

Dyslexic Advantage

NEWSLETTER

MIND WANDERING



- CAREER ADVICE FROM FELLOW DYSLEXICS
- DR BROCK EIDE PODCAST
- MUSIC AND DYSLEXIA INTERVIEW SALLY DAUNT
- DYSLEXIA NEWS



Fernette Eide MD, Editor

Dear Friends,

We're hoping you're finding a way to stay cool! This issue has an update on mind wandering, because there have been so many advances in our understanding of how mind wandering is related to thinking, creativity, and problem solving. I'm also happy to announce a new course on STEM for Diverse Learners. This is such an important topic and can provide 15 STEM clock hours for teachers on completion.



Huge shout-out of thanks for our sponsors, Premium subscribers, and donors! Check out all of the amazing life-changing resources they provide!

The **NEUROLEARNING** Dyslexia Screening App is \$29.99 and available for children and adults 7-70 years old. iPad, iPhone, Android, and Kindle Fire.



PREMIUM

The app may be used to identify and qualify for services such as Benetech.

Thank you volunteers Shelley Wear, Trish Seres, Dayna Russell Freudenthal, and Michelle Wiliams for their astute critique and proofing. Thanks to Lady Grace Belarmino for beautiful design and layout.

Editor's Note: to make our publications easier to read, we will avoid use of italics and certain types of fonts.

Newsletters can be read online **HERE**. This issue will be available on the Joomag site for 3 months and can also be downloaded as a pdf file.



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DYSLEXIA NEWS

MIND WANDERING, READING, and DYSLEXIA

“My mind is very visual: I can see anything in pictures, and I always visualize things.” I can’t help it. It’s how I’m wired. So whatever you talk about, I’ll see pictures in my head. Very vivid, colorful, lifelike pictures. They aren’t still pictures. I can make them move. Reality, fiction, whatever. I really have to pull it back in to get focused. It was also a problem in the classroom because I’d sit there and imagine where I’d want to be, and what I’d want to do, and what I wanted to become, and I’d think happy thoughts, and I’d just be tuned out the whole time in class.”

- dyslexic CEO Glenn Bailey

Does this sound like you or does this not sound like you?

Having spoken to people with very vivid imagery like this and others who say they have no imagery at all, it's surprising that more research into the process of mind wandering or daydreaming hasn't been done up to this point in time.

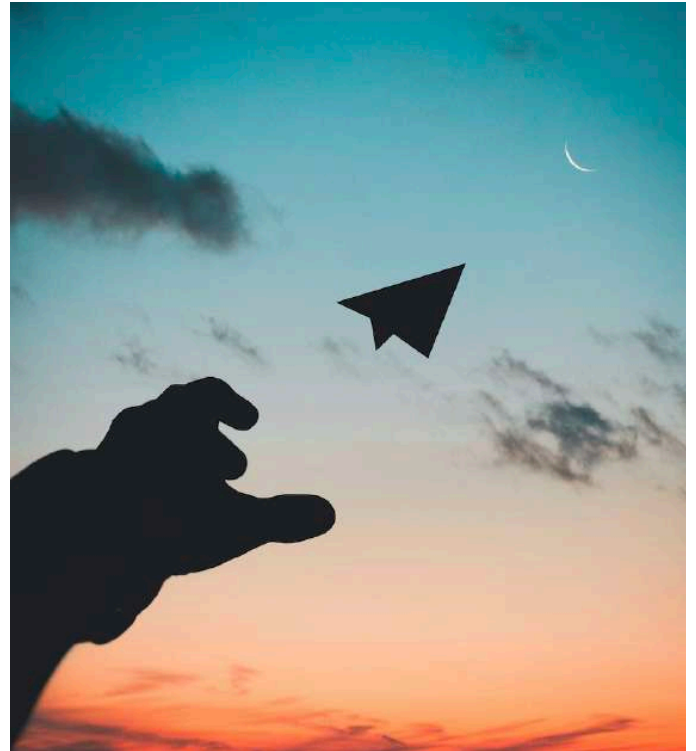
Brain researchers now know that mind wandering is an active process of the brain rather than a passive loss of focus. As the mind wanders, it drifts away from any task at hand.

