

INFORMATION SHEET – THE DYSLEXIC CHILD

Your child is failing at school. He does not know how to help himself or how to explain his difficulties.
(The male person 'he' has been used purely for convenience).

How can parents help?

Be positive ...

- Think carefully about his strengths and weaknesses.
- Discuss the problem with his teachers and with him.
- Seek appropriate assessment of his difficulties and appropriate teaching help.

Be patient and persevering ...

- *With his teachers* - carefully develop a good parent/teacher relationship. As your child moves through school, make yourself known to each new teacher. Information is not always passed on from teacher to teacher or from school to school. Be diplomatic, keep your anger and bitterness to yourself. Your attitude can do more harm than good, so stay cool, calm and dignified.
- *With him* - patiently teach him to do things for himself: to tie his shoelaces, to dress himself correctly, to tell the time, to tell left from right etc. Be patient with the progress he makes once he is receiving the right teaching - miracles will not happen. It takes time, determination and hard work. Teach him independence and how to help himself. Send him on simple errands and encourage him to use the telephone - particularly public phones.

Be aware ...

- Of the problems, symptoms and signs of stress. He may be teased and called names by his peers and be accused of being 'lazy' or 'stupid' by some adults. He may not be good at games and be left out of team games. He will be frustrated by many things besides schoolwork and he will have many disappointments. But he will learn to live with them and can be helped to avoid them most of the time - provided you can be one step ahead and realise the risk before it becomes a problem in time to do something about it.
- Be aware of stress signs such as bedwetting and introversion. Aggression and anti-social behaviour have to be checked gently but firmly. Not all stress signs are because he is dyslexic. It is a good idea to talk to non-dyslexics about how are they behaving. It helps to get things into perspective.
- Be aware of the ignorance and misunderstanding you will meet at all levels. Not all head teachers, teachers, GP's, psychologists or employers have understanding and sympathy for the dyslexic. Not all the advice you are given will be good advice.
- Be aware that he may use his dyslexia as an excuse. You need to acknowledge that he is dyslexic and things will take him longer to do but insist that he can do it.
- Be aware that your child has to work very hard at school and will get very tired so avoid pressuring him at home about reading and writing.
- Let him have a break and enjoy his weekends and holidays.
- Avoid failure situations at home- he will experience enough of those at school. Home should be a safe place, so don't show your anxiety because it will add to his feeling of inadequacy.

Be practical ...

- Not many parents are able to teach their own children, but there are ways in which you can help.
- Read to him. Even teenagers find there is a lot of reading to be done and he may appreciate your help when he is tired and can no longer comprehend what he is reading.
- Note taking is difficult- writing deteriorates and words are sometimes omitted, so offer to type out his notes.
- Set books for English literature courses can be put on tape. Take him to his Shakespeare play or listen to it on the radio.
- Watch television with him and discuss what you see. Play memory games as a family.
- Encourage his interests and feed him information. Encourage leisure activities. Give lots of praise and encouragement in anything he does.
- Boost his confidence and self-esteem. As parents of a dyslexic child you have a very difficult task bringing him up, but if you can give your child confidence in his own abilities and a loving, stable relationship for life - not just for reading, writing and arithmetic - your child will become a well-balanced individual ready to face the world.