

Let's Talk Learning Disabilities

EPISODE 38

Welcome to Let's Talk Learning Disabilities with Laurie Peterson and Abby Weinstein. Laurie & Abbey spend their days talking about dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, & ADHD they talk to parents of struggling students and adults who have had a lifetime of academic challenges. They want to share those stories, along with their own insights with you. So, *let's talk learning disabilities*.

Laurie: Hey everybody. This is Laurie,

Abbey: and this is Abbey and welcome to *let's talk learning disabilities*, episode number 38. We have a very special guest today, today we have DJ Tharrington, who is with us.

DJ: Hello!

Laurie: And he is just going to share his story about his life with dyslexia. Some of his struggles, not only as a child, but well into adulthood. Hi, DJ. Thanks for being here.

DJ: Thanks for inviting me to be here.

Laurie: So, you're our second guest with a nickname with, with initials, by the way. Cause we had SJ on and now we have DJ, so it's a thing. Maybe we need to find our own, like I'll be LP.

Abbey: And right, I'll be AW.

Laurie: Anyway, All right. So, DJ, tell us about dyslexia. When were you first diagnosed?

DJ: Uh, what'd I say probably, um, back in 84/85 in Germany. Um, around seven-ish, seven years old.

Laurie: Wow. Do you remember being diagnosed?

DJ: Um, I remember going to like this class, um, and the lady, seen boxes and read this and read that. So, I remember just the process, but nobody really explained what was going on. Um, and then immediately I remember going into, um, special classes and things of that nature. Um, I was diagnosed in Germany. Um, the department of defense school. So, which I think the funding's a little different, so they have, they're going to be up to speed with all the latest and greatest. So, I remember being tested and then like the day after going to like special classes, um, nobody really explained what was going on, but now as an adult, I know what happened.

Laurie: Okay. So, what kind of special help do you remember? What kind of special if you got, like special programs?

DJ: Um, and this is going way back into the, to the ancient days here. Um, I remember, um, having a special ed teacher, um, it was called ADA or something that I don't know, the abbreviation, there was something weird and I would go into a room with a special ed teacher. She'll pull us out of class and she would go over like the math and the reading in this basically kind of more one-on-one help. I remember maybe being three or four kids in the room. Um, and then they will take us and take us back to the homeroom. And then we both, you know, like for science and for art. In fact, for reading and math, I remember going to the special ed class.

Laurie: So, you started in kindergarten in Germany?

DJ: So, I started kindergarten in, uh, Colorado. Um, and I do remember, now that what you said that, um, also being the special ed classes, but I had been tested prior to that because we went to Germany first, then got tested in Germany, special ed classes. Then we came back to Colorado, I remember the special ed classes there. And then we went back to Germany. I was in special ed classes again.

Abbey: So special ed was kind of, so you like knew that you were struggling even as young as a kindergarten student. Did you struggle like learning the names of the letters and the sounds of the letters? Do you remember that far back?

DJ: Um, I remember, um, I remember back in the day when I was just saying your reading level is at a certain spot. Like I remember being in the fourth grade, they were telling my mom, oh, he's at a second grade reading level. Everybody was always talking about the reading level.

Abbey: The reading level, below grade level.

DJ: Yeah, below grade level. But nobody said the word nobody used the terminology, dyslexia. It was always special ed and the, in the, the reading level.

Laurie: Okay. So how long then were you in Germany for? Oh, total years, about eight years total.

Laurie: So, what grade was it when you finally left Germany?

DJ: We left Germany back in 92 when we're doing the huge exodus. And I'm going to say seventh grade because when we left Germany. So, when you came and you came back to the states, where did you guys move to?

DJ: We moved to Lawton, Oklahoma.

Laurie: Okay. So, tell us then, because this is kind of interesting. So, you received all the support from basically kindergarten to seventh grade. And then what happened when you came back to the states?

DJ: I want to say, so mom was like, let's pull him out. Um, and just put them back into the, into the regular school system. Um, in Germany, we, I did have issues with kids kind of picking on me and things of that nature got to some fights and I think she was trying to, um, Get in front of some of that. Um, so

she said, hey, he doesn't need it. Well, what's worked well for me independently or whatever. Then I didn't know that conversation was had until after the fact. Um, so that I didn't get the assistance I got prior to, um, it worked at first, if somebody was working because going back and forth from Germany to the United States, we always ran into the situation where sometimes I would be ahead of the kids and sometimes I'd be behind the kids. So, we got into lot Rocklahoma I had actually was ahead of the kids. So, there was times where I was actually showing the teacher, oh, I remember this, this, this, this, this, but eventually that kind of regressed that it kind of caught up. And then this way you just, yeah.

