



Dyslexia Association

of Bexley Bromley Greenwich & Lewisham
(FOUNDED IN 1974 AS THE NORTH KENT DYSLEXIA ASSOCIATION)
NEWSLETTER - JANUARY 2011

FUTURE MEETINGS

HELD AT St Nicholas Church Hall (Village Hall), Church Lane, Chislehurst, Kent BR7 5PE

**Thurs 3rd February
at 7.45pm**

The Eyes Have It

By Jasmine Prentice
and Sara Windsor

It is estimated that 30% of dyslexic people suffer from Visual Stress. This is the inability to see comfortably without distortion and discomfort, which can cause movement and blurring of text. It can also cause headaches, thus being a trigger for migraine too. Diagnosis requires a specialist and is not covered in a routine eye test. We will be hearing from two local Optometrists who will share with us the symptoms of and solutions to visual stress. Many dyslexic and non dyslexic children and adults



have this condition, often without fully realising it. When the correct coloured overlays or lenses are used the change in reading and writing abilities can be amazing.

**These meeting are FREE
to members and £3.00
entry to non-members**

Older children are welcome at our meetings, if their parents feel they would be interested in the talk

The following buses go to **Chislehurst War Memorial**, which is a few minutes walk from the Hall:

- 61 Bromley North to Farnborough & Orpington
- 102 Eltham to Bromley
- 160 Catford to Sidcup
- 161 from Woolwich
- 162 Beckenham Junction to Eltham
- 269 Bexleyheath to Bromley North



ADULT GROUP

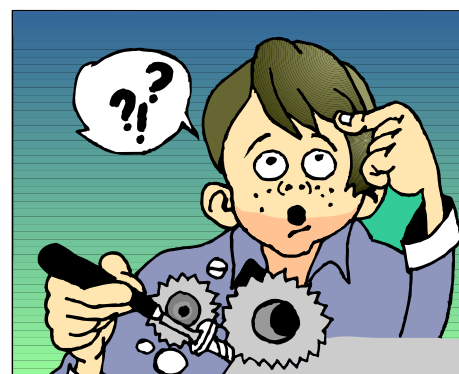
Our very active Adult Group meets on the first Wednesday of every month, excepting January and August. Each meeting has a speaker and/or an open forum. Do come along and discuss your experiences and concerns with other dyslexic adults of all ages and from all walks of life. First Wednesday of the month at Community House, South Street, Bromley BR1 1RH at 7.30pm for 7.45pm.

Trevor Hobbs
020 8319 3662 or the helpline
07000 50 50 55

**Thurs 24th March
at 7.45pm**

“Transition At All Stages”

By Carol Leather



We are so often told how difficult transition between one stage and another can be for dyslexia children and adults. It is a subject that Carol feels passionately about, and she will be talking about the problems and solutions to transition throughout school and from school into further or higher education or the workplace. This will be a talk of interest to parents, teachers, older children and adults alike.

Help Filling-in Forms

If you have problems filling in forms, then help is at hand. Starfish in Blackheath are happy to help with this task, but please do ring to make an appointment before going along.



Starfish is at **St John’s Church**, near Blackheath Standard every Saturday morning from 9.15am to 12 noon.

020-8305 0520

HELP LINE: 07000 50 50 55 email: info@dyslexiawise.co.uk

Nice to know we can help!

We received a wonderful letter from an ex-member recently, and she has given us her permission to reproduce it here as an inspiration and comfort to others:

I just wanted to say a belated thank you to all for the help provided to me some years ago.

My daughter, born in 1984, is dyslexic, as are my sons, and without diagnosis my husband, my father, his father and myself. That said, my beautiful little girl was the one that gave me sleepless nights - why could this bright, chatty - very chatty - child not read, or write her name. After a visit to an assessment centre, she was found to be dyslexic. She was pleased, in her own words, as it meant that she was not dumb and stupid - obviously the classification used by her peers.

At many of your meetings, and through those that I meet via your association, I heard again and again about how children had learnt to overcome their difficulties and get degrees, etc. At the time I thought how can that be possible?

Well, she is now 25, has a degree in Early Childhood Education, which means she can teach 0 to 8, from Melbourne University - Australia. She has been in constant work since completing her degree. Her handwriting on the board is as neat as can be - although I understand she still worries in case there is a mistake in important documents/school reports - she knows that spell checkers are not to be relied upon. The journey has not been smooth but I am very, very proud of her.

My first son, born in 1989, who still cannot spell, is in his 4th year of a 5 year double degree for Science and Engineering at Uni - and doing well. He is studying very high level maths, and the tutors don't seem to care if he adds an extra 't' or misses out an extra 'l'.

My other son in many ways had the same severe problems as his sister, but being a boy was reluctant to attend and accept the support offered by 'special' units. He now has a black belt in taekwondo - good for co-ordination and balance, and confidence - and

was accepted into the Australian Defence Force Academy - meaning he had to meet fitness, psychological tests, show leadership and pass the Australia equivalent of A levels - he did not get the grades for English first year but did at the second attempt.

