Disability or creative ability: reexamining our misconceptions

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DISABILITY OR CREATIVE ABILITY?
RE-EXAMINING OUR MISCONCEPTIONS

Patricia Klug
Ignited Recent Interest in Dyslexic Strengths

- Metaphor and Myth about David and Goliath and the Underdog.
- The Underdog actually has uncelebrated and unseen advantages.
- Applies the story of dyslexia.
Misconceptions that Leads to Adversity

- It’s a reading disorder and effects only reading, writing and spelling.
- Accommodations such as 504 plans and IEP’s solves learning issues in the classroom.
- If a dyslexic person gets instruction in reading, they will overcome his or her disability.
- They can **overcome** their disability with extra instruction and accommodations.
- All dyslexics are identified and diagnosed by the time they come to college.
- Elementary schools and High Schools are quick to recognize, diagnose, and deal appropriately with Dyslexia today.
- Dyslexics cannot specialize, major, or work in language orientated fields and disciplines.
### Dyslexic Strengths Correlation and Causation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brain Differences</th>
<th>Adversity</th>
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<tr>
<td>- MRI Scans show activation differences in brain when reading.</td>
<td>- US Schools not equipped to handle learning disabilities</td>
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<td>- Mini columnar cell structure in cerebellum shows longer distances from one column to another</td>
<td>- Treat it as disability – put in special education (many times are “gifted”)</td>
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<td>- Use of right brain hemisphere overall is more activated on scans than left hemisphere</td>
<td>- Succumb to myth that it is a reading disorder; focus of accommodations is teaching reading and spelling (Orton Gillingham method).</td>
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<td>- Visual Perception differences</td>
<td>- Brain doesn’t change once it is reading, and major differences remain.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Very high strengths, very low on weaknesses.</td>
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</table>
“I was completely outclassed and left out at the beginning of the race.”

Winston Churchill
How Do We Determine Intelligence?

“Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.”

Albert Einstein
Jonathan Buchanan – Ted Talk
Dyslexics Can Persevere In Spite of Their Challenges

- "Never give up hope. When someone helping you gets frustrated, don't let them. Take a step back, because you can't learn anything under pressure. And don't worry about the label!"

- Erin Bronkovich
Classroom and Real World Struggles

- Handwriting
- Spelling
- Pronunciation
- Reading
- Sequential directions
- Details forgotten
- Working memory
# Approaches to Being Dyslexic in the World

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accept It</th>
<th>Change It</th>
<th>Leave It</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accommodations</td>
<td>Universal Design</td>
<td>Withdraw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Learning Styles</td>
<td>Homeschool</td>
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</table>

Dyslexia advocacy can encompass one, more than one, or all of these approaches.
Finding the Right Accommodations

- Extra Time on Tests
- Notes available – (Power Points, lecture notes, taking picture of the board).
- Option for taking exam orally (this can’t be enforced only offered voluntarily by Professor)
- Sitting at the front of the room
- Technology
  - Speech to Text
  - Kurzweil for Reading
  - Recording devices for taking notes
  - Ginger software program for spelling
A Fish Running the Race
Advocates

Ben Foss – University of Michigan Dyslexic Help Center, “The Dyslexic Empowerment Plan.”

Scott Sonnen – TED TALK
So What about Differences in Learning, Creativity, and Dyslexic Success?
MIND Strengths of Dyslexics

- **M** Material Reasoning =
  - Visual/Spatial

- **I** Interconnectedness Reasoning
  - Connections in reading, context, word associations

- **N** Narrative Reasoning
  - Episodic memory (clarity and vividness)

- **D** Dynamic Reasoning
  - Ability to imagine, predict processes and patterns
M.C. Escher’s Waterfall and Dr. Matthew Schneps
Visual Perception Findings

- Dr. Catya von Károlyi – University of Wisconsin, Madison. Study showed dyslexics figured out the impossibility of this picture 1/3 times faster than non-dyslexics.

- Dr. Matthew Schneps, findings published in Bulletin of Astronomical Study in 2011 found that Dyslexics often outperformed non-dyslexic peers in detecting characteristics of black holes.

- Dr. James Howard discovered in 2006 that dyslexics could detect the letter “T” better in a sea of “L’s”
Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics: Dr. Matthew H. Schneps, Director of the Lab for Visual Learning
Studies the consequences of cognitive diversity on learning.
Thomas West: The Unwrapped Gift of Dyslexia
“Portrait of a dyslexic artist, who transforms neurons into ‘butterflies’ (Rolfes).
Artist, Rebecca Kamen’s artwork on brain inspired by her dyslexia.
Rebecca Kamen’s *Illumination*

Kamen says, “People with dyslexia understand things in relationship to other things, “which in retrospect, is such an incredible gift” (Rolfes)
Ways to Access and Demonstrate Knowledge

- Illustrate your understanding – Cartoon, drawing, diagrams
- Act out a play showing your understanding
- Create a PowerPoint and deliver an oral presentation about the topic
- Make a video
- Write a poem about the concept
- Find patterns in events, dates, facts, concepts, ideas.
- Build a model or sculpture
- Deconstruct a problem, a reading, a concept.


*The Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity*. Yale School of Medicine, 2014. Web 10 October 2014.
