

LD *Connections*

December 2015

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see what we are up to**

<https://www.facebook.com/LDAWellingtonCounty>



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Welcome

We hope people are enjoying our more frequent newsletters. We had initially thought that we would have less content but it seems there is always lots of great information to share!

We welcome feedback from anyone around content, format or anything else you would like to share!

December, while being a time for lots of festivities, can be a time of great stress and we wanted to give some helpful tips on that.

Please remember our Program Coordinator, Cheri, is starting to reach out to the community. She is available during the day, usually Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday to answer any questions that people may have or requests for resources. Our goal is to create a much larger presence! To that end, Cheri and Christine, our treasurer have been on *The Grand 92.1 FM* recently discussing Learning Disabilities. This is something we

*learning disabilities
different paths....same destination*

Thank you to all who are supporting us and the United Way by purchasing Guelph Storm hockey tickets for some games in advance of our 50/50 game! See inside for the dates, we still have tickets available but they are going fast!!!

Each month we are happy to support other groups that are holding workshops and information sessions. See a few listed at the end of this newsletter and watch your email for further details.

Our board of directors is made up of an amazing group of volunteers. We would like to officially welcome Cheryl Balkind to our group. We are always looking for interested people to join our board and help contribute to making a difference. If you are interested please contact us at info@ldawc.ca or 519-837-2050.

Help Support LDAWC and The United Way!

By purchasing tickets to these Storm games we are able to run our 50/50 draw. This is a significant fundraiser for us every year so help us be able to participate.

Tickets are \$17.50 each and \$1 from each ticket will be donated to the United Way.

Game dates are as follows:

Jan 17, 2016 3:00pm vs. Peterborough

Jan 29, 2016 7:00pm vs. North Bay

To order tickets email info@ldawc.ca or call (519)837-2050



Helping at Home

<http://www.idao.ca/introduction-to-ldsadhd/introduction-to-ldsadhd/what-helps/helping-at-home/>

Learning disabilities can have a large impact on a person's home-life as well. Social difficulties, hyperactivity, disorganization and communication-issues can all affect a family, as can the stress that people bring home when their days at work or school are difficult. Additionally, having one member of a family who requires more help can leave other siblings feeling ignored; and having a child who struggles is a stressor on any marriage.



In order for families to weather these issues, the first step is ensuring that all members understand and recognize the effects of LDs/ADHD. Speaking openly (and courteously) about the issues, rather than pretending they are not there, can go a long way to decreasing a family's stress.

Family counselling is an option worth exploring. When all members are equally stressed, having an outsider guide discussions may be the best option. It is important to remember that all members of a family are affected by the struggles of a single member, and so the stress of all members must be considered. When a family can work through hard times in a healthy, productive way, they can forge an even deeper bond.

Families can also do much to help with developing solid and effective compensatory strategies, since they know the person with LDs best. Group problem-solving around compensation can help a family member feel supported and confident, giving him or her more confidence to try the compensations at school. It also allows the person with the LDs the chance to practice their skills and strategies in a safe environment.



Looking for a gift for your child's teacher, tutor or coach?

Consider making a donation on behalf of the special person in your child's life to the Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County. The gift will be put to good use and help us continue to provide valuable programs.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

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Peer Support Network



Peer-support networks for families of children with disabilities can be a valuable resource for parents. Parent groups support each other, share information, and work together to create meaningful change. Parents facing opposition from school boards on accommodating children with special needs are encouraged to contact these groups for advocacy strategies and support.

LDAWC is planning to implement a program that will match up interested parents with volunteers who can provide support for families whose child has been diagnosed with a learning disability. These contacts will be willing to connect with other families to act as a mentor or guide in assisting another family with navigating the path of getting support. There will be a social event component to this program to help foster the sense of community and connection while reducing stigma and a sense of isolation.

Watch your email and our website for more information as this program takes shape!

Preventing Parental Burn Out: Coping Strategies for Parents of Children with Learning Disabilities

University of California - <http://ucsfhr.ucsf.edu/index.php/assist/article/preventing-parental-burn-out/>

When a child is diagnosed with learning disabilities, all of the attention is focused on helping the child. However, parents also need assistance in coping with their own feelings and frustrations.

Research has shown that parents of children with learning disabilities had very elevated scores on the Parenting Stress Index, signifying that they perceived far more stress in their role as parents than did parents of children without learning problems. By increasing coping skills, parents can reduce their own stress and can become effective in reducing stress in their children.



Internal Stress

Expectations of parents about their child lie at the root of burnout. When expectations about parenting are not met, the first thought is “What did I do wrong?” Therefore, parents must learn how to develop realistic expectations and how to recognize when negative self-talk defeats effective coping.

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Management Strategies

Identify your own self-defeating assumptions and think of alternative messages. Be kind to yourself and accept yourself and child as fallible. Note and use personal strengths and talents.

