

Let's Talk Learning Disabilities

EPISODE 07

In this Episode, Laurie interviews Dr. Charles Shidlofsky, or Dr. S as she knows him. Dr. S runs Neuro Vision Associates of North Texas and shares how visual processing disorders are diagnosed, what to look for, how they are treated, and how vision therapy can also be used outside visual processing disorders.

Symptoms of Visual Processing (5 min)

Visual Processing disorders can be difficult to diagnose because they can either be misdiagnosed for something like dyslexia, or ADHD. It can also run in accordance with those learning disabilities as well as something like a sensory processing disorder. Symptoms of a visual processing disorder include mind wandering or falling asleep while reading, re-reading multiple times, eye strain and eye fatigue or even headaches.

Irlen Lenses (13 min)

Laurie shares about a patient of hers who used what is called an Irlen lens to improve her reading ability. The third grader said that when she is wearing the lens, she can see the spaces in between words, and when she is not wearing the lens, she cannot. Dr. S explains that though the lens is helpful, it is more of a band-aid treatment because it may be helping her with that one task, but not addressing the underlying issue in how she visually processes words and things on a page.

Passive Therapy and/or Active Therapy (14 min)

Two types of vision therapy mentioned in this episode are passive therapy and active therapy. Dr. S explains that each patient may be strong or need improvement in different areas and so many times they will combine passive and active therapy based on the needs of each patient. Examples of passive therapy may include lenses, prisms, tints and occlusions. Examples of active therapy may include a step by step retraining of certain activities that will have a regenerating effect on the eye-brain connection. Both can be helpful, depending on the underlying issues of the visual processing disorder.

Making Vision Stronger (24 min)

Dr. S shares on part of his practice called Sports Vision, where he works with athletes on spatial skills and strengthening their eye-brain connection to pick up on cues faster. Vision therapy is not just for learning or occupational settings, it can be applied in situations where athletes want to have a sharper focus and a quicker response.

Misdiagnosis (26 min)

As mentioned in the previous episode on visual processing disorders, dyslexia is the most common misdiagnosis of a visual processing disorder. What makes this difficult is, dyslexia can also co-exist with a visual processing disorder; it is not uncommon for a patient to have both. Other conditions that are either misdiagnosed or exist in addition to visual processing disorders are ADHD and sensory processing disorders.

Red Flags to Watch For (31 min)

Red flags to pay attention to in watching for visual processing disorders include: falling asleep easily when reading, covering an eye while reading or trying to relieve eye strain by looking away regularly. Frequent headaches or eye pain without an acuity issue are also red flags to know about.

Covid Related Developments (33 min)

As Covid has led to many adults and students working and learning virtually for an extended amount of time, Dr. S mentioned a new influx of students and adults who are having problems because of the consistent screens they work and learn from. Many are coming to his practice complaining about eye fatigue or eyestrain. Dr. S recommends the 20-20-20 rule, every 20 minutes, look at 20 feet for 20 seconds. Give your muscles a break in your day so you can refocus.

Resources:

Neuro Vision Associates: neurovisionassociates.com // Call (972) 312-0177

Dr. S: dr-s.net

College of Optometrists in Vision Development: covid.org

Contact info for the podcast: letstalklearningdisabilities@gmail.com

E-Diagnostic Learning Website: <https://ediagnosticlearning.com>

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