

Let's Talk Learning Disabilities

EPISODE 21

Welcome to Let's Talk Learning Disabilities with Laurie Peterson and Abbey Weinstein. Laurie & Abbey spend their days talking about dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, and ADHD. They talk to parents of struggling students and adults who have had a lifetime of academic challenges. They want to share those stories, along with their own insights with you. So, *let's talk learning disabilities.*

Laurie: Hello everybody. And welcome to episode number 21 of Let's Talk Learning Disabilities. This is Laurie,

Abbey: and this is Abbey.

Laurie: We're excited. You guys are back today. Today. We are going to break down. IQ testing, we have actually had recently here in the last couple of weeks, some fascinating cases or clients with some, some interesting IQ stories and concerns. And so we thought maybe this would be a good time just to kind of break down and debunk maybe all the myths surrounding IQ tests and help people understand exactly what an IQ test is and what it does. And so, Abbey, I know you did a little bit of research on kind of the history, the history of intellectual evaluations also known as cognitive evaluation.

Abbey: That's right.

Laurie: Tell us, tell us all you've learned about IQ testing.

Abbey: IQ testing, intellectual IQ stands for intellectual quotient or intellectual ability. Um, and so it is also interchangeable with cognitive testing or cognitive evaluation. It has been around since, cognitive or

intellectual testing, has been around since the early 19 hundreds, a guy named Alfred Benet first introduced and, um, first created the first IQ test and the intelligence scales. And still to this day, there is a test. An intelligence test called the Stanford Benet, where, um, he got together with another guy, developed it.

Laurie: His legacy lives on.

Abbey: His legacy does live on, it is a very hotly debated topic because you know, there are myths surrounding it. There are. People's people have different perceptions of what IQ is. And some people want to know their IQ and some people don't want to know. And I don't know what the fear is about knowing what your IQ is, but I think that. Part of it is that the majority of the population falls in the average range. And I think most people want to be above average. They like to think they're above average.

Laurie: But I think too, a lot of people think that their IQ can't change that once you tell me what my IQ is, that's like, you've, you may as well just tattoo it on my forehead forever. That is what I'm going to be forever. And that is really not right at all.

Abbey: That's correct. It's a myth.

Laurie: Okay. So tell me why, why does my, how does my IQ change? Well, used to be that, you know, research did say that whatever your intelligence quotient was when it, when you were tested at six or 16 or 36 or 66, that it would stay the same, that it was what you were capable of, what your brain was capable of and how you reason and problem solve. Research has since disproven that and has shown that your IQ can change over time with experience, with knowledge, with learning, it can change, it can grow with practicing certain skills, working on certain skills. It can definitely grow and increase over time. And it does.

Laurie: I think too, with younger kids, what we run into too. Yeah. When you test somebody really young for their IQ. And I want to say like, even as young as six or seven, You know, developmentally they're, all of those skills are still developing their brain. I mean, obviously we're still developing way

into our twenties, but at that age, those skills, some of those aren't developed yet.

Abbey: That's right.

Laurie: Or even, you know, even between two, six year olds, you've got two kids that are exactly the same age, but just developmentally they're in different places are in different. You have to know that if you were to come back and do this again in a year, your scores could look a little bit.

Abbey: And their ability to respond appropriately is, is different at young ages. So your test performance is going to be based on your attention, your listening skills, how likely you are to respond appropriately. How well you're understanding the instructions, the language. There's so many different factors that go into your performance on that test. So your performance at six is going to very different than your performance greatly than your performance at 16, especially if you're more attentive, you have better listening skills, you're responding more appropriately right on.

Laurie: So what does an IQ test test like? What are they, what is it asking for?

Abbey: What that intelligence quotient says is basically it's a snapshot of your potential. Your learning potential is what the intensity, your, your overall cognitive ability, your ability in all of your cognitive skills, such as your verbal reasoning skills, your nonverbal reasoning skills, your memory skills like working memory versus long-term memory. Your visual spatial skills are. Your processing speed, all of those different cognitive skills go into this overall composite score, which is often called your IQ or your full scale IQ.

