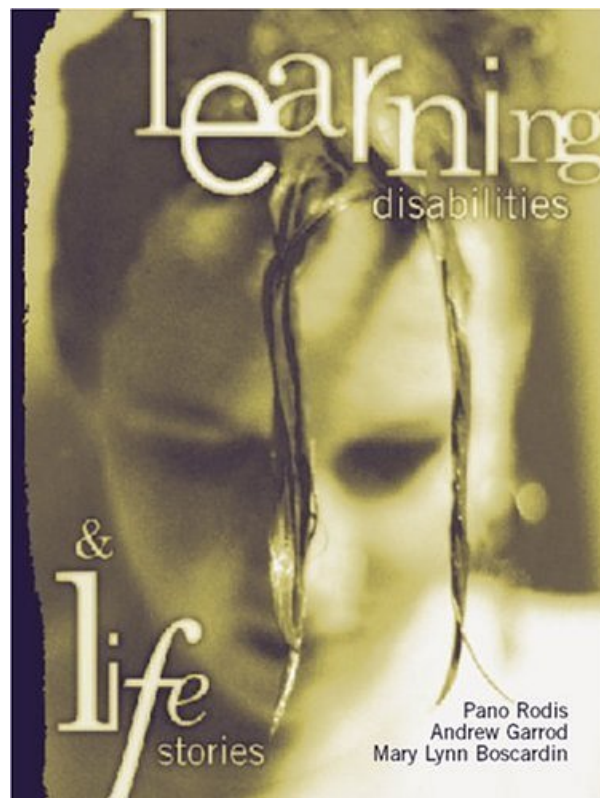
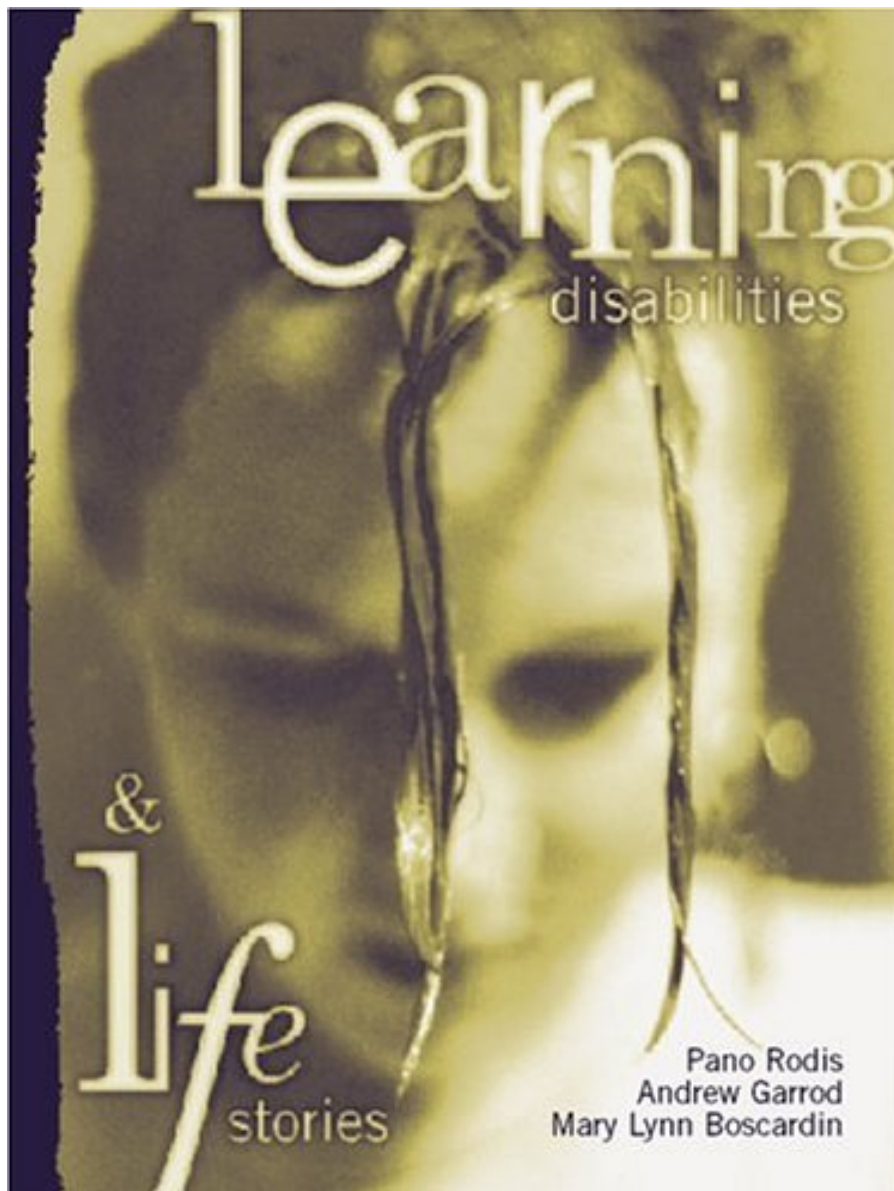


