

Confronting the Learning Disabilities Lie



by Paula Moldenhauer



Anna R. Buck

Anna Lee's mother, teacher, therapist, and friend

Society, professionals, even friends and family gave Anna Buck the same message: Your daughter has severe learning disabilities. You must accept it. She must learn to cope.

But that wasn't good enough for Anna. She knew before her daughter, Anna Lee, was born that she was a gift from God to be treasured. It was her responsibility to do whatever it took to help her precious child. She couldn't give up. Anna Lee's survival depended upon Anna's faith and tenacity. God had created Anna Lee and He knew the answers. He would show them what was wrong and what to do about it.

God didn't give Anna the answers she desired in her timing, but when He did, the results were staggering. Now the Buck family uses what they learned to help other struggling children reach their God-given potential, combating society's lie that the best a child with learning disabilities can hope for is to learn to compensate.

The Early Years

It was obvious to Anna that her daughter struggled to learn, but the extent of her disabilities was more than Anna was willing to face. For a while she lived in denial followed by a season of anger and weeping. At last Anna was ready to deal with the situation. Determined to offer her child a safe environment in which to develop, Anna pulled her from private school and began an arduous homeschooling journey.

"Homeschooling was a battle, but no one could offer alternative methods for teaching her," said Anna. "I refused to have her diagnosed, yet received lots of comments: severe dyslexia, bipolar disorder, and Central Auditory Processing Disorder (CAPD). Homeschooling wasn't commonplace when my girls were young, and I received a lot of criticism. I learned to be very protective of Anna Lee and did not share her struggles outside the immediate family."

Progress was slow. Anna agonized over her daughter's inability to read or write. Equally frustrating was Anna Lee's speech difficulty. She could not repeat words over two syllables.

"I prayed daily that the Lord would meet Anna Lee's needs in spite of my inadequacies," said Anna. "Each fall I wrote down specific goals that I thought I could live with if she were to gain that little bit during the coming school year. Each spring I pulled out the list and confirmed that they had been met. These were not



Anna and Anna Lee



Anna, Anna Lee, and Melissa

Anna and her two daughters work together at Anna's House to help children with learning disabilities.



Anna's House
Northglenn, Colorado



Anna Lee's survival depended upon Anna's faith and tenacity.

significant accomplishments; they were just enough to assure me some ground had been gained."

But the slow progress exasperated Anna. "Sometimes I became so angry I fought the urge to ask, 'What is wrong with you?' Yet the older she became, the more I realized how dysfunctional she truly was. I couldn't think about her future; we had to get through one day at a time."

Anna Lee had other struggles as well. She seemed to have no sense of place or self. She needed her mom beside her at all times or she felt lost. Social interaction was excruciating. Anna felt she didn't really know her daughter. It was as though her personality were hidden somewhere deep underneath all of her difficulties and fears.

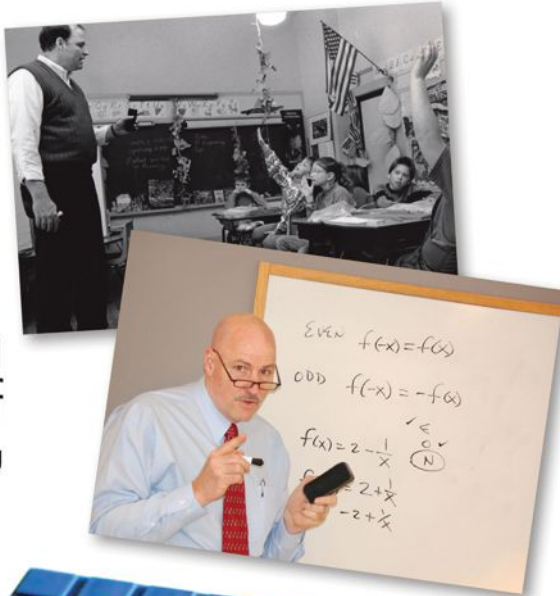
The hardest part wasn't the hard work or slow progress; it was not knowing how to help her daughter. But Anna didn't give up. She kept praying and spent days at the local bookstore researching learning disabilities. She was shocked to read one professional opinion that said no one knew the cause or what dyslexia was.

Hope Builds!

The years rolled by—five, then ten, and more—and Anna kept praying and researching. The name Dr. Peter Blythe appeared often in her reading. Anna dug deeper. Dr. Blythe's lifework was in understanding and treating learning disabilities. He founded the Institute for Neuro-Physiological Psychology (INPP) on the belief that learning disabilities were related to the cluster of primitive reflexes at the base of the brain and could be treated by starting there.

Anna also read *If Children Just Came with Instruction Sheets* by Svea Gold (Fern Ridge Press, 2008), and contacted the author, a friend of Dr. Blythe. Svea answered Anna's e-mails and gave Anna simple exercises to do with Anna Lee, who was now nineteen years old. Some nights the exercises seemed to do nothing. Other nights Anna Lee would burst into tears and cry for about fifteen minutes. Anna began to notice that the day after a teary episode Anna Lee would be able to do something she'd never done before. There was improvement in body awareness, balance, or coordination.

The progress convinced Anna to fly to INPP in Chester, England, where she trained to become a Neuro-Developmental Delay therapist. Anna studied normal development, learned to find the



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point of developmental breakdown in children who struggle, and how to begin treatment.

When she returned home and applied what she learned, Anna was excited beyond words. God was showing her specific answers to all the prayers over the years. She and Anna Lee were embarking on an adventure to healing. Anna became her daughter's observer, encourager, and soother. She curled around her during the many crying bouts, stroked her hair, and promised her it would be okay.

