

OPTIONS CENTER EDUCATION TOPIC



Dyslexia and Learning Difficulties

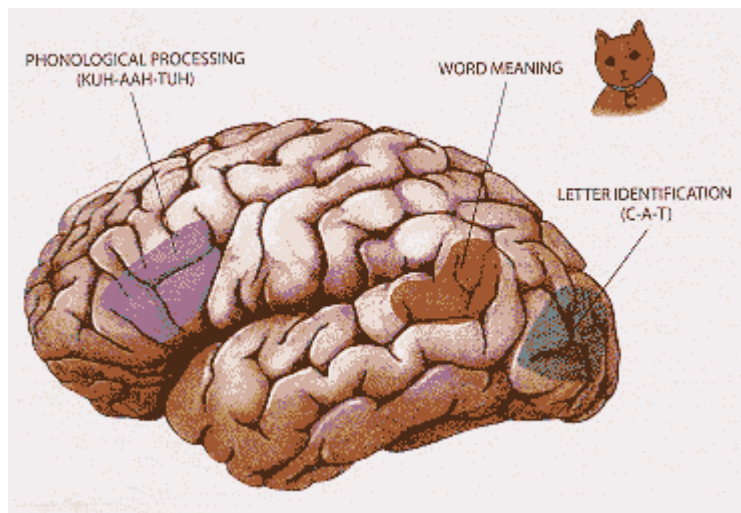
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In America alone, researchers and educators estimate there are over ten million children and adults who suffer from learning disabilities, which can range from mild forms -- such as underachieving and failing to reach one's full potential -- to severe forms -- such as dyslexia and attention deficit disorder. Learning disabilities do not bias a certain socio-economic level or discriminate against any particular gender, race, or ethnicity. Learning problems are not limited to language skills or mathematical abilities. They can also have devastating effects on the student's emotional stability. Those with learning difficulties usually have behavior problems, especially at school, because they take out their frustration on those around them, or they may withdraw within themselves completely and not talk or interact with anyone outside their family. The student may lose self-confidence and self-esteem and develop a negative self-image which could be carried through the rest of his or her life.

Treatment of dyslexia and learning difficulties in the past put the main emphasis on "left-brain training" where drills are based on repetition, sequencing, and matching speech sounds with written symbols. While this left-brain based treatment may help the student reach a certain point in learning language, a more whole-brain emphasis helps with complete learning and information processing. By adding an emphasis on the right brain, the student's awareness encompasses the whole picture; and he can then open his own innate expression, rhythm, and intuitive way of learning. A whole-brain approach to learning can recognize details but also synthesize the parts to understand the whole big picture and can be processed without trying too hard. Whereas most dyslexics and students with other learning disabilities compensate for their inefficient information processing, when these same students integrate their left and right hemispheres of the brain, they can function at a higher level of efficiency and perceive the whole as more than just the sum of its parts. The left brain is conscious of language and comprehension and the right brain deals with symbols and codes. By integrating the two hemispheres, the student's language skills are strengthened and corrected.



Dr. Dennison, the creator of Brain Gym® (Educational Kinesiology), and a dyslexic himself, emphasizes that dyslexia and other learning difficulties are conditions, not diseases. Learning difficulties come about from inefficient neurological functioning or "short circuits" in the brain. Dyslexia and other learning difficulties occur when the student "switches off" one hemisphere of the brain instead of using both sides cooperatively. When one hemisphere is switched off, the student will only be operating with half power (half a brain). This "switching off" occurs subconsciously when the student is under stress. The student may be stressed by his environment (home and/or school), such as a difficult home environment from a change in residence, divorce, or unsatisfactory relationships with teachers and/or classmates. Stress can also be felt if the student has developed later than other children in his class. "Switching off" may become second nature and therefore difficult to break the student out of the habit of functioning and compensating in this way.



Performing the Brain Gym® exercises on a regular basis (three times a day minimum), especially before going to school or doing homework, the student's brain will become integrated so both hemispheres are working together. The more times the student does the exercises the more integrated the student will be on a regular basis, but time and patience is necessary at the beginning as the student and his/her brain become accustomed to working in this way. The mid-line movements, specifically the cross crawl, help the student's right and left hemispheres communicate together so there is less chance of one of the hemispheres "switching off". Information and learning can be accomplished more easily and the student is less stressed, thereby breaking out of his/her habit of "switching off" and becoming frustrated. Then, the student can become excited about learning and learn in such a way that is relaxing, active, and creative.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

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