Learning difficulties: GP information sheet

Some children and adults find reading, writing or maths much harder than other learning, even with good teaching. This can include dyslexia and similar learning differences. These differences are not about effort or intelligence, and people bring many other strengths.

About this sheet. We have written this sheet as psychologists, in the hope that GPs may find some of it useful. It offers general information only and is not a clinical tool.

How it may show up in everyday life

Some people, or the people close to them, may notice things like these. They can look quite different from one person to the next.

Reading

- Reading might feel slow or tiring
- Sounding out words may take effort
- Understanding could be easier when listening

Writing and spelling

- Spelling might vary from day to day
- Getting ideas onto paper may feel hard
- Talking ideas through could feel easier

Maths

- Number facts might be hard to remember
- Worded problems may feel confusing
- Concepts could make more sense with hands on examples

Feelings about learning

- Children might feel frustrated with schoolwork
- Some may avoid homework
- Confidence could dip

At school

- Teachers may share similar observations
- Extra support might already be in place
- Progress could feel slow

For adults

- Some adults may only wonder about learning differences later
- Many may have found clever workarounds
- Reading at work might still feel tiring

What the person might be bringing

Families may arrive feeling worried, or frustrated that things have been hard for a while. Children might feel they are not as clever as others, which can weigh on them.

A warm, curious conversation may help it feel safer to talk. Feeling heard can be a meaningful first step.

What GPs already do well

Opening gently

GPs are often the first person a family talks to. A gentle opening can help them share what they have noticed.

Listening to the story

GPs often know the person, and sometimes their family, over many years. That wider view of someone's life can be very valuable.

A steady point of contact

As people explore their options, the GP can remain a familiar, steady presence, working alongside other professionals.

Seeing the whole person

GPs often hold the bigger picture of a child's health and wellbeing, which can help families feel understood.

What psychology may offer

Understanding

- Time to make sense of experiences
- A thorough learning assessment, where the family would like one
- Recognising strengths as well as challenges
- Information to share with schools

Practical and family support

- Ideas for learning strategies
- Support with confidence and feelings about school
- Support for parents and carers
- Working alongside schools and other professionals

Everyday things some people find helpful

These are simply possibilities. What helps one person may not suit another.

- Reading together for enjoyment
- Audiobooks and listening
- Breaking work into small steps
- Assistive technology
- Praising effort and progress
- Time for favourite strengths

Trusted Australian resources

AUSPELD auspeld.org.au

SPELD NSW speldnsw.org.au

Raising Children Network raisingchildren.net.au

Referring to Strategic Psychology

Our psychologists work with children, adolescents and adults. If a client would like to see one of our team, they can call us on 02 6262 6157 or visit strategicpsychology.com.au. Medicare rebates may be available with a GP referral.

This sheet offers general information for GPs to consider. It does not replace clinical judgement.