

COUNSELING MODULE FOR CHILDREN WITH EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE (ED) IN INDIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

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Abstract

Children with emotional difficulties can be considered as children with special needs because they lack appropriate emotional make up. Unfortunately, this group of special children face negligence from two most important pillars of their life, i.e. teachers and parents. Unfulfilled emotional needs in a child affects different spheres of formative years such as academic, behavior, adjustment to their self and social environment. As academicians and psychologists, substantial measures are required to meet the needs of children with unfulfilled emotional needs. Hence, this paper presents a conceptual model of handling children with emotional needs. It includes set of components essential in counseling and guidance for children (with emotional disturbance), their teachers and parents. The components aim to equip children with healthy coping behaviour and handle emotional difficulties; and sensitize the parents and teachers to become more effective in their communication skills to handle such children.

Keywords: Emotional Disturbances, Children, Coping behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

Bower (1960), Graubard (1973) and Kauffman (1977) suggests that emotionally disturbed children can be distinguished by excess and deficit behavioral patterns. According to Zabel (1981) children with emotional disturbance may engage more in behaviors which are inappropriate and disagreeable. Emotional disturbances are quite prevalent but go unrecognized and untreated creating problems for them as they grow into adulthood. They may go unnoticed until they begin to result in changes in overt behavior (Castello, Mustillo, Erkanli, Keeler & Angold, 2003). On the same lines, Ross (1974) advocates about the existence of psychological disorder when the behaviour of children are judged by their authoritative parents as extremely high or low in intensity or frequency. So a wide number of school age children with emotional disturbances exhibit significant deficit behavioral patterns in social and cultural context (except children with disorders such as autism, psychosis). According to the authors, an emotionally disturbed child is one who has emotional problems that are serious enough to adversely affect his relationship to some or all aspect of his environment.

The emotionally disturbed child is one who chronically displays following behaviour due to organic and or environmental influences- difficulty in establishing and maintaining social relationships, inappropriate responses for day to day life situation, inadequate capacity to learn as per the child's physical, motor, sensory, and intellectual development and behaviors may range like hyperactivity, impulsive responses to depression and withdrawal. (Haring,1963).

Since mid-nineteenth century, Western psychologists have been proactive in defining and formulating the concept of emotional disturbance as a separate condition of concern in children and adults. Various studies in this field show the determination of Western scholars to understand and modify the education system to make it conducive for children with emotional disturbances. Attempts had been made to define the characteristics of emotionally disturbed children (Bodman, 1974; Wallinga, 1963), identify educational disability in emotionally disturbed children (Stone, Beth & Rowley, Vinton, 1964) and develop different teaching methods which are suitable for children with emotional disturbance. (Cohen, 1967; Kounin, Jacob, Friesen, Wallace & Norton, Evangeline, 1966). Saunders (1971) claimed that treatment to disturbed children within the public school classroom leads to group contagion but the study did not find any significant difference in behavioral contagion based on degree of social acceptance. Scultz, Hirshoren, Manton and Henderson (1972) conducted an extensive study across the District of Columbia among the state directors of special education.

Beside the above mentioned studies, few scholars emphasized on therapeutic provisions for such children as part of education system. Packer (1989) highlighted the need for inclusion of music within therapeutic education, so that the ED students can reap the benefit. Shuman (1973) suggested dance therapy for the same group.

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In the field of mainstream psychology, Patterson (1958) made unique suggestion to counselor for counseling the emotionally disturbed children to benefit their adjustment.

Hence in a nutshell such children are constant concern to parents, teachers and in their peer group due to their behaviour. Emotionally handicapped youngsters may display a variety of response deficits such as not developing and maintaining friendships, not completing homework assignments, or not participating in classroom discussions (Simpson, 1984).

