

Psychological Assistance for Children in a State of Distress

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Abstract: This article provides information about the state of distress experienced by students and the psychological assistance offered to children who are in such a state.

Keywords: Adolescence, state of distress, psyche, cognitive processes, reference groups, transitional period, compensation, hypercompensation, aggression.



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Today, raising a healthy and well-rounded generation is one of the top priorities. Mentally healthy, morally elevated, physically and intellectually developed children are the future of the nation. Currently, the rapid development of science and technology is influencing not only social life but also the education and upbringing of the growing youth. As a result, our students are facing psychological distress and difficult situations. Undoubtedly, such states of distress have an impact on the physical, mental, and intellectual development of students.

A state of distress is a strong manifestation of emotional tension occurring in an individual's psyche. Such a condition is dependent on the individual's cognitive processes, intellectual activity, and their role within interpersonal relationships. Additionally, this condition leads to specific changes in behavioral norms within the individual.

Adolescents' Behavior in Relation to Their Peers

Adolescents tend to strive for a unique position that satisfies them among their peers, which is observed as a high level of interest in behavioral norms and the values of reference groups. The transitional period in an adolescent's psyche is characterized by the simultaneous presence of both childhood and adulthood traits. During adolescence, there is often a tendency to retain behavioral reactions typical of younger individuals. The following are relevant to this:

1. **Withdrawal Reaction:** This is one of the simplest forms of behavior that manifests in withdrawing from relationships, obligations at home, studies, and other activities. In most cases, it is caused by sharp disruptions from usual life circumstances (such as separation from family or changing schools).
2. **Resistance, Strong Discontent, and Protest Reaction:** This is expressed in opposing one's behavior to what is required: demonstrative bravery, unreasoned absence from classes, evasion, theft, and even actions that are seemingly meaningless but are carried out as a form of protest.

3. Imitation Reaction: This is generally characteristic of childhood and manifests in imitating parents and close individuals. The imitation reaction is typical for groups of adolescents who have developed as individuals in an antisocial environment.
4. Compensation Reaction: This is expressed in the attempt to compensate for failures in one area with successes in another. For example, an adolescent who struggles academically may try to gain respect from peers through rude or inappropriate behavior.
5. Hypercompensation Reaction: A child or adolescent tends to strive for success only in areas where they face more failures. The psychological reaction characteristic of adolescents arises from the interaction with the social environment. For example, the adolescent's desire for freedom reflects their aspiration for independence and escape from adult guardianship. As a result, the adolescent may exhibit behaviors such as running away from home or school and developing negative attitudes towards parents and teachers.

The situations described above require treatment or correction. It is crucial to differentiate between pathological and non-pathological forms of behavioral disorders in a timely manner, as some situations may require various forms of pedagogical and social support or even medical treatment. An important aspect of psychological development during adolescence is related to the formation of methods for overcoming problems and difficulties. Some of these methods are developed from childhood to solve uncomplicated situations and become habitual. Children accumulate aggressive behavior patterns based on three main sources:

1. Unhealthy Family Environment: In such families, the relationship between parents and children is not characterized by a positive psychological climate. Conflicts among siblings, family disputes, and a lack of family harmony lead to the development of aggressive behavior in children. The manifestation of aggression in children is considered to be dependent on the level of influence from the family environment.
2. Peer Group: Children also absorb aggressive behaviors from their peers outside the family. In many cases, children attempt to manage their own aggression by observing the behaviors of their peer friends.
3. Mass Media: Today, this is one of the most powerful influences on children. The impact of the internet is increasingly growing in this regard. Through internet connections, children are also exposed to information that does not align with their characteristics. In this context, various violent films and shows presented through the media also contribute to the development of aggressive traits in children. According to psychological observations, factors such as the family climate, the relationship between parents, the relationship between parents and children, family harmony or discord, the closeness among siblings, and parental reactions to inappropriate or mistaken behaviors exhibited by children are all considered significant factors influencing the formation of aggressive behaviors within the family.

Based on the above, I recommend using the following psychological training exercises to address the state of anxiety in a group of adolescents.

Psychological Training Exercises Aimed at Overcoming Anxiety in Adolescents

1. "What Does My Mood Resemble?" Exercise

Objective: To develop skills for understanding, managing, and controlling emotional states.

This exercise can serve as an activating game for such activities. It allows participants to recognize their emotional states and express them in a figurative manner based on the principle of "here and now."

Instructions: Listen to yourself. What color does your current mood resemble?

2. “Let’s Count Emotions” Exercise

Objective: To enhance participants' vocabulary regarding emotions.

Instructions: Let’s find out who knows more words that represent different feelings. Participants take turns saying words and writing them on a flip chart.

Information for the Trainer: Depending on the group’s preparedness level, this exercise can be organized as a competition or in the format of a "brainstorming" session. The flip chart can be used as a helpful tool throughout the exercise. Additionally, during the activities, this "dictionary" can be enriched with new words. Special attention should be paid to ensure that basic emotions (anger, sadness, joy, fear, frustration) are not omitted. If any participant doubts the emotional relevance of a word written down, others can be asked to explain it.

At the end of the exercise, the following questions can be posed to participants: “How did you feel the last time you took a control test?” “How do you feel when you make a mistake?”

In discussions, participants can be invited to answer questions such as: “What do you think is the most unpleasant feeling?” “Which one is the most pleasant?” “Which of the feelings listed below seems familiar to you?”

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