

The Dyslexia Myths

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It is estimated that as many as 40 million Americans are dyslexic. Regardless of class, color, creed or any of the characteristics woven in the complex American population, Dyslexia permeates in all backgrounds. As is the case with anything that affects so many people, myths and stereotypes are construed to pigeonhole dyslexics into one box or another. Many of these myths are harmful falsehoods formed through a misunderstanding of dyslexics and perpetrate a cycle of ignorance.

A common and harmful myth is that dyslexics are inherently unintelligent. Reality says otherwise, as research has consistently shown that no correlation can be drawn between IQ and Dyslexia. Furthermore, IQ tests are not an accurate reflection of the dyslexic's true intelligence, and many dyslexics can score in average and way-above average ranges.

The difficulty that dyslexics face in reading and learning can result in a lack of progress and frustration that spawns a self-sustaining cycle of idleness or apathy that stalls productivity. As a result, it is wrongly said that dyslexics are merely lazy. Ask any dyslexic parent and they will tell you their child is anything but that. "Lazy" is an inappropriate word to use to describe a dyslexic child. The word that best describes the dyslexic who exudes lazy-type symptoms is "discouraged."

High expenses are also associated with Dyslexia. My personal experience has been that Dyslexia IS expensive. As a first grader, I went to an eye specialist and was also tested by a learning disability boarding school, both of whom diagnosed me as dyslexic. Eventually, I learned to read at the 4th grade level but had become creatively dependent on others to get me through the educational system. Unknown to me at the time, this was the beginning of an unhealthy dependency on other people for getting me through the reading and writing challenges of school.

It is said that dyslexics are easily distracted and can't stay focused on the tasks at hand. Doctors, experts, parents, teachers, and tutors tend to look at the surface and focus on the symptoms. They tend to concentrate on the here and now of the prevailing issues without digging deeper and finding the root cause or sources for an inability to stay focused. The issue is not that dyslexics are easily distracted, but that something is causing distraction.

The association of rote memorization and learning is also linked to dyslexics. The dyslexic, especially in the early years of learning, tends to equate memorization with learning. Interestingly, a very high percentage of dyslexics excel in memorization. The bottom line for the dyslexic is: "If we cannot convert our current activity to fit into our 3-dimensional thinking, then we naturally attempt to find success with memorization." In fact, memorization is really the enemy of learning. However, too often, testing for comprehension of the text just reveals a lack of understanding and content recall.

Although some of the myths have nuggets of truth to them, most are built off a foundation of misunderstanding. It is up to parents, educators, doctors and experts to come to a clearer conception of Dyslexia, understand how it affects those who are afflicted, and to do their part in disseminating accurate information that contributes to discourse.

Learn to Read So You Can Read to Learn™