

How do you talk to a child about having a learning disability?

Parents are often concerned about whether to discuss the topic of "learning disability" with their children. This may be due to a belief that the term reinforces negative self-thoughts a child might be having or due to the fear that there is negative stigma associated with it.

Interestingly, research shows that many children with learning disabilities have never had an explanation about why they struggle at school. Despite having gone through an extensive diagnostic process, the results of the assessment of the child may not have been discussed with the child.

Research has demonstrated that children's self esteem can actually improve after diagnosis with a learning disability. When children understand why they

struggle, become aware of their strengths and receive information about what might help them to learn, they often experience improvement in their ability to manage and cope.

Children's negative response to the term "learning disability" is often based on the attitudes of those around them. It has been found that negative responses of family, teachers and/or peers can strongly influence whether a child finds the label stigmatizing or not.

Parents can help their children understand their learning disability by discussing it openly, honestly and with optimism. There are a number of books and web sites that can help parents to discuss learning disabilities with their children.

Book resources include:

- *The School Survival Guide for Kids with LD* *(Learning Differences)*

By: Rhoda Woods Cummings & Garry Fisher (1991).

- *Succeeding with LD: 20 True Stories About Real People With LD*

By: Jill Lauren (1997).

- *Keeping A Head in School: A Student's Book About Learning Abilities and Learning Disorders*

By: Mel Levine (1990).

Internet resources include:

LD Online www.ldonline.org

LD Pride <http://www.ldpride.net>





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.

Reproduction of this TIP was made possible through a grant from The Ontario Trillium Foundation:



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This article has also appeared in *Among Friends*, Integra's twice yearly newsletter publication

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TIPS FOR PARENTS

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