

What is NLD?

by Cheryl Pidgeon, Educator and Parent of a child with NLD in Ontario, Canada

NLD is a neurological disorder which originates in the right hemisphere of the brain.

Reception of nonverbal or performance-based information governed by this hemisphere is

impaired in varying degrees, causing problems with visual-spatial, intuitive, organizational,

evaluative, and holistic processing functions.

The syndrome of Nonverbal Learning Disorders (NLD) consists of specific assets and deficits.

The assets include:

Early speech and vocabulary development

Remarkable rote memory skills

Attention to detail

Early development of reading skills and excellent spelling skills

Eloquent verbal ability

Strong auditory retention

The three categories of deficits are:

Motoric: lack of coordination, problems with balance and graphomotor skills

Visual-spatial-organizational: lack of image, poor visual recall, faulty spatial perception, and difficulty with spatial relations

Social: inability to comprehend nonverbal communication, difficulty adjusting to transitions and novel situations, and deficits in social judgment

People with **NLD** can be affected in varied levels of severity in each of the categories, so that each person with **NLD** presents a unique clinical, behavioral, and educational picture.

People with NLD can be helped by many forms of therapy, but their world is filled with confusing sensory stimuli.

For some, their physical endurance is challenged by generally low muscle tone. Some need

support throughout life with cognitive and organizational skills, motor skill development, pragmatics and social skills.

Children with NLD have advanced verbal and auditory memory. Some are precocious readers with advanced vocabularies. Nevertheless, **NLD is a problem of language.** People with NLD have rote language skills but when it comes to functional daily use of language, they have difficulties with tone of voice, inference, written expression, facial expression, gestures, and other areas of pragmatic speech.

People with NLD have difficulty understanding patterns and lining up columns of numbers. Spoken instructions can be troublesome due to difficulty picturing consecutive directions and poor visual memory.

NLD can also affect coordination causing clumsiness, poor balance and a tendency to fall.

Many people with NLD have poor safety judgment.

**We are not sure what causes NLD,
but we know that the earlier the
intervention, the better the prognosis.**