



# EMBRACE DYSLEXIA



# Embrace Dyslexia Commitment

Embrace Dyslexia intends to raise awareness of dyslexia in the Singaporean community with an aim to have as many people understand both the strengths and challenges that individuals with dyslexia face everyday.



## Raise awareness for Embrace Dyslexia by:

- Sharing information about dyslexia in your workplace
- Inviting DAS to conduct Awareness Talks
- Including information about dyslexia in the staff handbook



## Explore opportunities to work with DAS

- Workplace Giving or Volunteering Initiatives
- Mentoring DAS Alumni for internships or work experience



## Champion dyslexic individuals

- Recognising their strengths and understand their weaknesses
- Providing appropriate support and encouragement



## Donate to DAS Programmes

- Support low-income families by giving to the Bursary Fund



## Advocate for Embrace Dyslexia

Embrace Dyslexia with us. Sign your commitment today.

[www.das.org.sg/embrace-dyslexia](http://www.das.org.sg/embrace-dyslexia)



**DYSLEXIA ASSOCIATION  
OF SINGAPORE**  
HELPING DYSLEXIC PEOPLE ACHIEVE

The Dyslexia Association of Singapore (DAS) is a vibrant organisation serving the specialised educational needs of over 2,900 students with learning differences. DAS has over 240 professional staff offering a wide array of services and operates 13 learning centres across Singapore.

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# Positive Dyslexia: Working to our Strengths

Professor Rod Nicolson and Poliana Sepulveda

*Department of Psychology*

*The University of Sheffield*

You will all be familiar with the 'Embrace Dyslexia' movement run by the Dyslexia Association of Singapore, which is now a regular feature in this handbook. You may have seen in previous copies of the DAS Handbook that the Sheffield Dyslexia researchers have been working on an initiative that we call 'Positive Dyslexia'. This is the other side of the coin from the 'Dyslexia as Disability' perspective, and is inspired by the Positive Psychology movement. It is aimed at helping every individual to find their own 'personal best' strengths, with the idea that they will then be able to select – and thrive in – a career that suits them or in general to craft their lives to spend more time doing what they find interesting and rewarding.

I am delighted to report that we have made really good progress over the past couple of years, including publication of my book (and iBook) 'Positive Dyslexia' and also in finding out more about what the distinctive strengths of dyslexic individuals are likely to be – we have termed them the 'Dyslexia Decathlon' of strengths - and we have also gone some way toward finding which careers might best suit dyslexic adults.

Now we are moving on to the even more exciting aim of persuading business leaders that dyslexic employees can be among the most valuable company assets, with '21st century strengths' that can give the company a competitive advantage - if their talents can be managed with awareness of the learning differences associated with dyslexia.

"Now we are moving on to the even more exciting aim of persuading business leaders that dyslexic employees can be among the most valuable company assets, with '21st century strengths' that can give the company a competitive advantage."

The second phase of the research has been headed by Dr Sara Agahi who did indeed investigate the strengths, and whose work, together with that of Poliana Sepulveda, led to the development of our 'Diverse Work Strengths Finder'. (DWSF) This is a simple 30 item questionnaire that allows you to think about things that you seem to do best. We would be very interested on any feedback you are able to provide on the DWSF, which you can do via the link below:

The link to the DWSF is: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/LH69KXR>

This third phase of our research is continued in Poliana Sepulveda's PhD research, but I'll let her take up the story...

My name is Poliana and I am currently a third year PhD student at the University of Sheffield, a member of Professor Rod Nicolson's Positive Dyslexia group. My main area of research is Positive Dyslexia and my focus is with dyslexic adults.

The dyslexia community has made great progress over the past decades in the UK in identifying dyslexic individuals, removing barriers to their achievement and providing the best support for their reading difficulties. The British Dyslexia Association (BDA) also played a leading role in creating the "Dyslexia Friendly Schools" initiative that provides schools with guidelines and a 'kitemark' specific standard in order to better help dyslexic children to succeed in school.

Our goal is to move this further and involve companies so as to create "Dyslexia Friendly Companies". Such an initiative would be beneficial for both dyslexic workers and their companies, since we believe they have qualities that will help to make a difference. However, the first stage is to establish what current practice is in terms of recruiting and managing dyslexic workers as well as understanding dyslexic behaviours towards job application and disclosing the information (about being dyslexic).

My most recent study focused on the recruitment process and I interviewed a range of employers – in Brazil and in the UK - to find whether they treated dyslexic applicants any differently. I found that many companies had little knowledge of dyslexia at all, and even the more supportive ones said that they would not discriminate against an applicant because they were dyslexic. None seemed to have any idea at all that dyslexic workers might actually be able to make unique contributions to the company's success. We think it's time this was changed!

This next stage in the PhD is aimed at dyslexic adults – whether in a job or not currently employed. We are particularly interested in whether you consider it to your advantage to disclose whether you have dyslexia at any stage in a job application

or in your job performance. The findings should provide clear evidence to inspire the initiative for positive dyslexia in the workplace. Your help in this study is crucial and we would like to invite you to take part in our study. It will take around 10 to 15 minutes. Just type the link below into a web browser and you will be directed to the questionnaire.

