

## Strengths of Dyslexia

<https://www.dyslexiasupportsouth.org.nz/parent-toolkit/emotional-impact/strengths-of-dyslexia/>

Parents and teachers can support children with learning differences by helping that child become aware of the strengths they have just from the way they think and process information.

People with dyslexia have a tendency to not recognise or acknowledge what they can do well (their strengths).

Their low self esteem makes it even harder to recognise these strengths.

As a parent or teacher, even though we can see the strengths of the child, it is also very easy to get caught up in focusing on the areas of struggle as well.

It takes conscious steps to be able to change this mind set and focus on the strengths.

## Helping your child notice their strengths

(NB: Every person with a learning difference is different. They may be very creative with art or good at sport or in their ability to manage a group of people for a common cause or with their social interaction, for example a dyslexic may not draw well but instead they may be very co-ordinated at sports.)

### **Dyslexic strengths include:**

- Good problem solvers
- Creative
- Observant
- High levels of empathy
- Excellent big-picture thinkers
- Good at making connections

- Strong narrative reasoning
- Three-dimensional thinking

All these strengths intertwine as well. For example, problem solving needs imagination, creativity, being observant and reasoning skills.

## What these strengths mean

### Good problem solvers (thinking outside the box)

- This can come to the fore when the children create strategies for managing their learning when it is so difficult for them.
  - For example, asking the person sitting beside them for the instructions or using “Ok Google” for spelling
- Seeing new ways to complete tasks and may discover connections that others have missed.
- They are especially good at bringing together information and resources from different areas to see these new connections.
- They tend to use an intuitive approach to problem solving that can seem like daydreaming. Staring out of the window is how dyslexics work, letting their brain slide into neutral and ease itself around a problem to let connections assemble.
- Can use critical thinking to solve a problem after comparing information.

Examples of dyslexics using this strength include Albert Einstein and Leonardo Da Vinci

### Creative

Being creative can mean many different types of creativity, such as an artist, a musician, a talented sportsperson, a leader of a group or an entrepreneur.

The painter’s Picasso and Pollock were both dyslexics. So was the author Roald Dahl and entrepreneur Richard Branson. NZ shot-putter Tom Walsh is also dyslexic.

### Big picture thinker

This strength can make it easier to spot patterns and see trends in data. People with dyslexia have the ability to see how things connect to form complex systems, and to identify similarities among multiple things. Such strengths are likely to be of particular significance for fields like science and mathematics, where pictures are key.

“9 out of 10 dyslexics describe their thinking as “seeing past detail to gain a strategic (big picture) view of a subject/problem”

### **Observant**

People with dyslexia excel at finding the odd one out from enormous quantities of visual data.

For example, dyslexic scientist Christopher Tonkin described his unusual sensitivity to noticing “things out of place.”

‘The British intelligence agency uses the abilities of dyslexics to analyse complex information in a “dispassionate, logical and analytical”, way to combat threats such as foreign espionage.

While many people with dyslexia struggle with reading or writing, they are often extremely skilled at deciphering facts from patterns or events’.

### **High levels of empathy**

This can relate to where a person with dyslexia has the ability to “read the situation” and then have a sense of understanding what is happening for other people in that situation (empathy).

This can be a very strong skill.

Whether this heightened empathy is a result of their brains being wired differently, or because their childhoods are defined by difference make them more empathic to others’ plights, is not clear.

### **Narrative reasoning**

Narrative reasoning uses memory of experiences (episodic memory). Dyslexic individuals have a greater ability to learn through experiences and recall information with more efficiency, whether they have actually experienced or simply imagined these experiences.

### **REASONING:**

1. Understanding patterns, evaluating possibilities or making decisions. (84% of dyslexics are above average in Reasoning).
2. Simplifying: understanding, taking apart or simplifying complex ideas or concepts.
3. Analysing: using logic to decide on strength of an argument or where the truth lies.
4. Deciding: interpreting patterns; situations to predict future events; make decisions.
5. Visioning: seeing past detail to gain a strategic (big picture) view of a subject or problem.

(From *Made by Dyslexia*)

### **Three dimensional thinking and making connections**

They think with 3-dimensional, multi-sensory images that evolve and grow as the thought process adds more information or concepts. They do not experience much, if any, internal dialogue. This thought process happens so much faster than verbal thinking, that it is usually subliminal. Many people with dyslexia demonstrate better skills at manipulating 3D objects in their mind. Many of the world's top architects and fashion designers have dyslexia.

*Compiled by Chris Cole November 2019*

