

Dear Reader,

My name is Ned, and I have dyslexia. Do you know what dyslexia is? I would like to tell you more about myself and, at the same time, help you understand how dyslexia affects people. It is essential to know from the beginning that dyslexia is not a disease; it is actually a different way of processing information. The dyslexic brain thinks and learns differently. It is known as a Learning Processing Style. I have dyslexia, and so does my Uncle Jim. Dyslexia can run in families. You do not grow out of dyslexia. It is always with you, but you can learn to manage it better.

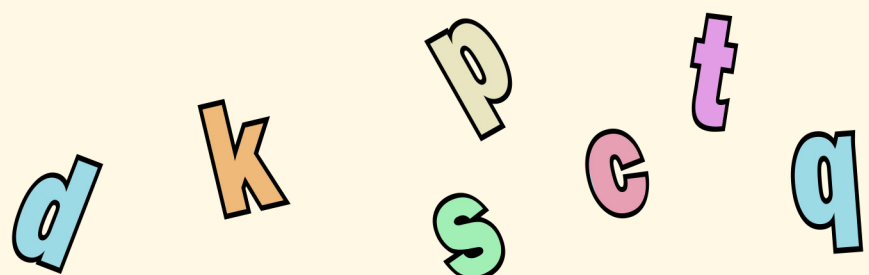


Here is my experience of understanding dyslexia and learning how to manage it.

Dyslexia is pronounced as diss-lek-see-ah, and it is a learning difficulty. Dyslexia comes from the Greek root words 'dys' meaning difficult and 'lexis' meaning word. It literally means difficulty with words. I am so glad my mom told me about dyslexia when I started school. She could see I was making up words to fit the pictures in the storybooks I was learning to read from. I had a vivid imagination and could remember the stories other children read. I used this knowledge to pretend to read, but I was not actually reading the words on the page.

Early in my school life, my mom was aware that I may have some difficulty with reading. She noticed that I went from being a happy and curious child to being more withdrawn and anxious about going to school. Mom knew I was bright because I was so good at puzzles and making things. I loved Lego and games and I liked exploring and going on treasure hunts. I also loved my Uncle Jim, Mom's brother. He took me on camping trips, and he came to visit us often when we lived in the city.

Mom began to worry about me when I moved from the preschool part of learning to the more formal kindergarten phase. Suddenly, I was having to face more lessons. I was taught about letters and how to write them. I found these lessons rather hard and didn't want to talk about them at home. My mom thought that was rather strange. She and Dad went to see the teacher, who said she thought I had an attention problem. My mom was not convinced about that. She knew I could sit for hours with my puzzles and construction toys.





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After Mom and Dad had seen the teacher, they came home and discussed what had been said. My school was a big school, so Mom and Dad decided a smaller school giving more personal attention may be a better idea for a boy like me. They chose to move to a small town. One weekend, they visited Lakeside, a village overlooking a lake. Dad liked fishing, and they decided a small-town way of life would suit them both. Uncle Jim was invited to join us, and my mom found a house with a cottage at the back.

It was the ideal place for our family to move to. I was excited to know Uncle Jim was joining us. Uncle Jim understood what it felt like to struggle at school. I heard him talking to my mom one day just before we moved. He was explaining how he had struggled in school with reading and writing. He knew what it was like when the class thought you were dumb or slow. No one had really helped Uncle Jim at school. He relied on his excellent sporting ability to get ahead in the school system.

Uncle Jim was glad Mom had decided to move me. He thought she should look at the possibility of me being dyslexic because dyslexia can run in families. I knew Mom was listening to Uncle Jim, and I had a good feeling about the school. They were happy to take me with my struggles and allowed an assistant teacher to help me along. That was encouraging. I did wonder how the other children would react to me. Luckily, the class was small and the children friendly. I made good friends and there was another child in the class who also had learning difficulties. That helped me feel I could fit in and not stand out as the only child with learning challenges.

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Uncle Jim helped me understand that people with dyslexia have difficulties learning things to do with words, like writing, reading, and spelling. These difficulties make learning at school very hard. However, the fantastic thing about dyslexia is that children with it have interesting strengths in other areas. When you look at people on the outside, you see they look different. Their skin color, hair, and eyes may be different, even in the same family. Children with dyslexia have differences in their brains. Did you know everyone has a different brain? Just like fingerprints, no two brains are the same!

When I began understanding how a dyslexic person thinks differently and sees things differently, I started understanding what it meant to be dyslexic. People like me use the right side of their brains. They have strengths that many others don't have, like being good at doing puzzles, cracking codes, and seeing solutions to problems. Like I said earlier, dyslexia is not a condition you grow out of; it stays with you. If you have it, you need special help at school and lots of understanding people to support you. You might seem to be a bit slow in the classroom because reading and writing your answers is difficult, but you have many other creative skills.

