



Idao • Learning Disabilities
Association of Ontario

The right to learn, the power to achieve

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communiqué

THE PUBLICATION OF THE LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO



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Communiqué provides a forum for information, news and opinions relevant to the field of learning disabilities. The Association does not, in any sense, endorse opinions expressed or methods or programs mentioned. Articles may be reprinted unless otherwise stated. Please mention "*LDAO Communiqué*" and the article's author if and when articles are reprinted.

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EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

When the Heart Speaks, Take Good Notes



Carter Hammett, Editor

“Must you *always* do such and such”?

And so begins another round of arguments, misunderstandings and conflict. Because of its invisible nature, people with learning disabilities and ADHD often experience social isolation and this in turn, forms the embryo of the social difficulties they will face as adults. LD expert Rick Lavoie has proposed four components that help in the key growth areas of socialization: the ability to join or enter a group; the ability to establish and maintain friendships; the ability to resolve conflicts and the ability to “pick up” on social cues.

And yet, and yet. The nonverbal child may not have the hard wiring to do this. The child with visual-spatial issues may constantly lose things, making him appear careless; the ADHD child may go around interrupting everyone. As adults, these kids may find partners who feel a need to “baby” them or overly-attend to their social skills deficits. This in turn can cause resentment on the part of the adult with LD, and another cycle begins.

Then there's the matter of sex. A person with ADHD for example, may easily lose interest, have either extremely high or low sex drive, may feel the need to get stimulation elsewhere, or be sensitive to touch. The whole stew can get pretty frustrating for all stakeholders.

That's one of the reasons we've decided to devote this issue of *Communiqué* to the theme of *Love, Sex and Relationships*.

It began quite innocently last spring during a walk with a friend in Toronto's east end. We noticed a curious-looking statue sitting in a driveway. As we stood admiring it, a man appeared and introduced himself as the artist. A few minutes later and he disclosed that he had a learning disability. A few minutes after that, he had agreed to be profiled for this magazine. Suddenly, we had a theme. A touchy one, but a theme nonetheless.

From child abuse, to social skills, to sustaining a relationship with someone with an invisible disability, we've tried to respectfully approach a topic that's often difficult to broach. Contributors this issue were especially generous and sensitive to the topic. Writer **Bryan Hutchinson**, who has authored three books on living with ADHD, immediately offered an article on sexuality once we connected online and he learned this issue's theme. Psychologist **Catherine Avery** followed suit with an article on marriage and forming supportive relationships with the LD/ADHD partner. Not to be outdone, my buddy, Toronto writer **Kenneth E. Seaton** also leaped at the chance to contribute a piece on social skills for this issue.

Another accidental connection occurred when I happened to find myself on a bus in Italy seated beside a woman, who introduced herself simply as “Chris.” Turned out **Christine McMurray** was a professor at the University of Australia who has written dozens of books and articles on demographic studies in the South Pacific. We don't often get a chance to explore the issues of culture and learning disabilities, so I was thrilled when she offered to write something, and even more thrilled when it arrived. Indeed, this issue's development took on a kind of organic feel and maybe that's why it feels so satisfying to introduce.

And relationships are *supposed* to be organic. They are *supposed* to be fun. They are *supposed* to be natural. Unfortunately, for many with LD/ADHD relationships are hard work, frustrating and too often, isolating. It's a reminder to the rest of us to take another look at the layer of presence beneath the layer presented and reflect on the beauty that lies waiting to flower underneath, like a late and lovely spring.

Carter Hammett, Editor



CONTRIBUTORS THIS ISSUE

Dr. Catherine Avery received her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from the Illinois Institute of Technology. Over the past twenty years she has specialized in the assessment of AD/HD, learning disabilities, and mood disorders in children, adolescents, and adults. She currently resides in Sioux Falls, South Dakota with her husband and four children. • **Roslyne Chues** is an artist living in London, ON and the designer of this issue's cover. Visit her site at: [www. http://roselynechues.com](http://roselynechues.com) • **Lisa Booth** is an Education Co-ordinator and Group Facilitator with Sue Potter at The Art of Possibilities, ADHD Coaching and Consulting. Together they deliver a number of group programs and workshops designed for adults and adolescents with ADHD and those who live with them. If you would like more information about these programs, please visit www.theartofpossibilities.ca • An American living in Germany, **Bryan Hutchinson** was diagnosed with ADD at the age of 37. He

has written three books about his life experiences with ADHD, including his autobiography *One Boy's Struggle: A Memoir*. He is also the author / founder of ADDerWorld.com an online blog and ADHD community. This article is featured in his new book *Adult ADHD can be Sexy*. • **Sheila Milloy** is the Resource Coordinator with the Learning Disabilities Association of Ottawa Carleton • **Dr. Christine McMurray** is an associate at The Australian Centre for Population Research. She is also a teacher and has frequently acted as a consultant on infant mortality and social demography. She has authored over 80 reports, books and conference papers on population, health and development, including *Diseases of Globalization: Socioeconomic Transition and Health* (2001) • **Kenneth E. Seaton** is a Toronto freelance writer living in Mexico and principal of WordAble • **Susan Stanley** is employed with The Toronto Public Library.

Message from the Executive Director

Thirty years ago, what I knew about learning disabilities could fit on the tip of one finger. Three years ago, when I became Executive Director for the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario, my familiarity had increased somewhat. But, it has only been during my tenure as ED that I have really grasped some understanding of how people learn differently and how those differences create challenges to accessing and processing information, to interacting in relationships and to living.

At a certain age, and I won't divulge what that age is, you spend a lot of time thinking, "If I'd only known then, what I know now ...". This issue of *Communiqué*, and its focus on learning disabilities and intimacy in relationships, caused me to consider that phrase and its relevance to my own past unsuccessful

relationships with people who I now know "learned differently" from me. In reading some of the submissions and editorial in this issue I had several "aha" moments – better late than never!

I'm not saying that knowledge automatically guarantees a different outcome but I'm pretty sure it generates greater understanding, respect and forgiveness.

I hope this issue of LDAO's *Communiqué* is as good for you as it is for me.

Maggie Wygant, Executive Director



Maggie Wygant

Message from the Chair

What a great issue! Our editor, Carter Hammett, has outdone himself with the articles on Learning Disabilities and relationships. I hope you find them as informative and meaningful as I have. To be honest, the struggle often experienced by those with Learning Disabilities and those who give them support can be wearing, and sometimes exhausting. Then, along comes an issue of *Communiqué* like this that shares terrific insight and understanding. It's uplifting, especially as it shows how we can make things work better. So it's hopeful.

One of the things I appreciate is the tacit recognition in this issue of the life-long nature of learning disabilities. LDAO has long

championed the needs and rights of young learners, and that has been augmented to include students' right through post-secondary education. While that attention continues, the organization is keenly dedicated to assisting adults in dealing with their challenges, whatever they may be.

Richard Lavoie has said, "Prepare the person for the place, and the place for the person." The key to that is understanding on everyone's part. "*Communiqué's* messages this issue certainly promote that. Please enjoy them, share them, and keep fighting the good fight.

Vinnie Greco, Chair, LDAO

Toronto Resident Awarded 2010 Gloria Landis Memorial Award

Toronto's **Samira Jaffer** is the recipient of the 2010 Gloria Landis Memorial Award.

"I cherish the bursary...I wasn't sure I'd get it but this has set the ball rolling for my confidence even before the school year started," she says enthusiastically.

The 27-year-old Jaffer, who has returned to school studying social work at George Brown College this year, plans to work either with the elderly or "families where relations between parents and children are broken." Already a graduate of the Human Services Foundations program at Connestoga College in Kitchener, Jaffer seems well focused and committed to a career helping others.

Indeed, when it comes to hard work, she is no stranger to it. She already works full time for Ganz, which sells Webkinz and other toys. "Webkinz is a virtual pet played with online," she says. "The site also operates a chat forum, and we're the web police," she laughs. "We monitor discussions, including some that are

inappropriate." She notes a conversation with a 40-year-old woman and a child, who were supposed to meet up. "The police were notified so they could notify the parents," she says. So, social work seems to be a natural choice for her.

Her learning disability, which involves reading and writing comprehension, appears to be no barrier for her either. She tackles her issues head-on, uses Kurzweil and takes extra time to complete tests and assignments.

But she's also quick to acknowledge the importance of a support network in her life too.

"Seek all the support and services you can. It's important to be self motivated and determined. At the end of the day, you chart the life you want to live. You have to work twice as hard as everyone else, but try not to look at the label," she says. "Instead see yourself as working around that and having more confidence."



Dr. Glenn DiPasquale to Talk on Motivation at LDAO 2011 Corporate Breakfast

Join us March 31, 2011 for the LDAO Learning and Leadership Corporate Breakfast. This year's event will be hosted at the Sheraton Centre Toronto where Dr. Glenn DiPasquale will talk about motivation – what motivates people, at school, in the workplace...and how can we create the right environment in which people feel motivated. For more information please contact Denise Harding, Fund Development Consultant at 416-929-4311



LDAO Friend, Former Board Member, Jean-Luc Bernard Retires

On September 16th, at the beautiful Glendon College campus of York University, LDAO joined friends and colleagues of Jean-Luc Bernard, in the celebration of his retirement. Jean-Luc was the superintendent of education of the Conseil scolaire de district du Centre-Sud-Ouest from 1998 until 2002, when he became the director of education. Jean-Luc, an advocate for special education and a former LDAO board member and fundraising volunteer, retired after more than 30 years in education. Bonne retraite Jean-Luc from your friends at LDAO!

