



*Michael Senoff's*

**HardToFind Seminars.com**

Expert Interviews On Mind Body & Spirit

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INTERVIEW SERIES

**Exactly What It Feels Like To  
Be Dyslexic...  
And The Help That Can Make  
A Difference**



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Expert Interviews On Mind Body & Spirit

Dear Student,

I'm Michael Senoff, founder and CEO of [HardToFindSeminars.com](http://HardToFindSeminars.com).

For the last five years, I've interviewed the world's best business and marketing minds.

And along the way, I've created a successful home-based publishing business all from my two-car garage.

When my first child was born, he was very sick, and it was then that I knew I had to have a business that I could operate from home.

Now, my challenge is to build the world's largest free resource for online, downloadable audio business and health related interviews.

I knew that I needed a site that contained strategies, solutions, and inside information to help you operate more efficiently.

I've learned a lot in the last five years, and today I'm going to show you the skills that you need to survive.

It is my mission, to assist those that are very busy with their careers.

And to really make my site different from every other audio content site on the web, I have decided to give you access to this information in a downloadable format.

Now, let's get going.

Michael Senoff

*Michael Senoff*

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## Exactly What It Feels Like To Be Dyslexic... And The Help That Can Make A Difference

Joan Esposito didn't realize she was dyslexic until she was 44 years old. Because she couldn't read or write, she says, she was constantly trying to hide what she thought was her "stupidity." The day she was diagnosed with dyslexia was one of the best days of her life because she realized she wasn't stupid. She was able to learn, just not in the way that everyone else does. She was so excited she decided to go back and get her degree so she could make a difference in other dyslexics' lives.

And in this audio with her and her husband, Les, owners of the Dyslexia Resource Center, you'll hear her amazing journey, the resources she's compiled to help dyslexics like her, and how to know if you (or someone you love) might be suffering unknowingly too.

### You'll Also Hear...

- What it feels like to be dyslexic – Joan says, for her, it's like being constantly handed a book in Chinese – she can't sound out the words, she spells words differently each time she writes them, and what that struggle is like (along with the strategies she uses that help)
- A shocking look at how schools are supposed to be helping kids they think might have dyslexia – and what's really happening
- Why low-income dyslexics might still be falling through the cracks – and where to go for affordable help and diagnoses
- Debunking the common myths about dyslexia
- What kinds of things you should look for if you suspect someone has the disorder

Joan says because dyslexia is an invisible disability, it may just look like a dyslexic simply isn't trying hard enough or that they're just not as bright as someone else. It's a struggle that not only affects a person's academics, but also their self-esteem. It doesn't have to be that way. And in this audio, you'll hear how to get the kind of help for dyslexia that really makes a difference.

*Hi, this is Kris Costello and I've teamed up with Michael Senoff to bring you the world's best health-related interviews, so if you know anyone struggling with their weight, with cancer, diabetes, ADHD, autism, heart disease, or other health issues, send them over to Michael Senoff's <http://www.HardToFindSeminars.com>.*

Kris: We're talking with Joan and Les Esposito of the Dyslexia and Resource Center, located in Santa Barbara, California. The center provides

information and support services to children and adults affected with dyslexia, attention deficit disorder, and other learning disabilities.

Joan spends much of her time advocating for teenagers with undiagnosed learning disabilities in both the public and private school systems, and the public court systems. Joan is an adult with dyslexia and attention deficit disorder. At the age of 44, Joan could barely read, until she was remediated at Santa Barbara Community College. Joan has experienced all the frustrations and challenges of a functionally-illiterate adult. Joan has also served as state president of the California Learning Disabilities Association, and previously served as their government affairs chairperson. She's been instrumental in legislation on dyslexia, both on the state and national level. Joan is recognized throughout the country as an expert in her field and has participated on both state and national panels related to learning disabilities.

Kris: So Joan, you wrote a letter about your experiences being dyslexic. Would you care to share that with our listeners?

Joan: I wrote this letter, and it was published in a book called, Lessons to the Heart. It's a letter I wrote to teenage girls, to young girls, just not to give up always following your dreams. The title is, "When You Walk through a Storm, Hold Your Head up High."

"As a teenager, I sang these words over and over, though I could never remember the rest of them. I knew they were about life and hope at the end of the storm. And I'd lived in a storm until age 44, when I discovered that my struggles with spelling and reading were from a neurological condition that causes dyslexia, a difficulty with language. When the specialist who gave me the test said I could learn how to read, it was as though that was the day I was born. It did not mean that I could not learn when I had dyslexia, but my brain learns in a different way. Unfortunately, not one of my teachers in school knew how to teach children with dyslexia.

