

Psychological and Emotional Costs of Dyslexia

Bill Allen

The Emotional Cost of 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.

[\(Dr. Alex Granzin - Traumatized Learning: The Emotional Consequences of Protracted Reading Difficulties ; "Traumatized Learning: The Emotional Consequences of Protracted Reading Difficulties." p 1/30 Dr Granzin is a School Psychologist with the Springfield Public Schools of Oregon. He has taught courses at the University of Oregon, including behavior management and instructional consultation....\)](#)

The emotional impact of dyslexia, diagnosed or undiagnosed, on the child, the parents, and the family can be enormous, and have lifelong consequences. As the child fails to keep up in school with his friends, they learn to think, "I am dumb." (Sam Sagmiller. [Dyslexia My Life](#)) The hearts of the parents grow heavy and they feel unable to help their child, who started out as a bright, happy child. As the child continues to fall behind and fail in school, his self-esteem plummets. No one likes to feel this way, and avoidance and compensating behaviors are automatically engaged in order to reduce the pain of not being able to read like one's peers – e.g., "act-out," be aggressive and defensive, withdraw, be disruptive, go blank and numb, lack attention to the task, become anxious, depressed, angry. (Alex Granzin, PhD. p5/30; [Dr. Alex Granzin - Traumatized Learning: The Emotional Consequences of Protracted Reading Difficulties](#),) The child may be called lazy and told to "try harder." No one knows how hard the dyslexic is working to learn to read, and his attempts are judged by their limited success. In the beginning this child wants to learn to read as much as his friends in class. The child suffers because they are not given the tools that they need to accomplish this outcome.

"Up to half of the printed fourth-grade curriculum is incomprehensible to students who read below that grade level, according to the Children's Reading Foundation." ([Home - Reading Foundation](#))

The whole family carries the emotional burden, as well as the physical burden (time taken away from family activity), when one child cannot read, cannot keep up with his peers, and therefore has a very limited future-life outlook.

Like any handicapped condition, dyslexia has a tremendous impact on the child's family. However, because dyslexia is an invisible handicap, these effects are often overlooked. ([Social and Emotional Problems Related to Dyslexia | LD Topics](#); Michael Ryan, MD, International Dyslexia Association)

The Sky Village – Trail of Spells app is designed to eliminate this painful emotional impact by enabling a child to learn to read the abstract words that make up more than 85 of the TOP 100 MOST COMMONLY READ WORDS.

Growing up Dyslexic

The true effects of dyslexia go well beyond having a difficulty with words and spelling, as it also affects the ability to remember names and facts, balance and the ability to tie shoelaces and tying ties, misreading and misunderstanding the relevance of numbers, to write neatly, and to recall facts once learned (even from two minutes ago.)

("The Lifelong Social and Emotional Effects of dyslexia," Jessica Kingsley Publishers. August 26, 2015; [The lifelong social and emotional effects of dyslexia - JKP Blog](#))

Sam Sagmiller grew up as a dyslexic,

He was labeled as a LD (learning disabled) student. He is very articulate as he describes how different the world is for a dyslexic:

"Dyslexia is not a disease to have and to be cured of, but a way of thinking and learning. Often, it's a gifted mind waiting to be found and taught." (Sam Sagmiller, **Dyslexia is My Life**, 1998. [Dyslexia My Life.](#))

"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 looks different and sounds 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 - not a written word. Making a connection between all three is sometimes hard for the dyslexic." ([Dyslexia My Life](#) , Sam Sagmiller.)

General Patton grew up as a dyslexic.

The usual definition of dyslexia as "a learning disorder characterized by reading, writing and spelling reversals" is highly misleading." This description barely scratches the surface of "a complex disorder that, in addition to creating difficulties with reading and writing, includes an inability to concentrate, sharp mood swings, hyperactivity, obsessiveness, impulsiveness, compulsiveness, and feelings of inferiority and stupidity." A tendency to boast is also very common among dyslexics. Moreover, dyslexia often affects spelling, grammatical, and mathematical abilities. Like Patton, many dyslexics are eventually able to overcome the reading and writing aspects of the disorder and lead productive lives. What is often overlooked by those who perceive dyslexia as merely a reading problem is the lifelong traumatic emotional effect it has on its victims. Until recently those who studied dyslexia never seem to have grasped fully that its reading aspects were merely the tip of the iceberg. (Carlo D'Este. **Patton: A Genius for War**. 1995, p 46.)

