

How Neurodevelopmental Programs Can Improve Function

By Marilee Nicoll Coots, BA, Neurodevelopmentalist, Copyright © 1999

About 25% of school age children have problems related to learning, attention, or hyperactivity. Many of these children have received a "label" such as learning disabled, dyslexic, attention deficit disorder (ADD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), or simply slow learner. Some are said to have a processing problem or a problem with short or long term memory. Among this group of children, many have articulation or language problems, sloppy handwriting, or appear to be poorly coordinated.

When a child is having a problem with learning, attention, hyperactivity, or with school, there is a reason for that problem. Often the underlying problem is due to a disorganized nervous system.

Neurodevelopmentalists consider function to be reflective of neurological organization. They believe that the function or lack of function which we observe in people who have been "labeled" is rooted in the development of the brain and nervous system, neurodevelopment. When there are developmental inefficiencies we see a lack of function, a symptom. These symptoms reflect neurological disorganization. As neurological organization improves, development progresses, and we see an improvement in function. So if we can cause development to progress we will see a change in function, an improvement in the symptoms.

Neurodevelopmentalists have discovered that developmental changes can be accomplished by appropriate stimulation. To be effective that stimulation needs to be delivered with high intensity, high frequency and short duration. It also needs to be applied over a long enough period of time for the changes to occur.

Through using specific activities with many children, neurodevelopmentalists have learned which activities work best to specifically address the various developmental levels and cause neurodevelopment to progress to greater degrees of organization. Many of these specific activities have been drawn eclectically from other disciplines, tested and refined. Neurodevelopmentalists assess children to determine the inefficiencies underlying the symptoms, design a home program of specific activities to address those inefficiencies and train the parents to carry out the activities at home. This approach, properly applied, has been successful in totally eliminating many of the symptoms which have kept children from educational achievement.

Our Philosophy:

- Families have a right to treatments and educational materials which do not offend their religious beliefs. Parents have the right to educational materials and which are supportive of their faith.
- Parents, not professionals, are responsible for making decisions for their child. Parents should have the freedom to utilize eclectic treatments and educational materials consistent with these decisions. Professionals should support that process.
- The parent/child relationship is the most important element in a child's development. The amount of progress made by a child is dependent on the amount the family can work one to one with that child.
- Learning and attention problems should be addressed primarily without resorting to labels, drugs, or compensation approaches.

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