ASD Helping Hands

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Dyslexia

Understanding Dyslexia: A Guide for Children, Parents, and Educators

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1. Introduction to Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a learning difference that primarily affects reading, writing, and spelling. It is not related to intelligence but rather how the brain processes language. Dyslexia can make certain academic tasks more challenging, but with the right support and strategies, children and young people with dyslexia can thrive.

Many individuals with dyslexia have strong creative, problem-solving, and verbal skills. By understanding dyslexia and providing tailored support, we can help children develop confidence and achieve their full potential.

> ***"Not every child learns the same way. I could not learn through my eyes. Reading was impossible. Math, to compute it in my mind, was impossible. I learned everything through listening... How we learn has nothing to do with how brilliant we are."***
>
> ***Toyah Wilcox***
> ***(English Musician, Actress & TV Presenter)***

2. Common Signs and Symptoms

Early Years (Ages 3-6)

- Difficulty recognising letters or learning the alphabet.
- Struggles with rhyming words and sounds.
- Trouble remembering sequences, such as days of the week.

Primary School (Ages 6-11)

- Slow progress with reading despite regular practice.
- Difficulty spelling common words and frequent letter reversals (e.g., ‘b’ and ‘d’).
- Trouble following multi-step instructions.

Secondary School (Ages 11+)

- Difficulty reading at speed or understanding large amounts of text.
- Problems with note-taking, organisation, and written assignments.
- Avoidance of reading or writing tasks due to frustration.

3. How Dyslexia Affects Learning

Dyslexia impacts learning in different ways, depending on the individual. Some children struggle with decoding words when reading, while others find writing and spelling particularly challenging.

Dyslexia can also impact working memory, making it harder to remember instructions or recall specific words quickly. However, with tailored learning strategies and patience, children with dyslexia can develop skills to manage these challenges effectively.

Reading fluency can be slower, making it difficult to keep up with classroom lessons that involve large amounts of text. This can affect comprehension, as children may spend so much time decoding words that they lose track of meaning. Spelling difficulties may persist, even with practice, and written work can often appear messy or incomplete due to trouble organising thoughts on paper.

4. Supporting a Child with Dyslexia

Parental and educator support plays a vital role in helping children with dyslexia feel confident and capable.

At home, parents can encourage reading in a stress-free environment, using audiobooks and reading aloud together. Chunking information into smaller steps and using visual aids can also help children process language more effectively. Encouraging strengths in creativity, storytelling, and verbal communication can boost confidence and self-esteem.

Educators can provide structured phonics-based learning, additional time for tasks, and alternative methods for demonstrating knowledge, such as oral presentations or mind maps. Building a supportive learning environment helps children develop resilience and a positive approach to learning.

5. Strategies for the Classroom

Teachers play a key role in ensuring that children with dyslexia receive the support they need. Classroom strategies that can help include:

1 Multisensory Learning

Combining visual, auditory, and hands-on activities to reinforce learning.

2 Clear Instructions

Breaking down tasks into simple, manageable steps and checking for understanding.

3 Alternative Assessment Methods

Allowing children to demonstrate their knowledge in different ways, such as verbal responses or project work.

4 Extended Time

Providing additional time for reading, writing, and test-taking.

5 Seating Arrangements

Positioning students in quieter areas with fewer distractions.

6. Assistive Technology and Tools

Technology can be an excellent support tool for children with dyslexia. Some helpful resources include:

Text-to-Speech Software

Reads text aloud to assist with reading comprehension.

Speech-to-Text Tools

Converts spoken words into written text, reducing difficulties with writing.

Coloured Overlays and Fonts

Some children find reading easier with coloured backgrounds or dyslexia-friendly fonts.

Audio Books and Digital Readers

Helps children access literature without the frustration of decoding text.

Organisational Apps

Assists with structuring assignments, setting reminders, and managing workload.

