



# Learning Disorders Learning Differences

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# What is a Learning Disorder?

Learning Disabilities refer to a number of disorders which may affect the acquisition, organization, retention, understanding or use of verbal or nonverbal information.

These disorders affect learning in individuals who otherwise demonstrate at least average abilities essential for thinking and/or reasoning.

As such, learning disabilities are distinct from global intellectual deficiency.

How do learning  
disorders manifest?

- Learning disabilities result from impairments in one or more processes related to **perceiving, thinking, remembering** or **learning**.  
These include, but are not limited to:
  - language processing; phonological processing; visual spatial processing; processing speed; memory and attention; and executive functions (e.g. planning and decision-making).
- Learning disabilities range in severity and may interfere with the acquisition and use of one or more of the following:
  - oral language (e.g. listening, speaking, understanding);
  - reading (e.g. decoding, phonetic knowledge, word recognition, comprehension);
  - written language (e.g. spelling and written expression); and
  - mathematics (e.g. computation, problem solving).
- Learning disabilities may also involve difficulties with organizational skills, social perception, social interaction and perspective taking.

How are they  
identified and can  
they be cured?

Learning disabilities are lifelong. The way in which they are expressed may vary over an individual's lifetime, depending on the interaction between the demands of the environment and the individual's strengths and needs.



Learning disabilities are suggested by unexpected academic under-achievement or achievement which is maintained only by unusually high levels of effort and support.



The formal diagnosis is made through a comprehensive evaluation that assesses cognitive abilities as well as academic and selected other areas of functioning.

