
Welcome to the Age of Dyslexia Awareness

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Midlife Matters



On Wednesday, February 17, I was a guest on the blog talk radio show Midlife Matters with Les Brown. you can click on the blog talk microphone image (left) to hear the interview. The conversation Les and I had started me thinking about the global state of dyslexia. During the interview, I expressed this theory.

We are in phase two of a three-phase process necessary to eradicate dyslexia as a fundamental learning disability in our society. Phase one is what I am calling "The Age of Ignorance," phase two is the "The Age of Awareness," and phase three will be the "The Age of Consciousness."

The Age of Ignorance

Unfortunately, my father, grandfather, and the generations of dyslexics before them were born in the Age of Ignorance. Seeds for a language-based, multisensory, structured, sequential, cumulative approach to teaching reading were being sewn in the early 20th century by pioneers such as neuropsychiatrist Samuel Torrey Orton and psychologist Anna Gillingham, but the world as it pertained to dyslexics was still overwhelmingly dark. During this age of darkness, terms such as retarded, slow, lazy, and even mirror-eyed (referring to turning letters and words around on the page) were used to describe individuals with dyslexia. Misunderstanding ran rampant, and seemingly unbreakable stereotypes were born, such as "dyslexics read backwards." My heart goes out to the generations of dyslexics who suffered through these dark times.

The Age of Awareness



I consider myself extremely lucky to have been born at the beginning of the Age of Awareness. This is a time when dyslexics themselves have decided to walk into the light and not be shamed by their dyslexic way of thinking. Standing on the shoulders of dyslexic giants such as Charles Schwab, Paul Orfalea, Richard Branson, Henry Winkler, Diane Swonk, Whoopi Goldberg, Jewel, and many others who have lent some portion of their time, resources, or fame to the cause of global dyslexia awareness, it is my belief that a wave of awareness has been started.

Embracing this era of scientific discovery enveloping dyslexia, I believe this age will be expedited just as so many other modern phenomena have been accelerated by technology. The science behind how dyslexics process the written language and moreover the world is here and now. Quantum leaps are being made in our current era, propelling us into an undeniable understanding of the power of dyslexic thinking.

MEG scans, fMRI technology, longitudinal studies, and research-based multisensory approaches to early childhood interventions are being entertained daily by people "within the know" who are financially or geographically able to take advantage of the modern age of dyslexia. Seeds have been sewn, and fruit is coming to bear, but the challenge of this age will be feeding the masses.

The Age of Consciousness

The third age will come when a shift in consciousness is felt around the world, with the realization that there is a better way, when the human race collectively realizes the systemic benefit of changing an antiquated system of education. Education will become a catalyst for change, and scientific certainty will promote better ways to teach.

I can feel the pain necessary for change building each time a teacher shares the heartbreak of watching another child fall behind. I hear the pain in the voices of parents desperately calling for help in a system that does not support their child's learning needs, and I see it in the eyes of our children being warehoused in juvenile detention centers, as half of them are functionally illiterate

What will be the benefits of this process of change? The visual, spatial, conceptual, and intuitive mind of the dyslexic will benefit. Teachers will succeed in a more holistic approach to meet their dyslexic students' educational needs, a free appropriate public education will be scientifically derived from a research-based multisensory learning environment, parents previously on a mission to litigiously tear down school systems for their inept attempts to meet their children's educational needs will pour their resources into supporting local schools, and last, there will be a reallocation of dollars being freed by a decreasing demand for beds in our juvenile detention facilities because our children are being caught before they fall through the cracks. All this will be brought on by a shift in global consciousness surrounding dyslexia.

There is a better way. Losing so many of our best and brightest is no longer acceptable, and their contributions to our society are worth the effort involved in changing a broken system.

At middle age, I find myself in the middle age of dyslexia.

Here's to a brighter future,

Rob

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[1] <http://www.blogtalkradio.com/midlife/2010/02/18/midlife-matters-rob-langston-midlife-dialogues-ser.mp3?localembd=download>

[2] <http://www.robertlangston.com/>

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