Abbey: Yeah.

Laurie: So then did you reach out for any support or you just kind of struggled through?

DJ: I struggled. I struggled. Um, especially in, um, reading, um, math was okay. A little bit. I was always able to kind of work through the math piece of it, but anything reading related and just, uh, writing and things of that nature, it was difficult. Um, and not knowing what was going on. I mean, there was times where I just thought like, okay, am I illiterate? I mean, I literally questioned that at times because nobody explained what it was.

Laurie: So, how did you find the graduate?

DJ: Oh God, it was a struggle. Um, it wasn't, it was a struggle. My parents, you know, very conservative religious background, so they were just kind of like, boom, boom, boom, boom. Very strict. So, my parents did work with me a lot, but it was a struggle. I wouldn't say I graduated with a 2.3 GPA. I mean, I was, um, I was in band. I was a drummer, you know, drum major. I was, uh, president of the secretary and the president of the obvious student organizations, student leagues. So, I had all of those attributes. Um, but it was just, I struggled and everything else. I remember when I was actually running from w drum major, um, I was actually failing in an English class and was not able to, uh, try out my mom got real upset and she got in, he got in front of me, let me try out. But he still didn't let me do it that first time,

because my GPA was just so bad. But you have that GPA was always a struggle and prevented me from participating in those other activities. Yeah.

Abbey: So, all throughout the rest of your schooling, until you graduated high school, you didn't have any special education support? No, no classroom accommodations?

DJ: No.

Abbey: Even when you were struggling tremendously with your grades, you just, you just struggled and your mom didn't want you to have that special support?

DJ: She did not want me to have that special support. And then now that I think about it, um, I don't remember one of the teachers saying we were doing the Shakespeare, you know the written Shakespeare, whatever Romeo and Juliet. And I always used to hate when you have to read out loud. And I've been always kind of like, when there's a circle, I'm always kinda like flipping and trying to practice the words. So, you're impacting things so much that you're not paying attention to what's going on. And I remember to teacher, "Oh we have such poor readers in this class, dah, dah, dah." And I would always come up with, oh, go to the restroom or my eyes hurt or something just to prevent me from having to read out loud.

Laurie: Yeah, you were resourceful.

DJ: When you deal with it for so long, you, you adapt. This was a way of life for me. So, I was like, okay, let me figure out how to adapt to this. So, I was committed. I mean, even to this day, some friends, I, you know, pulled up, they will have, they'll be shocked. They have, you know, because I think my IQ is above IQ. I'm an intelligent person, and I think a lot of people that know me personally would be surprised that I even suffer from dyslexia because you just become, as an adult, then you just put up this, so I'm not ridiculed or pick at or whatever. So, yeah.

Laurie: Right, you learn how to hide it.

Abbey: You hide it and you've probably also learned a lot of good compensatory strategies to kind of overcome it. Yeah.

Laurie: Okay. So then. What did you want to go to college after you graduated, after striving all that struggle where you really, that fired up about college?

DJ: Actually, yeah. Cause like I said, I've always felt like, okay, I want to progress. I, you know, I remember going to the library, looking at books on, you know, being a, um, engineer for a computer information officer. I remember looking at those occupational books and just trying to figure out what the next step was. What, what do I want to do? What do I want to do next? So, college was, it was something I wanted to do. Um, now when I applied for college, um, because I remember coming up conservative, um, very conservative, uh, background. I remember applying for Oral Roberts University in Tulsa. Um, because I was also an ordained minister at 14. Yeah. So that was struggle to read in the Bible with dyslexia. I mean, it was a struggle and that's before we had the talking Bibles. I remember buying this Bible, um, from Bodell bookstore, it was that little beady red one that they read out loud. It was like \$300 back then. And that was a lot of money back, but I needed it. So, I didn't want anybody to know that I was struggling. And even reading scriptures of a church, I would practice, practice, practice, practice, practice to make sure that I wasn't struggling in front of the congregation while reading scripture.

