

Impact on affected individuals

Are learning disabilities common?

Currently, almost 2.9 million school-aged children in the U.S. are classified as having specific learning disabilities and receive some sort of special education support. They are approximately 5% of school-aged children in public schools. These numbers do not include private and religious schools, or home-schooled children.

What can one do about learning disabilities?

Learning disabilities are lifelong and although they don't go away, they don't have to stop a person from achieving their goals. Help is available if they are identified. Learning disabilities affect every person differently and the disability can range from mild to severe. Sometimes people have more than one disability. In addition, approximately one third of people with a learning disorder also have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), which makes it difficult for them to concentrate, stay focused or manage their attention to specific tasks.

Individuals with a learning disability may isolate themselves from society as they may feel:

- Ashamed of the types of difficulties they struggle with, such as poor literacy skills, attention or memory difficulties
- Fear of failure, criticism, ridicule, or rejection
- Fear of discrimination
- Fear that others may think that they are stupid or incapable
- Ashamed that they are unable to read or that they have poor handwriting
- Left out of everyday discussions due to lack of understanding
- Depressed
- Alone
- "Learned Helplessness"

Types of Learning Disabilities

Here is a list of different types of learning disabilities that are frequently identified:

Language

- Reading
- Disorder of written expression

Calculation

- Mathematics disorder

Problems with motor skills

- Developmental coordination disorder

Communication Disorders

- Expressive language disorder
- Mixed receptive-expressive language disorder
- Phonological disorder
- Stuttering

Learning Disability



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Learning Disabilities

Learning disabilities are real. A person can be of average or above average intelligence, not have any major sensory problems (like blindness or hearing impairment), and yet struggle to keep up with people of the same age in learning and regular functioning.

What is a learning disability?

A learning disability is a neurological disorder that affects the brain's ability to receive, process, store and respond to information. The term learning disability is used to describe the seeming unexplained difficulty a person of at least average intelligence has in acquiring basic academic skills. These skills are essential for school and work, and for coping with life in general. Learning disorder is not a single disorder. It is a term that refers to a group of disorders.

How can one tell if a person has a learning disorder?

Learning disabilities can affect a person's ability in the areas of:

- Listening
- Speaking
- Reading
- Writing
- Mathematics

Other features of a learning disability are:

- An extinct gap between the level of achievement that is expected and what is actually being achieved.
- Difficulties that can become apparent in different ways with different people.
- Difficulties that manifest themselves differently throughout development.
- Difficulties with socio-emotional skills and behavior.

A learning disability is not a disease, so there is no cure, but there are ways to overcome the challenges it poses through identification and accommodation.

Identification. If there is reason to think a person might have a learning disability, it is important to collect observations by parents, teachers, doctors and others regularly in contact with that person. If there does seem to be a pattern of trouble that is more than just an isolated case of difficulty, the next step is to seek help from school or consult a learning specialist for an evaluation.

Accommodation and Modification.

Depending on the type of learning disability and its severity, as well as the person's age, different kinds of assistance can be provided. Under the individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1997 and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 people of all ages with a learning disorder are

Protected against discrimination and have a right to different forms of assistance in the classroom and workplace.

What causes Learning Disabilities?

Experts aren't exactly sure what causes learning disabilities. Learning disabilities may be due to:

- Heredity – often learning disabilities run in the family, so it's not uncommon to find that people with a learning disability have parents or other relatives with similar difficulties.
- Problems during pregnancy and birth. Learning disabilities may be caused by illness or injury during or before birth. It may also be caused by drug and alcohol use during pregnancy, low birth weight, lack of oxygen, and premature or prolonged labor.
- Incidents after birth – head injuries, nutritional deprivation, and exposure to toxic substances (ex: lead) can contribute to learning disabilities.

Learning disabilities are not caused by economic disadvantage, environmental factors or cultural differences.