



# **Learning Links**

**Meeting the social  
and emotional  
needs of kids  
with learning  
differences**



*lee pesky learning center*

## Social and Emotional Needs

### **Coping with the cycle of failure**

Learning differences include a specific learning disability (e.g., dyslexia, ADHD, Asperger's) or other learning obstacles (e.g., deficiencies in basic literacy, lack of basic study skills).

For a child with a learning difference, schoolwork is hard and often unsuccessful. This may lead to anxiety, frustration, decreased self-esteem and even depression. Emotional turmoil of this kind is common among individuals with learning differences. In turn, emotional turmoil may cause further frustration and failure in school.

Breaking the cycle of frustration and academic failure presents a daunting challenge for all too many students. It is a particular problem among those with a learning disability.

Because most people with a learning difference are intelligent and multi-talented, poor academic performance is especially frustrating. When failure is persistent, it is difficult to keep trying. Positive self-esteem is fostered by genuine praise and a sense of accomplishment. For kids and adults who struggle in school, praise and pride are usually in short supply.

In addition, the very difficulties that result from struggles in the classroom also affect one's ability to form and maintain healthy friendships. Teasing or ridicule by other children is common, especially in the elementary years. In fact, research tells us that kids with learning differences may be lonelier than other kids.

Fortunately, there are effective strategies for helping a child through the social and emotional challenges that come with having a learning difference.

### **How you can help:**

- Take the time to really listen to your child
- Share your own success stories

- Encourage your child to pursue a special hobby or talent – something at which she genuinely “shines”
- Help your child develop his social skills by encouraging play dates, involvement in activities he truly enjoys, and use of a “mentor” such as a big brother or sister to give friendship advice

**When it might be time to get professional help:**

- Your child is missing school because of chronic stomach aches, headaches, or other vague physical complaints
- Your child’s anxiety or sadness interferes with his enjoyment of life or his normal activities (loss of pleasure and withdrawal)
- Your child has more than the typical resistance to doing homework, avoidance of difficult tasks, irritability, aggressiveness, or impulsivity
- Your child is struggling with loneliness, or “not having any real friends”

The good news is that emotional competence and social skills can be learned. Students with learning differences benefit from learning ways to manage anxiety and depression, boosting self-confidence, learning to advocate for themselves, and developing solid social skills.

Counseling services at Lee Pesky Learning Center are available by calling Lori Sirs, LCSW at 577-1106. The Center also offers small groups for students who want to better understand the way they learn, and/or learn social skills in a fun and supportive atmosphere.

**Additional Resources:**

***Websites***

Schwab Learning: [www.schwablearning.org](http://www.schwablearning.org)

The Frostig Center: Success for children with learning disabilities: [www.ldsucsess.org](http://www.ldsucsess.org)

Learning Disabilities Online: [www.ldonline.org](http://www.ldonline.org)

**Recommended Books:**

*It's nobody's fault: New hope and help for difficult children and their parents.* Kopleicz, H. (1996). Crown Publisher.

*It's So Much Work to Be Your Friend: Helping the Child with Learning Disabilities Find Social Success.* LaVoie, R. (2005). Touchstone.

*Jarvis Clutch, Social spy.* Levine, M. (2001). Educators Publishing Service: Cambridge, MA. \*\*

*No one to play with: Social problems of LD and ADD children.* Osman, B. (1995). Academic Therapy Publications: Novato, CA. \*\*

*Smart but stuck: Emotional aspects of learning disabilities and imprisoned intelligence.* Orenstein, M. (2001). Haworth Press: New York. \*\*

*SOS - Help for emotions: Managing anxiety, anger, and depression.* Clark, L. (2002). SOS Programs: KY \*\*

*What to do when you worry too much: A kid's guide to overcoming anxiety.* Huebner, D. (2006). Magination Press: Washington, D.C. \*\*

*Why doesn't anyone like me?: A Guide to raising socially confident kids.* Marano, H. (1998). Quill: New York. \*\*

**Recommended Videos:**

*How Difficult Can This Be: The F.A.T. City Workshop.* LaVoie, R. (Running time: 70 mins). WETA: Washington, D.C. \*\*

*Learning disabilities and social skills: Last one picked ... first one picked on.* LaVoie, R. (1994). (Running time: 68 minutes). WETA: Washington, D.C. \*\*

*Stop and go with success: An Integrated approach to helping children develop social skills.* Rothenberg, S. (1998) (Running time: 21 minutes). Filmed by Ocean One Productions, Inc. \*\*

**\*\* Available for check-out in the Family Resource Library at Lee Pesky Learning Center**



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