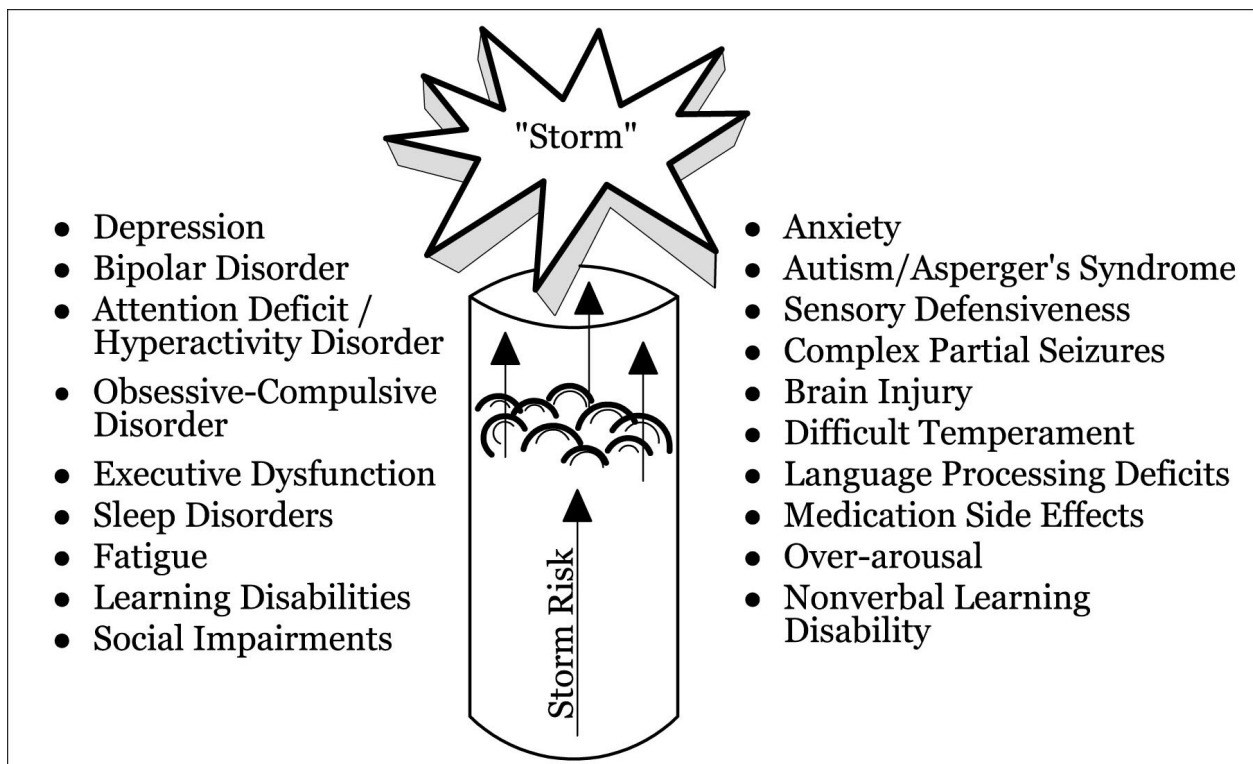


There are MANY pathways to a “Storm,” “Meltdown,” or “Rage Attack.” Here are just some of them:



From Challenging Kids, Challenged Teachers. © Woodbine House, 2010

“STORMS” OR “RAGE ATTACKS”

Definition: discreet episodes that seem out of proportion to the triggering event and that are out of character for the student.

The more co-morbid conditions a student has, the more likely they are to have this problem.

There is no single medication or class of medications for “storms” (or “flight-or-fight rage attacks”). You must find out what’s causing them and then address that.

