Transcript — Francesca, age 13: Day in the life with dyscalculia

[**On-screen text:** Francesca's story]

[**Description:** A guitar plays in the background. Framed photos of Francesca as a baby, then as a toddler wearing a white lace dress. Transition to a from-behind shot of Francesca sitting on a chair at the kitchen counter. Transition to Francesca, a teenager with braces and long brown hair, wearing jeans and a white zip-up hoodie, sitting on the couch. The kitchen is visible behind her.]

[**On-screen text:** Francesca, 13, Dyscalculia]

Francesca: Hi, I'm Francesca. I'm 13 years old.

[**Description:** Francesca facing the camera and smiling. She twirls her wet hair around her finger. Photos of Francesca: smiling in an elementary school classroom; lying down next to a fence, kissing a guinea pig she's holding in her hands; as a toddler, sitting in the water on a beach playing with sand.]

The first time I discovered that I had dyscalculia, I was a little bit relieved that I wasn't dumb or something like that. But it did make me mad that I had to work harder than the other kids who would just pick it up right away.

[**On-screen text:** Megan, Francesca's mom]

[**Description:** A middle-aged person with short brown hair tied back in a low ponytail, wearing a white T-shirt and sitting on the couch. She starts to tear up as she begins to talk. Transition to Megan giving Francesca a hug and both of them smiling. Transition to Francesca walking the grounds of her school.]

Megan: When you send them to school with something like dyscalculia, you have this kid with this big spirit going into the classroom. That can cause a lot of anxiety, and it can be really hard for them.

[**Description:** Megan and Francesca outside, smiling. Transition to Francesca wearing a helmet and riding a horse.]

You just hope that they don't lose that spirit. And I think that's the hardest part as a parent.

[**Description:** Photo of an elementary-age Francesca in front of a pond, wearing a white-and-pink polka-dot shirt. Transition to Megan and Francesca at the horse-riding school, standing outside and talking. Megan touches Francesca's arm.]

When she was little, when she was first diagnosed, she'd say, "Mom, my heart just feels like it's beating out of my chest."

[**Description:** Megan sitting on the couch. Transition to the whole family in the kitchen: Megan cuts something on a chopping board, Francesca's sibling sits on a chair playing with an electronic game, her dad is doing something at the counter. Francesca hands Megan a knife. Transition back to Megan on the couch.]

There was a point where she would start having panic attacks outside of school. And then, you know, she'd say, "Oh, this kid said this," or "This kid did this occasionally." Going into that environment and trying and trying, having to work through it is commendable.

[**Description:** Francesca doing math homework on a calculator. Transition to Francesca at the kitchen table doing homework, writing in her notebook. Transition back to Francesca on the couch.]

Francesca: My dyscalculia shows up when I'm doing math, like adding, subtracting, multiplication, division, et cetera. Anything that usually involves math is when it shows up, and it's like, "Hi."

[**Description:** Francesca at the kitchen table doing homework, writing in her notebook. Transition to Francesca on the couch. Transition to

Francesca walking the grounds of her school with other students. Transition to her walking into a room.]

Usually, memorization is the way that I try to keep it together. Or, maybe I'll jot it down like, "Oh, this symbol means this." My mom is still helping me the best she can. And then, for school, there's always someone in the room if I need help.

[**Description:** Megan sitting on the couch. Transition to Francesca sitting at a desk, working on a computer. Transition back to Megan on the couch. Transition to Francesca smiling at the camera. Transition back to Megan on the couch.]

Megan: I think kids really want to do well. And I think so often kids are perceived as lazy or that they're not trying hard enough. And I think it's really important for those children to be seen and be understood. And that does wonders for that child, just to be seen and say, "Yeah, I see that you're struggling."

[**Description:** Francesca sitting on the edge of a pool, dressed in a bathing suit, wearing a swim cap and goggles on her head. Transition to Francesca swimming laps in a pool. Transition to Francesca adjusting her swim cap. Transition to Francesca waiting at the end of the pool lane and then starting her lap. Transition to an overhead shot of Francesca swimming the lane.]

Francesca: With swimming, the way that dyscalculia affects me is, let's say, I have to read the board for the interval times. And you have to do it on this time. And then every time they say, "Go on the 20," for example, "Get on the wall and go 20 seconds later." That's always been a really struggling thing for me, so usually I'll just look over at the person next to me, and when they go, I go.

[**Description:** Over-the-shoulder shot of Francesca paying at a bakery. Transition to Francesca sitting on the couch. She makes air quotes as she says "pray that's enough change."]

It's still really challenging for me. Whenever I had to pay for something, I'll just give them a 20 and ask for change and then pray that's enough change. And I still do that today. I'm just hoping they're a good cashier and they'll give me the money I need.

[**Description:** Megan smiling and giving Francesca a big hug. Back-and-forth shots of Megan sitting on the couch and Megan and Francesca standing together, hugging and smiling.]

Megan: I had to learn a lot about what she was experiencing. The more I learned about what was going on, it made it easier for me to help her. I think the kids who really excel, who really thrive, have an advocate behind them saying, "I see it. I'll help you. You know, let me help you."

[**Description:** Francesca sitting at the desk in her room, writing in a notebook. Transition to Francesca rolling over in her bed and getting out of bed.]

Francesca: Dyscalculia, it's a part of my life. I've almost embraced it. I've learned by now how to manage it in my life, and I couldn't see my life without it now.

[**Description:** Francesca sitting on the couch. Transition to Megan, Francesca, her two siblings, and her dad embracing in one big hug. Everyone is smiling and laughing and Francesca is making a funny face.]

I think it's great that I have a support system. Like a lot of people don't have one, and I'm just really grateful that I do have one.

[**Description:** Francesca sitting on the couch. Transition to Megan smiling and walking around the living room. Transition back to Francesca on the couch. Transition to Megan cooking something on the stove and Francesca standing next to her.]

My mom, when she learned about like dyscalculia, she was really supportive. My mom was a really big help because she'd like read all about it and learn all about it, just to see like how I learn things and how I need to learn things, so that she could help me to the best of her abilities.

[**Description:** The whole family seated around the table eating a meal. Close-up of Francesca smiling and licking her fork. Transition to Francesca sitting at the table, eating out of a mason jar and talking to someone.]

Even though my brain works differently, it doesn't affect the way that I act. I see everything everyone else sees. I'm still me.

[**Description:** Megan sitting on the couch.]

Megan: I always tell them, I'm like, "I will help you," but they do all the work, and that's huge.

[**Description:** Francesca in the passenger seat of a moving car. Transition to Francesca in her room, looking at the camera and smiling.]

All of those kids, they're the true heroes for sure.

[Understood sonic logo]