

NON-VERBAL LEARNING DISABILITY

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People with nonverbal learning disability (NLD) have difficulty processing information that is not presented in language. They generally have an excellent ability to express themselves verbally. People with NLD learn most effectively through discussion. They have excellent rote memory skills, and can store a great deal of specific information about a topic.

However, their thinking may be overly concrete, so that when asked about a similar topic, it may become clear that a person with NLD has not truly understood and internalized the information, but simply memorized it. Generalization of information from one setting to the next is not something that comes naturally for people with NLD. They do not automatically make connections between bits of information, but rather engage in a great deal of effort to store new information. Teachers and parents often find that children with NLD ask questions incessantly. This questioning occurs because children with NLD learn best when information is presented in a concrete verbal manner. By asking specific questions, children are able to access the particular information they require. However, it can be challenging for the teacher of a large class to be bombarded with the questions of one student.

People with NLD are frequently challenged in maintaining organization and finding their way around. They often have difficulty with visual-spatial orientation and following sequential directions. As such, they may appear disorganized, may get lost more frequently and be late for appointments. In addition, characteristic of people with NLD is a dislike for transitions and changes in routine. They

enjoy the structure and predictability offered by a stable daily routine, and may experience stress, anxiety and panic when faced with unexpected changes.

Making it through a typical day can be exhausting for individuals with NLD. A child with NLD, may expend a great deal of effort to complete assignments, and ensure that he remains organized, in the right place at the right time. When interacting with other people, we use verbal and nonverbal cues to understand behaviour and plan our responses. People with NLD have difficulty perceiving nonverbal cues, and will often misread social situations. For example, a sarcastic remark may be interpreted at face value, without taking the tone of voice of the speaker into account. Overcoming the difficulties associated with NLD requires hard work on the part of the individual. In addition, those affected by NLD may be hypersensitive to sensory stimuli, making every sensory experience feel more intense than it does for those not affected. ☐



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