



# Dyslexia Assessment and Consultancy

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## DYSLEXIA: AN EMOTIONAL ACCOUNT

**Dr Sylvia Moody**

*This 'emotional account' of dyslexic difficulties is narrated by a fictional character, Tom.*

*It is presented as a basis for discussion of the emotional aspects of dyslexia.*

*Tom writes as follows:*

So - it was finally upon me: the Day of the Assessment, or, as it seemed to me, Judgement Day. I had put off making the appointment with the psychologist for weeks, but I couldn't put it off for ever. My wife was badgering me, the children were encouraging me, friends were lecturing me. They had all become convinced that I was dyslexic. They had heard programmes about it, read books about it, talked to people about it - and now they were absolutely *positive* I was dyslexic. But I didn't feel so sure.

True, all my life I'd struggled with reading and writing. True, I'd always felt in a muddle somehow - but surely that was just me. At school I'd been put down as 'lazy', 'not very bright'; at college I had to work twice as hard as everyone else just to survive; and at work I was constantly in trouble for forgetting things and making silly mistakes.

I always seemed to be battling somehow, battling to express myself, battling to take in what people were saying, battling to organise myself, battling to keep some self respect in the face of constant frustration and humiliation.

And now suddenly people were telling me, 'No, this isn't stupidity, it isn't laziness or bloody-mindedness, it isn't anything terrible at all - it's just a collection of difficulties that you can do something about.' I felt I didn't know what to believe about myself.

As I drove to The Assessment, I began to fear the worst, I felt my hands clammy and my heart beating. What dreadful revelations would there be about me?

And indeed as the assessment progressed, I felt that my worst fears *were* being realised. I found it hard to give the psychologist any sort of coherent account of my problems; and, even though the tests were quite straightforward, I could feel myself getting panicky and making a mess of simple things. The reading and writing bits were the worst; I

could hear myself stumbling over words, and a little composition I tried to write came out like gibberish.

I felt despondent and defeated and waited miserably for the psychologist's 'pronouncement'. Somewhere far off, almost in another world, I heard her saying, 'Well, Mr Smith ...' and then I just caught phrases: 'no problems with your reasoning power ... very great potential ... hampered throughout life by dyslexic difficulties ... done tremendously well in the circumstances ... just need some specialist tuition'.

I felt numb for a few moments - then an overwhelming sense of relief. To my amazement I found I'd burst into tears - as if forty years of damned up frustration and worry about myself suddenly flooded out.

I felt embarrassed about being so emotional though at the same time it made me feel a lot better. In fact, as I left the psychologist's office, I found myself grinning in a silly sort of way. I was gripped by a kind of elation - I almost floated back to the car. I was all right! It seemed as though some massive distortion in my life had suddenly been straightened out. I wasn't a fool, I wasn't just lazy, I wasn't a lost cause, I had some perfectly ordinary difficulties that I could get help for.

I bought some flowers and a bottle of wine and went home. The family were waiting for me all agog. They spent the evening saying 'told you so' in various ways, but I couldn't explain to them what a world of difference there is between people telling you something and you really knowing it yourself.

For a day or so my feelings of elation continued, but, as the days passed and I began to take in the implications of what had happened, my mood changed. I began to have feelings of resentment, anger, rage that I had spent so many years thinking so little of myself, so many years hiding from the world, concealing some dark secret that was a mystery even to me. Bitterly I remembered the moments of humiliation, the periods of despair.

It almost seemed as if I'd spent forty years in the wrong life. Forty years being confused about myself and bewildered by my behaviour. Forty years squandering energy in erecting defences against myself. How much more could I have done in life had I been free of all that fear and bewilderment!

To the dismay of my family and friends, I began to sink into despondency, even depression. I just felt that half my life had been lost and there was no way of getting it back. I suppose there was only one word for what I was feeling: grief. Grief for the loss of what might have been. Like all grief it was a very painful experience.

But I knew that I had to confront it and accept the losses of the past if I was to turn my life around in the future. So I did confront it - I sat it out, and at least the family were sensible enough not to try and jolly me out of it.

Eventually I surfaced again - with a strong resolve to give myself a future that was better **than the past. I signed on with a tutor and began to talk through my difficulties and learn** ways of dealing with them. I was still prone to periods of anger and depression, but these gradually grew less.

I think one of the most positive things to come out of this is that the energy I used to put into 'hiding' now goes into finding constructive ways of dealing with my problems. I've got more confident too - I appreciate my good points and don't see myself simply as a liability to people as I did in the past.

And I am not afraid to ask for help either: I asked a friend to help me write this piece - but I can assure you that the emotions described here are very much my own!

## **Useful books**

### ***Workplace:***

*Dyslexia: How to Survive and Succeed at Work.* Sylvia Moody. Random House (Vermilion).

*Dyslexia in the Workplace: an Introductory Guide.* Diana Bartlett and Sylvia Moody.  
Wiley Blackwell.

*Dyslexia and Employment: A Guide for Assessors, Trainers and Managers.*  
Edited by Sylvia Moody. Wiley Blackwell.

### ***College:***

*Dyslexia: Surviving and Succeeding at College.* Sylvia Moody. Routledge.

### ***Dyspraxia/ADD:***

*Living with Dyspraxia.* Mary Colley. Jessica Kingsley.

## **Help organisations:**

The British Dyslexia Association    0845 251 9002    [www.bdadyslexia.org.uk](http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk)

DANDA (dyspraxia/ADD support)    020 7435 7891    [www.danda.org.uk](http://www.danda.org.uk)

## **Comprehensive information sheets:**

**[www.workingwithdyslexia.com](http://www.workingwithdyslexia.com)**

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