

Jan. 17, 2014

Transcription Nick

Introduction: A video in which Nick describes his experience with accommodation for dyslexia, ADHD, and “sight dyslexia” or dysgraphia.

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

I have dyslexia with sight and sound, so what I’m told that means is that reading and spelling and hearing stuff so inside the classroom, taking notes, I can’t process note taking so I have to deal with that. I get notes from the Meighen Centre which is great. Outside—taking directions, I’m terrible at directions. I couldn’t tell you where to go in Sackville. I could show you, but as for me to tell you or you telling me, that’s something I definitely struggle with, and just general reading outside of school and inside of school is hard. I have ADHD and I’m big so nobody wants a big guy sitting beside them kind of moving around. Because of that, I’ve decided to sit farther back in class with space to kind of monitor my movement.

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

I’ve got the reading software which is Kurzweil, which is great. It really helps me with everything; I don’t know where I would be without it reading-wise, studying-wise. I’ve got e-textbooks—I just fire my textbook on there. It takes me a little bit longer because I have to slow down the reader and have to read it more than once. It’s kind of a pain in the butt that way and the voice isn’t the greatest but I still love my Kurzweil. I put my notes on there. I get a lot of my notes through email and documents—that’s another big thing, getting notes. Like I said earlier, I can’t take notes, so I need notes. That’s really about it. Extra time on tests, midterms and stuff like that, which is great. I use my Kurzweil during exams to read it. I get to type most of my midterms, so that’s pretty much all the accommodations I get.

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

All my professors know—I try to sit down and I talk with them before because it is very distracting to have somebody in the back of your class moving around shaking and not paying attention—what looks to be not paying attention and looking around and sometimes I bring my cell phone just to break up the time. I’ll structure it so I pay attention for so long and I’ll look at my phone for 5 minutes or I’ll look out the window for 5 minutes and then back to it. Without that I’d be really useless, so I have to kind of sit down and tell my professors, “Look, I am paying attention.” For the most part, when professors tell jokes, nobody laughs—you’ll hear me laughing because I’m the one listening, which is funny, and to tell him I come to class every day, this is why I don’t take notes, I am in the Meighen Centre, I have to get forms signed to take midterms, so I have to give them that. What has helped me is I really structure my day. I wouldn’t say I have OCD but I’m very structured in everything I do, almost to the point where I fear change—I don’t know, I don’t want to say that, but a little bit. I’m very structured and I sit in the

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same seat in class. Whether that helps me or not, it just keeps me there so I'm not always constantly, "Am I in front of somebody, can they see me, am I bothering them." I'm up every day at a certain time, I lay out structures—OK, if I've got a paper due at this time—I have tutors, so I have to meet my tutor every week at the same time to make sure I don't miss it or anything and during readings I'll time it up so 20 minutes to read, 10-minute break, 20 minutes to read, 10-minute break and that really helps me because with ADHD, it keeps me going and then it helps me handle everything. Handle is a bad word, but it kind of helps me cope, I guess. You've got to buckle down, it's living with it—living with it is huge and coming out and saying you have it, especially with dyslexia it's something that's invisible, kind of, disability. Nobody sees it—if you were to look at me and I were to look at you, you'd think, "Well, you're a normal looking, well-mannered young man" and I'd say, "Well, no, I have dyslexia" and a lot of people struggle with coming out and saying that. If I could take anything away from being here and learning everything I learn it's the power and ability to kind of say, "Look, this is a weight off my shoulder, I have dyslexia, I have been living with it for 22 years, I'll never get rid of it." There's no pill that will get rid of it. There's programs that will help, like Kurzweil, like the Meighen Centre, like people to read my papers and stuff but that is something that will never be taken away. Being diagnosed with a disability, dyslexia in my case, well there's ways to handle it. Having dyslexia, being dyslexic, or living with dyslexia and that's the latter, you have to get there. You know, you go through all these kind of stages, you know you have the "I don't know what's wrong with me, why can't I read, why can't I pay attention, why can't I do this" and then there's being diagnosed, "Well, now we've figured it out, we know what it is, let's work on that. And then there's working with it and shaping it. It takes many years, I mean my first year here, I was kicked out of university because I didn't know how to deal with it, I didn't pass any of my classes, really, because I didn't know how to live with it, I didn't know how to structure my day, I just knew something was wrong. And now I'm at the stage, I still struggle sometimes, but now I'm at the stage where I know what I have to do if I'm not performing at my best, I know my expectations. I never shoot too high, and I never shoot too low, and it's really hard, learning to live with it is probably I would say the hardest thing for any student or any person with a disability, not just one like myself.