**LEARNING DISABILITIES AND LIFE
STORIES BY PANO RODIS, ANDREW
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Review

"Learning Disabilities and Life Stories brings important new perspectives to the study of learning disabilities — those of people living with them. Their poignant and informative narratives combined with the scholarly and timely works of the authors makes this a must read for anyone who works with people challenged by these difficulties who wishes to be both empathetic and effective." —By Mark Ciocca, Ph. D, ABPP, Capital Valley Counseling Associates, Past President of the New Hampshire Psychological Association

From the Back Cover

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For any educator or parent of students with learning disabilities.

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Most helpful customer reviews

24 of 24 people found the following review helpful.

National Association of School Psychologists

By A Customer

Learning Disabilities & Life Stories

Edited by Pano Rodis, Andrew Garrod & Mary Lynn Boscardin (Allyn & Bacon, 2001; ISBN # 0205320104)

Reviewed by Peg Dawson, NCSP

On a recent flight to France, I sat next to a French physicist, currently living in Cambridge, Massachusetts. His specialty was optics and he told me he knew Ansel Adams personally. When he asked what I did for a living, I told him I was a psychologist specializing in children and adults with learning and attention disorders. His reaction, like so many adults outside the fields of education and psychology with whom I converse, was: "Don't you think that young people who claim to have these problems are, in fact, just lazy and unmotivated, and use the labels LD and ADD as an excuse?"

While in France, I began reading the book, *Learning Disabilities & Life Stories*, and I wished I could have given my friend the French physicist a copy of the book to read. How cavalierly he suggested that learning disorders are really excuses for character flaws. This book is a series of 13 autobiographical narratives written by adult students with learning and attention disorders. Each autobiography is different, yet each is laden with pain - many express anger and triumph as well. I have worked with students with disabilities all my professional life, and I thought I had a grasp on what it means to have a learning disability. After reading this book, I realized that my understanding of learning disabilities has been grounded in a logical-scientific-cognitive world. Students with disabilities view their learning problems through an emotional filter - and no student, it appears, grows up in America with a disability and emerges unscathed from the experience.

I have always viewed with some suspicion the argument that learning disabilities are the creation of a socio-cultural context. I have questioned this argument because I know the students I work with have genuine difficulty reading - or doing math, or paying attention, or remembering things. The point this book makes is that the impact of a disability on a student is powerfully affected by the environment in which that student finds himself or herself.

American students grow up in a world that rewards ambition, personal achievement and competition. The current emphasis on high stakes testing only accentuates this. And it's not just that teachers and parents have this bias - although this can be devastating enough, as several of the essayists in this book attest. Children, too, absorb this message from a very early age. Most of the students writing these essays endured teasing and ridiculing by their peers. And the ones who didn't still managed to learn that they were defective when compared to their classmates. Every contributor to this book had to dig themselves out of a fairly deep hole to get to the point where they could survive in college and write about the experience of growing up with a disability. In fact, a majority of students with disabilities fail to graduate from high school and only a scant 7 percent of them go on to higher education. Bruised as these writers are, they are clearly the survivors!

