

Kathleen Dunbar, MA, CHT, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist #MFT 39880

Offices: Throughout California via Telehealth; San Francisco; Marin

Phone: (415) 668-5130

Web: www.kathleendunbar.net

Email: kathleen@kathleendunbar.net

Web: www.dyslexicselfesteem.com

For Dyslexics—You Are Amazing!

By Kathleen Dunbar, CA Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, Certified Hakomi Therapist

Welcome from Kathleen Dunbar and Joseph Feusi

You're dyslexic? Wow! That means you have some amazing gifts! The planet needs your unique brilliance!

Welcome!

As many of you have found in your travels through life as a dyslexic, there are not a lot of resources available to explain what it means emotionally to be dyslexic. There are even less resources to help you have a positive outlook and positive self esteem. We've created this website to give you accurate information about your journey through life as a dyslexic, and also to help you embody your fantastic gifts as a dyslexic person. **As you journey through our pages, our hope is that what you find will alleviate and heal the negative stigma associated with dyslexia, and help you reach the fulfillment that is your birthright as the amazing dyslexic person that you are.**

One of the amazing things about dyslexics is that each of you has your own expression of your strengths and challenges. No one dyslexic is like another. The diversity of your gifts is extraordinary! You will find prominent dyslexics in the fields of Arts and Humanities, Architecture, Engineering, Entrepreneurship and Leadership. Your Iphone, the car, the light bulb, and the airplane are only a few of the many things dyslexics have given the world.

Learn About Dyslexia

Dyslexics are here on this earth to do great things! They have all the necessary gifts and skills to create a positive future for themselves and for humanity. Did you know that 50% of NASA employees are dyslexic. And that at the nation's top engineering school, dyslexia is known as the "MIT disease" because dyslexics are so brilliant and there are so many of them there.

Dyslexia is a learning difference, it is not a learning disability. If the gene pool didn't want to have dyslexia, it would have long since thrown you, the dyslexic, in the dust bin of genetics. Instead, according to renowned physician, Sally Shaywitz, M.D., co-founder of the Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity, 1 in 5 people are dyslexic! We need you!

Consider all the unique thinkers, inventors, artists, leaders and musicians who have brought their unique vision to the world not in spite of, but *because of their dyslexic gifts!* Leonardo Da Vinci, Winston Churchill, John F. Kennedy, Picasso, Agatha Christie and John Lennon are just a few of your many dyslexic brothers and sisters!

The **Learn About Dyslexia** pages provide information about how the dyslexic brain works, and the unique gifts, challenges and tradeoffs of the dyslexic thinking process. Find them here: <https://dyslexicselfesteem.com/learn-about-dyslexia>

Self Esteem and Healing Hurt

Most people weren't educated in a formal school system until the mid-1800s, which is where the trouble began. The conventional education system offers a one-size-fits-all teaching approach which abandons dyslexics. This is painfully apparent in what happens to our youth: 32% of students with dyslexia/LD drop out of high school or do not receive a regular diploma, and 50% of youth in the juvenile justice system have dyslexia/LD. This is a sad and unnecessary outcome. It has also been shown that the methods which benefit dyslexic learning are also beneficial for non-dyslexic children.

There are many systems, educational and social, that seem to be hell bent on destroying dyslexic people's self esteem, and not many resources to empower them. So we made the decision to make this website to self empower you.

There are websites available that explain the neurodiversity of the dyslexic brain, and others which provide guidance for a dyslexic child's learning process. However, there isn't much information available about the real hit to self esteem, the tragic loss of self expression and the life that could have been, and the resulting life long sorrow and disbelief in oneself which arises out of educational and social experiences growing up dyslexic.

It is often the experience of dyslexics that school is hell, and every day can feel like a forced march into a war zone. We feel it's vital to name the very specific hurts and resulting negative beliefs in order to bear witness to the suffering. It's important to be able to give a name to what happened to you, and have that witnessed and understood because that is part of the healing journey. ***And we feel it's so crucial that you understand that the hurt is what happened to you, it is not who you are or ever were. You are amazing and we want you to know that.*** To support you in your healing journey, we have provided what we call "Help on the Quest" which are suggestions, inspirations and concrete steps you can take to reclaim your self esteem and your birthright of incredible creativity and unique vision. Look for this information in the Self Esteem and Healing Hurt pages: <https://dyslexicselfesteem.com/self-esteem-and-healing-hurt>.

As you raise your awareness of your gifts, you can embrace them; as you become aware of your challenges, you can find support; and as you become aware of your

limiting beliefs, you can transform them into nourishing, true beliefs that reflect your uniqueness and your power.

Therapy and Mentoring

You will need support for healing your trauma and profound shame. We want you to be able to reach out for help to therapists and mentors/coaches. However, many professionals do not understand the dyslexic experience, and if they don't they won't meet your needs as a dyslexic! Our website provides a list of therapeutic modalities that best serve dyslexic clients, and **a checklist for you to use to vet your prospective professional to make sure they fully understand the needs of a dyslexic.** Learn more on the Therapy and Mentoring page: <https://dyslexicselfesteem.com/therapy-and-mentoring>

Joseph and Kathleen

Joseph is available worldwide as a **mentor/coach** for dyslexic clients; and also as a **consultant** for professionals who work with dyslexic clients. He is a dyslexic himself, and knows the journey from the inside out. Learn more about Joseph Feusi, Mentor and Consultant here: <https://dyslexicselfesteem.com/about-joseph-feusi-mentor-and-consultant>

Kathleen is available in California as a **psychotherapist** for dyslexic clients; and also worldwide as a **consultant** for professionals who work with dyslexic clients. She became passionate about dyslexia because her partner, Joseph, is profoundly dyslexic and profoundly amazing! Learn more about **Kathleen Dunbar, Psychotherapist and Consultant** here: <https://dyslexicselfesteem.com/about-kathleen-dunbar-psychotherapist-and-consultant>

We believe in you! You are the future! We're here to empower dyslexics and inspire you to reclaim your positive self esteem!

Joseph and Kathleen

For Dyslexics—Intro

What you'll find on these pages.

These pages and articles are dedicated to understanding:

- **What dyslexia is.**
- The unique challenges of growing up dyslexic on emotional wellbeing: **key areas of difficulty and suggestions for support.**
- The kinds of **psychotherapy and mentoring/coaching that are best suited for dyslexics.**
- **Resources:** Videos of dyslexics speaking about their experiences; books and articles; inspiration and information.

You'll also find all this information in **one document**—go to the Dyslexia Matters Blog and look for the Blog Post called *For Dyslexics—You Are Amazing!* at this link: <https://dyslexicselfesteem.com/dyslexia-matters-blog>

Would you like to have a **PDF with all of this information in one document?** Great! Find the Article called *For Dyslexics—You Are Amazing!* on the Articles page at this link: <https://dyslexicselfesteem.com/articles>

Dyslexia—Facts, Myths, Statistics, and The Hell of School

The Dyslexic Advantage

You're dyslexic? Wow! That means you have some amazing gifts! The planet needs your unique brilliance! First thing—let's talk about dyslexia as an advantageous expression of **neural diversity** rather than as a disability. Here's some things to keep in mind:

- **The dyslexic brain has some interesting differences that are distinct advantages.** For example, dyslexics easily and rapidly see the “big picture” in unique and creative ways that allow them to innovate (Steve Jobs), accurately predict outcomes as in the financial world (Charles Schwab) understand antecedents (the paleontologist Jack Horner), or to express in creative ways that are new (Pablo Picasso).
- **Here are four areas where dyslexics especially excel:**
 - **The Arts and Humanities:** Dyslexics make great writers, filmmakers, actors, artists, musicians, counselors and coaches, teachers and public speakers.
 - **Architecture:** Dyslexics are wonderful architectural designers, contractors, and builders.
 - **In the Engineering field** you'll find dyslexic mathematicians, mechanics, physicists, and computer scientists.
 - **Entrepreneurship** is another field well-suited to dyslexics, where they are self made entrepreneurs, financial wizards and sales people, and leaders.
- **Dyslexics . . .**
 - are highly curious
 - have great intuition and insight
 - think and perceive multi-dimensionally (using all the senses)
 - have a lively imagination
 - are very creative
 - see the big picture (don't get lost in details and are able to see the important aspects)
 - can recognize patterns, connections and similarities
 - can be very driven, ambitious and persistent
 - are capable of seeing things differently than others
- **Right this moment you are benefiting from the brilliance of the dyslexic mind.** Dyslexic inventors have given you the car (Henry Ford), your Iphone (Steve Jobs), the light bulb (Thomas Edison), the first phone (Alexander Graham Bell), the CDs you use (James Russell), the airplane (the Wright Brothers). And the list goes on.

- **Dyslexics are great innovators and problem solvers.** Because dyslexics are such great solution finders and cutting edge thinkers they are needed even more right now to find solutions to the many difficulties our planet faces.
- **Did you know:** World famous architect and dyslexic Richard Rogers specifically employs dyslexics on his design team because he needs their special abilities to envision and create his building designs.

Facts and Myths

- **Dyslexia runs in families.**
- **Dyslexia has *nothing* to do with not working hard enough.**
- **Dyslexia has *nothing* to do with IQ.** Einstein was profoundly dyslexic and had an IQ of 160. In fact, it is ***thanks to his dyslexia*** that he was able to think in his genius way.
- **Having dyslexia is a distinct advantage otherwise people with dyslexic genes wouldn't have survived.** Humans have been around for about 200,000 years and people started writing about 5,000 years ago—the blink of an eye in the grand scheme of things. People only started being schooled in the 1800s during the Industrial Revolution.
- **Dyslexia is a learning difference, it is *not* a learning disability.**
- **Dyslexic advantages and tradeoffs:**
 - **Advantages:** Dyslexics have distinct advantages in thinking outside the box, connecting ideas, 3-D thinking and seeing the big picture.
 - **Tradeoffs:** The same neural differences that give dyslexics their advantages also affect their ability to read and write. Additionally, dyslexics may struggle with organizational skills, planning and prioritizing, keeping time, or concentrating with background noise. Each individual has a unique combination of their gifts, abilities and trade offs.
 - **Keep in mind—reading and handwriting are a transfer of information only.** They are not the same as thinking creatively and have nothing to do with intelligence.

“Having Survived School . . . aka . . . School Was Hell”

- **Students have many different learning styles. Unfortunately, many school systems are set up to teach students only within a narrow band of a wide continuum of learning styles.** If a student doesn't learn well within this limited spectrum, they suffer, often profoundly. While there are some schools set up for dyslexics, it is common to hear dyslexics and those that help them, such as Professor John Stein, **speak of the horrors of their “having survived school.” School is often Hell Itself.**
- There are some **main stream schools and colleges that offer support for dyslexic kids.**
- There are also **schools specifically designed to teach dyslexic students.**
- Some kids do best with **home schooling** if that is possible for their parents.
- An unfortunate reality is that sometimes parents must bring in an **attorney** in order to have a school system give the support to their child that is already the child's by legal right. Many kids are still falling through the cracks, and suffer low self esteem, PTSD, anxiety and depression into their adult lives.

- Kids need people who see their strengths, believe in them, and offer support. Dyslexic kids often excel at things outside of school, and it is vital that their interests be engaged. Schooling needs to be tailored to fit their learning style, and when this doesn't happen, they make what's wrong with this picture about themselves instead of the system. **They don't value themselves. They end up "practicing stress" instead of practicing being themselves.**
- **TIP:** Dean Bragonier, Founder and Executive Dyslexic of NoticeAbility, has created a nonprofit dedicated to **creating a dyslexic-specific middle school curriculum**—find it at: <https://www.noticeability.org>
- **TIP:** Eye To Eye has developed a **coalition of mentoring programs for students with learning differences by students with learning differences.** Check them out at: <https://eyetoeyenational.org>

Made by Dyslexia Pledge for companies, educators and governments to pledge to value dyslexic thinking, and to begin taking positive steps towards supporting dyslexia

Follow the link to read and share the Made by Dyslexia Pledge:

<https://www.madebydyslexia.org/assets/downloads/MadeByDyslexiaPledge.pdf>

Spelling It Out

"This simple guide gives essential information about dyslexia, how to support it, and how to advocate for it." —Made by Dyslexia

<https://www.madebydyslexia.org/assets/downloads/spelling-it-out.pdf>

Some Statistics:

- **At least 1 in 10 people have dyslexia. According to the International Dyslexia Association and author Shelly Shaywitz, dyslexia affects up to 20 percent of the population: That means that 1 in 5 people have dyslexia.** Over 40 million adult Americans are dyslexic, but only 2 million know it. One out of every five school aged kids—20% of the classroom—in America are dyslexic.
- **32% of students with dyslexia/LD drop out of high school or do not receive a regular diploma.**
- **50% of youth in the juvenile justice system have dyslexia/LD.**
- **60% of adolescents in drug and alcohol rehabilitation have dyslexia/LD.**
- **35% of entrepreneurs have dyslexia.**
- **At the nations top engineering school dyslexia is known as the "MIT Disease."**
- **40% of self made millionaires have dyslexia.**
- **Over 50% of NASA employees are dyslexic.**
- **80% of popular opinion still associates dyslexia with some form of "mental retardation"—this is not true.**

Some Keys to Unlocking Your Brilliance:

- **Find out who you really are!** Engage with anyone and anything that offers you the support and the dignity to find out who you truly are.

- Find out **what interests you the most**: for pleasure, for study, and for a profession.
- A really important part of finding dyslexic strengths is to **find other dyslexics** to share interests, triumphs, and challenges.
- A psychotherapist who is **somatically-based and who is experienced in healing trauma** can be an enormous help to process emotions and find out who you are and what interests you.
- **A mentor/coach, especially one who is also dyslexic**, can be a huge help to implement your plans and make your dreams a reality.

Organizations and People that Help Dyslexics

Made By Dyslexia

From the Made By Dyslexia website at <https://www.madebydyslexia.org>: "We're a global charity led by successful dyslexics. Our purpose is to help the world properly understand, value and support dyslexia.

Changing Perceptions

Dyslexic minds process information differently. Our divergent, lateral thinking has created some of the world's greatest inventions, brands and art. Yet dyslexia is still perceived as a disadvantage.

Schools aren't designed for dyslexic thinking, most teachers aren't trained in dyslexia, meaning most dyslexic kids are unidentified and unsupported.

Creating Solutions

Working with experts and strategic partners we develop campaigns, films & tools to explain and support dyslexia.

And we're launching CONNECTING THE DOTS, a global advocacy campaign and movement with one mission; to level the playing-field so every dyslexic can achieve their potential.

Getting Involved—Follow & Share:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/madebydyslexia/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/MadeByDyslexia?lang=en-gb>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/madebydyslexia/>

YouTube:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLBUsgxhf_otK_qKoZnP0pA?app=desktop

This simple guide, **Spelling It Out**, gives essential information about dyslexia, how to support it, and how to advocate for it:

<https://www.madebydyslexia.org/assets/downloads/spelling-it-out.pdf>

Watch & Share or free **Dyslexia Awareness Training** at

<https://education.microsoft.com/en-us/course/30a7b5e8/overview>

Made by Dyslexia Pledge for companies, educators and governments to pledge to value dyslexic thinking, and to begin taking positive steps towards supporting dyslexia. Follow the link to read and share the Made by Dyslexia Pledge:

<https://www.madebydyslexia.org/assets/downloads/MadeByDyslexiaPledge.pdf>

NoticeAbility

Dean Bragonier, Founder and Executive Dyslexic of <https://www.noticeability.org> has created a nonprofit dedicated to creating a dyslexic-specific middle school curriculum.

Dyslexic Before It Was Cool

From their website:

"NoticeAbility is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping students with dyslexia identify their unique strengths and build self esteem. We incorporate the neuroscience of dyslexia, the best practices of special education, and the power of EdTech to construct enrichment curricula and instructor training programs for global distribution.

