

## Dyspraxia Foundation Members Monthly Newsletter, March 2017

### Katie Parker tells her story of hard work and determination #anythingispossible



I was diagnosed with dyspraxia at a young age, around 9-10. I was lucky enough that my parents sent me to a special private school for dyslexia and dyspraxia at the point of diagnoses as my regular school were struggling to engage me and I was struggling to achieve my grades.

I despised sport and physical activity because I was so poor at it and clumsy. (I am still just as clumsy, tripping, dropping things 24-7 etc) I wanted to do a PE GCSE but my PE Teacher told me not to bother as I was not good enough and would never be any good at it...

Me being me, led me on to decide to prove her wrong. I became a personal trainer initially but it didn't seem enough for me, I then decided I wanted to go all the way to the top, I wanted to coach professional athletes. Against the odds I got into uni, to study Strength & Conditioning science (Bsc). My lecturers were phenomenal, one ever giving me private jumping lessons because I couldn't jump, and it was affecting my Olympic lifting. I went on to win the universities inaugural Patrick Lawless award for self-development.

During my time at uni I studied full time, but commuted from Northampton to Twickenham to enable me to work two full time internships, I was determined to be a success against the odds. My industry is male dominated putting another spanner in the works. But nothing was going to get in my way. I left St Mary's University Twickenham with a high 2:1. Without the support of my family and my lecturers I couldn't have done it. Nor without my own hard work and dedication.

In 2015 I won the UKSCA (UK strength & Conditioning Association) Richard Holmes Emerging coach of the year, the first female ever to win this. I didn't expect such a huge peer, recognised honour. Since then I have gone on to work with some incredible professional and elite athletes. I have worked with clubs such as Warwickshire County Cricket Club, Northants CCC, Surrey County Cricket Club and Watford FC. I was recently appointed Performance Sport and Fitness Officer at Brighton University (I manage all elite scholarship athletes. Some that represent Team GB AND/OR England). I delivered my first lecture a few weeks ago also, from the girl who couldn't run and struggled to achieve her grades, to where I am now is quite the change. Two months after this Surrey County Cricket Club approached me about becoming Head of Strength and Conditioning for the full Ladies set up.

In my time at Brighton I have discovered two of my athletes are dyspraxic. I feel now I have learned to cope with my dyspraxia I would love to get involved and somehow give back or help with research. There is very little sporting research, it would be great to get people who do have dyspraxia engaged in sport. It's the best thing that could have happened for me and has improved my confidence and belief in myself. Don't get me wrong there are days when it all goes wrong and I drop everything, trip over and hurt myself. But because of my achievements I know the next day I'll get back on the track and be fine. I now horse ride, train regularly and live a very active life style.