External Stress

Neighbors, friends, and relatives don't understand why such a normal-acting child is having academic problems. Teachers frequently don't fully understand the ramifications of a child's problem. Parents are called upon by the school to help make decisions about the child's academic program, but often feel helpless because of their own lack of understanding. External stressors are those that are situational, and often involve relationships with others.

Management Strategies

Problem-solving techniques, time management, and goal setting are helpful when dealing with stressors associated with raising children and running a household. Since coping with a child with learning disabilities is so emotionally draining, parents also are encouraged to develop assertiveness skills, intimacy skills, and a support system.

Know your limits and be realistic about what you can accomplish. Say no to unreasonable demands. Learn about your child's problems and needs, so that you can be an active participant in school and resource meetings.



Physiological Stress

Parents of children with learning disabilities need to recognize that children with learning disabilities require exceptional amounts of energy. In order to replenish energy, parents need to be sure they get sufficient rest, eat well-balanced meals, and exercise regularly. Make recreation and relaxation a priority, so that you have some time off during the week. (Studies have shown that psychologically healthy families have less-than-perfect house keeping!)

Parenting children with learning disabilities presents special challenges, not only with the child's everyday problems, but also the associated social and emotional problems of school failure. Better coping strategies and parent groups can provide both skill training and emotional support for parents of children with learning disabilities.



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Presents:

A Day with Rick Lavoie

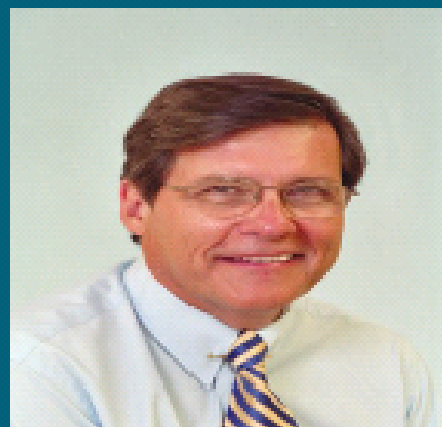
Information and Inspiration for Parents and Teachers of Children with Learning Disabilities

Workshop: *It's So Much Work to Be Your Friend:*

Helping the Child with Learning Disabilities Find Social Success

Among the topics covered will be:

- The impact of social incompetence upon the daily life of children.
- The direct correlation between social skill deficits and learning disabilities.
- The generic nature of social skill deficits.
- A review of the history of social skill instruction and the weaknesses of the current approaches.
- The impact of paralinguistics (non verbal language) on the development of social competence.
- Helping the child develop friendships and positive peer relationships.
- The use of Social Skill Autopsies to improve interaction skills.
- Teaching the Hidden Social Curriculum to children to improve peer acceptance.
- Factors that enhance children's social acceptance.



Rick Lavoie holds three degrees in Special Education, is an author of several books and has created various award winning films.

Rick has delivered his message to more than 500,000 parents and professionals around the world.

Saturday, February 13, 2016

1:00 - 5:00 pm

Aldershot High School (Auditorium)
50 Fairwood Pl W,
Burlington, ON L7T 1E5

Tickets:

\$100 (Non-Member), \$80 (Member)

Register Online at

www.LDAHalton.ca

Learning Disabilities Association of Halton

905-333-1977 Info@LDAHalton.ca www.LDAHalton.ca

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Parenting Children with Learning Disabilities, ADHD, and Related Disorders

<http://ldaamerica.org/what-do-parents-of-children-with-learning-disabilities-adhd-and-related-disorders-deal-with/>

Children with learning disabilities, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and related disorders puzzle parents because of their many abilities and disabilities. It can also be difficult to understand how much of their behavior is the nature of the condition and how much is oppositional. It is all too easy for parents to sense a child's feelings of inadequacy and then feel bad as a parent. Parenting approaches that include clear, concise instructions; structure without rigidity; nurturing a child's gifts and interests; and constant approval of positive behavior help parents feel better and help children feel safe. It takes time for both children and parents to embrace the concept that being different does not mean being inferior and, in fact, can be a good thing. Parents need to be nurtured and praised to help them nurture and praise their children. Most parents use almost every resource they have to help their children flourish, and still, they worry they are not doing a good enough job. Usually they are!



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Discovering the Problem - Discovering a child's special needs is often a confusing and painful process for parents. First of all, because learning difficulties can be subtle, multiple, and difficult to pinpoint, it can be hard for parents to know whether things are normal or not. Especially with a first child, parents may not know when to expect vocalizing, playing with sounds, and learning to speak. It is also difficult to distinguish between a healthy, very active toddler and a hyperactive toddler with ADHD. What is the difference between the child who is a little clumsy (which will be outgrown) and a child having significant motor skills problems? What are the indications of children being off course in their ability to listen and follow directions? It may take some time for parents to recognize and articulate concerns.

