



"Tapping The Hidden Talent Pool"

Dyspraxia FAQ's

1. What is Dyspraxia?

According to the Dyspraxia foundation, Dyspraxia is best defined as 'an impairment or immaturity of the organisation of movement. Research from the Dyspraxia foundation indicates that around one in ten people in the UK may suffer from it to varying and lesser extents. Yet, most people still know little or nothing about Dyspraxia in the workplace or society. Dyspraxia like most areas of Neurodiversity is a hidden difference so many people will not immediately understand or see that a person with Dyspraxia has a disability. Other names for Dyspraxia are developmental coordination disorder, minimal brain dysfunction, motor learning difficulty or perpetuo-motor dysfunction, which for many people can be baffling scientific terms which are not easy to understand.

2. What are the main characteristics of Dyspraxia?

The main core characteristics of Dyspraxia in individuals tend to be but are not limited to the following difficulties:

Visual and auditory perception – A person with Dyspraxia may struggle in environments with fluorescent lighting, loud noises and open plan office spaces which can cause them to be distracted and lose focus with the task at hand. It can also cause considerable stress and anxiety if the environment they are in is not visually and auditory sensitive to their needs.

Spatial awareness – A person with Dyspraxia might struggle with spatial awareness in various scenarios. A person with Dyspraxia might have difficulties with navigation when travelling through crowded spaces, using stairs or ladders. This may also manifest itself when a person with Dyspraxia is learning to drive and spatial awareness can also be a challenge in social situations when a person with Dyspraxia is seeking social interactions with their peers.

Balance – Difficulties with balance for a person with Dyspraxia are often a consequence of other factors such as low muscle tone, and coordination difficulties. Balance is another factor which can make it difficult for people with Dyspraxia to learn new skills such as riding a bike or learning to skate.

Coordination – Issues with coordination will arise often as a result of poor muscle tone and poor coordination. This can cause difficulties when learning to ride a bike or perhaps holding a pen or cutlery properly. Difficulties with coordination can have a major impact on daily life for a person with Dyspraxia. As a consequence, it can affect their confidence and emotional and physical well-being.

3. How do I get a diagnosis of Dyspraxia?

Dyspraxia is a complicated neurological difference and as such there is no formal diagnostic criteria. However, in order to get a diagnosis of Dyspraxia, it is first necessary to see a doctor or GP who will refer an individual to an occupational or speech and language therapist. Doctors will usually refer individuals with Dyspraxia to an occupational therapist who specialises in physical Dyspraxia or to a psychologist who can look at the cognitive aspects of Dyspraxia. At this stage of the process an individual may be referred to a neurologist for diagnosis in conjunction with support from an occupational therapist.

4. What are the main workplace challenges for employees with Dyspraxia?

Some of the main workplace for people with Dyspraxia will include but are not limited to:

- Postural discomfort when sitting at a desk for long periods of time.
- Muscle and joint problems which can cause back, wrist and arm pain when working at a computer or lifting heaving items.
- Clumsiness, trips, bumps, and even falls.
- Difficulties when operating machinery and equipment.
- Bright office lighting.
- Planning and organisational skills.
- Time management.
- Memory deficits that can lead to slower processing speeds and automaticity.

5. What is one of the main barriers to employment for people with Dyspraxia?

People with Dyspraxia like many of the other areas of Neurodiversity will experience significant hurdles when trying to obtain access to the labour market. One particular challenge that many with Dyspraxia have is disclosing their Dyspraxia on a job application form. For many there is a fear of being omitted from the employee lifecycle process before it has even begun if they disclose that they have Dyspraxia. Sadly, their fears are often not too far wide of the mark. According to research by the Dyspraxia Foundation only 33% of people with Dyspraxia have access to reasonable adjustments in the workplace. Put simply not enough employers know about Dyspraxia to be able to make reasonable adjustments throughout the employee lifecycle process. So, invariably employers will often subtly look for reasons to omit candidates with Dyspraxia from the interview process.

6. What strategies can employers put in place to understand Dyspraxia in the workplace?

As a specialist neurodiversity consultancy firm, we advise organisations that training and education creates a culture of awareness, understanding and acceptance in the workplace. If employers are aware of Dyspraxia and the common characteristics of Dyspraxia then they will be able to implement appropriate reasonable adjustments. It is important for employers to consider that although employees with Dyspraxia might have a slower processing speed with new tasks, once a task has been mastered, the chances are that the employee will often be highly competent at that task. Furthermore, it is important to factor in that people with Dyspraxia think differently and may bring new ideas and approaches into the business. So, as an organisation it is important to provide employees with Dyspraxia a psychologically safe working environment where they can bring their ideas and ways of working to the table in an environment and culture that celebrates their differences.

7. What are the workplace strengths of Dyspraxia?

Employees with Dyspraxia have a considerable level of strengths that can add value to any organisation if they are given the opportunity to do so. For example, people with Dyspraxia will often have a high level of verbal intelligence and an aptitude for language which can lead to a substantial vocabulary. Often when assessed they will perform highly in verbal tasks. According to the Dyspraxia Foundation many people with Dyspraxia are very creative, determined, persistent and intelligent. Another key strength of people with Dyspraxia is their ability to think strategically and to

problem solve. Often for people with Dyspraxia these critical thinking skills will become more applicable at secondary school and beyond. Inventiveness is seen as a result of the attributes that are typically associated with strong Dyspraxic thinking, where the lateral, problem-solving nature of the thinking often makes associations between ideas which might instantly be connected or correlated, leading to inventive solutions.

8. Why are reasonable adjustments necessary?

Reasonable adjustments in the workplace are necessary not just for people who have Dyspraxia but also for others who identify as neurodivergent. For example, it is estimated globally that around 30-40% of the worlds population are neurodiverse. Research in the United States has also interestingly shown that organisations who have a Neurodiversity network or Employee Resource Group have seen an average 50% increase of neurodiverse talent into their workplaces. This demonstrates that hiring people with Neurodiversity isn't just the right thing to do it is the smart thing to do.

Reasonable adjustments also create a level playing field in the workplace and as our research shows it also creates a diverse workforce, where innovation, problem solving and creative thinking is actively allowed to flourish. Research also from the United States has shown that organisations hiring neurodiverse talent into their workplaces have in some instances seen a rise in their population retention by as much as 20%. Furthermore, with the right training, knowledge, and implementation of reasonable adjustments for employees who are Dyspraxic and Neurodivergent an organisation will often reduce their costs on hiring and reasonable adjustments as a consequence. This is often because employees who are neurodivergent if given the right opportunity that plays to their strengths and interests will likely work for that organisation for a longer period of time than a neurotypical employee who may see their role with the organisation as just a 'job'.