

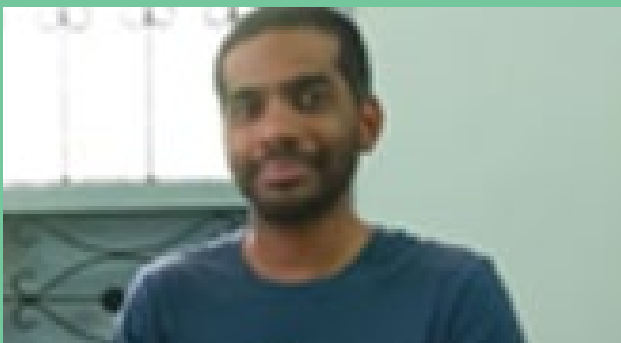
NEWSLETTER

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Veeru Murugappan - How I Navigated Dyslexia



Editorial

Specific Learning Difficulties (SLDs), the commonest of which are dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia and dysgraphia, affect about one in six children. From the moment SLD is diagnosed, a new dimension is added to the family dynamics, one that is not going to go away or become better with time. Apart from the academic issues, there are emotional and financial aspects which involve every member of the family. Parents, siblings and extended family have to re-organise their lives to a great extent. This can call for life-altering adjustments from everyone.

The primary care giver - usually the mother - is looking at an uncertain future, dominated by anxiety, guilt and fatigue. It is also the mother who first suspects that there is a learning difficulty but may be unable to acknowledge or process the idea, an attitude shared by the whole family. Siblings may have to do with less attention to their needs, leaving them feeling resentful and angry, at times even jealous.

However, as the articles in this issue of the MDA Newsletter show, help for acceptance is available as are different strategies to diagnose and aid the best possible outcomes to use the child's signature strengths and help them lead a happy and productive life, as it is their right to do.

The Editors

Specific Learning Disability and Family Dynamics



Dhanalakshmi Ayer
Member, Editorial Team,
MDA Newsletter

When a family has a child with Specific Learning Disability (SLD) where the basic processes of learning manifests as imperfections in the ability to speak, read, write or calculate, the challenge of child rearing is compounded many times over. To raise a child with SLD involves recognition, identification, acceptance and remediation. Each of these affects the emotional and mental well-being of the parents and the family. Remediation involves therapies, special education, adaptation in terms of facilitation, coping strategies and abundant parental care, attention, involvement and commitment. Experience shows that the right remediation goes a long way in converting the disability into an opportunity for these children to become confident capable adults who can face and live in this world on their own terms successfully.

Parental Acceptance

Savitha feels, "Parents need to identify, understand and support the child to help them realise their potential. Children often have several talents that may go unnoticed purely because they lag at academics." Ranjana says, "Parents are the first advocates for the child and need to do all that they can to create a path for their child's progress."

Niloufer and Preeti opine, "Parental acceptance is paramount, acceptance helps understand why the child is struggling academically, emotionally and socially." Sandeep, Swati, Rajesh attest, "Trust and faith in the child are most important. Unconditional love, assurance to the child that the parents are with you is the message that needs to be driven home to help the child face and cope with the world."

Kumar and Abbas add, "SLD affects all areas of a child's development, not just academics alone. Remediation that follows acceptance helps in a structured approach to the issue." Roshan and Thomas say, "As children with SLD may seem to be difficult, lazy or stubborn, many parents may deal harshly with them that causes further damage to their development and hampers remediation. This results in bad behaviour, distress, depression, psychological issues and growing up to be a dysfunctional adult."

Remedial help and Family Dynamics

Swati and Abbas say, "Even when the child is given help, it is a problematic. The entire matrix affects the family in terms of interpersonal relationships, understanding, managing social and societal perceptions, finances. Families may get split, couples estranged. All of this impacts the child as guilt, neglect, isolation, withdrawal which compounds the SLD issue."

Ranjana adds, "Parents face significant emotional turmoil and pressure from the school. If parents undergo remedial training, work together with the child, despite this being pressurising for the parent, it builds confidence in the child. Moreover, if the child has a high IQ and is neglected, they could land up in the wrong company and undesirable activities."

At the same time, Preeti's, Sandeep's, Roshan's experience has been, "When our children received special education and occupational therapy sessions, it made all the difference. The child enjoys going to school and made progress with fine and gross motor skills. They are motivated to help themselves, see small successes, which in turn helps their coping mechanism, all having a positive impact on the family dynamics." Savita and Kumar feel "Remedial help boosts the child's confidence and self-esteem."

The family, even if it is only the parents, need to rework their priorities, routines, logistics, finances, and lives to facilitate, accommodate and adjust to the remedial patterns." "Once remediation begins", Niloufer, Sandeep, Abbas add, "there is hope, a sense of relief that the child is in expert hands. Parents can focus more on building the child's social skills, emotional self-esteem and regulation, organisation and planning, cultivate discipline, hobbies all of which will stand by their stead later on in life."

