

Dear Helen Irlen:

I would like to take the time to thank you and to show you my gratitude for inventing the Irlen method. Your Irlen Spectral Filters for my glasses have made more than a world of difference for me and have given me a whole new lease on life altogether. Before I was diagnosed and treated with Irlen Syndrome I had an extremely difficult and complicated life. During my childhood I suffered from medical problems such as ADHD, epileptic seizures and dyslexia, which caused severe learning difficulties in the classrooms. I was extremely hyperactive, unfocused, had poor social skills and had a hard time making friends in grade school and getting good grades in school.

My doctors had me placed on Ritalin to help me stay focused, Zarontin and Dilantin to help manage the seizures. This helped me to manage the symptoms of my medical problems. I was just barely getting through school with the help of my parents and tutors enough to pass to the next grade level each year. As I approached adolescence my self-esteem continued to plummet as my anxiety levels continued to soar to new heights. By the time I started 7th grade in Jr. High School I did see some improvement in my school work but still had a great deal of problems with anxiety. I did not have very many friends and was severely depressed to the point that I no longer felt that I had a reason to live.

By the time I was fourteen years old I had a life changing experience, this altered my reality quite drastically for the next twenty-two years of my life. It was as if I woke up one morning and my whole world was turned upside down, as if I was stuck in a surreal dream that I could not wake up from. I felt extremely groggy, my physical senses had greatly diminished and light seemed a whole lot dimmer. I didn't understand what was going on with me but it felt like I was not even alive anymore and I seemed to be detached from myself and from reality. Almost as if I had become a living soul inhabiting a dead body, much like an undead creature you would read about in fictional horror stories. All of my physical senses seemed to have diminished significantly to the point that I no longer felt as if I were experiencing the world around me. I brought this matter to doctor's attention but they had no explanation for what was happening to me. Since there was no known diagnosis or treatment for my condition, it was uncertain as to whether my life would ever be normal again. Just a few months after this strange anomie began; I was given another EEG to see if I was still having epileptic seizures. Oddly enough, the EEG did not reveal any epileptic seizures at all. In fact the

EEG was completely normal much to my astonishment, which gave no explanation for the strange shift in awareness that I was experiencing.

Throughout my adolescent years, I continued to have difficulties building normal and healthy friendships with others and even had problems trying to establish them at all. Many of my friends felt that my social and communication skills left a lot to be desired and many people were reluctant to associate with me. New romantic relationships were usually evanescent and eventually my persistent failures with relationships discouraged me from pursuing them any further. I continued to stay stuck in this mental stupor for many years ahead, without any knowledge or understanding of what was happening to me.

By the time I was twenty-four years old I began pursuing neuro-feedback, chiropractic care and vitamin supplements. Through these methods I noticed significant improvement over time and some of my cognitive functions were starting to come back again, however, I was still not yet close to feeling back to normal again. We had done several different neuro-feedback protocols to treat conditions such as ADD and Aspergers' Syndrome. Throughout the duration of time that I received neuro-feedback treatments I was given about two to three hundred treatments all together over the span of a ten year period. Unfortunately I was still having significant problems with my vision and I was continuing to have problems with visual distortions such as tunneled vision, apparent dimness of light, problems with spatial and depth perception and difficulty with processing motion accurately. I paid a visit to a neuro-optometrist to seek diagnosis and treatment for the visual abnormalities however no real explanation or treatment was given for the visual problems except for the amber colored tint he prescribed to be put into my lenses to help improve visual contrast. Unfortunately the tint did not seem to help me but only exacerbated the problem.

In an attempt to explain these aberrant symptoms that I was experiencing I went to see a neurologist who I knew from church. She ran a couple of tests on me such as an MRI and an EEG, however neither of these tests revealed the abnormalities or it's causes. The neurologist then referred me to a psychologist by the name of Dr. Stoller. She authorized a psychological evaluation to be done to determine the cause of my symptoms and come up with a possible treatment plan for me. The psychological evaluation did not seem to explain any of the strange symptoms that I was having, however, the test indicated that

I was suffering from a few psychological disorders called schizotypal personality disorder, chronic depression and obsessive-compulsive traits. Dr. Stoller recommended that I begin treatment by taking Xyprexia (an anti-psychotic medication) and counseling with one of her counselors at Alegent Health, however I declined to pursue Dr. Stoller's recommended treatment method and continued to search for a holistic approach that would help me to convalesce. I spent most of my late 20's with chat rooms and video games, because this seemed like a good escape from reality for me. Reality was a very painful thing for me to face and I did not feel that there was any real hope for me in life of ever being truly happy, and after having dealt with severe depression and suicidal thoughts for over 15 years; I did not think there was any hope for change. By the time I joined the electrical union I found that I was having difficulty holding a job in my occupation due to my unexplainable medical problems and lack of proper previous training. In a second attempt to try to explain what was going on with me medically, I had a neuro Psyche evaluation done to determine the cause of my unexplained symptoms. The results only reconfirmed my ADD diagnosis and told me that I have an IQ of 105. Problem solving was my strongest and writing mechanics was my weakest point. My test revealed that my writing mechanics was at a 7th grade level, which was not very commendable for a thirty-one year old man.

