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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT HOMESCHOOLING YOUR KIDS WITH DYSLEXIA

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HOMESCHOOLING WITH DYSLEXIA 101:	
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Intro: How I Overcame my Fear of Homeschooling

Our family's experiences teaching children with dyslexia is somewhat unusual in that we have always homeschooled. Even more unusual is the fact that of our 8 children, 7 of them have some degree of dyslexia whether mild, moderate, or profound.

A common fear that parents have of homeschooling their dyslexic child is that they believe that they are ill-prepared or unqualified to adequately teach them. I struggled with this fear for many years. I'd like to share a story of how I overcame this fear.

When our oldest two kids were 9 and 7 years old, our family took a three year sailing trip. Our 9-year-old was still not reading well and the 7-year-old was following in his footsteps. We had explored several treatment options but they were expensive and had little evidence that they were truly effective.

While we were on our sailing trip, we rented our house out to a family with children our own kids' ages. They were enrolled in the local public school that our kids would have attended had we chosen to go that route.

We found out later that their 8-year-old daughter had all of the classic signs of dyslexia. She struggled to read but her teacher was unaware of dyslexia symptoms and misjudged her as a lazy girl who just didn't try hard enough. This teacher tried to motivate the young girl by forcing her to read out loud and mocking her in front of the entire class. She was teased and laughed at to the point of feigning illness so that she would not have to go to school. Certainly this is not always the case in the classroom, however, it is far too common. The teacher simply did not know how to teach kids like this family's daughter who was a bright girl who learned differently or that these differences were signs that she needed outside help.

At this point I knew that even if my kids never learned to read, it would be better than subjecting them to the sort of treatment our friends' daughter experienced. Of course my kids did learn to read because as a highly motivated parent, I searched and searched until I found what would really help my kids - without the shame and humiliation of being 'behind' in school.

Over the past 20 years that we have homeschooled our kids with dyslexia, I have learned by experience that not only is it possible, in my humble opinion, it is the best option if it is within your power to do so.

My goal for this book is to encourage you and empower you that you are the best advocate and teacher for your dyslexic children.

Chapter 1: Getting Started Homeschooling With Dyslexia

"Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time." - Thomas Edison

Overcoming Doubts

Before we go any further, we need to deal with doubt; your own doubt and the doubt of the many well-meaning friends and family members in your life. Many people who consider homeschooling their kids with dyslexia are overwhelmed by doubts about their ability to teach their own kids. I mean if the schools, who are supposed to be the 'educational experts' can't do it, how on Earth can I?

The truth of the matter is that accredited teachers, even reading specialists with advanced degrees, are leaving school with little to no instruction on dyslexia, the warning signs or which methods for teaching kids with dyslexia really work.

Because of this, many parents with kids who are struggling end up waiting for years to get their kids tested, and into a program that will help them, if that ever happens at all. By this time, these kids are significantly behind and have been embarrassed and demoralized by their lack of reading and writing ability. These experiences can be very damaging to developing kids. I guess a better way to look at this doubt is, "If the schools can't educate my dyslexic kids, I will have to do it do it myself!"

As a homeschooler, whether you teach your children to read yourself using one of several solid, parent-friendly, research-based reading curricula or you choose to hire a profession dyslexia tutor, you will have control of what your child is learning and have the freedom to change anything that isn't working whenever you choose.

Benefits to Homeschooling With Dyslexia

• Freedom to choose teaching methods and curricula is just one of many benefits to homeschooling kids with dyslexia.

- Homeschooling allows for the necessary individualized instruction that kids who learn differently need and in all subject areas: reading, spelling, composition and comprehension.
- Homeschooling allows for kids to focus on areas of interest and for lessons to be planned around this interests, also known as interestled learning - one of the most effective, enjoyable and motivating methods of teaching.
- Homeschooling allows for freedom from being measured against peers, day in and day out, with no learning difficulties and the shame and embarrassment that comes with it.
- Homeschooling allows for your child to work at their own pace using, resources that work best with their individual strengths.
- Homeschooling necessarily avoids the rigid scheduling and standardized testing {and the practice of teaching to the test} that is required in the public schools.

Don't believe me? Listen to what the International Dyslexia Association has to say:

"dyslexic students need direct, systematic and individual instruction in reading and spelling and traditional schools do not always provide adequate levels of service".

Nobody cares for your child like you do. Don't underestimate the power of caring and motivated parent to figure out the best way to educate their children.

Having homeschooled 7 dyslexic kids over the past 20 years, I am a huge believer in homeschooling dyslexic children because of the simple fact that dyslexic children thrive in the homeschool environment, despite the mistakes that I have made along the way.

Is Homeschooling Even Legal? and Other Questions

Yes, homeschooling is legal in all 50 states. There are no special requirements for families who have kids with learning disabilities - diagnosed (we'll talk about that later) or not.

Homeschooling is increasingly mainstream. To get started homeschooling you will want to find out the laws in your individual state. Home SchoolLegal Defense (HSLDA) is a good place to start. I recommend joining HSLDA for the protection they provide in the rare occasion that you would need legal support. Your yearly membership fees also goes towards helping HSLDA keep an eye on legislation that affects homeschooling in the United States.

According to the National Home Education Research Institute (NRERI) there were over 2 million children being homeschooled, that is, parent-led, home-based education, in the United States in the year 2010. Home educated kids score above average on achievement tests regardless of their parents' level of formal education or their family's household income. The NHERI also found that homeschool students are increasingly being actively recruited by colleges. For more of the NHERI's research facts on homeschooling, please visit their web site here.

Get plugged in to a good local homeschool support group (resources available on the Homeschool Legal Defense web site). Many local homeschool organizations have support and encouragement groups for families with non-traditional learners.

Find other families who are teaching kids who learn differently who can support you and guide you along the way.

Learning Styles

Dyslexia does not just affect a person's ability to read. It can also affect, spelling, handwriting, math and organizational skills. Although very bright, dyslexic kids learn differently. The freedom to individualize your child's education by homeschooling allows for children to be taught at their own pace with the methods in which they learn best.