Nandita pipes in to say, "After getting help, the family may be more understanding. However, it is generally one parent who is stressed out in the process of taking care of the routine, strenuous day to day remedial regimen. Any break in the chain of activities may affect the progress and may actually lead to reversals in certain cases. Family outings, attending functions, social activities all get affected, which causes strain and strife in the family. It is important for both parents to not just accept the SLD in the child but also be involved in the upbringing and remediation."

Stress and Pressure the Family Faces

Roshan says, "Pressure arises mostly from society's expectations and judgements. The major obstacle is navigating the school system that is largely under-prepared to be inclusive." Joseph adds, "Unfortunately there is constant stress from all fronts - from the situation, family, neighbours, social and societal pressures, in having to live a 'normal' life even while nothing was normal and finances. Getting the right diagnosis, proper assessments, correct remedial measures, facilitators, congenial school atmosphere, adds to the stress quotient. Anxiety and the constant uncertainty compound the stress."

"Despite all the success stories around, until our child crosses the threshold that uncertainty is a reality," Kapil says, "Parents also have to contend with the behavioural problems of and demands the schools make on the child. Lack of confidence impedes interactions leading to resentment and anger. The uncharitable approach of outsiders also can be upsetting."

Pankaj experienced a sense of shock and failure in the beginning. "We find that all our dreams for our child collapsing especially when we didn't know

what is wrong. It does lead to depression, anxiety, withdrawal and denial in the parent that gets transmitted to the child."

In addition to these issues, Niloufer and Pankaj believe, "There is the persistent stress of doubts about the right kind of interventions, personnel involved, second opinion. And of, when will my child get better, be accepted and 'successful'?" Ranjana adds, "We also face the pressure of relatives and extended family, on the academic progress of the child, while being aware of the child having SLD."

Conflict with other members of the family

Swati and Preeti tend not be assertive with their children because they are aware of the inherent challenges. But the spouses, with good intentions continue to set higher goals. Sometimes the differing approaches could lead to conflicts. Pankaj says, "We did face criticism from the families on both sides, silent and verbal, benign and hurtful, snide remarks and obvious exclusion."

Ranjana and Thomas feel, "Some relatives do not understand what sort of difficulty the child is undergoing and simply label them as mental issues." For Ranjana, initially, her husband and the extended family were in denial. They simply could not comprehend that something like this is a real problem and not an excuse for not conforming to norms. "They feel we are putting fancy names for age-old problems and blowing things out of proportion."

Conflict between spouses and interference from other family members

Swati, Savita, Abbas, and Kumar say, "We knew what the problem was and were lucky to ultimately get the right advice. After a few initial hiccups and blind ends, it was a matter of negotiating the right path. Luckily both the parents were on the same page, in terms of what needs to be done and how. We worked out on the strategy of the father bringing in the money and the mother doing the slog work of all that remediation entails, therapies, school - facilitators' interface, co-curricular activities and everything else. Preeti, Sandeep, Roshan got "A lot of interference in the name of good faith but we did not get swayed by it, even as we were facing confusion and stress as parents."

Ranjana, Pankaj, Niloufer and Joseph were fortunate to have very open and understanding families on both sides, with no interference from them. With Savita's husband working in another country, "Sometimes I feel the complete responsibility of bringing up the child is overwhelming, triggering conflict between us spouses."

For Thomas and Preeti, "There was no interference from other members of the family, but there were differences between the parents in dealing with the child. While one parent wanted to go by the book, what the special educators and occupational therapists instructed, the other wanted to have a more laid back approach, concentrating on what the child wanted to do, what excited and interested them and wait for results. One took the anxiety of therapies, co-curricular activities, school, studies, class tests, pressure from teachers while the other did not approve any of this. This ended in emotional outbursts leading to a deep chasm in the families and almost led to break of marriages."

Children with SLD being bullied in School

Swati, Rajesh, Roshan, Thomas said, "Our children were bullied by many teachers while the principal and others were very supportive. Peers too were rather unkind and uncharitable in many ways. Memories of school for them are mostly of denial, exclusion, hurt." Savita, Abbas, Kumar had schools that were accommodating whereas in schools that Thomas, Preeti, Pankaj and Niloufer sent their children to, "had good bondage with the peers, the teachers were biased." Ranjana's and Joseph's children were not bullied, but came under peer pressure. Ranjana's child was possessive of a friend leading to bullying by her own child with SLD!

Teachers' treatment of the child with SLD in comparison to the child without SLD in the same school

Many families sent their children to different schools. Where they did not, Joseph thinks, "Teachers find students with SLD a big headache to handle as they don't fully understand the neurological issues this predicament involves. This is not something that goes away by the end of the academic year or through relentless tutoring. If the school does not have a remedial set-up, it is still worse. The parents

are called in and requested to pull the child out, as the school is not equipped to handle the child." Even where both kids went to different levels and they did not have common teachers or supervisors, Roshan felt, "the school did treat them both very differently."

