



**Idao** • Learning Disabilities  
Association of Ontario

*The right to learn, the power to achieve*

# communiqué

THE PUBLICATION OF THE LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO

SUMMER 2015



## Living with Co-existing Conditions

Nurturing Self Advocacy Skills • Tips for Managing Those ADD Kids  
Win a Smart Key! • And... A Talk with Quinn Bradlee

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# Editor's Notebook

## "DELIVERING THE GOODS"



You know you've got committed writers on your team when, in typical ADHD fashion, one of them suddenly remembers an article is due, hastily taps the whole thing out on a cellphone and sends it to you just slightly after the deadline date... from Bangladesh.

It could be a reflection of their dedication, but it might also be that short-term memory thing again as well.

What it does demonstrate is a commitment to delivering the goods (albeit in the sometimes strange and unique way I've come to love about our community) even if it doesn't exactly conform to pre-determined expectations.

In a way this whole issue reflects that.

Whether it's living with the complexities and learning coping strategies that arise out of comorbid challenges, like contributor Aaron Bailey struggles with on a daily basis; whether its learning to chunk out requests in order to get household chores finished like Super ADD Mom Ril Giles does with her kids, or being able to assemble favourable components that help nurture self-advocacy skills

like Melissa Rowbotham recommends, all of our features deal with "delivering the goods" that lead to living an improved quality of life.

That much can also be said of Quinn Bradlee, the Washington-based founder of Friends of Quinn, a website that is not only the first to use the dyslexie font, but has also created a gathering place in the world of social media for thousands living with dyslexia and other LDs. The "goods" are partially reflected through his interviews with luminaries like Steven Spielberg and Whoopi Goldberg. You can't help but listen.

The Parent Panel also delivered the goods at LDAO's March 12 corporate breakfast. Composed of business executives, all parents of LD kids themselves, these leaders revealed how, at the end of the day, we are all humans doing the best we can to make a contribution to the world. As one executive said, "it's about cope-ability vs. capability."

We hope you find the stories in this issue echo that sentiment.



### A CONTEST THAT'S YOUR KEY TO SUCCESS

Oh yeah...

That writer I mentioned at the beginning of this column happens to be the one-and-only **Mark Kawate**, who writes about LD-friendly apps in every issue of *Communique*. He's very generously donated a Smart Key from legato, something which many of us non-neurotypicals will certainly appreciate. For the uninitiated, a smart key enables you to receive notifications whenever you leave your key behind; helps you remember where your key was last seen; finds your key by playing a sound and allows you to connect with your bag, camera or other valuables as well.

Of course there's a catch, and that catch comes in the form of a skill-testing question. The first person to correctly answer the question, which three US presidents were thought to have learning disabilities? Will be the proud owner of a handy smart key! Make sure you email your answer to: Lawrence@LDAO.ca.

The correct answer will find us delivering the goods to you.

## This Issue We Were...

**Aaron Bailey** is a Kingston-based Learning Strategist. • **Ril Giles** is a former Developmental Disabilities Support Worker from Nova Scotia, who now lives and homeschools her children in Picton. She is currently writing her book on Adding Routine for kids with ADHD and LDs, to be released later this year. Visit her website [www.superADDmom.com](http://www.superADDmom.com), where she

writes about life as a parent with/and of LDs. • **Mark Kawate** is a self-proclaimed pirate strategist, founder of Akasha Inspired and has been in the technology industry from the age of 12. He started the non-profit brand ADHD Apps and Apps for ADHD as a way to help his brothers and sisters with ADHD/LD/AS succeed by effectively using the technology in

their lives. You can find him on Twitter. [com/ADHDapps](https://twitter.com/ADHDapps). • **Melissa Rowbotham** M.Ed, performs intake services for the Integra program of The Child Development Institute, a children's mental health centre specializing in treating youth with learning disabilities and co-occurring mental health disorders. • **Taru Virkamaki** is a Toronto-based non profit professional and writer.

Next Issue You Could...

# Message FROM THE CEO



Lawrence Barns, CEO

I tend to see myself as a “glass half full person”, always looking for the bright side in any problem and finding places to celebrate the work LDAO does within our community. In just the last month a great corporate breakfast event left me proud of the volunteers and staff who pulled off such a first class event. I then had the honour to open a session on accessibility organised by the office of the Attorney General. This work to build systemic understanding to help our community achieve equal access to the justice system is immensely important. Over time this shifts from a reactive response by us to a call for help to a system designed to make sure an LD will not be a barrier to justice. Add that to the new guidelines in PPM 8 being rolled out in the education system after nearly two years of work and I am more than proud of the work done to change the impact living with an LD has in Ontario.

Yet when someone asked me recently what my role was like without thinking I answered “It’s like walking a high wire without a net.” Whilst it’s fair to say I used the term for comic effect it does reflect some of our reality of being a smaller charity in the world of the huge causes that dominate. I will never knock others who do good work, but there is no doubt we suffer from a lack of public awareness and the resources it brings. Last year for awareness month the LDA’s of Ontario ran the Don’t Dis my Ability posters. It is a campaign to highlight the stigma and

invisible nature of those we serve. I am very proud of the quality of the campaign messages, but as is often the way finances prohibited us from reaching a broader audience with a TTC wide pilot that we were approached to run.

Wouldn’t it be great if this October you opened the paper to see a prominent campaign, heard us on a radio or even at a push TV ad. Here is where LDAO needs your help, and it isn’t the usual request for you to donate! My challenge to you is do you have a contact in your network who influences corporate support/donations/marketing who may just be interested in partnering with us. After all Bell has received so much praise through “Let’s Talk” , could you help us find a partner to do something similar for us while enhancing the perception of their brand?

I am going to put on my optimist’s hat again and think that someone is just reading this and has a thought of the call they can make to help this become a reality.

Together we can stop the Dis and show the ability and make the invisible visible! 

## PROVINCIAL ADVOCATE WANTS TO HEAR FROM YOU

Contribute to the **I Have Something to Say** project of the *Provincial Advocate for Children & Youth*, with your experiences of living with learning disabilities.

Children and youth are encouraged to **share their stories** directly using the *I Have Something to Say* website.

In addition to writing, you can share **a piece of art, videos, songs, e-books** — whatever works best for you. Watch Sammy’s submission – a graphic illustration of the effects of inappropriate and hurtful labelling. This is just one of many different ways to submit your ideas. 

## LDAC ISSUES FORMAL POSITIONS ON LD DIAGNOSTIC CRITERIA

### **TO REVISE OR NOT TO REVISE: The Official LDAC Definition of Learning Disabilities Versus DSM-5 Criteria**

The latest version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders; Fifth Edition (DSM-5) published May 2013, includes the diagnostic criteria and features of Specific Learning Disorder. This Position Paper explores the DSM-5 criteria at variance with the LDAC Definition of Learning Disabilities. An Ad Hoc Committee has taken on the responsibility of identifying some of the key similarities and differences in both perspectives.

For more information visit:

[http://www.ldac-acta.ca/downloads/pdf/media\\_release/LDAC-DSM-5-Statement-March-2015-FINAL-CL.pdf](http://www.ldac-acta.ca/downloads/pdf/media_release/LDAC-DSM-5-Statement-March-2015-FINAL-CL.pdf) 

# The ADHD Files

## Women with ADHD in the Workplace

by Carter Hammett

*“Sure I had lousy social skills, was moody and impulsive, fought alcoholism, binge smoked and was constantly overwhelmed, had no career and no money and changed boyfriends more often than I changed my socks but still, I was smart –right?”*

So muses writer Zoë Kessler after being diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) at the tender age of 47 in her hilarious and recently-published book, *ADHD According to Zoë – The Real Deal on Relationships, Finding Your Focus & Finding Your Keys*.

Part memoir, part “how-to” guide, Kessler’s book serves as both a primer and a brilliant management tool that helps unravel the stigma of an often misunderstood condition.

Prior to her diagnosis, Kessler, now 55, had been a writer, legal secretary, chamber maid, retail clerk, teacher, farm labourer and waitress--“that job lasted two weeks”—among a host of other jobs that just never seemed to quite work out for her. Although a law clerk position lasted two years (“the longest I’d ever held a job”) a predictable cycle had begun to emerge.

“I’d start a new job with high hopes and sure enough I’d start well,” she says. “There was always a change though that could be felt when people stopped liking me. You can feel a vibe in the room when you don’t feel accepted. After that, I’d get

the ‘uh-oh, here we go again’ feeling, then the fear that I’d lose the job. After fear came anxiety. That became a self-fulfilling prophecy and I started making mistakes. I had no idea how to change it.”

