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## LDAWC News

October is Learning Disabilities Awareness month. It is a great opportunity to help stop the stigma and raise awareness. At LDAWC we are promoting LD month with our fourth annual Family Conference. We are excited to be able to offer this event for FREE. This event is designed for parents of children with learning disabilities to obtain knowledge and support from an outstanding list of professionals as well as other parents experiencing a similar journey. See the details starting on page 14 of this edition of the newsletter.

Help support LDAWC and the United Way by purchasing tickets to select Storm games. Selling these tickets is a significant fundraiser for us every year. \$1 from each ticket will be donated to the United Way. See page 7 for game dates.

LDAWC is excited to start to offer a new program aimed at Grade 7-9 students. SOAR (Some Assembly Required) is a focused on Transitions to High School. See page 6 for the details.

If you're not already following us on social media, it's a great place to get updates, interesting articles and ideas:

facebook.com/LDAWellingtonCounty

twitter.com/lda\_wellington



United Way Guelph Wellington Dufferin



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## How to Explain a Diagnosis to a Child: Ten Steps to Help Guide You Through This Process

By Arnold, J. & McLeod, F

As parents we are often bombarded with many questions from our children, some easier to answer than others. You might even find yourself having to answer heart-breaking questions like, "Mom, what's wrong with me?" or "Why am I not smart?" These dreaded questions may lead you to ask, "How do I explain a diagnosis to my child?"



For some parents, this is a topic they were hoping to never really answer, perhaps avoid and hope that it "just goes away" or is "never brought up". For others, it is as simple as just saying, "Oh you have this thing called \_\_\_\_\_". Regardless of your approach, this can be a very sensitive time for you and your child.

The explanation of a diagnosis can be complex and laden with such emotions that parents often do not know exactly what to say, when to say it or even how to say it. It is important to remember that it is a process that should be positive and based on your child's individual needs.

The goal of explaining a diagnosis is not to further isolate, but to build self-awareness and knowledge of one's own abilities. Once a child has this understanding, they can truly accept and be proud of who they are. When kids have a better understanding of themselves, of their areas of strength and need, they are better equipped to advocate for themselves.

"My family worked so hard to help me realize that having this diagnosis is nothing to be ashamed of, and one that truly makes me who I am. Having known about my diagnosis has helped me to work hard to show others that I can in fact learn and work towards my dreams. Now I am always thrilled to tell people that I have a learning disability, was an honours student, won awards for top marks (in math, science, and computer courses) and have completed my B.Sc." – Caylin, young adult with an LD

To help guide your conversation and get the process started, here are a few tips you may want to consider.

1. Deciding when to tell your child is not always easy and is not always agreed upon between you and your partner. There really is no exact age or time correct for all families. As a family, you may want to think about your child's age, their social awareness and their current understanding of their abilities. Have they already begun to make comments or ask questions about their "differences"? If so, this may be a good time to begin.





- 2. Start by identifying their talents and strengths. When we begin by focusing on what a child can do well, we are helping build their self-esteem and overall confidence in their abilities. A positive mindset can set the stage to manage possible future challenges.
- 3. Have your child draw a picture/self-portrait that represents who they are. This portrait can be used to initiate a conversation about their diagnosis and overall self-awareness. Questions you can ask while reflecting on the self-portrait may include, "What do you most like about being you?", "Is there anything you would want to change?" "What do you think is the first thing others notice about you?" By creating a self-portrait, children learn who they are, how they want to present themselves, and what is important to them.



4. Celebrate differences. Children who understand that every person has traits that make them different from one another, are children who also accept these differences. It is about teaching children that these qualities make every person unique and should be celebrated.

5. As much as we want to focus on the positive, it is important and okay to work with your child to

understand what challenges they may experience day-to-day. Explain to your child that we all have things that may be challenging for us, especially when it comes to learning, but sometimes what may be challenging now may become one of our many accomplishments later in life.

- 6. Children are better equipped to deal with difficult information when they can see and learn that there are others who are just like them, especially when they are famous or influential people. Consider sitting down with your child and researching famous individuals who may also have the same diagnosis as your child to help show how much they have achieved in life, even with a diagnosis.
- 7. Create self-advocacy cards. Review the information from previous conversations and have your child write down all the things they would like their teachers (or others) to know about themselves. This is a great way to build self-advocacy. (See sample on Page 5)
- 8. As parents you may not have all the answers, so seeking additional professional support (e.g., psychologist, social worker, or therapist) may not only benefit your child, but their siblings and you as well.





