

Coming To Terms With My Child's LD by Patsy Kahn

“I used to have dyslexia,” exclaimed our 11-year-old. Experts know that you don't “get over” dyslexia, but our child has made such terrific progress she believes she's “cured.” We weren't always this open and optimistic. The journey from denial to acceptance of her LD has been an extended, emotional trek.

At the suggestion of her preschool teacher, our daughter, age three, was seeing a speech therapist. We quit after she suggested that our daughter had ADD and language processing issues. My husband and I labeled the therapist an alarmist and wondered how she could expect a young child to pay attention when there were so many distracting toys around. We consoled ourselves with the belief that this was strictly a maturation issue. How could our child be expected to learn colors or numbers when she was putting so much energy into learning to tie her shoes?

We maintained this stance as we enrolled her in a mainstream kindergarten and employed a private tutor twice a week. First grade proved to be difficult, but still, we resisted when the teacher suggested testing. Second grade was painfully tough, even after she repeated the first grade. She received individual attention and spent part of each day in the Resource Center.

Toward the end of the school year, we were called into a meeting to discuss third grade. Our child was to have “special” spelling words, “special” reading assignments, and would not be assigned a younger reading buddy. With all of these “special” provisions, we finally had to admit that we had a child with “special” needs.

I cried on the tour of the Special Education school. I cried when I told my friends. I made promises to myself and to my daughter that this would only be for two years. I kept her in the after-school program at the previous school. I was still deep in denial. I could not accept that my daughter was, somehow, less than perfect. But within a few weeks at the new school, my child's bubbly, cheerful spirit reappeared. When I mentioned to her that she seemed so much happier now and suggested that this school was really helping her, she replied, “Duh, Mom!”

That is as good an answer as I could give anyone. Duh! Special Ed teaches each student individually, celebrating strengths and fortifying weaknesses.

Intensive testing revealed that our daughter does, in fact, have speech and language issues, auditory processing issues, and ADD. Accepting this reality sooner would have saved our family this painful adventure.