Thank you for your time!

Poliana

[https://sheffieldpsychology.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_d5XhIIDLzYNhWGp](https://sheffieldpsychology.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_d5XhIIDLzYNhWGp)

We appreciate that it is pretty annoying to have to type in these long and meaningless internet addresses. If you would prefer to email me at [note there's no 'h' in Nicolson] ... [r.nicolson@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:r.nicolson@sheffield.ac.uk)

I will be happy to send you an email containing this information so you can just click on the link.

With best wishes

Rod Nicolson  
[r.nicolson@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:r.nicolson@sheffield.ac.uk)

"The dyslexia community has made great progress over the past decades in the UK in identifying dyslexic individuals, removing barriers to their achievement and providing the best support for their reading difficulties."

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



### **PROFESSOR ROD I NICOLSON**

*Department of Psychology  
The University of Sheffield*

*Rod Nicolson is Professor of Psychology at the University of Sheffield, UK. His area of specialism is human learning, and he has published over 100 scientific articles and books in the field. Working with Angela Fawcett for over two decades, he has a leading international role in dyslexia research, theory and practice. Their book *Dyslexia, Learning and the Brain* (2007) created a unique and comprehensive framework for understanding the causes of dyslexia in terms of reading, learning and neural circuitry. Recently he has been working on the strengths of dyslexia, with his book *“Positive Dyslexia”* (Rodin Books, 2015) providing a complete blueprint for success in life as a dyslexic person. His contribution to the book with Julian Elliott *“Dyslexia, Developing the Debate”* (Bloomsbury, 2016) provides a strong counter-argument to Elliott’s pessimistic view of the value of dyslexia diagnosis. The *Dyslexia Screening Tests* (jointly with Angela Fawcett), are international best sellers, with a third edition currently in development.*

# Dyslexic Advantage

**Brock and Fernette Eide**

*Founders of the Dyslexic Advantage*

The Mission of Dyslexic Advantage is to promote the positive identity, community, and achievement of dyslexic people by focusing on their strengths. Everyone should grow up with positive self-understanding, real opportunities to learn, and a positive vision for the future. Our vision is a world where dyslexic people are known for their strengths.

Scientific research shows that dyslexic children and adults process information differently from non-dyslexics and some of these changes may account for strengths in creative problem solving, entrepreneurial thinking, and certain types of learning and memory. An understanding of the advantage side of dyslexia is important for children to discover how they learn and remember best as well as for adults to find careers and work environments that allow them to work to their highest abilities.

Brock and Fernette Eide, founders of the Dyslexic Advantage have given DAS permission to reprint some of their blogs from their website for this year's edition of handbook. The blogs here are free to access, but those seeking greater depth can become premium members of Dyslexia advantage, and this also entitles you to a free newsletter. For those interested in finding out more about Dyslexic advantage check out [www.dyslexicadvantage.org](http://www.dyslexicadvantage.org).

Dyslexic advantage celebrates the strengths of those who have been successful with dyslexia, illustrating their blogs with tips for young people on how to build success for themselves. An ideal place to start for our Singaporean readers is the entry from 2015 in memoriam for Lee Kwan Yew.

"Everyone should grow up with positive self-understanding, real opportunities to learn, and a positive vision for the future. Our vision is a world where dyslexic people are known for their strengths."

## Lee Kuan Yew – Legendary Founder of Singapore – His Dyslexia and Vision

By Fernette Eide | March 23rd, 2015 | Dyslexic Advantages

The world says goodbye to Lee Kuan Yew, the founding father and first Prime Minister of Singapore who transformed the island outpost into one of the wealthiest and least corrupt countries in Asia. Those who know something about multi-talented families with dyslexia won't be surprised to know that his neurologist daughter was the first to suggest to her father that he had dyslexia after discovering that some of the trouble she had with reading was due to being dyslexic.

"I am pretty proud of him, all things considered...(he) had complained that (he ) could not read fast without missing important items."

Subsequently, Lee and his family became more outspoken about being dyslexic and contributed in many ways to Dyslexia Association of Singapore. In his interview with the New York Times, he spoke about a grandson who pursued his education in the US because he was dyslexic, then went on to get a business degree at Wharton. Another grandson went to MIT. His son is currently Singapore's Prime Minister.

Lee certainly had I-Strengths (interconnected reasoning, important for politicians and country builders), N-strengths (narrative reasoning, communicating a vision), and D-strengths (dynamic reasoning, ability to make sense out of constantly changing circumstances, ability to forecast).

Lee was a Cambridge-educated lawyer who led Singapore through a complex merger with, and then separation from Malaysia. He wrote a popular memoir, "From Third World to First: Singapore." President Barack Obama hailed Lee as a "true giant of history" and UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon, remembered him as a "legendary figure in Asia."

Condolences to his family.

