



Dissemination good practice

Collected by

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“You can be extremely bright and still have dyslexia. You just have to understand how you learn and how you process information. When you know that, you can overcome a lot of the obstacles that come with dyslexia.”

Tim Tebow

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Introduction

All DysVet modules are the products of collaborative work between partners. The main aim is to support adults with dyslexia in vocational education and in employment.

This module is an exception, because the information presented on the following pages comes originally from adults with dyslexia, who have agreed to publish their stories related to personal experiences.

We looked for stories of real individuals whose lives are affected by dyslexia, who are inspiring and could help motivate other people. To our surprise, when we wanted to write about their experiences, they were often hesitant about it. Only a small number of people thought that talking about problems they have faced all their life could be helpful to someone else.

Dagmar Rýdlová expressed herself precisely in the introduction of the „Sborník výpovědí dospělých dyslektiků” (the first collection of the statements of the dyslexics adult in the Czech Republic). Dyslexia is typically focusing on the problem. There is an official definition of dyslexia and there are a lot of materials about the causes and the consequences of dyslexia. However, we are lacking focus on the individual person with dyslexia and solving their specific problems.

Hopefully, this module will support you and may contribute to future work in the field of focusing on helping and solving individual problems of dyslexic people.

Learning objectives

This module has been prepared as a collection of case studies, prepared by individuals with dyslexia with the aim to share own experiences.

The objective of the module is to support the dyslexic individuals in their self-confidence and effort to overcome the consequences of dyslexia in vocational education and employment.

Case study 1

Renata didn't know about her dyslexia until she was 28. She had successfully finished a geodetic high school. She was interested in the area of geodesy. Because she was careful, patient and consistent, she thought that her way of preparing for lessons was the right one. She spent 3-4 hours each day reading notes from lessons, books and made an effort to remember the terminology and understand the relations. From her perspective, other students were not interested in the area of study. Renata believed that she did well. Actually she was an average student and the effort was not in relation with the outputs. She thought that her poor results in exams were caused by nerves and the distraction of classmates. She never thought that her troubles could have a different cause.

She passed A-level and started her job at the Office for Surveying. Initially she was satisfied and interested in her job. She was responsible and careful, and she was promoted to the position of deputy department manager. She needed to read long and complicated documents for this position. She needed to quickly decide, sign the contracts and submit the evaluations. She made mistakes, spent a lot of time at work and her supervisor wasn't satisfied with her work.

She felt frustrated; her personal life suffered as well. She decided to visit the clinical psychologist who firstly tried to help her with overloading. During her treatment he was diagnosed the symptoms of dyslexia. The psychologist explained to her the causes of her troubles and suggested possible solutions. It was a shock for first, but she decided to go on with the job she was interested in. She needed a courage to introduce her problems to her boss. She based her explanation at the diagnosis and proposed possible solutions, which were accepted by the manager.

Renata suggested to resolve the easy tasks immediately but to take extra time for the important decisions and difficult documents.

In cooperation with her psychologist, Renata organised her working day. She started earlier, when her colleagues weren't at work yet with the documents where she needed concentration. She moved the meetings with colleagues to the afternoon, when it is more difficult for her to deal with documents.

Her performance has improved and she feels better.

Case study 2

Zdenek, 45 years old.

Zdenek was a lively child and very good at sports. He held the school record in 100m running for more than 20 years at primary school.

Since primary school, he had troubles learning. He wasn't able to rewrite text, read fluently and write dictation.

Symptoms of dyslexia were not well-known like today, and assessments were not often provided. Therefore, his difficulties were associated with his poor behaviour.

His parents tried to help him overcome his problems by training and made him to rewrite long articles from newspapers. He wasn't able to understand the text and hours of writing was a nightmare to him.

When he was 14, he entered to high military school. He hoped to get used to the daily routine. But he had troubles learning, he couldn't understand written text but could substitute his deficiencies by practical skills. He finished the school successfully passing the A-level exam. He started own business very soon after.

