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LD *Connections*

learning disabilities

different paths.....same destination

Welcome

Spring is not far off and that gets us looking forward to what will we be doing for the coming year. Already we were busy selling hockey tickets to the Guelph Storm games and running the 50/50 draw at the Storm game on Family Day. Some lucky winner took home over \$1500! We appreciate being able to participate in this great fundraiser. We were also the recipients of funding from the Rotary Club of Guelph – Trillium and that will allow us to continue to publish our newsletters.

Our programming committee has been very busy during the winter months planning some great events for the coming year! At the end of the month, on March 31, we will be hosting the first of a series of video nights with instructional videos related to Learning Disabilities. We are also looking to bring back some great speakers who were very popular as well as some new ones in the fall. Be sure to check out our website for details of our coming events, you won't want to miss them. We are open to suggestions for future events, so please contact us.

The first article in our newsletter is about strategies to encourage children to read, and I thoroughly enjoyed the series by Rick Riordan, about Percy Jackson, the reluctant Olympic Hero. I also read another series, by James Patterson, with the lead character being Maximum Ride, who is also a child with her own set of unique challenges. My son and I spent many nights at bedtime reading all these novels together.

One of the suggestions in the article on "tips for managing your child's anger" is to make sure your child gets lots of sleep. We learned, back in the fall, how important it is to get your child checked out for a possible sleep disorder, when we had Dr. Louise Scott present to our group.

Our last article, about the number of LD's in Canada, reminds me that a lot more can be done to make people aware of LD's and the strategies that can help them succeed. We need to keep advocating.

Susan Newcombe
Board Member

LCBO stores raising funds for Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario

Starting April 1st, the public can help support Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO) by making a donation at any of the more than 600 Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO) stores throughout Ontario. Donation boxes for LDAO will be displayed at LCBO checkout counters until April 30th.

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4 Ways to get ADHD Kids to Read

Source: Dr. Kenny Handelman ,www.addadhdblog.com



Author Rick Riordan wrote the best selling Percy Jackson books (the first of which was also made into a great movie). These books started as bedtime stories for his son – who has ADHD and Dyslexia.

My sixteen-year-old son Haley recently came into my office and announced that he'd finished a six-hundred-page manuscript. I suppose that would be unusual coming from any sixteen-year-old, but given my son's background, it's especially stunning.

Haley is ADHD and dyslexic. At seven, he hated school. He would hide under the dining room table to avoid reading or doing his homework. My novels about Percy Jackson began as bedtime stories for him – a father's desperate attempt to keep his son interested in reading. That's also why I made Percy Jackson ADHD and dyslexic, and made those two conditions indicators of Olympian blood.

Over the last nine years, so much has changed. Percy Jackson became a five-book series. Haley took his own hero's journey from reluctant reader to an avid devourer of books. Now, as I launch a new series "The Heroes of Olympus," which returns to Percy Jackson's world, it seems an appropriate time to reflect on what I've learned about getting ADHD/dyslexic kids to read. I can't promise that every child with learning differences will become a novelist, but I do think all children can become lifelong readers. Below are four essential things I've learned as a dad and a classroom teacher:

1. Model reading at home. If the parents are too busy to read, it's a safe bet the children will feel the same way. Set aside time for family reading each night. It doesn't matter so much what the kids read, as long as you provide them space for reading and a sense that it is a valuable part of your daily routine. Sometimes the Riordan family will read books together. Sometimes we're all reading different things. But we value books, and we have great conversations about our favorite authors and stories.

2. Match your children with the right books. By the "right" books, I mean the ones that will leave them wanting to read more. Every child's taste is different. Don't worry if they're not reading "War and Peace" at age 12. First, build a good foundation and a positive attitude about reading by letting them pick the stories they enjoy. Make friends with a bookseller or librarian. They are a wealth of information on finding books that kids enjoy.