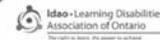


LDAO is getting ready to launch a newly redeveloped version of Job-Fit!

Job-Fit



Let's get to work!



Thanks to generous funding from TD Bank Financial Group, LDAO has been hard at work redeveloping their Job-Fit program. TD's sole sponsorship allowed LDAO to engage Dr. Andrea Dinardo from St. Clair College to lend her considerable expertise to the rewrite of this valuable program.

The purpose of Job-Fit is to help individuals with learning disabilities (LDs) identify and maintain appropriate employment by improving their employment readiness and self-advocacy skills. The experience of those who have LDs and who are successful in their work environment has shown that LDs can be overcome. People with learning disabilities are employable. With the right training, support, self-awareness, and accommodation they can become self-supporting, productive workers. The premise behind Job-Fit is that if adults with learning disabilities are to be successful at obtaining and retaining employment, a better process for matching strengths with employment is needed.

Job-Fit provides information to help adults with learning disabilities (LDs) better understand their assessment, abilities, skills, and employment interests. Participants complete individual exercises that help them identify jobs that match their skills. Participants learn to explain their LD, write a cover letter and résumé, prepare for a job interview, ask for workplace accommodations, and whether, how, and when to disclose their LD.

The new edition of Job-Fit will include both a print-based, facilitated version as well as an online, self-directed one. It is LDAO's hope that by adding the online aspect we will widen Job-Fit's scope and availability, allowing more individuals to benefit from the program. In addition, our goal is to make it easier for individuals who utilize assistive technology to access the materials, as well as those who are not able or do not wish to engage in the program with a facilitator at an LDAO Chapter.

To order copies of Job-Fit, or enrol in the online version, please visit LDAO's website at www.LDAO.ca.



October is LD Month

The Right to Learn the Power to Achieve

ldac
Learning Disabilities
Association of Canada



acta
Association canadienne des
troubles d'apprentissage

the right to learn
the power to achieve



It's harder to achieve your
full potential when others
don't see it in you

For the past several months the primary thrust of the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada's, Marketing Advisory Committee (MAC), has been to determine a national theme and structure for Learning Disabilities month in October. Comprised of participants from all the provincial/territory LDAs, the MAC committee has been in complete agreement on a number of key issues. In order for the country to make the most of LD Month, messaging, visuals, and campaign style needed to be consistent, clear and impactful.

The overall goal was to develop a toolkit and key messages that would support a national 'look and feel' while also enabling the chapters to capitalize on LD month by tailoring the program and link to local events.

The goal for the month is to increase the national awareness of learning disabilities and stress every individual's "right to learn power to achieve" and to encourage people to respect and embrace learning differences and the creative possibilities they offer.

The grassroots campaign engages Learning Disabilities Associations at the national, provincial/territory and chapter levels and invites individuals with learning disabilities and their families to speak openly and share their success stories using YouTube, FaceBook and Twitter.



**Ldao • Learning Disabilities
Association of Ontario**
The right to learn, the power to achieve

Each and every day, Canadians with learning disabilities (LD) face the challenge of learning and processing information with courage and determination. What they don't need is the added challenge of having to explain LD to classmates, colleagues and employers.

October is LD Awareness Month

It's time to release the power...

The Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (LDAC) and its member organizations across the country plan to set the record straight on LD and the people who live with them. It's time for all Canadians to not only understand LD but to celebrate the unique achievements and capabilities of people living with LD.

*Misperceptions about LD can foster barriers between people.
Together we can bring them down.*



www.youtube.com/ldacacta2010
www.ldac-acta.ca

Will you join us?

*Imagine a world without the stigma of learning disabilities...
If we can imagine it, we can do it.*



**When we support people with learning disabilities, everyone wins!
Please join our team and support the right to learn and the power to achieve.**

Go to www.ldac-acta.ca to find out what you can do to make a difference.

Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario

in partnership with

The Community Health Systems Resource Group at The Hospital for Sick Children

presents...

LDAO 2010-2011 Workshop Series:

Practical Applications of Current Research for Parents and Professionals

\$75.00 plus HST (lunch provided)

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Workshop registrations are transferable but non-refundable

FOR REGISTRATION: Please call **416-929-4311 ext. 21** or email **workshop@LDAO.ca** or visit our website at **www.LDAO.ca**

Learning Disabilities, ADHD and Working Memory

November 26, 2010

Presented by: Dr. Rhonda Martinussen. Dr. Rhonda Martinussen is currently an Assistant Professor of Special Education and Adaptive Instruction at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. Her research focuses on the relations among working memory, inattention, and academic achievement in children and youth. She is currently conducting a study examining how to enhance listening and reading comprehension in children with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). She is also studying note-taking and written expression skills in youth with and without ADHD. What is working memory? How do we measure it? What is the relationship between working memory and academic achievement? Is working memory related to attentional control? These are all questions that Dr. Martinussen will address in her talk. She will also discuss various factors to consider when instructing students who exhibit working memory weaknesses.

Closing the Gap Between Student Ability and Achievement; Note Taking, Study, Exam, and Test Taking Strategies for Students

March 4, 2011

Presented by: Lawrence Feld. Lawrence Feld M.Ed. has worked in the field of education for twenty-five years. He has taught and been a principal at both the elementary and high school levels. His specialized experiences are highlighted by work as: a special services coordinator at the Vanguard School (a school for students with learning disabilities); a director of a program for students with emotional disturbance; and a lecturer in special education and education psychology intervention programs at McGill University. He is currently the co founder and program director of an online learning company called Vox Factum (www.voxfactum.com). What do you say to an intelligent student who admits he has no idea what you just read to him? How do you help a student who freezes on tests no matter how much extra time he has been assigned? What can you say to a student who is overwhelmed by an essay question or multi dimensional project? There are good and helpful answers to these questions! This workshop will discuss how to improve "academic literacy". This can start with teaching the student the difference between coloring with a highlighter versus note taking with a highlighter. It can progress to illuminating the learning opportunities between a lesson and a test, such as: a 90 second daily review of classroom notes; bi weekly peer reviews; and weekly student/teacher email review sessions. These are the activities that can make or break a student's school career almost irrespective of intelligence. The subject of developing academic literacy will be explored and practiced. By the end of the workshop, the participants will have first-hand experience using literacy strategies ranging from storage (note taking) to retrieval (mnemonic). They will also have developed an awareness both of common breakdowns in academic literacy and appropriate and effective responses to them.

All workshops
are hosted at:

The Hospital for Sick Children
Main Auditorium
555 University Avenue
Toronto, Ontario
10:00am – 2:30pm

Speakers/workshops
subject to change



THE ADHD FILES

Fairy Tale Endings and the ADHD Relationship By Lisa Booth

Lynn hung up the phone just as Darryl walked in the door. Immediately, she started to tell him about the complaint she had just received from their son's teacher. He'd been cutting class and hadn't turned in his term paper. She saw Darryl's eyes get that far away look as she was speaking to him. Feeling angry that Darryl was not listening to her again, she added that Martians had landed in the kitchen and would be cooking his dinner. Lynn stomped out of the room.

Darryl walked in, and dropped his coat on the nearest chair. Lynn started talking to him when he realized he wasn't carrying his briefcase. He'd had a frustrating day at work. His team was angry that he'd missed a project deadline. He'd promised to finish it tonight. He was sure he put the project papers in his briefcase, but did he bring it home? Hopefully he wouldn't have to go back to work to get it. He began to ruminate about how it takes him ten times longer to get things done than anyone else. Startled by the irritation in Lynn's voice, Darryl watched her march down the hall. His stomach knotted while he tried to recall what they had been talking about. Was it something about Martians...??

We all dream of 'happily ever after' once we've made that life commitment to our significant other. We expect to love, respect, encourage and accept each other, growing old together. We expect our partner to value and honour our feelings and needs, just as we value and honour theirs. We want the rapport of 'give and take', with each partner taking a share of the joint responsibilities. However, life happens. As part of the normal ups and downs, even with a good bond, we can occasionally feel unfairly accused, rejected, ignored or taken advantage of. We get bored, argue, and even dislike each other. If we still have the underlying mutual love and respect for each other, with insight, effort and commitment we can get the relationship back on track.

Unfortunately, when we have to relate to a partner who is continually forgetful, disorganized, and distracted and who fails to live up to his or her responsibilities, we often grow discouraged. When we never know when a conversation will be ignored, or will disintegrate into a heated argument of blame and accusation, we become resentful. When the balance of the relationship is perceived to be constantly tipped in one direction:

- respect turns to resentment
- communications break down
- acceptance becomes intolerance and frustration.

Like Darryl, people with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) often have problems with their abilities to organize, focus, start and stay on task, or remember things. They have difficulty regulating their emotions or actions. This creates stress, frustration, guilt and low self-esteem when they inadvertently say or do something inappropriate. They begin to find it difficult to trust themselves, sometimes feeling it is better to say or do nothing. The neurological impairments of ADHD affect the top level mental skills or executive functions a person needs to plan, pay attention, motivate into action and to control impulses.

