



SUPPORTING RESILIENCE IN CHILDREN WITH DYSLEXIA

Presented by: Michael Hart, Ph.D.

Central Texas Dyslexia Conference October 2017

www.doctormichaelhart.com

HOW I TALK ABOUT RESILIENCE

- Kids don't live in a vacuum
- Science very often focuses on the student outside the context in which they live.
 - We did this, we measured that, this was the result
- First change our template, our lens through which we view the challenge
 - Broaden the context



CHALLENGE

The question is not just...

How have we, as parents and educators, organized our environment in a way that either impedes or supports resilience for our child or student...

But also how are we supporting and nurturing our own resilience?



WHAT DO WE MEAN BY RESILIENCE?

- **Psychological resilience** is defined as an individual's ability to properly adapt to stress and adversity.
- The capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness.
- The noun *resilience* stems from the Latin *resiliens* “to rebound, recoil.” As a character trait, *resilience* is a person's ability to recover quickly from unfortunate circumstances...



THE DYSLEXIC EXPERIENCE?



7 X 5 X 9



A DIFFERENT TYPE OF RESILIENCE

- Seven hours a day, 5 days a week for 9 months out of the year too many of our dyslexic students are challenged by a sense of failure and confusion.
- As young children: Underdeveloped social and emotional skills to cope with the *mismatch* between their learning style and school program.
- School = Terrifying place!
- *Chronic risk of feeling ashamed, inadequate, confused and helpless.*



*Hmmm...Chronic risk of feeling
ashamed, inadequate, confused
and helpless.*

*Who else might feel that way
sometimes?*



When we see a student struggling and believe that we can't help, the powerlessness can feel overwhelming. If we don't do the work to transform that emotion in a healthy way, it can instead become frustration and irritation, and begin to chip away at our empathy.

But I know that how I react to students, and my ability to manage my emotions, colors every interaction I have. *Left unexamined, these strong emotions can lead to burnout.*

Alex Shevrin

<https://ww2.kqed.org/mindshift/2017/04/24/a-mindset-shift-to-continue-supporting-the-most-frustrating-kids/>



MY MESSAGE TO YOU

- We need to inject humanity, compassion and professionalism
 - Self-care is part of professionalism
 - Professional athletes
- Parents and teachers must take care of themselves **FIRST**
 - This is a triathlon, not a sprint
 - Compassion for self drives compassion for others



From humanity, compassion, self-care and professionalism comes the answer to nurturing resilience and unique strength in our dyslexic children and students

...a delicate, complex dance



CAN RESILIENCE BE TAUGHT?

- A resounding YES...AND it takes vigilance, persistence and compassion on the part of parents, caretakers and teachers.



EIGHT TIPS AND STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING RESILIENCE FOR DYSLEXIC STUDENTS

1. Support Self-Awareness

- Help your student identify and celebrate what is special about him/her. Authenticity is important here.
- The more you help a child grow aware of his/her strengths, the more confidence and awareness he/she will have.
- Let your student teach you something. Let them explain what to do and show you how to do it.



TIPS AND STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING RESILIENCE FOR DYSLEXIC STUDENTS

2. Support Self-Management:

- Be very consistent with the rules you have set in your classroom. Hold your student accountable.
- Help your student learn to ask for help: “This is hard for me. I’m getting frustrated. Can you help?”
- Talk about it later when calm and be sure to discuss what could be different next time.



TIPS AND STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING RESILIENCE FOR DYSLEXIC STUDENTS

3. Support Social Awareness:

- Notice what makes your student most comfortable instead of forcing them out of their comfort zone. Talk about it with them.
- Teach your students how to verbalize what their comfort level is.
- No reading in front of class.



TIPS AND STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING RESILIENCE FOR DYSLEXIC STUDENTS

4. Support relationship building skills

- Find out what your student's interests are. Show them that you care about things they love to do.
- Model for your students how to talk about it when conflicts or challenges arise.



TIPS AND STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING RESILIENCE FOR DYSLEXIC STUDENTS

5. Support Goal-Directed Behavior

- Talk out loud as you solve a problem. You're modeling how to work through something challenging.
- Support your student's efforts to talk about what he or she finds challenging. Offering encouragement will breed persistence.



TIPS AND STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING RESILIENCE FOR DYSLEXIC STUDENTS

6. Support Decision-Making

- Give your students choices and be clear about living with the consequences—positive or negative.
- When your student makes a mistake turn it into a learning moment. “What can we learn from this? How can we make things better in the future?”
- Model an appropriate emotional response when your/their choices end up being mistakes. Do not show disappointment and anger. Be positive and focus on the teachable moment.