By the time she was finally diagnosed, a chronic pattern of underachievement that dogs many ADDers had been firmly established throughout a career littered with jobs that she had either been fired from or quit.

“Our behaviours put neurotypicals—people not living with a brain-based disability like dyslexia or Asperger’s, among others—on their guard. Many of us are unskilled at following social rules. We find it difficult to understand why we should in the first place, and the value in that,” she says. “Many ADHD women can’t abide small talk; we want substance.”

“We live in a society where the bulk of the domestic work tasks still fall on the woman’s shoulders. She’s the one getting the kids ready, doing most of the domestic work and that can be psychologically and emotionally taxing. She’s at a deficit by the time she gets to the office!”

It’s variables like these that throw the traditional definition of ADHD—hyperactivity, impulsivity and/or inattentiveness—out the window and moves it beyond the limitations published in the controversial Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) which psychiatrists use as a standard reference tool.

“I think it’s more important to learn everything you can about what will help you meet your potential at work. The more you are aware of your own ADHD, the less

others will need to be aware of it.”

Combine that with a proper diet, regular exercise and enough sleep, and you have a good recipe for improved self-regulation.

Unfortunately, because of ADHD’s invisible nature, the majority of women remain undiagnosed. Girls tend to be socialized differently than boys and learn how to hide their ADHD. Sometimes other conditions with ADHD-like behaviours, including depression or anxiety might be diagnosed instead. Further complicating matters are hormonal fluctuations that can exhaust already over-taxed minds. Perimenopausal women for example, can exhibit memory problems and slower information processing skills.

Women with ADHD tend to be non-linear thinkers who are often creative, intelligent hard workers who don’t fit into the 9-to-5 mould. It’s important to find the right career fit and find ways to make your ADHD work for you.

After a series of ill-fitting choices, Kessler found her calling with freelance writing—a job that includes her popular blog at [psychcentral.com](http://psychcentral.com)--and teaching.

“I was born to do it,” she says. “I love the autonomy. It’s entrepreneurial, you set your own schedule; get paid to learn. I have so many interests and passions that are ever-changing, fascinating stimulating. I get to meet people from all walks of life and it’s wonderfully fun. It also lets me exercise my own value system.

“The bottom of my office is still littered with paper but I’m okay with that.” 

## STUDY LOOKING TO TAP THE STRENGTHS OF STUDENTS WITH ADHD

Past studies have found that students with ADHD are underrepresented in the field of engineering. Researchers feel that traditional teaching methods are driving away those ADHD “out of the box” thinkers that have the potential to be pioneers in the field of engineering.

This study is going to compare the creative thinking processes of engineering students with and without ADHD, looking at what might be hindering students with ADHD from being successful in these traditional programs. The principal researcher, Arash Zaghi, is an assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering and was himself diagnosed with ADHD at the age of 32. He feels engineering courses do little to foster creativity.

An article on this study also points out that high school advisors often suggest university engineering programs to students who are creative and express a

liking for things that are hands on without taking into account their unique areas of strength and weakness. This can result in a bad university program fit and unhappy students.

The study will also be looking to see if medications used to treat ADHD affect a student’s creative thinking. The study hopes to help dispel some of the myths about students with ADHD.

If only more of these types of studies could be funded, ones that provide insight into how students with ADHD can best use their strengths to become successful in their areas of study. Perhaps we need more adults with ADHD such as Arash Zagji, to lead the way.

For more information and to access the original article about this study, please visit:

<http://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-02-strengths-adhd-students.html>



## BROADFUTURES TRANSFORMS WORKFORCE ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUNG ADULTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

BroadFutures, an emerging Washington, D.C.-based non-profit organization, is committed to serving this growing, underrepresented group of young adults with learning disabilities by using an innovative program designed to help combat these pressing issues. BroadFutures’ program employs a unique combination of holistic, individualized training and mentorship, coupled with paid internship opportunities.

Pilot program interns meet with employer partners for evaluation.

“BroadFutures offers an innovative approach to youth transitions with learning disabilities,” says Mark Perriello, president, CEO, American Association of People with Disabilities. “This specialized program puts in place the tools and resources, coupled with personalized and creative influences, needed to make it in

the workforce. Simply put, BroadFutures is unique and welcome in our space.”

Founded in August 2013 by Carolyn Jeppsen, Diana Eisenstat and Bradley Holmes, BroadFutures successfully completed its first of three pilot programs in August 2014. To promote openness and establish a strong presence, the pilot stage consists of three phases – the second phase occurring in January 2015, and the third in summer 2015.

“Very few of the successful existing workforce programs effectively address the transitional needs of young adults who have adequate cognitive skills and capabilities for the workplace but lack the organizational, attentive and social abilities to independently navigate employment,” says Carolyn Jeppsen, CEO, president, co-founder, BroadFutures. “That’s what BroadFutures is working to address.”

## 2015 SCOTIABANK TORONTO WATERFRONT MARATHON

The Learning Disabilities Association of York Region (LDAYR) will be participating in the **Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon** on Sunday October 18, 2015. Show your support for **LDAYR** by running alongside us or sponsoring our goal of raising \$20,000!

### Sign up today!

- All registrants will receive recognition on our website and in our newsletters.
- First two (2) registrants will receive free membership to LDAYR for the year ahead and
- First 20 registrants will receive a free enrollment (minimum fundraising amount \$250)
- Those that raise \$250 will receive two (2) complimentary tickets to our annual conference.
- Monthly prizes for challenge winners
- Weekly prizes for challenge winners on the month of October
- First registrant to raise \$2000 will win an apple iPod touch 5th generation 16gb (retail at \$289)

Not able to make the run? Join the team by making a donation or volunteer to cheer the team!

With your support, all proceeds raised from our run will go towards programs and services at **LDAYR**.

Help us reach our goal by donating and encouraging others to participate. Any donations count big or small! Help us make a difference by raising awareness.

For more details please contact Helga Sirola at:

905-884-7933 x 26 or [seniorteam@ldayr.org](mailto:seniorteam@ldayr.org)



The 2014 Right to Learn Team

# Public Policy Roundup



## ONTARIO'S SPECIAL NEEDS STRATEGY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

A new Special Needs Strategy is being developed by the Ministries of Education, Children & Youth Services, Community & Social Services, and Health & Long Term Care. Significant changes are being proposed to the system for children with special needs, including how speech/language and occupational therapy services are offered. Planning is underway in 34 regions of the province. One of the directives from the Ministries is that families and youth must be consulted as part of the planning process. More information about the initiative can be found on the Special Needs Strategy web portal by registering at: <http://specialneedsstrategy.children.gov.on.ca/register/>.

### Highlights

- A new developmental screen will help identify early signs or risks of delays to development in children from birth to 6 years of age
- Children who need speech-language therapy, occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy services will receive seamless services from birth through the school years.
- Parents of children and youth with multiple or complex special needs will have one identifiable place where they can go for coordinated service planning and will know who is responsible for developing and monitoring their child's plan.
- The new Service Planning Coordinators will coordinate service plans for children and youth with multiple or complex special needs and help parents navigate services across multiple service types, including children's mental health services.

- Service Planning Coordinators will be responsible for connecting with children's mental health lead agencies when children have mental health service needs so that mental health services are part of the coordinated service plan.

## MOVING ON MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVE

In November 2012, the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) launched *Moving on Mental Health*, with the objective of creating a system where children and youth with mental health problems and their families in all parts of Ontario will know what mental health services are available in their communities; and how to access the mental health services and supports that will meet their needs.

A key element of *Moving on Mental Health* is the identification of one lead agency in each defined service areas across Ontario. Lead agencies will be responsible for establishing and maintaining access to core, community-based CYMH services, including those in French where appropriate, through a combination of their own, directly-delivered services and by contracting with other providers to deliver services. The lead agencies in 16 service areas have been chosen and can be found on the Moving on Mental Health website: [www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/topics/specialneeds/mentalhealth/moving-on-mental-health.aspx](http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/topics/specialneeds/mentalhealth/moving-on-mental-health.aspx).

## MORAN REVIEW OF THE AODA

On February 13, 2015 the Ontario Government released the final report of the Second Legislative Review of the

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, halfway between the unanimous passing of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act in 2005 and the goal set for a completely accessible Ontario in 2025. Ms. Moran had held consultation meetings around the province and provided an opportunity for anyone to submit confidential feedback or a written submission on how the present provisions of the AODA are working.

