

WHAT IS DYSLEXIA ?

Dyslexia has been known about for over 100 years now, but is only in the last 30 years that research is shedding light on the understanding of this complex condition.

Can You Define Dyslexia ?

There is a great deal of controversy about dyslexia. Some people do not believe that it exists. Others know it exists, but deny there is a problem.

Those who struggle with dyslexia day by day KNOW that it is REAL, and causes great difficulty with learning to read and write, which other people take for granted.

The word "DYSLEXIA" derives from a Greek word, which literally means "difficulty with words"

Dyslexia is much more than that

Dyslexia is characterised by having normal or above average intelligence, but having difficulty with reading, writing, spelling, numeracy, and musical notation, despite adequate educational and family support.

Dyslexia is associated with poor short term memory, difficulty in sequencing days and numbers, with weaknesses in visual and /or auditory (hearing) perception. There may be problems with balance, co-ordination and hand writing.

Dyslexia is common. It affects 10% of those in the UK. It crosses the boundaries of all cultures and backgrounds. In a class of 30 children, you can expect 3 out of 30 will have some degree of dyslexia - whether mild, moderate or severe.

Incidence - It is 4 times more common in boys than girls. Dyslexia often occurs in families.

Dyslexia may be associated with other conditions such as dyspraxia, ADHD and autism. Dyslexia can occur on its own, or a child may have 2 or 3 of these features, because there is often overlap of these conditions.

Dyslexia cannot be cured, but those affected can be helped by :-

1. Proper recognition in Primary School.
2. Using Multi-sensory techniques to help children to learn effectively.
3. Support given to families affected, and understanding by Schools.

How does Dyslexia OCCUR ?

Genetic causes

We know that the BRAIN structure in dyslexics is DIFFERENT.

We understand from research that nerve cells do not develop properly in areas of the brain concerned with speech/language development, and vision and hearing parts of the brain, during the embryonic stage of life. We also know that the nerve fibres inter-connect in a dis-organised fashion, so that transmission of impulses in the brain are interrupted or diverted.

We also know that the language area of the brain in the L hemisphere is smaller in a dyslexic.

Research being done in Oxford, has identified some genes which appear to influence the migration of nerve cells in the embryo. The genes also appear to affect magnocellular neurones in the brain, which have impaired function in dyslexics.

For more information ; Check out the website of the Dyslexic Research Trust
On www.dyslexic.org.uk

Environmental Causes

1. Brain trauma. Brain injury at birth, or in an accident. Deficiency of oxygen
Can cause damage to the delicate brain cells.
2. Poor Nutrition ... Lack of a balanced diet with deficiency of omega -3 fatty acids and low vitamin levels can affect brain function.
3. Certain biochemical processes in the body, which are thought can have an effect. More information needs to be researched about these.

EARLY IDENTIFICATION OF DYSLEXIA is important.

Every child needs to learn basic skills of reading and writing whilst they are in Primary School. Children who are under-achieving, need to be identified by the age of 8 if possible. Because children develop at different rates, medical and social factors need to be taken into account too.

HOW DO YOU RECOGNISE DYSLEXIA ?

Common signs :-

1. Can communicate intelligently in the spoken word, but struggles to read or write or spell. May have difficulty with numbers.
2. Gets tired easily, and loses concentration with a task.
3. Easily distracted, or appears to be inattentive. Can be restless.
4. No sense of time. Very disorganised and forgetful.
5. Frustrated, easily bored or difficult behaviour. May be very quiet and lacks confidence.
6. Poor sense of direction. Confuses L and R.
7. May be a late developer.

Memory and Speech/Hearing Difficulties:-

1. Difficulty saying words he/she wants to express. They know what they want to say!!
2. Monotone voice when attempting to read. Limited use of words.
3. Difficulty articulating words.
4. Unable to follow simple instructions, especially if given more than one task at a time.
5. Poor use of words, and gets some of them confused. May not understand what the teacher or person is saying to them.
6. Difficulty learning days of the week, months of the year, and multiplication tables.
7. Easily forgets names of things and people.
8. Difficulties telling the time.
9. Confusion of sounds and syllables eg ephalant, lellow.
10. Difficulty with rhymes. May not be able to copy rhythms or clap it.
11. May be over-sensitive to sounds.
12. Distracted easily. Slow to comprehend what is being said.

READING DIFFICULTIES

1. Misses out words or letters. May add words that are not there on the page.
2. Mixes up words or phrases and puts them in a different order.
3. Reverses letters or words. Was/saw god/dog
4. Confuses similar words - eg form/from/ of/for
5. Difficulty with vowels.
6. Confusion with similar letters - p/q b/d m/w u/n
7. Substitutes letters.
8. Difficulty making sounds and reads very slowly/ with pauses.
9. Difficulty keeping place on a line, or going to the next one.

SPELLING DIFFICULTIES

1. Unable to remember sounds/symbols and sequences.
2. Misses out letters, words or syllables. May add them.
3. Difficulty copying from the board in class, or a book.
4. Reverses letters.
5. Bizarre spelling.
6. Often spell phonetically.

HANDWRITING DIFFICULTIES

1. Awkward pencil grip.
2. Messy writing, often on a slope.
3. Poor letter spacing and shapes.
4. Mirror writing - especially after age 6 years. Is common under the age of 6.
5. Poor writing posture and paper position. May tilt head to one side.

DISORGANISATION

1. Clothes put on back to front. Buttons may be done up the wrong way round.
2. Difficulty tying shoe laces. Velcro is a lot easier !
3. Forget kit or homework for school. Cannot remember where to go to next class.
4. Homework takes ages, as it takes so long to concentrate and try to do it.

DIFFICULT BEHAVIOUR

1. Under-achievement at school may give the impression that they are "lazy" or "stupid" which is UNTRUE.
2. Dyslexics may become withdrawn and isolated if they feel loss of confidence and know that they are not doing as well as their peers. It causes low self esteem. It can cause depression, especially if they are forever being told off in class.
3. Some may become disruptive, aggressive, and act the Clown, to get attention. They can get very frustrated. They may ask to go to the toilet to get out of reading aloud in class.

DYSLEXIA IS NOT ALL BAD NEWS !!

Dyslexia can give a person many talents - as they can think laterally and appreciate the BIG PICTURE.

They are good problem solvers, and often good communicators and very sociable.

They may be very artistic, musical or excel at sports.

There are many famous people with DYSLEXIA who have achieved a lot!

Eg Richard Branson, Jackie Stewart, Duncan Goodhew, Susan Hampshire.

THE IMPORTANT MESSAGE IS THAT THERE IS HELP AVAILABLE, BUT IT NEEDS TO BE DISCOVERED WITH A LOT OF PERSISTENCE !