On the Siblings, Parents viewpoint

Though Pankaj's and Niloufer's are single child families, the child's rapport with their cousins, many of them around the same age as them, has been on balance, then and now. "Then, it was a case of they being patronised at and now it is a case of others being in awe of their academic and professional achievements." Abbas, Kumar, Ranjana feel, "As long as the parents treat them all equally, irrespective of the SLD or gender, the bonds between the siblings will grow and remain strong." Nandita and Swati say, "Conflict between siblings is quite natural and normal." Whereas Savita says, "There are no conflicts at all between the siblings and they are supportive to each other, stand up for each other in social situations especially in the absence of the parents."

Thomas and Preeti opine, "There will always be sibling rivalry among children, having to share what they love most - parents." Ranjana's experience is, "The elder sibling is very loving, caring, supportive and accommodative to the younger (SLD), very mature in understanding the difficulties." Nandita feels, "Their interaction was mostly adversarial and combative on part of the sibling with SLD and non-interactive from the other."

Roshan says, "Overwhelmed by the pressure of SLD, most attention was channelled on to the younger child, we felt we were losing our elder child, who understood the situation and never made demands. Guilt of neglect made us send the older child to a boarding school, against our earlier persuasion, giving some peace and respite to all of us. On the flip side, the younger one got used to undivided attention; there would be clear expressions of jealousy and dislike whenever the older sibling was home. Though there was no comparison even unintentionally, the non-SLD child earned laurels all the time, leading to self-comparison at times, resulting in frustration and negative behaviour in the SLD sibling. Though there is not much cooperation or bonding between the two, they are proud of the other's achievements."

While, every parent felt there was no conscious favouritism, the family time, attention and funds do get deflected towards the needs of the child with SLD, the needs of the other was never compromised. Swati, Savita, Abbas, Kumar state, "There are uncharitable comparisons by others in many said and unsaid ways."

On siblings, favouritism, appreciation, help, in school, vis-a-vis the family –From the point-of view of children with SLD

Trayi and Violet, felt that at times the parents have given more importance to the siblings than themselves. Mannat, Jishnu and Vignesh say, "We have always had an equal treatment." Sapna and Himmat thought, "Favouritism tilted towards us." Naman and Ayesha were "Happy for the siblings and encouraged them when they did well, but have also felt jealous and envious."

While some of them were helped by their siblings regularly, some were not, others occasionally.

Going to the same school led to both bonding and competition in terms of study and sports in the case of Mannat, but Violet, Trayi, Sapna tended to avoid their siblings in school. The sibling relations in school in most cases reflected their equations at home.

Inevitable, hurting and painful comparisons proved a boon for Jishnu and Vignesh, who learnt from them. Mannat, Trayi and Himmat felt, "They were never underestimated by their parents on the basis of the comparisons that the family made, in any way." Sapna and Violet were in turn "Lucky to have a very understanding and supportive extended family."

All in all, the impact on and the family dynamics of children with SLD is a mixed bag that needs to be negotiated with care.

[All names have been changed to protect the identities of the persons concerned.]

Addictions are Treatable and Preventable



Dr Ravi Samuel Ph.D.
Cognitive Behaviour Therapist

Doctor, what is addiction?

Addiction is the uncontrollable use of 'substances' like tobacco, cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana, LSD, Ecstasy etc., 'objects' like mobile phones, television or iPad for using the internet or 'activities' like gaming, chatting, etc., despite knowing all the harmful effects of such usage. When people use it, it has a severe physiological or psychological reaction in the body and mind. Physiologically they can have symptoms like sweating, tremors, loss of appetite, palpitation, nausea etc. and psychologically, they can be very irritable, angry, excited, and explosive for minor reasons, use excessive force to obtain the desired object.

How will addiction affect the person and the family, doctor?

Addiction will lead to a slow decline in their education, vocational activities, family and personal functioning, including personal hygiene. It is at this point that it becomes a significant problem to the family. For every activity, a person fails to do something someone else has to do it in addition to

their activities. So, this increases the workload on the carer directly. Addictive behaviour will involve a cost in buying that which they are addicted to. Inability to access them makes them get very aggressive and even indulge in an assault.

Addiction can cause enormous psychological distress among the family members. This can burden the primary carer with increased work and supervision to make the person do minimal self-care, eating, and maintaining hygiene.

Addictive behaviour will increase social isolation; they will instead prefer to be alone and avoid all socialisation to engage with themselves and their obsession. When addictive behaviour is akin to 'self-stimulation or masturbation,' they can choose lonely corners of the house like a terrace where people will visit only occasionally.

Specifically, why children with SLD are at risk? The difficulties of disabilities are felt more during childhood. The parents can expect the child to do things that are not easy for them: writing, spelling, calculating, socialisation etc. These have a profound impact on the child. To add insult to injury, the adverse social reactions and rejections get registered in their minds. These experiences make them more vulnerable to such addictive behaviour as they do not have intimate friends to discourage them from such behaviour. Friendships approve and disapprove of much behaviour in a child's life, which enables the child to learn and do the necessary correction according to socially acceptable behaviour. Thus, the risk of children with SLD getting into the addiction trap is much higher than children who don't have SLD.

What can I do to prevent my child from getting into addictive behaviour?

