The Gifts of Dyslexia: Talents Among Dyslexics and Their Families

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Abstract
To date most dyslexia research has been oriented toward pathology - investigating what is wrong, developing means of remediation and following patterns of difficulty within families. However, some researchers have observed that many dyslexics have high visual-spatial and other talents that are enormously important for various occupations - that these areas of talent are often passed down through families - and that family members may have special roles in developing these talents. Some argue that the most successful dyslexics are often able to make their major contributions mainly because they were able to focus on their areas of strength early - with major support from family members and others. Researchers note that when one seeks the most proficient, original and creative in certain occupational groups - whether in medicine, architecture, art, design, entrepreneurial business, engineering, mathematics or science - one finds that dyslexics seem to be well represented. Recent thinking among researchers suggests that a more balanced understanding of the talents and difficulties experienced by dyslexics is needed for the benefit of individuals and the larger society - as well as to take advantage of a distinctive window into the inner workings of the brain. Explicit recognition of the nature and range of distinctive talents among successful dyslexics could substantially affect the early identification and proper education of dyslexic children. It is apparent that this cannot be done by comparing these children to conventional, non-dyslexic, academically successful adults. Rather, this should be done by comparing these children to highly successful and unconventional dyslexic adults. (HK J Paediatr (new series) 2005;10:153-158)

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