7. Building Confidence and Self-Esteem

Dyslexia can sometimes lead to frustration, low self-esteem, or reluctance to participate in academic tasks. Many children with dyslexia may feel they are not as capable as their peers, particularly if they struggle with reading, writing, or spelling. Without support, this can lead to a lack of confidence and even anxiety about learning. It is crucial to help children develop a positive mindset and recognise their unique strengths so that they feel valued and capable.

Recognising Strengths

Dyslexia may present challenges, but it also comes with many strengths. Many individuals with dyslexia excel in creative fields, problem-solving, and verbal communication. Encouraging children to explore their interests—whether in the arts, music, sports, engineering, or storytelling—can help them recognise their abilities beyond traditional academic settings. By celebrating their talents and highlighting their successes, children can develop a stronger sense of self-worth.

Providing Positive Reinforcement

Positive reinforcement plays a crucial role in building confidence. Children with dyslexia may require more encouragement to stay motivated, particularly when they face setbacks in learning. Providing praise for effort rather than just results can help shift their focus from frustration to perseverance. Recognising small achievements, such as reading a short passage or spelling a new word correctly, can encourage children to keep trying. Offering words of encouragement, reward charts, or certificates for effort can reinforce their progress.

Encouraging a Growth Mindset

A growth mindset is the belief that intelligence and abilities can improve with effort and practice. Teaching children that mistakes are a natural part of learning can help them develop resilience. Instead of focusing on what they struggle with, encourage them to see challenges as opportunities to grow. For example, if a child finds reading difficult, reassure them that skills improve with time and practice. Providing examples of successful individuals with dyslexia, such as Albert Einstein, Agatha Christie, and Richard Branson, can also inspire them to embrace their learning differences positively.

Creating a Supportive Environment

Children with dyslexia thrive in environments where they feel safe and supported. Whether at home or in school, ensuring they do not feel singled out for their learning challenges is important. Parents and teachers should foster an atmosphere where asking for help is encouraged and where every child's learning style is respected. Providing access to learning tools, assistive technology, and alternative ways of completing tasks—such as oral presentations instead of written assignments—can help children feel more confident in their abilities.

Encouraging Independence

Helping children develop independent learning strategies can boost their confidence. Teaching them how to use tools such as audiobooks, speech-to-text software, and organisational apps empowers them to take control of their learning. Encouraging them to set small, achievable goals—such as reading for five minutes a day or learning one new spelling word at a time—can give them a sense of accomplishment and build self-reliance.

Building Emotional Resilience

It is common for children with dyslexia to experience moments of frustration or self-doubt. Teaching them coping strategies, such as deep breathing, mindfulness, or taking short breaks during challenging tasks, can help them manage their emotions. Support groups or peer mentoring programs where children with dyslexia can connect with others facing similar challenges can also provide reassurance and reduce feelings of isolation.

By combining these approaches, children with dyslexia can develop the confidence to embrace their unique way of learning and recognise their full potential. With the right encouragement and support, they can grow into self-assured individuals who are ready to take on challenges with a positive mindset.

8. Resources and Further Reading

British Dyslexia Association (www.bdadyslexia.org.uk)

A national charity providing advice, assessments, and practical support for individuals with dyslexia.

Dyslexia Action (www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk)

Offers training, tutoring, and resources for people with dyslexia and their families.

Nessy Learning (www.nessy.com)

An interactive learning platform designed to help children with dyslexia improve their literacy skills in a fun and engaging way.

The Reading Well Program (www.reading-well.org.uk)

Provides recommended books and resources for children and adults with dyslexia.

Our Mission

“Empowering autistic individuals and those around them, ASD Helping Hands is dedicated to fostering confidence, independence, and inclusion at every stage of life. We provide guidance, education, and resources to help individuals, families, and professionals navigate autism with knowledge and empowerment.

We champion the rights of autistic people, striving to create a more inclusive society while ensuring our services remain accessible, reliable, and built on trust.”

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