

Jan. 17, 2014

Transcription Harry

Introduction: A video in which Harry describes his experience with accommodation for nonverbal learning disability.

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

I have what's called a non-verbal learning disability, or NLD. I've never actually had the chance to sit down with a psychoanalyst to go through the report, now that I'm old enough to do that. Basically I know that I have trouble with a range of things that are non-verbally based. So, things that are verbally based, I'm quite well off in, I'm even in the 99th percentile in verbal reasoning. When it comes to spatial reasoning, so puzzles, 3-D graphical representations of things, manipulating things in a 3-dimensional plane, like you get all the blocks and have to make the pattern that you see, that kind of stuff is just awful and dreadful—reading maps, all that kind of stuff, doing math, anything that has to do with manipulations on a 3-D plane is very, very painful. And that's really hard when you're in school and you're around people that have even average intelligence—reading maps, doing visual puzzles isn't hard for them, they can work through it and you're trying and you're trying and you're trying and your brain is just saying, "No, that pathway does not exist. We can't work around it, we can't work through it, it's just not there, abort and move on." That's really tough. My disability impacted me in the classroom in that learning isn't always the easiest, especially in our school system which is tailored to a very general brain, to a very general learning style. Taking notes is hard for me. I can't listen and take notes at the same time. Putting my thoughts down on paper is often very hard, even with a computer. If I know the answer to a question, my brain will answer it instantly and I'll spend the next half hour trying to go back and find what I thought, what I said. From that point of view, learning can be found quite challenging, especially at the fast pace that the university goes.

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

At the Meighen Centre, I have received a lot of good accommodation, it really helped me out. Mainly I get a computer for all written responses which really helps me, because my handwriting is not great. I get double time on my tests because my processing speed in putting things on paper is much slower than what I'm speaking, and I have access to tutors and note takers for my classes. So, in classes that aren't math-based, where I don't have to be doing the equations in class, I can just sit and listen and process and then go home and I have access to notes to review, which is extremely helpful.

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

So here at university, having the Meighen Centre and all its amazing staff really helped me and having an accepting community, even though people don't always understand what it's like, the fact that they can accept, if they don't get it, the fact that they accept you for who you are and they try and accommodate

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you the very best they can, that's what really makes a difference in the end. And that's everything from the Meighen Centre doing what they do to my teachers saying in lecture, "Come in my office and we'll sit down for an hour and we'll go through the same stuff that I just taught yesterday and we'll talk through it until you understand it because we care about your education and we care about you as a student." That attitude in itself is what makes the difference.