



# WHAT IS ADULT DYSLEXIA?

A GUIDE FOR DYSLEXIC ADULTS

BY MIKAÿLA PERRIER



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# Introduction

Dyslexic children grow up to be dyslexic adults. I know. I am one of them.

Hi there!! I'm Mikajla, a dyslexic adult, budding cognitive scientist and flourishing advocate, studying at Carleton University. I have always had curiosity regarding Dyslexia ever since I got evaluated at the age of 8. As you would imagine, I was not thrilled about my (dyslexic) differences at the time. I longed so much to be like my (non-dyslexic) friends and classmates, to the extent that I would ask my mom to take me to a doctor and get my brain "fixed."

Obviously, there is no such surgery, of which my mom was well aware. Still, I remember

being inspired by others who had Dyslexia, whether it be learning about famous dyslexic people such as Albert Einstein or when, to my surprise, my elementary school principal opened up about his own Dyslexia experience.

However, the desire to understand the dyslexic brain persisted throughout the years and never entirely left my mind (pun intended). As no one could operate me or give me a satisfactory answer on the definition of Dyslexia, I always felt that I needed to take matters into my own hands.

Throughout my adult life, I have advocated for Dyslexia, worked to deploy assistive technology for students with literacy difficulties throughout a school board, and eventually decided to undertake studies in cognitive science in an attempt to further understand the internal process of the (dyslexic) mind.

Over my last summer as an undergrad, I was granted the opportunity to complete a summer-long project on adult Dyslexia to get an overview of what is known to science on the subject matter. After so many hours, countless detours to Starbucks, and written over 50 pages worth of annotations, I have gathered a selection of information on Dyslexia in adulthood for my interest and to share with the adult dyslexic community. Indeed, there seems to be a plethora of books, guides, and resources for childhood

Dyslexia, while in comparison, I always felt that the selection of resources for adulthood is practically inexistent.

In any case, this guide is the fruit of my summer long labour. There is so much more to say, more I could have added, and more to discover — and I hope that by the end of this guide, you may also feel like joining, helping the community learn & uncover even more! This guide is for other adults who have or suspect they might have Dyslexia. It will begin with what Dyslexia is & the history behind it all, then explore how it manifests on a cognitive, personal & social level and finally provide some strategies moving forward.

In other words, this was a labour of passion that grew into a tree bearing a fruit of knowledge on adult Dyslexia, and I am now ready to share the fruit of my labour with you and everyone in the dyslexic community!



# Part 1: What is Dyslexia?

In this first section, we set the foundation for the investigation of Dyslexia. To begin, I will provide a definition of Dyslexia, then briefly explore its history, and finally, give an overview of the scientific theories that justify its observed manifestation. As I will demonstrate throughout this section, there is more than meets the eye when trying to answer the question: What is Dyslexia?

## A Definition of Dyslexia: Its Origin & History

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is hereditary and results in brain differences that affect a person's ability to read and write efficiently.<sup>[1][2][22]</sup> For Dyslexia to be considered a potential cause for challenges in literacy, the individuals must demonstrate that the reading difficulties do not reflect their otherwise intact intelligence and reasoning abilities.<sup>[17]</sup> Moreover, the current body of scientific knowledge on Dyslexia has primarily focused on dyslexic children, but there seems to be a growing interest in understanding how it evolves & manifests in adulthood.<sup>[18]</sup>

The history of Dyslexia began when it was first noted in 1878 and was described as "word

blindness," while the term Dyslexia was coined a few years later, in 1883, when a researcher argued that the reading challenge observed was due to the patient's vision and their inability to process sight mentally & adequately.<sup>[1]</sup>

The etymology (aka the history of words) of Dyslexia denotes its origin in Greek, where the first part, "dys-" means to have difficulty & the second part, "-lexis" implies reading.



[23]

Then in 1891, a French neurologist claimed that regions from the left side of the brain were involved in reading.<sup>[22]</sup> From that point on, other researchers started investigating these brain regions in patients with reading difficulty and formed the neural basis of Dyslexia. Then the scientific advancement in Dyslexia stayed constant until the 1980s, when the "generative phonology" movement from the field of linguistics gained popularity and provided a compelling justification for Dyslexia by suggesting the mental manipulation of individual pieces that make up a word,

## What is Dyslexia?

such as the combination of each sound that form any given word.<sup>[1]</sup> Today, research on Dyslexia involves experts from numerous academic disciplines, each providing support in

How can science have so many theories & no agreed consensus?