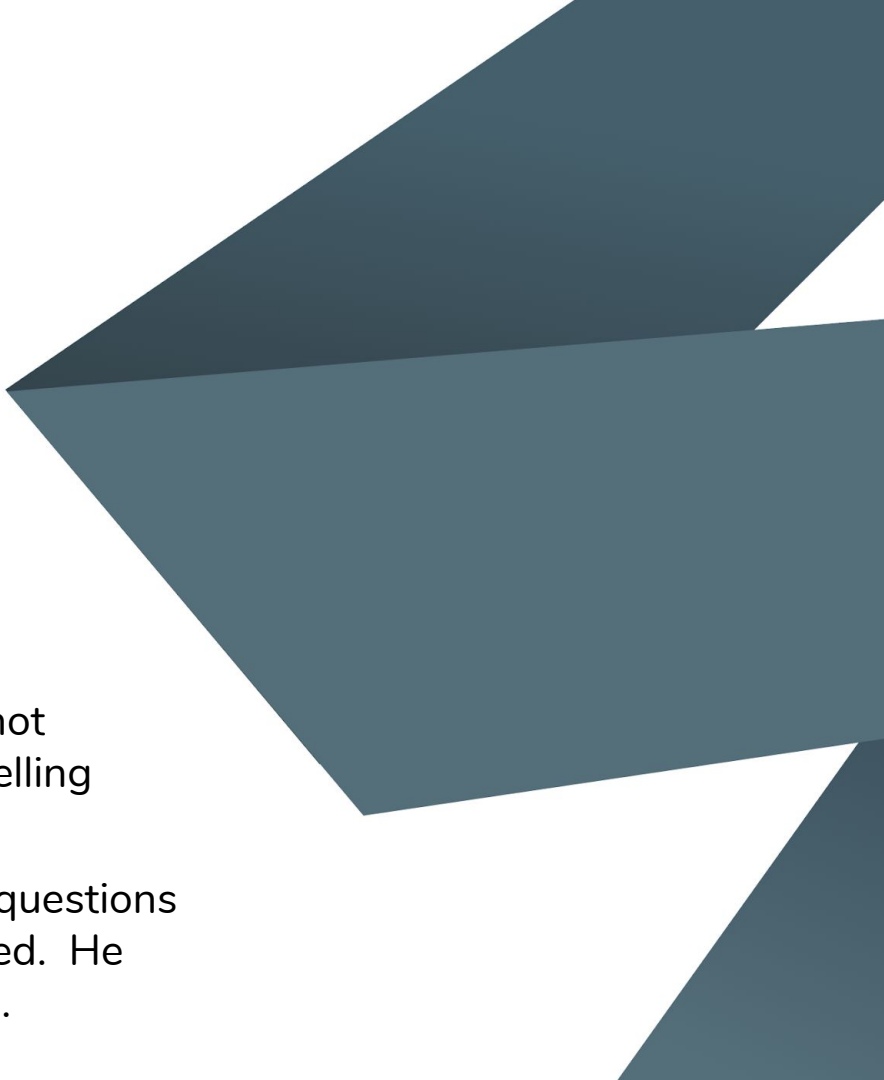


# Types of Learning Disorders

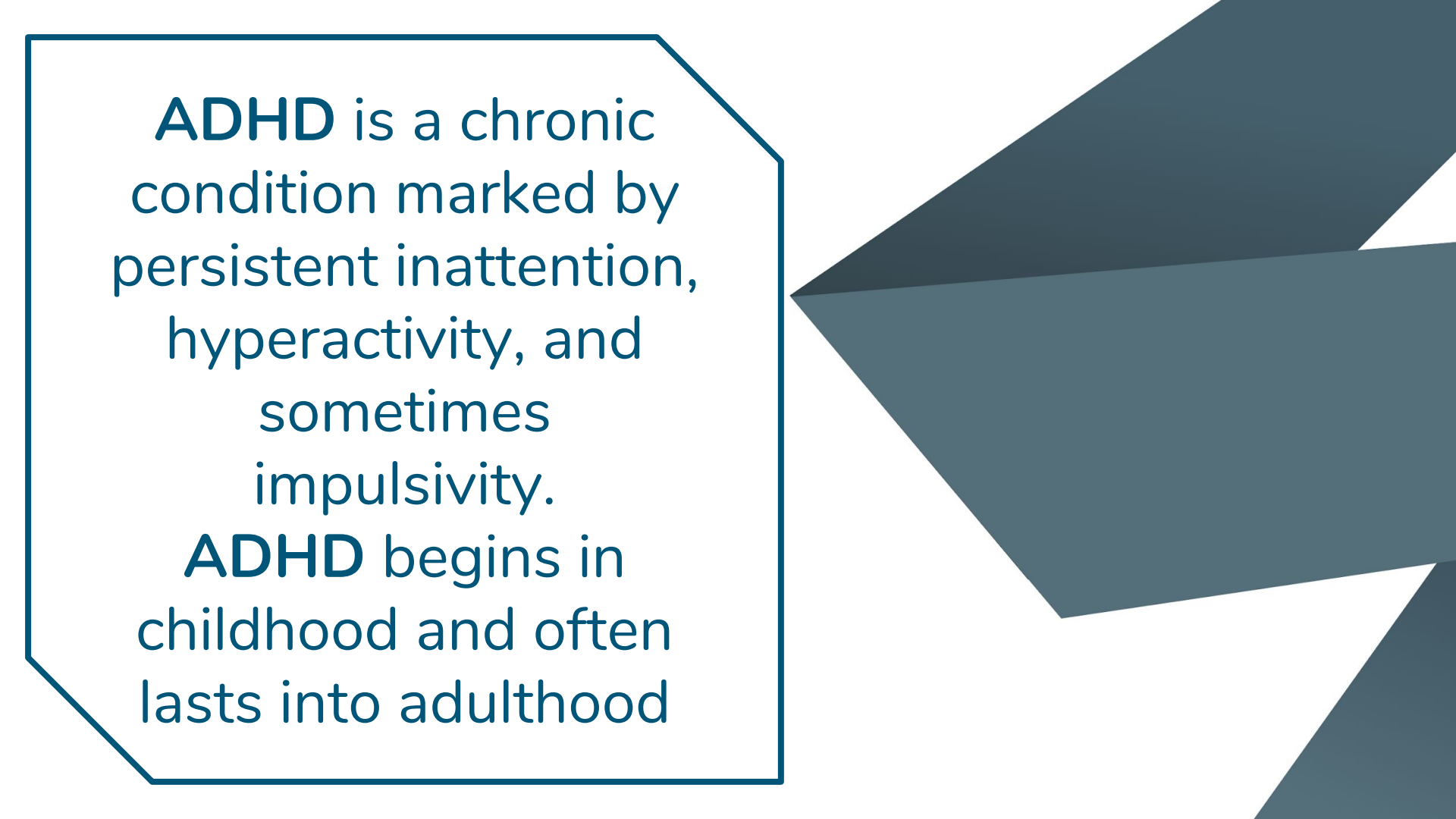


- ❖ Dyslexia (Specific Learning Disorder with Impairment in Reading)
- ❖ Specific Learning Disorder with Impairment in Written Expression (sometimes referred to as “dysgraphia”).
  - ❖ Related to this, but its own diagnosis is Developmental Coordination Disorder
- ❖ Specific Learning Disorder with Impairment in Mathematics (sometimes referred to as “Dyscalculia”).
  - ❖ Auditory Processing Deficit
  - ❖ Visual Processing Deficit
  - ❖ High Functioning Autism (Autism Spectrum Disorder/Nonverbal Learning Disorder)

What might you  
observe in the  
classroom?

1. A student underperforms on tests after visiting your office hours and demonstrating an understanding of the material and/or demonstrating knowledge in class discussions.
  2. A student makes slight/careless errors on tests. In math, for example, there might be excessive simple computation errors, numbers might be misaligned or not transferred from one part of the page to the next.
  3. On an essay test, the written expression is not reflective of a student's oral expression. Spelling and sentence structure might be poor.
  4. The student might not pay attention to test questions and therefore not answer what is being asked. He might overlook parts of multi-part questions.
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What is  
AD/HD?



**ADHD** is a chronic condition marked by persistent inattention, hyperactivity, and sometimes impulsivity.

**ADHD** begins in childhood and often lasts into adulthood

Several inattentive or hyperactive-impulsive symptoms were present prior to age 12

Several inattentive or hyperactive-impulsive symptoms are present in two or more settings (e.g. home, school, work, with friends/relatives, in other activities)

There is clear evidence that the symptoms interfere with, or reduce the quality of social, academic, or occupational functioning.

The symptoms cannot be better explained by another mental disorder

What might you  
observe in the  
classroom?

**Issues with organization and remembering to bring materials and/or assignments to class.**



**Presentation of material in disorganized fashion. Student might submit work that is not organized on the page, illegible, and or missing important information (from the student's name to aspects of the assignment).**

**Student appears disengaged, either daydreaming and/or distracted by other belongings or people**



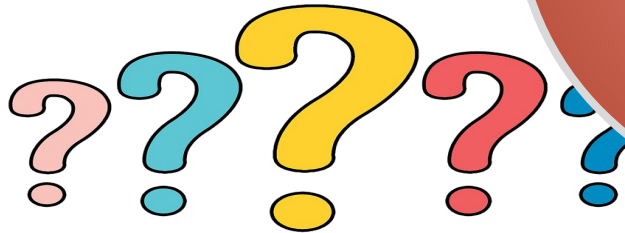