The brain centers associated with mind wandering are part of the default mode network, an area of great interest in those also studying creativity.

From [Cerebral Cortex 25:3502-3514](#): “we found that connectivity between multiple reading-related areas and areas of the default mode network, in particular the precuneus, was stronger in dyslexic compared with nonimpaired readers.”

It is interesting to see that different research groups studying mind wandering tend to take different positions as to whether mind wandering is "bad" or "good. "

It looks bad if mind wandering is what study subjects are doing when their speed and accuracy of reading comprehension are being tested, but in fact, researchers have found that mind wandering occurs often in their tests. When people are asked, they will say they are thinking about their day, themselves, others, or what they will do in the future.



Mind wandering is not just inattentiveness. It also seems to be important for certain types of problem solving and creative thought.

Chicken-egg questions arise when thinking about the impact of mind wandering on reading comprehension.

Unsworth and McMillan (2013), for instance, found that mind wandering while reading is affected by people's motivation to read, working memory, and the difficulty of text. Could dyslexics experience mind wandering because of the stress of text complexity plus working memory overload?

My goal is not to persuade you that reading is unnatural to dyslexics, but rather to raise awareness of how some dyslexic readers may struggle with over-active mind wandering with reading - especially if the text is difficult, there is lower motivation to read a particular text, and working memory could be overloaded.

On a practical level, if you are trying to help a student who seems to get hopelessly derailed when sitting down to read complex text, then try to prime the pump as much as you can before the reading is set to begin.



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INVITE INTEREST

Try to pique curiosity or interest in a book by talking about it, raising a question about it, or reading the first chapter with plenty of emotion. As a group, dyslexics may have strong sensory imaginations when listening to exciting texts, so setting the scene can get a certain amount of momentum going so it's easier for the student to keep going with the rest of the text. Reading the first chapter also often identifies main characters and setting, reducing working memory demands when students encounter those names and words in the text.

LISTEN ALONG WITH READING

For students who are able to listen and read along at the same time, give that a try for reducing working memory demands while reading; it is not cheating. In fact, doing so can increase printed word recognition as well as reading endurance in general.

COULD STRONG DEFAULT MODE NETWORK ACTIVATION CONTRIBUTE TO THE LATE BLOOMING NATURE OF DYSLEXIA?

Answer: It certainly could! With what we know about dyslexia wiring, there is a bias toward long connections in the brain which could facilitate more unusual / creative ideas and complex thinking, but before maturation is complete, it also could put more demands on working memory and executive function. It should come as no surprise then that stronger default mode network activation (and therefore mind wandering) can make a linear progression through formal schooling difficult at best.

The purpose of sharing this scientific insight is to know what you're dealing with, whether it's you, your child, or your spouse (or all 3!). There is a lot that can be inconvenient about dyslexic wiring and parenting has more art about it than science. Knowing what to do and what not to do is a continuing challenge.

MIND WANDERING...THE USERS GUIDE

Some of you may recall that at one of our conferences on Dyslexia and Innovation, we invited a researcher to speak on Mind Wandering. Since that meeting, he's added considerably more to the understanding of this interesting higher order thinking phenomenon.



TABLET-BASED DYSLEXIA

- **Dyslexia Subscale Scores range from 1 to 10.**
- **A score of 5 is average on each subscale.**
- *Higher scores indicate which processing systems or skills are contributing most to elevating your Total Dyslexia Score, and to any dyslexia-associated challenges you are experiencing.*

Your Dyslexia Subscale Scores Are:



