

Learning Disorders



What is a Learning Disorder?

A learning disorder is a **neurological disorder that affects the ability to receive, process, analyze, or store information.**

Children with learning disorders may be just as intelligent or even of greater intelligence than their peers, but often struggle to learn as rapidly as those around them.

Problems associated with mental health and learning disabilities often include **difficulty in reading, writing, spelling, recalling, and reasoning**, as well as impaired motor skills and problems with mathematical concepts.

Children with untreated learning disorders often fall behind at school and miss out on the fundamental building blocks needed for further learning. Their **self esteem can also be affected** as they see themselves trying harder than other children, but not getting the reward of good grades or praise from their parents and teachers.

Similarly, an **untreated learning disability can cause great psychological anguish** for an adult.

While this is often a life-long condition for which there is no quick-fix cure, there are many learning solutions in which a person can be trained to **cope with mental health and learning disabilities, and still succeed.**

Common Learning Disorders

Dyslexia – is a learning disorder that affects reading and/or writing ability. This is a language-based disability where a person has trouble understanding written words.

Dyscalculia – is a learning disorder that affects mathematical ability. A person with dyscalculia often has difficulty solving math problems and grasping the basic concepts of arithmetic.

Dysgraphia – is a disability in writing, regardless of the ability to read. People with dysgraphia often struggle with writing the shapes of letters or writing within a defined space. This may also be accompanied by other fine motor-skill difficulties.

Auditory and visual processing disorders – these are learning disorders involving sensory disabilities. While a person may be able to see and/or hear normally, these disorders prevent them from making sense of what they see and hear. They will often have difficulties in understanding language, either written or

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auditory (or both).

Nonverbal learning disabilities – these learning disorders result in problems with visual-spatial, motor, and organizational skills. Commonly they result in difficulties in comprehending nonverbal communication and interactions, which can result in social problems.

Specific language impairment (SLI) – a developmental disorder affecting language acquisition and usage.

Diagnosing a Learning Disorder

Since children's brains are more flexible than adults, they can often learn new strategies and are able to *re-train* their minds to think in more constructive ways. Because this [brain](#) elasticity decreases with age, it is important to seek help as early as possible.

As a general rule, **the younger the age of diagnosis of mental and learning disabilities, the more successful the treatment will be.** Children who are diagnosed in kindergarten can often completely overcome their problems with remedial help.

Those diagnosed only in later school years may be **taught ways of compensating for the disability and techniques to help them cope** – but the likelihood of completely overcoming the disorder decreases with time.

Recognizing the Symptoms of a Learning Disorder

Symptoms Displayed in Young Children

- Slower speech and vocabulary development compared to other children
- Problems with pronunciation
- Difficulty learning numbers, the alphabet, shapes, and colors
- Difficulty following directions
- Motor skill difficulties
- Easily distracted
- Problems with social interaction

Symptoms Displayed in Older Children

- Slow to learn letter-sound association
- Constant reading, writing, or spelling mistakes
- Difficulty in math and confusing arithmetic signs (i.e. mistaking the symbol + for the symbol x)
- Slow to learn new skills
- Accident prone and unaware of spatial surroundings
- Poor concentration
- Spends a longer time on schoolwork and homework than their peers
- Reverses letter sequence and struggles with mirror image letters (such as b and d or p and q)
- Avoids reading out loud
- Struggles with word problems
- Poor handwriting



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**Michele Carelse, Clinical
Psychologist**



All of our natural remedies are formulated by our expert team of herbalists, naturopaths and homeopaths, and headed by Michele Carelse.

Michele has had years of experience in the manufacturing and use of natural remedies. In addition, she is a trained Clinical Psychologist and has been incorporating natural remedies into her treatment of patients with depression, anxiety, ADD, ADHD and stress for many years with spectacular results.

- Difficulty making friends
- Poor grades

Symptoms Displayed in Teenagers and Adults

- Avoidance of reading and writing tasks
- Misreads things
- Spelling problems
- Works slowly
- Struggles with abstract concepts
- Memory problems

It is **usually a teacher or parent who first notices that a child may have a learning disorder**. School performance typically drops when the work becomes increasingly difficult and the child might struggle with school work that they should find easy.

In some cases, **children are fairly adept at concealing or compensating** for their difficulties, and they may only become evident when the work level becomes too much to cope with.

