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ANXIETY DISORDERS **43** |

Anxiety disorders are the most common mental disorders in the United States. Children affected by these disorders experience extreme and persistent fears and worries that significantly interfere with their ability to function academically, socially, and emotionally.

Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) 45 |

GAD is a condition in which children experience excessive worry about many aspects of life. These children may feel anxiety even when there is no objective reason to be worried.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) 50 |

OCD is an anxiety disorder that includes unwanted, intrusive thoughts (obsessions), repetitive behaviors (compulsions), or a combination of both. Children may demonstrate seemingly odd behaviors to diminish their internal anxiety.

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<i>Also called social communication disorder, this disorder involves difficulties understanding the appropriate thing to say and how and when to say it. Often observed in children with high-functioning autistic disorders, Asperger's Syndrome, and Nonverbal Learning Disability, this disorder creates significant social and academic problems.</i>	
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Introduction

*“Why did I choose this profession? Why am I here?
Simply put, I’m here to make a difference.”*

—Tommie Lindsey, educator and author of *It Doesn’t Take a Genius*

How many hats are you wearing today? As an educator, of course, you have many. It’s your job to teach a diverse population of students—many who have difficulties with learning. Add to this the fact that children come to you with a wide variety of social and emotional issues and your job becomes considerably more difficult. Some students may have problems with self-control, mood, or socializing that interfere not only with their learning but also with your ability to teach.

You’ve got a tough job—one of the toughest there is. That you’re reading this book shows your deep concern for students’ learning and mental health. In my work with children and their families, I’ve come to know and admire many dedicated teachers. Like you, they are hungry for information they can use to help students who struggle with various problems. That’s why I wrote this book. I wanted to provide practical classroom strategies that teachers can use to best teach and support all students—especially those with mental health and learning disorders.

TODAY’S MAINSTREAMED CLASSROOMS

What is it that makes your job so demanding? Without a doubt, you are expected to teach a wide spectrum of students. Some of your students come to you with academic and behavioral difficulties. This is, in part, the result of the practice of mainstreaming

children with special needs. Gone are many of the special education classes of the past, in favor of keeping these students in the regular classroom.

While good intentions underlie mainstreaming, you can imagine, or may have experienced, some major challenges: How can I help all kids succeed academically? How do I deal with children's social and emotional development? What about training for me? How can I respond to children with mental health problems?

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT . . .

Only about 25 percent of children needing mental health care receive necessary professional attention, and 70 to 80 percent of those children receive that attention in a school setting.

The task of helping students with mental health, behavioral, and learning problems may seem daunting. The good news is that there are many strategies you can use to support students. *Teaching Kids with Mental Health & Learning Disorders in the Regular Classroom* provides interventions for the regular classroom teacher as well as advice for determining when students may need the help of other school staff or outside professionals.

HOW COMMON ARE MENTAL HEALTH AND LEARNING DISORDERS?

The number of children being diagnosed with learning and mental health disorders is increasing. Up to 10 percent of students have a learning disability. About 20 percent have a mental health problem that interferes with daily life—and half of those children meet the criteria for a diagnosable mental disorder. Add these numbers and you have up to 10 million young people with challenges that can make it difficult for them to learn or behave properly in the classroom. Many of these students have more than one area of difficulty.

More and more it's being acknowledged that academic problems are often grounded in significant differences in *how* students learn, as well as in social and emotional difficulties they may be facing. Multiple learning approaches and innovative instructional techniques are being used to engage learners. Rather than simply penalizing students for misbehavior or low achievement, educators are looking more deeply into what might be causing problems. They're finding that when psychological or learning problems are identified and addressed, students not only feel and behave better, but achieve at a higher academic level.

Providing attention to students' differences can seem to be a great challenge when, at the same time, you're accountable for the performance of your entire class. You might fear that giving too much attention to certain children will keep you from helping the majority of your class achieve state standards and reach grade-level proficiency. The information and strategies presented in this book are meant to allow you to provide individual attention to those students who need it

with minimum negative impact on the rest of the class. You will also learn ways to address problems with student behavior that can interfere with teaching.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

My goals in writing this book are to provide current information on mental health and learning disorders and make it easy for you to apply this knowledge in the regular classroom. Here's what you'll find:

Part I. The Role of Schools in Addressing Mental Health and Learning Disorders

The first part of the book provides background to help you meet the needs of students with mental health and learning disorders. “The Changing Nature of Special Education” features a discussion of the recently revised Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and how it continues to change special education services in schools. You can use the section titled “Assessing Student Needs” to identify students who may need academic help, emotional support, or behavioral interventions. “Effective Classroom Policies and Procedures” offers classroom management guidelines—including recommendations for setting consistent rules and positive, proactive disciplinary measures. You can use “Effective Teaching Strategies for Meeting Diverse Student Needs” to incorporate into your school day best practices for motivating all students to learn. “Establishing a Safe and Caring Classroom” gives you suggestions for making your classroom a place where students feel respected, valued, and safe. The last section of Part I, “Building Social Skills in Students,” provides ideas for fostering social development in children—an area of growth often affected by mental health and learning disorders.

Part II. Mental Health and Learning Disorders

The second part of the book opens with “Terms Used in This Book”—a section with general information on disorders and terminology used by different professionals to describe these problems.

Next you'll find detailed information on mental health and learning disorders. All of the sections are laid out in a consistent way so you can easily reference the information you need. Each section defines the disorder with its symptoms, and then it gives helpful strategies for working with students. Also included are statistics on how common disorders are among children, in-the-trenches stories, treatments professionals may use, and other information that can be helpful in your work with children.

The book concludes with sections you can use to find out more about conditions. “Resources” are organized by disorder and include information on related books, organizations, and Web sites. The “Notes” section provides sources for statistics and information that appear throughout the book.

This book can be used whether or not you know a child who has a disorder. In cases where you already know what disorder a student has, you can find relevant information by referencing it in the contents. When you're not sure about the

- Practical strategies for teaching and supporting students with mental health and learning disorders
- Written by an expert, user-friendly and practical

Teaching Kids with Mental Health & Learning Disorders in the Regular Classroom

Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD). Nonverbal Learning Disability (NVLD). Dysthymia. Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD). Asperger's Syndrome. Do you know what they are? Would you recognize them if you saw them? Would you know how to respond?

Mainstreaming was implemented with good intentions, but it left many teachers with the daunting task of helping students with mental health and learning disorders and related behavioral problems. Formerly taught in special education classes, these students are now in your classroom. If you don't always feel prepared or you sometimes feel overwhelmed, you're not alone.

This accessible, ready-to-use guide describes mental health and learning disorders often observed in school children, explains how each might be exhibited in the classroom, and offers suggestions for what to do (and what not to do).

Look inside to find:

- A discussion of the recently revised Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- Classroom management guidelines
- Best practices for motivating all students to learn
- Ideas for fostering social development in children
- Detailed information on dozens of mental health and learning disorders including definitions, statistics, and in-the-trenches stories
- Behaviors and symptoms to look for
- Concrete, practical classroom strategies and interventions
- Concise descriptions of professional treatments
- Extensive resources including books, organizations, and Web sites

Written to and for the regular classroom teacher, this book is a valuable tool for all school personnel, parents, and anyone who works with children and teens.

Myles L. Cooley, Ph.D., has been practicing psychology for over 30 years. He evaluates and treats children, adolescents, and adults for a variety of problems. Dr. Cooley serves as a consultant to schools and has presented educational programs to educators, mental health professionals, physicians, and parents.

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