"When I was a young child living in Liverpool, England, I found learning exceedingly painful and humiliating. Every morning I woke up, sick to my stomach, knowing I had to attend school. To me, it was a form of child abuse because I simply could not learn no matter how hard I tried. As a result, I was afraid to socialize with my classmates, because I couldn't read or spell like them. I felt like I was constantly teased, and my teacher would say I could learn if I tried harder.

"I'd go home from school, feeling like a failure. Without the diagnosis of dyslexia, I failed to go beyond the fifth grade, and was functionally

illiterate. After my divorce, it led to my nine-year-old son and me becoming homeless in Santa Barbara for several years. And 17 years ago, with the help of my new husband, Les, I founded and became program director for the Dyslexia Resource Center. It houses one of the largest lending libraries in the country on learning and attention difficulties. Our services are free.

“Ever since, I’ve helped families to demystify learning differences, and I advocate for children. Many adults also seek help because of their undiagnosed learning disability. The Center now receives over 2000 requests per year from around the world.

“My message is never give up, believe in yourself, pursue your dreams, no matter how long it takes or how hard the journey is. Always remember ‘to your own self be true.’ If you’re not, nobody else will be. It may take a while and you may feel that you’re never going to make it, but be persistent. Don’t let others talk you out of making your dreams come true.”

Kris: So Joan, can you tell us a little bit about just exactly what is dyslexia?

Joan: Well, dyslexia is ... Number one, it is an invisible disability. I have dyslexia, and my condition wasn’t identified until I was 44, because I don’t look like I have a condition such as dyslexia. And dyslexia simply is ... “dys” is difficulty, and “lexia” is reading a language. So, I have a problem with information that you may be speaking to me, and I process it much slower than you do. I also have a problem with retrieving information, and it is caused by a difference in brain structure that is present at birth.

We have a lot of research going back to the first researchers, at the Beth Israel Hospital. They dissected the brains of deceased dyslexics, and found the structural differences in the brains. So it isn’t something that you’re going to give us a pill, and we’re going to get over it. You can’t correct it with nutrition, so what you have to do, is you have to teach us how to learn in a different way. It’s called a multi-sensory way. So when I’m reading or when you teach me how to spell, if you just have me write it out, it will never stick to my brain. My brain won’t hold onto it. If I’m reading very often it’s like I’m reading Chinese, because I can’t sound out the words. In other words, it’s someone who has problems matching the sound to the symbol on the page.

Kris: How difficult is it to diagnose dyslexia?

Joan: It’s not difficult at all. It’s not difficult at all.



Kris: And do most people or most children get diagnosed early on, or how does that work?

Joan: I think more and more children are being diagnosed now, because we have, let's say in the last ten years, we've had a lot more public awareness on it. But still not enough, because you know I read an article today, and it was entitled, "Stopping the School House to Jail House Pipeline," by enforcing Federal special education laws. And with Federal special education laws, the school is supposed to go out and search for these children, looking in classrooms, looking in the juvenile court system, looking at alternative schools, and see if that child is struggling with reading and writing and give them the assessment. The problem is, it is not being done, so that's the really sad side of this, although the exciting side is we do have wonderful assessment tools to find out how severe your dyslexia is or how mild it is.

We also have some wonderful private schools, but we don't have any private schools in the Santa Barbara area and we don't in Santa Maria. There are wonderful specialists who can teach us the basics in how to read, how to study, and how to retain it, but they're charging anywhere from \$50 to \$125 an hour. So the problem with that is, the low-income children don't have that benefit.

Kris: Even for the average person, it's going to add up to get a little pricey.

Joan: Oh, absolutely.

Kris: So you had the condition yourself, and you and Les basically started the Dyslexia Awareness and Research Center to address your concerns, or how did all that come about?

Joan: Well, actually, our son was going to school, and he wasn't diagnosed until he was 18. And it was a neighbor who said to me, "Joan, I think Joel has dyslexia. I think you have it." And I said, what's dyslexia? Then my son was identified privately, I was identified at Santa Barbara City College, and I've always said it was like the first day I was born, because it meant that I wasn't stupid.

When I got those test results, I said to Leslie, "I'm not stupid. I really can learn. I can go back to school, and I can get a degree." For me, it was the most incredible day of my life, besides giving birth to my son and marrying my husband. It was Les who took me to City College to get the assessment. I needed his support, because I didn't understand the education system.