*This article has been republished with the permission of Dyslexic Advantage. The original article can be found at the following weblink:*

*[www.dyslexicadvantage.org/lee-kwan-yew-legendary-founding-father-of-singapore-his-dyslexia-and-vision/](http://www.dyslexicadvantage.org/lee-kwan-yew-legendary-founding-father-of-singapore-his-dyslexia-and-vision/)*



## New Research: Brain Scans Predict Cognitive Performance

By Fernet Eide | May 13th, 2016 | Brain, Research, Science

*"This suggests that individual differences in many cognitive tasks are a stable trait marker."*

There's a new Oxford research study circulating through scientific communities and around the world. From 'Science' (Task-free MRI predicts individual differences in brain activity during task performance, <http://science.sciencemag.org/content/352/6282/216>), Tavor and colleagues applied machine-learning principles to test subjects in a "resting state" to see how they could predict their performances on various cognitive tasks.

What was the result?

They could predict subject's responses in 46 out of 47 tasks (and maybe there's a reason why the 47th one didn't work...it involved more subcortical activity). Tasks included responses to mental math, sentence and story processing, but also higher order problem solving, social perception, and working memory.

The data have a lot of ramifications in terms of understanding how connectivity (and the research methods that document differences) has real-world associations with cognitive performance. Also, it may provide future groundwork for the holy grail of education: personalized learning.

What about dyslexia? Neuroscience is making progress there too. Another research group from Europe use a machine-learning algorithm on brain scans to predict whether college students were dyslexic or not. A trained anatomical classifier identified 80% of students with dyslexia correctly and 78% of non-dyslexic correctly.

Not bad – especially considering that here in the US, some 3 out of 4 students are being missed by public schools.

*This article has been republished with the permission of Dyslexic Advantage. The original article can be found at the following link: <http://www.dyslexicadvantage.org/new-research-brain-scans-predict-cognitive-performance/>*

## Harvard Genetics Professor George Church on Dyslexia and Failing

By Fernet Eide | May 18th, 2016 | Being Dyslexic, Creativity and Science

*"If you're not failing, You're probably not trying as hard as you could be."  
~ Dyslexic Harvard Genetics Professor George Church ~*

### From Harvard's Gazette:

Church had an erratic path through higher education like many dyslexic students, but his path shows a lot of ingenuity, passion, and dogged persistence in spite of not learning to read well.

### As a young person:

"I was using books — even though I had a lot of trouble reading. By using the index and using photographs, I could figure out just about anything. So that kind of set me on a course of independent study. I was not particularly well adapted socially. I had dyslexia, narcolepsy, OCD, ADD — all these things were very mild, but made me feel different."

School was erratic because of all the required courses. He did well in research as a student, but flunked two classes: "...my research was going well, and to some extent it didn't fully register that I had flunked out. My crystallography adviser, Sung-Hou Kim, had to pick me up as a technician, which he didn't complain about. He was a really terrific guy. I'm still good friends with him. He went to bat for me, tried to get them to give me a second chance, and they said no. I had two F's, so it just was not negotiable.

### Q: How old were you at this point?

I think I must have been 20. I wasn't a teenager, technically, anymore, but I still behaved like one. And I just kept going, assuming that everything was fine. Sung-Hou would tell me from time to time, everything's not fine. You are not destined to be a technician.

You're designing experiments, and people like me aren't going to necessarily let you do those experiments."

"Church had an erratic path through higher education like many dyslexic students, but his path shows a lot of ingenuity, passion, and dogged persistence in spite of not learning to read well."

But as many students who excel in real life activities like scientific experiment, but not the coursework...Church applied to Harvard Graduate School anyway:

"I had applied to Harvard two years before and I turned down Harvard to go to Duke, which must have flabbergasted them at the time. It was the same department that I eventually got into. And so, to them, bureaucratically, they were just readmitting somebody that they'd already admitted, who in fact, in those two years, got five papers, some of which as first author. Maybe they didn't notice the F's, or they didn't care about the F's. Whatever it was, it was one of many times that Harvard has rescued me from myself. That was a pretty dramatic rescue."

**Q: What advice would you have, reflecting on your own career, to a student who looks at what you do and thinks: that would be really cool.**

The problem with getting advice from people who have managed to dodge all the bullets is they don't necessarily know how they did it.

All the failures I've overcome? That's much more important than any successes. I had to repeat ninth grade. I had to repeat the beginning of graduate school. I lost my major source of funding just before I came up for tenure. One of the major things — news flash — that they judge you on for tenure is whether you can support yourself. In each case, it helps if you can think out of the box and think of a new way of doing things.

The other thing is: Follow your dreams, even if it does mean taking a risk. If you're not failing, you're probably not trying as hard as you could be. And being petrified of failure means you're going to be probably a very extreme underachiever."