Chapter 2: Understanding Learning Styles

"Just as we develop our physical muscles by overcoming opposition - such as lifting weights - we develop our character muscles by overcoming challenges and adversity." - Stephen Covey

What is a Learning Style?

Learning style is a broad term used to describe the factors that influence all aspects of learning. You may have heard the common, simplified view of learning styles as a choice of either the auditory, visual or kinesthetic pathway. While all people use every one of these pathways for learning; most people prefer one over the other. There are many factors that affect a person's ability to learn.

One of the most widely used and researched models of learning styles is the Dunn and Dunn model which is outlined by the following areas of individual preference:

Environmental

- sound
- light
- temperature
- design

Is your child effected by noise or bright lights? Do they struggle with a cluttered work space?

Fmotional

- motivation
- persistence
- responsibility
- structure

Does your child lack confidence or get overwhelmed by big projects? Do they thrive with a loose schedule or do they need instruction every minute?

Sociological

- learning by self
- pairs
- peers
- team
- with an adult

Does your child like working with others, by himself or does he need you right next to him?

Physiological

- perceptual preference (auditory, visual, kinesthetic)
- food and drink intake
- time of day
- level of mobility allowed

Does your child learn better by hearing, seeing, or by getting her hands on things? Do they learn better in the morning or in the afternoon? Does your child need to move around and stretch frequently?

Psychological

- global or analytical preferences
- impulsive or reflective

Does your child need to learn the big picture first? Does your child need time for quiet reflection?

Freedom for Individualization With Homeschooling

While the length of this list this might make the idea of finding your child's learning style seem overwhelming at first, it really is fairly intuitive. You can also see why homeschooling provides more freedom to adapt these many factors for the individuals in your family.

By intentionally observing your children everyday with these factors in mind, you will come to know what triggers struggles for your child.

I have one daughter who simply cannot focus if there is a lot of noise in the room. I have another daughter who likes to listen to music while she does her schoolwork. This isn't done overnight. Adjusting your homeschool to create a more effective learning environment can be done and perfected over time.

The freedom to adapt your teaching method to your child's individual learning style is one of the main benefits to homeschooling the dyslexic child.

Dyslexic students have often been said to have a 'learning disability'. I am going to step out on a limb here and say that it would be at least equally fair to say that dyslexic learners are suffering from a teaching disability. This is not to say that teachers are inherently incompetent. Most teachers are sincere in their desire to effectively teach their students.

The most effective teaching style for the dyslexic learner is not easy to implement in a classroom of 30+ children, all at different levels with a variety of differing learning styles

'Typical' Learning Styles of Dyslexics

As many as 80% of struggling learners are right-brain dominant. That does not mean that right-brain dominance is a weakness. Considering that most school curricula teach in a more left-brained style, things start to make sense. Look at the following chart of right and left-brain functions and then think about what style of learning would benefit most from the typical public or private school classroom: workbooks, worksheets, rote memorization, timed tests, lectures.

If your child is struggling with these methods of schooling, you may do well to change the way you are teaching. By tapping into the strong right-brain strengths – music, color, emotion, humor – you are in a sense, speaking their language.

LEFT BRAIN FUNCTIONS	RIGHT BRAIN FUNCTIONS
uses logic	uses feeling
detail oriented	"big picture" oriented
verbal	non verbal
facts rule	imagination rules
words & language	symbols & images
math & science	philosophy & religion
order/pattern perception	spatial perception
knows object name	knows object function
reality based	fantasy based
forms strategies	presents possibilities
practical	impetuous
safe	risk taking

How to Determine Your Learning Style

Another great way to begin to better understand the learning styles of you and your children, is to take a learning styles assessment to find out quickly how you and your child(ren) learn best.

Our school group had the opportunity to hear Mariaemme Willis, author of the book Discover Your Child's Learning Style: Children Learn in Unique Ways – Here's the Key to Every Child's Learning Success speak on the importance of understanding learning styles in the homeschool.

She has created a very comprehensive online learning style evaluation. It includes not only talents but also other aspects of learning such as

interests, modality, environment, and disposition – a very detailed assessment. I was not so surprised by my own assessment – I know myself pretty well. However, I was definitely surprised by some of my kids' results {although they were not!}.

Mariaemme has offered my readers a \$5.00 discount on the learning style assessment. Click here for more information. Have all of your kids take the assessment – you may be surprised at what you learn!

Don't forget to find out the learning style of you – the teacher. We will tend to teach in the way that we learn best. If we tend to learn best with textbooks but our child doesn't, we can end up with a lot of tears and frustration.

Learning more about the specific learning styles within your family can be very helpful in understanding how to work with your child instead of against them.

Helping your child(ren) to learn how they learn best is critical for equipping them to be successful and independent learners, both now and in the future.

I hope that you are beginning to see the power that you have as a homeschooler to give your child the individualized education that he or she needs to thrive.

Chapter 3: Creating a Positive Learning Environment

"Be of good cheer. Do not think of today's failures, but of the success that may come tomorrow. You have set yourselves a difficult task, but you will succeed if you persevere; and you will find a joy in overcoming obstacles. Remember, no effort that we make to attain something beautiful is ever lost..." - Helen Keller

Before we talk about homeschool teaching methods, how to purchase books and other curricula to teach your kids at home and creating a homeschool schedule, I want to talk about creating a positive learning environment in your home. Later as you begin to fill in the details of your curricula and schedule you can bear in mind this idea of making your home a safe place for your kids to learn the way they learn best and at their own pace - an individualized education.

Talking about individualized education sounds awesome while reading about it in the comfort of our living rooms. Somehow, however, when we begin to implement our teaching philosophies, many parents revert to a traditional teaching method and environment.

Let me explain. I was one of the 'good kids' in school. I could sit still, follow directions and quickly learned not to ask too many questions. Just tell me how many pages to complete ma'am!

Because most of us were educated within the traditional school setting of either a public or private institution, we tend to default to this teaching method. This can take some time to undo. Understanding the impact of these ideologies on our homeschooling decisions is the first step in creating a positive learning environment in our homes.