We can prevent addictive behaviour in a child if we start being mindful about it from the point at which the child begins experiencing symptoms of SLD. Acceptance by all the family members is critical. They all have to have one opinion about the problem. While choosing solutions, various options may surface: some may feel meditation will solve all the issues, some may feel motivating the child to perform will enable the child to overcome the problem, some may believe in religious healing. All these again can cause enormous guilt and shame in a child.

Considering that they are 'normal' can cause a lot of psychological pressure on a child to be normal, which their brain may not be able to.

The inner psyche of the child will mirror the apprehensions, disappointments and misgivings of the parents about the child. Parents can give those impressions in their speech, action and efforts. The child will instinctively know that they are being seen as a 'problem' to solve. This can alienate the child from others and make them start leading a very lonely life. Usually, the lives of children are very competitive, based purely on performance. The ones who perform well will be taking over the leadership positions, the ones who are not performing will be considered a 'standby' in games. The inability and disability will be openly commented upon, if not ridiculed. The matters get much worse if parents try to control other children's behaviour.

Many of the problems children face are created by the family and immediate circle, and then when the child grows into an adult, the family suffers. Addiction can start in childhood or teenage itself. Once they get into addictive behaviour, they also get very rebellious and defiant. Their financial demands may be far beyond what the family can afford, and this can cause enormous friction.

How do we prevent adverse psychological impact on a child, Doctor?

So, instead of creating the problem and trying to solve its after-effects, we need to be careful from the beginning of the child's development. Enabling a child to accept their inabilities and creating an environment in which they can function based on their abilities, appreciations, and encouragement will make their formative ages very conducive to a healthier personality.

1. Accept the child's difficulties instead of disputing with the child.
2. Attend remedial classes regularly – do not think of it as a wasteful expenditure.
3. Encourage the child on areas they can do very well. Keep your focus on those activities.
4. Based on the expert's opinion, parents should develop a uniform approach towards the problems.

5. If addiction is suspected, seek professional help immediately – do not try to solve it yourself!
 6. A person can overcome addiction with professional help – so do not lose hope.
 7. Addiction is an illness of the mind; we cannot overcome it with anger and advice. It may require medication, counselling and rehabilitation.
 8. Do not blame each other for addictive behaviour. 'Blaming' does not help, but 'co-operation' does enormously.
 9. Do not catastrophise addiction in your family; your emotional reactions can make it worse.
 10. Do not go shopping for solutions – commit yourself to one line of treatment. Some addictions like pornography or alcohol can be seen as more shameful but remember that is only a reflection of our attitude towards 'pornography and alcohol'.
 11. Once the teen or adult has overcome the addiction, preventive steps have to be taken with utmost care to prevent relapse.
- Addiction in individuals with SLD is treatable and preventable. It's better to be cautious than repentant.

Addictions are Treatable and Preventable



One of the best things to have happened in our family's journey in helping my daughter "find" herself and navigate the everyday pitfalls of learning, is technology. As a family, we took to it like a duck takes to water.

We introduced her to technology when my daughter was in class 6. She is now in class 12. She couldn't read or write until she was 13-years-old. Until class 5, I would read stories to her every day at bedtime in English, and tell her stories in Telugu.

We realised that eventually our daughter had to read independently. She used a scribe when she had to write the class 10 board exams. To prepare for this, and for reading as a life-skill, what I did was to give her a Smartphone, and taught her how to use it judiciously. She could use the phone during a designated study time and for catching up with her friends

at a particular time in the evening. All other times were dedicated to play and helping with chores at home. This routine was sacrosanct.

The following apps have helped her a lot and some of them continue to do so:

1. Google Assistant and Siri – the voice to text feature helps you navigate the internet and get all information you need.
2. <https://www.typingclub.com/> - free online typing app
3. <https://www.bookshare.org/cms/bookshare-india>
4. <https://www.mdachennai.com/about-mda/mda-avaz-reader> - MDA-Avaz Reader app was especially useful when my daughter was in the lower classes. The app, among other features, has a wonderful feature where you can scan the page you want to read which the app will read aloud. It was very useful to study class notes before exams!

5. <https://www.audible.in/> - Audible is a recent addition. My daughter listens to novels and short stories. This is a paid app.
6. <https://www.grammarly.com/> - Free writing assistant. Excellent for any kind of writing.

Why introduce technology?

When a child faces an uphill struggle to read and write with school work every moment of their lives, they hate to learn and avoid it studiously. When the goal of education is knowledge, why should a child waste their energy in a daily struggle to overcome reading and writing? When they get assistance

with technology in areas where they're struggling, acquisition of knowledge becomes easier. When there is help in their areas of weakness, the energy is spent in understanding the subjects in school and doing well in academics, instead of struggling with reading and writing. When all the education boards in India are now bound to provide concessions according to the guidelines set in the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016, as parents, we have a moral obligation to make our children's journey to become independent adults, who contribute to the society they live in, as "assistive" as possible.

Children with Specific Learning Disability who are Successful



Web/Mobile App Developer and Animal Rights Activist

Passionate, articulate and focussed, Antony Rubin is a man on many missions!

