

## What is Dyspraxia?

Dyspraxia is also known as Developmental Dyspraxia or Development Co-ordination Disorder (DCD). It is a neurological disorder, which prevents messages being sent to and from the brain efficiently and affects any skill or activity requiring the co-ordination of thought and movement.

Dyspraxia affects up to 10% of the British population and of these, 70% are male. It is likely that there is a dyspraxic child in every classroom across the UK

Dyspraxia is not an illness or disease which can be cured, but is a 'hidden' disability which stays with the individual for life. A child with dyspraxia will grow up to become an adult with dyspraxia.

## Symptoms of Dyspraxia

The child with dyspraxia will experience problems with their physical, social, sensory and language development and may display some or all of the following:

- Clumsy, uncoordinated movements
- Prone to accidents, bumping into furniture, other children etc.
- Awkward walking, running and climbing
- Difficulties with PE and ball games, due to poor hand-eye, foot-eye coordination
- Slow to dress, unable to tie shoe laces, do up buttons etc.
- Difficulty using scissors
- Poor handwriting skills and immature drawing
- Difficulty copying from the board
- Slow to complete school work
- Difficulties with maths
- Speech and language difficulties
- Tire easily
- Easily distracted and poor concentration
- Poor listening skills and difficulty following a sequence of instructions
- Poor organisational and planning skills
- A reluctance to attempt new physical skills
- Heightened sensitivity to touch, noise taste and light
- Over emotional, easily upset, difficulty adjusting to new situations, e.g. new teacher, new timetable
- May seem immature when compared to peers
- Poor social skills, difficulties forming friendships, may be loners and isolated from peers

Dyspraxia affects every child differently and to different degrees. Dyspraxia is inconsistent and so, while yesterday a child may have been capable of performing a task, today they may not be able to, because the 'plan' for the task has become lost in the brain. The 'plan' may be recalled eventually but could be lost for good, so the child will have to re-learn the skill. Today's ability may become tomorrow's inability but this should not be perceived as laziness. The child with dyspraxia would if they could but they can't.

Children with dyspraxia have normal intellect, often being above average intelligence, although they are often low achievers. School for the dyspraxic child is a true challenge and can often be a frustrating and unhappy experience. Continued failure in the classroom will damage self esteem, leave the child susceptible to bullying and may lead to behavioural problems.

## Supporting a Child With Dyspraxia

With the appropriate support and encouragement in the classroom, the dyspraxic child will achieve their potential.

- Ensure the child is sat facing the teacher and close enough for good eye contact
- The desk should be at hip height and the child's feet should be flat on the floor. A sloping surface is useful to improve handwriting
- Try to sit the child away from distractions, such as windows
- Allow more time for completion of tasks and avoid making the child redraft written work
- Allow the child to use lined paper
- Fix the paper to the desk, so the child does not need to hold the paper steady while writing
- Reduce the amount of handwriting for the child by allowing use of a lap top or by providing work sheets to fill in.
- Break down tasks into manageable pieces
- Give instructions one at a time, repeating several times and asking the child to repeat them back to you.
- Give rewards for effort, not just good, finished work
- Avoid punishing the child for failing to complete a task.

**Remember, a child with dyspraxia would if they could but they can't!**

## A poem about Dyspraxia

If dyspraxia could talk to me it'd say...

My name is dyspraxia I've been with you all your life,  
I've seen you go through a lot of pain and strife,  
I can be your worst enemy but I can be your best friend too,  
I've made you what you are today, I've made you, you.

Please don't ignore me and hope I'll go away,  
You have to face up to me every single day,  
People think you're stupid, clumsy, lazy or bad,  
But it's me that taught you not to let those idiots make you sad.

Please don't feel clumsy when you break that cup,  
Please don't feel useless and think you should give up,  
Please have the sense of humour to laugh until you shake,  
It's me that gave you that ability to laugh at your mistakes.

