

The Successful Dyslexic

Identify the Keys to
Unlock Your Potential

Neil Alexander-Passe



SensePublishers

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Neil Alexander-Passe

*University of Sunderland, UK
East Barnet School, London, UK*



SENSE PUBLISHERS
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**ADVANCE PRAISE FOR
*THE SUCCESSFUL DYSPLEXIC***

“Dyslexia is not only about early reading and school difficulties. It lasts a lifetime, with lifetime problems that we have to learn to deal with. But also with considerable lifetime advantages and distinctive capabilities that we need to understand and put to work. Neil Alexander-Passe’s new book *The Successful Dyslexic* provides valuable information and insights about dealing with the weaknesses as well as the strengths. I highly recommended this book for professionals, parents and dyslexics of all ages.”

– **Thomas G. West, author of *In the Mind’s Eye, Thinking Like Einstein and Seeing What Others Cannot***

“This is an eminently readable and valuable book. It will benefit many dyslexics and those who live with and work with them.

As an (ex) Head of two specialist boarding schools in the UK and a day-school in the USA, covering 24 years of working with dyslexic students, I appreciate the wisdom and applicability of this book to that population.

There are many key observations, from those on the lasting impact of harmful experiences in school to the disruptive influences of noisy work environments to the impact of constant negative evaluations. Alexander-Passe suggests that damaging experiences in school drive many dyslexics to prove they can be successful beyond school and even makes an argument that this inappropriate schooling has some positives. My experience of providing award winning schooling tailored to the many facets of cognitive and affective education suggests there may be other ways to take children to success. However, the author does make a powerful case for greater awareness and pro-active intervention in schools, a case which should be apparent but all too often is not.

The book contains succinct summaries and many lists of useful and pragmatic tips. It offers comprehensive coverage of the many factors that influence the life and work of dyslexic adults. It will be of immense value to education literature.”

– **Steve Chinn, FRSA, AMBDA, author, and Visiting Professor at the University of Derby**

“This book should be compulsory reading for all teachers, parents and dyslexics. The author, dyslexic himself, attempts to unravel the keys to success in life for dyslexics. Based on a series of surveys and interviews, the author undertakes a systematic analysis of the strengths and weaknesses

in dyslexia, the importance of home and school support, and questions whether failure and the consequent urge to succeed could be a vital force in the over compensation that characterizes many of our more successful dyslexics. This was first suggested by Rod Nicolson in his book 'Positive Dyslexia'.

My own experiences are fully endorsed here, with my own son a shining example that dyslexics are not necessarily motivated by money, but rather by a need to prove themselves and take control of their environment, even driven by a need to change the world.

At the same time, Neil Alexander-Passe presents a portrait of a group of unsuccessful dyslexics, dogged by low self-esteem, uncertainty, and learned helplessness, and damaged by the difficulties they have experienced in school and adult life. Given a more supportive environment and supportive parents, fewer children will emerge damaged from their school experiences, allowing them to achieve the potential as adults so clearly revealed in the chapter 'The keys to success' and the recommendations it provides could itself become the key to unlocking this potential!"

– **Angela Fawcett, Emeritus Professor, Swansea University, and Vice President, British Dyslexia Association**

"The Successful Dyslexic: Identify the Keys to Unlock Your Potential is insightful, timely, and altogether an excellent book. It fits perfectly with the current trend towards positive dyslexia.

The book is well researched and also provides 'tips' to be a successful dyslexic. One of the crucial aspects of the book is how dyslexic people deal with challenging situations – it is this type of information that can have implications for education and provide the book with universal appeal.

The role of the school and the teacher is of course crucial in both identification and ensuring the young person with dyslexia does not experience the anger, frustration and long-term feelings of failure that can be a consequence of late or non-diagnosis. The author also highlights the frustration that can occur when 'Dyslexics commonly excel orally when presenting their ideas but struggle when putting these onto paper'. The author also suggests that technology can help to liberate young people with Dyslexia and this is a message that must be taken on board by all educators.

This is a book that deserves to succeed as it can reverse many years of ignorance and misunderstanding. I feel sure it will and I have no hesitation in recommending this book to all involved in the education and employment of people with dyslexia."