His story reads like a fairy tale. He was born in the late 80's, and when he reached Class 3, teachers and parents realised he was falling behind. In the early 1990's awareness of dyslexia was in its infancy – nearly non-existent. The next four years seem to have been a confused string of visits to various experts – including hypnotists and psychiatrists. He was classified as mentally unstable or possessed by a spirit! At one point, he was diagnosed an epileptic, and was even treated for it for some time (the drugs have left a slight after effect, even now). In those four years, he moved through five schools, including one at a hostel in Yelagiri.



Fortunately, a relative from Spastics Society of India had been urging Antony's parents to have him evaluated for dyslexia.

Going to 'Alpha to Omega Learning Centre' was the most significant turning point in his life. Beginning from evaluation, and being admitted into their full-time school from Class 8 put him on the right track. He feels that more than the academics, he benefited from the other developmental activities like yoga, pranayama, karate, tai-chi, etc. He says the emphasis

on empathy and being taught three different prayers to recite every day added value.

Antony completed the class 12 exam in the NOS stream (now NIOS) and did a BA in Sociology at Loyola College. At this time, he became interested in civic issues and animal activism in particular. He has a hoard of stories about rescues and relocations – getting animals back to their habitat or making sure that their existing conditions were favourable to them. In the course of his work he has interacted closely with government departments and police personnel, so much so that the police force in Chennai is waiting with open arms to accept him into their ranks. He has filed PIL cases against animal trafficking and dealt with unusual situations like the temple elephant that killed its mahout. He has worked hard to relocate the elephant to Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary, where it is much happier and has gained 800 kilos in weight.

Antony's advice is sought by many – but he says he does not like preaching. He just quotes his experiences to anyone who goes to him, telling them what worked for him and what didn't.

Antony worked with an organisation in the UK on Rabies eradication in India and Malawi. He is also the founder and head of Heed Digital – a company that develops websites and mobile apps.

Today, with technology at his fingertips, and Google obliging him by reading long texts in Tamil, he does not find his dyslexia a hindrance at all.

Antony's story is not complete. He has enough ideas and drive to further his prospects and areas of influence. He is a firm believer in street wisdom, and he will find the roads that lead him to greater goals.



Sushma Ramachandran
Psychotherapist

Sushma Ramachandran comes across as a confident, passionate person who is completely comfortable in her skin.

Born in 1990, Sushma attended Bhavan's Vidyashram in Chennai in her early years. As she reached Class 5, she was finding it difficult to cope with her academic work, and had to repeat the year. She did well the second time around and was sent into class 6, but that proved to be too much to handle. Her father browsed the internet and wondered whether Sushma may have some form learning disability. When he discussed it with the school principal, they both felt it best to have Sushma assessed at Alpha to Omega Learning Centre. Sushma's IQ was high and her comprehension was good, but she was dyslexic and had ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder). She continued in Bhavan's with remedial assistance which did not prove helpful. So, she was moved to Alpha to Omega Learning Centre full-time.

From there on, her journey changed course. To manage her ADD, she was assigned a few younger children whom she had to take care of. Gradually, she managed them with creative ideas and a certain knack innate in her. After completing class 12 under the NIOS scheme, she moved to Women's Christian College for a B.Sc. in Psychology. She found it very difficult as she had no basics in the sciences after the class 6. She avidly read all she could find on the

internet and watched videos on YouTube. She could understand quite well, but expressing it in writing was something that always was a problem. By then she had begun recognising words visually – whenever she was not sure of a spelling, she went by whether it 'looked' correct. Her visual learning was excellent. She resorted to diagrams and drawings and barely made it past the pass line in the exams.

Sushma then decided just a B.Sc. would not be enough. She went on to do an M.Sc. in Psychology at the Madras School of Social Work (MSSW). She stayed on there to work for over a year and followed it up with an M. Phil in Counselling Psychology at MSSW.

Following this, she taught at DG Vaishnav College, Chennai and endeared herself to her students with her disarming candour. On day one she told her students that she had a problem, and that she might make mistakes while writing on the blackboard. The students enjoyed the experience of correcting her errors, and a good rapport was established. Her next stint was in her own clinic for a few years as a psychotherapist. She then obtained a certificate in

Transactional Analysis. By March, 2021, she managed the written and oral examinations. She would write out answers to essay questions, and her twin sister would proof-read and correct any errors.

Sushma continues to read a lot, and still depends on her visual judgement when writing. She has been consulting mainly online of late. In this field of work, she says, she does not have a large number of clients, because each client needs counselling for several years. Some have been with her for over six years.

Sushma has dealt with her difficulties with her own grit and common sense, and a lot of family support.



Shruti Jayasimha
Special Educator

Shruti Jayasimha lives in Bengaluru and has been a special educator for over a decade.

Her early school years were in Bengaluru. Moving to Chennai in 1994, she attended Chettinad Vidyashram until class 8. Although she found it difficult to cope, she managed with home tuition in mathematics and help from friends. But her grades were falling steeply because her handwriting was illegible and her teachers found it difficult to mark her classwork, homework and exam papers. As she moved into class 9, she went into a boarding school, which she found was even more difficult.