The above very much focuses on where we are now - and does not cover the tears and heartache from hours spent learning tables and spelling lists - only to fail again.

*Lessons I have learnt:
... 'and this too shall pass'*

- make sure your child knows that you love them, by repeatedly telling them, and think they are great,
- find something that has nothing to do with pens/paper that they can do well at - swimming - football - craft
- the experts - teachers - doctors - psychologists - other parents - your family - are only voicing an opinion, and that is exactly what it is, one person's opinion.
- learn all you can - and look out for wonderful teachers - they are worth their weight in gold and more.
- check out all the dyslexics - you/your child are in a very exclusive club - Richard Branson, da Vinci, and lots, lots more.

To all the admin people, and members of the Association - THANK YOU - you helped me, and I am grateful, just don't stop.



Shakespeare Multimedia Books

Trying to actually read Shakespearean text can be problematic for dyslexics, so we were pleased to hear of 3 titles that are supplied on CD-ROM in DAISY format by the RNIB. These contain full audio and linked text.

The three Nelson Thornes Shakespeare titles available so far are: **Romeo and Juliet** (TCM01), **The Merchant of Venice** (TCM02) and **Much Ado About Nothing** (TCM03).

For further information or to order, please visit the RNIB on-line shop or give them a ring:

www.rnib.org.uk/shop 0303 123 9999

Does It Add Up? A ONE DAY WORKSHOP

Do not worry if you missed our first two Saturday workshops on numeracy and dyslexia, "Does It Add Up?" It is being repeated in two further locations this year. The workshop is for families, teachers and teaching assistants to learn fun ways of helping children with numeracy. There will be a craft table and activity sessions for children, book sales, and information and support for dyslexic adults. Entry is free, and refreshments are available.

Feedback from Teachers, Teaching Assistants and Parents from the first two workshops includes:

"Really impressive and informative talk. The children's activities were excellent and inclusive. Thank you."

"Very helpful, clear presentation. Speaker was very helpful and knowledgeable."

"Event organised well. Resources displayed were excellent."

DATES AND VENUES ARE:

29th January - Birkbeck Primary School, Alma Road Sidcup DA14 4ED.

12th March - Linton Mead Primary School, Central Way, Thamesmead, SE28 8DT

Doors open 9.30, Presentation 10am
Event ends 1pm for both events.

UK DRIVING TEST and Dyslexia 'Adjustments'

Margaret Malpas, British Dyslexia Association (BDA) Chair, had many discussions recently with the Driving Standards Agency.

Following these and other discussions, examiners will offer adjustments to dyslexic candidates. These will depend on the particular difficulties the dyslexic person has. So examiners will be asking the candidate what adjustments they require. These will include:

- Asking the person's preference for verbal directions or for following signs during the independent driving section.
- Adapting directions from right and left to 'your side, my side' or whatever system the candidate prefers.

A BDA member, Bryan Roberts, is a driving instructor, and sent these reassuring words about the new driving test:

"all of my pupils either with or without conditions such as dyslexia or dyspraxia have had no problem with the independent driving part of the driving test. In fact I've just had a lady of 45 who is both dyspraxic and dyslexic pass with just 2 minor faults and those were both for the reverse around the corner - she just had one of those dyslexic moments. Regarding the independent driving section - if the candidate goes the wrong way as long as it's visually acceptable from the outside of the car to other road users then they will not be marked down. Also at any time the candidate wants to ask the examiner to confirm or repeat a direction all they have to do is ask. The most directions I believe they will give is 3 and at the test centre I use they tend to give 2 separate 4 / 5 minute drives. Before I started trying the independent driving on my pupils I thought all those with conditions would

struggle, but thankfully I was wrong. In fact the only one that had the slightest problem was a university lecturer who just got flustered, so all in all it's really no big deal! If the candidate's dyslexia affects their ability to read, then they can't ask them to read road signs. They'd be asked to follow a set of directions. The candidate needs to make sure they inform the DSA about their condition before they take the test, either by filling out the special needs section of the internet booking form or telling them over the phone."

If you want to know more about the independent driving section, click onto this helpful link:

[youtube.com/watch?v=wQR13zkkOgg&feature=channel](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wQR13zkkOgg&feature=channel)

Empathy

There has been some research in the States showing that current College students are lacking in empathy compared to their predecessors. It is reckoned that today's students are about 40% lower in empathy compared to students in the '70s.

In contrast to this, dyslexic children and students are well-known to be strong in empathetic skills. This is usually attributed to the years of insults and bullying they are often subjected to in school, which allows them to sympathise with others' problems.



Email Users Beware!

Email scams are getting more and more sophisticated, and it can be extremely hard for new email users to ascertain what is genuine and what they should respond to.

We have now heard about a massive fraudulent email campaign using what seems to be stolen email addresses. It is being sent around with a subject beginning with "**News Releases : Upgrade New Adobe Acrobat Reader 2011**"

You are asked to click on a link to download a PDF-related software package or update. This email links back to one of a number of malicious websites asking the user to install software that ultimately tries to steal personal details and credit card numbers.

