

A TASTE OF DYSLEXIA
Ginny Stacey
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**DEFINITION FROM THE BRITISH DYSLEXIA ASSOCIATION WEB SITE**

<http://www.bda-dyslexia.org.uk/> → information → What is dyslexia? 2005

- The word 'dyslexia' comes from the Greek and means 'difficulty with words'.
- It is a difference in the brain area that deals with language. It affects the underlying skills that are needed for learning to read, write and spell. Brain imaging techniques show that dyslexic people process information differently.
- Around 4% of the population is severely dyslexic. A further 6% have mild to moderate problems. Dyslexia occurs in people from all backgrounds and of all abilities, from people who cannot read to those with university degrees. Dyslexic people, of all ages, can learn effectively but often need a different approach.
- Dyslexia is a puzzling mix of both difficulties and strengths. It varies in degree and from person to person. Dyslexic people often have distinctive talents as well as typical clusters of difficulties.

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BRIEF DEFINITION OF DYSLEXIA

A person is dyslexic if in some way he/she cannot handle words at a level consistent with his/her level of intelligence and his/her physical well being. The handicap can vary in severity; it can be intermittent; different people manifest different collections of symptoms and problems. (M. Critchley, 1970 *The Dyslexic Child*. London: William Heineman Medical Books.)

A reversed view to put to dyslexic people:

There are two parts to being dyslexic:

- You have intellectual abilities that are outside the domain of language skills. These abilities are better than your language skills.
- Some or all of your language skills are below the level expected from your other intellectual abilities and your language skills are variable or inconsistent.

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## DYSLEXIA AFFECTS

|                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                               |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| in childhood:<br>single word reading<br>spelling<br>handwriting<br>fluent reading<br>creative writing<br>+ | in adulthood:<br>organisation of ideas<br>comprehension<br>organisation of self<br>management of time<br>management of place<br>all forms of spoken and written language<br>+ |
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## TYPICAL SYMPTOMS AND PROBLEMS OF DYSLEXIA



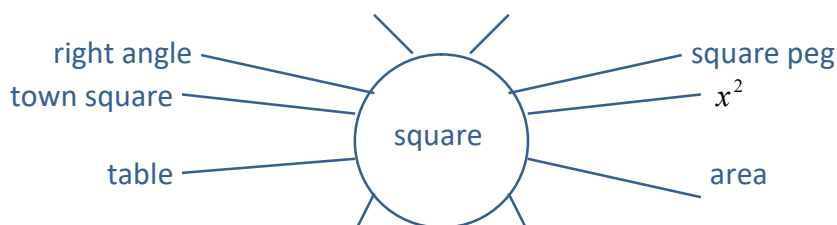
- \* an important contrast
- links show the same item in two categories

The dyslexic problems found in language have their equivalents in maths. The name 'dyscalculia' is given to the syndrome.

## MIND EXERCISE – KNOW YOUR OWN MIND

1) It is possible to watch your mind thinking and to direct the thinking so that it is appropriate to the task in hand; these abilities can be used to diminish the problems of dyslexia and to find the solutions. The mind exercise set out below is one way to develop the ability to watch your mind and to direct your thoughts.

2) Choose any object or idea, e.g., cup or square; write it in the middle of a page. Draw a circle round it. Write down associated ideas round the circle, like spokes of a wheel. After each associated idea, bring the mind back to the central idea:



Continue until no more associated ideas come. Stay with the central idea for 5 minutes after the last associated idea appears in your mind. The ability to watch one's mind is developed by selecting only those ideas that are related to the central one and by always coming back to it; the ability to direct the thinking also uses the concentration which is developed by staying with the central idea at the end of the exercise. The exercise is meant to stop the usual flow of thinking that occurs by random association, e.g., square - town square - central library - books due back - Is there time to phone the library? ....

3) A few examples from my own dyslexic mind:

- a) I have observed that when I think "I mustn't forget ....", I usually forget and when I think "I must remember ...", I usually do.
- b) There are certain styles of writing that will, literally, send me to sleep. Being sent to sleep used to start a period of time, maybe hours, when I could do almost nothing useful. Now I have learnt to see that I am going to sleep and to tackle the book, or subject, in a different way.
- c) Not writing at my best can be a sign that my ideas are not clear. Frequently no writing can be done until I have sorted out what needs to be said.

4) It is important that this ability to observe one's mind be used creatively. There is a danger that seeing what the mind does will increase any feeling of failure. Now that I have learnt how my mind learns most easily, I realise the mistakes I make are the results of inappropriate teaching in the past; they are not evidence of lack of intelligence. It is very satisfying to use the mind in its own natural way.