- 9. Be patient with the process and your child. Your child may become easily frustrated or even resentful with the fact that they have a diagnosis. This is okay and a common part of the process. Provide support and reinforcement that you love them, and that you are on this journey together.
- 10. Keep the conversation going. During this process there will be several times that your child may say "I'm good" or "I understand" and then not want to talk about it anymore. Though we do not want to force the issue and want them to be the guide, it is important to check-in and revisit this conversation as your child may have some new and unanswered questions.

These strategies are a starting point for a discussion about your child's diagnosis. The overall process should be positive, feel safe, and build on your child's strengths and needs. For some children, it may take weeks, or even months, before an actual label of the diagnosis is provided. It is important to remember that when you sit down with your child to help them understand their diagnosis, you are teaching them that this is just a part of them, sort of like having blue eyes or brown hair. A diagnosis should NOT define who they are; it is about understanding and empowerment. Your goal is to raise a confident individual who can advocate for themselves and hopefully others.

Source: https://www.ldathome.ca/2018/03/explaining-diagnosis/

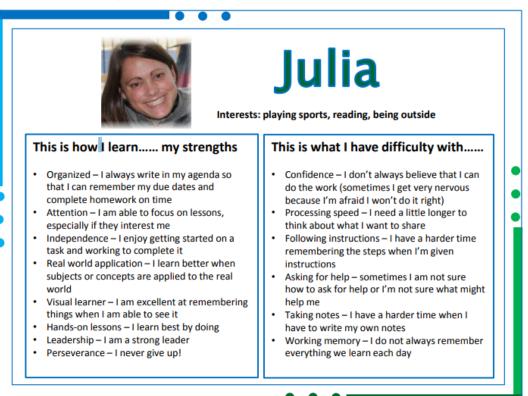
# VENDOR TABLE OPPORTUNITIES

Do you have a business that focuses on learning? We invite you to support our 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Family Conference on October 19, 2019 by purchasing a vendor table to share how your business supports people impacted by learning disabilities. Contact us at <u>info@ldawc.ca</u> for more information about this opportunity.





## Sample Advocacy Card https://www.ldathome.ca/2017/01/a-teachers-journey-with-student-self-advocacy-a-strategy-for-parents/







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## SOAR program-for students in grades 7-9 with LDs or ADHD



This course uses the SOAR - Some Assembly Required - curriculum, developed by the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario, and focuses on transitions and developing success.

Students will develop skills in:

- Identifying their own Strengths and Needs
- Learning Styles and understanding of their own LD and/or ADHD
  - Strategies for organizational and time management skills
    - Self-advocacy skills and social skills

The course is specifically for students who have completed grades 6, 7 or 8 as they begin preparing and adapting to the choices and challenges of high school - building self esteem, self awareness, how to express ideas and follow directions and become a selfadvocate in the learning process

> Weekly sessions for 8 weeks starting Tuesday October 15, 2019 7 pm to 8 pm Location St. Joseph's Elementary School, 10 Guelph St, Guelph

> > COST: \$200 or \$180 for members.

For more details or to register, please contact Monica at 519-837-2050 or <u>info@ldawc.ca</u>





## **Guelph Storm - Help Us Fundraise!**

Tickets are \$17.50 each (adult regular price \$26)

Help support LDAWC and The United Way! Get your Guelph Storm tickets from us!



\$1 from each ticket sale will be donated to the United Way.

Game dates are:

Saturday November 9, 2019 7:00 PM – vs. Kingston Frontenacs
Friday, December 6, 2019 7:30 PM – vs. Barrie Colts
Friday January 3, 2020 7:30 PM – vs. Peterborough Petes
Wednesday February 5, 2020 – vs. Erie Otters
Sunday, February 23, 2020 2:00 PM – vs. Niagara Ice Dogs

To order tickets, contact us at info@ldawc.ca or (519) 837-2050.





## **Disclosure in the Workplace**

#### By James A. Cincotta, MA Ed

Disclosure refers to telling a supervisor, co-worker or others about your learning disability. Disclosure is one of the most difficult decisions you can make. It's a personal decision that requires a lot of thought and planning. You need to carefully plan how you wish to disclose and think about the possible implications this action has for everyone involved.

