

# Let's Talk Learning Disabilities

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## EPISODE 29

In this Episode, Laurie and Abbey Interview a past client, Emily, who was first introduced to Laurie when Emily was in the 5th grade. At that point Emily had already been diagnosed with dyslexia and had gone through a dyslexia program. In this interview, Emily shares first hand experience in learning to deal with dyslexia, and how she's got to where she is today.

### **Early Diagnosis of Dyslexia (3 min)**

Emily was diagnosed with dyslexia in the 1st grade, and doesn't remember much about actually being diagnosed. She recalls doing some testing and being called out of class to work on things she didn't like, because these were the skills that weren't developing well for her. Skills like phonetics and spelling were difficult. At her private school, she was lucky enough to have a dyslexia therapist on staff, which probably was a large factor in getting an early diagnosis, however, being in first grade, it was hard for her to understand why she was being treated differently than other kids, and understood that most other kids were reading better than she was.

### **Dyslexia Programs & School Curriculum (5 min)**

When asked about the success of the dyslexia program, Emily recalls not thinking that it was helpful at the time she went through it, but definitely notices the value as she looks back on that time. Part of why it may have been so hard to understand, is she doesn't remember ever being told that she had dyslexia until she was around 5th grade. The whole time she had been working separately from the class on things, or going through testing, and the dyslexia program, she didn't know why those things were happening. This is apparently and unfortunately a common occurrence in young kids with learning disabilities. At the same time, the help they are receiving may actually be more beneficial if they knew why the help is being given in the first place.

### **Did Accommodations Truly Help? (7 min)**

Throughout middle school, Emily remembers the accommodations being more confusing than helpful, mostly because she didn't really understand why she was struggling and why she was treated differently. When she got into middle school, she started to see the value in a few of the accommodations, which helped her understand the importance of getting help when necessary. Accommodations like getting tests read to her, having a quiet place to study without distractions, and having extra time on tests, those were all things that had applicable value and purpose to helping her perform at her capability. On to high school, even though she had a 504 plan, she didn't use her accommodations, out of her pure stubbornness to get past the obstacles she had with dyslexia. Although she fought her parents and professional recommendations to use the help provided throughout high school, she did use them on occasion, as she felt necessary. In AP classes, and on the SAT and ACT, she did take advantage of having extra time on testing, and a couple of other accommodations, and those were truly helpful. She does, however, speak to how you tend to be treated differently in high school for using accommodations, and only wanted to use them if she thought it would truly be helpful. Even still, getting closer now to graduating from college, Emily doesn't use any type of assistance from disability services at her university, and only brings up her dyslexia if necessary. As she's matured and has learned more about herself, she feels like she's gotten a sense of knowing when she needs additional help, and seeks a solution when she does.

### **Advice to a Young Emily (21 min)**

Emily wraps up her story with reflection and advice for any young listeners with dyslexia. She encourages others to not fight it as much as she did. She fought her parents and others who surrounded her, and rejected their help in a lot of ways, mostly out of stubbornness, and realized that it may have helped her push through and achieve many of her goals, but it also prohibited her from accepting the assistance available to her. She says, if you don't fight it as much, you may be in a slightly better off position, with more support.

**Resources:**

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Length of episode 29:35