

THE DYSLEXIA MYTH

A practical guide for parents, teachers and therapists



H. D. Nicolay

Solve Reading and Writing Problems

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Forward

For nearly two decades, dyslexia and spelling difficulties were an insurmountable challenge for me both as a mother and teacher. For years I was involved in the quest for a successful method of helping children with reading and writing problems.

I read the literature and attended adult education courses, lectures, and various workshops given by doctors, educators and therapists. The results fluctuated between feeling helpless in the face of the phenomenon and ineffective suggestions for months of targeted practice. My studious daughter and I had unsuccessful results from practicing various methods and were losing faith.

The encounter with the *NICOLAY METHOD* suddenly changed my way of looking at things. Since then, everything has changed for the better. The method Mr. Nicolay developed is phenomenal. It can be integrated into everyday learning as well as into all forms of therapy.

Today, with the help of the *NICOLAY METHOD*, I accompany children/pupils on the path of exploring their own personal learning styles including those who are competent in reading and writing. It is gratifying to see how children gain self-confidence in such a short time. They renew the enthusiasm for learning

they thought they had lost. Now they know exactly how success can be achieved. Initially they apply their knowledge cautiously and later with increasing confidence and gratitude.

I am happy for the families affected, who are lucky enough to have peace and joy return to their families with the help of the *NICOLAY METHOD*. Have trust in your children and the method. Your children will thank you.

Monika Regina Juraschek, *Dyslexia Therapist and Teacher Trainer*

I have students and acquaintances who suffer from spelling problems. In my search for a means to help them I was disappointed by the offerings of extensive teaching aids and published worksheets.

A friend of mine introduced me to Mr. Nicolay's book. After reading the book and witnessing the successful treatment of their child as a client in Mr. Nicolay's practice, I decided to begin training as a *NICOLAY METHOD* therapist. After that I was able to apply the concept to individual children, the remedial course, and to the whole class. As a result I would like to share the following experiences:

- A big eye-opener for the children is when they recognize their own personal learning style and that of children who write error-free. How relieved they are to learn how to use their brain to store vocabulary words properly.
- The *NICOLAY METHOD* provides a well-thought-out approach. The progressive course of a therapy session for second graders is already well understood and experienced by the children as useful.
- The children are taken seriously and always reminded of their personal responsibility. The home exercises are carried out independently or with the support of the parents, and saves the child countless hours of therapy.

-
- The relaxation technique is introduced and implemented by the students and provides a solid base for success.
 - Children with poor grades in writing and reading, after consistent practice, soon experience success. Their self-esteem is also improved.

In January, my second grade class which has extensive dictation concluded with 73 percent of them earning grades of A or B.

I. Wittmann, *Elementary School Teacher*

In my practice, I incorporate the *NICOLAY METHOD*, which I learned from the book "The Dyslexia-Myth". In addition, I attended three seminars with Mr. Nicolay to fully learn the method.

After I integrated the concept in my practice, astonishing improvements in students presented themselves in a very short time. Some of them could read and write with an improvement of 2 - 3 marks/grades. To learn the written language, they can, with the support of the *NICOLAY METHOD* select the most appropriate learning style and target it for use. Previously, my students mostly used the phonetic approach in spelling. For this reason, they often made mistakes with not phonetically accurate words.

The holistic approach of the *NICOLAY METHOD* takes into account all the necessary factors for children to become successful in reading, writing and learning. The concept of learning allows students to apply themselves in school and with homework without a time penalty or restriction. The systemic approach is a key element in the *NICOLAY METHOD* where the parent-child interaction and cooperation is greatly enhanced. A motivated and focused work attitude of the child is achieved.

The sophisticated relaxation exercise helps to reduce stress. These aforementioned factors help the child to achieve a pleasant and positive learning environment. The joining together of these many components into a whole, contribute to the success of the *NICOLAY METHOD*.

Robert Singheiser, *Dyslexia Therapist*

Introduction

You bought this book because you have a personal interest in finding an effective means to combat reading and writing difficulties. Or you are seeking practical tips for safeguarding your child against problems with reading and writing. Maybe your child has trouble with spelling in school. Perhaps you would like to improve your own reading and writing in English or in a foreign language. Or maybe you are a teacher or therapist and you are searching for a method, which provides affected students with rapid assistance for learning to read and write error-free.

This guide introduces practical applications with which children who are weak in reading and writing

can acquire good grades. As a rule of thumb, four to ten individual tutoring sessions with either me or a teacher / therapist using the *NICOLAY METHOD* are required. Prevention is also possible so that children can be effectively safeguarded against future reading and writing problems.

The children learn to become aware of the thought processes they deploy when reading and writing. They experience how children with good reading and writing skills use their thought processes and how they can effectively apply these successfully in their learning strategies. The child learns what is described in the following chapters at home, with the support of his own parents and/or a tutor.

The method is based on proven scientific knowledge from the areas of neurology and psycholinguistics. Children first learn to store visually the individual words from their vocabulary in their native or a foreign language; later they learn texts and grammatical rules. In the future, they can recall the learned

- a. Playful journey of discovery to recognize your individual learning strategies and how to learn to read and write without making mistakes.
- b. A concept for strengthening the capacity to concentrate and relax, as well as to enhance self-esteem.
- c. A concept to counter-balance psychological, family or social disadvantages, which have a negative impact on successful learning.

One parent or tutor should be actively involved in the individual sessions. They obtain practical instructions from the book for continuing support at home, without outside help, and for bringing this to a successful conclusion.

I myself also had writing difficulties as a child and this influenced my career path. I describe my personal experiences in the second chapter.

vocabulary and write proficiently.

The *NICOLAY METHOD* is composed of three parts to ensure that the child can easily learn the new strategy and become more successful and happy at school:

If you are not interested in the personal details, I recommend that after reading the first chapter, you jump to the third chapter. There you will find information on how the reading and writing method I developed works. The fourth chapter provides a detailed description on how you can apply the concept.

Teachers who would like to implement the

method in the classroom should first work with just two to three children in individual support groups. In this way, they can coach the children to write and spell proficiently. Building upon this, error-free reading and writing can be taught to a larger group of students or a whole class using the *NICOLAY METHOD*.

The Nicolay learning concept is taught in special continuing training seminars. This book includes an overview of how the method is applied in the learning process. With this you can experiment keeping in mind the instructions for the individual sessions. But please do not harbor the expectation that this alone suffices to successfully apply the method with groups or whole classes.

We have created this book with a Dyslexia friendly font and layout to make it easier to read and comprehend.

This could also be used as a self-help workbook for parents, teachers and therapists who are interested in improving spelling and becoming able to read and write words error-free. This is a

self published book that has been translated from the German.

Chapter Two

Reasons for Reading and Writing Difficulties

Familiar words – unfamiliar words

First of all, when we talk about children misspelling and making mistakes in reading words, we need to clarify that we are talking about specifically the vocabulary the child learns in each grade. At the end of each grade the children will have learned what we call the “familiar words”.

But we all know that there are many words that are never taught in school. They will never be tested in dictation, spelling tests or verbally. Those

words have never been presented visually, orally, or phonetically to the child. If the child hears a word for the very first time without knowing the meaning, and having no visual image of it, he will not know how to spell it error-free. These words we call “unfamiliar words”.

This is important because we have to make a distinction between the “familiar” and the “unfamiliar” words. In this book we will focus on

how to support the child to learn to both read and write correctly the “familiar words”, those which the child has previously been taught. And for that, the child needs to use a certain style of memorization.

It seems unclear to many champions of phonetic spelling methods that there is no certain learning or instructional method to clearly write unfamiliar words error-free, which are only

heard, and which are not phonetic.

Based on my experience, there are three main causes for the increase in the number of children affected (see points 1-3 in the list below). Along with this, there are three further reasons (points 4-6), which are commonly present in the appearance of reading and writing difficulties;

1. The basic cause is the unknown use of an ineffective individual learning style. Without knowing and reflecting on their individual learning styles, children with problems in reading and writing use a thought strategy which is unsuitable for learning to read and write known words error-free (orthography and written skills).
2. Phonetic methods of instruction for teaching written language, which are oriented to the individual sounds of a word, produce significant reading and writing problems for children who perceive written words only or mainly through sound. Often sound and written image do not correspond in the language and as a result these children are less familiar with their visual capacity and do not know how they can use it for reading and writing.
3. But also children with a visual thought strategy in reading and writing can acquire problems with reading and writing if these are taught using a phonetic method. This happens if they are confused by auditory strategies (by means of hearing) in their visual learning process.

4. An important factor in the appearance of reading and writing problems is forcing children to learn something new at an inappropriate time. The individual window of development, the child's interest and motivation, as well as his own learning speed, often are not taken into account. A study at the Sudbury Valley School in the U.S. showed that not a single child who completed his education there had problems with reading and writing (see *"Free at Last: The Sudbury Valley School!" Life and Learning in the Sudbury Valley School* by Daniel Greenberg. I studied the Sudbury system for several years myself and was involved in establishing the Sudbury School in Maui/Hawaii. I can confirm that if children get enough time and are given full responsibility for learning what interests them and only learn when they are interested (without external control), successful learning can be achieved very rapidly. Children quickly notice the need to read and write in everyday life. This is a basic prerequisite for living in society and for exchanging and communicating ideas (social media, Twitter and Facebook). If they still need good orthographic, grammatical or other language skills to be accepted for studies, they can seek professional support. And they can learn in a motivated and targeted way.

5. Parents often have a very precise idea of when their child should be able to learn a certain skill. This is frequently caused by the pressure placed on the child who is supposed to progress to secondary (high) school or University/College. If mistakes are made or problems set in, many parents become impatient or anxious. They lose confidence in the potential of their child. Their own experiences with learning to read or write at school often plays a role as well. This can eventually mean that the parents, unsure themselves about their own reading and writing abilities, project their fear or their own failure onto the child. If the parents themselves did not experience trouble learning to read and write, they are unable to fully understand the nature of learning problems. In such cases, a great deal of time is taken up with practice when the parent does not know of an effective learning style for the child

or how to use it. For example let's say that you want to travel over water with your car. But you are unaware that tires are not suited for this, so you keep trying. Naturally, the effort is doomed to failure and reduces your motivation. This is what happens to many children who are repeatedly told they have to practice and concentrate more. But, without an effective learning style (water skis instead of tires on the car), they increasingly doubt themselves. Eventually they lose their motivation. It is predictable that such imposed learning does not lead to lasting success.

