



## A Word about Learning Disabilities

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People with learning disabilities are every bit as smart as their peers, but their brains work with information in a way that is not necessarily compatible with traditional methods of teaching and education. Learning disabilities affect a person's ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations. They are quite common - nearly 1 in 7 people are diagnosed with a learning disability.

The most common learning disabilities are those relating to reading. Some of the most common types are: dyslexia (affects reading, writing, and spelling); dyscalculia (affects math skills); dysgraphia (affects handwriting and spelling); dyspraxia (affects coordination); and information processing disorders (affect language development, reading, writing, and math).

Common types of learning disabilities:

Dyslexia: A language disability which affects understanding of written words. The person may consistently rely on guessing and context, have difficulty learning new vocabulary, she may transpose number sequences, confuse arithmetic signs, and have trouble remembering facts. Dyslexia can affect different people differently - some can have difficulty with reading and spelling, while others might have difficulty using words correctly and writing or telling left from right. (*Barnet friends can we send the reader over to "famous people with dyslexia"*)

Dyscalculia: A math disability by which a person has trouble solving problems and grasping concepts. The person may have difficulty recalling the numbers in a sequence, or become easily frustrated when using computation and organization skills. She may have trouble understanding how to tell time, trouble approximating how long an activity will take, poor mental math ability - unable to estimate grocery costs or number of days until vacation, difficulty playing strategy or role-playing video games, difficulty keeping score when playing games.

One woman in our neighborhood who has this diagnosis has a Master's Degree in Science but still cannot tell time!

Dysgraphia: A writing disability which causes struggles with spelling, poor handwriting and trouble putting thoughts on paper. Symptoms of dysgraphia include: tight, awkward pencil grip and body position, illegible handwriting, avoiding writing or drawing tasks, tiring quickly while writing, saying words out loud while writing, unfinished or omitted words in sentences, difficulty organizing thoughts on paper, difficulty with syntax structure and grammar, large gap between written ideas and understanding demonstrated through speech.

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Dyspraxia is a fine motor skills disability which affects coordination and manual dexterity such as trouble with scissors, buttons, writing, typing and drawing. The person may also have perception inconsistencies such as over- or under-sensitivity to light, touch, space, taste, smell.

Information Processing Disorders: An information processing disorder is a deficiency in a person's ability to effectively use the information the senses have gathered. It is not the result of hearing loss, impaired vision, an attention deficit disorder or any kind of intellectual or cognitive deficit. Information processing disorders may include the auditory senses

Nonverbal Learning Disabilities: These are neurological disorders which cause problems with grasping spatial relations, organization, evaluation or intuition. The person may have poor visual recall or poor social skills, such as using and understanding nonverbal communication (e.g., gestures, facial expressions), dealing with new information and situations, transitioning between situations, conversation skills, and understanding the nuances of spoken language (e.g., hidden meanings, figurative language). Additionally, a common feature of NVLD is seemingly incessant talking. These individuals often narrate their thoughts aloud, sometimes sharing too much detail (of a personal nature) without realizing they've done so, or repeat details and have trouble getting to the point or sharing the 'big picture' during conversation.

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD): People who have these disorders often have problems focusing their attention and are easily distracted. Other symptoms include remaining still, and keeping quiet. Some of the symptoms of ADHD are a lack of attentiveness or consistent distraction, hyperactivity and pronounced impulsiveness (moving from one topic to the next in conversation, for example, or from one activity to the next) and are very active, constantly moving and fidgeting or have a sense of internal restlessness, they may often act without thinking or anticipating the consequences of their actions, and they may have difficulties paying attention to details, listening to instructions, organizing themselves, taking turns in games and conversations, controlling temper outbursts.