

To Whom I Wish It Would Concern,

You may think that I am misbehaving for fun, you may think that I am lazy and don't want to learn, you may think that I need attention and will do anything to get it; when in fact, I have an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers, and often exhibit inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances. At home and at school people say that I have a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression. I have an Emotional or Behavioral Disability.

I act out by bullying and initiating physical fights. I may steal and destroy property. I also skip school a lot and shoplift from the corner store. I tend to misunderstand situations, like last week when that girl stepped on my foot in line; she said it was an accident, I thought she was starting something. Teachers tell me that I am difficult to teach because I am always off-task and am non-compliant when redirected. My behavior is affecting my learning and I have fallen behind in all of my classes.

Some of my peers also experience this emotional disturbance, but they may be unidentified because they internalize their behaviors. They may have eating disorders like anorexia and bulimia and are more likely to be described as depressed and withdrawn. They have unfounded fears and excessive worries. They often exhibit self-destructive behavior, including entertaining suicidal thoughts. Because they internalize their disability, these students are even less apt to receive the services that they need to be successful.

I, however, externalize my disability and because of this my behaviors and demeanor have attributed to a bad reputation which has affected my social life and my ability to get a job. If I do not receive targeted interventions, I am likely to drop out of high-school and I may even end up in jail.

You can support me by creating a united school/home front; set limits and stick to them, outline expected and unexpected behaviors, implement a positive behavior system that recognizes those moments when I am doing the right thing, and be direct and genuine when you address my bad behavior. You can support me by teaching me how to act socially; teach me what the proper action is, demonstrate how to act, give me time to practice my new skills, and allow me to apply them in a real situation. I will thrive in a well-managed classroom. One that provides engaging learning opportunities together with clear expectations that allow for a safe learning environment in which I can grow and excel. Teach me self-monitoring; use technology or assistive devices that help me recognize my on-task and off-task behaviors. Teach me self-management; give me a hand-signal to tell you I need help, or give me ear-muffs to keep myself from getting overstimulated. Teach me self-instruction; tell me the steps I need and listen as I learn to tell the steps to myself.

Most importantly, don't give up on me. Trust that with the right direction, I can be successful.

Your Student with Emotional or Behavioral Disorders