

The Danger of Symptomatic Labels

By Craig Stellpflug

Developmental labels are often the result of medical diagnosis obtained by first analyzing the variety of symptoms presented by the patient. The label is then selected by “lottery” or “he who has the most symptoms of this or that kind”. The developmental label will connote a certain severity of disability that is pronounced upon the patient. “Assessment” of learning problems and developmental delays or shortfalls does nothing to help a child function in a more effective way. Without a pro-active and aggressive therapy plan to remediate the causes of the symptoms the patient is no better for the diagnosis. The usual diagnosis consists of listing symptoms and applying a label and perhaps teaching some compensatory skills and making allowances for the disability. There can even be permanent and devastating effects from labels which result in slower learning paces, special allowances and drugs administered to the hapless “victim” of labeling.

The worst thing is that labels are sometimes considered to be medical conclusions and solutions. For instance, the pronounced label of ADD is no more than a check list of symptoms displayed by the child as per the parents, teachers, and the short assessment leveled by the analyzer. When a mere 8 out of 14 symptoms are checked by parents, teachers and analyst, this brings the diagnosis of the obscure “disease” called ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder). One more checkmark in the hyperactive box and the “disease” now becomes ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder).

The Merck Manual lists ADD/ADHD under developmental psychiatric disorders. The resultant drugs of

Adderol and Ritalin are now applied to the patient for behavior modification and the obligatory “special allowances” and compensatory teaching are applied. With this diagnosis comes little or no hope that without these drugs the child will ever function normally. The Merck Manual states that symptoms of

ADD/ADHD persist into adulthood. If a child has symptoms of problems paying attention in class, there are reasons and causes of this. If the causes are never remediated but only masked by drugs, the symptoms will persist. For instance, if the symptoms of inattention are behavioral issues, then the child will never be required to change the behavior without medication. This child is now classified as disabled by a check list and medicated for treatment.

Drugs only cover up “those nasty symptoms”, giving false perceptions of successful treatment plans. A majority of drugs only serve to put the child deeper into his problems by masking the symptoms while obscuring causes and actually adding another layer of problems to sort through before the first layer of original problems can be dealt with. If drugs are cures, then why are there side effects to drugs that can be worse than the original symptoms? If drugs bring cures then why do the symptoms often re-appear worse than ever when the drugs are discontinued? Administering drugs that only cover up symptoms is an out of hand admission of failure to understand and treat the underlying causes.

The mechanisms and processes of developmental disorders and issues have to be understood to effectively treat the causes of the presenting symptoms. For instance, autism has specific mechanisms in the brain and body that can be reproduced in the normal brain when certain events and triggers occur. Knowing and understanding the mechanisms that trigger developmental variances allows the parent and the professional to “unravel” and undo the causes of these developmental issues.

All this to say, developmental labels are often too innocuous and general in character but carry heavy consequences that do little if anything to address root causes of the aberrations. Because of this shortfall caused by administering labels to developmental issues it would be more productive to spend our time and assets administering developmental therapies, supplements, and natural diet solutions directly to the causes of the symptoms in any developmental deviation.