

# Dyslexia, Hyperlexia and Beyond

**Ann Farris**



Twenty plus years ago I was diagnosed as being heavily dyslexic and told there was nothing to be done to help me. How could this be? I was enjoying a very successful career as a producer/manager in opera and World Expositions and not willing to accept the testing officer's opinion. At the time I was Director of the Opera-Musical Theater Program at the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, DC and needed to feel competent and comfortable while reading. This article describes what I've discovered over these last two decades about my particular condition, my process for healing and the successes I continue to have.

## **My Diagnosis**

Typically and simplistically a dyslexic is defined as someone who has trouble sounding out and reading words and who has a poor vocabulary. However, even though I had been diagnosed as 'dyslexic', that definition did not fit me. I had two other issues: I did not seem to have the skills to comprehend the content of what I was reading and any effort I made only brought on a sense of inner rushing up the core of my body, a searing pain in my arms and across my eyes and a feeling of confusion in my brain. As a result when these discomforts would take over, I would simply "space out". Concentration was very challenging. In 1983, no one in the scientific, medical or academic community seemed to have any solution.

## **Elimination of Refined Sugar and Emotions.**

By chance, someone advised me to go off refined sugar. I decided to try it and to my amazement after a period of time the painful inner rushing within my body all but stopped. I then undertook extensive therapy to understand and learn how to handle the emotional issues that I had experienced during my lifetime. I knew somehow that this training was important to me in becoming the kind of a reader who could easily comprehend the content of what I was reading.

## **My Senses.**

I became proficient in understanding my body from a sensory point of view. I discovered that not only are my senses highly developed but also I have a synesthetic talent which enables me to feel one or more senses simultaneously. There's a downside to this skill which is that all this unasked sensorial information can cause real confusion in my brain. But as I learned about my synesthesia I was able to differentiate between the confusion

that was generated from my senses and the confusion that seemed to come from my “dyslexic” condition. Reference: <http://web.mit.edu/synesthesia>

### **Whoosh.**

Once I could differentiate between the feelings that came from my senses and those which came from my emotions I realized there was yet another inner feeling that could confuse me. I call it the “whoosh” because it appears suddenly through my head and into my chest and can require me to physically stop my current activity because I am in confusion. Learning to meditate and understanding myself from a metaphysical perspective gave me the tools to master this feeling. Reference: **The Other Side of Dyslexia** [www.dyslexiadiscovery.com](http://www.dyslexiadiscovery.com)

### **Retesting and Brain Gym.**

In November, 2005 I made two decisions. I would become licensed in Brain Gym® 1. (Educational Kinesiology) a movement-based program that is very effective in correcting dyslexic challenges and, I would be retested. Much has been learned in the twenty years since my first diagnosis. I wanted to see how the scientific community would assess my dyslexic condition now. Reference: <http://www.braingym.org>

### **Hyperlexia.**

This time the testing resulted in a different diagnosis. My primary issue is hyperlexia, dyslexia is secondary (only 20% of my problem). My hyperlexia diagnosis meant that I could not easily comprehend what I was reading because I was not creating images of the content while I was reading. The tests revealed that my reading comprehension was at a grade 3 level. How could that be? I am a graduate of Yale!!! Reference: [http://www.k12academics.com/hyperlexia\\_resources.htm](http://www.k12academics.com/hyperlexia_resources.htm)

### **Lindamood-Bell.**

To correct this situation I took the Visualizing and Verbalizing for Language Comprehension and Thinking Remedial Program at Lindamood-Bell. While the counselors were very skilled the training process was very challenging for me. The process of learning how to create images was physically very painful and my brain, emotions and body fought the process the whole time. I revisited all the emotional issues that I have ever experienced came up to be revisited. It was not a happy time in my life. I advanced myself to a grade nine reading comprehension level – quite an achievement I felt. However, as I began to face the challenge of imaging “theoretical” words, phrases or paragraphs my emotional interruptions plainly were not supporting any further advancement. It was time to stop and reflect. While I was proud of my progress I also was not enjoying reading. This process of learning how to create images seemed to extinguish my desire to read. Reference: <http://www.lblp.com>

### **Svetlana Masgutova Method and Reflexes.**

Shortly thereafter, in February 2006, as part of my training to become a Brain Gym instructor, I took a class on reflex pattern integration from Svetlana Masgutova, originator of the Musgutova Method, she is the Director of International

