

Emotional Disturbance

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Distinguishing Characteristics

1. Hyperactivity (short attention span, impulsiveness);
2. Aggression or self-injurious behavior (acting out, fighting);
3. Withdrawal (not interacting socially with others, excessive fear or anxiety);
4. Immaturity (inappropriate crying, temper tantrums, poor coping skills);
and
5. Learning difficulties (academically performing below grade level).

Incidence/ Prevalence

Children and youth identified as having an emotional disturbance represent 8.1% of all students ages 6-21 being served under IDEA It is more common in boys than girls with boys outnumbering girls 3.5 to 1.

Diagnosis

1. An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors
2. An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers
3. Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances
4. A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression
5. A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems
6. Includes Schizophrenia, but does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted

Etiology

No one knows the causes of Emotional Disturbance, although there are several factors;

1. Hereditary
2. Brain disorder
3. Diet
4. Stress
5. Family functioning

Implication of Emotional Disturbance for Instruction

“A student with an emotional disturbance has the inability to learn in school which cannot be explained by other factors, as well as the inability to build or maintain good relationships at school. These students display difficulties with behavior or feelings, and may be generally unhappy or sad. They may develop physical symptoms or fears that affect home and school.” - Do2Learn

Resources for Professionals

- PACER.org Children's mental health and emotional or behavioral disorders project
- [thrivectr.org/emotional disturbance](https://thrivectr.org/emotional-disturbance)
- Resilient Educator; 5 Tips for Handling EBD Kids (Emotional Behavior Disorder) in an Inclusive Classroom
- Classroom Leadership; Helping Students with Emotional Problems Succeed

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