

Brilliance of Dyslexia

Article By: Lynn P. Penner

This month, we are happy to share an article written by Lynn P. Penner. Lynn writes fiction and nonfiction. She has instructed her creative writing course, "Descriptive Writing" at Fanshawe, and is actively seeking traditional publishing for her realistic novel, "They All Wore Black." Lynn believes LDs are simply Learning Detours.

Thanks Lynn for your contribution to the LD Edge! Enjoy!

Despite the near disabling aspects of it, it's not a disability at all, rather an outstanding ability. Once it is discovered and nurtured, the brilliance of dyslexia will present.

I gleaned much information and encouragement at age 39 when I was diagnosed with the help of ATN Access Inc.

If more were known about dyslexia when I started school in 1968, over time, my skills and passion for writing would have developed with less suffocating in my own defeatism.

In grade one I was terribly confused by the compound word "onto" during the read aloud participation. I remember my tingling cheeks and swishing in my ears when the other kids started whispering the word with impatience. I also remember in grade three when I was sent to the office for "clowning around." I wrote "Wook book fro Writinp" on the cover of my new notepad. I can still see that, it was bold, a black marker, because writing was something I wanted to do well. This happened frequently, and I was labeled as "a slow learner." Outside of the classroom, sitting on the hall bench, I recall the coat hooks jabbing my head while an unknown adult tried to teach me math, but it was not unlike classroom instruction, just s-l-o-w-e-r. In the 60s and 70s, we kids with learning differences were just labeled slow and treated like someone ought to be there to scrape pudding off our chins at lunch.

To this day I write form instead of from, top for pot, left for felt, gob for dog and so on. I have edited reversed sentences also. I reverse numbers, too. Some days are worse than others. I write, though, and I accept the fumbling process. Autocorrect is mostly hilarious, but the spelling and grammar police on computers these days make it tolerable. Well, mostly. I do have to proofread my work repeatedly, and then when I feel I'm finished with the challenge, I have my computer read it to me, still finding errors.



How Kids With Learning and Attention Issues Can Set and Stick to New Year's Goals...cont.

So why is this learning disability called a *gift*? What's to celebrate about dyslexia? C'mon —it's devastating! Isn't it? And it's genetic, too? Don't parents feel guilty passing this "affliction" on to their children? How can it be overcome? Or can it? *Should it?* Let's sift through an article, "The Gift of Dyslexia," I read back in 2003 by Alanna Mitchell. You can decide if being dyslexic is being gifted or ruined.

Interestingly, the hemispheres of a dyslexic's brain are more symmetrical than that of non-dyslexic persons. Affected persons have difficulty reading; however, the symmetry is perfect for other complex brain functions involving images and three dimensions. Incredible photography doesn't just happen, it's a skill. Outstanding artists have the skill, too. Perhaps they're not all dyslexic, but artistic imagery, even *creative* literary art is possibly a flourishing talent for those who are dyslexic. Another perk is excelling at spatial perception, like seeing the trick of optical illusions, and catching moving objects as small as a set of keys. Sports are played well by the ones with symmetrical brains.

Also, dyslexics do not seem to sort through information in a direct, sequential way, rather a variety of things are sorted at the *same time*, rapidly. This gives them the edge on strategy. Throughout history, many people who are now understood as having been dyslexic, made dauntless advances in science, art, music, politics, and sports. Among the greats are Albert Einstein, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Alexander Graham Bell, and Winston Churchill.

Incidentally, a little off subject, if you look these people up for ADD or ADHD and bipolar disorder, a lot of them will be listed as having them with dyslexia. Learning differences (brain variances) share within themselves, if that makes sense. If you know you have one diverse aspect, you probably have three. Also, some of our favourite authors have learning differences including dyslexia, like Agatha Christie and F. Scott Fitzgerald. There are many if you google "famous dyslexic authors."

The sixteen-year-old, Nicholas Carson, featured in the article, "The Gift of Dyslexia," didn't read until he was twelve. He had reported that school was still difficult. It was said then that he thinks in pictures and the school was run by "word thinkers." So he felt alone in his imagery thinking, yet understood he was also gifted. The point is that dyslexics have a built-in three-dimensional imagination. They have multifaceted perceptions in varying situations. Try to understand that when a dyslexic carpenter is designing a building, they're able to visualize their plan, spin it around and explore all angles from the inside, although it's troublesome to do this with flat objects like blueprints on paper.

