

Dyslexia WA

harness the gift

NEWSLETTER

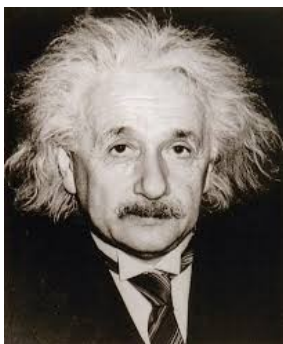
Newsletter of Dyslexia WA www.dyslexiawa.com.au Annette Johnston, facilitator. Contact email: dyslexiacorrectionwa@gmail.com phone: 0479 121 163 September 2017

These people are sinister, they must change and be like the rest of us!

Frank Johnston, Editor

Like dyslexic students in today's schools, in centuries gone by left-handers were discriminated against in a world designed for right-handers.

The very name, **right**-handed, indicates the 'right' or proper or correct hand to use as opposed to the wrong, incorrect, or left hand. Left also means unlucky or sinister and links can be made to negative terms such as a left-handed compliment or French terms for 'left' which also mean 'clumsy', 'awkward' or 'malicious'.



Einstein was left handed

This became more obvious with the coming of the industrial age when workers operated more complex machines and left-handers were made to look clumsy and less capable as these machines were designed to suit right-handed workers.

Many older Australians could have stories of being made to conform to the right-handed world

In schools where education and literacy skills

in particular were becoming a much greater necessity for all members of society and not just the elite, church hierarchy or government administrators, the use of dip pens with ink immediately put left-handers at a great disadvantage.

Dyslexia, a normal thinking pattern in around 10% of the population, experiences similar discrimination shown against 10% of the population from many years ago... left-handers

My own personal experience with an ink pen and blotting paper under my hand to avoid smudging my writing as I moved my left writing hand across the page comes to mind.

I think I was fortunate in that teachers did not force me to use my less dominant side.

Left-handers today may still feel discriminated against as evidenced by the Left Handed Society but many more allowances are in place to assist left-handedness and it is more regarded as just a normal variation in the range of human behaviour and not something which needs to be fixed.

The prevalence of dyslexia could also be regarded as a normal variation, a style of thinking which gives to our world people who have a significant capacity for creativity - artists,

musicians, sport people, entrepreneurs, designers, engineers, architects... It is a long list and the more famous dyslexics are very many.



Prince William is left handed

Dyslexics do not need to be fixed. They are not 'disabled', they do not have a learning disorder, they are not malfunctioning, lazy, don't try hard enough or fit into any other negative category non-dyslexics might wish to put them in.

All they require is to be taught in a way which suits their thinking style.

The most complex and difficult aspect is for non - dyslexic people involved in the educative process and who interact with dyslexic students to take the time to educate themselves in the way of dyslexic thinking.

For some great publications which present a refreshing and insightful look at the education of dyslexic people **see the next page:**



Perhaps it's not dyslexia we should worry about; what about dysentoli, or dysodigia?

From the editor

Dysentoli? Dysodigia? The word **dyslexia** comes from 2 Greek words meaning impaired reading or impaired word usage.

Well, I've made two new ones, again from Greek, but meaning impaired or incorrect instruction. I'm suggesting there is little or nothing wrong with people who are visual spatial learners and who struggle with written language, or two dimension symbols.

I am saying the problem lies in the instruction provided; it does not fit the learning style of the student on the receiving end.



For most teachers, who, like over 80% of the population, are word thinkers, accepting the challenge of overcoming dysodigia in relation to visual spatial thinkers, is a giant leap.

But if teaching is to be more effective, what is the alternative?

Help! I'm in a dysodigial environment

To reduce dysodigia in a dyslexic world, see over



Alice Wild has been teaching for 23 years including being the Head of Learning in a large school in the south of England. She is the parent of 2 children including one who is severely dyslexic. As a single working parent Alice blogs about life, "Alarminglly far from the Comfort Zone", and about surviving grown up life. Her blogs are frequently about parenting and education issues. This blog, which was posted on Alice's website halfwavinghalfdrowning.com on September 30, 2016, has had over 360 000 reads internationally.

From the Dyslexic Reader No 74

I'm about to go on a rant. I hate homework.