*This article has been republished with the permission of Dyslexic Advantage. The original article can be found at the following link:*

*<http://www.dyslexicadvantage.org/harvard-genetics-professor-george-church-on-dyslexia-and-failing/>*

*The Dyslexic Advantage website and blog also features information on the latest research in an accessible format.*

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



### **FERNETTE EIDE MD**

*Co-Founder and CEO*

*Dr. Fernette Eide is co-author of *The Dyslexic Advantage* and *The Mislabeled Child* and is an international authority on dyslexia and learning differences. She is a Magna Cum Laude with highest departmental honors graduate of Harvard-Radcliffe College and the University of California-San Francisco, and has been a consultant to the President's Council on Bioethics and visiting lecturer at the Stanford Graduate School of Education.*



### **BROCK EIDE MD MA**

*Co-Founder and CFO*

*Dr. Brock Eide is co-author of *The Dyslexic Advantage* and *The Mislabeled Child* and is an international authority on dyslexia and learning differences. He is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of Washington and University of Washington Medical School, and has been a consultant to the President's Council of Bioethics and visiting lecturer at the Stanford Graduate School of Education.*

# Post Secondary Initiative

**Nor Ashraf Bin Samsudin**

*Director of Specialised Educational Services*

*Dyslexia Association of Singapore*



The first DAS students joined us from 1993 and now in 2016, we have many alumni members who are in their 20's and 30's who are in need of support as they transit from higher education to the workforce. This is on top of the existing group of secondary students who will, in a few months be transiting into another phase of their lives as well ie. Secondary to tertiary education where the environment and demands placed on them would differ greatly from where they are now. It is timely therefore for DAS to look into initiatives that will benefit students once they leave the nest of their secondary school. A natural catchment for these students would be the DAS Alumni. The DAS Alumni has been a buzz of activity of over the past few years and 2015/16 is no different.

Since last year, the Alumni grew in the number and scope of our activities, reaching out to more alumni than ever before! Things are definitely not just stopping there, with many new and exciting developments in the pipeline.

## THE DAS STUDENT ALUMNI

One of the first few things that the Alumni Committee looked into is the establishment of their vision, mission and built a set of core values to guide what they do. This serves to unify the diversity of talents that the alumni brings together towards a common goal of bringing positive change to Singapore and the world.

"we have many alumni members who are in their 20's and 30's who are in need of support as they transit from higher education to the workforce."

## **DAS Student Alumni**

**Vision:** Building a world of highly sought after dyslexics

**Mission:** Unleashing Excellence

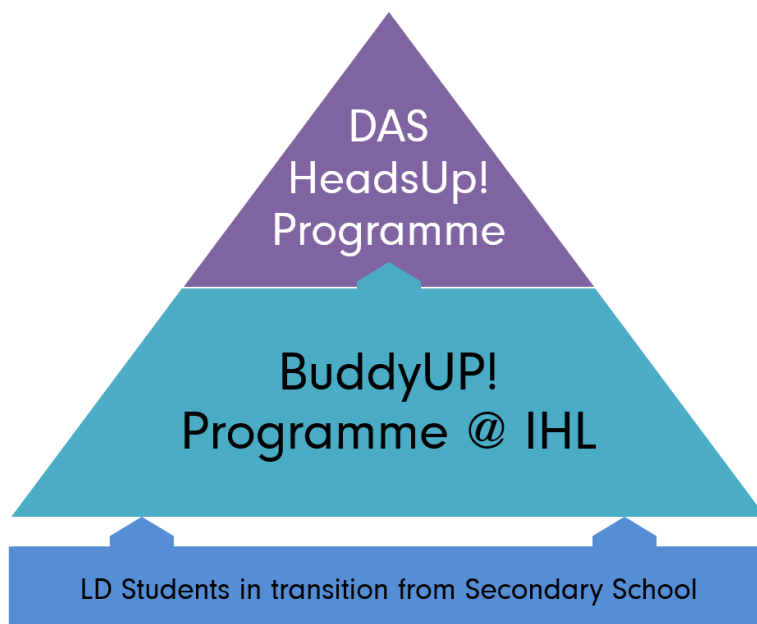
**Values:** Innovation, Humility, Resilience, Bold, Focus

With their smart new purpose, it was not long before many new activities were launched, ranging from bonding activities to skills workshops and networking events.

### **Mentoring Workshop by Dr Kate Saunders**

The Alumni kicked the year off with a mentoring workshop by Kate Saunders, CEO of the British Dyslexia Association. With over 20 years of experience with Dyslexia, she gave valuable insights and training to a group of Alumni and members of staff who have volunteered to be part of our budding mentoring program and for staff, a programme specially catered for the post secondary group. This event is part of a DAS-BDA collaboration made possible by a fund raising event by the Singapore High Commissioner at Oxford in June last year. It is heartening to note that funds in excess of £10,000 were being raised.

### **Support for Students with LD @ Institutes of Higher Learning (IHL)**



The mentoring support by members of our Alumni will form an integral part of our effort to help people with dyslexia who are moving on to the institutes of higher learning in Singapore. Called the BuddyUp! Programme the programme aims to provide mentors who will become “buddies” to transitioning students with LD particularly dyslexics, helping them to adjust to the less structured life in their Institute of Higher Learning (IHL). By doing that, we hope that our dyslexics will be more confident in riding the challenging transition that they will have to go through. It is therefore critical that these mentors are equipped with the correct knowledge, skills and attitudes to become truly effective mentors.