Here's an example. The letter b from a straight on view is a two-dimensional b. But from behind it's a d. From above a p, and below, it's a q. All of these variations are seen at the same time by dyslexics, hence the reading reversals and writing errors. On the other hand, a dyslexic's stellar imagination can create a compelling story, novel, or poem. We record our mind's eye imagery. It gives a whole new meaning to the phrase descriptive writing.

Dyslexic persons are highly creative, imaginative, athletic, and artistic. It has been established that they calculate thoughts so quickly; they usually don't understand how they arrived at an answer. This also goes for conversation whereas another's thought is correctly interpreted before the person has finished explaining something. Dyslexia then, to me, is a gift. Work with it, not against it, and the perks shine through. Please don't imagine curing my reversals, they are my edge, as backwards as that seems. Understand my ways and accept they're different. I'm not slow. I'm built for speed, and that sometimes slows me down.

March Break Ideas

Everyone involved in education from principals to teachers to the smallest kindergartner looks forward to Spring Break. While school professionals may be enjoying some much-needed down time, kids want to cut loose and have as much fun as possible in these five warm-weather days off.

Parents want their kids to have fun, too, but the most successful spring break for school-age children is one that balances fun and learning. Here are some fun and educational activities kids and parents can do together to make optimum use of this time.

Spend a day in the life. Parents – actually adults in general – ask kids what they want to do or be when they grow up as soon as they can string whole sentences together. A great way to give your child a real point of reference is to introduce them to people who actually work in the careers they're interested in, and visit the respective environments. For example, if your child says they want to raise horses when they grow up, schedule a field trip to a horse ranch so they can experience what it's really like to raise horses.

The simple fact is the more positive learning experiences you can expose your child to the more well-rounded and educated they'll be. The brain works best when it can connect concepts and ideas, so if your kiddo needs to describe a horse and has seen, touched and smelled a horse, their description will possess more detail than if never having had the experience.

Write about Spring Break. Document your exciting and educational Spring Break by making a book with your child. You draw the illustrations, and have your child write the words – whatever words they want, since it's not for school. Your kiddo will be tickled pink to see you coloring, and you'll get to check out how well they communicate in written form. Learning to put complete thoughts on paper helps to solidify concepts in your mind. Writing helps you make sense of what you've taken in, and is a skill that every student should master to at least a basic level.

Spring Break should be fun. But, you can double its benefits by including educational activities to do with your child during the time away from school.

Reference: What are some spring break learning activities I can do with my elementary-age child? (n.d.). Retrieved on February 8, 2017, from <http://elementary-education.yoexpert.com/teaching-strategies/what-are-some-spring-break-fun-learning-activities-1929.html>

Inspirational Quotes – Issue # 65

Edited by: Vicary Parkin

Throughout history, society has been influenced and shaped by the many great contributions made by individuals with learning disabilities. These people demonstrate the strength and perseverance to be true to themselves and strive for their full potential. We hope their words inspire and motivate you to reach for your true potential.

“My learning disabilities pushed me to discover talents that I wasn't aware of having. It has also led me to develop products to help others who struggled through school as I did.” – Reyn Guyer, inventor

While you may not recognize the name Reyn Guyer, you have likely heard of some of his more notable inventions – the Nerf ball, and the popular game Twister. Guyer grew up struggling in school, but it wasn't until his daughter experienced similar challenges that both him and his wife realized they had the same symptoms and were assessed themselves. He has always been a talented artist, and used these talents at the start of his career in marketing.

After decades of success as an inventor Guyer created his own company, Winsor Learning Company in 1997. They have created two different reading programs, one aimed at children who are having learning difficulty in the classroom, and one aimed at pre-school level children. Not wanting to leave his creative side behind, he also owns a successful country music label where he writes and records music.

Reference: Reyn Guyer Biography. (n.d.) Retrieved Online: February 28, 2017. <http://www.mcbdds.org/318/Reyn-Guyer>

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We hope you have enjoyed this month's issue of the LD Edge Newsletter and that you are looking forward to the next issue.



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If we give them an edge...
They may give us one!