Couples ask "Can there be 'happily ever after' when one or both partners have ADHD?" As a relationship matures and the excitement and stimulation of the new romance fades, maintaining a relationship requires engaging more of the executive function skills. The ADHD symptoms hamper couples

as they try to create emotional intimacy, a satisfying sex life, and quality family life together.

For many couples, ADHD is the wedge that threatens to drive them apart. When ADHD is undiagnosed, or misunderstood, couples can struggle for a long time trying to find and fix the problems that threaten the relationship. Unfortunately, regardless of which partner has the impairment, when those ADHD moments happen, the results affect the whole family. It is possible to heal the rift, but it will take a lot of hard work and commitment from both partners and most often will require professional help.

Here are some basic strategies couples can use to manage the challenges of ADHD.

- 1.** Acknowledge the problem. You both have to take appropriate action for the situation to improve. The ADD'er, needs to get a diagnosis, and into comprehensive treatment. The non-ADD'er, needs to empathize with and support their partner until they have the skill to do it on their own.
- 2.** Learn as much as you can about ADHD. ADHD, a life-long, neurobiological condition can be managed. When you know what you are dealing with, you can both learn strategies to manage and cope. ADHD is a highly hereditary condition, and the likelihood of a couple having children with ADHD can add an additional wrinkle to the family dynamics.
- 3.** Ask for assistance. It's critical to find appropriate professionals who recognize that ADHD behaviours may be a factor in the problem marriage. Attend a good support group. Consider counselling and coaching, either as a couple or independently. This can be a helpful way to get a new perspective on your situation.
- 4.** Keep the lines of communication open. It's hard to do when it's all you can do to be in the same room together. A key skill to develop is non-judgemental communications to regularly tell each other you value and respect the unique qualities that drew you together in the first place. Verbalize this love and respect to re-establish an equitable partnership.



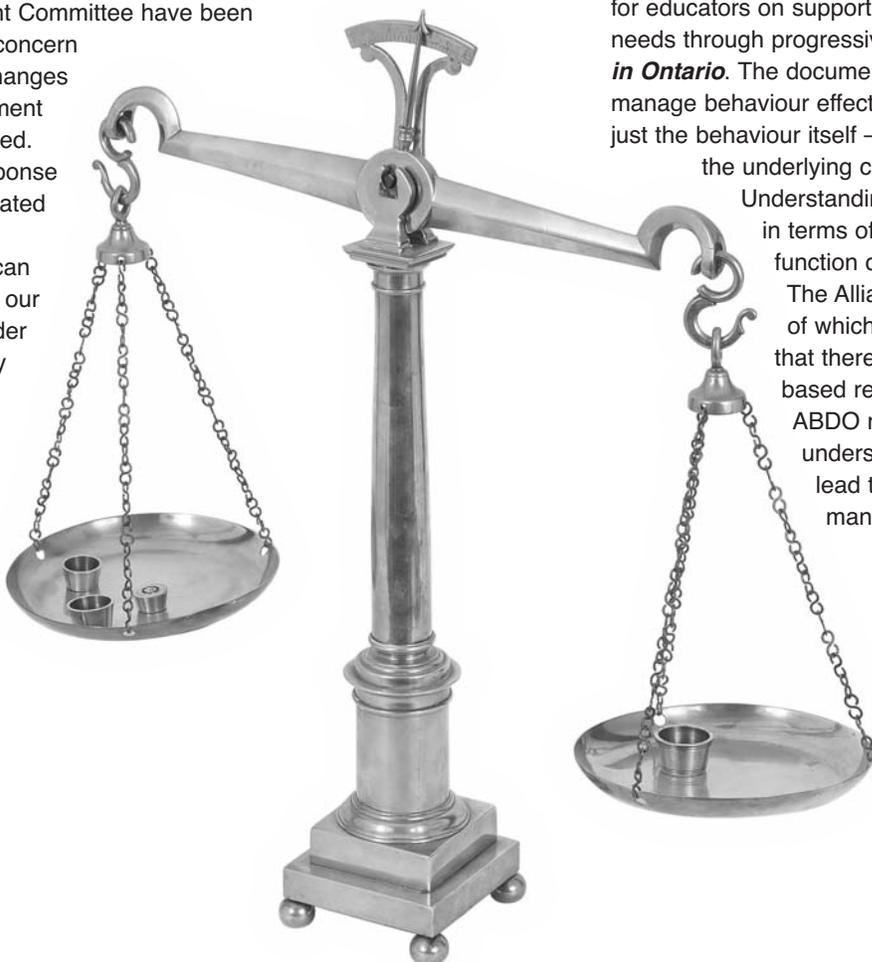
PUBLIC POLICY ROUNDUP

FALL 2010

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)

On May 31, 2010, the Minister of Community & Social Services announced the development of an integrated accessibility regulation under the AODA that would combine standards for Information & Communication, Employment and Transportation. On September 1st the proposed **Integrated Accessibility Regulation** was released for public consultation until **October 16, 2010**. The proposed regulation includes accessibility requirements that are general, as well as specific requirements for information & communication, employment, and transportation. There are also compliance enforcement initiatives and timelines for compliance, from 2011 and 2025.

Unfortunately the Accessibility Directorate website no longer posts the original proposed standards for Information & Communications, Accessible Employment, and Transportation that the standards development committees submitted to the minister, so the public does not have an opportunity to see what may have been 'lost in translation'. Many members of the Information & Communication Standard Development Committee have been expressing concern about the changes to the document they submitted. LDAO's response to the Integrated Accessibility Regulation can be found on our web site under Public Policy Advocacy.



Final Report of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions

In the Fall 2009 Public Policy Roundup we reported on the consultation of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, *Every Door is the Right Door: Towards a 10-Year Mental Health and Addictions Strategy*. In August 2010 the committee released its final report, *Navigating the Journey to Wellness: The Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Ontarians*. One of the key recommendations is to create a new umbrella organization—Mental Health and Addictions Ontario (MHAO), to coordinate service delivery to all age groups. This would mean that Children's Mental Health Centres would no longer be under the Ministry of Child and Youth Services. Such a change could be beneficial for transitioning between youth and adult mental health services, but other implications would need to be carefully considered.

Caring and Safe Schools in Ontario

In July the Ministry of Education released a resource document for educators on supporting students with special education needs through progressive discipline, *Caring and Safe Schools in Ontario*. The document makes the important point that "to manage behaviour effectively, educators need to consider not just the behaviour itself – what the student is doing – but also the underlying cause(s) of the behaviour."

Understanding student behaviour is framed primarily in terms of communications disorders, executive function disorders and mental health problems. The Alliance for Brain-based Disorders (ABDO), of which LDAO is a member, is disappointed that there is no mention of the underlying brain-based reasons for these behavioural issues. ABDO members believe that this lack of understanding on the part of educators can lead to use of inappropriate behaviour-management strategies.



ASK THE EXPERT

Christine McMurray

The Dark Side

LEARNING DISABILITY IN THE PACIFIC

Imagine a beautiful Pacific island. The sand is golden, the lagoon a dazzling turquoise under the warm midday sun and coconut palms wave gently in the breeze. In a small grassy clearing close to the shore a cluster of palm frond huts surround a neat, white-painted church and a one-room school.

Sounds like Paradise, doesn't it? Now imagine you are a twelve year old boy attending that school. You've been there for five years but you've learned almost nothing because you have dyslexia, and now you have symptoms of ADD as well. Your teacher has only very basic training and has never heard of either condition. She tries to keep you under control by beating you and sending you out of the classroom when you cause too much disruption. She has no time to deal with you in any other way because she has to teach 35 other children in the classroom, dispersed through Grades One to Six.

Your parents also have no idea that some children have learning difficulties. They think you are just disobedient and in need of ever stricter control. Even if they did know about it, they could not afford to seek special assistance for you. There isn't any available anyway, probably not in the whole country. You are becoming increasingly rebellious and frustrated. In a year or two you will probably drop out of school with low self-esteem and a big chip on your shoulder. You may hang around the village for a while, then perhaps drift to an urban area to prowl the street with gangs of other unemployed youth. Some have learning disabilities and some don't, but most are illiterate and unable to find decent work because they lack skills and because there are few jobs in the stunted national economy. You are likely to practice unsafe sex, use local narcotics and marijuana, drink home brewed alcohol and engage in petty crime. You are also at risk of sexual exploitation and being caught up in civil disturbances.

This is not a farfetched scenario. It is the reality for many young people in the small island nations of the Pacific. Each year many thousands of young men and women in the bigger Melanesian countries - Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Fiji and Vanuatu - as well as in the tiny atoll nations of Polynesia and Micronesia have a similar experience. It is estimated that only one in every 10 school leavers in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands finds work, about one in eight in Vanuatu and even in Samoa, one of the more successful economies in the region, only one in five.