It is a misconception that science proves anything. Science can only find evidence that points to how valid a theory is. As such, different researchers attempt to find evidence for different theories that relate to their area of expertise.



Furthermore, the research on Dyslexia is interdisciplinary, including researchers from various fields of study. As a result, different experts are investigating different components of Dyslexia with a unique lens to their disciplines.

uncovering the different manifestations of Dyslexia, based on theories of their respective field and expertise.

## The Theories & Manifestations of Dyslexia

As described in the previous section, we have come a long way from the original definition of word blindness to that of what we understand today. This evolution involves scientists proposing new theories & refining older ones. As it stands, some views are currently more accepted and researched than others. The main theories of Dyslexia are theories regarding how the dyslexic individual processes speech sounds & phonemes. While others involve vision and how the brain processes visual information, while others, named cerebellar theories, pertain to motor movements and automatic actions.<sup>[2]</sup>

The first type of theory under examination are the phonological theory. The ideologies behind this theory aim to provide justification for the signs of Dyslexia related to speech sounds, called phonemes, and how they are mentally represented, through a process called phonological awareness.<sup>[1]</sup> These arguments

state that dyslexic individuals find it more challenging to process individual speech sounds to make up a word when reading, writing and even sometimes hearing them.<sup>[2]</sup> For instance, they could explain why associating the correct letter with its corresponding sound is challenging for someone with Dyslexia learning a new language. In other words, these theories argue that people with Dyslexia will find it more challenging to combine the sounds of words (again referred to as phonemes) in working memory, which ultimately impacts reading fluency, comprehension, and writing.

The next type of theories attempts to justify the reading challenges observed in Dyslexia that are related to the visual system.<sup>[2]</sup> For example, ocular studies that examine eye movement have demonstrated that dyslexic individuals tend to do more saccades (i.e., sudden change in eye fixation) when compared to their non-dyslexic counterpart in reading due to differences in visual attention,<sup>[1][16]</sup> some other researchers propose that its neural basis may be due to magnocellular differences, which are a type of large brain cells that interfere with how the visual information is processed.<sup>[9]</sup> These theories primarily investigate how people with Dyslexia perceive visual information, not what their eyes see. That is because Dyslexia is neurological, and the dyslexic individual's eyes

## More on the Theories of Dyslexia

### Processing & Sequencing

- Involves both speech sounds and visual letters
- Difficulty in processing & sequencing of speech sounds that make up a word
- Difficulty in processing & sequencing of letters that make up a word



### Vision & Visual Perception

- Involves how eyes react when reading and how the brain perceives letters visually
- Varying attention given to letters and words
- Differences in brain cells and regions that process visual information



### Phonological Theory

- Involves speech sounds when reading
- Difficulty in segmenting the individual sounds
- Difficulty in associating the sound to its corresponding letter



### Hearing processing

- Involves heard speech sounds
- Difficulty in hearing the sounds that makes up a word
- Difficulty in associating the speech sound with its corresponding word



### Motor Control

- Involves a brain area called the cerebellum
- Coordinate motor movement
- Allow tasks to reach level of perceived automaticity



[1]

are functioning as expected.<sup>[1]</sup>

Finally, the cerebellar theories postulate that an area at the back of the brain, near the spinal cord, named the cerebellum, can explain other signs of Dyslexia. The cerebellum is responsible for motor movement and making tasks and actions feel automatic.<sup>[2]</sup> For instance, it explains why writing neatly, driving, and reading, can be difficult for people with Dyslexia as all these activities require the sequential coordination of motor movement.

