



Understanding Your Child's Uniqueness - Evaluations & Assessments

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Topics

- What is an “assessment”
- Types of assessments
- Types of professionals who perform assessments
- Warning signs that you or your child may need an assessment
- How assessments can improve your life

What is assessment?

- Assessment is the process of gathering and interpreting information from appropriate sources in order to deeply understand a person's strengths and needs.
- The purpose of assessment is identify areas of need so that appropriate support can be provided and to identify strengths that can be leveraged to help a person lead a better life.

Types of assessment discussed in this talk

- Psychoeducational, neuropsychological
- Specialized medical functions: OT, PT, Speech
- Medical - e.g., Neurological

Challenges assessments can reveal

- Autism
- ADHD/ADD
- Learning disabilities
- Emotional and social issues
- Speech and language disorders
- Sensory integration, balance, coordination and movement difficulties
- Mental retardation, and other cognitive conditions such as brain injury, dementia, and amnesia

Levels of assessment

- Formal - norm referenced tests
- Informal - observations and criterion referenced tests

Who can perform assessments and what type of assessments do they perform?

- Psychoeducational, neuropsychological assessments - Psychologists, neuropsychologists, educational psychologists, developmental/behavioral pediatricians.
- These assessments are conducted to determine strengths and weaknesses to help individuals address challenges that may hold them back in educational and career contexts.

What areas of functioning can/should be assessed?

- Auditory, Language and Speech
- Memory and Learning
- Visual, Motor and Sensory Processing
- Attention, Concentration, Organization and other Executive Functions
- Social, Emotional and Behavioral
- Academics: Reading, Writing, Math
- Personal and Family History

Occupational Therapy Assessments

- Occupational therapists perform assessments of daily living skills including:
- Visual motor and visual perceptual skills
- Fine motor development related to dexterity, strength, grasp efficiency, range of motion, and bilateral use (how well the hands work together)
- Gross motor strength, endurance, and coordination
- Motor planning abilities
- Self-help skills related to dressing, grooming, and feeding
- Executive functioning skills related to attention, organization, flexibility, etc.
- Self-regulation (how a child calms themselves or adapts to their environment)
- Sensory processing abilities (how a child processes what he sees, hears, feels, etc. and produces an appropriate response)

Physical Therapy Assessments

- Physical therapists perform assessments of muscle and joint function, posture, and movement patterns including:
 - Posture
 - Movement patterns
 - Muscle performance
 - Flexibility
 - Joint motion

Speech and Language Assessments

- Speech pathologists perform assessments of speaking, listening and verbal memory skills as well as feeding and swallowing functions:
- Pronunciation (articulation) of sounds
- Physical ability to produce speech
- Voice quality
- Fluency or smooth flow of speech
- Swallowing function
- Understanding and use of different words (receptive and expressive vocabulary)
- Correct use of words in sentences
- Use of language for different purposes
- Ability to reason with language

Medical Assessments

- Neurological assessment - neurologist, pediatric neurologist
 - Assesses the physical condition of the brain and nervous system
- Other related medical concerns
 - Medical doctors, nutritionists, functional medicine specialists, alternative medicine practitioners from various fields

Licensed Counselors & Social Workers-

- These professionals have many different fields of expertise
- They evaluate:
 - Mental and emotional health
 - Employment and career
 - Personality
 - Other related areas

Informal Assessments

- Informal assessments – observations, classroom tests
 - Educational therapists, teachers, parents, self report

Warning signs you or your child needs an assessment

- I have a checklist you can download at this link:
- <http://millereducationalexcellence.com/warning-signs-that-a-child-should-be-evaluated>

Auditory, Language and Speech

- Frequent or recurrent ear infections
- Does not respond to his or her name consistently
- Does not seem to be paying attention to sounds or to what is being said
- Mixing up sounds in words
- Has difficulty remembering / following more than one or two directions
- Has trouble understanding humor / jokes
- Daydreams or tunes out in class

Memory and Learning

- Acquires new skills slowly, needs much repetition, seems to forget previous learned skills without frequent practice
- Has difficulty remembering / following more than one or two directions
- Can remember that an event took place, but doesn't remember details of what is seen or heard during the event
- Seems unaware of time, doesn't seem to understand that some things take longer than other things, distorted sense of the past, little sense of how long it takes to do typical things

Visual, Motor, and Sensory Processing - 1

- Gets lost, difficulty with directions
- Visual spatial confusion (right/left, up/down, under/over, behind/between)
- Distorted concept of body image – difficulty pointing to body parts without looking, difficulty identifying body parts on others or in a picture
- Difficulty copying from near at hand or from a distance
- Turns, tilts or holds head in unusual position when trying to look at an object
- Eyes appear to be crossed or turned