At the suggestion of a well-wisher, she was evaluated at the Alpha to Omega Learning Centre and diagnosed as dyslexic. Her reading, writing and understanding was very good but for her illegible handwriting, which was dealt with by her loving teachers in Alpha to Omega Learning Centre. Shruti

says that getting into the Centre pretty much saved her life. She speaks very fondly of her teachers there – especially Ms Lalitha - and says she still keeps in touch with them. She completed her schooling from Alpha to Omega, appearing for class 12 exams with the NIOS Board.

Her interest in Special Education led her first to a B.Sc. degree in Psychology from the MGR Janaki College.

Shruti completed her education and then moved to Bengaluru in 2005. She received her Diploma in Special Education in 2006, and began working with children with LD. She got married in 2012 to Vikram

Raghuv eer, an Internal Auditor. In 2013 she armed herself with a B.Ed. in Special Education. In 2015 she enrolled in Alpha to Omega Learning Centre for the NILD Level - 1 course. This is an online program conducted by the Regent University, Virginia.

Shruti worked with some NGOs and regular schools until the pandemic struck and now consults online. She hopes to open her own centre to help children with LD.

Giving back to society in the best way she can, Shruti is a vibrant, positive person who is an inspiration to anyone dealing with academic drawbacks.

Living with Dyscalculia



Shreya Iyengar
Writer and Educator

As told to Dr Geet Oberoi, Founder Director, Orkids, New Delhi

I've had difficulty with numbers ever since I can remember. While to some people it seemed to come effortlessly, I felt as though I'd been asked to go into a roomful of unknown people and make conversation with them – it made me anxious, on edge, and was inexplicably frightening. I felt threatened by the numbers, as if they were monsters that were going to leap out of the page. Whenever I so much as saw an equation on the page, I froze. My mind and body shut down. To this day, my memories of school are fraught with anxiety and stress owing to that seemingly insurmountable challenge.

Fortunately, my parents were quick to recognise the rapidly worsening signs of my inability with maths. The summer that I turned fourteen, I underwent a psycho-educational evaluative assessment. A few days later, I had my diagnosis: dyscalculia. My parents' timely intervention led me to Orkids, a

special education centre, where I was a student for four years. Under the able tutelage of the teachers, I started being less apprehensive and tried my best to be more receptive to difficult maths problems that were prescribed in the textbook.

Ultimately, though, I had to drop maths in class 10 because I found it too incomprehensible and stressful – and needless to say, this did have a negative influence on my self-worth – but I'm glad I took that step of learning to recognise what was not working for me. I was relieved to be rid of maths. It was like a toxic relationship from which I had to walk

away in order to focus on myself and what was really important. Of course, it is never easy to overcome challenges, but that is where the reward lies.

I will always be grateful to Dr. Geet Oberoi – Founder-President, Orkids – whose gentleness and warmth has shaped a significant part of my personality into what it is today.

About the author

Shreya holds a Master's degree in English from the University of Delhi. She is a reader, writer and educator.

Our Donors



Shyam Sunder Suri

I have known Madras Dyslexia Association for a number of years and have been observing the path-breaking work they have been doing in identifying, coming up with and customising solutions to the Indian context in multiple ways.

I have been very taken in by their sincerity of purpose, honesty of effort and dedication to the cause of Dyslexia and other learning challenges. They have done yeoman service in running evolutionary Train the Teacher programmes consistently.

These are my reasons for wanting to support MDA in any form that I can. I do realise that this is a long and arduous journey that requires great dedication and resources to address and alleviate the issue of learning challenges and finding suitable income and self-esteem generating opportunities for these children and youngsters.

I wish MDA continued success in this endeavour.

செய்தித் துளிகள்

பயிற்சி

- தமிழில் சிறப்பு ஆசிரியர் பயிற்சி வெற்றிகரமாக நடந்தேறியது. காக்னிசண்ட் திட்டத்தில் பங்கேற்ற நான்கு பள்ளிகளுக்காக இச்சிறப்பு பயிற்சி நடத்தப்பட்டது. இத் திட்டத்தின் தொடர்ச்சியாக இப்பள்ளிகளின் அனைத்து ஆரம்ப பள்ளி ஆசிரியர்களுக்கு இணைய தளம் மூலமாக 12 நாட்களுக்கு அடிப்படை பயிற்சி கொடுக்கப்பட்டது.
- கீழ்கண்ட பள்ளி நிறுவனங்களுக்கு அடிப்படை ஆரம்ப கால ஆசிரியர்களுக்கான பயிற்சி இணைய தளம் மூலம் அகிக்கப்பட்டது

பத்மா சேஷாத்திரி பாலா பவன்
OMELAT,
ACT இன் தன்னார்வலர்கள்

- நடு நிலை பள்ளி ஆசிரியர்களுக்கான பயிற்சி இணையதளம் மூலம் கீழே கொடுக்கப் பட்டுள்ள பள்ளிகளில் நடத்தப்பட்டது.

