

Amanda gives back to DAS



"I am appreciative of what she has done. No matter how much I try to repay her now, it will never be enough."

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Caned, bullied & misunderstood: How Amanda looked past her challenges and found success in her strengths.

Today, the awareness of dyslexia is more widespread, and intervention is made increasingly available. Imagine growing up in an environment where having a learning difference is just not an option.

Amanda Lim was a DAS student back in 1999. At that time, there was not much exposure to the condition and there was still a negative stigma attached to it. Other than dyslexia, she was also diagnosed with ADHD and mild autism when she was 10 and had since been attending DAS classes. However, life continued to be an uphill battle for Amanda. As a student, Amanda despised school. Nobody in school understood her and she was a victim of bullying. At home, she would receive caning for getting extremely low scores in her examinations, especially for her languages. Amanda said that she had no friends of her own up until university. The other students around her thought that she was “weird” so the only time they interacted with her was to “make fun of (her)” or upset her by throwing her books around. In secondary school, Amanda’s classmates stole her money and belongings and although she reported the cases to the teacher, he did not take it seriously.

Many young students would seek refuge in their teachers when faced with bullying. Amanda, however, felt that some of her bullies were her teachers themselves. Even after noticing her learning differences, Amanda’s teachers would still rather not put in the extra time for one student. One of them even requested Amanda’s parents to transfer her into a special needs school, telling them that Amanda is “not normal”. That same teacher would pick on her in class and announced to the class that Amanda “copied someone’s work or got someone to do (her) work for (her)”. Due to the bullying, repeated failures and the punishments that followed, Amanda’s self-esteem was beaten down and she suffered from depression at a very young age.

Fortunately, Amanda is a strong spirited girl. After reaching the lowest point in her life, she knew that the only way left to go was up. Amanda worked very hard to get to where she is today. In 2013, she completed her Bachelor of Commerce in the

University of Wollongong in Australia and is now working in Singapore doing documentation. At work, Amanda still faces challenges especially when following instructions. However, by now, she has adopted strategies to cope and would note down everything new that she learns so that she will remember. Being dyslexic also gave her some benefits. She is better than her colleagues are at seeing the bigger picture and is very comfortable working with numbers, making her job more enjoyable.

Amanda is also very entrepreneurial. She voluntarily started a fundraising effort for DAS via an online platform called giving.sg. This initiative sparked after seeing herself in her young neighbour who is struggling with dyslexia, similar to how she did in the past. Her initial intention was to create more awareness of the condition but soon enough, she managed to garner enough support and raised a substantial amount. Other than that, Amanda has also plans of managing her own business someday with her best friend.

Undeterred by her history, Amanda is now a very positive individual. Despite the constant caning by her parents in the past, Amanda holds no grudges and sees their methods as a typical Asian parenting style. Even after knowing that Amanda is dyslexic, her mother still tutored her with a cane by her side. “I know she loves me. If she didn’t love me, she wouldn’t have put so much effort and time in me.” Amanda recalls her mother’s continuous reminder that it would take her two to three times more effort than others do to complete or understand something and that is fine. She would push Amanda to be independent. Her optimism and perseverance kept her going.

To Amanda, her mother is her source of strength. She sacrificed her time and effort and even quitting her well-paying job to give her full attention to Amanda. She was the one who worked tirelessly to get Amanda enrolled into DAS and to keep her in school. “I am appreciative of what she has done. No matter how much I try to repay her now, it will never be enough.”