



# Brain Injury Alliance of South Dakota

Helping people who have been touched by brain injury

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Newsletter | Fall 2024 | Volume 7 | Issue 2

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This is an independent newsletter that aims to serve the brain injury movement in South Dakota. To contact us, please email [braininjurysd@gmail.com](mailto:braininjurysd@gmail.com) or go to [www.braininjurysd.org](http://www.braininjurysd.org). Newsletter Coeditors: Doris Schumacher & Jennifer Williams

Current BIASD Board Members: Justine Ashokar, Karen Brokenleg, Brenna Christiansen, Jenny Hallan, Brian Poelstra, & Mary Tommerraasen



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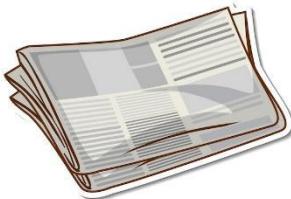
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## What's New?!



The Brain Injury Alliance of South Dakota (BIASD) recently hosted a dynamic retreat day focused on strategic planning, signaling a new chapter in their mission to make a significant impact. This pivotal gathering brought together board members, staff, and key stakeholders to collaboratively shape the organization's future vision and initiatives. The retreat was an opportunity to reflect on past achievements, identify key priorities, and establish clear goals for the coming year.

With a renewed sense of purpose and direction, BIASD is poised to enhance its advocacy, support, and educational efforts across the state, ensuring a brighter future for individuals affected by brain injuries. Stay tuned for exciting developments as BIASD continues to drive meaningful change in the community.



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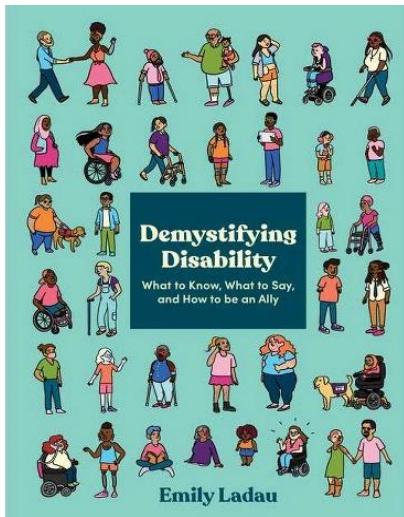
**In other news,** in July, the Brookings area support group enjoyed lunch and spending time at Lake Campbell together!



## Read & Review



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Whether or not you feel “disability” is a word that applies to you, this recent book might be enlightening and even useful to you. Here it is: Emily Ladau. *Demystifying Disability. What to Know, What to Say, and How to Be an Ally.* New York: Random House, 2021.

The author is a disability rights advocate in person and in print. And she has three disabilities--physical, hearing, and mental health. Her book's chapters cover the main topics by way of shedding light on disability: “Why Do We Need to Demystify Disability? So, What Is Disability, Anyway? Understanding Disability as Part of a Whole Person, An (Incomplete) Overview of Disability History, Ableism and Accessibility, Disability Etiquette, Disability in the Media, and Calling All Allies and Accomplices.”

One of the interesting points our author makes is about how we speak about people. One way is person-first language. So we might say, “person with a disability” or “person with a brain injury.” “The logic here is that disability is something a person has, rather than who they are, so by separating any mention of disability from the person and putting it second, you’re showing that you respect the personhood of someone with a disability.” (p. 11) Another way is identity-first-language. So you might say, “disabled person” or “brain-injured person.” “In this case, disability isn’t just a description or diagnosis; it’s an identity that connects people to a community, a culture, and a history.” (p. 11) Our author prefers this kind of language for herself but insists on the right of people to choose their own way of speaking about themselves. The second interesting point she makes is about ableism—which is like racism, sexism, ageism, and other-isms. She offers this definition: “Ableism is attitudes, actions, and circumstances that devalue people because they are disabled or perceived as having a disability.” (p. 70) And it is so varied and so embedded in our society that it is not easy to pinpoint it. Nevertheless, one widespread and recognizable kind of ableism is inaccessible: disabled people often find it difficult to do the things they want or need to do. Accessibility, on the other hand, would mean that people with disabilities could “fully use a product or experience”, could “freely occupy and move about a



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space freely,” and “accommodations are provided that ensure that both of these things are possible.” (p.78) This writer had come to see person-first-language as preferable but now can appreciate the value of identity-first-language. In addition, this writer now has a greater appreciation for the extent of ableism and the harm that it does—and an awareness of our need to address it as a society.

*Written by George G.*

## Making an Impact



LearningRx works with seven core cognitive skills: attention, processing speed, working memory, logic and reasoning, auditory processing, visual processing, and long-term memory. The data for 18,000 participants who completed the training show improvements across all seven core cognitive skills. Their program is one-on-one and intensive. However, the training may not be suitable for everyone, as it requires consistency, and some individuals who have sustained a brain injury may not be able to attend all required sessions due to headaches or other health issues.