In her recommendations Ms. Moran spent some time on transparent enforcement, streamlining of processes and public awareness. She recommended that the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario (ADO) release information on AODA enforcement actions at least every 3 months, and that there be a meaningful and well-publicized feedback mechanism. She supported the plan to establish an accessible toll-free phone number to report AODA violations (since announced on March 23, 2015) but suggested broadening the tool to enable on-line as well as mail-in reporting. Moran recommended that more guidance be given to obligated organizations and that a resource centre to provide quick answers about compliance could be extremely helpful. In addition, she recommended that there be a comprehensive public awareness campaign.

The review found strong support for development of additional standards for the health care and education sectors. Moran recommended that the responsible ministries take the lead and work with people with disabilities and stakeholders in these sectors to identify accessibility barriers and solutions, with oversight from the Accessibility Standards Advisability Council. It is notable that one of the possible targets she mentions is timelines for the accommodation process for postsecondary students, an issue for many students with learning disabilities. 

# Elsewhere

## Bits and Pieces of LD/ADHD News Collected From Around the World...



SINGAPORE



### All Primary Schools to Benefit from School-Based Dyslexia Remediation Programme in 2016

The Ministry of Education (MOE) has further expanded the School-based Dyslexia Remediation (SDR) Programme to 60 more primary schools in 2015, to now cover 121 primary schools, or two-thirds of all primary schools. Another 290 students are expected to benefit from the programme in the additional 60 schools. This is on top of the 1,510 students who have benefited from the SDR since 2012. The programme will be made available to all primary schools in 2016.

First piloted in 2012, the SDR programme is a two-year intervention programme for Primary 3 and 4 students. Students with weak language and literacy skills at Primary 1 will receive early intervention through the Learning Support

Programme (LSP). For students whose literacy difficulties persist, they would be systematically referred for further assessment and diagnosis by the end of Primary 2. Students confirmed to have dyslexia would receive specialised remediation through the School-based Dyslexia Remediation (SDR) programme in Primary 3 and 4.

A unique feature of this remediation is the specially designed curriculum by MOE Reading Specialists catering to the dyslexic profile of students. The remediation programme adopts a systematic approach to teaching reading and spelling which is based on methods tested and proven internationally. The approach addresses key difficulties faced by children with dyslexia, such as phonological deficits, difficulty in making connections between letter sounds and letter

names and weak memory. Students are taught letter names and letter sounds, as well as how to read and spell words, and read connected text explicitly with methods that involve multiple senses - of sight, sound, movement and touch. Repeated practice is built into each lesson to help students better internalise the knowledge and skills. The programme is conducted by Allied Educators (Learning and Behavioural Support) and English Language teachers who have received specialised training to conduct the programme.

<http://www.moe.gov.sg/media/press/2015/03/all-primary-schools-to-benefit-from-school-based-dyslexia-remediation-programme-in-2016.php>



UNITED STATES



### Experts debate the pros and cons of giving kids a break from ADHD drugs

Are you considering giving your child weekends off or even a summer-long break from ADHD medications?

It may work just fine. Your child may regain his appetite and catch up on his growth (some ADHD drugs may slow a child's height and weight gains).

Then again, a so-called medication vacation may unleash the very behaviors that have been controlled so well by prescription drugs. That could put a strain on the child, you, and other caregivers. And there is

some evidence that keeping a child on their ADHD medications will lessen symptoms better than stopping and starting.

Unfortunately, there is no one-size-fits-all answer. It comes down to what works best for you, your child, and your family. Doctors say it's easy to get on and off the stimulants that are typically prescribed for ADHD, which is characterized by hyperactivity, impulsivity, and/or inattention.

"The bottom line, it isn't harmful and it's part of personalization of care -- not to have a standard that fits all, but to have

a flexible approach that meets the needs of the individual child and family," says psychiatrist Benedetto Vitiello, MD, who leads the Child and Adolescent Treatment and Preventive Intervention Research Branch at the National Institute of Mental Health in Bethesda, Md.

Retrieved March 28: For full article check here:

[http://www.webmd.com/add-adhd/childhood-adhd/features/adhd-drug-holidays?src=RSS\\_PUBLIC](http://www.webmd.com/add-adhd/childhood-adhd/features/adhd-drug-holidays?src=RSS_PUBLIC)



# Web Head

## A Few Good Apps

By Mark Kawate

Hello LDAO friends! I have quite a few good apps to share with you this time out. There has been significant progress within the LD/ADHD app development scene and 2015 is going to be the year of advances towards higher quality assistive technology.

I have been keeping my eyes on everything I think is relevant to the community. As always, I've tested these new apps personally. They include:



### READING FOCUS CARDS APP FOR MAC AND PC

This is an LD-specific product that Brennan Innovators have developed. This app has been established by clinicians, LD-specialized developers and Joan Brennan, who is an experienced and seasoned educator.

This is a reading support system for people with ADHD, LD, Low Vision, Downs Syndrome, aphasia, and many others where attentive reading is difficult.

Reading Focus Cards are an innovative but very simple way of reading line-by-line without the distractions of the whole page for those with reading problems. There is now a digital application to go with the physical RFC cards. The physical cards can be used with both books and tablets, making them one of the most versatile products for focused reading available.

The digital cards can be found here: [www.focusandread.com](http://www.focusandread.com).

The physical cards can be found here: [www.readingfocuscards.com](http://www.readingfocuscards.com)

### HUMAN FOR IPHONE

Human is an all-day activity tracker that gently pushes you to move more and more each day. I use it every day, and now spend 60 minutes daily exercising. Nothing has helped me like this app: it is ultra-simplistic and the interface is truly intuitive.

Exercise is a crucial part of treatment strategy for LD/ADHD treatment. Doing this effectively is difficult, and I have found a perfect solution

Go to [Human.co](http://Human.co) and check out a game-changer in exercise for the iPhone. This app might just get your exercise plan to the next level. The initial goal is 30 minutes of movement. The sky is the limit from there.

### REFRESH

<http://Refresh.io>

Refresh is an interesting app that was designed for business interactions, but really the base of what it does is it identify who you are meeting with the new calendar and provides information aggregated from the Internet about the person you're meeting. I personally have great trouble with such a busy schedule; attempting to remember every single person I'm meeting. Doctors of all varieties, business contacts--basically everything that you need to know about this person. Whoever it is that you're meeting with in your calendar, this app will pool all the data from the Internet regarding this individual so you don't have to remember every single person that you're meeting and all the details about them.

### SYMPLE

This app is touted as the easiest way to monitor symptoms over longer periods of

time for analysis and better treatment. It is the Apple App Store Featured Medical App of 2015

The interface is very clean and quite nice to use. Symple allows you to quickly capture your symptoms in your OWN words, no multiple choice here!

You can track up to 10 symptoms at a time in seconds.

The functionality also includes recording medications, exercise and multiple other factors that influence your treatment success.

You can take pictures, view interactive graphs, and truly own your treatment.

One of the best features I found is the ability to send all of this to you and yours directly.

You can find it here: [SympleApp.com](http://SympleApp.com)

I want to be clear that assistive technology is not just merely iPhones and computer-based systems. A piece of paper and a pencil are just as much technology as a MacBook Pro, but you must find the systems that work for you. This is the most important thing when dealing with technology in general or as it relates to your ADHD or LD.

Please keep your eyes open and feel free to contact me with any question you might have. I will give you the best advice that I can regarding any of these apps. 

# Nurturing Advocacy in Our Youth: Thoughts for Parents and Helping Adults

By *Melissa Rowbotham*



## *“They need to learn how to advocate for themselves.”*

This is a phrase I hear often from parents and teachers in my work with LD kids at a children’s mental health centre in Toronto. Who could disagree with that statement? It is our ultimate goal that youth will be able to communicate their needs effectively. But what we miss is that the act of “self-advocacy” often relies on skills and abilities that are still developing in our youth and we often have higher expectations for our kids with LDs than we do for kids who don’t have learning challenges because there is a higher need for accommodation. Often, the skills needed to advocate actually highlight an area of weakness for a student with an LD. If they could clearly express themselves in a written or verbal fashion, there wouldn’t be a need to do it in the first place!

Research suggests that most students are not ready to independently advocate for themselves until late adolescence. It also shows that self-advocacy skills greatly contribute to successful outcomes in children with LDs and mental health issues. We need to support our kids and nurture their skills and abilities to help them succeed in an age-and-stage appropriate way, building on their strengths. Ultimately, parents, teachers and students all agree - this is an important life skill to learn so we will explore some necessary steps for success. How do we get there?

