



To: Teachers

Topic: **Common Psychosocial problems in Schools**

Message Objective(s): **To support teachers to identify common psychosocial challenges in schools and to address them.**

Message: Teachers must be able to identify common psychosocial challenges in the classroom. Learners like adults, suffer from psychosocial problems. These may be simple behavioural, emotional or learning problems in response to complex psychological problems. Teachers can assist learners with most of these, but some require the services of Educational Psychologists. Some issues resolve with a little help while others persist through adulthood. Prompt diagnosis by teachers and appropriate treatment increases the likelihood of successful management of these problems and help learners live and cope with these challenges.

The psychosocial issues can range from school refusal, difficulty with concentration and learning, disruptive behaviour, eating and sleeping problems. While other challenges are transitory, mild and moderate, others are serious causing distress, confusion, lack of control and can become unmanageable.

Psychosocial issues can show up as poor academic performance, lack of motivation in school, loss of interest in schoolwork, or poor relationships with peers or teachers. Teachers are expected to observe, and after proper training they can recognise the early warning signs of psychological problems. Their observation of learners and judgment on the characteristics of their cognitive and emotional behaviours can provide vital insight for preparing prevention and intervention programmes to alleviate the challenges. Common psychosocial issues faced by learners which teachers should be on the lookout for include the following:

Anxiety Disorders: Learners experience a range of anxiety disorders, including generalised anxiety, panic, phobias and obsessive-compulsive disorder. Often these anxieties can be easily dealt with counselling; a long delay requires initial medication as well.

Learning Disorders: Learners having difficulty in learning at the same level as their peers. Different learning styles are recommended, and these may be coupled with testing of the specific disorder.

Conduct Disorder: Learners encounter difficulty behaving in the way that is expected of them.

Attention-deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: ADHD is suspected when a school-aged child has difficulty focusing on homework, does not give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes in schoolwork, struggle to concentrate and general hyperactivities.

Substance Addiction: Abuse of prescription drugs, marijuana, alcohol and cocaine among other drugs

Autism: a pervasive disorder which manifests in behaviours and mannerisms which are not age appropriate.

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