If you are interested in learning more about this program, please email Dr. Hollins at [SiouxFalls.sd@learningrx.net](mailto:SiouxFalls.sd@learningrx.net), call her at 605-582-2020, or visit [www.learningrx.com/sioux-falls](http://www.learningrx.com/sioux-falls). She will be able to help evaluate whether you might benefit from this program and discuss the costs with you.



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## Accommodations Guide for Students with Brain Injury

Jeffrey Kreutzer, PhD, Nancy Hsu, Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Virginia Commonwealth University

The long-term effects of brain injury can be catastrophic for students at any level. Early on, students with the most severe injuries are unable to attend school. Some require homeschooling until they recover enough to travel and attend classes with other students.

Research shows that brain injury often harms basic cognitive abilities such as memory, learning, attention and concentration, word finding, and visual perception. Injury can also harm important academic abilities such as reading, arithmetic reasoning, vocabulary, writing, and spelling. Parents and students often worry about failing grades and failure. Concerns about passing the school year, graduating high school, or graduating from college with a degree are often expressed.

### **Frequent complaints from students with brain injury include:**

- I study for twice as long as I used to, but I'm doing much worse.
- I can't remember anything I read no matter how many times I re-read the same thing.
- I study hard and feel like I know the material. Then I go into the test and can't come up with the answers.
- Essay exams are murder. I need 20 minutes to think of what I want to say and then the time has run out.
- I get so tired I can barely get through the school day. At night, I'm just too tired to do my homework.
- I'm so distracted. I can pay attention for five minutes and then my mind wanders.
- I go to every class, but nothing sinks in.

Most of the time, school systems are very willing to provide accommodations to students with brain injury. "What are accommodations?" you might ask. Accommodations are special services or arrangements designed to help survivors overcome and offset injury related limitations.



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Students and parents often don't know that many kinds of accommodations are available to help students succeed. Many are also unaware of what accommodations are appropriate and reasonable for them. Having a thorough evaluation of academic and cognitive abilities is a first step toward understanding a student's special needs. Evaluations can be performed by neuropsychologists, educational psychologists, and school psychologists. Students and parents are encouraged to seek an experienced brain injury professional who can thoroughly document academic strengths, limitations, and recommended accommodations. Nearly all schools require documentation of disability and recommendations in order to provide accommodations.

To help you understand what accommodations might be appropriate for you or your student, we have prepared a partial list of commonly recommended accommodations on the next page. Talk to the psychologist or educational specialist helping you to determine what is best for your situation.

## **Classroom Accommodations:**

- Allow additional time to complete in-class assignments
- Allow for extra or extended breaks
- Provide student with instructor's notes or help student obtain quality notes from other students
- Allow student to audio record lectures for later playback
- Provide both oral and written instructions; clarify instructions
- For lectures, provide student with an outline or study guide when available
- Allow use of a portable computer with spelling and grammar checks for assignments and note-taking
- In grading work, reduce emphasis on spelling and grammatical errors unless it is the purpose of the assignment
- Permit referencing a dictionary or thesaurus for assignments
- Provide preferential seating at or near the front of the classroom
- Reduce quantity of work required, in favor of quality.
- Avoid placing student in high pressure situations (e.g., short time frames, extensive volume of work; highly competitive)
- Exempt student from reading aloud in front of classmates because of impaired reading skills.



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## **Test Accommodations:**

- Allow additional time to complete tests.
- Provide for completion of tests in a quiet, individual environment with the goal of minimizing distractions.
- Administer long examinations in a series of shorter segments with breaks allowed between sections.
- Allow oral examinations and assist student in having responses scribed, as needed.
- Assess knowledge using multiple-choice instead of open-ended questions.
- Allow student to clarify and explain responses on exams (and assignments).
- Permit student to keep a sheet with mathematic formulas for reference, unless memorizing the formulas is required.
- Permit student's use of a calculator.
- Permit the student to utilize a dictionary and thesaurus in writing test responses.
- If two exams are scheduled on the same day, allow student to reschedule one for another day.

*Posted on BrainLine October 27, 2011.*



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## Support Groups

### Aberdeen Area

**Where:**

Independent Living Choices · 110 6<sup>th</sup> Ave SW Suite 101 Aberdeen, SD 57401

**When:**

Third Tuesday of every month · 3:00 PM – 4:00 PM

**Contact:**

(605) 626-2976

### Brookings Area

**Where:**

United Way Office · 908 Hope Drive · Brookings, SD 57706

**When:**

First Thursday of every month · 3:00 PM – 4:00 PM

**Contact:**

(605) 961-8168

### Sioux Falls Area

**Where:**

Active Generations · 2300 W. 46th Street · Sioux Falls, SD 57105

**When:**

Second Saturday of every month · 1:00 PM – 2:30 PM

**Contact:**

(605) 940-1815 · (605) 322-5066 · (605) 367-5260