



dyspraxia explained

“My writing is messy
My drawings are too
I don’t like my paintings
I wish I was like you”

Poem by Tom, ten years –old boy who has dyspraxia

The Challenge

“Everyone says I’m stupid but I know I’m not. I wish someone could understand what it’s like to be me. I feel so fed up and lonely.”

Sarah, an eight year-old girl who has dyspraxia

Dyspraxia is surprisingly common in both children and adults. It is a hidden condition, which is still poorly understood.

The Dyspraxia Foundation is committed to making the teaching and medical professions more aware of dyspraxia and improving understanding of how those who have the condition can be helped.

What is dyspraxia?

Dyspraxia, a form of developmental coordination disorder (DCD) is a common disorder affecting fine and/or gross motor coordination, in children and adults. While DCD is often regarded as an umbrella term to cover motor coordination difficulties, dyspraxia refers to those people who have additional problems planning, organising and carrying out movements in the right order in everyday situations. Dyspraxia can also affect articulation and speech, perception and thought. Although Dyspraxia may occur in isolation, it frequently coexists with other conditions such as Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), Dyslexia, language disorders and social, emotional and behavioural impairments. D.C.D./Dyspraxia is generally considered to be present in about 5% of the population with boys more frequently affected than girls.

Speech and Language

Speech may be immature or unintelligible in early years. Language may be impaired or late to develop.

For some children, the primary difficulty is in making and co-ordinating the precise movements, which are used in the production of spoken language, which results in severe and persisting speech production difficulties. The condition is termed developmental verbal dyspraxia: it may occur in isolation or in conjunction with general motor difficulties.

Early recognition of dyspraxia enables a child's special educational and social needs to be identified. Action can then be taken to reduce the impact of this condition on their whole family.

What are the causes?

Although the exact causes of dyspraxia are unknown, it is thought to be caused by a disruption in the way messages from the brain are transmitted to the body. This affects a person's ability to perform movements in a smooth, coordinated way. There are risk factors and these include; prematurity (<37 weeks gestation), low Birth weight (< 2500g (5.5 lbs) and hereditary.

How would I recognise a child with dyspraxia?

The pre-school child

- Often late in reaching milestones e.g. rolling over, sitting, standing, walking, and speaking.
- May not be able to run, hop, jump, or catch or kick a ball although their peers can do so.
- Has difficulty in keeping friends; or judging how to behave in company.
- Has little understanding of concepts such as 'in', 'on', 'in front of' etc
- Has difficulty in walking up and down stairs.
- Poor at dressing.
- Slow and hesitant in most actions.
- Appears not to be able to learn anything instinctively but must be taught skills.

- Falls over frequently.
- Poor pencil grip.
- Cannot do jigsaws or shape sorting games.
- Artwork is very immature.
- Often anxious and easily distracted.

The school age child

- Probably has all the difficulties experienced by the pre-school child with dyspraxia, with little or no improvement.
- Avoids PE and games
- Does badly in class but significantly better on a one-to-one basis.
- Reacts to all stimuli without discrimination and attention span is poor.
- May have trouble with maths and writing structured stories.
- Experiences great difficulty in copying from the blackboard.
- Writes laboriously and immaturely.
- Unable to remember and /or follow instructions.
- Is generally poorly organised.

Where can I go for help?

The Dyspraxia Foundation can help you to find sources of support in your area. It publishes a range of leaflets, booklets and books on aspects of the condition – call 01462 454986.

For pre-school children

Although it is not typically diagnosed before the age of 5, if you have concerns talk to your GP and Health Visitor: they can refer your child to a paediatrician or a Child Development Centre. The appropriate psychologist, physiotherapist, speech and language therapist or occupational therapist can then assess your child for dyspraxia.

For school-age children

Talk to your GP, school nurse, school doctor or Special Needs Co-ordinator who can make referrals for assessments. Hospital referral may be required for special tests or treatment.

For adults

Problems experienced in childhood may continue into adulthood. Initial contact should be made with your GP who may refer you to a clinical psychologist, consultant neurologist, physiotherapist or occupational therapist. The Foundation's Adult Support Group may be able to help – contact the DF office for further details

What about the future?

Although dyspraxia is a lifelong condition, motor coordination may improve with age. Symptoms in children and adults can lessen if they are given appropriate treatment and advice on practical actions to minimise the day- to- day difficulties that their dyspraxia can cause.

What does the Dyspraxia Foundation do?

The Dyspraxia Foundation is a charity, founded in 1987 as the Dyspraxia Trust by two mothers who met at Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children in 1996 the charity changed its name to the Dyspraxia Foundation.

The objects of the Dyspraxia Foundation are:

- To support individuals and families affected by dyspraxia
- To promote better diagnostic and treatment facilities for those who have dyspraxia.
- To help professionals in health and education to assist those with Dyspraxia
- To promote awareness and understanding of dyspraxia.

Each year the Foundation answers approximately 10,000 enquiries and distributes more than 20,000 leaflets about the condition. The Foundation seeks every opportunity to increase understanding of dyspraxia, particularly among professionals in health and education.

- The Foundation is run by a fewer than six full-time equivalent paid staff and is supported extensively by volunteers. Its work is funded entirely by voluntary donation and membership subscriptions.

The Foundation

- Publishes leaflets, booklets, books and guides for parents, those who have dyspraxia and professionals.
- Organises conferences and talks about dyspraxia and related topics for parents, carers and professionals.
- Supports a network of local groups across the United Kingdom.
- Supports a group for adults who have dyspraxia.
- Support on Facebook and other social networks.

Membership

Members of the Dyspraxia Foundation receive:

- The opportunity to join a local support group
- A magazine, published twice yearly
- Professional members receive an annual journal.
- The Annual Report
- Reduced rates for the Foundation’s publications and events
- Access to “Members only” page on the website

Membership details are available on our website or call 01462 455016

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