Abbey: Wow. That's amazing. So, then you were confident enough to get up in front of the congregation and read?

DJ: It was different because I was, that was comfortable. And then with preaching, you're able to ad lib and just kind of play on the people's emotions and it's an easy. It's almost like an act. So it was, it was easier for me to adapt into that this situation. But when it hit me, was like, I wanted to go to Oral Roberts, I went up there to the Oral Roberts day and we did the, you know, stayed up there and all that stuff. And I was like, okay, I'm going to Oral Roberts, uh, put my application in, pastor recommendations. Turned out rejected because of my GPA and SAT scores. On the ACT I got a 17 on the ACT, so I was rejected there. Um, mom hit a brick. She was like, oh God,

what's going on? So, then Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls had a program where if you test at a certain levels, they put you in like some remedial classes that you didn't get college credit for, but you, you know, so like math and English and things of that nature. And, um, so I went to Midwestern State University for about two years and struggled. I think I was at like a 1.9 or something there. Um, and then I was like, you know what? I spent a whole lot of money here. Um, and I was looking for help. I just didn't know at the time the internet was not as full of resources that it is today. And I ended up going into the military.

Abbey: Really?

DJ: Yep, I end up going into the Navy, um, cause it just, I was just taking on all this debt and just didn't know what was going on. So, I ended up being a dental tech in the Navy. I struggled as a dental tech, struggled in the school, almost got kicked out of the school because I couldn't, you know, I was smarter to re um, to retain the information, but just the testing piece of it just couldn't read.

Laurie: So how long did you stay in the Navy?

DJ: Well, I was in the Navy for a year and a half, some others. Um, I was a victim of sexual assault in the Navy. Uh, so I ended up getting out. It was honorable and all that good stuff. So yeah, it was, it was, uh, it was, uh, it was a tough time.

Laurie: All right. So, you got the Navy, you're home.

DJ: Yup.

Laurie: Gonna try and go again.

DJ: Yup. So in the Navy doing the same thing. Okay. What school can I go to? That's going to take my GPM research and research and researching, and I ended up on Monroe, Louisiana. That was the only school. Um, that was going to take me with what I had. So left the Navy, went to North Carolina for a little bit

landed in Monroe. Uh, the University of Louisiana Monroe, uh, was there for about two years. Horrible. Same thing.

Abbey: Struggled.

DJ: Struggled, struggled, struggled then left there, went to Langston University, struggled, struggled, struggled through.

Laurie: Were you hoping that by going to the different schools, there might be a different, like just a fresh outlook, like, or was it just, you wanted to go somewhere? You figured maybe eventually you'd hit that place that would be able to, to meet your needs or...?

DJ: I think it's just, still at this point, I still didn't realize exactly what I was dealing with. And I had just this determination that I was going to be this.

Abbey: Yeah, that's, what I was thinking is that you were so determined to get through some college that you were going to keep finding a place that you could be successful. But at that point you didn't really know you had a condition called dyslexia. You knew you struggled reading. And writing, but you didn't know you had dyslexia, so therefore you, you didn't know that there were services and supports available to help you in college, correct?

DJ: Absolutely. If, if I would've knew back then, I'd probably be a US circuit judge right now. I mean, literally I would look at people, compare myself to them. It's like, what's different between me and them? The reading got so bad that I was just like, am I, I mean, literally I questioned my literacy and I was like, okay, what is going on and, went through this superior depression and just, yeah, because you don't, you don't tell your friends, Hey, I have a problem reading.

Laurie: All right. So when did the light bulb go off? When did you realize that there were support out there for you?

DJ: Um, so when I left school Dasko for a little bit, went back into corporate America. Uh, I've been in financial sales for awhile. Um, Got into what to bevel university. And I was somewhere, suddenly sit a dyslexia, something popped up dyslexia. Um, the school had obviously combination things and dyslexia popped up and I reached out to the school. Well, have you been diagnosed with dyslexia? I said, well, I think back in Germany I was blah, blah, blah, blah. And then I started trying to do all the research and try to go back and find information from Germany. I mean, I reached out to the department of DOD schools and sent emails, and I finally felt somebody sent a letter saying, yeah, he wasn't special, you know, whatever. And they accepted that. Um, so I got extra time on tests. Um, I use a system, he sent me this, um, prof software called dragon.