NoticeAbility has created a new paradigm for educating middle school students with dyslexia. While remedial reading programs are essential to dyslexics' early education, **the traditional school curriculum does a profound disservice to millions of students by failing to mine the specific and powerful capabilities of the dyslexic mind.**

NoticeAbility disrupts this narrative by introducing tailored enrichment curricula to students with dyslexia at the point (middle school) where the students have achieved a level of reading proficiency, but their negative self-image has not yet solidified. Once students come to recognize their strengths, they are more inclined to embrace their educational experience and fulfill their personal and professional potential."

To contribute to Noticeability please visit this link: **DONATE TO NOTICEABILITY**

<https://connect.clickandpledge.com/w/Form/e1014982-3950-47a6-8b22-76507790bc04>

Headstrong Nation

Headstrong Nation <http://headstrongnation.org> "is a movement dedicated to a radical new approach to dyslexia. We empower adult dyslexics to own their dyslexia, to understand it, and to develop new ways of learning and working based on their individual profiles. Being dyslexic does not stop at the end of formal education. It is a workplace issue as well as a factor in families and should be seen as part of the full life of an individual. Generally, we are interested in highlighting the strengths that can come with this profile in addition to the weaknesses and challenges. Our vision is to create a movement in which people with dyslexia and related profiles do not merely survive. We thrive."

The Dyslexia Awareness Foundation:

The Dyslexia Awareness Foundation <http://kingbaraka.com/the-dyslexia-awareness-foundation/> is the amazing work of actor, educator, author and dyslexic

advocate **Ameer Baraka** <http://kingbaraka.com/firstsite/about/> The foundation raises awareness about what dyslexia is, its prevalence, the need for screening for kids as early as possible, and support for dyslexic youth. The foundation is especially dedicated in its efforts to detect dyslexia in at risk youth, to educate youth, and to interrupt the streets-to-prison pipeline.

Let's put it in perspective. Below are the statistics of kids who are not diagnosed and supported with their dyslexia. At risk youth are especially vulnerable as they have so little support and can easily fall through the cracks. The gifts of their dyslexia, when unknown and unsupported, often becomes an insurmountable challenge:

- **32% of students** with dyslexia/LD drop out of high school or do not receive a regular diploma.
- **50% of youth in the juvenile justice system** have dyslexia/LD.
- **60% of adolescents in drug and alcohol rehabilitation** have dyslexia/LD.

Ameer Baraka did not know he was dyslexic while he was in school, and he was one of the casualties of an educational system that did not recognize the prevalence of dyslexia and the imperative of tailoring the education to the student. Baraka's journey of dyslexia took him in and out of the "system" and it was not until he was in prison at the age of 23 that he was finally diagnosed with dyslexia, learned how to read, and began his journey of supporting at risk youth with dyslexia.

The following is from The Dyslexia Awareness Foundation's website:

"Baraka was inspired by men like Malcolm X, who experienced a rebirth through self-education while in prison, and by reading about Nelson Mandela who moved mountains and changed the world from his Robben Island prison cell. Baraka has since authored his own book, *The Life I Chose – The Streets Lied To Me* (www.BarakaBook.com) <http://kingbaraka.com/book/>

The mission of the Dyslexia Awareness Foundation is eponymous. To take a page from Malcolm X's book, literally and figuratively, the organization's missions are to raise awareness about dyslexia 'by any means necessary,' and to promote early detection of dyslexia in an effort to improve dyslexics' academic performance as a means to dismantle the streets-to-prison pipeline. Among other things, the organization has created Dyslexia Diagnosis Day™, which is an annual worldwide event designed to promote early detection of dyslexia and to make no cost or low-cost screening tools available to the public.

The Dyslexia Awareness Foundation is working with such venerable institutions as the Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity at Yale University (<http://dyslexia.yale.edu/success-stories/>) Pearson Clinical Assessment, a division of the world's leading education company. The Dyslexia Awareness Foundation's dyslexia screening tool of choice is the **Shaywitz DyslexiaScreen** <https://www.pearsonassessments.com/store/usassessments/en/Store/Professional-Assessments/MTSS-RTI-PBIS-Benchmarking/Shaywitz-DyslexiaScreen/p/100001918.html> . The Shaywitz DyslexiaScreen was developed by the renowned physician, Sally Shaywitz, M.D., co-founder of the Yale Center for

Dyslexia and Creativity. To learn more about Dr. Sally Shaywitz, M.D.'s and Dr. Bennett Shaywitz, M.D.'s amazing work, please see: <http://dyslexia.yale.edu/the-center/our-leadership/> "

To contribute to the foundation please visit this link and click the donate button you will find on their page: **DONATE TO THE DYSLEXIA AWARENESS FOUNDATION**
<http://kingbaraka.com/the-dyslexia-awareness-foundation/>

Joseph Feusi, Mentoring for Dyslexic Adults and Youth

Joseph Feusi at <https://motivationalmentor.com/mentoring-for-dyslexic-adults-and-youth> been a Mentor/Coach since 1994. He is dyslexic himself and understands the gifts and challenges of being dyslexic from the inside out. He has a speciality in Mentoring/Coaching dyslexic adults and youth. It is profoundly helpful for a dyslexic to be mentored by another dyslexic who has succeeded and can illuminate the real gifts of dyslexia.

Joseph writes, "**My belief is that dyslexics who believe in themselves are unstoppable.** They will draw to them the unique resources and education that they need to accomplish whatever they want to dream into being if they believe in themselves.

So, in supporting dyslexics, I am best be described as **The Self Esteem Mentor to launch young dyslexics into the world, and to help mature dyslexics realize that they have a wellspring of gifts.**

Self esteem and a high sense of self worth are the chief causal agents that enable a dyslexic person to inhabit and express their gifts and to succeed in life. **I am here to help you know you are amazing!"**

The Yale Center For Dyslexia and Creativity

The mission of the Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity at <https://dyslexia.yale.edu> "is to increase awareness of dyslexia and its true nature, specifically to illuminate the creative and intellectual strengths of those with dyslexia, to disseminate the latest scientific research and practical resources, and to transform the treatment of all dyslexic children and adults."

Dyslexic Advantage

"The mission of <https://www.dyslexicadvantage.org/about-us/2-mission-and-vision/> is to promote the positive identity, community and achievement of dyslexic people by focusing on their strengths. Everyone should grow up with positive self-understanding, real opportunities to learn, and a positive vision for the future. Our vision is a world where dyslexic people are known for their strengths."

Famous Dyslexics

These famous folks *haven't "overcome"* their dyslexia. It is *because they are dyslexic* that they have the visionary gifts that they've used to excel:

- **Actors, Filmmakers:** Jennifer Aniston, Fred Astaire, Ameer Baraka, Robert

Benton, Orlando Bloom, Jim Carrey, Tom Cruise, Walt Disney, Danny Glover, Whoopi Goldberg, Anthony Hopkins, Kiera Knightley, Jay Leno, Steve McQueen, Keanu Reeves, Steven Spielberg, Will Smith, Octavia Spencer, Billy Bob Thornton, Robin Williams, Henry Winkler

- **Architects and Designers:** Michael Faraday, Christopher Lowell, Richard Rogers
- **Artists and Musicians:** Ansel Adams, Beethoven, Cher, Kurt Cobain, Leonardo Da Vinci, Harry Belafonte, John Lennon, Mozart, Pablo Picasso, Auguste Rodin, Bob Weir, Willard Wigan, Andy Worhol
- **Athletes:** Muhammad Ali, Magic Johnson, Bob May, Diamond Dallas Page, Steve Redgrave, Pete Rose, Jackie Stewart
- **Educators:** Bill Bowen, Dean Bragonier, Ben Foss
- **Entrepreneurs:** Josh Almeida, Richard Branson, Steve Jobs, Craig McCaw, David Neeleman, Charles Schwab
- **Law and Justice:** David Boies, Erin Brockovich
- **Leaders:** Winston Churchill, Benjamin Franklin, Andrew Jackson, John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Gavin Newsom, Nelson Rockefeller, Erna Solberg, George Washington, Woodrow Wilson
- **Military:** Dwight D. Eisenhower, George Patton, General Westmoreland
- **Scientists and Inventors:** Ann Bancroft, Alexander Graham Bell, Pierre Curie, Thomas Edison, Albert Einstein, Michael Faraday, Henry Ford, Carol Greider, Jack Horner, Archer J. P. Martin, Ky Michaelson
- **Writers—Fiction Writers:** Stephen Cannell, Lewis Carroll, Agatha Christie, John Corrigan, Jane Elson, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Fannie Flagg, Gustave Flaubert, Vince Flynn, Terry Goodkind, John Irving, Edgar Allen Poe, Anne Rice, Natasha Solomons, Elizabeth Daniels Squire, Jules Verne, Tom West
- **Writers—Journalists:** Scott Adams, Anja Dembina, Richard Engel, Byron Pitts
- **Writers—Literature for Children and Young Adults:** Avi, Hans Christian Andersen, Jeanne Betancourt, Amber Lee Dodd, Sally Gardner, Patricia Polacco
- **Writers—Nonfiction:** Charley Boorman, Larry Chambers, John Edmund Delezen, Andrew Dornenburg, Nelson Lauver, Eileen Simpson, Bernie Taylor
- **Writers—Poets:** Philip Schultz, William Butler Yeats

Neural Differences—How the Dyslexic Brain Works

Reading and Handwriting

There are real differences in the dyslexic brain. One difference involves the left brain. For nondyslexics, it is in their left brain that words are “decoded” or read silently or aloud, and “encoded” or written. Dyslexics don’t use their left brain in the same way, and thus have **difficulty in phonetic decoding—turning symbols into a sound in the brain and then stringing them together to compose a word, and in encoding or writing.**

Reading and handwriting are about transfer of information, they are not about expression nor about intelligence. Dyslexics need a different approach to help them to read and write which plays off their strengths, especially their ability to see things three dimensionally. For example, making three dimensional blocks of letters, or using their

arm and hand to write a giant letter in the air are a few of many helpful ways to learn the alphabet. Dyslexics benefit from being taught with methods that utilize their strengths.

Depending on the intensity of their dyslexia, dyslexics often reach a ceiling in their ability to read and with their handwriting. For example, some people with dyslexia may always have handwriting that is almost illegible even to themselves. Some successful dyslexics have never been able to read more than a book or two in their lives. However, these *same* people may become wonderful writers and produce great books, like naturalist and artist Jack Laws who has recently published the wonderful *Laws Field Guide to The Sierra Nevada*.

Big Picture Thinking and “Minitowers”

Another difference is in **neural structure in the brain**. Neurons are set up in **columns, or “minitowers,”** in the brain. These tall thin neural towers, roughly parallel to one another with their tops pointing to the surface of the brain tissue they are located in, are spaced **farther apart** than the general population. This means that the **neural signals have to travel over a greater distance** to make connections between the synapses. This creates an **advantage**—an inborn, great ability to: get the “gist” of problems, dilemmas, creative ideas, trends and human interactions quickly and accurately; have 3-D or spatial thinking; be a creative and accurate big picture thinker, connect ideas, and think outside the box.

Creativity, Insight and The Power of Daydreaming

Dyslexics have an innate gift for **insight**. Insights are those Eureka! or Ah Ha! moments where a relaxed right brain suddenly makes novel and perhaps distant connections to solve problems. While nondyslexics can do this, this strength is built right into the dyslexic brain. They naturally think this way. This is one of their amazing strengths. They combine their great pattern recognition (the gift of those long neural signals) and their natural ability to have insight to come up with unexpected answers and new ways of seeing. Think of Picasso’s paintings, Einstein’s theories, and Mozart’s music. Dyslexics just “get it all at once” after a process akin to reflection, relaxation and daydreaming. This process is right brained. It’s quite different than logical, cause-and-effect thinking. Dyslexics’ dynamic ability to come up with answers in this way are often misunderstood by others, especially in school settings, as them being “lazy” or “not applying themselves.” Others may see them “staring out the window” and not realize that this is how they process. This amazing right-brained-using learning difference is a gift.

M.I.N.D. Strengths—Dyslexic Strengths Explained

Brock L. Eide, MD and Fernette F. Eide, MD in their book *The Dyslexic Advantage* describe four different thinking and processing styles that are found in dyslexia: Material, Interconnected, Narrative and Dynamic Reasoning. They have an acronym for the four styles: **M.I.N.D. Strengths**. Each dyslexic person has their own unique combination and degree of these styles and the tradeoffs that accompany them. I’ve drawn the information below from the Eides’ great book—please listen to or read their book for an in-depth understanding. Dean Bragonier offers the following brief video

describing the four strengths:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f8ijgzZCjjw&feature=youtu.be>

Material Reasoning and M-Strengths

Definition:

Great spatial or 3-D reasoning.

- Think of looking at a blueprint on a page. A **dyslexic with M-strengths will look at the blueprint and quickly be able to see it as a complete, three dimensional building**. While non-dyslexics can learn to do this, a dyslexic person will do this with ease and artistry, like world famous architect Richard Rogers. Some dyslexics are visual. Others are more kinesthetic and feel things. **Dyslexics with M-strengths can make a 3-D model in their mind and are able to “test” it out in their mind to find and correct flaws long before production!**
- A famous dyslexics with M-strengths is Einstein.
- M-strength dyslexics make great mathematicians, engineers, designers, architects, mechanics, contractors, surgeons, painters, sculptors, photographers, pilots, filmmakers and directors. Dyslexics can have great talent in sports which are essentially 3-D expressions of the body.
- Tradeoffs include symbol reversals and subtle language challenges. M-strength people may be late bloomers in the classroom (Einstein did poorly in math) but show amazing creativity outside school.

Interconnected Reasoning and I-Strengths

Definition:

Seeing unique connections that others often miss.

Using different perspectives and approaches to create a big-picture view.

- Because of the greater distances that the neural signals travel in the dyslexic brain, **dyslexics with I-strengths are great at making unusual and creative connections between things**. The Eides write that people with I-strengths possess the “ability to see how phenomenon (like objects, ideas, events or experiences) are related to each other, either by *likeness* (similarity) or *togetherness* (that is, association, like correlation or cause and effect).” **They have the ability to see phenomenon from multiple perspectives and many disciplines and unite all sorts of information about a particular idea into a big picture view to “determine its gist.”**
- Douglas Merrill, who struggled greatly with school, went on to Princeton where he did groundbreaking research about learning, decision-making and artificial intelligence. His incredible problem-solving abilities lead him to eventually serve as an early CEO of Google.
- I-strength fields include computer or software design, all sorts of scientists, inventors, clothing and fashion designers, dancers and choreographers, musicians, actors, comedians, trainers and people in the fields of history, political science, sociology, anthropology and philosophy.
- Tradeoffs can include some difficulty with fast fine-detail processing.

Narrative Reasoning and N-Strengths

Definition:

Being able to create vivid mental scenes to display important ideas and concepts from the past, present and future.

Having a great personal memory (a.k.a episodic memory).

Being able to write so vividly that others imagine it clearly.

- **Dyslexics with strong N-strengths turn experience into long term memories by using episodic or personal memory.** This means that they store factual memories in a form that supplies **context** to the facts. For them, remembering stimulates events, episodes or experiences that they've had. Remembering is like "restaging mental scenes" from bits of past personal experience. The Eides' definition: "Episodic memory has a highly narrative or 'scene-based' format in which concepts and ideas are conceived or recalled as experiences." **This is different than creating long term memory semantically or impersonally** as abstract data with no context or experience, as in remembering by rote fact that the Magna Carta was signed in 1216. A dyslexic using personal memory has access to an incredibly rich storehouse of personal experience. They excel not only at remembering the past but the ability to "imagine the future, solve problems, test the fitness of proposed inventions or plans, or create imaginary scenarios and stories." **They have the ability to assemble and re-assemble multiple aspects of experience and use their memory in unique recombinatory and artistic ways, for example to create poetry, novels and screenplays.**
- Pulitzer Prize winning poet Philip Schultz is dyslexic. Musician John Lennon was dyslexic. Anne Rice is a dyslexic who has used her N-strengths to write the twenty-seven books in her series that begin with *Interview with the Vampire*.
- N-strengths occupations include poets, songwriters, novelists, journalists, screenwriters, counselors and therapists, coaches, teachers, public speakers, game designers, attorneys, sales and marketing folks, and public relations.
- Dyslexics drawing from N-strengths may struggle to remember things by rote or "bare semantic facts" and instead excel when they store things by using episodic memory and personal experience.

