

Hannah, 22 years old from London



How does Dyspraxia affect you?

Dyspraxia affects the way that I think perhaps even more than the way I move and interact with the world, which is of course the way it most externally manifests itself. I am clumsy, have poor balance and am uncoordinated. It means my thoughts can be very chaotic, I have very different thought processes to those around me and I often interpret texts, images and spaces in a different way, both noticing things that others don't and missing the obvious.

When were you diagnosed?

In my final year of university, about 5 months before my final exams.

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

I was very lucky because my university had a Disabilities Advisory Service, through which I got my educational psychologist appointment. The DAS also paid for my assessment.

What does having a diagnosis means to you?

Being diagnosed meant that I finally had an explanation for why I seemed to just think differently than the people around me and it made me feel less frustrated or stupid. It also meant I could start to explain to people why I am the way I am and not just flighty, dim or lazy as I sometimes worried people would perceive me.

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

At university I was given extra time for my final exams. At work my manager is educating herself on dyspraxia so that she can support me better and help me be as productive and happy as possible.

What are the most difficult aspects of living with dyspraxia?

I have a very high verbal intelligence but a very weak profile in other areas so get very frustrated with myself. I find it frustrating when I can't communicate my thoughts properly and worry that people think I'm stupid or ditzy. I also struggle with my clumsiness because I feel that my weird movements undermine me, particularly at work. I feel as though the

symptoms of my dyspraxia make it less likely for people to respect me and recognise my merits.

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

I'd like there to be more information readily available and generally more public awareness particularly about how dyspraxia is about far more than just clumsiness. I think it can be hard to disclose at work because to someone uneducated in the issue it can come across as making excuses for not working hard enough or being careless.

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

Something that I find particularly difficult is how most of the information available on dyspraxia discusses what we aren't capable of and what we can't do. It is often on my worst days that I will sit and do research, and it is so demoralising to read pages and pages of literature on all the things I'm crap at. On the other hand I do believe that my dyspraxia is a huge part of the reason why I have such a strong sense of empathy why I am so determined to succeed, why I hold myself accountable and am creative, a great lateral thinker and experience the world so vividly. I think that often the achievements of people with SpLDs are considered to be in spite of their neurodiversity, but I really do believe that many of mine are because of it. I have a First from Oxford and have no doubts that my Dyspraxic traits play a bit part in that. Finally, I really do believe that is the people around you who make you feel weird or wonky or useless. That's why greater awareness is so important.