NeuroKinesiology Institute of Movement Development and Reflex Integration(TM), and author of 80 works on psychology, education, NeuroKinesiology, Edu-Kinesthetics, Art-Kinesiology(TM), and movement development. Her work draws out new levels of potential from physical and mental challenges, ranging from cerebral palsy, paralysis and developmental delays to post-traumatic stress and learning disabilities. Reference: <http://www.masgutovamethod.com>

### **Effect on Baby in Utero of a Mother's Emotional Trauma During Pregnancy.**

This class was a turning point for me. Masgutova's research in Russia of clients with different learning processes showed that some people developed while in utero their neuro-developmental basis for dyslexia, hyperlexia, autism etc. In some of these cases, the mothers experienced emotional traumas while pregnant and that trauma was then transferred to their child. The physical result is that some of the reflexes which usually develop when the baby is in utero do not develop correctly causing incomplete neurological connections in the brain formation. This was my case.

Interestingly, not long after I had been first diagnosed with dyslexia, my mother told me that while she was pregnant with me she was faced with a major emotional challenge which she thought I should know about. It is extraordinary to me that this revelation would become so important a clue, twenty years later.

### **Bowenwork.**

Around the time I was working with the Masgutova Method I was also introduced to Bowenwork. In this process a body work specialist applies "relatively few, gentle "moves" over muscles and other soft tissue addressing the whole body, stimulating it to reset and heal itself. The healing may occur at all levels as needed: physical, chemical, emotional, mental, energetic, etc" (2) I had a sense that Bowenwork might assist me in controlling my need to space out. This proved to be true. It taught me how to stay in my body while moving through different emotional states like anger or fear, an important skill for good reading. Reference: <http://www.bowtech.com>

### **"Switching On" My Brain.**

Since February, 2006 I have worked with the Brain Gym Balances and also with Masgutova Reflex Integration processes to correct the emotional issues linked to the underdeveloped reflexes. These processes have been amazingly effective in helping me solve the hyperlexia/dyslexia. A Brain Gym session called a balance involves discovering the emotional or physical issue to be handled, stating a positive goal to resolve it, and identifying and then implementing the movements to most effectively connect the parts involved. The goal is to allow the whole brain to function eliminating a tendency to "switch off" any part of the brain.

### **Link of Emotional Issues and Underdeveloped Reflexes.**

In my case most of these corrections have involved the reflex patterns that were underdeveloped in utero and the first three years of my life due to my mother's stresses that were passed on to me. As I have released the emotional issues around the underdeveloped reflexes and done the simple exercises the reflex patterns are correcting

themselves. The result seems to be that my brain has been gently reprogrammed making it ready to handle learning. The brilliance of the combination of Brain Gym (Educational Kinesiology) with Svetlana Masgutova's reflex work has proven to be the tools I needed to learn how to heal my hyperlexia and dyslexia. Had I known about this approach before I feel sure it would have made Lindamood-Bell a much less painful process. Maybe I would even have come away with the desire to read.

### **Balancing It All.**

How am I measuring my success? Intellectually, as my imaging skills improve, I am more willing to venture into the theoretical reading material. I now have the confidence that I can control the emotional eruptive behaviors that were stopping me from imaging theoretical words or concepts. Now, when the emotions appear I simply apply the integrative movements. By balancing the emotions and the reflexes simultaneously, I am able to continue reading. I am learning that concentration must be stress-free so that my brain will function as I need it to.

### **Progress At Last.**

The last twenty years have been quite a personal journey. I wouldn't have missed it for anything. Now, I feel like a new person. To experience the joy of comprehending what I read is such a gift and such a relief. To watch an opera performance and be able to remember the next day the staging is a new experience. Am I done? No, not yet. That does not bother me. I am making progress without the overwhelming stress. My ultimate goal is to have the confidence and desire to know that I can pick up a book, any book and enjoy reading it.

1. Brain Gym® is a registered trademark of Brain Gym International/Educational Kinesiology Foundation, [www.braingym.org](http://www.braingym.org).
2. <http://www.bowtech.com/public/about/overview.do>

Copyright 2007 Ann Farris

All rights reserved

PERMISSION MUST BE GRANTED BY THE AUTHOR FOR USE ON WEB SITES  
AND FOR OUTSIDE PUBLISHING

Dyslexia Discovery

PO Box 170036

San Francisco, CA, 94117

415 552 6330

[ann@dyslexiadiscovery.com](mailto:ann@dyslexiadiscovery.com)

[www.dyslexiadiscovery.com](http://www.dyslexiadiscovery.com)