

Disability Insight

Take a look around you

Dyslexia Awareness Day

1st March 2018

Key points

- Dyslexia is a general term for difficulties in learning to read or interpret words, numbers, and other symbols
- Dyslexia does not affect a person's intelligence
- Dyslexia affects around 1 in 10 people
- It is a life-long, usually genetic, inherited condition
- Dyslexia is recognised as a disability under the Disability Discrimination Act (1995)
- Reasonable adjustments that can be put in place to help people with dyslexia in the workplace include assistive technology such as speech to text software and giving verbal rather than written instructions.

About dyslexia

- Dyslexia occurs in people of all backgrounds and abilities. Symptoms vary from person to person but can include reading and writing slowly, confusing the order of letters in words, putting letters the wrong way around (writing "b" instead of "d"), and struggling with planning and organisation.
- It's a "specific learning difficulty", which means it causes problems with certain abilities used for learning, such as reading and writing. Unlike a learning disability, intelligence is not affected.
- It can be related to other conditions, such as dyspraxia (i.e. physical co-ordination problems), dyscalculia (i.e. difficulties with numbers) and attention deficit disorder (i.e. problems concentrating and a short attention span).

- People with dyslexia may have difficulty processing and remembering information they see and hear. This can affect learning and the acquisition of literacy skills.

Research has shown that individuals with dyslexia have certain strengths:

- caring/empathetic
- intuitive
- good strategic thinkers
- good at problem solving
- creative and original
- determined and hard working
- holistic thinkers.

To see how someone with dyslexia may experience reading click the link below:

<https://geon.github.io/programming/2016/03/03/dsxyliea>

How does dyslexia affect someone's life?

Some people with dyslexia may have had bad experiences in school or university resulting in a lack of confidence and poor self-esteem. For many people, dyslexia can present barriers and obstacles to finding a job due to literacy and writing problems. Others experience additional stress at work.

People who have dyslexia have described how it can have both positive and negative effects on their lives

'I see things from a different perspective.'

'I have the right ideas, but I can't get them down on paper.'

'I can come up with solutions no one else has thought of and I think fast on my feet.'

'Sometimes when I am being told what to do, the words I hear get all jumbled up in my mind and I just can't take in what is being said to me'

'I know what I want to say, but I can never find the right words.'

'When I am reading, a passage will get all jumbled up, but when it happens I have to read and re-read the passage over again.'

To read and listen to people like Richard Branson and Whoopi Goldberg tell their story of living with dyslexia, click on any of the links below:

<http://www.dyslexiclogic.com/my-story/>

<https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/personal-stories/famous-people/video-whoopi-goldberg-talks-about-growing-up-with-dyslexia>

<https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/personal-stories/famous-people/video-sir-richard-branson-on-dyslexia>

Supporting someone with dyslexia in work

There are many reasonable adjustments and types of support that can be offered to employees with dyslexia to successfully help with areas of difficulty. These might include:

- providing assistive technology, such as digital recorders, spell checkers, autocorrect and offering 'speech to text' software;
- giving instructions verbally, rather than in writing;
- allowing extra time for tasks the person may find particularly difficult or working to the person's strengths; and
- providing information in accessible formats - use a plain, evenly spaced sans serif font such as Arial and Comic Sans. Font size should be 12-14 point, and using dark colored text on a light (not white) background can also be helpful.

Workplace support is available from the Occupational Psychology Service (Department for Communities), who can offer free workplace assessments and recommendations.

If you line manage someone who has dyslexia you will need to work closely with the individual, Human Resources and Occupational Health in relation to assessments and adjustments.

Support if you care for somebody with dyslexia

The British Dyslexic Association provides a range of information and support services. Find out more from their website:

<http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/parent/getting-help-for-your-child>

<http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/parent>

The Dyslexia Centre NI run training courses and have local groups in various locations which offer help and support. For more information click the following link:

<http://www.nidyslexiacentre.co.uk/>

Support if you have (or think you might have) dyslexia

If you have dyslexia, or think that you may have a form of dyslexia, inform your line manager to allow them to access support on your behalf. As dyslexia is covered by the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) you are protected from all forms of discrimination.

Information is available from your local healthcare team and the NHS Choices website: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/dyslexia/>

The British Dyslexic Association have produced a wide range of information materials, including on living with dyslexia and specific difficulties associated with the condition. They also have a range of support services, with details available from the link below:

<http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/dyslexic/dyslexia-and-specific-difficulties-overview>
and <http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/dyslexic/getting-an-assessment-for-dyslexia>

Sources and further reading

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/dyslexia/>

<https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/child-learning-disabilities/dyslexia/understanding-dyslexia>

<http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/>

http://atcourse.org/xerte2-1/play.php?template_id=154

https://matrix.rcn.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/333534/003835.pdf

