

SEMH & Learning Team

Dyslexia

Supporting children and young people at home



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Everybody is different and dyslexia will affect everyone in different ways. Understanding dyslexia can be difficult for adults as well as children so it is important to talk about it, even if you don't know all of the answers.

Tell your child that dyslexia has nothing to do with intelligence. They are not 'stupid,' but they learn in a different way. Dyslexia affects around 1 in 10 people. It can be quite mild, or severe. There are lots of things that can help children/young people with dyslexia do well in education, enjoy their hobbies and get a good job. Dyslexia should not hold anyone back from doing whatever they want to.

Children/young people can experience different emotions when they are told that they have dyslexia. Some feel relieved to find out why they have been struggling with their learning. Others may feel worried, angry, or embarrassed. They may feel 'different' to their peers.



There can be positive things about dyslexia:

- Strong visualisation skills (good for art, science, crafts, engineering)
- Strong problem-solving skills
- Seeing the bigger picture
- Spotting the odd one out
- Improved pattern recognition
- Good spatial knowledge
- Picture thinkers
- Sharper peripheral vision
- More creative

Other things can be hard for a child/young person with dyslexia:

- Poor memory, organisation and sequencing problems (putting things in order, or following patterns)
- Difficulties with reading, writing, spelling and sometimes maths
- More time and extra effort are needed to do things which can be very tiring
- Children/young people with dyslexia can have good/bad days for no apparent reason
- Many children/young people with dyslexia have low self-esteem

It is important to stress that there are ways around these things:

- Dyslexia is often passed on through families. Relatives with similar difficulties can talk to the child/young person about strategies that they have used to help themselves
- Talk about dyslexia in a positive way
- Let your child know that you don't have all of the answers because everyone is different but that you will find out together
- Find information from books, the internet and people who have an interest or understanding of dyslexia
- Ask your child what they find easy, as well as what is difficult
- Look at different tasks and try to work out why something is easy or hard. Try to work out ways together of using strengths to help with those activities that are more challenging



- Talk about other things with your child. Dyslexia is only a small part of who they are. They will have other interests too
- Make sure that school has all of the information that they need about your child
- Help the child/young person to write about, or say what dyslexia means to them and what others can do to help/support them. Share this with school
- Include siblings and other family members in discussions, so that they understand the positives and negatives and can help. If they are supportive, older brothers or sisters could hear the child/young person read or help with homework. Make sure that siblings do not tease. Be very careful if younger siblings are working at a higher level than the dyslexic child. DO NOT ask younger siblings to hear the child/young person read, as this will really harm their self-esteem

Discussing dyslexia with your child

1. Choose the right setting

It is important to discuss your child's reading and writing challenges, during a quiet moment in a place where they feel relaxed, rather than while they are stressed, trying to complete a piece of homework.

What you could say:

“ I've been talking to your teacher today about how well you are doing in... and how hard you work in all of your other lessons. I know that literacy is still really hard for you. Let's have a chat about it. ”



2. Explain what dyslexia means

Your child needs to know that dyslexia may present challenges. But make sure that they know that they are as clever as their peers who don't have it and that they are not alone.

What you could say:

“ I know that you struggle with reading sometimes. You have a difficulty called dyslexia. That's a big word which explains why some children and adults find it hard to learn to read, write and spell. You are as clever as other people, but your brain just works a little differently. There are lots of other children who have trouble learning to read! And dyslexia doesn't stop you from being great at other things such as... ”

3. Use accurate language

Specific words can help this 'thing' causing your child's reading and writing issues feel more defined and manageable.

What you could say:

“ You may have heard the word dyslexia at school. Now we know that you have dyslexia, we can use that word too. Soon we will start working with your teachers to create an individualised Education Plan or IEP for short. It will list your goals for reading and writing and say how your teachers are going to help you reach them. ”

4. Explain how school are going to help

Children/young people with dyslexia may worry that their teachers think that they are not trying. They need to know that school understands their challenges and has ways of helping/supporting them

What you could say:

“ I know that some of your lessons are really hard because of all of the reading and writing that you have to do, but schools are always finding new ways of helping pupils. Your teachers want to help you to succeed and they know lots of different ways to do it. We will be meeting with school regularly and you will be invited too. That way we can all work together to find the best ways to help and support you, in moving forward. ”



5. Let your child know that you are there for them

Your child probably wonders whether you realise how much dyslexia affects their everyday life. Show them that you understand and support them.

What you could say:

“ I know that your dyslexia affects all kinds of everyday activities like reading the rules of a new board game, or reading the menu when we go out. But I'm so proud of you for always working hard, wanting to learn and do well, even though dyslexia can make that trickier. I will always help you to get the help and support you need. ”

6. Discuss sibling relationships

Because children/young people may receive extra attention from adults they sometimes worry about how their brothers and sisters view them.

What you could say:

“ Your sister sees how hard you're working with your reading. She knows that I need to spend a little more time with you. If the tables were turned, I would do the same for her. I will make sure that she understands that. ”

7. Offer guidance on how to talk to friends

Your child's classmates may be familiar with their learning differences but friends from outside school probably aren't. Let the child/young person know that you will help them to work out how to discuss their dyslexia if and when they want to.

