

# LEARNING DISABILITIES

## When tutoring isn't enough

by Dr. Mark Goldenberg

When does a child need only tutoring and learning accommodations and when is the problem more complex, requiring a deeper look into the root cause of the learning disability or neurodevelopmental disorder?

If you think of the nervous system and brain as a building, tutoring and other interventions would be the higher floors. However, if the foundation of the building is not sound, the higher floors will be affected. This is the problem when dealing with children with any type of learning or attention issue. Our children are starting on the higher floors without strengthening the foundation of the brain and nervous system.

### *Functional Disconnection Syndrome (FDS)*

We know through current neuroscientific research that most children with neurobehavioral disorders have a functional electrical imbalance between the two halves (hemispheres) of the brain. The two hemispheres do not develop at the same rate, and one side of the brain is electrically underactive compared to the other side. Electrical impulses must be balanced from one side of the brain to the other, and if they are not, then the two sides of the brain are not coherent or synchronized.

We call this a Functional Disconnection Syndrome (FDS). From a processing standpoint, the right and left sides of the brain do completely different things, so if they are not in balance,

then they will not share information appropriately. This may give a child a fragmented view of the world. For example, during a conversation, the left brain hears and picks up the literal meaning of the words being spoken, but it is the right brain that puts the words in context.

If a child cannot put the words in context, she might have a different understanding of the conversation than the one intended. This happens with children who have neurobehavioral disorders, such as ADHD, Asperger's, Non Verbal Learning Disabilities, PDD, and Autism, where the weakness is in the right hemisphere.

Hemispheric Integration Therapy is a way to balance the electrical activity, or processing speed, of both sides of the brain. The next step is to have the two sides reconnect, or link up. Just as a weak muscle can be made stronger by resisting gravity, nerves can be made stronger through proper stimulation.

This brings us back to the original question. When is it appropriate to look deeper into the root cause of the learning disability or neurodevelopment disorder? When the child has other co-morbid factors other than the specific learning disability. For example:

- Does the child have trouble with balance, coordination, fine motor control, gross motor or postural control?

- Does the child have trouble in social situations, making and keeping friends?
- Does he get along better with children younger and older rather than children his own age?
- Are there or were there difficulties with allergies, digestive problems or eczema?
- Does your child seem to be out of synch with the world?
- Does your child have certain skills that are average or above and yet have other skills that are significantly below those of other children his or her age?
- Does your child do well academically but have behavior or attention problems?
- Does he avoid certain foods and yet crave others?

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, than your child might have a functional disconnection syndrome, and by strengthening the underlying neurological imbalances, he will have a better chance to succeed and benefit from other learning accommodations in school.

*Dr. Goldenberg is a board certified chiropractic neurologist and director of Pathways to Learning Center, 1 Westport Ave., Norwalk; 203-847-3000; e-mail, [pathwaysptl@yahoo.com](mailto:pathwaysptl@yahoo.com); Web site, [thepathwaystolearning.com](http://thepathwaystolearning.com).*