Please don't feel stupid when you fail the test,  
Please understand you learn differently to the rest,  
Please revise your way until you get it right,  
It's me that gave you the ability to work with all your might.

Please try hard until you succeed,  
It will happen eventually, I guarantee,  
It feels so good when things happen the way you want,  
It's me that gave you the determination to carry on.

Please understand when others do things wrong,  
You know how they feel so tell them to carry on,  
Please stay polite even when it's hard to do,  
It's me that's made you care so much for others as well as you.

Please don't ever feel like you'll never fit in anywhere,  
Keep searching until you find happiness somewhere,  
Please stay positive through all that life will bring,  
It's me that taught you to look on the bright side of things.

My name is dyspraxia I've been with you all your life,  
I've seen you go through a lot of pain and strife,  
I can be your worst enemy but I can be your best friend too,  
I've made you what you are today, I've made you, you.

By Charlotte, age 16.

## Further Information, Advice and Reading

Dyspraxia Foundation, 8 West Alley, Hitchin,  
Herts SG15 1EG  
Tel: 01462 454986  
Website: [www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk](http://www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk)

Dyspraxia The Hidden Handicap by Dr Amanda Kirby  
Published by Souvenir Press (E&A) Ltd,  
ISBN: 0-285-63512-3

Developmental Dyspraxia by Dr Madeline Portwood  
Published by David Fulton, ISBN: 1-853-46573-9

Dyspraxia: A Guide for Teachers and Parents by Ripley,  
Daines & Barrett  
Published by David Fulton, ISBN: 1-853-46444-9

## Useful Websites

[www.matts-hideout.co.uk](http://www.matts-hideout.co.uk)

[www.dyspraxia.org.nz](http://www.dyspraxia.org.nz)

[www.dyscovery.co.uk](http://www.dyscovery.co.uk)

[www.hiddenhandicap.co.uk](http://www.hiddenhandicap.co.uk)

[members.fortunecity.com/sian2/  
dyspraxia.index.html](http://members.fortunecity.com/sian2/dyspraxia.index.html)

[www.dysf.fsnet.co.uk/](http://www.dysf.fsnet.co.uk/)

[web.ukonline.co.uk/members/  
madeleine.portwood/dysprax.htm](http://web.ukonline.co.uk/members/madeleine.portwood/dysprax.htm)



[www.matts-hideout.co.uk](http://www.matts-hideout.co.uk)

## Quotations from Children with Dyspraxia

*"Take one classroom and several distractions. Add a teacher, a pen and some unfinished work. Stir in some panic, frustration and tears. What do you get? A dyspraxic child's typical day at school!"*

Matt, age 13.

*"Most of my teachers haven't heard of dyspraxia or think it's just an excuse. It's really frustrating no-one understanding the difficulties I have... I was always put into low sets for things because my writing was messy and I was slow to write and get started with things. It was so irritating people thinking I was dumb even though I have an IQ of 137!"*

Charlotte, age 13.

*"It is very hard for me because I am bullied and made fun of quite a lot. I don't like school very much now because I am blamed for things like bumping into other people on purpose which I don't and the teachers believe everyone else."*

Pryderi, age 11.

*"My junior school teachers thought I was lazy and had behavioural problems. My attempts at homework were torn up in front of a class and I was threatened with detention if my homework could not be completed... I have eventually been statemented, but my mum and dad have had a real battle with the Education Authority. I do not like school. I have no friends..."*

Eleanor, age 12.

**Remember, a child with dyspraxia would if they could, but they can't!**



Thanks to everyone who contributed to the production of this leaflet.  
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Leaflet written by Helen Alden-Farrow, designed by Darren Farrow  
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# Is there a child in your class who...

Lacks concentration?

Has poor listening skills?

Finds it hard to make friends?

Struggles in PE?

Has untidy handwriting?

Seems clumsy and un co-ordinated?

Is slow to complete work?

Struggles with buttons and laces?

# Could they have Dyspraxia?