5) A few suggestions of questions to ask yourself:

- What do you remember most easily? What you see? What you hear? What you do?
- What do you think about as you walk along a street?
- Do you find diagrams, tables, pictures etc. easy to understand and remember?
- What do you want to know and why?
- Does it help to use positive phrasing, see 3(a) above?
- How can you alter something that is not easy so that it becomes easier to do understand, remember or recall?

6) The exercise in 2) can be adapted to help with many situations in life or study.

## SPELLING

- 1) Work with words in simple sentences.
- 2) Look - Say - Cover - Write - Check:  
A Multi-Sensory Approach  
(Adapted from: 'Assessing Reading Difficulties', Lynette Bradley, London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1980)
  - a) Look: name the letters, write over someone else's writing, use ideas from section 5 below
  - b) Say: to link spelling the word with pronunciation; while saying, tap out syllables with fingers, see section 4 below
  - c) Cover: to use recall from memory
  - d) Write: name the letters, say the word, feel the movement
  - e) Check: notice when the word is right; when it is wrong, mentally correct the errors and repeat the processN.B. The learner must do the checking.  
  
Repeat three times to give security.
- 3) Test spelling: use complete sentences; use a gapped sentence, i.e. one in which the writer has to supply the missing word, based on words that are being tested.  
  
Frequent use: a secure memory of a word's spelling is aided by frequent use of the word and by consciously knowing the correct spelling, phonetic form, or hand movement as the word is written.
- 4) Syllables: every word is made of syllables; every syllable has a vowel sound; breaking words into syllables makes them easier to spell.
- 5)
  - a) Spelling rules.
  - b) Family groups: bear, pear, tear, wear  
here, where, there.
  - c) Semantic association: lose, loss, lost & loose, loosen diminishes confusion between 'lose' and 'loose'.
  - d) Phonetic distortion: saying 'Wed nes day' as three sounds while writing.
  - e) Using patterns: acc ommo dation, ind ivi dual.
  - f) Quirky methods: My garden g-nome is g-nashing his teeth.
- 6) Mark in the margin, 'sp': stimulates the writer's ability to check.
- 7) Standard reference book: when a mistake has been made that breaks a rule, tell the writer where to find the rule in order to put the mistake right.

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PUPILS' CHARACTERISTIC ATTITUDES TO LEARNING, LECTURERS AND WORK ARISING FROM THE MENTAL FUNCTION THAT IS DEVELOPED AS DOMINANT.

S = Sensing function; N = 'Ntuitive; F = Feeling; T = Thinking.

S	they respond to practical, functional tasks can this lecturer & subject show me something useful? will I learn skills I can master & put to good use? they think best with their hands they get lost when steps are missed out
N	crave inspiration find routines dull want their imaginations to be fired with intriguing ideas and plans when bored they will seek out something to relieve the boredom
T	energised by logically organised material thrive on things that can be analysed resent material to be learnt, that fits no logical structure resent and resist a lecturer with non-logical organisation when logical orderliness is absent there is no way to use their best energies
F	does the lecturer care about me? can I give my heart to this subject? caring about the lecturer carries them over boring tasks caring about lecturer and subject brings out their best when unable to care they lose their primary motivation, nothing is gained by changing instructional procedures or physical conditions

When the dominant function of a pupil is excluded from a learning task, that task becomes a near impossible obstacle. Altering other details of the educational situation will not improve his/her learning ability.

An extroverted pupil shows his/her dominant function to the outside world, an introverted one does not. The dominant is assisted by the auxiliary function. An extroverted pupil uses his/her auxiliary on his/her inner world; an introverted one shows his/her auxiliary to the outside world.

