

How to Talk Dyslexia with your Child

By Bill Allen

During my school days in the '60s and '70s, not much was known about dyslexia. It was more of a novelty to most, so I didn't hear the ludicrous/synonymous association of the terms “dyslexia” and “mental illness”. But from the '80s to the first decade of the 21st-century, the stigma of "mental illness" and “dyslexia” grew.

By the time the mid-'90s rolled around, the stigma was more than prevalent. In fact, when I coached one on one with my dyslexia students, far too many parents told me that they wanted help but I could NOT mention the word Dyslexia to their child. Despite knowing dozens upon dozens of dyslexic historical achievements, they did not want their child nor the community to know what their child's issue was. Things got so ridiculous that when I called on schools between 2000 and 2011, the term “Dyslexia” had become such a misnomer that this category of students was referred to by the politically correct term of "Special Needs.”

So much has changed in the last decade. Not only has the global dyslexic population count, estimated by the experts, grown from 5-10% to 15-20%, but the stigma associated with dyslexia has been eradicated from our educational system. Today's society is even appropriating educational money at both the state and federal levels to support recognizing that the dyslexic mind is needed going forward. However, a fundamental question lingers: How do we best teach the dyslexic to learn to read and write?

The stigma, money, and growth of the dyslexic population are immaterial to how to talk Dyslexia with your child, although, financial support is gladly welcomed!

What your child needs to know is that:

- They have a gift or a special group of talents that they can learn how to use to their benefit.
- Your child is associated with a group of individuals that has contributed mightily to the world in the past, as well as present.
- And yes, dyslexia will continue to contribute and impact their life as well as the world going forward.

How many famous dyslexics do you know? You may be surprised when you look at [the list](#). They have excelled in the disciplines of art (photography, painting, and even writing), drama (acting and filmmaking), music, sport, strategy (politics and military), science (engineering, architecture, as well as invention), and a talent that can't be categorized – intuition (knowing what comes next). In short, they have made their mark on society and continue to do so.

I recommend that you point out to your child these past and modern-day heroes/achievers. Let your child know they too can achieve whatever their gift is. However, they will have to work to

discover their talent and then develop this special gift(s). Most importantly, they need to know they are one of the lucky ones that has the gift of seeing and doing what has not been done before.

By the way, anyone would want to be dyslexic if there wasn't a reading and writing challenge associated with it. ~ Bill Allen

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