

Transcription of the video:

Harry's Story

[Harry]: I was in in standard class up until grade six, and I was doing fine. Before that, I was also kind of like an anxious kid, the kid who didn't want to be far from their parents, you know, gravitated more towards their teachers than their classmates. You know, always like to know what time it was. Just didn't like the unknown, but it wasn't until grade six that my marks became affected and that's when I started failing math tests because I couldn't function mathematically anymore. And then I got tested and was told that I have a learning disability, which was very very anxiety provoking for me.

I still recall quite well, it was the first day of grade seven, my first time being in the special education class – same school. None of my friends knew I was going to be changing, kind of programs you could say. I still remember I woke up that morning and I was terrified, I was refusing to get out of bed. I was refusing to go to school. I was absolutely petrified of what they would think of me, and what I would be like. The social fallout and the all that because of the stigma that surrounds, well 'sped kids'. And I finally got the courage to go to class and it was going fine, I made a few friends. It was a very small class then we went to a morning recess, a fifteen minute break mid-morning, and out of people, all the guys, all the girls that I've been classmates with for the last six, five/six years they saw me coming out of the building with all the other kids from special ed, who'd been in special ed for all their grades at my school and they just, they did not look at me in the same way. Like it was a mixture of, you could say apprehension or fear or like they just, you know, they nodded or waved. They didn't come say 'hi'; they usually would. They didn't socially interact like they usually would. Only one of my best friends that I met in grade five walked up to me like nothing had changed, briefly commented on the fact that I've changed classes and we caught up on our summers. Just that one guy that's still one of my closest friends to this day. Everyone else took about a week or so to even treat me close to how they used to treat me. They never quite went back to normal.

A non-verbal learning disability or NLD very simply put close can mean difficulty with anything that isn't verbal, as the name suggests. Examples would be: I have trouble gaging social interactions, trouble reading facial queues and expressions, mathematics, graphing, puzzles. I'm a slower reader, and I often have to re-read sentences once or twice just to make sure that I can understand their meaning. I generally have very good comprehension and in terms of writing, I have a lot of trouble with punctuation, when to use commas, when to use different grammatical devices. I had a, it took me years to get the whole there, their, and they're and two, to and too thing. I usually study hard because I've learned, especially having an LD, that if things don't come easy for you the best way to ensure your success is to work your butt off at everything and it will pay off, which it has for me.



I've been inspired by Integra through Mindful Martial Arts program. I'm able to do things, in fact people explore in ways I couldn't due to my anxiety. It's learning how to be present with thoughts, with feelings, with anything. I think the meditation practice is absolutely crucial. It is a formal way of practicing that can be done at any time, at any place. It just gives you an opportunity to silence your mind, focus on the present and to hone in on your skills of becoming aware.

I think the most important thing is teaching, helping kids have a better understanding of acceptance from a young age, not always needing to be juggling everything they see other peers labeling everything they see. If kids can be taught and observe from a young age that people can just be the way they are and that being different or learning differently or occasionally acting differently isn't necessarily bad or needs to be frowned upon. If kids can take that and own that, and apply that to their peers, then learning the actual ins and outs of learning disabilities will just be a bonus. All that you need is to just accept those people for who they are and how they are.

