

Imagine a room filled with people who have either a loyal seeing eye dog or visible hearing aids. Others in the room are sitting with sign language interpreters or in a wheelchair. Not only are they all unable to see or hear or move, but there is only one person who has none of these physical limitations. That is what I am. I am a person with an invisible disability. For years, my family and friends knew me as the different one. When most of my peers were excelling in school and grasping complex concepts, I was lost and often times discouraged. When everyone was moving ahead to the advanced level, I could barely grasp the basics. It was not until I became a 20 something tourism professional in client relations, that a close friend suggested to think outside the box and find out what I had been labelled into and find out what “really was going on.” I was successful. I was a supervisor. I was impervious to the challenges that deterred me at an early age but I pressed on and booked a psycho-educational assessment for support to pursue my original dream of writing and reading. I realized the importance of what I was doing. During the assessment, I felt nervous and curious. My hands sweating, my fingers fidgeting, my knees shaking. Not only the importance of having a proper diagnosis, but the assessment taught me to see what other individuals in my family could not. Being labelled as a granddaughter of an illiterate grandmother would not stop me. I pressed on. After a week or two of impatient waiting and soul searching, I followed up with the professional practitioner who had bittersweet news. Although I was confident, certainly capable and my tenacity unflappable, I had been diagnosed with dyslexia. I later came to know that learning disabilities were common with people who were like me; curious creators, ravenous readers, witty writers. I felt empowered. Not only a BC resident, I felt compelled to smash the stereotypes of those who though I could not see and began sharing my story with everyone I knew. Dyslexics can read. Dyslexics can write. Dyslexics can unite. Or untie, as my family teases. Instead of life handing me lemons, I made fruit salad with melons, pressing on and pursuing my passion in the Digital & Print Publishing diploma program at Langara College. My time at Langara College was incredible. Not only did I place on the Dean’s Honor Roll, but each subsequent term my GPA improved. This came with a lot of hard work, elbow grease with a sprinkle of spellcheck. And my faculty was inspired by my driven nature and my organizational coping habits (time management, calendar, reminders) helped me graduate the at the same level as my non-dyslexic peers. Success! Plus, we, as a department, produced a magazine entitled PRM (Pacific Rim Magazine) and were awarded College Media’s 2019-2020 2<sup>nd</sup> place in their Two-Year Feature Magazine category and in a pandemic. Not only did the print magazine give me hands on experience as an Ad Traffic Manager, but the course had an online component which helped me design and create my own WordPress portfolio website. In the online version of the magazine, I was quality assurance which helped me troubleshoot and locate mistakes in our department’s online version of the magazine. My personal site is often still used today to show to potential freelance clients and employers. While my road to discovering my dyslexia has not been easy, I am grateful the veil has been lifted and I am confident I will graduate from SFU’s Editing Certificate. Not only do I think differently, I strive for excellence and look for different abilities in communications. My challenges in the internship will be to not discourage myself and not see my limitations as an inability, but more as a different ability. I feel I am no longer able to use the word disability, as to me, it has always been about having different abilities. I also find when my nerves get the better of me, I feel embarrassed. Immediately I am transported to when my assessment was happening; hands sweating, fingers fidgeting, knees shaking. But I know, that without this weakness, I will not thrive. I am courageous, I am curious, I am a dyslexic, I am me.