– **Gavin Reid, Author of 28 books, and an international independent educational psychologist**

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JOHN (JACK) R. HORNER

FOREWORD

I think that every child has a curiosity to learn, and that as children we learn by every method accessible to us. Most of our earliest learning comes from observation, trial and error, and spoken words. As we age, schooling becomes our expected medium, with information primarily disseminated through written and spoken word, with less and less reliance on observation or trial and error. At least, that is considered the norm, and anyone who cannot acquire information through written word is soon bypassed, considered odd or 'dysfunctional'. And, for those of us who were considered 'dysfunctional', school was a miserable experience.

Growing up in a time and place where dyslexia was unknown as an explanation for my failure to read, my father thought of me as lazy while my mother considered it a hearing or visual deficit. Throughout grade school nothing changed in my abilities or in my parents' perceptions, and I lived day to day by doing other things outside of school that satisfied my curiosities about the natural world. When I reached high school an obvious change occurred. While still failing all of my high school classes, I also managed to win our local science fair four years in a row. Everyone was baffled, how was it possible that this dysfunctional kid could get an F in every science class, to win the science fairs? In college I continued to fail every class, flunk out of the university seven times, and yet complete a comprehensive research project that would eventually produce numerous published papers. In the end I left college without a degree, yet with a wealth of information, and out of the box ideas that would carry me eventually to the very top of my field with a plethora of awards and honours including a MacArthur Fellowship.

Neil Alexander-Passe explains this paradox in his new book titled 'The Successful Dyslexic'. It is the most comprehensive and insightful book ever written on dyslexia and success, and needs to be read by anyone who has any interest in understanding the subject and how our dyslexic minds process information. The book is the result of innumerable interviews with dyslexics, personal insights from the author, and a myriad of data from outside sources. It is a dissertation, a compendium of data, a reference, and a self-help guide, all bound into a grand, magnum opus on the subject of dyslexia in all its iterations. It is a book that helps to remove the stigma of disability and replace it with the prestige of intellectualizing differently.

FOREWORD

BIOGRAPHY

John R. 'Jack' Horner (born June 15, 1946) is an American palaeontologist who discovered and named *Maiasaura*, providing the first clear evidence that some dinosaurs cared for their young. He is one of the best-known paleontologists in the world, with many paleontological discoveries to his name.

Horner's 2009 book, *How to Build a Dinosaur: Extinction Doesn't Have to Be Forever*, describes his plan to recreate a dinosaur by genetically 'nudging' the DNA of a chicken. Horner's idea for the project came from an early script for *Jurassic World*. Horner had been planning the book as early as June 2005, to be released simultaneously with the film *Jurassic World* as a scientific companion volume.

In 2009, National Geographic released a documentary entitled *Dinosaurs Decoded* which reviews Horner's research into juvenile dinosaurs. He suggests that juvenile dinosaurs looked sufficiently different from adults, and that they have sometimes been mistaken for a separate species. From 2011 Horner has been pursuing the project to develop an animal, which he describes as a 'chickenosaurus', with a team of geneticists. In 2014, George Lucas began funding most of the project's costs and Horner expected to have a living dinosaur within 10 years.

Films:

Horner served as the technical advisor for all of the Jurassic Park films, and had a cameo appearance in *Jurassic World*, and even served as partial inspiration for one of the lead characters, Dr. Alan Grant.

Current role:

Presidential Fellow at Chapman University in Orange, California
Regents Professor of Paleontology Emeritus at Montana State University, Bozeman

Education:

Honorary Doctorate, University of Montana
Honorary Doctorate, Pennsylvania State University, 2006

THE REASON FOR THIS BOOK

This book was designed to investigate the following questions:

- Why some dyslexics are can be highly successful and others are not (many can be found in prisons)?
- The role parents and school play in the creation of successful dyslexics?
- How do you define success for a dyslexic?
- Is a successful dyslexic similar to a successful non-dyslexic?

The author, being dyslexic himself, was very interested in comparing and contrasting two groups of dyslexics, and so this book began a journey of discovery to why he had survived school and had managed to have two successful careers, firstly as a graphic design and the secondly as a teacher in mainstream education.

His previous research had investigated dyslexia and mental health (depression and self-harming), and he was struck at how seemly highly successful dyslexics were still plagued by the horrors of their school days, causing them high levels of self-doubt and in some cases depression. There seemed strong parallels between those who were deemed successful and those who were not, in that they shared the common bond of a traumatic schooling. Hence this books aims to ask why.