The book concludes with several essays written by scholars in the fields of education and psychology. While I found the autobiographies themselves the most useful part of this book, the essays by professionals were informative. It was helpful to find the socio-cultural argument amplified. One author described the stages that students with disabilities go through in dealing with their disability, a description that matched my own

professional experience. But the enduring lesson I brought away from the book is how absolutely critical it is to view these students as more than a collection of disabilities. Too often, we pay lip service to the need to recognize a child's strengths as well as weaknesses. Think about it: humans develop strong self-concepts by locating and expanding their areas of competence. Robert Kegan, one of the contributing scholars, asks, "How wide a range of a child's endeavors are we willing to respect?" The task of childhood, in Eriksonian terms, is to develop "industry." This same writer states, "If we shrink the respectable 'industrial' arena down to the one domain in which children who have learning disabilities have the most difficulty, we create childhood worlds of pain."

Reading this book has led me to make new resolutions about the way I do my work: Never again (if I ever did before) will I write a psychological report that only lists a child's weaknesses. In every encounter I have with a child with a disability, I will work to identify that child's passions and talents - and to hold up a mirror so that the child - and the child's parents and teachers - can see them and celebrate them, too.

Peg Dawson, Ed.D., NCSP, works at the Center for Learning and Attention Disorders in Portsmouth, NH. She is President-elect of the International School Psychology Association, a past President of NASP and a Contributing Editor to the *Communique*.

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

Highly recommended for individual

By Lissa Parker

Highly recommended for individual, ages 14 and up--individuals with LD, service providers, and loved ones.

In this book, thirteen college students vividly recount how LD affected their academic, social and emotional lives, and how they overcame these problems. Some of the students also suffered from ADHD, emotional problems (i.e. anxiety), and behavioral problems.

The authors have a variety of life experiences, learning problems (i.e. dyslexia, auditory processing difficulties, etc.), and perspectives on LD. Each story is inspirational in its own way. As each author attended college, the book is especially suited to inspired other LD students to consider pursuing higher education. There is a lot of intense emotion in these stories; many of the authors experienced trauma in school. I would suggest that parents discuss these stories with their child.

Here are other superb books for children and teens with learning difficulties and disabilities:

Grades K-3

It's Called Dyslexia, Jennifer Mallinos

K-5

Knees: The Mixed Up World of a Kid with Dyslexia, Vanita Oelschlager

2-5

The Alphabet War: A Story About Dyslexia, Diane Robb

Hank Zipzer series (protagonist has dyslexia), Henry Winkler

Susan Shreve- *The Flunking of Joshua T. Bates*, *Joshua Bates Takes Charge*, *Joshua T. Bates in Trouble Again*

3-8

Many Ways to Learn: A Kid's Guide to LD (2011 edition), Judith Stern

Eli, The Boy Who Hated to Write (2nd edition), Regina and Eli Richards

4-8

My Name Is Brain Brian, Jeanne Betancourt

Sixth Grade Can Really Kill You, Barthe DeClements

3-12

Succeeding with LD (2nd edition), Jill Lauren

9-12

Learning Outside the Lines, Jonathan Mooney and David Cole

Brilliant Idiot: An Autobiography of a Dyslexic, Dr. Abraham Schmitt

Reversals, Eileen Simpson

The Human Side of Dyslexia, Shirley Kurnoff

Books About Learning Difficulties

K

Leo the Late Bloomer, Robert Kraus

K-2

The Pout-Pout Fish Goes to School, Deborah Diesen

K-3

Katie's Rose: A Tale of Two Late Bloomers, Karen Burnett

Jasmine Can (difficulty reading), Bena Hartman

1-3

Annie's Plan: Taking Charge of Schoolwork and Homework (attention, time management, organization),
Jeanne Kraus

2-5

Thank You, Mr. Falker (difficulty reading), Patricia Polacco

3-5

Gifted Hands: The [Dr.] Ben Carson Story, Gregg and Deborah Lewis

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

Stories From the Heart

By T. Arthur

From someone working in the school system for the past 15 years, this book, Learning Disabilities and Life Stories, touched me more than any other book on the subject. Reading the personal accounts of former students with LD, they pointed out many shortcomings of our school systems throughout the country. In reading the book, one can hope that we as educators, counselors, psychologists, and parents, will help educate all who are involved in the lives of children, especially those who are crying out for our help in the classroom. Hopefully we are changing the way we look at disabilities of any kind. This book is a constant reminder that if we do not work to help children with these disabilities, we will be losing a generation of potentially contributing adults to society. What a great tribute to these children, who are now educating us on the plight of being lost in our classrooms. I plan to share this book with fellow educators, and parents.

See all 10 customer reviews...

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