



# UNIT-11

## Common Behavior Disorders in Children

### Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Defining “Disorders”
- ✓ Early Childhood Behavioral and Emotional Disorders
- ✓ Behavior and Emotional Problems
- ✓ Parenting for Childhood Success

## Unit 11

### The Most Common Behaviour Disorders in Children

Raising children is challenging, and dealing with difficult children can be even more so. However, determining whether a child is going through a phase or if something is seriously wrong isn't always straightforward.

A 2-year-old throwing a tantrum does not necessarily indicate that he or she has a problem with authority, and a kindergartener who refuses to sit still does not necessarily indicate that he or she has an attention disorder. Experts say diagnoses and labels should be kept to a bare minimum when it comes to understanding children's behaviour.

#### Defining “Disorders”

The term "disorder" should be used with caution for children under the age of five, according to child psychology experts from the University of Oxford and the University of Pittsburgh, who question its validity in some instances.

According to professors Frances Gardner and Daniel S. Shaw, there is little evidence that preschool problems predict problems later in life or that behavioural issues indicate a true disorder. “In this period of rapid developmental change, there are concerns about distinguishing normal from abnormal behaviour,” they wrote.

In this age group, however, it is best to take a cautious approach to dealing with behavioural and emotional issues.

#### Behavioural and Emotional Disorders in Children and Adolescents

A child under the age of five is unlikely to be diagnosed with a serious behavioural disorder. They may, however, begin to show signs of a disorder that will be diagnosed later in childhood.

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), oppositional defiant disorder (ODD), autism spectrum disorder (ASD), and anxiety disorder are just a few examples.

- Depression
- Learning disabilities
- Bipolar disorder
- Personality flaws

You've probably heard of a lot of these. Others are more uncommon or aren't commonly used outside of childhood psychology discussions.

Angry outbursts, for example, are common in ODD and are usually directed at people in positions of authority. However, a diagnosis is only possible if the behaviours have persisted for more than six months and are interfering with the child's ability to function. Conduct disorder is a far more serious diagnosis that involves acts that would be considered cruel to both people and animals.

Physical violence and even criminal activity are examples of behaviours that are not common in pre-schoolers.

Meanwhile, autism is a term that refers to a group of disorders that can affect children in a variety of ways, including behaviourally, socially, and cognitively. They are classified as a neurological disorder with symptoms that can begin as early as infancy, unlike other behavioural disorders.

### **Emotional and Behavioural Issues**

A temporary behavioural and/or emotional problem is far more likely than one of the above clinical disorders in a young child. Many of these will pass with time and require the patience and understanding of a parent.

Outside counselling may be necessary in some cases and may be effective in helping children cope with stress. A professional could assist your child in better controlling their anger, working through their emotions, and communicating their needs. Medicating children at this age is controversial for obvious reasons.

### **Parenting for Success in Childhood**

Parenting styles are rarely to blame for behavioural issues in children. Even so, parents are critical in the treatment of early childhood behavioural issues.

Styles of Parenting. There are four main types of parenting styles, one of which is the most effective in raising well-adjusted and well-behaved children:

**Authoritarian parenting:** Strict rules with no compromise, and no input from the children.

**Authoritative parenting:** Strict rules, but parents are willing to listen and cooperate with their children. More of a democracy than authoritarian parenting.

**Permissive parenting:** Few rules, and few demands put on children. There is little to no discipline in this home, and parents typically take on the role of friend.

**Uninvolved parenting:** No rules and very little interaction. These parents are detached and may reject or neglect their children.

Children raised by authoritative parents are more likely to be well-adjusted and happy. Experts say that uninvolved parents are more likely to raise children who lack self-esteem, self-control, and general competency.

These parenting styles teach us that children require clear rules and consequences, as well as a parent who is willing to listen and guide them.

### **Children Require Patience**

As their child struggles, parents should adopt empathy, a cooperative attitude, and a calm temperament. It's also important to know when to seek assistance.