STATUS OF ED CHILDREN IN INDIA

India is the second most populous country in the world, with a population of 1.236 billion.(UN international children emergency fund) In this vast population, every fifth person is an adolescent between 10 and 19 years and every third person is aged between 10 and 24 years (census of India 2011). India has the highest number of children and adolescent in the world whose number falls more than 434 million . As this age group by 2030 is going to contribute to the nation's growth and development therefore, there is a need to priorities the policy based decisions for the mental and physical health of adolescents and children. But there is less importance given to the child and adolescent mental health in India. Though the focus on the moralities, immunization and nutrition of infant and children under the age of five years has lead to the overall improvement of the physical health . (Burden of Diseases in India, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare)

Ten percent of 5-15 year old have a diagnosable mental health disorder, which indicates that on an average 50 million children who are under the age of eighteen years can get benefit with mental health services. There are up to 20 million adolescents with a severe mental health disorder. Around 90% of children with a mental health disorder are not currently receiving any specialist service (Shastri2009). Children who are below the age of eighteen years and have mental health difficulties need timely, high quality and multidisciplinary mental health services to ensure effective assessment, treatment and support, for them and their families (Shastri2009).

The Individuals with disabilities education act, 1997 has laid five criteria for defining emotional disturbances. The duration and marked degree of each criteria decides the emotional adversity of a child. These five criteria laid by IDEA, 1997 are- inability to learn (in absence of intellectual, sensory and health factors) and, constructing and preserving interpersonal relationships, under normal circumstances don inappropriate conduct and feelings, negative mood or unhappiness and depression and finally develop fear and physical symptoms in face of problems in school and personal life (IDEA, 1997).

There is lot of discrepancy in the definitions of emotionally disturbed children given by different scholars regarding the nomenclature, extent of social failure, degree of effect on educational performance and also on the inclusion of mental illness like schizophrenia to be included in this or not. In spite of the disagreements there are some common features of emotional disturbed children and behavior that goes to an extreme that is not just slightly different from the usual; a problem that is a constant one that doesn't rapidly disappear and conduct that is unsuitable as a result of social or cultural expectations.

According to RPWD act 2016 children with emotional difficulties are not included directly but mental illness is one category. The children with emotional problems need support. The special education procedures provide support only to children who are eligible under the categories of RPWD and who are suspected to have disability. It is recognized that both boys and girls can suffer from Emotional Behavior Difficulties (EBD) (Abaoud & Almalki 2015). **Reasons for emotional disturbance:** The reasons for such problems in a particular child are usually difficult to identify precisely, but it is likely to be the result of multiple and overlapping factors (Walker & Sprague, 2000):

1. Biological factors: certain biological factors are responsible for some emotional and behavioral problems they seem have genetic links like depression and schizophrenia, as well as to nutritional deficits, certain physical illnesses and injuries, and some neurological conditions.(Quinn et. al.2000)
2. Family factors. The environment in which children live can either help or disrupt healthy development. Influences in like Physical abuse, child neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional maltreatment in the child's family may increase his or her risk for developing emotional or behavioral problems.(Quinn et. al.2000)
3. School factors: Teachers and schools can have a tremendous influence on students (Tolan, Gorman-Smith, & Henry, 2001).Teachers' expectations affect the questions they ask students, the feedback they give and their way of interacting with students. Problems can get better because of teachers' actions—and they can get worse for the same reason. In other words, what educators do makes a difference. For example, a teacher who is unskilled in managing the classroom or insensitive to students' individual differences may create an environment wherein aggression, frustration, and withdrawal are common responses to the environment or the teacher.

CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN WITH EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE

Students facing emotional and behavioral problems exhibit a vast range of characteristics. The manner in which a disability or problem presents itself varies, as does the intensity of disorders. While some students experience intense feelings of anger or frustration others may have mood disorders, such as depression. Different

individuals have a different ways of reacting to feelings of depression, anger or frustration in very different ways. For example, some students Internalize these feelings, acting shy and withdrawn; others may externalize their feelings, becoming violent or aggressive toward others. Few characteristics and behaviors reflected in the children with emotional difficulties might be:

1. Hyperactivity (short attention span, impulsiveness);
2. Aggression or self-injurious behavior (acting out, fighting);
3. Withdrawal (not interacting socially with others, excessive fear or anxiety);
4. Immaturity (inappropriate crying, temper tantrums, poor coping skills); and
5. Learning difficulties (academically performing below grade level).

ROLE OF A TEACHER IN CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT

The student teacher relationship is celebrated in Indian Knowledge Tradition. This relationship is honored as a tradition because it plays a cardinal role in developing learning skills, social and moral conduct of a student. A student is helped sustain a quality life by the foundation laid by its teachings.