INTRODUCTION

Looking at dyslexia, there seems to be three main perspectives discussed:

- Looking at children and how literacy deficits can be treated in schools.
- Looking at the causes of dyslexia, whether it has a phonological basis or not, and whether it differs substantially from those with reading disability.
- Lastly, looking at the human aspect of having dyslexia.

As a dyslexic myself, and one who was unsupported at school (ignored might be a better description for it), whilst having well-meaning parents, I come to this subject with personal perspective. Reading traditional books on dyslexia, it could be assumed that dyslexia disappears as one turns into an adult, and adults never suffer from dyslexic difficulties. This is further supported by the substantially greater web and book resources catering to children.

But, dyslexia does not disappear. There is some support in school for literacy difficulties and the term 'dyslexia' is generally avoided; but at university, academic support mainly comes in the form of assisted technology; however in the workplace, support is generally non-existent.

Twenty years ago, I wished to be better prepared for my own children, when they themselves would be diagnosed as having dyslexia - as dyslexia is genetic and is likely to be passed from one generation to another. When I started to research dyslexia, I was interested in the 'human' experience of dyslexia, leading to investigations of dyslexia and emotional coping (self-esteem, depression and avoidant coping). However, as each of my four children gained their literacy skills at school as per their peers, I came to the realisation that none were going to be dyslexic. However, I had opened a Pandora's Box that no one else had opened. There was a void of research in this area, especially from those with dyslexia, and that the stories and life experiences from dyslexics needed to be heard.

This is my 10th book, and preceding ones have included both research-based books sharing new research in the area, as well as dyslexic-based fiction (under the name of Alex Nile) which used narrative to enlighten the world to the dyslexic experience.

My aim has always been to enrich the reader's understanding how the dyslexic school experience has affected those with dyslexia - post-school and into adulthood. How negative teaching has meant they felt excluded as children in lessons, and sought to protect themselves through avoidance, and defence strategies to regain some control over their lives. Self-harm through food, drug or alcohol abuse and cutting, arose as a common

INTRODUCTION

strategy, however, with dangerous consequences. Depression and mental health were seen to be common in adult and in some children with dyslexics, and many had dyslexic parents who avoided returning to school for their children, due to this being a highly emotionally charged environment for them.

My investigations into Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder were very interesting, and led in fact to this book, looking at the effects (both positive and negative) of school-based trauma. To some, trauma made them withdraw, and in others it motivated them to do well in life. The 'why or how this happens', the phenomena, is the basis for this book.

It is my intention to make this book as user-friendly as possible, avoiding academic talk and references where possible.

I would like to express my huge thanks to: my wife Andrea and our four children for allowing me the space to write this book; Elizabeth Wilkinson and my mother Anita, for proof and sense-reading and Barbara Pavey my academic mentor. The fabulous drawings in this book were provided with the help of Charles Pinel and Philip Mayer and the Years 8 and 9 students of The Moat School, London, a specialist school for SpLD/Dyslexia, with special mention to Anastasia Tornay, Daisy Mae Dearle, and Cherry Maskell Semikin, whose illustrations in this book really enhance the message that dyslexics can be successful in life!

DYSLEXIA?



WHAT IS DYSLEXIA?

What is dyslexia? A seemingly easy question to ask, but complex to answer, as there is no single, definitive diagnosis or definition for dyslexia, and many dyslexics are diagnosed as having 'dyslexic type difficulties' rather than being definitely 'dyslexic', and this causes confusion. There are long debates about how to diagnose dyslexia and if dyslexia actually exists. This is made worse by dyslexia being a spectrum of difficulties, with some mild and others more severe. Therefore, it's rare to find two dyslexics with exactly the same range of difficulties. However, there are commonalities in all dyslexics.

The spectrum of difficulties can mean employers are confused about what tasks a dyslexic person finds hard, and relies on the knowledge of the last dyslexic they encountered to imagine the difficulties they might face, and what challenges an employer may face in helping them succeed in the workplace.

Dyslexia has been called the 'Pandora's Box' of learning disabilities, as it combines a gamete of difficulties, and has become the default diagnosis for many with literacy (reading, writing, and spelling) and coordination difficulties. There are also several sub categories of dyslexia, e.g. dyscalculia,

dysgraphia, dyspraxia; all have common features, but each is different in other ways.

Dyslexia comes from the Greek, 'Dys' difficulty and 'lexia' words. The term was first used in 1892 to describe a difficulty with reading, writing and spelling, despite receiving a traditional education.