It's time to seek professional help if a child's behaviour becomes disruptive to the household or their education, or if they become violent.

It's not easy to raise a child with behavioural issues. However, before diagnosing them or becoming a strict disciplinarian, one should seek help. A paediatrician can determine whether a child's behaviour is typical for their age group and offer resources for help.

## Examples of Emotional and Behavioural Issues

### Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)

Oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) is a group of behavioural problems in children and adolescents that is commonly diagnosed as a disruptive behaviour disorder. While all of these disorders are marked by challenging behaviours, ODD is distinguished by frequent outbursts of rage, intentionally irritating or hostile behaviour, and a marked intolerance for authority.

The term "oppositional" literally refers to actions that go against socially acceptable behaviour rules and norms. A pattern of irritable, angry outbursts, arguments, and disobedience is common in children with ODD. While this behaviour is typically directed at parents and teachers, it can also be directed at siblings, classmates, and other children.

ODD is a relatively common problem that, with the right treatment, can be successfully treated. Stopping the chain of events that leads to problem behaviours as soon as possible is the key to successfully "nipping problem behaviours in the bud." Problem behaviours are likely to decrease if the pattern of behaviour is identified, stopped, and treated.

### Causes

The exact cause of ODD is unknown, but it is thought that both developmental and learned factors may play a role in the disorder.

#### Developmental Factors

According to one theory, children with ODD may suffer from underlying "temperamental" issues that cause them to be quick to anger and slow to calm, leaving them vulnerable.

- Began to have issues as toddlers
- May have had an unusually difficult time separating from parents ("standing on their own two feet") when they were younger
- Did not resolve their normal developmental issues in their younger years, leading to later behavioural problems

#### Learned Factors

According to another theory, children with oppositional defiant disorder:

- Developed unusually high levels of negativity and pessimism (two main traits of ODD) as a result of a parent or other authority figure who meted out excessive punishment or other forms of negative reinforcement
- Began to associate the parent or authority figure's negative reinforcement with receiving more attention, time, and resources

Other factors that may play a role in the development of ODD include:

- Permissive parenting, in which a parent gives in to a child's demands too frequently and too easily

Strong will in the child, which can be caused by any or all of the following:

- The mother's exposure to certain harmful agents (such as cigarette smoke) while pregnant
- The mother's lack of positive attachment to a parent
- Significant stress or a lack of predictable structure in the home or community environment

### Signs and Symptoms

What are the signs and symptoms of oppositional defiant disorder (ODD), and when do they appear?

ODD symptoms usually appear in children between the ages of 6 and 8, though it can also appear in younger children. Symptoms can last well into adolescence. If these symptoms are persistent and last for at least six months, a child may be diagnosed with ODD.

- Frequent temper tantrums
- Excessive arguments with adults
- Refusal to comply with adult requests
- Always questioning rules
- Refusing to follow rules
- Behaviour intended to annoy or upset others
- Blaming others for misbehaviour or mistakes
- Becoming easily annoyed with others
- Frequently displaying an angry attitude
- Speaking harshly

### Anxiety Disorder

#### What are Anxiety Disorders?

Moving to a new location, starting a new job, or taking a test can all cause anxiety? Although this type of anxiety is unpleasant, it may motivate you to work harder and achieve better results. Ordinary anxiety is a fleeting feeling that does not interfere with your daily activities.

If you have an anxiety disorder, you may experience fear all of the time. It's intense and can be debilitating at times. This type of anxiety may cause you to abandon activities that you enjoy. It may prevent you from entering an elevator, crossing the street, or even leaving your home in extreme cases. If anxiety isn't treated, it will only get worse. Anxiety disorders are the most common type of emotional disorder, affecting people of all ages.