The contribution of specific conditions such as hearing and visual impairment, dyslexia and ADD to learning difficulties in the Pacific is not known. There are no reliable estimates of even the most obvious physical disabilities, let alone those less visible. What can be said is that few teachers and fewer parents know how to recognise learning disabilities. Few children have their hearing and eyesight tested until they are well into primary school, if then. Most schools in rural areas are severely under-resourced, many teachers are under-trained and with limited skills and many classrooms are overcrowded. In this situation it is difficult for any child to learn, least of all those with a learning disability.

It is especially difficult to tease out the contribution of learning disabilities to poor learning outcomes in the authoritarian parenting and teaching environments that prevail in the Pacific. Pacific cultures tend to be strict and traditional, and children in general are taught to be seen and not heard. Asking questions of adults is generally discouraged, and most children are more likely to confide in their siblings and peers than their parents. Passive and rote learning are the norms in schools, because there are few resources and because teachers lack the skills to engage children in a free learning atmosphere. Most children are raised with strict discipline and corporal punishment at home. Such children can quickly become extremely disruptive in a



of Paradise:

different environment, especially if they are bored or unable to understand what is being taught. One young teacher in Kiribati told the writer that up to 50 per cent of her time in class was spent telling the children to be quiet. She said they refused to obey her because she was an outsider in their community and so they said she had no right to tell them what to do.

Disability services of any sort are extremely limited in the economically disadvantaged context of the Pacific, where there is heavy reliance on international donors for assistance. World Health Organization and UNICEF, the main agencies concerned with children's health, necessarily prioritise other crucial areas such as maternal and child health, immunization, child nutrition and infectious disease. UNICEF does include promotion and support for pre-school education in its early childhood development strategy, which incidentally is making some valuable inroads into traditional authoritarian attitudes to education, but learning disabilities are not specifically included. The main provider of services for the disabled is the Red Cross, a relatively small donor, and it too must prioritise and attend to those with severe physical and mental disability before those with learning disability.

In these mostly poor and under-resourced countries, support for learning disabilities isn't likely to happen any time soon. But there is scope for interested organizations to provide assistance and facilitation. For example, they could provide special awareness-raising for student teachers and produce and distribute simple materials to help teachers identify and address special needs. Simple strategies for actively engaging children in learning could also be promoted.

Any assistance must be handled carefully to avoid stigmatising slow learners, whether disabled or not. It is a sad fact of life that those with little sometimes see stigmatisation of those with even less as one of the few luxuries they can afford. Learning ability

assessment therefore needs to be promoted as a normal part of teaching services rather than as a special service, and learning disability needs to be explained as a normal characteristic in a certain percentage of any population. Likewise, special assistance should be presented as part of normal education services.

Any kind of assistance or intervention in the Pacific also must be culturally sensitive and customised for particular groups. Pacific cultures are by no means uniform and can even vary from village to village. Potential donors must begin by consulting governments and receiving their approval and advice to ensure the assistance provided is both wanted and appropriate. Local 'ownership' and active participation is absolutely essential to success. There are countless examples of well-meaning efforts to assist Pacific communities that have failed because correct procedure have not been followed and the activities have been neither wanted nor appropriate and sometimes even totally rejected.

It is important to address the assessment and management of learning disabilities in Pacific countries for the sake of many children whose poor learning outcomes lead to dismal futures. It is also worth addressing this neglected area because of substantial potential spin-off benefits that could reach well beyond the primary target group. Raising awareness that learning is a process to which children may or may not be well adapted, would also help to bring teaching methods and teachers' skills into focus. This could improve learning outcomes for all, whether or not they have specific learning disabilities. Better learning outcomes would, in turn, improve youth self-esteem, reduce exposure to risk and improve young people's prospects for employment. There are few areas of development assistance where the entry point is so obvious and the potential as well as the immediate benefits are so vast.

A faded, light blue background image of a man and a woman in bed, embracing. The woman is on the left, looking down, and the man is on the right, looking towards the camera.

AND Love AND Sex AND Relationships

Well...somebody had to discuss it! Let's be blunt: when it comes to love, sex and relationships, people with learning disabilities are often left behind. Whether poor auditory processing makes it frustrating to understand or remember what's just been said; whether the disorganized person has lost something...again, or the person with ADHD has lost sexual interest in you for the umpteenth time, relationships are definitely problematic for many.

This issue, we mix the personal with the practical; the realistic, with the really hard to take. Beginning with a discussion on social skills that plague us from childhood, to the very real and adult subject of maintaining relationships, we attempt to move an often taboo subject forward. Whether it's keeping a relationship—or simply a sexual experience—alive, we at least try to introduce the subject here and share both professionally and personally how others have succeeded (or not) with this touchy area.

At the end of the day, love is probably the thing that most defines us as "human." And love, or its presence, absence, attainability, passing, longing, abuse, pining and inspiration, is something that needs to be taken seriously. Someone witty once said, "when the heart speaks, take good notes." That's what we hope to do in this issue. We hope you find some meaning within these pages.

Is Sex Important to Someone With ADHD?

Bryan Hutchinson ponders that enduring question and comes up with an answer that begins with...

Not really.

Physical sex that is, it is nearly irrelevant. You wouldn't think so, because, well, we probably think of sex more than we think of anything else. However, we don't think of physical sex that much, not in that way. Do you doubt me? Then read on.

Our inherent definition of sex is entirely different than what we think sex should be. I mean to say that what marketers, advertisers and movies, TV and magazines show us what sex should be, isn't what we define sex to be. And you know what – sex in of itself is uninspiring for someone with ADHD, and yet, for someone who doesn't have ADHD, I have heard tell that having sex, physically and emotionally, with someone who has ADHD can be the best sexual experience they have ever had, the first few times, that is. Have you heard this too?

I am not basing this article on any research or scientific facts. Take it or leave it, read it and think about it, that's all. This all comes from the mind of Bryan; I am an ADDer, that's my research. Even so, I've got you thinking, because, you know...

Sex is boring. We'd rather be doing something else while in the act of having sex, something more exciting, like, well, fantasizing about sex, putting together a good story about our sex life and while we do that we miss out on something important, the reality of sex. What's the reality of sex... but first...

Now, just because sex seems boring to us while in the throes of passion, it doesn't mean it's boring for the other person. Why? Maybe it is because we are trying to reach a goal while having sex, and by trying to reach that goal we go all out for the other person, to please them, and many of us do get the other person where they want to go, but, did we get where we want to go? Usually not, and that's why we see the actual act of sex as boring. We pull out all the stops for the other person, but, in our (usually wrong) estimation, that person doesn't seem to take an interest in pleasing us.

What's the problem? Why is sex unsatisfying? Are you sure you want to know? Remember, I am just telling you what I think here, no scientific facts, you can take it or leave it and it may not be the same for everyone... I am not going to present any neurons, biochemistry or brain scans. No pie charts.

Physical sex is unsatisfying because it can never seem to live up to our expectations! ADDer men may have porn collections that outpace their comic collections. And some ADDer women have more romance novels than they could ever finish reading. Why? They are not satisfying and the search will go on, until you find the one movie, book or magazine that is satisfying... some come close, but, never quite reach it. Does that even make sense? No, it probably doesn't, unless you know the truth. Sex, in of itself, will never scratch that seemingly ever enduring itch. Oh yes, you will scratch the itch of those you have sex with, indeed, quite well, at first and if that were all that would be important, well, then sex would never be boring.

Do you want to know the ultimate answer to solve this mystery? Our inherent definition of sex is something entirely different than we tend to realize. Some of us realize it, but not all. Sex is... love, compassion and ultimately caring for someone else. When we have love, the real kind of love, the kind that keeps you up until dawn just talking and getting to know the other person – that is what sex is and physical sex becomes an extension of that. Physical sex, alone, will never be satisfying until we care about the other person and stop worrying about whether they can give pleasure in a physical manner, because, the right person can, if you open up, let go and let them, by caring about them.

ADDers tend to have an expectation of sex that will never be met and can never be met, one reason is because we have lived through a life of not achieving our expectations and therefore give-up on having any real expectations that we want to turn into reality. We find it easier to relinquish wanting something because we don't think we will get it anyway. However, when it comes to sex, too many continue to create and build on a fantasy no one person can ever hope to fulfill. Porn collections and romance novels will never fill the void, getting more of them is like a chocolate craving, the last bite is never enough because it isn't quite as satisfying as one had hoped. And yet, the hunger for more chocolate continues.

Some are just looking for love in all the wrong places. Once you find it, sex is ultimately satisfying. There is no last bite of chocolate.

It's All About

By Kenneth E. Seaton

Social skills are the foundation for all relationships, but people with learning disabilities are often at a disadvantage in this department. Problems begin in childhood and continue on into adulthood and this carries a whole host of problems. Our writer explains what social skills are and suggests some solutions.

"Why does he do it?" She moans as she brushes tears away, "How can he keep being so mean to me"! How indeed? The most heart-wrenching point is that he probably isn't even aware that he is doing something wrong or being mean!

Everyone dreams of having a happy and healthy relationship with someone. For adults with learning disabilities (LD) relationships - short and long-term - are very hard to find and harder still to maintain. It becomes even more difficult when someone has low or underdeveloped social skills. Many broken hearts, failed friendships and employment setbacks can be directly traced to a person's social ineptitude and his/her inability to use a defined set of social skills to communicate clearly with other people.

