

Learning Disability: Dyslexia In The Workplace

By Lyndsay Swinton

What To Look Out For And What You Can Do

Disability discrimination legislation in the UK now includes dyslexia, and employers have a responsibility to make reasonable allowances for all employees with this specific learning disability. Dyslexia awareness has increased in the last few years, and it's important for managers to understand this learning difficulty so that they can work with people with dyslexia effectively.

Dyslexia Statistics, Signs and Symptoms

- Around 10% (1 in 10) people have dyslexic tendencies, with about 4% severe and 6% mild to moderate problems.
- Dyslexia can affect all backgrounds and abilities, from people with literacy difficulties to people with advanced doctorate degrees.
- Most people associate dyslexia with reading and spelling difficulties, however, difficulties include poor short term memory, dis-organisation and poor concentration.
- In the UK, dyslexia is formally diagnosed by an educational psychologist, however a simple, non scientific test is that specific learning difficulties may exist if there is a large discrepancy between intellect and learning ability.

At this point you may think that dyslexia is a bad thing in the workplace – not so! There are many professions where dyslexic tendencies are advantageous and it would make sound business sense to actively recruit people with dyslexia. There are disproportionately more people with dyslexia in for example, the architect profession, where artistic creativity and design are highly valued.

It is thought that the dyslexic brain processes information in the right brain, (compared with the more usual left brain dominance), and this may be reason for the distinctive dyslexic strengths and talents.

What You Can Do To Assist People With Dyslexia in the Workplace

- Use coloured paper for handouts, or coloured overlays for reading material.
- Use diagrams or pictures instead of lengthy written explanations
- Use simple, colour coded systems for filing or organisation
- Consider font size and style e.g. comic sans or verdana in written communication
- Encourage use of spell-checker and thesaurus
- Consider more advanced software such as text readers or providing audio versions of information.
- Build on and encourage strengths, such as creativity and design and develop coping strategies for weaker areas, e.g. use mind-maps for organising.
- Above all, be patient and supportive!

Dyslexia Resources

www.bda-dyslexia.org.uk

www.iamdyslexic.com

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