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Health Education & Counseling  
978-785-9977

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## **School-Based Interventions : Accommodation** **Detailed Definition of Accommodation**

*A support provided to help a student fully access the regular education curriculum (the ordinary subject matter or content being taught in regular math, science, language arts, etc.).*

An accommodation does *not* change the content of what is being taught (for example, the student still reads *Moby Dick*, but perhaps also listens to the audio version, or has the chapters divided into smaller units with review questions to ensure comprehension). The student completes the same curriculum as general education students. Accommodations help the student reach the same "bar" (standards or expectations) as general education students.

Accommodations are generally provided for students who *do not qualify* for "special education" services. Students on a "504" or "District Service" plan usually receive interventions in the form of accommodations.

## **School-Based Interventions : Modification** **Detailed Definition of Modification**

*A change to the general education curriculum or other subject content being taught.* Teaching strategies are modified so that the material is presented differently, and/or the expectations of what the student will master are changed.

Modifications may "lower the bar" or standards required of the student (for example, a student might be allowed to read a shorter, or more simplified version of *Moby Dick*). Students receiving "special education" often receive modifications to adjust the required subject content based on their disability.

Modifications are provided for students whose needs for "special education" are documented in an "Individualized Educational Plan" ("IEP").

## **School-Based Interventions : Specialized Instruction** **Detailed Definition of Specialized Instruction**

*An adaptation of instructional level, content, or performance criteria (for example, grading based on different requirements).*

Specialized instruction is usually delivered by specialized staff (such as a counselor, special education teacher, speech therapist, occupational therapist, or physical therapist).

This is instruction not normally available to students in the general education program, but instead is specifically designed for students with a disability. Specialized instruction is sometimes provided informally to students who do not qualify for "special education" (for example, a counseling group on peer communication that includes students who do not have special needs in this skill area).

## **Interventions for PTSD** **Accommodations**

- **Prepare or signal the student for changes, class surprises, or transitions**

*Example:*

Use a calm, soft voice to forewarn a student of a fire drill, change in lunch period, or circumstances that may remind the student of past trauma, and discuss/rehearse how the student will manage.

- **Avoid unnecessary exposure of the student to evocative/troubling stimuli**

*Example:*

Allow the student to enter the building from the side or back so he/she does not have to pass an area where he/she was frightened or traumatized.

## Modifications

- **Prepare or provide alternative schoolwork to avoid eliciting past traumas**

*Example:*

Alter curriculum content that is distressing to the student (substitute study of another State if the student's parent died in a State addressed by the curriculum).

## Specialized Instruction

- **Identify patterns that result in the student's "shutting down", and establish cues to interrupt or intervene**

*Example:*

Help the student identify circumstances that triggered his/her shutting down: what the student saw, what the class was talking about, or what made the student think about the trauma. Clarify what can help interrupt or prevent the student's shutting down (ask a content question, stand up, do something with his/her hands, hum a song to him/herself).

- **Identify acceptable language for the student to speak more comfortably about traumatic events**

*Example:*

With the student and parents, identify less painful language, such as "assault" instead of "rape," "sad time" instead of "mother's death".

## Behavioral Planning

- **Identify cues to signal the student when he/she appears to be shutting down**

*Example:*

Provide nonverbal (teacher hand signal) and verbal signals ("time to focus on \_\_\_\_") if the student becomes more withdrawn or shut down.

- **Identify safe, comfortable staff with whom the student can discuss traumatic events, flashbacks, or triggering events, and establish a procedure for accessing those staff when needed**

*Example:*

Identify a hierarchy of staff (counselor, aide, coach) and places (guidance office, hall next to office, gym) the student can access if he/she cannot focus on academics and instead needs to address the trauma while at school (the student may "address" it by writing in a journal, bouncing a ball in the gym).

## Interventions for Worry

### Accommodations

- **Model appropriate behavior for the student in anxiety-provoking situations**

*Example:*

Specify how to react to different situations. When a test paper tears, get tape or obtain another copy. When a pencil breaks during a test, raise your hand, sharpen the pencil, or use a different pencil.

- **Diminish stress within school situations**

*Example:*

Allow the student to eat lunch in a small group of familiar peers. If uncomfortable speaking in front of the class, the student may read his or her speech into a recorder.

- **Forewarn the student of transitions, and have "tasks" for the student to focus on during transitions**

*Example:*

If the student is worried about a school trip, provide tasks that distract from anxiety, such as checking attendance, or holding the door at the site.

