

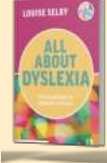
## Fish in trees

Dyslexia workshop for parents, students and staff

February 26th, 2025



## About your trainer



Louise Selby  
[www.louiseselbydyslexia.com](http://www.louiseselbydyslexia.com)



“Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.”

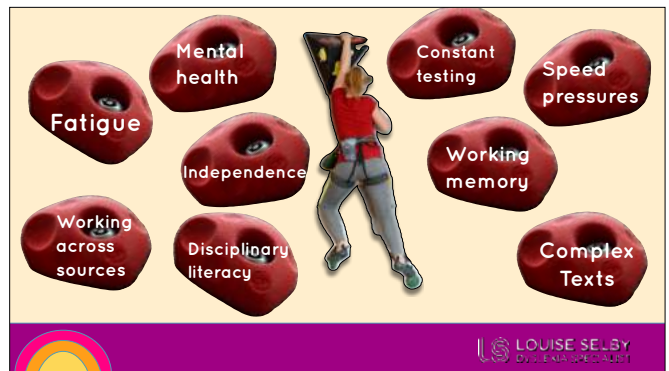


## Today, we'll look at:

- |                               |  |                                   |  |
|-------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1. The experience of dyslexia |  | 5. Memory & learning how to learn |  |
| 2. Spelling & vocabulary      |  | 6. Notes & study skills           |  |
| 3. Reading                    |  | 7. Focus on the positive          |  |
| 4. Organisation               |  | 8. Questions                      |  |



### 1. The experience of dyslexia



Dyslexia is primarily a set of processing difficulties that affect the acquisition of reading and spelling. In dyslexia, some or all aspects of literacy attainment are weak in relation to age, standard teaching and instruction, and level of other attainments. Across languages and age groups, difficulties in reading and spelling fluency are a key marker of dyslexia.

## A new definition



## This means in practice...

It always impacts literacy.



It's a difficulty with processing skills underlying literacy.



It can manifest as reading or writing fluency problems.



Difficulties are unexpected...



## Myth alert

It's not a gift or a superpower - but it comes with lots of positives!



It's not a visual difficulty.



It's possible to read well and still have dyslexia.



The nature and developmental trajectory of dyslexia depends on multiple genetic and environmental influences. Dyslexic difficulties exist on a continuum and can be experienced to various degrees of severity. Dyslexia can affect the acquisition of other skills, such as mathematics, reading comprehension or learning another language.



## This means in practice...

Dyslexia can vary greatly in its presentation.



It impacts maths and other curricular areas.



What's done in school makes a big difference!



It impacts reading comprehension.



It often runs in families.



The most commonly observed cognitive impairment in dyslexia is a difficulty in phonological processing (i.e. in phonological awareness, phonemic decoding skill or phonological memory). However, phonological difficulties do not fully explain the variability that is observed. Dyslexia frequently co-occurs with one or more other developmental difficulty, including developmental language disorder, dyscalculia, ADHD, and developmental coordination disorder.



# Myth alert

Dyslexia is not linked to intelligence!

It is a barrier not a deficit... "How I do it differently".



# This means in practice...

Dyslexia is caused by underlying processing difficulties

Dyslexia can co-occur with...



# What are the underlying processing skills?

Working memory/  
verbal memory



Phonological  
awareness



Processing speed



And..?



# Phonological awareness

The ability to identify, discriminate and manipulate speech sounds. Crucial in spelling and early reading - also vocabulary.



# Key areas of difficulty: working memory & processing speed

Working memory is the ability to store information and work with it as well. In other words:

**Working memory = Remember + WORK**



# Key areas of difficulty: working memory

For example:

- Remembering a set of instructions and following them (get your coat and wash your hands)
- Remembering a word whilst writing it
- Remembering some numbers whilst needing to add them together



Think of working memory like a bottle.



Long term memory

Information goes in - both visual and verbal.



Long term memory

The working memory's job is to hold it in mind and manipulate it.



Long term memory

This information needs encoding - made sense of so that it can be stored.



Long term memory

The information needs to go somewhere; there is limited storage capacity in the working memory!



Long term memory

If working memory is not supported, this can create a bottle neck effect...



Long term memory

..Leading to catastrophe!

Long term memory

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Losing it is catastrophic!

When the recalled information is gone from the mental sketchpad, it's gone for good.

