

Alison, 54 years old from Hampshire

How does Dyspraxia affect you?

Dyspraxia affects my coordination, posture, balance and my spatial awareness too. Driving in unfamiliar places and parking can be stressful. I can also misconstrue perceptually. I have also had lifelong difficulties sleeping properly



When were you diagnosed?

Summer 2018

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

It was very challenging. I did not want to pay for a private assessment, and my GP referred me on the NHS. I could not find an NHS Occupational Therapist with experience of diagnosing adult dyspraxia. Five years after my initial referral, I got my diagnosis from a neurologist to whom I was referred for a consultation about another medical condition. He was able to diagnose dyspraxia very quickly. He referred me to a neuropsychologist because he thought a fuller assessment would be beneficial. This NHS assessment identified that executive function difficulties trump my difficulties with praxis. I contacted an educational psychologist privately and he was able to confirm that my symptoms are typical of ADHD.

What does having a diagnosis means to you?

My life would have been easier if I had the dyspraxia and ADHD diagnoses when I was much younger. The assessment diagnosis of difficulties with executive function trumping praxis difficulties has been particularly beneficial for me because it has enabled me to better understand some of the difficulties that I face. If the focus had only been on difficulties with praxis, then this would not have been as helpful.

One of the most significant things that I have learned is the importance of 'practice' to become adept at things that initially may be difficult as a result of dyspraxia

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

None. I have supported myself by using CBT and mindfulness strategies that are aimed at adults with ADHD. This benefits my dyspraxia too, because of the co-occurrence of symptoms.

What are the most difficult aspects of living with dyspraxia?

Driving is challenging, although I commute 30 miles to get to work. I feel like I am 'caged' because I am so limited physically in terms of the things that I feel able to do. Difficulties with social cues can also make life challenging each day.

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

I would like there to be more recognition of the comorbidity with executive function difficulties (the DAMP Scandinavian model recognising the combination of attentional and motor difficulties).

I wish all adults with dyspraxia could have access to disabled parking spaces.

I would also like to see standard job interview recognition that people with dyspraxia don't necessarily do a good interview when presented with a box ticking exercise to show what experience they have for a job. I think the current 'box ticking' interview method positively discriminates against candidates with dyspraxia.

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

I wrote a book about dyspraxia in 2015, which the Dyspraxia Foundation endorsed. (The Dyspraxic Learner, published by JKP.) When I was researching my book, I read Mary Colley's book for adults and read some of her other Internet material/interviews. I was intrigued that as time evolved Mary Colley began to think that her ADHD was as significant as her dyspraxia. Then I got my dyspraxia/ADHD diagnosis. This is why I would really like there to be more emphasis on support for the perceptual/social/executive function difficulties that can so frequently accompany dyspraxia in adult life.