

Nonverbal Learning Disorders: What To Look For

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As you review the characteristics outlined within this article, please keep in mind that many of the characteristics listed under one heading may, and often do, impact the individual in many areas of their lives. The hallmark of those diagnosed with NLD appears to be their fear, and sometimes terror, of any novel situation.

Cognitive/Academic

1. Generally the individual's WISC VIQ is higher than their PIQ, but not in all cases - particularly during adolescence.
2. There is an excellent vocabulary and more than typical verbal expression, starting at a young age.
3. Exceptional rote memory skills are quite common, and may mask the disability in early education.
4. There is excellent attention to detail, but the individual will likely miss the big picture.
5. The individual may be an early reader, OR may have early reading difficulties.
6. Difficulties in math are common, especially in the areas of computation, word problems, and abstract applications.
7. Concept formation and abstract reasoning may be significantly impaired.
8. There is likely to be great difficulty generalizing information - applying learned information to new situations.
9. Generally their strongest learning medium is simple/rote auditory - if they hear it, they will remember it.

Physical

1. Physical awkwardness is quite common - they appear to lack coordination.
2. There is difficulty learning to ride a bicycle, catch and/or kick a ball, hop and/or skip.
3. Physical difficulties may be more pronounced on the left side of body.
4. Fine motor skills may be impaired - handwriting may be poor and/or laborious.
5. Significant problems with spatial perception are quite common.

Language/Communication

1. These individuals are very concrete and interpret information quite literally.
2. They do not process nonverbal communication - body language, facial expressions, tone of voice.
3. They are unable to intuit or read between the lines (impacting both conversation and reading comprehension).
4. These individuals have poor social skills. They will most likely have trouble making and/or keeping friends.

Emotional/Behavioral

1. In all likelihood, they will have tremendous difficulty adjusting to new situations, or changes to their routine.
2. These individuals generally appear to lack common sense, or "street smarts" - they can be naïve.
3. Anxiety and/or depression are very common, especially during adolescence.
4. Often these individuals suffer from low self-esteem.
5. It is quite common for them to be withdrawn, and they may actually become agoraphobic.
6. There is a higher than normal incidence of suicide within the NLD population.