6. For many decades, reading and writing problems/dyslexia has been the subject of countless empirical studies and specialists are still attempting to answer the question of what causes it. Too many symptoms have been combined under these concepts. Only the following appears certain:
 - There is no organic, physical or social condition which leads to such problems in every case.
 - There is no condition which, of itself, leads to reading and writing problems.
 - More boys than girls develop reading and writing problems.
 - Children in all cultures and languages can develop reading and writing problems.

Attempts to find a solution

Children who have been classified as dyslexic do not have any form of deficiency or illness.

They are capable of the same success in reading and writing as those children who master these

subjects. In the search for the reason behind the theory of a genetic disposition. reading and writing problems, I do not support

1. In the USA, culturally, society lets impaired individuals down because of the prejudiced views and negative shared attitudes of the non-impaired community towards people with physical and psychological impairments. Prejudice is associated with the recognition of difference, and "disabled" people are not seen as normal in the eyes of "non-disabled" people Swain, Finkelstein, French & Oliver, 1993. Prejudices are evident in language and the terminology used to describe people with impairments, much of which is derived from medical labels. People are more than just a label describing a negative attribute, and the stigma attached to those labels means that individuals with impairments are held back from achieving their goals. The mass media is also responsible for many of the shared negative meanings and discourses, which create stereotypes and prejudices.
2. The same disastrous trend in Germany of equating therapy with illness means that new illnesses are being assigned to children who do not function well within the existing school system. Some years ago, a chromosome number 15 (C15) was identified which is supposed to be responsible for genetically related dyslexia. According to this theory, those affected by this chromosome have no chance of being cured. Children with learning difficulties are stamped as hopeless cases by parents and teachers. Then there is a widespread and inaccurate idea that spelling problems can only be overcome through tedious therapy. The *NICOLAY METHOD* has proven, with experience based on thousands of children, that this is not the case.
3. Good spellers, proficient in reading and writing, use primarily a visually-constructed learning style and are equipped at birth with the ability to do so.

Chapter Three

My personal experiences

Childhood and first career choice with spelling problems

For the past 20 years I have experience as an Educator, Teacher Trainer, Family Therapist and Coach where I have been offering on-site and on-line programs and training sessions in schools, and also teacher trainer workshop facilities. In 1996 I started my own practice in Munich, Germany and have been actively working with schools and in teacher training both at home and abroad.

I authored a book titled *"The Dyslexic Myth:*

Solving Reading and Writing Problems" which has been successfully published in German.

I developed the *NICOLAY METHOD* to help children overcome their difficulties and to treat dyslexia. I also have developed a specific training program for therapists and teachers to be able to learn the method and thus support and teach their own classes of children error-free writing and reading. I have also trained under Dr. Michael Grinder and

Dr. Marshall Rosenberg, using the principles of Virginia Satir and others.

As a child I wanted to become a pastor when I grew up simply because I felt at home in the church. It was less important for me what was being preached from the pulpit and I was much more impressed by the atmosphere in the church during the service. I applied for the entry examination to a seminary and the results were good yet my writing was poor. I was told that on account of the number of spelling mistakes I had made that I could not be admitted.

My world fell apart. But does being a good pastor not depend on more important things? So then

Turning point and new direction

At the height of my professional success I took seriously ill and in a near-death experience I saw my whole life pass in front of me. At that point I realized that deep inside myself I was desperately unhappy with the career I had chosen and decided to make a change to be healthy and “whole” again and return to my core values (original talents and

I was disappointed with the Church for using such criteria to select its priests. This experience robbed me of any perspective on my future. What was to become of me? What career should I pursue?

My parents intervened, influencing me to study computer science, saying “that is the future - and will earn you a good salary”. Having no perspectives of my own at that point, I agreed even though as a child I was not interested in such technical matters. After finishing my studies, I started a family and then set up a company for electronic security systems where I developed patents and which proved to be a financial success.

goals) which would therefore change my life. It was actually a period of convalescence in a holistic private clinic in Bad Wiessee, Germany when the turning point in my life and I began to switch from a job to a vocation. I started reflecting on some basic issues; What is illness? What is health? What is good fortune? Does life have a meaning or a

natural path? I began extensive psychosomatic studies and body-oriented therapies and increasingly got the feeling that I was finding my

true direction in life, which gave me the strength and confidence to move forward in a different direction.

My path to learning methods and family coaching

Without knowing where the path would lead me, I decided to follow it in this direction as a profession. I sold my computer company and rid myself of all obligations. My financial independence gave me the opportunity to put together my own study and training plans. I visited individuals and institutions that had tangible results to show: experts in the fields of psychology, pedagogics, communication and behavioral therapy, neurology, brain scientists as well as schools where teachers excelled in the classroom as well as unconventional thinkers and those who thought "out of the box". For me it is actually unimportant what people say or maintain they do - I look only at their visible behavior, what they do and how they do it and what results they achieve. "By their deeds ye shall know them! "

For my studies, I traveled to several different countries such as the USA, Japan, New Zealand,

Australia, and India. I still do this to continue my education today. I sat in seminars, classes and rooms for therapy. I even lived with people with whom I was studying and completing my internship. I stayed as long as it took for their skills to become my skills. From this I developed my own pedagogical concepts and also those for family counseling. Then I matched these concepts to the German educational system. The challenge of presenting myself to the world without titles but with extensive knowledge and practical experience was a large one. I had demonstrable success with schools of education, continuing education, other schools and a number of other institutions. The goal was to have them look at my accomplishments and not the missing titles.

The first educational group, which gave me a chance and offered my seminars, was the Bavarian

Teachers' Association in Germany. The seminars were well-received and further activities followed. In Germany and other countries, I successfully teach practical concepts for independent learning and rapid help with reading and spelling problems, along with promoting the ability to concentrate. I do this in schools as well as in individual sessions with both children and families.

In 1996, I opened my own practice in Munich, Germany and I continue to work with many schools and in successful teacher training both at home and abroad. I specifically developed the *NICOLAY METHOD* to help children overcome their difficulties and to treat dyslexia. Furthermore, I have developed a training program for both therapists and teachers.

Chapter Four

The *NICOLAY METHOD*

My experience with thousands of children has shown that each child is capable of learning to read, write and understand grammar and thus complete written work with at least a B grade. Every day there are children who have permanently improved their grades after four to ten individual sessions. Evidence of the effectiveness of my method can be found in Chapter Six of this book. You will also find an extensive list of references on my home page at, www.ipl-nicolay.com.

The *NICOLAY METHOD* is based on scientific knowledge, observation and interviews with

people who can read and write error-free which proves that people who experience error-free reading and writing mainly use visual learning strategies. The meaning of internal word images is not just important for writing. It also is significant for fluent error-free reading of familiar vocabulary words.

The phonetic aspect is undoubtedly important for learning unknown words, which are heard but not visualized. It seems unclear to many champions of phonetic spelling methods that there is no certain learning or instructional method to write words

error-free, which are only heard, and which are not phonetic.

Through observation and interviewing individuals with good or deficient spelling, Robert Dilts researched their thinking and learning strategies. From this experience, he developed a practical application method. It teaches individuals with reading and writing difficulties, how they can improve their own reading and writing by learning and using the strategies of people with error-free reading and writing. Michael Grinder taught for twenty years in all types of schools in the U.S. and he developed a method for children in school classes to recognize their learning style, which is an important ingredient for learning to read and write successfully for children with a risk of language problems. In the course of my pedagogical and therapeutic education in the U.S., I studied these two methods. I combined them with other holistic approaches and employ them in my individual tutoring sessions as well as in my teaching style at elementary and middle school.

I was surprised by the techniques rapid success and gave the method the name the "*NICOLAY*

METHOD" (NM®). After my return to Germany in 1996, I successfully incorporated the method into the German school system of therapy and teaching methods for languages in schools.

Since that time, I have been successfully offering affected children fast and lasting help. In continuing education seminars, teachers and therapists acquire skills in successfully applying the method into their own specific field of activity.

Scientific studies by Galanter, Pribram and Paivio have proven the existence of word images in the human mind. Grissmann showed that a visual memory of the word image renders a correct written reproduction possible for good spellers. So the process of reading and writing is more complex than the simple reduction to the visual page. Without an inner word image, good spelling is out of the question.

In the early 1980's, the "whole language approach" was developed and introduced into elementary schools but the application did not work. I believe that this was a result of its inappropriate application, as teachers did not have the proper

training. As a result there was a return to phonetic language teaching, although this already had been recognized as unsuitable and ineffective. Since then, the number of children and young people with weak reading and writing capabilities has increased dramatically.

In the U.S., use has been made of the whole language approach as well as phonics. According to Wikipedia, "the whole language approach to phonics grew out of Noam Chomsky's ideas about language acquisition". Phonics involves alphabetic recognition and whole word has to do with children transcribing their thoughts into words.