Sub Word Processing: 7



Working Memory: 7



Naming / Retrieval: 10



Visual Attention: 7

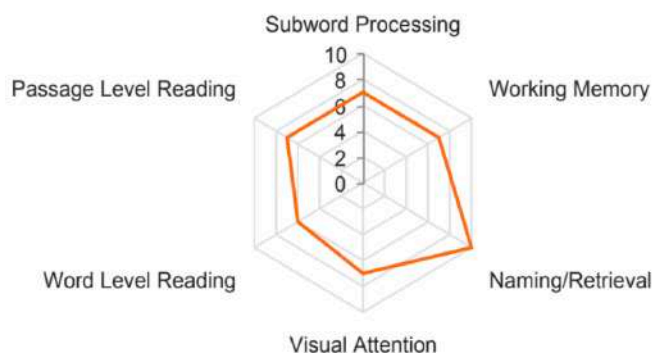


Word Level Reading: 6



Passage Level Reading: 7

Dyslexia Subscale Scores



The radar graph of your scores provides a quick overview of your Dyslexia Subscale Scores. The further a particular score is from the center of the graph, the greater the likelihood it represents a dyslexia-associated processing trait.

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Creative ideas of physicists and writers often occur during mind wandering and Schooler and his colleagues found that mind wander spells were especially fruitful for creatives who were looking to have a breakthrough in a problem they were working through.

Being aware of one's tendencies to mind wander and how mind wandering can be used to work on problems can lead to greater productivity and less frustration.

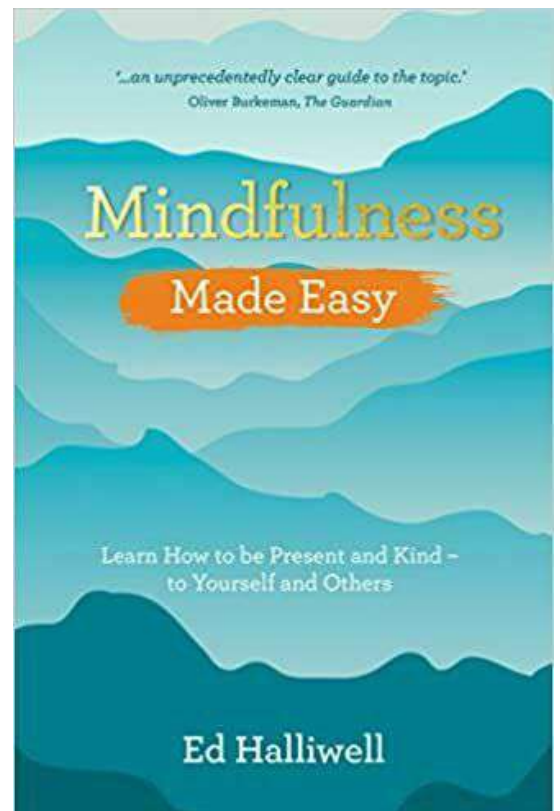
Dr. Edward Halliwell, psychologist and author of [Driven to Distraction](#) has talked about his dyslexia as well as his ADHD. He likens ADHD to having a brain like a Ferrari race car engine - very powerful, but also potentially hard to stop (he imagines the Ferrari engine with bicycle brakes).

If we don't see mind wandering in and of itself as a "bad" or deficit-type thing, really what we are trying to do is to learn how to control it - to use it when it will help us, but to keep it under control when we want it under control.

Mindfulness is what Halliwell is calling for in his Mindfulness Made Easy book.

"In order to notice that the mind has wandered, and be able to return it to attention, there must be something bigger than that mind, a wider perspective that can observe the distraction. That wider perspective is awareness.

Awareness sees the whole picture. With it, we can experience life with a more open lens. We might think it's a bad thing to notice the mind drifting, but actually the reverse is true. The fact we can see it means we're opening to greater consciousness. It's true that in mindfulness practice we're cultivating a capacity to attend with greater stillness, stability, and strength. But with awareness, we can discover a way of being that isn't caught in the reactive jumble of thought, sensation, and impulse, even when attention is drawn to it."



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Scan here to hear what one PTA has to say
about the ReaderPens they purchased



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MIND WANDERING WHILE READING - DEEPER DIVE

But one thing that's particularly interesting is a deepening in science's understanding of the different types of mind wandering that exist while reading. A nice overview of the scientific literature has come in a *Frontiers in Psychology* article ([here](#)).

Jonathan and his colleagues, for instance, have noted that some types of mind wandering occur with a subject's awareness and at least partial control ("tuned out"), where as other events ("zoned out") seem to occur with less awareness, surprising the reader once they have come to the end of a mind wandering episode.