However, as time has moved on and more research was conducted into dyslexia, other non-literacy aspects have been identified e.g. difficulties with co-ordination, fine motor skills, balance, handwriting, short-term memory processing, sequencing information, working memory, memory recall, knowing their left from their right, reversing letters, clumsiness, number concepts and visual stress.

Research has highlighted that difficulty with words comes from **phonological issues** and these impacts on decoding what is read and how it is processed. The decoding in phonology comes from reading letter sounds and blending them together to form words, e.g. b-ed = bed. Dyslexics need more time to understand the English language and the sounds that make up words. They are then further confused with 'sight words.' These are irregular words that just need to be memorized as they can't be decoded and built using letter sounds, e.g. fire.

This **confusion between words that can be blended together and those that can't (sight words)** has a knock-on effect to how one learns to spell, and many dyslexics find the English language to be confusing and illogical, compared to other languages (French, Spanish and German) which can be very phonetical – meaning words are spelt how they sound.

Dyslexics find many tasks at school illogical, and very confusing e.g. all the rules required to read and write. Many dyslexics **spell phonetically** at school, and develop strategies to avoid detection or camouflage their spelling difficulties, e.g. only using shorter words they know how to spell, rather than the words they can say but can't spell, as many are sight words. A movement towards logical spelling has come in the form of teaching 'morphological spelling': teaching of root words (e.g. ground) and then teaching the use of prefix (words that go before) and suffix (words that go after) to help dyslexics spell correctly, thus 'under' (suffix meaning 'below') is joined to 'ground' (root words) to make 'below ground' = 'underground'. The use of suffixes can help to understand how words can be modified to become verbs (adding an 'ing'), plurals (adding an 's'), or adjectives (adding an 'er') etc. However, not all words have roots, but this strategy can be helpful and teaches that spelling can be logical.

A main symptom of dyslexia in school is the **disparity between oral and written work**, e.g. a dyslexic child can tell you some amazing facts about steam engines, but when asked to write them down they find this really difficult. This can be understood by: difficulty organising thoughts into coherent sentences, difficulty remembering the right spelling, and lastly difficulty with the tools of writing. Dyslexics have all these amazing ideas but can forget them easily due to **memory difficulties**.

A great software for school-aged dyslexics is called 'Clicker'. It allows dyslexics to record their ideas and embed this recording at the start of their page, and then have the ability to replay this as many times as needed to write all their ideas down. Clicker also lets dyslexics type rather than write their work. Thus messy handwriting (also common in dyslexics) is removed as a barrier to them demonstrating their potential. Clicker again has a spell checking option, so will offer a number of suggested spellings rather than just change it for them, and to top it all, Clicker will read back the writing so it can be checked that it makes sense. Such software like this is ideal for dyslexics as it removes many of the barriers they face in education.

When one talks about the keys for success in dyslexics, use of assisted software is seen as one of those keys.

Short-term memory difficulty is a common trait in dyslexics, in that they lose what is in their heads very fast e.g. one closes the front door and locks it, then walks 5 steps and then asks oneself if the door was locked and can't remember, so goes back to check it to find it is, in fact, locked. This can cause problems when being asked to do tasks, as the information floats away into oblivion. In school or work situations when a dyslexic is given a list of tasks or objects, they will only remember the last few items. Therefore, if they are sent out shopping or asked to do many tasks, only the last items will be bought or done.

Related to this are **difficulties with working memory and sequencing information**. Dyslexics typically will have problems sequencing information, commonly seen by repeating the alphabet in the wrong order or doing tasks in the wrong order. This can create problems when making a cake and forgetting parts of the recipe and folding in food at the wrong stages. Tests for dyslexics commonly look at this ability by giving a list of numbers to repeat backwards and forwards e.g. 69256. Can you repeat this back in the correct and in the reverse order? Linked to this are **problems moving memories from short-term banks in the brain to long-term memory banks**,

and these can be linked to dyslexics being called more creative or divergent, as their memories are not stored in traditional areas of the brain and will make sometimes illogical links with information, or combine two ideas that have never been tried before.