Abbey: Dragon dictation?

DJ: Yeah. World of difference. I had the microphone and I would just speak because, you know, if a camera was fine and I would talk my papers out and then go back and edit it and things like that, it just was a world of difference. And it was just, yeah, that's, that's when it clicked. Correct. Matter of fact, when I was at Bellevue university. Um, legal studies with contracts and law, and all of a sudden my GPA went to a 3.5.

Abbey: Wow.

DJ: I actually got deans of the Dean's office a couple of times, um, at Bellevue university. Yeah.

Laurie: All thanks to the accommodations.

DJ: Thanks to the accommodations. Yeah.

Abbey: Wow. That's amazing. Yeah.

DJ: So let's say, I think, but there's a cause I'm 43 years old, man. I think over the past. Within the last 10 years I beat it's becoming a little bit more. And maybe because it's technology, whatnot, as far as people move more

up to speed on, you know, their combinations actually exist because when I was at school, we didn't, you know, Facebook was new, so we didn't know there was even in any accommodations available, so.

Laurie: Okay. So then you graduated and what happened?

DJ: I graduated what's, uh, what's what's to work corporate America, same thing. Um, I would hate wherever we would go to those, um, kind of conventions and things of that nature. They'll put you in a room where everybody, okay, it's your turn to read. Okay. You read and you read, I'm always in the back and me being who I am. Everybody's okay. DJ. I'm the comic relief of the company everybody likes me. So naturally everybody wants to call on the person that they know in the room. So I'm always the one getting called. So I'll always go and leave and I never forget. One time, I went to the CVS, we had a national sales convention in Dallas. I went to the CVS and I bought an eyepatch and I put the eyepatch on so that they would think that I had an eye issue so that nobody would call on me.

Laurie: Wow.

Abbey: Really resourceful!

DJ: So then I, you know, just got to a point, you just get, you get tired of it. So then I remember talking to one of my, uh, my boss and he was real cool and said, Hey man, I have dyslexia. Um, you know, don't call me to read and he's like, you know, I'm cool. Cool, cool. And he's like, okay, I won't do it. Then he would call me to read. So I'm just like, yeah. So yeah, it was, it was a struggle. Um, Then I decided I wanted to, you know, um, wants to do something different that was to, go to law school. And I had took the Lsat before and I got a 132, which is basically put your name on a piece of paper. And that was it. Yeah. And this was after I spent probably about \$3,000 or so on one-on-one tutoring. Um, and of course the guy didn't pick up on it. He just wanted to get his check. And I was reading about accommodations and that nature and the Lsat is very difficult to get any accommodations for. So I was doing Google and I actually ran into you guys just, uh, the diagnostic learning services. Um, and honestly, truth be told I had no expectations. I saw just how hard it was to get accommodations. I saw all these horror stories

about combinations. Did the testing with Laurie. Um, yes, you are dyslexic. That was also very like, okay. Wow. I can put a name to it. This is, I have proof. They gave me accommodations and my score went up 17 points.

Abbey: Wow. Awesome. So you submitted your evaluation report from us along with your application to request accommodations. And were you granted eligibility for all of the accommodations?

DJ: Immediately, immediately. So like the Lsat has four different sections and they're 25 minutes each. Um, I was awarded 56 minutes in each section. Oh, so, you know, if it also for the reading, um, a reading device. So basically they gave me a flash drive, put my flash drive in the computer. The computer would read the passages to me. Groundbreaking. Groundbreaking.

Abbey: Yeah.

Laurie: Ok yeah, so...

DJ: So, took the Lsat, bam - COVID hit. Um, so just wasn't the time then, uh, took over that new position at my, my job, uh, They, when I left. I was in the field before, prior to this new position, I was a sales rep and I managed to sit in certain territory. So it was more face-to-face interaction. So I didn't have to read or answer emails, things of that nature right there. Uh, because of my performance in that position, they moved me to this other position where I was managing people and I was compliance and auditing, go figure. Um, so I remember getting emails from people. Check your spelling, uh, do this, do that. And it was almost like a picking. So I was like, okay, I'll fix you. Um, I submitted my accommodations, you know, for dyslexia, you know.

