

# The Ron Davis Story:

## How one man's discovery forever changed the face of Dyslexia

Celebrating 40 years of *the Gift of Dyslexia*

Forty years ago...as the world went unknowingly about its business, one man **stumbled upon the biggest breakthrough in education and learning disabilities** since the two have coexisted.

Having come from 38 years of illiteracy, his first glimpse into what other people experience while reading opened a door to profound discovery, resulting in some of the most brilliant insights into Dyslexia, ADD/ADHD, Dyscalculia, Dyspraxia, Dysgraphia, and Autism that exist today.

That man? **Ronald Dell Davis**. A genius and philanthropist whose fascinating life's story could be the making of a Hollywood movie. A true coming-of-age story of overcoming huge obstacles and achieving success that others said was impossible.

**Davis' initial discovery of the root cause of Dyslexia** and his subsequent research and experiments to prove his theories evidentially have followed a similar path to other great breakthrough theorists like Newton, Einstein, and Jung. A true innovator in the field, his work was initially deemed "controversial" and was disregarded by many. Yet four decades of countless dyslexics are now reading, writing, spelling, calculating, and participating fully in life due to his courage and tenacity in bringing his life-transforming work to the world.



It is only in the past 10 years that the scientific community is catching up and proving Davis' theories – with neurodiversity and "the gifts of dyslexia" now widely accepted as self-evident.

His journey to success and recognition has not been an easy one. Ron Davis was born on August 8, 1942, and his arrival came with unexpected complications. What would now be considered severe Autism, Ron's mother was told that her son was a "Kanner's Baby" – a devastating and [then] rare condition that, in his doctor's words, meant the he would never be able to be held, to learn, to speak, or achieve much beyond what a chimpanzee could. This was the "sentence" he was given in 1954.

Luckily, what Ron's mother heard was, "Ronnie is going to be slow." She became his biggest advocate, despite a husband and two older sons whose patience for Ron wore thin quite early on in his life.

From Ron’s account of his early childhood, he has no recollection of his first nine years. During that time, he explains, he had no awareness of being alive...no connection to others or *himself*. It was at the age of nine that Ron miraculously became aware of the physical world around him. Until that point, he had no idea that he even existed. *His body had been operating void of awareness of it.* From deep in the void of Autism, something, somehow woke him to the world.



**Let that sink in for a moment.**

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*From deep in the void of Autism, something, somehow woke him to the world.*

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This awareness triggered the beginning of the developmental process that most babies go through at the age of two – only he was nine and terrified of the chaos he was suddenly experiencing. The world was a harsh, confusing, and scary place. He had no tools, no experience, no understanding, and no foundation on which to make sense of this new reality.

Part of this reality was being at school! Now, rather than being in school unaware of his surroundings, he was assaulted by colors, noise, lights, rules, unfamiliar language, and chaos. School was a nightmarish place where he was expected to do something that, at the time, he was unequipped and unable to do: **LEARN**.

Over the next three years, Ron began to have experiences. He began to individuate. The cycle of identity development had begun that fateful day when his awareness connected with his body. This is typically when children begin to develop an awareness of “self” – and along with that comes sensory integration, likes, dislikes, discernment of others, favorites, etc. – and experiences begin to lock into memories, creating a platform of learning and language development.

Ron’s progress was slow, however. He continued to be predominantly non-verbal, displayed sensory issues, and social interactions were literally and figuratively painful.



Learning in a classroom was impossible. The letter strip along the top of the wall in his classroom was a welcome distraction from the chaos – although it held no meaning whatsoever to him. In fact, the interesting shapes would float in the air, rotate, flip, and turn from his perspective – and they were *just amusing enough* to cause some intrigue.

Once home, Ron could retreat from the place they called *school* to spend time in his happy place: his backyard. His brothers would grudgingly oversee his playtime, as Ron was still not able to be left alone. Although they did not realize it, Ron was picking up on more than they knew. He heard them talking

about him. He knew he was different. He understood that he was not like the others – and all he wanted, so desperately, was to be like everyone else: a “real human being.” This was the beginning of his motivation to integrate into the world.