Laurie: And we talked about a lot of those skills when we did the processing deficit or processing issue podcast, because that's how we test those is through an IQ test. Interestingly though, when you and I test and we meet with parents or clients, I never used the word IQ. We talk about all those skills and I might say, wow, you've got a really bright kid or your overall abilities right there in the average range, but we don't really ever say the word IQ and we just kind of leave it there. We really care more about, wow, your working

memory is really weak, your verbal, you know, your verbal processing or your verbal, your understanding of language, how you process language is kind of weak or strong. Um, and then that helps us understand how they do academically. Not all tests though. If we look at all the IQ tests that we have. Cognitive tests. They don't all test all those areas. They cover, they may just cover two or three or four or five. They may not cover every one. Um, and that's okay. And that gives us a general idea.

Abbey: And sometimes you give just one test, one battery. And you're going to give, let's say the Woodcock Johnson test of cognitive abilities, or you're going to give the Stanford Benet intelligence test, but, and you're going to administer that test and you're going to get the scores on those different composite areas that, that test measures, but sometimes depending on what you're looking for or where there might be discrepancies or abilities that you want to dig deeper into. You may pull in pieces of another battery. So you may give one standard battery of an intelligence test and then want to dig deeper into long-term memory and give a piece of another test.

Laurie: So if I go somewhere and I. The Woodcock Johnson. Someone gives me the Woodcock Johnson and then a week later I go somewhere else and they give me the Wexler, should my IQ about me the same?

Abbey: It should be about the same. So the, there is a lot of research that goes into developing these intelligence tests and they have said, One they're very valid, meaning they actually measure what they're intended to measure. There's about 10 years of research that goes into the development of one, one edition of an intelligence test. They also say research says that the tests are very reliable, meaning that test and retest reliability is there. So if you're tested today, it's going to be very similar to when. A week from now, it's going to be reliable, give or take plus or minus three shorts on either side. And depending on which tests you get, your performance is going to be about the same or your intelligence ability is going to be about the same from those various different tests because they all are measuring the same types of cognitive abilities.

Laurie: I think too, though, what we have to explain a lot of times is that if there is a huge difference between two tests, sometimes that could be

attention and focus concerns because I was focused here, but I wasn't focusing there. It could be the relationship that you have with the examiner.

I mean, there are so many different things that play into so many different formats, but at the end of the day, they're designed. To report the same kinds of information, the same way.

Abbey: Exactly. And the most common term you hear is IQ or intelligence, quotient, many tests though. Also call it the general ability index. And that's I think when we talk to clients and we're going over there, Dean results. We most often refer to it as your overall ability level or your general ability level, um, rather than, than just saying IQ, because that one number, it just doesn't tell you a lot of information about the individual. It's better to focus on those different cognitive processes. Like we talked about the verbal reasoning skills, the working memory skills, the right processing speed.

Laurie: Right. Just saying that you have an IQ of 103. Okay. But what made that? How did you get that, right? Exactly. I think it's important to you to explain that an average IQ score is 100 that does. The range of average can be anywhere from 90 to 109, and 50% of the population is going to fall somewhere in that 90 to 109. So that's where most of us sit, you know, and the further you get away from that 100 and you work your way up or work your way down. There's fewer and fewer people falling into those outlying ranges, right? To fit somewhere between 90 and 109 is a good thing. I think the one thing I do end up explaining to parents a lot of times, especially of our high school student, We do lots of reevaluations where kids were diagnosed with maybe dyslexia in second grade. Um, they're back now in high school and they need a new evaluation and their IQ has dropped 10 points. And so I always have to explain to the parents that, um, yes, in kindergarten or first grade, when they tested, compared to their peers, they were way above, you know, they were above that. But over the years, they haven't lost knowledge. Their peers have just slowly caught on they've maintained. Yes. Their peers have closed the gap. So now they're more in the average range. Then compared to same peers, struggled with reading. All of your peers are constantly learning new vocabulary and improving their language skills because they're reading all the

time. But if I don't read it, I don't like to read mine. Isn't going to grow. So now they're going to maybe catch up. They might even surpass me. And so now my score is below average. Again, that doesn't mean that I've lost knowledge. I just haven't progressed at the same rate. And I think that

Abbey: That is a good point to point out.