First I think it is helpful to actually define “advocacy” because there are many different interpretations and definitions. For this article, “advocacy” refers to “seeking active support for positive

change”; therefore, “self-advocacy” means that one is taking action on their own behalf.

It is clear that the task of self-advocacy requires many high order thinking and communication skills that may still be developing, making it a gradual process that needs active support, and access to information and skills from adults in the students’ world. It also requires realistic expectations of the student by everyone involved.

This kind of process will take ongoing conversations by the larger team including parents, teachers, and the student themselves. We often have important meetings about a student where we don’t include them and yet expect them to self-advocate in the chaotic moments of classroom life when emotions may be running high. Practice in safe settings like arranged meetings so that supportive relationships can be fostered with school staff. This kind of relational safety is what will eventually lead to increased confidence and ability to communicate needs effectively in the moment. Again, these are skills that develop over adolescence and shouldn’t be expected without support and scaffolding across environments.

Do you hear helicopter blades bearing down on us from overhead? Let me be clear: I am not talking about taking over for a child – quite the contrary - I’m suggesting breaking things down into manageable sections and adjusting levels of support as kids move forward with their confidence and level of skills development, not unlike an Individual Education Plan (IEP). Where to start?

# How to help the individual be ready for “self advocacy”

## 1. KNOWLEDGE OF SELF:

Do they have a clear understanding of their LD? Do they know what will help them? This stage may take time and support as self-acceptance is a process. Clear, direct conversations at an age-appropriate level can begin as soon as the diagnosis is given and can evolve with the child as they become mature and ready to share and integrate their own interpretations. Also, if adults helping the child can't answer the above questions, it may be a sign that additional information is needed – perhaps an updated assessment or additional exploration would be helpful.

## 2. KNOWLEDGE OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS:

Help them develop the skills to communicate their needs. Can they articulate things with you in a safe place during practice time? Can they start by saying a few words at a meeting with a parent/adult supporter with them before being expected to do it alone in the moment in front of their peers? Would they prefer to

write a letter explaining things instead of doing it verbally? Use their strengths here – whatever modality they are strongest with, including bringing examples of where things worked or didn't work. Do they know how to give positive feedback? (Kids sometimes unintentionally put adults on the defensive with their brutal honesty.) Teach phrases to use and ones to avoid (“you never help me!”) If they can't do this with a parent at home practicing, they may not be ready to do it on their own. Go with them to start. Call a meeting but let the student “chair” it.

## 3. KNOWLEDGE OF THE SYSTEM:

Do they know who to ask? When office hours are? A medium that the teacher prefers? Email for example? Right after class? Do they know the accommodations that are easier or more challenging for a teacher to provide? It is very difficult to know the system and you can see that this may take some ongoing communication and team building with those who are going to receive the requests so that everyone is ready and understands what the system requires for success.

## Tips:

Plan for specific situations. Practice at home including things like tone of voice, body language, and word choices. Write a script, letter or an email.

Identify supporters. Who is your child's “go-to” person who they feel most comfortable with, who may be able to smooth the way for the student to advocate for themselves.

Understand school policies and discuss realistic expectations for support that teachers can offer.

Have a plan for when things go wrong – Brainstorm about what to do/who to go to if things aren't working (supply teacher in an exam won't allow accommodations for example). Students are often very good at articulating where problems happen in their day – ask them to come up with barriers so you can work around them. What are the next steps?

Finally, understand when a situation is not appropriate for self-advocacy and adults need to become more involved. Intervene directly if a student complains of bullying, or is upset and says they tried and “it didn't work”. This can be demoralizing for a student and being told to “try again” is very hard to hear. Also, if the youth talks about feeling sad, depressed, overwhelmed, hopeless, angry or frustrated... these feelings may be signs that expectations are too high or even that mental health issues are present or brewing. Our kids need our help with feelings so listening and acknowledging them can go a long way to understanding and working together towards solutions.

Understand that no one person can do this alone: not our youth, not parents, not school staff. You can always bring on more team members including therapists, guidance counsellors, and peers to help. It is through ongoing relationships and discussions that

situations are understood, addressed and resolved. Remember that conflicts, mistakes, “failures”, can be an opportunity to come together and have a more in-depth conversation.

You can see that communication and cooperation are paramount to this kind supportive approach to developing self-advocacy skills. Know that your efforts are worth it as you work together towards the goal of youth effectively advocating for themselves. 🤖



# Living With Co-Existing Conditions:

## Thoughts on Living with Multiple Invisible Disabilities

*By Aaron Bailey*



*Living with one disability is difficult enough, but living with several is like living with a bunch of uninvited house guests you just wish would disappear. Here is one man's take on living with co-morbid conditions.*

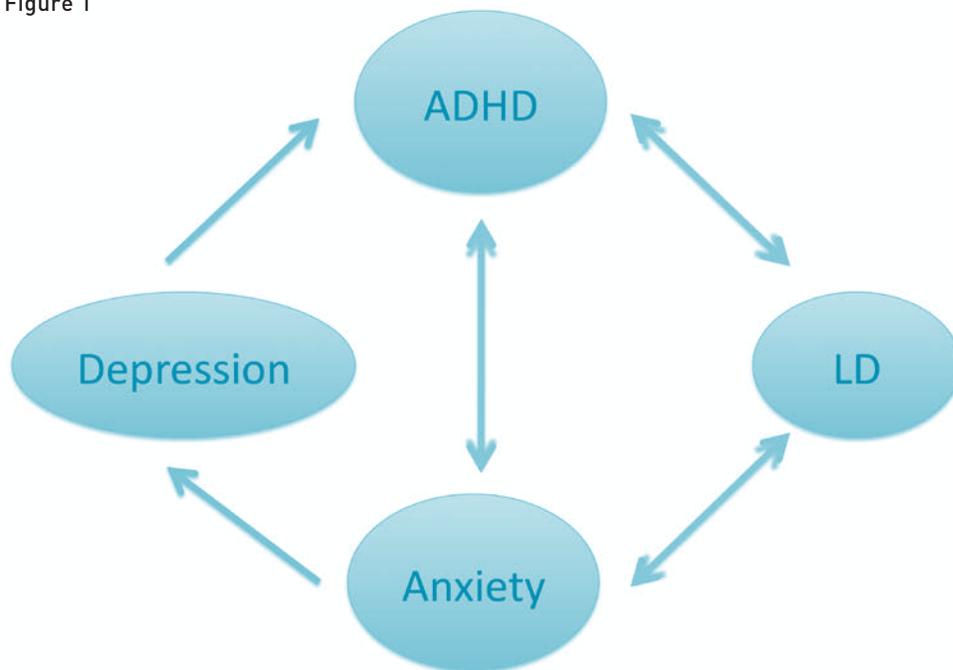
I have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder-Combination type (ADHD), a learning disability (LD), which creates difficulty with reading and writing among other things, and generalized anxiety disorder (GAD). I also suffer from depression. At times, life is hard, but I've learned a lot along the way and enjoy sharing what I've learned with others.

Concurrent or co-morbid disabilities can be defined as "the concurrent presence of two or more medically-diagnosed diseases [or disabilities] in the same individual" (Fried, L. 2004). People diagnosed with ADHD are at a high risk to have comorbid conditions like LD, anxiety, and depression. Because of variables in individuals and in diagnostic criteria, there is no concrete percentage of comorbid rates among people with ADHD. However, a recent literature review by DuPaul, G., Gormley, M., & Laracy, S. (2013) found the comorbidity between ADHD and a writing LD to be in the range of 59-to-65 percent; reading and writing LD to be in the range of 24-to-38 percent while nonverbal LD fell to about 13 percent. According to Shermon, J, & Laracy, S (2013) the comorbidity rate for persons with ADHD and depression is approximately 20-to-30 percent. Comorbidity rates between ADHD and anxiety is more than 25 percent. "Luckily for me" I have ADHD, an LD, Anxiety Disorder, and depression.