Renowned dyslexia expert Dr. Harold C Levinson writes: “Most dyslexics feel dumb, despite being smart Most often a dyslexic’s compulsion to succeed is motivated by an overwhelming desire to prove to himself and others that he is not really as stupid as he feels. Accordingly, the dyslexic disorder frequently serves a potent stimulus to achieve, reflecting a desperate attempt to reverse the humiliating feelings of inferiority that are invariably present.

Unfortunately, tangible success and peer recognition, even adulation, do not neutralize or eliminate a dyslexic’s feeling dumb. All too often, accomplished, even famous dyslexics merely feel that they have succeeded in fooling everyone around them, and that others are not truly aware of how inept they really are, they attribute their success to chance, a lucky break, a fluke of nature.”

(Dr. Harold C Levinson quote in Carlo D’Este, *Patton: A Genius for War*, p46)

Dyslexics Learn Differently

Magical I Am recognizes that dyslexics and those who can read and don’t like to read learn differently. These children struggle the most with learning to read abstract words, which make up over 50% of the written material they read in the six formative years of elementary education. Sky Village – Trail of Spells is created to provide young children with a revolutionary way to learn to read abstract words and symbols. It resolves the many decade-old dilemma of how to teach a young child to read abstract words – they are those “little, itty-bitty words” that can cause young students to stumble while they read, misread, and misunderstand. When these children use the methods of Sky Village – Trail of Spells, they increase their grade reading level, fluency, comprehension, and, most of all, their joy of reading.

The Developing Young Brain

In the early, critical elementary grades, a child’s brain is developing its cognitive abilities. We cannot expect every young mind to switch over suddenly to being a logical thinker (thinking in symbols, words, and abstract concepts) in place of his initial style of thinking in pictures, feelings, sounds, motions, touch, and imagination. (Charles T Krebs, L.E.A.P training, 2001-2003) And, in fact, at least 20% of K-5 graders don’t make this switch, and they are poor readers, often labeled dyslexic, as they fall behind in learning to read. They do not make in these early formative grades the logical, symbolic-thinking leap that their friends make, and they get left behind as poor readers and all the stigmas that go with this label.

The Social Pressure and Esteem of Being Able to Read

A turning point comes for a parent when their child comes home from school, and says, “I am stupid.” (Sam Sagmiller, [Dyslexia My Life.](#)) 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 along with their peers. Labels are attached to the child, some about unacceptable behavior presentations (acts-out; has short attention span; inattentive; goofs-off; depressed, doesn’t try, lazy; defensive, sullen, defiant), and others about the child’s apparent inability to learn (slow, disadvantaged, dyslexic,

impaired). Labeled and feeling “stupid,” the child feels like a failure who hasn’t a chance of learning to read like his peers. This is frightening for the child and his parents. All the child’s defenses may protect him from the agony of trying and failing to read, and yet they, at the same time, condemn them to a life of limited possibilities in our world of print.

“If you are not learning to read, you are being left behind in probably the single most important process that occurs in early schooling because it’s the key to everything else that occurs.” (A. Granzin, p4/30.)

Print is everywhere in school. Print is everywhere in life.

Reading is an essential learning process that enables us to read directions, signs, prescription labels, contracts that we sign, get a driver’s license, know which bathroom to use, and who to vote for on a ballot. (A Granzin, p 4/30.)

“And if you see yourself being excluded from the process of becoming familiar with this [reading print], 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.**” (A Granzin, p4/30.)