Laurie: They look at that and think, how did they, did they get dumber? We've been asked that and I'm like, no, not at all.

Abbey: It's not like comparing apples to apples because like you said, you're being compared to same age peers on all of these intelligence tests they are what's called norm reference, meaning you are compared to a norm sample of the population that was used when they were developing the test. So there were so many people of different ages and ethnicities and races and abilities, learning, disability, learning disabilities. And so you're always being compared to same age, individual. From that norm sample. So you are, um, at one point you may be average. Another point you may be above average, just depends on how the rest of the population or the rest of the sample was performing.

Laurie: And you're right where you fit in. You. Can't always just compare yourself. To how you were 10 years ago, because you're not losing abilities, you're just, your peers are catching up, but I think it always leads to a great conversation then about why, why have you not been able to progress like your peers? And that again is why though that those little bits of information in there are so valuable. Um, versus just looking at that one, number one number. The other thing we get asked a lot about too is gifted. You know, we do a lot of gifted and talented testing for parents. Um, and so when the schools do gifted and talented testing, they typically, um, administer a group administered IQ tests, right? There's a lot of kids and to do one-on-one would take forever. So there are tests like the Cogap, what that stands for. Yeah. I can't either, but it's basically a group administered ability test, which means that no one is interpreting. Child or the students' responses there bubbling and answer sheet.

Abbey: Right. And in a classroom of 20 kids, when you're giving this test and each child is sitting at their desk independently working on this, you're not

sure that they understood the directions that they understand the tasks that they're on, on task and attending. You're not sure that they didn't just quickly choose an answer. Whereas, when we give those tests, we give them individually. One-on-one, face-to-face, you're watching very closely that individual that you're testing. And so you, you can tell if they didn't understand the directions and if you need to repeat the directions, um, or to the teaching side again, or if they were impulsive in responding, that's right. And those observations are very key and important to factor into their we're all performance.

Laurie: The thing about gifted kids too, is they think outside the box, so they may respond to a question. And get it wrong on a multiple choice format because, but then when they give you their explanation, you're like, you know what you're exactly right. And they would give them credit for something like that. So that thinking outside the box piece for those gifted kids, those tests don't really allow for much of that. Um, they're looking for a right or wrong answer and there's not always that black and white.

Abbey: On most of the tests we give, there are many different answers that can be right. And on some of the tests, you can have a two point answer, a one point answer or, you know, an incorrect, a zero point answer. So that is, it takes a lot of professional judgment. And so I really feel like the best type of insurance. Test is given one-on-one by trained professional, not just a classroom teacher, giving a group administered test. Now they do use those group administer tests have to use something right. And they're screening to see who falls above the 97th percentile. I believe that. Qualify for the gifted. And she usually has like a one 30, maybe one 30 IQ or above, I think most public schools just look at your percentile ranking. So if you're in the 97th percentile, meaning you scored better than 97% of your same age peers on that test, then you qualify for the gifted and talented program. Um, but some people. Some people want to know what their intelligence is, what their potential is for learning what their reasoning abilities are, but it is also very important for eligibility for a lot of different specialized programs. Like you mentioned, the gifted and talented program. You can't get into that program. An intelligence test, just like most special education programs around the country, in order to qualify for those services, you have to have an evaluation that shows your intellectual ability and your academic achievement ability. Also, um, you know, a lot of different standardized tests

that people are taking to get into medical school, law school, any type of certification exam, the GRE. In order to be eligible for accommodations, to be able to document that you have a disability and that you're eligible for accommodations, they want to see what your intellectual ability is. They don't want to just see what your academic achievement skills are.

Laurie: But they want to see that. Not because they're judging, you know, how high your score is, but if you do have a low. Ability across all areas. Well, that's an indicator that you might really struggle with the curriculum you're going to have to work extra hard.

Abbey: Right.