So, a student needs a teacher to help him to divulge in knowledge and a teacher needs a student to go ahead with his knowledge tradition. The key elements of this relationship are based on authenticity of the guru, and the respect, commitment, devotion and obedience of the student. According to Rob Preece (2006) the teacher/disciple relationship can be an invaluable and fruitful experience. In other words, a teacher endows certain attributes to students that are actually projected from within. With change of era, the gurukul and relationship of *guru-shishyaparampara* is modified into modern schools with teacher-student relationship.

Knowledge is transmitted to students from the teacher, and teacher's role is still a sacred 'role-model' that cannot be compromised at any cost and teacher, is the one person after parents who imbibe the values of honesty, respect, compassion, tolerance and truthful in students through exhibiting their regular conduct. According to Chopra (2013), the relationship between teachers and students is more friendly than spiritual, teaching in today's classrooms is certainly more challenging. It means identifying the needs and requirements of individual learners, adapting teaching-learning strategies to specific situations and making a constant effort to perfect the art of the ever-evolving character of teaching. Classrooms are the learning grounds for both teachers and students. In other words, in modern times, in modern schools, teachers are expected to prepare students for various challenges of life such as framing problems, finding information and integrating it for creating new solutions, develop self-learning and work as a team. A teacher is required to identify physiological and psychological needs of the child and design the classroom curriculum accordingly. In this process, when a teacher thinks back on students, the transcending boundaries of culture, religion, gender is dissolved and they recognise knowledge seeking, fertile young minds eager to attain the light of wisdom and develop insight and self-awareness. Few of these needs are met by changing the environment, such as integrating different teaching styles or motivating students through various competitions, but some children need more attention and time to acquire knowledge or new skills. The reason cannot be judged in singularity like inability to understand or learn; rather it is a co-morbid of unmet emotional needs of children. Such children are often labelled as either 'bully', 'hyper-active', 'anti-social' etc., but actually they suffer from some emotional difficulties due to some traumatic experiences of life or have unmet emotional needs. Although, these children require individualised attention, customised classroom curriculum to help them addressing their difficulties and a conducive environment from teacher and parents, but sadly this group of children are found to be most neglected and easy target as scapegoats. Change of situation for emotionally deprived children is a conjoined work of teacher and parent. Both share equal amount of responsibility in meeting the emotional needs of children.

ROLE OF PARENT IN CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT

Child upbringing is the most challenging task in a parents' life and parents all over the world are not very different from each other when it comes to rearing a child. In Indian tradition, parenting is emplacing cultural norms and moral values in the mind and behavior of children. A parent evolves during their child's learning and children learn by observing their parents. Parental attitudes, behavior, temperament are the modeling entity for children. Parents are the first teachers, guide, and support to their children. Parenting is like an art, where every parent can inspire other but cannot replicate. Parents are required to pay attention to various needs of the child and provide them physical, emotional, social and intellectual support from infancy to adulthood. Physical needs vary according to age and are met by providing materialistic entities; so are social and intellectual needs that can be fulfilled by the social support, socialization and intellectual exposure to appropriate stimuli. Unlike these needs, emotional needs are very latent, subtle and vulnerable in childhood; and yoking these needs in childhood provides a foundation for success in school, work, relationships, marriage, and life in general. Managing emotional needs of children provides powerful and practical concepts and tool of parenting. In managing emotions, parents need to reflect on their control over their emotions and henceforth they can model such management of emotions in their child. Ideally, emotional needs must be given priority among other needs but in reality, they are either neglected or left unattended. Reason for such negligence can be lack of quality family

time, demanding jobs of parents, lack of effective communication between parent and child etc. children display socially and morally unacceptable behavior due to this negligence. Such behavior shall be interpreted as a call for help and not something to be neglected for further damage. Failure to support children's emotional needs at home and in schools is jeopardizing their future and of the society.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this paper is to design a module for the child with emotional difficulties to develop a sound emotional health for his/her sustainability.

IMPORTANCE OF THE MODULE

This module will help to strengthen the capacity of teachers and parents to serve the children with support in an enabling environment. Stormont, Reinke, and Herman (2011) mentioned that teachers' need to understand and willingly to support students with Emotional and behavioral disturbance. They should be aware of the problems as well as have knowledge of resources provided in the school. Due to absence of such provision in the present Indian Constitutional Framework (PWD Act) following problems are left unresolved:

- Children with emotional difficulties are not able to engage in useful and positive learning activities.
- Children do not get appropriate support from family and school.

