

Let's Talk Learning Disabilities

EPISODE 33

In this Episode, Laurie and Abbey interview Hunter Donahue, a college student who is currently being treated for dysgraphia. Hunter shares his insight in coping with dysgraphia, advocating for his own needs and some tools that have helped him improve along the way.

How Dysgraphia Showed Up for Hunter (2 min)

Hunter is now in his second semester of college and recently received his diagnosis of dysgraphia from Laurie & Abbey as a Senior in High School. He talks about growing up with handwriting problems and how many of his teachers told Hunter that his handwriting was the worst they'd ever seen. His teachers could hardly ever make out what he was writing, and sometimes neither could he. Hunter went to Laurie & Abbey for a diagnosis in hopes of being able to receive an accommodation to be able to type assignments in all of his classes.

Cursive & Keyboarding (5 min)

Hunter went to a few different schools in early Elementary years and says he initially learned cursive in kindergarten. When he switched schools after that, teachers at his new school specifically wanted assignments written in print. Since cursive was easier for him in some ways, he learned to merge the two in a cursive type of print that combines both styles. Laurie & Abbey also ask Hunter if keyboarding was easier for him once he learned to type, which was definitely the case for him. Some writing experts have said that comparing handwritten writing content to keyboard written content, the higher quality of work is found in the handwritten content. However, for a dysgraphic individual, handwriting can interrupt their thought process and creative flow. Keyboarding, for someone who has dysgraphia, can remove that interruption in their creative flow, and actually allow for them to get all of their ideas out in a better way.

Math and Dysgraphia (9 min)

Hunter says he had frequent issues in math. Whether it was mixing up plus signs with other symbols or variables, or losing track of how the problem was supposed to be lined up, he would frequently confuse himself in math problems. He also had an issue even recently with being able to show his work. His teachers often followed the guideline that if they couldn't read it, they wouldn't grade it, which has resulted in a lot of zeros on homework assignments for him. When Hunter asks if there is even an accommodation for something like that, Laurie and Abbey recommend turning a lined paper sideways to us the lines in a vertical orientation, or even using graph paper which can sometimes help keep numbers and equations lined up in the way they need to be.

Fine Motor Skills & Dysgraphia (13 min)

Laurie & Abbey ask Hunter if his dysgraphia has affected other areas of his life such as fine motor skills, small movements like cutting with scissors, etc. Hunter doesn't feel like it does, outside of tying his shoes. His mom tried to teach him when he was younger and ended up taking him to a shoe tying class at Nordstrom Rack, where the associates taught a group of 30 kids how to tie their shoelaces. Still to this day, he ties his shoes in that way.

College Accommodations & Advocating for Help with Dysgraphia (15 min)

Each college typically has a learning disability advocacy type of center, at TCU it is called a disability awareness office. This is where you would apply for specific accommodations. Hunter visited this office in July before his first semester to be proactive in getting the accommodations he needed. Thankfully all of his accommodations were approved, but he actually knew of someone whose accommodations did get denied. Even though Hunter has an accommodation to be able to type all of his work instead of hand write assignments, he has had to fight for that right in a few of his courses. One of his professors did not allow for any electronics to be used in the class at all. Hunter had to have several conversations with his professor to explain what dysgraphia was, and even have the disability awareness office contact him to let him know he actually couldn't be denied that right.

Resources:

Dysgraphia Example - <https://bit.ly/3ArmsJb>

Mod Math - <http://www.modmath.com>

Snap type - <https://www.snaptypesapp.com>

Contact info for the podcast: letstalklearningdisabilities@gmail.com

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