Even after a diagnosis, parents often face a whole gamut of emotions before they can grapple effectively with the stark truth that their child has learning disabilities. Parents may move through emotions like Kubler-Ross' (1980) stages of grief, initially denying there is a problem and rationalizing why it's not a problem, then having to deal with the fear, the anger, and the guilt of having a child who experiences many difficulties. It is normal for parents to want to blame somebody – anybody – and to bargain in the sense of thinking that changing neighborhoods, schools, or doctors might make the problems go away. Grieving for what might have been follows, and finally parents can come to accept the child's strengths and weaknesses and try to figure out a helpful plan of action (Kubler-Ross, 1980; Smith, 1995).

Neurologic Basis - Parents often feel guilty because they feel their child's learning disabilities, ADHD, and related disorders are somehow their fault. But, that is not true. Parents may tend to feel that if they had been stricter, demanded more, forced more practice, it would have changed the situation. That would not have changed the situation.

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Children and adults with learning disabilities often have clusters of difficulties that lead to academic failure or low achievement. These disabilities emanate from a neurophysiological base. It is as though the switchboard of the brain short circuits some of the information coming in, scrambles it, and then loose wires interfere with the ability to get that information out. This neurological dysfunction contributes to disorder, disorganization, and problems with communication. Parents can be reassured that these problems are organic and are not caused by external factors (Smith, 1991; 1995).

For years there have been nay-sayers who claim that there is no such thing as learning disabilities – that there are lazy children and motivated students, that there are stupid children and bright students. However, technological advances over the last 5-10 years have laid those issues to rest. Brain researchers using magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) have shown differences between the brains of individuals with learning disabilities and those without (Dr. Martha Denckla, personal communication). Researchers have also found images of ADHD in the central nervous system (Dr. Xavier Castellanos, personal communication). The architecture of the brain of the child with learning disabilities is different.

Brain researchers also point out that neuronal links in the brain typically travel in particular patterns, but in individuals with learning disabilities, they are scattershot all over the brain, resulting in unusual linkages (Dr. Gordon Sherman, quoted in *The Doctor is In*, 1988). Consequently, exceptional disabilities are often linked with exceptional abilities. As an example, for over 35 years, graduates of the Lab School of Washington have become very successful in the arts as graphic artists, film makers, fashion designers, jewelry makers, actors, architects, photographers, musicians, dancers, and computer graphic specialists. A number of the graduates have also become highly successful entrepreneurs and business executives. Parents can take reassurance in the fact that many abilities usually accompany the constellation of problems or cluster of difficulties that constitute learning disabilities.

Understanding Behaviors - It is often confusing to parent children with learning disabilities, ADHD, and related disorders. One of the biggest confusions and challenges parents face is the large hiatus between what the children can do and what they cannot do. Often they are very smart, know a great deal, and reason well, yet cannot read or write. School teachers and family may be telling them to try harder, and they are usually trying their hearts out. They tend to work 10 times harder than everyone else does, but still they may be called lazy.

Another aspect of the confusion for parents lies in how hard it can be to distinguish between a child who can't do something and a child who won't do something. For parents, it can be vexing not to be able to control a 5 or 6-year-old or to know whether to push an adolescent or reduce expectations. In this confusion, parents tend to ask, What is wrong with me? rather than What challenges is my child having to face? Shifting this focus can be therapeutic for parents and children.

Children may seem to be having behavior problems when, in fact, they are confronting difficulties in accomplishing a task. Children tend to withdraw or act out when a task is too demanding. It can help parents to know that when children say they hate something that usually serves as a wonderful diagnostic tool, indicating what is difficult or impossible for them. For example, when a child loves dance, art, and music but hates drama, it could be that the child has a speech/language problem. When a child hates math or reading, these are likely

areas of difficulty. Conversely, what children like and want to do usually serve as indicators of their strengths.

While a diagnosis will help to some extent, the job of sorting out these issues on a day-to-day basis is no small task. On a planning level, confusion occurs because teachers, doctors, psychologists, and social workers may disagree not only on diagnosis but on the best treatments or programs for a child. This can be frustrating and anxiety-provoking for parents who have to pull all the information together and decide what to do, right or wrong. Additionally, at home and elsewhere, parents must anticipate problems and sense when their children are tired, or frustrated, or about to explode. Parents must trust their guts as to how long the child can last at a party, or sit in a restaurant, or be pleasant with visitors. While parents have to do this with all children, it is much more challenging with this population.

Parents of children with special needs are constantly trying to puzzle out what's working, what's not working, what causes the child's frustration, and what brings the child pleasure. Parents have to analyze everything, think carefully, reflect on activities of each day, and problem solve to recognize the child's strengths, interests, and areas of difficulty, and come up with plans for managing the child's behavior and supporting the child's development.