Long term memory

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Working memory and processing speed difficulties can lead to overwhelm, distraction, emotional dysregulation, fatigue, withdrawal and difficulties following instructions.

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It's helpful to find ways to avoid the bottleneck.

Long term memory

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Support strategies

1. Avoid long periods of talking.

Long term memory

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Support strategies

2. Give instructions that are clear, concise, unrushed, given in chunks or steps, and repeated if needed.

Long term memory

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Support strategies

3. Use pictures and movement to help.

Long term memory

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Support strategies

4. One thing at a time!

5. Avoid lengthy sentences and wordy "fluff"!

Long term memory

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Support strategies

6. Give them time to process!

Long term memory

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Support strategies

7. Avoid the random - give it meaning and context.

Long term memory

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Support strategies

8. Give them brain breaks and encourage movement

Long term memory

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6 strategies for learners

WORKING MEMORY TIPS FOR LEARNERS  
Holding onto what you hear

- Look out for key words which tell you something important or tell you what's next in a lesson or story.
- Write in the margin down or draw pictures of the most important things.
- Look for a keyword which is repeated often.
- Draw a picture of what you hear or see in your mind.
- Repeat words, sentences or phrases.
- Use hand signals.

Working Memory Tips Poster

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Listen out for key words: words that tell you something important or hold key information. E.g. colour, number, object, place.



Working Memory Tip Poster

Write a few words down or draw quick pictures of the main points or key words.



Working Memory Tip Poster

Look for a finished product to see what it will look like.



Working Memory Tip Poster

Visualise. Make a picture in your mind of the key words, or what it will look like, or the different steps.



Working Memory Tip Poster

In your mind, rehearse yourself doing it!



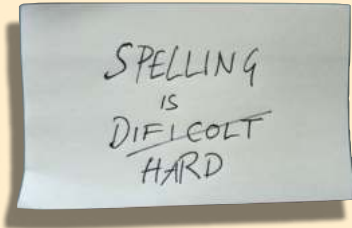
Working Memory Tip Poster

Say it back to yourself.



Working Memory Tip Poster

## 2. Spelling and vocabulary



## Phonological awareness



The ability to identify, discriminate and manipulate speech sounds. Crucial in spelling and early reading - also vocabulary.

## And..Orthographic mapping?



Orthographic mapping is the process of storing a word permanently in memory for instant retrieval – and key to effortless, accurate, and fluent reading.

## Orthographic mapping



B /ē/ /ch/



b ea ch

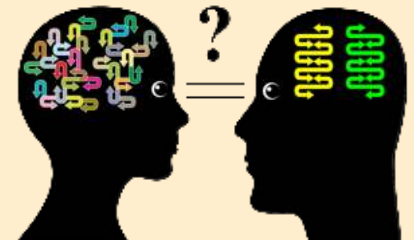
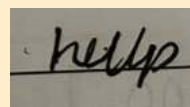
## Orthographic mapping



b ee ch  
b e ch e  
b ea ch



## Spelling is not the same as intelligence!





Make up stories about words and draw pictures of them



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Visual support & visual aids



200 Tricky  
Spellings in  
Cartoons,  
Lidia Stanton



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C and h are inseparable at Christmas!

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Visual mnemonics



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Use visualisation

Parallel



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Use visualisation

Para||el



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Use visualisation

Para  el

Use visualisation

Pa r a  e l

Use visualisation

Para  el

Use visualisation

Parallel



Look at parts of the words

Use morphology (prefixes, suffixes and roots). It can be helpful to teach students to look for the root in a word first, then find the suffix and/or prefix.

reley

real	-ly
real+ly	

engineering

engine	-er	-ing
engine + -er + -ing		



Tier 2 & 3 vocabulary

### descending

**De** = away, down, reverse, not

**Scend** = climb

**ing** = current action, result

Decompose, decamp, deport, debug, deformed, ascend, ascension, descendant, condescend...



Tier 2 & 3 vocabulary

### Monarchy

**mono** = one, single

**arch** = old, from the beginning, chief, leader

**y** = like, full of

Monologue, monochrome, monarch, monotony, monosyllabic, archaic, anarchy, matriarch...



### Modern foreign languages

Cognates (French, German, Spanish): telephone, family, restaurant, music, minute, president, moment...



### Beyond cognates

Look for cross language relationships.