These problems can be resolved by the ways mentioned below:

For the first problem, this module will empower the children to engage in useful learning activities and would lead to better learning outcomes.

For the second problem, this module will help to strengthen the capacity of teachers and parents to serve the students with support in the enabling environment and to develop healthy and appropriate exchanges and collaborations among the students, teachers and parents to foster equitable outcomes.

Further it will foster the enhancement of skill, knowledge, understanding, and sensitivity among all who work with children with emotional problems or are at risk of developing serious emotional disturbance.

MODULE FOR CHILDREN WITH EMOTIONAL DIFFICULTIES

This is a module to strengthen children, helping teachers and parents identify children with emotional difficulties. The elements of module are designed keeping in mind about the needs of a child i.e., respect, self-esteem, and good treatment from teachers and parents.

The module consists of three facets where, child is placed at center surrounded with two important pillars, teacher and parent on the sides. The triangular arrangement depicts the interrelationship and inter-dependency of one facet on other. The interrelationship explains the functioning of module, where child's emotional needs can be satisfied by collaborative work of parent and teacher. Inter-dependency can be explained as the structure of module where all the three facets are in all-or-none situation. The effect of one facet affects and depends on another.

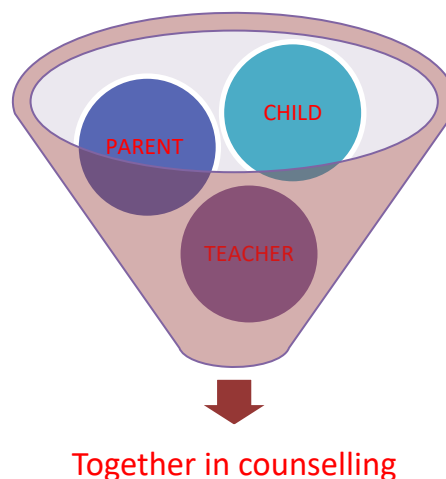


Figure 1 Counseling module for ED children involving the child, parent and teachers

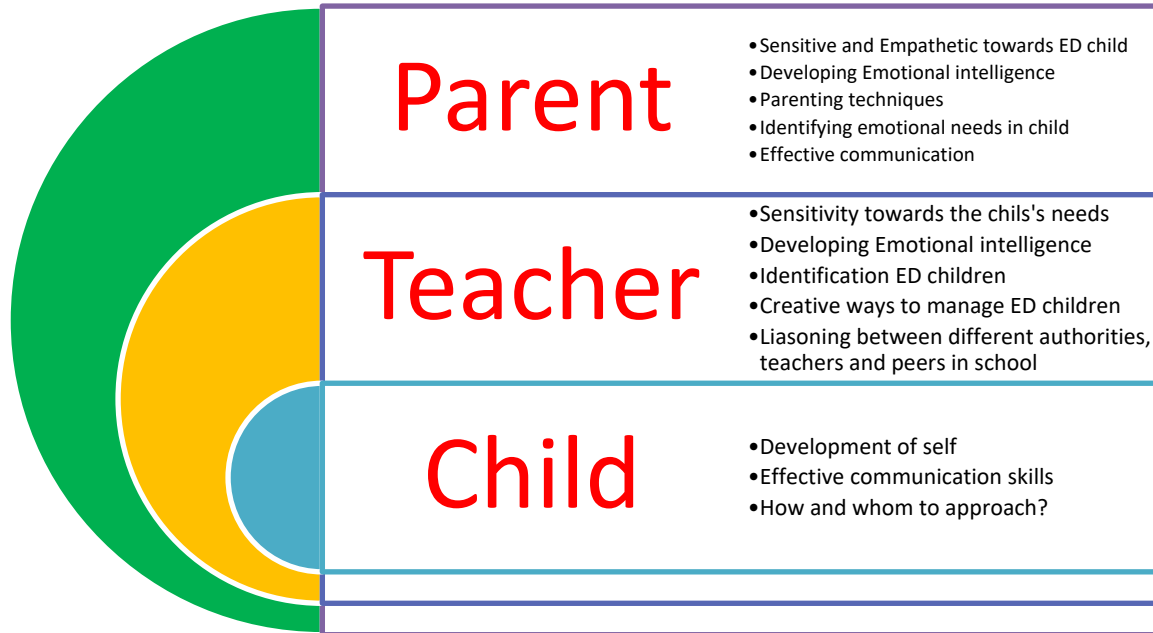


Figure 2 Components of ED child, parent and teacher to be noted by counselor

Figure 2 depicts the sub-sets for each facet. A training program based on each sub-set is designed with following purposes: Firstly, to develop sustainable emotional environment for an emotionally disturbed child and secondly, to empower parent, teacher and child for they can deal effectively with everyday life demands and challenges.

