

# "The Exceptional Learner"

## Understanding Learning Difficulties



# Awareness of Needs

Dyslexia

Autism/  
Asperger  
Syndrome

Attention  
Deficit  
Hyperactive  
Disorder

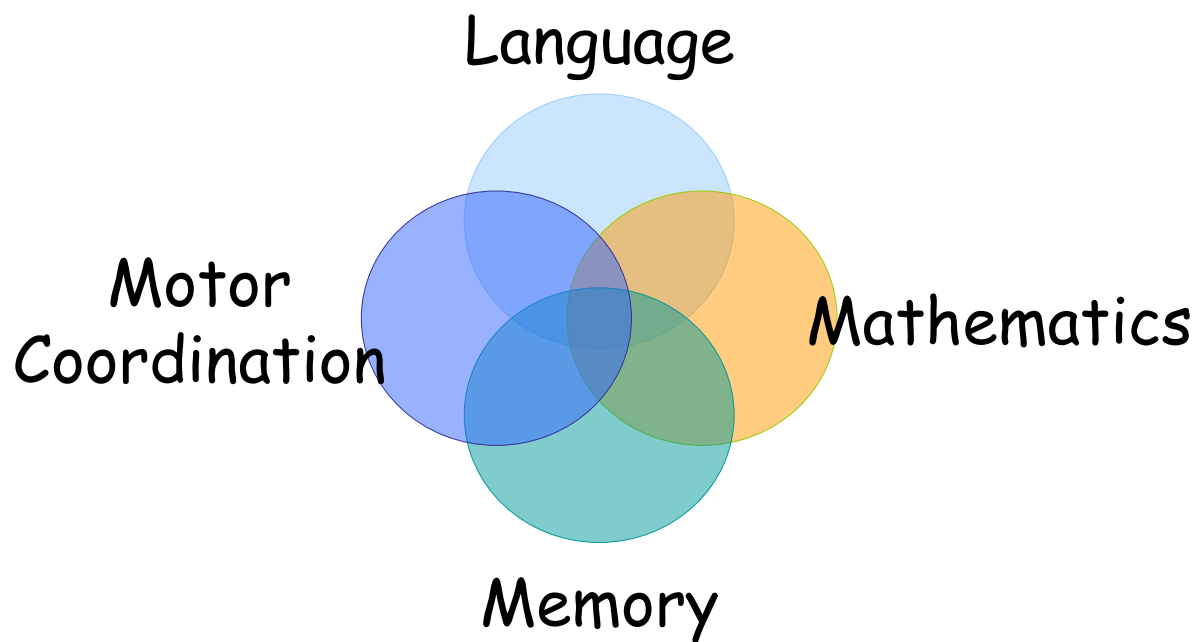
# What is Dyslexia?

- It is a difficulty with language. People with Dyslexia typically have average to above average intelligence.
- They may have difficulty in reading, spelling, understanding language they hear, or expressing themselves clearly in writing or speaking. An unexpected gap exists between their potential for learning and their school achievement.

\* 7 years and above, more than 6 months



# Characteristics



# Language

- Difficulty learning new words
- Difficulty understanding questions
- Difficulty rhyming words
- Lack of interest in story telling
- Slow corresponding of letter to sounds
- Consistent errors in reading and writing
- Inability to tell story in sequence
- Poor reading comprehension
- Reversals in similar looking letters
- Difficulty summarizing

# Motor Coordination

- Difficulty in organizing
- Clumsy
- Poor note taking skills
- Poor ability to proofread and or check work
- Confuses between left and right
- Poor balance



# Memory

- Poor memory processing speed
- Poor rote memory
- Poor handwriting
- Difficulties copying from the board

# Mathematics

- Confusion of Math signs
- Trouble memorizing math facts / concepts
- Trouble in learning time, money, times table



# Sample Work

Alphabet:

→ a d c b e f g h i j k l m n p q r s t u v w x y z

Paragraph:

I like to play with my dog and chase a round  
the field and go through bobwit  
and run and play in the snow  
and play in the snow and run  
a round the snow.



# Passage

"I like to play with my dog and chase her around the field and go through barb wire and run and play in the snow and play in the house and run around the house."



