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## Learning disorders

Story thanks to  
Jutta Dempsey



# "I HATE SCHOOL"

Hidden learning disorders can often be the cause of problems and a lack of enthusiasm at school, writes Jutta Dempsey

It's only been a short while since your kids eagerly tried on new shoes and uniforms for the new school year. They were excited about meeting a new teacher and forming new friendship groups, some may even have been looking forward to the lessons.

And now, as they're back in to the swing of school, is your child still eager, or has the whole school routine become their dread?

Over 10% of children have a learning disorder. These children generally do not like school and develop adjustment difficulties because of their learning disorder. By adolescence they are showing signs of depression, anxiety, social and/or behavioural problems.

Learning disorders vary from person to person. One child with a learning disorder will not have the same kind of learning problems as another child. Some children will find reading difficult while others struggle to write, do maths or follow instructions. There are many types of Learning Disorders with Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, Central Auditory Processing Disorder, being just a few. A psychometric assessment by an educational psychologist is required to identify them and recommend how a child will be best able to learn.

Learning disorders are caused by differences in how a person's brain works and how it processes

information. Children with learning disorders are not "dumb" or "lazy". In fact they usually have above average intelligence. Albert Einstein, Winston Churchill, Tom Cruise are just some of the very bright and talented people with a learning disorder.

With the right diagnosis and the right support, children with learning disorders can and do learn successfully. Their brains just process information differently. When they receive the correct learning support, they feel better about themselves, do better at school and avoid many of the pitfalls of a hidden learning disorder. The child with an unrecognised learning disorder will not only have difficulty in the school years, but throughout life both in their working environments and their interpersonal relationships.

Parents are usually the first ones to suspect a learning disorder as it will often be missed at school because the child is "doing alright".

The earlier the diagnosis the less the negative impact on your child's longer term learning, emotional and behavioural development.

It is not a dream to have your child eager to start Term 2, Term 3 and Term 4 with the same enthusiasm as Term 1. They may actually enjoy the challenge and even do the homework!

**Jutta Dempsey** is a child and family psychologist and principal of Directions Learning & Behaviour Guidance.

### Signs of learning disorders: Is your child showing two or more of the following?

- Feels dumb, has poor self-esteem
- Is easily frustrated or emotional
- Labelled lazy, careless, immature, not trying hard enough
- Behaviour problems such as being the class clown, attention seeking
- "Zones out" or daydreams
- Homework takes excessive time and is avoided
- Poor spelling, hand writing and doesn't read for pleasure
- Poor organisation and time management
- Talented in art, drama, sports, or building
- Too quiet and withdrawn
- Poor social relationships
- Seems bright but just average in class