

A WAY WITH WORDS

Many of us take the ability to read and write for granted, but for children with dyslexia, life can full of challenges. Now, new approach - The Raviv method - is giving dyslexic children new hope. Raviv practioner, **Usha Patel** explains:



Parents with children suffering from dyslexia and other learning difficulties are right to be angry with MP Graham Stringer with his unqualified remarks about dyslexia and his dismissal of it as 'cruel fiction which leads to crime'.

As a Raviv Practitioner, I work with many children with dyslexia and the fact is that these children want to be able to read, and want to be like their peer group in their abilities. This is only natural. When they can't learn in the same way as other children, their self esteem takes a knock and they lose interest. Alternatively, they may focus on only the things can do with ease. The creative industry is full of dyslexics who can create or design almost anything, but find reading a massive challenge.

What is dyslexia and how can it be helped?

As humans we do not have an innate ability to read, write, spell or do maths. All of these things have to be learnt.

Before we can read, we need to have certain foundation skills in place. These skills utilise three key centres in the brain, the motor, the visual and the auditory centres. They work together

with the nervous system in sending messages to rest of the body. For these messages to be transmitted correctly, the brain needs to relay it in the correct sequence and along the fastest circuits. Sometimes the brain message transmission fails to occur correctly due to developmental gap or development delay. This can results in motor related problems such as delayed speech, dyspraxia, or poor coordination during infancy. Often, these symptoms are dismissed as being a 'late developer' and the learning difficulties such as dyslexia only become apparent during the school years.

The reasons why these developmental gaps or development delay occur is not yet fully understood . Causes can be numerous and can include trauma at birth, trauma in the womb, missing a stage in development during the early year and genetics. What research has shown is that those with dyslexia process information in a different way from those with normal learning abilities. This information processing method is not as effective as in non-dyslexic readers and takes up far more energy and time. If dyslexics are spending a huge amount of energy trying to understand the written word then it is not surprising if they neither look forward to or enjoy reading.



How can dyslexia be helped?

Dyslexia Action and other organisations involved in helping those with Dyslexia all acknowledge that conventional teaching methods do not necessarily work. They recommend a structured, multi-sensory, cumulative, approach.

The Raviv Method is a relatively new therapy. It is a motor sensory therapy which uses multi-sensory techniques. It is done on a one to one basis and, as a practitioner, I have seen many children go through this therapy with good success. The movement based exercises are completely removed from the academic set up of the classroom, which makes a refreshing change for the dyslexic learner who has possibly built up a resistance to formal teaching techniques.

The movement based exercises stimulate the visual, auditory and motor centres simultaneously. This in turn helps create new neural pathways offering better communication between these key centres and laying the foundation for the pre-school skills which were never properly developed before.

Dyslexic readers often complain of seeing letters and words jumping around. Instead of seeing letters as two

dimensional with a top, and bottom and left and right sides and a fixed orientation, they see them as three dimensional objects without any fixed orientation. Hence dyslexics often see and write the letters 'd' 'b' 'p' 'q' the wrong way round. The therapy goes through various stages to help establish an understanding about the relationship between the spoken sounds and the written language. Once the reading system is in place, the child can then go on develop other skills such as comprehension, logic and numeracy.

Many children who complete The Raviv Method become really enthusiastic about reading. Their reading ability goes up as does general academic abilities. Those with AD(H)D and other similar genetic conditions may need to continue doing the simple movement exercises after the therapy because their brain wiring needs constant renewal .

Like any therapy, for a successful outcome there needs to be good commitment from both the parents and the child over the duration of the programme of around 24 weeks, but this approach has seen many children on the road achieving much more then their parents had ever thought possible.

To find out more about the Raviv method visit www.ravivpracticelondon.co.uk

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