How often do we consider mind wandering when students struggle with reading? Probably not enough. We can sort through the possibilities by asking the student and trying to see if higher interest-texts or priming the reading or even scaffolding improve understanding.

One study of mind wandering found the greatest extent of wandering occurred with listening; after that, was silent reading, and finally, the least mind wandering occurred when people were asked to read aloud.

One thing that these studies haven't connected to, though is to what extent mind wandering is linked to personal imagery. A young student comes to mind who was seen our clinic. He was a bright and creative child with mild auditory processing difficulties, but also with strong imagistic thinking. He freely admitted that when he listened in class, they strongly evoked pictures - and then he could go off into daydreaming.

What turned out being a good match for him was Gander Publishing (Lindamood Bell's) Visualizing and Verbalizing. The approach is fairly simple - accurate repeating back at the sentence level, then paragraph, page, then eventually pages.



What his tutor found out is that he had many false images triggered by listening or reading stories.

His mind wandering was not "off-task" in the usual meaning of the word. He was on-task, but once it hit his vivid imagining brain, the information was changed and his perception was no longer exactly what was heard or down on a printed page.

There is no magic with the Visualizing and Verbalizing curriculum. He just received regular practice in describing back what he had heard or read, improving his rigor of images, avoiding imagining what wasn't actually said or heard. Ultimately, his listening became a little super power. He had disciplined himself to make accurate images of what was heard or read, and he did not have to take notes.

More recently, there has been a growing movement to include the positive sides of mind wandering and some creatives even recommend enhancing it - at appropriate times and for creative purposes.

From Fabry and Kukkonen's Frontiers [article](#):

"Based on the studies on relationship between mind-wandering and reading we have reviewed above, one might get the impression that reading is simply understood as the opposite of mind-wandering: on task, goal-directed and stimulus-dependent. There are many cases, however, in which reading does not have all these properties, which are worth considering in more detail. How often do we read a newspaper article with the intention to retain its main points in memory? How often are we just curious to check what it is about before we completely forget about it? Is our goal when we pick up Jane Austen's (2008/1811) *Sense and Sensibility* to mine it for whatever information it holds about Regency Britain? Are we actually interested in tracing the intricacies of Austen's plot? Aren't readers rather looking for a kind of flow-state in literary reading that resembles mind-wandering in that readers detach their attention from the here and now?"

In any case, as scientists and researchers debate the different applications and purposes of mind wandering and reading, teachers, parents, and readers of all sorts should do the same. What are we searching or hoping to instill in our reading?



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National Center for Learning Disabilities, the International Dyslexia Association have evaluated the Sonday System(r) and deemed that the program contained the required elements for teaching reading identified by the Nation Reading Panel.

The best answer is that we should have multiple purposes in reading - reading for enjoyment (Csikszentmihalyi's flow), but also reading for information and reading for deep analysis (like dense literary texts or poetry).

Readers who have strong movies in their head when they read, may struggle putting their perceptions into words - whether aloud in a classroom discussion or down

on paper for exams. Images by themselves can also invite false memories; these false memories can have creative benefits, but also penalize students academically when verbatim responses are only what are rewarded. Obviously, extremes of mind wandering and inability to mind wander are problematic; the challenge is finding

the right balance and being able to create opportunities as well as some control.

In the video below, enjoy Dr. Michael Corballis' suggestions for enhancing mind wandering and its positive aspects:



MUSIC AND DYSLEXIA:

Chat with Sally Daunt, Chair of the Music Committee of the BDA

Recently, I had a wonderful opportunity to chat with Sally Daunt, Chairwoman of the Music Committee of the British Dyslexia Association.

We had been corresponding about dyslexia and choral groups and Sally had asked about how dyslexic strengths can manifest themselves in choral groups where singers had to fit into tightly controlled schedules of music, extensive sight reading, and music performances which could have limited opportunities for musical interpretation.

