



## **TIPS AND TRICKS FOR UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING CHILDREN WITH NONVERBAL LEARNING DIFFERENCES**

### **What is a Nonverbal Learning Disability (NLD)?**

- A nonverbal learning disability (NLD) typically involves impaired abilities to organize visual-spatial material, adapt to novel situations, and/or accurately read nonverbal signals and cues.
- This disorder appears to affect females as often as males.
- Children with a nonverbal learning disorder may struggle on academic tasks that require speed and adaptability.
- It is not unusual for the child with nonverbal learning disorders to become increasingly isolated and withdrawn as failures in school multiply and intensify.

### **Signs of NLD:**

- **Motor deficits:** These children display a lack of coordination, severe balance problems and/or difficulties with fine-motor skills. The child with nonverbal learning disorders commonly appears awkward and is, in fact, inadequately coordinated in both fine and gross motor skills. Examples would include: learning to ride a bike; kick a soccer ball; cutting with scissors; tying shoelaces.
- **Visual-spatial organizational** such as poor visual recall, faulty spatial perceptions, and/or difficulties with spatial relations.
- **Social deficits:** The child lacks the ability to comprehend nonverbal communication, difficulties adjusting to transitions and novel situations, and/or significant deficits in social judgment and social interaction.
- The child learns little from experience or repetition and is unable to generalize information.

### **Tips for Working with Children who have been Diagnosed with NLD:**

- Tardiness is something these children may struggle with and this should not be treated as misbehavior. As such, allow them extra time to get places and provide verbal cues.
- The world can be very scary for someone who is misreading 65% of all communication and he or she will naturally be reluctant to try new things.
- Avoid power struggles, punishment, and threatening. This child does not understand rigid displays of authority and anger. Take a positive rather than negative approach.
- School assignments that require handwriting need to be modified and/or omitted. Active verbalization is the best memory approach for someone diagnosed with NLD.
- Test answer sheet layouts and the arrangement of visual-spatial math assignments need to be simplified. Whenever possible, use of graph paper is recommended to keep columns aligned in written math assignments.
- Paper and pencil tasks need to be kept to a minimum because of finger dexterity and visual-spatial problems. Occupational therapy is a consideration to help with this matter.
- Use of a computer or laptop is highly recommended for all written school assignments, as the spatial and fine-motor skills needed for typing are not as complicated as those involved in handwriting.
- Additional time will be needed for all written assignments.
- Tasks requiring folding, cutting with scissors, and/or arranging material in a visual-spatial manner will require considerable assistance, provided in an accommodating manner or they should be eliminated entirely.
- Consider enrolling your child in activities that are individually focused within a group setting (e.g., karate, Lego camp, robotics, chess club) rather than group athletics (e.g., soccer).



**Websites:**

- [www.nldontheweb.org](http://www.nldontheweb.org)
- [www.ldonline.org](http://www.ldonline.org)
- [www.nldline.com](http://www.nldline.com)