

Poor Literacy + Low Self Esteem = Trouble For the Long Haul

There is simply no question that a connection exists between poor literacy and trouble in later life. Often literacy problems show their first signs in children's behavior rather than their study skills.

Many children begin to act out due to their frustration as they struggle to learn and begin to fall behind their classmates. Once a child starts to feel "different" a drop in self esteem is not far behind. With low self esteem and frustration in learning, it's no wonder behavioral problems begin to appear.

If the literacy issue is not discovered and supported early on, the behavior issue often escalates and one problem leads to another. The lasting effects of poor literacy are undeniable:

- **85%** of delinquent children and **75%** of adult prison inmates are illiterate;
- The cost to U.S. taxpayers of adult illiteracy is **\$224 billion** a year in welfare payments, crime, job incompetence, lost taxes, and remedial education; and
- U.S. companies lose nearly **\$40 billion** annually because of illiteracy. ¹

It is clear that if children have literacy problems at an early age, intervention is needed to help their odds of becoming successful members of society as they grow into adulthood. When self esteem drops, behavior problems are typically right around the corner.

"Not long after he started second grade, my son started refusing to do some of his school work. He wasn't naughty or oppositional. He just quietly refused. And at home, we started to see a number of anger outbursts that were out of character.

So off we went to a child psychologist to find out what was going on. As it turned out, poor literacy was the source of his behavior problems. He wouldn't do his work because he would rather refuse to try something than to try it and fail.

And much of his anger came from frustration - he knew that he was bright so he couldn't understand why he was struggling so much with reading and writing. He felt stupid and it affected his self esteem and behavior."

How can I help my child?

If your child is having behavioral problems at school, investigate their literacy skills! If you find they have a reading difficulty, then the best way to help your child is to research and learn everything you can about their situation.

Children with reading difficulties need adults in their lives to help pull them through the challenges that come with being a poor reader.

When caught early enough, and appropriate help acquired, a reading difficulty or a learning disability can be overcome. Arm yourself with knowledge, teach your child about their difference, and help them learn ways to deal with it.

Kids and parents need to understand that having a learning difficulty does not mean that the child is not intelligent. In fact, often these kids have a higher intelligence than many of their peers, allowing them to learn techniques to hide their difficulties. (That's why so many kids don't get discovered sooner – they use their exceptional memories and other skills to memorize words so their inability to actually decode words goes undetected until later years in school).

Children with learning difficulties need to also understand that their learning difference is a processing problem in which their brain just works differently than some other people, and they just have to learn to “learn” in a different way. Left to their own devices, children most often will form a negative self image when trying to figure it all out. With our help, they can thrive.

Yet another way to support your child is to **listen** to them. Too often our busy lives and packed to the hilt schedules don't allow us enough time to simply listen to our kids. Find out what is happening in school. What areas do they like? What subjects or classes do they dread?

By communicating openly and frequently you will discover many things about your child's school experience and may just be able to get a hint of a problem right from their very own mouth.

Open communication with teachers and school professionals will also help set up your child for success. By communicating with teachers any assessment results taken outside of school as well as techniques that you see are helpful at home, the teacher may be able to implement some of the strategies necessary to help them be confident and successful in the classroom. Parents and teachers working as a team can provide a strong foundation for success both at home and in the classroom.

Just look at how getting the right help can truly turn things around for a struggling reader. It did for this child:

“The good news is that we immediately got one-to-one remedial literacy tutoring for my son and after 18 months, he not only caught up, but in some areas surpasses his grade level in literacy. He is confident, happy and doing well in school.”

This mom saw the warning signs, made a decision to get involved and now sees that results can be positive! You can do the same-make a decision to get the information, and get involved in your child's learning and you might find the same success in your home!

¹ http://www.nationalreadingpanel.org/Publications/Interim_Report/section1.htm

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