From my discussion with Sally:



"Many dyslexic musicians have difficulty with sight reading - and perhaps cathedral choirs might consider whether an absolute requirement is necessary in the audition process. Some who have difficulty with sight reading might be able to pick music up quite quickly having heard a version once. In theater companies, some accommodations are made by letting auditioners take home a part a night before, for instance, rather than having an on-spot sight reading determine an audition.

Neither Brock nor I have studied musicians in-depth, but when we've come across talented musicians, some have perfect pitch, some have remarkable voices and interpretations of music. In a choral context, this could be when they sing solos or duets, I would imagine. Dyslexic students may have strengths in emotional sensitivity (there was at least one study from UCSF) which could translate to music.

Strengths in the context that you mention could be in terms of an ability to work well with others, a good ear for singing in cooperation with other singers, and personal traits of strong emotional EQ, camaraderie, and leadership.

Listening to music does involve both hemispheres of the brain, but the right hemisphere seems to be especially important for melody and emotional aspects of music, which I would think would be important for choirs. It is true that lyrics are more commonly processed on the left, but if I had the choice of listening to someone with a strong melodic sense and emotional musicality vs. someone who knew all the lyrics, I would definitely choose the right hemispheric strengths.

Hopefully, this is helpful. It is a fascinating area. There are some dyslexic musicians who really live their music all the time - they may have powerful images with music and set their lives to music, and express themselves more directly in music. They definitely are wonderful to listen to."

Here is my interview with Sally. Due to bandwidth problems, my web camera is off.



We spoke on a wide range of subjects - from the high incidence of dyslexia in one study of orchestral musicians, to issues that can affect sight reading, rhythm, and musical intervals. Sally's interview with Anna Devin can be seen below. Opera singing has the demands of singing in foreign languages.

In the video at right, Anna shared some of her observations about how she could learn more efficiently - learning music while moving was helpful to her, as was marking up a score in sections and using colored highlights to get the shape of music. She likes to sing in harmony with a pianist early in the process. Anna shares how she uses spider diagrams to break down the learning of text.



Sally also shared with me a story about an orchestral musician who was practicing in this era of COVID with social distancing and found that she had a much harder time knowing where she was in the music. It reminded me of how my daughter told me she could sometimes say her Bible verses if she was tested at the same time with another student. She told me she would 'guess' at the next words she was going to say even she wasn't sure of the words. This sensitivity or social perception would probably be helpful in all sorts of group activities - whether in musical groups or other groups.

Do check out my interview with Sally to hear more. She also shared the wide variety of resources that the Music Committee of the BDA has posted online and where we've put down links on the following page.

It is possible to ask for accommodations for dyslexic students in music school. Some examples include, the option to use musical software like flat.io to color, option to mark up a score with a colored highlighter, or a little extra time for sight reading exams.

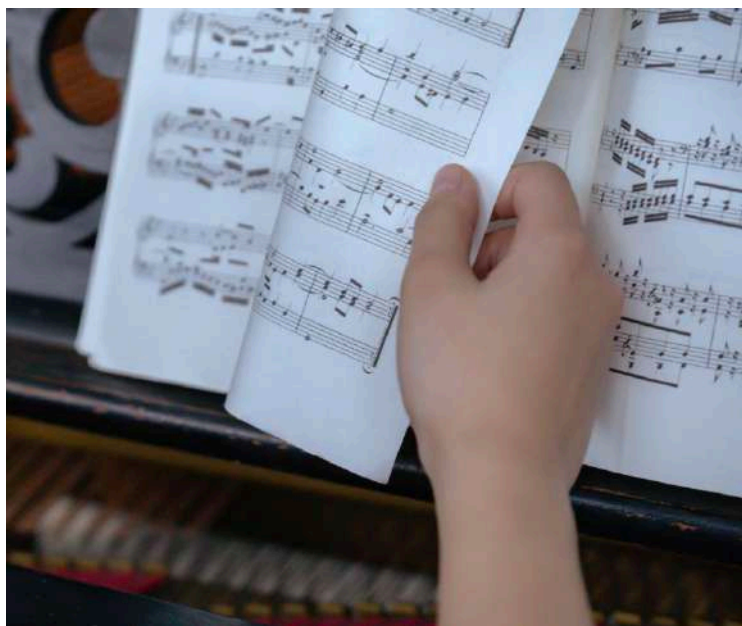
**Thanks to the British Dyslexia Music Committee
for these wonderful resources on Dyslexia and Music:**



