



DYSLEXIA AND RELATED DISORDERS

The word *dyslexia* comes from the Greek language and means *poor language*. Individuals with dyslexia have trouble with reading, writing, spelling and/or math although they have the ability and have had opportunities to learn. Individuals with dyslexia can learn; they just learn in a different way. Often these individuals, who have talented and productive minds, are said to have a language learning difference.

Does My Child Have Dyslexia?

Individuals with dyslexia usually have some of the following characteristics.

Difficulty with oral language

- ◆ Late in learning to talk
- ◆ Difficulty pronouncing words
- ◆ Difficulty acquiring vocabulary or using age appropriate grammar
- ◆ Difficulty following directions
- ◆ Confusion with *before/after, right/left*, and so on
- ◆ Difficulty learning the alphabet, nursery rhymes, or songs
- ◆ Difficulty understanding concepts and relationships
- ◆ Difficulty with word retrieval or naming problems

Difficulty with reading

- ◆ Difficulty learning to read
- ◆ Difficulty identifying or generating rhyming words, or counting syllables in words (Phonological Awareness)
- ◆ Difficulty with hearing and manipulating sounds in words (Phonemic Awareness)
- ◆ Difficulty distinguishing different sounds in words (Auditory Discrimination)

- ◆ Difficulty in learning the sounds of letters
- ◆ Difficulty remembering names and/or shapes of letters
- ◆ Reverses letters or the order of letters when reading
- ◆ Misreads or omits common small words
- ◆ “Stumbles” through longer words
- ◆ Poor reading comprehension during oral or silent reading.
- ◆ Slow, laborious oral reading

Difficulty with written language

- ◆ Difficulty putting ideas on paper
- ◆ Many spelling mistakes
- ◆ May do well on weekly spelling tests, but there are many spelling mistakes in daily work
- ◆ Difficulty in proofreading

Does My Child Have Other Related Learning Disorders?

Difficulty with handwriting (Dysgraphia)

- ◆ Unsure of right or left handedness
- ◆ Poor or slow handwriting
- ◆ Messy and unorganized papers
- ◆ Difficulty copying
- ◆ Poor fine motor skills

Difficulty with math (Dyscalculia)

- ◆ Difficulty counting accurately
- ◆ May reverse numbers
- ◆ Difficulty memorizing math facts
- ◆ Difficulty copying math problems and organizing written work
- ◆ Many calculation errors
- ◆ Difficulty retaining math vocabulary and/or concepts

Difficulty with attention (ADD/ADHD – Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder)

- ◆ Inattention
- ◆ Variable attention
- ◆ Distractibility
- ◆ Impulsivity
- ◆ Hyperactivity

Difficulty with motor skills (Dyspraxia)

- ◆ Difficulty planning and coordinating body movements
- ◆ Difficulty coordinating facial muscles to produce sounds

Difficulty with organization

- ◆ Loses papers
- ◆ Poor sense of time
- ◆ Forgets homework
- ◆ Messy desk
- ◆ Overwhelmed by too much input
- ◆ Works slowly

Other

- ◆ Difficulty naming colors, objects, and letters (Rapid Automatized Naming)
- ◆ Memory problems
- ◆ Needs to see or hear concepts many times in order to learn them
- ◆ Distracted by visual stimuli
- ◆ Downward trend in achievement test scores or school performance
- ◆ Work in school is inconsistent
- ◆ Teacher says, “If only she would try harder,” or “He’s lazy.”
- ◆ Relatives may have similar problems

Everyone probably can check one or two of these characteristics. That does not mean that everyone has dyslexia. A person with dyslexia usually has several of these characteristics, which persist over time and interfere with his or her learning. If your child is having difficulties learning to read and you have noted several of these characteristics in your child, he or she may need to be evaluated for dyslexia and/or a related disorder.

What Kind of Instruction Does My Child Need?

Dyslexia and other related learning disorders cannot be cured. Proper instruction promotes reading success and alleviates many difficulties associated with dyslexia. Instruction for individuals with learning differences should be:

- ◆ Explicit – directly teaches skills for reading, spelling, and writing
- ◆ Systematic and Cumulative – has a definite, logical sequence of concept introduction
- ◆ Structured – has step-by-step procedures for introducing, reviewing, and practicing concepts
- ◆ Multisensory – engages the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic channels simultaneously or in rapid succession.

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