

A dyslexic person, of good or average intelligence, perceives his environment in a different way, his attention diminishes when confronted with symbols such as letters and numbers. Due to a deficiency of his partial performances, his perception of these symbols is different to the perception of non-dyslexic people. This results in difficulties when learning to read and write and do arithmetic.

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Everyone who can call a dyslexic person his friend, is a very lucky person. Dyslexic people are very creative, technologically gifted – my computer was properly adjusted by dyslexic children – and they also showed great patience when explaining it all to me. Every dyslexic person has a well developed sense of justice. This I find most important in times like this. I am very pleased that we have people like that. A dyslexic person is a loyal friend for life.

Often dyslexia is mistakenly seen as a general reading and writing weakness. The fact is that there is a difference – mainly in the study support. Let us try to work out the differences.

The cause for an acquired reading and spelling weakness can be psychological, physiological, family problems, teaching methods, learning deficiency and general poor performance. In contrast, dyslexia is genetic – meaning that the tendency to being dyslexic was already present at birth. How this tendency will express itself in each individual will depend on his environment. If a dyslexic person finds conditions that do justice to his needs, then there will never be grave problems at school.

Early recognition of dyslexia is very important. Many signs are already recognisable at the pre-school stage. The crawling phase is very important for the development of the coordination necessary for the reading and writing. It has been observed that this phase has never taken place, or taken place in a very diminished form, for many dyslexics. They are often the so-called ground shufflers, more often than not they crawl backwards or sideways. At this stage it is of utmost importance to closely observe these children for other symptoms indicating a possible dyslexia. And, because

dyslexia is of genetic origin, observation is recommended when dyslexia is found in one parent and perhaps in a few relatives.

At the first signs of problems in acquiring reading, writing and arithmetic skills, tests should be done without delay to ensure a minimum waste of time. In general intensive practising does not show much improvement – but a lot of frustration – for the child and the whole family unit.

It is not necessary and must not be. We know that dyslexia is not an illness or a handicap, nor are these children lazy or stupid.

I am a dyslexia trainer – and many mothers and children seek my help. With a computer test – or other means, with games – especially with younger children who are still unable to deal with a computer, it can be determined in a short period of time, which perceptions are affected and need to be trained.

The first part of the test is dedicated to the attention capability.

The second part of the test is dedicated to the sensory perceptions needed to read, write and do arithmetic. And they are:

Visual differentiation – is the capacity to recognize sameness and differences and keep them apart.

Visual memory – is the capacity to remember what has been seen, to store and retrieve it when necessary.

Visual continuity – is the capacity to line up visual impressions as they take place.

Auditory differentiation – is the capacity to hear particular words and differentiate similar sounding words.

Auditory memory – to retain what has been heard to store and retrieve it when necessary.

Auditory continuity – to discern which word has been spoken first in a sentence.

Room orientation – sense of space and time and the capacity to judge size and items.

Body pattern – to judge own body (to differentiate left and right).

After analysing the test results it is determined which perceptions need to be taken care of.

Here we deal with a primary dyslexia.

Once the children's boundaries are broken, through constant demands and lack of understanding, they acquire behavioural problems, then it becomes a secondary dyslexia. And this is much more difficult to remedy than the primary dyslexia.

This is why it is so important to help these children in a quick and targeted manner. The children need success experiences. We do not want sick and desperate children who do not believe in themselves anymore.

The combined efforts of parents, teachers and dyslexia trainers is especially important. The teacher must not be made the sole responsible for the progress of the dyslexic children.

Once this circle closes and the child notices that it is not alone with this problem, behavioural problems will not happen.

Comments such as " more practice" or " it is going to work out well " are out of place. At this point I would like to point out that there are very dedicated teachers, but if a teacher tells me that I have the wrong profession because there is no such thing like dyslexia, I would have to ask this teacher to reconsider his career as a teacher.

It is also important to clarify – what is a spelling error and what is a perception error? In general dyslexic children make perception errors. Meaning that, due to their perception disorder they are not aware of any errors made during the process of reading or writing. These perception errors mainly happen with frequently used words. There are several perception errors:

Sequencing of letters – omission (several), addition (severale) and sequencing (serevale).

To confuse letters such as b and d.

To confuse similar sounds such as k and g or t and d.

Stretching of sounds and accentuated sounds.

Memorising and storage of errors (sight words are misspelled, the same words in a text are spelled differently).

A combination of all the above.

The basic problem of dyslexic children is their inability to control their thoughts during the process of reading, writing and doing arithmetic.

The solution is to increase their concentration span and improve their perceptions by targeted training, as well as individual training of the errors when reading, writing and doing arithmetic.

Here we have the pictorial understanding and the manipulation of letters and numbers. What a dyslexic person can touch or see in three dimensions, he will remember. It is also very useful to deal with whole word families at once. If we take the word 'drive' (driver, drive), then we can deal with several words at the same time.

Dyslexic children enjoy working with plasticine, shaving foam etc. To work on the computer is also very important. Dyslexic children access the computer very easily.

The training programme needs to be tailored for each child. This is why a one on one training is important.

Dyslexic children need lots of time and understanding, then they will acquire the skills of reading, writing and arithmetic just like any other child. These children are out of place in a school for the disadvantaged!!

Constant control and observation is important. Lets try to create a world where dyslexic people have a place in our society – without prejudicing. Lets listen to dyslexic people wit attention – they have a lot to tell us,- and we all can learn a lot from them.