Suddenly Anna Lee could feel pain and tell her mom when she felt ill. Verbal expression began to develop. Seeing Anna Lee smile or answer when someone spoke to her gave her mom chills of excitement.

Still Anna felt that her daughter needed more assistance in learning to process auditory information now that the learning blockages were removed. Anna thought Paul Madaule's listening therapy might be the answer. Anna flew to The Listening Centre in Toronto, Canada, and trained in the Listening Fitness Program. When she brought back these strategies to help Anna Lee, Anna became the first person to combine and dovetail the work of INPP and the work of The Listening Centre.

Breakthrough!

With the combined therapies, the changes in Anna Lee happened so rapidly, unfolding day by day, that there wasn't time for Anna or her daughter to become discouraged or fearful. "I remember being very uncertain but trusting the Lord to see it through," said Anna. "I understood that these changes were occurring deep within her central nervous system, and so it made sense that there would be ups and downs as her body adjusted and adapted. Because she was already nineteen, every new thing was a profound step forward. I didn't know what would improve and what might stay the same, but I knew we would keep going regardless. As I watched her bloom and come alive, I was astounded, humbled, and in awe of a God who created our bodies so marvelously."

Eighteen months after they started therapy, the academic breakthrough Anna had prayed for became a reality. "Before we began therapy Anna Lee struggled to read at a third-grade level. She couldn't make change at the grocery store. If she went to the neighborhood park, she couldn't find her way home," said Anna. "Now I watched her read adult fiction, write stories, and become a fully functioning adult. I felt as though I was given my daughter back as a whole person."

But the most rewarding experience came as the two women really got to know each other. "For so long I felt I never knew who Anna Lee was. I am thrilled to have finally gotten to know her. She is

definitely her own person, and she has talents and abilities I didn't know existed. She expresses thoughts and opinions. Even if I disagree, it's a pleasure to know she can think for herself. She has become an adult. She no longer needs me by her side in order to survive."

The Buck Family Today

Already a tutor for other children, Anna began to use what she'd learned to help others. Her older daughter, Melissa, graduated from college with a business degree. The two combined their skills and opened Anna's House, LLC, where they offer academic remediation. Melissa runs the business side, while Anna diagnoses and treats the many children God sends her way. And Anna Lee? She's on staff serving kids in the Listening Fitness Program and writes novels in her spare time.

"I named our center 'Anna's House' because so many of the kids I treat have been shuffled from clinic to clinic for most of their lives," said Anna. "The American system typically treats the symptoms, not the cause. This means a child has a speech therapist, an academic tutor, and someone else to help with vestibular issues. I wanted kids to be able to say, 'I'm going to Anna's House.'"

Interestingly the clients who tend to experience the most success with the program at Anna's House are homeschoolers.

Anna and her staff work hard to create a warm, welcoming environment. Anna prays over each child entrusted to her, asking God to show her the best path for remediation. She has treated children from all around the world, and the results are nothing short of miraculous. Just ask the mom of a seventeen-year-old boy who struggled to read a second-grade primer when he began treatment. Now in his early twenties, her son is making straight A's in his chemical engineering degree program.

Anna has dozens of success stories. "One time a family pulled up in front of my house to say hello. I could see a girl I had previously worked with sitting in the front seat of the car, her nose in a book. A surge of joy swept through me. She jumped out of the car, ran up the driveway, and hugged me. Then she proceeded to tell me about the book she was reading. When I first met this girl, she was two years behind in reading and had been told she had dyslexia. Now she reads constantly.

“Another mother told me how her six-year-old is coming out of her shell and no longer terrified and withdrawn. Several of my pupils who struggled with balance have gone on to become gifted athletes. I often cry when I read e-mails from mothers who share something new their child did for the very first time. I know what it’s like to see a child come alive.

“All of these things bring joy to my heart. I know they happen by the grace of God and the commitment of the parents to see this through. Seeing broken, dysfunctional children become whole persons is a privilege I cherish. I wonder what the future holds for each of these children.”

Interestingly the clients who tend to experience the most success with the program at Anna’s House are homeschoolers. “Our treatment moves at the child’s pace,” said Anna. “The public schools want to meet quotas and keep students in neat little boxes. That’s not the way God designed children. When a homeschooled child comes to Anna’s House, [he is] much more likely to sail through the program. Homeschool moms understand a child’s need to develop at his own pace and allow him to move forward without the stress.”

Anna Confronts the Lies

Anna Buck has seen too much success to believe society’s lies. God answered Anna’s prayers for a solu-

tion to her daughter’s struggles. The answers didn’t come in her timing, but they came. She believes His answers are there for other children too.

“Our bodies were created to develop in an organized manner and when treatment follows that same organized, systematic progression, we are able to observe amazing growth and healing that we never thought possible,” said Anna. “I don’t like that society typically assumes that whatever diagnosis a child receives, he or she must accept, live with, and learn to compensate for. When we use treatment that follows God’s organized plan for development, children can and do change! Never give up, because if you don’t fight for your child, no one else will.”

A freelance writer and homeschooling mother of four, Paula Moldenhauer’s children received help through Anna’s House. Paula wrote this article in gratitude for all the help their family received. You can contact her at Paula@soulscents.us.

Anna Buck, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Christian Education, has been a private tutor for over 20 years. She is a certified Neuro-Developmental Delay Therapist and Licentiate of The Institute For Neuro-Physiological Psychology in Chester, UK. Anna is also a certified Listening Fitness Trainer for The Listening Centre, Quebec, Canada. You can learn more about Anna’s House at <http://www.annashousellc.com/>. Contact Anna at anna.annashouse@gmail.com.

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