What you could say:

“ It's up to you if you want to talk about your dyslexia with people. If you don't want to get into a deeper discussion with someone, you can just say: It's not that I can't learn to read. I just need to learn in a different way. ”



8. Reassure your child about the future

Your child needs a safe place to raise their concerns about growing up with dyslexia. Ask about their hopes and aspirations. Do they want to go to university? Do they have a dream job? Discuss the possible ways of achieving this. Let the child/young person know that they will be able to lead a full adult life.

What you could say:

“ It's perfectly normal to wonder how dyslexia may affect you when you are an adult. I believe you will have lots of opportunities to pursue your passions. Your difficulties with reading and writing won't disappear, but with determination and hard work, I'm confident that you can achieve your dreams. ”

Ways you can support your child:

- Find out as much as you can about dyslexia, so that you can talk about it with the child/young person and answer any questions that they may have.
- Look out for signs of emotional stress. Many children/young people with dyslexia can feel frustrated or angry. They can demonstrate low self-esteem or become withdrawn. Before reading, writing and spelling can be improved, your child needs to believe that they can succeed.
- Your child will need constant praise and support to build self-esteem and self-confidence. It is very important for the child/young person to know that there is someone who believes in them and is supportive.
- Never compare the child/young person's schoolwork with their siblings. They will probably already be aware that they are not doing as well. If the sibling is younger this can be very detrimental to their self-esteem.
- Don't get angry when kit is lost, or homework is forgotten. The child/young person cannot help it and may already feel worried or upset that they have been unable to remember. Help them to become more organised by introducing strategies, such as: providing checklists and visual diaries. Set routines. Colour-code their timetable so that lessons can be seen easily. Get them to pack school bags the night before and put them by the front door. Establish a place where everything must be put away straight after use.
- At the beginning of each school year, meet with your child's class teacher. Make sure that they know about the child/young person's dyslexia and the ways that they can help and support them.

Books and resources that can help:

So you think you've got problems – by Rosalind Birkett

Dyslexia – Talking it through – by Althea

Brian has dyslexia – by Jenny Leigh

My little brother – by Chieko Tateno

Dyslexia explained – without the need for too many words – by Nesy.com

Help! My Child has Dyslexia – A Practical guide for Parents – by Judy Hornigold

Dyslexia – A Teenager's Guide – by Dr Sylvia Moody

The Teenage Guide to Stress – by Nicola Morgan

Dyslexia: A Parent's Survival Guide – by Christine Ostler

CBBC Newsround 'My Dyslexic Mind; - a special programme about dyslexia: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/20783005>
www.bdadyslexia.org.uk

http://www.callscotland.org.uk/Common-Assets/ckfinder/userfiles/files/Wheel_Of_Apps_V1_0.pdf

www.communication4all.co.uk downloadable letter reversal prompts and alphabet strips.

Apps to support Dyslexia:

Dyslexia Quest – A series of games designed to assess working memory, phonological awareness, processing speed, visual memory, auditory memory and sequencing skills. Dyslexia Quest has been developed, researched and tested at the Bristol Dyslexia Centre. (Cost 2.99)

What is Dyslexia - An app to help you understand dyslexia. Watch a video comic and follow the story of a typical dyslexic. Find out ways that parents can help at home. (Free)

ClaroSpeak - A reading and writing app with high-quality text-to-speech, formatting controls and a wide range of fonts and styles. ClaroSpeak provides visual highlighting in-sync with spoken words, a great range of colour and font settings to allow for optimum reading, and word prediction to help with writing. ClaroSpeak is a quality app for proofreading text through listening, helping with reading and literacy development, and creating audio files from any text. (Cost – 2.99)

Make sentences - This app teaches children how to form simple sentences from a series of scattered words. (Free)

Dragon Dictation - An easy-to-use voice recognition application that allows you to easily speak and instantly see your text or email messages. The trouble Dyslexic children have with writing can make it hard to develop ideas or get their thoughts down on paper, but with this app, they can give voice commands to make text. (Free)

Blio – A tool for Dyslexic children who struggle with reading and comprehension. Available in both a web-based and app version, Blio offers a host of ebooks. Children will benefit from a variety of features, including the app's ability to highlight words while reading the text out loud, making it easier for users to follow along. Ebooks can be annotated, too, letting children make notes and reminders for important pieces of text. Font size can even be enlarged, limiting the number of words on-screen at a time to ease the reading process. (Free)

Letter Reflex - An app aimed at helping children to overcome letter reversals, a common problem when they confuse b and d or p and q. Initial levels involve a kinaesthetic tilting activity where you roll a ball around the tablet to the correct letter. 'Flip it' then allows them to practice forming the correct letters. (Cost – 3.99)

Dyseggia - Reading and spelling games. All exercises in Dyseggia have been scientifically designed to target reading and writing errors specific for dyslexic children. (Free)

DD's Dictionary: A Dyslexic Dictionary – A dyslexia-friendly on-line dictionary (Free)

iWrite Words – Handwriting app (Cost 2.99)

ABC Pocket Phonics – Games to reinforce phonics, along with letter formation (Cost – 6.99)

Pinterest - <https://uk.pinterest.com/theliteracynest/multi-sensory-learning/?!p=true> Lots of suggestions for multi-sensory learning activities (Free)

Read2 Me - Converts any website text or uploaded file into a Podcast

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