

Einstein Syndrome

I heard about a condition, known as "The Einstein Syndrome" this year, when I picked up the book entitled, "The Einstein Syndrome: Bright Children Who Talk Late". It was written by the compelling and talented, Thomas Sowell, from the Hoover Institution at Stanford. He is also the author of "Late-Talking Children".

Sowell's interest in the topic first started when his son did not reach the speech and language milestones expected for his age. He mentioned this challenge in one of his syndicated columns; and, the next thing he knew, parents from all over the place were contacting him to share similar experiences and a speech-language pathologist at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, Professor Stephen M. Camarata, wanted to do a study of these children.

The Einstein Syndrome describes children (usually boys) who are exceptionally bright and exceptionally slow to develop the ability to speak. In addition to being intelligent, and unlikely to have a back-and-forth conversation before age four, these children often have some of the following commonalities:

- Parents who are highly educated"
- Strong musical gifts"
- Many close relatives who are musicians"
- An amazing ability to solve puzzles"
- Lagging social development, thus leading to a misdiagnosis of autism"
- Delayed toilet training abilities

The area of speech and language development is rather complex. There are many theories as to why some children are late talkers; but how can we generalize when not all late talkers are bright and they so often come from different environments? How can we just assume that all late talkers, with bright parents (especially engineers), and associated poor social skills, have an autistic spectrum disorder? (this describes those who have difficulty in the non-verbal parts of communication – including their desire and ability to use language in a social context)

If your child is a late talker my advice is to read more about the Einstein Syndrome in Sowell's superb and thought-provoking book, and to get into contact with an experienced speech therapist or psychologist. These clinicians are definitely worth their weight in gold. You could wait for someone from the government-run medical system to look at your child but I don't recommend it. Too often the waiting lists are inappropriately long.

I believe that it's better to get to the bottom of things sooner rather than later, especially given the importance of early childhood development!

Access www.healthykids.ca for a terrific new resource in helping families raise healthy children - **Healthy kids with Dr Nieman** will optimize your child's complete health.

An **informed** parent is...an **empowered** parent."