Dynamic Reasoning and D-Strengths

Definition:

Taking information and accurately making predictions about the past and the future.

The ability to notice patterns, even where some information is *missing*, and *correctly make predictions*.

Understanding how to deal with change and uncertainty from looking at qualitative data.

Having and following insight.

- D-strengths add an additional **predictive** ability to N-Strengths. **It is the ability to look at information and using episodic memory to accurately predict outcomes in the future** (very handy for things like predicting financial markets) **or the past** (as in the work of geologists and paleontologists) rather than using

cause-and-effect linear reasoning. It is very helpful when chunks of information are missing or unavailable, as dyslexics with D-strengths not only get the “gist” but can understand outcomes and antecedents without having access to all of the information.

- Vince Flynn struggled mightily in school, but was determined to become a writer. He was author of twelve counterterrorism-themed novels. His ability to predict and express were so startling that after his publication of *Memorial Day* he was contacted by officials at the Department of Energy because they were certain he must have been fed classified information!
- D-strength dyslexics find occupations as entrepreneurs, CEOs, venture capitalists, small business owners, business consultants, tax planners and CFOs, economists, doctors (especially immunology, rheumatology, endocrinology, oncology), farmers and ranchers.
- Dyslexics with D-strengths use their powers of intuition. They may be seen as being “passive” or “daydreaming” while they “stare out the window” as nondyslexics may misunderstand the nature of the way they “work.” They arrive at accurate answers quickly, but sometimes must learn how to explain to others the steps to arrive at their surprising and accurate conclusions.

Assistive Technologies and Accommodations

Assistive Technologies are the means for helping dyslexics with the transfer of information at school, work, and for pleasure—reading and writing.

Accommodations help students learn in a style that benefits them most. Some people may misguidedly view dyslexic accommodations as “cheating” but they are not! Accommodations are the equivalent of having a ramp for a person in a wheelchair to get up the stairs instead of dragging him- or herself up step by step by the elbows. Could they get up the stairs by crawling? Yes. Is it necessary, productive, or more fair? No! The Eide’s write, “Accommodations aren’t cheating, and they don’t unfairly plant ideas into anyone’s head. **They simply remove the barriers that prevent dyslexic students from expressing what they already know—that’s all.**”

Assistive Technologies:

- **Keyboards**
- **Recording systems**
- **Calculators**
- **Livescribe smartpens**
- **Talking dictionary or electronic thesaurus**
- **Speech-to-text software** like Dragon Naturally Speaking, and programs with **spellcheck features** for writing.
- **Audio books**
- **Digital text-to-speech software**—this means that text has been encoded in digital form so it can be read aloud by a text-to-speech program on a computer or other electronic device. *Additionally*, as Ben Foss discovered, the big advantage of digital text is *speed*. He says, “You can listen to digital text much faster than analog text recordings—in some cases up to ten times the spoken rate, and over

time you can train yourself to be comfortable with ultrafast digital text as a way of getting access to information.” Ben couldn’t read well, and used this technology to get his BA, Masters and JD/MBA all from prestigious universities. He says that one essential key is to listen to many electronic voices and pick the one that you like best.

- **TIP: Listen to the Internet—How to Make Safari Speak in 60 Seconds or Less:** <https://youtu.be/aAPWMKlt0DE>

Accommodations for School and College Students Include:

- Being able to use the assistive technologies listed above.
- Extra time to take tests and complete schoolwork and handwritten assignments.
- Oral testing or having a person to act as a reader to read test questions aloud.
- Having a quiet room to take exams in.

TIP: This is the book to get to help advocate for your dyslexic child at school!

This book will help you untangle the intricacies and help you advocate for your dyslexic child. ***Dyslexia Advocate! How to Advocate for a Child with Dyslexia within the Public Education System*** by Kelli Sandman-Hurley Find it at this link:

<https://www.amazon.com/Dyslexia-Advocate-within-Public-Education-ebook/dp/B01BCQP8MK>

And here’s a short video from Kelli: ***What Is Dyslexia?***
<https://youtu.be/zafiGBrFkRM>

“Disability” versus “Difference” and the Lens of Public Perception

While it is vital for individuals with learning differences to be eligible for accommodations, ***it is important to begin to reframe public perception and legislature to use the word “difference” instead of “disability.”*** **Dyslexia is not a disability, it is a learning difference with inherent unique strengths as well as challenges.**

- An inclusive society recognizes that the differences between people are natural and beneficial. These include differences in culture, race, sex, nationality, sexuality, spiritual orientation, age—**and learning styles.**
- Traditional schooling offers instruction only within a narrow band of the broad spectrum of learning styles.
- Broadening the spectrum: Students must be tested in order to be eligible for accommodations and assistive technology, which can include fees parents must pay for these tests. Unfortunately parents must often advocate very strongly for their children—**this may include getting a lawyer to ensure that some school systems take proper steps.**
- Where funding and awareness is available, instruction that fits a broader range of student needs in schools and colleges is available—see links below.
- **Where funding and awareness is not available, students’ and parents’ choices are limited and brilliant minds are kept in prison: 32% of students with dyslexia/LD drop out of high school or do not receive a regular diploma. 50% of youth in the juvenile justice system have dyslexia/LD.**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Individuals_with_Disabilities_Education_Act

IDEA is legislation passed in 1990 that ensures students with a disability are provided with Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) that is tailored to their individual needs.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

<https://adata.org/learn-about-ada>

The ADA became law in 1990 and new amendments were put into effect in 2009. The ADA helps ensure equal opportunities in school and in the workplace. For people with dyslexia, this means they are eligible for the accommodations they need to perform well in school and at work. The Act protects against discrimination.

Here are some helpful links regarding ADA and accommodations for kids and college students:

- <https://www.dyslexicadvantage.org/dyslexia-and-accommodations-new-ada-guidelines-2016-for-school-and-work/>
- <http://dyslexia.yale.edu/resources/accommodations/>
- <https://dyslexia.yale.edu/resources/dyslexic-kids-adults/college-planning/>
- <https://www.readinghorizons.com/blog/post/2013/04/12/8-dyslexia-accommodations-for-students>
- <http://dyslexia.yale.edu/resources/accommodations/time-and-tools/>
- <https://www.understood.org/en/about>

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And here's a short video from Kelli: ***What Is Dyslexia?***

<https://youtu.be/zafiGBrFkRM>

It's hugely helpful for dyslexic students to have an also-dyslexic mentor a few years older than them. Eye to Eye is an organization that helps match up students with student mentors:

- <https://eyetoeyenational.org/mentoring>

Feeling the Impact: Dyslexic Adults

Self Esteem and Believing in Yourself

- Dyslexics may not believe they can do what they're doing ***even while they're doing it, and doing it well and creatively!***
- What happens when you can do something better than others without formal education? Can you claim your power?
- Dyslexics are intelligent, often exceptionally so, and can do well in many fields, but may not believe in themselves enough to take the time ***to find out what they really want to do.***

Some Frequently Mentioned Fears

- You don't believe you can do things, even though you continue to have creative solutions.
- You worry you'll get it wrong.
- You fear you don't have enough information.
- You think you must have misunderstood something.
- You second guess or doubt yourself because you think that you might have missed something that others learned in school.

The Hero and Heroine's Journey

Please note, the exercises you will find here are not meant to replace professional help. If you find that they are activating to you, please seek the guidance of a professional.

The journey of dyslexia often involves profound suffering. It is an heroic journey, with perils and tests, and also with mentors and supporters for you to find along the way to help you in your quest to let your brilliance shine. In this section you can read about the particular difficulties that dyslexics struggle with. There are also some suggestions for support and further exploration in the sections entitled Help On The Quest. The suggestions for any one section can also be used for the others.

Let's begin looking at your epic journey with a poem that Brock and Fernette Eide quote from *The Lord of the Rings* in their great book *The Dyslexic Advantage*. It sums up Aragorn's journey from seeming to be a wandering vagrant to his at last claiming his rightful place as king:

*All that is gold does not glitter,
Not all those who wander are lost;
The old that is strong does not wither,
Deep roots are not reached by the frost.
From the ashes a fire shall be woken,
A light from the shadows shall spring;
Renewed shall be blade that was broken
The crownless again shall be king.*

—J.R.R. Tolkien

The Dark Woods—Common Issues for Dyslexics

Schooling and peer perceptions can leave heavy wounds and distorted thinking. Even if you have found your stride as an adult, you may often still struggle, especially at stressful times, with the following. Scroll down to the following paragraphs to learn more both about that particular struggle, and for some suggestions and help along the way.

- **Low Self Esteem**
- **Being Invisible**
- **Difficulty Asking for Help**
- **Grief, Loss, Intense Sorrow and Almost Unfathomable Pain**
- **Anger**
- **“Imposter Syndrome”**

- **Anxiety and Fear**
- **PTSD, Trauma and Panic Attacks**
- **Not Believing You Have A Positive Future, or Fear That You Have No Future At All**
- **Not Knowing Who You Really Are**

Limiting Beliefs and Their Effect on Self Esteem

One of the biggest challenges dyslexics face are limiting beliefs and the low self esteem that goes along with those beliefs. Here's a metaphor: In the old days at the circus, elephants were trained in the following way. A baby elephant was staked—a rope was tied around it's foot and attached to a stake in the ground. As a baby, the elephant didn't have the strength to pull out the stake. It's entire world was limited to what it was taught in that small circle of experience. When the baby elephant grew up into a big elephant it easily had the strength to pull up the stake and go out on its own. But the elephant didn't know it had that strength. ***The habit of the small tug of the rope on its foot was enough to keep it captive.*** This is a limiting belief system in action. If the stake was removed and the elephant freed, it was disconcerting for the elephant because it didn't know who it was other than the tricks and performance it had been trained to do and the limited life it been allowed to lead. The elephant had been trained out of it's true nature. If an elephant is once again given it's freedom by being released into its natural environment, it can begin to take delight in finding its true nature. Elephant International Carol Buckley writes, "The joy elephants show when they're freed from chains – you cannot mistake it. It is pure joy."

It's the same with people. Dyslexics are often put in a small circle as kids and don't know they can step out and find their true nature. They don't know that it is their birthright to claim their gifts and shine with their natural brilliance. What happens when kids keep getting "error messages"—"You're not smart," "You can't do it," "There's something wrong with you." Kids have to make some sense of the world in order not to go crazy, so they start to believe the error messages are true even when they're not. Even when they grow up, there's still that tug of the old tether to believe the critical messages and stay in a small acre of life instead of having access to the world. It's like the big elephant, you don't believe you can pull the stake out of the ground, or if you do you don't know who you are. You are stuck in this small circle of experience. One dyslexic described it as being "a boy in a bubble" where his world was limited by what he was told he could do and the critical way he had learned to think about himself. Fortunately, he eventually got therapy and went on to become a cutting edge therapist and trainer who developed one of the early programs in Oregon to train other therapists.

- "Reading disabilities often match in intensity the level of shame associated with incest."
—Gershen Kaufman, Ph.D.

HELP ON THE QUEST:

Longing is the Doorway to You:

Feel into your experience of the word "longing." Ask yourself, "What am I most longing for?" The word longing brings real magic. It's a right brain, felt sense, evocative word

that has the power to go straight to the heart of what matters most. It is the doorway into what you want and who you are.

Receiving the “Missing Experience”

Once you begin to identify what you are longing for, it's vital to actually **have the experience in a felt sense way**. Knowing theoretically or rationally is simply not enough to begin living from new beliefs. One part of healing is for you to identify the longed-for belief. The other part is to actually begin to experience it so you can practice the habit of feeling good instead of practicing the habit of feeling less than. Because we learn and we repair with others, healing your self esteem and repairing your belief systems involves finding others who can support you in your longed-for experience. A connection with some other dyslexics can be especially important. A skilled experiential or somatic therapist has a range of techniques to help you embody nourishing beliefs. Hakomi, for example, even has a name for what you are seeking—The Missing Experience—and helps you learn to have what you naturally long for and what is your birthright, but what you may never have had.

Here are some examples of shifts that are **not only possible** for you to make, but which are your **birthright**:

- **The Limiting Belief—becomes—The Longed-For, Nourishing Belief, Your Birthright**
- **Here are some examples:**
- I have to hide—becomes—It's okay to be seen
- I must be dumb—becomes—I am smart!
- No one will understand me—becomes—I am understood, especially by those who care
- I'm a phony—becomes—I've got some uniquely kick ass, helpful gifts!
- I'm lonely—becomes—I am loved
- I'm defeated—becomes—I am powerful
- There's something wrong with me—becomes—I'm loveable and naturally unique

Here's something you may find interesting to try on your own. Did you know that our body posture can signal you to have certain beliefs, and that shifting body posture helps shift beliefs. You might want to experiment with the pairs of beliefs above, focusing on the ones that speak most to you. You might look at it like going to the store and trying on a new shirt to see how it fits.

For example, you can play around with the limiting belief, “I have to hide.” As you sit comfortably in a chair on your own, take on “I have to hide” and see exactly how your body “does” this belief. You might find that you tighten certain muscles, that you dampen your energy, that you cast your eyes down. Okay, now shake it off, literally, and come back to neutral. Now, “try on” the nourishing belief, your birthright, “It's okay to be seen.” Don't worry if you don't believe it, or don't see how it could ever be true. Pretend you are an actor in a scene taking on the role of someone comfortable with being seen. You might notice that you find your sitsbones in your chair and let your spine lengthen. Don't try to sit up straight as that is exhausting. Instead, find your sitsbones, lengthen your spine as it rises out of the pelvic bowl, and let your chin come up a bit. This is

important too—let yourself take up more space by letting your hips open and letting the angle of your legs open a bit more.

Commonly, this is what happens: the first thing to happen (albeit maybe only for a second or two, so watch for it!) is that it just feels so good and “right.” This can quickly be followed by a lot of messages about why you can never do this. Take heart!—if this felt “right” for a few seconds, and even only a tenth of a percent of you participated, that is the path into finding yourself. One way to explore this in a practiced way is with an expert like a somatic/experiential therapist. You might also explore what feels “right” by taking a yoga class, a martial arts class, or a dance class. And yes—everything I mentioned includes the body and sensory awareness.

HELPFUL TIP: When we slump, or tighten our chest, we literally have less room to take a breath because the slump compresses our lungs. This result is that we have less oxygen in our blood because we haven’t taken a full breath. The brain doesn’t know if you are just slumping in your chair at your computer, or are feeling scared—what the brain reads is **less oxygen!** and it interprets less oxygen as **threat!** You can make a practice of noticing when you are tightening, and take a stretch, yawn, or simply find your sitsbones and let your spine elongate naturally (again don’t try to sit up straight). The brain reads a fuller breath as **safe now!** and sends signals to your body to produce feel-good chemicals instead of anxiety chemicals.

"Choose Strength, Not Shame"

Ben Foss, dyslexic, prominent entrepreneur and activist and the founder of Headstrong Nation, a not-for-profit organization serving the dyslexic community, talks about his journey of dyslexia and moving from shame to strength:

<https://youtu.be/bs93inbQPU0>

Brené Brown on Shame and Vulnerability

- Brené Brown’s TED Talk: “Listening to Shame”
https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_listening_to_shame?utm_campaign=tedsbread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare
- Brené Brown’s TED Talk: “The Power of Vulnerability:
<https://youtu.be/iCvmsMzIF7o>

Being Invisible, Difficulty Asking for Help

Dyslexic kids are often misunderstood, marginalized, ridiculed and bullied. If you’re dyslexic, you may have learned to keep a low profile so you don’t stand out. You may have learned that being invisible is safer.