3. Create a productive environment for reading. Usually, this means few distractions. Reading with music or TV? Not such a great idea. On the other hand, many ADHD kids can focus better if they can have something to fiddle with like a stress ball, an eraser, or some other small object that absorb their kinesthetic energy. Let your child participate in finding the most comfortable space to read – a chair, a sofa, a loft, a patio.

4. Most importantly, keep the long view. Your child will grow up to be a successful person. ADHD and dyslexia really are differences, not disabilities. A disproportionate number of millionaires are dyslexics. ADHD adults are valuable in the workplace because they can focus like a laser on things that really interest them. Kids with learning differences naturally become out-of-the-box thinkers, because they have to find different ways to solve problems. If we can get these kids through the school years, they will excel.

Take it from this dad. It seems like just yesterday my son was hiding under the table to avoid reading. Now, he's writing books longer than mine.

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Tips for managing your child's anger

Source: By Keath Low, About.com Guide

It is not uncommon for children with ADHD to react in anger. It can be very difficult for these kids to manage and regulate their emotions. They may also be hypersensitive. Stressful or frustrating situations can quickly boil over into intense anger. Children with ADHD also have a tough time being able to stop and think through problems before reacting. As a parent it can be hard to see your child losing control. While we can't make the anger disappear, we can help our children better manage these intense reactions.

Understand Triggers Be aware of what triggers your child's angry meltdowns. Are there particular times of day that anger appears to peak? Are there any patterns? You may notice that after school time is most difficult as your child is able to let down his guard and release pent up feelings. It may be when he is feeling hungry or tired. There may be triggers that set him off like when he is experiencing frustration with a task. Also, times when the medication is wearing off may be the most difficult.

Intervene Early As you become more aware of the triggers, you can begin to intervene before the anger comes to a full blown head. Be a calming presence. If your child responds well to physical contact, rub his back or arm. Encourage him to take a deep breath and count to 10. Do this along with him to help demonstrate this calming technique.

Use Time Out Time out doesn't have to be punitive. In fact, it shouldn't be. Time out is a great way for your child to remove himself from the negative situation to take some time to cool down. Approach time out in this way. Pick a time when your child is happy and settled and talk with him about how to use time out. Give him a sense of control by having him choose a designated time out chair away from the hustle and bustle of the household. Now he will understand how to use it when he needs it.

Label Feelings As you notice your child is beginning to feel frustrated, reflect upon his feelings. "That puzzle is really hard to put together! I see it is making you feel a little frustrated." As you do this you will help your child become more aware of his own feelings. As awareness increases, you can help

your child label his own feelings. If you got an update from the teacher that your child had a rough time with peers that day, spend time talking with him about how it felt. Help him to express his feelings to you by using words.

Offer Choices Offering choices to your child gives him a sense of control. If you know that your child has difficulty around transitions such as clean up time, help him ease through this time by offering a choice — "Do you want to clean up the blocks first or the race cars?" Just be sure to limit the number of choices to two or three. Too many choices can make a child feel overwhelmed or over-stimulated.

Make Sure Your Child is Getting Plenty of Sleep Children with ADD / ADHD often have difficulties with sleep. When kids don't get enough sleep they are more irritable and moody, have more trouble tolerating stress, are more easily frustrated and overall symptoms of ADD / ADHD will be worse during the day.

Model Good Anger Management Yourself It is very hard for children with ADD / ADHD to regulate their own emotions, but the more and more you can do to help your child understand his feelings and be more aware of alternative, more positive ways to react the better. One way to do this is through example. Teach by example, by not only responding in an appropriate manner, but also by talking through the process so your child will better understand.

Read Books Together Go to the library and pick out books that address feelings, especially related to anger, frustration, rejection, isolation, sadness, or any other difficult emotion your child frequently experiences. Ask the librarian for recommendations. Read these stories together with your child and discuss the feelings. Discuss the ways the character handles their feelings. How do the characters react? Could they have reacted differently? How might you react when faced with the same situation? Problem solve situations together and discuss positive steps characters can take.

