



Idawc • Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County

The right to learn, the power to achieve

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LDAWC News

Our Reading Rocks program continues to run twice a week in Guelph and Fergus with 21 student and volunteer tutor pairs working hard at their reading concepts twice a week. The weather this month has made for a record number of cancelled Reading Rocks sessions. Parents and tutors are thinking that they'll go an extra week in April to make up the missed time.

LDA Wellington County, like many of the other LDA Chapters in the province, offers advocacy support to parents and adults. What does this look like? If you're a parent and are unsure of issues related to your child's education, such as their rights or what services they could

have at school, our Resource Coordinator could help. She could also accompany you as an advocate to a school meeting – regarding Individual Education Plans (IEPs), the Identification, Placement, Review Committee (IPRC) process, or issues like transition planning. If you're an adult with an LD attending college, university, or working and are unsure about how to get accommodations for your LD or ADHD, Jen may be able to help as well by writing a letter or accompanying you to a meeting. Our Resource Coordinator Jen Paterson can be reached at (519) 837-2050 or info@ldawc.ca

The Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO) is the provincial association representing the interests of persons with learning disabilities throughout Ontario. As part of its mandate LDAO participates in many consultations and submits responses to government initiatives or legislation that may impact children, youth or adults in Ontario who have learning disabilities. Some public policy and advocacy responses are here: <http://www.ldao.ca/ldao-services/public-policy-advocacy/>



Articles – LDs and ADHD

9 Benefits of Martial Arts for Kids with Learning and Attention Issues

By Peg Rosen



At a Glance

- Martial arts are self-defense practices, like karate, judo and tae kwon do.
- They focus on individual progress and can be a good alternative to team sports.
- Martial arts aren't a "treatment" for learning and attention issues, but they can help with self-esteem, coordination and executive functioning.

Exercise is great for every kid. But children with learning and attention issues can have a hard time finding a sport or physical activity that suits them.

They may not have the social or physical skills to participate on a team. They may not have the coordination for activities like skating or ballet. They may find it too hard to follow rules, or they may be bullied or left out.

Many families discover that martial arts are an excellent option.

What Martial Arts Are

Martial arts are an ancient practice from Asia. They were originally meant for self-defense. Today, lots of people practice martial arts as a way to build physical and mental strength.

There are many different forms of martial arts. Some—like karate and tae kwon do—focus on striking and blocking. Others—like judo and jiu-jitsu—focus on wrestling and grappling. All use deliberate and repetitive motions and emphasize the connection between mind and body.

Many parents believe the benefits of martial arts are more than just physical for their kids. They say martial arts can help to improve kids' self-control, attention and other executive functioning skills.

There is some research supporting this, says Kimberley D. Lakes, Ph.D., of the Pediatric Exercise and Genomics Research Center at the University of California, Irvine. However, she warns, most studies have been done on schoolchildren in the general population. Few have focused on kids with learning and attention issues.

There's also no solid evidence showing that martial arts can be a substitute for medication and other treatments for learning and attention issues.

What Martial Arts Can Offer Kids With Learning and Attention Issues

There are lots of reasons martial arts can be a good match for kids with learning and attention issues. Here are nine potential benefits:

1. **They focus on individual growth, not on team competition.** Many kids with learning and attention issues struggle with the pressure of having to compete with other kids. So traditional sports may not appeal to them. But in martial arts, the focus is on self-improvement. There's no "letting down the team."
2. **They offer concrete, attainable goals.** Some kids with learning and attention issues may feel like they never "win" at anything. In martial arts, kids work at their own pace. They're awarded a different coloured belt every time they reach a new skill level. This can boost self-esteem and keep them motivated.
3. **Routines are broken down into manageable chunks.** A technique or form in martial arts can have dozens of different movements. But kids learn gradually, repeating and adding steps as they go. They learn to anticipate which step comes next and eventually put everything together into fluid movements. All of this gives working memory a workout, but in a way that kids may find manageable.
4. **They emphasize self-control and concentration.** Attention is central to martial arts. Kids must stay focused to learn and to perform. When a child's focus drifts, instructors will often ask them to take the "ready stance." This position allows them to reset and ready themselves for what's next.
5. **They can help with coordination.** The deliberate, repetitive movements of martial arts can help kids develop a better feel for their body in space, which can be useful to kids who struggle with motor skills. This may also help some kids understand the power of the mind over the body, which some find to be valuable for kids with ADHD.
6. **They provide structure and clear expectations for behaviour.** Good martial arts instructors have clear rules and constantly reinforce them. They also emphasize good behaviour in and out of class. Some even send kids home with behaviour charts their parents must sign.
7. **They can provide a safe outlet for excess energy.** Contrary to what some might expect, martial arts don't encourage violent behaviour. In fact, instructors often emphasize that fighting is a last resort. At the same time, kicking and karate chopping can allow kids to work out frustration or anger, while also practicing self-control.