And so what we do now is, we were working out of our home, working with a lot of juvenile delinquents, and then a group came to us and asked us to open up this center. And Les, because he does all the paperwork, and he does all the grant writing, we were able to open up the center, AND not charge people for services. So we can de-mystify what this condition is to the parents, so the parents are not telling the child, "Look ... he can spell it correctly on one line, and four lines down, he forgets it. He's just lazy." Well, no. that's part of the condition.

I can spell it correctly once, and incorrectly several different ways on one page. I know the condition. I can discuss it because I have it. I studied it for twenty years. And Les and I have done a lot of radio and television shows. If it wasn't for his support, we wouldn't be here.

Kris: And Les, did you notice -- with Joan the symptoms? And were you aware of what was happening?

Les: Joan and I first got together: Joan had asked me to correct a letter that she had written for her son at that time, my step-son, for school. And my background is education, and I thought this would be a perfect way to help her write a good letter. And so like most teachers in that age, many years ago, I took the letter and I circled every mistake, and gave it back to her. And she immediately started crying. And we were just beginning to date, so I figured I had really blown it. So I said, "Don't worry, Joan. I'll help you write it right." And she said, "It took me two weeks to write this letter."

I had been in education probably about ten or fifteen years at that time, had my degree in education, was principal of a high school. I went through the education process through the school system. And I had never heard of the word "dyslexia." By the time Joan and I got married, and then our son was having trouble in high school, we began to realize that he had a problem, especially when he was dealing with a foreign language. And then Joan and I had to go to a parent meeting, then someone mentioned, as Joan just said, "He might have dyslexia." And Joan for the first time, I heard her ever say, "You know, there was a girlfriend of mine that had said, "Joel might have dyslexia. She said that I might too." And those things started clicking.

Joan and I didn't know much about dyslexia at that time. But we knew that we needed to support our son, and we knew we had to find more about it. And there was a program in our Santa Barbara area called ...

Joan: Dyslexia and the Criminal Mind."



Les: “Dyslexia and the Criminal Mind.” Now we knew our son wasn’t a criminal. It had something to do with dyslexia. Joan and I went to that. And this was when we heard about dyslexia, and how you observe different aspects of it. And Joan at that time was a recluse, and she put up her hand in front of this whole crowd – this was the first time I’d ever seen her do this – and she says, “I think I have dyslexia. Where can I be tested?” and that’s when we learned about a disability program for some people in crisis such as Joan. “We can test you at Santa Barbara City College.”

And, as Joan explained to you, she was tested, and she had dyslexia, and ADD, and she had the courage to go back to school. It’s very hard to go back to school -- first of all, to admit that you can’t read at forty years old

...

Joan: Les DROVE me to school every day. I wouldn’t have stayed if I’d have had a car.

Les: I think that Joan, once she got there, and she started working and began matching sounds with symbols, like she was talking about, I could see that she was so excited about it, that she was going to learn to read. Just imagine if you’re forty years old. How do you survive forty years, without reading and writing?

One of the fallacies about people that have dyslexia – people think that these people aren’t smart. And they are, they’re very smart. It’s not a question of intelligence; it’s a question of processing. And when Joan began to realize that she could process, that she could match sound with symbols, and that she could begin to read, she worked at it very very hard. And pretty soon she was reading.

And it was hard for her. It was hard for her to go back after forty years of Joan’s life. She had been put down so many times, because of her inability to read or understand. She was in a piece of crap marriage, and she had just gotten out of that, just before I met Joan. And it was difficult. It was very difficult. Joan has this inner strength that once you get to know her, you really begin to admire her. I don’t think I could have done what she did. But once Joan got through the program, she was so excited about it. She went to bat at Santa Barbara City College, and went to the head of the department and went up to her teacher and now the program director out there, Janet Chapazzi. “Janet, the whole world has to know about this ... Ya, we’re going to go into these schools. I’m going to get you in these schools ...” And Janet said, “Joan, I don’t think the schools really want to hear about it.” “Oh yes they do!”

For more interviews on health, mind, body and spirit, go to Michael Senoff's  
<http://www.HardToFindSeminars.com>.

Kris: So she got inspired ...

Les: She got inspired. I've talked about Joan many times, and I've always said that Joan has a vision quest ... once she realized that she could learn how to read and write, and she had experienced the pain and suffering that she had lived through ... and she saw the pain and suffering of many of these children that she's still in contact with. She decided that she was going to do something about it. Not just talk about it, not just go out and complain about it. She wanted to open up a center to bring awareness and resources to these children.

