

A CRITICAL APPROACH TOWARDS DYSLEXIA

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We discussed Student Behavior Management and Support in the previous issue. Lets look into one of the complex issues that affects our students and the ways to tackle it appropriately in this issue.

Dyslexia is a syndrome in which a person's reading and/or writing ability is significantly lower than that which would be predicted by his or her general level of intelligence. People are diagnosed as dyslexic when their reading problems cannot be explained by lack of intellectual ability, or by inadequate instruction, or by sensory problems such as poor eyesight, because reading is a complex mental process, dyslexia has many potential causes.

In this article, we would discuss about the strategies that can be employed to make students get over with dyslexia.

5-15% of the population can be diagnosed as suffering from various degrees of dyslexia.

Studying dyslexia is very valuable for understanding the intelligence and creativity of the mind. Dyslexia illustrates the power of inborn wiring of the brain in developing mental skills. In elementary school children, dyslexia can be treated by overcoming inborn limitations. Those difficulties result from reduced ability to link up visual symbols with sounds. In the past, dyslexia was mistakenly thought to have a motivational background. Contrary to that erroneous belief, modern research has shown that dyslexia is a condition largely inborn. In other words, dyslexia is a condition that children are born with and is not the result of poor parenting or environment. Some have disagreed with these findings, however, and believe that while dyslexia may sometimes be inborn, it is often attributable to lack of phonics training, when learning to read and the preponderance of the whole language system.

To give you more detail, you might have noticed some student's reverses "d" and "b" sometimes "g" and "q" and reverses "p". Some students have trouble with the sounds of the same letters.

Some students hold their pen / pencil tight and the way in which letters are formed can be unusual. One student, when writing the letter 'y' will start at the bottom of the tail, make an upward diagonal stroke, then put in the little stroke. Poor spacing is a problem. Words are jammed together making several words appear to be one word. Their writing often floats above and cuts down through the lines. The mixing of cursive and printing is also common especially within a word. I have noticed the use of an upper-case/capital 'B' used instead of a lower case 'b'. For example I found the word 'trouble' written 'truBl'

Build Confidence:

A majority of dyslexic children have come to the conclusion that they are stupid! In any school in any week of the year a dyslexic child experiences a huge amount of failure. With sequencing difficulties, any form of writing or maths is going to present severe problems, and the dyslexic child cannot fail to notice that almost all of the other children are able to do the work which he or she finds so hard. Why can't he read and spell? He must be dumb, thick, stupid. It's the conclusion that anyone would reach in similar circumstances, and this notion badly need to be changed before any corrective teaching is going to be effective.

The difficulty with dyslexia is that it is not visible. If the child had a broken arm, everyone would be rushing around giving extra consideration. 'Of course he can't write - his arm is broken! There's nothing wrong with his intelligence.'

But no-one ever says 'Of course he can't spell - he has inherited a different pattern of brain circuits! There's nothing wrong with his intelligence.'

What I am suggesting is a little cognitive therapy by the teacher, if possible in combination with the parent! Not as hard as it seems. The assumption in the child's mind - that he is stupid - is inaccurate, and it needs correcting if he is to re-establish the self-confidence he needs to learn. This is not going to be achieved simply by telling him that he's as intelligent as the next person. Well-intentioned people have been telling him that for years to no effect. He needs evidence, and he needs to re-construct the picture he has of himself in his own mind. Only in this way can he see his difficulties as a dyslexic learner in the proper context of a person - like anyone else - who has **both strengths and weaknesses**. Most dyslexic people have great strengths in the areas of physical co-ordination and/or creativity and/or empathy with other people. His strengths may lie in some of these areas, and he will know that lots of other children are weak in exactly these same areas.

The following exercise has a great effect on children, and can be carried out by a parent, or a teacher, or, if at all possible, both together with the child, who needs to be on his own (not in a group situation). Take a sheet of paper and make two columns: in one column put 'Things I am good at' and in the other 'Things that I am not so good at'

Real Case : I remember a student of 5th grade, who was dyslexic, and unwilling to speak as well. His parents went to the extent of writing to the board examination to permit him to write examination through computers, which ultimately failed. Though after a 14 day course of boosting confidence, there was tremendous improvement shown. I was working with the student counselor of that particular school, where he was then given special attention and gradually improved to a great extent. Initially I could see him as a shy person, always defending him and making

him feel superior to others, while he wasn't and when given a task, was unable to execute. But tremendous changes can happen with the way we deal with students.

There are students who always say I can't, I don't, and I don't know. These are the early signs of dyslexia. I suggest that this be dealt at the time you spot it right.

