

STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

WHAT IS A LEARNING DISABILITY?

A learning disability is a disorder that affects a person's ability to process or apply information. Someone with a learning disability may have an average or above average IQ but may have difficulty with some tasks.

Learning disabilities can range in significance and may affect:

- Oral skills
- Written language and reading skills
- Mathematic problem solving
- Auditory problems
- Visual problems
- Motor and organizational problems
- Conceptual thinking

You do not outgrow learning disabilities but the significance of them may vary over one's lifetime. The key to managing your disability and leading a successful life is effort and learning what works best for you. Sometimes you can learn skills or techniques that may help you overcome some of these difficulties. Many people with learning disabilities know they have one before they reach high school.

LEARNING WITH ADHD (ATTENTION-DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER)

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a condition that affects learning and behaviour. People with ADHD have difficulty concentrating and are often hyperactive, easily distracted, unorganized and impulsive. It affects about 5% of the population and is the most common learning disability.

Symptoms of ADHD:

1. Difficulty with sustained attention or concentration
2. Impulsive
3. Easily distracted
4. Restless
5. Disorganized
6. Fidgety
7. Starts projects but unable to finish them
8. Forgetful
9. Daydreamer
10. Constantly on the go
11. Impatient
12. Overly talkative

People who have ADHD can improve their learning by using a number of self-help strategies, which can be obtained from the learning resource center at your school. Medications can also be helpful; however they must be prescribed by a medical doctor. If you have previously been diagnosed with ADHD or if you think you have ADHD, it may be a good idea to visit your health clinic to discuss what options are available with a health professional.

I THINK I HAVE A LEARNING DISABILITY - NOW WHAT?

If your symptoms are interfering with your regular life routine, it is important that you see a psychologist or medical doctor for assistance — the sooner the better.

Learning disabilities begin in primary school but sometimes people can have one for many years before it is diagnosed and treated. It's important not to over-diagnose learning disabilities. Sometimes it may just be that you are having difficulty keeping up with the increased demands of schoolwork. However, if you do suspect you have a learning disability there is effective treatment available.

If you have been prescribed medications just be careful not to overmedicate yourself in times of stress or exams. Also be aware that mixing ADHD medication with other medications can be dangerous. Discuss what you are taking with a medical doctor.

CAN I SUCCEED IN SCHOOL IF I HAVE A LEARNING DISABILITY?

Yes, of course you can! Sure, you may need to work extra hard in some areas or study a little differently but with a plan, preparation and perseverance, you'll do great! Those are the "3Ps" that help overcome learning disabilities.

SELF-ADVOCACY FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

- Self-advocacy is the ability to identify your strengths and weaknesses, to make personal goals, be assertive and make wise decisions.
- ◆ Talk to a Guidance counsellor if you are feeling overwhelmed or stressed.
- ◆ Remember a positive attitude is important for success.
- ◆ Find out about tutoring services.
- ◆ Manage your medications. Take them as prescribed, and make sure that a doctor is monitoring your usage.
- ◆ When selecting your courses, be careful not to overload yourself with back-to-back classes requiring heavy reading and writing.

- ◆ Educate yourself about your disability so you are best able to advocate for yourself effectively.
- ◆ Study more difficult material when your energy level is at its peak and take breaks.
- ◆ Keep a day-timer instead of trying to remember everything in your head.
- ◆ Sit at the front of the classroom to minimize distractions.
- ◆ Talk to your teacher if you are having difficulty or have any questions.
- ◆ Write flash cards; they will help you memorize key points.
- ◆ Remember a positive attitude is important for success.

Check These Out:

<http://www.cambriancollege.ca/disabilityservices>

<http://studytips.org>