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Psychological, Psychoeducational and Neuropsychological Assessment: Information for Adults and Families

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Introduction

When a person has trouble with their feelings, behaviours, learning or function, it may be helpful to see a psychologist for an assessment. Psychologists can do different types of assessments, such a psychological assessment, psychoeducational assessment, and neuropsychological assessment.

Psychological Assessment

When might this be helpful?

- Are there troubles with feelings (e.g. depression, anxiety, anger)?
- Are there troubles with behaviours (e.g. making unhealthy choices)?
- Are there troubles coping with stresses?

What is it?

- A psychological assessment is where one meets with a psychologist, and the psychologist asks various questions. The psychologist may also give tests (such as filled out on paper) that can see if there are specific issues such as mood problems.

How does one get a psychological assessment?

- Psychologists may work at a publicly funded agency (e.g. mental health agency), or may work in private practice (i.e. you need to pay the psychologist out of pocket, however if you have an extended health plan through your workplace, you may able to be reimbursed.)

Psychoeducational Assessment?

When might this be helpful?

- Are there troubles learning at school? Such as someone who seems ’smart enough’ but does not appear to

be working to potential? Having trouble focusing or paying attention? Behind (or developing more slowly) than peers in areas such as language, academic, social and motor skills?
- Are there troubles in the workplace, with troubles doing tasks required for work? Such as troubles with focus/attention?

What is it?

- Psychoeducational assessment is made up of two types of testing:
    - Psychological assessment: Measures learning potential (as opposed to what has been learned). Domains measured include:
        - Overall intellectual functioning, including both verbal and nonverbal problem solving.
        - Processes involved in learning, such as memory and attention, processing speed, language processing, perceptual-motor processing, visual-spatial processing, and executive functions.
    - Educational assessment: Measures what has been learned in school and includes assessment of sight word vocabulary, phonetic decoding skills, reading comprehension skills, reading fluency, spelling skills, written expression skills, math calculation skills, math problem-solving skills, and fluency of math facts.

How does one get a psychoeducational assessment?

- Ask your teacher or other school personnel to see if it might be possible to have one done through the school. Note that due to lack of resources, it has become more difficult to have a psychoeducational assessment completed in this way.
- If your child is seeing a mental health professional, ask them to see if they have any particular ideas.
- See a psychologist in private practice for a private psychoeducational assessment. It typically costs $2500-$3500 for a such an assessment, depending on the measures used, and the complexity of the situation. In some cases, some or all of these costs may be covered by an extended health insurance plan.

What is a Neuropsychological Assessment?

When might this be helpful?

- Does the person have one or more medical conditions that are known or suspected to affect brain development and functioning?
- Does the person have uneven development across domains, suggesting uneven brain development?

The assessment results in recommendations to educators, parents and other adults working with the child, and can help address challenges the child is having with learning, behaviour and emotional regulation.

What is it?

- A neuropsychological assessment examines neuropsychological functions such as visual, auditory and sensory attention, information processing, perception, memory, language, problem solving, executive function, intellectual functioning, along with academic and social/emotional and behavioural functioning.
- The assessment can determine what level a child is functioning at, identify the child’s neuropsychological strengths and weaknesses, and help predict how the child will do in the future.
- Neuropsychological assessments are done by particular type of psychologist, known as a neuropsychologist.

How does one get a neuropsychological assessment?

- If the person receives services through a hospital for a medical condition (e.g. epilepsy), neuropsychological assessments might be provided through the hospital.
- In other situations, you will probably need to see a neuropsychologist in private practice. If you have an extended health insurance plan, this may provide reimbursement for part of all of the cost.

Summary

	Psychological Testing	Psychoeducational Testing	Neuropsychological Testing
What is it helpful for?	Problems with thoughts, behaviours, moods or stress	Problems with learning at school, or a person's ability to perform tasks at work	Problems with learning and function, e.g. person who has a brain condition (such as epilepsy or stroke) or a condition that affects the brain (e.g. chemotherapy for cancer.)

Which Type of Testing: Psychological, Psychoeducational or Neuropsychological?

How do you know what type of testing is required? When you see a psychologist, the psychologist will talk with you and determine which type of assessment would be the most helpful.

About this article

Written by Simone Korstee (psychologist), Zohar BenDavid Streiner (Psychologist), Michael Cheng (psychiatrist). Reviewed by members of the CHEO Mental Health Promotion Committee. Thank you Kim Surette, Psychological Associate for the French version.

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