Reasons Why Adults with LD Keep It To Themselves.

- May not know much about their LD and how it affects them at work
- Had an unpleasant experience in the past, and do not want to repeat that experience
- Fear that disclosing will lead to prejudice, discrimination or rejection
- May think that a LD will be seen as a weakness
- Feel they should not disclose their LD unless it is absolutely necessary. They prefer to work around the problems.
- Do not know when or how to disclose their LD .

#### Some Reasons Why you Might Decide to Disclose:

- Because the requirements of your job have changed due to organizational growth, restructuring or technological changes, and you can no longer "hide" your learning disability
- Because clear-cut issues have arisen that allow your supervisor to gain a better understanding of your situation
- Because you want to explain why you have not always met expectations or requirements of the job.

#### Some Situations When You Might Decide to Disclose

- Before a job interview, or before you accept a job or a promotion so you can discuss the accommodations you require
- During a job evaluation
- When your LD begins to hamper your work performance
- At other times, when you think your employer and/or co-workers are receptive to your disclosure.

#### When Not to Disclose

- When companies recruit people with LD but lack a supportive environment allowing people with LD to excel.
- When you believe that a person or the company will use the information to prevent your success



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- When you feel that people will make you feel bad about your LD
- When you are at a job interview, because there is a risk of not being selected for the job due to your LD or the focus is put on your LD, not your skills

## To Whom Do You Disclose?

The best person to talk to is a staff person from the human resources department, or at least removed from the front-line. In small companies, you may want to speak to a senior person who is not your direct supervisor.



## Some Helpful Tips About Disclosing

- Plan a meeting. Scheduled meeting between yourself and the person you have decided to talk to.
- Be prepared. Provide the person with a specific reason for the accommodation. Explain why you need it and how this would benefit the organization.
- Don't discuss your life history. Provide only as much information as the person needs to know for you to obtain the accommodation.
- Information discussed should be private. Stress that the information needs to remain confidential and private. Ask if anyone else will be given the information and for what reasons?
- Make a plan and stick to it. Write an action plan on how, when and to what extent the accommodation is to be provided.
- Follow up. Request a follow-up meeting to chart the progress or adjustment which needs to be made.





### Think It Over, Carefully

- Before you disclose, think carefully about what you are going to say. Remember, it is important to emphasize your strengths and successes, and list any strategies or accommodations that have worked for you in the past.
- Ultimately, only you can decide the time, the place and the amount of information to share with others.

## Strategies to help individuals at work

## Accommodations on the Job

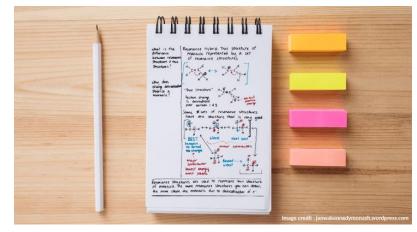
- Accommodations are the different methods and materials that a person with learning disabilities uses to complete tasks or activities with greater ease and efficiency.
- According to Canadian Human Rights legislation, employees have a right to accommodations in the workplace if it does not cause "undue hardships" to the company or the organization where you work. Undue hardship means the accommodation is not too expensive or too hard for the employer to put in place.

## Accommodation Means:

- Making changes to the environment without changing the nature of the task or activities
- The specific equipment used (e.g. computer, tape recorder) to get the job done
- Techniques (extra time, quiet working space, written and verbal instructions) to make communications with supervisors and co-workers flow better
- Matching the tools, techniques or strategies to the specific need.

## Auditory: Best Practices

- Assistive Technology (A computer that can read to the individual or help with spelling)
- Reduce background noise (ie. Sitting under a vent could distract a person conversation; make them aware and move elsewhere )
- Repeat instructions
- Have listener repeat back information to you and allow extra time for information processing
- Offer written instructions, charts, pictures, ie. Declaration
- Demonstrate the task first rather than discussing it





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You have difficulty remembering what you heard.

- Make sure that verbal instructions are given away from background noises such as ringing telephones, noisy machinery or background conversations.
- Ask to move to a quieter location.
- Ask if you can have a written copy.
- Take notes or ask for written instructions.

