

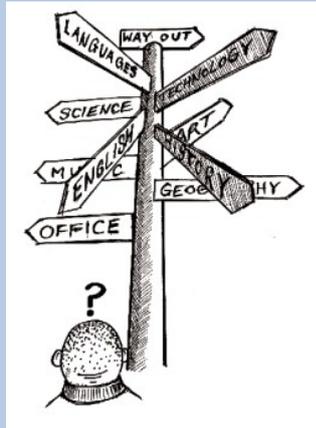
# Demystifying Dyslexia

It wasn't until Dr. Jody Anderson of 'sports MATTERS'™ fame, was an adult that he discovered he wasn't stupid after all.

All of his life, he had excelled at sport – ice hockey in particular - because he was miserable at study and built his life and dreams around the opportunities his physical prowess afforded him.

However, discovering he had dyslexia changed his outlook and life – he is now a doctor of chiropractic medicine specialised in sports medicine and the physiology of performance, so being an athlete ended up helping him study. The same discipline he had applied to sport, he applied to study and this is what eventually got him over the many hurdles he faced in becoming qualified and still maintaining his practice today.

Now Dr. Anderson's story is a positive one of success and awareness and luckily for him, there were people around him who sought to understand how a bright and quick young man could possibly be so 'lazy' when it came to study. Dr. Anderson is someone I have met later in life, but I've worked with countless others – children and teens – who have faced the same struggles he did and are still struggling because the support at home either isn't aware there is a problem or doesn't understand what to do. Oftentimes what parents recognise as laziness in their child is an unwillingness to perform rooted in fear or anxiety over the simple fact that they don't physically understand how to do what their peers seem to be doing. Studying, especially literature or languages because of the volume of content, is not appealing to a person with dyslexia because they are, at varying degrees, unable to harness moving, flipping or disappearing letters and words. It takes so much energy to focus on the text – 10 times more energy



than it takes someone without dyslexia – it's no wonder they are ready to give up 10 times more quickly. **Have patience. Your young or teenaged readers are not lazy or stupid and they need your help.**

**Awareness is key:** if you don't read with your child, how can you understand if there may be a problem to address? Use part of your family time to explore words in some form and encourage your child to participate. Assess any resistance they may demonstrate toward the activity and then reflect. Is the content too difficult? Is the child simply tired? Does the child become angry or frustrated easily when faced with something longer than a couple of sentences?

**Understanding your child's needs** is a cornerstone of parenting and these needs are many. Dyslexia can not only rob your child of their self-esteem as an independent student, but also take away their confidence in general. **Your awareness makes the difference.**

Although the onset of dyslexia varies from person to person, here are some typical problems students with dyslexia face:

**Weak working memory:** forgetting information or details easily and difficulty in copying information down;

**Difficulty listening to instruction:** misunderstanding information or instruction, long response times;

**Short attention span and distracted easily:** demonstrates an inability to pay attention and seems to 'switch off', restlessness or fidgeting and sights, sounds and thoughts frequently bring the child off task;

**Poor organization:** loses important notes and papers, difficulty prioritizing and managing time for tasks.

This list is by no means conclusive, but these are common markers that are almost always present in a person challenged with dyslexia. If you note some of the same features in the behaviour of your children as Dr. Anderson's parents noted in him, take the time to investigate the reasons behind your child's resistance.

**Read with them:** provide a forum wherein support is unconditional and the child can feel comfortable demonstrating his or her true ability.

**Relate activities to their interests:** Dr. Anderson's parents brought him hockey magazines and performance statistics to read and explain – enjoying the context encouraged his participation in the activities.

**Be a positive and informed resource:** your children, when they are facing any problem, need to feel that you are stable and able to help. Become educated and aware of the services and groups in your area that can help your child be as happy and successful as he or she deserves to be.

Brandie Silva, *Language Point Milan*

Sources: *British Dyslexia Association, Brandie Silva Laboratory Notes*