The Family with the Child with Special Needs - Learning disabilities can be hard on a family. One parent, often the mother, may recognize and face the problem sooner or more readily than the other. Misunderstanding and conflict can result. Brothers and sisters often resent the amount of attention given to a child with special needs and may proclaim knowingly that the child is a spoiled brat who is perfectly capable. Grandparents tend to blame parents for not doing enough, not being disciplined enough, organized enough, or not giving enough direct help to the child. Neighbors can be intolerant if the child is very hyperactive or has low frustration tolerance and tends to explode or cry at each hurdle.

On a daily basis, children with special needs typically raise the irritant factor in family life. They tend to leave everyone on edge because their behavior is unpredictable, erratic, inconsistent and full of ups-and-downs. Children with learning disabilities and ADHD are usually very disorganized. They have trouble dealing with sequences and order, so they don't plan well. They are distracted easily and often impulsive. Just getting washed and dressed in the morning can be an arduous task. Sometimes resulting in explosions on the part of the children, their parents, or both. Clashes frequently emanate from a child's misunderstanding of instructions or going off on a tangent. To complicate the problem, when wrong or criticized, children with learning disabilities tend to fall apart, withdraw into day dreaming, or strike out in one form or another.

Emotionally this population is very immature and fragile. These children tend to personalize things that have nothing to do with them. For example, when family members are laughing at something, children with special needs are often convinced that they are being laughed at, and, as a result, they get very upset. Furthermore, their moods swing widely, and a child may be laughing one moment, crying the next (Smith, 1995). This emotional lability is hard to live with. Children with learning disabilities and ADHD are prone to depression (Smith, 1991). Their sense of defeat and failure is contagious and, sometimes, the whole family feels their helplessness and despair. Often adults, otherwise incredibly competent in their daily lives, feel incredibly incompetent when with these children. This can take a toll on parents, and support

and education may be necessary to bolster parents' sense of confidence and competence in effectively parenting the child with learning disabilities.

Parenting Strategies

Addressing difficulties with time and space. Space and time are organizing systems involved in every task, every performance and every aspect of life. Yet, because of central nervous system dysfunction, neural immaturity that tends to disorder, and poor organization, many children with learning disabilities are very disorganized – unable to keep their rooms anything but a complete mess, unable to accomplish even the simplest task in a timely fashion, unable to follow instructions, likely to lose belongings frequently, and appearing lost in time and space. Problems with sequencing explain why they have trouble remembering the days of the week, seasons, the alphabet, counting, and the order of tasks and instructions. These problems are why they have trouble beginning projects, sustaining them, and finishing them. Poor organization not only affects home life and relationships with friends, who will take only a certain amount of forgetting and lateness, but also academic life. Poor organization means forgetting to bring home the homework or not having the time management skills to meet deadlines. It affects being able to establish priorities -what is most important to study, what is less so. Often this disorganized behavior looks oppositional and hostile, when actually it stems from the very nature of the learning disability.

Parents and teachers of children with learning disabilities can help them by providing clear structuring of time and space. To help children with structuring space, visual aids can be useful. For example, shelves can be used instead of drawers so children can see where things belong and how to put them back. The use of other visual cues, such as lists or labels, can augment efforts to help children organize tasks and belongings.

Developing understandable and reinforced routines can help with structuring time. Breaking routines and other tasks into manageable chunks and communicating what must be done first, next, and last is important. A large number of children with learning disabilities have language learning disabilities, which means they have trouble deciphering language, listening, and following instructions. Because of this, it is also helpful if parents and teachers limit the number of words used in giving directions, using simple phrases such as. Go upstairs. Close the window. Come down.

Parents can also assist their children by engaging them in planning activities. Examples include planning celebrations, planning a garden, organizing what needs to be done to collect food for the homeless, or any other kind of planning that involves developing lists, going shopping, checking off the lists, and then charting the tasks still to be done (which can then in turn be checked off). All of these projects are useful, engaging, and have the hidden agenda of working on organization skills.

Addressing relationship difficulties. While children with learning disabilities face challenges academically, a problem that many parents find more troubling than difficulties with the 3 R's (reading, writing, arithmetic) is the 4th R: relationships. Many children with learning disabilities cannot play successfully with even one child and certainly not two. They don't read social signals: facial expressions, gestures, or tones of voice any more than they read letters or words. Additionally, many of these children are literal and concrete; they cannot deal with subtleties, nuances, inferences, or multiple meanings. This affects family life and peer

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relationships because they often cannot understand jokes, subtle teasing, or sarcasm. One of the consequences of this is that they have to be taught explicitly how to relate to others. Parents have to work with them on reading faces, reading gestures and movements, and learning what is and is not appropriate to say. Parents may have to coach them through common social situations until they develop appropriate interpersonal behaviors.

