**Failure to function adequately**

“Failing to function” is generally taken to mean that a person is **unable to cope with everyday life**. Their behaviour is seen as maladaptive (not good for survival), disrupting their ability to work and conduct satisfying relationships and causes personal distress, as well as distress to others.

**Rosenhan and Seligman (1989)** have suggested some key characteristics that must be ***present*** for an individual to appear to be ‘failing to function adequately’:

**Deviation from Ideal Mental Health**

This definition stands out by not defining abnormality directly. Instead, it attempts to define a state of **ideal mental health** (i.e., factors necessary for ‘optimal living’).

**Marie Jahoda** (1958) defined ideal mental health through a list of characteristics indicating psychological health and therefore the ***absence*** of the characteristics (rather than presence; as with the FFA definition) suggests abnormality.

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| **Self-actualisation -** The mentally healthy individual should also be focused on the future and on fulfilling their potential (developing their talents and abilities). |
| **Observer Distress (or Discomfort) -** Where someone’s behaviour causes discomfort and distress to others observing the behaviour. |
| **Empathy –** The individual should show understanding towards others. |
| **Personal Distress –** Most people who seek psychiatric help of any kind are suffering from a sense of psychological distress or discomfort. |
| **Irrational Behaviour**- If a person’s behaviour doesn’t make sense to other people (difficult to understand) |
| **Autonomy -** They should function as autonomous individuals, recognising their own needs and with an accurate perception of reality (i.e., to have the ability to act independently, to make their own decisions and to find satisfaction from within themselves). |
| **Resistant to stress -** Someone with ideal mental health should be resistant to stress and its negative effects. |
| **Maladaptive Behaviour**- Where someone’s behaviour interferes with their ability to lead a normal life (e.g. agoraphobia) |
| **Unpredictable Behaviour-** If behaviour is unpredictable if it does not fit the situation or if it is unexpected and uncontrolled (e.g. sobbing for no reason or laughing at bad news). |
| **Strong sense of self-Identity -** A psychologically healthy individual should be in touch with their own identity and feelings. |