

Teaching Guide/Resources

Inside Dyslexia “Seeing through a different lens”

By Josh Easdon and Nate Hamlin LD Productions LLC www.INSIDEDYSLEXIA.COM

INTRODUCTION

Carmen, Gio and Amanda are unique individuals with unique learning disabilities. *Inside Dyslexia* profiles these incredible students to help us understand the challenges, perspectives and triumphs individuals with learning disabilities and their families undergo each day, in and out of school.

Carmen struggles specifically with written language. She had difficulty learning to read in spite of her impressive verbal skills. She reports relying on her impressive memory in order to hide her struggle. Her specific learning disability is *Dyslexia*.

Gio struggles primarily with attention and organization. This leads to gaps in his knowledge and difficulty organizing and prioritizing materials and tasks. His learning disability is *Attention Deficit Disorder*.

Amanda struggles with math. She interprets everything about the world of numbers as a foreign language, making it challenging and frustrating to understand or perform mathematical calculations or to use mathematical reasoning. Her learning disability is *Dyscalculia*.

Carmen, Gio and Amanda all struggle with various aspects of school and each finds ways to succeed. Their recipes for success, like their learning disabilities, are as unique as they are.

This video provides an excellent introduction, explanation and insight into the life of learning-disabled people. Parents and teachers of all children can benefit from this video as it provides humor, perspective and hope.

VIDEO GUIDE

Use these questions and answers to guide your viewing of Inside Dyslexia and to enhance your understanding of learning disabilities.

What is a learning disability?

While experts vary slightly on some of the finer points of the definition, most agree on the definition provided by the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities (LDA):

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Specific Learning Disabilities is a chronic condition of presumed neurological origin, which selectively interferes with the development, integration, and/or demonstration of verbal and/or nonverbal abilities. Specific Learning Disabilities exists as a distinct handicapping condition and varies in its manifestations and in degree of severity. Throughout life, the condition can affect self-esteem, education, vocation, socialization and/or daily living activities (1986).

Dyslexia, Attention Deficit Disorder and Dyscalculia all fall under the broader umbrella of learning disabilities. A student may display characteristics of one or several specific learning disabilities. The degree of severity and the areas the disability affects may change over time, but learning disabilities are a life-long condition. Therefore, early identification and intervention for individuals with learning disabilities is crucial. We live in an exciting time when more information about the brain and how information is acquired and processed is available daily.

Inside Dyslexia provides a snapshot of three individuals who have succeeded with, in spite of, or because of their learning disabilities.

YEAR ONE

Carmen was diagnosed with *Dyslexia* as a young child.

- What were some early signs of Carmen’s reading difficulties?
- How did these difficulties affect her in and out of school?
- What steps did her family take in order to address her difficulties?

Gio’s mother reports his diagnosis to be *Attention Deficit Disorder* with a language delay.

- What are the signs of his struggles with attention?
- How does his lack of attention affect his learning in all academic areas?
- Do you see any evidence of difficulties with spoken or written language?

Amanda was diagnosed with *Dyscalculia* as a young child. Even in a specialized environment, she continues to struggle with all aspects of math.

- How does this struggle appear to affect other parts of her learning?

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YEAR TWO

Carmen

We have the opportunity to listen to Carmen’s parents and teachers describe the strides she has made and the opportunity to observe Carmen’s growth as a learner.

- Although reading and writing are specific areas with which Carmen struggles significantly, how do these struggles affect other academic areas?
- What particular strengths does Carmen have that allow her to be more than her learning disability?

Gio

Gio struggled through one year of high school and managed to pass all of his classes and avoid summer school. While this is a victory in itself, the larger success is his development of a more positive self-image and his ability to understand himself as a learner. His teachers report that he makes strides academically and socially. In the first year that we meet Gio, we can see that he observes the behavior of other students and uses that as a guide.

- How has Gio managed to make this strategy useful to him in the second year that we watch him?
- What particular strengths does Gio have that allow him to be more than his learning disability?

Amanda

In the first year that we meet Amanda, we can see that she works hard to avoid math and has little systematic strategies for organizing her knowledge.

- What can we see her doing in her second year that has helped her retain and organize the information in a way that is more useful to her?
- Amanda struggles primarily with math but her organizational skills are also quite challenged.
- How does this difficulty affect her learning?
- What particular strengths does Amanda have that allow her to be more than her learning disability?

Each of the students finds success through different paths but none of them do so alone.

