

All too often children are labeled as slow or stupid; they are put aside into special classes for the slower kids and looked down upon by the smarter kids. Teachers and parents look at them in disappointment for the great potential they once saw in their child's eyes has gone to waste. Many teens that now believe that their stupidity is a truth were once as young children, praised for their quick learning and brightness. There must be an explanation for this. The explanation for me along with many other kids is the learning disorder called dyslexia.

I would like to give them a combination of the next to definitions. "A complex neurological condition, the symptoms may effect many areas of learning and function and may be described as a difficulty in reading, spelling and written language" (Reid 2), as defined by The British Dyslexia Association in 1997.

This is a common definition of dyslexia. The other definition of dyslexia is "an inherited neurological difference, resulting in language, perception, processing, and attention concentration deference's" (Dyslexia Research Institute 1). Dyslexia is a serious disorder that effects an "estimated 5 percent to 15 percent of children" (UniSci 1).

This number is extremely high; yet many do not know the effects that dyslexia has on the learning process and the emotional development of children, or understands what dyslexia even is.

It has been found through research that dyslexia is a disorder occurring in the brain. On the UniSci WebPages, it was stated that "an issue of the American Journal of Neuroradiology provided evidence that dyslexia is indeed a brain-based disorder" (1). Many tests and researches have been done to prove and also further the discovery of how the dyslexic brain works so that we may better understand it. Researchers at the University of Washington found that "dyslexics were using 4.6 times as much area of the brain or five times the brain area to do the same language task as the other kids who were not dyslexic" (UniSci 1). That translated means that "the dyslexic's brain works much harder and uses much more energy than that of a normal person" (UniSci 1).

Also, the researchers found that the “difference between the dyslexic person and a normal person relates to auditory language and not to nonlinguistic auditory function” (UniSci 1). This was shown through a study using six dyslexic boys and seven normal boys. “All of the boys were fitted with earphones and asked to perform four tasks while their brains were being imaged. Three of the tests involved pairs of words and the fourth involved pairs of musical tones. During the language tasks, the dyslexic boys exhibited nearly five times more brain lactate activation. But, during the musical tests, there was no difference between the dyslexic boys and the normal boys” (UniSci 2).

When dyslexics are at the infant age, they seem very smart, and often above the learning abilities of the other infants of the same age. “As of three-months, dyslexics begin to develop their special abilities, skills and deficiencies” (Davis 68). Some of these special abilities are talking early.

Usually when a dyslexic child learns to talk they often talk very fast and their words all run together because they are thinking faster than they can talk. This is where the question of Attention Deficit Disorder or ADD, comes in.

Many parents and even doctors misdiagnose dyslexia as ADD because when children are trying to keep up with their minds, they often seem very hyper active just as children with ADD are. Many dyslexics are misdiagnosed, according to the Dyslexia Research Institute, “only five percent of dyslexics are ever properly diagnosed and given appropriate help, this means that eighty five percent of adult illiterates are dyslexic”(1).

Another special ability that is prominent in infant dyslexics is being able to alter his/her perception to connect the part of something that he/she can see to the whole object without seeing the whole picture. Author Donald D. Davis uses a baby laying in its crib as an example, “the baby can see his mother's elbow and that is it, but he knows that it is his mother without seeing her face” (68). He automatically puts the two together. This is a skill that is developed as an infant improves through out childhood. This talent is often why parents will think that their child is above the learning abilities for his or her age, and when it comes to this, they are, but in the long run, it does not help them.

Research also showed less activity angular gyrus part of the brain of the dyslexic than those without the disability did, and dyslexics also use this area of the brain “inadequately” (Brain Briefing 2). “The angular gyrus or the AG is located toward the back of the brain and is the part of the brain that translates the mass of words and letters we encounter in day-to-day life” (Brain Briefing 2). Since the dyslexic is unable to properly use the angular gyrus, they will “compensate by using other brain areas such as the inferior frontal gyrus which is associated with spoken language. Dyslexics will often show this when they are reading. Instead of reading quietly to themselves, commonly they will read out-loud to themselves to comprehend what they are reading” (Brain Briefing 2).(see appendix for image of AG)

Another neurological finding is the “evidence of deficit in the brain’s visual system in people with dyslexia” (Atypical Brain 1). In other words, dyslexics have problems “processing specific visual information” (atypical Brain 1). Therefore, it is very difficult for dyslexic children to learn and read with traditional teaching styles. “Education is done on the conditioning level, and dyslexics can master many things faster than the average person can comprehend them when things are presented experimentally” (Davis 103). But, when things are presented conditionally, or shown to them or read to them, it is much more difficult and many times impossible.