# Interventions

- Visual Image - instructions, vocabulary
- Mind Maps / Graphs / Diagrams
- Avoid chunky passages
- Age level reader
- Increase rote memory
- Introduce letter sound correspondence
- Card Drills
- Learn through software games, educational shows, videos

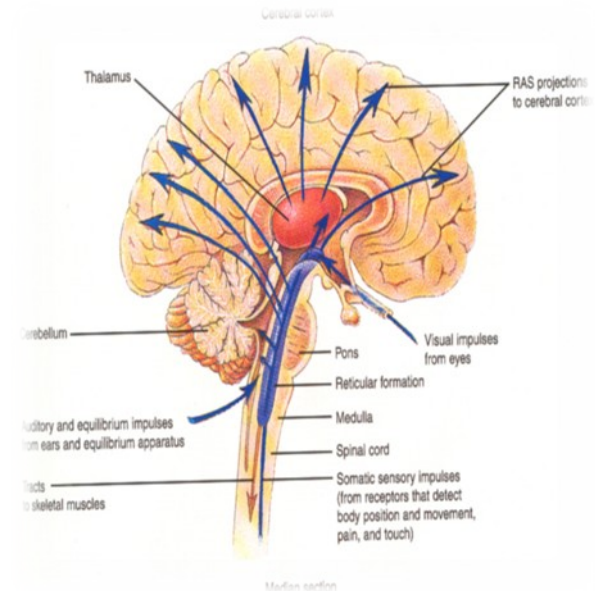
# Video on Carly



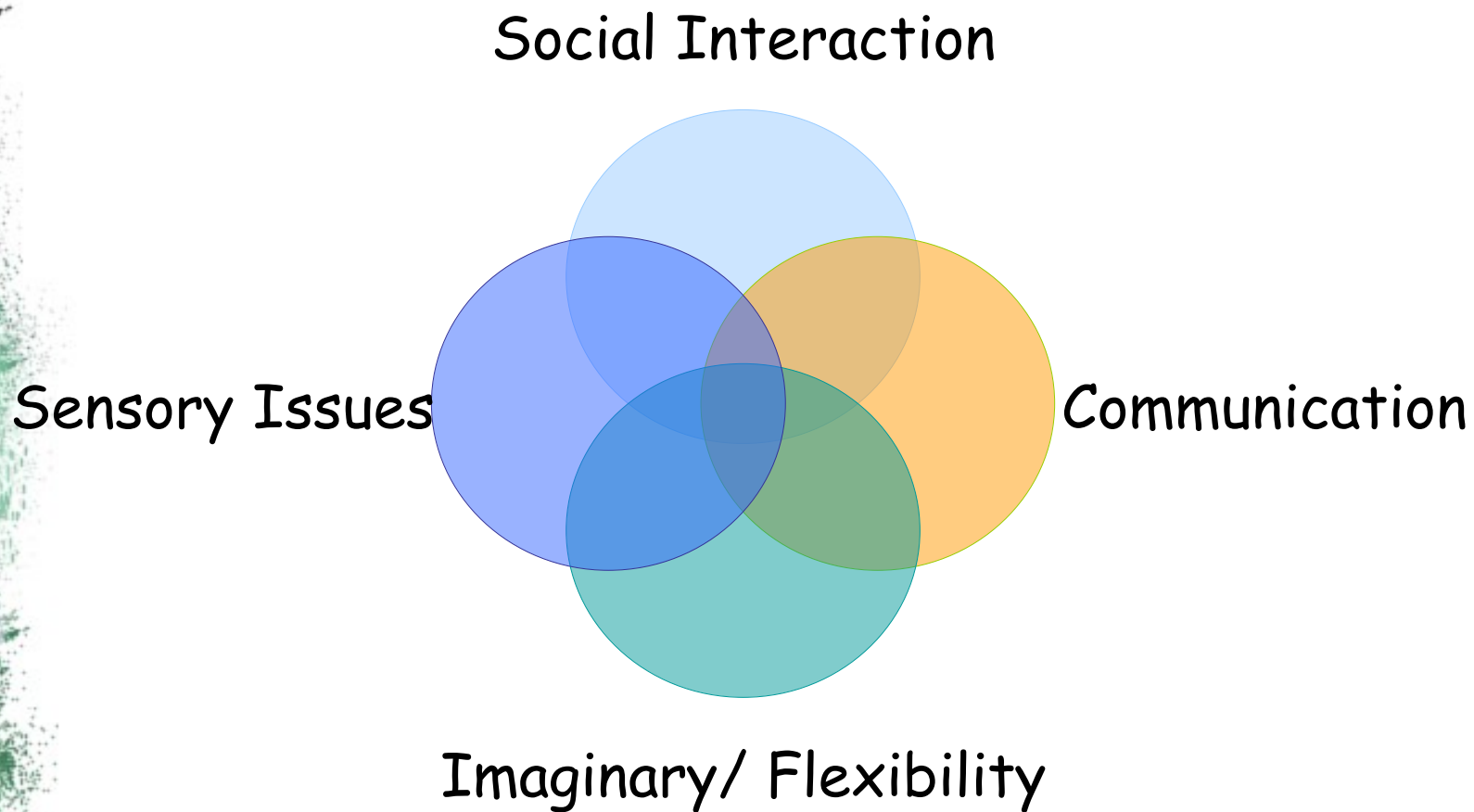
# What is Autism?



