



Psyched Express

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Psyched Express is the official newsletter of
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Y.E.T. – Youth Evaluation and Therapy

Homeschooling and Learning Differences



Homeschool Headaches

I just saw this posted on a social media site -----

Hello, I have two kids (one in elementary school and another in middle school). My elementary son is doing fine and able to do the work with little instruction. My oldest is quitting on me and throwing tantrums. I am also working from home, but that has been completely disrupted because I just spent over 3 hours sitting next to her working through one writing assignment and we are only 1/2 done with a task that was meant for only today. I am almost at my wit's end!

Parents have been home now for a few weeks and many are homeschooling their children for the first time. Schools are sending work via the internet and there are some teachers who are in on-line virtual classrooms. This is, of course, helpful. Parents get material that they can then use to instruct their children, but what many are now saying is "I can't believe how hard this is!" After this crisis is over, I think we will all have a new appreciation for classroom teachers.

I have been getting calls and here are just a few of the questions-----

- My kids don't learn the same. What can I do to make sure everyone takes in their curriculum?
- My child seems to not remember the lesson from yesterday. What can I do?
- I didn't realize how much time it took for him/her to do the writing (or math or whatever). What can I do?
- Why isn't my child paying attention? I've tried everything but it doesn't work.

- His/her behavior has turned negative whenever we start a lesson. What can I do?
- He/she seems really upset. Is it the work, the staying at home, me? How do you tell?

Many parents know that different personalities, different learning styles, and different gifts require different approaches. For some children, however, it is more than a matter of style or gifts. You may have a child with learning or attention problems that you feel is beyond your ability to teach.

If your child seems difficult to teach, it is worthwhile to look at the symptoms of learning disabilities. Even from home, there are steps you can and maybe should take.



Possible Symptoms of Learning Disabilities

(National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2019)

Many children have trouble reading, writing, or performing other learning-related tasks at some point. This does not mean they have learning disabilities. A child with a learning disability often has several related signs, and they don't go away or get better over time. The signs of learning disabilities vary from person to person.

Please note that the generally common signs included here are for informational purposes only; the information is not intended to screen for learning disabilities in general or for a specific type of learning disability.

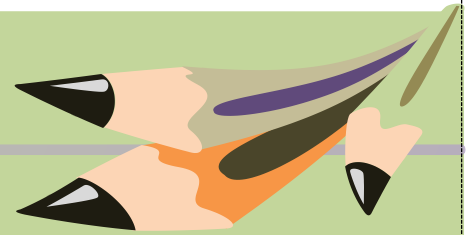
Common signs that a person may have learning disabilities include the following:

- Problems reading and/or writing
- Problems with math
- Poor memory
- Problems paying attention
- Trouble following directions
- Clumsiness
- Trouble telling time
- Problems staying organized¹

A child with a learning disability also may have one or more of the following¹:

- Acting without really thinking about possible outcomes (impulsiveness)
- "Acting out" in school or social situations
- Difficulty staying focused; being easily distracted
- Difficulty saying a word correctly out loud or expressing thoughts
- Problems with school performance from week to week or day to day
- Speaking like a younger child; using short, simple phrases; or leaving out words in sentences
- Having a hard time listening
- Problems dealing with changes in schedule or situations
- Problems understanding words or concepts

Each learning disability has its own signs. A person with a particular disability may not have all of the signs of that disability. These signs alone are not enough to determine that a person has a learning disability. Only a professional can diagnose a learning disability.



Have Your Child Screened/Evaluated (even on line!)

A screening is a research-based developmental evaluation of a child's learning skills. Typically, it does not use standardized tests, but may on occasion. It is low cost and can help point the way to necessary next steps. It can also be given on line.

Youth Evaluation and Therapy offers a screening which looks at the following areas. The screening has been used for over thirty years, with periodic updates. It is now in its fifth printing and is constantly revised to reflect current developmental research findings. Some of these investigated "red flags" are known learning disability issues: *narrative ability, processing/attention, memory, and phonological awareness*. Parent, student, and teacher input are also valued.

Consider keeping a journal of the child's behavior, with specific examples of problems, progress, and strengths. Keep a few work samples to show successes and difficulties.

Your child may need a hearing test or vision exam. There are other conditions that look like Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or learning disabilities (LD)—including mild autism, depression, sleep deprivation, and bipolar disorder—that need different treatments. Your child may have a combination.

Does your child need a *psycho-educational evaluation*? (also available on line) Has the problem continued for several years and in a variety of settings? Some parents are afraid to have their child evaluated and "labeled" by a psychologist. But a diagnosis is only a big deal if you make it one.

Learning problems are complex, so a thorough evaluation is crucial in identifying learning strengths and weaknesses. While you know your child best, professionals have seen hundreds of children and have a better sense of what is normal and what is not.

Take your journal and samples of the child's work along to the psychologist. Written logs and journals are better than vague descriptions. When you meet to hear the report, come with questions on how to apply the findings to your homeschool. Ask the psychologist to recommend books and resources.

Finally, every homeschooler needs a focus on character, perseverance, a joy in learning and physical exercise.