

NASET's HOW TO Series

September 2014

How To Understand Symptom Patterns and Causes in Children

Introduction

When children experience serious social, emotional, physical, academic, psychological, language, perceptual, or environmental problems, the tension from these issues exhibits itself in the form of behavioral symptoms. These would be the first thing teachers notice and should understand that they are behavioral symptoms which indicate a more serious underlying problem. What follows is a series of problem areas that children may encounter and what kind of symptoms may exhibit themselves in the classroom.

SYMPTOM PATTERN

POSSIBLE CAUSE

Intellectual Symptom Patterns

low academic achievement

low functioning, limited capacity

short attention span

low functioning-unable to maintain focus

confusion over directions

low functioning resulting in limited memory

difficulty following directions

low functioning resulting in difficulty grasping concepts

concrete thinker/trouble with

abstract concepts

asks things to be repeated constantly

Academic (Achievement) Symptom Patterns

low academic achievement

poor skill development

procrastinates

low skills result in avoidance

brings home unfinished work

low skills reduce productivity

poor computational math

poor basic fact skills

poor written spelling

reading on grade level

adequate reading skills

uses fingers to count

poor math skills/basic facts

Psychological Symptom Patterns

short attention span-

affected by possible tension

confusion over directions

anxiety reduces memory

reticent behavior

fear of reaction

disorganized

high anxiety

trouble getting started

avoidance behavior

trouble handing in assignments

avoidance behavior

makes excuses

fear of failure, low energy

procrastinates

avoidance behavior

brings home unfinished work

high anxiety slows productivity

squinting

tic disorder, high levels of tension

stubborn

low self esteem, fear of reaction

Social Symptom Patterns

stays alone during recess

argumentative towards peers

intrusive

trouble following rules during games

sarcastic towards peers

fight with others

tries anything to be like

Environmental Symptom Patterns

reticent behavior

critical household, symbiotic relationship, older siblings control

taking

comes in tired all the time

daydreams early in the day

resistance to leaving school

extreme fear of notes going home

never talks about family

Medical Symptom Patterns

confusion over directions	hearing problems
poor handwriting	neurological or physical limitations, visual problems
difficulty following directions	hearing problems
disorganized	neurological impairment
poor written spelling	neurological or physical limitations, visual problems
difficulty in art	neurological, vision problems
difficulty in physical activities	neurological or physical limitations, vision problems, depth perception
squinting	vision problems

Language Symptom Patterns

confusion over directions	processing problems
trouble labeling things	
asks things to be repeated constantly	
uses wrong words	
confuses words in sentences	
hesitates when expressing ideas	

Perceptual Symptom Patterns

awkward gait	
large and fine motor difficulties	
poor auditory memory	
confusion over directions	auditory memory problems
poor handwriting	visual motor difficulties
difficulty following directions	auditory reception, auditory association or memory problems
disorganized	processing limitations
poor written spelling	visual motor problems, auditory memory to motor difficulties
difficulty in art	fine motor problems, visual motor problems