Minute - min means small - diminish, minute, minimum

Innovative - inovador, nueva (Spanish) novice, innovative, novelty, renovate

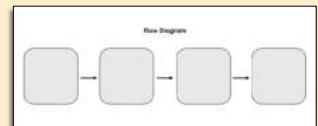
Venir - convenient, convene...

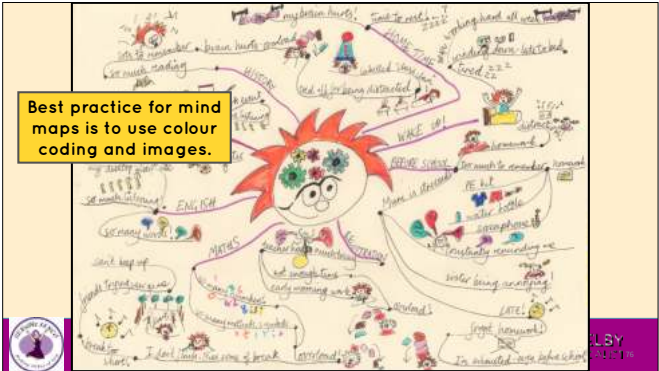
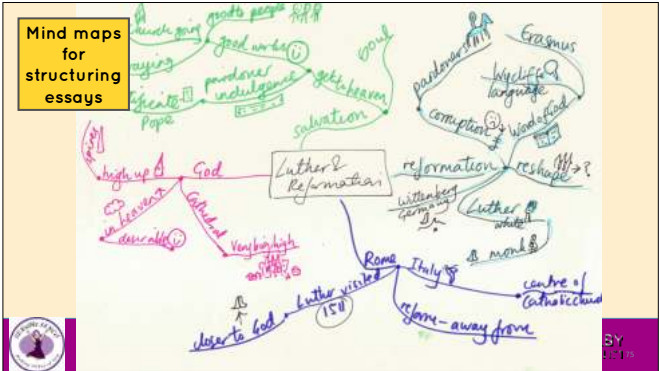
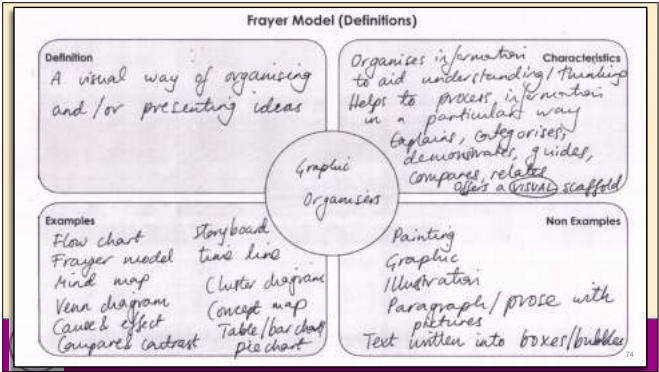
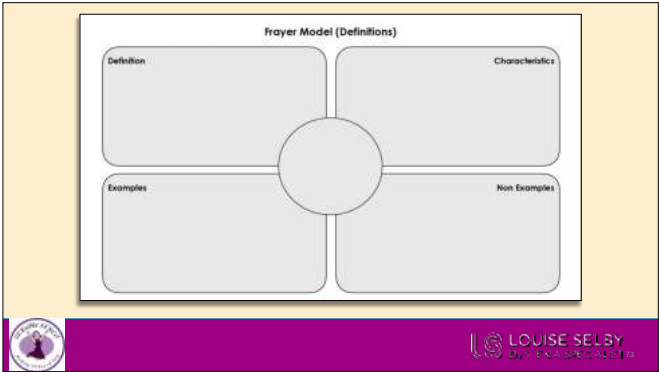


### 6. Writing



### Organising information and getting started can be key barriers





**Use assistive technology!**

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**Assistive technology for spelling & writing**

- Mind-mapping software
- Reader pens or text to speech
- Spellcheck
- Speech to text - often free
- Apps, e.g. DocsPlus by Crick
- Editing programmes, e.g. Grammarly

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### 3. Reading



### What causes reading difficulties?



Decoding: reading is a written code for spoken sounds



- Welcome to the Weather -

W  
elcome to England, Mr Klein," said the immigration officer as he handed back the passports to Alan's father.  
Alan stared up at the tall officer; the officer looked down at Alan. "Have a good holiday now."  
"Thank you," said Alan's father. He took Alan's hand and began to head for the luggage-reclaim area.  
Alan jerked his father's hand and stopped suddenly. "Where are they taking us?" he said, brimming with excitement.  
His father turned to him and spoke as if he was trying to speak quietly. "What did I tell you? From now on we must try to speak English; you must practice your English - all right, young man?"  
Alan panicked. "No, please," he said.  
The father's response was swift. "English, I said."  
"Yes, Father."  
"Now what did you say?"  
Alan looked down towards passport control. Father, the man who looked at the passports, what was writing with him?

