

## Myth vs. Reality about Learning Disabilities - Quiz and Answers

For each of the statements below, write T if you think the statement is *true* and write F if you think the statement is *false*.

<i>LD is an excuse for unmotivated or lazy people.</i>	
<i>People with LD are not smart.</i>	
<i>LD only affects children. Adults grow out of the disorders.</i>	
<i>The terms dyslexia and learning disability are the same thing.</i>	
<i>Learning disabilities are only academic in nature. They do not affect other areas of a person's life.</i>	
<i>People with LD can be successful in college/higher studies</i>	
<i>Children with LD are identified in kindergarten and first grade.</i>	
<i>More boys than girls have learning disabilities.</i>	
<i>Medication, diet or alternative medicines can cure LDs</i>	
<i>LDs affect everything a child does at school</i>	

### Answers:

#### **Myth 1. *People with LD are not very smart.***

Kids with learning disabilities are just as smart as other kids. Intelligence has nothing to do with LD. In fact, people with LD have average to above average intelligence. Many have intellectual, artistic, or other abilities that permit them to be defined as gifted. Studies indicate that as many as 33% of students with LD are gifted.

#### **Myth 2. *LD is just an excuse for irresponsible, unmotivated, or lazy people.***

LD is caused by neurological impairments, not character flaws. For some people with LD, the effort required to get through a day can be exhausting in and of itself. The motivation required to do what others take for granted is enormous. Learning disabilities are problems in processing words or information, causing otherwise bright and capable children to have difficulty learning. The disabilities involve language—reading, writing, speaking, and/or listening.

#### **Myth 3. *LD only affects children. Adults grow out of the disorders.***

It is now known that the effects of LD continue throughout the individual's lifespan and "may even intensify in adulthood as tasks and environmental demands change" (Michaels, 1994). Sadly, many adults, especially older adults, have never been formally diagnosed with LD. Learning disabilities cannot be outgrown, but they can be identified reliably in kindergarten or first-grade children, or even earlier. Research clearly demonstrates that the earlier a child is given appropriate help for a learning disability, the more successful the outcome.

**Myth 4. *The terms dyslexia and learning disability are the same thing.***

Dyslexia is a type of learning disability. It is not another term for learning disability. It is a specific language-based disorder affecting a person's ability to read, write, and verbally express him or herself. Unfortunately, careless use of the term dyslexia has expanded so that it has become, for some people, an equivalent for LD. Four out of five children identified with a learning disability are diagnosed with a reading disability (or dyslexia). They have trouble learning how spoken language translates into written text. Since every subject—including math—requires reading and writing, a reading disability affects all of a person's school-based learning.

**Myth 5. *Learning disabilities are only academic in nature. They do not affect other areas of a person's life.***

Some people with learning disabilities have isolated difficulties in reading, writing, or mathematics. However, most people with learning disabilities have more than one area of difficulty. Dr. Larry Silver asserts that "learning disabilities are life disabilities." He writes, "the same disabilities that interfere with reading, writing, and arithmetic also will interfere with sports and other activities, family life, and getting along with friends." (Silver, 1998) Some children have good verbal (language) skills but weaknesses in visual and spatial perception, motor skills and, most significantly, social skills—affecting their ability to grasp the main idea, "see the whole picture," or understand cause-and-effect relationships.

Many children with LD struggle with organization, attention, and memory. One-third of them may also have an attention deficit disorder—difficulty in regulating attention effectively, paying attention as needed, and shifting attention to another task, when required. Children with LD are creative and resourceful, and can frequently be characterized as gifted and as alternative thinkers. They are often very smart, and typically have strengths and talents that differ from the skills emphasized in school. With recognition of their difficulties, appropriate help, and the development of their interests and talents, children with LD can learn to succeed both in school and beyond.

**Myth 6. *Adults with LD cannot succeed in higher education.***

More and more adults with LD are going to college or university and succeeding. With the proper accommodations and support, adults with learning disabilities can be successful at higher education.

**Myth 7. *Children with LD are identified in kindergarten and first grade.***

Learning disabilities often go unrecognized for years; most are not identified until third grade. Bright children can "mask" their difficulties, and some kinds of learning problems may not surface until middle school, high school, or even college.

**Myth 8. *More boys than girls have learning disabilities.***

Although three times more boys than girls are identified by schools as having learning disabilities, research studies show that, in fact, equal numbers of boys and girls have the most common form of learning problem—difficulty with reading. Many girls' learning difficulties are neither identified nor treated.