

Seven Myths & Facts about Learning Disabilities

Compiled by Rebecca Fast

(1) **Myth:** People with learning disabilities are stupid, or a little less intelligent than their peers.

Fact: Learning disabilities are differences in how a person's brain receives, processes, and puts out information. Learning disabilities are not an indicator of an individual's intelligence. Persons with learning disabilities simply learn differently from their peers. Thus, while many such persons have average or even above average intelligence, there is a discrepancy between their abilities and their actual achievement.

(2) **Myth:** People with learning disabilities are lazy.

Fact: People with learning disabilities may make the same mistakes dozens of times. They may forget homework assignments, may miss a meeting, or do something they have just been told not to do. These issues are related to the way in which their brains process information. This is all part of their struggle.

(3) **Myth:** With effort, most people can out-grow their learning disabilities.

Fact: While the specific causes of learning disabilities are debated, it is clear that learning disabilities, *once they manifest themselves, are always present*. However, the goal of much school accommodation is to teach individuals with learning disabilities the tools that will help them to develop sustainable compensatory strategies for the rest of their lives. To put it succinctly, *children with learning disabilities grow up into adults with learning disabilities*.

(4) **Myth:** Learning disabilities are invisible.

Fact: Learning disabilities may be almost impossible to diagnose by outside appearance, and thus *seem* invisible, but the signs and symptoms in children with learning disabilities are clear when you look for them:

- He/she is easily frustrated with school and homework.
- He/she has low self-esteem from repeated academic and/or social failures.
- He/she has low grades and a feeling of being treated unfairly after all their hard work.
- He/she may need constant, step-by-step guidance for tasks.
- He/she may not be able to remember problem solving-steps when they do not understand the bigger picture and the logic behind the assignment

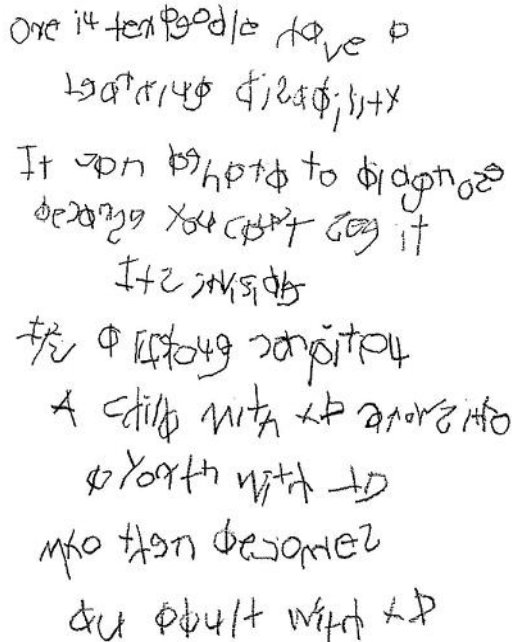
(5) **Myth:** People that are successful with learning disabilities do so by pretending to be “normal” like everyone else.

Fact: While a certain stigma and many falsely held beliefs remain around the area of learning disabilities, there are many people who have publicly acknowledged their learning disability and gone on to have great success in their lives. Well known inventors, painters, and actors who have succeeded with learning disabilities include Albert Einstein, Alexander Graham Bell, Whoopi Goldberg, Keira Knightley and Salma Hayek.

(6) **Myth:** Learning disabilities affect males more then they affect females.

Fact: While it is true that boys are four times more likely to be *diagnosed* with a learning disability, research does not show any difference in the *incidences* of learning disabilities among girls and boys. Perhaps because of some traditional ideas of gender-based academic skills, or because of the more introverted behavior of girls with learning disabilities, they are less likely to be identified and treated for their learning disabilities.

Can you read this...?



One it ten people have
learned to read
It can be hard to diagnose
because you can't see it
It's not
It's not
A child with a learning
disability will do
more than someone
else without it

(7) **Myth:** School accommodations, and individual education plans give students with learning disabilities an unfair advantage.

Fact: Accommodations, whether they are technological, peer assistance, teacher clarification, extra time, or other types, are one way that the school can help a student with a learning disability find greater success in academics. Accommodations are seen as helping to “level the playing field”

for people with learning disabilities. The graphic above, from the Learning Disabilities Association of York Region, is an example of what a person with dyslexia may see when reading. Accommodations could help this person decipher what they are trying to read.