- It is a complex developmental disability that typically appears during the first three years of life.
- It impacts the normal development of the brain in certain areas.



# Main Concerning Areas



# Common Impairments

## A) Social Interaction

- Eye contact
- Attention span
- Joint attention
- Echolalia
- Communication Skills
- Social referencing
- Social cues

# Common Impairments

## B) Social Communication

- Common Intent
- Body postures, facial expressions, gestures
- Responding and initiating
- Focusing on Conversations
- "Prosodic" features
- Turn Taking

# Common Impairments

## C) Imaginary and Flexibility

- Interests and imaginative play
- Changes in routine (rigidity)
- Literal thinking
- Cause and effect



# Sensory Issues

## D) Hypersensitivity (defensive)

- Volume /Pitch of sound
- Textures
- Taste of food
- Overpowering Smells

## E) Hypo-Sensitivity (Seeking)

- Vibrations / sounds
- Movement
- Pressure

# Sensory Integration

- Multiple Stimuli
- Odd Movement

## Thinking / Organizational Skills

- Concrete thinking
- Sequencing



# Interventions

- Changes to Physical Environment
- Introduce daily schedule
- Set up work system
- Visual Structure









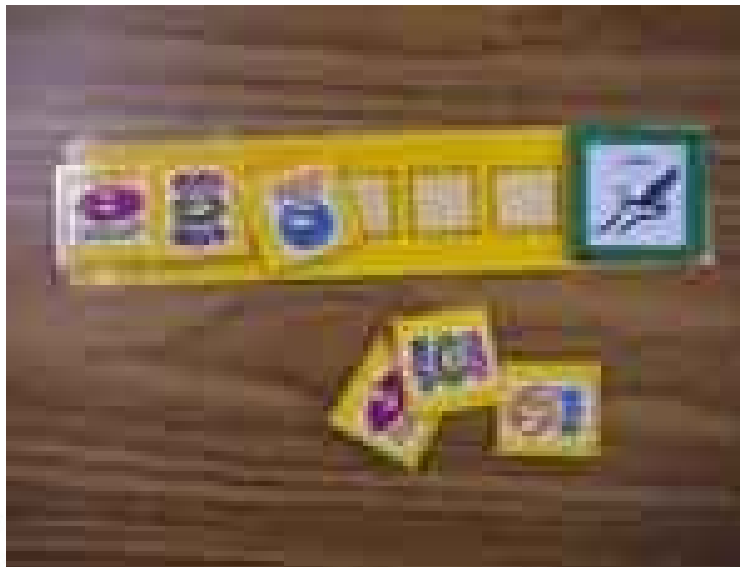
# Scheduling and Work System



## Morning Schedule

The following things must be done every morning before school.

	Make your bed.
	Get dressed.
	Eat breakfast.
	Brush your teeth.
	Pack your lunch and snacks.
	Get your backpack.

