

Education Is the Greatest Thing

Rachester Motley

A Hard Beginning

My mom was born down South. She had to work in the fields and pick cotton day and night. Going to school was not a priority. My mom did not have access to education.

Mom moved our family to Detroit for a better life. I was one of eighteen kids. I was the baby. By the time my mom got to me, she was worn out. Mom had tuberculosis (TB), and she was hospitalized for a long time. It was extremely hard for me to get an education because of Mom's health. My brothers and sisters were grown up. I did not get the support that I needed.

I Did Not Know I Had Dyslexia

I did not graduate from high school. At the time, I did not know that I had dyslexia. I never knew why it was so hard for me to focus on things in school, or why reading was such a challenge. Back then, people like me did not have the support that they needed to learn. I got so discouraged that I left school as soon as I was old enough. I started working.

Pushing My Son to Get an Education

I did not want my son to suffer like me. I pushed him to get an education. Every day, I got him up for school. I told my son that he would graduate. Today he has a college degree. My son has also gone back to school to get more degrees for his career. My grandchildren are all educated.

Pushing Myself to Go Back to School

Three or four years ago, I found Oakland Literacy Council and started taking classes. I wanted to get an education because I wanted to be more independent. I wanted to be able to understand and read my mail. I have a wonderful tutor at Oakland Literacy Council named Jill. For the first



Rachester Motley with her son.

time, I had the chance to learn with someone one-on-one. Jill realized I had dyslexia. She researched ways to help me.

Jill and I started by breaking words down into small parts and sounding out each part. I never knew how to do that. Now I can understand my mail. I can read a lot better. I can even read words I have never seen before.

Reading Is Amazing!

When I'm walking my dogs, I'm amazed by all the words on the street signs and posters that I can read now. It's exciting to understand the words I see. Sometimes I struggle, but I like the challenge.

My tutor understands me. Sometimes I say, “Jill, did you know what you were getting into when you took me on?”

Jill smiles and says, “I know what I’m doing.”

I Have Come a Long Way, and You Can Too

Jill is proud of me. She sees progress in me. I have come a very long way. I always valued education, but I value education even more now. Having your education gives you power. My father always said, “Understanding is the greatest thing in the world.” I believe education is the greatest thing in the world.

To other people with dyslexia, I would say this: Learning with dyslexia is a lot of hard work. But there are people out there who are willing to teach you. You will be amazed at all the things you can learn. With the right support, it can happen! It makes you feel really great about yourself.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. Tell Rachester’s story in your own words—first very briefly (in just a few sentences), and then again with more details.
2. Read the story by Tammy Roya on pp. 4-5. How are their stories similar? How are they different? Be specific.
3. Read and discuss the definitions in the box on the right. The second definition mentions “strong thinking skills.” Point to examples of Rachester’s strong thinking skills in the text.

Rachester Motley (pictured here with her tutor) has been a student at Oakland Literacy Council in Pontiac, Michigan, since 2020. She loves her studies and is hungry for more knowledge. Rachester is living proof that even with dyslexia, you can learn and be successful.



What Is Dyslexia?



There are several definitions of dyslexia. According to the International Dyslexia Association, “Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.”

<https://dyslexiaida.org/definition-of-dyslexia/>

Here is a different definition written by editorial board member, Andjela Kaur: “Dyslexia affects how people process language. People with dyslexia may find it hard to:

- recognize words quickly,
- spell
- sound out words

For someone with dyslexia, these tasks are challenging because their brains process language sounds differently. People with dyslexia often have strong thinking skills and just need different ways to learn and access information.”