Laurie: They're obviously still going to look at your academic performance, your performance on standard other standardized tests. Right. But that's an indicator of your potential for success. It doesn't mean that you can't still do it. You know, I think somebody with an 80 IQ could do whatever they want. Absolutely. They're going to have to work a little bit. Yeah. That's right. You can do anything. They want it doesn't limit you.

Abbey: And just because you have a 120 or 130 IQ doesn't mean that you're gonna do well in an academic program, you know, in graduate school or undergrad, you have to also be motivated, right? Perseverance and be driven and work ethic and attention. So there are many different factors that go into your ability to achieve and to be successful in any type of program. It's not just your IQ.

Laurie: We see a lot of those brighter kids who can fly through high school because they don't have to study. Or now they've acquired no study skills. So college isn't being a little bit harder for them because yeah. They don't have those skills under their belt. So sometimes having that, you know, having to work a little bit harder is a good thing.

Abbey: Absolutely. And you know, a lot of individuals with learning disabilities feel like they are dumb.

Laurie: Oh, for sure.

Abbey: Or not smart because they have struggled so much in school, but really for the most part, the majority of individuals with learning disabilities have average to above average them, which is such a, that's a huge myth.

Laurie: Right. I mean that people think, and kids feel that way, but I mean, ha I mean, I get it though.

Abbey: You just feel dumb, but it's absolutely, you've struggled. There's nothing to do with your intelligence. That's right, right. So you can have high intelligence and then struggle with an academic area or struggle with attention and focus and motivation and task initiation and execution and different things like that. So it is, um, the intelligence ability. It is important to know that it's used for so many different things, but it's those pieces of those things. Those different separate skills broken down that tell you so much about how you, reason, how you problem solve, how you process information, how you take in information, how you express yourself.

Laurie: I think processing speed too is a big one because that's sometimes how we justify the need for extra time on tests. If you have a slower processing speed for whatever reason, um, then that helps. So by having that information, we can prove sure that you do need that now.

Abbey: But if you say, sorry to interrupt you, if you say, no, I don't want an IQ testing IQ tests, then we can't get you, you know, extra time accommodations on tests or in college and graduate school.

Laurie: We have also seen too, a lot of schools and some other professionals, depending on what they're testing for, they might give, like what's called a brief, a cognitive evaluation and those are literally a snapshot of just three or four of those 7, 8, 9 skills we talked about, they just pick the top two or three and test you there. So again, that score can look different than when you give a full battery...

Abbey: But it still gives you just an idea of your, of your ability levels. So those brief or abbreviated IQs now there's also. A nonverbal IQ can be obtained on many different intelligence tests. So if someone has a really severe speech and language disorder or a physical disability that interferes with their ability to speak or to communicate in language or they're second

language learners, or they're bilingual they're are intelligence tests that have non-verbal IQs that can be obtained and they give different tests that don't require a lot of verbal information.

Laurie: That weeds out. The verbal language loaded, heavily verbal and tasks, and let's us focus on how they problem solve, how they, reason, things like that, which is huge. Those seals are cause if you can problem solve and reason you can work around a lot of your weaker things.

Abbey: Exactly. Exactly. Good to know. Take out the verbal skills. Um, also the IQ tests, the great deal of research has gone into them, but they also change. So, you know, every about 10 to 12 years, a new edition or new version of an intelligence test comes out. So you might have been tested in first or second grade with, you know, maybe the Wechsler intelligence scale for children, fourth edition, or third edition. Whereas now you're getting ready to go to college. It's been 10 or 15 years later, you're tested again, or you're applying to graduate school or medical school. And so don't be alarmed if you see now you're getting, giving a newer, a newer version of the test, or now you're getting the adult version versus the, the ch the child version.

Laurie: Is it true? I've always understood it. That as a new edition comes out, um, the norm. People tend to score a little bit lower because of the norms are fresher. Norms are fresher. I always say they're tighter, which doesn't really make any sense to me, but I feel like they get loose over the years, if that makes sense. And so a new addition it's people tend to score a little bit lower, especially that first year it's out. I feel like that's just weird.

