**Learning Differences**

*What are LD’s?*

Learning Differences, Disabilities, Difficulties

A Learning Difference is a general term for the unique and individual ways some people process information.

[Learning Disabilities refer to a number of disorders which may affect the acquisition, organization, retention, understanding or use of verbal or nonverbal information. These disorders affect learning in individuals who otherwise demonstrate at least average abilities essential for thinking and/or reasoning. As such, learning disabilities are distinct from global intellectual deficiency.](https://www.ldac-acta.ca/official-definition-of-learning-disabilities/) (LDAC)

A Learning Difficulty impacts learning, but doesn’t necessarily qualify as a Learning Disability.

Common Learning Differences include:

Dyslexia (Reading)

Dysgraphia (Writing)

Dyscalculia (Math)

Verbal and Non Verbal Learning Disorders

Executive Functioning

ADHD/ADD

Processing Speed

Sensory and Other Processing Disorders

*Red Flags*

PDF’s for Dyslexia, Stealth Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Dysgraphia

*My Child Is Struggling, Now What***?**

* Advocacy
  + If your child is struggling to learn, you must become their advocate. Learning to advocate for our children who learn differently is a journey – but there are many resources available!
  + Websites:
    - Understood.org
    - <https://www.thedyslexiainitiative.org>
    - NILDcanada.org
    - <https://www.ldao.ca/home/Assessments>
  + Podcasts:
    - Building a Brain
    - The Science of Reading
    - Attitude: Strategies and Support for ADHD & LD
    - Let’s Talk Learning Disabilities
  + Books:
    - The Myth of Laziness
    - The Dyslexic Advantage
    - The Whole Brain Child
    - Different Learners by Jane Healy
    - Bright Not Broken
    - Differently Wired
* Assessments
  + A pyscho-educational assessment performed by a psychologist will help you understand your child’s learning and behavioural profile. It will offer insight as to why your child is struggling to learn or retain information.
  + A good Psycho-educational Assessment will provide information about the overall intellectual ability, academic level, a strengths and weaknesses profile, and a list of accommodations or interventions.
  + An assessment is less “getting a label” for your child and more understanding your child so you can help them be successful.
  + If your child struggles in learning and has received extra help without improving, you may want to pursue a formal assessment.
  + Crossroads does not perform pyscho-educational assessments, but can perform informal assessments to help you know whether you should pursue a formal assessment.
* Classroom Accommodations
  + PDFS from Dyslexia Association
* Hope
  + Neuroplasticity is the brain’s ability to change and adapt throughout life
  + <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ELpfYCZa87g>
  + Neuroplasticity allows the human brain to create and strengthen new neural pathways which is the underlying reason why we can learn new skills, habits, and ways of thinking. Different interventions (link to interventions page) can be used to access particular parts of the brain that require strengthening.
* 10 principles that are proven to facilitate neuroplasticity in the therapy environment:
* 1. Use it or lose it: Children who do not regularly use and practise a skill can lose these skills and the brain function dedicated to these skills.
* 2. Use it and improve it: Training or specific practise will enhance a function.
* 3. Specificity: Practise of each skill must be very specific to induce plasticity. For example to learn to walk, the child must specifically practice walking, not just general movement skills.
* 4. Repetition matters: Sufficient repetition is required to induce plasticity, refinement of the skill and memory for how to perform the skill.
* 5. Intensity matters: Practising skills must occur regularly to induce plasticity. The frequency of the skill practised is very important for infants, who tire easily.
* 6. Time matters: Different forms of plasticity occur during different stages of the learning. For example, learning new knowledge about a task, refining execution and making the skill automatic so you can execute without even thinking about it
* 7. Motivation matters: If the tasks are motivating for the child more plasticity occurs.
* 8. Age matters: Plasticity occurs more readily in younger brains, as the younger brain is more open to possibilities (but the brain never stops being plastic!)
* 9. Transference: Practising skills should occur in multiple environments, so that the child can learn to execute the task without you being present or with competing demands.
* 10. Interference: Plasticity can be for good or bad. For example if you have a bad habit it is hard to unlearn. It takes time and dedication to learn a new alternative habit.
  + 1Kleim, J. A., Jones, T. A. (2008). Principles of Experience-Dependent Neural Plasticity: Implications for Rehabilitation After Brain Damage. Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research, Vol. 51, S225–S239, February 2008, D American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. 2Morgan, C., Novak, I., Dale, R. C., Guzzetta, A., & Badawi, N. (2016). Single blind randomised controlled trial of GAME (Goals. Activity. Motor Enrichment) in infants at high risk of cerebral palsy. Research in developmental disabilities, 55, 256-267.

**Programs**

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FIE

iLs

IM

Reading and Math

Search and Teach

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**FAQ’s**