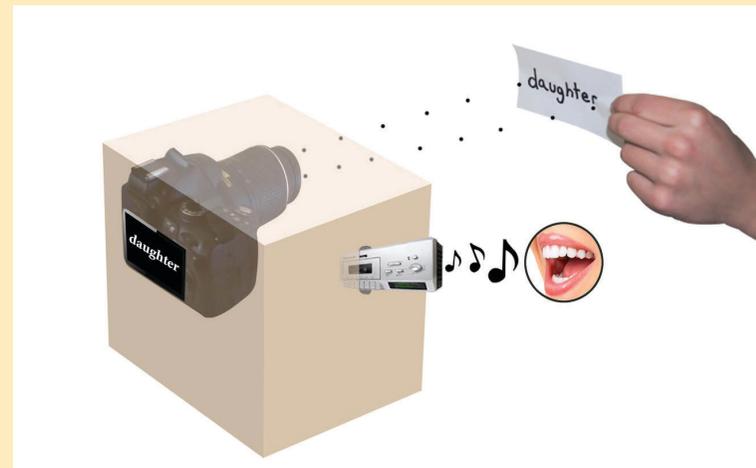
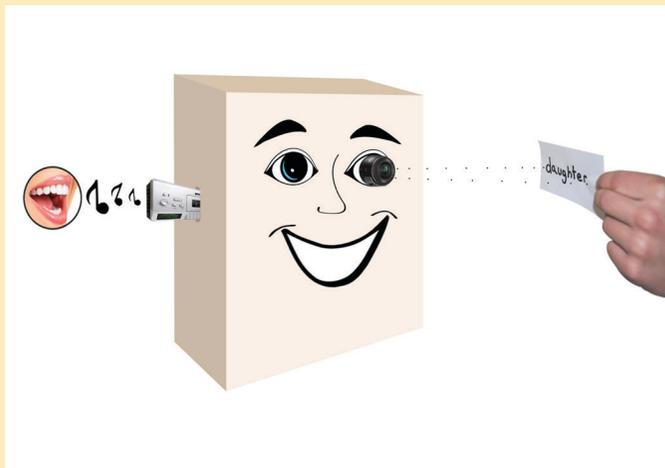
The basic principle of the *NICOLAY METHOD*

The *NICOLAY METHOD* consists of three basic parts. These help to ensure that the child can easily

learn the new thinking strategy, and become more successful and happy at school.

1. A playful journey to discover his/her individual learning strategies and how to read and write error-free.
2. Strengthening the capacity to concentrate and relax, along with enhancing self-esteem.
3. Counter-balancing psychological, family or social disadvantages, which have a negative effect on successful learning.

How do you store words in your mind?



The figure Jim is represented by a cardboard head and represents a good speller. One of his eyes is the lens of a digital camera and there is a tape recorder in one of his ears. Jim is supposed to learn a new word. A flash card on which the word "daughter" is written will be held up to his eyes. This word is a perfect example because it is not written the way it is pronounced. Next sound out the word to Jim to find out how he stores the seen and the spoken word in his mind for error-free reading and writing.

This is the first question I ask each child that I am working with. This opening question is to help get them in the right frame of mind, gain access to

their thought strategies and to use these in their own reading and writing. The typical answer to the question is: "Well, I have no idea."

With a special list of specifically developed questions, the child first learns to recognize what thinking strategies (s)he uses in reading and

writing and also that (s)he can influence their own learning strategy.

How children with error-free spelling store words in their mind

Once the child has identified his/her personal learning strategy, (s)he will examine which thinking strategy children who have good grades in written work (reading and writing) are using and how this strategy differs from their own style. For this I developed the figure of Jim. See the picture above. He has a cardboard head. One of his eyes is the lens of a digital camera and there is a tape recorder in one of his ears. Jim is supposed to learn a new word. So I hand him a flash card on which the word "daughter" is written. This is a perfect example because it is not written

as it is pronounced. Then I ask the child: "What do you think; how does Jim store the word if he wants to learn it, and to write it error-free?" After some reflection, the "aha effect" follows: "With the lens of the camera (eyes) he can photograph it and store it on the display of his camera (inner mental screen) and repeatedly look at the word image whenever he needs it". On its own, the child recognizes that children who read and write error-free have adopted this strategy and that is the reason for their success.

How to become error-free in reading and writing

At the moment the child becomes aware of how to use their mind to read and write error-free, they will want to try it out themselves by, implementing

this newly learned methodology in the future.

With this new motivation and the knowledge

gained, the child learns to use his thinking strategy in the same way as children who read and write error-free. This is precisely the basis of instruction. In this way, the child learns to store words in his mind. The goal is to accomplish his written work without errors and to be able to correctly read known words fluently.

What about the vocabulary and instructional

material he has learned before but stored incorrectly in his mind? The child needs to completely rework this, which equates to looking anew at the text in the book and then visually memorizing it all with this new way of thinking. Typically, this is not part of the support I provide. Rather the child does it with the help of parents and/or a tutor at home.

Parental support, a guarantee for rapid results

One parent or tutor should be actively involved in the individual tutoring. (S)he receives practical directions for continuing the support at home and successfully completing it. Normally, four to ten individual meetings with me or a therapist/

teacher using the method are required.

Afterwards, the parents or tutors continue their assistance at home and complete it successfully.

High IQ and reading and writing problems

According to most studies to date, individuals with good reading and writing skills use a similar thought strategy. This method is used by individuals with a high IQ, those who achieve

success in written work at school.

A scientific study by Nils Galley proves that people with a high IQ store visual pictures very rapidly.

The faster a person stores what is seen, the higher the IQ.

But it is a known fact that there are children who have a high IQ and still have reading and writing problems. Based on my perception, one reason is that reading and writing is mainly taught phonetically in most elementary schools. Children with an inherently visual learning style start to give up on storing word images visually because of phonetic instructional methods taught to them. This often results in them becoming students with reading and writing problems.

Normally this is not the case in the first days after enrollment. Children with a visual learning style look at words and naturally store them visually. But if the teacher uses primarily phonetic reading and writing instruction for pupils, then some of the children with higher IQ give up their visual learning strategy in favor of an unsuitable phonetic one.

But, in each class, there are children who are not distracted by the phonetic teaching of written language; they stick to their visual learning

strategy. These students are soon ahead of the class in reading and writing and will remain this way.

There are the children with problems who come to me and, during individual tutoring, it turns out they have a visual learning style which they have “unlearned” through phonetic instruction. With incorporation of the *NICOLAY METHOD*, they quickly learn to become error-free in reading and writing.



THE DYSLEXIA MYTH: SOLVE READING AND WRITING PROBLEMS

Chapter Five

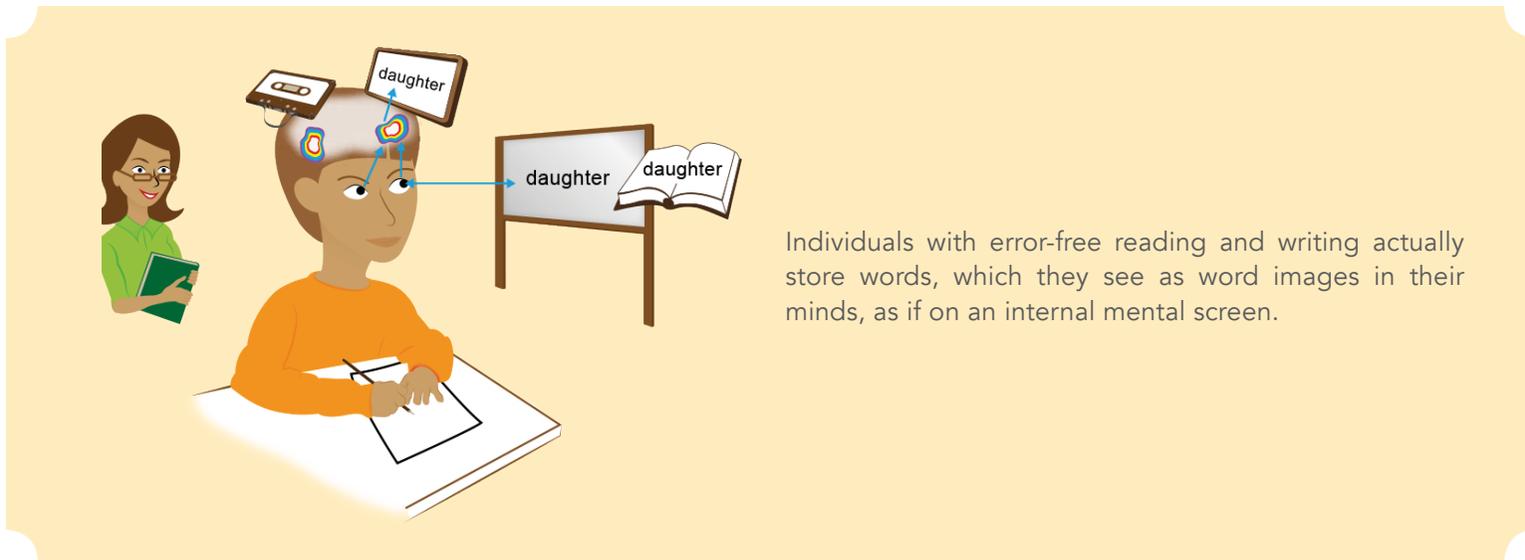
Learning strategies for error-free reading and writing

Reading and writing known words error-free

Pedagogically, the correct teaching of written language requires that the written word be shown to the child in a book or on a blackboard visually and is also pronounced phonetically. Exclusively in phonetic teaching, without showing

that word, it cannot be transformed by the child into writing error-free, since many English words are not phonetic, as is also the case in German and French.