A person with a **learning disorder is characterized with the following**:

- Noteworthy delay in academic achievement, despite average or above average IQ
- Severe information-processing deficits
- Actual academic achievement and ability is substantially lower than what is age-appropriate and in accordance with IQ and education

If you **suspect that your child has a learning disorder, it is advisable to contact your child's school** and arrange to meet with some of his or her teachers. They should be able to give you a clearer picture of your child's learning difficulties as well as abilities, and **provide learning solutions**.

A **medical check-up is also advised** so that hearing and visual problems can be ruled out. If after doing these things you are still concerned, make an appointment with a clinical or educational psychologist who will be able to do an accurate assessment of your child.

What to Expect During a Learning Disorder Assessment

In the first appointment, the **psychologist will take a full history of your child**, including information about pregnancy, birth and early milestones. A family history will also indicate whether this is a problem that has occurred before in the immediate or extended family.

Take along past school report cards or any reports of previous assessments of your child. Most psychologists like both parents to be present at the first appointment if possible.

Based on the information gained, the psychologist will select a **variety of psychometric tests** which will help to give a comprehensive picture of your child's functioning. These tests will probably only be administered in future

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appointments – not on the first day.

Depending on the tests selected and the age of your child, the **assessment process may require your child to attend a few testing sessions**. The psychometric tests may include both written and oral sub-tests and even an emotional assessment, should this be indicated.

Most children thoroughly enjoy the testing sessions, which are especially designed to be as enjoyable and non-threatening as possible.

Once the tests have all been completed, the psychologist may need some time to **score and analyze them before compiling a report** – which will be explained to you in a feedback appointment. Once again, psychologists prefer that both parents attend the feedback session if possible.

Depending on the outcome of the assessment, your **child may be referred to remedial specialists** (e.g. occupational therapists, speech therapists, physiotherapists, remedial teachers). If emotional problems have been identified, a course of therapy with the psychologist may also be recommended.

If a diagnosis of mental health and learning disabilities is confirmed, make sure that you **ask about treatment options and coping mechanisms** that you can explore. There are a number of educational interventions and learning techniques that will assist your child with educational and social problems and it is important that you ask questions and receive full and satisfactory answers.

What Causes a Learning Disorder?

No one is absolutely sure what causes learning disorders.

Research has shown that there are a **number on factors which may play a role**, for instance:

- **Genetics** – Learning disorders tend to run in families.
- **Brain development and damage** – Some research has shown that learning disabilities may be caused by problems in brain development, both before and after birth. Low birth weight, lack of oxygen, maternal drug or alcohol abuse, smoking during pregnancy, premature birth, malnutrition, as well as poor prenatal care may be involved with the development of learning disabilities. Young children who sustain head injuries may also be at risk of developing a learning disorder.
- **Environmental factors** - Environmental toxins have been implicated as a possible cause of learning disorders. The developing fetus, infants, and young children are especially vulnerable to the damage caused by these toxins. Some toxins implicated include certain food additives and preservatives, cigarette smoke, mercury, and lead. Poor nutrition in early life may also lead to learning disabilities later in life.

Help for Learning Disorders

Every child is unique, so **treatment options often vary depending on the type of disorder and the severity of the symptoms**.



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Discuss the options with the child's psychologist and teachers and look for a learning solutions treatment plan that will best suit their needs.

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Most treatments for learning disorders involve **educational interventions and behavioral skills training**. A teaching program can be designed to help a child learn new strategies in the subjects he or she struggles with. As mentioned, in some cases, where self-esteem and confidence has been affected, psychological counseling may be of benefit.

Used in conjunction with psychological and educational interventions, **natural remedies can offer a great deal of support in coping with a learning disorder**.

While conventional drugs are not generally available to those suffering with learning disorders, **natural products are readily available**, virtually free of side effects, and are much safer than prescription medication.

These products are tailored to suit the needs of the individual child and can greatly assist in treating learning difficulties. Some well-known and commonly recommended natural remedies for increased concentration, brain functioning, and memory include Rosemary, Centella asiatica, and other homeopathic ingredients, including a variety of biochemic tissue salts.

As noted above, it is important to seek help as early as possible if you notice your child struggling with learning or school work. If diagnosed early, **treatment and schooling assistance can help your child lead a normal and successful school life**.