8. **The environment is accepting and communal.** Respect is a core value in martial arts. Students are expected to show it for their instructor and their peers. Negativity is generally not tolerated in class, and students are encouraged to support each other.
9. **They're just plain cool!** Kids with learning and attention issues can often feel awkward or socially out of the loop. But lots of kids think martial arts are cool. It's hard not to feel special when you're wearing martial arts gear and breaking boards in half.

What to Look For in a Martial Arts Class

Your neighbourhood may have classes for many different kinds of martial arts. Some, like mixed martial arts (or MMA), are more aggressive and are generally not the best choice for kids.

Most youth classes teach tae kwon do or karate. The type you choose for your child, though, isn't as important as how a studio approaches instruction, Lake says.

Before you sign on, meet with the head of the studio. Be honest about your child's challenges. Explain what you're hoping he can get out of the class.

For the best experience, the school you choose should:

- **Take a traditional approach** that focuses on character development.
- **Provide a pre-evaluation** so the instructor can assess your child's strengths and challenges. You can also see if your child and the instructor are a good fit.
- **Have a low student-to-teacher ratio.** Ideally, each class would have at least two instructors. If there are too many students, your child will not get the individualized attention he needs.
- **Have experience teaching kids with learning and attention issues.** While it's important for instructors to push students, they should also be supportive and understanding about your child's challenges.

Martial arts provide a great opportunity for your child to develop higher self-esteem, find community and experience success.

Key Takeaways

- Martial arts focus on engaging the mind as well as the body.
- They emphasize respect, self-control, focus and individual achievement.
- The type of martial art you choose for your child is not as important as a studio's approach to instruction.

Source : <https://www.understood.org/en/friends-feelings/child-social-situations/sports/9-benefits-of-martial-arts-for-kids-with-learning-and-attention-issues>

TIP SHEET FOR PARENTS: Emotion Regulation

For children and youth with learning disabilities (LDs), regulating or managing emotions can be particularly difficult.¹ Children and youth with LDs are also two to three times more likely to experience mental health challenges, such as anxiety and depression.²

Emotion Regulation

Emotion regulation is your ability to control your emotional responses to arousing situations.³ Emotion regulation skills may impact how we feel certain emotions; how we pay attention to emotions; how we think about emotions; and how we behave. If we have intact emotion regulation skills we are able to experience a range of emotions, but we are not overwhelmed by those emotions.

Emotion Dysregulation

Emotion dysregulation is when your emotional responses are often out of control.³ They are persistent, severe and significantly impairing (e.g., they get in the way of everyday life and functioning). For a child or youth with a LD, emotion dysregulation may look like anger and aggression getting in the way of making and keeping friendships, or avoidance and withdrawal getting in the way of participating in emotionally challenging activities.



Under-Regulation

Children and youth who have trouble containing intense emotions may seem stuck in the 'on' position and may have trouble exerting control over their emotions and behaviors. Under-regulators may

need help from others to manage intense emotions. You may see behaviors including meltdowns, low tolerance for frustration, overreaction, quick temper, mood swings and difficulty calming down.

Over-Regulation

Sometimes children and youth have difficulty managing intense emotions and they keep the emotions tightly held within. You may see behaviors including withdrawal, avoidance, becoming easily upset, or shutting down.

Bucket of Emotions

A different way to think of emotion regulation is as a bucket of emotions. We all have emotional buckets and not every bucket is the same size. You may have a large bucket which has more room for emotions, or you may have a small bucket which has less room for emotions. Stressors throughout the day add different emotions to our buckets. If we have intact emotion regulation skills we may be able to keep our buckets from overflowing. If we are experiencing emotion dysregulation our buckets may overflow because we are unable to hold everything in.



