

PARENT QUESTIONS

1. Q. What is dyslexia?

A. Dyslexia is a specific type of language (reading, writing, spelling) disability caused by visual and auditory processing dysfunctions in a person with an average or above average intellectual ability.

2. Q. Is a dyslexic mentally retarded?

A. No. To be diagnosed as dyslexic, a child must have a normal, or as is often the case, better than normal IQ.

3. Q. Besides getting tutoring or a special class for him, what can I as parents do?

A. 1. The most important thing a parent can give every child is his love. The child with a learning disability may need his love demonstrated more than do most children. Be sure to reach out and pat him or hug him; reassure him that you know some learning is difficult for him but you know that he can do it.

2. Love him with firm, reasonable discipline. Do not let him have the run of the home because he has a problem. He should be expected to perform completely as the normal child that he is. Be as consistent as possible.

3. Teach him responsibility by having definite duties for him to carry out each week.

4. Keep his life as ordered as possible. He should have a definite schedule for rising, going to bed, eating meals, etc. This is important for every child but really helps keep the child with a learning disability on an even keel.

5. Help him keep in the best physical health possible.

1. Have eye checks every two years.

2. Have a complete physical before beginning any special program and have regular physical checks. Ask your doctor to be sure and check him for allergies. Many students with learning disabilities have allergies, which may affect school performance.

3. Have his hearing checked before he begins a special class or tutorial session.

6. If he is particularly hyperactive or distractible, keep his room as plain as possible. Remove any unnecessary decorations and make his surroundings as restful as possible. This often helps him to be calmer and more organized.

7. When you are planning anything different from the usual routine, tell him. If you explain ahead of time that you will have company for dinner and exactly what you want him to do, he will know. If you don't prepare him, he may be constantly interrupting in an inappropriate manner.

8. Remember your child can do anything you train him to do. He may not automatically develop all the nice traits you want him to have, but few children do. Teach him how you want him to behave. Reward good behavior with privileges and punish poor behavior with removal of privileges and rewards.

When a parent says, "I just can't handle him", he usually has not really tried to teach his child proper behavior. It is not easy. If you have an unmanageable child, begin to change him one trait at a time. Pick the thing that annoys you the most. Tell him you want to work on changing this with him. Work together to make the change. Be patient and firm. Don't give up.

4. Q. Should I tell my child he is dyslexic?

A. Yes. Discuss it with him as you would if he had any other problem. He has a right to know what causes his difficulties in school. He is usually quite relieved to know that he is not "stupid" or "dumb". The worst thing a parent can do is to try to hide the problem from the child. He will know something is wrong and he will think you are ashamed of it if you won't talk to him about it. You might tell him, "You do have a reading problem, but the examiner said you were bright. We will have to work very hard for a while to help you, but we can make learning easier for you." Briefly answer any questions he might have. Don't worry about being technical or detailed.

5. Q. What can I expect from my dyslexic child?

A. In school he will have difficulty with reading, writing, and spontaneous spelling. English will usually be his most difficult subject. If he remains in a regular class without outside help, he may be characterized as a dreamer, a child who is not trying as hard as he might. With tutoring or a special class he can be helped to perform up to his mental potential. He may always have to work "harder" for good grades than the student without this problem, but with help he can do it. Adult dyslexics have achieved in every kind of profession through hard work and remediation.

6. Q. Should my child read for pleasure?

A. Dyslexic and children with ADD can read anything they wish to attempt outside of school. The parent should not force them to read material not prescribed by their teachers. Since the processing of symbols is a deficit area for the LD child he may never "enjoy" reading in the same way as the reader who can do it easily, but he can come to find it less stressful after specific teaching techniques improve his accuracy and comprehension in reading.

7. Q. What is ADD?

A. ADD means (Attention Deficit Disorder) without hyperactive behavior, but marked distractibility is a prime characteristic. In a classroom the ADD student can stay in his chair but is constantly missing information since he cannot focus and concentrate normally. This distractibility is due to neurological deficits in inhibition control.

8. Q. Is this a reading problem?

A. Reading (decoding) may or may not be affected in the ADD child. Many times the student with ADD can "read" (call words), but does not comprehend what he has read.

- 9. Q. Does the student with ADD have difficulty with other subjects?**
A. Yes. The math skills are often poor and writing and spelling problems may affect all subjects.
- 10. Q. Is ADD more severe than dyslexia?**
A. No, it is just different.
- 11. Q. Is the student with ADD poorly coordinated?**
A. He may have poor balance. Some fall frequently or bump into objects. They can achieve in sports but they have to work at the skills they want to master. They are often very competitive.
- 12. Q. Does the student with ADD have poor writing?**
A. Yes, almost always this student has writing difficulties characterized by poor slant, poor spacing, omitted and added letters and words. The writing gets worse the longer he writes. With training he can improve his writing skills, but rarely has excellent handwriting.
- 13. Q. Does the student with ADD frequently have behavior problems?**
A. Yes, he can. He is often an impulsive child, quick to react or strike out. He thinks of himself first and others later. This usually requires firm parents who work very hard, plus teacher cooperation.
- 14. Q. Should the student with ADHD be given medicine to help him control his hyperactivity?**
A. Sometimes, but always with a doctor's recommendation and under his supervision.
- 15. Q. Aren't these medicines dangerous?**
A. No more than any medicine. The main thing to remember is that they should be prescribed by a physician and administered under his supervision. The parent should report frequently on the medicines' effect to the physician. If he prescribes such medicines, they are necessary in his opinion for the student to have the opportunity to take the best advantage of his learning situation. These medications have been researched for over 40 years and are not habit forming. Studies have also demonstrated that they do not have long-term effects on growth.
- 16. Q. What can the person who is ADD or ADHD achieve?**
A. The ADD/ADHD child, like the dyslexic, has a normal or better than normal IQ and he can achieve his intellectual potential if properly taught.
- 17. Q. Will my child always be hyperactive?**
A. For some, much of the actual hyperactivity or excessive movement will improve by puberty. Others describe symptoms of impulsivity and a lack of inhibition control into adulthood.
- 18. Q. If my child has a combination of learning differences such as dyslexia and ADD or ADHD will he be able to achieve?**

A. Combination of learning differences are more complex to remediate, but many students with combinations of the six patterns presented have been able to overcome most, but not all of their challenges. Many are successful adults. As with all challenges an attitude of perseverance, a strong education program., and supportive parents and teachers are optimal.

19. Q. Can my dyslexic or ADD/ADHD child be cured?

A. There is no "cure" in the medical sense of the word for these learning disabilities. Specific instruction for these students to overcome their deficits is necessary. With hard work on the part of the student and consistent support from the parent, the child can become effective in reading, writing, spelling, and/or math and so overcome his major difficulties.

20. Q. How long will my child need remediation for his learning difference?

A. Learning Differences occur in varying combinations and the severity of the learning difference effects the length of time a child would benefit from remediation and/or a specialized school. As a result, there is no one answer, but most children are in remediation for an average of two to three years.

RESOURCES

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