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Behavioral Dysregulation in Children: Signs and School-Based Strategies

What School Counselors Can Look For—And Use to Support Students

COMMON SIGNS OF EMOTIONAL & BEHAVIORAL DYSREGULATION IN SCHOOL

Frequent, Intense Outbursts

Meltdowns that feel out of proportion to classroom situations.

Long Recovery After Upset

Long recovery period after a disagreement, frustration, or classroom challenge.

Big Reactions to Small Problems

Strong reactions to minor setbacks, such as losing a game or getting a low grade.

Aggressive Behavior

Hitting, kicking, throwing objects, or verbal outbursts toward peers or staff.

Overly Rigid Thinking

Has trouble being flexible and becomes upset when routines, rules, or expectations change.

Difficulty with Limits

Struggles with transitions, classroom rules, or hearing “no.”

TOP SCHOOL-BASED STRATEGIES FOR CHILDREN WITH BEHAVIORAL & EMOTIONAL DYSREGULATION

Use Feelings Charts

Encourage students to identify their emotions using classroom visuals or thermometers.

Offer Reset Breaks

Allow brief breaks when emotions escalate to help the student reset.

Practice Coping Skills

Teach and practice deep breathing or grounding exercises in the classroom.

Guide Problem-Solving

Help students identify a problem, validate, brainstorm, and try solutions.

Reframe Extreme Thinking

Support flexible thinking: “I can’t” becomes “I can try step by step.”

Reinforce with Steps

Use specific praise and break tasks into small, doable steps.



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