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Behavioral Dysregulation in Children: Signs and School-Based Strategies

What School Counselors Can Look For, and Use to Support Students

Common Signs of Dysregulation in School

Frequent, Intense Outbursts
Meltdowns that feel out of proportion to classroom situations.

Long Recovery After Upset
A long recovery period after a disagreement, frustration, or classroom challenge.

Big Reactions to Small Problems
Strong reactions to minor setbacks, such as losing a game or getting a low grade.

Aggressive Behavior
Hitting, kicking, throwing objects, or verbal outbursts toward peers or staff.

Overly Rigid Thinking
Has trouble being flexible and becomes upset when routines, rules, or expectations change.

Difficulty with Limits
Struggles with transitions, classroom rules, or hearing “no.”

Top School-Based Strategies for Students

Use Feelings Charts
Encourage students to identify their emotions using classroom visuals or feelings thermometers.

Offer Reset Breaks
Allow brief breaks when emotions escalate to help the student reset.

Practice Coping Skills
Teach and practice deep breathing or grounding exercises in the classroom.

Guide Problem-Solving
Help students identify a problem, validate their feelings, brainstorm, and try solutions.

Reframe Extreme Thinking
Support flexible thinking: “I can’t” becomes “I can try step by step.”

Reinforce with Steps
Use specific praise and break tasks into small, doable steps.

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If a child’s anxiety is interfering with daily life, or if parents feel stuck, call our team. No waitlist, and a free 10-minute call to see if we’re a fit.



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