



I'm Dyslexic and it isn't a Superpower!

Description

I'm dyslexic. I was diagnosed 30 or more years ago. So I say with all respect, stop calling Dyslexia a superpower. It belittles & glamourises a condition that is, to many, crippling and leads to terrible anxiety and self-esteem issues.

When I was young, I was labelled stupid by my school. In fact, my maths teacher even told my Mum – to her face – that I was dumb and should just be left to get on with it. I am very lucky my parents took me to a specialist in the early 90s to get a diagnosis to force the school to “reassess” their opinion. I was the first in my school!

However, I struggle to read, I can't remember my times tables, I struggle to process information, understand it and convert it to long term memory. I struggle to concentrate, focus and maintain focus. To maintain an average academic ability, my brain had to work twice as hard as others. Oh, and I struggle with the lesser-known but awesomely fun element of this type of processing issue, false memories! Yep, because of how my memory works, a dream, a partial memory or even a visual thought/daydream can create a full-blown memory I would pass a lie detector test defending – just ask my wife. It's not just seeing letters backwards folks.

Sure, I have a different way of interpreting the world around me which can be handy at times – that is what this new #DyslexicThinking that LinkedIn is promoting is all about. That is cool, in some ways, but it comes at a significant cost. It also comes with years of trying to understand my mind and work around its deficits.

Now, however, it seems that we are trying to make dyslexia glamorous. It is as though people want to be associated with it. I can't see why, maybe it is to show how battle-hardened they are to be where they are now and also dyslexic. Sadly this is likely to just mean people using the word to disguise other issues – how many of them have actually been diagnosed rather than just doing a quick 10 questions on the internet I wonder?

My daughter is also dyslexic and dyscalculic, the less cool little brother of dyslexia. With dyscalculia, you fail to grasp magnitude. $1+1$ might equal 2, but with dyscalculia, you might not really understand

why. Let that sink in a moment. I asked her today “Do you think your dyslexia and dyscalculia are superpowers?” She laughed and said, “no – who wants to not be able to spell or add up – what kind of rubbish superpower is that?”

I get the importance of trying to normalise these types of issues in society. However, calling them superpowers and creating a hashtag isn’t going to do that. For one, it almost tries to imply that those with neurodiversity are better than those without, creating further division. Secondly, as I said, it belittles the day to day struggles kids and adults are really having.

Until the education system is capable of teaching in a way that fits with the neurodiversity of the kids within, telling them “it’s ok you have a superpower” is just insulting to most. It’s creating an excuse to continue to treat them the same way as before. Our education system is not fit for purpose and most people seem to know this. For instance, who decides what age a person is before they should learn something? What version of *average* is used for this? Some kids might burn through maths faster than others and be ready for new things way before their peers. Some may need way more time to get there. But, because they are 14 – they are expected to be there, no matter what – why? Because some guy somewhere decided so at a guess.

Living with any neurodiversity is a daily struggle. You learn to cope, but I have never once said “I am so glad I am dyslexic, it has made my life so awesome!”

It isn’t a trend or a bandwagon. It should not be the latest opportunity for people to *come out* as “a little bit dyslexic” and create a hashtag #imdyslexic or whatever. “Oh ya, I’m a little bit dyslexic, sometimes I can’t even spell my own name”...

I applaud the current trend of speaking about it and being open. But until the world is willing to adapt to those with these diverse and beautiful minds, they will always feel like outcasts and different – no amount of hastags will solve that.

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Date Created

01/04/2022

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