SOCIAL SKILLS: WHAT THEY ARE AND THEIR IMPORTANCE

Quite possibly, social skills and the capacity to utilize them to their best advantage are the most important set of abilities that a person can have. They determine how we interact socially with other humans and we are judged accordingly. How often have you heard someone say that he/she has "great people skills"? Or perhaps, "He is such a good listener!"

Not understanding social skills can lead to social isolation, under-or-unemployment, depression and even imprisonment. The functionality of these skills is to aid us in socializing, communicating and relating to other human beings. The ability to interpret voice inflections, sarcasm, and to be able to correctly read body language are crucial to the success or failure of social interactions. Communication forms can be both nonverbal and verbal.

Knowing what to say, when to say it and most importantly who to say it to, are considered to be good verbal skills. Interrupting

conversations, being aggressive or speaking in an overly loud voice are some examples of inappropriate verbal skills. Remember, socially we are often judged not only by the things that we said but when we said it. Always try to put the brain in gear before putting the mouth in motion.

Nonverbally you need to make and keep eye contact with the person you are speaking with, if culturally-appropriate. Smile not only with your eyes but with your mouth. Try to stand straight and tall (if you can) and keep any gesturing that you may do, appropriate to the discussion. Show good rapport with the other person by maintaining a small buffer zone between you and them, many people like to keep a "personal space" around them.

To demonstrate that you are actively engaged in and that you understand what is being said, occasionally contribute a quick comment - "I see", "uh huh", etc. or nod your head appropriately. Another way is to offer up direct feedback to what you've heard - "She said that to them? Then what happened?" Showing that you are not only paying attention but that you are participating will make your conversation partner feel much better about you and it will demonstrate great social skills on your part.

RELATIONSHIPS - TYPES AND HOW WE DEAL WITH THEM

Relationships can come in many shapes and sizes:

- **Personal** - which includes your family, friends and dates or mates
- **Social** - acquaintances you know (people you are on a nodding and hello basis with), people you interact with (store clerks, bus drivers, etc.), strangers, etc.
- **Professional** - co-workers, bosses and health care personnel, etc.

Me



How you define, develop and maintain your relationships says a lot about you and your social skills. After all, you interact differently with a co-worker than a family member. You also relate differently to your doctor than you would a neighbour. Even social interaction with a stranger, no matter how fleeting, still calls for some form of relating on your part.

Relationships, dating or otherwise, involve many means of subtle communications with lots of verbal and non verbal negotiating going on. On the best days, with nothing going wrong, it can still be very stressful to some people. You with your LD may at times become completely overwhelmed by the whole process.

As a result of this overwhelming or overloading you could lose focus on the relationship and all its complexities. Occasionally, when we are most stressed we may say or do things (consciously or sub-consciously) that we come to regret later. "You always hurt the one you love!" is not only a song title but also a true sidebar to love and relationships.

Your attention may wander from your partner and they may feel left out or completely ignored. Here is where you need to control your impulsive behaviours and to alleviate some of your anxiety by focusing on your partner. You should find concentrating on their needs and wants will reward you with an increase in your own comfort levels.

As discussed earlier, good communication is vital to a healthy relationship. You need to be able to talk about yourself, your disabilities and your personal challenges with your partner. The more open you are the more they understand just how unique a person you are.

LEARNING DISABILITIES AND HOW THEY RELATE TO SOCIALS SKILLS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Perhaps you were diagnosed with a learning disability as a child, teenager, or as an adult. Additionally you may have been informed that LD, a result of a nervous system dysfunction, would affect your ability to learn, to process and carry out everyday tasks. Time erodes lessons learned and you may no longer remember that LD is for all intents a "hidden" disability and that its impact is life-long. People with LD also:

- Tend to forget or misinterpret conversations or things that were just said to them
- May be impulsive, become easily distracted with a short attention span
- Are often late for dates, appointments or functions and may have trouble following directions
- Experience trouble in dialling phone numbers or in reading addresses which may cause them to put off doing things

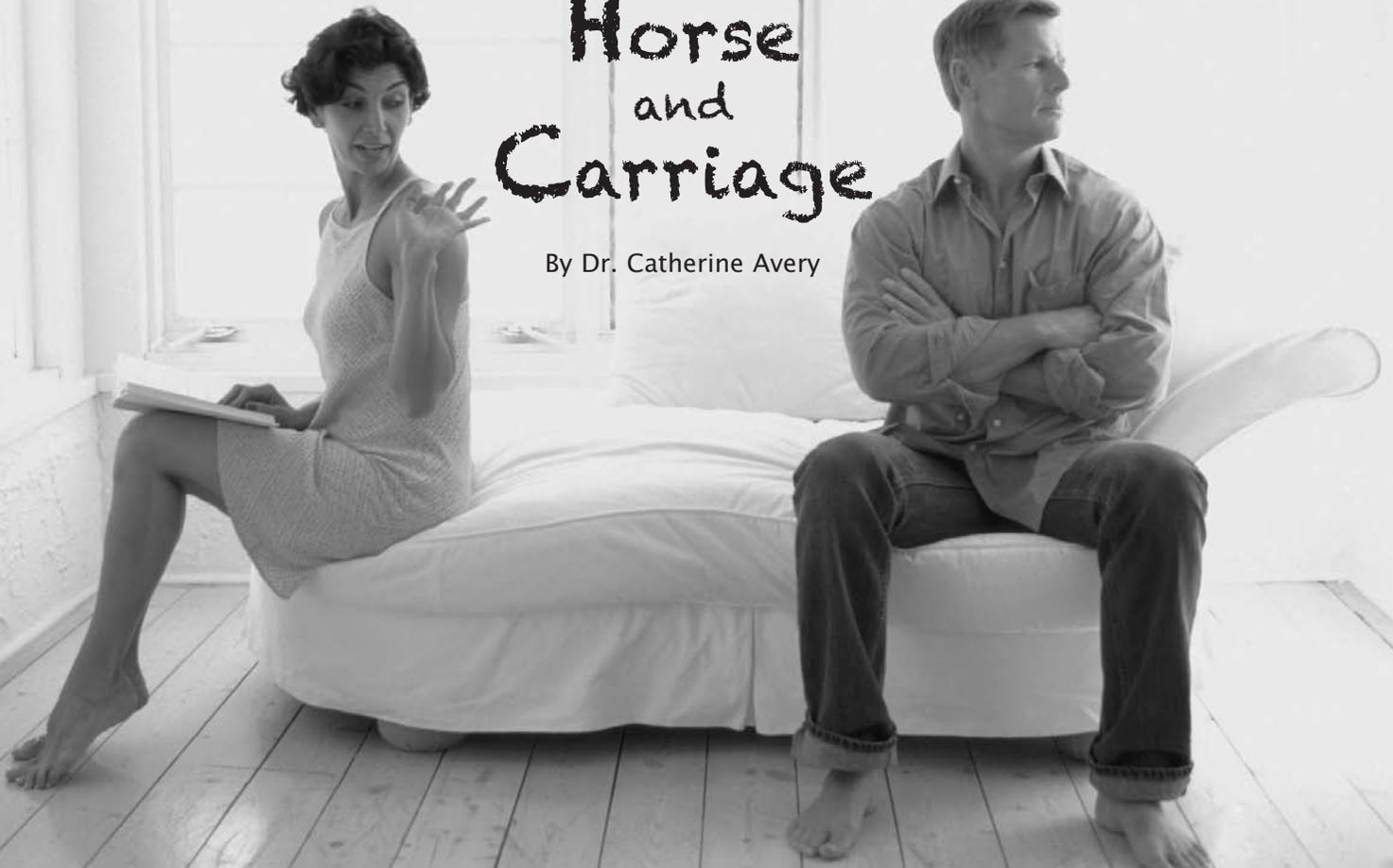
FINAL THOUGHTS

As an adult with LD you will have many different relationship challenges to face. You also have many choices to make and you may decide to face the challenges on your own. However, you are ONLY alone if you choose to be. Family, friends and yes hopefully - a significant other - can help you cope with your challenges. There are many options available for people who have no one close to them.

Sometimes fear of failure will stop people from trying. From trying to make new acquaintances, friends or even finding that special someone. Keep trying and you will discover that, as you improve your social skills, it will become easier to develop relationships and you might even find that special someone!

Love and Marriage Go Together Like a Horse and Carriage

By Dr. Catherine Avery



Being married to, or in a relationship with someone who has LD or ADHD can be a pretty frustrating experience says Catherine Avery. And this writer knows of what she speaks, living with ADHD herself. Here, she offers practical tips on how to survive and thrive in a happy and productive relationship with someone “on the other side.”

I recently received a request from a young adult for advice on ADHD and marriage. When I asked for more specifics, she responded, "I dunno, just how not to drive each other crazy, I guess." Being an ADHD adult and a clinical psychologist, and having not yet driven my sweet husband of 27 years to the brink of insanity, I came up with what I believe are key points to making a relationship successful when one or both partners have ADHD or a learning disability. These would include education, compromise, and a thoughtful division of labour.