Parents can provide their children with practice in anticipating what might happen in various social situations. They can role-play with their children about what to do or say when they want to join a game that their cousins or friends are playing, or when grandparents say, “Read this to me.” Some parents have found it useful to show the wrong way of handling a situation and then to have their children critique them. The process of acting situations out, problem solving, and talking about the situations, helps many children with learning disabilities and ADHD think through various options.

Promoting self-esteem. Early on, children with learning disabilities begin to notice that others can do tasks easily that are intensely difficult for them, and they begin to feel bad about themselves. They may receive frequent criticism or, at best, global praise such as “You are doing better” (better than what?), “You are doing fine” (what is fine?), “You are making progress” (what is progress?). Criticism damages self-esteem, and global praise is often too abstract to be meaningful to concrete thinkers.

By training themselves to comment on the positive as much as possible, by offering concrete comments on what their child is doing well, and by using very specific praise, parents will cultivate desired behaviors and boost their children’s self-esteem (Smith, 2001). Examples of specific praise include phrases such as: You finished the assignment, You are listening carefully, You are sitting properly and looking at me, You remembered to bring home the work you have do, You cleaned the table after dinner, You picked up the bag the lady dropped. Thank you. With specific praise, a child can be very clear on what behaviors are liked and expected.

Visual, concrete proof of progress also helps children notice and feel confident about their progress and accomplishments. Home made certificates, gold stars, stickers, charts, and check lists with lots of checks can be used when children work hard on tasks at home, such as remembering to take out the garbage, shopping without forgetting, setting the table correctly, making their beds, and putting the toilet paper into the holder when the last piece has gone.

Parents and teachers also boost children’s self-esteem by seeking out what they can do well and fostering and supporting these areas to the hilt. Whether it is an art form, science, nature, photography, computer work, selling things, inventing, or telling stories, children with learning disabilities need parental support to become the best in this area at home and to bring their talent into school. It won’t help them feel better about their academic performance, but it will help them feel better about themselves.

Teaching children that many people have overcome difficulties to become successful is another valuable parenting strategy. One way to do this is to read or play tapes of biographies in which children or adults have had to struggle to achieve their goals -adventures where the characters got lost or had to fight sharks or other beasts; stories of achieving despite illness or disability; or stories of fighting prejudice or unfairness. Children enjoy and benefit from discussing these kinds of challenges. Additionally, when parents can introduce their children to

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highly effective members of society who struggle with disabilities, particularly disabilities similar to those the child faces, children can hold their heads higher. All members of society who are functioning well with learning disabilities and ADHD – firemen, policemen, plumbers, day care center workers, business executives, park rangers, recreation coaches, athletes, and celebrities can serve as role models and inspiration for children with learning disabilities.

When parents learn to cherish diversity, their children learn there are many different ways to celebrate birthdays, get married, raise children, and so forth (Smith, 1994). These children feel better about themselves when they understand that doing things differently, learning differently, being different is OK, and that differences can enrich our lives. Artist Chuck Close said, *I think accomplishment is figuring out your own idiosyncratic solutions. Accomplishment is being able to do what you want to do even if you don't do it the way everybody else does it.* (Smith, 1991, p. 703, and personal communication).

Empowerment. Children with learning disabilities and ADHD often feel powerless and inadequate. They tend to be passive learners and need to be totally involved in activities to make them active learners. Parents can encourage hands-on activities, such as cooking, cleaning, shopping, and running errands to show children that they can make things happen. These learning activities have the additional benefit of resulting in tangible, visible products appreciated by the whole family.

Parents must beware of doing too much for children with learning disabilities because that does not empower them. The effects of active engagement are in fact neurological. California neurobiologist Marion Diamond's research (Diamond & Hopson, 1998) shows that the sights and sounds of enriched environments cause dendrites to form neural pathways that she calls *magic trees of the mind*. Her data demonstrate that the curious mind, stimulated to further inquiry, makes the central cortex thicker, activating the brain to further enhance learning (Smith, 1995).

Parents can also empower their children to view obstacles as challenges and to know that they have a lot going for them and a team behind them. It helps children with learning disabilities when parents can adopt a problem-solving mode rather than always providing the answers. It helps to say, *What can we do about this? What options do we have? Let's figure out where we can find the information we need instead of doling out the right answer much of the time.* Parenting children with learning disabilities and ADHD demands enormous amount of problem solving, and on top of that, parents need to help turn their children into outstanding problem solvers. Grappling with adversity, figuring out strategies that work for them, and learning when to ask for help and who to ask are crucial life skills that these children must learn and will hold them in good stead.

