

-a different perspective

I am writing this article for the mothers just like me, who have been in severe pain and shed many tears at seeing their darling children work so hard at school, and fail across the board. This article is also for teachers who try everything that they can to assist these kids reach their potential, but are stymied by their best efforts, as nothing really seems to work for a percentage of children in their care.

When my son's learning difficulties presented and I recovered to an extent from my shock—like any mother I made it my mission in life to find the key to his learning. This set us down many different avenues of traditional methods to remedy the struggle he was experiencing.

So some history—Tim was a wee bright kid, social, happy, creative and easy. He would play for hours with his Thomas the tank engine trains—lost in his glorious world of imagination.

Things changed radically when he started school, all of a sudden he started coming home complaining of feeling sick in the tummy, headaches and dizzy. He had his vision and hearing tested—no problems there. Then he started to come home and say that he was dumb and stupid and that all the other kids could read and write and asked, what was wrong with him?

For the mother who is reading this piece and whose child has uttered those words—it is absolute torture and heart break to see your child's self-esteem plummet and belief in self-worth take

a battering.

My husband and I looked to the school for help and to cut a long story short, from the age of 6 to 12 years Tim participated in just about every traditional remedial programme available. Some were helpful, but none seemed to work long term.

When Tim was 12 a friend gave me a book, *The Gift of Dyslexia* by Ron Davis, resulting in my whole world being turned upside down. I experienced an immense feeling of relief to finally discover how my child perceived and thought, and why my bright little boy, who gave his all, was struggling to read and put his thoughts down on paper.

What I discovered is that my child is dyslexic, which means that he has three common defining factors with

other dyslexic individuals.

- 1) The ability to think primarily in pictures—this means that the thought process is in images, three dimensional and is incredibly creative, inventive, imaginative, intelligent and when having to do with objects, very fast and accurate.
- 2) The ability to alter the senses—this means that when something is encountered in the environment that is new or a unknown stimuli, disorientation of the senses occurs so that you do not know what the stimuli is. This distortion of the perception works exceptionally well when it comes to objects or concepts and ideas, but does not work at all well when trying to decipher and decode symbols on the written page.
- 3) A lower than normal threshold

for confusion—the ability to alter the perception and sort out confusions when it comes to objects is accurate and successful, the individual has never experienced the feeling of confusion for any length of time.

However, when the child starts school and is introduced to symbols, letters and words that represent an idea and the like, kids like my son are totally overwhelmed with the feeling of confusion, have zero tolerance for this emotion and have no way of alleviating the problem.

Also at this tender age students are introduced to the basic sight words, these consist of the little words that make up our language, such as “in”, “the”, “though” and the like. There are 217 of these words that between the ages of 5–8 children are expected to know how to read, spell and write with.

The dyslexic child does not have a mental image for the meaning of these words to think accurately with, resulting in an overwhelming feeling of confusion that literally produces a blank mental image. The child is left in a constant state of confusion, with no way of escaping until they discover different patterns of behaviour that will help them survive the ordeal.

If you are a parent of a child who does everything in their power to avoid sitting down and doing their homework or produces a project on a Sunday night and tells you that it is due in on Monday, this might help explain what is happening for your

child. As frustrating as it is for the parent, it is equally as frustrating for the child who does not want to be oppositional – but is pushed into survival mode.

From the child’s perspective sitting down in front of all of those words in a disorientated state can cause the symbols on the page to move around, get blurry, fuzzy and other phenomena that cause symptoms of nausea, dizziness and headaches.

“...it is absolute torture and heart breaking to see your child's self-esteem plummet and belief in self-worth take a battering.”

It is a very human reaction to avoid at all costs what is painful and difficult and from my experience, the defensive patterns of behaviour are an attempt to conceal the problem from others. There is a tremendous amount of shame, embarrassment and humiliation tied into not being able to read and write like everybody else. To be labeled the class clown, rebel, distracter, daydreamer, lazy... is so much more preferable than the label of dumb and stupid.

The reading of *The Gift of Dyslexia* led to an investigation on the net and to the discovery that there was a very developed programme, based on Ron’s

book, that was available in the States and Europe.

The Davis Method focuses on the individual’s strengths and provides mental tools that control the perception and a very creative process called Symbol Mastery that fills in the blank pictures for all 217 sight words. This process involves creating a three dimensional model in clay with the dictionary definition fully demonstrated. This process gives the ability to think with the meaning of these sight words, eliminates the confusion and enables the written word to be deciphered easily.

There are currently 14 licensed Davis Facilitators practicing in New Zealand providing one on one programmes to individuals aged 8 and over.

Also the Cookie Time Charitable Trust, whose vision is to create awareness of dyslexia in our community offers scholarships to children aged 8–18 who are financially disadvantaged and would benefit from this method. www.cmct.org.nz

Tim participated in the Davis Dyslexia Correction Programme in 1999 and has not looked back since!

To bring this up to today—Tim is 18 and the world is his oyster!

For me, well, life has changed beyond recognition. My son reads for pleasure. Which is all I ever wanted for him, that and for him to reach his full potential in life without struggling.

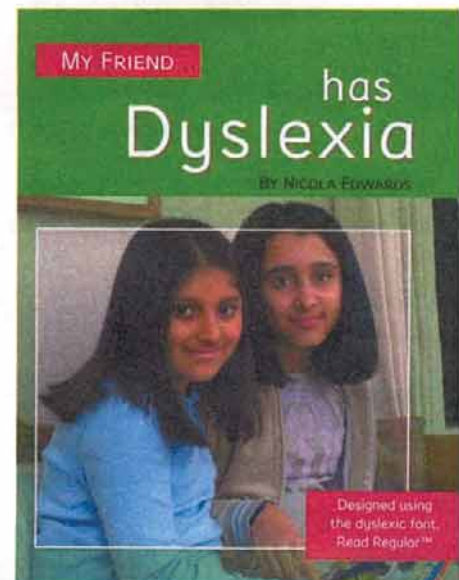
If reading this article has touched a

cord, you might find reading *The Gift of Dyslexia*, and *The Gift of Learning* by Ron Davis, of great value to understand your child’s inherent gift and talents.

For further information please feel free to contact:

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‘My friend has Dyslexia’, is a great tool for children to help understand how dyslexia affects themselves and their friends and to help understand that they can lead a normal and fun life.