Soon after the second evaluation was done I was married to a woman I had met in church, which little did I know would be filled with much drama and challenges, yet at the same time was also in part responsible for the discovery of my Irlen syndrome diagnosis and the cause of some other health problems that I was experiencing at that time. Throughout the course of my marriage I had a whole lot of problems being able to function in my marital relationship because of both of the unexplained health problems and problems with mental cognitive functions. In an attempt to manage the many problematic symptoms that I was experiencing which was also causing several problems for me in everyday life as well as my marriage I began getting treatment for my symptoms with going to counseling and taking medications (Strattara and Effexor XR). The medications seemed to help improve my mental awareness and functioning. I began to notice significant improvement in my memory and job performance. However there were still several unpleasant symptoms that could not be explained. I tried switching to a new chiropractor that used what is called Gonsted technique and this seemed to help with some of the problems with

blurred vision and headaches from misaligned vertebrae in the cervical spine. Yet still I was experiencing unexplained periods lasting up to a day or two where I would experience memory loss, extreme disorientation, dizziness, vertigo, inability to think or communicate clearly, extreme drowsiness and overall feelings of unwellness. I brought this matter to my chiropractors attention and he seemed to be very concerned about the symptoms that I had described to him and recommended that I see a neurologist as soon as possible for testing and possible treatment of whatever was causing the unusual and unexplainable symptoms. Shortly thereafter I was having one of those days where I was experiencing those unexplainable symptoms so I called my general practitioner to inform him of what I was experiencing at that time in hope of being referred to a neurologist for EEG testing. Unfortunately he was no help but instead he lectured me for calling him after office hours to inform him of the problems I was experiencing. I ended up finding my own neurologist to run tests on me to determine the possible cause of my symptoms. I deliberately did things that I knew would exacerbate the symptoms to make sure that anything aberrant would show up on the EEG testing. Alas the EEG revealed nothing out of the ordinary and the neurologist therefore speculated that my symptoms were caused by psychological and emotional problems. Her conclusion was based on the fact that I was previously diagnosed with psychological and emotional problems. I felt that the neurologists conclusions about what was causing my symptoms were quite dubious it seemed as though I was right back to square one and had no better understanding of what was happened to me or causing the unexplained symptoms. I was beginning to run short on hope for how to deal with these unexplainable problems. With persistent marital conflicts, difficulty keeping a job, and credit card debt piling up in the thousands of dollar ranges, my anxiety levels soared to unmanageable heights.

Around that time both my wife and parents had reminded me of the Irlen Clinic, which I came to learn about from my Neuro-feedback specialist Virginia White who works in Hastings, Nebraska. Virginia recommended the Irlen clinic because I was having great difficulty with reading and would usually get severe headaches whenever I would use the computer. For a long while I did not think that I was a good candidate for Irlen filters or screen overlays because I did not seem to have a problem with sensitivity to light but rather to the contrary I seemed to have a severe lack of sensitivity to light. Finally after about two years of

consistent prompting from my wife and parents I decided to get in touch with a local Irlen screener named Ann Frances.

