

Some of the more common conditions associated with learning difficulties are:

ADHD

Stands for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder; people with ADHD are inattentive, easily distracted, impulsive and hyper active. These characteristics are usually combined to varying degrees in severity.

ADD

Attention Defecit Disorder without hyperactive and impulsive symptoms.

Autism

Difficulties in relating to and communicating with others resulting in social isolation. People with autism often live in a world of their own.

Asperger syndrome

Often referred to as 'high functioning autism'. People with Asperger syndrome frequently have one special interest to the exclusion of anything else and often become obsessively involved in it. They can function adequately on their own but may have difficulties in relating to and communicating with others.

DAMP

Deficit in Attention Motor control and Perception is the medical term; it may mean having some or all of the ADHD characteristics as well as having motoric difficulties and problems interpreting what you see and what you hear.

Predominately diagnosed by the co-existence of Dyspraxia (DCD) and ADHD.

Dyslexia

Specific difficulties with reading and writing. Associated difficulties Dysgraphia (poor handwriting) and Dyscalculia (difficulties with math).

Tourette syndrome

Involuntary movements or sounds which may come and go and vary in severity.

It is very common for these difficulties to co-exist in various combinations.

We would like to thank all of those people with learning difficulties who have helped us write these leaflets.

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learning without boundaries

Meet Alice

She is quiet and focused

She has an excellent memory

She can beat you at chess

She can show you a different perspective

But she can't always cope with change
Understanding Asperger syndrome

Asperger syndrome

Facts

Asperger syndrome

Asperger syndrome is an autism spectrum disorder and is often referred to as high functioning autism. It is a neuro-developmental condition – which means that it is part of the make-up of the brain.

A key feature of Asperger syndrome is the lack of intuitive ability to adapt socially and fit in with others. People with Asperger syndrome may often be obsessively knowledgeable about a favourite subject, to the exclusion of other interests. They may appear eccentric and may be strongly attached to particular possessions.

It is only in the past ten years that Asperger syndrome has become recognised as one of the most important categories within the field of learning difficulties. Current research shows that more men than women are affected, although that balance may change as diagnostic skills improve.

People with Asperger syndrome differ widely in terms of social and academic ability, depending on their individual make-up, so the principal characteristics may apply to quite different degrees.

Only by understanding both strengths and weaknesses can we bring the very best out of others and ourselves

What can you do to help students like Alice?

How to help

A student with Asperger syndrome needs a safe, organised and reliable daily routine. They perform best in familiar surroundings and do not respond well to sudden changes. It is particularly helpful if teachers and classmates are sympathetic and able to tolerate eccentricities.

- Keep instructions simple and straightforward
- Try to avoid complex language and abstract ideas
- To explain harder tasks, use lists, cards or pictures
- Write messages, use diagrams or concrete objects to make communication easier
- Assign work in few small steps and not in long sequences
- Forewarn in case of changes in routine, location or teachers
- Give regular, gentle prompts to help meet deadlines
- Identify 'stress triggers' and then try to work round them
- Make sure 'Alice' is motivated at the outset
- Capitalise on her mechanical memory skills
- Provide a predictable environment
- A structured – even rigid – routine works best

So what can Alice do for you?

Creating a mutual benefit

Many people with Asperger syndrome are highly intelligent with an enviable ability to think analytically, although there is quite a wide range of capability. This makes it important to adjust the level of work to match the individual and keep within his or her achievement levels. With the right balance and routine, 'Alice' will be able to thrive and build on her strengths.

She will probably have difficulties in asking for assistance even when she needs it and may be oversensitive to criticism. To get the most from her, it is best to provide tactful help and regular supervision. Aim to increase her achievement levels with positive, supportive and clear communication.

The so called 'norm' would not 'norm'-ally include 'Alice' yet she has plenty to offer and a contribution to make. By working together to understand the strengths and weaknesses of students like her, we create the opportunity to bring the best out of them – and out of everyone they encounter.

We are all unique in our personal make up and in the way we function. So these general guidelines are just that. Please interpret them and adapt them to suit each individual and each situation.