

YOUR LIFE

The Daily Section on Better Living

I resolve to...

On the occasion of World Health Day, actor Yudishtir hopes to stay off greasy Indian Chinese >B19



Tom Cruise was victimised

AP: When he was seven, Hollywood actor Tom Cruise was labelled dyslexic. The primary schools he attended used the look-say method (or Dick and Jane method) of teaching reading. "I would try to concentrate on what I was reading, then get to the end of the page and have very little memory of anything I had read. I would go blank, feel anxious, nervous, bored and dumb. I would get angry, my legs would hurt. When I would go to a new school, I would not want the other kids to know about my learning disability, but then I would be sent off to remedial reading."

BLESSING in disguise

Special educator Bela Raja's book, *Children With Learning Difficulties*, which was released yesterday, is arguably the first Indian book to address the issue, thanks to the stigma attached. **YOUR LIFE** proves that learning difficulties are also the stuff geniuses are made of

By Kasmin Fernandes

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He turns the tables

Sion resident Aakash Sharma became DJ Aakash at age 16. He taught himself how to mix music and work the console at sound and lights company, Amigo. He worked his way up, starting out as a helper and going on to become a regular DJ at nightclubs at Ramee and The Regent. The industrious teen could give any unemployed free loader a complex. So, when you are told Aakash has a "learning difficulty" called Attention Deficit



Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), you find it hard to stomach. But he did not have it all that easy. "I had two bosses, one of whom knew everything about me, but treated me like an equal. Once, the other boss mockingly remarked to him, 'Yeh kisko leke aye idhar.' His attitude had nothing to do with my work. The partners later parted, and he invited me to join his firm."

Those disinterested in learning might just be creative, complicated thinkers

Learning difficulties can mask a gift

If your child hates school and achieves way below his/her potential, he/she may be creative, complicated thinkers whose "giftedness" is being overlooked, according to education experts at the University of Melbourne.

Expert on "gifted education",

Dr John Munro from the Faculty of Education, says it is estimated that up to 30% of talented students are misunderstood and rarely get recognition for what they know and think; they can be considered both gifted and learning disabled.

What lies beneath

Dr Munro's research group used a

range of cognitive tasks to map and compare the knowledge of gifted students, gifted students who had literacy-learning disabilities, and non-gifted students. Their thinking and learning patterns suggest they use "global synthetic brain processes" — processes involving personal ways of understanding ideas. This means they are more likely

to produce creative interpretations of ideas rather than culturally typical interpretations. It explains why they face difficulty learning to spell or understand math tables when taught 'by rote', apart from rules for social interaction.

Other evidence

These findings support and

extend recent brain-imaging studies demonstrating that, when presented with symbolic tasks, both gifted and average students activate symbolic processing areas of the brain. In addition, the gifted students activate cortical areas that store their visual memories of personal experiences, unlike their average-learning peers.

How to tell if your child has LD
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