Syllables: tek/  
at/low/al

Phonics: e.g ou  
in shout

Common exception words - e.g. father



### What causes reading difficulties?



Speed and fluency



### 1. What causes reading difficulties?



Language processes



### What causes reading difficulties?



Visual problems



### Immersive reader



Think of your own questions about a text!



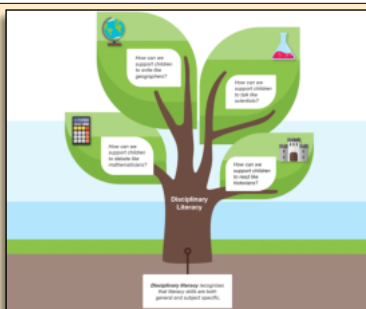
### Reading for pleasure?

Don't expect reading for pleasure - or judge an individual's reading ability by their lack of enthusiasm.

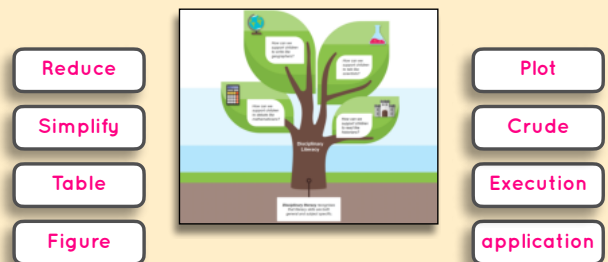


### Reading for pleasure?

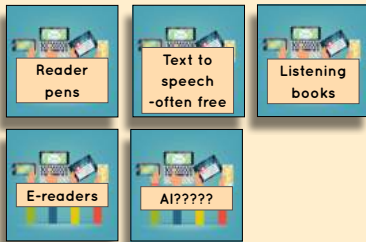
Instead, view reading in a different way: a means to an end.



Disciplinary reading



## Using technology for reading



## Other ideas



Find film versions of texts e.g. Shakespeare

Allow/encourage re-reading

Ask for texts in advance/simplified versions

## 4. Organisation



Keep shared calendars up to date

Display timetables at home

Keep passwords written down & easily accessible

Keep spares of essential equipment at home

Have separate folders for separate things

Look at emails from teachers together

## 5. Learning now to learn



Allow time to think and talk about learning tasks.

Questioning - before, during after

Knowledge of self, knowledge of task, knowledge of strategies





What do you need to do this?

How are you going to remember?

What do you need to learn/demonstrate here?

What does the teacher want from you?

What are you good at that will help?



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What's working well? Do you need to change your method?

What can you use to help you?


What could you check over for?

Have you done what you needed to?



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### Metacognition



Metacognition

What did you do with your previous lessons of this task?	What skills are you using?	Can I do this better this time?
None	None	None
None	None	None
None	None	None

Do I need to ask for more help?	Is there something I can do, get or find that will help me?	How am I doing?
None	None	None
None	None	None
None	None	None

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### Self-Regulation and Metacognition Checklist

Think about your learning before, during and after your task. Choose some key questions to consider each time. These are just suggestions!

**Before starting**

**Knowledge of task**  
Which aspects of this task will provide the most challenge? Which aspects are the easiest?  
How can I manage my time to make sure I finish it well?  
What do I know already that I can use to help me?  
What are the main concepts/ideas/terminology required of me here?  
What do I know already that I can use to help me?  
Is there any terminology or vocabulary I need to use?

**Knowledge of self**  
Do I have any particular personal skills that will help with this? How can I make sure I use them?  
How motivated am I here? What can I do to increase my motivation?  
How long are I for staying focused? Is there anything that would help me?  
How can I make sure I remember everything?  
How will I divide up the time I have?

