

# ALDA

## UPDATE

# Express!



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Sometimes when a person gets mixed up or a little confused, there is a saying, "That's OK, you're only human". But, what if a person does this on a more regular basis? Do they say "that's OK"? No. We tend to label them as dumb, stupid, lazy, uncaring, day-dreamers - and the name calling goes on and on. Who are these people? Why are they this way? They are people with a learning disability. I am one of them.

As a child, I had a hard time learning and grasping things in various areas of my life. I was around three before I could



put words into complete sentences and I had a hard time pronouncing certain words. Only my family could understand me most of the time. I also had a hard time remembering things and it really was noticeable when I started school.

Teachers then did not know or understand about learning disabilities. They gave me such a hard time. One teacher made me stand in the front of the class and said that I got the lowest mark in class - again. I felt very hurt and upset that a teacher would do this to a youngster.

Learning to read and write was also very

difficult, as I had dyslexia, and I would mix up letters and numbers. Learning to print and write was very hard as I was left-handed. I also had a nervous disorder called St. Vitus Dance. I was always dropping things and it is very hard to print and write with shaking hands, so this was also a hindrance. I had a very bad memory and it was frustrating for everyone: teachers, my parents and especially myself. I grew up thinking I was stupid and that I could not learn. I studied so hard and I still got terrible marks. My parents could not understand why I did not do well, because they saw me work so hard.

When I was around twelve years old, I



realized that there had to be something wrong with my brain. Our family Doctor only looked

at me like I had a wild imagination.

In high school, things only got worse. They would not let me learn French as they said I could not even learn English. Math and English were my worst subjects. Social Studies, Music, and Art were my best subjects, especially History. Instead of getting any help or encouragement, teachers just pushed me through the sys-

**Helping people with unique learning needs develop greater independence!**

tem to get rid of me. One Math teacher in particular was unwilling to help me, and when I had to repeat his class he sneered: "Oh no, are you back again?" School was so stressful for me that I blanked out on a regular basis and didn't know where I was. Between classes, I would blank out and, luckily for me, friends would drag me to the next class where I would sit for minutes before coming back to reality. Teachers would throw chalk and erasers at me out of frustration!

A guidance counsellor told me not to come to school any more, as there were no subjects that I was capable of learning, and I was taking up a seat that another student could use. When I told her that I did not intend to come back and that I was going to look for a job, she said that I was incapable of keeping a job for more than six months at a time. I felt so humiliated and left her office in tears. I left school and stayed at my first job for six and a half years.

One day, I was watching the news about children with learning disabilities. I realized that was what I was dealing with. I felt so relieved, as I finally found out why I had had such a difficult time in school and in my job.



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Office Hours: Monday thru Friday 9:00am to 4:30pm  
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## Share what you know!

ALDA's Mentorship Service can always use your input!

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I found out that a support group for LD adults was starting up, so I joined. It was great to finally meet others in the same situation as myself. I no longer felt so alone. I gained self-confidence and learned to like myself.

I also found out that I could be tested for my learning disability. I went to see a Registered Psychologist and found out not only about my disabilities but also about my abilities. I actually had strengths, not just weaknesses!

It was nice to find this out, and it has helped me every day of my life. I retired this year after fourteen years working in housekeeping at BC Place. It sure looks like that guidance counsellor was wrong. At our support group in 1987, we decided to establish ALDA because other groups mostly provided help for children and did not know how to deal with adults. Over the past twenty-two years we have helped thousands of adults who have come to see us. I am proud to be one of the founding members and am still very active at ALDA as current Chair of the Board of Directors.

It is very rewarding to see the many adults who have come through our doors become more self-confident, concentrate on their abilities and go out into the world with better knowledge and understanding of themselves.

*Debra*