Obviously, as the scientific knowledge on Dyslexia evolves, so do its supporting theories, whether in the level of detail provided for the justification of a specific sign or their inner working. Furthermore, the theories of Dyslexia are not solely limited to those described above; these are simply the most relevant. All in all, there is not a single theory that can explain all signs of Dyslexia, and it is far more likely that different theories are required to describe all the signs of Dyslexia.<sup>[1]</sup>



## Part 2:

# How Does Dyslexia Manifest Differently in Adulthood?

In this second section, we examine how these theories and cognitive processes from part one applies to the life of the adult dyslexic. Although still present, reading challenges take the back seat in adulthood as most individuals have acquired adequate literacy skills for their adult needs.<sup>[19]</sup> Instead, adults living with Dyslexia carry an invisible stigma with them and learn to compensate to achieve the requirements of adult life, and many reports they find tasks that involve planning and organization much more challenging and central to their lives.<sup>[10][19][21]</sup> This variation observed in the expression of Adult Dyslexia reflects a shift from that of the those seen in childhood Dyslexia, where the requirements of the elementary student learning to read are far different from the adult who need to survive and get through yet another day in adulthood.

# Why Can't Others See Me? A Life of Stigma & Stereotypes.

Dyslexia is an invisible disability not apparent to others unless the dyslexic individual decides to disclose it to others.<sup>[5]</sup> As such, it is hard for others to notice the extra effort involved in many daily tasks that a dyslexic adults ought to do.<sup>[20]</sup> However, having a hidden disability such as Dyslexia has some advantages and disadvantages over other (visible) disabilities.

For instance, it can be an advantage as dyslexic individuals can decide to keep their identification privy to others which could limit discrimination due to outdated stereotypes commonly associated with Dyslexia, such as having low intelligence, lack in ability to perform tasks, or inadequacy in social skills.<sup>[20]</sup> But as appealing as staying in incognito mode sounds, it also has its disadvantages. One such disadvantage reported by dyslexic adults is that others do not see their internal battles, and thus they may get dismissed when requesting accommodations in the workplace or in academic settings due to others

not grasping what Dyslexia fully entails.<sup>[19][20]</sup>

Indeed, individuals with Dyslexia report feeling less favourable toward university institutions than those with visible disabilities.<sup>[5]</sup>

Furthermore, adult dyslexics students state feeling less favorable towards the support they receive in comparison to others with visible disabilities and even remark perceiving that their professors' consideration of their accommodation mainly depended on their personality over their knowledge on their disability.<sup>[5][20]</sup> As such, people with Dyslexia will attempt to conceal their disability unless absolutely required to avoid the stigma, stereotype and challenges associated with their identification instead of getting the necessary accommodation and services they need for their support.

In fact, the stigma and shame surrounding one's Dyslexia identification can be so powerful that it not only impacts their academic life but may also spill into their personal lives. For example, some dyslexic adults report having made-up dietary restrictions to convince their friend to go at a restaurant of their choosing, all to keep their disability concealed, avoid having to decipher yet another restaurant menu and ultimately mitigate their feelings of inadequacy.<sup>[21]</sup>

Although dyslexic adults have control over the psychosocial aspect of their disability (i.e., choosing when to disclose), it is undeniable that the secrecy involved in keeping one's Dyslexia identification hidden from others can add to their emotional toll.<sup>[21]</sup> However, there are other areas in which adults with Dyslexia do not have the same flexibility and authority, such as external factors impacting their self-perception of failure. Indeed, a significant segment of people with Dyslexia report having an internal feeling of loss and failure.<sup>[13][21][22]</sup>

### **System Failure:**

Lack of systematic support, such as academic opportunities, leads to failure outside the control of the individuals.

### **Constructed failure:**

Barriers to receiving support (e.g., an individual must demonstrate that they are experiencing challenges before receiving support).

### **Public failure:**

The pressure of literacy skills to participate in society as an adult (e.g., reading directions on a transit map; making applications for financial credit or job applications).

### **Personal failure:**

Self-perception of failure due to the stigma, shame, barriers, and other challenges imposed by Dyslexia's manifestations.

### **Family failure:**

This type of failure is due to family settings that are not supportive of the challenges of Dyslexia and may opt to ignore the manifestations of dyslexic individuals.

[21]

These external barriers can affect a person systematically, such as the rules imposed by society and culture, impacting the individual publicly, at home with family, and in personal realms.

Evidently, individuals with Dyslexia may not have complete control over external forces of failure coming at them, but not all is lost, and there is still hoped to lessen the impact on their lives. This hope lies in those who speak candidly about their Dyslexia.<sup>[21]</sup>

Indeed, candid dyslexics (i.e., those who openly talk about their Dyslexia identification) impact these external barriers by serving as an example to other dyslexics who may still be closeted (i.e., do not openly disclose their identification) or confused (i.e., are unaware of their potential Dyslexia identification).