Multi-sensory Teaching Methods

Studies from the national institutes of child health and human development have shown that for children with difficulties learning to read, a multi-sensory teaching method is the most effective teaching method. Same can be used to teach a child with dyslexia.

The major sensory methods generally used are

Visual (V), auditory (A), kinesthetic (K), gustatory (G) and olfactory (O) are the five primary sensory modalities that we use in order to experience the world around us. These modalities are also known as representational systems (rep systems) as they are the primary ways we represent, code, store and give meaning or language (linguistics) to our experiences.

We work with three representational systems: visual, auditory and kinesthetic. Primary senses, gustatory and olfactory do not play a major role and are often included with kinesthetic.

This table with sample words will let you know how to recognise the user preferred language:

Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic
See	Hear	Grasp
look	tell	feel
bright	sound	hard
clear	resonate	unfeeling
picture	listen	concrete
foggy	silence	scrape
view	deaf	solid
clear	squeak	touch
focused	hush	get hold of
dawn	roar	catch on
reveal	melody	tap into

illuminate	make music	heated argument
imagine	harmonize	pull some strings
hazy	tune in/out	sharp as a tack
an eye-ful	rings a bell	smooth operator
short sighted	quiet as a mouse	make contact
sight for sore eyes	voiced an opinion	throw out
take a peek	clear as a bell	firm foundation
tunnel vision	give me your ear	get a handle on
bird's eye view	loud and clear	get in touch with
naked eye	purrs like a kitten	hand in hand
paint a picture	on another note	hang in there

Brain Gym

Brain Gym model is based on the knowledge of how the brain works. They describe brain functioning in terms of three dimensions: laterality, focus, and centering:

- Laterality is the ability to coordinate one side of the brain with the other, especially in the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic midfields, the area where the two sides overlap. This skill is fundamental to the ability to read, write and communicate. It is also essential for fluid whole-body movement, and for the ability to move and think at the same time.
- Focus is the ability to coordinate the back and front areas of the brain. It is related to comprehension, the ability to find meaning, and to the ability to experience details within their context. People without this basic skill are said to have attention disorders and difficulty in comprehending. At a deeper level, focus allows us to interpret a particular moment or experience in the greater context of our lives or to see ourselves as unique individuals within the larger framework of our society.

- Centring is the ability to coordinate the top and bottom areas of the brain. This skill is related to organization, grounding, feeling and expressing one's emotions, a sense of personal space, and responding rationally rather than reacting from emotional overlay.

A few exercises:

Cross Crawl.

This exercise helps coordinate right and left brain by exercising the information flow between the two hemispheres. It is useful for spelling, writing, listening, reading and comprehension. It also improves left/right coordination.

While standing, alternatively touch your left knee with your right hand then the right knee with the left hand. Continue for 10 to 15 repetitions. (Variation 1 - touch opposite elbow to knee. Variation 2 - reach hand behind back to opposite foot.)

Lazy-Eights (or Double Doodle)

Helps with: reading, speed reading, writing, and hand/eye co-ordination.

Extend one arm in front of your face. With one thumb pointing upwards, slowly and smoothly trace the infinity sign (∞) in the air. Keep your neck relaxed and your head upright, moving only slightly as you focus on the thumb and follow it around. This relaxes the muscles of the hand, arms and shoulders and helps visual tracking.

Hope this would be of help to you while dealing with dyslexic children. Look forward to more such articles in the coming issues.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bobby Leonard is Master Certified personnel from NFNLP USA in NeuroLinguistic programming (NLP), is also a Hypnotherapist from NGH- USA, and has been working in similar field in Dubai, Oman, Abu Dhabi, Sharjah and INDIA. He has attended workshops and seminars of Paul McKenna the world's best Hypnotist, Teresa D Hale on Regeneration, Deepak Chopra on mind body, Madan Khataria on laughter therapy, Beryl Comar the best in Middle East for NLP, Annie Jirschitzka on Future Life progression and with Louis on Avatar. He has worked with hypnotherapists in the Middle East region and life coaches in Dubai. He has close associations with Dina Faidi, the one Arab trainer for Edward DeBono and Tony Buzans Creativity trainings. Also Associated with Vasanth of mind transformation of Singapore for their trainings in Dubai. And associated with Dave the only Stage Hypnotist in the Middle East and Michelle Charlotte the kinestheology trainer in Dubai. He is the lead trainer for i-manager's TDSOL (Faculty enrichment) programme. He can be reached at bobby@imanagerindia.com.



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