When I got together with Ann Frances to be screened for Irlen Syndrome Ann mentioned that she thought it was strange that I asked to have the lights turned on as opposed to turning them off as most light sensitive people with Irlen Syndrome usually do. As Ann tested me she did note that I had a significant amount of difficulty with reading and visual distortions. Four goldenrod screen overlays were given to me for use with reading and using the computer. Ann also thought that due to my severe visual distortions; I would be a very good candidate for Irlen colored filters in my glasses. So Ann set up an appointment with a nearby Irlen Diagnostician by the name of Bonnie Bartels. Before I met with Bonnie I spent the next month after my initial appointment with Ann using the screen overlays for reading books and using the computer. As I used the screen overlays something very interesting happened, my brain started to change the way it processed visual information. It was as if there were some rusty old gears in my brain that finally started turning again very slowly after several years of being still and dormant. Finally, I was starting to get back some of my sensitivity to light and I actually needed to wear sunglasses in brightly lit places. So to counter the effects of the neurological changes I slowly started to reduce my dosages of Effexor XR (a reuptake inhibitor antidepressant) and as I decreased my intake of Effexor I noticed that my rapidly increasing light sensitivity started to level off and become more tolerable. But I still used sunglasses as a temporary means of filtering out the irritating lights, which were causing stinging headaches. When I finally met with Bonnie Bartels, I was ready and prepared to be tested and fitted with the Irlen spectral filters that I needed for my glasses. When we were done testing we had come up with what was a good set of base colors for me that would help me with my reading and reduce visual distortions and a whole lot of other unpleasant symptoms. By the time I got my glasses back from the Irlen lab my sensitivity to light had increased even more so, therefore I still had to wear sunglasses over my Irlen prescription glasses. As my brain's ability to process light slowly began to come back again, I noticed that it also seemed to cause changes in the way my brain functioned as well. I felt as though I was actually starting to become more awake and lucid during the day, as though I was slowly waking up out of a twenty year long semi-slumber. My dreamlike reality was becoming more real every day and I continued to

convalescence. The more I healed the less anti-depressant I needed to take to be functional and happy in life. A few months later, I went back to be retested by Bonnie, except this time we applied the Irlen tint to my clip on glasses that came with my glasses instead of the power prescription lenses. When we were done testing a second time, there were Irlen spectral filters in both my power prescription lenses and my clip on lenses. Although something seemed just a little off, I could see a major improvement in my vision and my problem with headaches and anxiety had greatly diminished. A couple of months later, after having some time for my brain to heal, I really started to feel a whole lot better. Better than I had ever felt in a long time in fact. And as I continued to convalesce, I felt a sense of serenity, which I have never felt before in my whole life. The everyday tasks of life and day-to-day pressures and responsibilities, which once seemed like insurmountable difficulties, now were becoming possible for me to do. It was as though I was finally starting to wake up from my surreal, gothic nightmare of a reality. The realistic world that I once remembered was coming back again and I was beginning to feel like I had finally rejoined the human race once again. With my sense of depth perception, light perception and color perception changing, people's faces began to appear differently, as I have never seen them before. I was beginning to notice that women were starting to look a lot more attractive than what I had ever remembered before, so much that I could not take my eyes off of them very easily. I began to see my perception of body language and many different forms of non-verbal communication changes as well, as though other people's facial expression did not seem quite as harsh, judgmental or condescending but rather seemed to be a lot friendlier than I had ever remembered. I have also noticed my verbal communication and writing skills have also improved significantly. Although I realized that my healing was and still continues to be a work in progress, it was such a great feeling to know that I am in remission, I am healing and that I am on my way to having a healthy and normal life again or perhaps for a very first time in my life. By spring of 2010 I went back to Bonnie for more upgrading on my Irlen prescription. With time to heal and some adjustments to the new prescription I am noticing that I am changing, healing and regaining more cognitive function and building healthy self esteem more everyday. I also started going back to college this spring of 2010 and I am doing better in school than I have ever done before. My reading skills are

improving quite a bit and I am staying focused for longer periods of time. I am actually able to listen to, follow and comprehend class discussions for a first time in my life. I am able to drive more skillfully and confidently with a new improved ability to see visual images more accurately. My ability to judge distances and peripheral vision has also improved however I still maintain longer following distances behind other cars as a precautionary measure due to difficulties with processing motion. Each new coming day has been something to look forward to in learning, growing and healing. I am starting to see the world differently than I have ever seen it before; it is a much more hopeful and positive light (no pun intended).

With a troubled life now behind me, and a new and brighter future ahead of me, I now know that this is the time for me to rebuild and repair. To start out with a healthy new outlook and life perspective, which is healthier and more positive than ever before. After having been through these surreal experiences I certainly have learned to have a lot of compassion for other people who are suffering from debilitating medical problems in the world and I would like to help anyone I can in any way I can, especially others who are also suffering from the devastating affects of Irlen Syndrome. That is why I am going back to college to get my Associates degree in science and then my bachelors in Biology. Once I get my bachelors degree I would like to receive training to become an Irlen Screener so that I can start to diagnose and begin treatment for others who are suffering from the same condition of Irlen Syndrome. Thank you Helen Irlen for recognizing and naming Irlen Syndrome and for developing the Irlen method used to treat this problem. It has really changed my life in so many wonderful ways that I had never thought possible. I have been and will continue to tell others about how the Irlen method has helped me and can also help others with Irlen syndrome as well. I also hope that this story that I have shared here will be helpful to others as well and will help to give others hope for themselves.

Sincerely, Chris Abdouch