Now, research does indicate that candid dyslexics only make up a tiny percentage of

people who have Dyslexia but are reported to be vital for others in the community as they allow other dyslexics to recognize themselves in them and inspire other dyslexics to follow in their footsteps.<sup>[21]</sup> Additionally, candid dyslexic also




**Closet dyslexic:**

Individuals who decide to keep their Dyslexia identification and additional required effort privately.




**Candid dyslexic:**

Dyslexic individuals who are comfortable with their Dyslexia and openly speak about their identification.



**Confused dyslexic:**

Individuals who are unaware they have Dyslexia.



[21]

directly impacts external barriers as they go through the obstacles and request accommodations and justified adjustment as they make their way up the mountain of doubt & failure imposed by external forces.

Indeed, by speaking up openly, a candid dyslexic may serve as a potential role model for other dyslexics and be a positive agent of change in altering others' perceptions, thus lowering the stigma and stereotypes associated with Dyslexia.

Candid dyslexics are trailblazers who are essential to the community. However, a dyslexic individual may decide to keep their identification hidden to others in fear of discrimination as an act to protect them from undesirable situations and events. Yet keeping their identification privy also results in the inability for others (dyslexic or not) to understand the challenges involved with Dyslexia, which may further add to the discrimination.<sup>[5][20][21]</sup> There is no other way to put it: speaking up is not easy, but it can help lessen the stigma for current and future dyslexic adults.

**To compensate or not to  
compensate, that is NOT  
the question.**

Not everyone has the privilege to be able to safely disclose and be candid about their Dyslexia, while others may prefer to keep it

private altogether. That is okay! It is not the only element in overcoming barriers, whether they are external or one of our own makings. Indeed, it is possible to mitigate many challenges dyslexic adults encounter in everyday life without needing to disclose or advocate for themselves through developing compensatory strategies.

In fact, research suggests that young and old dyslexics find ways to compensate for tasks that are more challenging to them.<sup>[10] [17]</sup> For instance, adult dyslexics show a variation in the strategy they use in reading as opposed to those of younger dyslexic, where the adults demonstrate an emphasis on cues relating to the word's meaning (i.e., morphology) while children rely more on how the sounds are combined to make up a word through phonemic awareness.<sup>[10]</sup>

To illustrate, consider the following sentence: "The temple was deconstructed to remove the inner shrine." A young dyslexic reader may use their phonetic skills as a strategy to decipher the words of the sentence, breaking down each word into individual parts, sounding out every phoneme along the way, and combining them into syllables — for example, (de)(con)(struct)(ed). In contrast, an adult dyslexic reader is more likely to use strategies that depend on cues that relate to the meaning of the word, such as (de-) meaning undoing, (-construct-)



meaning to build, and (-ed) indicating the past tense. As such, the dyslexic adult demonstrates a change in strategy that relies on skills acquired later in life.<sup>[10]</sup> Moreover, revising compensatory strategies with age could also reflect the change in life requirements, such as a need to parse through large amounts of text at a faster rate, which many adults will surely need to face one day or another.

## Thinking About Thinking and Other Planning Skills

Many responsibilities are required to do as a contributing member of society in adulthood, such as going to work, paying bills, keeping the lights on at home, & putting food on the table, which are quite different from those of childhood, which mainly revolve around going to school. Indeed, many of these responsibilities require adults to remember details of their lives and mentally put them in sequence to meet the demands of adulthood.<sup>[19]</sup> For instance, take the steps involved in feeding yourself. First, you must ensure that you have food at your disposal, which in turn requires going to the grocery store, which may require making a grocery list,

which then requires taking an inventory of what you already have at home.

The abilities that handle tasks such as planning, managing and executing actions rely on a mental system called working memory. It is in working memory, an active variation of short-term memory, that the information to execute tasks is processed.<sup>[12]</sup> As such, these tasks involve planning skills which typically results in a plethora of smaller tasks to be executed in sequence to make it all work — just try to boil an egg to feed yourself when you forgot to purchase them the last time you swung by the grocery store, good luck. These mental processes include executive functions<sup>[15]</sup> and metacognition skills.<sup>[12][14][19]</sup>



### **Metacognition:**

Involves thinking about thinking while keeping into account one's ability, energy, and knowledge on a given tasks. Allowing an individual to plan, observe, and adjust the tasks they are performing based on its requirement.

