

A resource by The LUNA Project

Dyslexia and Dyspraxia

A part of the “From Me and My Friends to You and Yours” series

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What are dyslexia and dyspraxia?

(Dyslexia: DIS-LEX-EE-AH, Dyspraxia: DIS-PRR-AXE-EE-AH)

- Dyslexia and dyspraxia are both differences in the brain’s approach to processing information.
- Differences in processing styles are common and are part of diversity like race, culture and gender.
- Dyslexics and dyspraxics have unique strengths but have difficulties with aspects of the world that go against their natural way of processing information.

Strengths of Dyslexics and Dyspraxics

- Creativity
- Mental Visualisation
- Empathy
- Resilience
- Problem Solving
- Communication Skills
- Unique Perspective

Challenges

Dyslexia

Affects the processing of information associated with reading, writing, and spelling.

- Reading
 - Take longer, have difficulty with reading or struggle to absorb information from text.
- Writing
 - Misspell words and miss grammar mistakes. Take longer to write.
- Working Memory
 - Difficulty processing information that's seen or heard, like instructions or a conversation.
- Organisation and planning
 - Difficulty with organising, timekeeping and time managing.

Dyspraxia

Affects the processing of information associated with movement and coordination, but also the planning and undertaking of motor movements.

- Large Movements
 - Such as walking, playing sports. Can appear clumsy.
- Small Movements
 - Such as writing, tying shoelaces or applying makeup.
- Speech
 - Articulating, moderating and planning speech.
- Sensory Sensitivities
 - Discomfort or preference for specific light, sound or touch.

How do dyslexia and dyspraxia affect...

...me physically?

Dyslexia

- Dyslexia doesn't always have a physical component, but I feel seasick and tired when I read by eye.
- I don't read by eye by choice and I prefer to use text-to-speech.
- I use colour-tinted glasses or overlays when I have to read by eye or write.

Dyspraxia

- I'm clumsy and accident prone; I walk into furniture, drop things or lose my balance frequently.
- I have a hard time learning and carrying out physical movements.
- It can take a while and a number of different explanations to be able to do something.
- Playing sports can be difficult, but they're not impossible with patience, particularly from others.
- I have to be careful or take longer with tasks such as cooking to not injure myself.

...me mentally?

- It is tiring and frustrating to sustain engagement with tasks and environments that I find difficult because of my dyslexia/dyspraxia.
- People don't always understand or listen to why I might find something difficult, which can make me feel worse.
- My brain can struggle to process even a moderate amount of social, emotional or sensory information quickly. When I become overwhelmed, I can become quiet or upset .
- I often need to slow down with activities, take regular breaks or excuse myself when I'm too tired.

- I've learned to understand my own needs, my own strengths, and become more resilient. Mostly I am very happy but it's not always possible for me to fully adapt.
- It always helps to have a friend who listens, and recognised my challenges, as well as what works for me.

...my life?

- Having the identities of dyslexia and dyspraxia have made it easier to learn about, understand and explain to others why I might need to do things differently.
- I like talking to other neurodivergents and learning about the way they use their strengths and overcome their challenges.
- I've learned to adapt, and recognise my own strengths, so dyslexia/dyspraxia have been superpowers as much as disabilities.
- Most opportunities are still very possible for me, just not always in the way others might expect.

3 things your friends can do to help

Talk about it!

- It's ok to ask about dyslexia and dyspraxia.
- Many dyslexics and dyspraxics may feel like they have to hide or cope alone, because our challenges aren't always obvious.
- It will mean a lot to your friend to have your support.
- Ensure you're listening to your friend and not presuming based on what you might have heard before. Each dyslexic/dyspraxic person is different.
- Use what your friend tells you to recognise when they're struggling, anxious or frustrated.

Celebrate your friend's strengths and successes

- Your friend will have strengths, as well as challenges, linked to their dyslexia/dyspraxia.
- You might know these strengths as what makes your friend unique. Don't forget these when supporting your friend.
- The challenges that might face your dyslexic/dyspraxic friend might be what most find simple, but they can be big hurdles for them.
- They may hide the extent of them to appear like everyone else and avoid harassment. Check in with them regularly and encourage them to speak up.
- Celebrate when they overcome their challenges too!