Thanks to his business intuition and adaptability, he became successful, with 120 employees. His main strength was the ability to see opportunities where others didn't see them. He now spends his time on activities where he is exceptional and he delegates administrative tasks to colleagues. His intuition has helped him also in the recruitment of good staff.

Symptoms of dyslexia were not so known in primary schools 30 years ago and learning difficulties were often associated with poor behaviour.

Zdenek hasn't become familiar with modern trends or social networks. His business is based on personal relations with customers.

Dagmar Rýdlová, author “Languages without barriers”

I have spent my childhood and youth in Prague. There was a scientific development base for heating systems near our house. My father worked there as a technologist. I lived in an atmosphere of research institute since birth. Sometime around 1965, I tasted my first meal warmed in the microwave oven, developed by Ing Andras with his team.

In the sixties, we learned at school that science would once solve all of population's problems. We visited sometimes the research institute. I was always fascinated by different production procedures. I was interested in the transfer of raw material to material and of material to products. It didn't matter if it was about producing glass, china, carpets, musical instruments or chocolate. I was interested in seeing, asking and thinking about all of them.

I always wanted to work in research and would have never imagined a specific area would become my domain – development of educational tools and methods for dyslexic children. Everything is so little tangible. Problems of children with dyslexia seem sometimes paradoxical, difficult to explain at the current state of knowledge. I have special competence for my work. I'm dyslexic and so I can use my own large experience. I can try for myself if my ideas work. Initially I took dyslexia as a handicap till I got advice that each disadvantage can be changed to an advantage. This advice has brought a change to my life. I have started with development of educational tools for dyslexic children full-time. Unfortunately we don't have a research institute where I can be based, so I had to start as an entrepreneur. In 2010, I established a civic association, ADYS.

Today I know that science will not solve all our problems. We are living in bipolar world and this is our destiny. Pleasure gives colour to our life and pain gives the depth. This is my creed. And I have one more: in what we are the same, this connects us, in what we are different, this helps us to development and growth. This philosophy has helped me at work and also in personal life. As a dyslexic, I don't feel inferior. I have strengths and weaknesses like everybody.

I have finished the University of Economics, Prague, branch of study economic and industry management. My last employment was a programmer – analytics. Since 1991 I'm self-employed, focused on the development of educational tools and methods. I'm author of two industrial models. I'm a member of DYS-centre Prague and the Czech association of Czech Patent Office and Czech Union of Inventors and Rationalizers. My main topic? Languages without barriers...

Case study 3

Richard

My parents led me into the world of sports and my school results were not much of a priority. To learn something new was more important than to get a good grades at school. My school results were below average. I should have studied in my spare time but I preferred to do sports.

Somehow I managed to make it through elementary and high school as well. No one really cared that my school results were bad. I found an interesting job which I really enjoyed and I agreed to study during my working.

(distance learning)

I have graduated from college without any major problem.

I have three children and two of them study a Gymnasium. Most of the time my wife helps them with studies but sometimes I get involved too. It is a bit strange situation when I come to help someone who is getting an excellent grade from the same subject where I was getting the very bad assessment.

Why getting good grades is so important and why it is necessary to do so much schoolwork? What is the practical things they carry with them into the life? My opinion is that children have to learn a lot of things that are absolutely not important and they will not need them in a real life.

Dyslexic people are often not getting the basic information. They often think that they do not understand something but in fact they have coped with it a long time ago

I have never noticed any success in a school. It was very depressing for me but fortunately I could do sport and be good somewhere else than at school.

Nobody or nothing is perfect except our family.

It is a space where children can look for an explanation for any questions.

We know that things can be explained simply but also that explanation can be much more complicated. If something sounds very complicated it doesn't mean that it is complicated but it means that someone doesn't know how to explain things easily.

We need prepare our kids for a real life and explain to them that they will be sometimes surrounded by a complex of tangled rules and laws. They can start used to it in school. But they have always parents who can tell them that the problem is not just on their side.

