

To whom it may concern.

As I have pointed out throughout my previous lectures many of the problems of dyslexic children don't begin with the enrolment in an elementary school.

Moreover – in many children their ego distortions are there before the children go to school. And they find expression in their social behaviour and relationships as well as in their learning difficulties in reading and writing.

Teachers are often aware of the suffering as well as of the disturbed behaviour of many of these children. But teachers do not know how the children's behaviours and difficulties are interrelated.

Following my experiences some teachers are suggesting psychotherapy for these children, but never for their diagnostic of dyslexia.

But it would be suitable to suggest psychoanalytic investigation just for every dyslexic child for recognizing his problems behind the symptoms.

The teacher's helplessness, their desperate situation with many of these children I often found expressed, when they explained how they tried to deal with their pupils. Some points I will mention in my following report, are by no means helpful for these children:

Point one: There are teachers nowadays who avoid to maintain the planned program of lessons because they feel the bad mood of their pupils. That means at the same time: A pupil never knows, what will be the subject-matter of each day's lessons. And he has to drag along his school bag with all his exercise books he has.

But what works mostly against the children's interest is the lack of structure, the lack of experiences in time. For the pupils this doesn't act as an incentive to learn the names of the weekdays and to memorize for which day they have to prepare a task. Such practices are all the more against the interest of the dyslexic children because a lot of them don't have had sufficiently experienced rhythms in time from baby time onwards. I have treated some of these children who at the age of

12 years did not know the weekdays and the months in their chronological order. They could not see what time it is either.

Especially such children absolutely need structure, limits and guiding rules and regularities.

Point two: The teachers must also be conscious of their significance to act and to behave as a model for their pupils. For example, they ought to be on time within the bounds of possibility. And they ought to give back the pupil's exercise books punctually.

By this, it is important to make out little progresses the dyslexic child does. Every encouraging feedback counts. This is not only a normal pedagogical principle. For the dyslexic child this also helps to reduce the dangerous spiral of hopelessness, and of avoiding to work. And it may work against the tendency to intensify the negative self image of the dyslexic child.

Point three: There seems to be a great danger, that teachers overidentify with the diagnosis of the child and consequently with the child's suffering. In that case, teachers are unable to go in a certain helpful distance to the child and to encourage the child. One teacher told me of "helping the child" by writing him some pages in the exercise books. She wanted to give the pupil the feeling to have something correct in his book. What really happens in doing so, is that the pupil is held in regression.

Point four: On the other hand there are teaching or training persons being exhausted by the problems of these children and give the children the feeling by words or mimic art: give up, you will never grasp it.

All these points contribute to increase the children's hopelessness.

What the children need instead from their authorities is encouragement, the feeling that one gives them credit, and one believes in their potentialities. And finally, that there are solutions for their problems by therapeutic help.

Point five: But also for teaching authorities there is to be taken into account the possibility of help by supervision. I think, in the past many teachers asked really too much from themselves in coping with these difficult children. Perhaps feelings of shame undermined their sense of self-worth. They were not open for supervision. Actually, my observations, gained in a workshop with teachers showed that there is a growing tendency to seek for psychoanalytic supervision. I had the impression, when teachers have been told about the real difficulties of these children, as I experienced and reported, some of them dared to recognize that they are not prepared appropriately for their pedagogic involvement in their academic training, their university education. Others felt confirmed by what I told them.

They already had tried to cope with some situations as I had suggested.

Point six: Principally, the teacher's situation has something in common with the situation of the therapist. That is, to give a good framework: being strict on the one side and ready for some negotiations on the other side.

Naturally, I can't offer a panacea.

Generally spoken, it would be desirable, to instruct these children in little classes, so that teachers can invest more time for each child.

These children are in general not easy to handle, they are even frustrating in their reactions. One needs much patience with them. I will pick up some situations from my observations and experiences with them.

These children show somewhat like an automatic defence being confronted with any new task. "I can't" is their response.

When they have understood something wrong and one begins patiently to offer an explanation, one has not said two words, they cry: "I know, I know", even when they can't know it at all. By this way they reveal an enormous anxiety for being blamed. This may have to do with their painful experiences.

Another situation: When they try to tell something and one doesn't understand them at first go, they seem to feel hurt: Their promptly reaction: "Forget it". This may be all the more just a problem for teachers because these children have great difficulties in telling clearly a little story. In spite of very friendly asking to grasp things better, the answer would be repeated: "Forget it."

This has often to do with the lack of experiences of being taken seriously, the lack of having experienced, that someone listened carefully to.

But in spite of all resistances in the beginning, it is never too late to offer such new experiences.

One can for example comment with a bit of humour: Oh, I see you are of the quickest troupe. But I need longer to understand something new. I need that something is repeated to me, so that I can think about to finally understand.

Another time one can give a comment to their lack of patience with themselves in saying for example: I see, you are always expecting too much from yourself. It seems to me that you are forcing yourself to be in a hurry, when you are solving a problem.

Point seven.: When some of these children have progressed for example in writing their maternal language, one can't expect that they would be able to use their experiences for another learning area like a foreign language. Again, they might claim: "I can't". These children are often not very flexible in their thinking. One has to help them to build logical bridges to enable them to move from one thinking level to another, for example to compare two similar situations for drawing a conclusion from it.

Point eight: As I have tried to show in the previous lectures, many of these children have not been helped in coping with negative feelings and aggression at home. But in school they may be very direct in uttering verbal aggressions towards teachers. I remember such an example, told by a very fine female teacher of a secondary school. Her pupils of early adolescence in a class of dyslexic adolescents showed massive verbal aggressions in an hour, but towards the end of the hour, they would lament one after another: "Swear that you will not treating me resentful and not using against me, what I have said."

This teacher, talented as she was, could cope with these pupils.

She was able to stand through the moral pressure of the boys. Her answer was:

“It is not my business, to swear, but it is your business to have control over what you are saying. Before speaking, you have to reflect about the ideas you will express by words. And that is, what you have to think about and to learn.”