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**PERVASIVE HYPERSENSITIVITY DISORDER**

***A New Approach to Understanding Anxiety and Mood Disorders in Children***

**BEHAVIORAL MANIFESTATIONS**

- Acts immaturely.
- Oppositional and argumentative, often characterized by automatic disagreeing.
- Loses temper easily, sometimes resulting in temper tantrums or “meltdowns.”
- Excessive verbal activity, often characterize by off-the-topic rambling.
- Excessive motor activity (hyperactivity), always on the go, can’t sit still.
- Restless and fidgety, difficulty establishing a state of comfort when seated.
- Chews on inedible objects such as pens, pencils, erasers.
- Stretches shirt or sweatshirt over knees or pulls jacket over head.
- Bites fingernails, picks at or chews on skin.
- Eye-blinking, throat-clearing, facial tics or grimaces.
- Ritualistic, compulsive behaviors.
- Becomes easily upset when an activity is interrupted prior to completion.

**THOUGHT PROCESSES**

- Frequent worrying
- Often worries about how they are perceived by others.
- Overly concerned with how well they perform.
- Perfectionistic tendencies, cannot admit to making mistakes.
- Reluctance to take risks, especially when asked to do something new or in a manner that is different from the usual way of doing it.
- Rigid, inflexible thinking style.
- Obsessive thinking, cannot “let go” of certain thoughts or ideas
- Introspective, deep thinker, who may “overinterpret” situations.
- Often feels misunderstood or that nobody understands them.
- Often feels confused or overwhelmed.
- Difficulty finding the exact word or words to express one’s thoughts.
- Seems to have a reason (or excuse) for everything.
- Doesn’t take responsibility for his or her actions, tends to blame others instead.
- Impulsive, doesn’t think about the consequences of one’s actions prior to acting.
- Better verbal than nonverbal skills.

## **EMOTIONAL MANIFESTATIONS**

- Can be either emotionally volatile or emotionally constricted.
- Difficulty expressing feelings appropriately.
- Feels uncomfortable in emotionally charged situations.
- Feelings of insecurity and vulnerability.
- Easily embarrassed.
- Feelings easily hurt, but may also be very sensitive to the feelings of others.
- Very easily irritated.
- Moodiness, often with feelings of sadness or depression.
- Family history of anxiety and/or depression.

## **PERCEPTIONS / INFORMATION PROCESSING**

- Tends to perceive things as much stronger than they really are.
- Tends to take things personally and attribute malevolent intentions to others.
- Overreacts to situations, often demonstrated through overly dramatic presentation.
- Tendency to distort perceptions.
- Hypervigilant, doesn't miss a thing.
- Difficulty "filtering out" irrelevant or unimportant information.
- Overly focused on irrelevant details, often missing the big picture (cannot see the forest from the trees).
- Does not deal well with ambiguity, needs specific, detailed instructions.
- Just doesn't seem to get it (clueless).
- Constantly asks "why?"
- Often complains about people being unfair.
- Often complains about people being "mean."
- Strong dislike of "yelling," which can be any feedback perceived to be negative.
- Does not handle criticism well, often becoming immediately defensive.
- Will either shut down or become enraged when confronted with criticism.
- Avoidance and denial serve as primary coping mechanisms.
- Poor self-image.
- View themselves as different from others.
- Marches to the beat of a different drummer.

## **INTERPERSONAL / SOCIAL MANIFESTATIONS**

- Difficulty understanding social rules and social consequences of one's behavior.
- Difficulty "reading" social cues.
- Difficulty making and keeping friends.
- Often gets along better with adults or younger children than with same-age peers.
- Often viewed by their peers as weird or unusual.
- Often feels that other do not like them or are out to get them.
- Tries too hard to get other to like him or her.

- Frequent negative attention-getting behaviors.
- May feel uncomfortable being the center of attention, particularly when asked to speak or give a presentation in front of the class (performance anxiety).
- Doesn't mind his or her own business.
- Often interrupts others.

### **SCHOOL / ENVIRONMENTAL MANIFESTATIONS**

- Becomes anxious in new situations or when there are changes in routine.
- Is often a "barometer" of the level of emotionality in the immediate environment.
- Performance in school is often determined by the child's feelings toward the teacher and the child's perception of the teacher's feelings toward him or her.
- Takes a long time to complete homework or class work.
- Learning disabilities not usually present, although they may have difficulties in the initial stages of learning to read.

### **ATTENTION / MEMORY**

- Easily distracted or drawn off task.
- More often distracted by their own thoughts than by what they hear or see.
- Daydreams frequently.
- Absent-minded and forgetful.
- May possess good rote memory skills and excellent memory for detail.
- Will selectively attend to certain details of what others say and embellish those details to provide a distorted interpretation or recollection (which is usually to their benefit) of what was actually said.

### **PHYSICAL / SENSORY MANIFESTATIONS**

- Hypersensitivity to sound, touch, taste, smell, and/or temperature.
- Prefers to sleep on a cold pillow.
- Bothered by the way that certain types of clothing feel, such as turtlenecks, tight-fitting clothing, or scratchy sweaters.
- Bothered by tags in the back of shirts and/or socks that are not lined up just right.
- Allergies are common and often indicated by dark circles under the eyes, puffy eyes, one red, hot ear, stuffy nose, runny nose, watery eyes, itchy throat, sneezing.
- Physical symptoms, such as headaches, stomachaches, and muscle aches.
- Difficulty falling asleep at night.
- Perspires easily.
- Marked feelings of tension or inability to relax.