A Pianist's Story



Accommodations for Music Exams

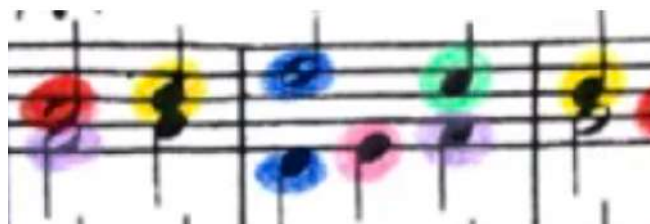


Learning Music



Sight Reading

From Instructables, low tech color coding
of music with colored pencils:



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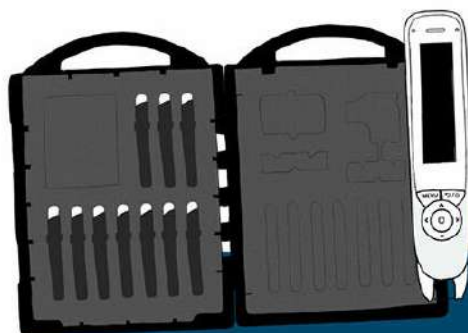
All across America, Educators are working diligently on their catch-up strategies to help students overcome literacy obstacles that may have arisen over the past year.

Given the academic year we have just had, setting up effective summer learning will be no easy task. For many students, the opportunity to sustain high-quality learning during the summer will make all the difference in the fall.

Whatever your plans might be, this summer will be unique for everyone which means it's the perfect time to provide your students with the best tools to meet their full potential. Adopt some proven text-to-speech supports into your current strategies to nurture student independence. It's a game-changer!

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Episode 23: The Dyslexic Advantage, with Dr. Brock Eide

🕒 2021-06-22

Download

In this Episode, I interviewed Dr. Brock Eide about *The Dyslexic Advantage*, a bestselling book written by him and his wife, Dr. Fernette Eide. *The Dyslexic Advantage* opened my eyes to the unique cognitive strengths of individuals with dyslexia that are often overlooked. As children with dyslexia develop, they often feel punished for their struggles with reading and writing without the acknowledgement of their strengths, and their self-esteem can suffer as a result.

I discussed with Dr. Brock Eide aspects of learning and brain physiology for individuals with dyslexia, and he presents a compelling argument why the "dyslexic brain" presents an evolutionary advantage for humans by giving some individuals unique sets of cognitive strengths. In fact, he argues that at least 20% of all people fall somewhere on the dyslexic processing style spectrum.

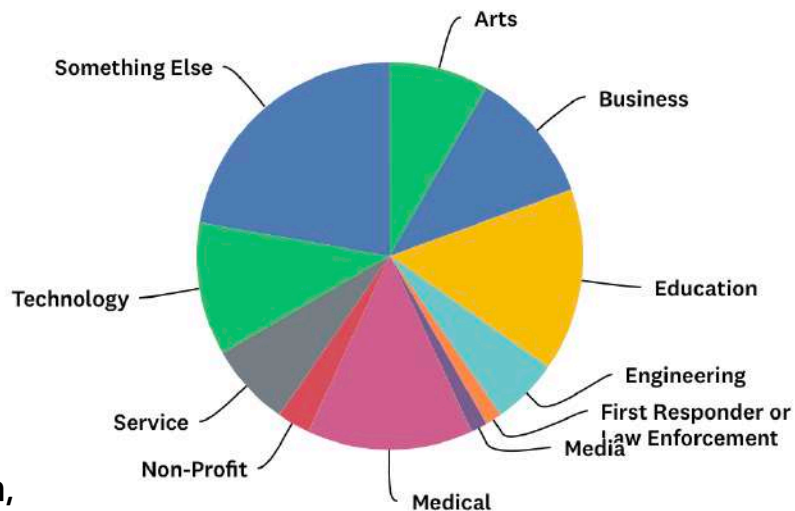
Brock Eide is co-author of the bestselling book *The Dyslexic Advantage* and *The Mislabeled Child*. He is an international authority who has lectured and written widely on dyslexia and learning differences, and has been a consultant to the President's Council of Bioethics and a visiting lecturer at the Stanford Graduate School of Education. He is co-founder of the 501c3 non-profit dyslexicadvantage.org, and is currently CEO of Neurolearning, SPC, a company that makes a dyslexia screening test app and other tools to help people with dyslexia.