Other Conditions Related to Learning Disorders

In many cases, learning disorders are accompanied by ADHD or ADD (which are not considered learning disorders but are interrelated). It is important to get a thorough assessment so that any co-existing problems may be addressed. These may include:

- Language disorders
- Tourette's Syndrome
- Depression
- Anxiety disorders (test anxiety)
- Social skill deficits
- Poor self-esteem

Tips for Coping with a Learning Disorder

- **Become actively involved in your child's learning.**
Encourage games that involve reading, math, or a special skill that your child lacks. Keep in contact with teachers so that you are aware of any changes and progress.
- **Encourage and praise your child's strengths and interests.**
Help him or her to use these as compensations for their disabilities.
- **Create an area in your home that is a suitable learning environment.**
Make sure it is organized and quiet so that your child can focus on the

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problem at hand.

- **Have realistic expectations of your child.**

Do not put added pressure on children to succeed, but praise them when they do.

- **Listen to your child's problems and concerns.**

Having a learning disorder comes with emotional struggles that children often need to talk about.

The Natural Approach

While Western medicine has become the norm in many cultures, it is not the only treatment option. Conventional western medicine, often called allopathic medicine, is the system of medicine taught at most medical schools and most pharmaceutical and synthetic medicines are manufactured and marketed according to the principles of allopathic medicine. Allopathic medicine is also sometimes called orthodox medicine.

Because most of us in the Western world have grown up in a society in which allopathic medicine is the prevailing norm, we forget that, only a few decades ago, homeopathic, herbal and other natural medicines were commonly available – and freely used even by conventional doctors. While there are often heated debates about which system of medicine is 'better' than the other, many responsible doctors (whether they are allopathic or not) recognize that both have a role to play in the treatment program.

Natural medicine has often been frowned on by conventional doctors, especially by those who did not have sufficient knowledge of these medicines. However, it is encouraging to note that some medical schools are now beginning to re-introduce it into their course work, thereby providing doctors with a wider range of treatment options from which to choose. In many countries, especially in Europe, India and China, natural and homeopathic medicines are commonly prescribed by conventional doctors and represent a significant part of the total annual drug sales.

Naturopathy is a branch of medicine (just as allopathy is a branch of medicine) which operates according to the underlying philosophy that the body has an innate capacity to heal itself. While natural medicines are often called 'alternative' or 'complimentary' medicines, they are, in fact, a unique and independent form of medicine in their own right, well able to treat a variety of conditions. Perhaps the term 'holistic' medicine is more apt, given the broad range of treatment options and approaches which are to be found within the practice of natural medicine, which encompasses many different disciplines, including herbalism, homeopathy, iridology, osteopathy, chiropractic, therapeutic massage techniques, aromatherapy, acupuncture and many, many more.

Most naturopaths will use a variety of treatment modalities in order to treat their patients in a holistic way to support health, relieve symptoms and prevent future disease. In fact, even the World Health Organization defines health as being "... more than simply the absence of illness. It is the active state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being." This is a wonderfully clear description of holistic or natural medicine, which strives to support health (thereby relieving or preventing symptoms), rather than simply eliminating disease.

Although allopathic medicine certainly has a role to play and has made a tremendous contribution to medical science during the past century, there is a



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growing perception that it is not the only answer and that, in many cases, holistic medicine can accomplish just as much, if not more – without the risk of side effects, addiction and sacrifice to health so commonly associated with pharmaceutical drugs. Contrary to common perception, and provided that they are manufactured in the correct way, natural medicines can work quickly and safely to promote healing.

In many cases, they can succeed where pharmaceutical drugs have failed. Despite frequent reports that they are ‘unproven’ and ‘untested’, the opposite is true. Natural medicines have a long history of usage and there is a wealth of empirical evidence to support their effectiveness and safety. In addition, active clinical research is carried out by many academic hospitals and universities to support the extensive traditional and empirical evidence behind natural medicines.

It is also important to know that, like any medicine, herbal and homeopathic medicines must be manufactured in the correct way, following acceptable procedures and manufacturing methods to ensure maximum effectiveness and safety. Due to the recent rise in popularity of natural remedies, many companies have sprung up to take advantage of the market. Unfortunately not all of them are equipped to manufacture to the correct standards, often resulting in a flood of inferior (and sometimes even unsafe) remedies onto the market –giving natural remedies a bad name.

