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**Subject:** Learning Disabilities



Dear ,

One of the most common diagnoses a family will see when they review a child's full profile are learning disabilities. This is due in part to the fact that a child may have attended school sporadically or not at all while in care of their biological family. It doesn't mean that the child is stupid; it just means that they will need some extra support in school and at home in order to succeed in the classroom. The more you know about the different types of learning disabilities children may have, the less daunting they may seem.

#### **What is a learning disability?**

A learning disability is a difference in the brain that affects how information is received, processed, or communicated. An individual with a learning disability may have trouble processing sensory information because they see, hear, and understand things differently. Early traumatic life events can affect how the brain develops, and in turn, affect how information is received, processed and communicated. For example, the stress hormone cortisol has been shown to have adverse effects on learning and memory. If a person has constant high levels of cortisol due to being in stressful situations, over time this will negatively impact the brain's ability to learn and remember details.

#### **What can you do if your child has a learning disability?**

-First, and most importantly, provide your child with love and support. Keep in mind that the way you behave and the things you do will have an impact on your child. Showing your child how to overcome this challenge is important. Keeping their self-esteem intact is crucial.

-Maintain a positive and optimistic attitude. Your child will follow your lead, and will develop the same attitude as you.

-Remember that all people learn differently. Find your child's strengths and remind him/her of those. The challenge for you is to find the best way for your child to learn.

-Be an advocate for your child. Stand up for them, and take the lead in finding the best strategy. They count on you for help and support.

-Do your own research. Find reputable sources online and in your local library. Teachers, counselors, therapists and pediatricians are all great resources, but you first need to educate yourself. Take an active role, not a passive one. **You** know your child better than anyone else, so it is up to **you** to decide what will be the best solution to help your child.

-Learn about new developments, different programs, and educational techniques that may help your child.

-Focus your energy on what will work best for your child and implement that into your child's life. Do not take an idle role and let someone else be responsible for providing the tools your child will need to learn, especially with budget and program cuts going on in schools. Now, more than ever, it is important that you take an active role in your child's education. You can do it, and you should!

#### **How can you take an active role in your child's development?**

-Become educated about developmental milestones. Talk with your pediatrician, ask for a developmental milestone chart, and do your own research. Paying attention to normal developmental milestones is very important in the preschool and early childhood years.

-If you notice that your child is lagging behind, **do not** panic. It is better to figure out a plan to help your child, rather than get caught up in diagnosing

them or putting a label on them.

-Learning disabilities are often grouped by school-area sets, like reading, math and writing. If your child is in school, it will be apparent if he/she is struggling in one of these areas, and narrowing down the type will be easier.

### Types of learning disabilities

- **Motor disabilities:** problems with motor coordination and movement. Examples include cutting, writing, running and jumping.
- **Math disabilities:** this can be affected by a language learning disability, a visual disorder, or difficulty with sequencing, organizing and memorization. Examples include telling time, working with money, counting by a certain number (2's, 5's, 10's), and memorizing and organizing numbers.
- **Language disabilities:** involve the ability to understand or produce spoken language. Examples include verbal skills, ability to retell a story, fluency of speech, and the ability to understand tenses, words and parts of speech.
- **Reading disorders:** understanding the relationship between words, letters and sounds, in addition to comprehension of words, phrases and paragraphs. Examples include letter and word recognition, understanding words or ideas, reading speed and fluency, and general vocabulary skills.
- **Writing disabilities:** physical act of writing and the comprehension of information. Examples include difficulty in forming words and letters, organizing thoughts on paper, neatness and consistency of writing, spelling, and accurately copying letters or words.

### Diagnosis and Testing for Learning Disabilities

The process of determining if your child has a learning disability involves testing, history taking, and observation by a trained specialist. Ask your child's school, pediatrician, your insurance company, or a friend or family member for a reputable source. Specialists trained to do psychological testing: school, clinical, educational, and developmental psychologists; occupational, and speech and language therapists; and neuropsychologists.

### Resources

[National Center for Learning Disabilities \(NCLD\)](#)

[NCLD: Types of Learning Disabilities](#)

[Learning Disabilities Online: Learning Disability Basics](#)

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