We were fortunate to have Dr Kate Saunders here in Singapore to conduct training to our select group of mentors.

Dr Kate has over 20 years of experience in the field of dyslexia and special educational needs, having worked as a Senior Specific Learning Difficulties/Dyslexia Advisory Teacher, Special Educational Needs Coordinator, chartered psychologist and lecturer. Kate has a Ph.D. in Education and is co-author of “How Dyslexics Learn”, published by PATOSS.



*Pictured above from Left to Right, Dawn Tan, Fahana Muladi, Nor Ashraf Bin Samsudin, Lee Siang DAS CEO and Kate Saunders BDA CEO*

The mentors enjoyed themselves and benefitted from the personal stories that Dr Kate shared during the training. The topics covered ranged from the Ethics of being a mentor to more tangible skills like Executive Function Support and Organisational skills.

Our alumni recognises that one of the keys to success is to embrace lifelong learning. Aside from providing a platform for Alumni members to meet and network, the social event will have external speakers, industry experts and fellow Alumni speakers. Through the sharing, we hope to expand their world view beyond school, gain deeper insight into what interests them and also learn the key attributes to achieving success from fellow Alumni members.

To further our collaborative efforts with the BDA, DAS and the Alumni organised a

networking social event with an educational twist at the Minds Cafe. With the cosy private room booked for us filled with attendees, it was soon filled with laughter and chatter. With attendees coming from the most diverse of industries such as retail, finance, gaming and tech, the personal stories shared that day definitely gave everyone there something to take back home.



*DAS Alumni Students with Ashraf*

and support being given between people of different races and nationalities regardless of where we are on the planet.

The event was planned to coincide with Dyslexia Awareness Week and what is different this time round is that we had the great pleasure of having a video conference with Dr Kate together with a couple of her youth members from the BDA. The discussion was fruitful and it was heartening to see stories being shared

The hype continued soon after with the graduation of the 2015 batch of DAS students! The alumni welcomed many fresh faces to their family while giving the new graduates a taste of what the alumni offers them. Following that, they had our ice skating bonding event where they officially welcomed those new to the family to join them in a morning of play and fun. This event was closely followed up with our newly launched themed networking events to introduce dyslexics to the various potential industries they could join, or to just simply learn something new! First up was the gaming industry where an industry veteran (who was a student in one of the first batches of the DAS!) shared his journey and experience in the industry. The rest of the year was packed with a flurry of events ranging from bowling to skills-based training for students in IHL.

Beyond activities, the Alumni also launched their own Instagram page earlier in the year and brought on a whole suite of updates to our social media channels. Members can stay tuned to all that at @das\_alumni for posts ranging from famous dyslexics to inspirational quotes and unique featurettes of our very own alumni. More importantly, it provides a place for all the dyslexics, to follow them to learn about our upcoming events and programmes!



## Executive Functions Programme (HeadsUp! Programme)

This 20 hour programme is specially crafted for our dyslexic learners to enable them to sharpen their executive function skills. Learners with dyslexia, apart from literacy, have difficulties with certain processes which may hinder their ability to learn effectively at an independent level.



In this programme, we aim to help students in the above skills through the achievement of the following objectives;

1. Empower students to develop strategies to improve memory
2. Enable students to learn effective ways of taking notes and studying
3. To teach students to come up with an assignment management system
4. To teach students how to set long-term goals
5. To teach students social-emotional competencies which include skills like self-awareness, social-awareness, relationship management and responsible decision-making

6. Empower students to plan and write essays/reports
7. Empower students to plan and manage long-term projects

The HeadsUp! Programme is currently being trialled on 13 students and looking at the year ahead, we hope to be launching both our executive function and mentoring programmes, to our alumni and various Institutes of Higher Learning (IHL). Covering dyslexics from the various ITE's across the country to our local universities, it is a nation-wide rollout which helps dyslexics to leverage on their unique skillsets to cope, perform and excel in school. Over the next year, this tailored programme will be improved on and expanded further to include collaborations with more IHLs.

In the more distant future though, we hope to use a combination of programmes, workshops and events, amongst other things, to help dyslexics unleash their potential and leverage on their unique skillsets.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



### **NOR ASHRAF BIN SAMSUDIN**

*Director of Specialised Educational Services*

*Ashraf has spent the last 10 years teaching and coaching dyslexics and students with learning differences and is now the Director of Specialised Educational Services. Prior to this, he was appointed as the Assistant Director of Education, taking the lead in various curriculum development projects across the different programmes at DAS. During this time, he also presented numerous workshops and talks to parents, educators and professionals around the island to help spread the awareness of learning differences as well as to provide useful and practical strategies for them.*

*Ashraf has a Post Graduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, London Metropolitan University and is currently undergoing his Masters in Education (Leadership, Policy and Change) with Monash University. With his training in dyslexia and in Neuro Linguistic Programming, he blends knowledge from these two fields to deliver programmes which emphasises importance on the acquisition of not only the hard skills but the soft skills as well.*

