Emotional Disturbance (ED)

IDEA defines emotional disturbance as follows:

“...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.”

As defined by IDEA, emotional disturbance includes schizophrenia but does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance.

Characteristics

Children with an Emotional Disturbance may have a short attention span, impulsiveness, aggression or self-injurious behavior, withdrawal behaviors, and immaturity (inappropriate crying, temper tantrums, poor coping skills). Children with the most serious emotional disturbances may exhibit distorted thinking, excessive anxiety, bizarre motor acts, and abnormal mood swings.

Tips for Parents

- Learn about your child’s specific mental health disturbance.
- Focus on your child’s strengths.
- Remember, they’re kids first.
- Set clear behavioral expectations and reward positive behaviors.

Resources

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

American Psychological Association
- Spanish [www.centrodeapoyoapa.org/](http://www.centrodeapoyoapa.org/)

National Alliance on Mental
- English [http://www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)
- Spanish [http://tinyurl.com/28rweba](http://tinyurl.com/28rweba)