



OPTIONS CENTER EDUCATION TOPIC



Introduction: The following is a review of a video that is very popular. The review was written by a student of a Brain Gym® 101 course taken at Options. She has summarized problems presented in the video. After each problem she has written Brain Gym® exercises she thought would be helpful for that specific problem. The Brain Gym® exercises are explained in *Brain Gym® Teachers' Edition*.

How Difficult Can This Be? **Understanding Learning Disabilities**

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This is a video of the F.A.T. Workshop, which stands for frustration, anxiety, and tension. Those who participated in the workshop were teachers, special education teachers, parents, administrators, students, as well as others. This video was a simulation of what it is like to walk a mile in the shoes of a child with a learning disability. Mr. Lavoie had the participants work through a series of tasks that helped to illustrate how people with a learning disability would handle the same task. He stated that 6-10% of United States children have a learning disability of some kind or another.

The following activities are some of those that he shared during the workshop:

Processing: Those who have processing problems are often easily frustrated. He illustrated this by conducting the class in a very fast pace. He asked questions and wanted an immediate response. The questions were fairly easy, but even those participants in the workshop had a difficult time keeping up. For a L.D. child, by the time they get an answer to a question, the instructor has already moved on to a new question. They have to first process the question and then come up with the answer. It doesn't necessarily mean the child doesn't know the answer, but needs additional time to get to the answer. An instructor therefore needs to give everyone a chance by giving extra time or to slow down a little bit.

Brain Gym® Exercises: PACE. For more information, go to Education Topics- PACE Parts 1-5.

Anxiety Problems: Many times children have anxiety when they think they are going to be called on in class and won't know the answer. They begin worrying about getting called on and lose track of what material is being discussed or don't take notes. One suggestion that Mr. Lavoie made was to take the child aside and explain to him that he would not call upon him unless he was standing directly in front of him. This would reduce the child's anxiety and would be able to focus on the material better. The instructor would also try to ask this child questions that he knows the child can answer. This would help to increase the child's self esteem and confidence.

Brain Gym® Exercises: Calf Pump (pg. 20), Foot Flex (pg.19), Hook-ups (pg. 31), Cross Crawl (pg. 4) in *Brain Gym® Teachers' Edition*.

Other characteristics of L.D. people: Those children who are distractible pay attention to everything and those who have low attention spans listen to nothing.

Brain Gym® Exercises: All Lengthening Exercises (pg. 16-22) in *Brain Gym® Teachers' Edition*.



Taking Risks: Students with a learning disability are not risk takers. They don't volunteer for anything. They don't like surprises.

Brain Gym® Exercises: All Energy Exercises (pg. 23-32) in *Brain Gym® Teachers' Edition*.

Visual Perception Problems: Those students with visual perception problems need their teacher to help them find the way. They need details and precise instruction. The activity presented for this disability included looking at a picture. No one in the group was able to identify what was in the picture. They were given a picture of a cow that did not represent a cow at all until the instructor placed an overhead on their picture and showed them how to interpret it. This reminded me of the picture that is often shown of the old woman and the younger lady. What you see is how you interpret the picture. Sometimes you see an old woman and if you look at it in another way, you see a young woman. Basically teachers need to help these students by taking the time to make sure the students understand what is being asked.

Brain Gym® Exercises: Elephant (pg. 8) in *Brain Gym® Teachers' Edition*.

Reading Comprehension: Teachers often teach reading through vocabulary words or a list of words. Many times students know what the words mean by themselves, but when you put them together they often don't make sense. Mr. Lavoie said that background and training are essential for comprehension. This is why we are learning that students need to have hands on experiences so they can relate to the material.

Brain Gym® Exercises: All Lengthening Exercises (pg. 16-22) in *Brain Gym® Teachers' Edition*.

Effect of Perception on Behavior: Teachers need to be more aware of their actions and how others may perceive their actions. An example was given that some teachers have been known to tear up a students work in front of their eyes. The student didn't understand why. It was stated that L.D. students often get in trouble and they honestly don't know why they are in trouble. It is not the child's mission to mess everything up and to make the teacher's life miserable. They can't help what they do. Teachers need to be more understanding and be more conscious of their actions.

Brain Gym® Exercises: Cross Crawl (pg. 4) in *Brain Gym® Teachers' Edition*.

Visual Motor Coordination: These L.D. students often get mixed messages. This was illustrated by trying to get people to transfer what they see in a mirror on paper. This was difficult for most people. Their lines were shaky and often took a wrong direction on the paper.

Brain Gym® Exercises: Double Doodles (pg. 6) in *Brain Gym® Teachers Edition* and DLR. For more information on DLR, go to Education Topics-Whole Body Movement.

Oral Expression: Some people have dysnomia, which is a word-finding problem. Words are at the tip of their tongue but they aren't able to verbalize it clearly. There is a problem between storage and retrieval of information in the brain. Mr. Lavoie described two kinds of thoughts. The first is associative thoughts. A person is able to think of two or more things at one time. The second is cognitive thoughts. This person can only think of one thing at a time. He described this

by stating that some people are able to drive a car, listen to the radio, look out the window, and sing or talk to others in the car. This person has associative thoughts. As they are driving they hit a snowstorm. The radio goes off, they stop talking, and they focus on the road. This person now has cognitive thoughts.

Brain Gym® Exercises: DLR. For more information on DLR, go to Education Topics-Whole Body Movement.

Dysnomia: Students with dysnomia can't take notes and listen at the same time. It is better for the student to listen during class and get the notes from someone after class whether it is the teacher or from another student.

Brain Gym® Exercises: Balance Buttons while touching both at same time the mastoid bone and occipital area in the back of the head (pg. 27) in *Brain Gym @ Teachers' Edition*.

Reading and Decoding: He talked about how we are raised in a society that no matter how we look at things, it is still the same. A pencil is a pencil if you hold it upright, upside down, or flat. We have spatial orientation where it is the same, no matter how you move it. He described how some students have trouble with reversals. Letters like bpdq change. They are the same formation put in a different way and then given a new name. L.D. students take too long to decode the letters or words and therefore they are unable to comprehend what is being read.

Brain Gym® Exercises: Midline Movements (pg. 3-15), particularly the Elephant (pg. 8) in *Brain Gym @ Teachers' Edition*.

Auditory & Visual Capabilities: L.D. students need stories placed on tape so they are able to listen to what is being said.

Brain Gym® Exercises: DLR. For more information on DLR, go to Education Topics-Whole Body Movement.

Fairness: Everyone gets what he or she needs, not equal for all (Lawrence Kohlberg). For example: If someone in a class of 30 needs CPR and you are capable of helping, you don't think about the other 29 students. You help the one in need without hesitation. It is okay to help some students more than others depending on their need.

Brain Gym® Exercises: PACE and Positive Attitude Action Balance. For more information, go to Education Topics- PACE Parts 1-5 and Positive Action Balance.

Commentary: At the end of the video, the people that participated in the workshop described their feelings about the activities that were presented. Many of them felt stupid, frustrated, had headaches, poor self-esteem, and devastated.

Brain Gym® Exercises: DLR. For more information on DLR, go to Education Topics-Whole Body Movement.

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