There is an old study that shows that babies in orphanages stop crying when no one comes to help. Dyslexics can have a similar problem. When you asked for help—how to read, more time to take a test, support for your ideas and dreams—no one wanted to help, or no one understood the kind of help you needed, or people told you something was wrong with you. It’s easy to stop asking for help when you are judged for asking.

HELP ON THE QUEST:

It's only one part of you that keeps you invisible. Though it might feel like who you are, it's actually only a part. You hired this part long ago to keep you safe. When you're a kid, you don't have a lot of choices. You do whatever you can to make sense of the world given the experiences you have, combined with your temperament, personality and family system. You can look at it this way—your True Self, which naturally shines, had to go underground in order for you to survive. Your True Self is still there, with all of your gifts, untarnished and untarnishable. But—in order to survive you may have hired Invisible Guy or Have to Do It Myself Gal or Protector Self to step in. They kept you safe in a world that had limited choices. But they also keep your world small if they are running the show.

Have you ever watched *Star Trek: The Next Generation*? One of the jobs of Captain Picard is to take into account the various opinions of all his top officers and then make a decision about how to act. He takes the best information, and also uses his valued intuition, sometimes making a choice that surprises everyone. The part of you that keeps you invisible is a bit akin to Worf, the Chief Security Officer. Confronted, say, with a sweet old lady with a flower, Picard, all the officers, and the entire crew might know that she is safe. But Worf's typical response, in his low growling voice, would be, ***"It could be a weapon!"*** There's nothing wrong with him saying this—in fact it is his job to be cautious. But he is not the captain, and ultimately Picard must decide what to do. The point of this, is for you to imagine yourself as the captain of your life on your sacred journey. You have the final say. Of course you have a Worf! But who is your Captain, your True Self? A great way to play with this is through visualization. Put on some interesting, trippy music, relax in your chair or on the couch, and use your great dyslexic imagination and visual or sensory gifts to take a little trip where "you have never gone before"—back home to your birthright as you imagine yourself as Captain, making choices and using your intuition!

Grief, Loss, Intense Sorrow and Almost Unfathomable Pain

Childhood and youth can be stressful times for anyone, but the struggle with dyslexia can rob kids of their childhood and replace it with heavy fears and concerns. The journey into adulthood is colored by critical beliefs that limit joy and life force and keep triggering trauma and low self esteem. Sadness, loss and anger are constantly in the background. There is often deep grief and loss around having been let down and not getting the support one should have had, and for many missed opportunities at school or work. This grief runs deeply into the heart, and the pain of so many losses can be almost unfathomable.

Because dyslexia runs in families, a child's difficulties may trigger a dyslexic parent's trauma. As a result of their own trauma being triggered, a dyslexic parent may struggle through their own loss to help their child, and their feelings may be further compounded by guilt. If their children succeed in ways a dyslexic parent did not have the support or opportunity to do, the parent's joy at their child's successes can be mixed with a deep grief around the loss of what they missed themselves.

HELP ON THE QUEST:

Our life force is unstoppable, and yet sometimes it meets an immovable object. Your life force consists of things like your particular gifts, interests, vitality, creativity, humor,

curiosity, uniqueness and ability to love and be loved. Immovable objects are those things beyond your control, especially when you are a child. Immovable objects that many kids experience are divorce, the death of someone close, bullying, moving a lot and leaving people behind, mean teachers, as well as abuse of any kind. As a dyslexic you have your own brand of immovable objects if your schooling does not fit your needs and has been a journey of peril and endurance instead of expression and learning.

When adults don't explain things to kids so they understand what is happening, when they don't help kids when they need it, or when they blame kids for what is out of their control the pain that kids experience is equivalent to the pain of breaking a bone. I mean that literally—the brain processes those kinds of emotional misses as though a bone has broken. And yet children are often left alone with that pain and have to make sense of their experience in order to not go crazy. Unaided, the sense kids make is that something is wrong with *them* and that whatever happened is *their fault*. They then put away their life force—their creativity, joy, humor, self esteem—and are left with precious little comfort for unbearable aches. They begin to see life through the lens of the error messages they adopted to make sense of things (“There’s something wrong with me,” “I’m not smart,” “It’s dangerous to be seen.”) Their unstoppable life force has run aground on the immovable object.

The good news is that your life force is waiting for you to let it flow again. But first the ache must be tended to. What is involved in healing when the heart aches so? Part of the answer involves being present with the ache—to actually let your heart be pierced, to feel the pain and let it move through you. We contract through difficulties, but when we learn to be kindly present with our experience, when we re-open we do so with more strength and creativity. We find new vision and surprises that we never even dreamed existed.

Another part of the answer to working with the ache involves the kind hearts of others who can remind you of your gifts, offer you dignity, and who can guide you step by step through the process of feeling and moving through the heartache instead of putting it away. Because if you put the ache away, you also put your life force away and stay contracted.

Many parts of your being may do everything they can to keep you away from the ache, saying it is best to avoid it. But learning to actually be present with it, especially in a one-step-at-a-time way with a caring, understanding guide, can lead to a huge transformation. Dyslexics often have learned to be invisible and to not ask for help. Yet how we learn as children, and how we heal as adults—how we are wired biologically—is to share our sorrows and joys with kind, understanding, consistent people.

- What was once only the neural path of remembered pain transforms into . . .
- . . . the neural path and memory of someone offering kindness and support while you ache, of someone being available when you need them, of someone who honors your unique being and helps you to understand who you are and always were

Then you come back home. Then you come alive.

Support Practices for Grieving: Letting the heart be pierced is something you

generally work your way up to. First you begin by learning how to engage in practices that help you feel safely grounded and present in the moment. It's even more effective to engage in these activities with a group. Here's some things proven to help you learn how to ground and be present:

- Mindfulness practices
- Guided visualizations can be really helpful ways for you to learn to calm your nervous system. They also can help you be inspired to find your favorite symbols that represent healing. Many studies have shown that imagery helps heal trauma and emotional difficulties of all kinds.
 - You can find free visualizations by searching the web and going to Youtube.
 - For a fee, and sometimes with some freebies, you can check out visualizations by the masters like Reggie Rey at: <https://www.dharmaocean.org>
 - or Belleruth Naparstek at: <https://www.healthjourneys.com>
 - A therapist trained in visualizations can offer them to you as part of your work together.
- Yoga
- Tai Chi or Qigong
- Group activities like playing music, dancing, or singing

Anger

When you are aware of your intelligence, creativity and uniqueness, and yet you have been unable to tap that as easily as nondyslexics, a natural response is to feel rage. It is a terrible bind to have intelligence and creativity but no outlet or support. Part of the rage arises out of feeling trapped, imprisoned or impotent. You might find that you have a tendency to turn this rage inward on yourself and be really mean to yourself. You might also have a very keen awareness about the injustices you see others suffering from as you know how awful it feels. You might sign up to help free the elephants! That's great—and it's important to find people to help *free you*, too!

HELP ON THE QUEST:

Because you are dyslexic, you are inherently intelligent and creative because of your cool right brain wiring. If your experience has been that it's hard to find an outlet for your unique expression, some of the healing involves having your anger witnessed by people who understand. Anger in its essence is about making a boundary: "Stop!" "Don't do that!" and also, "I need help and I feel angry when I'm denied the support I see others getting!"

- **All humans are biologically wired to need support, witnessing and soothing from their "village."**

Whether we are aware of it or not we are constantly scanning for and picking up on both the verbal and nonverbal cues that others give us. It is absolutely necessary to have an inner circle of safe people to share the ups and downs of life with, the grief, anger and joy. When we see kindness and safety in the faces of those people in our inner circle, our face relaxes, our heart relaxes, our gut relaxes, our bodies stop producing stress-chemicals and begin to produce relaxation chemicals, Then we literally run our thinking on different brain circuits. Our mood lifts. It becomes easier to believe in ourselves.

When we find and begin to let in support, we can feel our life force and find the direction we want to move in. The good news—our “village” or inner circle doesn’t have to be large, it just has to be trustworthy, even just one or two people.

- **The support of kind, authentic people is how we are wired to heal and to grow.**

That’s one reason why it’s so important to include some other dyslexic friends or mentors who understand your own experience from the inside out, as well as someone like a trained therapist or mentor/coach.

- **When you speak to others who truly understand, though it can’t change the past, it can help you find your life force in the present.**

It’s a natural human need for healing and growth to have a couple of good buddies that you can tell, “This fucking pisses me off!” and hear back, “Hell yeah! Of course you’re angry!!!”

“Imposter Syndrome”

Specific fears:

- Fear of being “found out” as an “impostor”
- Fear of failing
- Fear of judgment or criticism
- Fear of rejection

People with dyslexia often make incredible leaps of understanding swiftly and accurately, and without “formal training.” Traditional training is linear and requires going through a series of steps. Dyslexic thinking offers the individual a 3-D visual or sensory way of looking at a problem from multiple angles and from a wealth of diverse perspectives and lenses. The dyslexics’ way of creative problem solving bypasses linear steps. **Nondyslexics may doubt the validity of a dyslexic solution because the dyslexic thinks differently and thinks in a less effortful way.**

- **A dyslexic may not need the same amount of schooling a nondyslexic needs to arrive at a conclusion.**

Example: A dyslexic with strong M-strengths (see section on M.I.N.D. Strengths) can look at a blueprint and not only easily see the building or object three-dimensionally, but is able to rotate it and test for flaws in the structure all without “formal training.”

- **What do you do as a dyslexic if you know things that others only know through formal education? Unfortunately, the answer is often that dyslexics struggle with owning their abilities and may end up feeling like “imposters” even while they are performing well and creatively!**

Remember, your dyslexic brothers and sisters make up 50% of the employees at NASA!

HELP ON THE QUEST:

Trusting Yourself

You might check out this exercise on a simple, relaxed day when you don’t have to interact with other people. It’s about practicing trusting yourself, your intuition, and being kind to yourself.

- This exercise may *seem* to be about noticing choices: which shirt to wear, which kind of tea to drink, which way to drive to the store, which voice to believe inside

yourself. However, it's really about getting to know the Chooser. Some times it'll be your True Self making the choice, and sometimes it'll be The Doubter. It's **not at all** about doing it correctly or perfectly. It's about waking up the blueprint of your True Self in a bite-sized way.

- So one day, every time you make a choice, **no matter which one**, play around with telling yourself, "Okay, that's what I'm going to do now!"
- If you find yourself worrying, instead of trying not to worry or beating yourself up about worrying, what happens if you say, "Okay, I'm stressed out and I'm just going to worry about this for a while!" If you have a choice of salad or sandwich and you want the sandwich, try telling yourself, "The sandwich makes the most sense even though I don't know why, and I am ordering the sandwich!" If there are two routes to drive to the store, pick one. If there's a lot of traffic you might say to yourself, "Yep, I picked this one and there's lots of traffic—and that's okay" or "Something told me to go this way and I'm so glad I did because I missed that traffic snarl!"
- The point of this exploration is to get behind whatever you choose, which is actually shifting mental states: By taking the stress off what choice you make, you are shifting into being kind to yourself. The self that is kind is the True Self, and it feels better. **As you begin to make choices that feel "right" from the get-go, those are coming directly from your True Self.**
- There is a prize hidden here—the prize of your True Self—because interestingly, if you persist in this exercise you might find that as you let yourself off the hook of tension for your choices, that more and more often you begin to make and trust the choices which make sense for you. **You will know this is true because you will have a feeling of "rightness" and the choice will bring you energy (even if it is active) rather than sap you.**
- **It's important when you engage in anything that feels "right" that you stop, take a couple of seconds, and feel all the way into your heart and belly and shoulders and energy. Really try on what this "rightness" feels like—it is your essential self, after all! This is practicing the habit of your True Self rather than the Part that has had to feel like an "Impostor."**

Daily Miracle Practice

I always love how this practice makes me feel, whether I'm doing it on an already-great day, or whether I'm down in the pits. It shifts something, brightening the dark, or making my light shine even more brightly.

- Declare, "Today, a miracle will happen!"
- If you believe it at least a tenth of a percent, that's enough to get yourself looking around for the miracle. The one who is open to receiving a miracle is the True Self.
- So, let's look at the definition of miracle for this exercise. Here's the one I use: A miracle is anything beautiful, kind, astonishing, touching, cool, surprising. It's the huge incredible smelling roses that my neighbors grow in their front yard—and yes, I stop and smell the roses. When I do, I make sure I look at the color and vibrancy, inhale the incredible scent, and that I feel gratefulness for having this rose garden to walk by. Then I **also** make sure I notice the **shift** into the physical and energetic experience that comes with the appreciation. It's really important to

include the sensory shifts in your body and energy, as those help anchor you in your True Self. So I'll notice how it's easier to breathe, that my shoulders have dropped, that my energy feels lighter and some gladness fills my heart.

- When we allow ourselves to be grateful, we shift out of our ever-comparing left brain (which can get really negative) and into our right brain and heart. Gratefulness and appreciation activate the neurons in the heart and brain, balance the brain, and help us start to produce feel-good chemicals instead of worry or anger or fear chemicals.
- So don't only look for the big miracles. Winning the Lotto *would* be nice, of course. But which Lottos have you already won today: the joy of a healthy deep breath of forest air; seeing a hermit crab walk along the beach; the kind smile of a stranger; the joy of your pet at seeing you. The more you take in, the more you see, the more you take in, the better you feel.

Your True Self

You'll notice in all these exercises I'm talking a lot about the True Self. When we are in our True Selves there is just a sense of rightness we feel right into our bones. Your True Self is amazing! You never lost it, but it will take some time to find it if it has gone into safekeeping, and for your security team to go back to the barracks and play cards until they are needed.

Bring to mind a time when you made a decision that just felt "right." It could be something big like where you decided to go on vacation, or a hobby you took up. It could be something smaller like deciding which path to hike in the forest. If nothing comes to mind right now, feel into how you might be *longing* to feel this rightness because it seems like a pretty good thing. That longing is enough to put you in the doorway of your own self.

When we are in one of our Parts—what I also call the members of our Security Team—we tend to either be expending too much energy (working, figuring out, overtalking a point, worrying) or we have gone offline (feeling frozen, depressed, low energy). Oops! We've fallen off the horse! If you learn to say, Oops! in as kind a way as you can muster, you've already started to shift back to your True Self, because it is the True Self that has the mindfulness and consciousness to catch yourself in a kind way. If you aren't kind as you catch yourself, that *too* is a security team member. Oops! If you get back on the horse for two seconds, **that is enough to start creating a new neural path and waking up your essential self!**

It's like if you receive ten thousand dollars every month into your bank account. At first, when a lot of folks set out on their healing journeys, they find that they are spending about \$9,500 on the security team every month to keep them safe. That only leaves them five hundred bucks to play around with. Not so fun. A reminder, when you hired your security team long ago, it was absolutely necessary, so you can be kind to yourself about having them. As kids and teens, the limiting beliefs and attitudes we adopted ("I have to doubt myself." "I'd better be invisible." "If I get angry no one will care.") began because we had to try to make sense out of a hurtful world. They are the words and actions of the security team. **But they are error messages that never got corrected,** and instead have become an habitual way to look at the world. If you put on pink

sunglasses, everything looks pink. It is our Security Team, or Parts, who espouse these messages and put distorting glasses on ourselves. It is a kind and necessary act is to thank them, give them all a medal, tell them, “I know you’re just worrying about me,” and ask them to Step Back! at least five feet.

