

TOUCH FOR HEALTH AND DYSLEXIA

Paul E. Dennison, Ph.D.

Dr. Dennison had spent many years in the study of Dyslexia with excellent success. When he took his Instructor Training Workshop in Pasadena in May of 1980, suddenly the Touch For Health muscle testing technique allowed Paul to "put it all together" and now his success is even greater. Paul's new book Switching On has just been released and promises to be a significant addition to the understanding and alleviation of dyslexic problems. Paul welcomes comments and may be reached at the: Valley Remedial Group, P.O. Box 5002, Glendale, Ca. 91201 (213) 784 - 7044.

Dyslexia is a fascinating subject, because so little is actually known about this mysterious affliction which involves an estimated 25 million Americans. Literally dyslexia means "unable to read," and the term identifies a learning disability often experienced as "word-blindness." Certain behaviors are shared in common by most dyslexics, including an inability to remember how to spell, reversals in reading, such as "was" for "saw", and letter transpositions within words, such as "bluk" for "bulk". Dyslexia may refer to the non-reader who never completed school, or the slow reading adult who must struggle to keep up with his peers. Dyslexia is not determined by intelligence and aptitude, and millions fail to achieve their professional and creative potential because they are struggling with the developmental task of learning the communication skills. All who experience difficulty and frustration with near point, multi-sensory tasks such as reading, writing, spelling, or drawing share in the plight of the dyslexic.

I have worked with dyslexic children and adults in a clinical setting for over ten years. I have studied the subject from every point of view, including special education, optometry, psychology, and medicine. I am now, through Applied Kinesiology and right-brain/left-brain research, able to integrate these studies into a comprehensive understanding of the reading process which I call Edu Kinesthetics, or E-K. It is now possible to describe dyslexia in terms of balance instead of disease. Patterns of imbalance can be easily recognized, and the dyslexia can be corrected. Dyslexia need never destroy another life again.

In order to understand the process of reading, and how this process breaks down for the dyslexic, one needs to become familiar with the left brain and the right brain. These two brains are known as hemispheres; the left hemisphere mainly in charge of the right side of the body, and the right hemisphere mainly in charge of the left. They are interconnected by the corpus callosum, a bundle of nerve fibers. A complex system of switches is developed in infancy to synchronize and integrate information so that the two brains work together in harmony and coordination. Hemispheres can take over for each other, and one may operate its own side for a given task. In general, the more complex the task, the more both sides of the brain need to be involved in the operation.

The two halves of the brain, in addition to their separate responsibilities for switching on and off the physical body, have separate functions regarding consciousness and thought processes. A duality seems intrinsic in the Universe, be it Day and Night, Yin and Yang, Mind and Intuition, Logic and Art, or Left and Right. It appears that the brain, too, is so divided. The left hemisphere is predominantly involved in analytical thinking, especially language and logic. It gets switched on whenever we need to process computerlike information that has structure and sequence. The right hemisphere, in contrast, is responsible for our visual memory, orientation in space, artistic ability, body awareness, and recognition of faces. It gets switched on when we need to process information as a whole, simultaneously, rather than in linear fashion.

It is becoming increasingly more popular to talk about Right and Left Brain. We read about research studies and hear enlightened discussions. Everyone seems familiar with the concept that there is a difference between the two hemispheres of the brain. Most of us, even those of us in the field, have not thought much beyond this point. All this confusion about separating right and left! What practical use can be of it after we get it straight?

After fifteen years of research and experimentation with reading students, E-K now provides a method for understanding what is going on in the brain which the layperson and professional can use for practical purposes to help people. We are excited about this, because it works and makes sense, explaining much that has been elusive over the years. We do not suggest that we have all the answers, but our concept of the brain is so useful, manageable, and predictable, that we feel we are "three giant steps" ahead of ourselves, and the results we are getting, with both normal and retarded children is incredible.

The story of one of my students will illustrate what we are doing. I asked one of my students, named Jimmy (about ten years old at the time), to draw a series of loops across the width of a four foot chalkboard, while standing at the center. He was to use his right hand only, reaching as far as he could in each direction.

Jimmy understood the directions and copied the loops perfectly, until he reached the right-hand side of the board. There he changed the direction of the loops, apparently unaware of the mistake that he was making. He neither could see, nor feel, that he was going in the opposite direction from the beginning loops. Considerable stress was observed when he got to the midpoint, but he seemed unable to help himself from doing what he did. The following illustration shows the correct loops on top, and a representation of Jimmy's loops on the bottom. This behavior, as performed by Jimmy, is the story of dyslexia.



This is how Edu-Kinesthetics enables us to understand and work with Jimmy:

1. Jimmy is left eye dominant and Right Brain dominant. This is determined by muscle testing. When he points his eyes to the left, he is strong. When he points his eyes to the right, he weakens. When he listens with his left ear (connected to the Right Brain also), he is strong. When listening with the right ear, he is weak.
2. When he commences to draw the pattern, his Right Brain is on and strong, as he functions well with the left eye in the left visual field. His Right Brain is in charge and he is happy and aware of his body.
3. When he reaches the midpoint or midline of his body, where synchronization and binocular focusing of the two eyes is essential, there is conflict as the two brains have not learned to work together in the right field. The Left Brain should take over, translating the outside-in movement going toward the midline into an inside-out movement going away from the midline intellectually, while the Right Brain provides visual feedback, keeping Jimmy aware of the whole while he concentrates on the part.

4. Instead, Jimmy tries too hard. He switches off (confirmed by muscle testing) the Right Brain, his strong dominant mode, in order to zero in and concentrate upon using the Left Brain. His Right Brain actually goes into an Alpha brain wave, meditational state, as he deals with the stress of crossing the midline and using the right eye and working in the right visual field. An EEG would show a pattern similar to a person with a blind left eye.
5. Instead of seeing and drawing the pattern the way the Right Brain would see it from the left eye, he gets back the reciprocal image indirectly via the Corpus Callosum, and lacks feedback-feedforward to correct it himself. The image on the retina is upside-down. Unaccustomed to using the Left Brain, right eye alone, he is confused by this. It is our experience moving in space, a Right Brain skill, which teaches us to perceive what we see.

The explanation of Jimmy's experience acquaints us with the concepts crucial to understanding and working with the two Hemispheres of the brain.

1. There are two separate brains, Right and Left, involved in our perception of reality.
2. The two brains are either working together, or they are in conflict. Conflict may lead to inefficient information processing and switching off.
3. The two brains perceive information in totally and completely different manners. We must understand the consciousness of each to learn effectively.
4. Awareness of the total visual field, and ability to work on each side of, and across the midline, is fundamental.
5. Concentration must be stress free, so that we do not switch off one side of the brain. We must always be aware that the "whole is more important than the sum of it's parts".
6. The Right Brain is vital to our performance.