# Guide to Mentoring and Dyslexia

**Margaret Malpas**

*Chair of Trustees—BDA Management Board  
British Dyslexia Association, UK*

*This article is abridged from: “Mentoring, Entrepreneurs and Dyslexia Guide” (2014), Malpas, M.  
(with input from Abdulaal, E), © British Dyslexia Association, Bracknell.*

*This article will be published in the British Dyslexia Association Handbook 2017. It is re-produced here with kind permission.*

The British Dyslexia Association (B.D.A.) has run and helped to set up a number of mentoring schemes within organisations. These can be empowering and enriching for both dyslexic mentors and mentees. Mentors can play a key role in enabling dyslexic individuals to celebrate their strengths, utilise effective strategies and overcome barriers, so that they may be more able to achieve their potential.

## WHAT IS MENTORING?

Mentoring traditionally is where a more senior or resourceful person, with more experience and skills, assists the development of a more junior person. Mentoring schemes have been around in business organisations for over 40 years. The original advocate for them was David Clutterbuck (eg. Clutterbuck, D. (1995) ‘Mentoring in Action’ 2nd edition 2006, Kogan Page Limited) and his books remain helpful.

Within the Mentoring schemes the B.D.A. has run, there has been a strong focus on mentors who have experiences to share with their mentees and knowledge that they can pass across which will help the mentee manage their lives more effectively.

“Mentors can play a key role in enabling dyslexic individuals to celebrate their strengths, utilise effective strategies and overcome barriers, so that they may be more able to achieve their potential.”

## **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF A MENTOR PROGRAMME FOR DYSLLEXIC INDIVIDUALS**

It is crucial with all mentoring programmes that the aims are considered at the outset, but particularly for a programme engaging with dyslexic individuals. They may already have faced many obstacles in life, see this as another educational scheme to endure or have inappropriate aspirations of what it can achieve for them.

From B.D.A mentoring schemes run to date, it has become apparent that what really benefitted the mentees were two aims:

1. to improve the confidence of the mentee, and
2. to impart specific skills and knowledge that enable them to manage their lives better.

## **TRUST**

It is essential that the mentee has absolute trust in their mentor, even more so for the dyslexic individual who is likely to be divulging feelings and fears that they may never have shared with anyone else before. If it is possible then the best way of beginning this is to bring potential mentors and mentees together and allow them to choose each other.

This was done very successfully in a programme run by a Police service some years ago where twenty senior officers and twenty more junior staff were brought together at the regional training centre and over a weekend could get to know each other and choose who to work with.

However, geographical issues can cause difficulty within a mentoring scheme if the mentee and mentor are based in different parts of the country. However with remote working applications such as Skype being widely available, it is possible to forge a constructive and useful mentoring partnership.

## **RECRUITING AND TRAINING MENTORS**

In our experience, it was very easy to recruit mentees, but much more difficult to recruit mentors. It is a good idea, therefore, to recruit a bank of mentors before you start to advertise for mentees. There are lots of ways in which you can advertise for free for mentors, including:

- ◆ Dyslexia Support Alumni groups
- ◆ National newspapers offering free adverts for charities seeking volunteers

- ◆ Yours and contacts' websites
- ◆ Doing press releases about your scheme which might then appear in journals and newspapers with your contact details,
- ◆ Word of mouth
- ◆ Social Media such as LinkedIn

It is important that mentors know what they are taking on and make a commitment for a sustained period (e.g., a years' worth) of activity. It is a good idea to run some induction training, which could be done as distance as the webinar which is being offered to mentors will be. This training needs to cover:

- ◆ The aims of the scheme
- ◆ How the scheme will operate (logistics)
- ◆ How to give support and advice to the mentee
- ◆ How to deal with difficult situations such as a mentee with too high an aspiration of what can be achieved; or, anger management, as these schemes can allow an opportunity for high emotions to be vented
- ◆ Where to signpost mentees to when they need help beyond the scheme.

## **MENTORING CONTACTS**

In order to manage various risks, it is advisable to have a contract between the mentor, mentee and scheme's organisation. This can be quite informal in tone but should spell out all the specific elements of the relationship between the parties and also risk mitigation items. This contract should be available in various formats and provided ahead of time so that those individuals with dyslexia are able to absorb and fully understand it in their own time.

## **COMMUNICATION WITH MENTORS AND MENTEES**

As the scheme is designed for those with dyslexia, it is important to ensure that all communications are dyslexia friendly. Complying with the B.D.A.'s Style Guide will ensure that best standards are met (see: [http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/common/ckeditor/filemanager/userfiles/About\\_Us/policies/Dyslexia\\_Style\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/common/ckeditor/filemanager/userfiles/About_Us/policies/Dyslexia_Style_Guide.pdf)). It can be helpful for mentors and the mentees to provide each other with an informal agenda prior to meetings so that they each have time to prepare appropriately.