CAREERS ADVICE: FROM FELLOW DYSLEXICS...

As things are opening up again, many will consider what they really want from their careers. If you haven't taken our job survey before, please consider doing it [HERE](#):

It is for dyslexic adults only.

Here is the sampling of jobs from this survey:



Highest sectors included "something else", education, medical, technology, and business.

Many of the respondents answered before the COVID years, but "something else" included careers in architecture, agriculture, hospitality, wildlife management, social work, and non-profit.

WHAT TYPE OF WORK SHOULD BE AVOIDED?

The consensus was clearly repetitive work and jobs that don't value individuality or creativity. Many respondents expressed the importance of being able to create



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your own rules and work environment. Many had cautions about jobs with extensive desk work, but some also said administrative jobs were possible with a secretary.

"Basically, you will need to go for a position where you will be able to lead. Working under bosses less bright than you are will be unsatisfactory because if the boss is not at your level they will be uneasy about you."

"Jobs where each step is "choreographed"... face it our Brains ARE different so it frequently will just NOT work for us to try to do things the same ways non-dyslexic people do."

"Jobs in which you are not required to think outside the box."

"Working in a large firm where there is a lot of boring tedious work."

JOBS THAT ARE GOOD FOR DYSLLEXIC PEOPLE

"Work in the gray areas where no one knows the rules. Where you are adding value to the community you work within and the world."

"I've only had a career as an IT tech and software dev, but my guess is this applies no matter what you do for a living. The problem solving aspect of dev work is really appealing for dyslexics. Also, understanding your personality type will help you cope with how you communicate and handle conflict with colleagues / bosses. And finding the right company is an important too. Companies that are very fast paced / hard deadline, will put a lot of strain on you. our minds don't usually perform better under stress, but worse. Smaller companies are going to require more responsibility and rely on you more to perform quickly and with large amounts of productivity. larger ones are more likely to share the work load and not put as much strain on the team to perform and meet deadlines."

"Music, technology, and the caring professions."

"Healthcare is a little bit more understanding."

"Any job that requires organizational skills. It is one of the dyslexic coping skills."

PREMIUM ISSUE SIXTY-SEVEN JULY 2021

Dyslexic Advantage PREMIUM MAGAZINE



COGNITIVE OVERLOAD

- HANDS-ON MATH RONIT BIRD
- JUSTIN JOHNSON TECH EXECUTIVE
- CONCEPT MAPS
- DYSLEXIC TALENTS IN STEM: CHEMISTRY
- LOOKING AHEAD TO SCHOOL: BEYOND COVID

PREMIUM RECENT ISSUE



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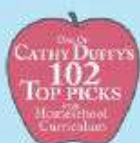
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"The traditional entry through credentials, resumes, and cover letters may not be your best entry. Disregard what others tell you. Do the things that you can do that add to the human experience. Your uniqueness is what matters the most. Then work really hard at it. You may have to work a lot harder than others."

"Do what makes you happy and what you enjoy."

"Ask what kinds of work give you energy and notice what tasks drain you. "

"Try different jobs and be honest with your employer. "

"Choose whatever job suits you even if you have to quit 100 times. "

"Find what interests you or what you're passionate about. With all the struggles associated with LD, going after something you don't care about can make it that much harder to rise above academic challenges."

"Choose something that is a passion or a hobby. "

"A career that uses your intellectual strengths."

"I happen to be in Computers, Math was not that bad but Chemistry I didn't do well. Programming I do very well and when I started out I was able to see my finished code in my head prior to finishing what I wrote. This allowed me to advance quickly. People are amazed at my troubleshooting skills."