Sometimes when I have to go to the authorities I feel like at school.

Luckily I have a great wife who is often assures me that the faults are not probably on my site . This gives me a little strength to fight with it

Case Study 4

Monika – Dyspraxia

Monika is 37 years old teacher of Pedagogical High School.

Her problem started in kindergarten where she had problems to grasp a pencil or other drawing/creative tools properly. Her work and drawing was never hung on the board. Later, when she was a bit older, and she wanted help to her mother with ironing clothes, but she was always burnt by the iron. Monika was a very ambitious person, even in kindergarten. As a pre-schooler she wanted very much to learn to tie her shoelaces, and despite of her Lack of manual dexterity, she visited one of her cousin during a weekend where she learned this during two days.

It was normal for her to press down too hard on the pencil at the first class of Elementary school. A real fountain pen was given to her, as the last one in the class. The time limit given to her in the class wasn't enough for her and she had to finish some of her work at home with her mother (sewing, crocheting, etc.). She always had to focus on her movement because she was very clumsy. She had a tendency to bump into things or spill her drinks.

Furthermore, she couldn't work with other children on a large projects because, for example, cutting or gluing was very difficult for her.

She doesn't recall having any problem during her studies on High school or University. As a teacher today, she has been using a variety of modern technology.

How she overcame her problems:

Thanks to a very strict teacher, her mom and hard training, she learned to write very well. But she needed to concentrate on it.

She was using a solid metal compass for geometry class.

A slimmer pen has been very helpful.

Dyslexia Contacts - Useful Websites and Publications

<http://www.eda-info.eu> - The European Dyslexia Association is a European non-governmental organisation of the European Union, Brussels. The associations of people with dyslexia and other specific learning differences, children's parents, professionals and researchers currently has 37 member organisations in 25 European countries: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, North Cyprus, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, San Marino, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

<http://www.doitprofiler.com> - It collates information from multiple sources, helping to identify hidden challenges that may be present, and also mapping out the reasons for these challenges (for example specific learning difficulties, mental health, study difficulties, educational and employability barriers)

<http://dyslexia-international.org> - Dyslexia International asbl, a non-profit organisation, was registered in Belgium in 2000.

<http://www.dyslang.eu> - E-learning course and best practise guide for teachers and parents so they will be able to support the multilingual individual in learning an additional language that is different to their mother tongue.

<http://disco-tools.eu> - European Dictionary of Skills and Competences - terminological description and translation of occupations, personal competence profiles or the requirements for a job as well as for the description of learning outcomes, diploma and certificate supplements (comprising about 10,000 skills/competence terms in CZ, EN, FR, GE, HU, LT, SE, IT, ES, SK). Anyone who needs to write a resume or cover letter in a foreign language can use it.

Useful Websites and Publications in Czech Republic

www.dyscentrum.org - DYS-centrum® Praha is a voluntary independent association of individuals and corporate bodies that are connected with specific learning disabilities matters. They cooperate with a number of specialists including psychologists, (special) educators, speech therapists, neurologists, psychiatrists, and paediatricians, who treat clients with specific learning disabilities.

www.czechdyslexia.cz - Czech Dyslexia Association - voluntary non-profit organization for professionals who deal with dyslexia, other specific learning disabilities and associated difficulties in behaviour. The organisational core of the new company consists of twenty psycho-pedagogical professionals, teachers of primary, secondary and higher education institutions and other persons dealing with specific learning disabilities and behaviour disorders.

<http://www.ippp.cz> - IPPP collects and processes information about the pedagogical-psychological services, special pedagogical, educational and of career counselling in schools.

<http://www.nuv.cz> - National Institute for Education, School Counselling Facilities and Facilities for the Further Education of Pedagogical Employees (NUV). NUV addresses issues of preschool, primary, secondary and higher education, including art and language education. The Institute also addresses the pedagogical-psychological, special pedagogic, educational and career guidance in schools.