

Glossary of Useful Terms

As you search for answers to your child's problems, you will come across many different terms used in books or articles, or by psychologists, doctors, therapists or teachers. This glossary explains some of the more common terms used to describe specific disabilities. It is important to remember that a child will rarely display symptoms in only one of these categories. It is more likely that symptoms from two or three categories may be evident as the neurological functions that control our senses and our skills are so interconnected.

PERCEPTUAL DISORDERS

Children with perceptual disorders have problems with the way they receive, understand and organize information that comes via the senses.

- **Visual Perception Disorder** is the inability to understand and put meaning to what one sees.
 - **Visual Discrimination Disorder** is the inability to identify similarities and differences between objects, letters and words.
 - **Visual Memory Disorder** is the inability to remember what the eyes have seen.
 - **Visual Sequencing Disorder** is the inability to remember what one sees in the correct order.
 - **Visual Analysis Disorder** is the inability to divide the whole word that is seen into meaningful parts and **Visual Synthesis Disorder** is the inability to join these parts together into meaningful words.
 - **Visual Closure Disorder** is the ability to identify a word, letter or picture successfully when parts of it are missing.
- **Auditory Perception Disorder** is the inability to understand and interpret sounds and words that one hears.
 - **Auditory Discrimination Disorder** is the inability to hear slight similarities and differences between sounds and words.

- **Auditory Memory Disorder** is the inability to remember what the ears have heard.
- **Auditory Sequencing Disorder** is the inability to remember what one hears in the correct order.
- **Auditory Analysis Disorder** is the inability to divide the whole word that is heard into meaningful parts and **Auditory Synthesis Disorder** is the inability to join these parts together into meaningful words.

MEMORY DISORDERS

Children with memory disorders have trouble retaining information, sometimes while they are concentrating on it, and sometimes after it has already been stored.

- A child with **poor short term memory** will have difficulty remembering what was learned previously when questioned after a short period of time.
- **Poor long term memory** signifies a difficulty in remembering what was learned previously when questioned after a long period of time

LANGUAGE DISORDERS

Children with language disorders have difficulty using symbols for communication.

- **Receptive Language Disorder** is the inability to understand the spoken word.
- **Expressive Language Disorder** is the inability to communicate with others effectively
- **Aphasia** is the inability to call to mind written or spoken language, the inability to express language.
- **Apraxia** is the inability to reproduce written or spoken language.

ATTENTION DISORDERS

Children with attention disorders are unable to use skills of attention effectively.

- **Attention Deficit Disorder:** the child is passively inattentive and easily distracted; usually daydreams and drifts off; cannot maintain concentration and focus on the task at hand for a period of time.
- **Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder:** the child is overly active and impulsive causing an inability to concentrate well enough for effective learning to take place.

MOTOR DISORDERS

Children with motor disorders have difficulty making controlled movements of various parts of the body while performing an action.

- **Visual Motor Integration problems:** an inability to combine vision with movements of the body; difficulty in copying correctly what is seen.
- **Fine Motor problems:** a disorder in the use of the hands to perform precision tasks like writing, drawing, cutting and pasting.
- **Gross Motor problems:** a disorder in the use of the large muscle groups used in running, jumping, crawling, and so on.
- **Perseveration problems:** the child is unable to shift from one topic or activity to another; may repeat phrases in reading several times before continuing or repeats letters or words several times in writing.
- **Hyperactivity:** the child is excessively restless, engaged in random activity and erratic behaviour.
- **Hypoactivity:** the child is lethargic and very quiet, fails to respond appropriately and has difficulty working effectively in class.

BODY CONCEPT PROBLEMS

Children with body concept problems have difficulty using their body as the central point of reference when perceiving other objects around them.

- **Laterality problems** – the child has not developed a conscious inner awareness of the two sides of the body and that one side of the body differs from the other, correctly labeled as the right side and the left side.

- **Directionality problems** – the child is unable to perceive and label directions, such as up-down, left-right, in-out.
- **Midline crossing problems** – the child avoids moving any one part of the body (e.g. the arm) across the midline of the body.
- **Spatial orientation problems** – the child is unable to correctly locate the position of two or more objects around him in relation to himself and to each other e.g. under the bed, to the right of the cupboard, on top of each other.

OTHER TERMS

- **Abstract Thinking:** the ability to think about things and concepts that are not concretely present.
- **Central Nervous System:** the brain and the spinal cord – sensory impulses are transmitted through the spinal cord.
- **Concrete Bound:** the child needs to see or touch in order to understand; has difficulty relating current situations to past experiences; has difficulty in understanding nuances, humour, sarcasm or tone of voice; has difficulty in thinking abstractly.
- **Developmental, Maturational Lag:** a delay in the development of the central nervous system causing the child's behaviour, perceptions and cognitive development to resemble those of a much younger child.
- **Dyslexia:** an impairment of the ability to read due to a neurological disorder.
- **Dysgraphia:** an inability to properly perform the motor movements required for writing due to a neurological disorder.
- **Dyscalculia:** difficulty in performing mathematical functions due to a neurological dysfunction.
- **Hard Signs:** evidence of brain injury, determined by medical technology, for example convulsions, seizures, muscle atrophy, tics and others.
- **Low Frustration Tolerance:** the inability to withstand much frustration without either exploding or withdrawing.

- **Minimal Brain Dysfunction:** a neurological disturbance in children of average to above-average intelligence who show no major physical, neurological or psychological deficits.
- **Soft Signs:** a lack of evidence of brain injury, but specific learning disabilities exist because of the collection of difficulties the child experiences, for example, poor attention span, impulsivity, uneven performance, and so on.