We talked about learning styles and the typical learning styles of dyslexic learners. Is it okay for our kids to do school in the dining room? Outside? Under the dining room table? This may feel strange for us and for our kids who are used to a traditional school environment.

It is okay to rethink things like:

Where we do school How long we do school

What we teach
What we don't teach
How we teach

Overcoming Negative Public/Private School Experiences

Before I go any further I must address the issue of overcoming any school inflicted trauma that your kids may have experienced before beginning to homeschool. I have talked to too many parents whose kids have completely lost their desire to learn. Their confidence is so low they don't even want to try anymore. The good news is that these same parents have been able to rekindle their kids' love of learning over time through their homeschool experience.

Here are some tips for reviving a love for learning in your discouraged learners:

Back way off on teaching standard subjects. While this may seem counterintuitive since your child may be considered 'behind' their peers in the school system, it really is how to start their healing.

Experience real life together. What does your child enjoy doing? Find activities that you can do together to stimulate thoughts and ideas aside from academic things for a time. Whether you spend time cooking, hiking, drawing or painting, take time to talk about real life activities that your child enjoys.

Read out loud. It is likely that a dyslexic child who has been discouraged by his or her experience at school will NOT want to read. That is okay for now. Find books of interest and read them aloud. Discuss the ideas, characters and themes from your read aloud time. This should not be a time of lecture or overt teaching rather a time for your child to find his or her voice and feel comfortable discussing their own ideas in a safe environment.

Focus on Interests. If your child is an animal lover, go to the zoo, local farms, animal breeders in your area, etc. Be creative! By helping your child to remember the things that they love, you will help them to rekindle their passions and an interest in learning.

Some Thoughts on Interest-led Learning

Kids Are Always Learning

In our large homeschooling with 8 children, there just necessarily was a lot of downtime for our kids. There was no way that I could be everywhere all the time. I observed something very interesting during this time. My kids, regardless of what they were doing, were always engaged in some form of learning. They were absolutely compelled to it. I did not have to be 'teaching' them every minute in order for them to be learning.

Despite my fears about my kids reading difficulties, they had been blessed with massive amounts of natural curiosity and passion for life. I began to see how their 'down time' was actually propelling them to pursue their interests. With limited constraints on their time, my kids were finding time to create, build, nurture and pretend to their hearts content.

Using Interests to Motivate

When my oldest daughter was 10-years old, she was an avid animal lover. She would check out tall stacks of books from the library on any and everything to do with the animals she so longed to own.

The trouble was that she was still not an independent reader. I had my hands full with lots of little ones and was often unable to finish the books we had started reading.

Interestingly, her passion for learning everything about animals propelled her to do the hard work (reading for a dyslexic is always hard work) of finishing those books on her own. That year, she cracked the code of reading, overcoming great obstacles to realize her own interests. That, my friends, is power.

Stepping Away From the Traditional School Model

Stepping away from the traditional school model isn't as scary or dangerous as it may seem. In fact, many aspects of interest-led learning take place quite naturally. With a little effort on the part of parents, this learning can expand and grow into a fantastic learning experience.

How to Encourage Interest-led Learning

Give kids down time. Play is a child's work. Make sure that they have plenty of time for it. It is okay for kids to be bored!

Observe kids interests. Pay attention to what interests your kids. For some it may be obvious, like our daughter's love of animals. Others are more subtle, like our young son's fascination with machines and figuring out how things work.

Encourage interests with books, tools and your gentle support. Provide support in the form of outings, materials or other resources that can enhance your child's learning.

Kids can learn many skills and gain much information from interest-led learning in a way that keeps them engaged and enjoying learning.

An example of interest-led learning:

The daughter that I mentioned above had for many years a love for animals.

Here is how her interest-led learning looked:

We noticed our daughter's interest in animals and took time for any opportunities to see, touch or learn about animals in our daily lives. We took frequent trips to the local zoos, animal rescue stations, beaches and parks etc.

We began to gather resources such as field guides, binoculars, and library books on the animals that she was learning about. She began to keep a nature journal, drawing and labeling the animals that she had seen.

After reading some fictional books about the lives of animals, our daughter, who was dyslexic and as yet unable to write well, dictated animal stories to us that included characteristics of animals that she knew about.

We watched documentaries and read library books about various animals, learning about mating and other habits as well as the habitats that the animals needed to thrive.

We began to notice the role of animals in history such as the fascinating ideas held by ancient Egyptians about animals and their supernatural powers.

Eventually, our daughter bought her first rabbit and learned how to care for it.

She joined 4-H and began to learn more about rabbits, eventually buying a trio of rabbits to breed. Studied breeding schedules and prepared for her rabbits to give birth.

She learned to document the rabbits' pedigrees and sold rabbits at rabbit shows.

This eventually branched out into owning other animals, showing them at the local county fair and earning money by selling prize-winners.

She saved money so that at 15 years old she could afford to buy her own horse.

Over time, our daughter's interest in animals waned and was replaced by other interests. She learned so much from this experience.

What Was Learned

Handwriting. Keeping track of the animals she saw through a nature journal was a natural need for using good handwriting.

Art. Practicing sketching the animals that she saw using various forms of media.

Composition. Writing, or in our case - narrating, stories inspired by the information she was learning and the characteristics of each animal.

Observation. Sketching and photographing animals and trying to match them to our field guides helped our daughter hone her powers of observation, making note of tiny variations in species, etc.

Research. Using field guides to determine an animal's species is a basic research skill.

Library Skills. Over time our daughter was able to find the animal sections in both the adult and juvenile sections of the library and eventually she learned how to use the online catalogue as well.

Reading. For a struggling reader, learning about a subject of great interest supplied the motivation to press through the difficulties of reading and read all of this library books and field guides.

Biology. Applying all of her knowledge and carefully breeding and raising young rabbits taught our daughter about the miracle and delicate nature of life.

Business. Unable to keep all of the rabbits she was raising, she learned the value of the animals and found a market for selling her specific, pedigreed breed.

Sure, there is a tendency to feel like our kids won't learn what they need to learn without the use of textbooks or the traditional methods of teaching found in schools. Hopefully, you can see now that interest-led learning not only covers many areas of study, it does so while maintaining a love for learning.

