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What You Might Not Know About Dyslexia

BY SUSAN E. MURRAY

In plain English, having dyslexia means a person has difficulty remembering and determining visual shapes. For those who know a bit about dyslexia, most know it causes a disconnect in the ability to perceive and discriminate letters and words. But there's more to it than that.

Affecting more males than females, these challenges often show up in the early school years. It is important to know that dyslexia does not affect general intelligence.

It's also important to know that dyslexia is about more than early reading or writing challenges. Some children show few signs of early reading and writing difficulties, but later on they may have trouble with complex language skills such as grammar, reading comprehension and more in-depth writing. They may omit letters, words or even add new ones. This can be due to the brain failing to acknowledge that the word others see is even there!

As noted above, dyslexia affects language, reading and writing, but it also affects a child's emotional and behavioral reactions to life:

From ages 5–8, other symptoms include difficulty in rhyming words, repeating what has been said, learning to speak and staying focused. Children begin exhibiting poor self-confidence, poor social skills (which includes making and keeping friends), are easily frustrated and exhibit a quick temper.

From ages 9–13, additional symptoms include difficulty speaking smoothly and understanding directions, including the rules of grammar and vocabulary. They don't enjoy reading, and have difficulty learning and remembering new words. Remembering numbers, word math problems and understanding spelling rules hold special challenges.



They don't do as well on tests as expected. They have a hard time maintaining a positive attitude, assuming a good sense of direction, learning new games and other new skills.

By ages 14–18, along with the above symptoms, they may have difficulty getting to a point quickly, fully developing ideas, and being logical and organized. They struggle with identifying their own social strengths and weaknesses, dealing with being teased, making and keeping friends, identifying what others are feeling, and dealing with unexpected challenges.

Children who struggle with dyslexia but have not been diagnosed don't receive the additional support they need academically. Depending on their personality, these children may have to work very hard to memorize and organize information classmates and others their age find easy ... and they don't know why.

If there is a child in your life who exhibits these types of issues and you have questioned why, dyslexia may be at the root of their challenges. The earlier a child receives support in these areas and their school can compensate for their needs, all will benefit.

Susan E. Murray is a professor emerita of behavioral sciences at Andrews University, certified family life educator, and licensed marriage and family therapist.

Suggested Resources: <http://www.dyslexiaexplained.com>, <http://www.offalydyslexiagroup.org> and <http://www.LearningAlly.org>