Parents can foster curiosity in their children and lay the framework for thinking and questioning. When children's minds are questioning everything, their bodies are active, and their hands are into things, children are helped to achieve the highest cognitive development possible. Parents work with their children to develop critical thinking skills when they have them look at photos or drawings and piece together what could be going on; when the family watches a TV show and the children are asked what the big message was; when a mystery story has been read and the children guess who did it; or when a family plays games like chess, checkers, Clue®, and Stratego™. Children often can teach their parents how to work computers, and programs like HyperStudio® allow children to draw, to photograph, to speak, Generously funded by

to scan objects from the Internet, and to make rewarding, satisfying multimedia presentations that simultaneously use and develop many skills.

Cultivating Parental Optimism - Because it can be frustrating to parent children with learning disabilities and behavioral challenges, it is encouraging for parents to know that some of the negative behaviors of their children very often become positive attributes in adulthood. For example, the most stubborn children often turn out to have fierce determination. The most manipulative children often turn out to be fabulous entrepreneurs, leaders, or politicians. The children who argue all the time like jail house lawyers actually become lawyers, and those who doodle and draw all through school may well become artists in adulthood. In 35 years of experience at the Lab School in Washington, DC, this pattern has been evidenced again and again. The boy who sold his mother's jewelry for 25 cents apiece grew up to be a real estate mogul. The boys who were tinkers, taking everything apart, became mechanical engineers. The girl who tried to help her classmates avoid arguing, who was teased because she was always trying to make peace and never projected any opinion of her own, became a mediator – and a good one at that! Numbers of very hyperactive youngsters have turned out to be very energetic, productive entrepreneurs. The inflexible one way kids have often become scientists who study one problem in depth for many years or airplane controllers who focus intensely on the task at hand. Many bright children with ADHD, who were impulsive, very distractible, and had poor attention spans, have grown up to be outstanding emergency health care specialists, paramedics, and firemen. In an emergency, their adrenaline is apparently stimulated, so they become highly focused, able to put their excellent analytic abilities to use while doing many tasks.



Self-care should be a priority for parents of children with learning disabilities. Parents themselves need nurturing to help nurture their child with special needs. They need to go out and have fun regularly. They need more sleep than other parents, for these children sap their energy, and their condition demands help from parents constantly. Finding supportive friends or relatives, or locating a support group or an online parent support community can provide a place for parents to vent frustrations and obtain valuable suggestions, strategies, and support. Laughter is also important for parents and the whole family. Children with learning disabilities and ADHD need to feel that it is not the end of the world that they have these disabilities – nuisances – and they need to laugh at some of the nonsense they go through. Parents, too, need lightness and humor. When parents can have fun with their children – even being silly and laughing – and can enjoy life as much as possible together, everyone benefits.

It is hard to be a grownup, difficult to be a parent, even more challenging to be a parent of a child with special needs when the parent must become the analyst, the interpreter, the problem solver, the cheerleader, the lawyer, the psychiatrist, the spiritual advisor, the organizer, the notetaker, the friend, companion, advocate, and disciplinarian. Most parents use every resource they have to help their child flourish, and yet, they worry they are not doing enough or a good enough job. Chances are parents are doing an incredibly fine job under difficult circumstances. Professionals need to realize and appreciate the heavy load carried by parents of children with learning disabilities, ADHD, and other related disorders.

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Mindful Families

<http://www.mindfulfamilies.ca/>

The more we are able to keep in mind the intrinsic wholeness and beauty of our children - especially when it is difficult to see - the more our ability to be mindful deepens.

Jon Kabat-Zinn

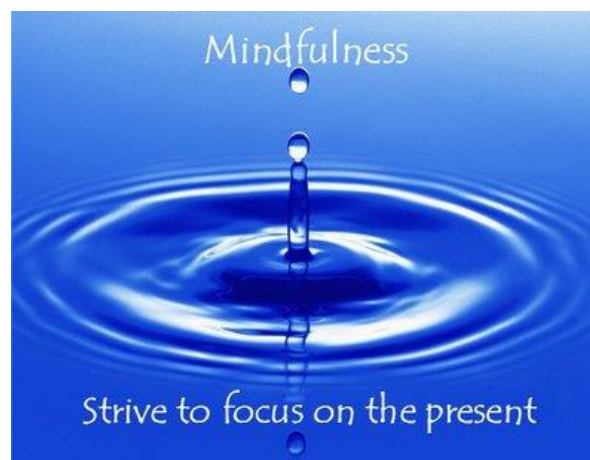
What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is being fully present in the moment; having a non-judgemental awareness of our moment-to-moment experiences as they are occurring rather than being lost in thought about the past or planning for the future. Through mindfulness practice we can learn to be less reactive and more intentional in our words and actions. We can become more intimately aware of our emotions and respond to them, rather than being swept away by them when they become very intense. Mindfulness practice can support us in leading a richer life as we learn to 'show up' and be present with all that life brings our way - whether it be pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.

Mindfulness practice has become increasingly popular as people experience the myriad benefits it can bring to our health and well-being. Cutting edge research continues to demonstrate the benefit of mindfulness practice to physical and mental health and also shows how engaging in mindfulness awareness and / or compassion practice can actually change the structure and functioning of the brain.

