School-Age Disorders with Behavioral Components

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder and Learning Disability

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) refers to developmentally inappropriate degrees of inattention, impulsiveness, and hyperactivity (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Early identification of affected children is important because the characteristics of ADHD significantly interfere with the normal course of emotional and psychological development. Their behavior evokes negative responses from others, and repeated exposure to negative feedback adversely affects their self-concept. Children with ADHD are at greater risk for conduct disorders, oppositional defiant disorders, depression, anxiety disorders, and developmental disorders (such as speech and language delays and learning disabilities) than are children without ADHD (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2011a).

Clinical Manifestations

The behaviors exhibited by the child with ADHD are not unusual aspects of child behavior. The difference lies in the quality of motor activity and developmentally inappropriate inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity that the child displays. The manifestations may be numerous or few, mild or severe, and vary with the child's developmental level (Minzenberg, 2012). Mild manifestations of the symptoms are apparent in at least two settings, usually educational and family environments. Every child with ADHD is different from all other children with ADHD (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Most behavioral manifestations are apparent at an early age, but the learning disabilities may not become evident until the child enters school. A major clinical manifestation is distractibility. The stimuli may come from external sources or internal sources. Children frequently demonstrate immaturity relative to chronologic age. Selective attention is often seen in which the child has difficulty attending to "non-preferred" tasks, such as completing chores or finishing homework. The child may not consider the consequences

1547