In terms of education, it really helps for both partners to understand the symptoms of both LD and ADHD and how they

impact day-to-day behaviour. Inattention, distractibility, impulsivity, and internal restlessness are symptoms of both issues. Other problematic behaviours include hyperfocus (becoming intensely focused on areas of interest) and cognitive inflexibility (that is, a resolute determination to do things your own way, and being initially unwilling to accept alternative suggestions.) Until these symptoms are identified and their impact on day-to-day functioning are understood, these symptoms can cause misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and frustration within the marriage.

Let me give you an example: When my husband, Bill, and I were first married, I was prone to extreme restlessness which seemed to worsen over the weekend days. I would wake up on a Saturday morning with a grand plan of something I wanted to accomplish, and it often required my poor husband's involvement. One week it could be a plan to rebuild a saggy porch; another week it could involve moving bedroom furniture from one room to another on the other side of the house. Being restless and impatient, I would pester Bill until he finally agreed to the project (and not recognizing my hyperactivity as a symptom, I would be completely convinced that this project had to be completed!) Shortly into the project, however, I would get bored and wander off to talk to the neighbours, go grocery shopping, or whatever. Bill, who wanted nothing more than a day to relax, would be left in the middle of a project, and by himself! Bill would become understandably angry, and I would wonder what in the world set him off.

Once we both were able to identify the symptoms inherent in this scenario (restlessness, impulsivity, distractibility and inattention), we could make better choices. If I was restless, maybe I would go for a run first. It's amazing how these pressing projects can be put into perspective once that excess energy has been burned off. If we really had a project that needed to be completed, Bill would agree to it under the condition that I would stick to it and not abandon him midway through. And when I would invariably wander away, he would call me back in a good-natured manner, identifying the symptom rather than feeling unappreciated and frustrated.

Although it's important to be understanding of a spouse with LD or ADHD. I believe that it is equally important for the partner with the disability to make a sincere and dedicated effort to find ways to compensate for his or her symptoms. If you are planning to meet your spouse at a certain time, and know that time management is problematic for you, find a way to circumvent this problem. Perhaps you need to put a reminder on your cell phone, or set your watch alarm to go off 30 minutes before your meeting time. If you are making a sincere effort to compensate for your symptoms, your spouse will be more understanding or accepting when you slip up from time to time. (And given the nature of learning disabilities, you will slip up, despite your best intentions! You see, as soon as an intervention becomes a routine, the partner with the disability will stop paying close attention to it, and over time may forget why it was necessary in the first place! Recurring revelations on the same issue is another aspect of both LD and ADHD!)

Finally, make thoughtful and reasonable choices in terms of division of labour. If inattention to detail and procrastination are major problems for you, unless you enjoy having debt collectors calling you on a regular basis, have your spouse take over the role of bill paying while you take on other household duties. Make sure one of you helps kids with their homework too! Make sure the division of labour is fair, so that the non-LD partner does not begin to think of their spouse as one more responsibility, as opposed to an equal and exciting partner; or conversely, so that the partner with the LD/ADHD does not feel overloaded and then overwhelmed by the amount of household chores that must be attended to.



The Children of the Code project has five major components:

<http://www.childrenofthecode.org/>

1. **A Television, DVD and Web documentary series;**
2. A college, university, and professional development DVD series;
3. A cross-indexed website/database containing videos and transcripts of our interviews with the world's leading experts in fields related to reading;
4. **A variety of professional development events for educators;**
5. **A series of presentations for parents, policy makers, and the general public.**

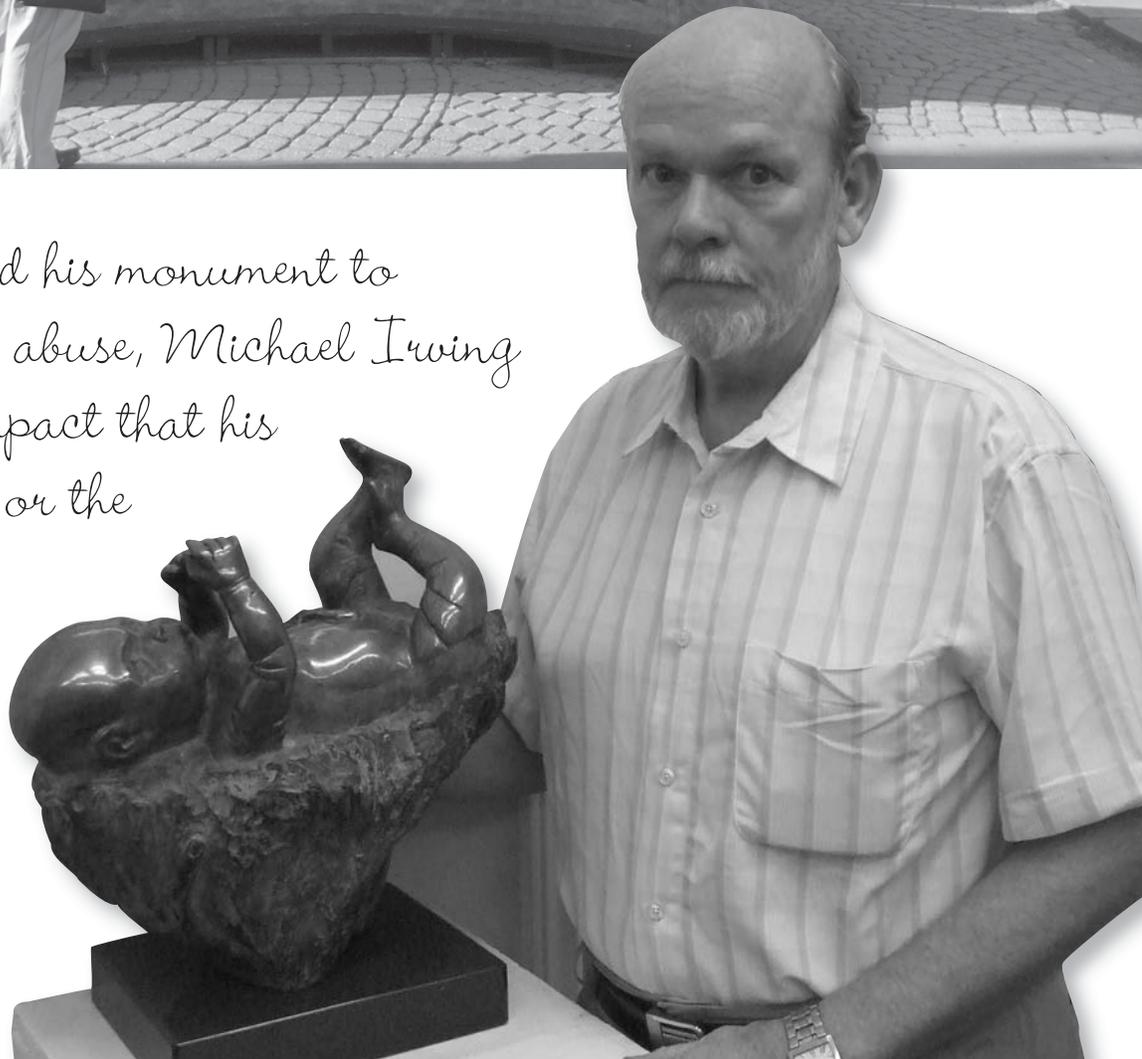
The web site states that "Most children who struggle with reading experience the struggle as a reflection of something wrong with themselves - something to be ashamed of. Unintentionally but pervasively, parents, schools, and society as a whole contribute to perpetuating this insidious myth. Children don't think that their reading troubles might be due to a normal difference in their **genes and brains analogous to being tall or short - they don't think that maybe their **parents, siblings, and other care-givers didn't engage them in enough conversation** before they started school - they don't think that perhaps their **teachers didn't teach them correctly** - they don't think the **confusion they experience is a consequence of an archaic and artificially complex 'code'** that presents a **completely unnatural processing challenge to their brains... no, they blame themselves - they feel ashamed of themselves** - ashamed of their minds. Statements like: "I'm dumb", "I'm stupid", "I'm not smart", "I'm not good in school" are all strategies to protect themselves from the shame they feel. "**

The web site takes an active and empowering approach to learning disabilities and is certainly worth a visit to check out!

HANDS-FREE:



When he conceived his monument to survivors of child abuse, Michael Irving had no idea the impact that his work would have on the journey he was about to embark on...



By Carter Hammett

The Child Abuse Monument

On February 18, 1997 Martin Kruze stepped forward and told the world about his sexual abuse at the hands of former Maple Leaf Gardens employee Gordon Stuckless.

The media ran with the story, coast to coast. For months it was difficult to avoid seeing or hearing how violation of young boys had occurred in the “temple of dreams” that was symbol of the great Canadian sport. Reactions of course, were mixed. Some doubted the veracity of his story. Others became very uncomfortable with a subject that, to that point, received scant attention. Still others came forward to admit the same thing had happened to them. Whatever you felt about the story, Kruze was everywhere. After the media frenzy finally died down, Kruze went to work tirelessly volunteering, speaking, writing about sexual abuse and its devastating impact. But on October 30, 1997, three days after Stuckless was sentenced to two years less a day for violating 24 boys, Kruze committed suicide.