Mindful awareness can be developed through formal meditation practices, such as awareness of breath, mindful walking, mindful eating, body awareness, awareness through the senses. Through intentionally practicing to develop our awareness, in a non-judgemental way, we can then learn to bring this non-judgemental, present-moment awareness into our everyday lives... and into our parenting.

Mindfulness practice can also be very rewarding and beneficial to children.



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Glass of Water

Adapted from Putting Yourself First Seminar

A lecturer, when explaining stress management to an audience, raised a glass of water and asked “How heavy is this glass of water?” Answers ranged from 20g to 500g. The lecturer replied “The absolute weight doesn’t matter. It depends on how long you try to hold it.”

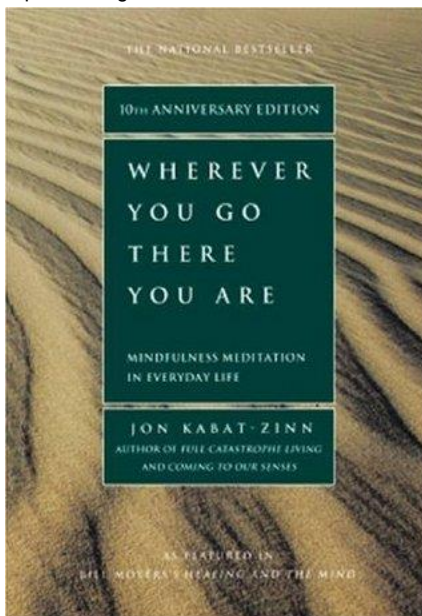
“If I hold it for a minute that’s not a problem. If I hold it for an hour I’ll have an ache in my arm. If I hold it for a day, you’ll have to call an ambulance. In each case it’s the same weight but the longer I hold it the heavier it becomes.”

“And that’s the way it is with stress management. If we carry our burdens all the time sooner or later, as the burden becomes increasingly heavy, we won’t be able to carry on. As with the glass of water you have to put it down for a while and rest before holding it again. When we’re refreshed, we can carry on with the burden. So before you return home to-night, put the burden of work down. Don’t carry it home. You can pick it up tomorrow. Whatever burdens you’re carrying now, let them down for a moment if you can. Relax; pick them up later after you’ve rested.”



Book – Wherever You Go There You Are

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/14096.Wherever_You_Go_There_You_Are



by Jon Kabat-Zinn

In this book, the author maps out a simple path for cultivating mindfulness in one's own life. It speaks both to those coming to meditation for the first time and to longtime practitioners, anyone who cares deeply about reclaiming the richness of his or her moments.

“Mindfulness means
paying attention
in a particular way;
On purpose, in
the present moment,
and non-judgmentally.”

Jon Kabat-Zinn

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Tech Talk – Mindfulness Apps

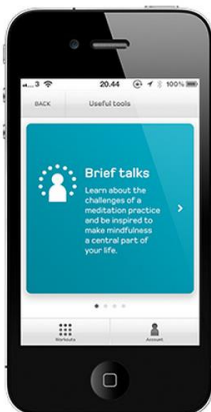
<http://www.mindful.org/mindfulness-apps-for-that/>

By our count, there are at least 22 meditation timers out there, ranging from \$0 to \$5 and varying in the extras they offer (would you like some nature sounds with that?). Taking a broader look at apps containing some sort of meditation or mindfulness component, we're looking at nearly 45 apps, some endorsed by clinical psychologists and others merely asking you to choose an emoticon to describe your state of mind. Here are three apps we're happy we downloaded, and they're available for Android and Apple devices.



Headspace (on-the-go) This slickly designed app provides 10-minute meditation sessions, with the first 10 days available free of charge. (Then, you can choose a subscription. The annual option offers the best rate, \$7.99/month.) You start with a brief body scan and then Andy Puddicombe, cofounder of Headspace, talks you through with easy banter and relatable instruction (“Don’t force your breath, your body already knows how to breathe”). The app provides animations about how the mind works and tips on how to sit and breathe. It also allows you to set meditation reminders and track your activity.

The Mindfulness App by MindApps (\$1.99) The voice that guides you through this meditation takes some getting used to (it’s a little on the whispery side), but the meditation technique itself is excellent—reminiscent of some of the practices offered by Jon Kabat-Zinn. This comes as little surprise, though, as the practices are guided by Catherine Polan Orzech, who teaches MBSR at Thomas Jefferson Hospital in Philadelphia. The app comes with guided meditation practices of 3, 5, 15, and 30 minutes in length. There’s also a silent meditation option and a brief body-scan practice. Like most meditation apps, you can customize your meditation and track your progress.