Laurie: For workplace.

DJ: For work accommodations, I'll never forget. So I submitted it in August.

Laurie: Really quick though, which accommodation? What were you asking for?

DJ: I was asking for, sometimes, the text to speech software, because of the corporate computer, you can't do anything to them without locking up. And just extra time as far as to answer emails. And I think even I was reading just kind of basic accommodations for work, and it says this, you know, notes and things of that nature didn't even really need that. It was more so just a software to be able to make sure that I was communicating effectively and things of that nature. Submitted that through our, there was a third party almost like for your FMLA, you know, it's like you submit to the third party. It's like, yeah, cool. They sat on it, the job sat on it for about two months and I consistently hit them back. Hey, Hey, Hey. And then the last time I reached out to him and said, Hey, what's going on? The third party company escalated and say, yeah, they're just sitting on it. We don't know what's going on. The next day I was terminated.

Abbey: No way.

DJ: Yeah, the next day I was terminated.

Laurie: What's the reason for termination?

DJ: Oh, we eliminated your position. I was the only person in the United States that worked in my role in compliance and auditing, had three different departments and you eliminated my position? There was no way possible. And I told him on the phone, I say, gentlemen, I find your timing may be somewhat concerning being that I just submitted my ADA accommodations to you. Um, well, we didn't understand what exactly where you were asking for. Um, I said, but you, I said, but you didn't reach out to me, reach out to the third party and do any of that. Well, and one guy got off the fall where I was supposed to do HR. He hung up the phone and HR was like, well, duh, we're going to give you this. I said, Nope. I told him I'm coming for you, got an attorney and we end up settling.

Abbey: Really, settling?

DJ: Settling outside of the court.

Abbey: So you were suing them for, was it wrongful termination?

DJ: Wrongful termination, because dyslexia is actually protected under the Americans with disability act. Yeah. And that was asking for reasonable accommodations. I made sure that, I made sure, I Googled and all that good stuff to make sure that I wasn't asking for anything that was outside of the norm. Um, and then I have the documentation and all that stuff. And like I said in, prior to that, you know, I had been, you know, a circle of excellence winner. I had got all these high evals and things of that nature, you know, had a very successful career. Um, but then when I had to work up close and personal you know, whatever, it was a whole different matter. They did not want to deal with it.

Abbey: That is crazy.

Laurie: You would think in today's society, right? Like that, that is that I can't believe that that happens.

Abbey: I can't believe that happens. And I can't believe that they would be so ignorant too, accommodations and to people with dyslexia and be confused by your requests, first of all, and not reach out to you and say, can we get clarification or why exactly do you need this? If they weren't sure. And then it seems like so common that people are getting workplace accommodations now, especially in big, big corporate America companies, which you were.

DJ: I was, it was a big company. But I think when you start talking about the Americans with disability act, people are automatically assuming that it's has to do with a physical...

Laurie: Like a ramp

DJ: Yeah. And when I submitted that, I think maybe they didn't take it seriously or thought it was playing or whatever they have. Mickey or picking at my dictation spellings and things I'd say. And I remember telling one of the young lady who wasn't, um, like four levels down from me. Hey, I'm dyslexic, you know, could you, could you knock it off? Yeah. He's not gonna

hold you just not even through that, just stop, you know, that's unprofessional to sit there and to badger somebody, yeah. Emails. So I had all that, all the evidence and I remember sending it to the attorney. And she was like...

Laurie: Slam down.

DJ: Are you serious? Are you serious? Typically, legally you think litigation, it takes years on years. It was like 45 days. Yeah.

Abbey: So you had the evidence that you had not only been fired. You had been critiqued and criticized.

Laurie: And were a stellar employee.

Abbey: Stellar employee with a great track record.

DJ: They couldn't say anything as far as. You didn't submit it properly because it was a third party company, but you submit all your stuff, that handled all of the accommodation and stuff. And I would reach out to them, reach out to them and reach out to them. And I've never, this is, this is the key, key part. When, the day they fired me or we're laying you off, we're eliminating your position the next day, the people from the accommodations call me and say, Hey, we still haven't heard back from them yet. We're reaching out. And I didn't say anything. I was like, okay, whatever. And two weeks later, They awarded me the accommodations, the third party and third party. Well, the third party works with the workplace workplace was like, so they said yes to all the accommodations that we were just trying to cover themselves. But this had been, he submitted this back in September. Why now terminate him? Now he's awarded all these accommodations.

