

## WHAT DOES HAVING A DIAGNOSIS OF DYSPRAXIA MEAN TO YOU?



On 26<sup>th</sup> July, the Dyspraxia Foundation called for Case Studies from adults living with dyspraxia to support Dyspraxia Awareness Week, 6 – 12<sup>th</sup> October 2019. Thank you to the 40 adults who responded and kindly gave their consent for us to share their personal story to highlight this year's campaign which focusses on dyspraxia in adulthood.

The case study form included several questions about the individual, their diagnosis and experience of living with the condition. Here are some of the comments in answer to the question 'What does having a diagnosis of dyspraxia mean to you?'

*A diagnosis of dyspraxia can have its ups and downs and can make you frustrated. It means I can explain why I am broken. Yet it's useless as I can't access support and PIP doesn't recognise it.*

*My life made sense and gives a name for what is wrong with me. I wasn't lazy and dumb.*

*It's a hidden disability. People cannot argue that I do not have a problem.*

*Closure – as without it on paper you can't get any help. i.e. reasonable adjustments in the workplace.*

*Helps understand why you do what you do.*

*It's extremely important. Rather than blaming myself for being "clumsy", "weak" or "lazy", I can now comfortably focus on where my skills are best and not worry about the things that are never going to be strong for me. As a consequence it's hugely improved my mental health, which was poor (so now it's less poor, certainly not perfect)*

*Having a diagnosis was absolutely key to me completing my Masters (in which I got a distinction) as I got access to software and tools that helped me. More generally, the diagnosis has allowed me to better understand how I work as a human, why I sometimes struggle with certain things and has allowed me to redress certain difficulties I have finding strategies to overcome them. Overall, the diagnosis was a relief as well as slightly difficult to come to terms with.*

*For me it's reassurance the issues that I struggle with day to day are linked to something that I'm not just forgetful or clumsy there is a reason behind these issues.*

*It massively helped me understand more about myself and why I am different to some other people. Not only academically but also socially and in every other aspect of my life. It really enabled me to become the person that I am (and so more confident in myself)*

*It means a lot as I don't have to live thinking there's no way of overcoming challenges or finding ways to get support. It also means I can do what I can to find people who are similar to me and form connections that way.*

*It explains why I have struggled throughout my education and working life. I've always felt different and don't fit in.*

*Fantastic! After being constantly criticised by parents and schools having very low self-esteem and eventually having a breakdown as an adult. I could understand my struggles.*

*I brings an incredible sense of relief and comfort to know that there is a justification for why I find some daily activities so challenging and to know that I'm not alone or unique.*

*I believe that if I have a diagnosis it would assist me in asking for support from others that I need for everyday situations.*

*I have a certificate and I can get help when I'm in a job, to keep it for longer, but when applying I can only ask for an oral application but if they refuse or ignore me, I cannot do anything as courts do not care.*

*Before I received my diagnosis I think I had quite low self-esteem as I didn't understand why I was experiencing so many difficulties at work and in my personal life. I had memories of be 'in trouble' quite a lot at Primary school for untidy writing and not sitting properly in a chair. I dreaded PE at school and by year 10 I was finding ways of avoiding the lessons altogether even though I was a fairly achieving students in other subjects. I now run 30 miles a week and complete two marathons a year! I recently qualified as an Athletics Coach because I want to help children who are experiencing similar issues – I want to help them feel positive about themselves and their abilities. They just need the right support.*

*Once I was diagnosed, having never heard of it, I researched it and it was as if they were describing me. It explained a lot of things from my childhood so I knew I wasn't just stupid.*

*I did not understand it at just. There were and still are times that I have been dyspraxic. But I am beginning to accept it as part of my creativity and having a diagnosis has helped me to understand me.*

*Means I am able to understand my disability, meet others with it and tell my employers to make my workplace easier. It feels like everything finally makes sense.*

*I feel vindicated in struggling with so many things – all through my childhood my family mocked me for being clumsy, and that affected my self-esteem. Now I know why I struggle, and that I am not stupid or careless.*

*It meant a lot. At uni I was really struggling with time management, get organised, keeping up with the pace of some at lectures and with living in my own (I nearly blew up the kitchen twice)*

*I may not have had a formal assessment if not for the DSA application; whilst it has provided an explanation for some of the difficulties I have experienced since childhood I am uncertain about*

*What does having a diagnosis of dyspraxia mean to you?*

*the 'label' I've given myself. However, it has helped a great deal in my work as I can truly empathise with students that I work with (who are awarded DSA because of their dyspraxia)*

*It does not magically make my difficulties go away but it does explain them to me and to others around me. It has been life changing for me*

*It gives me the support to speak about and raise awareness for dyspraxia and gives me support in work.*

*It was huge relief to know why I felt so different, why I struggled to ride a bike, why I struggled so much with a change in routine. It meant I wasn't weird or awkward. There was a reason.*

*I really think it's good to be able to name the difficulties and see the strength of a named condition. So a diagnosis is a good thing in my opinion.*

*It's important when doing college, uni etc that I get extra time and extra help at uni to make it easier for me.*

*On one hand it was a shock, but on the other everything made sense. It's something I talk about a lot as I'm an adult trainer and find many adults I work with have been badly at school and have some level of learning disability.*

*I know what I'm dealing with. Makes me more positive, as I know it's not me in the sense there's a reason why I do things differently from others.*

*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.*

*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.*

*I strongly suspect dyspraxia has ran through my family for years. My father grandfather and great grandfather all suffered many of the traits that I have. More importantly my daughter shows probable signs of the condition. I believe it is time that this condition is properly recognised.*

*It's stability, it helps me understand that I'm not clumsy or careless, my brain and body just work differently to everybody else's, I spent a lot of my childhood being called "Messy", "Unorganised" and that if I could apply myself and "Neaten up" I could be successful. Being able to explain that most of the issues I've had have been due to my dyspraxia has helped through a lot of my*

*academic life. That's not to say however that having a diagnosis has always been a good feeling, in lower times I've often wished I could just be "normal" and not require the extra support I need at work/home/Uni.*

*Reassurance it's not my fault. An excuse. A reason that gives employers and education understanding into how to support me*

*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.*

*Being diagnosed means I understand why there are some things I find challenging. It has changed my life. At school, I was frequently mocked by teachers for my bad handwriting – now I know it is because of dyspraxia. After diagnosis, I knew I wasn't simply stupid – it dramatically changed my estimation of myself.*

*Being diagnosed with Dyspraxia was an emotional journey towards understanding myself. The written report, for example, allowed me to understand more clearly what I struggle with and why (i.e. my weak reading speed at 13th percentile, reduced auditory working memory capacity at 23rd percentile, and reduced processing speed at 30th percentile). However, receiving a diagnosis is what led me to recognise my unique strengths because of the way my brain works, and discover the ways I can help others (i.e. spelling at 90th percentile, and verbal knowledge + reasoning skills and visual + spatial reasoning skills within the top 25% of the population). Knowledge of my strengths has allowed me to find coping strategies to compensate for my weaknesses.*

*It helps me understand myself better. It allows me to access appropriate support and understanding in my workplace. It allows me to explain to others that I'm not just being lazy when I struggle with so-called 'simple' tasks.*

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