



*Canadian Psychiatric
Research Foundation*

When Something's Wr ng

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Ideas for Teachers

How to Use This Handbook

A child's difficult or unusual classroom behaviour creates tremendous stress for him/her, the teacher and the other students. In some cases, behavioural disturbances can be temporary; in others they may reflect a mental disorder.

When Something's Wrong: Ideas for Teachers has been designed to help you, the elementary or secondary school teacher, understand and implement ways to help children with behaviour problems that are due to common mental disorders.

The handbook is made up of eight sections, which can be used independently:

- Anxiety Disorders
 - Separation Anxiety Disorder
 - General Anxiety Disorder (GAD)
 - Social Anxiety Disorder
 - Panic Disorder (PD)
 - Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Autism
- Depression
- Eating Disorders
 - Anorexia and Bulimia Nervosa
- Impulse Control Disorders
 - Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)
 - Conduct Disorder (CD)
 - Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD)
- Schizophrenia
- Tourette Syndrome
- Resources

Anxiety Disorders

Autism

Depression

Eating Disorders

Impulse Control Disorders

Schizophrenia

Tourette Syndrome

Resources

The mental health issues addressed in these sections were selected by focus groups made up of teachers, guidance counsellors, psychologists, social workers, behaviour resource teachers and child/adolescent psychiatrists.

When Something's Wrong: Ideas for Teachers is a "quick reference" source. It can be used alone, or together with *When Being a Good Parent or Teacher is Not Enough*, a two-volume set presented by Health Education Consultants in association with the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and written by Barbara N. Buchanan, M.D. and Anne E. Yarnevich, M.S.W.. (Copyright 2000 by Health Education Consultants.)

In each colour-coded section you will find:

- A brief description of possible classroom behaviours that can accompany some of the more common childhood and youth mental health problems.
- Suggested strategies to help you deal with these issues in the classroom.
- Summaries of existing medical or therapeutic treatments.

At the end of each section and at the end of the handbook you will find:

- A list of resources for further information or professional help.

For further information and additional coping strategies, please see CPRF's second handbook *When Something's Wrong: Ideas for Families*. It is designed to work together with this teacher handbook.

Sections included in the family handbook which are not found in this handbook include:

- Managing Problem Behaviour in Children
- Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD)
- Bipolar Affective Disorder (formerly known as Manic Depression)
- Suicide
- Working with Your Health Practitioner

Please note that all data included in this handbook (i.e., statistics and figures) is based on available scientific literature at the time of printing.

This handbook is not a diagnostic tool. A professional diagnosis is always essential, and a second opinion is recommended. The purpose of the handbook is to give the teacher useful strategies to cope with and assist a student with behaviour difficulty. You may already use some of the strategies listed, but we hope it will provide additional suggestions that will be of value, not only for students with mental health problems, but also for general classroom management.

It has been shown that one in five school children has a mental health problem. Many of these children will exhibit their difficulties in the classroom, through problems with mood, behaviour or thinking. A significant proportion may have a brain dysfunction for which effective treatment is available. If you recognize a student who may have one or more of the disorders described, initiate a referral through the appropriate school services. Early identification and treatment can lead to improved outcomes.

All of these young students can benefit from strategic classroom interventions provided by informed teachers.

A team approach, involving teachers, parents, school support staff (psychology, social work, behaviour resource), public health nurses and other health professionals, may be required to provide optimal assistance to some children and teenagers. The support system may vary from one school to another, but in all cases the teacher plays a central role in day-to-day activities. This may include: recognition of behavioural difficulties that may indicate possible mental disorders, classroom management, and the use of appropriate classroom strategies. In recognizing mental health problems, it is important to consider that some may be relative to cultural adjustments of ethnic groups or to behavioural expectations arising from differences in originating cultures of specific students. Students undergoing major adjustments in the home (e.g., divorce, death) may also experience adjustment difficulties that are expressed through behaviour. Ongoing communication between teacher, student, parent and other involved professionals will be necessary to apply the information in this handbook effectively.

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