

## **The Broken Children**

**By Lisa Harp**

Every day broken children come to our learning centers to be fixed. They are beautiful and bright, but definitely broken. Academically, they are broken for sure, but almost always they are broken spiritually as well. We start mending them in the slow process that we know it takes to make dyslexia, ADD, and learning disabilities go away. Sometimes that's the easy part. What is often left, even after reading, math, and spelling scores are raised, is a child who still suffers from a poor self-esteem and is spiritually broken. Yet, these are the lucky ones because their parents have sought help and found it.

A majority of others face the world spiritually and academically broken. The negative effects of learning problems need to be addressed by all of us, as our educational system is still doing an extremely poor job of dealing with learning problems. If a student is at risk at school, as millions are, then he is tested for placement in special education. If he qualifies, he is then placed in a special education program. This is a label he will carry throughout his life, even though he may be quite intelligent. The label is this: "I am dumb. I go to "special classes" because I am not smart enough to stay with the normal kids." If a student doesn't qualify for special education, he is expected to carry a full class load of work and his grades usually reflect poorly. Often, he is retained. No wonder these children are broken.

As a nation, we are breaking our children daily and it's the rare child who gets adequate help. Visual, auditory, and kinesthetic training must take place to treat learning disabilities. The brain must become connected to the body to work efficiently. Visual and auditory memory skills must be taught as well as spatial and perceptual skills. If the "normal" way of teaching these children isn't working, then an alternative method must be found and used.

For instance, we achieve excellent results with my students who have dyslexia and Attention Deficit Disorder. We have them perform whole brain integration exercises that help unite the left and right sides of the brain. Then, the students perform visual memory and spatial exercises. If the student needs auditory training, this will happen, too. When the student is receiving academic instruction, this happens by working on one skill at a time and always using blank paper and colored marking pens. Although this seems too simple, it is quite beneficial to a student with learning difficulties since it alleviates spatial interference. The students learn the skills, find academic and life success, and feel a lot less broken. There are so many ways to help broken children.

One of our students came to us today and relayed that he didn't need any more help because now he can focus and understand math, especially decimals. He stated that he had a great day at school (this was a first) and that he always

thought that he had a short term memory loss because he could never remember things before. Pretty astute, don't you agree?

If we have the means to help a child learn and succeed, is there any reason for him to feel broken? Should a child have to go through life feeling that he has a short term memory loss? No child should be broken. It's time we started mending instead of breaking.