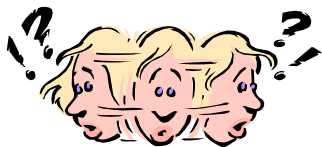


One of the most common learning disabilities is language processing problems.



Children with language processing problems may have difficulties understanding individual words, questions, directions and/or complex phrases. These children may find it hard to make and to keep friends as they may not be able to understand the jokes, inferences and subtleties in social communication. Difficulties understanding what the teacher is saying can lead to frustration and acting out behaviour in the classroom. Recent research has indicated that one of the most common causes of reading disabilities is a deficit in phonological coding (the ability to segment words into individual sounds) (Stanovich & Siegel, 1994).



There are many things that parents can do at home to improve their child's language skills.

Two books that may be helpful for parents are *Playing with Words* (Margie Golick, 1987) and *Wacky Word Games* (Margie Golick, 1990). These books suggest games that enhance vocabulary, comprehension and phonological awareness. Rhyming games and alphabet games draw children's attention to the individual sounds within words. An example of a rhyming game from *Playing with Words* is 'Stinky Pinky' (e.g., What do you call the Chief of Police? A top cop). Another game entitled 'Words within Words' helps children recognize spelling patterns in words (e.g., find four words in 'potato'). In addition, there are several riddles and variations of 'Twenty Questions' that can enhance children's expressive vocabulary and word knowledge.



When children in elementary school avoid reading, their learning difficulties can become compounded by an information deficit. Simply stated, these children do not acquire as much information about the world

as their peers do through reading. Parents can help to improve both their child's language development and general knowledge by reading to them frequently from both fiction and non-fiction books. When you read, ensure that your child can see the text. It may even be helpful to use a ruler to identify the line you are reading. When you are finished a chapter or section of the book, talk with your child about what you just read. This will help to consolidate your child's understanding of the material and enhance his/her overall listening comprehension.



It is important to stress that these games and activities should be introduced in a playful, stress-free environment. If your child is resistant or finds the games too difficult, select another game that s/he enjoys. You may need to begin with what you think is an 'easy' game. Offer your child an activity that s/he can do well before proceeding to more difficult material. This will help to build a sense of competence in your child.

Margie Golick's books are available through the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (416)929-4311.



Integra, founded in 1967 by parents and professionals, is an accredited Children's Mental Health Centre dedicated to helping children and adolescents who experience social, emotional and behavioural problems related to their learning disabilities. We are a charitable organization administered by a Board of Directors comprised of dedicated volunteers from the community.

Integra has an experienced and multidisciplinary professional staff that is dedicated to creating and implementing a range of programs. Integra serves as a centre for research, practicum placement and continuing education.

Integra is committed to the promotion of a community-wide understanding of the mental health needs of children and adolescents who have learning disabilities, and to improving community-based services for them and their families. A range of clinical services is provided by Integra, as well as related activities in research and evaluation, and in training, consultation, collaboration and advocacy.

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TIPS FOR PARENTS

Encouraging Language Development

by Lorraine Campbell, Ph.D., C.Psych.

Improving the lives of children and youth with Learning Disabilities
25 Imperial St., Toronto, ON M5P 1B9

T: 416-486-8055
E: info@integra.on.ca
W: www.integra.on.ca