When trying to **recall information and facts they can have problems with memory recall**, this is the ability to recall information from their long-term memory, and commonly they have stored information strange places, so it is harder to quickly access. Therefore when they see a dog barking, they also think about tree bark, or having problems recalling the correct word or spelling for an object. They may store details about people by their personality or looks rather than their name. Therefore, to recall facts about people they need to visualise how they look, as their name is a just a set of letters without meaning. Many dyslexics when presenting to large groups will prefer to show an image to trigger information rather than having to read large sections of text, which they may be slow at e.g. an image of a cat to trigger information about caring for animals.

When young, a dyslexic can demonstrate **difficulties when coordinating their bodies** e.g. tying shoelaces or kicking a football. These tasks require **eye and hand co-ordination**, an area that many dyslexics find hard. This can also affect **balance** and **fine motor skill tasks** like handwriting and holding a pen/pencil correctly. This confusion with coordinating their bodies can also be seen in difficulties **understanding their left from their right and reversing their numbers and letters** when writing e.g. b/d, p/q, 6/9, 3/5, 14/41. Creating problems at school by getting sums correct, but putting down the information in the incorrect order (e.g. 6962 coming out at 9629) so are marked as being incorrect, along with getting confused and getting on the wrong bus to and from school. This can also affect reading timetables and finding the correct room numbers. Young dyslexics also can be a bit **clumsy** and knocking objects over as young children can be common, as it relies on abilities to understand their bodies within the space around them, and to control their **fine and gross motor skills**.

Around 50% dyslexics, not all, also have problems with their sight, and **visual-stress** affects their ability to concentrate and to read for long periods, as black text on white paper begins to move, or it takes a lot of energy to focus on (called 'Meares-Iren Syndrome' or 'scotopic

sensitivity syndrome'). Whilst the use of tinted paper or a tinted computer screen can help. The use of colour for text can improve readability and to highlight text so sections can be read at a time, and the use of colour headers can help organise a document and indicate where sections start and end. This works by reducing the visual frequencies being processed (black to white is a broad range, but black to light blue has a reduced range).

A large percentage of dyslexics also have **problems with maths**, and this can affect their ability to process abstract concepts such as algebra. However, due to their short-term memory, memory recall and sequencing problems, learning their times tables is going to be really hard. Parents will work for hours the night before a test, and by the morning it is as if no effort had been made the night before.

Jamieson's (2014) useful chart (see [Figure 1](#)) helps to understand how the aspects of dyslexia affects individuals (or SpLD – Specific Learning Difficulties as it is commonly referred to by educationalist). Whilst designed to help those supporting criminal offenders, it is very helpful for all to understand the many implications of dyslexia.

Difficulties such as **dyspraxia** (also known as 'Developmental Coordination Disorder'), similar to dyslexia, have short-term memory and organisational elements, which can also affect the skills of reading and writing. The 'praxia' element indicates difficulty with movement affecting handwriting skills along with catching, throwing, riding a bike, running and jumping (fine and gross motor skills).

Dyscalculia is also related to dyslexia, with the same short-term memory and organisational elements, which can also affect the skills of reading and writing. However, the 'calculia' element indicates specific difficulties with numbers, as well as concepts to do with numbers e.g. which number is bigger 5 or 9, learning to add and subtract is made harder as these theories seem illogical, and they are unable to grasp the meaning of +, -, x, /, symbols.

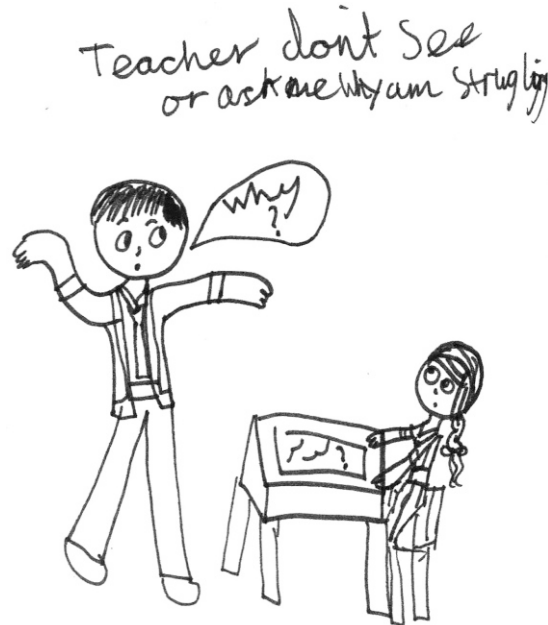
Dysgraphia is also similar dyslexia with short-term memory and organisational elements, affecting the acquisition of skills for writing. However, the 'graphia' element also describes specific difficulties with handwriting and fine motor skills. Dysgraphia is a less severe form of dyspraxia.