It is the nature of these types of attacks that the websites concerned change frequently so you will need to be vigilant. Do NOT click on any link in an email unless you are confident of its validity. Remember normal software updates are not usually delivered by email, and this is a classic approach adopted by fraudsters.

Who is Dyslexic?
Well Steve Jobs, Apple's iconic CEO for one. He dropped out of college in 1973, and freely admits to being a trouble-maker in his youth, letting snakes loose in the classroom and exploding bombs!

Right To Appeal at SEN Tribunal

A new right of appeal to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal has been added to the existing ones.

A parent can now appeal if the Local Authority decides to make no changes to their child's Statement following an Annual Review.

For further details of this and other appeal rights, see

www.sendist.gov.uk

Hereditary and Dyslexia

Professor Maggie Snowling, of the University of York, has stated that dyslexic adults have a 40% chance of having a child who is also dyslexic.

Even children who are not assessed as being dyslexic, but have a dyslexic parent, may still experience milder forms of learning difficulties in dealing with text. Delayed language development in young children also increases the probability of their having dyslexic difficulties when they reach school age.

Who Else is Dyslexic?

Many of you may have laughed at Shappi Khorsandi, the Iranian Comedienne. But did you know that she, too, is dyslexic? Her dyslexia was not diagnosed until she was an adult. She highlights how hard it is to achieve as a dyslexic in school (diagnosed or not), and what it can mean to experience that elusive success: "Somehow or other I got an A for my English A-level. I had never got an A for anything before, always scraping by. When I saw my A grade, something changed in the way I saw my world. It was the first time I realised I was not just "Shappi the blob", as my French teacher once called me. My career in stand-up comedy has since taken me places and given me experiences that I only imagined in my wildest dreams. But nothing has ever been quite like that moment when I got my A-level results and realised there was a place for me in this world after all."

DYSLEXIA CHAMPION

When leaving East Enders, Kara Tointon was offered the chance of making a TV programme on any subject at all that she wanted. She categorically chose dyslexia, and we hope that you saw the brilliant result.

Kara was diagnosed as dyslexic 20 years ago at the age of seven, but agreed to become a guinea pig for a new research project set up by Professor Cathy Price at the Wellcome Trust Centre for Neuroimaging. Taking part in the unique project has changed her life, says Kara.

She used to spend four hours of painstaking study learning lines for her role as Dawn Swann in East Enders which would take her co-stars a mere 15 minutes. Kara's dyslexia tutor, Claire Salter, was able to show her multi-sensory techniques, utilising a combination of colours, sounds, buzzwords and physical movement to trigger memory. Kara said "these techniques were a revelation. I'd listen

to a tape of my lines then walk around the room, slowly sounding out the words. While dyslexia can't be cured, it can be helped and I had to get out of my old routine.'

Recalling her schooldays Kara says: 'I used to put my hand up and ask the teacher to repeat what she'd said because I didn't understand what she meant. I always used to get the same reply, "You should have been listening, Kara". The teachers thought I wasn't paying attention when in fact I was.

'Now I realise it was probably my short-term memory that was making it difficult for me to remember what was being said. I felt naked and exposed during the reading exercise but I was also frustrated and angry with myself. I was surprised by how emotional I was.'

Kara now also wears tinted glasses for reading, which calms the text down for her.

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER...

OPEN MEETINGS
Thurs 3rd February
Thurs 24th March

ADULT GROUP
1st Wed of month
except Jan & Aug
7.45 for 8.00pm

Adult Dyscalculia

For the first time an on-line screening test has been produced at Loughborough University to give adults an indication of whether they are at risk of being dyscalculic. This, like dyslexia, is a hidden condition and results in poor numeracy skills.

Clare Trott and Nigel Beacham have been working on the project for a number of years. They have now joined up with Iansyst and Tribal to roll out the test commercially.




The screener is called DysCalculiUM, and is designed to be administered by learning and disability support teams in colleges and universities, as well as by human resources professionals in the workplace.


Loughborough University's Consultancy Services licensed DysCalculiUM to Iansyst in order for it to be delivered online through Tribal's Advance Learning Platform. The website and manual include materials to assist users through the screening process.


It is estimated that between three to six per cent of adults could have dyscalculia, but many remain unidentified as screening is currently only available for children. Dyscalculics face challenges each day with tasks such as household budgeting, checking change or helping children with homework

 www.iansyst.com

FUTURE EVENTS

British Dyslexia Association are running a variety of courses in London over the next 6 months for Teachers, Teaching Assistants and Parents, on Practical Solutions for Dyslexia, Dealing with Dyscalculia and Screening for Dyslexia.  www.bdadyslexia.org.uk ☎ 0845 251 9004

16th February - Topic being organised. 7.15pm at East Croydon United Reformed Church, Addiscombe Grove, Croydon (close to East Croydon station and East Croydon Tram stop). Croydon Dyslexia Association. ☎ 08442 49 69 49  www.croydondyslexia@orange.net

8th March - "An Holistic Approach to Dyslexia" Kent West Dyslexia Assn.  www.kentwestdyslexia.org.uk ☎ 01732 832 203/ 01580 712 216

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Please do send in any good news, poems and short articles etc.