

# COGA Glossary

8th September 2020 (Lisa's draft)

## Cognitive and Learning Disabilities

May include: Cognitive Disabilities, Learning Disabilities (LD), Intellectual Disabilities and Specific Learning Disability

Learning disabilities and cognitive disabilities can mean different things in different locations. Taken together they refer to:

- Significantly reduced ability in one or more areas of cognitive function that affect learning, such as communication, reading, writing or math. Note overall intelligence is often not affected and people may function any level in other areas of learning. (Sometimes known as learning disability or specific learning disability) and / or
- Significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information and learn new skills, with a reduced ability to cope independently. (Sometimes known as cognitive disability, learning disabled or intellectual disability) and / or
- Significantly reduced memory and attention or visual, verbal or numerical thinking.

Note we need to edit out "learning disabilities" or give an example in the text

## Memory impairments

**Includes: Recognition, Recall, Working memory, Short-term Memory and Long-term Memory**

Memory impairments are where a person is unable to recognize or recall pieces of information or skills that are usually remembered. It can affect:

**Working memory** that holds information while it is processed. For example, we rely on working memory for tasks such as copying a number.

**Short-term Memory** that stores information for a short time before it is stored in long-term memory. For example, we may rely on short-term memory to remember the location of items between web pages.

**Long-term Memory** that holds information long term, such as information from personal events, language and information. For example, we may rely on long-term memory to recall past events.

## Mental health

### Includes: Mental health impairment

Mental health refers to our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. A Mental health impairment/condition generally has some combination of disturbed thoughts, emotions and ability to relate to others that impairs daily functioning. Examples include depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder. These conditions may cause temporary or long term issues with accessing information, such as difficulty focusing on information, processing information, or understanding it.

## Executive Function

The group of cognitive processes and skills required for planning, and fulfilling tasks and goals. It includes working memory and remembering details, impulse inhibition, organizing tasks, managing time, fluid reasoning and solving problems.

## Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI)

Mild cognitive impairment (MCI) can involve problems with memory, language, thinking and judgment that are greater than normal age-related challenges. It is sometimes considered the stage between the common and expected age appropriate forgetfulness and the more serious decline of dementia but many or most people with MCI will not develop dementia.

## Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity is a term that refers to the different ways the brain can work and interpret information. It highlights that people naturally think about things differently. People with Autism (ASD), Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD(H)D), Dyslexia, and other diagnoses or labels may prefer the term “neurodiverse” as they are part of normal and healthy variation in the human population, bringing diverse skills and perspectives.

## Easy Reading

'**Easy reading**' refers to text content that is in an accessible, **easy** to understand, form. It is often useful for people with learning disabilities, and may also be easier for many other people as well.

## Agreed definitions

### Age Appropriate Forgetfulness

Sometimes called “age related memory loss”

People with age appropriate forgetfulness have impaired memory issues that can be a normal part of healthy aging. They may take longer to learn new things, forget something but remember it later, or occasionally forget particular words. (This differs from dementia where forgetfulness is due to a disorder and is more pronounced.)

### Alternative and Augmentative Communication System

Sometimes called “AAC”

Any method, device or app that can be used to help those who cannot use spoken language and need additional support by means of symbols, images and/or text. For example a screen with symbols that the user can select to speak the appropriate words or add them to a document.

## Anxiety Disorders

People who have anxiety disorders struggle with intense and uncontrollable feelings of anxiety, fear, worry, and/or panic. This is more than just feeling worried once in a while. This may last for a long time and can interfere with daily activities, such as concentration and executive functioning.

## Attention Deficit (hyperactivity) disorder, AD(H)D

Sometimes called Attention deficit disorder, ADD, and Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, ADHD

Attention deficit (hyperactivity) disorder or **AD(H)D** involves difficulty focusing on a single task, focusing for longer periods, or being easily distracted. It is marked by an ongoing pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that interferes with functioning or development.

## Autism spectrum disorder (ASD)

Sometimes called “autism,” “Asperger syndrome,” and “pervasive developmental disorder”

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is characterized by some degree of impaired social behavior, communication and language abilities. This may also impact the person's ability to regulate behavior and attention. Individuals can have a narrow range of interests and activities and they may rely on alternative communication methods. Some individuals may also experience episodes of sensory overload.

Lisa: See neurodiversity for an alternative approach to ASD and other cognitive disabilities.

## Brain Injury

Brain injury including Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Acquired Brain Injury (ABI), are caused by damage to the brain which can lead to long-term impairment of executive function, memory, learning, coordination, speech and emotions as well as other physical and sensory impairments.

Brain injury can have many different causes such as a concussion or stroke, and can happen at any stage of life.

## Early Stage Dementia

Common impairments of early stage dementia include memory loss, difficulty concentrating, and struggling to follow a conversation or find the right word. These may appear before a diagnosis of dementia. At this stage, these symptoms are often mild.