



LEARNING DISABILITIES: MENTAL HEALTH

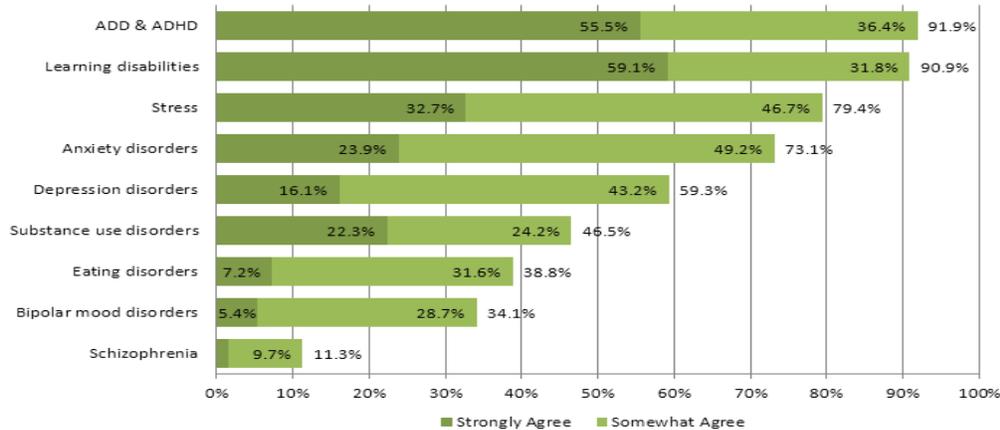
Why is it important to think about mental health in relation to learning disabilities?

Mental health is “a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively, and is able to regulate their behaviour appropriately.”¹

- An estimated 40% of children with learning disabilities (LDs) also report anxiety, depression or self-esteem issues
- People with LDs are twice as likely to report distress, depression, and anxiety
- People with LDs report poorer overall health than people without LDs
- Children with LDs are at an increased risk for both bullying and victimization

A helpful factsheet with more information about LDs and mental health is available at http://ldatschool.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2015/02/MentalHealthLDsMythandFactSheet_acc_ess.pdf

This graph shows the percentage of teachers’ concerns for students’ differing mental health concerns (Source: Froese-Germain and Riel, 2012).



¹ World Health Organization (2014)





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How might we help children and adolescents experiencing LDs and mental health issues?

One method for helping people with LDs and mental health issues is called self-instructional training. Self-instructional training is a three-step process:

1. Adults offer verbal instructions to the child with an LD
2. Children learn to exercise self-control using their own speech (i.e., by stating instructions for behaviour aloud)
3. Children learn to self-evaluate in line with these instructions and statements without saying them aloud

Throughout the process, therapists teach children how to use “self-statements.” These statements include self-evaluation, self-monitoring and “I” statements where they begin by saying “I feel nervous when I don’t understand something”. This approach can help children interact in social situations.

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