

General Advice for Parents

1. Accept your child's learning difference. Accept that your child is not deliberately not learning. Almost all children, and in particular young children, desperately want to learn and want to please you and their teachers.
2. Do not feel guilty. Do not blame yourself or anyone else. Do not blame your child or the teachers. Trying to apportion blame is a normal reaction but will not help anyone.
3. Talk honestly and be open with your child. Be gentle and be tactful, but don't pretend that you don't know that school is difficult. Reassure your child that she or he can talk to you and that you will listen and help them however you can.
4. Discuss the learning differences with your child. Whether or not you use the word dyslexia with your child is up to you. Some children may be confused by it, but others may find it therapeutic as it gives a name to the reason they are finding some aspects of learning problematic. Children should never be ashamed of who they are.
5. Make home a safe haven and a refuge for your child. Don't always greet your child with questions about school. Remember many children feel a lot of stress and anxiety during school and need to relax when they arrive home.
6. Inform yourself about the learning difficulty. Read books, go to lectures, and talk to informed professionals and ask questions (see the section 'Book List' in The Library.)
7. Keep a master file of your child's development with reports, schoolwork and personal observations. Bring this with you to any assessment session or meeting when plans for your child are being discussed.
8. Support your child's school and work with the staff. No one is trying not to teach your child. Regrettably, many professionals just do not know how to help. You can help by providing information about your child and how he or she learns.
9. Help your child to be organised. Establish patterns and routines in the home. Be specific with instructions and explanations. Make lists of jobs and chores that must be done. Gently insist that things are done and not forgotten. Expect lapses of memory and the need for frequent reminders. Arrange a specific place to always keep the schoolbag and set a time each evening to organise the bag for the next day.
10. Provide alternative learning opportunities. School is not the only place where children can learn. Take them to places like museums, galleries and exhibitions. Encourage them to watch educational television programmes by watching with them and discussing informally what you learn afterwards.

Share your knowledge and opinions with them and let them do the same.

11. Read to your child from books that are appropriate to their age group but which they may not be able to read or enjoy reading by themselves. Ask your child's teacher and local librarian as well as the child about what books would be of interest. Take note of what their friends are reading.

12. Ensure your child is receiving appropriate help and support in and out of school. Visit and talk to your school regularly and monitor what the school is providing. Be aware of the kinds of provision that are available.

13. Reinforce learned skills. Ask the professionals working with your child about what you could do at home to help.

14. Don't overprotect your child. Give responsibilities appropriate for age. Provide guidance and advice, but let them make their own decisions. Help your child develop decision-making and problem-solving skills. Look for opportunities to offer him/her choices to allow him to practice decision-making skills.

15. A variety of skills including decision-thinking and problem-solving as well as turn-taking and general social skills can be promoted through playing board games and interactive games with the family.

16. Encourage a work ethic. Emphasize the positive aspects of her behaviour or performance, even if the task was not completely successful. Reward direction, not perfection.

17. Help your child develop good social skills by modelling appropriate behaviour that they can imitate. Respect them as individuals.

18. Monitor your child's physical and mental health. Have hearing and sight checked regularly. Be aware of the importance of adequate sleep and a balanced diet to facilitate learning.

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