### Organization: Best Practices

- Use timers or verbal response as reminders
- Map information / graphic organizers
- Allow extra traveling time and time to process
- Allow client to work at own pace
- Break task into component parts or sub-tasks
- Help in mapping out a day or projects.
- PDA's / Daytime / Alarms

You have difficulty telling time and you arrive late or unusually early.

- Use alarms or bells, etc., to signal changes.
- Schedule extra time for travel between meetings and interviews.
- Use timers or verbal response as reminders.

Have difficulty organizing your work day, tasks, files or paper work

- Use a day planner or agenda book. Regularly keep it up to date. Check it before you leave for work.
- Use colour pens and highlighters to colour code and prioritize tasks and activities. Use "sticky" notes which can be removed once the task is completed.
- Break down larger activities into smaller tasks. Ask for specific timelines and due dates to complete work. Ask which tasks are urgent and which can wait.
- Use time reminders, such as a watch, alarm clock, stop watch or buzzers.
- Buy a good, easy-to-use time management book or take classes in time management from a community college or adult high school which will teach you how to better organize your time.
- Use time management software which can schedule your meetings and activities and organize your emails.
- Work in groups or ask a co-worker to help you.







#### Visual Perception: Best Practices

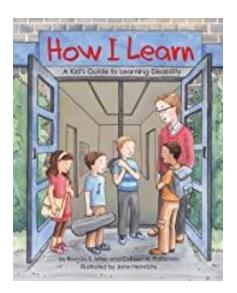
- Provide a room in neutral colours with minimal physical distractions
- Use oral communication and web-based materials instead of written documentation
- Voice Activated Software
- More time to complete tasks
- Talking Calculator
- Position person so their back is facing the door

## Attention: Best Practices

- Always on the move, fidgeting (feet/pencil tapping), you can't sit still.
- Take frequent exercise or stretch breaks. Be careful not to take too many because you don't want to let people think you're not working.
- Keep a soft rubber ball that you can squeeze and play with. Make sure that by playing with the ball you are not bothering anyone.
- Take the time to exercise at home or at a gym before going to work to burn off energy. Consider walking to work.
- Write down the time of day when you fidget the most. When you are the most active, use that time to run errands, talk to people, or do the type of work that allows you to burn off the excess energy.

Source: http://www.ldao.ca/introduction-to-ldsadhd/articles/about-lds/disclosure-in-the-workplace/

## **BOOK: How I Learn**



## How I Learn: A Kid's Guide to Learning Disability

How I Learn introduces the concept of a learning disability in concrete terms for younger students. This supportive and upbeat story reassures readers that they are capable, and can use "smart strategies" to help themselves learn. And that's better than OK. That's GREAT! A Note to parents, caregivers, and professionals is included, with suggestions to guide discussion and help children identify their particular strengths and challenges.

https://www.amazon.ca/How-Learn-Guide-Learning-Disability/dp/1433816601





## **October 2019 Peer Support Network**



Come join our Peer Support Network and meet other parents on a similar journey. LDAWC Peer Support Network's goal is to provide an informal setting to share experiences, challenges, successes and resources. Living, learning and/or working with a LD, or supporting a family member with LD, has its ups and downs. Come learn from others. Benefits are:

- Learning about relevant resources, supports and strategies
- Insights into what has and hasn't worked for parents and families
- Learning you and your student aren't alone through shared ideas and experiences
- Reduced stigma and stress

When: October 3 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm

Where: Eramosa Engineering, 650 Woodlawn Road W, Block C Unit 4, Guelph, ON N1K 1B8 Canada

Cost: FREE

Register: https://ldawc.ca/event/october-2019-peer-support-network





## **Upcoming LDAWC Event**

## SAVE THE DATE!

## Looking for Tools & Strategies to support your Child's Learning? JOIN US! 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Family Conference

Date: Saturday, October 19, 2019 Time: 8:30 am – 3:15 pm Location: St. James Catholic High School, 57 Victoria Rd N, Guelph No Charge to Attend.



## **Register now for this FREE EVENT:**

https://ldawc.ca/annual-family-conference.html

## Making Memories Silent Auction - New for 2019

Bring your wallet or chequebook (sorry, we can't process credit/debit cards) and get ready to bid on some amazing fun-filled packages for moms, dads and families!

<u>Who should attend</u>: Parents/caregivers of children with learning disabilities and/or ADHD seeking tools & strategies to support increased learning at school and at home.

