

Dyslexia..... The “hidden disability”.

“ I don’t suffer from dyslexia I live with it and work with it. I suffer from the ignorance of people who think they know what I can and cannot do” (*1)

What is DYSLEXIA?

The word dyslexia is made up of two different parts: “Dys” meaning “not or difficult”, and “lexia” meaning words, reading or language. So quite literally, dyslexia means difficulty with words. (Catts & Kamhi,2005) One of the most common misunderstanding about this condition is that dyslexia is a problem of letters, words or sentence reversals e.g. ‘b’ read as ‘d’ and ‘was’ read as ‘saw’. Letters may seem to be “dancing around” on the page (*2).

A comprehensive definition of dyslexia comes from over 20 years of research—

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. Although there is no universally recognized definition of dyslexia, the one presented by the World Federation of Neurology has won broad respect. “A disorder manifested by difficulty in learning to read despite conventional instruction, adequate intelligence and socio-cultural opportunity. It is dependent upon fundamental cognitive disabilities which are frequently of constitutional origin ”

The single most important hallmark of dyslexia is underachievement in writing and reading.

There are several characteristics of dyslexia which may appear singly but more often in combinations.

Characteristics of Dyslexia: -

- Problems with reading, accuracy, speed and comprehension.
- Repeated spelling errors.
- Reversal of orientation of letters or sequences of letters in words, when read or written e.g. b-d, was- saw, quite- quiet.
- Errors in letter naming.
- Difficulty in learning and remembering printed words.
- Cramped or illegible handwriting.
- Difficulty in finding the “right” word when speaking.
- Slow rate of reading
- Lack of awareness of sounds in words – sound order, rhymes etc.

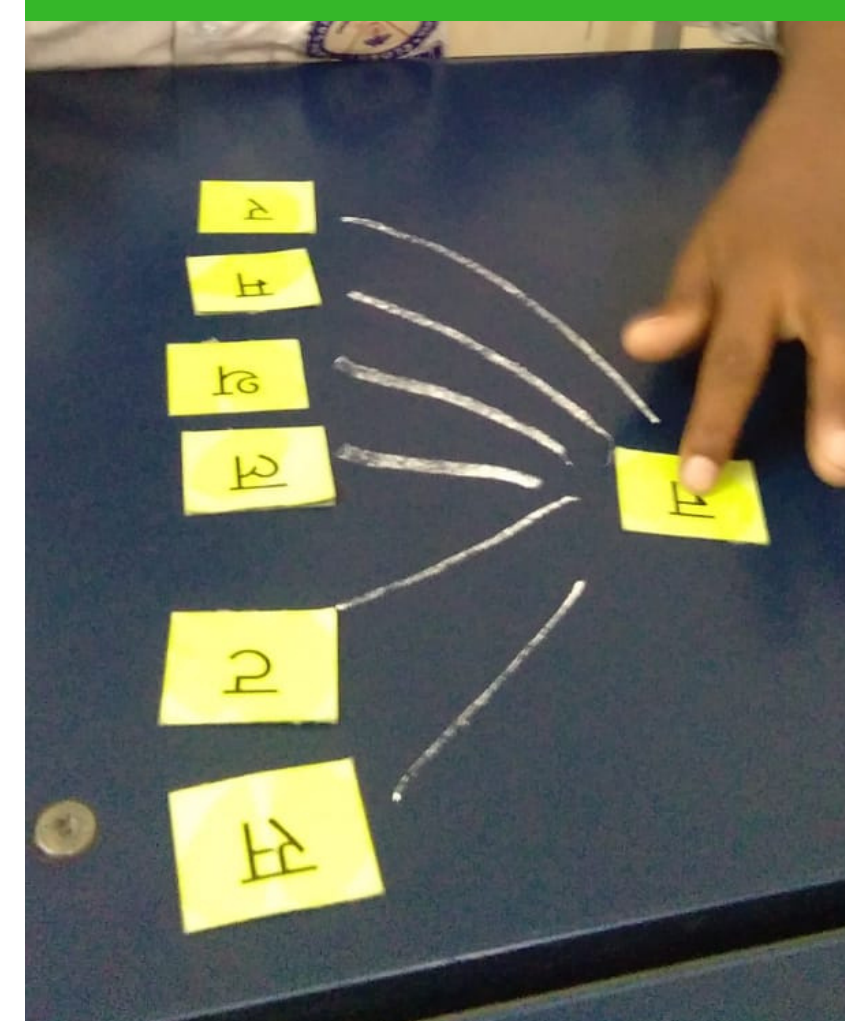
Characteristics that may accompany dyslexia: -

- Confusion about directions in space or time (right and left, up and down, yesterday and tomorrow, days and months)
- May coexist with other special educational needs – dyscalculia, dyspraxia, ADHD/ADD
- Occurs across all socio-economic groups and affects different people differently.
- Dyslexia does NOT imply an impaired person – Einstein, Edison, Leonardo Da Vinci, Hans Christian Anderson, George Patton, Woodrow Wilson, Nelson Rockefeller and our own Abhishek Bachchan and Aamir Khan – ALL have found success despite having dyslexia.

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Strategies for working with students with dyslexia: -

- Recognize the frustration and confusion.
- Provide support.
- Encourage drafting and redrafting.
- Encourage self-correction.
- Practice memory games.
- Use structured Multisensory Literacy Program.
- Contextual cues, look and say, Phonics, Punctuations and word shapes.
- Graded reading program.
- Rehearsal reading.
- Provide opportunities to re-learn and over learn.

The choice is ours.

Education is a fundamental right of every child. All children should receive an education appropriate to their needs. In the case of dyslexia, the concept that they require alternative teaching strategies is only now beginning to be acknowledged by many Educators. A “Hidden disability” is hard to accept and understand. The student with dyslexia must be diagnosed so that they may get appropriate help. The feeling that diagnosis will label children with dyslexia must be worked on. If we don't give it a name and if we don't recognize it, we can't provide the required help. Thus hampering the child's chances of becoming a fully contributing member of society.



References *

1. ERICA COOK
2. Rayner, Foorman, Perfetti, Pesetsky & Seidenberg, 2001