Shame, Defeat, Self-Doubt takes over

When a child finds that they seem to lack the ability to do something their peers are learning to do, shame floods in, they doubt self and easily feel defeated. While spoken language is part of our ancient developmental heritage, written language is comparably new and an “unnatural” process to us. No child is born able to read. The child must be taught to read.

The confusion that builds in the process of failing to learn to read is different and unlike the confusion experienced in learning a spoken language, learning how to interact with people and your environment, or learning a skill. As confusion, frustration, and performance anxiety build, the child can become so stressed they are incapable of learning, answering questions, or thinking clearly.

“If a reader is struggling as their mind is trying to catch and stay entrained in the processing that is necessary to reading this code, and their frustration and confusion leads them to 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.” (A Granzin, p9/30.)

Confusion and Emotional Stress Derail the Functional Brain

Confusion and emotional stress derail the brain (anyone’s brain) of its full, integrated function. When their brain is confused and stressed, the child has little chance of learning to read. The child is likely to shift into behaviors that further reduce their chance of learning – lack of focus, fidgeting, distracted. Sometimes the child is put on medication for their apparent ADHD or other behaviors considered disruptive of learning. Some of their disruptive behaviors may subside, however medication is costly (both financially and physiologically) and does not fix the

foundational reading problem ... the child lacks the educational tools their needs to learn how to read in the way their brain works. Dyslexia cannot be “fixed” by medication.

As these children grow up, it becomes more difficult for them to shift out of the defensive behaviors that they learned to avoid the pain of failing to learn to read and feeling unequal to other children their age. Many turn to drugs and alcohol for relief, and then have to live with a “dual diagnosis” - Dyslexia and Substance Abuse. They may have learned to turn to drugs for “help” when they were medicated as young school children to control their behavior and the pain of not being able to learn to read and keep up in class.

“Dyslexia does not reflect a person’s level of intelligence or potential to succeed. Nevertheless, many children with dyslexia grow up feeling ignored, left behind or neglected in school. Dyslexia can increase a child’s risk of being marginalized socially, which can put the child at risk of using drugs or alcohol to mask feelings of isolation and depression.” ([Dyslexia and Substance Use Issues.](#))

Specialized Options Beyond Public School

Although parents ask schools to test and help their children, most schools do not provide specialized programs for dyslexics, and few of their teachers are prepared to provide the specific and direct training these children require. Dyslexia-specialized schools and training programs are only available financially to 1% of American families who can afford schools and their programs that cost up to \$40,000. Parents of children struggling to read are typically sent to Educational Psychologists, Psychiatrists, Reading Specialists, Learning Specialists, or Speech-Language Pathologists to get help for their child’s learning challenges. ([Dyslexia Treatment for Children](#))

Wayne Guest Story

When Dayne Guest was in kindergarten, his mom Pam knew “something wasn’t right.” Teachers told her to be patient, and her son would catch up with the others. At the end of 1st grade, Dayne still was not reading. His mom thought her son might have dyslexia, and the schools said “No, he doesn’t.” What could she do, they were educational experts? This pattern continued through his whole school career.

At the end of Dayne's senior year in high school, Pam learned she had a legal right to an evaluation. The school tested him, and the report said Dayne had weaknesses "often seen in students diagnosed with reading disabilities including dyslexia."

"But they would not say that he was dyslexic," said Pam. "And I asked the psychologist why, and she said we would never say that a student is dyslexic." And I said, "What do you mean?" She said, "It is not in our realm of professionalism to say that a student is dyslexic."

The reluctance to confirm that a child is "dyslexic" goes beyond avoiding a label that could harm kids. Public schools nationwide have long refused to use the word, allowing many of them to avoid providing special education services as required by federal law. According to dozens of interviews with parents, students, researchers, lawyers and teachers across the country, many public schools are not identifying students with dyslexia and are ignoring their needs. (*Emily Hanford. "How American schools fail kids with dyslexia."* [How American schools fail kids with dyslexia | Hard to Read.](#))

Medication and Dyslexia

When schools can't help, concerned parents turn to psychologists and doctors for help with their child who is not learning and is behaving in unwanted ways in school. Their child may be given a medical diagnosis that they are dyslexic, and that they may have some other co-occurring behavioral problems like ADHD. Often the child can end up on anti-anxiety medicines and anti-motion sickness drugs like Marezine, Antivert, Dramamine, Adderall, and Ritalin. These medicines may help to treat ADHD that can be co-occurrent with dyslexia, however, there is no medication that helps dyslexia! The only cure for the reading and writing problems of a dyslexic is education that fits the child's learning style.