Mindfulness Meditation from Mental Workout lets you choose from six different lengths of meditation practice, written and narrated by Stephan Bodian, author of *Meditation for Dummies*. The guided meditation has a bit less, well, guidance, but that might be preferable for those who seek instruction but not a constant stream of it. Extras include a 10-minute relaxation exercise and a body-scan practice. You can get a subscription to the app for \$17 per year.

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Events



January 20, 2016, 6:30pm -8:30pm

Milton – Introduction to Executive Functioning and LDs/ADHD

This workshop provides participants with an understanding of the nature of executive functioning (higher order thinking skills including organization and problem-solving) and difficulties children with Learning Disabilities and ADHD may have in regulating themselves. Suggestions on how to support children with executive function difficulties will be introduced.

All workshop presentations offered through the Integra Program by the Child Development Institute. All workshops are available to parents for FREE and are made possible by an Ontario Ministry of Education Parents Reaching Out Grant.

Refreshments will be offered. Registration is REQUIRED.

Reserve your seat today by registering for individual workshops online at www.ldahalton.ca.

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February 13, 2016, 1:00pm -5:00pm

A Day with Rick Lavoie- It's So Much Work to Be Your Friend, Helping Children with Learning Disabilities Find Social Success

Where: Aldershot High School (Auditorium) 50 Fairwood Pl. W., Burlington ON

Among the topics covered will be:

- The impact of social incompetence upon the daily life of children.
- The direct correlation between social skill deficits and learning disabilities.
- The generic nature of social skill deficits.
- A review of the history of social skill instruction and the weaknesses of the current approaches.
- The impact of paralinguistics (non verbal language) on the development of social competence.
- Helping the child develop friendships and positive peer relationships.
- The use of Social Skill Autopsies to improve interaction skills.
- Teaching the Hidden Social Curriculum to children to improve peer acceptance.
- Factors that enhance children's social acceptance.

Tickets: \$100 (Non-Member), \$80 (Member)
Register Online at www.LDAHaltont.ca

February 24, 2016, 6:30pm -8:30pm

Oakville – Supporting Self-Reliance in Adolescents with LDs and ADHD

Where: @ Queen Elizabeth Park Community & Cultural Centre, Black Box Room
2302 Bridge Road, Oakville, ON L6L 3L5

This workshop will look closer at Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and how it may affect adolescents at school and at home. We will look at a specific approach that will show parents and teachers how to support an adolescent to gradually learn to become more independent.

All workshop presentations offered through the Integra Program by the Child Development Institute

All workshops are available to parents for FREE and are made possible by an Ontario Ministry of Education Parents Reaching Out Grant.

Refreshments will be offered. Registration is REQUIRED.

Reserve your seat today by registering for individual workshops online at www.ldahaltont.ca

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Visit us at: www.ldawc.ca

February 28, 2016, 9am -1:30pm

Toronto – Understanding Your Adult ADHD

Where: Japanese Canadian Cultural Center
6 Garamond Court (Wynford and DVP)
Toronto ON, M3C 1Z5

Cost: \$30 each or \$50 for two. Registration opens at 8:30

This informative and interactive workshop will be a mix of short presentations, discussion and sharing. The focus will be on understanding your individual ADHD and discovering how your symptoms may lead to impairments in the home, workplace and in relationships. A good portion of the day will be spent looking at useful strategies, tools and accommodations that may be helpful. The day will end with an open discussion on common roadblocks, frustrations, as well as successes.

Significant others and family members will also find this workshop helpful.

Featured Presenters and Facilitators:

- Dr. David Teplin, Adult Clinical Psychologist
- John Tucker PhD ACG, ADHD Coach
- Heidi Bernhardt, RN, President and ED CADDAC
- Russ LeBlanc, Radio Personality, Entrepreneur and Adult with ADHD

For full details and to register online visit our events section at www.caddac.ca

March 24, 2016, 6:30pm -8:30pm

Hamilton – Understanding Social Competence in Children with LDS/ADHD

Where: @ Melrose United Church, Auditorium
86 Homewood Avenue, Hamilton, ON L8P 2M4

In this workshop, we will discuss why children with Learning Disabilities and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder are at risk of experiencing social challenges with their peers. Participants will explore the development skills necessary for these children to be socially competent and successful. Strategies on how to understand and support social competence will be offered. This workshop is best suited for parents of children 12 years and under.

All workshop presentations offered through the Integra Program by the Child Development Institute. All workshops are available to parents for FREE and are made possible by an Ontario Ministry of Education Parents Reaching Out Grant.

Registration is REQUIRED. Refreshments will be offered.

Reserve your seat today by registering for individual workshops online at www.ldahalton.ca

Everybody is a genius. But, if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will spend its whole life believing that it is stupid. ~Albert Einstein.

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Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario

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 Evans Avenue, Suite 202, Toronto, ON M8Z 1K2

Tel: (416) 929-4311 Toll free in Ontario only: 1-877-238-5322

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