



## **Specific Learning Disorder**

**Definition:** Specific Learning Disorder (SLD) is a disorder that disrupts the normal pattern of learning academic skills for at least 6 months. A key feature is that the individual's performance in a particular area is well below the average for his/her age. Learning difficulties are usually apparent in the early school years for most individuals. However, it may also show up later in school as learning demands increase and exceed the individual's learning capacities. Learning problems are not associated with any type of intellectual disabilities, hearing or vision impairments, mental disorders, language differences or lack of adequate instruction.

**Symptoms:** SLD impacts three academic subjects: reading, writing, and math.

- Reading- Deficits may include word reading accuracy, reading rate or fluency, and reading comprehension
- Writing- Impairment in written expression including spelling accuracy, grammar and punctuation accuracy, and clarity or organization of written expression
- Math- Possible deficits in number sense, memorizing of arithmetic facts, accurate or fluent calculations, and accurate math reasoning.

**Causes:** The cause of a learning disorder may be the interaction of genetic and environmental factors which affect the brain's ability to perceive or process verbal and non-verbal information efficiently and accurately. Research suggests that SLD runs in families and can be inherited.

**Treatment:** Specific Learning Disorder is a lifetime condition that can't be "cured." There is rarely just one intervention that will have an impact on a child with learning disabilities. A multidimensional approach usually works best, using targeted screenings and assessments, and with focused, explicit, intensive instruction. Usually, experts work to help a child learn skills by building on the child's strengths and developing ways to compensate for the child's weaknesses. Interventions vary depending on the nature and extent of the disability. A child with a learning disability may struggle with low self-esteem, frustration, and other problems. Mental health professionals can help the youngster understand these feelings, develop coping tools, and build healthy relationships. Children with learning disabilities sometimes have other conditions such as ADHD. These conditions require their own treatments, which may include therapy and medications.

11/2014