Difficulties linked to SpLDs	Possible implications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor reading skills • Reading aggravated by 'visual stress' i.e. print seems to become distorted during reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to cope with official letters and form filling. • Does not check submissions/documents. • Does not heed notices and written advice. • Great difficulty locating information from text. • Avoids education & training opportunities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak/erratic spelling • Awkward handwriting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not respond to written communications. • Anxious about form-filling. • Appears uneducated (this may not be the case).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor short term and working memory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forgets information conveyed orally. • Unable to hold on to information while considering a response.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor listening skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misunderstands or just gets part of the picture, leading to possible disciplinary procedures. • Will need thinking time before responding. • Frustration all round!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty expressing meaning clearly & concisely – may use street jargon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to put their point of view over. • May appear evasive, uncooperative.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor sequencing skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gets things in the wrong order (procedures or when relating a series of events). May seem incoherent. • Mistakes with number/letter strings.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Left/right confusion and disorientation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trouble locating venues, easily becomes lost. • Makes mistakes referring to Left & Right when asked

Figure 1. Difficulties linked to dyslexia (Specific Learning Difficulties) and possible outcomes (Jamieson, 2014).

Difficulties linked to SpLDs	Possible implications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Misinterpreting situations / instructions / body language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can misread situations. Can get into trouble easily. Exacerbates awkward situations. Can fails to take account of unspoken rules.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short attention span 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cannot sustain attention. Becomes overloaded and 'switches off'.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High levels of distractibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be distracted by sounds, thoughts. Probably distracts and annoys others. May also be restless and fidgety.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor time management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can miss appointments. Compliance issues. Incapable of prioritisation and estimating how long things take.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor organisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fails to turn up at the right place, at the right time with the right papers on the right day Loses documentation. Compliance issues.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor spatial skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cannot 'read' maps, charts, and timetables.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clumsiness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be told off for knocking things over or bumping into others. Antagonises people.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of numeracy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cannot organise financial affairs. Can get into debt without realising. Trouble managing fines.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stress and anxiety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficulty functioning. Coping skills undermined. May appear angry and/or incompetent.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low self esteem Lack of confidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inability to acquire new skills and benefit from new opportunities. Easily influenced, likely to be bullying target.

Figure 1. (Continued)



THE DYSLEXIC AT SCHOOL

When one thinks about children with dyslexia at primary school one only thinks about the negatives, what they can't do. Which turns out to be the focus of most lessons: reading, writing and spelling correctly. The young dyslexic, commonly undiagnosed, suffers in educational environment that should be nurturing and caring, helping them to fulfil their potential. Unfortunately, what commonly happens is they learn that school is inhospitable, and focuses on everything they find hard (compared to their peers) – this means they can start to see school as a hostile environments. They also have no choice but attend school, as their parents are forced by law to send them there five days a week, so a legally enforced prison in some eyes.

It could be likened to a mother placing their beloved young 5 year old girl in a lion's cage each day, and having no choice in the matter, as the government tells her time and time again that their child will gain (learn) from this experience. The lion circles their child and roars at her as she is not a lion. The lion thinks why is this child here? She is not a lion. The lion tries to communicate with the girl, but as she doesn't roar back he believes the girl to be a threat and attacks her. It's no wonder the girl cries and tries to make herself look weak and hope the lion will take pity on her. However,

he likes to terrorise weak creatures, and the girl tries to hide so the lion can't see and attack her. The girl counts the minutes or seconds to the time they can go home and be safe again, and when the mother comes the lion is non-threatening so the mother thinks what harm could happen in that cage. At home, the girl will be exhausted and worried about going back again tomorrow to the lion's den and this causes her to worry all night, so much so she wets the bed and even thinks about running away from home to avoid being sent back to the lion's den. However, most children sent into these cages learn to roar by learning the lion's language, and learn many amazing things about the world and the lion's amazing adventures, but not this girl.

When the girl gets to 11 years old she is moved to a bigger lion's cage, containing many more lions, and so the capability to avoid detection is reduced. She is so scared of being detected that she daydreams (withdraws emotionally) to another place, a place of safety. Finally, she finds an area of the cage full of frightened children like she is, and together they plan to rebel, and many do. However, this young girl knows she needs to be in the cage, as that is what her mother told her, that it is for her own good. So doesn't rebel, she just hides even more in the corner whilst others rebel. After 10 years, she is let out of the going to the cage each day, however, as she never learnt to roar, she never could communicate with the lion. Thus her time in the cage was a complete waste of time. Now imagine how this might have affected the child's emotional and psychological well-being?

