**Emotional and behavioral disorders**

Emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD; sometimes called emotional disturbance or serious emotional disturbance) refer to a disability classification used in educational settings that allows educational institutions to provide [special education](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special_education) and related services to students that have poor social or academic adjustment that cannot be better explained by biological abnormalities or a [developmental disability](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Developmental_disability).

The classification is often given to students, after conducting a Functional Behavior Analysis. These students need individualized [behavior supports](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classroom_management) such as a Behavior Intervention Plan, to receive a [free and appropriate public education](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_and_appropriate_public_education). They would not be eligible for an [individualized education program](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Individualized_education_program) under another disability category of the [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Individuals_with_Disabilities_Education_Act) (IDEA).

IDEA defines emotional disturbance as follows:   
  
“…a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child’s educational performance:   
  
     (A) An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.   
  
     (B) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.   
  
     (C) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.   
  
     (D) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.   
  
     (E) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.”  
  
As defined by IDEA, emotional disturbance includes schizophrenia but does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance.

**What Causes a Behavioral Disorder?**

A behavioral disorder can have a variety of causes. According to the University of North Carolina, the abnormal behavior that is usually associated with these disorders can be traced back to biological, family and school-related factors.

Some biological causes may include:

* Physical illness or disability
* Malnutrition
* Brain damage
* Hereditary factors

Other factors related to an individual’s home life may contribute to behaviors associated with a behavioral disorder:

* Divorce or other emotional upset at home
* Coercion from parents
* Unhealthy or inconsistent discipline style
* Poor attitude toward education or schooling

**What Are the Signs of a Behavioral Disorder?**

Someone who has a behavioral disorder may act out or display emotional upset in different ways, which will also vary from person to person.

**Emotional Symptoms of Behavioral Disorders**

According to Boston Children’s Hospital, some of the emotional symptoms of behavioral disorders include:

* Easily getting annoyed or nervous
* Often appearing angry
* Putting blame on others
* Refusing to follow rules or questioning authority
* Arguing and throwing temper tantrums
* Having difficulty in handling frustration

**Physical Symptoms of Behavioral Disorders**

Unlike other types of health issues, a behavioral disorder will have mostly emotional symptoms, with physical symptoms such as a fever, rash, or headache being absent. However, sometimes people suffering from a behavioral disorder will develop a substance abuse problem, which could show physical symptoms such as burnt fingertips, shaking or bloodshot eyes.