Spend Special Time Together Make sure you set aside regular times each day to spend one on one time with your child. Make this time together positive, loving and nurturing.

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White noise may be as effective as drugs for ADHD

Source: Paul Taylor, Globe & Mail, Sep 10

Children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, or ADHD, are often prescribed powerful medications to help them stay focused in school. But adding white noise to a classroom may be just as effective as drugs at aiding learning among these pupils, suggest the surprising results of a Scandinavian study.

The research, led by Goran Soderlund of Stockholm University was carried out on 51 students at a secondary school in Norway.

The children were first assessed for their ability to pay attention in class. They were then given a test in which they had to remember as many items as possible from a list read out loud – either in the presence or absence of white noise. The results showed that children who normally have difficulty paying attention actually performed better when the white noise was turned on.

The researchers aren't sure why white noise – which is made up of random signals – seems to benefit the inattentive. But Dr. Soderlund noted that people with ADHD lack adequate levels of dopamine – a chemical messenger in the brain. He speculates they are easily distracted because the reduced availability of dopamine means the brain is operating at a suboptimal level of activity.

“You see people with ADHD often have difficulty sitting still. They are tapping their fingers or moving their feet,” he said. “I think that activity translates into a kind of neural-noise in the brain – and it's their way of increasing their arousal and attention.”

In a similar fashion, random white noise may boost neural activity so the brain works more efficiently, enabling the students to focus on their studies. Writing in the journal *Behavioral and Brain Functions*, the researchers predict their findings “could be of particular importance for the significant population of parents that are uneasy about the use of medication” for treating ADHD.

Still, there's a lot more work to do before researchers can recommend the use of white noise in schools – especially classes that include both attentive and inattentive pupils. That's because the random sound hinders the learning abilities of the students who normally pay attention. For them, it's just too much noise and they get distracted.

“Our study shows that different brains need different levels of external noise to work properly,” he said.

The white noise used in the study was blasted at 78 decibels. “That's the level of your vacuum cleaner – it is a really, really harsh sound,” Dr. Soderlund acknowledged.

He is now experimenting with different sound levels to find an optimal level for everyone. But if one can't be found, he suggests ADHD students could wear earphones that provide them with white noise – without distracting the other students.

9 tips for advocating for your child at school

1. **Know your child's rights** – Get to know the policies and rules of your school board, most can be found on the school board's website.
2. **Keep written notes** – write down all important meetings with the school, with dates, in the order that they happened.
3. **Remind the school of your right to “informed consent”** – the right to make important health decisions, most importantly regarding medication, as your child's legal guardian.
4. Make sure school staff know that you know the rules.
5. Before any meeting ask who will be there to represent the school.
6. In important meetings take notes, make no commitments, and sign nothing. Consider bringing a friend or advocate as a witness to the meeting.
7. Take time to discuss anything proposed with your child's health care team, therapists and professionals, & supporters. A balanced discussion of your child's needs will lead to better results.
8. Stay calm and professional.
9. When you think you need legal help because of a school issue call the Child Advocacy Project at 416-977-4448 or www.childadvocacy.ca

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Families needed for description of the genetics of reading disabilities study at the Hospital for Sick Children

Source: Leaning Disabilities Association Ontario

Families are needed for a research project at Sick Kids, which is investigating the genetic basis of reading disabilities. We require the participation of families and their children, age 6 to 16 years, who have reading problems. Parents will receive a report describing their child's test results, which may be helpful in educational planning. All testing will take place at Sick Kids.

Abundant evidence suggests that reading disabilities run in families and that both genetic and environmental factors influence the predisposition to having reading problems. The aim of this study is to identify genes that may contribute to reading disabilities by examining genes that are thought to be involved in the biological basis of reading. We will also investigate the genetics of associated skills including language, spelling, math, attention, and working memory.

One full day of psycho-educational testing for the child will take place at the Hospital for Sick Children. Parents will receive a report describing their child's test results which may be helpful in the educational planning. A small blood sample is taken from parents and child.