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- What supports make their success more likely?

Carmen, Gio and **Amanda** are remarkable individuals made even more so through the support of their families.

- What has each family done to help contribute to the success of their children?

GLOSSARY

Attention Deficit Disorder/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is categorized under three different types by the American Psychiatric Association’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*.

ADHD, Predominantly Inattentive Type refers to an individual with at least six symptoms of inattention that have persisted for at least 6 months to a degree that is not consistent with the individual’s developmental stage.

ADHD, Predominantly Hyperactive-Impulsive Type refers to an individual with at least six symptoms of hyperactivity and/or impulsivity that have persisted for at least 6 months to a degree that is not consistent with the individual’s developmental stage.

ADHD, Combined Type refers to an individual with at least six symptoms of each type of ADHD that have persisted for at least 6 months to a degree that is not consistent with the individual’s developmental stage.

Dyscalculia is a widely used term for disabilities in mathematics. It is a severe or inability to perform mathematical calculations.

Dysnomia is a word-finding problem in which a person may speak in vague terms and struggle to find the precise words to describe a situation, event or thing. This is an expressive language difficulty.

Dyslexia is a widely used term for disabilities in reading. It is a severe impairment in the ability to read that is generally thought to be due to neurological factors.

Pragmatics is the way language is used in social situations, including body language, word choice and tone. This is context dependent. Many students with learning disabilities struggle to “read” social cues.

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Expressive Language is language one can understand and use correctly. Children with language delays often use fewer words, shorter sentences and less specific words in order to express their thoughts, ideas and needs in either speaking or writing.

Receptive Language is the language a listener is able to understand. Children with language delays often struggle to understand words and word relationships, which can lead to communication difficulties as well as comprehension problems in reading.

RESOURCES

Websites

Council for Exceptional Children

www.cec.sped.org

Provides information to parents and professionals regarding new research about learning disabilities, workshops, speakers, publications, legal rights and career opportunities.

International Dyslexia Association

www.interdys.org

Provides information to parents and professionals regarding new research about learning disabilities, workshops, speakers and publications.

LD Online

www.ldonline.org

Provides links to many resources on all aspects of learning disabilities as well as a full archive of articles for and by professionals, parents and individuals with learning disabilities.

Learning Disabilities Association of America

www.ldanatl.org

Provides information to parents and professionals regarding new research about learning disabilities, workshops, speakers and publications.

Resources for Children with Special Needs

www.resourcesnyc.org

Provide information (in English and Spanish) through special events, directories, workshops, and advocacy services.

National Center for Learning Disabilities

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www.NCLD.org

Provides information to parents, professionals and individuals with learning disabilities, while promoting research and special programs.

Books

To Read or Not to Read: Answers to All Your Questions about Dyslexia by Daphne Hurford. New York: Scribner, 1998.

Driven to Distraction: Recognizing and Coping with Attention Deficit Disorder from Childhood through Adulthood by Edward M. Hallowell, M.D., and John J. Ratey, M.D. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994.

Childhood Speech, Language & Listening Problems by Patricia McAleer Hamaguchi. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2001.

It's Nobody's Fault: New Hope and Help for Difficult Children by Harold S. Koplewicz, M.D. New York: Times Books, Random House, 1996.

All Kinds of Minds by Dr. Mel Levine. Cambridge, MA: Educators Publishing Service, 1993.

A Mind at a Time by Dr. Mel Levine. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002.

Educational Care by Dr. Mel Levine. Cambridge, MA: Educators Publishing Service, 2002.

Keeping A Head in School by Dr. Mel Levine. Cambridge, MA; Educators Publishing Service, 1990.

Succeeding with LD * 20 True Stories About Real People with LD by Jill Lauren, M.A. Free Spirit Publishing, 1997.

Lifers: Learning from At-Risk Adolescent Readers by Pamela N. Mueller. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001.

Learning Disabilities & Life Stories by Pano Rodis, Andrew Garrod and Mary Lynn Boscardin. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2001.

The Misunderstood Child: Understanding and Coping with Your Child's Learning Disabilities by Larry B. Silver, M.D. New York: Three Rivers Press, 1998.

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Hallahan, Daniel P., Lloyd, John W., Kauffman, James M., Weiss, Margaret P. & Martinez, Elizabeth A. Learning Disabilities: Foundations, Characteristics, and Effective Teaching. Boston, MA: Pearson.