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Let us open the Door for Children with Learning Disabilities

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ABSTRACT

Learning abilities vary from person to person, but there are people who have severe learning problems that persist throughout their lives and so they may require special understanding and help throughout school and beyond. These learning disabilities are caused by differences in how a person's brain works and how it processes information. Children with learning disabilities are not "dumb" or "lazy." In fact, they usually have average or above average intelligence. Their brains just process information differently. Living with learning disabilities can be a painful struggle for both the parents and the child with the learning disability. Over the years, the government has launched various programmes and schemes to meet its commitments towards the education of children with disabilities. This paper tries to focus on some of the most common learning disabilities in children; and suggests some possible ways to the parents to diagnose the disabilities of their children. Finally it concludes by suggesting them some possible ways to help their children in learning better.

INTRODUCTION

There may be various reasons for the poor performance of children. Some have emotional or family problems; for others community, the school, or peers may be the source of trouble while some others are simply of below average intellect. But 10 to 20 percent have a neurologically based disorder of the type called a learning disability.

Learning Disabilities is a general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities. According to the definition used by the federal government, these children are of at least average intelligence (many are far above average), and their academic problems are not caused by an emotional disturbance, by social or cultural conditions, or by a primary visual, hearing, or motor disability. Instead, the reason for their learning problems seems to be that their brains are "wired" in a way slightly different from the average person's.

Children with learning disabilities may have difficulty learning basic skills in reading or understanding reading. Difficulty writing, math, or language may also signal learning disabilities. Some students with learning disabilities may easily learn basic skills but have difficulty applying skills in problem solving or higher level school work.

CAUSES OF LEARNING DISABILITIES

Are Learning Disabilities biological? True learning disabilities (LDs) are believed to be an organic type of disability resulting from neurological processing problems that cause difficulty with learning and applying skills in one or more academic areas. Evidence suggests that a child's chances of having a learning disability increase when parents or other relatives also have learning disabilities. This suggests that heredity may play a role in some cases. However, there are other possible causes of LDs that can be prevented in some cases.

TYPES OF LEARNING DISABILITIES

The information processing used in learning occurs in four major stages: input, processing, memory, and retrieval. *Input* is the process of recording in the brain information that comes from the senses. *Processing* is the process of interpreting this information. *Memory* is its storage for later retrieval. *Retrieval* of information is achieved through language or motor (muscular) activity. Learning disabilities can be classified by their effects at one or more of these stages. Each child has individual strengths and weaknesses at each stage.

1. **Visual Perception Disability:** In this disability students face difficulty in recognizing the position and shape of letters for eg. b for d, p for q or inversions: u for n, w for m. The students have poor visual-motor coordination. They complain print blurs while reading. They also have poor handwriting, poor spelling (cannot visualize the words), slow reading speed; poor comprehension.
2. **Auditory Perception Disability:** It occurs when they are not able to correlate correctly what their ears hear and how their brains have perceived. They often face difficulty in understanding spoken language, following directions, remembering details. They are also not able to focus on verbal presentation or lectures. They also get confused with multi-digit numbers, people's names and telephone numbers.
3. **Memory Deficits:** The students having this disability have small working memory. They can hold bits of information while they blend into a full thought or concept.
4. **Language disabilities:** In this disability the students face difficulty in organizing thoughts and finding the right words and answers.
5. **Motor Disabilities:** Motor disabilities are of two types: gross motor disability and fine motor disability. Gross motor disabilities make children clumsy. They stumble, fall, and bump into things; they may have difficulty in running, climbing, riding a bicycle, buttoning shirts, or tying shoelaces. Children with fine motor disability write slowly, and their handwriting is often unreadable. They may also make spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors.

SUGGESTIONS TO HELP CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

Teach through your child's areas of strength.

- Use activity-based study tools, like role-playing or model building
- Use memory games and flash cards, take field trips.
- Use television creatively

Respect and challenge your child's natural intelligence.

- Pay attention to your child's interests and passions.
- Helping them develop their passions and strengths will probably help them with the areas of difficulty as well.

Recognize that there may be some things your child won't be able to do or will have lifelong trouble doing:

- Perseverance is the drive to keep going despite challenges and failures, and the flexibility to change plans if things aren't working.
- Children with learning disabilities may need to work harder and longer because of their disability.

Make sure books are at your child's reading level

- Foster reading by finding books on topics of interest to your child or by reading to him.

Encourage your child to develop his or her special talent:

- Help your child develop his or her strengths and passions. Feeling passionate and skilled in one area may inspire hard work in other areas too.

Motivate your child to develop the ability to handle stress:

- Encourage your child to identify activities that help reduce stress like sports, games, music, or writing in a journal. Experiment with different stress reduction techniques with them.

CONCLUSION

In the past thirty years, education for children with disabilities has improved greatly. Learning disabilities are supported with specially designed instruction based on each child's unique strengths; weaknesses and the impact of his learning disability. These improvements have a great impact on the quality of the lives of children with disabilities. It is also essential that teachers to be aware of and develop innovative teaching strategies. There is a need for re-examining perceptions around the values and purposes of education for children with disabilities.

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