



Emotional Disturbances



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What is an Emotional Disturbance?

“A condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child’s educational performance:

- (a) An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.
- (b) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.
- (c) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.
- (d) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
- (e) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

The term includes schizophrenia. The term does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance.”



Causes of Emotional Disturbances

No one knows the actual cause or causes of emotional disturbance, although several factors—heredity, brain disorder, diet, stress, and family functioning—have been suggested and vigorously researched. A great deal of research goes on every day, but to date, researchers have not found that any of these factors are the direct cause of behavioral or emotional problems.

Prevention of Emotional Disturbances

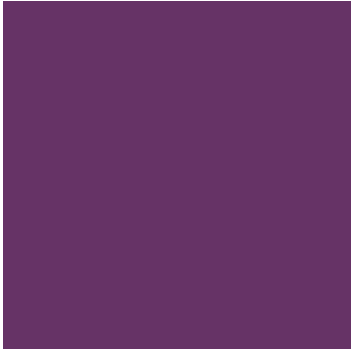
One of the first steps in preventing the development of emotional or behavioral disorders is determining which children exhibit behaviors that are often predictive of later problems.

Standards for normal behavior change as children grow up and move through the stages of their lives. When children behave quite differently from what is expected for their age group, it becomes a cause for concern.

Prevention and treatment of emotional or behavioral disorders can be accomplished in many different ways, but the implementation of three different approaches could cause a substantial reduction in the prevalence of this disability:

- Medical management
- Reducing overrepresentation
- School based interventions

(Functional Behavior Assessments and Behavior Intervention Plans)



Characteristics of Emotional Disturbance

Each student with an emotional disturbance will have characteristics that are unique to that individual. However, these students will all share deficits in three specific areas, namely emotional development, behavioral development, and cognitive development.

These students may have specific emotional characteristics/conditions such as anxiety disorder, mood disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, conduct disorder, and schizophrenia. Not addressing any one of these disorders with the appropriate support system could have potentially tragic results. Behavioral characteristics of an emotional disorder include externalizing behavior and conversely internalizing behavior. The former can result in problem behavior and physical aggression while the latter results in depression and anxiety. Finally, students with emotional disorders have a number of academic issues as well, and each year half of the students in this category drop out of school entirely.

Emotional disturbance is a commonly used umbrella term for a number of different mental disorders. Let's take a brief look at some of the most common of these.

Anxiety Disorders

As with the term emotional disturbance, "anxiety disorder" is an umbrella term that actually refers to several distinct disabilities that share the core characteristic of irrational fear: generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), panic disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), social anxiety disorder (also called social phobia), and specific phobias.

Bipolar Disorder

Bipolar disorder is a serious medical condition that causes dramatic mood swings from overly "high" and irritable to sad and hopeless, and then back again, often with periods of normal mood in between those mood swings.

Conduct Disorder

Conduct disorder refers to a group of behavioral and emotional problems in youngsters. Children and adolescents with this disorder have great difficulty following rules and behaving in a socially acceptable way.

Some of these behaviors include:

- aggression to people and animals
- destruction of property
- lying or stealing
- truancy or other serious violations of rules.

Eating Disorders

Extremes in eating behavior—either too much or too little—or feelings of extreme distress or concern about body weight or shape. Two common forms of eating disorders include Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia Nervosa.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

OCD is characterized by recurrent, unwanted thoughts, obsessions, and/or repetitive behaviors or compulsions. Repetitive behaviors such as handwashing, counting, checking, or cleaning are often performed with the hope of preventing obsessive thoughts or making them go away.

Psychotic Disorders

Two of the main symptoms of psychotic disorders are delusions and hallucinations. Delusions are false beliefs, such as thinking that someone is plotting against you. Hallucinations are false perceptions, such as hearing, seeing, or feeling something that is not there. Schizophrenia is one type of psychotic disorder.

+ Instructional Strategies

When working with students with emotional disturbances, it is important to use wrap around services in which other service providers, such as counselors, therapists, psychologists, or social workers, utilize time in the classroom to work with the students, and also work with the student outside of the classroom to work through some of their difficulties in academics due to their emotional disturbance.

Parental involvement in the determination of educational services is an important instructional strategy as well, as the parent knows the strengths of the child and can communicate these to the teacher and other service providers.

Effects of Disability on Adolescents and Adults

For Adolescents:

Adolescents may face problems with social behavior, depression, anxiety, psychosomatic disorders.

They may also function below grade level academically.

For Adults:

More than 40 million adult Americans are affected by one or more mental disorders and 5.5 million Americans are disabled by severe mental illness, such as schizophrenia, manic-depressive illness, and severe depressive disorders.

It is thought that up to 600,000 people are homeless throughout the country on any given night and one-third are estimated to be adults with serious mental illness or emotional disturbances.

For adults struggling with an emotional disturbance, the unemployment rate is estimated to be 85 percent.

Current Trends

Inclusion within the classroom is a current trend in education as more students are diagnosed with emotional disturbances in the academic setting.



Online Resources:

<http://nichcy.org/disability/specific/emotionaldisturbance>

<http://www.education.com/reference/article/emotional-behavioral-disorders-prevention/?page=4>

<http://projectidealonline.org/emotionalDisturbance.php>

http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0842/is_n4_v20/ai_17166496/



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