Joan: To offer solutions.

Les: To offer solutions ... for some of them, many solutions. You see a person who is dyslexic; they can read and write, if they're taught in the proper way, like Joan told you.

Joan: You know, I think something was very very important to me, and that was the computer. Because in order to process it by moving my fingers and seeing it, for some reason, the spelling words stuck in my brain. It was just incredible! If I was to give anything to a child, it would be a computer. And now we have even more incredible programs, programs you know if you can't get your thoughts out in sequence and there's computer programs to help put your thoughts in sequence for you as you type them in. And you know, we have all this information, at the Center ...

Kris: Speaking of that, I want to go ahead and give out the website address for the Dyslexia Awareness and Resource Center. You can find them at [www.dyslexiacenter.org](http://www.dyslexiacenter.org). That's D-Y-S-L-E-X-I-A-C-E-N-T-E-R.org and they would be happy to hear from you and give you more information, if you or someone you know is struggling with this.

Now, what kind of things should people be looking for, if they have a spouse or a child that they suspect might be dyslexic? What are some of the symptoms?

Joan: For a child or an adult, poor spelling problems ... Lots of reversals, for instance, I have a problem with left and right. If you say to me, "Quickly, now Joan, turn right," I'm not going to do it. I have to process the information, so if I process it, I say, okay, I know this is right. I get to a door that says "push" or "pull," I will just go back and forth. If I come up against something quickly, and I haven't had time to process it, I have a

directionality problem. A child or someone who is reading out loud, which you know they're not going to read out loud. A lot of teenagers I deal with will not read out loud. They would rather get into a fight at school and become the class clown, or become the behavior problem ... and you can sit them outside ... this way they don't have to read out loud.

Then we'll talk about mental health issues. There we're talking about stress and anxiety, and about self-esteem. And which one of our children turn to marijuana, turn to drugs and alcohol, and adults do the same thing – because they're constantly trying to hide what they think is their stupidity, because no one has told them that they're very bright. They just have not been able to learn up until this point.

So the spelling problems, the reading problems, math problems. I really reverse numbers, so all these kids are hiding, they're hiding their dyslexia, they're finishing up on welfare; they're finishing up in juvenile court onto the welfare program. There's a broader spectrum of dyslexia here, you also have what are called "learning disabilities" and dyslexia is one of them.

It can be a child who has problem tying their shoe laces, telling time, times table – I still do not know my times table, the months of the year. If you will ask me for a month in the middle of the year, I have to go "January, February ..." I have to go all the way through it. For my alphabet, if someone says "what comes after m?" I have to go, "a b c d e f ..." and then I have to go through it. I learned my alphabet by singing it. And some people say, "Well, I know my alphabet ... I just sing it." Well, they may not know the alphabet if they happen to sing it. There's a rhythm there.

You know the biggest thing is children who either are bullies or they stay away. And they become either the class clown or they become very quiet. They're are not learning. Now I get a lot of adults in here, who happen to work on computers in their job. And now, with some of the adults were taking their work home for their wives or their girlfriends to work on it. Now the work needs to be done in the office on the computer. They can't do it, and they lose their jobs.

I've given talks to the homeless population from here to Texas. The majority of the homeless have started out with having dyslexia, and now they have mental health issues. I have two nineteen year old boys right now, very simply they had learning disabilities. The district has been fighting us for like four years and not given them services. Now, they have emotional disturbances, and now they have mental health problems.

So this really is a crisis in our society for mental health, because what you're doing is you're bringing these children up to have to lean on society, to have to go on the welfare system, to have to go into our mental health system. And the sad thing is, Dr. Samuel Olson who back in the 1930s opened up a school and taught people how to read and write. He specialized in dyslexia. Why haven't our public schools tapped into that? Why aren't they tapped into what's going on in the private schools? And so it's become a mental health issue.

The other thing here is that I'd say, every client who has walked in this school or people who've had dyslexia – everyone has had some form of attention problem – whether it's with hyperactivity or without hyperactivity. Then there's the other side, where I have clients just who have the attention deficit disorder but have no learning disability.

Kris: So sometimes these things are mixed in, and they're hard to ...

Joan: ... to figure out, yes, absolutely so. If you assess for the learning disability, you really should assess the attention deficit also.

We've been talking with Joan and Les Esposito of the Dyslexia Awareness and Resource Center. That's the end of our interview, and I hope you've enjoyed it. For more great health related interviews go to Michael Senoff's <http://www.HardToFindSeminars.com>.