According to a 2007 Statistics Canada report, 53,400 children and youth were victims of a police-reported assault the previous year. The risk of abuse, of course, is thought to be at least five times greater for people with disabilities than the rest of the population and most victims are violated by someone they know. According to the Disabled Women's Network of Ontario, up to 90% of all women with disabilities will suffer from abuse at some point in their lifetime. Furthermore, people with disabilities are more likely targets of sexual abuse because the ability to communicate their violation is more difficult, because of speech issues, isolation or credibility. The reality is disquieting.

* * * * *

A few days after the Martin Kruze's death, Dr. Michael Irving was

approached by the Kruze family. Irving, a psychotherapist and artist, creator of The Child Abuse Monument, had spoken with Kruze about participating in the project, and now, in death, Kruze was still making a contribution to promoting knowledge about sexual abuse.

With a cast of Kruze's hand and the words, “Martin's Hope” engraved on a patch of bronze quilt that forms the core of the statue he is remembered. Hauntingly, an image of Kruze at the age his abuse occurred rests just below the cast of his hand.

Indeed, the monument is hard to miss. Directly inspired by The Vietnam Monument, the sculpture, properly entitled, Reaching Out, is actually two figures together measuring 11-foot high and 30 feet wide. The figures stand imposingly, arms reaching out and skyward, forming an arch, wide enough for three people to walk through. Embedded within the figures are a series of quilts (or squares) created by survivors of abuse and their supporters. Each square is unique: some are quite simple, others more complex. All are poignant. Here, a hand reaches out to a bird on a branch, possibly a hawk. There, a hand either rises out of or sinks into, a pool of water. The viewer is left to decide. In yet another square, a child's tiny hand sits below the hands of his parents, with the words, “May hope be passed through every hand” floating beside.

It's not all doom and gloom. Some squares carry visceral, empowering messages, including a hand that hovers open on its square, a mouth between the thumb and index finger, with the words, “I will be heard” scattered around. In yet another, a human embryo, rests content in the palm of a hand, with guardians, including a rabbit, lion and dog surrounding it. Others represent aboriginal forms of healing.





Additionally, there are 22 plain quilt squares, left blank intentionally so all survivors of sexual abuse can be remembered. Alternatively, visitors can dampen their hands in the fountain that fronts the memorial and leave their own wet, temporary handprint on the statue as a way of being indirectly involved with the work, even if directly affected.

It should come as no surprise that some of these hand prints featured in the work are those belonging to people with learning disabilities. But it may be a bit more surprising to learn that the Monument's artist was diagnosed with LDs himself.

"At 34, I had the writing level of a fifth-or-sixth grader," he says. "I believe the impact of the abuse made my learning disabilities unable to be coped with."

Irving grew up in a home he describes as "violent and abusive." Out of 12 children, he states seven were illegitimate. At his father's funeral, several friends described his father as the angriest person they had ever known.

Early on he turned to art, recognizing its healing properties. He became interested in sculpture and painting. Further healing came later by exploring his First Nations roots. Through his own healing work, he developed not only a richer sense of self, but also the ability to have compassion for others.

"Acts of compassion are the most rewarding things that a person can do and being able to be compassionate gives the greatest meaning. It can almost be viewed as selfish in terms of what comes back."

Much of that compassion goes into the psychotherapy practice he runs in Toronto's east end.

"I get a sense of being a teacher and sharing skills to manage a life," he says. "Hopefully they'll (clients) impart some of that. I have a sense of a rippling effect because of their time spent with me."

When working with trauma survivors, Irving's style is to always look for what is fundamentally positive about the person. He recognizes that behaviors and symptoms that are presented are not always what is implied.

"With trauma survivors, their symptoms are often the best response they could make at the time, to a horrible situation," he says. "Therefore what may be seen as a disability, or disabling, may have its roots in being an ability. So, I always look for assets and strengths."

The same applies to his own learning disability.

"At the core of dyslexia, there's a sense of freedom of thought about what is truth," he says. "I'm not confined to the structure of

language in the same way I don't feel confined to the structure of social beliefs."

Those social beliefs often dictate that sexual abuse should not be discussed. Typically, Irving went against the grain to attain his vision and honour his commitment to seeing the project through to its completion.

Over a painstaking number of years, through dozens of public consultations and focus groups, workshops on sexual abuse, and unending rounds of funding applications, the project gradually began to take shape. Eventually, he amassed over 1000 pages of documentation as the project was being conceived. Irving consulted abuse survivors, artists, psychologists before identifying three characteristics the Monument had to possess, says Irving.

"It needed to be personal, collaborative and include storytelling," says Irving. "I came up with the idea of a hand print of it being personal and borrowed from female artists when I decided to use a quilt for collaboration."

But it's the stories woven into the bronze quilt that are the most riveting aspects of the sculpture. Names are named; angry, sad, empowering stories are reported.

Yoko Ono once famously remarked that "art was a verb"

meaning, that her work was an invitation to be interactive with the viewer, rather than the viewer being a passive recipient of the work. The Monument functions much the same way.

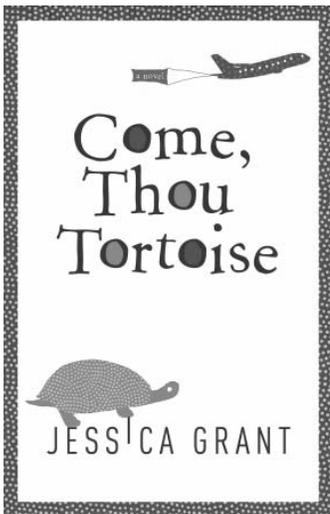


Irving states the piece is a good example of "projective identification," meaning that the viewer can engage with it. "We all have had the experience of seeing a movie and coming out feeling changed." says Irving. "Consciously or not, previous conflicts have been massaged

and you have changed in the darkness of the theatre. The Monument is a piece of art in which a survivor can engage in this process of projective identification.

"A few hundred survivors put heart and soul into these art works," he says. "They did so because they knew the Monument would be around for centuries and would have a positive impact on generations of people who were coping with an adversity they themselves had been through."

By visiting the Monument website you can cast your vote of support to have the Provincial government accept the donation of the finished Bronze Monument to Queen's Park; and you can also find out how you can have you own Handprint message permanently placed inside one of the Monument figures. http://www.irvingstudios.com/child_abuse_survivor_monument/in dex.html



SHELF LIFE

Come, Thou Tortoise

Reviewed by Susan Stanley

Come, *Thou Tortoise*, the title Jessica Grant saddled her first novel with, may seem odd, but in reading towards the finish line, the levels of meaning in the title develop perfectly and call the reader to join the journey.

Beginning to read the book, you may wonder how to classify the main character, Audrey a.k.a. "Oddly" Flowers. Does Audrey have Asperger's Syndrome? Does she have some type of learning disability? Is she merely quirky and superstitious, employing her own logic to figure out mysteries? For a young woman, apparently missing jokes and references, she's remarkably observant and capable. For instance, already a nervous flyer, Audrey realizes there's something amiss with an air marshal on a plane, but deduces he's a terrorist and disarms him. Not bad for a naive waif.

Grant uses the literary device of a naive narrator brilliantly. As a reader you're aware that Audrey is not always getting everything happening around her, but Audrey's misinterpreted, re-engineered words are more clever and apt than the original words she's mangled. At one point in the story, Audrey receives her old school records which have assessed her as having a low I.Q. It only slowly dawns on her that the score is not the same as a "not-bad grade" when her father rages that it's "bollocks". He tells her that the tests "measure how similar your brain is to that of the brain that made up the test" and later, her boyfriend dismisses the score, saying "they can't measure what you are". True enough, because Audrey is swift in as many ways as she could be deemed slow. She's determined to seek out solutions, she's quick to concern herself with the safety of others, and swift to seek justice for those she loves.

In a picaresque novel, an author will use a naive narrator of low social class or outsider status to humorously show up the foibles of society while the narrator journeys to a just conclusion. Audrey Flowers just might be the Lazarillo de Tormes of low I.Q. She fights to conquer her fears and live her best life. She's ready to tackle arch-enemy rivals of her father, cold and unforgiving relatives, the personal demons of Uncle Thoby, the imagined captors of her missing, wheel-loving mouse Wedge, all the while grieving the loss of her father, and worrying also about the safety of her tortoise Winnifred, sheltered temporarily with a mostly out-of-work Shakespearean actor named Chuck.

Yes, there is a tortoise in the story who sometimes shares the narration with Audrey. Winnifred, like Audrey, is a blend of slow and brilliant, partly mystified by others' actions, partly wise in her own right -- perhaps wiser than the buffoons around her. She's lived longer than those around her and had her own storied life that no one who sees her knows anything about. Never mind the idiosyncrasies of her knowledge (she understandably doesn't know what footnote numerals denote on the page of a play, but she does somehow know about mathematical exponential numbers, hence while doing bookmark duty she reads a line to the power of 3). She's another engaging and funny character in a novel that's sweet without becoming too precious.

Audrey isn't just sweet. She's brave -- a quality encouraged in her by her father and Uncle Thoby. They hope that she will travel and see a bit more of the world than Newfoundland, and to help Audrey get over her fear of planes, they re-create a plane's cabin and cockpit in their basement. It works and Audrey does go exploring, but like a lot of us, she's still in the dark and doesn't fully understand the people who are important to her. She cares enough to try and swift enough to remind others they're wanted and welcome. To quote Shakespeare's play, "The Tempest": "Come forth, I say! There's another business for thee. Come, thou tortoise!"

