

June 9, 2014

Transcription Anonymous

Introduction: A video in which a student who wishes to remain anonymous describes her experience with accommodation for dyscalculia.

What impact has your disability had on your college or university experience?

I feel I have to study a lot more than any other student. I prepare in advance, I don't take my own notes but I'm still really particular about making sure I understand every note. After I get my notes, I'll read over them that day after class and maybe on the weekend I'll look at them again. Maybe my social life isn't as thriving but that's not really why I'm here anyway. I find in study groups as well a lot of teachers are like, "Well, get together and do this as a group and help yourselves." That's one thing, sometimes I get a little bit embarrassed because I just can't do it as fast as other people. It's something I've been really private about, my learning disability, like why I chose to do this silhouette, like I don't think most of my professors would even know that I had one, except when it comes to accommodations. It's just not something I've been using as a crutch, I guess. I just like to have my good marks, I don't want an excuse for doing anything other than my best but yeah, when it comes to group studying, it's not that I'm not helpful, it's just sometimes if they're trying to do it fast because when we're studying for exams, students that aren't writing like me in a separate room want to get it done fast and that's just something I'm not—like they'll have flashcards and it'll be OK like, here's 60 seconds, get it or you skip it, it's kind of like you're penalized for not getting it on time. But I do study on my own and I think that people sometimes will ask me for help because I have a different perspective, and it took me, like I have to approach a question in a different way. Sometimes I don't understand it the same way other students do, so it's just a different perspective and sometimes explaining it to people from my perspective. I think that a lot of people could also have learning disabilities and aren't aware of it because, like me, their marks weren't terrible going through high school. I wasn't diagnosed with a learning disability until I was in grade 11 and it was not with dyscalculia, either, it was with dyslexia and I'm like I was in enriched English, so like a level 1 course and the teacher pulled me aside and said, "You know, you can articulate really well in your thoughts and you do fine with..." up to part of it but I just noticed that I would come in for extra help in spelling tests and stuff and it didn't really matter how long I studied, I would still just not get this mark. My efforts weren't reflected in my grades and that was a disheartening thing, but now they are, which is good. Some students will be like, "Oh, you got some 60s and 70s and maybe occasionally an 80.." and that's not bad, it's just not what you should be getting when you're putting in three or four hours into studying for a test which is just some other student may take like 20 or 30 minutes and that doesn't mean that students with learning disabilities don't try as hard, it's just that I think students with learning disabilities have to put a little bit more effort into things just to get it done in a time efficient way.

What accommodation measures have you received to help you succeed in your studies?

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For anything math-related, I get double time and a lot of people are like, "Oh, wow, 6 hours to do an exam, you must not need all of that," or "You must get really tired," but I think most students with learning disabilities are very persistent workers and if you, it's different, because if you actually study and you know you know the answer, you don't just give up. I know all the answers, it just takes me probably twice as long to get them. My first year I had Microeconomics and I took all 6 hours to do my exam.

What other things have helped you overcome your challenges and be successful in your college or university life?

I think just having tutors. The facility where I go, they offer note takers and tutors and it's been really beneficial because it's hard to try to follow along with an equation and see where the professor or the instructor is getting that answer and trying to write it down at the same time. When I can rely on someone who has really well-organized notes and they write a little explanation on the side, they're a lot better at multitasking than I am, so I don't have to worry about getting everything the professor is saying and then trying to know what he's doing as well, because in high school, I'd always be trying to write notes and then I'd get home, the notes would be like having holes in it and I wouldn't be able to trace back and figure out where that answer came from. So it's a lot easier to have a student who's really well organized be able to provide me with that kind of resource, as well as double time and extra time in a quiet room. I don't have to worry about students getting up and leaving the exam. I find I'm really sensitive to time. Throughout high school and anything like public education, I find they're like telling you to do it as fast as you can and if you don't get that multiple choice question in 60 seconds, move on because you need to do the rest of your test. So I think I've really been geared to do everything as fast as I can and it's kind of a different experience now that I have accommodations, where I can relax and I can actually answer things to the best of my ability and not have to worry about a timer. Having that extra time really does help.