PRE-STORM WARNINGS

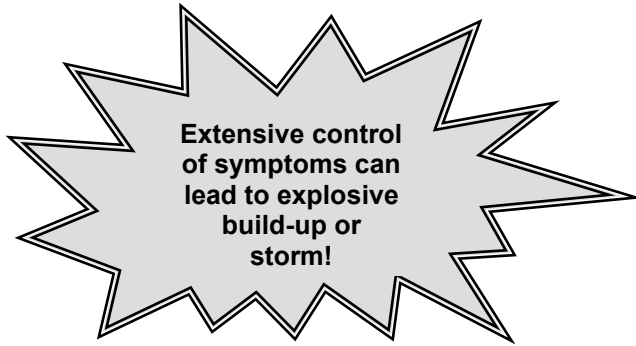
- Overreacts to touch, noise, etc.
- Becomes loud
- Increase in activity
- Shows low frustration tolerance
- Demands must be met immediately
- Seems “stuck” or inflexible
- Appears agitated or highly anxious

STORMS VS. TANTRUMS

A “tantrum” is purposeful behavior intended to get someone to do something. When the purpose is achieved, the tantrum stops. A “storm” is not future-oriented or manipulative and once started, has to just run its course.

RECIPE FOR A STORM

- Engage in a power struggle.
- Back the student into a corner or small space.
- Touch lightly, push, grab, shove, or attempt to restrain the student.
- Attempt to remove the student forcefully from the situation or classroom.
- Keep talking when the student is already over-aroused.
- Give an easily frustrated student work that is too difficult or that cannot be completed within the allowed time.
- Act angry or afraid of a student.
- Embarrass the student in front of peers.

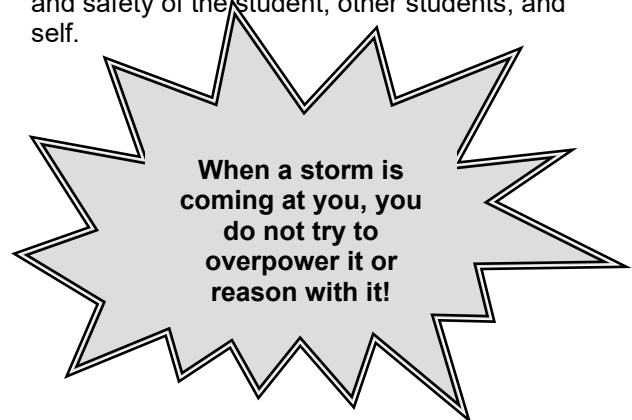


STORM PREVENTION

- Allow the student to make a “graceful exit” while saving face.
- Allow the student to go to someone they trust or to their ‘safe place’ where they can calm themselves or ‘chill.’
- Develop a good relationship with the student.
- Do not “lock horns” with the student – disengage!
- Learn to recognize the warning signs of storm buildup for the student and pre-arrange safe outlets.
- Use physical activity or neurological calming techniques to dissipate a buildup of tension.
- Arrange for a comprehensive assessment of the student, including a functional behavioral assessment and a behavior intervention plan to reduce serious problematic behavior.

IF A STORM IS STARTING:

If it becomes impossible to prevent the ‘storm,’ shift the focus to protecting the health and safety of the student, other students, and self.



Once a storm begins, it generally has to run its course. Only the student will know when it is over. Any stimulation or sensory input (e.g., trying to talk to the student once the storm has already started) will only feed the storm.

Students are unable to verbalize or react in a rational manner during a storm. During the storm, the student may curse, make hurtful statements, and slam or occasionally destroy property.

Do not personalize any verbal attacks; treat the character assassination as “mental debris.”

“STORM” CLEAN-UP

When the storm passes, the student may be sleepy, feel remorse, and have only fragmented and inaccurate memories of episode. They may deny inappropriate behaviors. Defensive behavior is common to students due to embarrassment and fear of being unable to control their own behavior. Some students may have no memories of the storm and feel no remorse because they do not remember what they said or did.

Allow the student to sleep if the student says they need to sleep. If the student does not want to sleep and just wants to be left alone, allow the pursuit of a self-selected calming activity to enable the restoration of focus and well-being. Do not push the student to engage in academic activities or to talk with you or other school personnel about what just happened.

Avoid “consequences” or premature discussions that can rekindle a storm. When the student is calm, it is time to talk about **reparations**.

Resource:

Packer LE, Pruitt SK (2010). *Challenging Kids, Challenged Teachers: Teaching students with Tourette's, Bipolar Disorder, Executive Dysfunction, OCD, ADHD, and more.* Woodbine House.