## What are some of the Different Types of Anxiety Disorders?

Anxiety plays a role in a variety of disorders. These are some of them:

- Panic Disorder: recurring panic attacks at inconvenient times. A person suffering from panic disorder may live in constant fear of having another panic attack.
- Social Anxiety Disorder: extreme fear of being judged by others in social situations
- Phobia: excessive fear of a specific object, situation, or activity
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD): obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is characterized by recurring irrational thoughts that lead to the repetition of specific behaviours.
- Separation Anxiety Disorder (fear of being separated from home or loved ones)
- Illness Anxiety Disorder (fear of being sick) (formerly called hypochondria)
- PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder): anxiety that occurs after a traumatic event

## What are some of the Signs and Symptoms of Anxiety?

Anxiety manifests itself in a variety of ways depending on the person experiencing it. From butterflies in your stomach to a racing heart, you may experience a variety of emotions. You might feel out of control, as if your mind and body aren't communicating.

Other symptoms of anxiety include nightmares, panic attacks, and uncontrollable painful thoughts or memories. You may be afraid of a specific place or event, or you may be afraid of a general feeling of fear and worry. Symptoms of general anxiety include:

- Increased heart rate
- Rapid breathing
- Restlessness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty falling asleep

Someone else's anxiety symptoms may be completely different from yours. That's why it's crucial to be aware of all the different ways anxiety can manifest.

## What is The Definition of an Anxiety Attack?

An anxiety attack is characterized by a strong sense of dread, worry, distress, or fear. An anxiety attack can take a long time to develop for many people. As a stressful event approaches, it may get worse.

Anxiety attacks can manifest in a variety of ways, and symptoms may differ from person to person. That's because anxiety's various symptoms don't affect everyone, and they can change over time. Anxiety attacks are characterized by the following symptoms:

- Faintness or dizziness
- Shortness of breath
- Dry mouth
- Sweating

- Chills or hot flashes
- Apprehension and worry
- Restlessness
- Distress
- Fear
- Numbness or tingling

The symptoms of a panic attack and an anxiety attack are similar, but they are not the same.

### **What are the Causes of Anxiety?**

The exact cause of anxiety is unknown to researchers. However, it's likely that a number of factors are at play. Genetic and environmental factors, as well as brain chemistry, are among them. Furthermore, researchers believe that the areas of the brain that control fear may be affected. Anxiety research is currently focusing on the parts of the brain that are involved in anxiety.

## **Depression**

### **What is the Definition of Depression?**

Depression is classified as a mood disorder. It's characterized by feelings of sadness, loss, or rage that interfere with one's daily activities. It's also a fairly common occurrence. Depression manifests itself in a variety of ways for different people. It may cause disruptions in your daily routine, resulting in lost time and decreased productivity. It can also have an impact on relationships and some chronic illnesses.

Depression can exacerbate the following conditions: arthritis, asthma, cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, and obesity. It's critical to recognize that feeling down is a natural part of life. Everyone experiences sad and upsetting events. However, if you find yourself feeling down or hopeless on a regular basis, you may be suffering from depression.

Depression is a serious medical condition that can deteriorate if not treated properly. Symptoms often improve in just a few weeks for those who seek treatment.

### **Symptoms of Depression**

Depression is more than just being sad all of the time or feeling "down." Major depression can manifest itself in a variety of ways. Some have an impact on your mood, while others have an impact on your physical health. Symptoms may be persistent or intermittent.

Men, women, and children can all have different reactions to the symptoms of depression.

