

# Let's Talk Learning Disabilities

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## EPISODE 35

In this Episode, Laurie and Abbey interview Markus Stefani in the “Living With...” Series. Markus discusses his experience with ADHD, and going through testing for that as well as dyslexia and visual processing evaluations. Markus is an NYU student majoring in Economics with a minor in Business Studies. Laurie & Abbey get to hear about his experiences growing up and as a young adult with ADHD.

### **Recognizing & Testing for ADHD (4 min)**

At 10 years old, Markus was diagnosed with ADHD and subclinical OCD. Markus had been struggling since the 3rd grade with academic studies such as reading, writing and math. After deciding to transfer to a school that was not as traditionally structured, Markus' mom decided it might be good to also have him evaluated to see if any learning challenges were present as well. It was then that he was diagnosed with ADHD. There wasn't a ton of initial treatment done to help with Markus' newfound diagnosis like medication or accommodation plans. He went on to stay at the non-traditional school for a couple of years before moving back to a more structured environment. Markus' ADHD shows up in more of an inattentiveness rather than impulsivity or hyper-activeness that some others experience with ADHD. Realizing that he needed the structure and thrived in that type of environment, he moved back to his first school.

### **Organizational Red Flags (10 min)**

Laurie & Abbey ask Markus how he was able to juggle homework and organization while in grade school. Markus said procrastination was a huge struggle for him. He would frequently put off large projects like the science fair for example, and would end up having to rope his mom into helping to finish up a whole project up until 3am the morning it was due, just to get it all done in time. In day-to-day organization, he frequently struggled with misplacing

assignments, losing track of notes, or putting them in places they would get ruined, like the bottom of his backpack.

### **Reading with ADHD (12 min)**

Markus loved reading as a kid, and the older he got in his elementary years, the more struggles he had with focusing and comprehension, which initially made his mom think it could be dyslexia that they were dealing with. In reading tests as a young student, a lot of the testing was centered around speed recognition, which he was great at memorizing in a test setting. As he got older, about 4th grade, the reading and comprehension became harder, and he also began struggling with spelling more difficult words. At one point, Markus and his mom sought out further testing through Laurie and Abbey, to find out if dyslexia was present as well. At that point, they were able to conclude that dyslexia was also a component of the struggles Markus was experiencing with reading, writing and comprehension.

### **Accommodations & Playing on Your Strengths (16 min)**

Finding the diagnosis of dyslexia was one of the reasons why Markus decided to ultimately change his major to Economics from Performance studies. Previous to changing his major, a lot of his courses were centered around reading and writing 10 page essays for major grades, which was a challenge for his comprehension and spelling skills. He now spends his class time focusing on numbers, computing, and graphs. He enjoys the concrete answers that you can arrive at in mathematical courses, and problem solving in that way.

### **Available Resources (20 min)**

At one point, Laurie connected Markus with Melanie, a dyslexia therapist who helps with techniques and strategies to improve comprehension and reading capabilities while coping with dyslexia. Aside from that, he did have an accommodation plan to help when he needed it. Markus did mention however that he only used some accommodations when absolutely necessary, for example, he did not want to use extra time on tests if he did not actually need it, because it created more time for him to think or over-analyze his answers, which in turn negatively affected him, at times.

Resources:

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