

Annika Berntsen
Living With Dyslexia Scholarship Application

My moss green eyes, ash blonde hair, and pale skin were gifted from my kind Norwegian father. Most importantly, he gave me his fierce creativity via dyslexia. Dyslexia wasn't a true concept to me as a kid, but rather a heavy gray cloud that consumed my tiny kid mind. In the first grade, I was placed in the lowest reading group, alone. In the second grade, multiplication tables consumed my entire existence. In the third grade, long division slowly devoured my confidence. I remember those sobbing panic attacks in the minivan the mornings of elementary school spelling tests. Hours of practice with my ever patient mother could never seem to prepare me. Scrambling up letters always seemed to be inevitable. As my years of education progressed, I developed a relentless determination to get good grades. I spent hours and hours studying, rehearsing, memorizing, whatever it took to prove to myself that I was just as smart as my peers. As I entered middle school, my mother self-diagnosed my dyslexia as an auditory processing disorder. Plagued with such a discouraging title, my confidence crumbled. Teachers treated me differently. They slipped me answer keys to assignments with fake smiles, pity lingering in their eyes. Rather than allowing me to adapt the curriculum to my one personal learning style, teachers impulsively shoved answer keys into my hands, somehow expecting this to cure me.

As I was thrown into a high school eighteen times larger than my middle and elementary school combined, I learned to utilize my unique perspective and learning methods. As my mind struggled to see curriculum as my peers did, I noticed that I saw the world through a different lens. I interrupted concepts differently; my perspective was unique. To avoid my academic struggles, I escaped to creative outlets. Funny tweets got me friends and binge watching Youtube videos got me a career. I taught myself iMovie, creating videos, which portrayed my reverse perspective and dry humor. Dyslexia created a fierce work ethic and a burning determination within me. As a college student majoring in Media Production, my dyslexia allows me to bring new ideas and a fresh outlook on storytelling and projects. Without dyslexia, I wouldn't be the fighter they I am today, and for that, I am forever grateful for my Norwegian genes.