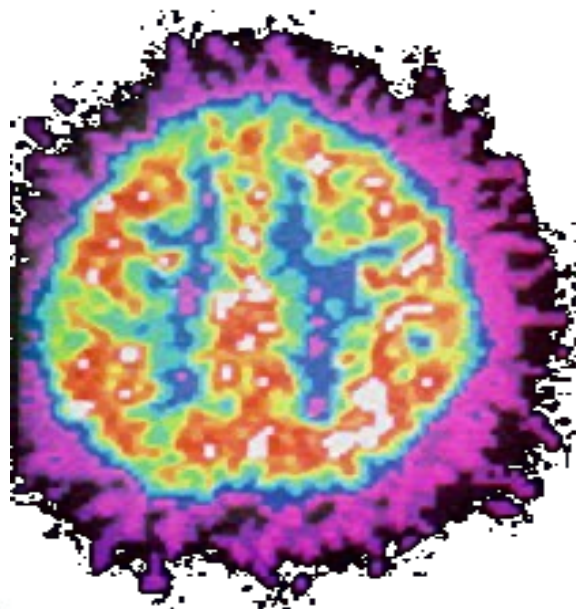


# What is ADHD?

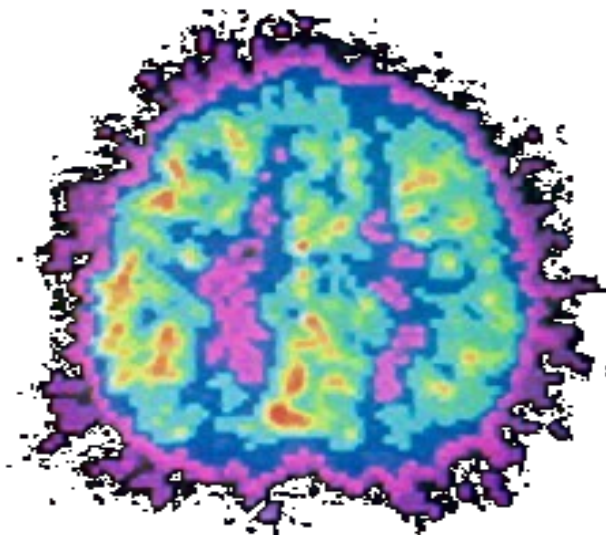
It is a chronic and impairing behaviour patterns that display abnormal levels of inattention, hyperactivity, or their combination.

\*More than 6 months

NO ADHD



ADHD



## A) Inattention

- Organizational Task
- Mental Effort
- Careless/ Forgetful
- Stimuli
- Close Attention
- Listening
- Verbal Instructions



## B) Hyperactivity-Impulsivity Hyperactivity



- Movement
- Engaging
- Hyper
- Excessive Talking



# Impulsivity

- Blurts out
- Turn Taking / Waiting
- Interrupts and Intrudes



# Interventions

## Strategies for coping with Inattentiveness/Hyperactivity:

- provide separate section on the fridge for task scheduling
- use colorful pictures and diagram for instructions and to keep focus intact
- give breaks : walk around, wash face, sip of water
- use puzzles, games, educational programs, computer educational software
- behavior contract

# Interventions

## Strategies for coping with Impulsiveness:

- Prepare them for transition
- Set clear rules
- Explain consequences: **BE CONSISTENT**
- Teach child how to check work



# Interventions

## Strategies for coping with Disorganization/ Handwriting/ Motor Coordination:

- Teach simple *DO* skills: colour codes
- Set routine
- Give credit for correct work than for handwriting
- Give more physical space



# Article

## Sharp rise in kids with behaviour disorders

By **Theresa Tan**

There has been a spike in the number of young patients diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), as more parents and teachers send these children for help.

Last year, more than 840 new patients with the learning and behavioural disorder showed up at the Institute of Mental Health's (IMH) Child Guidance Clinic, which sees patients of up to 19 years of age.

This is almost quadruple the number the clinic treated in 2000.

ADHD, which is characterised by hyper-

activity, impulsiveness and inattention, is now the most common condition seen at the clinic, making up a quarter of all patients.

Psychiatrists interviewed attribute the sharp rise to a greater awareness of the condition and to parents' increased concern - some are even anxious - and willingness to seek help for children displaying ADHD's telltale signs.