([Top Five Dyslexia Drugs That Work Newsmax](#), "Top Five Dyslexia Drugs that Work" ... for ADHD); (Shaddi Abusaid, 2018. "Dyslexia treatment cost is prohibitive for some." [Dyslexia treatment cost prohibitive for some](#)).

Pharmaceuticals - A related cost of Dyslexia

Five commonly used medications for Dyslexia and unwanted co-occurring behaviors are Marezine, Antivert, Dramamine, Adderall, and Ritalin. Desperate parents turn to psychiatrists and doctors to help them with their child's dyslexia, and may spend large amounts of money to help their child with controversial drugs and therapies. ([Dyslexia treatment cost prohibitive for some](#)).

1. At the Controversial Dr. Levinson's Office (1985):

At 10 A.M. on a recent day, seven families waited in Dr. Harold N. Levinson's Medical Dyslexic Treatment Center. A spillover crowd sat in the building's cafeteria. Many said they had made appointments six to 12 months in advance.

Among those waiting were people from Switzerland, Sacramento, Calif., and Vancouver, British Columbia. Some of those from other countries said they had planned vacations around the visit.

They said they were willing, even eager, to pay the \$500 a visit the doctor charges and take the medications they knew would be prescribed for as long as four to six years. "It's worth the substantial expense," said one California woman, accompanying her son for treatment. "If it cost \$20,000 a year, I'd beg, borrow and steal it."

The patients and their parents said they had been everywhere for help: doctors, psychologists, reading clinics, school resource rooms. They had read all the literature. And they knew all about Dr. Levinson. They had seen Dr. Levinson with Phil Donahue or on the "Today Show", had read Levinson's two books, and hoped to be among the 75 percent of patients Levinson says he can help.

But many needing help for dyslexia are staying away from Great Neck, NY.

Dr. Levinson's critics say there is no research to confirm his basic theories about the cause of dyslexia. They also disagree with Levinson's definition of dyslexia given in an interview: "dyslexia is an inner-ear-determined disorder which can affect any one of 13 major areas, including writing, a sense of direction, speech, motor coordination, behavior and emotions - in any degree of intensity, regardless of I.Q. or reading scores." ([Doctor Fights For Dyslexia Theory](#); Barbara Klaus, Nov 24, 1985)

2. The cost of some medicines given to dyslexics:

The **cost** for **meclizine** (Antivert) oral tablet 12.5 mg is around \$10 for a supply of 7 tablets, depending on the pharmacy you visit. **Prices** are for cash paying customers only and are not valid with **insurance** plans.

The **cost** for **dimenhydrinate** injectable solution (50 mg/mL) is around \$219 for a supply of 25 milliliters, depending on the pharmacy you visit. Prices are for cash paying customers only and are not valid with insurance plans. Dimenhydrinate is a member of the anticholinergic antiemetics drug class and is commonly used for Insomnia, Motion Sickness and Nausea/Vomiting.

The **cost** for **Methylin (methylphenidate)** oral solution (5 mg/5 mL) is around \$82 for a supply of 500 milliliters, depending on the pharmacy you visit. Prices are for cash paying customers only and are not valid with insurance plans. Methylin (methylphenidate) is a member of the CNS stimulants drug class and is commonly used for ADHD and Narcolepsy.