This story is about me and Uncle Jim. Remember I said we both have dyslexia? Uncle Jim learned to manage it over the years, but he was not as lucky as I am because educators were unsure about this learning problem when he was at school. Uncle Jim was a good sportsman. He shone at field sports because he could see the whole game playing out in his head. Uncle Jim knew where to pass the ball, so the other team players could get the ball and score a goal. That's not all he did. Uncle Jim loved inventing things and would spend hours at the bottom of the garden fiddling with engines and gadgets.

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Mom used to get frustrated with her brother, who was usually covered in grease and late for dinner. When Uncle Jim left school, he got a special scholarship to join the police force. It was a sports scholarship, and the police force needed some key players for their team. Uncle Jim loved being a policeman and found he was very good at cracking codes and working out how the bad guys would think. He became a valuable member of the police force. He was promoted to a senior detective in the Special Operations Unit. He did not talk about what he did very much because most of his work was top secret.

Uncle Jim is very supportive of me and my dyslexia. When my mom wanted to arrange for an assistant to help me with my written work and reading, Uncle Jim was behind the decision. He knew the help would make all the difference for me. I was at risk of becoming the class clown or being seen as different by the other children. I wanted to fit in. I did not want to feel embarrassed because I couldn't read or spell. My teacher was aware of the problems I faced with dyslexia, and she was ready to help.

It is important to recognize that dyslexia gives children special strengths. A child with dyslexia processes things differently as they learn, and observes their world from a different side of their brain.

These strengths allow dyslexic people to connect different kinds of information and look for fine details. They can see the bigger picture through practical knowledge and their personal memory. Successful people all over the world have dyslexia. Inventors, artists, entrepreneurs, and musicians have dyslexia, but have managed to make a difference. Knowing they have talent is encouraging for dyslexic children everywhere. They are not swept under the classroom carpet anymore. Their difficulties are recognized, and they are shown how to learn in a way that suits their brain's way of thinking.

Steven Spielberg, the award-winning director of many movies you love, like Jurassic Park and Indiana Jones, has dyslexia.

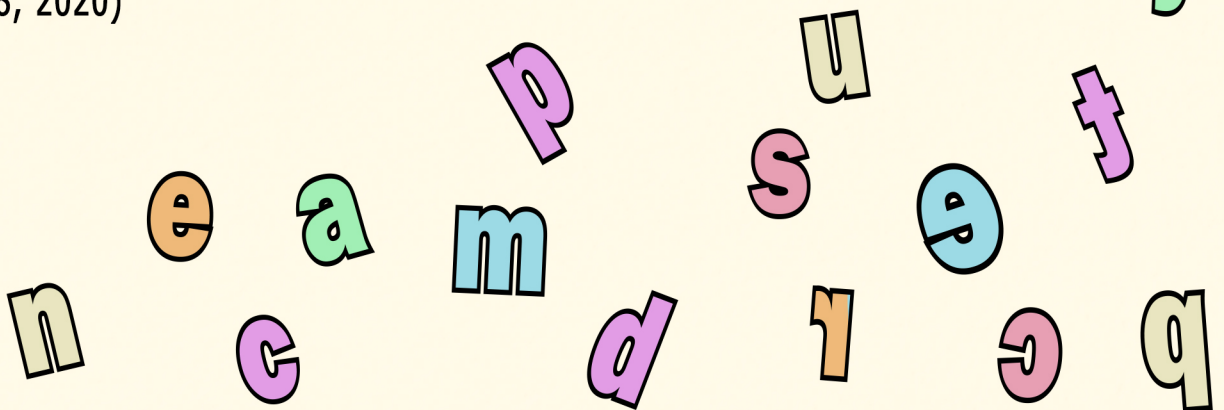
Mr. Spielberg said this when he was asked about dyslexia:

"It is more common than you can imagine. You are not alone. And while you will have this the rest of your life, you can dart between the raindrops to get where you want to go, and it will not hold you back."

I hope you enjoy my adventures with Uncle Jim. We are the dyslexic detectives and work side by side and use our differences to see through the complications of the mysteries and the crime scenes in our village by the lake. We support each other, and Uncle Jim makes a world of difference to my life because he understands. Together, we use our strengths and don't shy away from our dyslexia.

I am also glad I know that people like Richard Branson have used their dyslexia to become great examples to others who have this problem to face. Uncle Jim and I, the dynamic duo, have shown that we are not set back in any way.

"Dyslexia is just a different way of seeing the world, a different way of processing information, and a different way of coming up with great ideas. And many of you will discover that it's a superpower that can take you to great heights." (An excerpt from Richard Branson's speech on World Dyslexia Day, October 8, 2020)



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p Now you know more about what dyslexia is. This knowledge will help you understand how Uncle Jim and I work out our mysteries and are detectives together.

k If you have dyslexia, this is an excellent series to enjoy. Maybe you know someone with dyslexia or someone in your family who struggles with reading and spelling words. If so, then this story will encourage you to give them support.

I hope you enjoy all the ins and outs of solving mysteries from a dyslexic point of view.

See if you can keep one step ahead with Uncle Jim and I, the Dynamic Detective Duo!

Ned