I hope this idea of creating a positive learning environment has been an encouragement to you. In our next chapter, we will look at different homeschool teaching methods and how to choose one, or several, that are a good fit for your dyslexic homeschooled kids.

Chapter 4: Homeschool Methods

"Sometimes adversity is what you need to face in order to become successful." - Zig Ziglar

Hopefully, you are feeling more and more empowered as you go through this free course that homeschooling your dyslexic kids is not only doable but enjoyable. No two homeschools will ever be just the same. That is one of the beauties of homeschooling our kids. We can set up a learning environment that nurtures our kids learning styles and allows them the freedom to pursue their interests making learning much more effective and enjoyable.

Let's take a look at an overview of the different homeschool methods that are available today. Keep in mind the learning styles of you and your kids. Remember, there will be a homeschool method that appeals to your learning style and one that will appeal to your kids' learning styles.

Homeschool Methods

Most of us were raised with the traditional text book, workbook, quiz and test format. These methods make it easier to organize and manage the teacher-to-student ratio in the public or private schoolroom – mainly for organizational purposes. Everybody has the same assignments. Everyone is required to complete the same work. There is little room for individualized instruction, even if there was understanding of the benefits to doing so. We don't need to limit ourselves to this method. There are many different homeschool methods.

Traditional: Closest to what you find in a traditional classroom. This method may be a good fit for your family if you have recently brought your kids out of the public school system. This method is heavily teacher driven and often involves the parent teaching with the student completing written assignments.

Classical: This approach uses the trivium (grammar, logic, rhetoric) as its main focus. A classical student will receive formal training in Latin, Logic, Greek, and Western Literature. The Socratic Method is instilled in the student to develop a critical thinker. The goal is to train the student to think for himself and become a future leader. Think of the student/teacher

relationship of Aristotle and Alexander the Great as an example of this method. A classical student will study mathematics and history in depth.

Unit Studies: Unit studies integrate all subjects into one theme. Good for combining subjects with multiple ages, is hands-on and activity based. Good for teaching multiple ages at once. Often the theme is determined by the child's interests, literature book, or time period being studied. Science and math are sometimes done outside of the unit study. Unit studies can range from 4 to 9 to 12-week intervals.

Charlotte Mason: A whole child approach that is based around reading 'living books' but includes focus on short, intense class meetings, nature study, narration, copy work, and the study of fine arts. The Charlotte Mason Method is a literature-based method, which also focuses on habit training. The student is trained in all areas--from education to social graces through habits. This instills positive habits as natural; consider the CM motto, "I Am, I Can, I Ought." Students are encouraged to perform at their best in all subjects, competing only with themselves. Charlotte Mason students have short classes with focus on excellent execution of material. Charlotte Mason educators are well known for nature study, narration, copy work, living books, study of fine arts, and the lack of textbooks. The goal is to instill a love of learning and a curiosity about life. This method has many characteristics that appeal to the dyslexic learner.

Montessori: Developed by Dr. Maria Montessori, this method is student-driven yet tempered by a structured environment. The Montessori method is well known for use with young children in preschool and early elementary schools due to the focus on sensory and motor training. The student is given the freedom to explore his environment at his own pace and level of interest. This is a hands-on method, whereby the parent or teacher becomes more of an encourager or guide through the educational experience.

Waldorf Method: The Waldorf method is also used in some homeschools. Waldorf education is based on the work of Rudolf Steiner and stresses the importance of educating the whole child—body, mind, and spirit. In the early grades, there is an emphasis on arts and crafts, music and movement, and nature. Older children are taught to develop self-awareness and how to reason things out for themselves. Children in a Waldorf homeschool do not use standard textbooks; instead, the children

create their own books. The Waldorf method also discourages the use of television and computers because they believe computers are bad for the child's health and creativity.

Thomas Jefferson Method: The Thomas Jefferson Method of homeschooling is based in the Idea of Leadership Education and not the conveyor belt system of the traditional school education. The principles are seen in these seven keys:

- Classics, Not Textbooks
- Mentors, Not Professors
- Inspire, Not Require
- Structure Time, Not Content
- Simplicity, Not Complexity
- Quality, Not Conformity
- You, Not Them

Eclectic: This method is developed over time through experience as a homeschooler. This homeschooler has determined the nature of how each of her children learns and is confident in her knowledge of curriculum and education. Simply put, the homeschooler picks and chooses curriculum and aspects of methods that best fit her family.

Please do not misunderstand; one does not develop into an eclectic homeschooler because of her level of ability, confidence, and experience. One does not aspire to one day be an eclectic homeschooler. You can be a mature homeschooler with years of experience and remain faithful to a single method or a mix of two methods. However, becoming eclectic is something that requires time and experience by someone who is naturally driven to tailor make her curriculum and homeschool. This method is also nice for accommodating multiple learning styles.

Unschooling Method: Perhaps the most controversial method, unschooling is completely student directed. A student is able to learn at his own pace and choose his own interests. Lessons are learned through hobbies, play, interests, and life experience. Unschoolers do not use grades or labels to identify students. The use of textbooks, classes, unit studies, or tests is rarely, if ever, used. The focus is on imagination, creative thought, critical thinking, nature, art, and music. The child's entire environment is his classroom, as there is not a designated "class time,"

classroom, or curriculum. Parents adopt the philosophy that children learn out of a sense of curiosity and use the world around them as their classroom. This method is purposeful and should not be confused with neglect, laziness, or lacking in education.

Take some time to look over the methods that appeal to you and your kids.

Review some of the resources and think about which methods appeal to both you and your students.

Chapter 5: Finding the Right Homeschool Curriculum

"The greater the obstacle, the more glory in overcoming it." - Moliere

Finding the Best Homeschool Curriculum for Your Family

With so many excellent curricula to choose from, how can you find the best materials for your family? Taking into account learning styles and homeschool methods that appeal to you and your students, you can begin to search for curriculums that are the best fit.