## **ADMINISTRATION**

Keeping good record keeping on mentors and mentees (eg. accurate contact details available on request when misplaced) is vital and it is preferable to log meetings at least initially, as well as implementing other risk avoidance factors.

Matching up mentors to appropriate mentees is also part of the administration process. This can be quite challenging when large geographical distances are involved. It is possible to use other communication methods rather than meetings, such as Skype calls or virtual meetings, but in order to establish trust, which is absolutely fundamental to the process, at least one face to face meeting is usually required.

### **WHAT WILL THE MENTORING ACTUALLY COVER?**

This should be decided at the outset as part of the aims of the scheme. However, whereas traditionally mentoring schemes were informal methods of development, the needs of dyslexic individuals may well be more specific and there may be frustration and disappointment if these needs are not met. So in addition to a conversation with the mentee about the challenges they are facing, and the barriers to progress which the mentor may be able to solve, it may be desirable to build in some other more formal learning into the process.

### **FORMAL LEARNING MODULES**

Often, no one has ever explained to the majority of dyslexic adults, what dyslexia is, how common it is and how it co-occurs with other specific learning difficulties. This is very empowering information and could be included within the training that the mentees receive.

Many dyslexic adults have not learned useful techniques for personal organisation and this is often a major area of challenge. Formal learning modules on time management, setting and achieving personal goals; and other personal competencies such as how to be assertive but not aggressive; and, how to make yourself visible at work; whether and how to disclose that your dyslexia at work, are all really useful to the adult with dyslexia.

Literacy development may be something the mentor recommends to the mentee who needs it, signposting them to suitable on-going learning schemes.

It is possible to add onto these ideas according to the needs of the individuals and also the circumstances and sectors in which they operate. For example, some people have a number of part time jobs and this can be immensely challenging for those with weaker working memories or sequencing problems. Consequently, modules that help with the requirements of this way of organising work, could really open up the individual's potential for the future.

## **CREATING A DYSPLEXIA FRIENDLY MENTORING SCHEME**

For those in tertiary education settings, some specific input on study skills, time management, organisational skills, project report writing, note taking, stress management, self-esteem, revision and examination techniques may be particularly helpful. It will be useful to consider the formats that applicants can use when applying for mentoring support. Adopting a dyslexia friendly format or method of communication for all correspondence would be appropriate (please see B.D.A. Dyslexia Style Guide in Additional Resources section).

## **SIGNPOSTING**

No scheme and no mentor can provide all the answers to the array of different needs that the mentees may arrive with. It is very important to have a resource pack available to both parties that has referral opportunities. This might be something simple as contact information for dyslexia organisations and how to access available support. However, it should also include references to agencies for dealing with other difficulties, including emotional difficulties.

## **ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY**

Assistive Technology can be used by the mentee to support their dyslexic difficulties. A common misconception is that technology is seen as the answer to everything, but it isn't, although it can make the users life more efficient. The individual must first have a good understanding of their strengths and weaknesses and how they work in order for technology to help support them. Dyslexia affects people in many different ways and so to address this many products have been developed over the years.

Common solutions include:

- ◆ Text to speech software: this will read webpages, documents and pdf's helping the user to process the information quicker as they do not have to process and decode the unfamiliar word and then put it back into context.
- ◆ Mind mapping software: this allows the user to produce a graphical representation (spider diagram) on the topic they wish to write about. As keywords are used instead of sentences, it is easier for the user to navigate the topic as a whole.
- ◆ Speech to text software: this allows the user to dictate their thoughts to the computer, which can be useful should the individual have difficulty

expressing what they wish to say, due processing speed and working memory difficulties. Using this software does require patience as the user has to develop the way that they talk to the computer as it is different to how you would speak to another person.

With the increasing popularity and power of smart phones and tablet computers along with access to the internet, an increasing number of apps are being developed to support the dyslexic community, meaning that we no longer needing to be 'tied' to a desk to access technology.

The above description is very general and more detail can be found on our New Technologies Committee website ([www.bdatech.org](http://www.bdatech.org)).

A list of free resources can be found at: <http://bdatech.org/what-technology/freeware-products/>

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

Tips for the Dyslexic Adult (2012) by Eorann Lean, British Dyslexia Association, Bracknell, UK

Available from: <http://www.bdastore.org.uk/books/british-dyslexia-association/tips-for-the-dyslexic-adult/>

BDA Dyslexia Style Guide -

[http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/common/ckeditor/filemanager/userfiles/About\\_Us/policies/Dyslexia\\_Style\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/common/ckeditor/filemanager/userfiles/About_Us/policies/Dyslexia_Style_Guide.pdf)

Covering: Dyslexia Friendly Text, Accessible Formats and Website design.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**



