

# NASET Lesser Known Disorders in Special Education Series

## Issue # 11 - November 2010

### Lesser Known Disorders

Each issue of this series contains at least three lesser known disorders. Some of these disorders may contain subtypes which will also be presented. You will also notice that each disorder has a code. These codes represent the coding system for all disabilities and disorders listed in the [\*Educator's Diagnostic Manual \(EDM\)\*](#) Wiley Publications.

### Disorders in this issue:

- [Organizational Learning Disorders](#)
- [Syndromic Hearing Losses](#)
- [Cushing Syndrome](#)

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## LD 9.00-Organizational Learning Disorders

### Disability Category - Learning Disabilities

#### Definition

An Organizational Learning Disorder is a type of learning disability specifically associated with difficulties in organization. Children with this disorder may require constant support in organizing, arranging, setting priorities and establishing time management when it comes to school tasks.

#### Diagnostic Symptoms

The diagnostic symptoms of an organizational disorder include difficulties:

- with temporal-sequential disorganization
- allocating and estimating time
- following schedules
- meeting deadlines
- solving problems in stages
- with material-spatial organization

- keeping track of possessions
- maintaining notebooks
- arranging desks
- finding objects like pencils and books
- in settling down and functioning effectively when expectations or settings change
- remembering what they are required to do (Levine, 1995)

## **Further Key Points**

Developing good organizational skills is a key ingredient for success in school and in life. Although some people by nature are more organized than others, anyone can put routines and systems in place to help a child become more organized (LDOnline, 2005). Chronic disorganization is a handicap that often goes unnamed in schools throughout entire school years. Yet it accompanies other learning disabilities in slightly more than half of the cases surveyed. For most children with chronic disorganization, the causes are neurological. Further, Children with chronic disorganization may require daily coaching. Less frequent help is not effective (Shwarzbeck, 2006).

## **Types of Organizational Disorders**

### **LD 9.01-Catastrophic Response Organizational Disorder**

#### **Definition**

A type of organizational disorder specifically associated with difficulties in handling too much stimuli and/or too much information at one time (Learning Disabilities Association, 2005).

#### **Explanation**

Individuals with Catastrophic Response Organizational Disorder may exhibit an involuntary and overwhelmed reaction to too many sights, sounds and/or extreme emotions. They may become dazed or unaware of one's surroundings, even "freezing" for a short time. For example, a student with this disorder may freeze up and/or be unable to think clearly when presented with a page of 20 math problems. In general, the student is overwhelmed by too much stimuli (Peniston, 1998).

### **LD 9.02-Cognitive Disorganization Disorder(Internal Disorder)**

#### **Definition**

A type of organizational disorder specifically associated with difficulties in thinking in an orderly, logical way, often leading to incomplete thoughts and statements (Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario, 2005).

#### **Explanation**

Students with cognitive disorganization disorder struggle with organizing their thoughts and feelings. They frequently exhibit many of the following symptoms:

- difficulty thinking of words (but for the most part can communicate normally)
- slowed mental process
- make occasional mistakes
- have failures in thinking and speech which can be corrected easily
- loss of train of thought
- forget what they are thinking or talking about
- leave statements incomplete
- sudden unexplained shifts in trend of thought or speech that they can correct with effort if asked
- thoughts or statements that become incoherent and difficulties clarifying them.
- difficulty thinking in an orderly, logical way
- often jump to conclusions and have difficulty planning tasks
- may often miss or forget steps in a sequence (Peniston, 1998)

## **LD 9.03-Directionality Organizational Disorder**

### **Definition**

A type of organizational disorder specifically associated with difficulties in directionality, e.g., distinguishing left from right; learning north, south, east, west; or learning the layout of a large symmetrical building (Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario, 2005).

### **Explanation**

Students with directionality type disorder have great difficulty with orienting themselves in the right direction. They frequently get lost, roam as if they lack a direction or purpose, and seem confused and unable to maneuver around the school or community without getting lost.

These problems become quite apparent during physical education and/or locating a new classroom at the beginning of the school year. In physical education, this individual has significant problems copying the movements of the teacher, as well as difficulties mirroring responses. Going in the correct direction may require many practice runs before exhibiting adequate skills (Peniston, 1998).

