

Dyslexia meet: learn to teach slow learner

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The solution is not to remove the hurdles in an obstacle course but to teach the child to cross the barriers without falling.

This fundamental formula applies to teaching children with learning disabilities or dyslexia.

"We have to teach dyslexic children the way they can learn and not how we can teach. Each one has an individual learning programme and we have to understand that," said Divya Jalan, president, founder and trustee of Breaking through Dyslexia, a non-profit organisation that will host an international conference on dyslexia at the International Management Institute in the city from December 17 to 19.

The three-day conference is named D.A.R.E. to Win, short for Dyslexia Awareness and Remedial Efforts.

"The objective is to update the community with the latest research and equip them with skills required to deal with students with a specific language and learning difficulty," said Aruna Bhaskar, special educator at Breaking

through Dyslexia.

Since many dyslexia cases go undetected, Breaking through Dyslexia has been making an effort to reach out to children, parents, teachers, special educators and school administrators to spread awareness. For instance, it tells how to catch the signs because early diagnosis can help a child overcome the difficulties rather than lose his/her self-esteem to bullying and badgering for being a slow learner. Formed five years ago under the initiative of Dyslexic Trust of Calcutta, the organisation is working to bridge the gap between academic researchers and practitioners, schools, parents and students.

Breaking through Dyslexia has invited three professors of the Teachers College, Columbia University, and specialists from across India to the conference. The Teachers College team includes professor emeritus Margaret Jo Shepherd and her colleagues Eileen Marzola and Dolores Perin.

Shepherd will deliver her keynote address on "dyslexia in perspective" while Perin will talk about "understand-

ing how children learn to write". Other than a keynote session, there will be multiple parallel sessions on all three days.

"We intend to increase awareness on this disability and efforts that needed to be taken to help children reach their optimum potential. We want to bring as much awareness in India... starting from our hometown Calcutta," said Jalan, who has plans for specialised teacher training.

Parents, teachers, clinical psychologists, special educators and students studying psychology or those pursuing teacher training are eligible to attend the conference through spot registration on December 17 or register at Breaking through Dyslexia's 3 Dover Park office, Calcutta 700019, or call +91 9831895577 for details.

School principals and teachers are expected to attend the conference to learn "how to walk that extra mile" and allow concessions in class such as extra time or extra attention to dyslexic students. "Schools should adopt a curriculum and evaluation pattern that suits a dyslexic child," Bhaskar said.