Learning to read can be a devastating time in a dyslexic’s life. It is when a child heads off to school for the first time that the special ability that he has developed so early and well begins to be a down fall for the child. This is also the point where most dyslexic children start to lose self-esteem that may never return.

After all of the research, it is clear that children with dyslexia learn by visuals. Therefore, in order for words to be understood, they must stimulate a picture in the dyslexic’s mind. Author Donald D. Davis explains, “ we can think of the word elephant easily if we know what an elephant looks like, but it is impossible for nonverbal thinkers to understand words whose meanings can not be pictured”(13). This would explain why dyslexics begin to struggle when they a learning to read.

Words that do not associate with pictures are harder for the dyslexics to understand. For example, the word work has no real meaning. There is no picture that can be associated with words like this, so the dyslexic has a great deal of problems trying to understand where these kinds of words fit into reading and writing. (Davis 13)

When a child learns to read, his ability to identify objects can not be applied here and it confuses the child. When the dyslexic child hears the word cat, he expects to see a cat, so when the teacher points to the word C-A-T, because the word cat does not look like an actual cat, he is confused. “He was trying to understand the word not as a symbol, but as an object”(Davis 79). Another way of looking at it is “the dyslexic child has never heard one of his own thoughts, he has been too busy thinking with pictures.

For dyslexics, the thought process happens way too fast, in fact, a dyslexic can think between four hundred and two thousand times faster than most other children can. But, because he has to do at least four thousand times more, he will appear very slow” (Davis 77, 81). This makes parents and teachers think that the child has some kind of mental handicap or that he is behind the kids that are of the same age, and as effect of how his parents now perceive him, his self-esteem continues to decline. (Davis 78,79)

As the child gets older, he adjusts to his learning disability or his parents place him in special classes to get help, either way, new challenges face the dyslexic child in school such as taking tests. For many dyslexics, knowing the answer to a question is not the problem; it’s answering it on paper. Dyslexic children so envious of those who can pick up a book and read it so simply, it takes them hours to read a chapter, not to mention that the hours they spent reading are basically pointless because they usually can not remember anything that they had just read.

Dyslexics have not only a difficult time reading, but more so, a difficult time comprehending what they have just read. Many dyslexics drop out of school because it is so difficult to keep up. It always seems that dyslexics will study for a test much longer than other students will in my class, but always, dyslexics receive the lowest grade. It is difficult to deal with the failure after such hard work; dyslexics have to keep telling myself that dyslexics will be rewarded for the

hard work someday, in the long run. “ ‘People do not understand how hard it is for dyslexic children to do a task that others do so effortlessly.’ says Berninger, a professor of educational psychology” (UniSci 1).

Orally, the dyslexic will usually have no problem answering a question, but with the pressure of a test and the fact that it is difficult to read and understand without hearing the question out loud, the chances of knowing what the question even says is minimal. Dyslexics have experienced this many times; in fact every test dyslexics have ever taken has been this way for me. No matter how many times dyslexics read the question, it is merely letters on a page; there is no meaning to it at all. When dyslexics receive the test back after it has been graded, they are able to read the questions out loud and they know the answers. This makes them feel stupid, and they now have absolutely no confidence when it comes to taking tests. This is typical for dyslexics.

In high school, many dyslexics realized that in order to make it in life, they have to focus on something where tests and reading are not the main factors in learning. Many dyslexics excel in music and art.

Many dyslexics are also very “gifted in mechanics, architecture, interior decorating, landscaping, science, painting, poetry, and even prose” (Cronin 133). Because of the way dyslexics use their brains, they usually excel in these areas. Many well-known artists, scientists and musicians were dyslexic, yet they were perceived as smart unlike most dyslexics. Albert Einstein for example, he is noted in every history book as a genius, yet he was dyslexic. (Brain Briefings 1) It is not that dyslexics are ignorant or slow, or lazy as many often assume that they are, it is that dyslexics “use their brain regions that process written language differently than those without the disorder” (brain briefings 1).

As a college student, many dyslexics still struggle with dyslexia. In fact, they believe that dyslexia was easier to get around in high school than it is in college. Being dyslexic is very hard and frustrating.

There are so many obstacles that dyslexics must go through. Not only do we struggle to learn, but also the self-esteem problems are a key characteristic of dyslexia. So many people are

unaware of what dyslexia even is that when you tell others of your disorder, they think automatically that you are illiterate or slow. It is very difficult to keep any pride in your self when others, even yourself sometimes, doubts that you have any ability to be educated. In the end though, I believe that dyslexics will achieve so much. Dyslexics have to learn that they have to work harder than others do and though it is frustrating and tiring also, they have to never give up. Dyslexia has made many people very determined persons, I think that once dyslexics overcome the challenges of dyslexia, they like Albert Einstein, will be praised for the wonderful talents that with out dyslexia, they would not have or be so good at.

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