

Learning Disability in Children and Its Strategies For Dealing

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Abstract

A learning disability is a neurological disorder. In simple terms, a learning disability results from a difference in the way a person's brain is "wired." Children with learning disabilities are as smart or smarter than their peers. But they may have difficulty reading, writing, spelling, reasoning, recalling and/or organizing information if left to figure things out by themselves or if taught in conventional ways.

A learning disability can't be cured or fixed; it is a lifelong issue. With the right support and intervention, however, children with learning disabilities can succeed in school and go on to successful, often distinguished careers later in life.

Parents can help children with learning disabilities achieve such success by encouraging their strengths, knowing their weaknesses, understanding the educational system, working with professionals and learning about strategies for dealing with specific difficulties.

Introduction

Not all great minds think alike

Did you know that Albert Einstein couldn't read until he was nine? Walt Disney, General George Patton, and Vice President Nelson Rockefeller had trouble reading all their lives. Whoopi Goldberg and Charles Schwab and many others have learning disabilities which haven't affected their ultimate success.

Facts about learning disabilities

- Fifteen percent of the U.S. population, or one in seven Americans, has some type of learning disability, according to the National Institutes of Health.
- Difficulty with basic reading and language skills are the most common learning disabilities. As many as 80% of students with learning disabilities have reading problems.
- Learning disabilities often run in families.
- Learning disabilities should not be confused with other disabilities such as autism, intellectual disability, deafness, blindness, and behavioral disorders. None of these conditions are learning disabilities. In addition, they should not be confused with lack of educational opportunities like frequent changes of schools or attendance problems. Also, children who are learning English do not necessarily have a learning disability.
- Attention disorders, such as Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and learning disabilities often occur at the same time, but the two disorders are not the same.

Common learning disabilities

- Dyslexia –a language-based disability in which a person has trouble understanding written words. It may also be referred to as reading disability or reading disorder.

- Dyscalculia – a mathematical disability in which a person has a difficult time solving arithmetic problems and grasping math concepts.

Dysgraphia

- a writing disability in which a person finds it hard to form letters or write within a defined space.

Auditory and Visual Processing Disorders –

- sensory disabilities in which a person has difficulty understanding language despite normal hearing and vision.

Nonverbal Learning Disabilities

- a neurological disorder which originates in the right hemisphere of the brain, causing problems with visual-spatial, intuitive, organizational, evaluative and holistic processing functions.

Discussion

Since difficulties with reading, writing and/or math are recognizable problems during the school years, the signs and symptoms of learning disabilities are most often diagnosed during that time. However, some individuals do not receive an evaluation until they are in post-secondary education or adults in the workforce. Other individuals with learning disabilities may never receive an evaluation and go through life, never knowing why they have difficulties with academics and why they may be having problems in their jobs or in relationships with family and friends.

Learning disabilities should not be confused with learning problems which are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor handicaps; of mental retardation; of emotional disturbance; or of environmental, cultural or economic disadvantages.

Generally speaking, people with learning disabilities are of average or above average intelligence. There often appears to be a gap between the individual's potential and actual achievement. This is why learning disabilities are referred to as “hidden disabilities”: the person looks perfectly “normal” and seems to be a very bright and intelligent person, yet may be unable to demonstrate the skill level expected from someone of a similar age.

A learning disability cannot be cured or fixed; it is a lifelong challenge. However, with appropriate support and intervention, people with learning disabilities can achieve success in school, at work, in relationships, and in the community.

In Federal law, under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the term is “specific learning disability,” one of 13 categories of disability under that law.

For someone diagnosed with a learning disability, it can seem scary at first. But a learning disability doesn't have anything to do with a person's intelligence — after all, successful people such as Walt Disney, Alexander Graham Bell, and Winston Churchill all had learning disabilities.

Learning disabilities are problems that affect the brain's ability to receive, process, analyze, or store information. These problems can make it difficult for a student to learn as quickly as someone who isn't affected by learning disabilities.

There are many kinds of learning disabilities. Most students affected by them have more than one kind. Certain kinds of learning disabilities can interfere with a person's ability to concentrate or focus and can cause someone's mind to wander too much. Other learning disabilities can make it difficult for a student to

read, write, spell, or solve math problems.

The way our brains process information is extremely complex — it's no wonder things can get messed up sometimes. Take the simple act of looking at a picture, for example: Our brains not only have to form the lines into an image, they also have to recognize what the image stands for, relate that image to other facts stored in our memories, and then store this new information.

It's the same thing with speech — we have to recognize the words, interpret their meaning, and figure out the significance of the statement to us. Many of these activities take place in separate parts of the brain, and it's up to our minds to link them all together.

If, like Noah, you've been diagnosed with a learning disability, you're not alone. Nearly 4 million school-age kids and teens have learning disabilities, and at least 20% of them have a type of disorder that makes it difficult to focus.

Although a diagnosis of a learning disability can feel upsetting, it's actually the first step in resolving the condition.

Once a person's particular problem has pinpointed, he or she can then follow strategies or take medicines to help cope with the disability. And taking steps to manage the disability can often help restore a student's self-esteem and confidence.

Some students who have been diagnosed with a learning disability work with a special teacher or tutor for a few hours a week to learn certain study skills, note-taking strategies, or organizational techniques that can help them compensate for their learning disability.

If you've been diagnosed with a learning disability, you may need support just for the subjects that give you the most trouble. Your school might have a special classroom with a teacher who is trained to help students overcome learning problems.

INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Some schools develop what is called an Individualized Education Program (or IEP), which helps define a person's learning strengths and weaknesses and make a plan for the learning activities that will help the student do his or her best in school. A student's IEP might include sessions with a tutor or time in a specialized classroom for a certain subject, or the use of special equipment to help with learning, such as books on tape or laptop computers for students who have dyslexia.

Medication is often prescribed to help students with ADHD. Several medicines on the market today can help improve a student's attention span and ability to focus and help control impulses and other hyperactive behavior.

There's no cure for a learning disability. And you don't outgrow it. But it's never too late to get help. Most people with these disabilities adapt to their learning differences and find strategies that help them accomplish their goals and dreams.

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