[15]

Indeed, adults with Dyslexia are no different from those without Dyslexia in that they are also required to maintain some level of

organization throughout their adult life,<sup>[19]</sup> which is a clear distinction between children who have additional support (e.g., teachers, parental figures) keeping them organized and on top of tasks. Thus, as dyslexic adults, we are, for the most part, left on our own to figure how to stay organized, without the same level of ongoing assistance. On most days, executive functioning skills are crucial for effectively planning and managing tasks in a day, at home



## **Executive Functions:**

Involve self-control, attention, working memory, as well as thinking & reasoning with flexibility.



[15]

or in the workplace. In fact, tasks that involve planning & metacognition are among the most requested from dyslexic adults in the workplace.<sup>[19]</sup> Thankfully, as dyslexic adults, we can recognize that compensating is not only possible but necessary to reduce the impact of the challenges involved with living with Dyslexia.

# Part 3: Strategies Moving Forward

This last section is for all the people with Dyslexia who are all around and amongst us, as it bridges our knowledge of adult Dyslexia and provides a path moving forward. As demonstrated in previous sections, there is no definitive theory on Dyslexia as scientists are still working to figure out what makes us tick different from others. Regardless, we can acknowledge that Dyslexia is not only cognitively demanding in adulthood but also involves an emotional component due to its secrecy and stigma. But not all is lost! YOU are here, still reading. In the following section, I contextualize and summarize tips I have gathered through my academic exploration & research on adult Dyslexia. Hopefully, you find something in there that is useful to you along your journey.

## The Right Strategies for the Right Cognitive Function

Whether an adult has Dyslexia or not, they cannot escape having to read something at some point. Reading requires many cognitive processes to process the information sequentially, fluently and accurately. These cognitive processes rely heavily on good executive function skills.<sup>[8] [17]</sup> However, as I have demonstrated earlier, individuals with Dyslexia meet these mental tasks with more difficulties.<sup>[12] [14] [19]</sup> For instance, adults with Dyslexia may find that information held in working memory fades faster, needs to be read more than once,<sup>[17]</sup> then risking the information getting out of sequence<sup>[1]</sup> to then still miss entire words.<sup>[6]</sup> Regardless, executive functions such as working memory are not only involved in reading but are in constant use when completing any tasks that require holding information in mind while it gets processed.<sup>[14] [17]</sup> As you can imagine, this ongoing battle between trying to complete a task and the available working memory bandwidth uses more

energy and ultimately makes the task more demanding and unappealing. Indeed, reading & writing share common cognitive resources with other daily tasks in a typical day's work.

As such, if you wish to achieve work success and soften the load on your cognitive resources, you will need to compensate efficiently.<sup>[7][10][14][17][21]</sup> That is, take note of your own work & personal life situation, find out which tasks are the most challenging to you, and focus your energy on making them more efficient through compensatory strategies.



### **80/20 rule (aka Pareto principle):**

The rule states that 80 percent of results come from 20 percent of effort if one focuses on the most impactful attributes. In other words, recognize which element of Dyslexia you can compensate for that would impact your overall life satisfaction the most.



[4]

For instance, consider the compensatory strategies I used to complete this project on Dyslexia. First, I had to investigate what barriers were impose upon me as a dyslexic university student. This project, and my whole degree for that matter, would not have been possible without using my computer to read.

Indeed, I use my text-to-speech software to read all the articles I examined for this project, and I still use it at the moment, editing away the text you are reading right now. Note that I am fully able to read without it, but I would have to risk not getting through everything I need to do and most importantly exhausting myself throughout the process. Something that would only make my academic life more challenging, that of which I would deem a lose-lose situation.