## **LD 9.04-External Disorganization Disorder**

### **Definition**

A type of organizational disorder specifically associated with difficulties in being neat, structured, and organized in school, home, and other environments where organization of materials is essential for every day functioning.

### **Explanation**

Students with External Disorganization Disorder are outwardly disorganized. Almost everything that they work on or have to do appear to lack structure, is messy, and borders on “completely unorganized.” These children exhibit many of the following symptoms:

- may have desks that are always cluttered and disorganized

- notebooks and loose-leaf with papers falling out, ripped pages
- limited/no awareness of order or neatness
- absentmindedness
- appear unable to incorporate suggestions dealing with organizational skills
- difficulty with organizing their room, clothing, and homework assignments
- often forget things
- misplace things
- seem confused with the reactions of frustration on the part of those around them

## **LD 9.05-Temporal Disorganization Disorder**

### **Definition**

A type of organizational disorder specifically associated with difficulties in time management and the organization of time for the completion of assignments (Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario, 2005).

### **Explanation**

Spatial-temporal processing deficits result in disorganization which is apparent in a lack of ability to organize oneself to accomplish a task. The more steps required to accomplish a task, the more apparent the disorganization will be. In school, this can frequently lead to assignments not being carried out on time. This deficit is often interpreted as a "lack of motivation", inefficiency, or "lack of initiative", when in reality it is due to an inability to organize one's time and firmly grasp time management principles (Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario, 2005).

Students with Temporal Disorganization Disorder exhibit many of the following symptoms:

- often become confused about sequences and time
- are often late for events they need to attend
- have difficulties remembering when an assignment is due
- don't know how much time to allow themselves to complete an assignment or job
- appear to never be quite sure what to do first, what to do second, and what to do third when they write a report or work on a project.
- lack appropriate time management skills

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## HI 6.00 Syndromic Hearing Losses

### Disability Category-Hearing Impaired

#### Definition

Syndromic hearing impairment is associated with malformations of the external ear or other organs or with medical problems involving other organ systems (Smith, Green & Van Camp, 2005).

#### Diagnostic Symptoms

The symptoms for Syndromic Hearing Loss will vary by disorder and as a result no general symptoms can be reported.

#### Further Key Points

Genetic causes of hearing loss can be “syndromic” or “nonsyndromic”. Syndromic means that a person has other related symptoms besides hearing loss. For example, some people with hearing loss are also blind. Usher’s Syndrome is one example. There are many different syndromes that have hearing loss as one of the symptoms. “Nonsyndromic” means that the person does not have any other symptoms related to the hearing loss. Whatever caused the hearing loss does not cause any other symptoms. The more common type of genetic hearing loss is “nonsyndromic” which includes 2/3 of all genetic hearing losses. A very common “nonsyndromic” hearing loss is caused by one gene known as Connexin 26 (abbreviated CX26). CX26 alone is the cause in about 1/3 of all children with a non-syndromic genetic hearing loss (National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities, 2005).

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## OHI 14.03 Cushing's Syndrome

### Disability Category - Other Health Impaired

#### Definition

Cushing's syndrome, also called hypercortisolism, is a rare endocrine disorder caused by chronic exposure of the body's tissues to excess levels of cortisol—a hormone naturally produced by the adrenal gland. Exposure to too much cortisol can occur from long-term use of synthetic glucocorticoid hormones to treat inflammatory illnesses (National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, 2005f).

#### Explanation

Cushing's syndrome occurs when the body's tissues are exposed to excessive levels of cortisol for long periods of time. Many people suffer the symptoms of Cushing's syndrome because they take glucocorticoid hormones such as prednisone for asthma, rheumatoid arthritis, lupus and other inflammatory diseases, or for immunosuppression after transplantation. Others develop Cushing's syndrome because of overproduction of cortisol by the body. Normally, the production of cortisol follows a precise chain of events. First, the hypothalamus, a part of the brain which is about the size of a small sugar cube, sends corticotropin releasing hormone (CRH) to the pituitary gland. CRH causes the pituitary to secrete ACTH (adrenocorticotropin), a hormone that stimulates the adrenal glands. When the adrenals, which are located just above the kidneys, receive the ACTH, they respond by releasing cortisol into the bloodstream (Endocrine and Metabolic Diseases Information Service, 2002).

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