

## **If Your Child Suffers In School, The Solution Is Here**

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As I prepared to write this article I thought for hours about the title and what I would call it hoping to get your attention. I knew the word "suffer" would do just that. Especially if your child is one of them. According to Webster's dictionary, it means, "to endure, to feel pain or distress", and the Canadian Thesaurus meaning of the word is "ache, agonize, grieve...deteriorate, fall off". Wow. How many kids in the system today who struggle with fluent reading skills, problem solving in math, the inability to complete homework, not able to comprehend, do you think probably feel that way? And how many of them "fall through the cracks" and are misdiagnosed while their parents, who also suffer heartache, attempt to find not just a reason, but also a solution.

I was one of those parents. I, like most, relied on the public school system to 'figure out' what was wrong with my son. I knew he was unusually bright but the arguing and frustration kept me thinking he had a learning disability. Otherwise known on the playground as retarded or stupid. But he was thoughtful, mild-mannered, and he had a great sense of humor. He even became the class clown in grade 5. He was musically inclined, he excelled in sports, but he was missing something in his schoolwork that no one could explain. So we agreed to put him on medication suggested by the school and completely against my better judgement. My gut told me it wasn't ADD.

It didn't last long and as time progressed his self-esteem plummeted to his toes, so we decided to end the roller-coaster ride the side effects of Ritalin had on him. He made his way into secondary school as an average student just skimming by and just this year applied everything he had and graduated. And fortunately, he told us that he belonged in a 'hands on' technical school to complete his final year. Because he may not have been successful otherwise. And in this case, folks, hindsight is not everything. This could have been prevented had I been aware of the characteristics and been provided with the tools necessary to correct my son's learning disability.

Today, I am quite proud to be the bridge to the answers that you need. A few weeks ago I met a couple of extraordinary people at The Lambeth Learning Centre on Colonel Talbot Road. I respond to an assignment from my publisher asking if I would do a write-up on their new instructor, Mary Ann Kettlewell, who is a licensed and certified facilitator of the Davis Dyslexia Correction® Program. Yes, dyslexia and the gift of it. Now, don't stop reading simply because you get the visual image of letters pointing the wrong way and succumb to the myth that these children (and adults) are non-functioning members of society. As I talked with Moe McLaughlin, the owner of Educational Help Centres Inc. I immediately began personalizing everything I was learning. The characteristics, the examples, they were all too familiar to me. So I continued to listen with intense curiosity.

Mary Ann Kettlewell is a soft spoken, genuine, country girl who discovered the Davis Dyslexia Correction® Program while trying endlessly to help her own nephew. After many disappointments and a lot of traveling, she set out on her own and began a journey of research that found her embarking on a program that was created in California in 1982 by a man named Ron Davis. Davis was functionally until age 38. He became a successful engineer, artist, and businessman. In his book, *The Gift of Dyslexia*, Davis reveals a number of famous dyslexics. People such as Alexander Graham Bell, Henry Ford, Cher and Walt Disney to name a few. The Davis program continues to explain that the mental function that causes dyslexia is a natural ability, a talent. It is something special that enhances the individual. The following is a quick checklist of a few traits:

- They are highly aware of their environment
- They are curious about how things work
- They have vivid imaginations
- They think mainly in pictures instead of words
- They can utilize the brain's ability to alter and create perceptions (the primary ability)
- They think and perceive multi-dimensionally (using all the senses)

What really hit home for me was when Mary Ann made me realize that as toddlers our children don't really learn the alphabet. They learn the song. And if you take the time to sing the song to yourself right now, you will see how easy it would be for a child to be confused about the last line "W, X, Y and Z". A dyslexic child thinks there is an additional letter- and. Fortunately, a correction program such as Davis will help children to master letters and words so that they can visualize them and eliminate the disorientation. The program focuses on verbal and non-verbal conceptualization emphasizing that reading a sentence while using non-verbal thought can produce dyslexic symptoms. The development of the picture being formed is stopped each time an unknown word is encountered, because it creates a blank spot in the overall picture. Each time the picture making process is stopped, the person will feel confused. Soon they will reach their threshold of confusion and become disoriented.

We received a phone call from the grade 5 teacher one day, that our son had found a piece of wool like material on the floor under his desk during math. Apparently, he had used the entire period to turn that piece of wool into a 'sweater' and hadn't gotten any work done. I remember disciplining him like always and didn't discover the truth until just the other night, some nine years later. I broke down in tears as I discovered that my son did indeed have the gift of dyslexia and as we traveled down memory lane he recalled that time quite vividly like he does with everything and said "I knew all the answers, I could see them in my head..But I couldn't explain how I got them and I got bored." We just thought he wasn't trying hard enough. And it was perpetuated by the reports that were sent home constantly

inferring that he " wasn't performing up to his full potential". No kidding. We just didn't know what to do.

Mary Ann has a warm and inviting personality as well as a comfortable learning environment at The Lambeth Learning Centre. I have been honored to speak to a couple of parents on the phone that when asked how the Davis Dyslexia Correction® Program helped their sons and daughters, proudly report, "It has changed our lives". "We read together and he doesn't burst into tears". "He shows me tests where he has received the highest mark in the class!" "Mary Ann, you turned this little boy's life around....we are forever grateful." So am I Mary Ann. Our only regret is not being able to take advantage of the incredible amount of talent my son has at an earlier age knowing that he has the gift of dyslexia. But we are going to watch him soar now as each of us take with us into the future the awareness and the desire to correct it so that he can contain it and use it to it's fullest potential.

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