

Let's Talk Learning Disabilities

EPISODE 36

In this Episode, Laurie and Abbey start a conversation with Darius Namdaran, founder of BulletMap Academy in Scotland. This interview gets into the trenches of how students with dyslexia think, and how mind mapping can create a learning and organizing system that leads to exponential growth and understanding in their educational lives. Darius shares his own experience with dyslexia and ADHD, and speaks to the journey that has led him to making a difference in the lives of others with the same experience.

What is Mind Mapping? (2 min)

Mind mapping is a visual way to organize thoughts and bring organization to those thoughts through bubble diagrams, spider diagrams, webbing, etc. Mind maps are trademarked by the original creator, Tony Buzan who introduced this process around 35 years ago. After Tony's introduction of this way of processing, others like Darius Namdaran have taken this idea and made it their own to serve different needs. Darius adapted this way of mind mapping in his own life to aid in test taking, and would later adjust this technique to specifically meet the needs of students with dyslexia, struggling in English classes.

The Beginnings of BulletMap (3 min)

Darius shares about when he first stepped into the world of dyslexia as a profession, after noticing a need to teach others this way of mapping out his thoughts, like his daughter who was struggling with organizing her thoughts when she was a teenager. He noticed her challenges and recognized the need to organize her thoughts, like he did when he was going through law school. He attempted to teach his daughter variations of mind mapping techniques through bullet point thinking and saw first-hand how incredibly significant it was to her success in school. After a matter of years, this has turned into a life

mission and a career path, to teach children how to think in this way. Darius gives an example of how children with dyslexia think, he calls it zero gravity brains. He says typical people's brains look like a tidy desk, all of things are neatly placed on the desk, they have their own place and can be picked up and put back down. People with dyslexia have zero gravity brains, their brains look like a desk with items floating above it, with no rhyme or reason, no organization to it all and items bouncing back and forth at times. Being able to learn a system in creating organization around thinking, allows a dyslexic person to go external in their thinking, and get all of their thoughts onto a single piece of paper, where they can then thrive creatively.

Dyslexic Thinking (9 min)

Darius explains the approach that BulletMap takes on learning, knowing that students with dyslexia process subjects differently than a typical learner. He gives an illustration of dyslexic learners through a soccer field. Imagine a soccer field, where a teacher is saying to take the ball and get it in the net. The thing with some dyslexic kids is they get into their head. They start thinking about how good they're running or dribbling or how long they can run and start running circles and get close to the net and cross the line. The teacher says I'm sorry but you didn't finish. The student is concerned more about how good their running was or their dribbling, but didn't complete the task of actually getting the ball through the net. They hunger for a bigger picture, bigger meaning, context at large and how all things correlate, rather than the sometimes simple tasks at hand. Darius gives another great example of his thought process growing up, before he knew that he had dyslexia. He recalls a challenge he came to one of his teachers with, telling him that he couldn't figure out what the substance of gravity was. His teacher said no one in the world had figured that out yet and that the question isn't even asked until you got to the university level in physics and that all he needed to know thus far was that gravity was 10 newtons.

BulletMap Academy (20 min)

BulletMap Academy contains students from all ages, children to adults in medical school, law school, etc. The academy has been built off of the core principles of learning with a dyslexic challenges in mind. A person can learn

to organize their thoughts with a single piece of paper, and a pen, no need for fancy technology, you can even begin learning these concepts as a young child before being able to read or write. These techniques are so important for individuals with working memory difficulties, executive functioning, difficulties, processing difficulties, auditory processing difficulties and phonological processing difficulties. Darius gives a great example of a dyslexic child, needing to write an essay, and teaching them a method to visually organize their thoughts from beginning to end using a 5-point star. The story isn't complete until you've got all 5 points, and having them all mapped out on one sheet of paper in front of you before you ever even start writing sentences, is the best way to start. He also goes through other examples of what mapping out your thoughts might look like and when you might use them.

Is Group Work Better for Kids with Dyslexia? (37 min)

Laurie mentions that a lot of time in the classroom, a teacher may recommend that the class work on an outline together as a group. Initially this sounds like a really great idea, but in all reality, a student with dyslexia may not really be learning anything, and focus mostly on copying what everyone is writing. These students learn more from being able to know what is being asked, and having the ability to get all of their thoughts down on one paper before starting the task at hand. They are freer to be creative, and can expand on each thought or idea, without losing those thoughts.

Resources:

BulletMap Academy: www.bulletmapacademy.com

Contact info for the podcast: letstalklearningdisabilities@gmail.com

E-Diagnostic Learning Website: <https://ediagnosticlearning.com>

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