

LEARNING DISABILITIES

MEET GARRETT, a 22-year-old student who is completing 2nd year of the UC degree program at Tyndale. He is a bright young man, who is very well liked by his professors, fellow classmates, and friends. Others describe him as a humble, gracious and caring man. Academically, Garrett identifies himself as being an average student. He went to a private school where the class sizes were small, and he was often given one-on-one attention from his teachers. But he does remember often feeling overwhelmed by the amount of school work and could never catch up with all that needed to be done. Homework and school reading assignments that took others only a short time would often take him hours. Garrett reports struggling with reading and writing. Most of the time when he reads something, he needs to re-read it several times to understand it. Writing with correct spelling and grammar is always a challenge and it's difficult for him to express himself in writing. During his first year at Tyndale, Garrett was barely able to keep up with all of his coursework. He often fell behind in his reading and this resulted in papers being late. Though he sees a Writing Consultant for assignments which has made a tremendous difference but his exam grades have been suffering due to common writing errors. This year with more difficult courses, Garrett is unsure if he will be able to manage and keep up with the course load. He is fearful that he might fail and made an appointment with the Accessibility Specialist, at the Centre for Academic Excellence to discuss if there could be a reason for his difficulties.

This is an example of a student that meets the profile for a 'Learning Disability'. This example does not represent an actual student but the challenges represented are very typical of a student with a Learning Disability. Students with a Learning Disability can be impacted in a variety of different ways, the example above is only one instance of the type of difficulties faced by students with learning disabilities. Any resemblance to real persons, past or present, is purely coincidental.

WHAT IS A LEARNING DISABILITY (LD)?

Learning disabilities refer to a variety of disorders that affect the acquisition, retention, understanding, organization or use of verbal and/or non-verbal information (LDAO, 2001). It affects how a student takes in, understands, remembers and/or expresses information.

HOW DOES ONE KNOW IF THEY HAVE A LEARNING DISABILITY?

Learning Disabilities are diagnosed by a Registered Psychologist through a comprehensive psycho-educational assessment. LDs can look very different from one individual to another, however, common signs of a learning disability include (LDAO, 2001):

- Spells words incorrectly
- Difficulty with reading and writing
- Either pays too little attention to details or focuses on them too much
- Poor grasp of abstract information
- Paying too little or too much attention to details
- Weak memory skills
- Misreading information
- Works slowly
- Trouble summarizing ideas
- Avoids reading/writing

RESOURCES:

Learning Disabilities Association of Canada: www.ldao.ca
Transition Resource Guide: www.transitionresourceguide.ca

ARE LEARNING DISABILITIES CURABLE?

Learning disability is a lifelong condition and it can impact individuals differently at every stage of life. Fortunately, through extensive research over the years, we know that the effects of a learning disability can be managed. Students can learn to cope successfully through resources and supports that the Accessibility Office offers.

WHAT NOW?!?

To learn more or if you suspect that a Learning Disability might be impacting you academically, talk to the Accessibility Specialist. To make an appointment: **Email:** accessibilityservice@tyndale.ca, **Phone:** 416-226-6620 ext. 2189, **Drop by in person:** E305

FACTS

- More than half a million adults over the age of 18 years in Canada live with a learning disability – making it difficult for them to learn in universities, colleges and on the job without supports (Statistics Canada, 2006)
- Learning Disabilities are one of the fastest growing type of disabilities in Canada that isn't related to ageing (PACFOLD, 2007)
- There are increasing numbers of students with LDs who are graduating from high school and continuing on to postsecondary studies (LDAO, 2012)