**Knowledge of strategies**  
What skills or the task looking for?  
What resources will help?  
What strategies would help, e.g. note taking, planning a structure, using colour, summarising, drawing a diagram, creating a bullet point?  
How can I connect this task with what else I know/have done?  
How can I make sure I understand the main concepts?  
How can I make sure I remember everything?  
How will I divide up the time I have?

**During the task**

**Knowledge of task**  
Is there anything I am not understanding here?  
Am I showing I understand this?  
What terminology and vocabulary do I still need to use?  
Have I used enough diagrams/tables/illustrations?

**Knowledge of self**  
Am I enjoying this? Am I focused?  
Is there anything preventing me from doing my best here?  
Has anything come up to make me think again about how I am doing this?  
Which bits of this task have been the easiest for me? Why?


**Knowledge of strategies**  
What will help me stay focused and motivated?  
Do I need to extend my strategies?  
Do I need to talk to someone else if so, who?

**After the task**

**Knowledge of task**  
Have I used anything?  
Have I shown I understand?  
Have I used the key terminology/vocabulary?  
Have I included references/diagrams/tables where they were needed?



**Knowledge of self**  
What did I enjoy the most in this task? Can I use this to help me next time?  
How do I cope with the challenges?  
How did I use my strategies?  
How well did I do? What happened/where with that?  
Would I approach this differently next time?

**Knowledge of strategies**  
How well did that go?  
What am I proud of?  
Did I learn any new skills here?  
What would I do differently next time?



Metacognition student sheet

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Metacognition student sheet

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Metacognition student sheet

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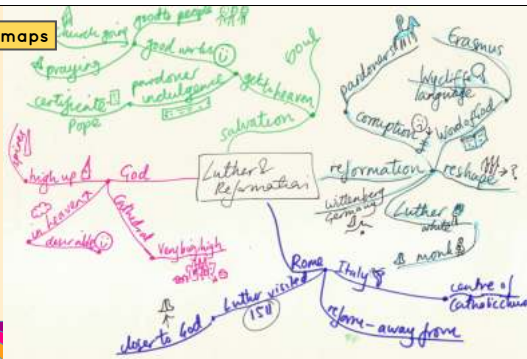
## Task Plans

Task plans can help with planning and organising - can be a simple tick list.

## 6. Taking notes & study



## Mind maps



## Cornell notes

Keywords	Questions	Main notes
judges	How did the conflict start?	Two families rose up war, Montague & Capulet. Original conflict - an insult. Planets daily lives affected.
conflict	Why could Tybalt not marry his sister? What was her fate? How did she die?	Tybalt is in war conflict - lives Romeo but marry family. He just cancelled to save. Can't have the fight. Hand dilemma.
make easy	What are Tybalt's motives? What does 'dignity' mean?	Tybalt & Romeo have a physical conflict. Tybalt kills Romeo's friend. Tybalt's death leads to death. Servants of both houses war against each other. Disruption on streets.
family	What does 'dignity' mean?	
status		

## Sketch notes



Help your child gain skills to compensate.

Work with your child on how to create mind maps and different ways of organising information.




Long term memory

E.g. writing frames, mind maps, bullet maps, graphic organisers

Help your child gain skills to compensate.

Help your child to think about how they learn



Long term memory

E.g. use of task plans, creating own memory aids, discussion of the type of learning

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### Avoiding the random

Visualise it in a picture or scene you know

Put it to a song or rap


Make it into a storyboard

Paraphrase it in your own words

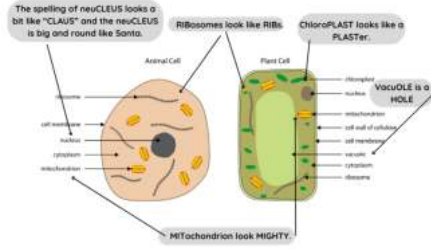
Place it into a repeating design e.g. wallpaper

Imagine it in a room or place you know - this could even be a cupboard!

Draw it into a picture



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The spelling of **neucleus** looks a bit like "CLAUS" and the **neucleus** is big and round like Santa.

**RIBosomes** look like **RIBs**.

**ChloroPLAST** looks like a **PLAST**er.

**MITochondrion** look **MIGHTY**.

**VACUOLE** is a **HOLE**.


Animal Cell: nucleus, cytoplasm, mitochondrion, cell membrane, vacuole.