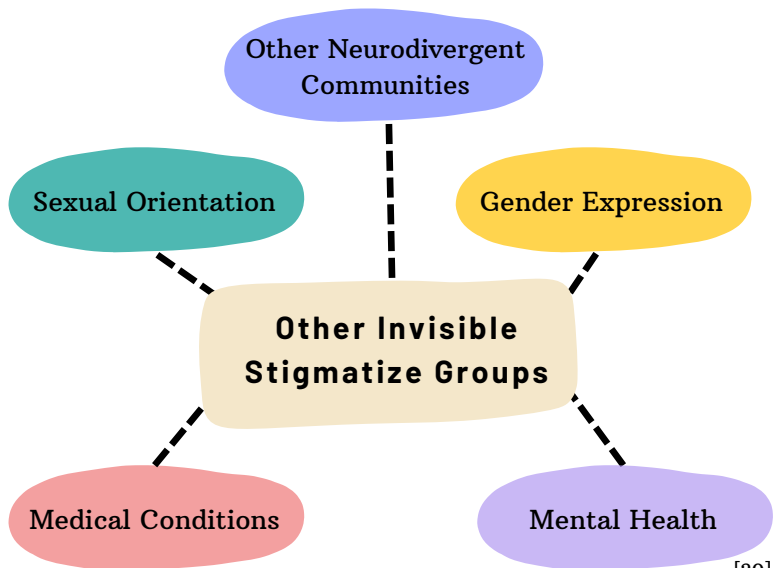
Moreover, once I started to use my computer and its text-to-speech software as a compensatory strategy, it has not only allowed me to excel throughout my academic career but also gave me what felt like superpowers as I discovered that I could read through my required readings faster than my non-dyslexic classmates. As such, by figuring out what tasks I was required to do as a university student that do not work well with my Dyslexia, I could then focus on finding ways to compensate in those tasks, and in some cases make them more efficient than those around me, dyslexic or not.

If you are still unsure where to start, I would recommend planning & organization skills as they are highly sought after by adult dyslexics,<sup>[8][12][19]</sup> which are indispensable at home and work, are accessible, and do not require any fancy computer magic, as they are just a Google search away.

Regardless of what you decide to do, try to make it a point to focus your efforts on your strengths while keeping in mind your weaknesses and use them as guides to fine-tune what works best for you, improve your production, and notably gain confidence and self-efficacy.<sup>[3][6][19]</sup>

## Get support!

Deciding when to disclose one's Dyslexia identification is not something to be taken lightly, nor should it be ignored. Communities with an invisible disability that carries a stigma, such as Dyslexia, are required to bring that



[20]



mental burden with them everywhere they go. Indeed, whether it be in a classroom, board meeting, or reading the nutritional label on a product at the grocery store, people with Dyslexia cannot escape their fate. In these instances, one can develop some emotional distress and feel unsafe, leading to their own concept of "private hell," privy to the rest of the world, resulting in lower self-esteem.<sup>[20]</sup>

As such, I encourage all dyslexic adults who can safely open up about their experiences to do so. Research demonstrates that people with Dyslexia who can rely on the support of a trusted family member score higher on self-efficacy and has a positive effect on emotional well-being.<sup>[20]</sup> However, it is not lost on me that this option may not be available to everyone currently reading. Therefore, dyslexic adults who cannot count on family support could seek aid from trusted friends, social workers,<sup>[20]</sup> and work coaches.<sup>[12]</sup> Indeed, living with an invisible disability is challenging enough, full of difficult situations to navigate, but remember that you are not alone! Knowing you have support can reduce the emotional load and improve your overall quality of life. Such questioning may lead you to consider wishing to obtain official documentation confirming your Dyslexia identification. Indeed, receiving official disability documentation can remove many

systematic barriers, such as receiving accommodations at school or work and assisting in accessing services and funding for people with disabilities.<sup>[18][21]</sup>

In any case, it is essential to note that most of the research on Dyslexia has been done in childhood, and thus there are currently no standard evaluation criteria for adults. As a dyslexic adult, you must tread carefully down this path and choose a specialist with experience in evaluating adults. The identification requirements may differ depending on the provider due to a lack of standardization amongst evaluator's procedures.<sup>[18]</sup> That said, rest assured, due to the growing interest in adult Dyslexia, researchers are currently working on teasing apart the variations and manifestations of Dyslexia in adults in hopes of eventually having a valid evaluation method to be used as a standard.<sup>[7]</sup> However, as it stands, it is still unknown when these evaluations for dyslexic adults will be fully validated and ready to see the light of day.

## Keep it up. You got this!

As demonstrated in the previous sections, many researchers are at work every day helping us, dyslexics, to better understand the underlying causes that result in the expression of Dyslexia. Disclosing one's Dyslexia identification can seem quite daunting as there are so many manifestations and elements to consider even with the right strategies and support; where to even start?

