

DSM5TR Defines CLINICAL JUDGEMENT

In the DSM-5-TR, **clinical judgment** is defined as the informed, expert decision-making process used by trained clinicians to apply diagnostic criteria flexibly rather than mechanically. It involves interpreting patient symptoms, cultural context, and history to determine the most accurate diagnosis and treatment, ensuring the manual acts as a guide, not a rigid script.

Key Aspects of Clinical Judgment in DSM-5-TR:

- **Contextual Application:** Clinical judgment is crucial when evaluating if a, for example, "normal" response to a major loss (like bereavement) crosses the threshold to become a mental disorder.
- **Expert Knowledge:** It is based on the clinician's training, experience, and ability to assess signs, symptoms, and functional impairment.
- **Beyond the Checklist:** While diagnostic criteria (symptoms, duration) are used for reliability, they are meant to be informed by—not replaced by—the clinician's understanding of the individual patient.
- **Differential Diagnosis:** It helps distinguish between similar disorders and identifies the "principal diagnosis" as the main focus of care.

The DSM-5-TR highlights that an overly rigid, "cookbook" application of the manual is inappropriate, and clinical judgment is required for safe and effective practice.