General Tips

- Search online for curricula that fit your family's learning style.
- Read the reviews
- Talk to other homeschool moms of dyslexic kids (or read their blogs!)
- Look for curriculums with audio options
- Look for curriculums with hands-on activities

Finding Balance:

There will be a homeschool method that appeals to you, the teacher, and another one that will appeal to your child, the student. Usually, the style(s) that you find the most interesting will be the most effective. I am a classic left-brained, just-tell-me-how-many-pages-to-fill-in kind of girl. I like the order and clarity of workbooks.

My kids, however, struggle with that type of learning. My right-brained, creative children would rather act out a scene from a certain period of history than write a paper on it. This is completely overwhelming to me. We have had to find compromise in our curriculum so that they are learning and I am not stressing out!

General Learning Preferences for Dyslexic Learners

Dyslexic kids, in general, do better with:

- shorter, intense teaching sessions
- auditory learning {audio books, discussion, educational DVDs}
- oral work or discussion of material

Dyslexic learners {in general} don't do so well with:

- lots of writing {look for narration exercises, arts-based assignments}
- learning by reading {look for curriculums with video or audio lectures}
- spelling lists
- rote memorization

While all people (dyslexic or not) have certain ways that they learn best, using a multi-sensory approach (combining seeing, saying, listening and doing) will help your child learn faster and enhance his or her ability to retain new information.

Also, making accommodations for learning styles should not exclude learning by other methods. If your child learns better through the auditory channel, great. Use auditory methods when you can but still be working on improving reading speed and comprehension on a daily basis.

Don't be Afraid to 'Tweek' Things

Most homeschool curriculums can be adapted to fit alternate learning styles. A few years ago, my two 9th-graders were working through a rigorous Integrated Physics and Chemistry curriculum. I had found a curriculum that was taught on video which appealed to their auditory learning preference.

However, the accompanying reading assignments were quite difficult and full of vocabulary that they had never heard before. We began the year plugging their (online) reading assignments into a text-to-speech app on our iPad. This was helpful, because they could follow along as the iPad read their assignment.

However, the content was still confusing to them so, rather than immediately list the curriculum on eBay (which I have done plenty of times!) I decided to sit one or two days per week and read the assignment with them. We stopped whenever there was something we didn't understand, looked up vocabulary words or better yet, watched a video or two on the Kahn Academy web site. {Oh my, this site is a homeschool mom's dream come true!}

We also had a lot of discussions about what we were learning and were finding connections to things that we already knew. By creatively working with our curriculum, we were able to make it work for us. Did I buy this same curriculum for Biology the following year? No, but we did learn how to learn which is a large part of homeschooling, especially for the dyslexic.

Truths About Finding the Right Homeschool Curriculum

There is no magic cure for dyslexia. A dyslexic child will become a dyslexic adult. However, all children {and adults} can learn to read and write. Dr. Maryanne Wolf, Director of the Center for Reading and Language Research at Tufts University has said "There are no universally effective (reading) programs, but there are knowledgable principles that need to be incorporated in all programs about how we teach written language."

Teaching to your child's strengths with research-based methods customized to your child's learning style and centered around his or her interests along with helping your child learn compensation techniques will go a long way to providing the level of literacy needed to become a successful adult.

There will be days of frustration when you feel that nothing is 'working' and want to give up. Rome was not conquered in a day! Press on and you will see, not only the advantages to homeschooling your dyslexic child, but the success.

It may take several tries to get a good fit that works well with your family. Don't be too hasty or too slow to replace a curriculum. Just because it works for everyone else or got great reviews, doesn't mean it will be a good fit for your family.

Chapter 6: Creating a Homeschool Schedule That Works

"I don't run away from a challenge because I am afraid. Instead, I run towards it because the only way to escape fear is to trample it beneath your foot." - Nadia Comaneci

Step 1: Choose Your Yearly Schedule

Every state has their own requirements for homeschooling, including how many days of instruction they require each year. In California where we live the law requires 180 days of instruction per year. Check out the Homeschool Legal Defense website for the laws in your state. There are many different ways to structure your yearly schedule to most effectively get your minimum amount of school days scheduled:

- The Traditional Public School Calendar
- Labor Day to Memorial Day
- Year Round Schooling
- Six Weeks On, Six Weeks Off
- Four Days a Week
- Something Completely Unique Just For Your Family

Many families switch their yearly schedule around from year to year depending on the needs of their family. There is no right or wrong way to do this - only what works best for your family.

Step 2: The Daily Homeschool Schedule

Once you have determined which schedule works best for your family, begin making the following lists – one for every child (don't worry about the order of events yet – just list them):

- begin by listing the subjects that you will be teaching them
- add to each child's list any classes, tutoring, sports or music lessons
- add a list of their daily, weekly and monthly chores

Make a master schedule on paper or if you like something larger, make your schedule on poster board and write every event that needs scheduling on a Post-It note. Write the names of your family members across the top

and the times of day along the side. I use 15 minute and half hour increments. Begin plugging in each activity, subject and event in their appropriate time slot.

- •begin with unchangeable events such as morning routines, Bible study, and any classes, tutors or lessons with a fixed schedule
- •add everyone to the schedule even the baby and preschoolers
- •schedule times when school-aged kids are not doing school to have them help with the preschoolers
- •schedule a few chores in between subjects or break times. Sometimes all that is needed is 5-10 minutes to wash a few windows or move and fold a load of laundry

Consider the first days and weeks using your new schedule as a trial period where you test it to see if it is working and adjust events as needed. For example, my older two kids will be sharing some computer programs and for obvious reasons can't both use the discs at the same time. As you use your schedule, simply move the Post-It note to another time slot if the current time isn't working. Continue tweaking as you go until you get a schedule that works for you.

Scheduling Tips

- •Find as many 'do-together' subjects as possible. Whether it be reading aloud for history, group science projects, family art lessons they will save a lot of scheduling conflicts later.
- •For some very unscientific reason, my days seem to go better when I start with my little guys. Giving them one-on-one attention early in the day both ensures that they are not slipping through the cracks and somehow settles in their hearts that they have had their 'mommy time' and are better able to play alongside the older kids for the rest of the morning.
- •Try scheduling specific activities for scheduled play times with the younger kids ie. Monday Play-Doh, Tuesday puzzles, Wednesday dry erase pens or crayons, etc...

