

In the News

Did You Say Dyslexia? No, I Said Dyspraxia: The Challenges of Having a Condition No One Has Heard Of…. By: Dawn Sloan Downes

From the day our son was born, my husband and I knew that our son Travis was a challenging child. The first night of his life, all he did was scream. He could never get a good latch and nursing turned into a disaster. At six-months old, then a year, then three-years he still wasn't sleeping through the night, despite our best efforts with every sleep training method known to Man. With the exception of talking, he hit every milestone on the late side of normal. Even talking brought its own set of challenges to our son. More often than not, I had to serve as interpreter for him when he was speaking to other adults until he was four years old and even then he still could not speak clearly. We "wrote off" many of the challenges to a combination of his strong-willed personality and our being first-time parents. Eventually, though, it became obvious that something wasn't quite right. [Read More...](#)

October 19, 2009 11:56 AM PDT Robotic arm reaches out to kids with motor deficit

by Leslie Katz, CNET.com

A robotic arm is lending a hand to children with dyspraxia, a motor-skills deficit also known as Developmental Coordination Disorder or Clumsy Child Syndrome.

The system, under development at the U.K.'s University of Leeds, combines a commercially available Phantom Omni haptic device with software that lets children with coordination problems practice therapist-prescribed exercises at home using an interactive desktop setup. It can also monitor how the kids move, measuring factors like smoothness, speed of movement, and joint configurations. [Read More...](#)

"Harry Potter" star Daniel Radcliffe has revealed he suffers from dyspraxia.

"The only child of parents involved in the arts, Radcliffe announced at age five that he might want to be an actor. "My mother said, "No you don't," he recalls. She finally relented and allowed him to audition for a television movie of David Copperfield when he was nine, largely because, he says, "I was having a hard time at school, in terms of being crap at everything, with no discernible talent." Radcliffe also suffers from dyspraxia, a developmental disorder affecting motor skills, and he still has trouble tying his shoes. "I sometimes think, why, oh why, has Velcro not taken off? He says’.

What I should like you to stress that Dan's dyspraxia is very mild and in fact he only really notices when he tries to tie his shoelaces or with his handwriting. So, I don't want others to get the wrong impression as it wouldn't be fair to those who suffer more severely.

Photo: Courtesy of Sam Rudy Media Relations
Quote as appeared in September 2008 issue of Vogue

Harry Potter's Klutziness

Dyspraxia Explains

Dyspraxia Is a Motor Skill Developmental Problem

By Emily Friedman
Aug. 19, 2008

<http://abcnews.go.com/Health/story?id=5605093&page=1>

Head of dyspraxia group says it helps that Radcliffe has spoken of condition

By Anne-Marie Tobin, The Canadian Press
Mon Aug 25, 2008 12:03 PM

TORONTO - When "Harry Potter" star Daniel Radcliffe spoke publicly about having dyspraxia recently, it was the first time many people had ever heard of the condition.

The diagnostic term used by the medical community is Developmental Co-ordination Disorder, and it encompasses a range of motor difficulties that can interfere with the activities of daily life.

Radcliffe's spokesman has been quoted saying the star of the phenomenally successful Potter films has a very mild condition that, at its worst, means he has bad handwriting and trouble with tying shoelaces.

Warren Fried, executive director of Dyspraxia USA, is grateful that Radcliffe has talked openly about it.

"Finally, people are interested in what I've been trying to explain to them for the past 27 years," he said from Chicago.

"Ever since I was little my parents knew there was something a bit different about me. And growing up in the States they didn't exactly know where to put me, because I wasn't autistic, I didn't have cerebral palsy ... I was failing every subject, and teachers were bullying me, other students."

Fried, who describes his own case as severe, grew up in New York and Florida, but it wasn't until he moved to England at age 18 that he was told he has dyspraxia and found out there were support groups.

"And then my whole world opened up."

After five or six years in England, he moved back to the U.S. and settled in Chicago. Fried, now 27, has been running Dyspraxia USA for about 2 1/2 years, gives lectures and speeches and does public service announcements for radio stations.

He's found a niche that suits his talents, but for many years he struggled.

"Something as simplistic as getting dressed in the morning was quite difficult, so I'd show up to class late," he recalled. "And I remember when I was seven ... I put my jeans on in the wrong direction, inside out."

His fine motor skills are not good - it's physically painful for him to hold a pen. He didn't have the verbal difficulties that some kids do, but math class was troublesome.

"Imagine having problems with depth perception and trying to do geometry, or lining up numbers," he said.

Getting around as an adult isn't easy. Some people with DCD can't drive a car, and although Fried uses public transit, he can have difficulty putting his ticket into the machine.

"I can't judge which way the arrows should go, and which way it should go in," he explained.

Cheryl Missiuna, an occupational therapist and director of the CanChild Centre at McMaster University, said an estimated five to six per cent of children - about one in every classroom - have DCD, but very few of them receive a formal diagnosis.

"These are not children who are just low in athletic ability," she said from Hamilton.

"They are children who are having difficulty with everyday activities like buttering bread, turning a key in the lock, printing, cutting, combing their hair, just doing everyday activities."

Missiuna said it can sometimes be helpful to have a diagnosis, but it isn't necessarily a disorder that needs to be medicalized.

"It's helpful to families when they recognize that their children are struggling to know that the children are not going to get worse, that it's not a degenerative condition," she said.

"In fact, the children are going to develop some skills over time, and therefore they will seem better."

Kids with DCD, which prior to 1994 was sometimes called clumsy child syndrome, might be labelled lazy and unmotivated when they struggle in school, she said.

"If people realize how hard it is for them to do the motor aspect of tasks, and they understand it, there's lots of ways around many tasks."

Families can reduce their stress and the child's frustration by identifying the difficult tasks and modifying them or adapting them, she added.

Missiuna said a study has just been completed involving young adults who were resilient and successful, who went to university and are doing well. Their families were supportive, and they found their areas of strength.

"Sometimes they use humour," Missiuna said. "You saw that probably with Daniel Radcliffe as well. He sort of jokes, 'Why hasn't Velcro ever taken off?'"

Indeed, Fried said: "Nothing's missing with us. We have talents; things are just a bit off."

He said that knowing about Radcliffe's success will help many children with dyspraxia.

"Now they have someone to look up to who's on the mild spectrum. They see me on the severe spectrum and getting the word out. And I function - I go to work, I do everything else like that."