Plant Cell: chloroplast, vacuole, cell wall, cytoplasm, nucleus, mitochondrion, ribosome.

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### Cartoons

Permission from [www.dekkocomics.com](http://www.dekkocomics.com)



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### Make learning into stories (also a great revising technique)



Wind pollination, a story



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### 7. Celebrate the positives



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“Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.”



### 7. Celebrate all achievements and the learning process itself

The legacy of dyslexia in school can be failure, failure and failing again.

Involve students in their own targets and goals, and discuss their learning strategies and successes with them.



### 7. Celebrate the positives

“I do it differently” approach



### 7. Celebrate the positives

Talk and listen! Be open about dyslexia and neurodiversity.



Share role models, e.g. famous people with dyslexia, young ambassadors with Dyslexia Scotland.



“The advantage of dyslexia is that my brain puts information in my head in a different way, more interestingly than if I saw like everyone else.”

Whoopi Goldberg  
#dyslexia

Share role models, e.g. famous people with dyslexia, young ambassadors with Dyslexia Scotland.



“You are not alone, and while you will have dyslexia for the rest of your life, you can dart between the raindrops to get where you want to go. It will not hold you back.”

Steven Spielberg, dyslexic  
#dyslexia

Share role models,  
e.g. famous people  
with dyslexia, young  
ambassadors with  
Dyslexia Scotland.



"I just see the problems differently  
and I obsess about things differently"

Jamie Oliver, dyslexic  
#dyslexia

Share role models,  
e.g. famous people  
with dyslexia, young  
ambassadors with  
Dyslexia Scotland.



"Now I had this great discovery. I felt  
like all of my childhood trauma,  
tragedies, dramas were explained."

Jennifer Aniston, on discovering in her 20s that she had dyslexia  
#dyslexia

Share role models,  
e.g. famous people  
with dyslexia, young  
ambassadors with  
Dyslexia Scotland.



"No matter where you are in your  
life, no matter what you think you  
can't achieve, there are some people  
that are out there ready to  
support you."

Jay Blades, dyslexic  
#dyslexia

Share role models,  
e.g. famous people  
with dyslexia, young  
ambassadors with  
Dyslexia Scotland.



"You may not be a brilliant speller,  
you may not be a very fast reader  
but you'll be better at different  
things and I think that is unbelievably  
important to know as a kid."

Kiera Knightley, dyslexic  
#dyslexia

Share role models,  
e.g. famous people  
with dyslexia, young  
ambassadors with  
Dyslexia Scotland.



"Champions are made from  
something they have deep inside  
them – a desire, a dream, a vision."

Mohammed Ali, dyslexic  
#dyslexia

Share role models,  
e.g. famous people  
with dyslexia, young  
ambassadors with  
Dyslexia Scotland.



"Imagine a world where people with  
dyslexia are educated in a way that  
supports them. It means anything is  
possible... **ANYTHING** is possible."

Orlando Bloom, dyslexic  
#dyslexia

Focus on strengths and don't worry about weaknesses.

"I do it differently."



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Resources

Role models: Dyslexia Scotland - young ambassadors

Assistive technology: Call Scotland (free courses), [dyslexic.com](http://dyslexic.com) (impartial recommendations)

Assessment: Patoss Dyslexia

Support & resources for parents: British Dyslexia Association, Helen Arkell Dyslexia Charity, Dyslexia Scotland



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Resources

Podcast: Parenting Dyslexia

Books for students (for personal reading): Barrington Stoke, Ransom, Phonicbooks.co.uk, Badger

Book for parents: DYSLEXIA. Wrestling with an Octopus: 10 Tips to Help Your Child, Beth Beamish and Sarah Pitts


Books for students (curricular based): Oakabooks



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Quick wins

1. Talk child about how you prefer to learn and what works for you.



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Quick wins


2. Spend some time looking at the free assistive technology on devices at home, e.g. dictate, read aloud, Immersive reader.



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Quick wins

3. Make up a picture/comic strip visual to help remember a spelling you find hard - adult and student!



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## Quick wins

4. Next time you are doing homework, ask some questions about the learning process, e.g. what do you need for this? How can you adapt?



## Quick wins

5. Look up some dyslexic role models, either using the Dyslexia Scotland young ambassadors or famous people with dyslexia.



## Final thoughts



Thank you for listening!

Please keep the conversation going...

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