TIPS AND STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING RESILIENCE FOR DYSLEXIC STUDENTS

7. Support Personal Responsibility

- Involve your student in activities doing real tasks with real accountability.
- Talk with your student about what personal responsibility looks like while it's happening so they have a better chance to internalize what it feels like.



TIPS AND STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING RESILIENCE FOR DYSLEXIC STUDENTS

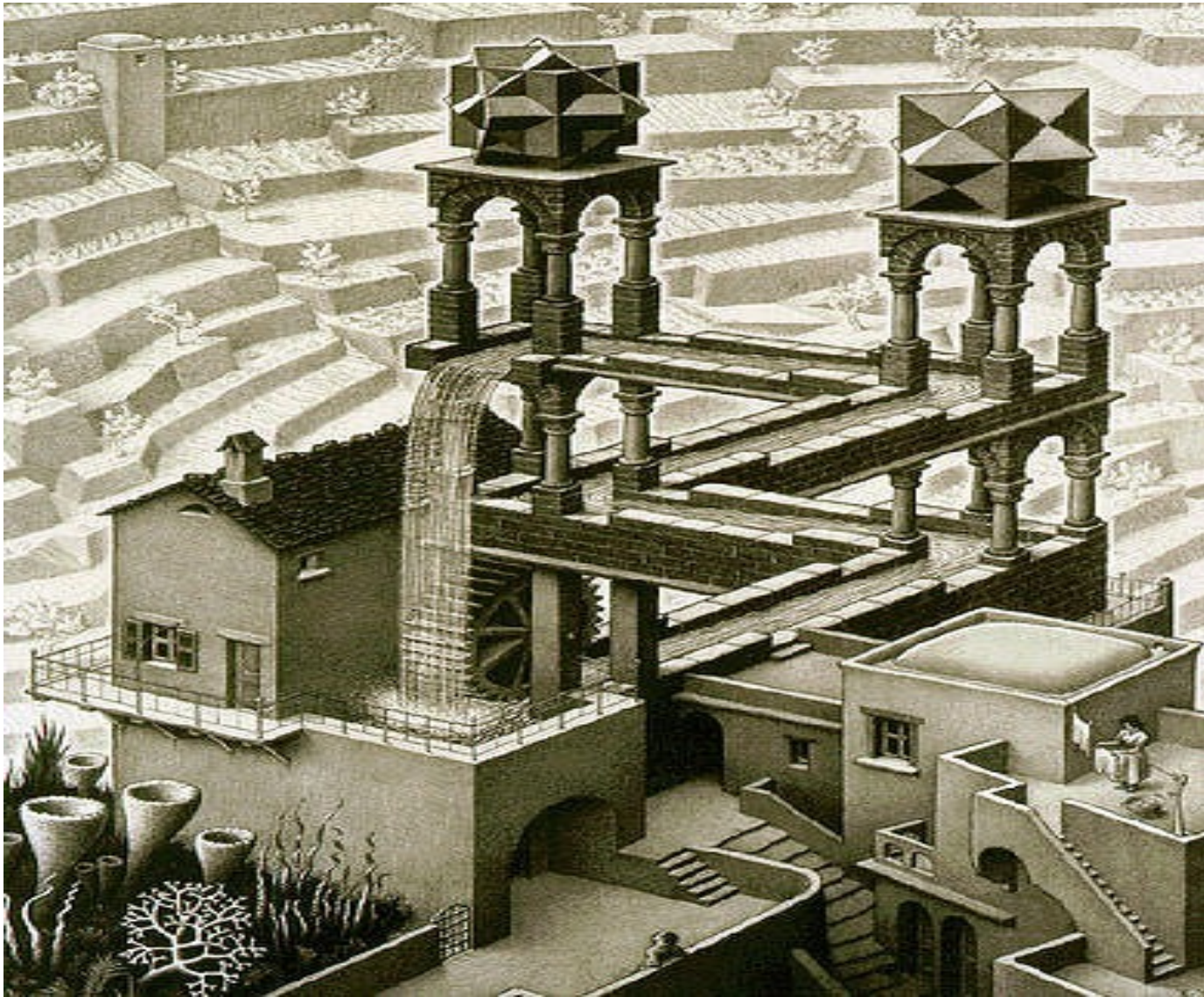
8. Support Optimistic Thinking

- Engage your student in frequent discussions about what their strengths are, what their passions are.
- Talking about their skills and passions are a critical counterbalance to their struggles in school.

