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Family & Relationships

Helping Children with Nonverbal Learning Disabilities to Flourish: A Guide for Parents and Professionals

Marilyn Martin
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Imagine getting lost in your own home, forgetting where the bathroom is at work, or being unable to operate a simple door knob. These are just some of the myriad challenges faced by individuals with a Nonverbal Learning Disability or NLD.

NLD makes it difficult for individuals to decipher nonverbal cues. Social situations, navigating buildings, and recognizing faces are all complicated tasks for individuals with NLD. While sufferers generally excel with verbal instructions, they may have speech articulation problems themselves.

In *Helping Children with Nonverbal Learning Disabilities to Flourish*, Marilyn Martin gives an overview of NLD and strategies for teaching individuals with this disability. Using examples of her struggles to help her daughter, who has NLD, as well as current research, she has written a book helpful for both parents and professionals.

In addition to her experiences with her daughter, Martin is a Learning Specialist with more than fifteen years of experience working with students who have dyslexia, NLD, and other learning disorders.

One problem facing individuals who suffer from NLD and their families is that it isn't yet considered a learning disorder according to the Diagnostic and Statistic Manual of Mental Disorders, which most professionals use for diagnosis. Without a diagnosis, services through school districts and insurance companies aren't be provided or paid for. Often children with NLD are instead diagnosed with a specific learning disability or as emotionally disturbed. A misdiagnosis also creates problems with intervention plans, since teachers and therapists might focus on treating the wrong disorder.

In one of the book's many examples, a little boy with NLD asks his mom to put bottled water in his lunches. He became anxious when his mom brought a large box of bottled water

home. “But Mom… those bottles all say ‘spring water.’ What am I going to drink in the fall?”

The outcomes for individuals with NLD can vary greatly depending upon the severity of symptoms and the type of intervention they receive. They can certainly flourish with support. “When my daughter rose…to give the salutatorian’s speech, I am sure the audience saw only a hard-working, capable young woman,” said one parent.

This book is a good introduction to NLD and interventions for treating it. The biggest downfall, it seems, is that parents who have undiagnosed children may not know to look for this book because they don’t know that their children have NLD.

As it gains recognition as a distinct learning disorder, interventions and informative books, like this one, will open doors, literally and figuratively, for families and individuals touched by NLD.

Laura Munion