The learning process in order to read and write error-free

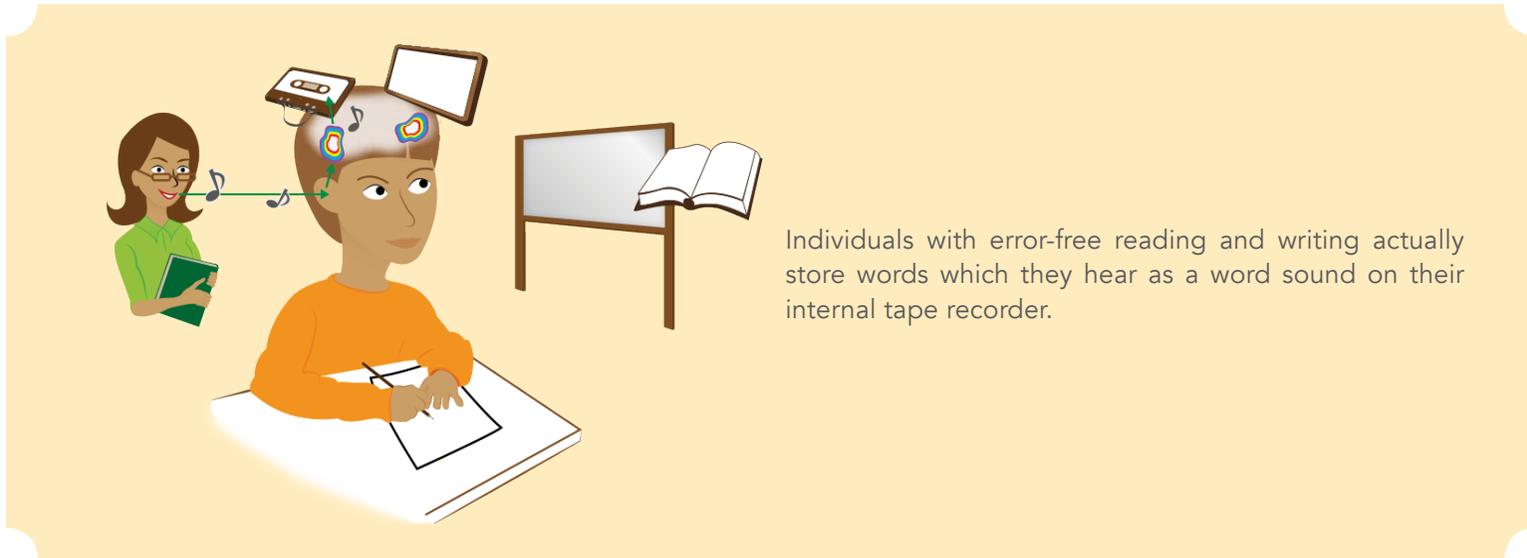


Individuals with error-free reading and writing actually store words, which they see as word images in their minds, as if on an internal mental screen.

Sight learning process

Individuals with error-free reading and writing transform the word image seen (of several letters) into an internal word image in their thought processes, otherwise known as a visual lexicon of word images, rules and content.

The word as heard

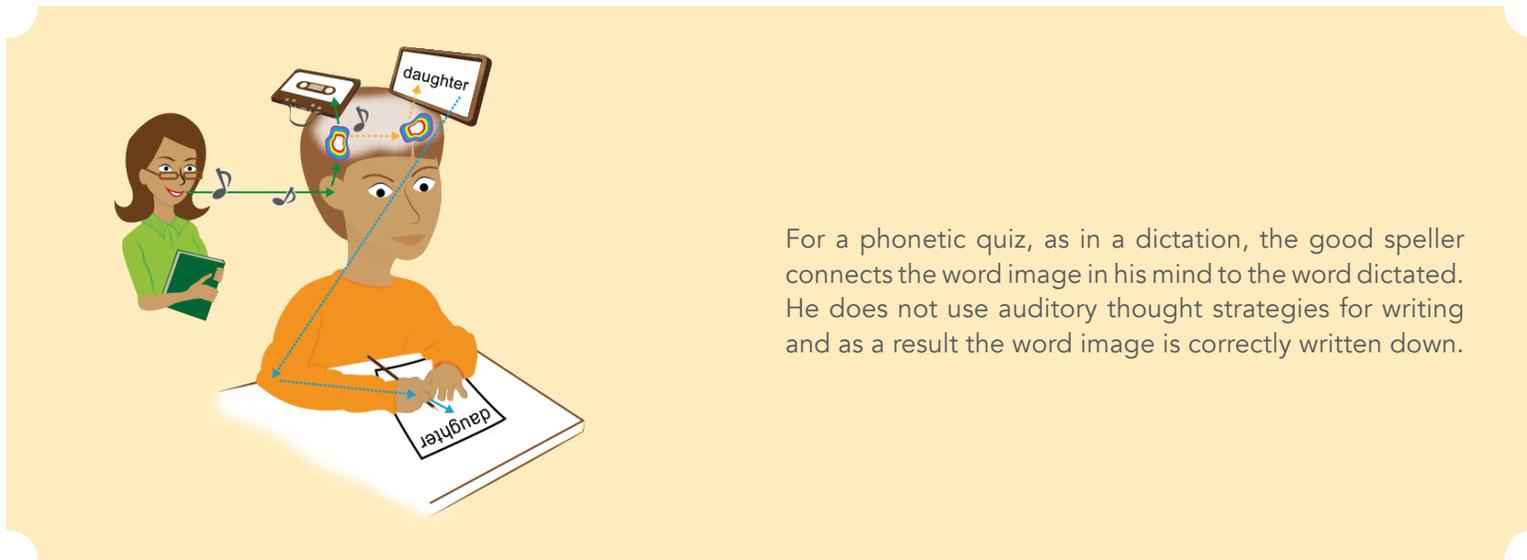


Individuals with error-free reading and writing actually store words which they hear as a word sound on their internal tape recorder.

The word heard (from several phonemes) is stored in an auditory way, like a tape on a cassette.

A physical sensation is assigned to the word image, which accompanies the movements in writing the word.

The writing process of the error-free speller



For a phonetic quiz, as in a dictation, the good speller connects the word image in his mind to the word dictated. He does not use auditory thought strategies for writing and as a result the word image is correctly written down.

For a phonetic quiz, as in a dictation, the good speller connects the word image in his mind to the word dictated. If the image creates a feeling of familiarity, then the word is correctly written.

If the questioning is purely visual, such as a text to be translated from one language into another, the good speller will use his visual thought strategy to

formulate what is asked for in writing. This could also refer to a fill-in-the blank test in which missing words are to be added. He does not use auditory thought strategies for writing.

“Whole word” or spelling method

In a simple and insightful experiment, Melow and Oxford of England were able to prove the usefulness of a visual thought strategy (recognition of the whole word) for rapid reading and writing of known words without mistakes. Please read the following text and observe how the individual words and text connect with each other:

Aoccdrnig to a rscheearch at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it deosn't mttær in waht oredr the ltteers in a wrod are, the olny iprmøetnt tihng is taht the frist and lsat ltteer be at the rghit pclæ. The rset can be a toatl mses and you can sitll ræd it wouthit porbelm. Tihs is bcuseæ the huamn mnid deos not ræd ervey lteter by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe.

In spite of the transposition of most letters, you will

Learning strategy for incorrect spelling

Studies of individuals with spelling problems have shown that they utilize a variety of different

notice that you could read most of the text easily because understood the words as a whole and your thought provided the words that fits. Now try an alternative to reading the text phonetically. Starting from the first letter, read letter-by-letter or syllable-by-syllable. This is not possible. Nobody reads words this way, unless taught in grade school to give up on understanding known whole words and read each known word letter by letter or by syllable.

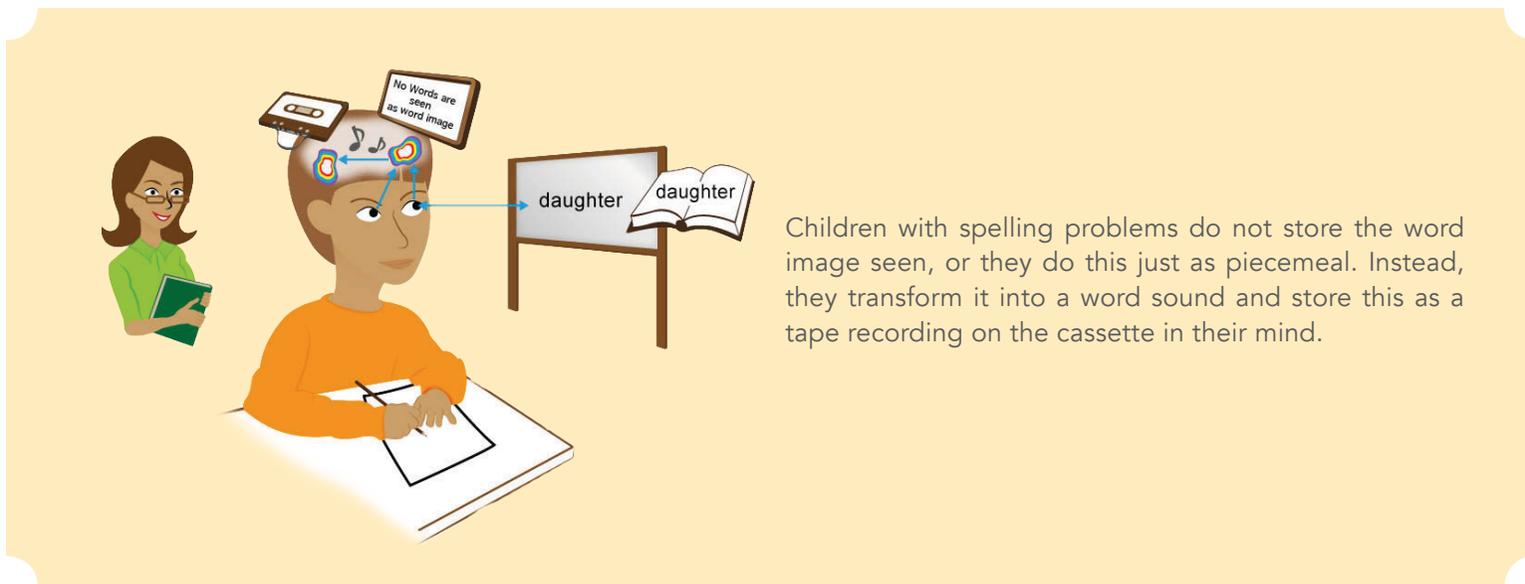
This simple and plausible explanation shows that people recognize and read a known word as a whole.

Then the right sound (if known) is added to the word image. Then the word can be pronounced quickly and error-free.

strategies. Based on such studies, two approaches are apparent:

- An internal word image is hardly present or is just used as piecemeal.
- Weak spellers try to write phonetically - that is, as they say the word internally.

