Diagnosis and Management of Learning Disabilities
An Interdisciplinary/Lifespan Approach
Diagnosis and Management of Learning Disabilities

An Interdisciplinary/Lifespan Approach

Second Edition

By

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PREFACE

Of all childhood disorders, learning disabilities and its concomitant condition, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, are by far the most prevalent, occurring in approximately 10 to 15 percent of school-age children. It is important, therefore, that all professionals who work with children understand basic concepts in the identification and treatment of these disorders. Although the second edition of this book, like its predecessor, is written at a level that can be understood by parents or professionals who have little familiarity with learning disorders, it is designed primarily for practitioners who are involved to some degree with diagnosis and treatment of children with learning disabilities.

Children with learning disabilities often have a multitude of problems that span many facets of their lives, including academic, social, emotional, behavioral, and familial. It is imperative, therefore, to consider the total child from several points of view. Practitioners must consider the difficulties encountered in each sphere, as well as the interactions among the various problem areas. In the case of the child with learning disabilities, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

As stated in the first edition, we believe that an interdisciplinary approach allows for the most thorough understanding of the child's problems and needs. When an interdisciplinary approach is used, professionals from many disciplines come together to plan the evaluation, to share results of the assessments they have conducted individually, to discuss how results from evaluation in one discipline relate to results from another discipline, to formulate diagnoses, to plan for treatment and follow-up.

In this second edition, we again have as a primary focus a desire to facilitate an interdisciplinary approach to the diagnosis and treatment of learning disabilities. As a developmental pediatrician, developmental psychologist, and educational psychologist, we endeavor to convey in a simple, straightforward manner what we do when we evaluate and plan treatment for a child with learning disabilities. In this second edition, we wish to emphasize that many of the problems for children with learning disabilities represent chronic handicapping conditions that have an impact across the lifespan of the affected individual. To underscore the need for a lifespan approach to learning disabilities, we intro-
duce two new topics: early (preschool) identification of learning disabili-
ties and promotion of effective transition for the adolescent with
learning disabilities. We have asked colleagues in the areas of early
identification of learning disabilities, language-based learning disabili-
ties, occupational therapy, and transition programming to help us de-
lineate an interdisciplinary and lifespan approach. We discuss what
types of treatments are available for various aspects of the disorder and
try to assess objectively the effectiveness of these intervention tech-
niques. Finally, we discuss ways to convey information to parents and
to plan for follow-up.

As in the first edition, we have tried intentionally to be brief and
direct. Our plan in writing this book was to answer the question “What
do you, as a practitioner, do from the moment you first suspect that a
child might have a learning disability?” We intend for this book to be-
come a part of the practitioner’s working library, as a guide to be used
on a day-to-day basis.