Results from the study may improve the understanding of how and what genes are involved in reading disabilities. The research is funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

For more information, contact Tasha Carter at 416-813-8207 or email her at tasha.carter@sickkids.ca

.....and the winner is

Paul McCallum.

Congratulations Paul who won \$1549.50
at the Guelph Storm game on
Family Day.

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The PAAC on SEAC Effective Practices Handbook

Source: Leaning Disabilities Association Ontario

The Provincial Parent Associations Advisory Committee (PAAC) on SEAC Effective Practices Handbook is a new comprehensive guide to effective practices on Special Education Advisory Committees. Select the link for the 106 page handbook

http://www.ldao.ca/documents/SEAC/2010/PAAC_ON_SEAC_Effective_Practices_Handbook_Oct2010.pdf

Making Good Friends – Helping your Child Make Good Friends

Source: Ann Logsdon, About.com

Does your child with a learning disability seem drawn to kids that may not be the best choice for healthy friendships or those with behavior problems? This is common among children with learning disabilities, who are at-risk for being socially left out, may need your help in choosing positive friends. These children may make unhealthy choices because of their own low self-esteem and the isolation that can come from having a learning disability.

Help your child make positive choices by teaching him the characteristics of good friends:

- Do not bully other children.
- Are kind to animals and younger children.
- Are respectful of others.
- Support you and are happy for you when you win a race, get a good grade, or have some other positive happening in your life.
- Avoid gossiping and are loyal to other friends, even when they are not around.
- Follow school rules and do not try to talk you into breaking rules, lying, cheating, stealing, or other activities that can hurt you or others.

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You can teach these ideas to your child in ways appropriate to her age and developmental level.

- Model these characteristics yourself and encourage others in the household to follow them as well.
- Look for teachable moments to talk about these concepts with your child. For example, if she shares information about other children in her class who were disciplined for bullying, ask her guiding questions about it. Was anyone hurt? Was the victim very upset? What could a good friend do to help the child feel better? What are some ways you could prevent bullying if another child asked you to help them pick on someone else?
- Have your child talk about people they enjoy being with. Ask them what they like about them. What is it about these people that makes them fun to be with?
- Share and exchange stories about others being good friends.

The Different Kids

Here's to the kids who are different.
 The kids who don't always get A's!
 The kids who have ears twice the size of
 their peers and noses that go on for days.
 Here's to the kids who are different,
 The kids they call crazy or dumb.
 The kids who don't fit, with guts and with
 grit, who dance to a different drum!
 Here's to the kids who are different,
 The kids with the mischievous streak.
 For when they have grown, as history's
 shown, It's the difference that makes them
 unique.

Digby Wolfe

Positive Effects of ADHD

Source: Centre for ADD/ADHD Advocacy, Canada

Many people with ADHD can be highly intelligent and creative. Although these can be great gifts, they occur along with the symptoms of ADHD and are not caused by the ADHD. Many people with ADHD do feel that they are able to think “outside the box” and do credit this skill to their ADHD.

Some ADHD traits that can be perceived as positive or negative are:

- A high energy level – hyperactivity
- Being able to hyperfocus – unable to change focus
- Orientated to action – impatient
- Persistent – stubborn, obsessive
- Daring – drawn to high risk
- Entertaining – class clown

LDs by the numbers: Putting it all into Perspective

Source: Learning Disabilities Association of Canada

We tell our politicians, doctors and school systems that one out of every 10 people has learning disabilities. That alone should be enough to draw attention. Sadly it does not because it has no meaning. It is time to change that. Let's start by talking numbers.

Using the one-in-ten formula, let's say that 3.4 million Canadians have learning disabilities.

- That's a little less than the population of greater Montreal;
- It's a bit less than the entire population of Alberta; and
- It's roughly the same number of people the population of Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and

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Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Northwest Territories, Yukon and Nunavut combined.

Compared to other important health and social issues, there are at least

- 25 times more people have learning disabilities than have Autism Spectrum Disorder;
- 64 times more people have learning disabilities than have prostate cancer; and
- 76 times more people have learning disabilities than have breast cancer.