The learning process:



Children with spelling problems do not store the word image seen, or they do this just as piecemeal. Instead, they transform it into a word sound and store this as a tape recording on the cassette in their mind.

Children with spelling problems do not store the word image seen, or they do this just as piecemeal. Instead, they transform it into a word sound and store this as a tape recording on the cassette in their mind. They softly recite what

they see on the board in their mind. They try to make the word sound as close to the word image as possible to use it for writing later. This sound is not the sound structure of the word nor is it the word as it is correctly pronounced. This

is especially important and more serious with words that are not written phonetically. From the word image seen, the children produce a sound

sequence, which is stored only for writing it down. The correct pronunciation and sound structure of a word are stored on the mental tape recorder.

The reading process for spellers who make mistakes

An example for clarification

Through individual tutoring and teaching language in the classroom, I show the child the English word "daughter", asking the child to look at the word exactly and memorize it, so as to write it down from memory. I do not pronounce the word shown. Rather, it is only perceptible for the child visually.

It is striking that almost all children who are oriented phonetically, along with seeing, first start saying the word aloud or silently - although only the word image is before them and the word is not pronounced.

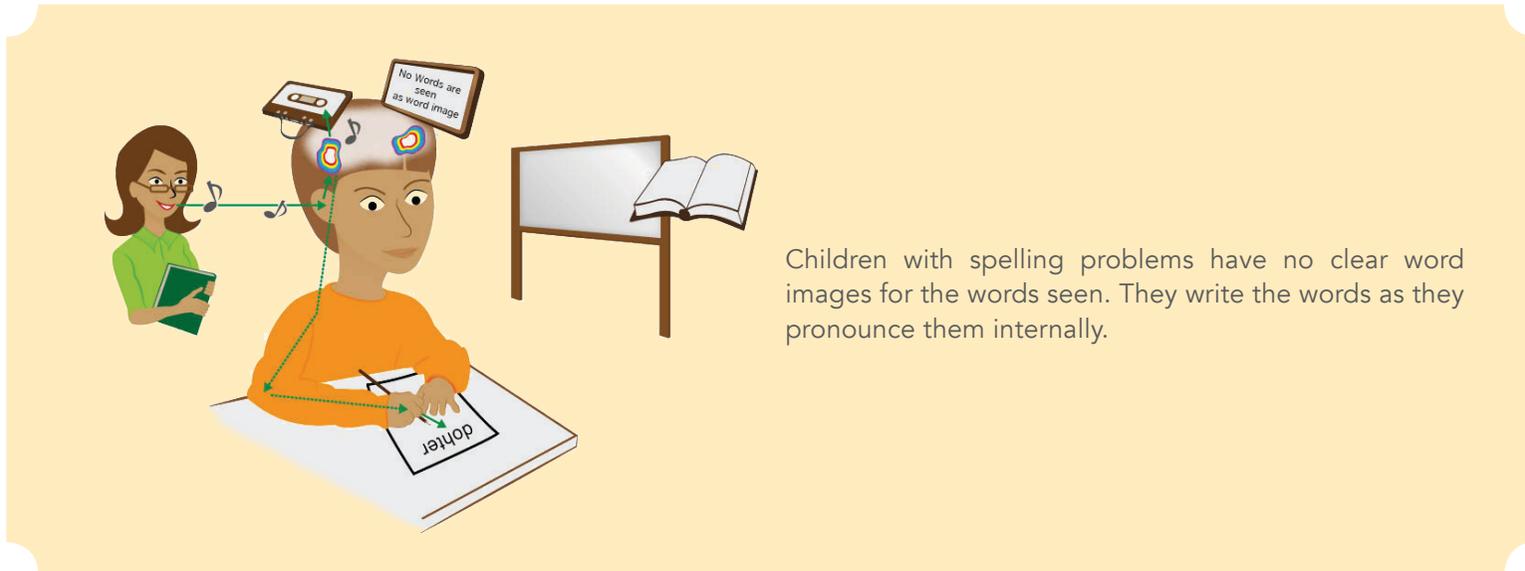
Children with language problems try gaining access to the word phonetically by repeatedly reciting it in their mind. As an example, the sound "daug"- "h"- "ter" is developed. Some children

repeatedly pronounce the individual letters so as to note the way to write it down.

Some children with good spelling also pronounce the visualized word silently in their mind. The reason why is because they want to know how the word will eventually be pronounced. But they visualize, store and use the internal word image for actually writing it down.

Testing and writing

The writing process used by incorrect spellers



Children with spelling problems have no clear word images for the words seen. They write the words as they pronounce them internally.

If the word alone is dictated to children with language problems, they acquire no clear word image or just have incomplete image elements in the visual "lexicon" in their mind. Thus, for writing, they use the applied sounds, such as "daug"- "h"- "ter" in the example from above. This is pronounced silently and internally. An intended

letter or grapheme is then assigned to each sound. The child then writes down the sound or sequence of letters so that something like "dogder" can result. This slow and tedious method does not lead to success. The necessary graphemes cannot be obtained on the basis of the word's sound. What is not audible cannot be written error-free. The mind

translates what it hears into phonemes, which it then transforms into graphemes. What has not been heard is not conveyed and not written down.

The feeling from checking the written word image often provides a warning for an incorrect written

Correctly writing words that are only heard but never seen

With dictated words whose written image has not been seen, good spellers find themselves changing their strategy. In these specific cases they try to find the correct spelling of the word using auditory strategies. They use their knowledge of things like letter-sound correspondence, which symbolizes syllables, along with other known phonetic rules.

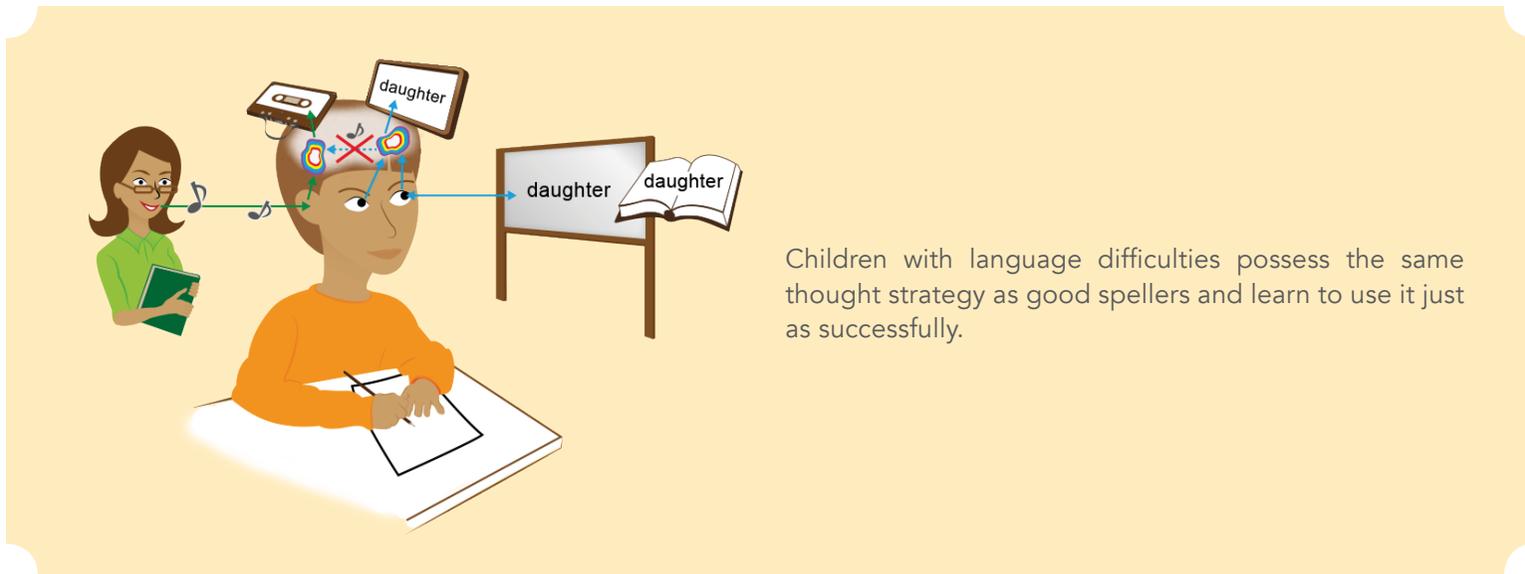
Writing words error-free that are not phonetic words cannot be learned with the *NICOLAY METHOD* when they are just auditory and not phonetic. In simpler terms: All words which are only heard and the written image of which is unknown cannot be written correctly. This happens when the child has never seen the written word and the word is pronounced differently than it is written.

transformation. That is, unsure spellers often feel they have written words incorrectly. As a result since no correct word image is consciously available to them, it can be used neither for writing nor for correcting.

An example of these types of words would be "daughter or thought".

I know of no other learning or instructional concept that would be suited to this. Also the method of "reading through writing" according to Dr. Juergen Reichen falls short here. With this method, the children learn how spoken language is written. The words are broken down into a chain of sounds and then written, sound by sound, on the basis of a table of sounds. The word "tree", for instance, is broken down orally into the sound sequence "t-r-e-e" and then written sound by sound. It is logical that words which are not phonetic (like daughter or enough) cannot be taught for error-free spelling using this method.

Using the thought strategy of good spellers



Children with language difficulties possess the same thought strategy as good spellers and learn to use it just as successfully.

Once the child has recognized his individual learning style and has become aware of the learning style of pupils who experience error-free reading and writing, he can expand his method of learning. And he is capable of using his mind as successfully as pupils who successfully get good grades in reading and writing.

In many schools, there is no subject called “recognizing a learning style” and becoming aware of the thought processes possessed by successful pupils. But this is essential to be able to use effective learning strategies to attain good grades in reading, writing and all other subjects taught at school.

Only when the child is fully aware of his internal learning processes, and can use and direct them, is his success in school guaranteed.

