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WINTER 2023

Homeschooling *and beyond*

Make
learning
fun!

How to raise an
entrepreneur

LEARNING
STYLES

Myths and truths

Deciphering
food labels

Enter & win
Drawing
Competition

A parent's
guide

Empowering the child
who learns differently

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Ask Dalena



Dalena van der Westhuizen will answer any questions or concerns you may have about learning, concentration, memory and cognitive development – and, of course, the frustrations arising from these

My son was diagnosed with dyslexia earlier this year. He's 13 years old. Does dyslexia affect mathematical skills and memory too and how do dyslexics learn best? – **Madeleine van der Linde**

Hi Madeleine,

The Gibson Institute of Cognitive Research in the USA tested 2 000 struggling readers/dyslexic individuals and found common weak skills that included long- and short-term memory, processing speed and auditory processing. These are all cognitive brain skills that play a role not only in our ability to read and comprehend, but in all other areas of learning as well. As a result, the cognitive weaknesses responsible for reading struggles (such as dyslexia) will impact mathematical skills and memory too.

Here are some tried and tested strategies to help make learning easier for your son:

- Keep instructions simple. Single-step directions that aren't overly complex are easiest for dyslexic students to follow. Always break down complicated instructions into multiple steps for your son to remember and follow.
- Before moving on to a new topic, ensure that he has a firm grasp of what's already been covered. Integrate regular reviews into his study/learning schedule.
- Graphic organisers are great for dyslexic students to use. Knowing what to expect and what to do removes a lot of uncertainty and last-minute stress.
- Speech-to-text software can assist – investigate the numerous options available.
- Remember, time is one of the best gifts you can give a dyslexic student. Make sure your son starts any projects/studying/tasks well in advance.

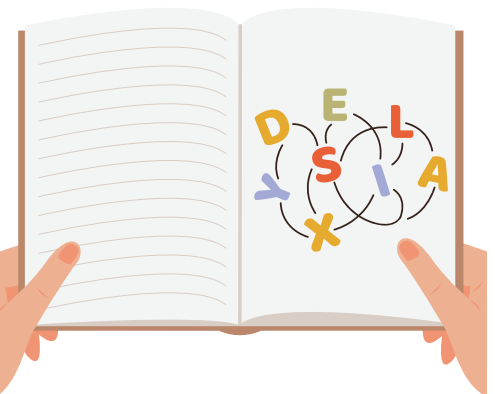
Also teach him how to break down work into smaller chunks, as he could easily feel overwhelmed.

- Memory exercises are always a great help for a dyslexic, so be sure to incorporate these into his daily routine.

What causes lack of motivation in schoolwork and how can I motivate my unmotivated 12-year-old? – Abigail Went

Hi Abigail,

It would be interesting to know whether this has been happening for a while or has it begun recently or suddenly? In my experience, children usually lack motivation when there's a personality clash with a teacher/tutor, when the information isn't presented in an interesting way, when they





struggle to keep up or when they don't grasp the work presented. The first step in helping your child is to pinpoint why they're unmotivated. Start by asking them that question. At the same time, consider digging deeper by means of a professional assessment to help discover other reasons for their lack of motivation. Only then can you begin working on improving it.

My son's in his final school year. His grades are really good. However, he's still uncertain about what to study next year. How can I help him choose the right course? – Brenda Fourie

Hi Brenda,

This is an exciting time in your son's life. Here are my suggestions:

- It's always worthwhile talking to a professional in the field of study choices.
- As a family, make a random list of the possible careers

your son might be interested in – then research which subjects are required for admission to studying in that field, as well as the required mark he'd need in them. If possible, let him talk to someone working in that field or Google it to find more information. Then keep narrowing down the list.

- Make sure you have a “plan B” in case of a shift in your son's interest from one field of study to another between now and when he needs to apply for admission. Two or three alternatives are ideal. Don't narrow down too much into a single field of study and be left with no alternatives/choices.
- Consider letting your son take a gap year to allow him time to investigate various study options.

About Dalena

Dalena van der Westhuizen is the co-founder and MD of BrainAbility, a cognitive development specialist, a master brain coach and an internationally certified cognitive coach. She translates the latest international cognitive research and best practice into strategies that can be applied by parents and educators alike.

A mom and a self-confessed chocoholic, Dalena enjoys working with both kids and adults to improve the way their brains process information for better learning, reading and focusing.



Send your questions for Dalena to: adri@isikhova.co.za.

