

The **COMMUNICATOR** *Express*

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CCCS MEDICAL INTERPRETER FOUNDATIONS PROGRAM

Now in its eleventh year, CCCS provides medical interpreter services statewide in Massachusetts and New Hampshire, covering assignments in 48 languages and dialects. The CCCS commitment to quality service goes beyond technical accuracy. We believe that professional interpreters must serve the LEP population with integrity and compassion, providing support in communication and comprehensive management of linguistic and cultural issues. For this reason, CCCS interpreters are screened, trained, and nurtured to ensure optimal performance.

CCCS has revised its interpreter policies and guidelines in a new publication, the **Medical Interpreter Foundations Manual**. This manual outlines CCCS interpreter requirements, reinforces the Code of Ethics, and provides interpreters with tips on managing their schedules, preparing for assignments, navigating the triadic encounter, documenting work and reporting critical incidents. The manual also sets out time-tested interpreter career development strategies.

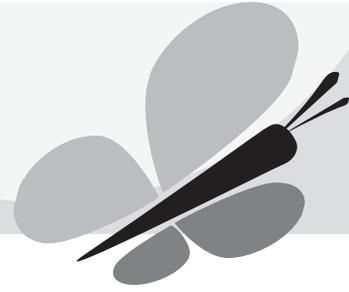
Over an eight-month period, all active CCCS interpreters will be invited to attend a new 8-hour **Medical Interpreter Foundations** orientation session. In the meantime, this publication will be distributed by mail to all active interpreters and will replace the previous **CCCS Guidelines and Policies** manual. CCCS interpreters will be assessed and critical incidents evaluated on the basis of the updated policies documented in this new publication.



INTERPRETER POLICIES
AND GUIDELINES

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“THE FOUR CHARACTER VALUES APPLIED TO A STUDENT WITH DYSLEXIA”

The following article is an adaptation of **“Cultural Considerations of Disability: A Cultural Competency Tool as Applied to a 15-Year Old with Dyslexia”** by Zarita Araujo-Lane. (FOCUS, Vol. 33, No.7. National Association of Social Workers, Massachusetts Chapter)

All of us, as individuals, carry many layers of culture. There exist layers of an **inner circle**, which include age, race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic background, disabilities, and immigration status. The layers of our **outer circle** relate to expectations and normative functioning based on the values of a majority group. Often the pressures of the outer circle leave us disempowered to express who we are as people and as professionals.

Carina, a 15-year-old high school honors student of Portuguese and Jewish ancestry, has written courageously about her inner and outer circles. In this article, we will examine some of Carina’s writings and identify the main threads that run through her accounts of her struggle with dyslexia. Then, we will introduce The Four Character Values, a cultural competency model that can be applied to our everyday interactions and to our work with patients and providers in the interpreted medical encounter.

“My mother and I stand in the middle of the pool. We are surrounded in an island of light and the only thing in my world is her. I am like a monkey clinging to her body, she holds me above the water, above all shame and fear. We stand together completely alone, a mixture of chlorine with a hint of safety hanging

in the air like a blanket. My cheek which is resting against her throat sends the vibration of her voice down my neck.

“The family friend that she is talking to nods his head in understanding, his white face made almost iridescent by the pool’s light. My mother is telling him about the latest subject in my life. Something that makes me feel special. Something that makes me feel like I could fly.

“Later that night, in the same pool my mother goes over what she had told me months ago. “Carina,” she says, “you know that you are different. You are special; you have something that makes you shine like no one else. “

“That night the sky had been so black, it was like someone used magic marker to color out the stars. The only light I had was my mother.

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CARINA, A 15-YEAR-OLD
HIGH SCHOOL HONORS
STUDENT OF
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Dislexia

“Sometimes when people are dyslexic it takes them a longer time to learn things, because you see the world differently from most. Sometimes seeing the world in a different way is going to be difficult for you, but it’s going to be something that makes you special. Something that makes you, you.”