Ron saw his brothers’ pocket-knives and wristwatches but was not allowed to have his own. He discovered that using the red dirt from his backyard mixed with water, he could make a gooey clay concoction that could be formed into whatever he wanted! Once it dried, it would hold its shape for a week or more. So, Ron created many pocket-knives and wristwatches, which meant that he was a step closer to being “normal.”



Eventually, those interesting alphabet shapes that he saw every day on the classroom wall became backyard creations. Holding the shape in his imagination until he got home, Ron began to create replicas of the letters in the clay, asking his brothers, “What’s? What’s?” in his limited communication ability.

They would tell him the name of the letter, and over time, something began to stick. Ron now had an experience creating the letters, which gave him an anchor on which to attach the name of it. The letters he created began to hold still on the wall, and his interest and motivation to keep creating them continued, until finally he had learned all of them. He had not cared to learn them in the correct order, but he knew every letter!

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*Unbeknownst to him, this little boy was in the process of developing a key component to a highly effective program that would eventually help hundreds of thousands of people find their way out of learning disabilities!*

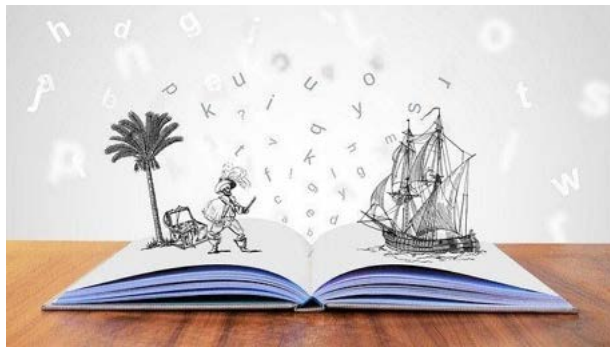
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Fast forward to the age of 17. A teacher had taken an interest in Ron and, although he had been labeled “uneducable and mentally retarded,” he was given an IQ test. The results were beyond shocking to everyone. He was a GENIUS. Ron had scored 137 points on the IQ test.

They immediately got him into speech therapy and his verbal language rapidly expanded.

Learning to speak made words part of Ron’s universe. He voraciously used clay to learn concepts and words – each time building upon what he had already mastered. Between the ages of 17 and 27, he had created more than a thousand ideas and words in modeling clay. By the time he was 27, his IQ score had risen to 169!

Ron was now speaking and able to participate in work, art, and have relationships. Reading, however, was still not possible. The problem was that, just like the alphabet letters on the wall in school, the



words on a page appeared to be *swimming*! The letters and words would not hold still, the spacing would disappear, the shapes of the words would transpose and shift. There was no way to make sense of any of it.

“Trying harder” made it all worse! Sounding out? Even if he could do that, it was the least of his problems. There was no way to know if he was looking at a b, d, p, q because they were all the same shape and were flipping and rotating!

This severe perceptual distortion was invisible to others, but a very real experience for Ron. Its invisibility made it possible to hide – and Ron’s extraordinary intelligence and coping mechanisms kept his inability to read hidden in shame and secrecy for much of his early adult life. Thank goodness there were many things in his life that came easily, mechanical engineering, for example.

**How could a man without a formal education understand the mechanics of engineering?** To the non-dyslexic this is hard to comprehend. However, do you recall Ron’s ability to mentally view letters from all angles? Well, this skill happens to be brilliant when it comes to real-world (or imagined) objects! His unique way of thinking and his ability to manipulate mental images made him a coveted asset during the “Space Race” era, opening up an opportunity for him to excel as an engineer for the US Government without needing to read a word!

In fact, he did so well, that Ron was promoted up the ranks until he hit a terrifying shift in responsibility – Administration. To avoid being exposed as illiterate, Ron left the government and took on a new career path: **Sculpting**. A familiar and comforting place that eventually earned him notoriety and financial achievement as an artist of commissioned sculptures.

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*It was during this phase in his life where he made the astounding discovery that broke all previously conceived notions of Dyslexia wide open.*

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During an interview about his brilliant artwork, he was asked, “*HOW? HOW can you do what you do?*” It was not an easy question to answer! For him, sculpting was easy – describing it in words was challenging. Nevertheless, he decided he would pay attention to his creative process in an attempt to answer the question.

Sculpting was simply bringing his mental image into form. Not unlike mechanical engineering, he could visualize what the sculpture *would* look like and mirror that image into the clay.