This JUST IN



Patrick Dempsey: Dr. McDreamy from *Grey's Anatomy* struggles with his own disability: dyslexia. In 2006, Dempsey revealed his struggle, which was a challenge for him as a child and even as a successful actor today. His dyslexia wasn't diagnosed until he was 12 years old, and Dempsey says that he still has trouble learning his lines and "reading them off the page...I need to memorize it, in order to go on," he told Barbara Walters.

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News Around The Province

NIAGARA

Niagara Kick Starts Fall With New Programs and Staff

LDA-N is pleased to announce the launch of four new programs, Reading Rocks, P.A.C.E. (Parents Advocating – Children Excelling), B.E.S.T. (Better Emotional & Social Times) and S.T.E.P.S (Social Teen Empowering Program to Succeed). LDAN also welcomes a new Executive Director, Ashley Graham and a new Program Coordinator, Naomi Gutknecht. The LDAN team would like to take this opportunity to thank their members for their support and patience during the transition of a new staff. Let's continue working together in the exciting year ahead!

OTTAWA

Chapter Is Moving On Up!

Earlier this year, the Learning Disabilities Association of Ottawa welcomed new executive director Linda Barbetta who says the chapter has been “a labour of love for me and an organization too valuable to let close”!!

Rebuilding and rebranding, the agency met a lot of challenges over the past year including creating a new board of directors and new membership. They facilitated the Sunshine Day Camp which hosted 48 children this summer over a six week period. The children even came up with a rap song for the camp!!

The chapter successfully secured Ontario Trillium Funding as well as United Way and are grateful to our funders.

Our parent support/education nights were reinstated in February and have been well attended.

We have refreshed our resource centre and named it the Roy Cooper/Memorial Resources Centre. We have purchased over 300 new books and CDs as well as started a library for children /youth.

In April, we presented an evening with Dr. Kenny Handelman who discussed ADHD *Myth and Facts*.

We continue to evolve and are in the process of developing a great new web page and we've participated in several speaking engagements, including Ottawa University's *Diverse Cultures and LDs*, Algonquin College Recreational Studies and Justice programs, The Ontario Principals Council, The City of Ottawa

We continue to sit at the table at The Ottawa Carleton District School Board SEAC.

With great help from our new resource coordinator Sheila Milloy, and many hours of input from dedicated volunteers, we have had a great year and are moving full steam ahead.

SUDBURY

Exciting New Workshop Available

The Sudbury chapter continues to develop and deliver awareness workshops for students, parents and educators. A recent addition to the variety of presentations created by LDAS was commissioned by a local school board, with the intention of enhancing staff development regarding the new policy document, Learning For All K-12, specifically regarding the focus on Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

Our chapter's mission parallels the content of this document as it reinforces the direction for individualized learning opportunities, which is the pathway to success for all students including those with learning disabilities. With UDL, “what's essential for some, benefits all”. Students with learning disabilities have the power to achieve. They simply need to be taught based on the way that they learn.

This fun-filled, experiential workshop engages and motivates educators to strive to meet the needs of their individual learners. Their active implementation will have students “growing with success”.

Community outreach staff Angie DeMarco is eager to deliver this workshop to Sudbury educators on professional activity days during the coming school year.

WELLINGTON COUNTY

Stress Management for Parents of LD/ADHD Kids Offered

Parents of learning disabled or ADHD children may experience stress resulting from behaviours, guilt, fear for the future etc. Learn how to deal with this stress and make changes in your life from instructor Christine Rickards, M.A. Christine is a Behaviour Consultant and has many years of experience working with families dealing with these issues.

The classes will run Wednesdays 7:00-9:00 pm Oct 13– Nov 17/10 in the Community Room of ARC Industries, 8 Royal Rd, Guelph Dress Casually! Bring Water!

Stress Management for Parents Course (6 weeks) **Fee \$60.00**

Seating is limited! Advance Registration required. Some subsidized spaces available. RSVP by phone (519)837-2050 or email info@ldawc.ca

Thank you to the Rotary Club of Guelph-Trillium for their financial support for this workshop! Mail cheque to #233, 17A-218 Silvercreek Pkwy N, Guelph ON N1H 8E8

YORK REGION

New Technology Camp Takes Off

This summer we created a successful partnership with VocaLinks. The assistive technology camp took place the week of July 27th. A total of 34 students and parents took part. We also conducted a mini advocacy course for the parents. On Saturday, September 11th, VocaLinks hosted a free one-day assistive technology clinic for parents at the LDAYR offices.

On June 28th we held our Third Annual Picnic in recognition of our members and volunteers. Despite the strong winds, everyone did have a good time.

We continue to translate our information into different languages and provide parent workshops and sessions. We have recently translated some of our information into Korean and Urdu. We now have information available to our diverse population in seven languages!

This summer we were successful in running a social skills summer camp for children aged 9 – 12 to help them develop friendship and problem solving skills which in turn will assist them in developing positive self-esteem, while at the same time having fun at camp!

We have continued to provide tutoring services for York Region families and this year we proudly expanded our program from SK to grade 8! Thanks to all of our dedicated volunteers we have serviced over 100 families this year alone!

We would like to thank our summer students, funded by Service Canada, for they have done a great job with our agency! Jenn revamped and improved our website. Please check it out! Ali assisted us with our marketing and PR and our new logo. Christine helped connect us to the Russian and Korean communities. We would also like to thank Elizabeth, our co-op student from Humber, for all her hard work and assistance with our programs. LDAYR wishes each of you all the best in your future endeavours. Their smiles will be missed!

Well, it's that time of year again – back to school! It seemed like only yesterday that the kids were thrilled to be finished school. With that being said, we are preparing for our fall social skills and SOAR programs. Our parent support and adult support groups resume in October. We look forward to continuing to provide support, guidance, resource information and advocacy assistance to our clients and to our members in our community.



The Web Based Teaching Tool

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The Web Based Teaching Tool (WBTT) is an online early screening and intervention program used by primary teachers (JK - Grade 2). Teachers use WBTT to screen their students in:

- School Readiness
- Early Literacy
- Mathematics



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IN PERSON: GEORDIE WALKER

What's Love Got to do With It?

By Sheila Milloy

Had anyone predicted that Geordie Walker's destiny included a career as high school principal when he was a high school student, he would have claimed they were off their rocker. Now, as an educator, he will tell you to never lose site of the fact that challenges can be overcome with support and resources. You can't give up, and the struggle is much easier when you are surrounded by support in a caring, loving, respectful, atmosphere

Love and intimacy is about parents. Without his parents, Geordie would have been a casualty of the educational system. Kindergarten through grade 12 was an arduous process of learning in a school system that neither recognized nor accommodated learning disabilities. Failing fourth grade meant that at Christmas time that year, Geordie was sent back to grade three. His parents never doubted his intelligence no matter how many times he cried himself to sleep feeling like an idiot.

A psychologist eventually identified Geordie's learning challenge. He could not write. His Mom hand scribed his work. He used a dictaphone machine to do written assignments so his Dad's secretary could transcribe the work. He took oral exams. Geordie learned to recognize his handicap, use it to develop a complete understanding of the expectations placed upon him, and to respond effectively. He realized that personality, not academics, is the key to success.

Educational life meant navigating between special education class and



Geordie Walker

regular classes until he graduated high school with remedial math and a grade 8 reading level. His diploma was based on non-academic courses: home economics, wood working, and physical education.

Inspired to continue, Geordie furthered his academic preparation in pursuit of a degree by attending college courses including writing, reading language, and a term in English as a Second Language. He graduated Simon Fraser University with a degree in psychology and a minor in native studies.

Work as a ski instructor in Europe led him to discover his passion for working with kids. He returned to Canada to begin a career as an educational assistant (EA) in a special education class. The work inspired him to apply to teacher's college.

The first three applications were rejected. It seemed there was a perception that he lacked what it takes to become a teacher. The perseverance and encouragement of a supportive partner propelled him to make that fourth try on the premise that if you ask enough people enough times

you will eventually get what you want. He met with the Dean, asked for an explanation, made his pitch and left the campus. His acceptance letter arrived shortly after. He took a leave of absence from his EA position to complete teacher's college.

Geordie worked as a teacher in Vancouver before coming to Ottawa to work at the Young Offenders Detention Centre, Crossroads, and as principal of Safe Schools. He is currently the principal at Rideau High.

Believing in kids helps them to build the foundation for love and intimacy in life. As both educator and the parent of two children with learning disabilities, he is continually learning in a set of changing circumstances. Personal struggle has created his acute awareness of the pitfalls inherent in navigating the world with a learning disability. Nurturing kids through their own experience has meant learning to step back and allowing them to grow through the hurts and heartaches that come with it. He has learned to trust his kids to develop their own tenacity and inner strength through their experiences and the loving support and guidance of parents.

Geordie was destined to become a high school principal. He sees himself reflected in the kids. He knows that positive personal relationships in his life encouraged him to become an educator that is a champion for the underdog. Helping kids do well means helping them to discover and build strengths that foster a solid sense of self.



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