How to teach children to be successful

Intelligent questions bring forth success

These lead to self-reflection and an “Aha” effect on the part of the child, when he consciously perceives his own learning style internally.

This is the starting point for the *NICOLAY METHOD*. With intelligent questioning, children research in a playful way, which thought strategies they use for acquiring written language in English, other foreign languages and additional subjects. They then consider which strategies children use that have mastered this easily. They become aware that they also possess these same thinking strategies and are able to learn to use their minds just as successfully.

With the *NICOLAY METHOD*, nothing is “unlearned”, but the children successfully learn to recognize and apply additional effective thought strategies.

It is decisive that the child himself recognizes his own learning style. Standardized tests are generally not suited to this.

The correct acquisition of written language, learning words and grammar, is the fundamental concern of the *NICOLAY METHOD*. It begins with training the mind to visually perceive an individual word. The next step is for the child to practice seeing and storing several words at the same time. Then he can learn to perceive and correctly store the grammatical rules visually.

The *NICOLAY METHOD* involves much more than just the acquisition of written language. Children acquire a new learning style of visual learning. This is also the basis for mathematics and all other subjects where good written grades are important.

Moreover, the enhancement of good and improved concentration skills and self-esteem is a major component in this holistic approach.

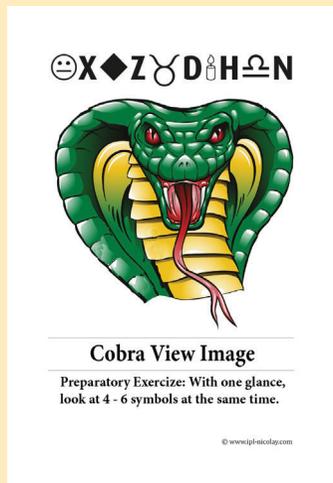
Phonics of language

At this point, I would again like to point out that phonetic instructional concepts have significant meaning for learning any language. Letter-sound correspondences which symbolize syllables are important for speech. Also, knowledge of the “internal structure” of a more complex word is essential. This involves knowledge of prefix, root syllable, final syllable, morpheme symbolic spelling pattern (graphemes) and frequent letter sequences. This knowledge, used extensively in schools, is the focus of teacher training.

inner tape. Only the child can hear himself speaking in his head.

If the child is fully aware of his inner “tape”, then we move on to make the child aware of the next important step called the “cobra-stare”.

The “cobra-stare” (peripheral view)



To learn the “cobra-stare” (peripheral view) and have the ability to look at all the letters of a word at one glance and store them visually on the inner mental screen in your mind. You start the exercise by spreading out your arms and bringing the thumbs to eye level, holding the head straight and seeing everything with a wide-angled view.

In order to read and write error-free, the child needs to look at all the letters of a word at the same time and both visualize and store the whole word image in his mental picture memory.

This form of looking at words and registering them is called “peripheral view”. To help the children understand the concept of their peripheral view, I call it the “cobra-stare”.

With some training, children past the age of eight are capable of picturing five to eight letters at once. With longer words, the child views and visually stores the first half of the word and then the second half. Then, in his mental picture memory, he combines the two parts into one word. It is important that the eyes rest on the word without moving, and to register all the letters at once. It is important that the children master and regularly complete the relaxation and concentration

exercises in Chapter Nine before attempting to learn the method of the “cobra stare”. This will speed up the learning process.

There are four cobra worksheets at the end of the book. These specific cobra worksheets will help the child to look at all letters of the word at once known as the “cobra-stare” (peripheral view).

Learning the cobra-stare



To learn the “cobra-stare” (peripheral view), look at all the letters of a word at one glance and store them visually on the inner screen in your mind. Spread out your arms and bring your thumbs to eye level, holding your head straight.

I explain the peripheral view (cobra-stare) this way:

The cobra is a snake and snakes are unable to

move their eyes. They always keep their eyes still, looking straight ahead and seeing everything with a wide-angled view. With the following instructions you can learn to look at all letters of

a word at one glance and store them visually on the inner screen in your head. This way, when you are supposed to learn the word and write it error-

free, you just visualize it on your inner screen and write it down exactly as it appears.

1. Spread out your arms and bring your thumbs to eye level, holding your head straight.
2. Look at the points of your thumbs with steady eyes.
3. Move your thumbs slowly apart to each side: the left thumb to the left and the right thumb to the right. The distance between should be about 4-6 inches (10-15 cm) or about the width of a word with 5 to 8 letters.
4. The eyes continue to look straight ahead with the "cobra-stare" (peripheral view).
5. The eyes do not move with the thumbs so the field of vision, with eyes directed straight ahead, becomes wider and wider.

Then I ask the child:

- Can you look straight ahead with your eyes relaxed and not moving?
- Are you able to see how your fingers move apart and together, without your eyes moving?
- If you notice that your eyes are moving, take a short break and start again.
- When you have mastered this step, then you begin with the next exercise.

- Only start the next exercise when you have mastered the cobra-stare.

Everything you learn here builds on what has been learned before. Think about what it takes to build a house. Only when the first stone is set, can the next one be safely added. If a stone is wobbly and you place the next one on it, then everything will collapse and you will need to start over. This requires additional energy and is quite frustrating. So take all the time you need to master each exercise before proceeding to the next one.

Visualize your name on your inner screen



Visualizing your name on your inner mental screen, with closed eyes.



Visualizing your name on your inner mental screen with open eyes.

First, you start with visualizing your name on your inner mental screen. Then you visually store four to eight *symbols* of the cobra sheet on your inner screen. If you have mastered and accomplished this step, then you are on your way to be able to correctly spell and read and write words error-free.

If you successfully master this task, then you start

to visually store words out of your workbook on your inner screen, without storing them on your inner recorder. If you have mastered and accomplished that step, you will become an error-free speller, writer and reader.

What you may experience while you try to visualize your name on your inner screen, is that your inner tape recorder may start to automatically recite the

word letter by letter. You know meanwhile, that if you recite words on your tape recorder, you will make errors when writing it down. So you need to purposely turn your tape recorder off, and only visualize your name on your inner screen, for error-free spelling and writing.

How you turn your tape recorder off is by counting backwards from 30 to zero while you visualize words, in this case being your name on your inner mental screen. (Note: Second graders can count backwards from 20 to zero). It helps to have your

inner tape filled with numbers while your eyes visualize your name on your inner mental screen. This prevents you from saying your name silently and storing it on your inner tape.

Now you will learn to work without your tape recorder to visually store on your inner screen first your name, and later words seen on a black board or in a book, without storing them on your inner tape recorder. This way, you can call up and write these words at any time, without making a mistake.

Here is the practical step-by-step explanation:

First please read the following instructions without carrying them out. They consist of two parts. It is important to understand both parts before you begin to implement them. You will be applying both of them at the same time and this might be a challenge.

Please take all the time you need to understand

1. Sit up straight on your "sitting bones". Let your body and your head completely relax.

everything and to master it. If it gets strenuous, take a break.

The relaxation and concentration exercises (see Chapter Nine) practiced before using the new learning strategy really supports learning it faster and thus more relaxed.

2. Hold your head straight; look up with your eyes at the level of your nose or forehead.
3. Start counting aloud-backwards from 30 to zero. Second graders, count backwards from 20 to zero.
4. Use the cobra-stare and visualize your name on your inner screen (at either eye or forehead level, with open or closed eyes). Visualize your first name and then your last name.
5. Look at all the letters of your name at the same time and at one glance while continuing to count aloud-backwards at the same time.
6. Once you have clearly visualized all the letters of your name on your inner screen please write the whole word/your name in to the air. Start with writing the last letter (to your right) in the air with your index finger. Then comes the next to the last and so on, up to the first letter. Use the cobra-stare. Continue counting aloud backwards at the same time.
 - When it works, follow the next description. If it doesn't work, take a break, do the relaxation exercise and start again.
 - I am aware that this exercise may be a challenge to you: Visualizing your name on your inner screen, and counting backwards at the same time. But it is absolutely necessary that you clearly visualize your name only on your inner screen, and are not verbally reciting it on your inner tape recorder. This is the preliminary exercise to make sure that later on you are able to write and read words and vocabulary error-free. So please take your time until you have mastered this step.

Visually store 4-8 symbols of the cobra sheet on your inner screen.



Before you learn to store words visually, you will learn to look at four symbols on the cobra sheet at once and visually store them on your inner mental screen, using the cobra-stare with either open or closed eyes.

Before you learn to store words visually, you will learn to visually store 4-8 symbols on your inner mental screen using the cobra-stare. This will assist you in visually storing words error-free on your inner screen.

At the end of the book you will find cobra sheets to be cut out. You will find the symbols at the upper edge of the cobra sheet. To practice the

cobra-stare, the cobra sheets will support you in learning the cobra stare method.

What you may experience while looking at 4-8 symbols at the same time, to photograph and visually store them on your inner screen, is that your inner tape recorder may start to automatically recite the symbols. You know meanwhile, that if you recite the symbols on your

tape recorder, then you will make errors when drawing them. So you need to purposely turn your tape recorder off, and concentrate only on visualizing the symbols on your inner screen.

How you turn your tape recorder off is by counting backwards from 30 to zero. Second graders, count backwards from 20 to zero. It helps to have your inner tape filled with numbers while your eyes visualize the symbols

on your inner screen. This prevents you from saying the symbols silently and storing it on your inner tape. Now you will learn to work without your inner tape recorder to visually store symbols and later words viewed on a blackboard/book simply on your inner mental screen, without storing them on your inner tape recorder. This way you can recall and correctly spell and write these words at any time without making a mistake.

Here is the practical step-by-step explanation:

The relaxation and concentration exercises (see Chapter Nine) practiced before using the new learning strategy support learning it faster and thus more relaxed.

1. Please sit up straight on your “sitting bones”. Let your body and your head completely relax.
2. Take the cobra sheet and place it before you on the table.
3. Isolate four of the graphic symbols at the upper edge of the cobra sheet with both index fingers. This is so that you can only see four of the symbols and the remaining symbols are covered.
4. Start counting aloud and backwards from 30 to zero. Second graders, count backwards from 20 to zero.