- •Schedule a 'Quiet Time' into your afternoon. All kids are in a designated 'quiet' area for a set amount of time. I use (and plan on) this time for checking email, doing paperwork for my husband's business, reading, blogging or just sipping some tea in a bit of peace.
- •Schedule an afternoon clean-up time, allotting everyone an area to clean.
- •Your day will never go just as you have planned. A schedule is just a guideline to help you aim for the goal of 'getting it all done'.
- •Once everyone is familiar with the schedule, you can put it away and work more off of habit than by the letter.

Scheduling Tips for Those Homeschooling Struggling Learners

- •Kids who are not reading well on their own will require a lot more of Mom's time. For this reason, choosing a curriculum without a lot of individual reading and writing helps.
- •Instead of assigning individual reading, plan for family read aloud times followed by narration, having the children tell back what they have just heard, instead of written comprehension questions.
- •Don't be afraid to occasionally let students choose not to write a report, instead let them choose to draw a picture, put on a dramatization or some other non-written activity that allows and encourages them to apply their new knowledge without the painstaking {and time-consuming} effort of reading and writing. Your right-brainers can do these things without your help, freeing you up for some one-on-one time with another child.

Homeschooling even one child while managing a home, business or other commitments can be a struggle. With every child there comes more to fit in. Scheduling will not guarantee that you get it all done – I don't think anything will! Scheduling will help everyone to know what they should be doing at any given time and give you a framework to manage your days.

The Reality of a Homeschool Schedule

It is important to have a schedule.

But know that creating and attempting to stick to a schedule is no guarantee that your day-to-day life will actually adhere to that schedule. I find that a lot of my energy living a busy homeschool life is poured into correcting my kids. Correcting kids is just part of life as a parent, and really should be the number one priority in our days.

I'm pretty sure half of the battle in maintaining a balanced home life is having **realistic expectations**. Knowing that we will never achieve perfect balance and that schedules are only a guide, helps keep our expectations realistic – right where they need to be.

More Than Schedules

I have found oftentimes that having a schedule, although good, is not always enough. We need to be on the same page as a family. We need to take the time to maintain our relationships so that we act as a team and pull together.

You can have the most elaborate schedule but if your kids resent it and you, you will be hard pressed to enforce it.

Spend some time this week looking at your daily schedule and implement the tips and strategies that you think would make your days run more smoothly.

Chapter 7: Setting Realistic Goals

When we least expect it, life sets us a challenge to test our courage and willingness to change; at such a moment, there is no point in pretending that nothing has happened or in saying that we are not yet ready.

The challenge will not wait. Life does not look back. -Paulo Coelho

Knowing Why You Homeschool

When we started homeschooling back in 1995, we didn't have a highly developed 'mission' for why we were doing it. Mostly we wanted to homeschool because we wanted to have the freedom to travel and spend time together as a family. We enjoyed being parents and saw no need to send our kids away to educate them.

We did dabble in the 'school-at-home' idea for about 3 months. I really had no idea what homeschooling looked like and because we had concerned family members watching us, creating a school-at-home seemed like an acceptable, and perhaps more convincing, thing to do.

I can't help but smile when I think of my creative, dyslexic, first-born, 5-year old son sitting down to a full seatwork-based curriculum. The fact that he struggled to hold a pencil and scrawl out the 3 letters of his first name should have been a clue that life was about to get ugly. Little did I know...

I had 2 kids at the time (I know – it should have been easy, right? Wrong!) After several months of trying to check off all of the boxes in my (extensive) teacher's guide, we were all well on our way to round one of homeschool burnout.

My son was resistant. He didn't want to 'do school'. My 3-year old daughter was bored playing by herself as we struggled along day after day.

My husband suggested that we take a break from the books for a few days and get outside. This is still one of the best pieces of advice he has ever given me as a homeschooler!

Whenever the atmosphere of our home begins to deteriorate, we call a school break and get out of the house for some exploring or just plain old relaxing and fun. We are always more productive when we return after having adjusted our attitudes.

This was one small step into the development of our family mission for education – or more simply stated, our big picture goals and priorities for the education of our kids. We were learning about what worked and what didn't and what we wanted our homeschool to look like as well as what we didn't want it to look like.

Oh, how our educational philosophy has changed over the years! As our family grew, one little personality and learning style after the other, our children have taught us more than any book about how to educate the whole child – body, spirit and mind.

In the early years, while our mission of homeschooling was still fairly small and simple, I didn't see the need to write it down. Now with 8 kids and a busy household of young adults, teenagers, right on down to preschoolers, my husband and I have found it invaluable to sit down each year and evaluate our family needs and goals, especially in light of homeschooling.

Big Picture Goals

The first step in setting realistic goals for your homeschool is to step back and think about why you are homeschooling and what your overarching goals are for your unique family. This can be accomplished by creating a homeschool mission statement.

How to Make a Homeschool Mission Statement

The thought of creating a mission statement can be overwhelming. Relax. It is not a 10-page paper on the history of education. It is a statement.

Several sentences long at most.

Begin by asking yourselves the following questions. Jot down your impressions and the key words or phrases that explain your thoughts on each subject. Don't overthink this. Your answers will likely change from year to year. Your mission statement won't be unchangeably set in stone.

Why are we homeschooling?

What are our spiritual goals?

What are our educational goals? What do we want them to learn? Why? What life skills do we want our kids to have? What non-academic areas are important to us?

What kind of environment do we want in our homeschool? Why does homeschooling provide the better environment for our family? Why homeschool rather than public or private school?

Take your notes and make sentences out of the ideas represented.

Example Homeschool Mission Statement

Here is an example from our family list:

Godly character
Christian worldview
Strong family relationships
Lifelong learners/equipped for real learning
Good study skills
Perseverance and diligence
Overcoming learning issues
Finding God's plan for using each family member's gifts for His glory

Our Homeschool Mission Statement:

The Sunderland Family homeschool seeks to foster strong family relationships and godly character first by teaching with a Christian worldview, by developing lifelong learners, equipped for real life learning by applying diligence and perseverance to overcome struggles, both academic and otherwise, with the ultimate goal of discovering and carrying out God's unique plan for each of our lives.