Dr Daniel Fung, IMH's chief of child and adolescent psychiatry, told *The Straits Times*: "In the past, these children were treated like naughty kids who caused problems in school...but who were not sent for psychiatric help."

He added that generally, children with ADHD do not perform well academically, as they cannot concentrate well and have poor short-term memory, among other factors.

The leap in the number of ADHD cases is in tandem with the growing number of children suffering from various problems being seen at the clinic, which can be found at both IMH's premises in Buangkok and the Health Promotion Board Building in Outram.

In 2000, the clinic saw 1,433 new pa-

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er practitioners and charities to enable them to spot those afflicted by mental illness and refer them to help services.

Mrs Lee Yoke Keng, a 50-year-old chief financial officer, is one parent who actively sought help for her young son to cope with ADHD.

About four years ago, her son's pre-school teacher asked the mother of two why her son was unable to count beyond 10. That made her send the boy to a psychologist, who diagnosed him with ADHD.

Mrs Lee said her son, now nine, was always hyperactive, would talk non-stop - even in his sleep - and always found himself in trouble with his teachers.

Once, his Chinese teacher hit him with a book because he would not stop talking in class.

She said: "People think he's a very badly behaved child, who is very poorly brought up. But he can't control himself; he leaps before he thinks."

But with therapy and medication, Mrs Lee's son has made considerable progress. He is able to concentrate more and behave himself in class.

Last year, he even topped his class in maths and scored high marks in other subjects.

She said: "Given the right support, ADHD kids can do well. They just need understanding and acceptance."

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## ADHD: Kids can do well with help

FROM  
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ents burdened by all kinds of problems; last year, the number more than doubled to 3,366.

Some of these patients are as young as four- or five-years-old, but the bulk are between seven and 12.

After ADHD, the two most common conditions are developmental disorders, such as autism and dyslexia, and emotional disorders, such as depression and anxiety problems.

But Dr Fung stressed that the higher numbers did not mean more children were feeling the effects of stress.

Instead, he said, it reflects a concerted effort by IMH to partner schools and other groups to spot children with problems and send them for treatment, in line with a national push to fight mental illness.

For example, Dr Fung says about 30 to 40 per cent of the clinic's young patients

are referred directly by their schools.

About two years ago, IMH started working with the Ministry of Education (MOE) to support students with mental health problems.

There is now a free helpline for schools to consult IMH professionals. Students who require more help than their schools can provide, meanwhile, are referred to the institute.

Mr Masagos Zulkifli, Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Education, told Parliament last week that IMH had also started training school counsellors in how to spot children who are depressed or burdened by other problems. These counsellors, in turn, are training teachers.

MOE told *The Straits Times* that it wanted all teachers, by the end of this month, to be equipped with basic knowledge on mental health, so as to identify stressed-out students early and provide the necessary help.

Next on IMH's list will be training gen-

STRAITS TIMES

Tuesday  
22.09.09

## Common disorders and how to spot them

**Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)** is a learning and behavioural disorder. Children with ADHD talk excessively, do not listen to what is being said, and often make mistakes in their school work, among other things.

A quarter of the 3,366 new patients at the Institute of Mental Health's (IMH's) Child Guidance Clinic were treated for the condition last year.

**Developmental disorders**, such as autism and dyslexia, occur when a child does not acquire the normal developmental skills expected for their age. This affects their ability to learn, behave and socialise. About a third of young patients at the clinic have such problems.

**Autism** is a disorder that affects a person's ability to communicate and to socialise with others.

**Dyslexia** is a neurological disorder which causes sufferers to have difficulties in reading, writing and spelling.

**Emotional disorders** are a group of disorders characterised by incapacitating fears and worries, such as depression and anxiety disorders. About a third of the clinic's patients suffer from such disorders.

**Depression** is a disorder characterised by pervasive feelings of sadness, loss of interest in most activities, and suicidal thoughts in some cases.

It is different from normal sadness in that the sadness is more severe and the symptoms persist even if circumstances improve.

**Anxiety disorders** are characterised by excessive worry or fear. For example, children may refuse to go to school and worry frequently about things before they happen.

**These conditions can be treated** by a variety of combination of methods, such as medication, counselling and therapy, depending on the individual.

**Helpline:** You can call IMH on 6389-2000 for general enquiries.