

Developing Evaluation and Intervention Tools - Learning Disabilities and ADHD (Carmel)

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"Learning Disability" was defined by the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (1994), as follows:

a general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual, presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction, and may occur across the life span. Although learning disabilities may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions (e.g., sensory impairment, mental retardation, serious emotional disturbance), or with external influences (such as cultural differences, insufficient or inappropriate instruction), they are not the result of those conditions.

D., a student aged 26, was recently diagnosed as suffering from learning disabilities. She recounts: "Every day I wake up in the morning and the first thing I ask myself is: "what day is today?"... It is important for me to remember the birthdays of my friends, but I find this very difficult I remember the date, but do not connect it with the day of the week, so that I miss it I do not have a daily schedule, and each day is completely different; this is also connected to the fact that each day starts at a different hour" D. adds: "In elementary and secondary school I often forgot to arrange my schoolbag, and would come to school with the previous day's bag Nowadays, I simply come to school without all the necessary material, we need the books and booklets that we work with, but I do not bring them at all "

Id2

Articles on children students and adults with learning disabilities in occupational therapy are based on the awareness that learning disabilities vary in their severity and in the way they are manifested in different individuals. Likewise, learning disabilities can affect not only academic performance but also the various functions in which the individual is involved. Hence the studies focus on the effects of the disability on various activities and occupations such as academic studies, activities of daily living, social interaction, play and leisure, military service, work, driving and family life.

There are underlying factors contributing to learning abilities. Studies in occupational therapy are performed in order to find ways to evaluate and improve those underlying factors that contribute to learning abilities, such as cognitive skills, meta-cognitive skills and executive functions including organization and self-management in time (e.g., planning a daily schedule while balancing between the various activities) and space (e.g., organizing personal belongings, orientation in different places). Studies also focus on the specific skills necessary for learning, such as the ability to write within a reasonable amount of time and without investing unnecessary energy, as well as producing a written document that is legible and comprehensible.

Moreover, research results show that in approximately 50% of the cases, learning disabilities co-occur with other disorders such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Developmental coordination disorder (DCD) and Sensory Modulation Disorder (SMD). Hence studies in occupational therapy also focus on revealing the unique characteristics of these diagnoses and on developing evaluation and intervention tools based on the unique needs of affected individuals while simultaneously addressing the additional deficits co-occurring with learning disabilities.

In summary, the studies currently being done are those that focus on the identification of learning disabilities as well as on evaluation and intervention in this population.

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