*"LD brings various different stresses into your life. When you add ADHD, anxiety, and depression into the mix, you get what I call the 'Circle of Depression'. This circle can happen in a matter of hours on any given day, or it can build over a period of weeks, or months."*

One of the major issues of comorbid disabilities is that it makes it difficult to detect other difficulties. For example, the focus may be on the person's anxiety and depression while the underlying difficulties of LD or ADHD can go unnoticed. It can go the opposite way as well with the focus on

Figure 1



ADHD, and LD, underlying the anxiety, and depression. As a person with comorbid disabilities I can say that it's difficult to articulate what you are feeling, as some of the signs and symptoms can be intertwined with other disabilities. You can see in **figure 1** that my comorbid disabilities are tangled together, making it difficult to pin point where the struggles are coming from.

I have been diagnosed with a math LD meaning that mathematics and I do not mix well. When it comes to math, I am in the first percentile, meaning, in a room of 100 people I would be the worst at that subject. Reading and writing are also extremely difficult for me. I often forget what I am reading, get lost in the page, read the same line repeatedly not understanding what I read, and do not comprehend the material. In writing, I struggle with spelling, continually get my "d" and "b" mixed up, cannot spell certain words to save my life such as "definitely" and "usually", and my grip on pens/pencils is so tight that my hand cramps up and I am unable to write more than a small paragraph.

As you can see, LD brings various different stresses into your life. When you add ADHD, anxiety, and depression into the mix, you get what I call the "Circle of Depression" (see **figure 1**). This circle can happen in a matter of hours on any given

day, or it can build over a period of weeks, or months.

For me, it starts with my ADHD. I get stressed out because I feel like I cannot concentrate and will never succeed in school or life. I then begin to think of my LD because I know I will never be as good as I want to be in math, reading, and writing. Before I know it I'm anxious, and when anxiety sets in my rational thought is gone, and my irrational thoughts take over. It's not long until I become depressed and that black cloud can hang around for a long time.

This cycle never ends. I have come to realize that this is my reality and this circle will be with me my whole life. Some individuals find it difficult to understand this cycle, as much of what happens is not technically "visible". These disabilities are considered "invisible disabilities". "Invisible" or "unseen" disabilities are defined as "disabling conditions that are not immediately apparent" (Waldman, H., Canella, D., & Perlman, S. 2009). When this circle of depression begins, most of the people around me have no idea what's happening; are unaware that this cycle can happen, or that it can happen so quickly.

Throughout the struggles with my disabilities I have learned countless

Continued on page 14. ➤

strategies that help. Some include fidget toys, to-do lists, reading aloud, affirmations, colour-coordinating my notes, and pacing back and forth. However, my top three strategies are: meditation, physical exercise, and music.

Meditating helps me greatly with my anxiety and ADHD. After meditating I find that the world around me moves slower, which, living with ADHD is rare to find, but when it happens it is a wonderful feeling. Meditating calms me down, helps me face my anxious thoughts, and lets me deal with my thoughts in a rational way.

I use physical exercise to help me with my depression, anxiety, and ADHD. After a workout the energy from my hyperactivity is still present, but I am able to harness that energy and use it in a productive way. Research has shown that “aerobic exercise can improve the symptoms of ADHD because of increased releases and adequate regulation of both dopamine and norepinephrine” Lenz, T. (2012). Lenz, T (2012) also found evidence that

there is a therapeutic effect that can last approximately 60- 90 minutes after exercising, which I personally can feel after working out. This also helps reduce my anxiety. Often I feel my anxious thoughts dissipate after working out; I’m able to push irrational thoughts out of my head.

The last and perhaps most powerful strategy that I use is music. Music is a strong therapeutic tool. If I am stressed, or overly anxious, I will sit down with my instruments (I play the guitar, harmonica, Cajón, and didgeridoo: I have ADHD what can I say?), and my stress and anxiety wash away. Music also helps with my ADHD; it is one of the only things that I can do for hours on end. I don’t struggle to pay attention while playing my instruments. It fills the void of the lack of stimulation that I experience throughout the day, and it makes me feel so good.

These are the strategies that, with trial-and-error, I found work best for me. Different strategies will help different people. It may be frustrating, but it is

important to know that you may have to try several until you find ones that work best for you.

I’m not perfect: sometimes I forget to meditate or I am too lazy to workout, or life gets in the way of my playing music. However, when I have a schedule and I make time for these strategies, *that* is when I feel my best.

As we can see, living with comorbid disabilities can be very difficult, however it’s important to remember that once we learn to work *with* our disabilities, instead of fight *against* them, that is when we begin to see positive change. When you begin to focus on your strengths, instead of your weaknesses, you can realize some benefits that come with your disability. It’s important to remember that every disability comes with a positive silver lining, sometimes we forget that, yes even I do as well, but if you stop, take a deep breath, realize you’re not alone, and focus on your strengths, you will start to see and believe... *that you can do this!* 🧠

# Super ADD Mom's Guide to Life: !?

## Four Tricks to Help Manage Your ADD Kids

*The popular blogger takes a moment to reflect on some of the tips and tricks that have helped her survive life with ADHD kids.*

*By Ril Giles*

If your kids are anything like mine, they *never* remember to do the things they're supposed to do, and I end up overworked and stressed out!

I can't tell you how much over the years I was the one in tears over the battles to get them to do their chores. I know it can feel hopeless, and I wanted to share my "secret" with you.

I tried chore charts, star charts with rewards of toys or extra computer time and nothing worked. I tried taking away computer time and video games- I even tried bribery with money!

The money worked for a little while, but honestly, we can't afford to pay the kids for things they should be doing anyway as a member of a household. No one pays me to cook dinner and do the laundry. So, why should I have to pay them to pick up after themselves, brush their teeth and clean the cat litter?

My kids are 14 and 10 now. About a year ago I found what worked! It has made the mood in our home so much nicer!





## 1. LET THEM COMPLAIN

If they are doing what they've been asked to do, and complaining the whole time under their breath... let them. Seriously! When I learned to turn off my ears to the complaining if I saw that they were actually doing what I asked them to do, it instantly lessened the stress in me!

Action is more important than words. So, let them whine while they get their laundry and clean the litter box. They're doing it! In time they will complain less. Just thank them when they come and tell you it is finished.

The positive "thank you" and lack of yelling will eventually sink in, and over time they will complain less and less.

## 2. DON'T ASSIGN THEM WEEKLY CHORES

Okay, I know you're now thinking, "What!? Is she for real?!" but hear me out.

Some LD kids have poor executive functioning skills, and struggle with doing things that require self-planning and follow through. They are not just being lazy and argumentative.

If I set up a dishes chore for my 14-year-old daughter three nights a week, we have fight-after-fight. But if I wash the

dishes and ask her to come dry them, she is good to go: not a single complaint.

We live in the country and have back yard chickens. If I ask her to go feed them, give them water and bring in the eggs, she would have an emotional meltdown. But, if I asked her to go check for eggs and *only* do that, she will do it happily. She loves the chickens, so she is happy to go do that.

When she comes back in with the eggs, I say "Thanks! Now here's a bucket, please go feed them.", and guess what!? She does it without a single complaint!

As she is on her way out the door, I remind her to bring me back the water dish for them.

Because she is already on her way, and not overwhelmed by that small add-on task... she brings it back in with no issue. Then, if I fill up the water dish and give it back to her... she will go back outside for the third time and give them the water.

It may seem like a lot of hands-on parenting, especially if they are older and "should be able to handle chores" but with LD kids, you need to guide them this way until they develop better executive functioning skills.

And, honestly, it takes a lot less time to do this with her and her to make the three trips, than it would for her to have a meltdown, go outside after I yelled at her

and then have to follow up anyway because she would only do one of the three things she was asked. No stress, no arguing, and it gets done faster! Works for me!

## 3. GIVE THEM LOTS OF POSITIVE FEEDBACK

This has been one of the four things that has created the most amazing change in the kids' behaviour.

With LD kids you *cannot* give too much praise. I know we live in a time where every kid is given ribbons for being the losing team and just for participating - but, with LD kids, giving them positive feedback when they do things they're supposed to, goes a long way to making them feel better about what they just did and it will help them get better at it. Even if they don't have the routine down yet or only have a "half success"

If I got in trouble every time I improperly did a chore, I certainly wouldn't learn to do that task better. I would resent that task and complain the whole time I was doing it! So, say thank you, even for them doing their homework.

Give them a high five when they make a valiant effort. Say things like "That's awesome!" or "You Rocked that!" Whatever your family's lingo is: praise praise praise.



My kids love fist bumps and saying "bata-lata-lata-la" like Baymax in *Big Hero 6* when I'm giving them praise. Try it for a few days and notice the difference.

## 4. GIVE THEM HUGS

*"Science says a 20-second hug releases hormones that make you feel loved and makes anxiety go away."*

This one may seem hard to do, especially if they are older now, or it's been stressful lately. It was the hardest for me!

