

DISABILITY CAMPAIGN

Detecting Learning Disabilities in Children



Image: HelpGuide.org

There are many children who struggle with a particular subject or even school in general, but for some this could be the result of a learning disability. *Web MD* says, "Learning disabilities are common. Between 8% and 10% of children under age 18 in the U.S. may have some type of learning disability."¹ Learning disabilities cause children to have a difficulty with reading, writing, spelling and organizing information. There is no cure for learning disabilities but, with treatment and support, children can succeed. Learning disabilities do not determine a person's intelligence; rather, a person with a learning disability learns a little differently. Although having a learning disability is challenging, there are strategies to cope and do well in life.

How do you know your child has a learning disability? First, consider these general signs of learning disorders. Then, read over the different types of learning disorders to see if your child's learning difficulties are similar to the signs of any specific disorder. This will give you a general understanding of what constitutes a learning disability.

Common Signs of a Learning Disorder

- Trouble memorizing
- Slower work pace
- Difficulty understanding ideas
- Lack of attention to detail
- Trouble staying on task

Types of Learning Disorders

- **Dyspraxia** affects motor skills; signs include speech difficulty and sensitivity to light, touch and smell.
- **Dyslexia** involves problems with reading and writing; signs include poor spelling, slow reading and difficulty learning new words.
- **Dysgraphia** affects a person's writing abilities; signs include a dislike for writing and problems with grammar.
- **Dyscalculia** affects the person's ability to do math; signs include difficulty with word problems, math equations and sequence of events.
- **Auditory Processing Disorder** relates to the way the brain processes sound; signs include trouble learning to read, remembering things and telling the difference between same sounding words.
- **Visual Processing Disorder** makes it difficult to process visual information; signs include trouble with hand eye coordination and difficulty reading.

If you suspect that your child has a learning disability, talk to your child's pediatrician about getting him or her evaluated. The sooner your child is diagnosed, the better his or her chances are of improving. You might have to see a few specialists before reaching a diagnosis. The specialist(s) will perform several tests and assessments to evaluate your child and present treatment options if your child is found to have a learning disorder.



Image: BatonRougeTutoring.net

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), all U.S. children with learning disorders are entitled to receive free special education services in public schools. Other options include private schools that offer services for children with learning disabilities, after school programs and at-home tutoring.

It can become overwhelming to find out your child has a learning disability. As a parent the best you can do is love, support and encourage your child. Knowing about your child's disability will help you find strategies that will be most beneficial to him or her. Make sure your child stays healthy. It's vital that your child receives adequate amounts of sleep to feel refreshed and improve his or her memory. Eating nutritious meals and exercising will help your child be healthier both physically and mentally. Trying to learn at school when you have a learning disability is hard enough; lack of sleep, poor diet or little exercise will only increase your child's learning difficulties. Be mindful of your child's emotional health as well, as bullying and teasing at school increases for children with learning disabilities.

To obtain more information about learning disabilities, visit the National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD) at <http://www.nclid.org/>. There you will find programs available for parents, educators and doctors. Upon receiving a diagnosis, consider visiting websites of organizations dedicated to serving people with your child's disorder to obtain additional resources for parents and children.

A learning disability doesn't have to be a setback. With the right tools, your child can overcome the challenge of a learning disability and thrive in life.

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¹ Detecting Learning Disabilities. (n.d.). Retrieved June 25, 2015, from <http://www.webmd.com/children/guide/detecting-learning-disabilities>