ஜே ம். பப்ளிக் ஸ்கூல்
எ. ம். டி. ஜெயின் ஸ்கூல்

விழிப்புணர்வு பயிற்சி

விழிப்புணர்வு பயிற்சி நேர்முகமாகவும், இணையதளம் மூலமாகவும் கீழ்கண்ட கல்வி நிறுவனங்களில் நடத்தப்பட்டது

- மகரிஷி வித்யா மந்திர், திருநீர்மலை
- அர்ஷ வித்யா மந்திர், வேளச்சேரி
- கேந்திரிய வித்யாலயா, அண்ணாநகர்

- வித்யா மந்திர், மைலாப்பூர்
- வித்யா மந்திர், எஸ்டான்ஷியா
- செயின்ட் கிளர்க்ஸ் பள்ளி
- சவீதா சட்ட கல்லூரி

சிறப்பு பயிற்சி அறை

டீ. என். பி.ல், மெட்ரிகுலேஷன் பள்ளி கரூர்
யூனிட்டி பப்ளிக் ஸ்கூல்
டீ. ஜி. மெட்ரிகுலேஷன் பள்ளி

பகுதி நேர சிறப்பு அறை

மாணவர்கள் சுதந்திரதின விழாவை இணையத்தளம் மூலமாக மிக சிறப்பாக கொண்டாடினார்கள். சுதந்திர போராட்ட வீரர்கள் போல் வேடமிட்டு அவர்களைப்போல் பேசினார்கள்.

ஆசிரியர்த்தனத்தன்று “ Wizard of OZ”. என்ற நாடகத்தை இணைய தளத்தில் மாணவர்கள் நடித்து காண்பித்தார்கள். இந்த நாடகம் மிக சிறப்பாக அமைந்தது

அனன்யா

அனன்யாவில் சுதந்திரதின விழா மிக சிறப்பாக கொண்டாடப்பட்டது. மாணவர்கள் அவர்களது திறமையை வண்ணம் தீட்டி காண்பித்தார்கள்.

டி ஏ பி ஆஸ்திரேலியன் கௌன்சல் ஜெனெரல் வருகை

கௌன்சல் மற்றும் டைரக்ட் எயிட் ப்ரோக்ராம் சேர், திரு அன்றாவ் கொலிஸ்டர் ம் டி ஏ விற்கு வருகை தந்தார். டிஸ்லெக்சியாவை பற்றியும் ம் டி ஏ வின்

Happenings in MDA

Training

- The first Intensive Teacher Training Programme in Tamil was successfully completed. This was conducted for special educators of four schools participating in a project sponsored by the Cognizant Foundation.
- As part of the programme a live online mode training programme was conducted for the teachers of these schools.
- Basic course on remedial strategies for primary school teachers was conducted as live online sessions for the teachers of:
 - Padma Seshadri Bala Bhavan (PSBB)
 - Organisation of Muslim Educational Institutes and Associations (OMEIAT)
 - Volunteers of ACT
- Effective Learning Programme was conducted online for the teachers of:
 - o JM Public School
 - o AMT Jain School

Awareness

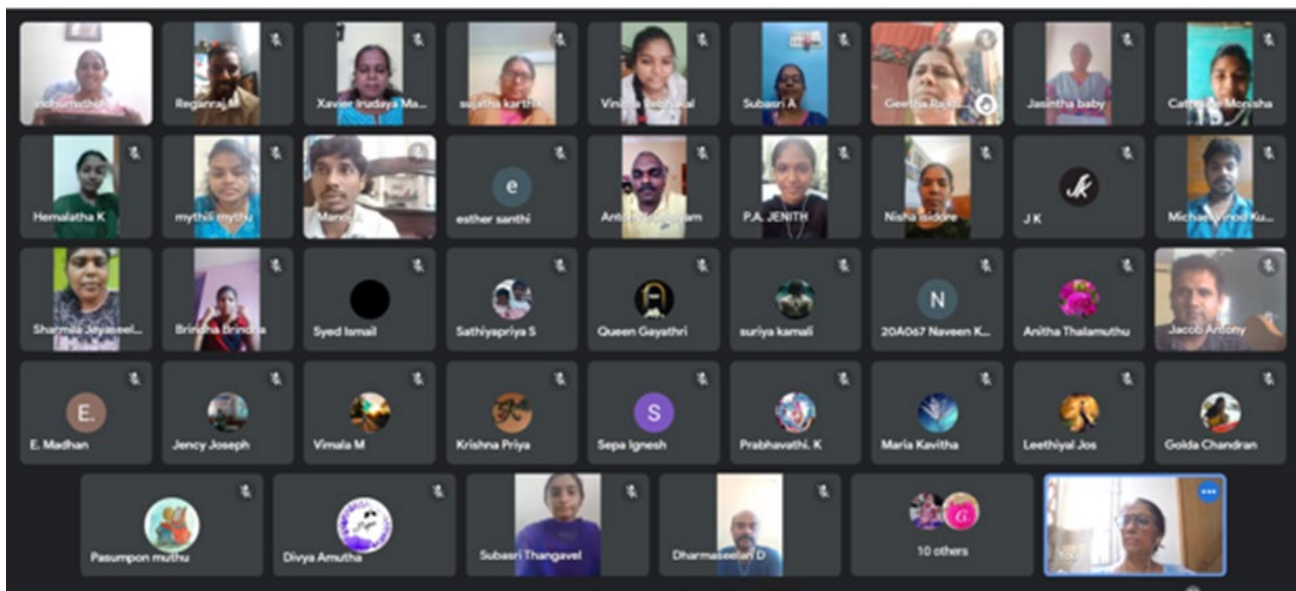
Awareness programmes were conducted in online mode and as physical programmes. They were conducted for the teachers of:

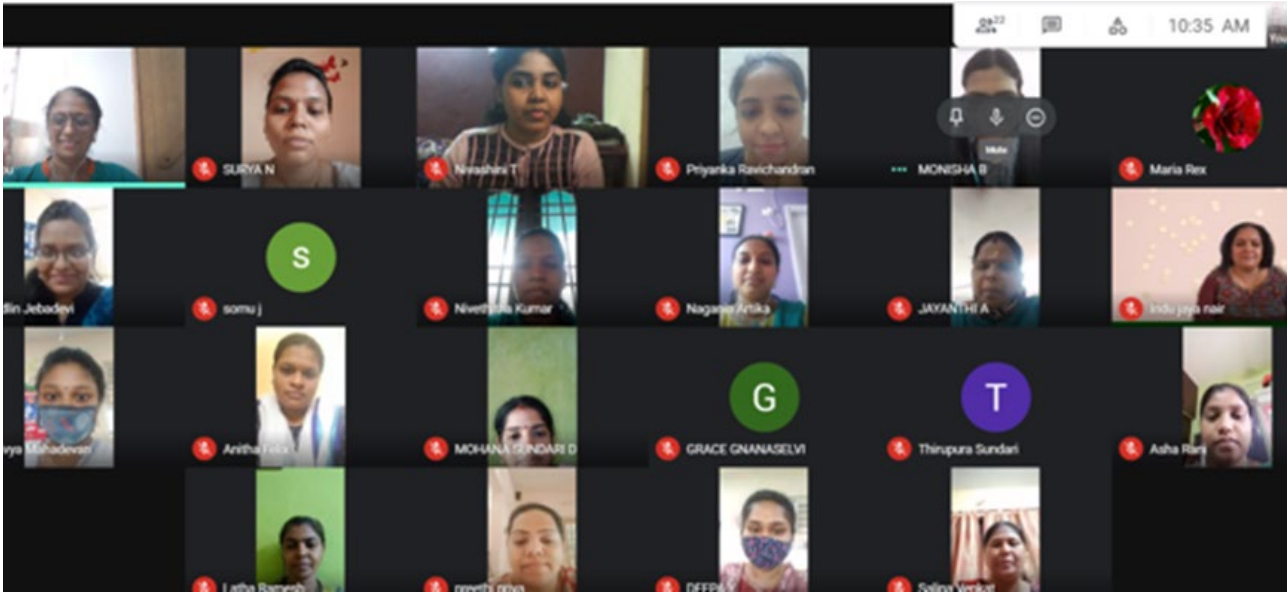
- Maharishi Vidya Mandir-Tiruneermaalai
- Arsha Vidya Mandir-Velachery
- Kendriya Vidyalaya-Anna Nagar
- St. Clark’s School
- Vidya Mandir Estancia
- Vidya Mandir Sr. Sec School-Mylapore
- Savita Law College

Resource Rooms

After the completion of Intensive Teacher Training Course (ITTC) Feb 2021, Resource Rooms are being set up in the following schools in the new academic year:

1. Unity Public School
2. TNPL Matriculation School, Karur
3. TI Matriculation School





After-School Remedials

- The Remedial Centre kick-started the academic year's activities by celebrating Independence Day online.
- A few children spoke on the significance of Independence Day while many others dressed as various freedom fighters and spoke about their contribution. The children were extremely enthusiastic and participated with great vigour.





Ananya

The new academic year has begun with lots of enthusiasm, new children and new friendships.

The children are very excited with the new-found non-competitive environment that nurtures their strengths. They are steadily making inroads into building and developing their academic skills, despite the challenging environment posed by the pandemic.

A sample of the spontaneous artwork done by one of the children for Independence Day:



A visit from DAP-Australian Consul General, Chennai

Mr Andrew Collister, Consul and the Direct Aid Program (DAP) Chair, visited our office to understand how we support children with dyslexia and their stake-holders. We have received a grant from DAP towards the development of animated case studies for use with digitised Tamil Vazhi Payirchi programme.

Teachers Day online celebrations

MDA Remedial Centre celebrated Teachers Day online on September 4th in a very unique manner. Children enacted an adaptation of the play 'The Wizard of Oz' online.

Since this was our first ever attempt to stage a play online, it was recorded in six scenes. The children co-operated very well both during the rehearsals and the recordings. The recordings were then edited, the introduction and conclusion added and seamlessly presented as a single video. The children played their parts from their homes. Many of them came up with appropriate costumes to suit their parts. The parents were also extremely helpful and enthusiastic. The children performed with great zeal and the play was appreciated by everyone present.





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