

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT: Tory's Success Story – How Educators Helped Me Succeed

Tory: I'm Tory, I'm a writer and an artist, and I [00:00:30] have ADHD and dyslexia. Before starting school, my childhood was awesome. My parents read to me all the time and I fell in love with stories. My favorite thing was to make up new endings to the story books they read to me. I wasn't very good at writing, but I much prefer drawing pictures to tell my stories. Once I got to school, some things came easily. I was able to memorize things very quickly. I just didn't learn to read. In class, [00:01:00] I could keep up verbally, but when it came time for the test, I just wouldn't write anything down. Teachers thought I was misbehaving. I knew there was something wrong, but I didn't know what. My parents also noticed that my reading and writing wasn't improving.

I was told I was going to see a doctor who was going to run some tests and figure out why I was having trouble with reading and writing. I thought it was going to be blood tests and shots. I remember being [00:01:30] in the waiting room and my teeth were shattering. I was shaking so much. When I got into the office, I was introduced to Pearl. She said, hello. And I relaxed instantly. The next thing I knew we're chatting away. And I remember her asking me a lot of questions, asking me to read some things and having me do a lot of puzzles. When my parents picked me up, Pearl, thanked them for letting us hang out together. And I was beaming. She [00:02:00] had made me feel so comfortable and we had had a good fun time together. She gave my parents a report with her assessment and some recommendations. She recommended some help in school, like extra time for tests, a pen grip, a reading pointer.

She also recommended that my parents hire a tutor that specialized in dyslexia. I had that same tutor until I started university. I was about 11 years old in grade five when I learned how to read. [00:02:30] My teacher, miss M was the first teacher I had that seemed to understand dyslexia. She didn't care what we were reading. As long as we were reading and comprehending the story. The first book I read independently was a Goosebumps book. I had read a bunch of early reader books with my teacher and my parents, but I saw other kids reading the Goosebumps books and I wanted to read them as well. I managed to get Welcome to Dead House from the school library and my teacher and the educational [00:03:00] assistant said that book looks pretty scary. Why would you want to read that?

So I sat in the reading corner and read by myself. I'm sure I did schoolwork that day too. But in my memory, they just let me sit and read the book. They even let me stay in over recess to read. And I remember reading the book when I got home and telling my mom about how good it was, but that it might be too scary for her. I was so proud of myself. I remember it being like [00:03:30] pieces of a puzzle coming together.

It's amazing to me how important this moment was, that a teacher went so above and beyond and that at the time I had no idea Ms. M would talk to me about the books and she would say she was scared to read them herself, but wanted to know what happened and would get me to tell her about it. The next thing I knew I was writing book reports so she could read them at home. I was fully tricked and at the same time, so proud of myself. It made me [00:04:00] feel smart. And like I was teaching her and it made me feel like I had value. It changed everything.



VIDEO TRANSCRIPT: Tory's Success Story – How Educators Helped Me Succeed

After I got used to the shapes of letters and practiced a lot, reading became easier for me. Spelling on the other hand is something I still struggle with today. In my grade seven science class, we were learning about the heart. We had to label all the major structures on the drawing and I could not do it, not [00:04:30] even close. So I started being the class clown. My teacher, Dr. Jay, held me back after class. But instead of punishing me, he sat me down with colored pencils and called out various parts of the heart. He said, color in the aorta, blue and I correctly colored the aorta in blue. This went on with different colors and different parts of the heart.

And after we were done, he marked my work and showed me that I got 100%. He said [00:05:00] to me, you are not an idiot. Do not act like one in my class. It is beneath you. That hit me hard. And I really stopped being a clown after that. He said, you have difficulty spelling. You have difficulty reading and the world will not change for you. It's up to you to find solutions for that. If you can't write the test, figure out what you can do and talk to your teachers about it. We want you to succeed and we will help [00:05:30] you figure it out. This wasn't always true. There were some teachers and professors that were not willing to understand what I was going through, but from then on, I started talking to my teachers before classes, telling them what I needed, what would be difficult for me. And nine times out of 10, we would figure it out.

School was easier once I learned to read and ask for help when I needed it. But my LDs still affected me academically and made me worry about my future. [00:06:00] In high school, I took a career aptitude test and when the results came back, it said that I should become an artist or a writer. My guidance counselor laughed and said, well, being an artist sounds good, but writer isn't really in the cards for you. Is it? I laughed it off, but then went to the resource room and burst out crying. Mrs. T took me into her office and had a talk with me about it. She said, Tori, being a writer and an editor require two different [00:06:30] skills. You could be a wonderful writer and you could also be the worst editor on earth.

You're never going to be able to spell check somebody else's work, but don't let that stop you from writing and telling your own stories. Mrs. T then talked me into writing a play that the school put on for the drama festival. The play I wrote, wasn't very good, but I wrote it and finished it. And I was given the drama award that year. It was the first thing that I wrote that won any kind [00:07:00] of award. And I've since gone on to write many more stories and books.

When I first got to university, I thought that I was cured and that I would not require any additional help. I think I was trying to prove to myself that I can handle university. So I took a full course load. I made it through about halfway through the first semester, before I realized I needed help. It was a little surreal to arrive for my assessment and for it to be [00:07:30] Pearl again. When we were talking before the actual assessment began, I remember saying I wanted to make it through university on my own. And she said, I would. She talked about how we never questioned that some people need glasses and we never forced them to try to see without their glasses. Just like that some people need longer to write a test. And that's all just part of the human experience.



VIDEO TRANSCRIPT: Tory's Success Story – How Educators Helped Me Succeed

I was surprised that my accommodations changed when I was in university, but the accommodations [00:08:00] I received were actually much better and more tailored to my needs. Some of them included having some of my readings recorded, being assigned a note taker, test accommodations, training with speech to text technology, a lessened course load, and writing workshops.

However, the biggest thing that affected me was the change from being told what my accommodations were to it being more of a conversation about what accommodations I [00:08:30] actually wanted and needed. I was now in the driver's seat and it was really empowering. What I realized was that all my experiences in elementary school through to high school, it was really just preparing me for this moment. I was learning how to learn and now I knew what I needed to make that happen. How I think of my LDs and how they affect me has changed a lot throughout the years. Sometimes my LDs are frustrating. I'm a writer. That's [00:09:00] what I do for a living. But in order for me to write what would be a first draft for someone else might take me three or four tries, and I need other people to review it, to make sure it makes sense.

It's hard to be dependent on others to create my work. Other times it sort of feels like I won the lottery. Some of the coolest, most interesting people, I know have ADHD. ADHD makes it hard to get stuff done, but if you can get a person with ADHD interested in something, [00:09:30] it's the greatest feeling in the world. My ADHD means I can notice things and focus in ways other people don't. My LDs are so incorporated into how I think and how I perceive the world. And in ways that I don't even think I consciously understand because it is in the way my brain is made.

I think the most important thing is to recognize that everybody is carrying their own burden. It may take some time to figure out how to carry yours. Don't expect [00:10:00] to know everything about yourself. You're still figuring it out. That's what being alive is. You're going to be figuring it out as you go along. And so is everybody else. And everyone is going to need help or certain accommodations along the way. Then later, when you see people who are struggling with something you'll understand and you'll be able to help them.