But I did it anyway. I made a challenge for myself to hug my 14-year-old daughter at bedtime every night for a week and just see what happened.

I had heard about a study that said that 20-second hugs were proven to lower blood pressure, relieve stress and released oxytocin in the people who are hugging. Oxytocin is the hormone that is released

when a person feels loved, and it helps create and cement bonding between the hugger and the recipient.

My daughter had not given bedtime hugs for a few years when I decided to try this little experiment. One night as she was going up to bed, I said "I think you forgot something!"

I was standing in the kitchen and she was half-way up the stairs. She turned around and came back down sighing heavily. I think she thought I was going to tell her to do something like pick up her coat off the floor.

When she got to me I said, "You forgot your hug!" and I put my arms around her and hugged her. She didn't hug me back, but I held on anyway.

While I was hugging her I said, "science says a 20-second hug releases hormones that make you feel loved and makes anxiety go away".

We were at about 10 seconds. She giggled. Then I felt a little like she was expecting to pull away, so I squeezed her tighter and said light-heartedly: "No, 20 seconds...we gotta release the love!" She giggled again,

leaned into the hug and put her arms around me and we counted out another 10 seconds together. She went to bed smiling that night, and so did I.

I did that for seven nights in a row, and something really amazing happened! After the fourth night, she came to me for the hug!

It's been over a year and I hug my teenager and my 10-year-old son every night for 20 seconds before they go to bed, and it is such a nice way to end the day.

Now, they even hug each other more than any other set of siblings they know, and they are proud of it.

So, there they are: Four free things that I do with my kids that has made a huge impact on the peace in our home.

We are human and not perfect. I still get frustrated and lose my temper at times, but overall these things have changed how we interact with each other in a positive way so much. Even after an argument or a meltdown, we can turn to the 20-second hug and move forward rather than hold resentment and frustration. 🌀



# Parent Panel Helps Make LDAO Corporate Breakfast a Huge Success

The 2015 edition of LDAO's Corporate Breakfast was yet another smashing success this year, but also featured a slight twist.

Instead of the high profile speaker that usually graces the stage, this year's "big ticket" item was actually a panel composed of successful executives who all shared a common interest: They were parents of kids with LD.

Moderated by LDAO's very own Lawrence Barns, the panel consisted of Kevin McKenzie of Ernst & Young (EY); Carol Poulsen, of The Co-operators Insurance Company and Arlene Russell of Scotiabank, all of whom leant their keen insight into the challenges and success stories about raising their own offspring with learning challenges.

McKenzie summed things up nicely when he stated that when his child was unfortunately nicknamed after struggling to read in front of the class, the situation became a matter of "capability versus cope-ability." His son felt ashamed and anxious and the bullying didn't help.

All parents agreed that self-advocacy

begins at an early age and begins with self-knowledge. Indeed, when Arlene Russell's daughter was finally diagnosed in grade 5, the psychologist was asked if Russell's daughter should be told. "She's known about it longer than you have," was the reply.

In addition to talking about it early with your child, Poulsen also stated the benefits of building a supportive community around the family, very often learning in the process that others share the same concerns. Sometimes other discoveries are made as well: "My husband said he experienced similar challenges to our daughter and was assessed as an older adult."

Complementing the distinguished panel was the professional wisdom of long-time LDAO friend and psychologist Dr. Todd Cunningham from the University of Toronto, who warned that early intervention was essential.

"Kids with LD and ADHD are bullied much more than other kids, so learning how to develop reciprocal friendships is very

important" he said, further adding that "the teacher needs to develop a relationship with and support the LD student."

The cumulative effect of these stories created a very human and humane experience for the hundreds of people in attendance at The Royal York Hotel March 12.

LDAO is grateful to this year's co-chairs Jay Mandarino and Rob Richards as well as event sponsors Scotiabank, EY, Heathbridge Capital Management, CJ Graphics and The Co-operators and all the donors and sponsors (a full list of which can be seen on our donors page on page 25) who helped make this event a fantastic success.



**Jay Mandarino**  
CEO and President,  
C.J. Graphics Inc.

## Co-Chair of the Corporate Breakfast Committee, Rob Richards, to step down as Co-Chair of the annual LDAO Corporate Breakfast

After eight successful years as Co-Chair of the annual LDAO Corporate Breakfast Committee, Rob Richards is stepping down from the position following the 2015 event. He will be missed but has decided to take time and enjoy a more relaxed pace of life with wife Penny and do some travelling and enjoy their growing family of grandchildren.

Rob has been a great supporter of the LDA family in Toronto and at the provincial level for over 30 years. He and wife Penny were active in the Toronto Chapter for many years

and in 1990 Rob was invited to join the LDAO Board of Directors. He brought with him a great passion for the financial well-being of the organization and served as chair of the LDAO Fundraising Committee during his time on the board. By the time he retired as a Director in 1994 LDAO had been the recipient of funds raised by the Fundraising Committee through province-wide car raffles, numerous Toronto Theatre events, and conferences.

When approached by LDAO in late 2007 to Co-Chair the Corporate Breakfast Committee with Jay Mandarino, the dynamic auctioneer of our Live Auction event at the Breakfast, he readily agreed to the challenge of raising much needed funds and over these past eight years he and Jay have built a strong committee with a diverse corporate base and each year saw more

exciting auction items and rising revenues.

Rob is not going to be leaving the Committee entirely yet but in recognition of his leadership and dedication, he was presented with a token of our thanks for the many years of service to persons with learning disabilities through his local chapter and the provincial work.

We wish him well in future endeavours.



**Rob Richards**  
President,  
Heathbridge Capital  
Management

# LDAO BOARD MEMBER JAY MANDARINO RECEIVES ONTARIO MEDAL FOR GOOD CITIZENSHIP

Jay Mandarino, founder and president of the C.J. Group of Companies and the C.J. Skateboard Park and School, has been recognized for his exceptional long-term contributions to the community.

Mandarino is one of 13 distinguished citizens in the province to receive this year's Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship. The Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, presented the award at a ceremony held at the Ontario Legislative Building in Toronto on November 5, 2014.

"This year's recipients of the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship are truly representative of what can be achieved by taking initiative and aiming high," Dowdeswell said. "These remarkable citizens have positively affected the lives of many in their communities throughout this province. I am delighted to pay tribute to these outstanding Ontarians."

Along with founding the not-for-profit C.J. Skateboard Park and School, a

28,000 square-foot facility for at-risk youth, Mandarino sits on the board of the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario and has raised over 50 million dollars for a range of likeminded charities. His own history with dyslexia and ADHD drives him to give back to those in similar situations, and he has demonstrated a lifelong passion for helping others conquer their personal challenges.

