



Youth and Dyslexia

Patricia Tatman, M.S.
Department of
Family and Consumer
Sciences, University of
Wyoming

What is Dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a learning disability that causes problems with reading, writing, and spelling. It typically occurs in those with average or above-average intelligence. Two other related learning disabilities include dyscalculia (difficulty understanding math concepts and solving math problems) and dysgraphia (difficulty writing in a defined space).

What Causes Dyslexia?

In a person who is dyslexic, the right hemisphere of the brain is used to process reading as compared to the typical left. The cause of this is unknown, but there is a genetic link as it tends to run in families. However, even without a family history of dyslexia a person may still have the disability. Other factors that may contribute to dyslexia include environment, education, and upbringing.

What are the Symptoms of Dyslexia?

There are many symptoms of dyslexia that occur at different stages in the life cycle. It is important to note that many children who are not dyslexic may occasionally demonstrate some of these symptoms. Children with dyslexia will demonstrate the following symptoms much of the time:

Early childhood:

- Trouble learning to speak,
- Difficulty rhyming,
- Trouble learning the alphabet, numbers, and days of the week,
- Difficulty telling a story in the correct order,
- Trouble learning connection between letters and sounds.

Middle childhood and on:

- Reads and writes letters in wrong order or backwards
E.g. Transpositions – “felt” for “left”
Substitutions – “house” for “home”
Word reversals – “dog” for “god”
Letter reversals – “b” for “d”, writes “bog” instead of “dog”
Inversions – “w” for “m” or “p” for “b”

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- Confuses small words like “at” and “to,”
- Difficulty reading, spelling, learning foreign language, and/or doing math problems,
- Difficulty organizing written and spoken language,
- Relies on memorization,
- Confuses math symbols,
- Trouble understanding non-literal language including jokes, slang, etc.,
- Awkward pencil grip,
- Difficulty organizing and managing time and tasks,
- Difficulty summarizing,
- Often misreads information,
- Illegible handwriting,
- Reads slowly and inaccurately.

How is Dyslexia Treated?

Treatment is essential so that a child can successfully learn to read and write. Some treatments include utilizing books on tape and writing on computers. Some children benefit from special colored glasses and/or transparent colored plastic sheets that can be placed over the reading. For some, this lessens the problems of dyslexia. Most people diagnosed with dyslexia work with a tutor or therapist to find a way to learn what will benefit them most.

Important Issues for Extension Educators and 4-H Leaders to Consider:

1. Have contact information for parents or guardians and the member’s doctor in accessible places. An example of this would be behind the child’s nametag and in the medical forms box in the main office at 4-H events. This form should include information such as what kinds of medications the child is taking, allergies, if any adaptive devices are used, and other health conditions.
2. Visit with the member and his or her parents about the member’s dyslexia. Questions that can be asked include: “What modifications would help you get the most out of your 4-H project manuals?” and “What method of record keeping will work best for you?”
3. Record keeping and the evaluation of record books is an important part of the 4-H program. However, for someone with dyslexia, accurately and neatly keeping records may be difficult. Allow for modifications such as typing records or having verbal interviews with a member. Try to place more

effort on what the member did and learned than the neatness of the records.

4. Some members with dyslexia may have been held back in school, even though they are of average or above average intelligence. They may have been labeled as “dumb,” “slow,” or “lazy.” Avoid these labels and concentrate on the positive attributes of the child.
5. People with dyslexia often have outstanding verbal, social, and memorization skills. They may be hiding their dyslexia or may not even know they have it. If this is suspected, do not confront them about it in front of a group of members. Instead, visit with the parents and child privately.
6. Avoid having members read aloud if it is known that a member has dyslexia.

For More Information Contact:

The International Dyslexia Association

Chester Building, Suite 382

8600 LaSalle Road

Baltimore, MD 21286-2044

Phone: (410) 296-0232

Voice message requests for information: (800)

ABCD123 or (800) 222-3123

Web site: www.interdys.org

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