

‘Decoding Learning Disability’:

Dyslexics need a thorough understanding of their learning disability.

Dyslexics' performance varies from day to day. On some days, reading may come fairly easily. However, another day, they may be barely able to write their own name. This inconsistency is extremely confusing not only to the dyslexic, but also to others in his environment. The inconsistencies of dyslexia produce serious challenges in a child's life. There is a tremendous variability in the student's individual abilities. Although everyone has strengths and weaknesses, the dyslexic's are greatly exaggerated. Furthermore, the dyslexic's strengths and weaknesses may be closely related.

What does the dyslexic person feel?

- Dyslexics become *fearful* because of their constant frustration and confusion in school.
- Because they may anticipate *failure*, entering new situations can become extremely *anxiety* provoking
- In fact, the dyslexic's hesitancy to participate in school activities such as homework is related more to *anxiety* and *confusion* than to apathy. Social scientists have frequently observed that frustration produces *anger*. This can be clearly seen in many dyslexics.
- As youngsters reach adolescence, society expects them to become independent. The tension between the expectation of independence and the child's learned dependence causes great internal conflicts. The adolescent dyslexic uses his anger to break away from those people on which he feels so dependent.

How can parents and teachers help?

- First, early in the child's life, someone has been extremely supportive and encouraging.
- Second, the young dyslexic found an area in which he or she could succeed.
- Finally, successful dyslexics appear to have developed a commitment to helping others.
- First, listening to children's feelings. *Anxiety, anger and depression* are daily companions for dyslexics
- However, their language problems often make it difficult for them to express their feelings.
- *Therefore, adults must help them learn to talk about their feelings.*
- Teachers and parents must reward effort, not just "the product". For the dyslexic, grades should be less important than progress.
- When confronting unacceptable behaviour, adults must not inadvertently discourage the dyslexic child. Words such as "lazy" or "incorrigible" can seriously damage the child's self-image.
- Caring adults must understand the *cognitive* and *affective* problems caused by dyslexia. Then they must design strategies that will help the dyslexic, like every other child, to find joy and success in academics and personal relationships

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