Abbey: And that also when they redo those. They re-norm them. Um, they also make them more applicable to our environment. And what's going on, like take out the questions about a typewriter or the questions about using a payphone?

Laurie: Yes. Oh my gosh.

Abbey: You know, um, so sometimes at the end of the. When a test is almost outdated or it's been around for a long time, it's sometimes harder to do really well on those tests because there are questions that you haven't been

exposed to. So it is good that they are constantly revising those intelligence tests and re-norming them based on the norms, the, the population changes.

Laurie: They try to make them more culturally diverse.

Abbey: Yes, exactly. So they do try and keep up with all of that.

Laurie: Um, you know, so I feel like our, our message today is. Don't ever be scared of an IQ test. Don't be scared of learning what your IQ is. Take it as. This is where I'm functioning today. This is where my child is functioning today, strengths and weaknesses, but those weak areas, there are ways to improve them. And I don't mean just taking home the test and practicing that skill over and over until you can do it. There are things that you can do to help globally improve that skill so that if you were to take this test again, you probably, we would score higher.

Abbey: Yep. Um, so those skills are. Part of your brains functioning. And so your brain isn't broken, you might have weaker muscles or weaker parts of your brain. You just got to go to the gym, you got to go to the gym and strengthen those muscles, strengthen those abilities. Like if your working memory is low right now, you can strengthen that and work on it and improve it, which in turn will improve your overall ability or your IQ. So yeah, don't be afraid of them. Don't be scared of them and they are somewhat engaging. I think they're interesting.

Laurie: They're kind of fun. I think they're kind of fun.

Abbey: It's like we are biased and we give them all the time. But I think, I think of it more as a brain games rather than tests. You're not going to be sitting there with a paper pencil. Doing testing for four hours on your own like an SAT. Yeah, exactly. They're really interactive engaging activities and tasks that are made that make up those intelligence tests.

Laurie: What's fun now is we can do almost all of them virtually where we can meet with you online and do them.

Abbey: And that's kind of fun. It is fun. Exactly. It's fun to be able to reach people all over the nations.

Laurie: So if you have questions about, um, IQ testing or you. You know, you've had some scores you want us to look at and just you're like, what does this mean? You know, or just to have questions in general, please feel free to reach out to us letstalklearningdisabilities@gmail.com. Um, thank you guys for joining us today. Hopefully this has been helpful information. If you have maybe some suggestions about other topics or things you want to hear about, please do not hesitate to reach out as well. Um, if you want to find some information about kind of what we do, diagnostic-learning.com is our website. It talks all about testing and how we use IQ testing and finding, um, learning disabilities and, and gifted and talented kiddos. Um, so anything else you can think of that we need to share?

Abbey: I think we've covered it.

Laurie: Hopefully everyone's back to school in the group.

Abbey: Hopefully everyone is doing great and having a great start to the school year. Again, if you do have topics you would like us to touch on. We're happy to hear what you're recommending. We're open to suggestions.

Laurie: Yeah, we're here for you guys.

Abbey: We're having fun with the podcast, but we want to make it more geared towards your individual needs. So reach out to us. If you have anything you would like us to touch on and.

Laurie: Coming up though, we have a couple of really great interviews. So I'm excited about that. So stick around. So this is just, we're already at number 21, which is really exciting. And then our next four or five are going to be super informative.

Abbey: I think we're going to have a celebration when we get to 25.

Laurie: Oh, I think so. Great idea.

Abbey: 25 we'll have a big party when we hit our 25th episode.

Laurie: Everyone is invited! All right, well, you guys have a great day. Um, please reach out if you need anything and we'll look forward to visiting with you on episode number 22. Thanks everyone. Bye

Thank you so much for joining us today. In our show notes you can find information about today's talk, as well as links to the resources and other episodes. If you have questions about today's talk, have ideas for future episodes or just want to stay connected, you can contact us through Diagnostic Learning Services on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram. So, Let's Keep Talking Learning Disabilities. This podcast is sponsored by E Diagnostic Learning. You can find more information at www.ediagnosticlearning.com.

Length of episode 26:24