

Developmental Delay

Teacher Training Article • Summer 2020 • Jessica Stickler



Medical Description

A diagnosis of developmental delay means that the child has either failed or been delayed in reaching typical milestones of growth and natural progression (for example, language milestones, gross motor skills, fine motor skills, or social skills). Another diagnosis may yet to be identified or may not become apparent until the child is older. The initial diagnosis is often the result of routine tests and screenings by a pediatrician.

There are two main diagnoses:

- **Developmental Delay** – This may be a short-term issue with an underlying source, which can be corrected with early intervention. This is often the case with speech and hearing issues. With the help of speech therapy, many children make steady progress and begin to meet milestones.
- **Developmental Disability** – This is often a long-term issue. In these cases, there may be an underlying disability yet to be identified or that will not become apparent until the child is older. Such delays may be caused by genetic factors, fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS, sometimes called fetal alcohol spectrum disorder—FASD), Down syndrome (DS), autism spectrum disorder (ASD), brain injuries, and other possible reasons.

Characteristics

Children identified with a developmental delay may seem to be lagging behind their peers. Developmental delay is often identified in the first three years of a child's life. Many school systems err on the side of caution with children in preschool or kindergarten by identifying developmental delay for these youngest learners. It is sometimes difficult to diagnose a delay in a child's early years because of a lack of experience in learning and social situations. After an extended time in school, doctors are better able to make a diagnosis based on reports from teachers and parents.

Ashley's Story (as told by Jessica Stickler)

A child we will call Ashley is a sweet, quiet six-year-old. Ashley has been diagnosed with a developmental delay. She has been receiving speech and language services since prekindergarten because her speech is hard to understand. She has difficulty with many of her letter sounds, and she has trouble understanding the speech of others. As a baby, she had many ear infections, which has led to some hearing difficulties. She also needs glasses for blurry vision.

Even though Ashley has difficulty in social situations because of her speech problems and hearing trouble, she loves Jesus, and the children in her Sunday school classroom love her. She may not always be able to speak her mind, but she has friends that simply love her for who she is.

Every Sunday, she enters her Sunday school classroom with a big hug for her teacher and then proceeds to her cubby and puts away her jacket, Bible, and offering. She joins in coloring and play activities before class begins. She loves to sing, and she is a model worshiper!

Accommodations and Supports

Children who are not able to verbally communicate may require communication devices (such as iPads) or may rely on sign language. If this is the case, a sign language interpreter may be necessary—look to your church's Deaf ministry or the child's parent for support.

Prepare materials ahead of time for children who have difficulty with fine motor skills. They may need assistance with cutting, writing, and holding objects. Pre-cut pieces for craft or activity sheets.

Some children with gross motor difficulties may need special attention when moving around the room or sitting. If a child has joint problems, offer several different ways of sitting (for example, a beanbag chair, a chair at a table, a stool). Not every child is comfortable sitting on the floor.

Use a different medium for the child to work with to complete an assignment (for example, a glue stick rather than liquid glue).

Allow children with hearing problems to sit near the teacher. This proximity may help them to better see props, pictures, and the teacher's lips moving as they are engaging in lessons and songs.

Practical Tips

Sharing and reading books is a great way to assist children with speech delay. Reading promotes increased vocabulary and can also assist children with social interactions.

Provide a buddy to help with classroom projects. This may also help with social interaction.

Use visual cues or hand gestures and pictures. A child may not be able to speak or hear but can still interact with a picture or gestures.

Snack time may also be another area where changes are needed. For children who have fine motor difficulties, instead of giving them a cup they must lift to their mouth, consider adding a straw—this focuses more on the motion of the mouth than the motion of the hands. Other children may need a sippy cup.

If the child has an individualized education program (IEP) at school, you may want to ask if the parents are willing to share it. It can be helpful to know what the local school system is doing to support the child.

Resources

Website: National Center for Learning Disabilities (<https://www.nclld.org>)

Website: Zero to Three (<https://www.zerotothree.org>)

Web Article: “What Causes Developmental Delay?” posted on My Child without Limits (<http://www.mychildwithoutlimits.org>)

Web Article: “Developmental Delay” posted on Center for Parent Information and Resources (<http://www.parentcenterhub.org/dd>)

Book: *A Parent’s Guide to Developmental Delays: Recognizing and Coping with Missed Milestones in Speech, Movement, Learning and Other Areas* by Laurie Fivozinsky LeComer

Book: *Helping Your Child Live with a Developmental Delay* by Robin L. Atkinson

Book: *Teaching Individuals with Developmental Delays: Basic Intervention Techniques* by O. Ivar Lovaas

Book: *Developmentally Delayed Children: A Parents Guide to Early Identification & Treatment* by Waln K. Brown

Connect with ABLE

If you have questions regarding special needs, contact ABLE (Accepting, Believing, Loving, Embracing). ABLE Ministry is a program of the Ladies Ministries Division of the United Pentecostal Church International (UPCI) and is dedicated to assisting the special needs and disabled populations within the church and the community. ABLE is committed to increasing awareness about disabilities in the community, the church, and the world. They strive to provide the strength, support, and assistance necessary to meet the needs of those affected by disabilities—physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

Facebook: ABLE Ministry UPCI

Website: <http://ladiesministries.com/programs/able>

For further information, email ladies@upci.org or call 636-229-7895



©2018 Pentecostal Publishing House
36 Research Park Court, Weldon Spring, MO 63304
www.pentecostalpublishing.com



Join us on Facebook. Search for Word Aflame and then choose the levels you want to follow.