“My Mother was telling me that I was dyslexic. She was telling me that I was born different, that life was going to be harder for me, because my brain and my eyes don’t always agree on what direction a letter is pointing. But on that night in Florida, my mother tells me that I am not stupid or lacking what I should have, but that I am special. I am something amazing, different and unique, because of my “disability.”

Two main threads in Carina’s stories are those of loneliness and shame:

“We are surrounded in an island of light and the only thing in my world is her. I am like a monkey clinging to her body, she holds me above the water, above all shame and fear”.

But at the same time, Carina carries a sense of inner strength:

“But on that night in Florida, my mother tells me that I am not stupid or lacking what I should have, but that I am special. I am something amazing, different and unique, because of my “disability.”

Carina’s sense of inner strength may have been fortified by the core values of her family culture. Her parents, both human service providers, felt that they owed it to their children to be open about Carina’s dyslexia, and they continuously reassured her that although she

at times would feel “alone”, she would always have family and friends to support her.

But sometimes, a family culture (inner circle) will clash with the values of the outer circle. By the age of five, Carina would come home and tell her parents that her teachers were not showing how they really felt about her. On many occasions, she explained, “they say nice words but their mouths are not smiling.” Carina’s parents were amazed at her ability to read facial expressions and capture the feeling of a moment.

A year later, when Carina entered kindergarten, she was extremely anxious and under pressure to perform. She loved to listen to stories and to look at pictures, but she could not read most of the words. There was a pattern to her reading that her parents noticed: she inverted words and mixed the letters “b” and “p”. She also had a hard time with words that were not representative of objects.

Carina was bright, sensitive and extremely caring towards others, but she was lonely and felt terrible about her learning progress. Carina had all the symptoms of a child who was dyslexic. (Dyslexia is commonly defined as a learning disability characterized by difficulty with reading and writing despite normal or above-average intelligence and cognitive abilities.) But the school was reluctant to call her dyslexic and the principal tried to convince her parents that it would be better if Carina and her classmates were not aware of her disability. Her parents disagreed with his

recommendation and decided to validate her anxiety by telling her the truth.

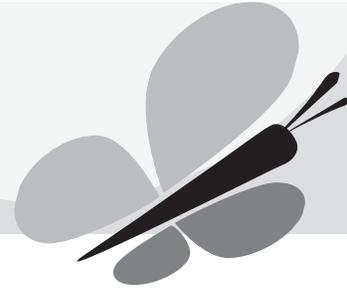
One summer night before starting first grade, Carina expressed great anxiety about going back to school and how she was going to handle the fact that she still could not read. She was scared of how she would be perceived by teachers and fellow students. Her mother asked her how she perceived herself and suggested that she give a speech to the class about her dyslexia. Carina asked her older sister to type the following speech as she recited it:

“It all began when I was a little baby. When I saw my mother’s elbow, a picture of my mother’s head would come to my head. Or, if I saw a kitten curled up in a ball-regular people would see a ball, but I would see a kitten. Some people who have dyslexia are very famous. In fact, they include, Whoopi Goldberg, Albert Einstein, Jay Leno and even Walt Disney. Albert Einstein had it the worst.

“The reason why it is so hard for me to learn how to read is that because when my brain sees a letter, it sees lots and lots of letters; upside down, sideways and even apart. Dyslexia is a condition that different brains have. It doesn’t really matter if it runs in your family, it just happens.

“The best way that dyslexics can learn how to read is probably memorizing the words and recognizing them by memory. The dyslexic’s brain works like anyone else’s brain, it’s just harder for them to learn how to read.”

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"THE FOUR CHARACTER VALUES APPLIED TO A STUDENT WITH DYSLEXIA" CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Thus, Carina set the tone for the new school year. She would not hide something that would be a part of her life forever. Carina and her family had added another layer to their fabrics: the culture of living with dyslexia.

