

Visit With the Utays

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School Psychology and Education Specialists



Dr. Joe Utay, Director of Counseling and Evaluation Services for Total Learning Centers and former professor for Indiana University of Pennsylvania's Department of Counseling, is a graduate of University of Pittsburgh, a school psychologist, marriage and family therapist, author, national speaker, and father. Dr. Carol Utay is Executive Director of Total Learning Centers. She is also a graduate of University of Pittsburgh, an expert in learning and special education. "Dr. Carol" has experience as a principal, Orton-Gillingham reading therapist, teacher, consultant, national speaker, professor, author, and mother. She is a national 2006 Athena Award winner for community service. They live and work in the North Hills with their daughter Andrea

Help Your Pediatrician Help You

5 questions to answer even if your doctor doesn't ask

"At my son's last check-up I asked my pediatrician for advice concerning problems he's been having keeping up in school. I didn't think it was a medical problem, just that he might refer me to someone if he thought there may be a real problem to deal with. He was clueless which started me wondering if I just didn't give him the information he needed to advise me."

Your question gives us the opportunity to give you information to share with your doctor and at the same time offer doctors brief simple questions to ask patients. You both have the same goal after all, to determine if a next step is needed.

These questions were inspired by the parent of a Total Learning Centers student, we'll call Jimmy. The story starts with what Jimmy's mom overheard at the pediatrician's office: "Dr. Jones, Mrs. Smith is in the waiting room asking to speak with you. She just got Jimmy's report card and is not happy. She wants your advice."

Time has passed and now Jimmy is a high school senior. He will be attending the University of Pittsburgh's business school on a partial scholarship but learning was not always easy for him.

Back when Dr. Jones saw Mrs. Smith, she was quite distraught. The answers to 5 simple questions gave him all the information he needed to recommend the next step:

1. How are Jimmy's grades?

Mom: "I know he is intelligent but he's making mostly Cs."

2. Does he have friends?

Mom: "Yes, but we spend so much time working on homework he never gets to see them."

3. How long does homework take compared to others in his grade?

Mom: "I know it frustrates him and from what his teacher and other parents say, it takes at least twice as long."

4. How does his reading, math, memory and attention compare to others?

Mom: "His teacher says he has problems with reading comprehension. He's never really enjoyed reading just for fun, except comic books."

5. Does he get in trouble at school?

Mom: "No, he is a good, kind, helpful kid."

So, in just a couple minutes, Dr. Jones discovered Jimmy is a bright, social, good kid who is frustrated by not living up to his and other's school expectations in reading. In education, just as in medicine, sometimes all it takes is one symptom and Jimmy had several. Clearly, Jimmy needed an educational assessment.

Total Learning Center's thorough evaluation confirmed his intelligence, pinpointed his exact reading deficiencies and inadvertently uncovered a visual processing deficit.

Armed with objective diagnostic data, the learning experts at TLC were then able to use a specific research-based program to use Jimmy's strengths to fill in devastating gaps in the underlying foundation of his reading skills.

Jimmy and his mother are now happy. The key was having an astute physician willing to take 2 minutes to ask 5 questions.

For more information about TLC's kid-friendly evaluation process, or to discuss your child's specific needs, contact Total Learning Centers at 724.940.1090 or visit us at TotalLearningCenters.com.

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