



DETERMINATION IN THE FACE OF NEW DISABILITY

Tackling and overcoming learning difficulties has become a frequent media subject over the last decade. Terms such as 'Dyslexia' and 'ADD' are becoming increasingly familiar to children and adults alike, with copious amounts of literature and online advice available on how to overcome these obstacles. However, Joanna Pinewood Education (JPE), a London based tuition centre, wants to draw our attention to less publicised learning difficulties; namely those which develop following accidents or trauma.

In recent months, JPE has been working alongside a young man who has faced these difficulties. He has kindly agreed to be used as a case study and to share his experiences. JPE will provide information and advice on how best to triumph over these new found challenges, while continuing both social and academic development.

The young man in question is in his thirties and from London. In year 7 at school, aged 12, he was pushed into the wagon of a passing London Underground train, which caused him to spend 4 days in a coma and a further 2 months in hospital. The boy incurred serious head injuries, developing chronic memory loss and epilepsy.

Adjusting to life after an accident such as this is extremely difficult and the man in question remembers severe bullying from his school peers alongside the struggle to come to terms with his new disabilities. Jonathan Smallman, an army officer who was injured in a horrific car crash in 1985 talks of similar difficulties in coming to terms with the severe brain damage incurred. Now a teacher at Rehab UK, which helps people with brain injuries to become socially and economically independent, Jonathan tells the BBC:

"When I first came round in hospital, I am told, that I was like a five or six year-old. I had lost my skills to interact."

"I remember in the early stages being driven into town by my mother."

"I can remember being ready to go home and yelling across the square to my mother, who was talking to somebody 'It is bloody freezing, hurry up.'"

"I was oblivious to everyone else who was shopping and what they might have thought. I had lost my social skills, but to anyone else I must have just seemed very rude."

Source: www.bbc.co.uk

Learning to rebuild your social and academic skills is extremely testing, especially when having to deal simultaneously with a new disability. However, through focusing his energy on a specialist interest, the young man has overcome this, gaining qualifications and an active lifestyle. He has concentrated on horticulture, gaining a Level 1 Vocational Diploma and is now working towards Level 2. This focused approach makes it much easier to motivate oneself as Krzysztof Bahrynowski, Managing Director of JPE states:

“The most difficult obstacle for these newly debilitated people is self-motivation. They are often so disheartened and depressed by an accident or trauma that a completely reclusive and inactive nature takes over. Through working face to face with people who have dealt with these issues, JPE is gaining invaluable knowledge that we would like to share with others who have been affected”.

Through working together, JPE and the young man would advise the following in order to help continue development:

1. Work as a team – To further motivate his specialised interest in horticulture, the young man has partnered with other people with similar disabilities on his allotment.
2. Get help – The young man has encouraged the local Disabled Person’s Society to sponsor his allotment that will become a project for these people in the community.
3. Get involved – Once the project is completed, JPE plans to take him to the Czech Republic for a workshop on motivational skills that will be held at the University of Olomouc in October to present his project work.
4. Keep in contact – Krzysztof and the team at JPE are ensuring that they maintain regular contact with the learner to ensure he is moving in the right direction. With JPE’s help, he will gain the new competences he had always wanted to achieve.

Over the last year, JPE has made it their priority to create tailor made packages for all learners, regardless of age or ability. They believe that providing packages to suit individuals’ needs is imperative, whether it is learning English as a second language, overcoming dyslexia, or a refresher course to help stay ahead of the game. JPE is also actively involved in the European Grundtvig Project “Let’s Do It Creatively...for the benefit of Adult Learners”, receiving a grant from the EU to help adult learners. Likewise, JPE are currently applying for a grant to help disadvantaged learners, providing free workshops on improving key competences.

For more information on the upcoming workshops or to book bespoke, one to one and group tuition, please visit www.jpetutors.com or call: 01895 847 135, email: info@JPEtutors.com