

The Parent “Me” Factor By Sharyn Lewis

How to work with your child’s learning challenge

As parents, we try to do the very best for our children. From the moment they are born, we provide a world of colourful educational toys, stimulating games and songs, and anything we can find to create a “bright” child. We study child development books to know what happens at each phase. We teach them to count and then to add and subtract. Reciting of the alphabet is a prime focus, followed by forming words and eventually reading. Family outings are planned to be educational and inspirational, with the ultimate goal of forming a young human being who will be able to excel and do well in the world, especially in the world of education.

And then one day in the future, you find yourselves sitting in the office of your child’s school. You have been requested to meet with a counsellor or a teacher because your son or daughter has been achieving low grades and is not performing at the grade level. In discussion you learn that your child may have an identified learning challenge.

Or, perhaps there have been behaviour issues which are affecting marks. You ask yourself, “How could this have happened? We did everything possible to make sure that our child was well equipped for school with all of the basic fundamentals and exposure. We never thought at any time that he would have a disability!”

This is where the “We” factor of a strong parent/child relationship breaks down and becomes the “Me” factor. As the educational expert talks to you, you internalize all of the comments as “I have failed somewhere. Something I have done has brought us to this place.” You blame yourself for the learning challenge or difficulty your child is now facing. The focus is no longer “We.” It is “Me” and the “W” has flipped over.

As parents you must learn to accept a learning diagnosis and instead of doubting yourself and what you have done wrong, immediately become proactive and develop a plan of action for your child which is right, and let the “We” kick back in again. Deal with this together. Your child is already feeling inadequate. Don’t let him or her feel that they have disappointed you. You have

been “We” since the beginning, so don’t let that disappear now. Discover ways that this learning challenge can be helped – extra help at school, more communication with the teachers, special programs provided at school, more concentrated support at home, educating yourself on the challenge itself, outside support/resources available to you, talking to others who have dealt with this, hiring an experienced tutor for one on one needs and confidence building.

Too many parents think of the learning challenge as a disability. It is a learning challenge, not a disability and life is full of challenges. Don’t ever let your child hear you say that he has a disability. Hearing is believing.

As parents who have supported their child since day one, don’t let him down now. They need you more than ever though frustrations may occur for both of you. Change the new “Me” back to old “We” and your child will grow, excel and thank you for it.

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