

Benetech's Bookshare: Decoding Dyslexia with an Ivy Leaguer

Brian Meersma, Bookshare User

When I was younger reading was a struggle, and there were a lot of things I was interested in learning about, but being dyslexic my reading speed is much slower than my classmates and peers.

Kathy Stratton, Brian's Mother

His teachers thought that he was over-placed in general education classes, and they wanted to remove him and not have him participate with his same age peers.

Brian

I don't think I ever really enjoyed a book because I had to rely on somebody else to do the reading.

Kathy

When your child is struggling to read and so much of what they come in contact with on a day-to-day basis is reading, it can be very discouraging for the child and the family. Particularly through the school year it sets you apart, and it can lead to isolation and it can lead to diminished self-esteem when people can't read.

Brian

With Bookshare I found the joy of reading, and it really helped me take control over the learning that I was doing in classes.

Kathy

Some of the changes that I've noticed in Brian since he learned about Bookshare was just a newfound sense of independence. He would get book after book. He thought it was really cool.

Brian

One of the great things about Bookshare is I can hear and see the words that are being read, so instead of putting all my energy into decoding the words, I can use my energy to understand the content.

Kathy

I've spoken to a lot of parents who worry that their futures are somewhat limited. I try to give them hope that there are lots of options through access to assistive technologies like Bookshare so that they can really rely on their strengths and not just focus on their weaknesses day in and day out.

When he was studying for the ACTs he used a study guide through Bookshare, and now he's a junior at Cornell and he's a Dean's List student at an Ivy League school. I really don't think he would have been able to make it to college let alone do so well in college without having access to Bookshare.

[Closing text with voiceover]

Bookshare is a Benetech initiative and is free for all qualified US students and teachers.