

# Survival Guide for Teenagers with Learning Disabilities (LD)\*

## **5 Facts about LD**

1. People with LD are found in all countries and cultures in the world, not only in the United States and other English-speaking countries.
2. Nearly half of all school-age children with disabilities have LD.
3. Of all the students identified as having LD, about 72% are boys and 28% are girls.
4. Most children with LD are identified in elementary school. Few are newly identified in junior high/middle school or high school.
5. Seventy-Eight percent of students with LD receive their education in regular classrooms and resource rooms. Twenty-one percent are in special education classes for students with LD.

## **Understanding LD**

There are many kinds of learning disabilities, but most of those classified at Hylton fall under SLD (Specific Learning Disability). Students with academic learning disabilities have specific deficits in reading, written language, and/or math. Their IQ scores were average; however, their educational scores in the academic areas were at least 15 points lower than their IQ score.

## **What “causes” LD?**

No one knows for sure. Often, they seem to run in families, or some children suffered from an accident when they were younger. The specific reason is unknown, but we do know that students with learning disabilities are not performing up to their potential and require special education services in order to be successful in school. Special Education Services are diverse and decided on an individual basis at each student’s IEP (Individualized Education Plan) meeting.

## **Tips for Talking to Teachers**

1. Think about what you want to say before you meet with your teacher.
2. Choose your words carefully. Instead of saying, “Lectures are boring,” you can try, “It is hard for me to pay attention during lectures. I lose track of what you are saying.” Instead of “I hate writing,” you can say, “Writing is hard for me.” You will find that you will receive even more support and help than you expected.
3. Don’t expect the teacher to do all of the work, or to come up with all of the answers to help you. You will have to offer suggestions, and be ready to make an effort. You will find that if you make an effort, most teachers will meet you more than halfway.
4. Be diplomatic, tactful, and respectful.
5. Focus on what you need as a student, not what you think the teacher is doing wrong.
6. Don’t forget to listen, and even take notes on strategies you both might try.
7. If all else fails, and you feel the teacher is not willing to help you, then speak with your case manager, guidance counselor, or anyone you trust to help you. Then try the above steps again in order to resolve any difficulties you might experience in class.

## **Teenagers and TV**

- Teens watch an average of 147 minutes of TV per day, or about 17 hours per week.

- By high school graduation, the average teen has watched 20,000 hours of television. That is more than he or she has spent in school and interacting with parents – COMBINED!
- For many teens, TV has taken the place of other leisure activities. Instead of being with other people, doing other things together and making friends, they're sitting home alone in front of the TV.
- Too much TV promotes a passive lifestyle. One study of 406 teenage boys found that those who watched little TV were more physically fit and active.
- The more time teens spend watching TV, the less time they spend reading and doing homework.

### **Ten Reasons to Get a Job While You Are Still in School**

1. You will learn things about the world that many people do not learn in school.
2. Now is the ideal time to try different types of jobs to see what might interest you.
3. A job will keep you busy and encourage you to organize your time and your life.
4. A job will keep you away from the TV set.
5. A successful job experience will help you feel good about yourself.
6. A job will make you more independent.
7. A job will give you work experience.
8. A job could help you decide what to do after graduation.
9. A job will give you experience in getting along with others.
10. You will get paid for working, and can learn about budgeting money.

### **Five Reason NOT to Get a Job**

1. You may already be too busy, and should not over-extend yourself.
2. A job might interfere with your schoolwork, and school is a priority right now.
3. A job might prevent you from helping at home.
4. Some jobs can make you feel bad about yourself.
5. Some jobs require you to be dishonest, work too many hours, or miss class time at school.

### **Five Ways to Learn about a Future Career**

1. Try out different types of jobs while in high school.
2. Ask your school counselor, or Transition Specialist to give you a career assessment.
3. Contact community agencies, such as the Virginia State Employment Agency for help. You can also check out **The Job Hut**, located in Manassas Mall. The Job Hut will open in October 2003, and will offer year round employment services for students ages 14-21 such as: career counseling, vocational aptitude testing, college and financial aid information, and job listings.
4. Read catalogs from community and junior colleges, trade and vocational schools, and four-year colleges and universities.
5. Talk to people who work in different jobs.

### **STUDY ENVIRONMENT**

- Each child needs a special area where they can complete daily homework assignments. (desk, left side of the dining room table, etc.)
- Good lighting

- Enough supplies to complete most assignments (sharpened pencils, pens, ruled paper, textbooks – many students can receive an extra copy of their textbooks to keep at home if they have difficulty with organization and planning.)
- Quiet – it is very helpful for their study area to be free from distractions, such as the TV, radio, CD player, younger brothers and sisters, etc.

### **STUDY HABITS**

- Students need to use their daily agenda – DAILY ☺.
- At the start of each week, month and/or quarter students should write important dates, such as test dates, due dates, etc in their agenda.
- Every day, students should write homework assignments from each class.
- They might try color-coding their notebooks – red for science, blue for math, etc.
- Students should try to study at the same time each night. After 10 days, an act becomes a habit. So, if they start off the school year right, then their study time should continue throughout the school year.
- ALSO – so many of my students came to class without a single thing last year. It makes it so hard for them to complete assignments without the basics – pencil, paper, etc, and it makes it hard for those students who bring supplies each day who feel obligated to share with those who “forgot”.

### **STUDY STRATEGIES FOR READING**

- Students should read the instructions for every assignment at least twice before beginning the work.
- Students should read the table of contents or introduction first to see what the book will be about.
- Students should try to identify the main idea/theme/message/purpose before reading.
- Students should write down key words as they read a passage.
- Students should summarize one to two passages as they read, and then move on.
- Students should also summarize the entire selection after reading.

\*Adapted from “The Survival Guide for Teenagers with LD” by Rhoda Cummings and Gary Fisher