Well, I believe it is vital to remember that we are the only ones who can speak on our lived experience, as the experiencer is always right in their experience. With this in mind, some adults with Dyslexia jointly organized thematic to create a concept map of their lived experiences.<sup>[8]</sup> These dyslexic adults identified seven thematic that make up the lived experience of living with Dyslexia as an adult. In no particular order, these thematic included the following: challenges with organizational skills, recognizing one's success & achievements, the impact of a support system, feeling overwhelmed, emotional aspect, longing for others to acknowledge the challenges and extra work involved with being dyslexic, the emotional distress of memories and how they

impact the present, anxiety surrounding disclosing, and finally moving on.

In my opinion, these thematic are amongst the most precious data I encountered during my summer-long research as they were conceived by other dyslexics and not by the interpretation of any researchers. Therefore, I genuinely believe they are a great starting point for other dyslexics to reflect on, notice where they relate in their lived experience and ultimately support further demystifying the characteristics of their Dyslexia in adulthood.

However, be warned & proceed with caution, as upon further reflection, you, as a dyslexic individual, may feel a grey cloud of dread hanging over you while digging through your lived experience via these thematic.<sup>[5][13][21]</sup> It is not at all surprising, as come to think about it, traumatic events, and untold memories regarding how our Dyslexia has impacted our daily lives go as far back as our first day of school and go up to this very moment.

We may have made ourselves feel stupid and less than adequate due to others' elusive expectations of us, but we have also achieved so much without their knowledge or acknowledgment. That cannot be understated and must be recognized by ourselves first and others after. As such, I strongly suggest creating a portfolio of your development and

accomplishments you have completed throughout your life to retain a record of all you have achieved — which can positively influence self-perception & efficacy, provides fuel for motivation, and persist to serve as validation in ourselves despite all the additional challenges imposed on us. Indeed, research has demonstrated that working on developing a portfolio increases our self-knowledge, helps us recognize our achievements, allow us to organize them and helps us sequence the timeline of our accomplishments.<sup>[11]</sup>

You can let your creativity guide you through the creation process of your portfolio in any way, shape or form. You could decide to assemble a scrapbook with all your achievements, make a mindmap and add new branches as you learn more, or keep it as simple as creating a note on your smartphone or folder on your computer to collect it all. There are no expectations from me or anyone else; After all, it is your portfolio, your experience, your achievements.

# Conclusion

If you are still reading at this point: Congrats! I recognize you for the work, effort and dedication you have given this guide by reading it fully. Hopefully, if you have made it this far, I have provided something valuable to you. Please do keep in mind that as science evolves, so will the definition and boundaries of Dyslexia. Regardless as adults, we are much more confident in our experiences than when we were still children — when we asked authority figures to confirm what was & what was not. Today is much different. We have years of experience on the matter at hand, and thus we ought to know ourselves and how one manages Dyslexia.

For this reason, I assert that making sense of

your adult Dyslexia may not only be beneficial for you as an individual but could also be beneficial to those around you. Indeed, once you feel at ease with a description that matches your experience, you will feel much more confident and equipped to communicate to others how Dyslexia manifests and impacts you. Under these circumstances, adults with Dyslexia may very well be the key to further understanding Dyslexia. If not for the laboratories of universities, then for ourselves and the rest of the dyslexic community. So read up, speak up, and identify all you have accomplished despite the odds. Then when you are ready to do so, open up and help others see all that is Dyslexia.

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*"Dyslexic children grow up to be dyslexic adults.  
I know. I am one of them."*

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Over a summer-long project, Mikajla dived into the question of what is known regarding adult dyslexia from an academic perspective. She then combined all her newfound knowledge with her own lived experience, then packaged it all in an accessible format to share with the dyslexic community.

**What is Adult Dyslexia — A Guide for Dyslexic Adults** is for any adult who has or suspects they may have Dyslexia.

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*Mikajla is a neurodivergent advocate living with Dyslexia and ADHD who brings a lifetime of lived experience. Since being identified as dyslexic at the age of 8, she has been enthralled by the brain. Most notably, with questions such as: why do some brains differ from others? She worked in educational settings for most of her adult life and later studied cognitive science to inform her inquiries further.*



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