- Resource: www.Centerforresilientchildren.org



INHERENT STRENGTHS FOR DYSLEXICS?



RESEARCH SO FAR

- A sensitivity to “things out of place.”
 - The dyslexic astrophysicists who were better at seeing the “simulated graphical signature in a spectrum characteristic of a black hole.”
- Sharper peripheral vision
- Getting the visual gist
 - Impossible Figures—dyslexics can rapidly take in the visual whole and form a visual gestalt



SOFT SIGNS

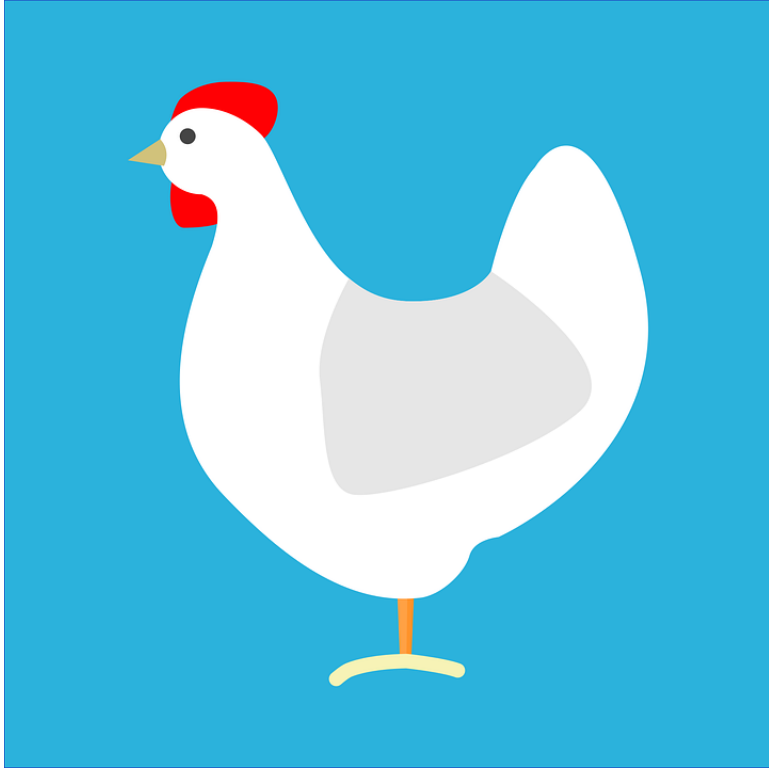
- Creative problem solving
- Thinking outside the box
- Spatial knowledge
- Pattern recognition
- Collaboration
- Entrepreneurship



WDC WD WD
SAMSUNG UNG
Hitachi
Maxtor
SEAGATE
WDC WD
TOSHIBA



CAUSAL OR COMPENSATORY?



“At IDA, we have highly successful people with dyslexia who speak about strengths they believe are due to their dyslexia. What we need to do in research is to find a better way to understand those strengths so that we can take better advantage of them. At the same time, we must ensure that teachers have the tools they need...”

- **Guinevere Eden, Georgetown University**



FINAL WORDS

- *From humanity, compassion, self-care and professionalism comes the answer to nurturing resilience and unique strengths in our dyslexic children and students*
- *Self-care is not self-ish...It is the greatest gift you can give to our children and students*



SUPPORTING RESILIENCE IN STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA

*Thank you very much for your time and
consideration today!*

*Please sign up for my newsletter at
www.doctormichaelhart.com for
discounts and bonus materials*

*Feel free to contact me at
doctormichaelhart@gmail.com*



REFERENCES

- Geschwind, Norman. “Pathology of Superiority: A Predisposition to Dyslexia May Have Advantages,” *Perspectives on Language and Literacy*, Winter 2010, <http://www.questia.com/read/1P3-1995238211>
- Schneps, M. R., Rose, T. L. & Fischer, K. W. (2007). Visual learning and the brain: Implications for dyslexia. *Mind, Brain, and Education*, 1(3), 128-129.
- von Karolyi, C., Winner, E. Gray, W., & Sherman, G. F. (2003). Dyslexia linked to talent: Global visual-spatial ability. *Brain and Language*, 85, 427-431.
- Geiger, G. & Lettvin, J. Y. (1987) Peripheral vision in persons with dyslexia. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 316, 1238-1243.

