

Dyslexia Network Plus

NEWSLETTER SPRING TERM 2009



A word from the Chairperson

IS IT REALLY DYSLEXIA?

VISUAL STRESS AND BINOCULAR INSTABILITY

At our last Annual General Meeting we were delighted to welcome Liz Wood, who gave a talk on Visual Stress (also sometimes known as Meares-Irlen Syndrome or Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome. Her talk was so useful, that it's worth passing on the basics.

What is it? A condition related to light sensitivity that can be responsible for distortions on the printed page, especially when black print contrasts sharply with a white background. It can be a major part of the problem for those who have difficulty reading, including those labelled 'dyslexic'.

What are the classic symptoms? Words 'moving around the page', headaches when reading, blurred words, aching eyes, and the page seeming very bright.

How many people are affected? Between 20% and 5% of the population. It is possible to be dyslexic and have visual stress, or to have either of the conditions separately. Many of the symptoms and effects are similar.

What is the treatment? Visual stress (but not dyslexia) can be cured by overlaying a coloured filter on to the material being read. The colour is specific to each individual and has to be selected with precision. For more information about testing, you can contact Liz Wood on 01757 229 109 or go to the website www.colour2c.co.uk.

And the good news? Dyslexia Network Plus will be training some of its volunteers to administer this test. Watch this space for further news!

Another condition which can be mistaken for dyslexia, and which can also occur alongside dyslexia, is Binocular Instability. This is to do with the muscles of the eyes and symptoms are similar to Visual Stress. Binocular Instability is easily diagnosed and can be corrected with eye exercises. You can get tested at Row's Opticians in Thirsk Market Place, and the half-hour test for a child costs £25.

It makes sense for anyone with reading difficulties to get a test for these two easily-correctable conditions. Although they can both occur alongside dyslexia, it is possible that the problem may not be dyslexia at all. That would make life easier, wouldn't it?

CHANGE OF SECRETARY

Jill Swinhoe stepped down as Secretary at the AGM, and has been replaced by Judith McKenzie. We welcome Judith to the team. She can be contacted on 01609 777566 or mckenzie343@btinternet.com

SO WHAT'S THE GOOD NEWS?

People with dyslexia often have exceptional creative and problem-solving skills. Famous people who have said they have dyslexia include:
Albert Einstein — Robbie Williams — Noel Gallagher — Tom Cruise — Anthea Turner — Guy Ritchie — Richard Branson — Steve Redgrave

OTHER NEWS

The book chain Waterstones has produced a resource guide called 'Waterstone's Guide to Books for Young Dyslexic Readers'. It can be downloaded at www.waterstones.com.

In partnership with Dyslexia Action, Waterstones has named ten books suitable for young readers with dyslexia. Authors who have books on this list include Roald Dahl, Eoin Colfer, Michael Morpurgo, and Jacqueline Wilson. Waterstones selected the books for this list using 'dyslexia-friendly' criteria, such as font size and type, vocabulary, tinted paper, margin type, and short sentences and paragraphs. Details of these books are also on the Waterstones website.

The publisher Barrington Stoke produce dyslexia friendly fiction books on cream paper for all ages. Ask at the library, or go to their website www.barringtonstoke.co.uk, or telephone 0131 225 4113 for a catalogue. Or come to a HERD (Dyslexia Network Plus resources library) and check out what we can offer. You might be surprised!

Yvonne Jackson

LEXION

Lexion is a screening program that we have that will help to identify the learning strengths and weaknesses of children. Having identified the areas of weakness, it then provides exercises for the child to try and remediate the problems. It was developed in Sweden some 18 years ago by a team of speech and language teacher therapists, so has a slightly different perspective from British programs, that were developed by educational psychologists - the major difference being that exercise solutions are provided, once the identification has been made. The program was translated into English about six years ago and has since been norm referenced for British children from 6 - 16.

The screening process is done through a series of activities, which vary according to the age of the child. Once the screening has been completed a graph and comments are provided and if needed, suggestions for activities. The child does not have to do the whole test at one sitting, so they can show themselves in their best light. In most of the tests, if they make 3 consecutive errors, the testing stops, so they are not subjected to obvious failure. To date we have screened three children, two with quite a few issues, which they are now addressing with a programme of exercises on their home computers. The third child, was shown to have mild dyslexic tendencies and whilst his strengths and weaknesses were identified, it was not felt that he needed to follow the remediation programme. In all three cases, the printed profile was useful for showing the child what he was good at, as well as the problem areas; providing specific evidence for parents, tutors and teachers of what they had suspected.



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DROP-IN SESSION

for families with children of all ages
 Wednesdays — Northallerton Children's Centre
 Thursdays — Thirsk Children's Centre
 anytime between 3.30 and 5 pm,
 during term time




HERD (Helpful Educational Resources for Dyslexia)
 is an after school drop-in session run by **Dyslexia Network Plus**

- Members may:
- * borrow fun games and resources
 - * find support and information
 - * just drop-in for a coffee and a chat

Screening is available
 to identify your child's
 specific difficulties
 >phone for information<

Further information: tel 0845 22 60 240 or just drop into a session

- Evening talk at Stokesley Children's Centre, 7.30–9.30 pm,**
- * Dyslexia Awareness for Parents, 26th Jan

- Evening talks at Thirsk Children's Centre, 7.30–9.30 pm,**
- * Dyslexia Awareness for Parents, 23rd Feb
 - * What to do about Reading, 9th March
 - * What to do about Spelling, 23rd March

**PHONE
TO BOOK
TALKS**

- **LEXION (continued ...)**
- DN Plus is providing this screening as a service to help members. The test takes from 1-2 hours, depending on how many rest breaks the child needs.
- The cost for members is £15.00 for the initial screening, plus £10.00 for the use of the MiniLexion cd on their own computer. A later re-screening will cost £12.00 for members. If non-members wish to use the service, the respective costs will be £30.00, £10.00 and £25.00.
- If you wish to use this service, or find out more, come to a HERD session to talk about it or ring 0845 22 60 240
- Judith Stansfield

- **TECHNOLOGY and DYSLEXIA blog**
- It is difficult to keep up with all the latest technology related to dyslexia but now there is a new quick way to find out what is new. **Dr Ian Smythe** has created and designed the Blog which is accessible to everyone by visiting the following website:
<http://technodys.blogspot.com>
- The Blog is updated daily with a review on the first day of each month (so its saves having to read everything - very welcome for dyslexic people!). The Blog is about how technology can help dyslexic individuals, promoting lots of software (and some hardware) that would be highly beneficial, much of which is FREE! In the first month you have been able to read about **SCRIBLINK** and **SCANMESSY!** To find out more, look up the above hyperlink address.
- **Dr Ian Smythe**
 (copied from European Dyslexia Association Newsletter)

Fundraising News

The group has been set up as a recipient for funds raised through inkjet cartridges, toners and mobile phones returned to "The Recycling Factory".

A number of FREEPOST envelopes for the return of items is available from HERD sessions and Committee members. Further information on the scheme can be found on their website www.therecyclingfactory.com

If you have any other fund raising ideas then please contact a member of the Committee.