



James' story: maybe it's NOT the dyslexics who are disabled

Frank Johnston, Editor

Reading James' story was another step for me in my continuing education.

In recent years I've learnt to agree with Sir Richard Branson - dyslexia is not a disability but simply a different way of thinking, and requires a different way of teaching.

James has taken me a step further - are the dyslexics indeed the gifted and us 'normal' lineal or word thinkers disabled?

James makes an obvious claim... "Non-dyslexics, as lovely as many of them are, just don't have the ability to understand us."

Then takes it further: "Their disability... manifests as a gray scale in our wonderful world of colour."

"They can only construct one scenario at a time from introduced stimuli; one answer at a time where we know of numerous other possibilities."

James contends it must be 'hard for them (non-dyslexics) to cope. Regrettably, all too often, they are not even aware of their limitations."

From my experience James' last claim rings true; for the large majority of the population who are not dyslexic there is little or no awareness of the marvellous gifts, creative-ness, problem solving skills and visual thinking style of around 10 - 15% of the community.

And that description probably fits the 2, 3 or even more dyslexic students in every classroom in our schools.

Instead they are seen as underperformers who struggle with literacy, sometimes maths, who may be 'day dreamers', 'lazy', 'don't try hard enough' when they are probably among the most intelligent pupils in the class.



James Lukac has a Bachelors Degree in Security, Terrorism and Counterterrorism and a Masters in Policing, Intelligence and Counterterrorism.

From our experience in our *Dyslexia WA* office it has been a pleasure and a privilege to interact with so many talented people (children and adults) who are gifted and who struggle with some aspects of their learning simply because they have a different way of processing information.

Once they are on track with the right tools they simply progress and succeed. Many of the students with whom Annette has worked have told us years later of the wonderful successes they have experienced after using well suited learning strategies.

University Studies

James successfully completed University studies with Bachelor and Masters degrees.

He urges anyone intending to study to let Uni staff know about their dyslexia with the hope the staff will recognise the difference the dyslexic student will bring to approaches and insights other students may not have.

Of his tutors and lecturers James said "They were routinely delighted with the directions my work took, with critical thinking displayed, and its unique focus. 'James I would never have thought to approach it from that angle'."

"Higher learning staff recognise that *mode of learning* and *capacity for learning* are two different things"

James is grateful for his discussions with Brenda Baird from Dyslexia Australia (based in Brisbane). "What you told me made me feel like a valid thinking person, rather than the goose I had been brought up to believe."

"I look at my degrees daily and remind myself they were hard earned, and make a point of highlighting to myself, and anyone who will listen, that my high average was a result of a wonderful gift."



Dyslexia: not a disability, but a visual-spatial thinking style which succeeds with a visual-spatial teaching style.

Teachers, Education Assistants, Home Schoolers, anyone who wants to successfully work with people described as dyslexic:

Davis Learning Strategies (DLS) is a 2 day Professional Development in which strategies for working with dyslexic students are explained and practised. It is particularly suited for Junior Primary classes. See <https://www.davislearn.com/> and <http://www.davidyslexia.com.au/teacher-training.html>

In Western Australia a DLS PD program can be arranged, 10 people or more are needed to register their interest. (Provider Gail Hallinan, the only licensed provider of DLS in Australia and NZ has to travel from Sydney).

Cost is \$650 for the two days: email your interest in a PD to take place in 2018 (date and time to be decided); please provide your name and contact email and number to info@dyslexiacorrection.com.au

Welcome to the new premises

from our WA colleagues, *Dyslexia WA*



Come on in

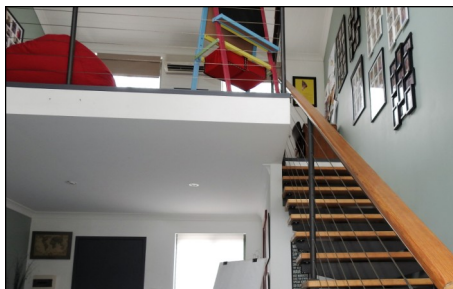
Recently Annette Johnston from Dyslexia WA was able to move into a new work place better suited to providing assistance for people learning new skills to overcome their literacy or maths difficulties.