The great—and **kind**—Identifier of parts, the one who knows whether or not you are overtly or sneakily being one of your security team selves is—you guessed it—your True Self, the mindful observer. So you can begin to notice Vigilant Guy, I’ll Never Be Able To Do It Gal, Suppress the Rage Dude, Hopeless Chick. Oops! They’re just tryin’ to make you safe. Once you start to notice this, you can begin to have a **choice** to go with their program, or to step out a bit, trust yourself a little **even for three seconds!** Even notice a miracle! When you practice noticing, daring to feel good, and any acts of mindfulness, love and creativity, you are literally practicing who you truly are, which is an awesome Hero and Heroine on a badass journey. Kudos to you!

Anxiety and Fear, PTSD, Trauma and Panic Attacks

If you were not identified as dyslexic in your schooling and denied the learning methods that fit you, you might have been told you were “stupid” or “thick” or were just ignored. This is especially true for people who grew up before dyslexia was better understood. It is a common story for kids with unrecognized dyslexia to be asked to read aloud in front of the class when they can’t, even when the teacher knows this is putting the child through a profoundly shameful experience. Or the teachers may ignore the student entirely and let him or her slip through the cracks. Kids are naturally curious and want to learn. They see their peers succeeding and yet dyslexic kids are unable to succeed in a “conventional” (ie, narrow-band) learning setting even if they apply themselves through “conventional” methods. The result is the experience of failing over and over, including failing in public. Other kids may make fun of them, exclude them, or bully them. Going to school becomes a daily act of going into a war zone, with all the accompanying trauma.

- After finishing school, dyslexics can find the newness of any endeavor, especially in the presence of others whether friends, family or work colleagues, to be particularly stressful because of the fear that new experiences may result in failing, being judged, criticized, or rejected. Dyslexics can run a constant background of anxiety and fear. If a situation is particularly stressful, their overwhelmed emotional system can even result in a panic attack. In order to shift the daily background feelings from fear to curiosity, reparative experiences need to happen to re-set the system. It is true—you can learn to re-boot your system.

Trauma is a response to a perceived threat. We need to react to threats in the moment to keep ourselves safe, usually by “fighting,” “fleeing” or “freezing.” Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD, happens after an initial event, when someone gets “triggered” by something they see, hear, or smell and begins to feel that they are back reliving the traumatic moment. Some traumatic reactions occur from accidents, disasters, and attacks. However, we also experience trauma when the reactions of others are so harsh that we have no choice but to put ourselves away inside. The loneliness and pain of denying oneself is a matter of life and death to our emotional system, especially as a child or teen.

- The triggers for trauma and panic attacks can be seemingly “mundane” objects, people, or experiences—like seeing the four o’clock sunlight come through the window. They can immediately conjure up overwhelming past memories and difficult experiences. Dyslexics can find themselves triggered by things like new tasks, seeing child-size chairs, talking to new people even about things you know and love, or talking to someone you find out is a teacher.

When people get triggered, they may respond in a number of ways: feeling overwhelmed, numbing, freezing, spacing out, being quick to anger. They may find themselves anxious and depressed. They can get panic attacks. Sometimes they avoid certain situations entirely. Life can become really small and dark. But healing is possible!

HELP ON THE QUEST:

Grounding Visualizations

We start to feel whole and safe when we can find a way into our body that feels nourishing, pleasurable, and brings us into the present moment. Here’s a simple exercise that offers a way to offload anxious thoughts and feelings and find the way home to a pleasurable present. In the present we are in our True Selves and can both enjoy life and have more resources to deal with difficulties.

Visualizations use some right brain functions to help us shift into a more embodied state. When we are anxious or upset, it is helpful to have a toolset that brings us back into balanced brain function, and using right brain gifts is really helpful. The right brain is a major player in how we experience the following:

- our body and physical sensations
- music
- food
- humor, jokes, metaphors
- express creativity and come up with new ideas
- compassion for others (putting ourselves in another person’s shoes) and for ourselves
- connection to the heart

That’s a lot of good stuff! So making use of the right brain’s gifts in visualization naturally brings us back into balance!

Every single human has a lot of “practice” feeling anxious, freaked out, nervous and scared. By practice, I mean that when we get triggered by something we engage in these states over and over until they become habit. Because they are habit, they are easy to start and easy to keep doing. It can be harder—at first—to feel calm, grounded and at peace with the world. It can be even harder—at first—to recover from difficult feelings. However, we can “practice” making new habits to feel the pleasure and joy in life, and to retain our equilibrium in the face of difficulty. It’s like learning to ride a bike—at first it might have seemed scary or even impossible—but we learned and pretty soon we found we could ride along without even thinking. Look Ma! No hands!

When we use lots of sensory detail in guided meditations or visualizations, we are engaging the right brain in a positive and healing way that ***naturally switches up how we are using our brain circuits***. That's right—you can learn to move from anxious circuits to grounded circuits by using sensory details. You are creating new neural paths! If you are visual, use lots of visual details. If you aren't visual, no worries—use sensations, so you might feel the sand under your feet at the beach while a visual person sees the color of the sand. What is best is using as many elements of sensations as you can—hearing, seeing, feeling, smelling, tasting.

In addition, if you add an element of feeling grateful, you strengthen the connection between right brain and heart. The heart also has neurons, just like the brain does. Using gratefulness means bringing to mind something beautiful or kind and staying with the feeling of appreciation. Some examples are: remembering a beautiful sunset, an act of kindness you witnessed, someone you love, etc. When you allow yourself to feel appreciation—and fill in all the sensory details!—you are also bringing your parasympathetic nervous system online. This is the part of our nervous system that naturally stimulates our brain and body to produce feel-good chemicals like oxytocin and dopamine instead of fight-flight-freeze ones like adrenalin and cortisol. You actually are your own prescribing chemist when you bring a kind face to mind or remember walking in a beautiful forest.

Below are two exercises for pushing the reset button to calm yourself. The more you practice, the more you strengthen these brain circuits, the more you learn to live from this state, and when life throws you a curve ball you have more resources to deal with the ball. If you want to learn more about how the brain works and have lots of exercises, you can check out: *Buddha's Brain, The Practical Neuroscience of Happiness, Love and Wisdom* by Rick Hanson, and *The Upward Spiral* by Alex Korb.

At The Beach*

**A variation is to go into the forest where a river is flowing nearby.*

- Sit or lie comfortably in a quiet room.
- Let yourself softly breathe in and out several times. On the outbreath make a sighing sound.
- Now imagine yourself at your favorite beach. It could be a real beach you've visited, or an imaginary one.
- For this exercise, this is a beach where only you may go, so you have a lot of privacy.
- Begin to fill in the details of your experience: Feel the warm sand under your feet, or the cool pebbles if it is a shingle beach. See the immense sweep of the beach. What trees are there? What birds? What color is the water? Smell the salt air. Fill in all the details.
- Now especially listen for the pounding as the waves fall upon the beach and feel the reverberation in your bones. Hear the ssssst as the waves withdraw. Be with that rhythm, ever constant and ever varying.
- Now, give one layer of anything that you'd like to let go of to the outgoing tide. It could be a tension, an ache, a worry, a tightness. Just one little layer at a time. Don't worry about trying to give it all away. Just give a little bit to the outgoing

tide, knowing that the tide will take care of it. Notice your experience as the layer leaves out, out, out to sea.

- As you let go of little layers, allow yourself to begin to notice yourself feeling more space for yourself or perhaps it is yummy softening. You might notice you are taking a bigger breath—savor the bigger breath and the spaciousness in your chest. You might notice the pleasant weight of your bones, the warmth of your breath, your feet on the ground. As you feel yourself slowing down and your mind empties, savor the quiet and the slowing pace. Let yourself take time with any relief, peace, spaciousness, weight of your bones, calmness, slowness.
- Notice in a playful way *who* is noticing—this is your True Self, your Home Base You.
- Thank the world for it's beauty, and notice what that thanking brings.
- Thank yourself for allowing yourself to be with the beauty, and noticing what that thanking brings.

Gratefulness Reset Button

You can do this anywhere, anytime. Gratefulness and appreciation of nature and of kindness switches our neural circuits and helps our parasympathetic (feel good chemicals) to start flowing. A few moments of doing this exercise can really facilitate a shift. Making it a regular practice helps it be an important tool in your toolkit of wellbeing.

- Stretch your hands over your head and yawn and sigh aloud—this primes the pump of the right brain.
- Feel the little glow of the stretch and yawn.
- Sit comfortably, neither slouching nor trying to sit up straight: find your sitsbones, let your spine rise from your pelvic bowl, allow your head to float on top of your spine. It's okay to use the back of the chair to lean on, (just don't slouch as slouching compresses your chest cavity and breath, which makes your brain nervous as it isn't getting enough oxygen).
- Breathe in your nose and out your mouth three times. On the outbreath make an audible sigh (ie, make a sound)—ahhh. Making a sound when you sigh automatically signals your nervous system that you are safe and allows it to produce the feel-good chemicals.
- Now bring to mind any of the following: a scene of beauty; an act of kindness you witnessed or received; the face of someone who cares about you (an easy person, not one you are having any difficulty with—the easier, the better).
- Let yourself feel appreciation for this scene or person.
- "Take the elevator down"—bring the beautiful sunset, the caring face, down into your chest and notice the sensations in your chest that accompany the sunset, the care, the kindness. Pay especial attention to any of the following: softening, spaciousness, slowing, flow.
- If you want, you can put your hand on your heart and feel what happens with that.
- Notice *who* is feeling grateful—this is your True Self.
- Thank whatever is beautiful and kind; thank yourself for participating. Notice what this thanking brings.

Healing From Trauma Means Befriending Your Body

Bessel van der Kolk is author of *The Body Keeps The Score*. He is one of the leading experts on working with trauma. He has created a list of effective modalities that help heal trauma based upon years of research. At the core, healing trauma first entails re-learning how to have a sense of safety in your body. That is absolutely key. At some point it will be necessary to integrate what happened to you—to acknowledge it, feel it and let it move through you and out of your nervous system. That happens in your own time, and usually with the help of understanding others who are close to you—friends, family, or professionals.

Healing Trauma Top Thirteen List

Drawn from Bessel van der Kolk and Belleruth Naparstek, leading experts in healing trauma.

1. Psychotherapy which includes Sensorimotor Psychotherapy or Somatic Experiencing (to help reset the limbic system)
2. A Good Support Network (family, friends, mentors, colleagues, therapists, bodyworkers, pets)
3. Music, Dance, Singing (group activities that regulate the nervous system and promote human connection)
4. Bodywork and Massage
5. Acupuncture
6. Mindfulness Practices
7. Guided Visualizations and Imagery
8. True Self and Parts Work (such as Internal Family Systems, or other modalities such as Hakomi and Re-Creation of the Self)
9. Psychodrama
10. EMDR
11. Neurofeedback
12. Yoga (*Note: Bessel van der Kolk notes studies in his book that cite six weeks of yoga has shown to be more effective than Prozac*)
13. Medications when necessary

Not Believing You Have a Positive Future Not Knowing Who You Really Are

Dyslexic kids often grow up with the fear that they “**have no future**” because of their learning differences. Often they **haven’t found out who they are** and what they like, and haven’t been helped to identify and study professions where they can shine. They haven’t been introduced to themselves and don’t know that all the time they are holding an armful of gifts that no one is helping them to open.

HELP ON THE QUEST:

Step One: What were you always interested in as a kid? Take another look above at the areas where dyslexics excel—what sparks you? Here’s an exercise to help you begin to have a line into your uniqueness: Make a list of all the things that interest you, however wild. Make sure you include things like being an astronaut or living for a month in Mongolia. If there’s anything on your list that evokes, “Oh, but I could never do that”—that might be the very thing that brings you most alive. Put a star by that one!

Step Two: We all have a True Self and when we live from this self we naturally engage in what interests us. However, if we've been hurt in some way as kids or young people we often end up putting away our True Selves in order to survive. The way we do this is, as I put it, by hiring a security team. The security team are "parts" of us that keep us safe by limiting our life force. Like any security team worth their salt they are highly trained to act at a moment's notice and shut things down at the slightest whiff of danger. They give voice to the security messages they have learned to keep us safe, like "Don't try new things," "I could never do that," or "I'll fail." **It's important to remember that the True Self never says those kinds of things!** But how to get access again to your True Self? Here's an exercise you might find surprising to make a little room for your dreams:

- Sit quietly and comfortably somewhere on your own.
- Stretch and yawn This helps shift neural states from activated to calm.
- Take three deep breathes in through your nose and out through your mouth with an audible sigh on the outbreath (ie, make a sound). The sound on the outbreath shifts you into your parasympathetic nervous system which relaxes and resources you and provides a more nourishing chemical bath for your brain and organs.
- Pick one of your security team people with a particular message and find someplace in the room for him or her to sit or stand. Is he on the left or right? Is she sitting or standing? If you allow yourself to be a bit dreamy and spontaneous and "irrational" you'll find that these guards are usually outside you and take up duty in a particular place. If they feel like they are on the inside, where would you like to imagine them to be on the outside of you?
- Now, tell your guard (out loud or silently), "**I know you're just trying to protect me. Thank you.**"
- Just that, just say thanks. No figuring out or analyzing. Just a recognition of the ways that that part has really gone to bat for you, most especially as a kid. The truth is, that part helped you survive. At first, all you need is one tenth of a percent of you to get behind the thanking. And of course, you need that part to give you more room. But have you noticed that if you fight with it, or try to ignore it, that it will speak up even more loudly. It's just scared you'll get hurt again. So thank it for being the brave veteran soldier trained to protect. See what happens. I guarantee you that you will be pleasantly surprised.
- When you are able to thank that part, not as a mental act, but as an act of gratitude, you are doing something quite helpful for your neural paths—you are accessing your heart and your right brain and their neural circuits (yes, the heart also has neurons). This produces feel-good chemicals instead of anxiety-depression-trauma chemicals. You are accessing your body in the present moment. You are practicing a new habit of being kind to yourself. You are beginning to come home to yourself.
- Now you may find something really cool happening here—**Ask yourself who is it that is thanking the security guard part?** The good news is that the you that can acknowledge how you've protected yourself—**that is the True Self.** You just stepped into your right brain and your heart, which can acknowledge both your difficulties and your truth.
- Breathe with this and hang out a while. You are waking up the blueprint you were born with!

- Don't worry if the new experience only lasts a few seconds. That's how we begin to come back home. Don't worry if most of you thinks this is hogwash. **If at least one hundredth of a percent of you felt this shift, that is great, that is how you begin.** Let yourself mark the sensations and felt sense experience of that hundredth of a percent. Congratulations—you've unearthed the blueprint that is You.

Mentoring for Dyslexics Adults and Youth with Joseph Feusi

I am here to help you know you are amazing!

- A fundamental need of human development is to have the support, wisdom, expertise, compassion and guidance of an expert who is there to help your unique dream be expressed and flourish.
- We human beings are social creatures, and we're hardwired to learn, to repair old hurts, to grow, and to transform—with other people.
- The fastest way to express your true self in a grounded, satisfying, way is to get the support of a Mentor.

Mentoring for Dyslexic Adults and Youth with Joseph Feusi

I have a specialty mentoring fellow dyslexics, both adults and youth. I understand from the inside out what the gifts and challenges of dyslexia mean. Having a successful dyslexic as a Mentor can exponentially help you achieve your goals and dreams in ways that you may not yet have been able to imagine!

A lot of emphasis is placed on the importance of dyslexics receiving a good education in a conventional or specialty educational system. I understand the importance of dyslexics receiving a good education. However, what is commonly missed is the importance of dyslexics being supported in their unique gifts in order to have high self esteem.

- **I view having high self esteem as the most important factor in the success of a dyslexic individual.**

I have seen a lot of dyslexics with very limited education become very successful in both their personal and professional lives because they have high self esteem and a profound sense of self that is on par with the unique gifts that dyslexics are born with. On the other hand, I have seen dyslexics who have managed to survive the educational system and are well educated, but they enter life with a very low sense of self-esteem and in some cases trauma from going through the conventional education system.