Where did Carina get the ideas for her speech? Her parents passed many on as they read *The Gift of Dyslexia*, a book by Dr. Ronald Davis. In it, he asserts, "dyslexia is a thought process that results from an individual's reaction to a feeling of confusion". He further develops this concept by explaining that there are two main forms of thought:

1. Verbal thought, where an individual makes meaning of sounds and words by using a step-by-step process to formulate mental sentences. There is order and predictability as conceptualization is maintained at a speed of 2.5 words per second. Language is then broken down into three main categories of symbols: sound, meaning and what it looks like. With verbal thought, we "think with the sounds of the language".
2. Nonverbal thought, which seems to occur in three-dimensional images that grow into other images at a higher speed than speech. Because of its speed, this process occurs in the subconscious and can create a sense of confusion and anxiety.

Most people use both verbal and non-verbal thought. Dyslexic individuals, however, experience an evolution of mental images in a way that makes it difficult for them to use words for which

they do not have a picture image. For example, many dyslexic patients have trouble connecting the words "a" and "the", as there are no mental images with which to associate them. Dyslexics do better with words that describe objects, like cat, ball, fireplace, house, bedroom, and beach.

In Dr. Davis' description, a dyslexic will read the sentence, "the ball and the cat were not at the house" like this: _____ ball _____ cat were not _____ house. These blanks create a feeling of confusion and disconnect between images, making reading and writing difficult or even impossible in some cases.

At home, to help Carina cope with the dyslexia that would so heavily impact her life, her parents used story telling to share personal experiences of feeling different or of feeling a sense of loss. Their stories were genuine and were a great way for the family members to connect with each other's inner and outer circles. Two years ago Carina wrote about one of these stories:

"My mother grew up in the Azores, a group of nine islands in the North Atlantic that are part of Portugal. When she was my age eleven, the Portuguese were having a civil war with the African colonies. The colonies wanted to become their own country. At night my mother would dream of losing her family "What will happen to me if they die or get hurt?" Every day she thanked God that she didn't have any brothers, so they would not take place in the bloodshed. The very thought of war filled her with

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sorrow and pain. It hurt her to think how many lives were being lost.

“With these feelings, you could just imagine how she felt when one sunny morning, she woke up to find the American navy infested on the beach of her childhood, where many summer days were spent laying on her back letting the sun’s warmth engulf her. Men in camouflage crawled in the sand with guns in their muscular hands, while amphibious boats painted in menacing green, parked on the sloping ground, looking awkward, as if wondering why they would be needed in such a beautiful place. The Americans were fighting in the Vietnam War. My mother knew this because she had read many articles about how they had burned villages, and killed many people.

“At that dreadful moment my mother thought the worse, that the mighty army that wore red, white and blue, had come to crush and destroy what and who she loved most. Luckily the American men had only come to her island for a drill. She recalled how at the end of their practice they threw out green army blankets and chocolates in the sand, instead of giving the children the treats from their hands, as if in some way the soldiers were greater than her friends and family. Also, the Americans were cocky and arrogant. “How dare they come to our shores and act as if we were below them!” From then on, during my mother’s childhood America was not her favorite country!

“As she grew older she began to see that not all of the Americans were like the

soldiers that she saw on the beach. “I think what happened” said my mother, now forty-four, “was that when I was younger I only saw one side of things, but as I got older I began to realize that there are always two sides of a conflict and that you have to see both of them.” “

In consideration of the many layers of Carina’s cultural fabric, we recall *The Four Character Values*, a cultural competency model for application as clinicians, parents, professional interpreters, and in everyday interactions. This model is based on the premise that all human beings have an inner “tree”, with roots (honor), branches (respect), leaves (generosity) and a canopy (trust).

How we grow our trees and how we expose our roots will differ from individual to individual (inner circle) or from country to country (outer circle). But we all know that a tree with damaged or missing roots will die.

