Do I have dyslexia? [1]

Dear Alice,

I have been wondering if I could have mild dyslexia. I have had trouble saying exactly what I mean as long as I remember through high school. I tend to slur words together and leave things out. When I read small print for a longer amount of time, parts of letters or words seem to disappear. When I write, I put end letters on the beginning of the next word and vice-versa. I read somewhere that dyslexics bump into people when they walk, and my friends are always complaining that I do that. I never had behavior or attention problems in school, and I don't think my life is overly affected by these problems, but I was just wondering if that's a possibility. I found a picture that I drew when I was in preschool or kindergarten. Some of the alphabets and numbers I drew on it were reversed. Should I be concerned?

? a little backwards

Answer

Dear a little backwards,

Hats off to you for exploring your concerns. Dyslexia is a language-based disorder that makes tasks, such as reading, writing, and spelling difficult. Dyslexia and other language-based disabilities are more common than you might think, affecting around 15 to 20 percent of the population. Additionally, the disorder is not related to a person's intelligence; in fact, people with dyslexia are for the most part of average or above-average intelligence. It's great that you are seeking more information about dyslexia, but keep in mind that the only way to determine for sure if you have a form of dyslexia is to be tested by a qualified professional.

The International Dyslexia Association [2] has compiled an age-specific list of indicators that a person may have a form of dyslexia. Some of the most common signs include:

- Problems with reading comprehension
- Difficulty spelling, especially with the sequence of letters in a word
- Difficulty pronouncing words

It's possible that some of the symptoms you mentioned could have other causes besides a language-based disorder. For example, you may be experiencing eye strain from reading small print. Are you reading in a well-lit environment? You also mentioned bumping into people when walking; there is some evidence people with dyslexia seem slightly clumsier than
others, but clumsiness is not considered to be a symptom of dyslexia. Additionally, your handwriting in preschool sounds pretty common among kids in that age group; many children write letters incorrectly when first learning the alphabet. Dyslexia cannot be tested for until the second grade or later, so your handwriting in preschool may not be a reliable indicator of a language-based disorder.

If you're still concerned about having a language-based learning disability, the first step is to get tested by a trained specialist, usually a speech-language pathologist or a psychologist. If you are a college student, your school likely has a Disability Services office you can visit, and most K-12 schools have information in their guidance offices. Otherwise, ask your health care provider for resources and referrals. You may also want to visit an ophthalmologist for your reading struggles, which may or may not be related to dyslexia.

Dyslexia is a learning disability you can work with. With proper support and instruction geared towards language learning, most people with dyslexia do fine in school and their work lives. In fact, many successful people you have heard of have dyslexia, including Tom Cruise, Whoopi Goldberg, Cher, and Sir Richard Branson (of Virgin).

Some good sources of information online about dyslexia and language-based disabilities include:

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association [3]
National Center for Learning Disabilities [4]
Dyslexia Action [5]

Good luck figuring out what's best for you to be successful in your school and work,

Alice!

Category:
General Health [6]
Miscellaneous [7]

Related questions

Do I have a learning disability? [8]
What is attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)? Does Ritalin help? [9]
Help! I struggle while classmates seem to breeze through coursework [10]
Can't process spoken speech? which makes school difficult! [11]

Resources

Disability Services [12]
Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) (Morningside) [13]
Mental Health Service (CUMC) [14]

Published date:
Aug 07, 2003
Last reviewed on:
Jul 27, 2015