

Living with both Dyslexia and Auditory Processing Disorder

By: Samara Dengler

During my younger years, I never imagined I would be able to fully appreciate my capacity for perseverance. When I was in third grade, I was diagnosed with ADHD, Dyslexia, and Auditory Processing Disorder. Each one of these learning disabilities has made it extremely difficult to learn even the most basic material. ADHD made it difficult to focus; Dyslexia made it very hard to put my thoughts down on paper; and Auditory Processing Disorder caused me to not be able to comprehend exactly what people were saying to me; My friends would tell you it makes me sound like an owl with my constant use of the word “who?” Over the years, I found my own strategies that helped me understand the way I best think and process information. As I entered high school, I was still fine-tuning the ways I educated myself best. I have continued to do so throughout my senior year, and will most likely need to the rest of my life. These difficulties may be reflected in my GPA and test scores, but they do not represent my true capabilities. I am passionate about my studies and continue to develop new learning methods. I am very dedicated to both my studies and my extra-curricular activities. Over the last seven years, much of my outside time has been spent with horses. Horseback riding has taught me to prioritize, how to learn from my mistakes, it has built my confidence, and taught me responsibility. It may take months to master a new riding skill. This alone has instilled in me the value of hard work. When I was younger I never wanted to ask questions because I felt as though I had more questions than everyone else. Riding horses has shown me that it never hurts to ask a question, regardless of how many you may have asked in the previous five minutes. Every question and answer, has helped me develop into the person I am now.

Growing up with these learning disabilities strongly encouraged me to become a teacher. I never want to see a student struggle as much as I did. I long to help each student find a learning plan that best fits his or her needs: help them reach his/her potential, and not have any of my students struggle like I did. During my junior and senior year of high school, my first period was a Teacher Apprenticeship in a local Elementary school second grade classroom. Being in this class for the past two years has impacted me tremendously. The ability to help students like me everyday, has only increased my desire to teach. There was a student, Nadia who reminded me of when I was her age. I worked with her on areas where she was struggling, and having the ability to show her strategies that I developed and used was immensely rewarding. I not only got to see her growth, but even more, I was able to see her have the “light bulb” moment. I can not describe how happy I was to be able to share my strategies, and see they can work for others. In addition, the greater part of my volunteer hours came from helping at a local underprivileged elementary school in their After School Program, where I assisted students with their homework, studying for tests, and even playing educational games. This experience allowed me to see an entirely different group of children and how each one learns.

My learning disabilities may have impacted my GPA and Standardized test scores, however, these are not a true measurement of my knowledge, abilities or passion. Not receiving the help, I so desperately needed with my learning disabilities has just made me stronger and more resolute, while horseback riding has helped me become an independent person who will never give up, or let anything stand in my way.