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Catastrophic Reaction

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Synonyms

[Catastrophic condition](#)

Definition

This term coined by Goldstein (1948) describes acute distress, agitation, and disorganized behavior occurring when overwhelmed by a situation with which the person cannot cope, typically following brain injury or other neurological impairment. Rapid and extreme anxiety, depression, and frustration can result when a person becomes overstimulated or overwhelmed with a task that has become too difficult or is perceived as being too difficult. Typically, persons experiencing catastrophic reactions are not fully aware of their increasing lability and cannot respond to logic and reason, but they benefit from decreased demands and calm reassurance. Catastrophic reactions were initially thought to be associated

only with dominant hemisphere damage and accompanying language impairment, but they can follow any neurological problem that interferes with adaptive coping and executive functioning.

Cross-References

- [Agitation](#)
- [De-Escalation](#)
- [Executive Functioning](#)
- [Frustration Tolerance](#)

References and Readings

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