Even some pharmaceutical companies have rushed to claim their market share by producing so-called ‘standardized’ extracts of herbs and offering these as superior to the tried and tested methods of naturopathic manufacturing. Nothing could be further from the truth. While ‘standardized’ extracts may offer benefit of easy consistency of dosage (and cheaper more efficient production lines), they have grave disadvantages. These include an increase in side effects as the medicines produced in this manner lose the natural protective properties of the herbs. In some cases, these side effects have proved fatal – as seen in the liver toxicity associated with standardized extracts of kava kava, a herb previously safely used for generations without any known side effects.

Most naturopaths recommend what is called the Full Spectrum Method of extraction – which retains the benefits of ALL the active ingredients within the herb as opposed to isolating only one – thereby providing a more complete treatment as well as superior protection against side effects.

Whatever your choice, always choose wisely. Research what is best for you. If you have a chronic or life threatening condition, don’t make changes without first discussing them with your doctor in order that your condition may be monitored. Well informed and supportive practitioners will support patients who want to take responsibility for their own health.

Related Natural Remedies:

Focus Formula™: Helps maintain optimal mental focus, concentration, attention span and memory function.

Focus Formula is a 100% safe, non-addictive, natural, herbal remedy. Formulated by a Clinical Psychologist for both children and adults, Focus Formula has been used for many years to **safely maintain health and systemic balance** in the brain and nervous system.

Focus Formula contains a selection of herbs known for their supportive function in **maintaining brain, nervous system and circulatory health, and wellbeing.**

The formula remains true to the full spectrum method of herbal extraction, ensuring the bio-availability and balance of all the active ingredients contained in the remedy.

This method of manufacturing also significantly reduces the likelihood of side effects and ensures that all active ingredients are in perfect balance - exactly as nature intended.

Focus Formula can make all the difference, without the risk of sedation, compromising health or serious side effects. In combination with a healthy lifestyle and diet, Focus Formula supports the healthy functioning of the brain and nervous system, helping to **maintain motivation, concentration and memory, and optimum performance.**

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Focus ADDult™: Improve concentration, focus and attention span in adults.

Focus ADDult is a 100% safe, non-addictive, natural herbal remedy and is formulated by a clinical psychologist specifically for teenagers and adults.

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Focus ADDult contains a selection of herbs known for their supportive function in **maintaining brain, nervous system, circulatory health, and overall well-being.**

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This method of manufacturing also significantly reduces the likelihood of side effects and ensures that all active ingredients are in perfect balance - exactly as nature intended.

Focus ADDult can make all the difference, without the risk of sedation, compromising health or serious side effects commonly associated with prescription-strength adult memory products. In combination with a healthy lifestyle and diet, Focus ADDult supports the healthy functioning of the brain and nervous system, helping to **maintain motivation, concentration, memory, and optimum performance.**

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BrightSpark™: Improve concentration, mental focus and calmness.

BrightSpark is a safe, non-addictive, natural remedy containing 100% homeopathic ingredients especially selected by our clinical psychologist. BrightSpark has been especially formulated for children and is a registered OTC homeopathic remedy to provide a balanced physical, cognitive and emotionally healthy climate to support healthy concentration and mental focus.

Many children fail to reach their potential despite the fact that they are **highly creative and intelligent** individuals with a wonderful sense of humor. Parents and teachers may be reluctant to suppress this spirit but recognize the need to help their children to improve concentration and conform to classroom standards of behavior. BrightSpark works by assisting the body in the **control of behaviors, emotions, and other obstacles** to effective concentration, thereby reducing distractibility, irritability and restlessness. It may be used to safely maintain health and systemic balance in the brain and nervous system, without side effects.

BrightSpark will help keep your child alert and focused while at the same time encouraging balanced mood and a positive demeanor. It will help with consistency and staying on-track with tasks, thereby improving classroom performance and helping children to reach their potential naturally.

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This remedy is **registered with the FDA** according to the requirements governing homeopathic over-the-counter medication. All the proven ingredients in BrightSpark are listed with the HPUS (Homeopathic Pharmacopoeia of the United States) and the remedy is manufactured in a registered facility under pharmaceutical conditions.

In combination with a healthy lifestyle and diet, BrightSpark helps children to maintain **healthy consistent behavior, clear focus, and optimum performance** by providing a sound platform to support wellness and vitality. BrightSpark, along with other herbal supplements to support healthy brain functioning, can make all the difference without compromising health.

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Tissue salts, also called cell salts or biochemic salts, are composed of **minerals that occur naturally at a cellular level** in our bodies and all organic matter on earth (plants, rocks, and soil).

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