Be open-minded

- If you are doing an activity, working or playing together and they say or you notice they are struggling with something, adapt with them to find a way that suits you both.
- Break down tasks into smaller chunks or explain something differently. Be patient.
- Be aware that they might not always say something about an issue or have a ready solution themselves, but they will still be trying their best to adapt.
- They will know themselves best, so be willing to listen, and open minded to any suggestions they do make.

A friend's perspective...

Ellie and myself:

- When I met Ellie during freshers 3 years ago, she told me she was dyslexic (me = clued in) and dyspraxic (me = clueless).
- We connected over our mutual love of rugby, science and good times and we continue to do so.

How I perceive Ellie's Dyslexia and Dyspraxia:

- Ellie is not defined by her dyslexia or dyspraxia but rather for her love of the outdoors and people.
- She continuously inspires me with her accomplishments, albeit the difficulties she has outlined in this article.

Sport:

- As mentioned, dyspraxia affects coordination/balance, but Ellie found a way to excel in rugby, hiking and rock-climbing.
- These sports require coordination/balance and Ellie tackles (pun intended) them persistently.
- With rugby, I've seen Ellie grow stronger and succeed with the help of supportive coaches and adjusted workouts.
- These focus on building her balance and coordination in order to tackle and pass the ball.

Dyspraxia only hinders her in sport if peers/coaches let it.

University:

- The persistence and motivation that Ellie has when it comes to learning and university inspires me daily.
- Considering the challenges surrounding learning, Ellie has found creative ways to overcome them and is genuinely one of the smartest people I know.
- I remember the day she got her Dictaphone pen. She was excited to show me she could now listen to the words she wrote and interact more with her university notes.

Dyslexia only hinders her in learning if she isn't provided with appropriate tools.

Everyday:

- In all honesty, Ellie is a ray of sunshine in a rainy Glasgow for me and I hardly notice either the dyslexia or dyspraxia when we are together.
- The times that I do encounter it is in the form of a trip or a bump, a slow read or an extra explanation in conversation.
- These 'encounters' are nothing out of the ordinary and just require patience and understanding.

We all trip from time to time – Ellie just a little more often, which I'm not going to lie, we both laugh about – but we get her back up again. Every. Single. Time.

What I have learned / How to support your friend:

- Ellie is continuously educating me about her dyslexia and dyspraxia – showing me her gadgets. I love it!
- Always support and encourage your friends to seek the help they need whether it is with appropriate kit/materials or styles of learning.
- Never discount their experiences and open the dialogue in order to understand what they are going through.
- Communication is key – take the time to educate yourself.
- Smile and laugh about it!! Ellie and I have our serious conversations when we need to, but we also enjoy life – that means enjoying life with dyslexia and dyspraxia.

Dyslexia and dyspraxia can be accommodated to by literally everyone because they are straight-forward, simple, small adjustments. There is no reason not to adapt – so do it.... Easy as that.

If you want to learn more

- **Dyslexia Scotland** – Charity for dyslexia support, resources, advocacy and campaigning in Scotland. www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk
- **Deviant Dyspraxic** – a blog/Twitter by a Dyslexic and Dyspraxic self-advocate. Blog: www.Deviantdyspraxic.wordpress.com Twitter: @WyrdWombman
- **Dyspraxic Circle** – A peer support and campaign network run by and for Adult Dyspraxics. Website: www.dyspraxiccircle.org.uk. Twitter: @DyspraxicCircle
- **Made By Dyslexia** – a global charity led by successful dyslexics from a variety of fields, highlighting the strengths and successes of dyslexics. Website: <http://madebydyslexia.org>. Twitter: @MadeByDyslexia
- This resource was designed with reference to **British Dyslexia Association's Dyslexia Friendly Style Guide**
<https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/advice/employers/creating-a-dyslexia-friendly-workplace/dyslexia-friendly-style-guide>

About the authors

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They met while playing rugby, a sport Ellie chose because falling over is a valid tactic, on the university women's team in their first year. They have been close friends since.

Get Involved!

We would love as many people involved in creating these resources as possible! If you are a young person living with a chronic illness, disability, or long term health condition, and would be interested in making a similar resource based off your experiences, we would love to hear from you! You can email us at thelunaprojectuk@gmail.com, or find us on social media @thelunaprojectuk