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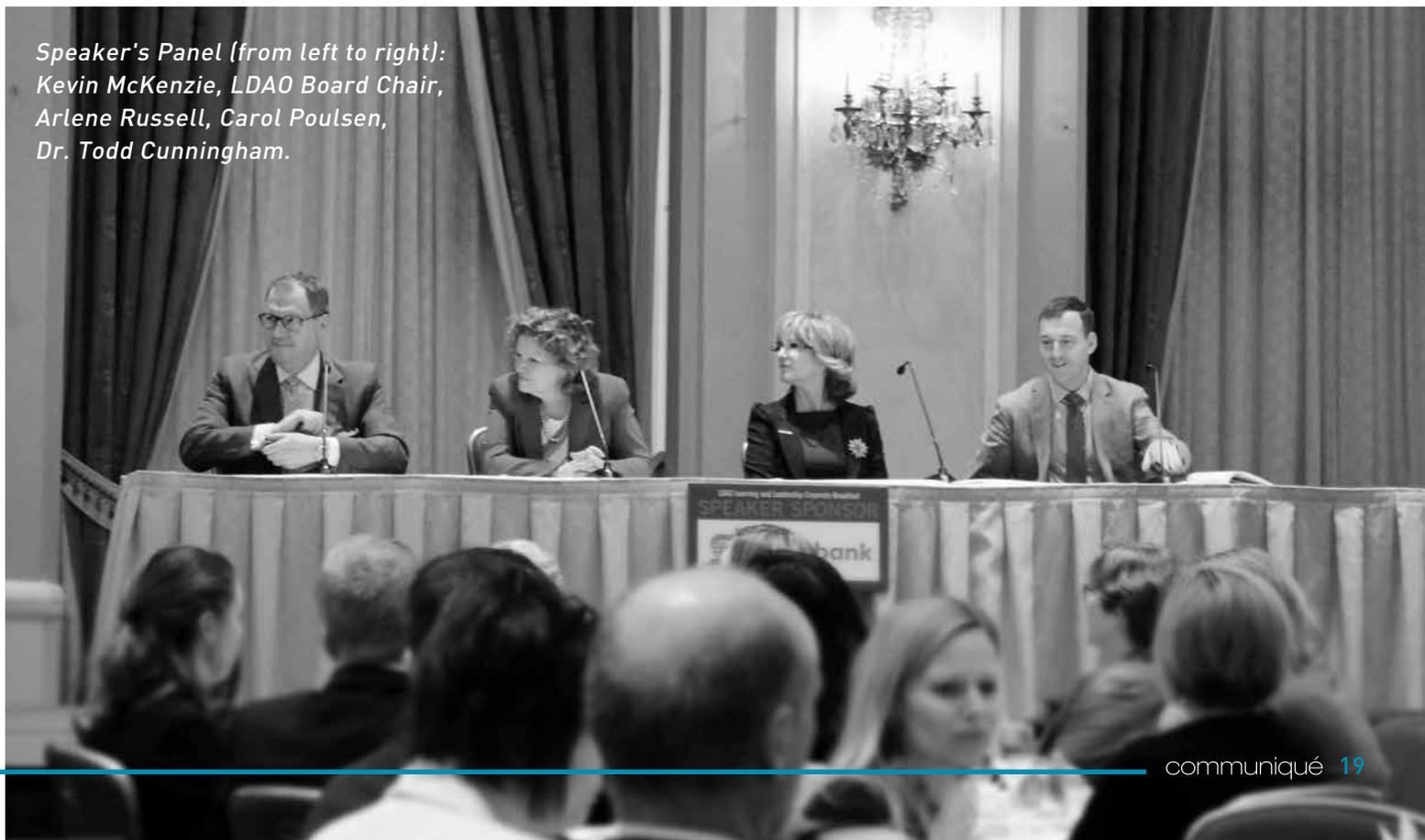
Scotiabank has been a strong supporter of LDAO for this annual event both in terms of sponsorship and in providing the greatest group of volunteers an organization can have for such an event. Ms. Hasold-Schilter is retiring after serving seven years on the board of LDAO and she brings her company's commitment to charitable support of a host of organizations to this event. Over 20 volunteers from Scotiabank worked tirelessly from one end of the room to



**Ms. Marianne Hasold-Schilter, Executive Vice President and Chief Administrative officer, International Banking, Scotiabank, brings greetings to the audience at the 2015 LDAO Corporate Learning and Leadership Corporate Breakfast.**

the other as they encouraged attendees to put in bids for a variety of items in our Roving Auction. These women and men have been taking on the cause of LDAO for many years and attendees look forward to having them come around and raise additional monies for the work of LDAO. Our thanks to Daly Marks of Scotiabank for organizing the volunteer pool every year.

**Speaker's Panel (from left to right): Kevin McKenzie, LDAO Board Chair, Arlene Russell, Carol Poulsen, Dr. Todd Cunningham.**





## If your students learn differently, can you teach differently?

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## Tuesday, August 25<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday, August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015

Hilton Mississauga/Meadowvale  
Mississauga, Ontario

This project is funded by the Ontario  
Ministry of Education.

Be inspired to make a positive change in your classroom, school, or school board!



### Conference Highlights

- August 25<sup>th</sup>: Opening keynote by Dr. Daniel Ansari, Canada Research Chair in Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience at Western University
- August 26<sup>th</sup>: Opening keynote by Dr. Jamie Metsala, Gail and Stephen Jarislowsky Chair in Learning Disabilities, Professor of Education, Mount Saint Vincent University
- Over 30 workshops in English and 15 workshops in French
- Topics include: Mental Health and LDs, Self-Advocacy, Assistive Technology, and more!

All Ontario educators and board staff who work to support students with LDs are encouraged to attend.

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- des vidéos
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## Le mardi 25 août et le mercredi 26 août 2015

Hilton Mississauga/Meadowvale  
Mississauga, Ontario

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### Éléments principaux du colloque :

- Le 25 août : discours d'ouverture par André Duguay, Directeur du Centre Jules-Léger à la retraite et expert au service de l'enfance à besoins particuliers
- Le 26 août : discours d'ouverture par Dre Nathalie Bélanger, Professeure et chaire de recherche sur la francophonie à l'Université d'Ottawa
- Plus de 15 ateliers en français et 30 ateliers en anglais
- Sujets d'ateliers : les technologies d'aide, les mathématiques, l'anxiété et plus encore!

Tous les professionnels de l'enseignement de l'Ontario et le personnel des conseils scolaires qui travaillent auprès des élèves ayant des TA sont bienvenus à cet événement.

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colloque2015](http://www.regonline.ca/colloque2015)

Les places sont limitées!



# Shelf Life

Books to enlighten and inspire and help you learn a little bit more about and embrace your LD/ADHD!

## SCRIBBLE AND GRIN: 53 RHYMES FOR INSPIRING TIMES

by Mary Giuffre & Paul L. Clark  
Published by inspirtainment ink, 2013

Skimming the Table of Contents and flipping through the pages of colourful and fun drawings and 'scribbles', I knew I was in for a treat.

Farts, poo, and toe jam are given rhyme time along with life's lessons on being kind to others and treating them well. Kids learn about feeling good about themselves and letting their own uniqueness shine through.

Engaging rhymes about what happens with bodies--hair that grows on chins or out of the noses of old people is treated with lovely humour for young children. Others tell about behaving well, but warn of behaving badly.

However, this collection is not made of morality tales. Rather, it's a delightful, funny and clever series of verses that touch on the silly (and some serious) stuff of life--who hasn't had a toothbrush fall into an open toilet, or gotten poo on their shoe? What about understanding the effect of name calling or bullying on others?

Parents and children of all ages will enjoy reading these rhymes together again and again. They explore and make gentle light of many of life's curious happenings and challenges within families and among friends, and others. Bringing up topics like secrets, bullying, name calling or just being afraid will give families the chance to talk about these issues that may be hard for children to put into words.

As someone who did not read any English nursery rhymes until later in life, I approached this new collection with anticipation.

I was not disappointed. I was charmed, and enjoyed every new verse and the accompanying illustration. It will be a joy to others as well.

Scribbles and Grin is accessible and copies are available in Braille. It would also be a great book for families with children with ADHD or a Learning Disability. The books are available with a free downloadable Teaching Guide for use by teachers in elementary schools or librarians with different age groups. The authors also suggest a number of age-appropriate activities to use with students.

-Taru Virkamaki



# Book Debunks Dyslexia Myths

## DYSLEXIA AND US

Collection

Published by Edinburgh City Libraries

What do HRH Princess Beatrice, businesswoman Michelle Mone OBE, Olympic rower Sir Steve Redgrave, Scotland rugby player Kenny Logan, 'Just a Minute' radio show host Nicholas Parsons, comedienne Elaine C. Smith, an 11-year-old boy, a 78-year-old retired construction worker, a job seeker, a parent, a prisoner and a vet have in common?

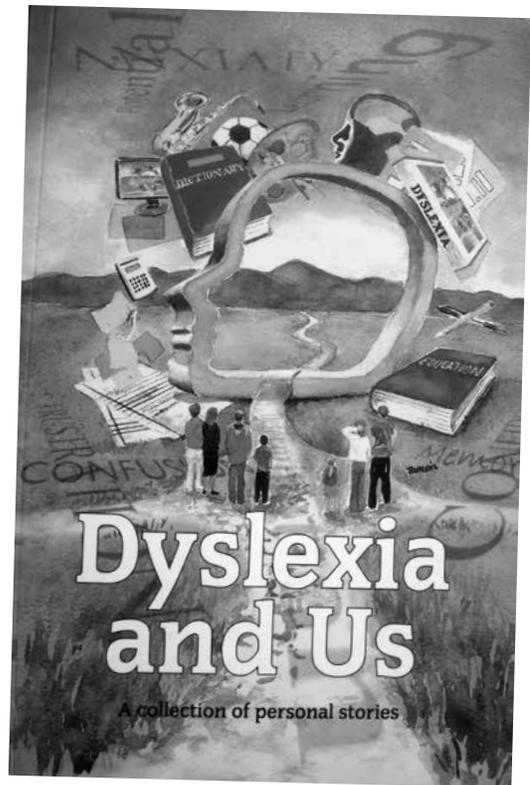
They are among the many people who have shared their personal stories about what dyslexia means to them for a bold and eye-opening new publication, *Dyslexia and Us*.