<u>Keynote Speaker</u>: Dean Huyck, former educator, has a wealth of experience working with children with learning disabilities. He will share learning strategies for home and educational settings and psychiatric day treatment programs. His unique ability to empathize and strategize with children helps to increase their learning potential.

<u>Breakout Sessions include</u>: Talking to your Kids about LD/ADHD; Parental Self Care & More!

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT LDAWC!



facebook.com/LDAWellingtonCounty



twitter.com/lda\_wellington

## **Self-Advocacy for College Students**

By: Richard Goldhammer and Loring C. Brinckerhoff

The need for self-advocacy skills in a postsecondary setting is essential. Students who have relied on the support of their parents and others now must be able to help themselves. This vital "rite of passage" enables the learning disabled individual to prepare for independence and success in the adult world. Self-advocacy for college students with learning disabilities can be defined as the ability to recognize and meet the needs specific to one's learning disability without compromising the dignity of oneself or others. Most parents and professionals involved with preparing students with learning disabilities for college would agree that independent decision-making and the ability to express one's needs are two critical elements of self-advocacy.

Yet, success with making decisions and communicating one's needs can be difficult for students with learning disabilities beyond high school. Without these skills, however, the transition from high school to college for students with learning disabilities may be daunting. In the college classroom, for example, students may need to show a professor how they learn best. A student with dyslexia who processes written material more slowly may require additional time on an exam to show what he or she is learning. Further, this additional time can often mean the stark difference between doing well and failing.

Given that self-advocacy is essential for prospective college students with learning disabilities to be successful, this article will present four myths about what self-advocacy is for these students as well as responses to these myths. They were chosen because of their prevalence among students with learning disabilities and their parents. Further, these myths often have had a decisively negative effect on these students' ability to meet needs critical to their success in a college setting. The responses presented address these myths and highlight some best practices for self-advocacy.







### Responding to myths about self-advocacy in a postsecondary setting

## Myth #1. It's better to avoid the label "learning disability" because such labels are ultimately damaging to the student's self-esteem.

Few would argue that students benefit from being labeled. However, for college students there are distinct advantages to "owning" the diagnosis of a learning disability. Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, college students have rights that are guarantees to any individual with a disability. (Please note this is U.S. legislation and does not apply in Canada). For example, some students with significant attention difficulties may learn best with minimal outside distraction. So a student with a diagnosed attention deficit disorder (ADD) may need to take an exam in a separate room, free from distracting visual and auditory stimuli, in order to effectively demonstrate what she or he is learning. If students have not faced their learning disability to some degree, they most likely do not know their rights as a disabled person, or what specific accommodations are tailored to their specific needs.

In response to Myth #1, the suggested practices are:

- Know how to describe your learning disability, as well as your specific academic strengths and weaknesses to a variety of different audiences.
- Begin to accept the term "learning disability" as a description of difficulties and as an aspect of how you learn. Do not let it determine your identity.
- Sample accommodations appropriate to your learning disability based on information in your diagnostic report. Try out different accommodations and then decide which ones work for you.
- Read about other adults with learning disabilities who were successful in college.

## Myth #2. Now that there are programs or students with learning disabilities at many postsecondary settings, their existence guarantees that students' essential needs will be met.

Unfortunately, this is not so. Even very comprehensive LD support programs may not emphasize the need of students to advocate for themselves in a college or university setting. While a students' rights to "reasonable accommodations" are protected under the law, the exact nature of the accommodation often rests upon the student's ability to negotiate with a professor. Too often students negotiate away their rights by not knowing their rights before they see a professor. They may assume that they did not need to approach the professor because there is an LD support program on campus. For example, once a student has taken a test without requesting accommodations, there is little that the l.D support services office can do when a student later realizes that more time was needed.

In response to Myth #2, suggested practices are:

• Take responsibility for your learning disability.





- Practice becoming more assertive with professors and support staff.
- Find a relaxed but confident communication style.
- Get to know professors and administrators in your program.

## Myth #3. Obtaining the highest grades possible is the major yardstick of effective self-advocacy. Better grades lead to increased options upon leaving a postsecondary setting.

