

Higher level language disorder (HLLD)

What is higher level language disorder (HLLD)?

HLLD is a term which has found its way into the literature on communicative difficulties relatively recently. People described as having HLLD develop language which is structurally normal and have some understanding, but have problems with...

- understanding more complex statements, questions and instructions - they often get hold of the wrong end of the stick
- expressing more advanced concepts, such as, "I ought to have ..."
- word-finding
- the more sophisticated aspects of language – for instance, knowing that "Go away home now," is rude, but "You must try these biscuits," is polite
- humour which depends on language
- inference – they have to have things spelled out to them
- literal interpretation – a child told to "Pull your socks up," (meaning, "try harder") might bend down and pull up his or her socks.

Often there is early language delay or disorder which seems largely to clear up, leaving the difficulties listed above. Many people with HLLD are of normal or above normal intelligence with good attainments in acquiring knowledge, solving problems and literacy. They often learn coping or masking strategies which hide their problems, and HLLD frequently does not show up on conventional language or psychological testing. Close observation and knowledge of the person is necessary for the diagnosis to be made, especially when checklists such as that above show such a degree of overlap with other contentious labels such as semantic-pragmatic disorder and Asperger's Syndrome. People with HLLD often have difficulty with social skills and forming relationships with others. This, again, makes distinctions with other terms on the autistic "spectrum" hard to maintain confidently.

References

Bishop, D (1989), Autism, Asperger's Syndrome and semantic-pragmatic disorder: where are the boundaries? *British Journal of Disorders of Communication*, 24(2), 107-121

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Jones, S, Smedley, M, & Jennings, M (1986), Case study: A child with a high level disorder, characterised by syntactic, semantic and pragmatic difficulties. *Advances in Working With Language Disordered Children*. London: ICAN

Lees, J, & Urwin, S (1997), *Children with language disorders (2nd ed.)*. London: Whurr

Please note: Afasic does not hold copies of any referenced material. However, it may be obtained via academic libraries.

Other relevant Glossary Sheets

- Semantic and pragmatic disorders (5)
- Asperger's Syndrome (11)

Other organisations which can help

ICAN
4 Dyer's Buildings
Holborn
London
EC1N 2QP
Tel: 0870 010 40 66

Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT)
2 White Hart Yard
London
SE1 1NX
Tel: 020 7378 1200

The speech and language therapy service of your local health trust. Details appear in the business section of the telephone directory, under 'Health' and the name of the trust.

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