



Classroom Strategies



Depression:

Suggestions for Supporting Students in School:

- Being successful and accomplishing tasks increases self-esteem so find ways to insure the student has chances to achieve, even at his/her lower energy level and reduced ability to concentrate.
- Eliminate less important work until the student is better able to focus.
- Make positive statements that reflect his/her own past successes.
- Make a special contact with the student each day. Maybe a specific greeting at the door followed by a question about something that has been of interest to the student.
- Give more time, break assignments into smaller pieces, offer extra help in setting up schedules or study habits, or pair the student with others who express an interest in helping.
- Depression impairs students' ability to learn and concentrate. They may work more slowly than other students. Shorten assignments or allow more time for them to be completed.
- Children and adolescents who are depressed are more sensitive to criticism. Corrections should be put in the context of a lot of praise and support.
- Students who are depressed often feel as if they have little to contribute. It is helpful to show confidence, respect, and faith in the student's abilities.
- Ask open-ended questions in class for which there is no clearly correct answer. These kinds of questions minimize any chances for embarrassment.
- Check your Board's procedures for supporting with students who are expressing suicidal thoughts. Seek direction from your principal if you have questions about what to do.

(Adapted from "When Something is Wrong, 2007)



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Bipolar Disorder:

Suggestions for Supporting Students in School

- Check-in on arrival to see if the child can succeed in certain classes that day. Where possible, provide alternatives to stressful activities on difficult days.
- Schedule classes later in the day when the student may be more alert and better able to learn.
- Allow more time to complete certain types of assignments.
- Adjust the homework load to prevent the child from becoming overwhelmed.
- Adjust expectations until symptoms improve. Helping a child make more attainable goals when symptoms are more severe is important, so the child can have the positive experience of success.
- Set up a procedure that allows the child to quickly and safely exit from an overwhelming situation.
- Ask about their medications and side effects.
- Learning and cognitive difficulties can vary in severity from day to day. Despite normal or high intelligence, many children with bipolar disorder have processing and communication deficits that hinder learning and create frustration.
- Because transitions may be particularly difficult for these children, allow extra time for moving to another activity or location. When a child with bipolar disorder refuses to follow directions or to transition to the next task, schools and families should remember that anxiety is likely the cause and is not intentional.
- Use strategies at school that are consistent with those used at home.
- Encourage the child to help develop interventions. Enlisting the child will lead to more successful strategies and will develop the child's ability to problem-solve.