5. Use the cobra-stare and look at all four symbols at the same time. The eyes remain directed forward without any movement. Continue counting aloud and backwards at the same time while visualizing the symbols.
6. Take all four symbols in at one glance and photograph and store them visually on your inner screen in your head.
7. This will work best if you just look at the four symbols quickly several times. Look for just two seconds then lift your head, keeping it straight. Then look straight ahead with either open or closed eyes. Continue counting aloud and backwards at the same time.
8. Find your inner screen. Remember where you visualized the letters of your name at the level of your nose or forehead visualized on your inner screen?
9. At either eye or forehead level, with open or closed eyes, visualize the four symbols on your inner screen.
10. Wait until you can clearly visualize the symbols there, right there in front of you as photographed.
11. If it doesn't work, then take a break, do the relaxation exercise and start again.
12. For two seconds, look with the cobra-stare again at the four symbols on the cobra sheet; seeing them all at the same time. Continue counting aloud and backwards at the same time.
13. Lift your head again, hold it straight and look again at the level of your nose or forehead.

14. Visualize the symbols there in front of you as photographed. You will notice that every time from this point forward you are able to visualize more symbols this way.
15. Repeat this until you can visualize all four symbols clearly on your mental screen in front of you at the same time.
16. If you can clearly visualize the four symbols on your screen all at once for about four to eight seconds, move on to the next step.
17. Take your index finger and draw the symbols in the air, right there where your inner screen is. Start with the last symbol, with the one that you visualized to your far right on the screen, then the second symbol from the right, up to the first one.
18. Continue counting aloud and backwards at the same time.
19. Drawing the symbols from back to front in the air helps you to really visualize them and not verbally pronounce them. You want to visualize the symbols in front of you on the screen and not just say them to yourself.
20. If this works, then look at five to eight of the symbols at the same time and draw them in the air.
21. If you are able to visualize five to eight symbols with the cobra-stare easily and clearly for four to eight seconds on your inner mental screen, by counting aloud and backwards at the same time, then continue with the next exercise.
22. If you are unable to easily do this, then take a short break and start again from the beginning.

23. If this doesn't work, again follow the relaxation and concentration exercise in Chapter Nine

Chapter Nine

Relaxation and concentration exercise

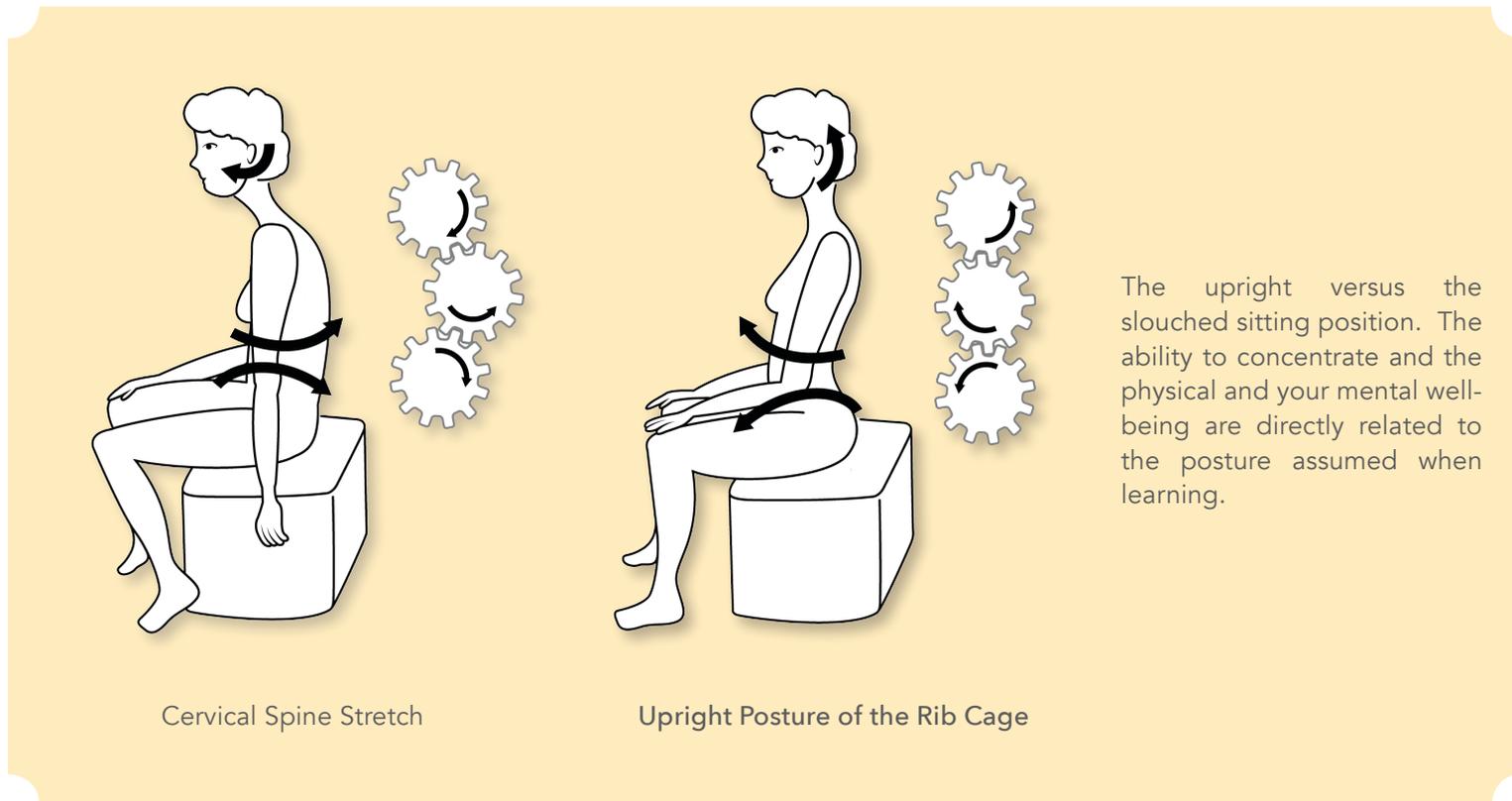
The main goal of this relaxation and concentration exercise is to get you to a point where you will be able to easily and automatically visualize clear inner word images and therefore retain these images in your memory for as long as possible.

At the beginning of the process, it is beneficial if the parents participate in the relaxation exercise. For one thing, it will be easier for you to relax. For another, when they are stressed themselves, your parents can hardly convince you to learn in a relaxed and focused way.

The inner and outer appearance and relaxed state of mind of the parents, tutors or facilitators is transferred to you and it clearly increases your prospects for success.

On the other hand, the restlessness of people around you during the training process influences and will certainly distract you. So ask those who are learning with you to participate in the relaxation exercise together. This will speed up the learning process.

Body posture aids concentration



For a relaxed and correct posture, deep breathing and attention span, it is of extreme importance to sit up straight and maintain good posture throughout. To do this you must sit straight in the middle of the chair. Only then can the spine keep an upright posture.

The upright versus the slouched sitting position

"Sitting bones" and relaxed learning



Sitting up straight while maintaining correct body posture is necessary for a relaxed state of mind and it will help your attention span. To achieve this you must sit straight on the middle of your sitting bones. You accomplish this by bending your upper body forward and finding the "sitting bones" by touching them with your fingers and feeling them for yourself. Place your posterior down on these. Then bend back and sit straight and relaxed on your sitting bones. I admit this is a funny exercise.

Ask your parents to help you to find your “*sitting bones*” and you do this by touching them with your fingers and feeling them for yourself. Then



To sit upright and maintain a comfortable body posture is important for a relaxed state of mind and improved attention span.

sit on these in the middle of the chair. To achieve this, bend your upper body forward and find the “*sitting bones*” with your hand. Place your posterior down on these. I admit this is a funny exercise, but sitting straight on your sitting bones is very important for an easy and relaxed learning process. It will also extend your attention span, which will be very important as you continue with the steps to follow. A sign that you are doing this properly is that your lower back is arched slightly inward. Your abdomen makes a small arch of the belly outwardly while breathing in. This is very important, in order to make it possible for the diaphragm to move freely while breathing in and out. Once you have found this upright and comfortable position, then please close your eyes, put your hands on your thighs and relax for two minutes.

Belly breathing instead of chest breathing

Now you will find out if you practice belly or chest breathing. And learn how to influence the rhythm of your (belly) breathing to enhance a more relaxed mental and emotional state of mind, which directly affects your attitude for learning.

RELAXATION AND CONCENTRATION EXERCISE



To establish an easy and relaxed mental and emotional attitude for successful learning, as well as the capacity to extend your attention span, it is important that you practice belly breathing instead of chest breathing.

It is important to influence the rhythm of your breathing. Your belly has to move outwardly while breathing in. This way, the diaphragm can expand downward into the abdomen and then spread

out. While you breath in, the lungs and heart can expand. Breathing air in through the nostrils fills both the entire abdomen and the chest area as well.

While consciously breathing out, allow the belly to come in and you will notice your diaphragm then moves upward and pushes on the lungs to support exhaling.

If the belly pulls in and not out while breathing in and lifting up the chest, this can lead to tension in both your body and mind since the diaphragm pulls upward into the chest cavity while you breathe in. Instead of spreading out, the lungs and the heart are going to be cramped. Easy and relaxed learning cannot take place in such a posture and thus the attention span will be low.

To find out whether your diaphragm pulls up or down while you breath in, put one hand on your belly, below the ribs, near the solar plexus. Put the other hand on the middle of your chest. Then close your eyes for a moment. While keeping your eyes closed and breathing in, consciously feel with your hands what moves first, is it the chest or the belly? After a few deep breaths, you will feel whether you breathe more into the chest or into the belly. If you breathe into the

chest, direct your full attention to the hand on your belly. Push your hand tighter on your belly. The next time you breathe in, first breathe into the belly where your hand is lying on it. Feel how the belly begins to arch outwardly and your hand is moving on your belly. You will recognize that much more air comes into your lungs, you will become more relaxed, plus your attention span and your ability to concentrate longer will certainly increase.

