LEARNING HELPLESSNESS SYMPTOMS: WHAT TO WATCH FOR?

by:

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Learned helplessness can be described as the belief that our own behavior does not influence what happens next; behavior does not control outcomes or results. This condition is rampant in many schools. However, because the condition is not identified by most, they think that a consistently failing student is just plain slow or that he or she just do not put in the required effort to learn.

There must be underlying problems to the constant failure. It could be learned helplessness. Here are some of the characteristics that you can observe in learned helpless children:

1. Low desire to learn, and reduced aspirations to succeed in school.

2. Low outcome expectations. They always believe that no matter what they do in school, the product will always be negative (e.g. bad grades). Additionally, they believe that they are powerless to prevent or overcome a negative outcome.

3. Insufficient relevance over their own behavior and the environmental events; one’s own actions cannot lead to success.

4. Lack of confidence in their skills and abilities (low self-efficacy expectations). These children think that their academic difficulties are due to their own lack of ability and low intelligence; despite they have sufficient ability and normal intelligence. They feel certain that they are not capable to perform the required actions to gain a positive outcome.
5. They underrate their performance when they do well in school, attributing success to luck or chance, e.g., “I was lucky that this test was easy.”

6. They hypothesize from one flop situation or experience to other situations where control is possible. Because they always expect frustrations, regardless of their real skills and abilities, they outperform all the time.

7. They focus on what they cannot do, rather than focusing on their strengths and skills.

8. They feel incompetent of implementing the required courses of action, they develop passivity and their school performance depreciates.

References:

What Learned Helplessness Looks Like in Children

By Lauren DiMaria