



Can Dyslexia Be Cured?

I am surprised by how many famous people who have achieved great success in their chosen careers have also revealed that they are dyslexic and can't read functionally. Among them are actors Tom Cruise, Henry Winkler, and Cher; millionaires Nelson, Laurence, and David Rockefeller; Charles Schwab, Richard Branson, and others. In the case of the Rockefeller brothers, they all attended the experimental Lincoln School, endowed by their father, where they were taught to read by the whole-word method, which caused their dyslexia. And probably the others acquired their dyslexia in public and private schools much in the same way. But what is even more disconcerting is that none of these famous people have been, or were, cured of their dyslexia.



Some years ago, when I was doing an article on Boston's famous Quincy Market for *Boston Magazine*, I interviewed the proprietor of one of the upscale restaurants in the mall. He told me he couldn't read. He was a graduate of Indiana University, but still couldn't read. Yet, he managed to become a highly successful entrepreneur. I offered to teach him to read with my Alpha-Phonics reading program. He accepted, and I went to his office in the evening several times a week. When I began teaching him the sounds of the letters, beginning with short "a," he asked if other people knew this. He had never heard of short "a." The sounds of the letters were a complete mystery to him.

It didn't take him long to learn to read phonetically. And he greatly appreciated the tutoring I had done. But he also told me something I have never forgotten. He told me that reading had been so difficult for him that he would rather be beaten than have to read. Obviously, this highly intelligent man was the victim of the teaching method in his school, and neither he nor his parents knew what the school was deliberately doing to him: turning him into a dyslexic.

So I've known for quite a while that dyslexia is indeed curable. But the only people who would listen to me were homeschoolers who bought Alpha-Phonics by the thousands and taught their children to read in the proper phonetic manner. However, most of those dyslexics who come out of our public schools believe they are permanently handicapped by a condition they were born with. But, fortunately, for future dyslexics, the scientific community has finally caught up to the realization that dyslexia is curable.

The recent publication of two outstanding books by neuroscientists has brought new hope to dyslexics, that their condition can be cured. The books: *The Brain That Changes Itself* by Norman Doige, M.D., and *Reading in the Brain* by Stanislas Dehaene, director of the Cognitive Neuroimaging Unit in Saclay, France, are now available to anyone interested in the subject. Both scientists believe that the brains of dyslexics are plastic enough so that they can be retrained to become normal readers. They have used



brain imaging to make their case.

So neuroscience has finally caught up with this writer whose book, *The New Illiterates*, published way back in the stone age of 1973, concluded that any child taught to read exclusively by the sight method would exhibit the symptoms of dyslexia. I had done a line-by-line analysis of the Dick and Jane reading program and became convinced that a child taught to read by that method could become reading disabled, or dyslexic.

I identified the sight vocabulary, whereby children memorize a list of words as whole configurations like Chinese characters, as the Thalidomide of primary education, and advocated a return to intensive phonics as the needed reform in reading pedagogy. In fact, at the end of the book I provided the reader with a phonics program, which eventually grew into my Alpha-Phonics instruction workbook, which has been used by thousands of homeschoolers to teach their children to read phonetically.

But it will take the recent work of neuroscientists to finally provide a scientific battering ram to break through the rigid barriers to common sense erected by the professors of education in the hundreds of colleges of education in American as well as Canadian universities.

Doige writes that scientists have finally demonstrated the neuroplasticity of the brain by showing that activity could produce change in the structure of the brain. Indeed, it is now believed that the brain may be exercised as though it were a muscle so that reading disabilities are now quite treatable. He writes of the Arrowsmith School in Toronto where these new concepts are being applied:

Accepted students, many of whom were distracted in regular schools, sit quietly working at their computers. Some, diagnosed with attention-deficit as well as learning disabilities, were on Ritalin when they entered the school. As their exercises progress, some can come off medication, because their attention problems were secondary to their underlying reading disorders.

We've known that fact for quite a while: that reading failure can cause ADD or ADHD. The frustration of being unable to read often leads to disruptive behavior in the classroom, which is why Ritalin and other such medications are prescribed for the student. Doige writes further:

Competitive plasticity also explains why our bad habits are so difficult to break or "unlearn."...That is why unlearning is often a lot harder than learning, and why early childhood education is so important- — it is better to get it right early, before the "bad habit" gets a competitive advantage.

Unfortunately, today's public schools work overtime to get it wrong as early as possible, which is why they now advocate preschool programs that can begin deforming children's brains as early as possible. Having tutored many reading disabled children, I can attest to the difficulty many children have of unlearning bad habits. But if you are to replace sight reading with phonetic reading, there is no escaping the problem.

Dr. Dehaene writes significantly: "When children learn to read...their brains will never be the same again." He has performed many brain scans and can actually see the difference between a literate brain and a dyslexic one. Phonetic reading is a function of the left hemisphere of the brain where the language faculty is located. But when you force a child to use his right brain via the sight method to perform the phonetic functions of the left brain, you get brain deformity. Dehaene writes:

The comparison of the dyslexics with their respective control groups reveal a clear anomaly. A whole chunk of the left temporal lobe was insufficiently active.... the left temporal lobe seems to be systematically disorganized.... This decrease in temporal lobe activity was found in adults who had



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suffered from lifelong reading deficits. But reduced activity can also be seen in young dyslexic children aged from eight to 12 years old.

Dehaene is quite aware of the reading wars that have been going on among educators for decades. But he makes it quite clear where he stands in that war. He writes (p.326):

We now know that the whole-language approach is inefficient: all children regardless of their socioeconomic backgrounds benefit from explicit and early teaching of the correspondence between letters and speech sounds. This is a well-established fact, corroborated by a great many classroom experiments. Furthermore, it is coherent with our present understanding of how the reader's brain works.

I hate to say this, but I've been preaching this sermon to educators since I wrote *The New Illiterates* 38 years ago. But our education system is so tightly controlled by the progressives, whose goal it is to dumb down the nation, that even these latest findings by the world's leading brain scientists will not be able to change what goes on in the public school classroom. And that's because the problem starts in the colleges of education where teachers are taught how to teach reading.

In any case, if you have a child who has been labeled "dyslexic," or know a friend or relative who has this condition, let them know that it is curable. Recommend that they get a copy of Alpha-Phonics, which is the simplest and easiest-to-use reading program on the market, or give them a copy as a gift. You'll make them very happy if you do. You can get it through [Chalcedon Store](#). ([Advertised sale price: \\$25.00](#))



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