I would argue that there is a much higher level of awareness about breast and prostate cancer and autism than there is about learning disabilities. As a community, we can draw these comparisons to the attention of decision makers. When the arguments arise that cancer kills and that autism affects every aspect of a person's life, we should say with authority that the same is true for learning disabilities.

Canada's demographic composition is changing, so it is important to think ahead. By 2031, there will be 3.6 to 4.1 million Canadians with learning disabilities. Importantly, the proportion of people with learning disabilities by age group will shift over time—a gradual decline in preschoolers and the school-aged population and a rise in the number of seniors. The largest single group of people with learning disabilities will be those people in post secondary education and those entering or making up the workforce. These findings have important implications for everyone working in the field of learning disabilities.

We must change how we present this information so that others gain an intellectual and emotional understanding of the magnitude of the issue. Readers wishing more detailed information about the population of people living with learning disabilities and projections to the year 2031, are invited to access, "LD by the Numbers: Estimates of the Prevalence of Learning Disabilities in Canada" (March 19, 2010) available online at www.LDExperience.ca. Click on the library tab to navigate to the report.

Writer: Kathryn Burke works, on a part time basis, as the Executive Director of the Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta.

Info from Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario

Each year, the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO) presents Practical Applications of Current Research for Parents and Professionals, a series of workshops that provides families, educators, and the community with important information about emerging research from The Hospital for Sick Children on learning, teaching, learning disabilities, ADHD, and parenting.

Upcoming workshops

The Emotional Impact of Learning Disabilities
March 16, 2011, March 17, 2011, Toronto
Guest Speaker: Christina Ferri

Dealing with Difficult Behaviours
March 30, 2011, Toronto
Speaker: Dr. Audrey Huberman Ed.D

Costs and registration information can be found at www.ldao.ca.

Websites to check out

<http://www.tvokids.com/framesets/grownUps.htm>
TV Ontario's Parents Home work help for elementary school students.

www.caddac.ca Centre for ADHD/ADD Advocacy, Canada

www.totallyadd.com Liberates people from the fear, shame, and stigma.

www.readingmadeeasy.ca - Assistive Technology

Guelph Storms tickets still available for
Fri Mar 18/11 7:30 pm vs Owen Sound
Attack. \$10.00 each, call 519-837-2050

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Upcoming Events

DVD Series presented by the Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County

- "Parenting the Explosive Child", a collaborative problem solving approach by Ross Green and J. Stuard Ablon.
- "It's So Much Work to be Your Friend", helping the learning disabled child find social success by Richard Lavoie
- A Barbara Colorosa movie
- Parenting with Humour

Series to begin at the end of March - watch for flyers with the details.

Parent Workshop Series: Setting Up Your Child For Success

This workshop series includes three parts. The workshop is designed as a self-paced online workshop to meet the needs and time commitments of busy parents. The workshop learning outcomes will be met through the exploration of the content provided within each unit, external websites, and additional references provided at the end of the workshop.

Part One: If Your Child Is Struggling

Part Two: Understanding the IPRC Process

Part Three: ADHD: The Home and School Connection

Cost: \$15

Contact Email: courses@ldao.ca

Unit Session information:

www.shop.access.ldao.ca/index.php?main_page=index&cPath=1

Donation/Membership Form

Name: _____ Address: _____

City: _____ Province: _____ Postal Code: _____

Tel: (H) _____ (W) _____ Email: _____

Annual Dues: Family/individual \$50; Student \$20; Professional \$75

I am interested in making a donation: _____ and/or volunteering: _____

Membership Advantages:

Awareness and advocacy efforts on behalf of those with learning disabilities or ADHD at the local, provincial and national level, subscription to local and provincial newsletters, information on learning disabilities and ADHD use of local resources and support services. Please mail this form and cheque to: Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario
365 Bloor Street East, Suite 1004, Toronto, ON M4W 3L4

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