Emotion Regulation and LDs

We are still learning about the relationship between LDs and emotion regulation. Some children and youth with LDs also have significant difficulties in regulating their emotions. This may reflect the increased experience of stress and anxiety, which results from managing academic, social and environmental demands throughout the day. Some children and youth with LDs may also experience more intense emotions than others.

We know that having a LDs can have an impact on the ability to cope with intense emotions. The challenges vary, depending on the nature of the LD but may include:

- ❖ Information processing difficulties (e.g., challenges in executive functions, memory, attention, language and communication abilities, and the speed at which information is processed)
- ❖ Difficulty understanding what was said or expressing how they are feeling
- ❖ Difficulty understanding how a family member or peer is feeling based on their body language and facial expression, and adjusting their behaviours accordingly
- ❖ Difficulty aligning their tone of voice, body language, facial expressions with how they feel



child tolerate and cope with uncomfortable emotions.

Labeling, acknowledging and validating emotions.

Labeling the emotion for your child can help to build their emotional vocabulary. Acknowledging and validating the emotion can support your child in feeling understood. Let your child know their emotions are normal and natural, and everyone experiences different emotions from time to time.

Modeling emotion regulation. Children often learn from their parents and caregivers. Talk about your emotions and coping strategies can help your child learn different emotion regulation skills. In modeling emotion regulation skills it is also important to ‘stay calm in the storm’ (during emotional outbursts) and use positive self-talk.

Offer help to problem-solve a better way to manage different emotions once you and your child are feeling calm and well regulated. Practice and role-play what to do in stressful situations.

Praise efforts to regulate emotions. Praise your child for attempts or successes related to calming their emotions. Praise helps to bring attention to helpful coping skills.

Helpful Strategies

There are many ways parents and caregivers can support the development of emotion regulation skills, including:

Managing the environment. Consistent limits, clear expectations and predictable routines (e.g., warnings when transitioning) can help children predict how the day will go, which may decrease opportunities for emotions to build up.

Listening for the emotions. Tuning-in and trying to understand what your child is feeling can help your

References

1. Milligan, K., Badali, P., & Spiroiu, F. (2015). Using Integra Mindfulness Martial Arts to address self-regulation challenges in youth with learning disabilities: A qualitative exploration. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 24(3), 562-575.
2. Wilson, A., Armstrong, C., Furrie, A., & Walcot, E. (2009). The mental health of Canadians with self-reported learning disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 42(1), 24-40.
3. Webster-Stratton, C. (1995). Emotion regulation. *Parenting Insights*. Retrieved from www.incredibleyears.com/parents-teachers/articles-for-parents/

Source: <http://www.childdevelop.ca/sites/default/files/files/TIP%20SHEET%20-%20Emotion%20Regulation.pdf>

Helping Your Struggling Reader (Part 1)

The following webinar is from the Ontario Branch of the International Dyslexia Association (ONBIDA), a non-profit whose mission is to create a future for all individuals who struggle with dyslexia and other related reading differences so that they may have richer, more robust lives and access to the tools and resources they need.

This webinar is for parents of young children and teachers of struggling readers. It addresses why some children struggle to learn to read and early warning signs of reading difficulties. Participants are guided through one of the first steps in how to teach a child to read. Participants are encouraged to bring white and yellow index cards, scissors, and a black marker to the session. These will be used to create a teaching resource that can be used with your child/student.

Presenter: Jan MacLean B.Sc.(O.T.), M.Sc. is the founder of The Reading Clinic in Kingston, Ontario. Since 2001, the Centre's YES! Reading, YES! Writing and YES! Math programs have helped hundreds of students achieve success. Jan is a Certified Orton-Gillingham Educator and Practitioner, and a IDA Dyslexia Therapist.

