

Jim and Jamie's story - Family learning is vital

**Feb 2010 in mum's words:** "My partner, Jim was assessed and diagnosed as Dyslexic in his last year at secondary school. Jamie, my daughter (9) was never diagnosed although her symptoms were identical to Jim's. She hated school. I pushed for school to recognise it, and they always said she could not be assessed as she wasn't one of the worst in the school and the money allocated for assessments was spent on the children with the worst problems. She was offered extra reading one to one. So I found help outside of school, as I felt extra reading was only going to add to her frustration and not help with the problem. I knew my daughter was very visual and brilliant at pictures",

*"I taught both of them how to visualise words and holds words still. The more Jim joined in, the more enthusiastic Jamie became. I also taught them to check when they were reading for the most comfortable position - nearly always holding the book up and not looking down on the words, where they so often pick up negative emotions. Jim had one particularly startling response. He was looking at a book with pictures on one page and words on the opposite page. He just couldn't keep his eyes on the words when looking down. His eyes automatically crossed to the page with pictures. But when he held the book up, he reported 'there are words on the paper' and started to read." Olive Hickmott's comment: I only needed to see them once and received the following updates on progress."*

**4 days later:** "When I sent my partner and daughter off to see Olive for a 1 to 1 session I expected them to come home with some new skills to help them improve their reading and spelling. I was not prepared to be totally amazed at the results.

My partner who I've known for twelve years has never read a book or willingly helped our children with homework, as he found it too frustrating. Since his appointment he has sat at the table writing, spelling and reading with our children. He has also been teaching our six year old (who was starting to show signs of dyslexia) the skills he learnt from Olive. I truly am blown away with how his confidence has grown, and he is motivated, encouraging and teaching our children all his new skills.

Our daughter, who would protest as soon as we started doing spellings or reading is now excited and can whizz through learning new words. She is even spelling them backwards! Not only has this made a difference to them both individually and it has also improved our family life.

The stress levels in the house have gone right down, confidence has grown, there is more co-operation and some very happy people. I believe the skills taught by Empowering Learning is a must for schools. If my partner had been taught this information in school, his whole school life could have been different. He would have left school with good grades and a sense of achievement, instead of being a "problem kid" and leaving school feeling a failure.

Our daughter has been lucky to learn this at age 9 and will now have the opportunity to succeed in school. Teaching this in schools would have a massive positive impact, if children read and write they are happier more confident motivated kids, therefore teachers' jobs would be easier, grades would go up. Money savings would be made as extra staff wouldn't need to come in. I would love to see schools benefit as much as our family has".

**After 4 weeks** "I have found that Jamie is practising on her own when a new word comes up, or with Jim. I think I can get a bit over-enthusiastic and she gets fed up with that!!! When I used to work with Jamie it felt as if every day we were starting over from scratch, now it feels like she is making progress each day. Her reading has become more fluent as she isn't stopping at every word. She is finding it easier and faster to sound words out too.

Jim said he feels so much more relaxed now around literacy as he feels he has a tool he can use anytime, anywhere. He is also reading with the kids more and I haven't got him asking me over and over how to spell the same word. He is also reminding the kids to look up, and he has been practising with Jamie.

My 6 year old is using the white board very well to learn her spellings, and is so pleased when she can spell the words backwards! I have learnt that I need to be much more patient with them and things go better when they are working at their own pace.

I told the school about Jamie and Jim seeing Olive, I also gave the school the book and web site details. My personal feeling was that they didn't seem to be interested or it could be that they are just too busy with paper work!"

**After 3 months:** Jamie's progress has been slow and I found that when I backed off and concentrated on Laurie (my 6 yr old daughter) Jamie saw the progress Laurie made and is now much more willing to put in the effort.

Laurie can now learn 7 spellings in one evening and she remembers them. For the past 7 weeks she has got full marks in every spelling test at school. Previously she would have only learnt 1 per evening and would not have remembered them all for the test. Her reading flows much more now too. Jamie has gone up a reading level, and has been told she will probably be moving up another level soon. Jim is still using the techniques and his confidence continues to grow.

**After 10 months:** "Life is good in our household, Jamie is working towards her SATS at the moment. She is reading every day (without me nagging!). She also asked for books for xmas !!!! There is no battle with her any more over

homework, she is much more confident with her literacy work (although it's not her favourite subject!)

Jim said he loves the white board as he knows now that if he wants to learn a word he speaks it into his phone, the phone spells it for him, and he puts it in his imaginary white board. I suppose really life is a whole lot easier, for all of us!

It seems amazing now that in one appointment so much was achieved - it just set them on a way of learning that they had never realised could be so valuable. They had to do the practise and as you can see the difference has been extraordinary".