Being intentional about identifying our beliefs about what education is, what our purposes are in home-educating, including any non-academic goals, will illustrate our unique vision for our individual families.

When your homeschool world is rocked by any one of the many trials and tribulations common to all homeschools, you will have your Homeschool Mission Statement to go back to for both guidance and encouragement.

Keeping your vision for your family clearly in front of you will be invaluable in helping you remain intentional with the short years that you have with your children.

Setting Specific Academic Goals

Most homeschool curricula have a recommended age range or even a specific grade level assigned to them. In large part you can trust the curriculum to provide age and grade appropriate instruction for your kids. If you want to learn what topics are included in a typical course of study from Pre-K through high school, you can <u>visit this link</u> for complete listings by grade.

What to do if Your Child is 'Behind'

In lesson 4 on Homeschool Teaching Methods we talked about the traditional teaching methods found in any institutionalized educational setting whether public or private. The reason for grade leveled material is to organize classes and curriculum by general ability and at each age level so that subjects aren't skipped or repeated. For the homeschooler these guidelines should be used as just that, a guideline.

Kids with dyslexia may not be reading at a 2nd grade level in 2nd grade, or 3rd grade or 4th, 5th or 6th grade. So what are we to do?

Teach them at the level that they are able to learn. That means not using a 4th grade curriculum to teach your 4th grader who reads at a first grade level. It will only end in tears and frustration for both of you.

It is not uncommon to find homeschooled kids working above grade level in one subject and below typical grade level in another. This is one of the beauties of homeschooling and not something to be worried about.

Many curriculum providers have web sites that offer sample pages, FAQ sections and helpful customer service reps who can help you find just the right level for your unique student.

Looking at Progress Over Perfection

Certainly we don't want our kids to be reading years behind their peers for long. I'm not suggesting that we give up on our kids. During the days of remediation (building the foundation of reading) we teach them where they're at so to speak. What kind of foundation will they have if it is not laid carefully, one brick at a time?

The way that I look at this in our houseful of non-traditional leaners is to monitor our kids' progress. Are they learning? Are they progressing? Are they enjoying what they are learning and actively engaged?

We have come a long way in the last 7 chapters! My hope is that you are being encouraged and learning. In our next and final chapter we will talk about how to get it all done and the importance of keeping perspective.

Chapter 8: Tips for Getting it All Done

"It's not that I'm so smart, it's just that I stay with problems longer."
-Albert Einstein

Keeping Perspective

It is not uncommon for homeschooling parents to get overwhelmed from time to time. I jokingly refer to February as National Homeschool Burnout Month. Having your big picture educational goals (that you created in our last lesson) in mind will help you to stay the course during the days when it seems like everyone has a bad attitude, the laundry is piled to the ceiling and the toilet overflows because your toddler stuffed an entire roll of toilet paper in it while you were teaching your reluctant 3rd grader. We've all been there. We've all had **one-of-those-days**!

Getting It All Done

Remember when we talked about creating a homeschool schedule in chapter 6? I said that we have never had a day that went exactly to the schedule. I don't say this to discourage you. Having realistic expectations about homeschooling your kids is an important part of being able to press on through those difficult days.

I do have some homeschool mom hacks from my nearly 20 years of homeschooling. In this, our last chapter, I am going to share those with you.

All of these tips are effective for teaching any type of learner but more so for homeschooling the dyslexic child. Kids with dyslexia often need more one-on-one time with mom (or dad) and become independent learners later than kids without dyslexia.

Start Earlier. By setting your alarm and getting out of bed a bit earlier, you can accomplish more. This is especially true if you are homeschooling more than one child. Teaching one child early in the morning can provide a quiet environment and add a few extra hours to your day.

Combine Teaching. Although a typical course of study may suggest that first graders study American History, 4th graders study State History and

your 6th grader study World History, this is not necessary - or recommended if you value your mental health! It is okay to teach all of your kids one subject each year in subjects like science, history, and the arts. Math and reading may require more of your time but by combining your other subjects you will save time and have a better chance of staying sane.

Delegate Inside the House. Children are amazingly capable people. Six year olds can keep an eye on the baby in her bouncy seat while the 10-year-old reads to the toddler. Older kids can prepare meals and help with the house keeping. There is no way that you can homeschool your kids, cook, clean, do laundry and drive everyone to practice and clubs. You can't do it all! Delegate!

Delegate Outside the House. Sometimes you just need to get some professional help. Whether you hire a house cleaner once or twice a month or hire a certified dyslexia tutor, if you are struggling to achieve your priorities in your homeschool, consider delegating outside the home. I talk more about how and when to hire a certified dyslexia tutor in my Parent Dyslexia Classes. In essence, if your dyslexic child is getting older (towards those awkward tween years), is significantly lacking in reading skills or teaching reading yourself is causing rifts to form in your relationship with your child, I recommend hiring a dyslexia tutor to take that burden off of your shoulders.

Take a Break to Build Productivity. It can be easy to get caught up in all of the details of assignments and commitments as a busy parent, whether you homeschool or not. If our family is struggling with poor attitudes, irritability and lack of enthusiasm, we will take a break for a day or two.

Sometimes we will head outside for the day. My favorite place to unwind and find peace is at the beach. Even if it is cooler outside, we still enjoy the wide open space, the lack of electronic stimulation and the fresh air. Other times we will go on a field trip to an event, museum or show. It is amazing how having a little fun together as a family can reset everyone's clock and help us get back to work with the right attitudes.

We are at the end of our course. My hope is that you would now have a firm foundation to establish a healthy, confident homeschool where your kids with dyslexia can thrive and learn.

The purpose of this site is to encourage and educate families with dyslexia. You should never stop learning about dyslexia. I am always learning new things that can help me to have more compassion and be a better teacher.

Conclusion

I have read a lot of books about dyslexia, how the brain functions, learning styles, how to teach with multi-sensory methods, different kinds of intelligence and lots and lots of research studies on what is going on inside the dyslexic brain - all so that I can teach my own kids with dyslexia in the best way possible.

