Common Warning Signs for Learning Disabilities

These Warnings Signs Vary & All Signs May Not Be Present in Each Child.
A Very Strong Warning Sign is Family History of Learning Disabilities or Difficulty.
Learning, Language, Sensory & Academic Difficulties Are Partially Genetic.

Red Flags for Children 2½-4 years of Age

Speaking
- Trouble with articulation, persistently mispronounces words
- Trouble using correct verb tenses, plurals, or pronouns

Listening
- Trouble rhyming, playing sound or word games

Word finding
- Knows colors, but cannot name them when asked

Sequencing
- Difficulty telling an event or story in order or sequence

Auditory memory
- Difficulty remembering multiple-step directions

Fine motor skills
- Difficulty cutting with scissors, tying shoes, or blowing nose

Uncoordinated
- Clumsy, messy eater, poor at skipping, trouble learning motor skills

Sensory processing
- Overreacts to or avoids sounds, touch, fabrics, foods, smells or lights

Red Flags/Warning Signs for Children 5-8 years of Age

Speaking
- Persistently mispronounces words, and slow word finding when talking

Phonological awareness
- Changes sounds in words heard, spoken, or read; poor word recall

Reading and Spelling
- Difficulty learning alphabet letters and their sounds or names
- Difficulty learning to sound-out words for reading and spelling
- Relies on sight words, reading is slow, effortful, & unpleasant

Sequencing
- Errors when reading, eg says “was” for saw; trouble telling a life event in order

Auditory memory
- Difficulty following directions, learning phone numbers, street address or names

Handwriting
- Awkward pencil grip, presses too hard on paper when writing, hand fatigues

Focus
- Trouble concentrating at home and school; wears out before a task is done

Self-esteem
- Repeated difficulties or frustrations lead to lower self-esteem

Red Flags/Warning Signs for Children 9+ to Adults

Speaking
- Persistently mispronounces words, and slow word finding or recall when talking

Phonological awareness
- Changes sounds in words that are heard, spoken, or read; poor word recall

Reading
- Slow; avoids it; relies on sight words; guesses and makes errors

Spelling
- Poor spelling, poor memory after spelling test, mixes up letters in words

Writing
- Avoids it; written sentences are short and poorly organized or ordered

Auditory memory
- Difficulty following or remembering multiple-step directions,
- Difficulty remembering alphabet for phonebook or dictionary use

Handwriting
- Effortful, messy, awkward grip, presses too hard on paper with pencil

Focus
- Trouble concentrating; wears out before task is done; loses place on a page

Self-esteem
- Increasing frustration and poor self-esteem

Language expression
- Difficulty putting ideas in words and sequencing them appropriately

Foreign language
- Trouble learning other languages, e.g. Spanish, French

Achievement tests
- Much better at math than reading, poor performance on standardized testing

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