Adapted from: 'People Types and Tiger Stripes' by Gordon Lawrence

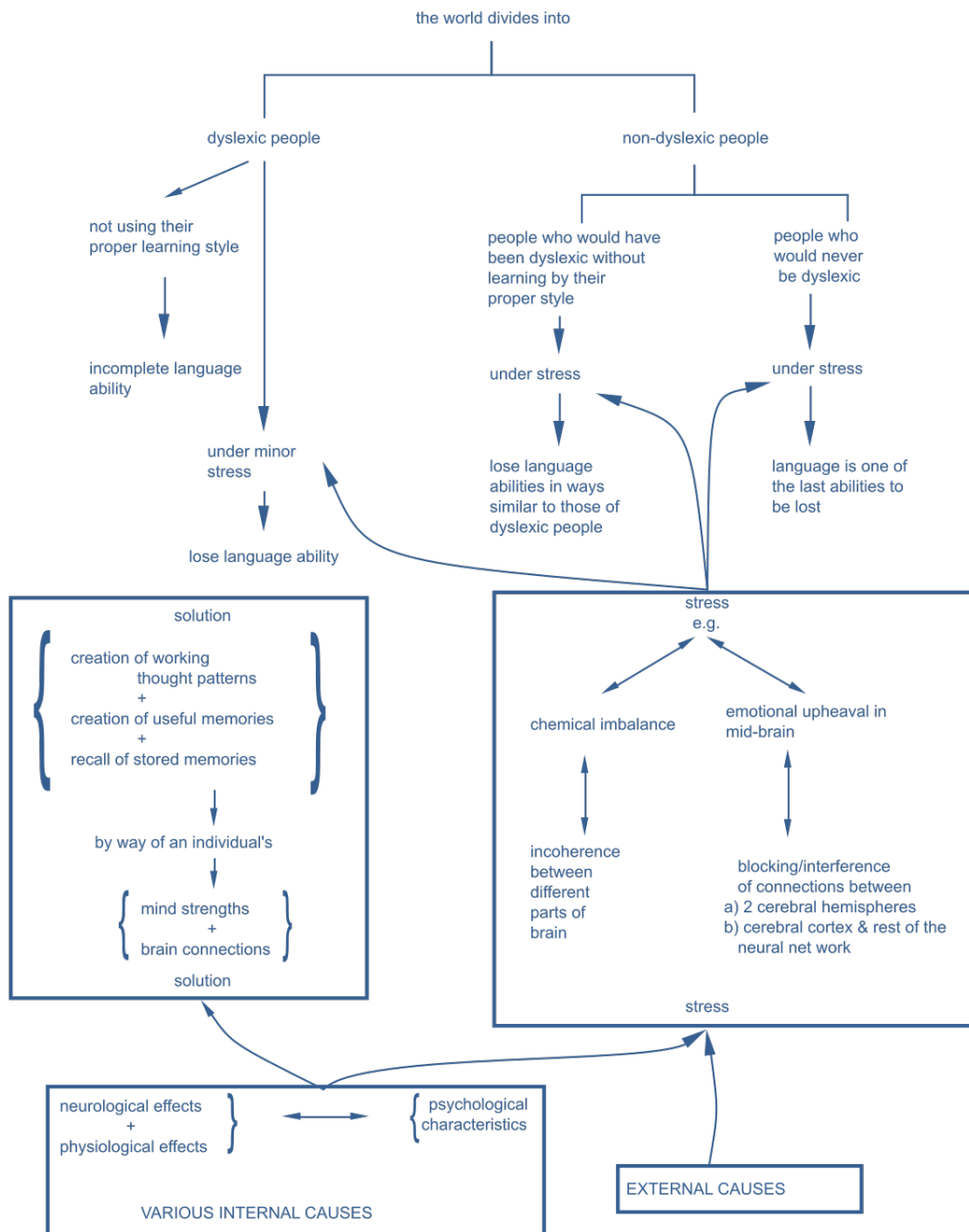
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### **SUBJECT MATERIAL THAT WILL ASSIST DIFFERENT TYPES OF PUPIL:**

|          |                                                                                                 |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>S</b> | examples that can be used to high-light relevant ideas, to root ideas in reality                |
| <b>N</b> | ideas, future plans, far-reaching implications that can make reality interesting                |
| <b>T</b> | the structure of the subject, logical connections between details                               |
| <b>F</b> | relevance to people (past, present or future), to people in general, to the pupil in particular |

## A COMPARISON BETWEEN DYSLEXIA and NON-DYSLEXIA

{independently of intelligence}



## IDEAS FOR HELPING DYSLEXIC PEOPLE

*This is a list of some ideas that may seem strange or obvious to non-dyslexic people but they can be very important for helping a dyslexic person to cope with being dyslexic. No two dyslexic people have exactly the same problems nor do they respond to exactly the same solutions, therefore these ideas are offered for exploration with any dyslexic person, to see what may help. The list is not comprehensive.*

### 1 Aspects of Communication

A dyslexic person may need to think consciously about the ways different aspects of communication link together; they may need to be given work designed to re-inforce the links between the different aspects of communication.

The following is a list of aspects involved in communication:

- a) the use of the physical senses in reading, speaking, listening, writing, body language
- b) the association of ideas with words ('cliff' is an idea when the word is used in a classroom); the meaning of words needs to be understood with respect to context
- c) the appreciation that experience is conveyed by meaning
- d) the skills of 1) collecting ideas together and 2) marshalling thoughts
- e) structure of language: grammar, syntax, spelling, essay structure, poetry forms, structure of a story, etc.
- f) awareness of the purpose of communication: awareness of others, e.g. "Can the reader follow?"; awareness of own goals, e.g. "Why am I reading this?"
- g) the contribution of feelings: how feelings aid or hinder communication (a dyslexic person may need help to overcome feelings that hinder communication).

