

Introduction

This book offers parents a new model for understanding children who have trouble processing information. Your child may have difficulties in reading or math, in conceptualizing and completing a series of steps in a certain sequence, in academics in general, in communication, and in social interactions—difficulties that put terrific stress on the child and family alike. This book teaches parents about the learning/thought process, and presents practical, concise exercises for working with such children. These easy to learn approaches lead to measurable improvement in your child's ability to understand and process information, to solve problems and learn more effectively.

What I want to do first is briefly describe to you part of my model of how the brain works, describe to you what I see as the process in learning. Then I will move on to describe how this process can be hampered and most importantly, how this process can be improved upon. After laying out these general concepts, the rest of the book will make easier sense.

When discussing learning, I believe the brain is designed to work in two separate ways, using two separate strategies. In one, the mind gathers a massive number of individual chunks of information to arrive at a conclusion, at a whole perception. In the other way, the brain more or less starts at the conclusion and then tries to fit all the pieces into that conclusion. The brain is designed to see the pieces AND to see the whole, and by using both strategies, to come up with a clear understanding of what is being looked at, read, seen, heard or experienced. These understandings come first and then after, learning occurs. More on this in a few pages. The premise of this book—what you will recognize in your child—is that not everyone has easy access to both of these skills at will, not all children or adults have an easy ability in using both strategies. As a result, there is a certain set of problems, a certain set of symptoms that arise, a certain set of difficulties that are experienced. For some of these people, diagnoses are made. *The strategies and exercises in this book are designed to help address this problem.*

Before I begin I want to highlight one thing. Even though this book is primarily aimed at children that are having difficulties in school and in life, primarily having different sorts of learning difficulties, it should not be thought of in a limited way. To a certain extent we all have learning strengths and learning difficulties. Our abilities to comprehend our surroundings are always somewhat clouded or influenced by our perspectives, which lead to different sorts of distortions. There is a lot in biological and behavioral sciences that speaks to this point. The bottom line is that we all have to learn, we all have to take in our environment, and we are all limited to one extent or another. It is just that for some people these challenges stand out more and interfere with many aspects of life.

As a result I would like to offer the following bit of advice. The work involved in this book is aimed at children with the diagnosis of learning disabilities, reading disabilities, math disabilities, auditory processing problems, central processing problems, etc. The list is long, and frankly somewhat depressing to me. I dislike all these terms. They dehumanize the child to a mere diagnosis. While the terms help in the diagnosis of a set of symptoms, they limit the ability to describe what really ails the child. As a result, many of the diagnosis are then followed by the psychologist saying that there is nothing really to be done to fix it, the problem just has to be managed correctly and that this child's hardwiring cannot really be altered.

I would like to reframe this issue completely. I would like to say that we all have a certain level of learning differences that we work with. Biologically speaking, our brain has come up with numerous strategies of how to learn, how to understand the world. What I would like you, the reader, to appreciate, is that if there is a tool or system that helps all people learn how to do this learning better, then it should be used by everyone. Yes, it will show its benefits to those that are suffering the most, but really everyone should use these tools, since they help our two main strategies (one of seeing the big picture first, one of seeing the component parts first) to work better.

What I believe, what I have seen, is that what follows will help many, many people to one extent or another. This means it will help all children, as the skills are aimed at helping train the brain in deep thought, increasing the

ability to conceptualize reality more clearly and think more critically. It can help adults, in that the problem of not developing these same skills in childhood will surely follow them into adulthood. Likewise, if there has been a disruption to the brain's activity, such as after a stroke or after a head injury, these same skills are compromised, and have to be specifically retrained. In short, this is not just for children who are failing, and really, it is not just for children.

That said, the vast majority of my patients are children and a large percentage of those come in diagnosed with some form of learning or processing disability. The parents have tried medications to no avail (the ones where the medications worked do not seek my care!) What I have found is that many of the children have the same cluster of symptoms yet no definitive diagnosis; they often fall through the cracks of treatment. Some diagnoses in the world of learning challenges have easier solutions than others. When there is not a definitive diagnosis, solutions can be that much more difficult to find.

The medical treatments that I specialize in and recommend, which are outside the scope and purpose of this writing, are by definition individualized. I believe that every child is unique and has unique issues to work through, unique gifts to offer the world, and particular work he has to do to grow in the way he was meant to grow. Besides the medical treatment that I specialize in, I have developed approaches described in this book that parents and caregivers can work with which can help children with processing issues. With these practical tools and applications, you do not simply *compensate* for problems, but aim to *correct* them.

The term 'learning disability,' as we know, is not just one problem. (I actually do not like the term, but it is currently a phrase in fashion.) There are many specific reasons why someone might be struggling or performing poorly at school or having difficulties in the social realm, in the family or with friends. As a result there is no one specific tool to help every single child. There may be cognitive issues that cause learning disabilities but there are other factors as well. For example, one child might primarily have an emotional disorder, which leads to poor school performance. Another child

might have a myriad of social difficulties in the home, be it poor hygiene leading to illness, or parents with substance abuse problems which interfere with the child being able to study effectively. Another child may suffer from a physical illness which interrupts their ability to do consistently strong school work, let alone attend school. The most important thing you can do is try to understand what underlies the poor performance, and address that directly. A proper and specific diagnosis of what ails your child always informs treatment options. You should do whatever you can to get a proper diagnosis for your child.