It is true that higher grades will lead to more options for students considering professions that require graduate schooling. However, grades are not the only factors that come into play. Students with learning disabilities will often have to work much harder than their peers to achieve comparable academic outcomes. Unfortunately, higher grades do not mean that one has truly learned to self-advocate. If by the definition of self-advocate we include meeting one's needs beyond the need for high grades (i.e., the need to show how one is learning, to be more self-aware, to become competent, confident, to affiliate with others, to contribute to the well-being of others), this yardstick measure falls short of what college can offer. Examples abound of students with learning disabilities who have mastered getting high grades but are left isolated and miserable in the process, ultimately hurting their development towards healthy, functional independence. If the bottom line is independence in the world of work, it may not be true that the better one's grades, the more successful the worker. Social skills coupled with competence in one's field are the skills necessary to succeed in the workplace.

In response to Myth #3, the suggested practices are:

- Join a support group for students with learning disabilities on your campus, or start one!
- Enjoy relaxing and growth-oriented activities (e.g., sailing with a friend).
- Seek a balance academically and socially
- Get involved in an



activity on campus for as much time as you feel you can afford. It's a great way to meet people and develop social skills.

• Ask for help with personal difficulties you may be having by seeing a professional in the counseling center on campus.



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## Myth #4. When students encounter a very difficult academic situation, it's best to let their parents take over.

This could not be further from the truth! While parents had to be strong advocates in many instances during their son's or daughter's prior school years, in college it is the students' responsibility to act on their own behalf. College affords students the opportunity to learn to problem solve, to draw on their own resources of independence and to seek the assistance of support staff, if needed. For the student

who may not think they can get what they need, the LD support services office has professionals trained to facilitate a student's selfadvocacy needs while respecting their dignity and need to make choices. Too many well-meaning parents have "chosen" a major for their son or daughter, directed them as to which support services they need and have told tutors or professors how their daughter or son should be taught. Further, excessive parent involvement can engender resentment among



college professors and support staff, especially those who do not directly work with students with learning disabilities. They may perceive such involvement as overprotective or meddling.

In response to Myth #4, the suggested practices are:

- Parents can join support groups in their area even after their daughter or son has left for college.
- Parents need to let go. They cannot be in charge of the adult life of their son or daughter.
- Realize that the most valuable lesson a student can learn as they are on the threshold of adulthood is learning about the consequences of their actions.
- Above all, a student with a learning disability needs to become comfortable with asking for help from those most able to be effective in meeting their needs in a postsecondary setting, whether they be professors, LD service providers, persons in career or counseling services, and others.





#### Conclusion

The opportunities for self-advocacy proliferate as students with learning disabilities enter college. Students ought to be encouraged to take part in as many of these opportunities for demonstrating their independence as possible. Learning self-advocacy skills is a "win-win" proposition for college students with learning disabilities.

Parents, professional staff and faculty win when students learn to negotiate effectively to have their needs met. Students with learning disabilities benefit most from developing self-advocacy skills for the realities of a postsecondary setting and the world beyond.

The preciously cited myths about what to do in college as a student with a learning disability highlight some of the pitfalls that need to be avoided. Using these suggestions for self-advocacy with students with learning disabilities will help them to better address the realities of a postsecondary setting.

http://www.ldonline.org/article/6142/

# Did you know.... LDAO has online workshops and courses

## **Online Workshops and Courses:**

Select the links below for more information about our courses or workshops.

- IEP 101 Online Workshop for Parents and Students
- Parent Workshop Series: Setting Up Your Child For Success
- Professionals Workshop Series: Introduction to LDs and ADHD
- Learning Styles & Self-Advocacy for Youth
- Learning Styles & Self-Advocacy for Adults
- Partnering with Schools for Student Success: Effective Parent Advocacy

http://www.ldao.ca/ldao-services/workshops-courses/









## 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 Inf				
Name:			Email:	
Address:			_ City:	
Postal Code:	Chapter Affiliation:			
Membership	о Туре:			
	Family/Individual	□ \$50.00	Professional	□ \$75.00
	Institutional	□ \$125.00	Student ID # Required _	□ \$20.00
Type of Pay	ment:			
□ (	Cash (only if paying in	person) 🗆 Ch	eque 🗆 Visa	Master Card
Card #			Expiry Date:	
Name of Cardholder:			CVV #:	

Please make all cheques payable to LDAO and forward to 365 Evans Avenue Suite 202 Toronto ON M8Z 1K2