- **My belief is that dyslexics who believe in themselves are unstoppable.**

They will draw to them the unique resources and education that they need to accomplish whatever they want to dream into being if they believe in themselves.

- **So, in supporting dyslexics, I would best be described as The Self Esteem Mentor to launch young dyslexics into the world, and to help mature dyslexics realize that they have a wellspring of gifts.**
- **Self esteem and a high sense of self worth are the chief causal agents that enable a dyslexic person to inhabit and express their gifts and to succeed in life.**

I believe that you have a unique destiny. That's a given. Your truest self is calling out to be expressed.

Joseph's Journey of Dyslexia

Click this link to learn more about **Joseph's Journey as a Dyslexic**:

<https://dyslexicselfesteem.com/the-story-of-joseph>

The Road I've Travelled

Speaking of destiny—I'm a naturally born Mentor. Thanks to my dyslexic gifts, I have a natural ability to see patterns and with practicality, laser-like accuracy, compassion, humor and thoroughness to help people figure out what they actually need to do to change their patterns and get the desired effect that they were hoping for. I've been mentoring people at Motivational Mentor since 1994.

What began as a rocky road for me as a dyslexic young person turned out to be one of the most important keys in my ability to understand patterns and find surprising solutions. I learned, along with other dyslexic folks like John Lennon, Pablo Picasso, Steven Spielberg, Leonardo da Vinci and General George S. Patton—to trust my intuition and creativity and offer it to serve others. I love giving back to my dyslexic brothers and sister by offering a specialty of mentoring dyslexic adults and youth. To learn more about my journey of dyslexia, click this

link: <https://dyslexicselfesteem.com/the-story-of-joseph>

- I've been a natural mentor from the beginning! It was not uncommon or considered strange for adults to come over to my parents' house and ask my advice.
- I live my life fully. I built my first house as a general contractor at the age of 21. I designed my first home and built that at age 23. That's about the patterns of physical structures and about motivating intense guys on my crew. Next I took a dive into the patterns of the psyche.
- I wanted a deeper understanding of the family I'd come from and the very human dilemma of being chained to old patterns and the heroic quest to throw off the bonds and instead live a life of freedom and meaning. Ever the avant-garde guy—I changed careers and became a Mentor.
- Mentoring offered me a way of expressing my gifts and giving public speakings on a variety of topics while I skied in the winter, kayaked in the summer, taught martial arts to the elderly and youth, and offered classes that included taking a group of men, and on separate occasions women on—successful—field trips to teach them how to date.

- Mentoring helps people learn how to work the world better, how to do things. It's like being at a race track—mentoring is like helping clients know what to do to win the race. I feel at home as a Mentor because it's the thing I was born to do—that I've been doing since the adults came to see me for help when I was a teen. So I began Motivational Mentor in 1994. My clients included people in the film and entertainment industry, business leaders and musicians, as well as individuals launching themselves into new businesses, college, and finding and living their destiny in a variety of ways.
- Once again I felt the pull of my dreams to expand and create. I took a sabbatical from mentoring to write several film scripts and hone my guitar and singing skills—both lifelong passions of mine.
- Following my dreams lead me to bring my film and guitar projects to San Francisco. With the Bay Area as my current home base I've found a new and deeper incarnation of being a Mentor for clients both locally and throughout the world via Skype and phone.
- I Offer My Gifts To Help You Realize Your Dreams
- My unique blend of gifts — *because of my dyslexia!* — allows me to think outside the box and with laser-like accuracy to recognize patterns and intuitively come up with practical and surprising solutions as I help my clients take the necessary steps to implement what needs to be done to realize their dreams.

Web—Learn More About My Offerings In-Depth On My Website:

Please visit my website at <https://motivationalmentor.com/mentoring-for-dyslexic-adults-and-youth>

Phone: 907-562-7353

Email: joseph@motivationalmentor.com

Consulting for Professionals Working with Dyslexic Clients

If you are a coach, mentor, psychotherapist, counselor, educator, employer, parent or spouse of a dyslexic I can help you to better understand dyslexics, their strengths and challenges, and how best to support them.

Psychotherapy with Kathleen Dunbar for Dyslexic Adults

Shifting Beliefs, Processing Grief, Healing Trauma

You are a unique individual with an incredible life force. Let your brilliance shine!

Psychotherapy Helps You:

Dispel Limiting Beliefs

Discover Your Unique Brilliance

Find Your Strengths Within Your New, True Beliefs

The truth is, you are an amazing individual. And, you went through some hellish experiences. Like most people going through hell, you started to believe the messages along the way, and may have even made some big decisions based on what you were

taught. ***Whatever bad things happened, it's what happened to you—it's not who you are or ever were.*** Psychotherapy helps you come back home to who you really are.

Another challenge is processing grief. You may have not yet had the chance to fully grieve the losses you have had, the time you spent not believing in yourself, and the opportunities you missed.

Whatever error messages you picked up along the way, psychotherapy can help you change those limiting beliefs in an effective way. **The palette of psychotherapy I offer helps you get beyond old beliefs and lay old grief to rest. Together we'll discover who you are so that you can live your life with joy and creativity.**

From the first session I will help you get a felt sense of your True Self so you take away:

- An effective
- felt sense
- embodied
- practiced in session experience
- of how to shift old beliefs
- and inhabit new beliefs and your True Self
- in a way that you can keep
- and practice between sessions
- and will continue to deepen into
- so that you live from who you truly are.

We'll awaken your natural birth-rights to:

- Be confident
- Find your power
- Value your amazing self
- Love yourself
- Celebrate your personal strengths
- Believe in your future
- Take the steps that lead you where you want to go
- Value your tenacity
- Define and engage in what interests you
- Build your village—supportive people who recognize and support your talents
- Understand how your own mind works
- Know and accept your edges—the tradeoffs of having dyslexia . . .
- . . . and remember they are accompanied by your unique strengths
- Advocate for help when you need it
- Enjoy your amazing life

The modalities I use are especially effective for your awesome dyslexic processing style:

Mindfulness

Mindfulness, or awareness, is a friendly attitude that welcomes all of your experience. When we welcome everything, the treasures *and* the challenges, the mind calms down. It's like one of those mandalas that include the angels and the demons, the lotus and the mud. The act of awareness (which I'll teach you) actually calms the mind. Awareness in itself shifts brain function away from fight-flight-freeze neural circuits where new beliefs can't arise, and into the more right-brained, creative parts of brain functioning, where you excel.

Bringing in the Right Brain

The **left brain** is for discerning the differences between things and collecting information. It amasses information, ***but nothing new arises from the left brain—there are no answers there!*** It is from the **right brain**, which excels at making new connections, at creativity and metaphor, that answers and new beliefs arise. Have you ever been stuck in the gerbil wheel of trying to figure something out, or being beset by dark feelings? Then when you have a shower and the hot water is massaging your neck in just the right place you have that Ah Ha! moment and the answer comes easily, or the difficult emotions lighten. That is the right brain in action. ***Dyslexics are naturally more right brained, so benefit from somatic (or experiential) right-brained therapeutic orientations that draw on the right brain's strengths to balance out the entire brain.*** Together we'll harness your natural gifts to help you reclaim you!

Somatic Psychotherapy

Somatic psychotherapy is based on current neuroscience, decades of research, the lenses of a number of approaches, and age-old wisdom practices. It is the felt sense **"Ah Ha!"** moments that really bring change and allow you to be more fully you. I teach you from the very first session how to have the Ah Ha! And since that's in alignment with some of your great dyslexic gifts, the somatic work I offer effectively helps you take with you what you've learned so you can be more fully yourself between sessions and build on it. Somatic psychotherapy is based on current neuroscience, decades of research, the lenses of a number of approaches, and age-old wisdom practices.

Parts Work, Psychodrama and Experiential Psychotherapy

Parts Work is an experiential way for you on a gut and heart level to really understand the difference between your True Self and your Parts. Your "Parts" are those selves you slip into that have those limiting beliefs. They are the "security team" you "hired" to help protect you or to make sense of a brutal world, but they can become your autopilot, and their "software" is sadly outdated. The Parts Work I offer is based on Hakomi and Re-Creation of the Self. It's similar to our close relative, Dick Schwartz' Internal Family Systems (or IFS).

Psychodrama offers creative, moving, fun and very potent techniques to express the unexpressed to family, teachers and others who gave you error messages. It is a powerful way to break the trance and claim your truth. Psychodrama is also one of the safe ways I offer to help you express grief in ways you may never have had the opportunity to do before, including with people who have died or whom it may not be

possible to actually speak with.

Experiential Psychotherapy uses a variety of techniques such as Parts Work, Psychodrama, role play, creative expression and drawing, music and guided imagery to transform old patterns into a new grounded sense of self.

Neuroscience, Somatics and Resolving Trauma

Bessel van der Kolk, one of the leading experts on resolving trauma, cites Somatic Work, Parts Work, Psychodrama, Sensorimotor Trauma Work and EMDR in his list of the most effective ways to resolve trauma. In order for people to change they have to have a felt sense of safety in their body and a felt sense of nourishing, expanded beliefs about the self. No way around this, can't intellectually know it, got to have the Ah Ha! With these modalities, you learn how to have the Ah Ha! in each session. They bring the whole brain online and engender healing. I have many years' experience in all of these modalities and I'm excited to introduce them to you.

CBT

A few words about **CBT** (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy). CBT is only one of many modalities used to help clients shift belief systems. How it is traditionally employed is as a very left brain approach. You may know rationally, ie. with your left brain, that you're intelligent, okay and loveable—**but simply recognizing this or telling yourself this doesn't affect your deeper emotional nature which is still imprisoned. To know something isn't to live something.** CBT as it has been traditionally used isn't as effective as more somatically-focused, right brain approaches, especially for dyslexics. Additionally, dyslexic processing is more right brained and you will benefit more from therapeutic modalities that use right-brained, creative, visual and kinesthetic techniques. The somatic work I offer takes the best of CBT and offers it in a highly useable somatic form as one of the many tools in our large palette.

Further Info—Modalities I Offer

I offer an abundance of modalities which are very helpful for dyslexics. You can find a complete, in-depth list and more info at these links:

<https://kathleendunbar.net/approach> and <https://kathleendunbar.net/somatics>

- Hakomi Mindfulness Centered Psychotherapy—I'm a Certified Hakomi Therapist
- Somatic Psychotherapy
- Trauma Resolution and Sensorimotor Psychotherapy
- Attachment Therapy
- Parts Work
- Grief Work
- Psychodrama
- Neuroscience Approaches
- Visualization, Guided Imagery and Meditation Approaches
- Psychotherapy-Informed Tablework
- Attachment Therapy

Consulting for Professionals Working with Dyslexic Clients

My focus as a consultant is threefold:

- I help psychotherapists, counselors, coaches, mentors, educators, employers, parents and spouses to understand the depth of trauma that a dyslexic child or adult has been subjected to and how to best support their gifts and talents as they overcome their challenges.
- I can assist in evaluating psychotherapists in your geographical area to find an appropriate psychotherapist who will understand and meet the needs of the dyslexic in your life.
- I am a consultant for psychotherapists and counselors to help them understand how to work effectively with dyslexics. Dyslexics have often experienced profound trauma and shame, and need to see a professional who understands how to recognize and work with profound trauma, shame, and the reclaiming of their positive self esteem.

Websites for Dyslexics

- Made by Dyslexia: <http://www.madebydyslexia.org>
- Dyslexic Advantage: <https://www.dyslexicadvantage.org>
- Headstrong Nation: <http://headstrongnation.org>
- NoticeAbility: <https://www.noticeability.org>
- Dyslexia Awareness Foundation: <http://kingbaraka.com/the-dyslexia-awareness-foundation/>
- Mentoring/Coaching for Dyslexics by Fellow Dyslexic and Specialty Dyslexic Mentor/Coach Joseph Feusi: <https://motivationalmentor.com/mentoring-for-dyslexic-adults-and-youth>
- Dyslexia Yale: <http://dyslexia.yale.edu>
- Decoding Dyslexia—A Parents-Led Grassroots Movement for Dyslexia: <http://www.decodingdyslexia.net>
- Dyslexia Help: <http://dyslexiahelp.umich.edu>
- DyslexiaLand: <https://www.dyslexialand.com/#home>
- Happy Dyslexic: <http://www.happydyslexic.com>
- Eye to Eye: <https://eyetoeyenational.org/mentoring>
- Dyslexia International Association: <https://dyslexiaida.org>
International Dyslexia Association of Northern California: <https://norcal.dyslexiaida.org>
- Understood: <https://www.understood.org/en>

Videos—Dyslexics Speaking Up About Their Experience

Here are links to helpful videos where adults and kids with dyslexia—including famous folks—talk about their experiences, and where you can learn more about dyslexia.

“Dyslexia Heroes—The World Is Made By Dyslexia”

From the Made By Dyslexia folks

The world is a better place *because of dyslexia*—see why!

<https://youtu.be/D IW 8eU28c>

First Global Summit about Dyslexia October 2018—Highlights

From the Made by Dyslexia folks

<https://youtu.be/Cku5GBrlbg>

“The True Gifts of a Dyslexic Mind” TEDx Talk

Dean Bragonier

Great overview of what dyslexia is, and dyslexics’ strengths and challenges.

<https://youtu.be/ dPyzFFcG7A>

“Because I’m Dyslexic”

Famous folks talk about their dyslexic experience.

<https://youtu.be/fzHaLYsTgJc>

Dyslexia Awareness Part 1: Module 1 - About Dyslexia

From the Made By Dyslexia Folks

"About Dyslexia - Celebrities including Sir Richard Branson, Keira Knightley, Orlando Bloom and Maggie Aderin-Pocock join expert teachers from two world leading dyslexia schools to share their wisdom and expertise in these inspirational Dyslexia

Awareness Dyslexia Awareness Training films produced by Made By Dyslexia. Millfield School UK and Schenck School USA are both pioneers in the field of dyslexia and the first schools in their respective countries to successfully support dyslexic students and

focus on dyslexic strengths. These films have been incorporated into 5 Dyslexia

Awareness Training modules designed to help teachers, educators and parents

understand dyslexia, both its strengths and challenges, gain essential knowledge in how to recognize and support it, and create a dyslexia inclusive classroom."

<https://youtu.be/DgHDQeZ5QuA>

“The Dyslexic Advantage, What You May Not Have Heard About Dyslexia”

From *The Dyslexic Advantage* authors Brock L. Eide, MD and Fernette F. Eide, MD

Inspiring overview including interviews with famous dyslexics.

<https://youtu.be/xyab VSBCAk>

“What Are The Dyslexic M.I.N.D. Strengths”

Dean Bragonier

Short video with great explanations of the four areas where dyslexics excel.

<https://youtu.be/f8ijgzCjw>

“The Creative Brilliance of Dyslexia” TEDx Talk

Kate Griggs

Helps you to rethink your perception of dyslexia and the way learning difference are approached.

<https://youtu.be/CYM40HN82I4>

“Choose Strength, Not Shame”

Ben Foss, dyslexic, prominent entrepreneur and activist and the founder of Headstrong

Nation, a not-for-profit organization serving the dyslexic community, talks about his journey of dyslexia and moving from shame to strength:

<https://youtu.be/bs93inbQPU0>

“The Gift of Dyslexia”

Professor John Stein

Professor Stein talks about the talents bestowed upon individuals with dyslexia.

<https://youtu.be/RVseLzwxceM>

“Dyslexia, An Unwrapped Gift”

Chris Smart

Articulate British teens talk about their experience. Since the publication of this video, research has discovered that 1 in 5-10 people are dyslexic, not 1 in 25.