Honor is a sense of worth or dignity that is defined in a person’s traditions, rituals, beliefs or history. In general they are buried, like roots, at a subconscious level. A person may act a certain way based on a value that has been passed on from generation to generation.

New roots can be added to the tree as an individual integrates new ideas from the inner and outer circles. In Carina’s story, we see the family tradition of “no secrets” and open communication. These values were passed on by her parents through positive reinforcement and storytelling as an attempt to add new beliefs to their original roots. This new tradition was in some ways contrary to

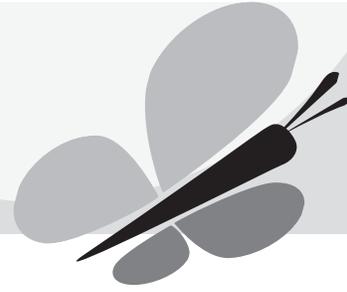
her mother’s upbringing, in which secrets were acceptable whenever they protected a child or a family from forces of the outside circle. Apparently, the principal of Carina’s school shared a similar view of secrets.

Another root was being Portuguese, and her mother’s account of not picking up the candy thrown on the ground by American soldiers conveyed a sense of honor. Her parents through rituals such as preparation for her Batmitzvha shaped Carina’s religious values. Another of Carina’s “roots” or values, is the understanding at as a dyslexic person, she would better manage three dimensional objects and facial expressions than letters and numbers.

Respect is the acknowledgement of a person’s roots. Listening to a person and accepting his or her information as valid, even if you don’t agree with it, is a manifestation of respect. In Carina’s story, her parents showed respect by listening to her stories about school and to her anxieties and fears. Carina’s parents, by respecting her values, helped her to find solutions to the challenges of dyslexia.

Generosity is the willingness to do something out of the ordinary that creates a sense of common ground. Storytelling itself is a form of generosity, and when parents or therapists take time to genuinely echo their children or patient’s fears in story form, the result is often a growing dynamic of **trust**, or as Carina put it, *“a hint of safety hanging in the air like a blanket”*.

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“THE FOUR CHARACTER VALUES APPLIED TO A STUDENT WITH DYSLEXIA”

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Today, Carina is thriving as a student, a writer and a captivating young person. She writes:

Then, just like that, I had it. It was a poem about bears, honey, and rainbows, something that any satisfied six year old would have thought up, but I scribbled it down on piece of paper and showed it to my mother.

“Carina,” she exclaimed after reading it, “that’s beautiful, you’re a writer!”

And just like that I was...Sometimes I wonder if I love writing because I was destined to love it, or because my mother told me I was good at it. I wonder if she had reacted differently about that poem, if she had laughed at it, or gone back to reading her newspaper after viewing it, if I would have still found my passion in words...I find joy in putting my thoughts in words. That is the unique gift my mother has given me. She has showed me something that makes me happy, something that will be a tool for me no matter what I choose to do in my life.

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DYSLEXIA MATCH GAME

Let’s test your understanding of the article. Match the vocabulary word with its corresponding definition.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Developmental dyslexia | a. The acknowledgement of a person’s roots (values). |
| 2. Respect | b. An individual makes meaning of sounds and words by using a step-by-step process to formulate mental sentences. |
| 3. Nonverbal thought | c. The willingness to do something out of the ordinary that creates a sense of common ground. |
| 4. The Four Character Values | d. A learning disability characterized by difficulty with reading and writing despite normal or above-average intelligence and cognitive abilities. |
| 5. Sound | e. A sense of worth or dignity that is defined in a person’s traditions, rituals, beliefs or history. |
| 6. Generosity | f. Occurs in three-dimensional images that grow into other images at a higher speed than speech. |
| 7. The | g. One of three main categories of symbols. |
| 8. Verbal thought | h. Expectations and normative functioning based on the values of a majority group. |
| 9. Honor | i. One word that commonly poses trouble for the dyslexic patient, because there is no mental image with which to associate it. |
| 10. Outer circle | j. A cultural competency model that can be applied to our everyday interactions. |