[\(Meclizine Prices, Coupons & Patient Assistance Programs\)](#)

3. Dr Levinson's 2nd book mentions 23 drugs ...

Twenty-three drugs are mentioned in the appendix of Dr. Levinson's second book, including Antivert, Marezine, Dramamine, Atarax, Sudafed, Ritalin, Dexedrine, Cylert and Deaner. Some critics say the medications are not all harmless. ([Doctor Fights For Dyslexia Theory](#))

4. ADHD drug shows promise for treating dyslexia; Clinical Pharmacist; 2017.

<https://www.pharmaceutical-journal.com/news-and-analysis/research-briefing/adhd-drug-shows-promise-for-treating-dyslexia>

The tragedy is that there is no single test to diagnose dyslexia, and medications are only designed to modify a child's behaviors that are symptoms of a struggle with a system within which the child doesn't know how to succeed.

“Dyslexia is not a disease, and thus medication will not cure a person with dyslexia, nor will it help with the dyslexia itself. Rather, dyslexia is the result of a different style of thinking and learning, and is best addressed through educational counseling or tutoring.” (Abigail Marshal, DDAI, [Dyslexia and medication](#) .)

Science and Brain Scans

Most school psychologists, educational psychologists, psychiatrists, and teachers have no new solutions. Many of them are uninformed at any depth of high-quality academic research on dyslexia, and they avoid being pinned down and talking about dyslexia. (Allison, Inoue. 2016 Thesis; Educational Psychology and Dyslexia: An Investigation into Current Thinking and Practice. <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/ec07/11945502c3611df5081df7188e6ad1face88.pdf>.)

Educational psychologists continue to use labels to explain apparent behaviors and lack of learning. Some define dyslexia as a neurodevelopmental disorder - more labels and pigeon-holing of children instead of discovering how to help them learn to read. Biased by traditional and outdated thinking, many educational psychologists view current fMRI brain function research as supporting their decades-old assumption that there is something wrong with a dyslexic's brain – to these psychologists, the brain functions inadequately for the child to learn to read along with their peers. The fMRI research merely shows that the active areas in the brain during reading varies from dyslexic to non-dyslexic in children and in adults. There is no indication that the brain of a dyslexic is damaged! It just functions differently!

Since the 1990's, Charles Krebs, PhD, has researched extensively the brain functions of how individuals learn. He uses current research along with his research of how the brain functions, including fMRI scans, to explain how brain differences produce different thinking and learning styles. Krebs' understanding is that there is nothing wrong with the dyslexic child, they just have a different way of learning than many of their peers.

(Charles T. Krebs, PhD. L.E.A.P Brain Integration Program 2001. "The Learning Enhancement Acupressure Program is based on extensive experience with children and adults with moderate to severe Specific Learning Difficulties, including overt brain damage. It became obvious during Krebs' research that the Brain Integration Procedure growing out of his work is a fundamental function at all levels of brain function, not just academic learning. In a sense, all Life is about learning, and how well you are able to learn and integrate your life's experience determines to a large extent what you are and what you will do in your life." Krebs, LEAP 2001 manual.)

We have a problem. We are failing our children. And sadly, the Child Thinks THEY ARE the Problem.

NAEP* scores show that **64 % of 12th graders in the US read below proficiency** – many cannot read their diplomas. When individuals read below proficiency level, most opportunities are not available to them. 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 [in the US] cannot read well** – approximately 1/3 of the adult population reads below 5th grade level, and 70% of the prison population.

(pp. 12/30, 15/30, 16/30; A Granzin.) (NAEP*- is the 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."

(A Granzin, p7/30. [Dr. Alex Granzin - Traumatized Learning: The Emotional Consequences of Protracted Reading Difficulties](#))

Every Parent Wants to Help Their Child Learn to Read

Every parent wants their child to read well enough to learn and succeed in school. Sky Village – Trail of Spells provides a solution for these parents. The Sky Village – Trail of Spells App is a new

and unique digital solution designed to give all children the tools they need to learn to read abstract words and symbols, which make up over 50% of the text they read in grades K-5. The Sky Village – Trail of Spells App uses a mobile device that most families and many children have, and very affordably provides the opportunity for a child to learn to read, in their own style of learning, at their own pace, without tutoring or teachers, anywhere they take the device to play Sky Village.

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