The new book, which was formally launched at Edinburgh's Central Library after being conceived and compiled by Dyslexia Scotland.

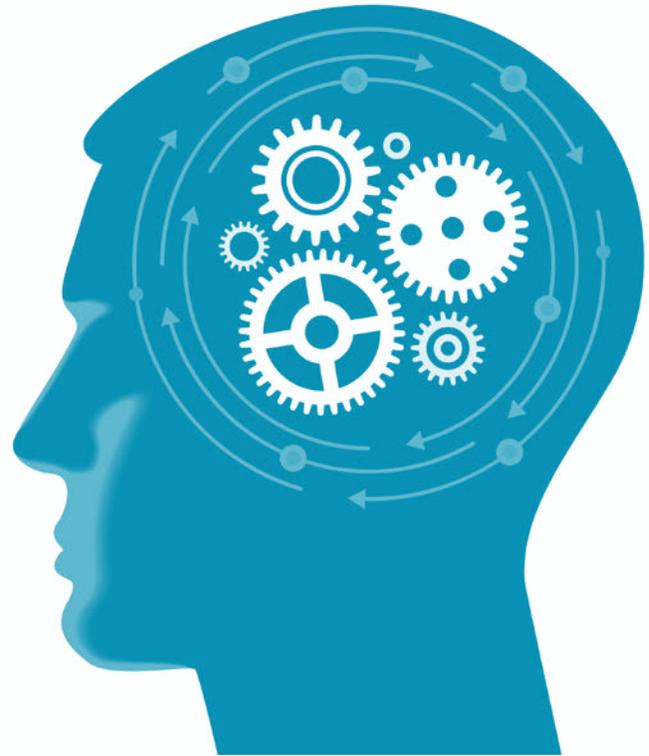
Not every contributor is dyslexic but they have all been sufficiently affected by dyslexia to write their story. Entries have been printed exactly as they were submitted, without spelling or punctuation corrected.

With a foreword by Formula 1 champion Sir Jackie Stewart OBE, this is a collection of over 100 moving, poignant, sad, shocking, funny, instructive and illuminating personal accounts.

The stories describe the powerful impact of dyslexia on individuals, families, relationships, professionals and support staff. They give a fascinating insight into how dyslexic people are treated in a wide range of different day to day settings, including job centres, adult literacy classes, education and workplaces.



# A Brain System that Appears To Compensate for Autism, OCD, and Dyslexia



Individuals with five neurodevelopmental disorders — autism spectrum disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, Tourette syndrome, dyslexia, and specific language impairment (SLI) — appear to compensate for dysfunction by relying on a single powerful and nimble system in the brain known as declarative memory.

This hypothesis being proposed by a Georgetown University Medical Center neuroscientist is based on decades of research. It is published online and will be in the April issue of *Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews*.

The proposed compensation allows individuals with autism to learn scripts for navigating social situations; helps people with obsessive-compulsive disorder or Tourette syndrome to control tics and compulsions; and provides strategies to overcome reading and language difficulties in those diagnosed with dyslexia, autism, or SLI, a developmental disorder of language.

“There are multiple learning and memory systems in the brain, but declarative memory is the superstar,” says Michael Ullman, PhD, professor of neuroscience at Georgetown and director of the Brain and Language Laboratory. He explains that declarative memory can learn

explicitly (consciously) as well as implicitly (non-consciously).

“It is extremely flexible, in that it can learn just about anything. Therefore it can learn all kinds of compensatory strategies, and can even take over for impaired systems,” says Ullman.

“Nevertheless, in most circumstances, declarative memory won’t do as good a job as these systems normally do, which is an important reason why individuals with the disorders generally still have noticeable problems despite the compensation,” he adds.

Knowing that individuals with these disorders can rely on declarative memory leads to insights on how to improve diagnosis and treatment of these conditions. It could improve treatment in two ways, Ullman says. First, designing treatments that rely on declarative memory, or that improve learning in this system, could enhance compensation. Conversely, treatments that are designed to avoid compensation by declarative memory may strengthen the dysfunctional systems.

Ullman says compensation by declarative memory may also help explain an

observation that has long puzzled scientists — the fact that boys are diagnosed with these disorders more frequently than girls. “Studies suggest that girls and women are better than boys and men, on average, in their use of declarative memory. Therefore females are likely to compensate more successfully than males, even to the point of compensating themselves out of diagnosis more often than males,” Ullman says.

Declarative memory may also compensate for dysfunctions in other disorders, he adds, including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and even adult-onset disorders such as aphasia or Parkinson’s disease.

The hypothesis may thus have powerful clinical and other implications for a wide variety of disorders, Ullman says.

Support for this research was provided by the National Institutes of Health (R01 HD049347), the Simons Foundation, and the Mabel H. Flory Trust.

Mariel Pullman, a former research assistant in Ullman’s lab and current medical student, is co-author.

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# In Person

## QUINN BRADLEE

by Carter Hammett

*The offspring of Washington royalty and literary lions Ben Bradlee and Sally Quinn, Quinn Bradlee offers hope and an online gathering place as the founder of LD social networking site Friends of Quinn.*



When friends like actress/View co-host Whoopi Goldberg and director Steven Spielberg drop by to chat, you know you're on to something.

Indeed, these are just some of the guests who rub shoulders with Quinn Bradlee, founder of the influential Friends of Quinn (FOQ) website, which has become something of a cultural touchstone among people, young and old in the LD community. Since its inception a few short years ago, FOQ has helped open up national dialogue among people living with learning differences, as Bradlee prefers to call LD, on topics like work, relationships and "fitting in."

Bradlee, 32, says the web site was originally conceived as a blog while he was working for a company called Health Central, but after that company folded the site was eventually taken over by the National Centre for Learning Disabilities. It's grown steadily ever since.

"One-eighth of Hollywood has dyslexia," he quips. "There's lots more than I thought!"

And while interviewees like Richard Branson and lawyer David Boice provide the star power, the site's real thrust is providing inspiration and dialogue, he says.

"When I think of a 'disability' I think of something that can't move," he says. "A vehicle can be disabled and won't move, for example. That's why I think of my situation as a learning difference. You learn differently, just at a different speed."

And Bradlee knows a thing or three about overcoming difficulties. Born with two holes in his heart that required invasive surgery when he was just three months old, Bradlee endured an apparently endless round of health challenges including seizures and migraines for most of his childhood. A diagnosis of velocardiofacial syndrome (VCFS) was finally made when Bradlee was 14. VCFS is little-known disorder affecting one-in-2000 people and manifests as a wide array of physical barriers and learning disabilities.

"VCFS is different for different people," says Bradlee. "In my case it's responsible for dyslexia and ADD. It's caused problems with reading comprehension and short term memory in general."

To compensate, he's developed routines to aid in memory, something he might have learned while attending the Gow School, a college prep school for students with LD. He also attended the Lab School in Washington DC and the New York Film Academy.

The production skills he learned at the latter were channeled into an HBO film, *I Can't Do This, But I Can Do That*, a documentary about LD. He also co-authored two books, including *A Life's Work: Fathers and Sons*, a joint venture with his father.

For the uninitiated, his father just happened to be Washington Post editor Ben Bradlee, who was instrumental in publishing the Watergate stories that ultimately led to US President Richard

Nixon's resignation. He passed away last year at 93. Bradlee pere's third wife is no literary slouch or stranger to controversy herself: mama Sarah Quinn is also a best-selling author and journalist. As if that weren't enough, Bradlee's great uncle Frank Cowinshield left his mark on café society as the editor of a couple of rags called respectively, *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair*.

With credentials like that, publishing is literally in his blood. "I am a journalist, but I don't think of myself as that," he demurs. "I just collect stories and put them on my site."

As for the pressures that exist with living up to the famous family he was born into, he says, "people like Kim Kardashian are famous for being famous. I've learned that fame is really just being the right person in the right place at the right time and that's what makes you famous."

Fresh off an award granted by Washington Life magazine as one of the most influential people under 40 in their recent "Power and Personality" issue, Bradlee maintains a level-headed composure as he describes his mission in life.

"One of the reasons I'm creating this site is so that people don't have to be clichéd about learning differences," he says. "I just want to show you'll have difficulties no matter your background, but you can still learn how to prosper." 

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