Child facet: the child facet includes three important skills that are required for balancing an emotionally disturbed child. These skills will be imparted in him/her along with the academic curriculum, with an aim to help him lead a healthy, meaningful and industrious life. The sub-sets include 'development of self', 'communication skills' and 'how and whom to approach?'

Development of self	This includes insight development, acknowledgment of self, character strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes. Self-esteem and confidence.
Communication skills	This includes skills to express one's feeling, desires, opinion, fear, thoughts and experiences verbally and non-verbally in an appropriate manner. The implication of this sub-set lies in helping the child to learn to communicate his emotions and feelings, instead of acting due to bad experiences.
How and whom to approach	This includes providing knowledge about place and person for providing assistance and advice in time of need. Here emphasis is on identifying unacceptable expressions of emotions and expression and help in reducing them.

Teacher facet: the teacher facet includes eight important skills that are required for managing an emotionally disturbed child. These skills will be imparted in him/her with an aim to identify and help emotionally disturbed children.

Sensitivity towards the emotional needs of the child	Teachers will be trained to develop sensitivity towards students with emotional difficulties and help them feel secure, confident and acts as a role-model for effective social behaviour.
Developing teacher's Emotional Intelligence	Recognizing the emotional domains of self is the foundational need for developing warm, positive relationships with students with emotional difficulties. The quality of student-teacher relationship will be improved by this.
Skills to identify children with emotional needs	Attending to stress related signs caused due to personal trauma, keeping a note on change in environment of child, noticing significant change in attitude of child towards peers and things, keeping a note of severe behavioural changes like mutism, regular crying bouts, frequent sleeping in class etc., avoid and discourage name calling or labelling a child by his peer or teachers or parents.
Creative ways of managing children with emotional needs	Showing respect and valuing student's emotional needs, modelling acceptable social and verbal behaviour, encouraging empathetic thinking

	by projecting questions like, "why do you think she/he is crying?", promoting child's confidence by engaging him/her in constructive problem solving activities. Develop positive behavioural support with more intensive, individualized level of support, look for reinforcing or maintaining factor for child's inappropriate behaviour.
Liason between the school, the child, the family members and other professionals.	Proving opportunities to develop social skills through school activities and provide reinforcement from authorities like 'asking principal to mark with appreciation, if the child displays appropriate behaviour',
Other teachers	Appreciating minor positive behaviours and avoid punishing if the inappropriate behaviour is not significant, avoid name calling or labelling, avoid making emotionally disturbed children exemplars for class, involving them in social activities and providing them clear instructions.
Counsellor	To bring awareness among the teachers about the behavioural changes in children due to emotional disturbances. Train the children with healthy coping mechanism to handle their mental health, set-up therapeutic sessions (behavioural therapy), and schedule child and parental counselling.
Peer group of the child	Demotivate peer group to make emotionally disturbed child a scapegoat, teaching the peer group to be patient and non-reactive towards such child's behaviour, appreciate peer learning, developing acceptance amongst peers through team building activities, encourage reporting inappropriate behaviour of such children instead of responding to them, discourage conflict situations.

Parent facet: the parent facet includes five important skills that are required for identifying an emotionally disturbed child. These skills will be imparted in either or both the parents with an aim to change present parenting style, empower the emotionally disturbed child and impetus a healthy mind and body development.