### 2 Homework and Instructions

Make sure homework has been written down correctly. Be clear with instructions; dyslexic people can be incredibly literal in their understanding, and they often do not register inferred instructions.

### 3 Personal Dictionary

Encourage a dyslexic person to write the words that are needed in a subject or that he regularly misspells in a notebook with alphabetical divisions. Build up a personal, pictorial dictionary to help with the very early stages of reading.

### 4 Correcting

- a) Know your pupil. Watch out for poor work that is the result of hard labour; correcting it very much may do more harm than good.
- b) Notice what errors are made. Teach correct procedures. Build up a reference system of correct procedures; correct by referring to this system and letting the pupil work out how to make any corrections.
- c) Use any colour except red for correcting; red has associations with danger and may hinder learning from corrections.
- d) Give two marks: one for content, the other for English.
- e) Limit the number of corrections made on one piece of work to the most important mistakes.
- f) Try to find something that can be genuinely praised.
- g) Do not avoid correcting work; dyslexic pupils usually want to know how they are doing and what they should do.

## **5 Teaching Methods to Explore**

- a) 5+: Explore the effectiveness of multi-sensory approaches, of systematic and logical explanations. Work with words in sentences. Use a child's interests: 'dinosaur' may be easier to learn to read and spell than 'was'.
- b) 7+: Play games that involve reading single words. Use Look-cover-write-check for learning to spell and write new words. Teach the basics of language. Use the Cloze method.
- c) 13+: Let pupils compare different ways to learn a given subject, e.g. basement-up vs top-down; divergent thinking vs convergent; facts vs concepts; logic vs humanistic. Teach the structure of language. Teach a variety of study skills. Give a spelling list relevant to your subject.

## **6 "Eat Your Own Apple"**

A dyslexic person often learns by doing. When tasks are done for a dyslexic person, he may be denied the chance to learn; he has "to eat his own apple". Tell him what to do; make steps small enough for him to cope with. A dyslexic person needs to know from his own thinking that he is doing the right thing and not from the encouraging look on your face. Be patient - it may be the quickest way.

## **7 Find an Effective Way to Learn**

Lack of progress in learning could mean the learning is being attempted the wrong way for the person in question. Our brains have their own natural way of thinking; when this is not used a particular brain may have no way of doing the learning. Most brains continue sorting out ideas when not consciously thinking about them; this sorting produces learning when the conscious work has used the brain's natural way of thinking.

## **8 Task Completion May Be Unhelpful**

Tasks may be well done but in ways that do not produce effective learning. A dyslexic person copying a word letter by letter can write the word correctly, but the 'whole-word appreciation' part of the brain need not be used and that person may not see those letters as part of any word. The task is done but the brain is not used in a way that assists the learning of one's native language or of a subject.

## **9 The Physical Senses May Be Disconnected**

The physical senses supply the brain with information but the brain does not always process it in the required order. For example:

- a) The effort of speaking may prevent listening to one's own voice.
- b) Concentrating on what you have to copy may prevent you from seeing that you have reversed a letter-shape. In P.E., concentration can prevent you from knowing what movements your body made as you followed a teacher.
- c) When a dyslexic child is trying to read but is not using phonics, telling him a word may re-enforce his listening-speaking ability and disconnect his seeing-speaking ability. Paired reading may help by giving time for the two abilities to settle down and work together.
- d) Concentrating on the subject of an essay prevents you from seeing that you have misspelt words that you get right in a spelling test.
- e) The physical representation of a word, i.e. the pattern of sounds or the pattern of visible shapes, may be disconnected in the pupil's memory and mind from the meaning of the word.

## 10 Re-enforcing Learning

A word that can be read easily on one page of a book may not be recognised on another page of the same book even during the same reading session. Try going back to the page where the word was read, let the reader compare the two words and see that they are the same.

## 11 Continuity of Thought

A dyslexic person often knows what he is thinking but cannot find the words to express his ideas in speech. Let him take his time. If you interrupt by suggesting words, you will break his train of thought and probably make matters worse. Try to relax yourself and wait.

## 12 The Effects of Time and Place

The setting of a conversation or lesson may be more strongly remembered than the content. If a person has forgotten the content, it can often be recalled by remembering the time, place, other people involved and one's own physical position.

## 13 The Pupil Cannot Always Tell What She Needs

A pupil may realise she is not learning effectively and may ask for help, but she may ask for the wrong help. For example, one pupil repeatedly asked for more work; eventually it was realised that she did not understand a new teacher from abroad with a different accent and a foreign use of English. Australians, Americans, Canadians, etc. make English into a new language. More work could not solve the pupil's problem which was the language barrier. The pupil often does not have enough experience to see problems clearly, but the solution will not be found without consultation with the pupil.

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