

Let's start off by having you tell us about yourself. What would you like folks to know about you?

I'm dyslexic, dyscalculic and I have a speech impediment, though many people wouldn't notice. I spent a lot of time volunteering at the Lacey library as a teen, where I've now worked as a library assistant for 9 years this October. I was there almost every week and most days in the summer for 4 years before becoming a library aide. Raina S., Kristi S. and Rachel I.-M. were my librarians and I feel I wouldn't be working in the library today without the impact they made or the support of my English teacher.

I loved reading and learning as a kid, still do! I would call myself a reluctant reader as a kid, but looking back I read a lot growing up. Many people with learning disabilities like dyslexia, were/are reluctant readers or didn't/don't find joy in reading. Some people find joy in reading when they're older and some don't, and that's okay! Everyone is different.

Growing up, I was the kid in class that would do book reports on animals and give them to my teacher unasked. I was also the kid in class that struggled to read text books and hated reading out loud in class. I also would go to the kindergarten class to read to the kids.
#MakesSenseWhenYou'reDyslexic

How old were you when you first realized there was something different about how your brain worked? What did you notice, and how did you feel about it?

I didn't truly realize that my brain worked differently until I was in my early 20's. Around 2nd or 3rd grade, I was pulled from class for speech lessons for a year and had additional classes through middle school. Even after I started speech therapy and additional classes, it wasn't explained to me why I was in these classes. I knew I needed more help in some subjects, being a pretty oblivious kid I never lingered on it. Learning what it meant to be dyslexic as an adult was a light bulb moment, it was relieving to actually understand myself. I started really looking at how I was interacting with the world and thinking "Wow, this is why I learn better kinetically" or "Now I understand why I read at a snail's pace, but can listen to an audio book at 2.5 speed". I also started researching dyslexia and really applying tools that I used as a kid and some new ones to my life.

When you discovered you had dyslexia, did that change anything about how you felt about that 'something different'? If so, how did it change you?

Learning I had dyslexia as a young kid, didn't impact how I felt about myself or how I interacted with the world. Though, as I got older, I did start to feel different and embarrassed at times. I think I really strived to prove growing up that I was just as smart as everyone else. I took advanced lit classes, 2 language classes and advanced orchestra and when I first started in the library, I learned everything available to me and still seek to know about anything new. Now, I'm still a curious person and am always looking to learn new things, but because I want to, not to prove an assessment wrong or meet a standard.

My dad is dyslexic and dyslexia is hereditary, though my dad and I experience dyslexia very differently. Looking back, I benefited from having a positive dyslexic figure growing up. He cemented that it's okay for me to do things differently or take my time. Even now, I do get embarrassed sometimes. But, because of him, I'm able to accept that it was okay for me to do things like play cello even if I can't read the music the "right" way or work in a library even though my spelling is awful. Learning I have dyslexia hasn't changed me, but rather the people who support me and my experiences with how people see me because of it have.

As a library employee where reading is something we do every day, has dyslexia helped your work, or hindered it, or really not made much difference?

Thankfully, I'm a pretty proficient reader now. I do still mix up things and am a slow reader, but I don't find it impacts me much. I feel quite lucky to live in the age of technology, I use the "OpenDyslexic font" anywhere that I can and spell check is great. Digital accessibility has really changed my life! That said, dyslexia can affect more than just how someone reads and comprehends written language.

My brain receives and processes information differently, I process things backwards first and convert information. But, I've found that I've got a great set of skills because I see the world differently and have spent my life finding ways to do something that doesn't come naturally to me. I'm not afraid to try things that might not work. I'm a very effective and active problem solver and I think that has equipped me to better serve our community. I love a challenge and find a lot of joy in helping people. I think I'm suited to the phrase "Jack of all trades is a master of none, but oftentimes better than a master of one".

I have a family member who is 73 years old and is dyslexic, though he wasn't diagnosed until he was in his fifties. When he was growing up, he was told he was 'slow' even though he has a quick wit, an extensive vocabulary, and did well in subjects that didn't involve having to spell things correctly. Do you think things have improved in identifying dyslexia and how it is addressed in the schools?

My dad is 61 and had a very similar experience growing up in northern California. My experience with the school system was decidedly better. There were plenty of negative comments and low expectations for me, but there was also a lot of additional support. Overall I think some of the negativity around learning disabilities has lessened and early dyslexia screening in classrooms via the teacher's assessment, access to reading tools, technology and additional lessons has greatly improved. That said it's very dependent on the teacher you have, the school system it's self and each family and child. Not everyone has a positive experience with screening or the additional help provided by schools. There are also many accommodations or modifications for yourself or for your kids in schools now!

What would you like others to know about dyslexia?

Dyslexia can impact us beyond or reading comprehension and ability to spell. Many dyslexic people have accompanying diagnoses that also contribute to how they interact with the world, some of them being auditory processing disorder (APD), dyspraxia, dyscalculia, and specific language impairment (SLI).

Being dyslexic is different for each person. Yes, there are shared traits and experiences, but we're all different and it's important to see that. Dyslexia isn't something that I define myself by, it's not something I think about often. I recognize it's a part of me, but I'm so much more and so is everyone else with dyslexia. I'm proud of all my fellow dyslexics and all their accomplishments.

All seriousness aside, though, can we start a petition to change the spelling of "Dyslexia"? I just stopped being able to put the letters in the right order, even after just typing it 19 times!

What things (tools, supports, behaviors) make things better for folks with dyslexia?

Here are a few behaviors I've learned about myself:

- **Interest = effort** If I'm interested in something, I'll put in more effort.
- **If I'm not interested, I reward myself.** *Example:* When I finish this chapter, I can take a break.
- **I communicate better verbally.** For writing and emails, I follow a structure: *Greeting--> reason--> response/action--> signoff.*
- **Directionals are reversed.** I tend to think right-to-left or bottom-to-top. If accuracy matters, I slow down and focus.
Example: I will always write 'y' backward when I'm rushing, so I've learned to slow down when it counts or not to worry about it.

Supports I use:

Advocate for yourself or your child - there are many classroom and workplace accommodations available.

<https://dyslexiaida.org/accommodations-for-students-with-dyslexia/>

<https://ldaamerica.org/>

[https://dsf.net.au/professionals/teachers-and-tutors/supporting-students-with-learning-difficulties-in-/what-are-accommodations?
srsltid=AfmBOoo6aWirjUeKYzVDfa7yqugl2hkkducoF4MnA4hnKn1g4d9J03D8](https://dsf.net.au/professionals/teachers-and-tutors/supporting-students-with-learning-difficulties-in-/what-are-accommodations?srsltid=AfmBOoo6aWirjUeKYzVDfa7yqugl2hkkducoF4MnA4hnKn1g4d9J03D8)

Tools that I have found helpful:

- Reading Rulers
- Website audio readers or closed captioning
- Digital or audio books
- Voice-to-text software
- High-contrast or sepia backgrounds
- Fonts like OpenDyslexic, Arial, or Open Sans
- Increased letter spacing and paragraph breaks

Formatting Tips

- 1.5 - 2 line spacing
- 12 - 14 pt text size
- Break long text into smaller paragraphs
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These adjustments improve visual processing and readability.