"Don't get anything overly "structured", nothing where "time on task" is monitored or "efficiency experts" have all the movements, etc. choreographed like some bizarre ballet. Instead go for things where you have a particular thing to get done, but where you can structure HOW you do it. Then consider your "differences" a good thing, maybe you will find a better creative solution, (just make sure they actually work under all conditions). I'm in IT & have had people complement me on my "different" way of approaching things. But it doesn't HAVE to be in the IT field. Like I mentioned go for jobs where there is a well defined "thing" to be done (so you will not be mixed up about what you are expected to accomplish) but HOW it gets done is up to you."

"Do internships in middle/ high school, start volunteering in middle/high school, see whats out there, before you decide on a major."

"See how you contribute positively to others. DO THINGS, get experience, and then move on. You can always come back. This helps to filter where your strengths and weaknesses lie."

"You should never stop evolving yourself. Career paths change and morph into new ones. Do what you're passionate about."

"Find jobs you enjoy doing. I loved to repair broken things. I had a bag of tricks that the fireman called the box that had many good parts for lawn mowers and cars and trucks that could fix things."

"Choose something where your dyslexic skills are desirable and you will be reminded that you are smart and valuable repeatedly. Also, don't feel like you have to choose. You can also go with the flow and follow your passions. You will eventually find your niche. "

"Follow your passion and get a virtual assistant or software that suits your needs. Self-employment is a good option for learning in the real world!"

"I started with mundane jobs. Each job was better than the last and eventually I ended up with what I wanted to do."

"Try to do something in a field you're interested in. If you choose the wrong area, change, move on, time and happiness are precious."

"Be aware of jobs that require productions and tediousness. Those can be a challenge for dyslexics who need more time."

"Dyslexics have a unique ability to see matters from multiple perspectives. Look for careers that help you do just that, whether that is in a corporate setting (like me) or in more physical work."

"I have great success in sales. Most of my job is verbal and I work at my own pace."



Michigan Schools Revolt: Won't Flunk Struggling 3rd Grade Readers

Bridge Michigan



Dyslexia is Not Like Other Learning Disabilities Kevin O'Leary - Shark Tank

Yahoo Finance



Can Dyslexia Be an Asset?

Fair Observer



Complementary Cognition Theory Suggests Adaptive Role for Dyslexia

Technology Networks



Dyslexia Non-Profit Wins \$25K Prize to Help Dyslexia Advocacy in Minority Communities

Johns Hopkins Hub

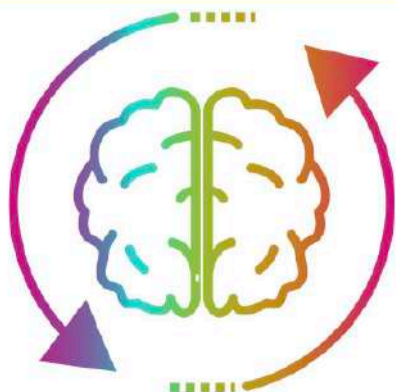


Invention Education for the Classroom (author dyslexic inventor)

Forbes

PREMIUM ISSUE SIXTY-SEVEN JULY 2021

Dyslexic Advantage PREMIUM MAGAZINE



COGNITIVE OVERLOAD

- HANDS-ON MATH RONIT BIRD
- JUSTIN JOHNSON TECH EXECUTIVE
- CONCEPT MAPS
- DYSLEXIC TALENTS IN STEM: CHEMISTRY
- LOOKING AHEAD TO SCHOOL: BEYOND COVID

PREMIUM RECENT ISSUE



- COGNITIVE OVERLOAD
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KOSU - NPR



Why Designers Need to Consider Accessibility in Type
Design Week



New STEM for Diverse Learners Course
Dyslexic Advantage 15 Clock Hours for Teachers




Interview with Margaret Rooke, Dyslexia is My Super Power
Ian Gilbert Live



Alice Thomson - My Family and Other Dyslexics
The Times (UK - Subscription Only)



Bob Ballard Talks Shipwrecks and Sea Creatures
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- Henry Winkler