

Emma Lewell-Buck MP

I was elected as the MP for South Shields in 2013.

As far as I know I am the first Member of Parliament to ever talk publicly about their dyspraxia. I'm sure there are others who have sat in Parliament before me with dyspraxia, but they either weren't aware that they had the condition or they simply didn't talk about it. But I wanted to use my position to raise awareness of



dyspraxia and be an advocate for better support for those affected by it. While my number one duty is to the people of South Shields, I'm also proud that I can represent people with dyspraxia and speak up for them.

I don't think that my condition has held me back or stopped me from achieving what I want with my life. Some things are harder for me than for your average MP – I have to work a bit harder to memorise facts and figures for example – but I use that as a motivation to practice as hard as I can and prove that I can be a good representative for my constituents.

Having dyspraxia shouldn't stop anyone from following their dream. I wanted to be an MP from a young age, and it seemed like the odds were stacked against me even before I found out about my condition. Only 650 people get to sit in the House of Commons, and competition to be nominated by your party and then elected by voters is very fierce. So if a person with dyspraxia can get elected as an MP, think what else we can achieve.

One thing I have learned over time is that dyspraxia is just a different way of thinking. Not better or worse, just different. Some of the things we do might seem a bit odd to some people – I know at first glance we can appear to be clumsy or accident-prone – but we're just as intelligent and perceptive as everyone else. In fact, the fact that our brains work differently can make us original or creative thinkers, who approach problems in a different way from everyone else. That makes us very useful to have around sometimes!

If you want proof, there's a story I always like to tell that helps show how having a mind that's a bit 'different' can be a tremendous gift. It's the story of a young boy who at school was called a "dunce" who would "never amount to anything." He struggled with simple things like tying his shoelaces. But that boy grew up to be one of the most famous scientists in history, and one who changed the way we look at our universe forever. Nothing held Albert Einstein back.