Webinar: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MGdcSmArO4g&feature=youtu.be>

Presentation and Handouts: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1qlxcFwKYitYeEyA0ZOcQ-a4gL1l4IJxq>

Upcoming LDAWC Events – March 20, 2019

Fostering your Child's Well-being through Relationship and Self-compassion



About our Workshop:

This workshop focuses on two elements that impact your child's well-being: your relationship with your child and helping build self-compassion within him/her. Speaker Allison will focus on helping parents build and repair their relationships with their kids and communicate/problem solve with them. Speaker Elyse will talk about self-compassion as a way to build self-esteem. The speakers will focus on specific ways to help your child with LDs and ADHD as well.

About our Speakers:

Allison Singh is a Registered Psychologist with the College of Psychologists of Ontario. Allison's area of expertise is working in school board settings and she has extensive experience in the assessment and diagnosis of learning and mental health needs. Having become a parent recently herself, Allison firmly believes that the well-being of children begins with parents and enjoys working with families to improve their communication and relationships with one another. She focuses on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) framework, but also draws upon techniques from other therapeutic methods including Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) and Brief Solution-Focused Therapy.

Elyse Redden completed her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology at the University of Guelph and is undergoing supervised practice. Her graduate research focuses on attachment, trauma, and self-compassion. She enjoys conducting psychological assessments to compassionately help clients better understand themselves, help parents better understand their children, generate personalized recommendations, and help communicate these findings to others who can help. She has a background in various treatment approaches including: interpersonal/psychodynamic, Acceptance & Commitment Therapy (ACT), Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT), Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT), and other mindfulness and self-compassionate techniques.

When: Wednesday, March 20, 7-9 PM

Where: Community Living Guelph (2nd Floor); 8 Royal Road, Guelph

Cost: \$15 for non-members; \$10 for LDA members

We never want cost to be a deterrent! Please contact us about subsidies.

Register: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/fostering-your-childs-well-being-through-relationship-and-self-compassion-tickets-57044102446> or find a registration link at www.ldawc.ca/events

UnderstandABILITY – Demystifying Psychoeducational Assessments



About our Workshop:

A psycho-educational assessment identifies areas of strengths and challenges within a student's learning profile, and provides a deeper understanding of his/her educational needs. It is also a necessity in identifying a student with a learning disability. Psycho-eds are challenging to understand, especially if you aren't a psychologist or a teacher.

Please join speaker Susan Slack Miller as she explains psycho-educational assessments from a parent's perspective with the intention of making it an accessible and usable document to support your child's academic success.

Come prepared for an evening filled with lively discussion and interactive activities!

About our Speaker:

Susan Slack Miller is an educator with over 25 years of experience supporting students who learn differently. In addition to a Master of Science degree in Special Education, and Specialist qualifications in Special Education, Susan taught at Trillium Demonstration School in Milton, ON (Trillium is a public school for students within Ontario with severe to profound learning disabilities.) Beyond her teaching role at Trillium, Susan also provided professional development for Ontario educators and administrators. Her work at Trillium resulted in an *Amethyst Award*, a provincial award that recognizes outstanding achievement.

Beyond her ongoing leadership roles supporting students with exceptionalities, Susan also served as a Board Director for The Learning Disabilities Association of Halton. She is also the owner of *Halton Educational Services*, which provides workshops for parents; professional development for educators/administrators; consultations for families; and direct instruction for students with exceptionalities.

When: Wednesday, May 15, 7-9 PM

Where: Community Living Guelph (2nd Floor); 8 Royal Road, Guelph

Cost: \$10 for LDABC members; \$15 for non-members

We never want cost to be a deterrent! Please contact us about subsidies.

Register: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/understandability-demystifying-psychoeducational-assessments-tickets-58097173209> or find a registration link at www.ldawc.ca/events



Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario Membership Application

Membership:

- Member fee rates to LDAO programs and services, including some online workshops/courses
- Member fee rates to all chapter programs and services, where available
- Two issues of the LDAO digital magazine LD@Ontario, sent biannually through email
- Chapter newsletters (frequency varies from chapter to chapter)

We're going **paperless**! Please provide us with your email address to receive your copy of LD@Ontario!

Required Information:

Name: _____ Email: _____

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Postal Code: _____ Chapter Affiliation: _____

Membership Type:

Family/Individual ☐ \$50.00

Professional ☐ \$75.00

Institutional ☐ \$125.00

Student ☐ \$20.00

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