

Transcript — Caris, age 15: Day in the life with dyslexia

[On-screen text: Caris' story]

Description: The camera on Caris in the style of an old home movie. Soft music playing in the background. Transition to a photo of Caris as a baby with her fists in front of her mouth. Transition to a photo of elementary-age Caris wearing a puffy tulle dress and headband with a flower, holding a purse. Transition to Caris, a teenager wearing a white V-neck T-shirt, jeans, and glasses, with her hair pulled back in a ponytail tied with a bow. She sits on the couch in her living room, with framed photos behind her on the walls. She points to herself.]

[On-screen text: Caris, 15, Dyslexia]

Caris: I'm Caris. I'm from California. And I am dyslexic.

Description: Caris putting books into her bookbag. There are posters and photos on the wall behind her. Transition to a close-up shot of her bookshelf with different books on it, a small fan, a see-through diorama, and a few other knick-knacks. Transition to Caris sitting on the couch. Transition to Caris sitting in a chair with a life-size Snoopy on the back of it. She looks closely at something on her computer screen.]

I started realizing it when everybody else was able to get the concept of something super easy. But, for me, it was like I had to break it down or I had to slow it down, because it was like such a difficult topic. So, I think that was what I struggled with the most.

[Description: Slow pan across Caris' wall, showing honor roll, participation, and department award certificates, as well as a soccer team photo. Close-up of the honor roll certificate showing Caris had a 3.5-3.99 GPA. Transition to Caris sitting on the couch.]

I was comparing myself to others. And I was doubting myself because I didn't understand fully.

[Description: Caris sitting at the kitchen counter, looking at something. Transition to Caris wearing her backpack, running out the front door. A teenager with a laptop leaves behind her and closes the door. Transition to Caris smiling and talking to her family in the kitchen.]

In elementary, I was bullied because I couldn't spell right. I couldn't say words right, I was a slower learner, I kept repeating myself. It took a long time for me to boost myself up by saying, "It's not a bad thing. It's something where you learn different."

[Description: Caris and her dad on the couch, hugging and smiling. The camera pulls out to show Caris' mom on the other side. Both her mom and dad have their arms around Caris, who is in the middle. All three are smiling and laughing.]

And my dad always told me, "It's OK to learn different. It's OK to learn this way and it's not like it's a bad thing to have this." My parents would always boost me up.

[On-screen text: Kevin, Caris' dad]

[Description: A middle-aged person with a salt-and-pepper goatee and buzzed hair, wearing a maroon short-sleeve Henley shirt, sitting on the couch, with framed photos on the wall behind them.]

Kevin: Caris is like, "Dad, you know, they're going to think that I'm just some stereotypical Black kid that's lazy. They think all Black people are lazy, and I'm not lazy."

[Description: Caris standing over the couch in the living room. Kevin is seated on another couch farther in the background. Transition to Kevin sitting in frame on the couch.]

I was like, "Don't worry about that. You can't change how people think about you, but you can change how you think about yourself."

[Description: Caris sitting on the bed in her room, reading a book.

Transition to Caris, her mom, and her sibling talking in the kitchen.]

If you notice that your child is struggling, and before you go to what you think is the obvious — they're just lying about doing their work, they're lying about studying — get to the deeper issue.

[Description: Sound of an electric toothbrush. Caris in the bathroom brushing her teeth, looking down at the camera. Transition to Caris taking clothes out of her closet. Transition to Caris sitting on the couch. Transition to a pan across Caris' wall of Polaroid photos with her friends.]

Caris: When I got diagnosed with dyslexia, I think it made me understand of why I was like struggling the most. For me, in the beginning, I was like, I have this and now all my friends are gonna judge me and everybody's gonna be like, "Oh, she's the slow one in the classroom. You don't wanna be paired with her."

[Description: Caris stretching on the floor. Transition to Caris putting on her backpack in her room, and leaning in toward the camera. Transition to Caris sitting on the couch. Transition to Caris walking down the hallway in school. Transition back to Caris sitting on the couch. Transition to Caris walking the grounds outside her school.]

I think it was like I was really doubting myself when I first found out. In the beginning, my teachers have noticed that that wasn't clicking. Then they actually found out that I had dyslexia when I took the test. And that's when I started getting extra help and extra time on assignments, because I was a really slow learner in the beginning, and my reading level for like a second- or third-grader was still at a kindergartner.

[Description: Caris sitting on the couch. Transition to Caris looking at something on her computer. Transition back to Caris on the couch. Transition to a close-up on Caris scrolling the trackpad on her laptop.]

I think the main thing that will make it super challenging for me is not being able to understand a word, say a word, or know what the word means. It gets hard, and I feel like my other peers understand it. So I feel like out of place, and I'm like, how do I not understand this word?

[Description: Caris sitting on the couch. Transition to Caris sitting at the desk in her room, working on her laptop.]

I always break down every assignment into steps. It's a lot easier for me. And I break it into chunks so that it's not like one whole big assignment that I have to do, and so like I'm not so stressed out about it.

[Description: Caris sitting on the couch. Transition to Caris sitting in a chair in her room, looking at her laptop.]

The things that make it a big challenge is like when I don't know which letter to put and like I don't know where to place it. And every time I sound it out, it still didn't make sense to me because I didn't know which letter to put there.

[Description: Caris in the passenger seat of a car. Her dad is driving and her sibling is in the back seat. Transition to Caris on the couch. As she talks, she makes a circular motion with her arms. Transition back to the family in the car.]

I'm not the best in direction. Like if I'm like in the car with my parents and they do a whole little loop-de-loop and we get back on the freeway, that confuses me so much.

[Description: Different shots of Caris in a class, dancing. Then a shot of Caris alone in the dance studio, practicing in front of a full-length mirror that spans the whole length of one wall. Trophies are lined up against the bottom of the mirror.]

It was so hard for me to learn my left from my right. It does happen to me a lot in dance, especially in the mirror when I'm looking at myself.

[Description: The whole family seated around a table in a restaurant. Caris holds a menu and laughs out loud. Transition to Caris sitting on the couch.

Transition to the family seated in a row on the couch, laughing. Caris' mom and sibling are holding a baby and a toddler on their laps, respectively.]

I'm so happy where I am today. I love what I do. I love that my parents support me in whatever I do. And I'm so grateful that I have them. I'm so grateful for the family that I have.

[Description: Framed photo of Caris' grandmother. Caris talking to her dad and gesturing with her hand.]

What my grandmother always told me is that you should never give up and always follow your dream.

[Description: Caris standing outside her front door, looking straight at the camera, with her hands on her hips, smiling widely. Transition to Caris sitting on the couch.]

You've just gotta stay strong. That's what my grandparents always told me. "Stay strong and strive for your dreams and everything's gonna be OK."

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