It's not that I am some kind of awesome person. It's just that I've just spent a lot of time - too much time - teaching them in ways they **don't** learn and it has been difficult - painful even. For **all** of us.

I hope that you found this book helpful for getting started homeschooling and understanding better what freedoms you have in homeschooling, whether it be in the homeschool method that you choose or the curricula that you use.

The more you learn about dyslexia, the better you will be able to teach so your kids will learn and the better you will be able to understand your kids. One of the common problems that people with dyslexia face is that their learning differences are misunderstood as laziness, bad attitudes or not trying hard enough. The irony of this is that students with dyslexia are often trying harder to learn than any other students and the desperately desire to do well in their studies.

Another reason that getting educated about dyslexia is so important is that dyslexia can affect many areas of learning:

- * reading
- * spelling
- * writing
- * math ability
- * memory
- * organization
- * attention

For the person teaching a child with dyslexia this means that we need to know more than just which reading methods work - although that is very important too!

I created the web site, HomeschoolingWithDyslexia.com, to help educate parents and teachers that work with kids with dyslexia. I am happy to share the things that I have learned, albeit the hard way at times, so that you don't have to make the mistakes that I did.

In addition to the eBook that you just finished, I have created courses to help further your education.

Dyslexia Education Classes

Your dyslexic children need you to be their advocate whether they are in a public school, private school or homeschooled. Our homeschool experience was vastly improved by the simple (yet time-consuming) task of getting educated about what dyslexia really is and how these bright and creative children learn best.

These Dyslexia Education Classes were created to help you quickly and easily get educated about what dyslexia is and how you can most effectively help your dyslexic children really learn.

All classes will provide reliable, research-based information, personal experience, practical applications and invaluable lists of resources to help you on your journey.

How The Parent Dyslexia Classes Work

All classes are approximately 1 hour long and come to you in both video and audio formats that are simple and downloadable. The course includes a printable outline for note taking and a downloadable audio recording of the class. You can listen anytime, anywhere (and your spouse can listen too.)

We are also offering support in a private Facebook group for class attendees only.

I know what it is like to be overwhelmed with the task of raising and educating dyslexic kids, so I want to make this simple. My goal is to make your learning as easy and efficient as possible.

That is why each course is delivered in a multimedia format. Watch and learn from your computer, or download the audio version to your iPad or iPhone.

All Parent Dyslexia Class students receive:

- access to the online video content
- downloadable MP3 audio versions of the class
- PDF outline for easy note taking
- links to resources
- access to small group encouragement via our private Facebook page

All classes are based on research-based methods of teaching dyslexics and a plethora of my own unique, personal experience. This is a unique opportunity for you to learn what has taken me many years to learn – how to teach dyslexic kids so that they can learn and thrive with tips and strategies along the way.

The following courses are now available. All courses were written and produced by a certified Orton-Gillingham tutor who has homeschooled her own dyslexic children for the past 20 years. Browse through our course offerings and feel free to contact us with any questions.



Course One: UNDERSTANDING DYSLEXIA

Course One: Understanding Dyslexia

In Course One of the Parent Dyslexia Training Courses you will learn:

- To more fully understand the many facets of the dyslexic mind
- To understand how dyslexics learn and methods you can implement today to dramatically improve learning
- To be aware of the other areas affected by dyslexia
- To better understand and nurture the seldom mentioned, inherent strengths of the dyslexic mind

You will leave this course feeling educated and empowered to help the dyslexic people in your life. You will be able to reject the myths and embrace the strengths associated with dyslexia so your kids can live and learn freely.



Course Two: TEACH THEM HOW THEY LEARN

Course Two: Teaching Them So They Learn

Course Topics:

- Making the decision to homeschool, including how to answer any critics that insist that the schools are the educational experts.
- The truth about the state of special education in our public schools.
- Common emotional issues for parents and kids and how to overcome them.
- How to get started homeschooling; including legalities and finding local support.
- Tips on finding and modifying homeschool curriculum for the dyslexic student.
- Teaching methods, including how to balance accommodations and remediations.
- When to get help in the form of diagnostic testing and educational therapy.
- Strategies for getting it all done.





Course Three: Reading Instruction That Works

In this course, Reading Instruction That Works, you will learn to:

- Understand the research about dyslexia so you can evaluate the myriads of programs, supplements and services that are offered to parents of dyslexics.
- Understand the research-based methods of reading instruction that really work with the dyslexic learner.
- Find a program, curriculum or other service to fit your family's needs.
- How much does dyslexia remediation cost?
- How long does it take?
- What about those 'alternative' treatments and therapies? Do they work? How can we know?





Course Four: Building Fluency and Comprehension

In this class you will learn:

- what reading fluency is and how it develops
- how fluency affects comprehension
- nine of the most effective, research-based
- methods for increasing reading fluency
- easy-to-implement methods to enhance your child's reading comprehension at home

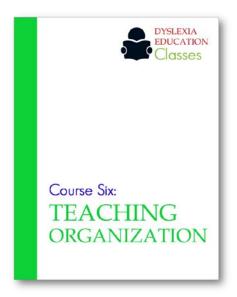




Course Five: Teaching Spelling From Remediation to Accommodation

What you will learn in this class:

- why people with dyslexia struggle with spelling
- the best methods for teaching spelling
- the power of studying morphology and etymology with your dyslexic students
- 3 simple ways to teach morphology to your students
- the best accommodations for students with dyslexia
- how to balance accommodations with remediation



Course 6 Executive Function: Teach Your Child to Organize Their Thoughts, Personal Space and Time

Do you have a child who is hopelessly unorganized? Can never find their backpack, folders or soccer cleats? Oftentimes these kids are not just disorganized with their belongings but also with their thoughts. There is a name for this type of disorganization – executive function – or in this case a lack of executive function skills.

In this class, you will learn:

- · what executive function is
- · how executive function weaknesses can affect organizational skills
- lots of strategies to teach your unorganized child to grow in this area

Visit the Classes Page at <u>HomeschoolingWithDyslexia.com</u> for more information and to sign up.

Get educated so you can educate your child.

