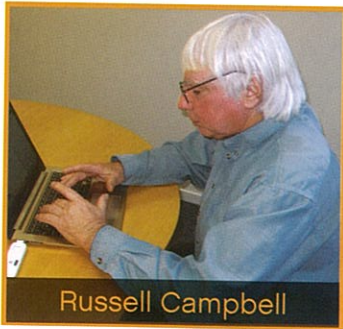


A STORY FROM AN ADULT SPELD NZ PUPIL



Russell Campbell is living proof that it's never too late to get help for dyslexia. He had semi-retired before he finally found the courage and time to tackle his huge literacy problems. Russell says he now loves to read and write - no small feat after a lifetime of struggle.

"I had carefully tailored my life to avoid situations where

I had to demonstrate reading and writing. I couldn't even fill in a boarding pass. I just couldn't understand what things meant. Now I'm so much more confident. My horizons are much broader. It's a wonderful, rewarding and enriching thing to be able to communicate with written word, particularly in our world of computerisation."

Russell's problems began at school which he describes as a complete disaster.

"I couldn't understand how I could not learn. All the way through school I struggled with reading. I couldn't even read a ruler. My spelling was atrocious. I could always write but nobody else could read it. The teachers and my parents just didn't understand me. I was called lazy and disruptive. They didn't understand that I could not follow instructions.

"I got tremendously bullied. I had the horrendous fear of someone thinking I was a dummy. I lacked confidence so I hung out with a bad crowd. It's so embarrassing when you can't spell. It's easier to hang out with kids on the street corner than kids in the library."

Despite his literacy issues, Russell knew he could understand far more than many other kids around him - especially when it came to taking apart machines and putting them back together again.

"I am really interested in the way a dyslexic's memory works. I used to think I was mad. I couldn't memorise my number plate yet I could pull a machine apart into a million pieces and then put it back together again, accounting for every screw and washer."

Russell put these talents to good use after leaving school without passing a single exam. He began a fitter and turner apprenticeship and eventually established his own business servicing wood working machinery.

Russell's business flourished until computerisation arrived. Unable to understand the computer controlling the machinery, he closed down the business. Russell also continued to struggle with daily life literacy situations. He could roughly follow bank statements but struggled to fill in forms. Eventually Russell decided enough was enough.

"I went around all the outfits that help with spelling and chose SPELD because they do their research. They're aware of upcoming education and they're aware that dyslexia is a brain function issue, not a psychological thing. They know that we think and function differently to 90 percent of the population. My tutor was absolutely lovely. She would go along with what I found easiest and was flexible enough to work the magic with that. We all learn in different ways. Being client centred is really important."

On his tutor's recommendation, Russell also began a Cogmed computer-based training programme to help improve his working memory. He describes this as a "brain changing" experience.

Russell says he now works in the financial sector, currently investing in research that will allow houses to be built by machines. He also takes an avid interest in applied neurology.

"I now have the skills to do research. It used to take a very long time and I couldn't remember what I had read. Working memory is a big thing with dyslexia."

Russell now loves writing his own emails.

"People now don't pick up the phone. They email. If you can't read or write and understand language fluently in the computer age, so many things are not accessible to you. You are really travelling quite blind. I can now recognise when words are spelt correctly. Even with Spell Check, before tutoring I couldn't figure out what to use from all the alternatives."

Russell believes many adults with dyslexia become adept at hiding the problem.

"They make all sorts of excuses as to why they are too busy to write so they are hard to pick up. Some of my friends have dyslexia and work in the engineering or building trades. All are bright and just like me, they hid when they went to school and were hard to teach so they did not bother and people thought they were lazy."

Russell's message to other adults with dyslexia is that it's never too late to learn to read and write confidently.

"As we get older, it's absolutely essential to keep our brains going. Doors can open because of it."