Men may experience symptoms related to their:

- Feelings of rage, aggression, irritability, anxiety, and restlessness
- Emotional well-being, such as emptiness, sadness, and hopelessness
- Sexual interest, such as reduced sexual desire, lack of sexual performance

- Cognitive abilities, such as inability to concentrate, difficulty completing tasks, delayed responses during conversation, thoughts of suicide, drinking excessively, using drugs, engaging in high-risk activities

Women may experience symptoms related to their:

- Emotional well-being, such as sadness, emptiness, anxiety, or hopelessness
- Actions such as a loss of interest in activities, withdrawal from social engagements, and suicidal thoughts
- Cognitive abilities, such as the ability to think or speak more slowly
- Physical well-being, such as decreased energy, greater fatigue, changes in appetite, weight changes, aches, pains, headaches, and increased cramps
- Sleep patterns, such as difficulty sleeping through the night, waking early, or sleeping too much

Children may experience symptoms related to their:

- Emotional well-being, which includes feelings of incompetence (e.g., "I can't do anything right"), despair, crying, and intense sadness.
- Cognitive abilities, such as difficulty concentrating, decline in school performance, changes in grades
- Behaviour, such as getting into trouble at school or refusing to go to school, avoiding friends or siblings, thoughts of death or suicide
- Physical well-being, such as fatigue, digestive issues, appetite changes, and weight loss or gain

The signs and symptoms can go beyond your mind.

**Depression is caused by a variety of factors.**

They can be biological or circumstantial in nature. Among the most common causes are:

- Family History. You have a family history of depression or another mood disorder, you're more likely to develop depression
- Early Childhood Trauma. Some events have an impact on how your body reacts to fear and stress.
- The Structure of the Brain. If your frontal lobe is less active, you're more likely to develop depression. Scientists are unsure whether this occurs before or after the onset of depressive symptoms.
- Medical Problems. Chronic illness, insomnia, chronic pain, or attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder are all conditions that can increase your risk (ADHD).
- Abuse of Drugs. Your risk may be influenced by a history of drug or alcohol abuse.

Other risk factors for depression include:

- Low self-esteem or self-criticism, in addition to these causes.
- A history of mental illness in the family;
- The use of certain medications

- Traumatic events, such as the death of a loved one, financial difficulties, or a divorce

Many factors influence depression symptoms, as well as who develops the illness and who does not.

## Bipolar Disorder

### What is Bipolar Disorder?

Bipolar disorder is a mental illness characterized by rapid mood swings from high to low and low to high. Mania is characterized by highs, while depression is characterized by lows. It's possible that your mood swings will be mixed, leaving you feeling both elated and depressed at the same time.

Bipolar disorder is a common affliction. Symptoms usually appear in late adolescence or early adulthood, but they can also occur in children. Women are more likely than men to be diagnosed with bipolar disorder, though the reason for this is unknown.

Although bipolar disorder is difficult to diagnose, there are signs and symptoms to look for.

### What Symptoms do you have if you suffer from Bipolar Disorder?

Bipolar disorder manifests itself in a variety of ways. Many of these symptoms can also be caused by other illnesses, making it difficult to diagnose this condition.

The symptoms of bipolar disorder are divided into two categories: mania and depression.

## Learning Disabilities

### What is a Language Disorder?

Language disorders make it difficult for people to express themselves and understand what others are saying. This has nothing to do with hearing problems. In young children, language disorder, formerly known as receptive-expressive language disorder, is common.

It affects ten to fifteen percent of children under the age of three. By the age of four, language ability is more stable and can be measured more precisely to determine if a deficit exists.

### Expression-Related Symptoms

Language disorders are frequently first noticed in childhood. Because they can't remember the right word, your child may overuse "um" and "uh."

- Limited ability to form sentences
- Impaired ability to use words and connect sentences to explain or describe something
- Reduced ability to have a conversation
- Leaving words out
- Saying words in the wrong order
- Repeating a question while thinking of an answer

## Conduct Disorders

### What is Conduct Disorder and how does it affect a Person?

Conduct disorder is a collection of behavioural and emotional issues that typically start in childhood or adolescence. The disorder makes it difficult for children and adolescents to follow rules and behave in a socially acceptable manner.

They may engage in aggressive, destructive, and deceptive behaviour that may jeopardize others' rights. Adults and other children may mistakenly label them as "bad" or "delinquent," rather than as suffering from a mental illness.

