

HYPERLEXIA

What is Hyperlexia?

- A developmental disorder affecting children's ability to read and understand written and spoken language
- Children are able to read, or decode, words at a higher level than what is expected, but they have difficulty understanding what they are reading

Signs of Hyperlexia

- Significant differences between the child's ability to recognize written words and their ability to understand what the words mean
- Difficulty understanding and answering Wh- questions (e.g., who, what, when)
- Behavioral and attentional issues
 - Disobedience
 - Lack of eye contact
 - Social detachment
- Reading at an early age without instruction (before 5 years old)
- Unusually drawn to words and letters
 - Interest in reading may replace other typical age-appropriate activities
- Repeating words or phrases used by others (echolalia)
- All children with hyperlexia will not necessarily have difficulties in all of the areas listed above

Hyperlexia in the Population

- More common in boys than girls (about 7:1)
- Children with family histories of reading and language disorders are more likely to have hyperlexia
- May occur in typically-developing children or along with other developmental disorders
 - Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
 - Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
 - Turner Syndrome
 - Tourette Syndrome



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For more information, visit:

www.autismkey.com/hyperlexia

www.csls.org/HyperlexiaDefinition.htm

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How Does Hyperlexia Affect Communication?

- Children with hyperlexia use single words and short phrases later than typically-developing peers
 - Some children may not use sentences until the age of four
- Significant difficulties understanding both written and spoken language
 - This can lead to issues in school due to trouble following directions
- Children with hyperlexia may have difficulty linking words to meanings and grammatical constructions
- Difficulties with social interactions due to behavioral differences

Support for Children with Hyperlexia

- Use of written supports that match the child's level of understanding
- Reinforce desired behaviors
- Provide models of adult-like speech patterns
- Use of visual aids to support understanding of spoken language
- Use alternative communication methods (such as picture exchange)
- Social stories, or written and visual supports for social communication, can improve children's ability to interact with peers

Role of the Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP)

- Provide guidance to teachers and families for effective use of alternative communication methods and classroom modifications
 - How to implement appropriate written supports
 - Selection of visual aids
- Use advanced reading abilities as an advantage for intervention
- Work to increase comprehension abilities
- Provide activities to help build vocabulary



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