



Amber's Story Out of the Darkness



Amber

Age: 11

Location: Idaho

Diagnosis: Dyslexia



Protocol

Amber worked for 30 minutes per day, 5 days a week, for 12 months. She completed Fast ForWord Literacy, Literacy Advanced, and Reading 2. She is currently half way through the Reading Assistant program.



Results

Amber was a struggling reader. This struggle impacted not only her academic life, but her emotional wellbeing. In one year, she moved from a self-described dark place to a place of comfort with reading and self-esteem. Amber is now reading on grade level and assisting other students in achieving their potential.

From the start, Amber's parents knew that their first born was smart and attentive. So they were understandably shocked to discover how much work she had to put into reading when school began and even blamed themselves when she didn't improve. She struggled with speech and reading in first and second grade and was grouped with students with seemingly more serious learning disabilities for instruction. Amber was repeatedly tested by the school, but the hours of assessments only left her feeling as if she were *dumb* or *stupid*. She stopped caring about herself and her work. Family moves led to new schools, but the experience was always the same: being pulled out of class with other students, a feeling of not being challenged or lowered expectations, and rapidly declining self-esteem. Her mother was told that she needed to accept that Amber was not as smart as she thought she was. When a joint reading attempt in fourth grade left both mother and daughter in tears, they felt they'd hit rock bottom. Amber retreated to a *very dark place* and referred to herself as a *waste of space*. Her mother felt as though she was watching all of the *dreams and ambitions of [her] sweet, kind hearted little girl being [thrown] away*.

An internet search on why her fourth grader couldn't read led to information on dyslexia. They'd previously been told that Amber didn't have this learning challenge, but the more her mother read, the more she understood that it was a spectrum of reading disorders. One of the first interventions she tried after her research was placing colored overlays on the page before asking her daughter to read. The result was an instant "Oh my, mom! The words have stopped moving on the page." Amber further explained that "all of her life, the words would just march off the page, and she could never keep up with them to read them". Feeling that she was on to something, Amber's mother asked the school for more testing. This pinpointed learning with memory and cognition for recognition as areas impacting Amber's learning. But the school was unable to offer support or resources. A new online search led her mother to Gemm Learning.

Thank you, Gemm Learning, for giving my sweet, loving, kind-hearted Amber back to me. – Amber's mother

Amber's mother liked that the program went *back to the brain* and confesses that she must have called [our company] *about 20 times to ask mostly the same questions over and over again*. She was grateful to the Gemm staff for always responding and "never pushing" her to sign up. She committed to the program and had Amber work on the exercise before school. Her daughter hated the software at first, but did it anyway. Within two to three months, Amber's mother noticed her daughter was speaking more clearly on the phone. Prior to this, it had always been difficult to understand her when they weren't face to face. Around this time, mom noticed Amber paying more attention to the family cat than to her program. Amber's mother began sitting with her daughter during sessions to help with motivation and effort. Progress improved substantially as a result.

Amber is now in 6th grade and currently working on her final set of Fast ForWord reading exercises. She is reading easily and with confidence, earning a 6th grade reading level on a recent STAR test, three grade levels above all previous achievements. Her mother describes Amber as a *different girl now. She is happy, confident, has lots of friends. She has discovered she is a fantastic artist and loves to draw wildlife. She also loves photography and is very good at the piano and cello.*

They just finished the book [Flowers for Algernon](#) and, over Christmas, [Of Mice and Men](#). They will be moving on to [Lord of the Flies](#) this spring. Amber gets 100% on her AR tests now and is often chosen to assist other students in class, because she understands their challenges.