Part One: https://youtu.be/ngl_lI8TtGk

Part Two: <https://youtu.be/bfyrHaR3yOY>

“Dyslexic Advantage”

Tom West, author of *Thinking Like Einstein* and *In The Mind’s Eye*

<https://youtu.be/grZQhgTZUZQ>

“How Education Can Make You Feel Stupid”

Richard Branson

An inside view from a super-successful entrepreneur.

<https://youtu.be/qYI4vv2Z3KM>

What Parents of Dyslexic Children are Teaching Schools About Literacy

PBS Newshour, Special Correspondent Lisa Stark

“Fewer than 40 percent of fourth and eighth grade students nationwide are proficient readers. learn about how Arkansas now requires teachers to learn how to teach young children in a way that benefits dyslexic kids and all children to learn to read more easily. Using phonics in a specific way, including with tactile methods is the best way to teach all kids to read. Arkansas was in the lower percentiles of producing literate kids. As programs like these are implemented across the country using methods that help dyslexic kids—1 in 5 kids is dyslexic!—these proven methods, based in scientific fact, help ALL kids learn to read more easily. Now, led by parents of children with dyslexia, a learning disability that makes reading and spelling difficult, some states are trying to change how reading is taught. Special correspondent Lisa Stark reports from Arkansas, where a group of determined advocates have upended traditional reading instruction.”

<https://youtu.be/b67cnoPSgSo>

How to Prove Others Wrong

Jonathan Mooney

Jonathan speaks about his journey from being an outsider to being successful.

<https://youtu.be/6nmXrSvewRA>

Positive Dyslexia

Professor Rod Nicolson talks about the advantages of dyslexia.

<https://youtu.be/XqmSMvkBPmQ>

“Inside The Hidden World of Dyslexia and ADHD”

Headstrong Nation

“In Headstrong Nation’s first film, we provide an overview of dyslexia and attention deficit disorder while exploring the brave lives of diverse individuals persevering in a world not designed with them in mind.”

https://youtu.be/15nOajd_7mo

Subscribe to Dyslexic Advantage on YouTube to see many helpful videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/DyslexicAdvantage/videos>

Here are links to help nondyslexics understand what dyslexics experience.

VIDEO

Title: Through You Child’s Eyes

By: Understood.org

Description: How a dyslexic child feels, a simulation for you of their experience, a professional explains.

Video Link: <https://www.understood.org/en/through-your-childs-eyes>

VIDEO

Title: How Difficult Can This Be—The F.A.T. City Workshop (F.A.T. = Frustration, Anxiety, Tension)

By: Eagle Hill School Outreach and Richard D. Lavoie, Director

Description: Video of volunteers (of parents, teachers, educators, therapists) going through a simulated experience of what it is like to have a learning disability. This is not specific to dyslexia, but includes dyslexia.

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q3UNdbxk3xs>

SIMULATION KIT

Title: Dyslexia for a Day Simulation Kit

By: Dyslexia Training Institute

Description: “A Simulation of Dyslexia is a kit that can be used by individuals or groups of experienced teachers, teacher training candidates, practitioners, immediate and extended family members, or anyone interested in learning more about dyslexia and what those with dyslexia often experience with reading, writing and processing. The kit walks participants through five different simulations: two reading, two writing and one processing simulation. It is designed to help individuals gain a better understanding of and empathy for those children and adults who struggle with dyslexia.”

Kit Link and Video: <https://www.dyslexiatraininginstitute.org/simulation-kit.html>

ARTICLE

Title: Online Dyslexia Simulation Is Compelling, Powerful, and Wrong

By: Carolyn D. Cowan

Description: An item published on the internet quickly got widespread attention

(including CNN and Wired). It gave a simplistic visual account of “This is what reading is like if you have dyslexia” which basically entailed looking at a printed page where many letters move around constantly. Author Cowen, herself dyslexic, writes, “I feel pretty confident saying that this simulation is NOTHING like what it is like for most people who have dyslexia.” Learn more about what dyslexia is (and what it is not) in this helpful article.

Link to Article: <https://dyslexiaida.org/online-dyslexia-simulation-is-compelling-powerful-and-wrong/>

Books and Articles on Dyslexia

Books on The Gifts of Dyslexia

The Dyslexic Advantage by Dr.'s Brock and Fernette Eide

The Gift of Dyslexia by Ronald D. Davis

Thinking Like Einstein by Thomas West

In The Mind's Eye by Thomas West

Seeing What Others Cannot See by Thomas West

For Kids and Teens

Spellwright, Spellbound and Spellbreaker (The Spellwright Trilogy) Fantasy novel series by Blake Charlton. "Blake Charlton is focused on importance of literature and imagination for students with dyslexia. Blake is a medical resident who has dyslexia and is the author of three fantasy novels featuring a hero who is aided by his dyslexia. Despite early difficulties in school, he graduated from Yale University and Stanford Medical School. Blake, a passionate and entertaining speaker, is a recent recipient of the Pinnacle Award from IDA."

Dr. Dyslexia Dude Graphic novels by Dr. Shawn & Inshirah Robinson. "Doctor Dyslexia Dude s a compelling story of an African-American boy who is also a colorful superhero with dyslexia. The capped character is autobiographically based on the painful, early life experiences of Dr. Shawn Anthony Robinson. Robinson and his co-author, Mrs. Inshirah Robinson RN, are parents who say their goal is to empower students in Special Education to stay encouraged and now they too can achieve greatness! Dr. Dyslexia Dude is an exciting, colorful, often humorous and relevant source of hope and inspiration for kids, parents and teachers."

Xtraordinary People: Made By Dyslexia. For **kids aged 5-10**, by Kate Griggs (author and founder of Made By Dyslexia), Steven Woods (illustrator), Richard Branson (forward). Discover which of seven Superpowers is yours! “This brilliant book will help you understand the ‘Xtraordinary’ strengths that come with dyslexia. I hope it will inspire to you find your talents and chase your dreams.” Richard Branson

Hank Zipzer A series of **books junior high/middle school kids** by Henry Winkler. From NPR: "You may know Henry Winkler as The Fonz from Happy Days or the "very

good" Bluth family lawyer from *Arrested Development*. Or perhaps, more recently, for his Emmy-winning role as the eccentric acting coach Gene Cousineau on the HBO comedy series *Barry*. But what Winkler is most proud of is, he says, may be his least recognized body of work: his best-selling children's book series *Here's Hank*, which follows the adventures and struggles of a dyslexic kid named Hank Zipzer. Winkler, who has dyslexia himself, pulls from his own experiences to write the series along with Lin Oliver."

Books on Helping Your Child Get Through School

Overcoming Dyslexia by Sally Shaywitz, MD "From Dr. Sally Shaywitz, one of the world's preeminent experts on reading and dyslexia, the most comprehensive, up-to-date, and practical book available on identifying, understanding, and overcoming reading problems—now revised to reflect the latest research and evidence-based approaches."

The Dyslexia Empowerment Plan by Ben Foss

Dyslexialand, A Field Guide for Parents of Children with Dyslexia by Cheri Rae

Narratives from Mothers of Children with Dyslexia: Our Stories for Educators by Shawn Anthony Robinson, Editor

Dyslexia Advocate! How to Advocate for a Child with Dyslexia within the Public Education System

by Kelli Sandman-Hurley. And here's a short video from Kelli: *What Is Dyslexia?*

<https://youtu.be/zafiGBrFkRM>

Additional Helpful Books

The Body Keeps the Score by Bessel van der Kolk (The current definitive book on how to heal trauma, highly readable, for clinicians and patients).

Buddha's Brain, The Practical Neuroscience of Happiness, Love, Wisdom by Rick Hanson (How the brain works in easy language and many exercises to cultivate calm, heal trauma, and live fully, a real must-have read, one of the best mindfulness books).

My Grandmother's Hands by Resmaa Menakem (Dyslexic kids of color often suffer severely in inadequate school systems that cannot diagnose and support their gifts and challenges. They often end up on the street. Though not specifically about dyslexia, this book is a true gift for support on the journey to healing our systemic racism and supporting people with learning differences. Menakem offers extraordinary help on healing the racial trauma that lives inside all our bodies in America. Compelling, insightful and profound, he offers body and mindfulness practices that move healing forward, drawing from and combining therapeutic expertise, social criticism and practical steps. This national bestseller is a must-read book for the profound call of these times to promote our own and our collective healing!)

The Upward Spiral: Using Neuroscience to Reverse the Course of Depression, One Small Step at a Time, by Alex Korb (Alex is like your cool cousin who happens to be a neuroscientist, who has dealt with some depression himself: he demystifies what's happening in the brain and offers a practical and effective approach to feeling better).

Waking The Tiger by Peter Levine, (Recognizing and dealing with trauma, the classic book).

Articles

Counselling the Dyslexic, A Personal Experience by Tony Monahan

<https://mindandbodyworks.com/counselling-the-dyslexic-a-personal-experience/>

How To Support Your Dyslexic Child by Kara Baskin, Boston Globe

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/2021/03/05/lifestyle/how-support-your-dyslexic-child/>

The Emotional Repercussions of Dyslexia by Pennie Anston

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/emotional-repercussions-dyslexia-pennie-aston/>

Black Boys with Dyslexia Need Love and Learning, Not Shame and Prison by Ameer Barkaa

<https://educationpost.org/black-boys-with-dyslexia-need-love-and-learning-not-shame-and-prison/>

Dyslexics: You Are Amazing by Kathleen Dunbar

Go to the following page and look for the article:

<https://dyslexicselfesteem.com/articles>

Find Your Dyslexic People and Nurture Them interview with Professor Rod Nicolson

<https://thepsychologist.bps.org.uk/volume-29/december-2016/find-your-dyslexic-people-and-nurture-them>

EY-Made by Dyslexia Report on the Value of Dyslexia to Business, Coordinated with the latest World Economic Forum's change in demand for core-related work-related skills 2015-2020, all industries by Made by Dyslexia and EY

<http://madebydyslexia.org/assets/downloads/EY-the-value-of-dyslexia.pdf>

Synopsis:

- “There needs to be a refocusing, now more than ever, of how dyslexic ability is viewed in the context of the changing world of work: schools must recognize dyslexia as a valuable way of thinking; understand the importance of discovering dyslexic challenges and strengths; and provide support which enables dyslexic individuals to reach their full potential. We hope this report will be the tipping point that enables the world to see the value of dyslexia and highlights why dyslexia should be a priority in schools. As this report shows, the working world can benefit from dyslexic minds.” —Kate Griggs Founder and CEO of Made by Dyslexia
- “In this report, we analyze how dyslexic strengths match closely to the pressing skill requirements of the changing world and have provided recommendations to

nurture and grow these abilities. Our findings show the huge benefits to be had from taking action to maximize dyslexic strengths. With this in mind, we trust our work will help in seeing the value of proactively educating, recruiting, developing and retaining those with dyslexia.” —Richard Addison, Dyslexia Network Partner Sponsor

Dyslexia Inspiration Dyslexia Inspiration on Facebook

Made By Dyslexia on FB: <https://www.facebook.com/madebydyslexia/>
Dyslexic Advantage on FB: <https://www.facebook.com/DyslexicAdvantage/>
Big Picture: Rethinking Dyslexia on FB: <https://www.facebook.com/TheBigPictureRethinkingDyslexia/>
Eye to Eye on FB: <https://www.facebook.com/eyetoeyenational/>
Dyslexia DAN on FB: <https://www.facebook.com/DyslexiaDAN/>
Dyslexia UK on FB: <https://www.facebook.com/DyslexiaUK/>

Finding a Therapist or Mentor/Coach

Finding a Therapist

Here are some tips to help you find a therapist on your journey. It's perfectly acceptable to “shop” for a therapist. You will be investing time, money and energy. Finding the right fit is important, as is finding a professional who has knowledge of dyslexia and is trained in methods which provide the best support for healing. First of all, it's amazing that many therapists may still not thoroughly understand dyslexia, how widespread it is, and the particular needs of dyslexic clients.

Regarding “talk therapy,” while talking and sharing may provide some relief, the new findings of neuroscience have proven that effective therapy involves much more than talking, and that therapies that incorporate body-brain-and-relationship, and also which understand and work with trauma, promote change more easily. For example:

- **Somatic Psychotherapy** takes into account what is happening in the body, provides support for healing developmental wounding, and enhances and expedites healing.
- **Trauma Work** (which is also somatic, because trauma is in the brain and body), provides specific resourcing and healing for trauma.
- **Parts Work, Psychodrama and Experiential Psychotherapy** are right-brained, creative techniques that greatly facilitate healing.
- However, **traditional CBT** therapy, for example, which heavily relies on the rational mind, is not best suited for working with trauma, nor for working with dyslexics who are naturally more right-brained. However, experiential modalities may utilize the best of CBT in an experiential way as one of a large set of tools.

Important screening questions to ask a prospective therapist:

- What is your understanding of dyslexia?
- What is your understanding of the dyslexic experience of school?
- Have you worked with adult dyslexics?
- What kinds of approaches do you use with dyslexics?

- Do you have training in somatic or experiential psychotherapy?
- Do you have training in working with trauma?

Some Somatic and Experiential Forms of Psychotherapy

- AEDP
- Attachment-Based Therapy
- Emotionally Focused Therapy or EFT
- Energy work
- Experiential Psychotherapy
- Expressive Arts
- Guided Visualization
- Hakomi
- Hypnotherapy
- Mindfulness-Based practices
- Parts Work—Hakomi; Re-Creation of the Self; Internal Family Systems or IFS
- Psychodrama
- Re-Creation of the Self
- Somatic Psychotherapy

Trauma Therapies (which are also Somatic):

- EMDR
- Sensorimotor Psychotherapy
- Somatic Experiencing or SE

The difference between a Therapist and a Mentor/Coach

What Therapists Do:

- Help you change your belief systems so that you can access who you truly are.
- Help you deal with trauma, anxiety, depression, anger and grief arising out of formative experiences.
- Help you build self esteem.
- Help you get unstuck and remove the blocks that are keeping you from fulfilling your dreams and desires and whatever you are trying to accomplish.
- A good therapist has a large toolset that is specifically suited to your needs.

What Mentors and Coaches Do:

- Help clients take their new belief systems and apply them to the world in practical ways.
- Work with you to put together a strategy to help you accomplish your goals.
- Once the strategy, or blueprint, is created, the mentor and you go about gathering all the raw and refined resources you need to accomplish your goals.
- Most of these resources will be information which the mentor will help you evaluate and implement.
- If some of the resource acquisition requires influencing other people to rally them for support of your dreams, the mentor may actually accompany you or be available on the phone as a support for you prior to important meetings (for example, with attorneys, or to speak with loan officers, or for prospective business opportunities). A mentor can also act as an intermediary and lend you

credibility.

- A good mentor has a wealth of practical information and a honed ability to guide you to your goal.

A Metaphor for Deciding—Therapist or Mentor?

A therapist is like the mechanic who will help you repair your engine and prepare your car so it's in top shape—so you have confidence and know who you are and what you want. **A mentor/coach is the pit crew boss** speaking to you on your headset to help you win the Grand Prix. When you're up on the wall going 175 miles per hour, you're not talking to your mechanic, you're talking to your pit crew boss.

Dyslexics Benefit from a Dyslexic Mentor or Coach

Dyslexics especially benefit from someone who has been through and understands their experience from the inside out. For example, Joseph Feusi, at <https://motivationalmentor.com/mentoring-for-dyslexic-adults-and-youth> is a Mentor who is also dyslexic. As a dyslexic, he is a great example of someone who has made a career of using his dyslexic gifts of big picture thinking and the ability to make connections to help his clients. How he expresses this:

“I have an ability to see patterns and with practicality, laser-like accuracy, compassion, humor and thoroughness to help people figure out the actions they need to take in order to get the desired effect that they were hoping for. My unique blend of gifts allows me to think outside the box and intuitively come up with practical and surprising solutions as I help my clients take the necessary steps to implement what needs to be done to realize their dreams. I've been mentoring people at Motivational Mentor since 1994.”