Abbey: Yeah now he's allowed to have all these accommodations.

Laurie: After you've realized.

Yeah.

Abbey: Wow. So you're, you've sought out, you sought out an attorney, what type of attorney was it that you found?

DJ: Well, and that, and that was another thing. It was difficult finding, um, an attorney that understood what it was because, you know, attorneys are a dime a dozen and you have to find somebody that understands the law, understands under ADA and all that. And I found a lady out of Houston and she understood it. She was like, oh no, no, no, no, no, no. Yeah.

Laurie: Okay. So now that you are retired yup. Um, which plan school you want to do?

DJ: Law school. I'm gonna go to law school. Um, my friends were like, man, you done okay for yourself? You know, why, why do you want to reinvent the wheel? And it's just. You know, I struggled. Um, I had a difficult time and you just kind of want to give back because my story is not everybody's story. I have, you know, I do a lot of reading and documentaries. I see so many people who are caught up in the criminal justice system because of dyslexia, not understanding. And I, I want to give back.

Laurie: Yeah. You know, we we've actually talked about that before. I do really feel like there's a lot of people that are, that are in that system right now that have a variety of disabilities that are not. But have probably led to there, you know, there's legal issues, right. ADHD being a big one, but, but just even all of the struggles you've got through school, but if you didn't, if you had not had a supportive family, you know, and if you had not had such an amazing work ethic, there's a lot of other places you could have ended up. Right. Because you just get so frustrated you give up, you think you can't do it. And I think you're exactly right. I think a lot of those kids, that's where they end up.

DJ: Yeah. And there was, there was, there was times where I just got to a point I just got so frustrated and I was just like, I'm over it. You know? And

there was opportunities to do things that would've ended up in the criminal justice system. You know what, I just know I can beat this.

Abbey: Did you ever think about dropping out of school?

DJ: Um, no, no, no. I've had this, like I had this willpower that you're not better than me.

Abbey: I'll show you.

DJ: Oh, yeah. I'll show you. The only difference between me and I tell people is all, cause people ask me all the time, you always have a good job. You always do this. And this, this how y'all say the difference between somebody that's successful and somebody like you is that they chose to do it. There is no other opportunities there between you like a millionaire, whoever they chose, saw an idea, and they did whatever they had to do to get the idea accomplished. And that's been my philosophy in life is just, if you see. Do it, you know, and you're going to fall down. I follow that. I read I'm 43 years about to go to law school. It should have happened 10 years ago. I even struggled with that. I was like, you know what?

Abbey: You're very driven.

DJ: You gotta be, um, cause my neighbor, she's a, um, she's a general counsel for pizza hut. She's my next door neighbor. And she's like, I was like, am I too old for law school? Do I want to be in law school, competing with these 20 somethings and then LA and she's like, no, You bring a different piece that law schools would love to hear into the class. And I'm noticing because my GPA is still suffered because of some of those lower things.

So my GPA overall, what I graduated undergrad was a 2.8 because of all those other. So I don't have the GPA standard status as most schools abide by, but because of just the other soft variables and things of that nature, that makes a complete class. So yeah.

Abbey: You're bringing some real life experiences to the table as well.

Laurie: So are you thinking that you're going to want to go more criminal law or are you looking at more ADA's kind of thing?

DJ: I'm more nonprofit, ADA. Um, cause like I said, I'm just, I'm, I'm, I'm a bullies bully. Um, and I just see this as an opportunity and it's just as I'm looking, because I was looking for myself, there's, there's not a lot out there. And then you have a lot of people who are focused on handicap, and I see a lot of FMLA for pregnancy and just, there's not a lot of things out there for adults. I remember even before I reached out to you, I remember even, um, going to a counselor, um, prior to reaching to you. And I saw the guy, I said, Hey, I wanna go to law school, but I'm having trouble reading. And this guy was like, so what else are you good at? And I kind of, I was like, so he was literally trying to talk me out of going to law school and this was a professional and I was just like, huh, I reached out to another one. So what are you good at? And I was like, wow. So there's not as an adult. There are not dyslexia, when you look at research and things for help, you see a lot of things geared towards children, but you don't see a lot of things geared towards adults. So it's been, it's been a challenge.