This story is very similar to the experience that many dyslexics talk about regarding their time in mainstream education (school). They are unsuited to our mainstream education system that focusses heavily on reading, writing and spelling. Their teachers feel powerless to help them in their learning, and feel unsatisfied and frustrated each time they try to teach them, as they do not retain what has been taught.

There are now moves to screen more children for reading, writing and spelling difficulties when they prepare for key examinations (key stage 2 SAT tests, GCSE and A'Level examinations), so they may gain extra time and the use of laptops in their examinations. However, one could argue this is too late to make a real difference to their attainment, as they need the help when they are learning these facts or theories for the first time. Early screening, diagnosis and interventions are the keys to helping dyslexics and their teachers to know how they would best learn, and what help they need to achieve their potential.

All UK teachers, by law must modify how they teach, so that all learners in their classrooms can learn effectively (this is called 'differentiation'). This means teachers must modify their lessons for high, medium, low learners,

along with those with English as an additional language (EAL) and with varying special educational needs. This is a tall order and many teacher's struggle in this regard, resulting in teachers supporting brighter children, and leaving the rest to teaching assistants, who may be experienced but lack the skills or training to be a teacher. Research suggests using a teaching assistant for struggling learners is bad practice, and these children's examination results tend to be very low as a result. Would you recover faster if you had been operated on by a first-year medical student or by a qualified doctor – striking but a true comparison?

Whilst some dyslexics survive school, it can be by using avoidance strategies, shielding them from high literacy demands, however this also prevents them from demonstrating their true potential. Many children understand which academic and non-academic school subjects and hobbies they are good at (e.g. art and design, drama, sport, coding, etc.), however these rarely shape their post-school career choices, and commonly they are funnelled into career choices that ignore their strengths, resulting in disillusion and frustration.

A minority of those with dyslexia leave school with adequate examination results, however these may not be with high grades. They are also commonly given poor career advice based on safe options rather than their true strengths. Whilst universities these days are very supportive of dyslexics, many dyslexics are actually diagnosed at university, as the literacy demands are heightened, and they begin to suffer in their first year. The 'Disabled Student Allowance (DSA)' provides assisted software, a laptop/printer and access to a learning support teacher. This can be real help and university departments can offer extended deadlines were needed.



THE DYSLEXIC IN THE WORKPLACE

Dyslexics tend to struggle in the workplace due to high literacy demands (reading, spelling, and organisation), however most office-situated work environments are computer-based and assisted technology can be a real help. Adult dyslexics tend to struggle with: working to other people's strict rules, meeting deadlines, organisation of their workload, explaining themselves coherently, writing without spelling and grammar errors, making silly mistakes, and forgetting to do tasks.

However, dyslexics face huge dilemmas regarding disclosure. They should really disclose at the application or interview stages, but this might mean they are not offered the post. If no disclosure is made at the application form or interview stages, and they are offered the post, then it could be argued they gained any post through deception. However, if dyslexic individuals disclose at the interview stages, then they would be eligible for 'Access to Work' help from the government in the form of assisted software, larger monitors, strategy training and other help to learn the tasks required for the workplace (e.g. a reader or a scribe). So a chicken and egg scenario. To disclose or not disclose? It is argued by many I have interviewed that employers when given the choice of candidates with and without disabilities with the same qualifications, they would choose the one without a disability, the safer choice, however trying to prove this would be hard.

Presently, only a minority of employers see the benefits of employing dyslexics due to their problem-solving skills. However, these tend to be positions requiring higher-level thinking, not the majority of office clerical or data input roles in the marketplace (e.g. code-breakers for GCHQ spy centre or NASA). Dyslexics tend to be suited to kinaesthetic/manual roles as they have good spatial awareness, e.g. designers, engineers, plumbers, electricians and builders, or requiring good people skills, e.g. marketing and sales. However, whilst they are good at some aspects of the job e.g. solving plumbing problems, other aspects such as recording what they did for billing purposes they may struggle with. So dyslexics need to develop coping strategies that allow their strengths to shine without their difficulties becoming overwhelming.