

# SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS



## HOW DOES IT AFFECT YOU?

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS CAN AFFECT MANY LEARNERS DURING THE COURSE OF THEIR STUDIES. STATISTICS SHOW MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS AFFECT ABOUT 1 IN 10 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE. THE MOST COMMON ARE DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY.

## WHAT ARE THE SIGNS YOU MAY BE WORKING WITH A LEARNER WHO HAS DEPRESSION/ANXIETY?

INDIVIDUALS WITH DEPRESSION/ANXIETY MAY DEMONSTRATE SOME OF THE FOLLOWING BEHAVIOURS IN THE CLASSROOM:

### ANXIETY

- ANXIOUS STUDENTS MAY BECOME EASILY FRUSTRATED OR SEEM LIKE PERFECTIONISTS WHEN HAVING TO COMPLETE DIFFICULT ASSIGNMENTS.
- SOME ANXIOUS STUDENTS MAY REFUSE TO START TASKS DUE TO FEAR OF FAILURE.
- SOME ANXIOUS STUDENTS MAY AVOID CLASS WHEN ASSESSMENT TAKES PLACE, DUE TO FEAR OF EMBARRASSMENT.

### DEPRESSION

- A LOSS OF MOTIVATION OR A SPATE OF SIGNIFICANT ABSENTEEISM.
- DECREASED SELF-ESTEEM AND FEELINGS OF SELF-WORTH.
- LACK OF INTEREST AND INVOLVEMENT IN PREVIOUSLY ENJOYED ACTIVITIES.

**MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS AFFECT ABOUT 1 IN 10 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

## SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL TEACHING TIPS

### Anxiety

- When running discussions consider fears of getting the answer wrong, saying something embarrassing, or simply having other students look at them may be concerns for an anxious student. Determine the student's comfort with either closed-ended questions (requiring a yes or no) or with opinion questions, start with whichever is easiest.
- Answering questions at the board or reading out can be issues for students with social anxiety, the combination of getting the answer wrong, and being visible to the whole class can be overwhelming. Where you know students or see signs of anxiety, exempt these students until they are ready to handle that challenge.
- Allow flexible deadlines where they find a particular assignment worrying.
- Ensure students write down instructions for tasks and assignments correctly.
- Give students a weekly lesson planner or schedule of work so they know what to expect.
- Give choices on the way assignments can be completed to help them feel they have some control.
- For older students, making adaptations to assessments can make all the difference. Many students struggle with performance anxiety, especially when it comes to tests or a practical. When a student is feeling anxious, their brain simply can't function as effectively. Think of things you could do to reduce assessment anxiety such as extra time or cue cards that will help students feel better prepared or less anxious.
- Class presentations.
- Students with social anxiety may have difficulty with oral reports. Consider having the student present to the teacher alone, or have the student audiotape or videotape the presentation at home.

### Depression

- Give students frequent feedback on academic, social, and behavioral performance.
- Reassure the student if they are behind with work that they can catch up and provide deadlines encouraging positive and realistic goals.
- Break tasks into smaller, more manageable tasks.
- Teach the student how to set goals and self-monitor.
- Teach problem-solving skills.
- Avoid saying things like you will 'get over it' which dismisses their feelings.
- Develop the student's self-management systems to ensure that they are able to organize tasks effectively.
- Assign one individual to serve as a primary contact who the student can talk to.
- Encourage gradual social interactions by providing the student with opportunities to engage in small group work during lessons. Ask students who are more sociable to bring them into the group discussions.