

# Dyslexia's Emotional Impact

Bill Allen

The emotional impact of dyslexia - diagnosed or not - on the child, parents, and family can be enormous and have lifelong consequences. In such situations, the child often feels "dumb" in comparison to their classmates, leading to self-confidence issues and poor academic performance, which, in turn, increases the parent's anxiety and their seeming incapability to help their child overcome this obstacle.

To cope with this feeling of inferiority, the child engages in avoidant, compensatory behaviors like "acting out" – e.g., aggression, emotional withdrawal, disruption, and lack of attention to tasks. This set of behaviors affects the relationship dynamics with those close to the child, making the emotional burden of dyslexia shouldered by the entire family.

**Sky Village - Trail of Spells** is designed to eliminate this painful emotional impact by enabling a child to learn to read abstract words – words that are difficult for dyslexics to read (85 of the first 100 commonly read words are abstract).

Dyslexia Learning to Read Schools (average annual tuition is \$25,000), as well as other learning-to-read programs are only available to 1% of American families who can afford the up to \$40,000/year programs to try to help their child learn to read, so they can read to learn. Meanwhile, the game **Sky Village - Trail of Spells** only requires a mobile device, which most families and many children have, and affordably provides the opportunity for a child to learn to read, at their own pace, without tutoring or teachers, anywhere they take the device to play the game.

Sam Segmiller grew up as a dyslexic and was labeled as LD (learning disabled) student. He is very articulate about how different the world is for a dyslexic:

*The **Dyslexic's mind** thinks in pictures and wants to make a shape out of everything they see.... People with dyslexia may be able to hear and see perfectly well, but what they hear and see can look different and sound different than it would to most people.*

*Typically, with dyslexia, there is a wide gap between IQ and school achievement. Often, the **dyslexic child's ability** to think creatively and*

*abstractly is quite good, but their basic reading and spelling skills are weak. Sometimes they have the feeling as if they are thinking in German, speaking in French, and writing in English. The word is a picture in their minds, the sound it makes is a feeling in their mouths and writing a word is a picture they draw, note not write. Making connections between all three is sometime hard for the dyslexic. (<http://www.dyslexiamylife.org/>)*

**Sky Village - Trail of Spells** provides a revolutionary way to learn to read abstract words. It resolves the many decade-old dilemma of how to teach a young child to read "the little, itty-bitty words" that cause young students to stumble while they read, misread, and misunderstand. In the early, critical grades when a child learns to read, we cannot expect every young, sensory-thinking mind to switch over suddenly to logical thinking (thinking in words and abstract concepts) in place of thinking in pictures, feelings, sounds, motions, touch, and imagination. And, in fact, at least 20% of K-5 graders do not make this leap and get left behind as poor readers and attached to the stigmas that go with this label.

### **What is the Emotional Cost to Having Difficulty Reading?**

*"When a kid is not reading at grade level the lifetime consequences are often disastrous. Why then aren't we pulling out all of the stops? We have no red lights flashing with sirens sounding announcing: 'Wait! STOP! We are not moving on and passing this child by. This is not a problem that can be solved by some extra monitoring and a few minutes a day with a reading specialist....' No one is born a good reader. Good readers are made, not born..." - Alex Granzin, PhD (<https://childrenofthecode.org/interviews/granzin.htm>)*

### **The Social Pressure and Esteem to be able to Read**

A turning point for a parent comes when their child comes home from school and says, "I am stupid." This parent sent their smart, alert, life-loving child to school, and this is how they come home when they fail to learn to read like their peers. Labels are attached to the child, some about unacceptable behavioral presentations, and others about the child's inability to learn. The child feeling "stupid" now feels like a failure who hasn't a chance of learning to read like their peers. This is frightening for the child and their parents. All their defenses may protect them from the agony of trying to read, and yet these defenses, at the same time, condemn them to a life of limited possibilities in our world of print.

### **Print is Everywhere in School. Print is Everywhere in Life.**

"And if you see yourself being excluded from the process of becoming familiar with

this, learning how it works, taking pleasure in it, being excited about being able to be autonomous and independent, **then I think that's a very potent emotional message that children get, and potentially a very damaging one.**" (p4/30 Alex Granzin)

Reading is an essential learning process that enables us to read directions, signs, prescription labels, contracts we sign, get a driver's license, know which bathroom to use, and who to vote for on a ballot.

### **Shame; Defeat; Self-Doubt Take Over**

When children find that they seem to lack the ability to do something their peers are learning to do, shame floods in, they doubt themselves and easily feel defeated. Spoken language is part of our ancient heritage but written language is comparably new and an "unnatural" process to us. The confusion that builds in the process of failure to learn to read is different than confusion in learning a spoken language, or how to interact with people and your environment.

"If a reader is struggling as their mind is trying to catch and stay entrained in the processing that is necessary to read this code, and their frustration and confusion leads to them feel ashamed of themselves, or feeling bad about themselves, their attention becomes split. What they are processing is no longer self-transparent code work. It now involves self-conscious feelings." (p9/30 A Granzin)

Confusion and stress derail the brain from its full, integrated function. The child now has little chance of learning to read. Often, the child is put on medication for their apparent ADD or ADHD behaviors, and this costly (financially and physiologically) remedy does not help the foundational problem – they simply lack the 3-D educational tools to learn how to read in the way their brain works.

NAEP scores show that 64% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders in the US read below proficiency – many cannot read their diplomas! This gap in reading ability reduces the number of opportunities available to a student. Too many children grow up unable to read proficiently and with a damaged sense of self as a result.

A recent national assessment of adult literacy reported that 92 million adults cannot read well – approximately 1/3 of the adult population reads below 5<sup>th</sup>-grade level, and 70% of the prison population reads below the 5<sup>th</sup>-grade level. (pp. 12/30, 15/30, 16/30; A Granzin) (NAEP = National assessment of Education Progress ... a national testing service.)

"The longitudinal studies that we have regarding the evolution of reading development suggest that if you are substantially impaired in first grade, you are very, very likely to be substantially impaired in the fourth grade. And if that's the case in fourth grade, you are probably looking at a school history of academic failure to one degree or another. So, it's a fairly depressing picture when looked at in that light." (p7/30; A Granzin)

## **We Have a Problem! We are Failing our Children.**

And sadly, these children think they are the problem.

It is time to act in the best interest of the child.

The challenge is a social, emotional, and educational issue that needs a different approach.

The inspiration of Bill Allen to build **Magical I Am's Sky Village - Trail of Spells** was his desire to enable all children to learn to read, so they can read to learn; and to provide an affordable and enjoyable process that fits the learning style of the young brain and can teach the young reader to read the abstract words and symbols that on paper often times do not compute in the sensory 3-D thinking style of the young reader.

*Learn to Read, so you can Read to Learn.™*