



Dyslexia and Adult Literacy



Helpline

0141 - 331 - 2121

www.dyslexiasw.com

Introduction

The reasons for literacy deficiencies in adults can be many and varied but it has been suggested that a significant contributing factor is dyslexia. 10% of the population of Scotland are dyslexic and the Scottish Executive estimates that as many as 30-50% of people in adult literacy programs may be dyslexic. The unfortunate reality is that many of these people will have developed literacy difficulties because traditional teaching styles and curriculums have failed to engage with them. Thus, adult literacy programs are starting to consider alternative approaches to teaching in order to help adult dyslexics.

Adult Dyslexics

Dyslexia in adults is often different to that in children. While children may be able to "train" their brains, the neural pathways in an adult brain are often set and it may be much harder to make changes. A good example of this is the differences between the ease that children learn another language, compared to an adult. Adult dyslexics

may have well defined coping strategies which compensate for any deficiencies they may have because of their dyslexia. These coping strategies may severely affect their ability to develop reading and writing skills. Dyslexic adults may well have "failed" in education in the past and will need constant encouragement and positive reinforcement.

Dyslexia can manifest itself in many different ways. The difficulties can be any, **several** or **all** of the following.



Visual -

- Dyslexics may sometimes see things differently from non dyslexics.
- When the word is written in front of them, they might not see it, but when it is removed, it is completely erased from their mind as if they had never seen it.
- They could be able to read a word on one line but when it comes to the next line, they have no idea as to what the same word is.

- They might not recognise the different combinations of letters that give the same sound. "ai", "a?e" and "ay".
- When they are proof reading, many can't see their mistakes.



Auditory -

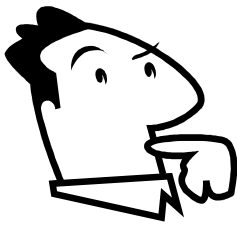
- Some dyslexics may have difficulty in distinguishing between sounds e.g. unfortunately and contact.
- They may not be able to blend e.g. c-l-o-c-k
- Pronunciation can be a problem e.g "hostipal" instead of hospital and "scabetti" instead of spaghetti.
- Word mix up i.e. take over and overtake.



Writing

- Mistakes can be made with writing from the right instead of the left hand side of the page.

- They might mix up "p" and "q", "b" and "d", "m" and "n", "v" and "w" and "u".
- They may mix up "was" and "saw" and "on" and "no".
- They may find it difficult to spell words like "where", "how", "when" etc.



Short Term Memory

- The dyslexic person may have great difficulty in remembering a short list of instructions, therefore appearing inattentive in class.
- Problems can sometimes arise with learning the alphabet and times tables. The learning has to be reinforced more for the dyslexic.

Working Memory

- The dyslexic person might have great difficulty holding on to information whilst using it to work something out.
- They may have problems doing a long division arithmetical calculation.



Orientation

- Dyslexics can find it hard to distinguish between up and down
- Left and right
- "past" and "to the hour" - time telling.
- Finding their place if distracted, whilst reading out loud in class or giving a presentation.



Sequencing

- Some dyslexics find it is difficult to start in the middle of the alphabet.
- Days of the week and months of the year may be difficult to remember.
- It might be difficult to start half way through the Times Tables.
- Mathematical sequencing can be difficult

Teaching adult dyslexics

Generally, when teaching adult dyslexics the most important thing is to be patient, be positive and to try different things. Remember that adult dyslexics may have failed before and will need constant encouragement. Also remember that they will have well developed coping strategies which may be an impediment to learning. It is often a good idea to work out what these coping strategies are, and if suitable, to work within them to assist learning.

There are a few generally accepted teaching principles when working with dyslexics. The first of these is to break up the lesson into manageable chunks. Dyslexics learn far more easily when confronted with only small pieces of information. Too much information at once can potentially overload the dyslexic learner.

Secondly and most importantly is to take a multi-sensory approach. This explores different learning styles, described in detail below.

Visual Learner

Learns best by seeing. Use pictures and multi-media material. Stick spelling words and post-its anywhere in view. Look at pictures in a book before reading, draw mind maps, use different colour e.g. syllables in words, use good visual software programmes. Keep the work area uncluttered.

Auditory Learner

Learns best by hearing. Talk about the book / information to be read or learned. Make sure instructions are orally clear and not too long or complicated. Get the student to record the information to be learned him/herself. Use software which has good auditory input.

Kinesthetic Learner

Learns best by doing. Trace letters in sand or in the air. Use concrete objects which can be handled, eg wooden letters, numbers etc. Memorise facts while moving about.

Learning aids

There are numerous aids which will work with dyslexics, including mind-mapping, software such as voice recognition programs or reading pens, memory aids such as cards etc. Simple things like using lined paper and spell checkers can have a beneficial effect. Each dyslexic is different but will usually gain some benefit from external aids.

More Information

The Dyslexia Scotwest Resource Centre has a significant collection of books and other resources which you can use to learn more about teaching adult dyslexics. Five books that may be immediately useful are:

1. *Practical Strategies for Living with Dyslexia* - Maria Chivers
2. *Adult Dyslexia - Assessment and Training* - D. McLaughlin, E. Fitzgibbon, V. Young

3. Adult Students and Dyslexia - Vicki Goodwin

4. Helping Adults to Spell - Sue Abell

5. Dyslexia in Focus at 16+, An Inclusive teaching approach - Jeanne Holloway

There are over 800 other resources in our Resource Centre which may be able to help you. We also have books for sale.

You may also find the following websites useful:

- www.dyslexia-scotwest.co.uk
- www.dyslexia-adults.com
- www.beingdyslexic.co.uk
- www.dyslexiainadults.com

You can also call the Dyslexia Scotwest helpline during working hours and our dedicated team will attempt to help you. We have significant

knowledge and experience working with dyslexics and can provide relevant advice.

Finally, Clydebank College runs the following stand-alone unit:

"Understanding the needs of dyslexic adults"

This unit, is designed for professionals working with dyslexics. It is aimed at people working in the fields of guidance, information, learning, training and care. If you work with dyslexics then this course could really make the difference.

This part-time / evening course has 40 contact hours run over thirteen weeks. It exists as a stand-alone unit but is also designed to complement the *PDA for Adult Literacy and Numeracy*.

For more information contact Clydebank College

Website: www.clydebank.ac.uk

Telephone: 0141 952 7771

Following consultation with our Service users our leaflets are prepared in Comic Sans font, size 14 on coloured paper as this is considered to be the most dyslexic friendly format.

Open daily

Monday to Friday

9.30 am till 4.30 pm

Please phone before visiting our office to ensure that someone is available to see you

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