



## Dealing with a Lifetime of Learning Differently

*Those who learn differently are most fortunate to find their way to Morrissey-Compton Educational Center, where they learn special techniques to help them leverage their strengths to compensate for areas of weakness. However, many go through school without access to these special services. These individuals either learn to compensate or struggle their entire lives. This testimonial was generously shared by **Mike Masia**, a member of Morrissey-Compton's Board of Directors.*

I was in college before I figured out I had a learning issue. One day while reviewing my results on a physics exam, I had an insight. I finally understood why I often got only partial credit. I would set up the problem properly, apply the correct physics, solve the problem using algebra or calculus, and then get the wrong answer. The multiplication was correct because I was using a slide rule, a kind of mechanical calculator, but when I had to add or subtract I would often make a mistake. For example, I would add  $2 + 3$  and often get 6, not 5; or multiply  $2 \times 3$  and get 5, not 6. My brain somehow confuses these simple arithmetical operations. I can do higher mathematics quite easily, but I cannot add and subtract without making errors.

I am now 66, had a successful career as an engineer and operations vice president, and I still have this problem. I will always have this problem. I learned to cope by always checking my work with a calculator. This made college very difficult, as calculators were not available until after I finished. My current strategy to cope with this problem is to use the calculator on my iPhone.

I also have an auditory processing issue. Before smart phones, voicemail was the most common way of leaving a message. Someone would leave me a phone number and I would listen to the number and write it down as they were talking. Most of the time I would transpose numbers. I would listen to the number three or four times to check, and still get it wrong. The same thing still happens when I use my credit card to buy something on the Internet: I transpose numbers. My coping strategy was to have someone listen to the number to see if I got it right. Now that we have smart phones, this is no longer necessary; I check my work by reading the number left to right, checking each digit one at a time.