Find a Sensorimotor Psychotherapist or a Certified Hakomi Therapist—A Resource for Dyslexic Clients Seeking a Therapist or Counselor

You will benefit the most from a therapist or counselor who:

- **Specializes** in trauma.
- Does **somatic** therapy.
- Provides **somatic support for developmental wounding**.
- These modalities include awareness of the body (“soma”) and use the entire brain. These are approaches that most effectively heal trauma and restore resilience.
- Talk therapy only, including CBT, **is not** effective.

It's perfectly reasonable, and your right, **to grill a prospective therapist about their knowledge of dyslexia**—you will be investing time and money and they should either have some understanding of dyslexia and the emotional impact or be willing to learn.

- You can send a prospective therapist to our website to learn about dyslexia and the emotional impact of early experiences in school, or contact us to consult. Our link is: <https://dyslexicselfesteem.com>
- And this is the direct link to this page for important screening questions you can ask a prospective therapist to ensure you are a match: <https://dyslexicselfesteem.com/how-to-find-a-therapist-or-mentor-coach>

These days most therapy is online due to COVID. The upside is that extends your range throughout your area to find a therapist, and this telehealth option will likely continue into the future as therapists and clients grow more used to it.

- **Here is an important source to find a somatic-and-trauma-informed therapist in your area. The list includes practitioners worldwide. It's the *Sensorimotor Psychotherapy* list. The "Certified Advanced Practitioners" at the top of the list have the most experience:**
<https://account.sensorimotorpsychotherapy.org/directory.html>
- **Another great resource is the list of *Certified Hakomi Therapists* in your area. The list includes practitioners worldwide. CHTs have a wealth of experience working somatically and developmentally. Ask to make sure they have also been trained in working with trauma:** <https://hakomiinstitute.com/directory/directory-intro>

We'd **love to hear about any therapist who you find to be a valuable ally**, as we are building a list of dyslexia-aware therapists in different areas of the world to refer people to.

The Story of Joseph

What is your story, or the story of a dyslexic in your life? How I got interested in dyslexia—my partner Joseph

I'm not dyslexic myself. How did I get interested in dyslexia? My partner Joseph is the dyslexic in my life. I am continually inspired by his great gifts and by how he meets and transforms his struggles. **Joseph has kindly offered to share his story. His journey illustrates many of the points that we have spoken about in the heroic journey of a dyslexic. He is my hero!**

The Dyslexic M.I.N.D Strengths

Before we begin, here is a little review of the dyslexic strengths explained, courtesy of Brock L. Eide, MD and Fernette F. Eide, MD from their book *The Dyslexic Advantage*:

1. You can review the **Dyslexic M.I.N.D. strengths** in the previous chapter.
2. Here is a little video by Dean Bragonier where he talks about them in a nutshell video: <https://youtu.be/f8ijqzZCjjw>

3. And right here is a mini-review of the dyslexic strengths explained:

M-Strengths: Material Reasoning

- Great 3-D or spatial reasoning.

I-Strengths: Interconnected Reasoning

- Seeing unique connections that others often miss.
- Using different perspectives and approaches to create a big-picture view.

N-Strengths: Narrative Reasoning

- Being able to create vivid mental scenes to display important ideas and concepts from the past, present and future.
- Having a great personal memory (a.k.a episodic memory).
- Being able to write so vividly that others imagine it clearly.

D-Strengths: Dynamic Reasoning

- Taking information and accurately making predictions about the past and the future.
- The ability to notice patterns, even where some information is *missing*, and *correctly make predictions*.
- Understanding how to deal with change and uncertainty from looking at qualitative data.
- Having and following insight.

Family

Joseph, (**as is common with dyslexics**) has many dyslexics in his family. Both of his parents are dyslexic. As a kid Joseph, with his great 3-D spatial comprehension and boundless curiosity, took apart literally everything in the house and put it back together again, including the toaster, most of the plumbing, all his bicycles, a camera, and his first motorcycle (**his dyslexic M-strengths at work**). He couldn't help taking things apart and reassembling them—it was really fun! He checked out ever single thing in the house. His mother was nervous about him having his first motorcycle. When she'd seen that he'd taken apart literally every piece of it and it was spread all over the garage, she was relieved because she thought he wouldn't be able to put it back together again. In a few days he had it put back together and it was running in better shape than ever!

The Hell of School

What I learned about Joseph is a recognizably dyslexic story of creative thinking, achievement, and struggle with a school system which shamed him, blamed him and discarded him. His story is one where adults told an eight-year-old boy that he “would never even be able to be a garbage man because when you grow up, Joey, even sanitation workers will have to have college degrees and you can't get one.” He got the message at that young age that he would “have no future” (**a common fear of dyslexic kids**). To this day Joseph still feels grief from teachers repeatedly telling him he was “stupid.” Once he was tested and found to have a very high IQ, the same teachers then told him he was “lazy” and it was because he “didn't try hard enough” (**a common and hurtful misunderstanding of the dyslexic learning process**) that he couldn't read.

This about a boy who longed to read and spent hours and hours struggling to do so.

A kind, polite kid, he responded to questions in class with more advanced information than was being taught due to his astutely dyslexic observations of life, watching TV (**a really helpful learning tool for dyslexics because it is a visual format**), easily picking up any visual information being taught, and being a member of the adult work force long before other kids. Joseph had a broader vocabulary than some of his teachers. He offered creative and astute answers in classroom discussions. The reaction to his creative, accurate, and advanced level responses was that his teachers labeled him a “smartass” because he could verbally answer but couldn’t express himself on written tests. A teacher in junior high told Joseph that he wasn’t doing his homework because he “must feel that doing homework was beneath his intelligence.” No one knew how to teach Joseph how to read and write though he longed to, and they didn’t understand that this was why he couldn’t complete assignments and tests.

Here is a typical and frequent story of his school experience: A teacher went to great lengths to explain a concept to the students, but they just didn’t understand. Joseph, who appeared to be “daydreaming and looking out the window,” (**that great and often misunderstood dyslexic D-strength processing system!**) raised his hand and offered a great metaphor which all the kids immediately understood (**N-strengths at work, easily finding a metaphor that others understand**). The disgruntled teacher responded with, “Mr. Feusi, how is it that you have the answers in class and don’t write them on the test!” Soon after, this same teacher assigned him to tutor a fellow student in biology. Biology was taught visually with lots of pictures and diagrams on the board (**a great way for dyslexics to learn**) which Joseph easily understood. He not only knew the material, but was a natural and friendly teacher. Joseph helped the girl who was struggling to get an A+ on her exam. Joseph got a D on the same test. He knew all the answers but he could not read the questions nor write the answers. The teacher knew Joseph was smart, which was why he trusted him with tutoring his prize student, but the teacher was unable to give Joseph the help he needed and blamed him for his “failings.”

Another teacher paid for braces for Joseph’s straight-A sister when their divorced mom couldn’t afford them. Joseph also needed braces, but he got Ds, and didn’t get the braces. Instead, one day when Joseph was struggling to read this same teacher came over with the teapot he used to water the plants in the class and dumped the entire pot on top of Joseph’s head in order to try to compel him to do his homework “better.” Faced with belittling comments by teachers, and the horror of being asked to read aloud when he couldn’t, pretty soon Joseph learned to become “invisible” and not respond (**invisibility is a way dyslexics often learn to cope**).

The student Joseph tutored went on to become high school valedictorian. Joseph had a different fate. He articulately lobbied to his high school vice principal to find some way to help him learn to read and write. Joseph always understood the value of education throughout his schooling. He entered the workforce masquerading as an adult so that he could be paid higher, adult wages. He held jobs of high responsibility. But he realized that he really wanted a college education and in order to do that he needed to read and write. So he had a meeting with the vice principal of his high school and expressed his concern that the school wasn’t doing a very good job of educating him and preparing

him for the world. As a student, Joseph learned to survive basically by being invisible and making sure he didn't get in any kind of trouble. The vice principal's response to Joseph's concerns about his lack of education as he prepared to enter the adult world was to label him a juvenile delinquent and angrily told him that they were not going to create a special program just for him, even though the State of California mandated and authorized such a program, and there were other kids who would have benefited. Joseph pointed out to the vice principal that he had never been in trouble of any kind! Indeed, he was the farthest thing from a delinquent as you could get—he was out working as an adult! The vice principal refused to help and simply signed Joseph's graduation certificate to get rid of him **(letting dyslexic students fall through the cracks, or dismissing them, is a common injury; in addition, parents of dyslexics may find that their child's needs will be addressed by the school system only when hiring an attorney, an option not available to Joseph).**

Entering the Adult World

Meanwhile . . . Joseph had entered the adult workforce quickly for family economic reasons—his parents had gotten divorced. While attending school and spending a lot of time trying to read and write, he also was working and having adventures. Joseph began to hitchhike to Los Angeles and the Haight-Ashbury from his home in Pacific Grove at the age of fourteen. He rose from dishwasher to manager of an entire restaurant at age sixteen, and tended bar at another restaurant at age sixteen, supplying himself with a fake ID which showed he was twenty one, a mustache, his six foot five frame, and his innate emotional intelligence. His astute understanding of people's motivations based on his dyslexic gifts made him easily appear older than he was. His ID allowed him to get paid higher, adult wages. At age seventeen he had a year stint at an old Italian fishing and fish processing company in Monterey. For a month he worked on a fishing boat, but was quickly moved to fish filleting, and within a few months he was promoted to union journeyman fish filleter. This was the highest position of fish filleter. It was a job generally reserved for skillful old-timers, but Joseph could do this based on his dexterity and panache **(his dyslexic gifts at work once again).**

Finding The Gifts of Being Dyslexic

After working for the fish company, Joseph left California for Alaska and learned carpentry on-the-job in three years, was licensed and bonded and formed a construction company, and built his first house at the age of twenty one **(using his 3-D M-strengths)**. Completely self-taught, he designed his first home and built it at age twenty three. At one point, he was asked to correct the problems for plans of another architect which would have resulted in the structural failure of that company's project. When the other architect discovered this, he tried to justify his erroneous calculations by the fact that he'd gone to architecture school while Joseph, who had saved the building, had not **(an example of the nonlinear nature of the dyslexic learning process, and the disbelief of nondyslexics who do not understand their process).**

All of this was before Joseph learned to read, which happened at a rare-at-the-time class for adult dyslexics when he was twenty five. He did learn to read, though his reading remains slow, and he cannot spell **(dyslexics exhibit a range of reading and spelling abilities)**. While in this class, his fellow adult students, discarded by their

school systems, were angry and sad that they had repeatedly been given the message that their only choice for employment was to become a janitor, dishwasher or line cook, or who had to turn to prostitution because they could not fill out an employment application. Joseph quickly learned he had a natural ability to counsel his fellow students (**counseling is an N-strength dyslexic profession**). He was subsequently able to complete several years of college thanks to the proactive help of the Anchorage college (**which offered the kind of help a dyslexic needs to succeed at college**) he attended at the time. He then headed south from Alaska to Oregon when he was offered an opportunity to become an alternatively-trained counselor with the help of an also-dyslexic therapist (**an example of the life-changing influence of having a mentor who is also dyslexic—this man was of enormous benefit to Joseph**). Meanwhile, for two years he was a successful associate lobbyist at a boutique Democratic lobbying firm that specialized in lobbying for nonprofits. One of the things he was known for was explaining complex concepts to politicians in a simple way that they could understand and then convey to their constituents and colleagues (**combining his dyslexic abilities to see the big picture and give informative and entertaining explanations**).

After he completed his training, Joseph moved to Whidbey Island with a relational partner. Here he became the second highest producing real estate sales agent out of a field of 127 agents within one year without being able to fill in the real estate documents!—This was before the days of computer documents. Joseph was so good at sales (**another dyslexic strength**) that he'd take a deposit check without a contract, explaining to the broker that he'd get the contract signed later. The broker would get anxious, stating that a check did not constitute a contract (he worried they'd lose the sale). Joseph would fax the info to his girlfriend and she'd fill out the contract and fax it back. Then Joseph would fax the contract to the client who would sign it. It always worked and he only lost one sale out of many due to the lag time between check and contract signing.

He then went north to settle once again in Alaska in 1994. He quickly had a lengthy waiting list of clients in his alternative counseling practice (**the counseling profession is an N-strength**) while skiing the black diamond slopes, becoming a triple black belt and teaching martial arts to the elderly and teen girls for their protection (**some dyslexics are great at athletics because they are able to use their bodies in a physically-felt 3-D way**). Then the laws of Alaska changed to require formal licensure and grad school for counselors. Faced with the overwhelming prospect of reading, he let go of finishing college and going to grad school—he decided to forego formal licensing, and focused instead on being a Mentor in 1997, a word he prefers to Coach. He was one of the first Mentors/Coaches in the United States (**using his dyslexic entrepreneurial skill**). Joseph excels at being a Mentor because he sees the big picture instantly and has the empathy and clarity to walk his clients step by step through what they need to do to achieve their dreams and goals (**combining his N-strengths, D-strengths and I-strengths**). His clients included Hollywood box office directors and actors, corporate boards, writers, photographers, artists, and well known musicians. He also helped entrepreneurial people open their own small businesses of many kinds. He helped others advance up the ladder in their corporate jobs. He worked via phone and Skype all over the world as well as locally. With the help of Dragon Naturally Speaking

(a word to text software program really helpful to dyslexics) and a personal assistant (**also really helpful for dyslexics**) he wrote four film scripts and began a self help book. What always amazes me is that he: writes in his head, remembers it all, *edits in his head*, and *remembers the edits (using his dyslexic N-strength gifts of narrative, storytelling, and scene-based memory)*. For example, the information on his Mentoring/Coaching website has virtually all been written and edited in his head. It is only a final step for him to dictate into Dragon. I spell check in case Dragon hasn't picked up something.

One of the unique and dyslexic talents Joseph offers clients is to help them write letters and applications of all sorts to influence people to be sympathetic to their needs and causes, even when his clients have already been denied. This includes home loans, business loans, college applications, and asking for abatement of medical costs. Pretty much anything that a client has gotten turned down for, Joseph has a knack in his research methods and his writing style to see the big picture of what is needed and help the client express what they need to prevail in their quest. Joseph reads about and researches the person who is being asked for something—**he uses his dyslexic gifts of understanding an issue from multiple facets and disciplines, and his great memory to access his huge store of knowledge about life and about human personality**. He then writes a letter that he knows the recipient will respond to favorably, and then rewrites the letter as though it was written by the client, and in the client's style so there is no disparity between how the client speaks and writes. When what is being asked for is granted, the client's verbal communication style matches their written communication style. Joseph is able to do this **because of his dyslexic gifts—he has highly developed dyslexic narrative strengths**. He sees the whole thing in his head like a theatrical performance, edits in his head, remembers the edits, and dictates it to Dragon Naturally Speaking or an assistant.

Around 2011, Joseph took a partial sabbatical to dive into some writing projects. He moved down to San Francisco when we began our relationship and has reinvented his Mentoring practice to include a spiritual and conscious awareness component and to offer a specialty in helping other dyslexics as well as all kinds of business owners, artists, and entrepreneurs. He works via Skype and in person.

Joseph has done all this and still sometimes struggles with self esteem and the "impostor syndrome" (**lifelong challenges of many dyslexics**)—in his darker moments he wonders if all he has done doesn't really count, or he is deficient, **because he did all of this without formal schooling**. However, through his own heroic journey he has also come to claim his many gifts. I admire his lifelong practice of taking the high road through both the dark times and times of great joy and creativity. My amazing partner—intelligent, creative, kind, unique Joseph!

You can learn more about Joseph's Mentoring/Coaching business:

- On the Dyslexic Self Esteem website at this link: <https://dyslexicselfesteem.com/about-joseph-feusi-mentor-and-consultant>

- On Joseph's website Motivational Mentor at this link:
<https://motivationalmentor.com>