**Can these students  
be successful?**



When students are underachieving, it is important to consider the factors



YES!

- Is the student putting forth effort?
- Is the student getting sufficient sleep or is over-programmed that there simply is not enough time to learn?
- Are there issues at home?

If the student is open to learning and putting forth effort but still not achieving, this is a red flag and likely very frustrating to the student who often is highly intelligent but unable to demonstrate his potential in a traditional manner.

Be careful of making assumptions →

**Examples:**

- This student is lazy
- This student does not care
- This student does not have the potential to succeed

# What can you as teachers do to help a student maximize his potential?



1. For a student who is inattentive, seat him at the front of the room. Make a point to engage him if you notice he is drifting.
2. Incorporate multiple modes of sensory input. By using visual aids to accompany lectures, students can learn by accessing material both visually and auditorally.
3. Make learning fun. Engage students by teaching in creative ways. Incorporate games, stories, etc.

4. Allow students to take notes on a computer. For students with fine motor issues, it might be the only way they will take notes. We live in a computer based world, so students might as well practice their keyboarding skills. Strict guidelines can be enforced with regard to no internet use.

5. Make sure to provide all instructions in writing. Some students rely on those visual cues and might not process the directions accurately if required to do so purely through auditory input.

6. Related to this, make notes/outlines/Power Points accessible and available to students.



# Student success

7. Provide textbooks for learning. Students should at least be able to reference a textbook to supplement other formats.

8. Though not always a reasonable accommodations, it might be helpful for students who are struggling on written tests to be assessed in an alternative format. This will allow you to gauge his level of understanding to determine whether poor test performance is due to a lack of knowledge or a difficult demonstrating his understanding.

Questions?