- **Address student individually, outside of class whenever possible, about fears**

*Example:*

Help the student generate solutions to be implemented when he/she is overwhelmed or "shutting down," or in the presence of fear-provoking situations or stimuli. Preferably discuss outside of class, when the student is not already at a high stress level.

- **Identify alternatives to avoid unnecessary exposure to anxiety-provoking stimuli**

*Example:*

Allow the student to enter school from the side or back so he/she does not have to pass the area where he/she was frightened or traumatized. If the student's parents are divorced, provide writing assignments beyond "family traditions for winter vacation" so the student does not have to think/write about divorce.

- **Have the student examine worry/anxiety episodes in a larger context to identify improvement**

*Example:*

Help the student examine how he/she has handled similar situations over the past year to see improvement (or conversely, to identify what has changed making it harder to use strategies that worked previously).

## Modifications

- **Embed desirable, familiar, or safe content in instruction**

*Example:*

Use questions about pets, sports, or preferred literary/TV characters to make new or anxiety-provoking content more comfortable to the student ("What would someone you admire/your hero do in this situation?").

- **Add literature (bibliotherapy) that addresses the student's fears, or exemplifies coping strategies**

*Example:*

Use a short story or film that deals with bullying, death of a relative, spending a night apart from parents, or getting sick on a school trip.

## Specialized Instruction

- **Have the student employ specific problem-solving steps**

*Example:*

Model a "Situation-Alternative-Consequences" (SAC) approach for the student: **S:** situation identified - **A:** alternatives enumerated - **C:** consequences predicted.

- **Devise a desensitization approach agreeable to the student**

*Example:*

If the student fears speaking in front of the class, allow the student to: have the speech read by a peer; read the speech into a recorder outside class; introduce other students doing speeches; do the speech with a peer reading some part. Finally, have the student read his/her own speech.

- **Provide group, interactive bibliotherapy activities (group dialogue, peer pairs) that address fears or topics worrisome to the student**

*Example:*

Read a book to students and accompany the book with either discussion, role-playing, art activities or creative writing. For example: an adolescent group/pair can compose a diary for a character in a book, write a letter from one character in the book to another, role play an incident in the book with a student taking the part of a key character, or draw pictures in sequence of important incidents in the book.

- **Use visuals to help "pace" the student when he/she is anxious about a parent being away, stressed about completing work, or perservating on a particular upcoming event or activity**

*Example:*

Develop a "time schedule" with specific symbols that the student places on a visual board for specific time intervals. This allows the student to see how much time remains before something is over or before something new begins. The student's "want" is visually included on the board as the "end goal."

- **Have the student practice positive self-talk**

*Example:*

Introduce positive "scripts" to practice in anxiety-provoking situations, such as "break the task down" with "I have done this many times, so now I'll just start by doing one problem, then checking to see if it's correct."

- **Help the student evaluate the evidence for his/her negative conclusions**

*Example:*

The student says "I'm worried that people will see what a loser I am if I play on the soccer team". Ask him/her: "did any good things happen last time you played soccer? Is there another sport that you play better?"

- **Challenge the student's negative cognitions**

*Example:*

The student says "I can't go to school because I'm worried people will make fun of me." Ask him/her: "What do students do when they arrive at school? Which students are glad to see you?"

- **Help the student identify automatic negative thoughts**

*Example:*

The student says "I can't let my mother go on the subway. The train might explode." Ask the student: "What happened the last time your mom took the subway? Did she come home safely?"

- **Help the student examine other perspectives**

*Example:*

The student says "I can't go to the school dance because everyone will notice that I'm nervous." Ask the student: "How would your best friend/someone you admire handle a situation like this? What does your friend think you should do?"

- **Provide the student with competing responses to negative thoughts or behaviors**

*Example:*

The student says "I'm afraid I'll start crying in class." Ask the student: "If you start to feel sad, what can you do before you start to cry? Can you read something that makes you laugh? Can you distract yourself by doodling?"

## Behavioral Planning

- **Develop a consistent de-escalation procedure familiar to staff**

*Example:*

When worried, the student will: 1) take 10 breaths; 2) identify how a preferred "hero" would handle the situation; 3) access designated staff; 4) do alternative, less stressful work; 5) do reading for five minutes in an alternative area (corner of room, library), then answer questions.