

Disability awareness

Dyslexia

Dyslexia affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent reading and spelling. It involves difficulties in dealing with the sounds of words, so it is especially hard to learn to use phonics to read words. It can affect your ability to recall or process a list of words or numbers or to remember a list of instructions. Dyslexia occurs across the range of intellectual abilities and can be thought of a continuum as people can be mildly, moderately or severely affected. According to the British Dyslexia Association, about ten per cent of the population are affected by dyslexia to some degree and four per cent severely affected.

Dyslexia is considered to be a specific learning difference along with Dyspraxia, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Autistic Spectrum Condition. These conditions can overlap or co-occur, meaning individuals may have one of these other conditions alongside their dyslexia. People may experience difficulties in other aspects of language co-ordination, calculation, concentration and personal organisation, but on their own, are not signs of dyslexia.

Here are some common effects:

Reading and writing

- ⦿ Spelling and grammar errors
- ⦿ Trouble getting ideas down in writing
- ⦿ Poor handwriting/reversing letter or numbers
- ⦿ Poorly organised written work
- ⦿ Finding copying and proof reading hard
- ⦿ Not reading fluently/misreads words
- ⦿ Difficulty understanding and learning new words
- ⦿ Visual sensitivity to text.

Processing and memory

- ⦿ Short-term memory problems
- ⦿ Not coping well with interruptions/distractions
- ⦿ Needing extra processing or thinking time
- ⦿ Finding it hard to learn in the 'normal' way
- ⦿ Struggling with multiple verbal instructions
- ⦿ Taking longer to learn and forgetting
- ⦿ Not able to apply rules to different situations
- ⦿ Extra time to respond to questions.

Organising and planning

- ⦿ Time management - struggling to meet deadlines
- ⦿ Difficulty in planning and prioritising work
- ⦿ Disorganised work area or losing things
- ⦿ Not remembering appointments and deadlines
- ⦿ Arriving for appointments on the wrong day or time
- ⦿ Difficulty with sequences of tasks or instructions
- ⦿ Not prepared for meetings and events
- ⦿ Difficulty multi-tasking or returning to tasks.

Other difficulties

- ⦿ Effects vary - good and bad days
- ⦿ Effects of tiredness and stress can make it worse
- ⦿ May have low self-esteem and confidence
- ⦿ Difficulty making conversation or answering quickly
- ⦿ Trouble map reading and navigating
- ⦿ Left/right confusion.

Often when we learn about different disabilities and health conditions there is too much focus on the difficulties not abilities. Having dyslexia can also give the individual valued skills and qualities such as those on the next page:

- ⦿ Able to absorb information from multiple sources
- ⦿ Lateral and/or critical thinking
- ⦿ Able to visualise how things will look
- ⦿ Innovative and intuitive
- ⦿ Problem solving and trouble shooting
- ⦿ Bigger picture/holistic approach
- ⦿ Connects different concepts
- ⦿ Can see inter-relationships between ideas
- ⦿ Identifies patterns in information
- ⦿ Creative, musical, artistic
- ⦿ Practical - good visual-spatial skills
- ⦿ Hard-working enthusiastic
- ⦿ Resilient/determined/persistent
- ⦿ Wants and needs to achieve
- ⦿ Generous considerate and empathetic.

Whether you have a friend, customer, colleague or employee with dyslexia there are some simple things you can do to make their life easier:

Reading and writing

- ⦿ Find other ways of giving information/instructions to avoid reading a lot of text
- ⦿ Highlight key points in documents (bold) or give summaries
- ⦿ Provide information on coloured paper and consider font and size of text
- ⦿ Allow plenty of time to read and complete the task (additional time for assessments)
- ⦿ Minimise tasks that involve writing - especially in any group settings
- ⦿ Explore other options for recording information eg. voice recorder, computer
- ⦿ Supply a dictionary, spell checker or glossary, offer proofreading.

Processing and memory

- ⦿ Give clear concise instructions one at a time – be direct and clear
- ⦿ Write down important information or use diagrams/pictures
- ⦿ Demonstrate tasks or give examples and templates
- ⦿ Encourage notetaking or offer handouts
- ⦿ Noise-cancelling headphones.

Organising time and planning

- ⦿ Find a quiet work space and minimise distractions and interruptions
- ⦿ Encourage focusing on one task at a time and planning ahead
- ⦿ Suggest using a folder, post-its, colour-coding or labelling
- ⦿ Be aware extra time might be needed
- ⦿ Help with prioritising tasks, setting small targets and deadlines
- ⦿ Suggest the use of a 'to do' list, diary or planner on paper or on mobile phone.

Communication, emotion and social skills

- ⦿ Be clear about the aims and give an overview
- ⦿ Give information in bitesize chunks and allow thinking time
- ⦿ Allow time for them to process questions/ give answers
- ⦿ Recap and summarise and check understanding regularly
- ⦿ Offer lots of praise and positive feedback
- ⦿ Be aware of how the client interacts with others in a group
- ⦿ Allow breaks in longer appointments or sessions.

Remember the individual with dyslexia is the expert – if in doubt, check with them!

Contact us:

If you would like further information on how we can help you, please get in touch with us:
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