Further, he realized, he would get lost in his thought and creative space – losing track of the physical world around him. His senses were aligned to what he was thinking about, not with what was going on around him. Language didn't exist there. It was all fantastic imagery. Time suspended. Hands and thought coming together in beautiful alchemy...

### **Wait, back up...**

...language didn't exist there...

***...language didn't exist there...!***

Where didn't language exist? Where did he go?

If he could "go" to a place where language didn't exist, could he find a way to "go" where it did?



His curiosity was SPARKED.

That question, little did he know, would result in his discovery of the root cause of Dyslexia (disorientation) and, once he figured it out, he was able to read effortlessly for the first time in his life. The words held still, the spacing was accurate, and he experienced, immediately upon discovering the answer, what the rest of the world experienced when looking at text.

Believing he had "cured" his Dyslexia, he established The Reading Research Council in 1982 to research and test his discovery with adult dyslexics who, like him, struggled with written language despite being highly intelligent, intuitive, creative, and **who also thought with VISUAL IMAGERY.**

They quickly discovered that all dyslexics participating in the research shared the following traits:

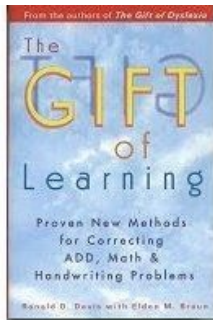
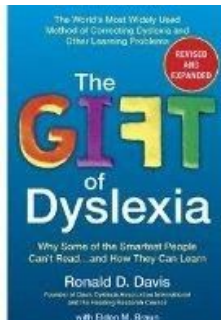
1. Varying degrees of perceptual distortion (words transposing, adding/omitting words, hovering, moving, etc.)
2. Thinking in visual imagery vs. in language (little to no verbal thought)
3. Higher than normal IQ
4. Inconsistency of reading ability (sometimes it was okay, other times impossible)
5. Trouble with high frequency/abstract words (sight words)
6. Ability to excel in one or more areas (having a "knack" for something)

The research was compiled, and, with the help of an educational psychologist, the pieces of the puzzle were coming together.

**The Davis Dyslexia Correction® Program** was born by reverse engineering the path that Ron had walked to get where he was, leading him all the way back to modeling the letters in his backyard, interwoven with sound educational principles contributed by Dr. Fatima Ali.



The successes were overwhelmingly positive. Word of mouth spread and soon hundreds of dyslexics were flooding to the doors of the Reading Research Council. The overwhelming demand gave Ron more momentum.



With the goal of reaching and helping as many dyslexic individuals as possible, Ron documented the entire process and published his best-selling book, *The Gift of Dyslexia* in 1994 and established [Davis Dyslexia Association International](http://www.davismethod.org) in 1995 to train others in his methods.

Subsequent programs (Davis® Attention Mastery, Davis® Math Mastery, Davis® Reading for Young Learners, and Davis Learning Strategies® for schools) have had equal success and have unlocked education for those who simply do not respond to mainstream teaching methods. Davis' second book, *The Gift of Learning*, was published in 2003.

Word of mouth has continued to spread his work around the globe. His book is now translated into more than 20 languages, making the Davis Dyslexia Correction program the most widely used private program to address the symptoms of Dyslexia and related learning challenges in the world.

Most of the over 500 Davis licensed facilitators entered training as a result of witnessing the transformational results of the program with a student or loved one. A truly grassroots organization, with a testament to the programs' efficacy, Davis Dyslexia Association International and is still progressing and growing with very little traditional advertising.

Ron Davis' inspirational and empowering life story and discoveries have impacted the lives of countless people who no longer believe that they are dumb, lazy, or daft. Rather, they are now unlocked and able to bring their gifts to the world! To read more, get a copy of [The Gift of Dyslexia](http://www.davismethod.org), please visit [www.dyslexia.com](http://www.dyslexia.com), and/or find a facilitator near you at [www.davismethod.org](http://www.davismethod.org).

With congratulations and gratitude to 40 years of paradigm shifting, paving new ways, and unlocking the brilliant minds of gifted dyslexics around the world we **thank you, Ronald Dell Davis, for your contribution and lifetime of achievement.**