Visual, Motor, and Sensory Processing - 2

- Difficulty focusing or making eye contact
- Poor coordination, clumsiness, unaware of physical surroundings, or has a tendency to hurt his/her self
- Lack of hand preference or mixed dominance
- Excessive risk taking – jumps and crashes into things
- Doesn't like to be touched or can't be touched enough
- Can't calm down or get to sleep

Visual, Motor, and Sensory Processing - 3

- Cries or covers ears with loud sounds – even vacuums, toilets or hairdryers
- Major meltdowns in noisy or crowded places
- Limited food choices
- Will only wear certain clothes
- Must have tags cut out of clothes or seams in socks cause distress
- Refuses to put hands in anything messy or to use glue, Play Doh, or to play with mud

Attention, Concentration, Organization - 1

- Difficulty noticing and attending to details which leads to “careless” errors
- Trouble sustaining attention on tasks or play activities
- Not following through to complete tasks
- Avoiding tasks that involve concentration or sustained attention
- Daydreams or tunes out

Attention, Concentration, Organization - 2

- Fidgety or squirmy when sitting still is expected
- Trouble waiting one's turn
- Feels restless
- Blurts out answers or interrupts

Attention, Concentration, Organization - 3

- Difficulty “shifting gears” to a new task
- Difficulty organizing materials, belongings, thoughts or words
- Procrastinates with tasks
- Loses or misplaces materials or belongings
- Seems to reach a “saturation point” — after performing a task accurately, begins to do the task incorrectly

Reading

- Difficulty learning phonics
- Slow reading speed for his/her age
- Difficulty comprehending the material being read
 - Making inferences, finding main ideas, determining character's motives, finding details
- Frequently loses place while reading
- Complains of headaches, eye strain, fatigue when reading
- Words move, jump, swim, or appear to float on the page when reading

Writing

- Messy handwriting, difficulty learning to make letters
- Letter reversals after age 7
- Frequent omission of letters, words or phrases when writing
- Difficulty writing ideas and/or organizing thoughts on paper
- Large number of capitalization and punctuation errors
- Poor spelling
- Frequently spells the same word differently

Math

- Difficulty memorizing counting sequences
- Shows limited understanding of counting sequences and number patterns
- Difficulty memorizing math facts
- Difficulty with sequences such as days of the week, months of the year
- Trouble with word problems and problem solving
- Trouble lining up columns or keeping place

Social, Emotional and Behavioral - 1

- Perfectionism, slow rate of work production
- Low tolerance for frustration
- Aggressive, bullying of others, shouting, disrespectful behavior
- Lacks tact

Social, Emotional and Behavioral - 2

- Often obsesses on one topic or idea
- Focuses on unusual objects for long periods of time or enjoys this more than interacting with others
- Very stubborn compared with others his/her age
- Tends to be anxious or tense

Social, Emotional and Behavioral - 3

- Tendency towards irritability
- Trouble getting self going in the morning
- Very slow moving
- Excessively tired at the end of the day

Personal and Family History

- Family history of learning disabilities, hearing loss
- Head injuries and long-term illnesses
- Being adopted
- Poor prenatal medical care and nutrition
- Prenatal injury or delivery complications
- Exposure to environmental toxins such as lead or toxic mold
- Exposure to traumatic experiences, loud noises

After the assessment - what professionals can help?

- School aged students -
 - School district personnel through the IEP or 504 process
 - Educational therapists – specially trained educational professionals
 - Tutors
 - Occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech pathologists
 - Psychologists and Social Workers - individual therapy, family therapy, social skills groups
 - Developmental/behavioral pediatricians, psychiatrists, highly trained MDs - medication to alleviate troublesome symptoms associated with conditions such as ADHD/ADD, anxiety, OCD, bipolar, anxiety, etc.

After the assessment - what professionals can help?

- Adults -
 - Executive function/ ADHD coaches
 - Psychologists and Social Workers - individual therapy, couples therapy, family therapy, group therapy
 - Occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech pathologists
 - Other medical professionals

Questions



Coaching and Academic Help

- Women who want to skillfully manage their time, their home and their career so they feel focused, confident, and in control of their lives!
- Parents who want to end the chaos and restore the calm to their home!
- High school students, college students, and young adults who want to improve their grades and be more successful in life!

Contact Dr. Miller

- DrKariMiller.com
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- Article with warning signs that you or your child needs an evaluation:
- <http://millereducationalexcellence.com/warning-signs-that-a-child-should-be-evaluated/>