

Dyslexia and other learning differences

Dyslexia is the most common form of learning difference. The most common feature of dyslexia is difficulties with reading, writing and spelling. Dyslexia is not an indication of intellectual impairment. Internationally 10% of the population have dyslexia. It affects all ethnicities, cultures and languages. It is a genetic condition and results from the way the brain is wired. Dyslexia lasts a lifetime and affects both genders equally.

Other challenges for folk with dyslexia include:

- Time. Dyslexic folk take longer to process information.
- Limited working memory. (Short term memory)
- Difficulties with time management and organisation skills.
- Slower automaticity. This is the time taken before routine tasks become automatic.

The positive side of dyslexia

Along with the challenges there are some very positive features of dyslexia.

- Folk with dyslexia often have superior visual, spatial and 3-D skills.
- Often dyslexic folk are innovative, creative thinkers.
- Many dyslexics come up with left field alternative solutions to problems.
- Often dyslexic folk see patterns that regular folk don't see.
- Dyslexic folk are often very empathetic and make good team members.
- Many of the world's entrepreneurs are dyslexic.

The opportunities for the employers of dyslexic folk

- Most folk with dyslexia, in most workplaces, will either be unaware they are dyslexic – or doing their very best to hide it.
- They are both a significant risk and a source of untapped potential. A risk because they may not be able to read key documents and keep themselves safe in the new health and safety environment. Untapped potential because they are likely the most creative and left field thinkers in your workforce.
- See the separate document that outlines steps employers can take to support their staff members with dyslexia.

The tell- tale signs

Each person with dyslexia will have a different combination of symptoms and will demonstrate different tell-tale signs.

- They will shy away from reading and writing tasks, especially in front of others.
- They will often have excuses to hide their difficulties, like "I haven't got my reading glasses", or "I prefer to work at home in the quiet".
- They will often refuse promotions, because they are afraid that their little difficulty will be exposed.
- They may struggle with spoken instructions and forget to complete tasks.

- There is often a significant difference between how good they are at their jobs and how poor they are at the paperwork that goes with their job.

Other learning differences

Dyslexia is the most common learning difference. Others include Irlen's Syndrome, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia, ADHD, ADD and Asperger's. In many people, two or more of the differences co-exist.

What can employers do?

- Find out about learning differences and let staff know that "folk with dyslexia are welcome here".
- Encourage staff to share their dyslexia with their supervisor or with the HR Dept.
- Discourage the usual mocking or teasing of folk who could be dyslexic.
- Support and encourage staff to obtain a screening or diagnosis of their condition.
- Investigate the range of supportive technologies that level the playing field for dyslexic folk.

The ultimate business opportunity

Becoming a "dyslexia friendly employer" can give your business a real competitive edge.

- It will empower staff that have previously been in the shadows.
- It can unleash new elements of creativity, and improvements in productivity.
- It is a tangible way of supporting your staff.

The final takeaway message

Dyslexia is a difference - not a disability.

Some useful links

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/feb/11/job-advertisement-uk-thinktank-recruit-dyslexics-only-steve-jobs-garage>

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLBUsgxhf_otK_qKoZnP0pA

<https://akoaooteaoroa.ac.nz/research-register/list/implementation-learning-interventions-which-support-dyslexic-trainees-classroom-and-workplace-enviro>

<https://akoaooteaoroa.ac.nz/ako-hub/ako-aoteaoroa-central-hub/resources/pages/how-make-learning-interventions-which-support-dyslexic-trainees>

<https://akoaooteaoroa.ac.nz/sites/default/files/ako-aoteaoroa-project-update-dyslexia.pdf>