Sensitivity and creating an empathetic environment	Give them a comfort space in the house, respect their privacy, acknowledging their achievements and feelings irrespective of being logical or illogical, and avoid shaming or embarrassing them.
Developing Parent's Emotional Intelligence	Manage emotions of oneself, show them how to handle distressing emotions without getting irritable, develop emotional awareness and self-regulation and teach the same to the child, like if the child is poking other child or is making lot of noise, then pull sometime take deep breathes and ask your child to do the same. It will help him to become aware and develop control of his emotions.
Parenting tips/ role of parents	Adapt different parenting styles according to situation, do not drag the child in parental arguments, avoid being dominant and unresponsive to child's emotional needs, teach your child to express strong reactions in socially appropriate manner, attend to child's emotional needs patiently, listening to their daily experiences, avoid giving guidance or lecture on good behaviour every time.
Skills to identify children with emotional needs	Externalizing or acting-out behaviour including non-compliance, ignoring teacher's or adult's instructions, not following directions, involve disruptive and aggressive actions like spitting, hitting, yelling out, destroying properties etc. internalizing behaviours like severe depression, mood or anxiety disorder, act immature, rarely play with same age children, frequently daydream, complain of sickness or hurt or self-inflict injury. Almost always have an academic failure. Have trouble understanding content of interactions and expectations for peer relationship. Identify change in appetite, sleep and other basic behaviours.
Communication	Talk about their feelings and responses, encourage discussion and not conflict, avoid name-calling, avoid degrading their self-esteem in front of guests, avoid comparing with other children.

Ecological perspectives assert that for supporting positive child outcomes, interaction between home and school is critical (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Nzinga-Johnson, Baker, & Aupperlee, 2009). Emotional and behavioral problems affect children in all life situations-home, community, school, society, etc. In addition, family members experience significant stress when their children have these problems, and they need to work with the schools to address the child's needs. Therefore, communication between the child's family and teachers should be one of the most important components of any school program. These significant members should be included in all significant deliberations about the child's development.

The present module is prepared on the above premise. This module will empower the child and two important pillars of child's development i.e., the parents and teachers. The training has to be imparted to the trio for its effectiveness. Early interventions should be directed at students who are at risk of developing emotional disturbance or behavioral problem.

The student's training should be imparted in a special class once the identification process is done. The training is imparted with an assumption that, there are remedial classes for children who do not perform well academically, similarly the students who are emotionally weak or need emotional strength should be trained for the same through a special program. The training can be imparted with the help of the 'Helping Professional' like Psychologist, Counselor or Guidance Professional.

GREAT TEACHERS HELP CREATE GREAT STUDENTS

An inspiring and informed teacher is the most important school-related factor influencing student achievement (Martin & Polly, 2017; Tucker & Stronge, 2005). This training will help the teachers to develop sensitivity towards children with emotional difficulty and identify them in their classes; because it may lead to behavioral problems in the class room.

Doing so can facilitate the cultivation of positive attitudes towards emotionally challenged learners. It can also allow teachers to feel greater readiness to enter the classroom because they are already aware of the needs of students in an authentic educational context. Teachers can manage their classrooms smoothly with well-ordered flowing environment Enhancing such classroom management is the utilization of lessons that present students with an appropriate level of challenge, where clarity is provided when needed so that student self-efficacy, motivation, and achievement remain high (Jere,1986).

CHANGE CHILD BEHAVIOR BY CHANGING PARENTING

Parents training can be helpful to alter their child's behavior by implementing behavioral modification strategies that will be taught in sessions. Parents will be trained in how to engage in positive interactions with their children, and effective strategies for disciplining their children. This component covers the using of communication skills that enhance the parent-child relationship. Parents with positive interaction skills can help their child to develop self-esteem. It is required that parents should practice the change in their present parenting skills. This practice will allow the Helping Professional to provide immediate reinforcement and corrective feedback to ensure parents' mastery of the skills.

CONCLUSION

The role of education is significant to help students sustain in adulthood and maintain a particular quality of life beyond. The role of mental health cannot be denied for sustainable development of the child in the crucial years of development from childhood to adolescence, which the child spends in the school and home.

Research indicated that children who exhibit externalizing behavior as emotional maladjustment like aggression, hyperactivity or impulsivity may lead to antisocial, and/or delinquent behavior in their later years of life. Students with emotional difficulties and behavioral disorders show performance that is below their grade level. (Cullinan,2002). Many of them also exhibit significant deficiencies in reading and in math achievement. Many of these students exhibit significant deficiencies in reading and in math achievement.

The above module will help the children with emotional difficulties overcome their present condition and envisage in them the educative component in developing knowledge, skills, attitude and aptitude. This will help and empower them to take a rightful place in the society and make a valuable contribution as responsible citizens of the country.

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