

Facts of life with dyslexia

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ou open a book and the words swim around the page. A bunch of letters in seemingly random order. You know the sounds that the letters make and you've practiced the sounds many times but you can't figure out how to put those sounds together. You have dyslexia. Dyslexia is a learning disability many people, young and old, face for their whole lives.

However, it is not what you think it is. Dyslexia can be considered good and bad, it just depends on how optimistic you are. It's commonly found at an early age, about four to seven, when someone first tries to learn to read. It comes in many forms and varieties. It grows with you. Dyslexia is common.

In fact, most everyone knows someone with dyslexia because somewhere between two and eight percent of the population has it. Dyslexia is defined as " Difficulty learning to read despite having normal or above-average intelligence." As this is a broad definition, dyslexia is a condition that can vary from person to person. For everyone, though, it can mean increased struggles with reading, school, and self-confidence. Many people with dyslexia have what is referred to as an auditory processing disorder.

This means that they don't hear the sounds of words in the same way that other people do and, in particular, they may not hear the sounds in the order in which they occur. Someone with dyslexia may think that the state of New York begins with a " K" because the " K" sound in New York is what they hear first. As you can imagine, this makes reading and spelling difficult if someone can't figure out what sounds should be in which words. People with dyslexia may also have trouble writing words in the correct order or with the

correct spacing. So, even if what they say may sound fluent, the written version may be less comprehensible.

Still other people with dyslexia may only “ see” one side of a word so will read just the beginning or ending of it. This becomes a particular problem with compound words. Someone with this type of dyslexia may read “ doghouse” as just “ dog” or “ house”. Obviously, this could change the entire meaning of a sentence or a story. Although most people think of dyslexia as being a problem in reading, this difficulty in interpreting the order of sounds and words can also show up as a difficulty in putting numbers in the right order.

Imagine trying to do simple math problems when you are rearranging the order of the numbers!! People with dyslexia usually get identified because they may seem disorganized, have difficulty studying, or have poor spelling and use of grammar. They may skip the words that help connect and make sense of a sentence. For instance, they may think they are writing “ One night, the dog was walking with his owner.” But, instead, they write down “ One night dog walk his owner.” So, the teacher may think that the student doesn’t know English when, in fact, the student has dyslexia.

What causes dyslexia? There are many theories and, no one absolutely knows for sure. Several studies have given us some clues. First, we know that there is likely to be a gene or genes that may predispose someone to dyslexia. Your chance of having dyslexia goes way up if someone in your family also has dyslexia. It even sometimes comes with being left-handed,

which is also genetic. It is also found more often in boys, though plenty of girls can have it.

All of this info adds up to not very much. The actual genes that cause dyslexia have not yet been identified. Scientists assume that there is a problem with how neurons in the brain get connected but this is still an area that people don't know much about. One study found that individuals who have a brain malformation in which neurons that are supposed to migrate during fetal development don't end up in the right place have a much higher chance of having dyslexia. All this information is leading us to a better understanding of dyslexia but isn't yet giving any definitive answers.

Because dyslexia is so common, many people have worked on methods to help people with dyslexia learn to read and write and flourish.

So, there is lots of good news. Most people diagnosed with dyslexia will learn to read at or even well above grade level, it just takes longer to get the ball rolling and takes a whole lot of work to get them there. People with dyslexia have been shown to be especially creative, well-coordinated physically, artistic, and to be empathic with others. Some people think that this may be because a different part of the brain is functioning more strongly than in individuals without dyslexia. People with dyslexia may struggle in school, and with reading and writing their entire lives.

But, studies on people with dyslexia that have followed them after school have found that people with dyslexia find a wide variety of careers that they can succeed at. Dyslexia does not stop people from reaching the highest levels of success. In fact, many famous people have had dyslexia. These

include Tom Cruise, Orlando Bloom, Ansel Adams, Alexander Graham Bell, Thomas Edison, Albert Einstein, Agatha Christie, Walt Disney, and Leonardo Da Vinci. This goes to show that people with dyslexia shouldn't let it get in the way of pursuing their dreams.

In fact, because dyslexia and creativeness seem often to go hand-in-hand, their dyslexia may be considered a gift, one that helped them to achieve such creativity.