Abbey: We're fortunate. Yeah. So good for you. So you're going to give back to adults with learning disabilities, like dyslexia and help them get the resources and supports they need.

DJ: Yeah. When I'm not in the Tahiti or whatever thanks to the last employer, but yeah.

Laurie: Okay. So thinking about all the other adults that are out there struggling with, you know, they're in their workplace, they're struggling everyday because of either they already know they have a learning disability or maybe an undiagnosed learning disability. What advice would you give them?

DJ: First come to terms of what you're dealing with. I think a lot of times we try, because we're frustrated, we try to, that's not me just like alcohol. You have to, you have to realize that you have a problem first. And I think that's

the first step. Hey, I have a problem. That's me. Uh, what she realized you have that problem, then just, you know, get, you know, you know a diagnostic learning center, find someone that you got to get tested. Um, so then when you get with the testing centers, those people can help you find the resources. You need to get you the accommodations and then ask for the accommodations. They're there for a reason. Um, you can't beat it on your own. And I think if I would have realized that 10, 15 years ago, I'm like, where would I be today? If I didn't try to beat it on my own? Cause I was like, I'm better than this. I'm going to beat this. Uh, it's chemically it's, you know, I don't know the schematics or the medical terminology for it, but it's, it's real. It's, you know, it's a real handicap. Um, so just really number one, identifying that you have it getting support, um, and just, you know, deciding that you're not going to, it's not going to beat you in extra accommodations. Yeah.

Laurie: A lot of people are scared to ask for accommodations. I mean, look, what happened to you? Obviously it all worked out, but people are scared. They're scared. They're going to look, someone's going to treat them different. They're going to be demoted. So it is scary. But at the end of the day, there. Those combinations that are offered and they're out there for a reason.

Abbey: Absolutely, and legally...

Laurie: Legally entitled.

Abbey: Wow. Good advice. I like that.

Laurie: You have a great story. I'm so excited because you were, I've got an amazing future. Like I can't wait to hear about the people you help and the differences you're going to make.

Abbey: I feel the same way. I can't wait to hear about your success stories. And I want to reach out to you when you graduate law school.

DJ: Yeah. This is going to be, this is definitely going to be alone relationship. Like I said, because if it hadn't been for you writing those

letters and doing the testing, um, It wouldn't have been an option, there's no way.

Laurie: Aww I love it, I get goosebumps.

Abbey: That's great. Thank you so much for sharing your story and for giving such great insight to our listeners and advice to other adults living with learning disabilities, especially dyslexia. There are resources there's accommodations that are available. I think it's great that you knew you were entitled to that and you fought the system and you fought for it. You advocated for your own needs, which is something that we talk a lot about. Um, even starting at an early age, it's important to make sure individuals with disabilities know what their disability is, know what strengths come from it. What weaknesses come from it and how to advocate for their needs.

DJ: Absolutely. That's awesome.

Laurie: Thank you so much. Thank you. Really appreciate you being here. I know it's been a long journey, but man, it's paying off.

Abbey: It is paying off. Yeah.

DJ: Three more years of war, but I don't have, I'm going to do it.

Laurie: You're going to do it starting in August, right?

DJ: Starting in August.

Laurie: All right. Well, we'll keep everybody updated on your journey too. Cause now I think you've got a whole bunch more people invested.

Abbey: We'll keep you guys updated on DJ's success story.

Laurie: We'll all be at your graduation from law school, parting hats!

Well, thanks everybody for being here today. If you guys have any questions or suggestions about future episodes, don't hesitate to email us at letstalklearningdisabilities@gmail.com. We also have a really cool new website coming pretty soon that's going to be all about our podcast and have all of our episodes and some really cool information as well. So we'll be announcing that in future episodes. So have a great day, everybody. Thanks for being here.

Abbey: Thank you.

Thank you so much for joining us today. In our show notes you can find information about today's talk, as well as links to the resources and other episodes. If you have questions about today's talk, have ideas for future episodes or just want to stay connected, you can contact us through Diagnostic Learning Services on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram. So, Let's Keep Talking Learning Disabilities. This podcast is sponsored by E Diagnostic Learning. You can find more information at www.ediagnosticlearning.com.

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