

# Dyslexic MIND Strengths... for Kids!

by [DYSLEXIC ADVANTAGE TEAM](#) | [BEING DYSLEXIC](#), [DYSLEXIA](#), [DYSLEXIC ADVANTAGES](#), [GIFTED](#), [MIND STRENGTHS](#), [RESEARCH](#) | [0 COMMENTS](#)



Dr Brock Eide

**Q:** What can you tell me about MIND strengths and dyslexia?

**A:** MIND-Strengths was a concept that we developed in our 2011 book, *The Dyslexic Advantage*. Both the book and the concept had their origin in our observations that dyslexic people not only shared certain kinds of challenges with each other, but also shared certain kinds of strengths. And when we looked at the kinds of strengths that we and others had observed in dyslexic people, we found that they naturally grouped themselves into four kinds of categories that could be labeled with the acronym MIND.

The first strength, **M**, stands for material reasoning, which is essentially three-dimensional spatial reasoning. The **I** strength stands for interconnected reasoning, which is essentially the ability to understand and think about systems and the connections and relationships between things. **N** strength stands for narrative reasoning, which grows out of the tendency we observed in many dyslexic people to have much better episodic memory, or memory for things they've experienced or learned about in the form of an episode, or event or story, than semantic memory, which is the ability to remember abstract or non-contextual information. We've found that many dyslexic people excel in being able to use and recombine fragments from their personal or episodic memory to solve problems or tell stories or make sense out of complex situations in ways that people who rely

more heavily on abstract reasoning can't do. And D stands for dynamic reasoning, which is the ability to predict and understand how processes that you can observe now will play out and change across time, either going forward into the future or backwards into the past.

We observed that each of these strengths seemed to be more common in people with dyslexia than in non-dyslexic people. Even more remarkably, we also found that there were good reasons, based in brain research, to believe that these differences in MIND-strengths were produced by the same differences in brain structure and function that also led to the challenges in reading and writing that characterize the clinical syndrome of dyslexia. In other words, it looked to us like these strengths and weaknesses were really the flip sides of the same neurological coin, which led us in turn to believe that the real point of having a "dyslexic brain"—and the reason why fully twenty percent of humans have dyslexic types of brains—are that these differences can create actual advantages for certain types of functions. It really suggests that it's an advantage for the human population as a whole to have a certain percentage of "dyslexic thinkers" in our community, in order to provide us with this different type of creativity and thinking.

In the years since our book has come out, we've gone on to do some research to document and verify these findings. About 5 years ago, we created a set of self-assessment surveys for adults which we gave both to people who were dyslexic and to people who are not dyslexic. These surveys initially contained 91 questions on the four different MIND-strengths, and over 2000 people aged 18 and older filled these out. When we compared the answers given by the dyslexic and non-dyslexic people, we found dramatic differences in the ways they rated their strengths in these four areas, which were entirely consistent with our initial observations that as a group dyslexic people really did show special strengths in these areas. Those interested in seeing some of the results of this study can watch a presentation on this research that we gave at a conference sponsored by Microsoft in Silicon Valley in 2017.

Using detailed statistical analysis we then honed down the surveys to a total of 55 questions across the four MIND-strengths, and that's become our

current MIND-strengths survey. And we use that self-assessment to help adult individuals with dyslexia to identify their dyslexia-associated strengths so they can begin to benefit their abilities, and many people have found this self-assessment very useful. For the last year and a half, for example, we've been working with the Schwab Learning Center at Stanford University who've been using the surveys with their students, and the feedback we've received from the students has been extremely positive.

However, one of the shortcomings of this research to this point is that it deals exclusively with adults ages 18 and older. We've been asked many times to extend this research to younger dyslexic individuals, so they can get insights into their strengths and help in developing those abilities, and this is something we dearly want to do and are focused on right now. But to do that we're going to need a lot of help.

**Q: What kind of help can the Dyslexic Advantage community give you?**

**A:** The number one thing we need is for parents and older teens to fill out the survey forms we've created to form our MIND-strengths self-assessments for children and adolescents. This survey is intended for children ages 5 through 17. For older students, the forms should be filled out in cooperation with parents, and for the youngest children the parents may need to fill them out as best they can just based on observation. But we need both children who are known to be dyslexic (for example through formal testing, or through a positive test on the [Neurolearning Dyslexia Screening Test App](#)), and also very importantly of children who show essentially no serious signs of dyslexic reading and spelling issues. About half of the siblings of dyslexic children (on average) will be non-dyslexic, but it would also be extremely useful to have forms filled out for students who have no dyslexic siblings or parents, as well.

We essentially need at least 500-1000 surveys filled out for dyslexic students across the 5-17 age range, and an equal number for students in that age group with minimal signs of dyslexia. It takes about 20 minutes to fill out a survey for each child, and the quicker we can get the participants

we need, the quicker the results will be available for our community to use. Again, the ultimate goal is to create a self-assessment survey for dyslexic children that will help them identify areas of strength so they can be connected with various kinds of interests, activities, educational experiences, and potentially even future job opportunities that are linked to strengths that might otherwise have gone unrecognized.

One of the things we've always found especially gratifying in our work with families is when we can point out to parents the presence of some special strengths their child has. This can be particularly helpful when those strengths maybe are not strengths the parents have themselves, so they either haven't been recognized them, or they are not sure how to nurture those strengths or what they might be good for. That's really our chief goal with this project: to be able to point parents, children, and the professionals that work with children, toward ways to identify, build, and use the child's strengths. Because these strengths can be useful both inside and outside the classroom, and both for activities that children are engaged in now and for things they'll be doing for the rest of their lives. So please, please help us with this important work!

Take our MIND-Strengths Survey for Young People (Dyslexic and Non-dyslexic Kids) [here](#).