### **MARGARET MALPAS**

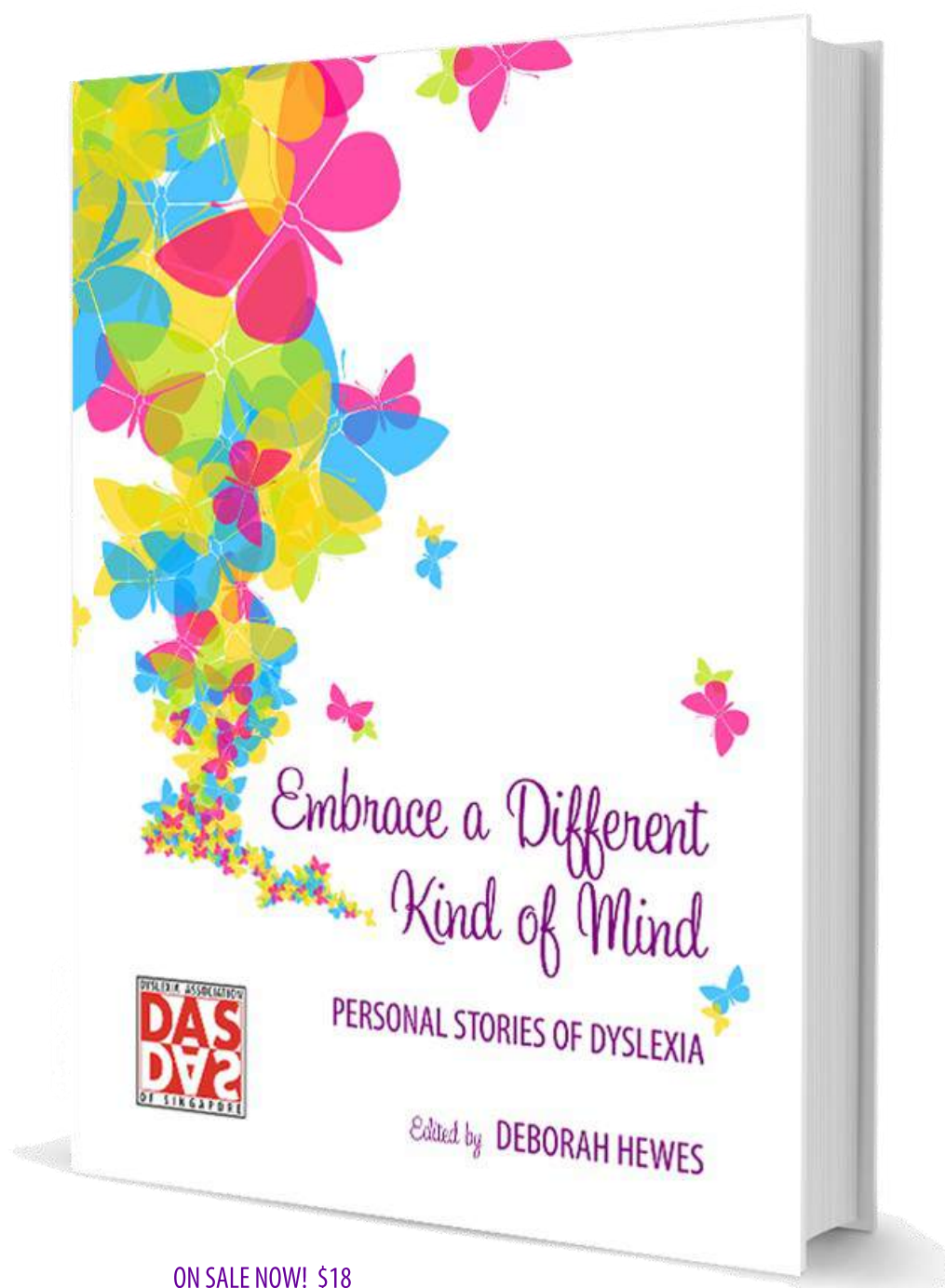
*Chair of Trustees*

*BDA Management Board*

*British Dyslexia Association, UK*

*I spend my time campaigning for a dyslexia friendly world. I am Joint Chair of the British Dyslexia Association and I also set up the Dyslexia Adult Network. Key things about me: entrepreneurial ( Founded Malpas Flexible Learning Ltd and Four's Fun), FCIPD with 30 years experience in HR and Training, dyscalculic, trained specialist teacher for adults with dyslexia*





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[WWW.DAS.ORG.SG](http://WWW.DAS.ORG.SG)

# EMBRACE DYSLEXIA

Raising awareness about **dyslexia**  
and to highlight the **strengths and challenges**  
that individuals with dyslexia face everyday.

Students with dyslexia are struggling in the education system each and every day. We believe that each student is **unique** in their own way and have the strengths that will see them through their education and into a successful career.

One way to provide **hope** is to raise awareness about dyslexia and to have role models for them to **aspire** to. Another is to have companies advocate for dyslexics in Singapore and to actively support DAS and its students.

**EMBRACE DYSLEXIA. SIGN THE COMMITMENT TODAY.**



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OF SINGAPORE**  
HELPING DYSLEXIC PEOPLE ACHIEVE

The Dyslexia Association of Singapore (DAS) is a vibrant organisation serving the specialised educational needs of over 2,900 students with learning differences. DAS has over 240 professional staff offering a wide array of services and operates 13 learning centres across Singapore.

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