Slowly, and in a relaxed way, now transfer your breathing from the chest to the belly so that the belly raises itself when breathing in.

It is important that your breathing is switched to the belly so that the diaphragm moves downward to the belly and thus the lungs and heart can expand. This will increase your attention span and your ability to concentrate longer, in a relaxed, more alert state. If you are uncertain about this or having trouble then ask someone to be a model and show you the proper belly breathing technique.

The importance of the relaxed jaw.



Relaxed jaw muscles will relax your brain.

Now you want to get your head, brain and mind into a relaxed, aware state. If the brain is relaxed, it will be easier to visualize mental pictures and eventually vocabulary words in your head. For this, it is important to get your jaw, jawbone, neck vertebræ and base of the brain into a relaxed condition. Please sit relaxed and upright, while consciously breathing deeply in your belly. Now

you want to get your head, brain and mind into a relaxed, aware state. If the brain is relaxed, it will be easier to visualize mental pictures and eventually vocabulary words in your head. For this, it is important to get your jaw, jawbone, neck vertebræ and base of the brain into a relaxed condition.

Ask your parents to support you, to consciously feel your lower jaw, jawbone joints, and upper vertebra with your fingers. Now please open your mouth slightly, to leave the lower jaw loose. Having your mouth slightly open will relax the jaw muscles. You can sense this by feeling the jaw muscles with your finger. Relaxed jaw muscles loosen the upper spine. Your neck feels loose and movable in any direction. The base of the brain stem, which is located in the upper area of the spine, is relaxed and sufficiently supplied with blood. This will relax your brain and your mind and help to exchange the information between the brain and the nervous system. Gritted teeth and a tight jaw can cause headaches and even migraines. All of this has been scientifically proven.

Calm eyes help the learning process



To relax fluttering eyelids and restless or irritated eyes, rub your hands together tightly until the palms of your hands are really warm. Then, for three minutes put your palms on your eyes. Your nervous system and thoughts need to be rested. Only then succeed in imagining the words you see in your book or on the blackboard as clear word images in your head and this will remain so in the future.

Close your eyes and let your eyelids and eyeballs relax completely. Feel your eyelids: Are they relaxed or do they flutter? Do the eyeballs move back and forth? Do your eyes feel irritated or are they red? If needed please ask your parents to help you find this out.

The goal is for your eyes, the nervous system and your thoughts, to be rested. Only then will you succeed in imagining the words you see in your book or on the blackboard as clear word images in your head. This is an important prerequisite for error-free reading and writing. It is also needed for successful learning in other subjects.

To relax fluttering eyelids and restless or irritated eyes, rub your hands together tightly, until the palms of your hands are really warm. Then, for three minutes, put your palms on your eyes. Make sure that the eyes are covered with the middle of the palms. Your fingers should not cover your eyes, but the middle of the palms, there where the warmth comes from.

This ancient technique, proven effective and practiced in India, causes the eyes and the brain to relax. This will enable you to store what you read in a book or see on a blackboard easily and error-free on your inner mental screen. As a result you will be able to clearly visualize the words while reproducing and writing them down error-free.

Learning takes place in the here and now

Learning happens at exactly this moment and at the place where you are now. We call this the present, the here and now. If you fidget around or are distracted, it will be difficult to read text and store it on your inner mental screen error-free. And you want to be able to reproduce it without errors, but that can only happen if you are present in the here and now.

Often parents say: "My child cannot concentrate. We've tried various techniques but nothing seems to be effective or to help. He is simply not capable. Maybe he has an attention deficit."

Here is a tip for parents to find out if their child is capable of being completely focused. Consider whether there are times where your child gets involved in something and works on it in a concentrated way. If this is the case, then your child does have the capacity to be in the "present", to be focused and concentrate.

The question is whether he also shows this capacity when he is supposed to learn something that doesn't really interest him. Specifically when he is expected to complete tasks that he would not willingly do if given the choice. It is very important to separate "want to" and "can". Ask

your child what he thinks about this and he will probably confirm this.

I have never met a child who was incapable of concentrating, so as to learn error-free reading and writing. But in many cases, I have often spent several hours counseling families, in order to counterbalance any rebellion in the family or to support the child to become motivated to ultimately be successful in school. If this process worked then the child was successfully able to

The relaxation instructions are directed to the child:

Please sit relaxed and upright on your chair. Notice how you breathe in deeply, with your diaphragm moving down into your abdomen. The wall of your abdomen will arch outwards. Let the breathing take place on its own. Do not try to control the breathing in your head. Breathing does not depend on you as it takes place on its own and in its natural way. Leave your jaw loose and your mouth somewhat open.

Feel how the jaw and neck are relaxed. Let your eyelids and eyeballs completely relax. Feel

improve his reading and writing within the four to ten individual sessions.

The following exercise helps the child and the parents to be fully present and thus absorb the exercises in this book in addition to the material introduced at school. Every time you and your child engage yourselves his ability to concentrate is lengthened. As a result the child develops the capacity to memorize more material in less time.

how your whole body is immersed in both an aware state and deeply relaxed state. All bodily movements rest and your head is relaxed as well.

Now you will learn how your thoughts and your head can rest. How to be both relaxed and yet focused at the same time. You eventually reach a condition in which you can absorb what is to be learned, and to correctly store it and reproduce it without errors.

Feel your nostrils without using your fingers or

moving your body. When you breathe in, feel where the air touches your nostrils for the first time. Don't say anything but just feel it for yourself. This way you learn to direct your thoughts to the here and now by feeling the air inhaled in your nostrils. Then count how many seconds the air touches the nostrils while inhaling. Count slowly: 21, 22, 23, 24... Take a minute of time for this counting. Then do the same with exhaling. Count slowly: 21, 22, 23, 24... Take a minute of time for this counting. Where does the air last touch your nostrils before it escapes? Just be aware of this without saying anything. Keep your body completely relaxed and yet alert. Stay with it for a minute and count how long you feel the touch of breath while you are exhaling.

Probably from time to time you will notice that you are thinking about something in between counting and you no longer feel your nose and you forget to count. At that moment you become aware, that you are not in the here and now, but are actually following a thought.

Then you will notice you are present again and have made contact with both your nostrils and

breathing. It is important not to evaluate yourself when you stray from being present with your thoughts. Just find your way back to your nostrils and breathing. Your breath and your feeling in the nostrils are always there. You don't have to do anything for this. Just ask yourself: Where do I feel my breath and where do I feel the contact of my breath with my nostrils? And then you just need to stay there.

The last step is to lengthen your attention span to be in the here and now, to be able to concentrate on something for a longer period of time. For this, lengthen the time of exhaling by one number: If, for instance, you have been counting up to 23 when exhaling, count now to 24. Casually lengthen the time of exhaling by one number. Take a minute to observe how your exhaling becomes deeper. Your state of relaxation and your concentration span expand effortlessly.

Then allow a little pause, in which you neither inhale nor exhale. Then let the inhaling return by itself. Do not control the breathing with your head. Breathing does not need you in order to take place. If you direct or guide it, you just

Chapter Twelve

Answers to frequently asked questions

What are the causes of language problems?

Difficulties arise from the unconscious use of an ineffective learning style for acquiring written language, which children are not aware of. The strong use of phonetic instructional methods for written language produces reading and writing problems and dyslexia in children.

Can psychological disadvantages cause dyslexia?

There is a strong focus on psychosomatic development in order to compensate for eventual psychological disadvantages, which could stand in the way of reading and writing success. As a child, I also had problems with spelling. This had a very negative influence on my childhood and continued for twenty years of my adult life. So it is a personal concern of mine to support children to establish self-confidence along with successful reading and writing.

Is there “the one successful learning method”?

It is striking that, according to studies, people with excellent spelling use a common strategy. The dictated (heard) word is transposed into an inner word image. A specific physical perception checks the inner word image so as to then write it down quickly and correctly. In simple terms, one could characterize these inner word images as a photograph. The inner dialogue, which is used for spelling, is more complex when carefully examined.

What learning strategies do those with dyslexia use?

Studies with people who have reading and writing problems show that they use a variety of strategies. Three prominent differences stand out:

- Elements of a word image are hardly detectable in the strategies of “weak” spellers.
- Word image elements are either not used at all or are unsystematic and fragmented.
- Most weak spellers try to spell phonetically.

The words to be written are stored as if on an inner tape recorder. For writing them down, they always pronounce these words inwardly over and over again. This method is tedious, slow and causes errors. This strategy is bound to fail on account of the lack of phonetic spelling in German, English, and many other languages.

How does the NICOLAY METHOD function?

There is a specially developed teacher-student dialogue format. It enables children to consciously recognize the learning style they use for spelling. This is done with intelligent questions and self-reflection. It begins with the simple question: “How do you store the

words you learn in your mind?" Most often the answer is a perplexed look. Children do not learn to consciously recognize how they use their thinking when learning. Very few know how the children who read and write error-free actually store words in their mind. However, once they have figured this out, it helps them to store words in their own minds as efficiently as the children who practice error-free reading and writing.

How long does it take?

Eighty percent of the children need only four to ten individual sessions to acquire good grades in reading and writing. Within six to twelve weeks they will have achieved good grades in written language tests.

Also children who were not helped by other forms of therapy or were identified as having incurable dyslexia are able to write and read error-free. This is assuming that a parent or tutor is actively involved in the individual tutoring and uses the practical instructions for successful continuation and conclusion at home.

All words and vocabulary, which were conveyed in school before learning this specific method, and which the child stored incorrectly, must be reworked. How does this take place?

This tedious work is not part of the instruction given. The child learns and continues this at home with the support of the parents or tutor. The parents or tutors obtain tangible instructions for individual tutoring.

