

BEAUTIFUL SAVIOR LUTHERAN SCHOOL PRESENTS:

PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

Special Thoughts on Raising Kids

Learning Disorders - No Easy Answers

Many children, as many as two out of ten, are diagnosed as having a learning disorder, perceptual motor problem and/or dyslexia. These common terms are used to describe a child who is normally intelligent but has problems in learning, usually academic learning.

Learning disorders rarely exist without behavioral problems and/or attitude problems at school. Many children may also have associated signs of definite neurologic “brain” dysfunction.

When a child has a “learning problem,” the specific problem needs to be defined before a specific solution can be offered. Many learning problems can be cured or helped while others need to be “coped with.” Too often parents face needless agony, wheel-spinning and financial cost when they try to fix a problem that will disappear with time, cannot be fixed, or is not the basic problem.

There are two ways of diagnosing learning problems. The first and most important is to obtain an accurate history, including birth or pregnancy problems, the age at which the child mastered such milestones as crawling, walking and talking, and family history, such as whether parents or siblings had problems in school. Second, there are a number of tests that help clarify a learning disorder.

What to do about a problem is based on an accurate diagnosis, but there some basics that apply to most learning disorders:

- 1) No matter what the problem, a child must feel good about him/herself while recognizing that he/she does have a problem in learning. Wise parents and educators focus on building a child’s strengths, rather than correcting weaknesses. Strengths may be in non-academic or extra-curricular areas.
- 2) If a six to ten-year old, particularly a boy, was “slow” in milestone development, but now walks and talks normally and has a normal vocabulary but messy handwriting, problems in math, drawing and spelling, he or she is likely to out grow most of the problems in the early teen years.
- 3) If a learning disorder is accompanied by Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), a physician may recommend medication. (ADD is a whole different topic.)
- 4) If a child is to remain in the educational system, the size of the class, the behavior of the other children and the ability of the teacher to respond to the child as a unique individual are the three factors most important to the child’s success.
- 5) Tutoring, even by the best teacher, only helps when a child buys into the program.

Focus on Building a Child’s Strengths Rather Than Correcting Weaknesses