Controversial, as I've been a teacher for 22 years and I've personally set hundreds of hours of homework in that time.

But I am becoming increasingly aware of a society in which the only results that anyone wants for children, be it parental or for school statistics, are the bloody As and A+s.

I remember knowing that my peers who scored As were those who were exceptional in that subject. An accident of genetics had made them shine at art, or music or maths. They were in the top 2% of the class. That is why they got an A (there were no A+s back then – and that's another issue – making the top even higher and wider so even more people feel they have to cram themselves in.)

I remember feeling happy for them and not feeling worried that it wasn't me. There were loads of us in the B and C group and we were fine.

Yet here we are with A grades being the standard we all want, "the only valid currency" as I heard the Headmaster sadly reflect, Bs and Cs are not good enough anymore it would seem (and 'D', did you say 'D'? I'm so sorry).

And how the Hell do you get normal, happy, perfectly able and fine children to get the As and A+s that really should be awarded to only a tiny percentage of the most naturally able?

You make them work, work, work. You put the pressure on from the age of 4. Six hours of school work at school isn't enough, so you set homework to reinforce and consolidate everything.

We can have everything we want at any moment we want it. We are the generation where every desire can be granted; pizza at 3am with one phone call, strawberries in January – so surely it is also possible that all of our children can be leaping in a line and grinning holding that slip of paper telling them they have 10A+s on results day?

We can make this happen. Can't we?

We shouldn't bloody have to. They shouldn't bloody have to. That's my rant.



Homework!

We have to find a way to bring the bar back down. NOT to be confused with lowering expectation or hope, and not to say that only the 2% of naturals should go forth and dominate – I just wish that we could find a way to allow our children some freedom from this pressure while they are growing and working out how to see themselves.

Unless we can, we are sending a MASSIVE percentage of children the message that they are failing. They should be getting As and they are not. NO THEY SHOULD NOT BE GETTING As.

We cannot all be good at everything. It's ridiculous. It invalidates the whole point of an A. No wonder they've had to change to a system where GCSE will be awarded levels up to 9...you want to know why? so they can add more to the top, a level 10 / 11 they ran into a problem with A, A+, A++ it had started to get silly.



Alice Wild

AND WE WONDER WHY LEVELS OF CHILDHOOD ANXIETY ARE RISING.

If you have children who do not fit the tiny funnel of the measurement system of the UK, if you do not have a child who has naturally been blessed with the paper recording and memory skills of a Dickensian bookkeeper, you may find yourself dreading homework.

The ruination of weekends. The axe hanging over your freedom to visit your family, to go swimming, to camp out. That sodding My-Maths, the blimming physics project.

My advice? Do not stress your child out. Have the camp out. GO swimming and visit Aunt Sarah. You will never have this time again.

All of us B/C/D fodder from my crap comprehensive, we're pretty much all OK now. We survived.

Please, please try to send them the message that although it's good to try hard, it's also good to be happy in your own skin. The one that fits you best. The one that might be made of Cs, Bs and the odd D. But does that make you a less valid person?

It will probably only make you a happier, healthier person and that, surely, is the ultimate goal of parents and schools.



Some suggested readings which present some great ideas about working with dyslexia:

Whitehead, Richard: Why Tyrannosaurus But Not If?

Hall, Susan: Fish Don't Climb Trees 2014

Maxwell, Betty and Punch, Crystal: Picture It! Teaching Visual Spatial Learners 2012

Eide, Brock L. and Eide, Fernet F.: The Dyslexic Advantage; Unlocking the Hidden Potential of the Dyslexic Brain 2011

Frank, Robert: The Secret Life of the Dyslexic Child 2002

Jantzen, Cornelia: Dyslexia—Learning Disorder or Creative Gift? 2010

OR: go to <http://www.daviddyslexia.com.au/teacher-training.html> to find out about Davis Learning Strategies professional development for junior primary teachers.



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That's the number of days we have left in our present office at 33 Crompton Road. By the beginning of November we have to find a new premises. Well, maybe not new but different. We hope it will be more roomy, better and more suited to the needs of the students who come and do the Program.

If all goes well, the next newsletter will have good news about our new location.