



# Emotional Difficulties

**E**motional difficulties can impact the way a child is able to recognise, understand, control and express basic emotions. Emotional difficulties in children can impact their learning through difficulties with attention, memory, problem solving skills and regulation of their feelings. Emotional difficulties may be temporary or permanent, and may occur with varying frequency throughout their schooling journey.

Some common emotional difficulties include:

- **Depression** - Persistent sad or irritable mood (possibly anger); loss of interest or pleasure; frequent vague/ nonspecific complaints of illness; poor sleeping habits; thoughts of self-harm.
- **Anxiety** - Persistent, excessive, and unrealistic worry; unable to control (turn off) that worry; frequently seeking reassurance; extreme self-criticism and feelings of restlessness that may impact sleep.

Strong and loving relationships can have a direct and positive influence on mental health. Encourage your child to stay active, eat well, sleep and balance digital technology use with other activities. Encourage your child to talk about their feelings, work together on solving problems and help them to build their self-esteem and confidence.

## Some causes of emotional impairments:

- Stress in the home (death in the family, parental issues, family disputes, illness)
- Violence / abuse
- Trauma
- Bullying (at school and home)
- Major life changes / disruptions.

## Common symptoms:

- Changes in behaviour and mood, e.g., aggressive, quiet, withdrawn, argumentative, avoiding people, disobedient
- Difficulty concentrating or remembering things
- Sleep problems
- Difficulty in maintaining or initiating friendships
- Confusion, worry, hesitation, anxiety, anger, irritability, guilty, shame
- Headaches, stomach aches or loss of appetite.

Emotional difficulties can also exist with other impairments. Often, due to the similarities of symptoms and signs, emotional impairments can be incorrectly classified as challenging behaviours or naughtiness / laziness.

**"All schools shall promote fair and equitable access to education for all learners with disabilities regardless of their gender, age, social status, economic background, geographical location, race, ethnicity, religious background, sexual orientation and gender identity, or intersections between these factors."**

(MoE, Special and Inclusive Education Policy)

**"Every person has the right to early childhood education, primary and secondary education and further education."**

(Fiji Constitution)

**Who can help?** School counsellor (where available), counselling centres, your nearest health centre, divisional hospital, community health worker. For information on supportive strategies, refer to <https://www.education.gov.fj/special-inclusive-education/>. For more information you can contact Lifeline Fiji - <https://lifelinefiji.com/> and Psychiatric Survivors - <https://www.facebook.com/psafiji>

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Please note that this document is for informational/education purposes only and does not replace medical advice.



Ministry of Education

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