

Stephen, 62 years old from Wiltshire

How does Dyspraxia affect you?

Condition, sequencing, eyesight, dealing with stress, communication at times.

When were you diagnosed?

2012

What is your experience of seeking a diagnosis as an adult?

I had to pay for a private diagnosis initially and then later got a NHS diagnosis.

What does having a diagnosis means to you?

Great weight off my mind. I finally was able to understand why I do the things I do. This is me and I celebrate it.

Have you received any support? (if yes, please include brief details)

Not at first then in my last job with Leonard Cheshire it was very good. My wife has been very supportive all the way through.

What are the most difficult aspects of living with dyspraxia?

Dealing with changes of timings, circumstances and information.

How would you like to see things change for adults with dyspraxia?

Much more understanding – they are real people with real feelings.

Please add any additional information you feel would be relevant to our campaign here

When I was a child, I can remember any kind of physical education was not easy. Balance is a major problem for people with dyspraxia, so sports were never going to be an area in which I would achieve. I could never catch a ball and even trying to pass or aim, would usually mean going off target. I, like many children who have dyspraxia, was described as clumsy, I often either fell over or knocked things over. I did, however manage to learn to ride a bike and when I was seventeen passed my driving test.



Interesting to note, that since my diagnosis I have noticed that every day I must adjust my balance in some way or other.

Textures can be very important to those of us who have dyspraxia, for me it has manifested itself in the type of clothing I wear and the types of food I eat, as it affects my bite and my jaw, so eating harder food like dry biscuits or nuts is not enjoyable.

My childhood was in the sixties, long before dyspraxia had been discovered and both my parents and teachers thought that I was lazy and was not 'making any effort in my schoolwork'. I left school with hardly any qualifications and had found the whole senior school experience a difficult and unhappy time.

Outside of school I developed an interest in music, I spent hours listening to my parents classical and opera records and my brothers and sisters pop and rock records. I also listened to the 'pop' radio stations whenever I could. My parents bought me a guitar and paid for me to have guitar lessons, but with my difficulties of memory and sequencing this was never going to be easy for me. Instead I got involved in being a DJ, I started when I was just twelve, at a junior youth club.

Since the early 1980's I have been involved in local radio and it was interesting to find out at my diagnosis that I came very high on my vocal abilities. To this day I present a live weekly music program and have just started to present a fortnightly political discussion program.

One of the things I did at school and later when I attended college was during break times I would walk along the corridors and up and down the stairwells. This is another thing that those with dyspraxia have a need to do, it is checking out their space, it also helps in remembering where things and places are.

Many of the jobs I have done, certainly in the early part of my career, were ones that demanded a certain amount of routine. This is important to a person like me with dyspraxia, as routine helps us remember what we need to do, and it is therefore less likely for us to make mistakes. As time went on, I was not only an employee, but became a husband and then a father, all these different roles require different approaches and it is not easy for someone with dyspraxia to focus on more than one thing at a time. It had the effect of making me feel confused and as if my head was spinning.

Shortly after my daughter Sarah, was born, I moved to Southampton and a couple of years later was offered a place on a social work qualification. I could not believe it when I had my first assignment back from the tutor and it had been marked with an A. Never in my life had I had anything nearing an A for a piece of work that I had submitted. At the end of two years I gained a Social Work Degree, I could see my father was very proud. It was this determination to show my parents and the world at large that I was not 'stupid',

but just needed to be given a chance to learn things in my way. Determination is a strength that many people with dyspraxia have.

Stress is not easy for anyone, but having dyspraxia, makes it even harder to deal with stress and my life was turned upside down when my wife left me suddenly. A few years later, I was able to meet a wonderful lady, who became my new wife and ever since my diagnosis has been my support and help in all stressful situations. This renewed confidence and love that I had, helped me to progress in my career, I managed to gain further qualifications, including a Management Degree.

In our home, it became very apparent that DIY was not my calling. I later discovered that my eyes are also affected by my dyspraxia. I am not able to tell if something is straight or crooked and can't sequence the order in which I need to carry out the task.

In the end my diagnosis came, as a result of my job as a Residential Manager in a large college for disabled students, it meant I had to produce figures on a spreadsheet, and I had to deal with a whole range of stressful situations. This stress caused me to become very forgetful. I went to my doctor and after a series of tests, I was diagnosed with dyspraxia. At last my life made sense and I now know why I do the things I do.