A child with conduct disorder may appear tough and self-assured. In reality, children with conduct disorder are often insecure and mistakenly believe that others are threatening or aggressive toward them.

### The Different Types of Conduct Disorder

Conduct disorder can be classified into three categories. They're divided into groups based on when the disorder's symptoms first appear:

- When signs of conduct disorder appear before the age of ten, it is called childhood onset.
- When signs of conduct disorder first appear during adolescence, it is known as adolescent onset.
- Unspecified onset means the age at which conduct disorder first occurred is unknown.

Some children with limited pro-social emotions will be diagnosed with conduct disorder. Callous and unemotional behaviours are common characteristics of children with this type of conduct disorder.

### What are the Signs and Symptoms of Conduct Disorder?

Children with conduct disorder are often difficult to control and disobedient to rules. They act without thinking about the consequences of their actions.

They also don't think about how other people are feeling. If your child exhibits one or more of the following behaviours on a regular basis, they may have conduct disorder:

- Abrasive behaviour
- Behaving dishonestly
- Negative attitude
- Breaking the rules
- Aggressive behaviour

### Aggressive behaviour can include:

- Bullying or intimidating others
- Purposefully causing physical harm to people or animals

- Employing a weapon
- Behaviour that is deceptive

**Examples of deceptive behaviour include:**

- Lying
- Breaking and entering
- Stealing
- Forgery

**Violation of Rules, such as:**

- Not going to school
- Attempting to flee the house
- Use of drugs and alcohol
- Sexual behaviour when a child is very young

Boys with conduct disorder are more likely than girls to engage in aggressive and destructive behaviour. Girls are more likely to be deceitful and break rules.

Additionally, conduct disorder symptoms can be mild, moderate, or severe:

**Mild**

If your child has mild symptoms, it means they have few to no behavioural issues beyond those required for a diagnosis. Others are only slightly affected by the child's conduct issues. Lying, truancy, and staying out after dark without parental permission are all common problems.

**Moderate**

If a child exhibits a variety of behavioural issues, they have moderate symptoms. Others may be affected by these conduct issues in a mild to severe way. Vandalism and theft may be among the behaviours displayed.

**Severe**

If a child's behaviour problems outnumber those needed to make the diagnosis, they have severe symptoms. Others are harmed as a result of these conduct issues. Rape, the use of weapons, or breaking and entering are all possibilities.

**What Are the Causes of Conduct Disorder?**

Conduct disorder can be influenced by both genetic and environmental factors.

**Genetic Factors**

Conduct disorder has been linked to damage to the frontal lobe of the brain. Problem-solving, memory, and emotional expression are all controlled by the frontal lobe of the brain. It's also where your personality resides.

A person with conduct disorder's frontal lobe may not function properly, which can result in,

among other things:

- An inability to control impulses
- A decreased ability to plan ahead of time
- A reduced ability to learn from negative experiences in the past

Frontal lobe dysfunction can be genetic or inherited, or it can be caused by brain damage from an injury. A child's personality traits that are common in conduct disorder may also be inherited.

### **Environmental Factors**

The following are some of the known environmental factors linked to conduct disorder:

- Child abuse
- A family in disarray
- Parents who are drug or alcohol addicts
- Poverty

### **Who is at Risk of Developing a Conduct Disorder?**

The following factors could make a child more likely to develop a conduct disorder:

- Being male
- Living in poverty
- Having a history of conduct disorder in the family
- A history of mental illness in the family
- Suffering from other psychiatric illnesses
- Having drug or alcohol-abusing parents
- Living in a dysfunctional household
- A history of being exposed to traumatic events
- Being neglected or abused

### **Further Reading:**

- ✓ BEHAVIOUR DISORDERS By Vera Nkiru Nwadinobi Ph.D, 2019
- ✓ Behavioural and emotional disorders in childhood: A brief overview for paediatricians World J Clin Pediatr. 2018 Feb 8