A comfortable, well lit interior

"After being told we had to move, along with other tenants, from the Council owned building, a search of possibilities

looked bleak until a bit of luck brought us to the present building which we were able purchase rather than lease. "

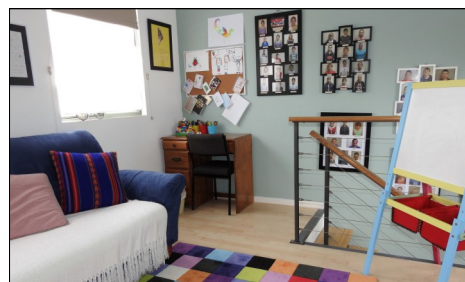


Fun upstairs

The spacious ground floor is complemented with a mezzanine floor which provides students with a break area along with games and very popular building activities.

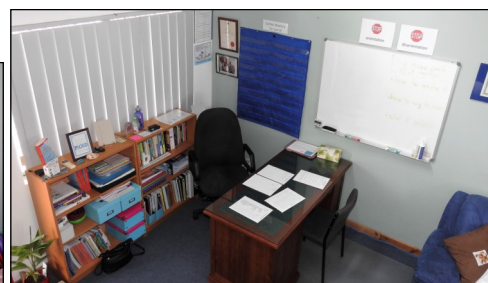


Games, books, relax



Imagination and construction area

Around the walls are the 'rogues gallery' of over 110 students who have completed the Davis Program and, from emails and messages received, have gone on, armed with effective strategies to successful academic futures.



Where the work happens

"D" is for Dyslexia and 3-D thinking

From Bowen Island Undercurrent
November 3, 2017 10:18 AM

Lacey O'Neill and Twyla Lotenberg have been getting together on a weekly basis lately to build plasticine sculptures of words like "on," or "at," or "through."

"They're trigger words," explains Lacey. "They don't really have a picture associated with them so when we're reading, our brains get tripped up and lose track and we don't understand what we're reading anymore."

Both Lacey (grade 12) and Twyla (grade 8) have been diagnosed with dyslexia, and the work they do together is just one tool they use to navigate a school-system based on a two-dimensional understanding of the world, instead of the three-dimensional perspective they prefer.

"I've been able to understand really complicated math stuff, concepts about time and space, since I was really little," says Twyla. "Math as a whole is easy for me. Graphs, I love graphs!"

"But word problems are the worst!" Says Lacey, who says she aced all her math tests last year without even studying.

Dyslexia is one of the most common learning disabilities, and tends to make reading more difficult.



Lacey O'Neill and Twyla Lotenberg get together regularly to do exercises that help them overcome their challenges with reading and writing.

Photo by MERIBETH DEEN

Both Lacey and Twyla laugh as they remember struggling through the easy readers in grade school while their peers were zipping through the more advanced ones.

"I think teachers found it really hard for me to be in their class," says Lacey. "I also have ADD, which is really common for people with dyslexia, so they couldn't really get me to focus on anything."

Despite these memories, both Lacey and Twyla are excelling in school now. Lacey is at Rockridge and has been awarded honours with distinction for three years in a row now. She says her teachers don't even know she's dyslexic.

"If I hadn't gotten help, I would've hated school," she says. "English is not my favourite, and taking notes really doesn't work for me but... I'm proof – no kid should have to suffer because she or he has dyslexia. It's just entirely unnecessary."

That's what she wants people to be aware of this October, which is Dyslexia Awareness month, and also, that this particular brain wiring is not a developmental disorder.

"There is nothing wrong with us at all, we are just 3-d thinkers in a 2-d world," she says.

And from a parent's perspective, Twyla's mom has more to add.

"Kids need to be given the support to understand that they can really achieve very high standards of success," she says. "But if they limit themselves to trying to think and approach things the way everyone else is doing, they just won't do as well. They need strategies, and it's up to parents and teachers to help promote the strengths these kids do have."



Article from
<http://www.bowenislandundercurrent.com/community/d-is-for-dyslexia-and-3-d-thinking>
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