

TIPS ON SOCIAL SKILLS FOR ADULTS & CHILDREN

READING & SOCIAL SKILLS: THE MISSING LINK

Dear Readers,

This week's newsletter includes one question on the topic of reading and social skills...

What is the connection?



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QUESTION:

My child has been struggling with reading for a while, but now she seemsto be struggling socially as well.

My husband thinks lam overstating this, but I think there might be a link between the two. Is that possible – are reading and socializing connected?



ANSWER:

The short answer is: yes, there is a link between readingand social skills. But, first, it is important to clarify some of the differenttypes of learning disabilities that cause children to struggle with reading:

Dyslexia: The NationalInstitute of Health defines dyslexia is characterized by difficulties withaccurate or fluent word recognition, and by poor spelling and decodingabilities. Dyslexia is a learning disability that is neurological in origin andoften runs in the family. Children with dyslexia experience trouble reading andwriting when taught through traditional instruction.

ADHD: AttentionDeficit Hyperactivity Disorder is a common behavioral disorder that affects between 8-10% of school age children. Boys are three times more likely thangirls to be diagnosed with ADHD. Children who have ADHD have trouble sittingstill, focusing on one thing at one time, and attending to details. While their attention seems unfocused, it is multi-focused. Their mind takes in multiple stimuliat once, making it hard to engage in one activity for long periods of time. For this reason, reading through conventional methods can be frustrating.

Visual Processing Disorder: Visual processing disorder affects how the brain perceives and processes what the eye sees. Difficulties with visual processing affect how visual information is interpreted and perceived. The person may have difficulty in discriminating foreground-background, forms, size, and position in space. Using worksheets with enlarged print and breaking assignments into clear, concise steps are various methods that assistcomprehension. Again, with visual processing disorder, traditional methods of reading instruction fall short.

As children enter elementary school, and reading becomes anintegral part of the curriculum, children with learning disorders begin tostruggle academically. Whereas before, they might have been able to get alongbased on their innate intellect, children with dyslexia, ADHD, or visualprocessing disorder start to show signs of struggles when reading instruction begins in earnest.

Often, these children go undiagnosed and their struggleswith reading are attributed to a lack of trying or apathy. In reality, thesechildren are working hard, but need different methods of instruction. Without these accommodations, children with learning disabilities often become frustrated and dejected. This can lead to low self-esteem and decreased self-worth.

So, are reading and social skills linked? Definitely. Whenchildren develop low self-esteem, they are less likely to attempt to makefriends. They believe that no one would be interested in being their friends and therefore think that they will be rejected by their peers. This often leads children with disabilities to isolate themselves in order to avoid risk-takingin social situations.

Fortunately, there is a lot that you can do to help improveyour child's reading and

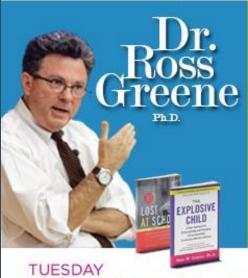
thereby improve her self-esteem. Depending on thesource of your daughter's struggles with reading, alternative readingstrategies can be employed. With a customized plan in place, your daughtercould be on her way towards success in reading. Then, with each small gain inreading, your daughter's self-esteem will grow – she will no longer be the girlwho is scared to be called on in class. Who knows? That newfound confidencemight allow her to believe in herself enough to take some risks and make somenew friends!

Coming Soon?



NEW? SOCIAL SKILLS COMIC BOOK by Rifka Schonfeld

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