

## **Famous Personalities with Dyslexia**

Many would consider difficulty with reading, writing and spelling to be a disability and while dyslexia is called a learning disability, many also call it a gift. Similar to how other senses become keener when one of the five is lost, so too does dyslexia often cause other talents to be brought to the fore, such as greater physical coordination, artistic gifts and empathy towards others. Due to the immense pressure in schools to read, write and spell properly, dyslexic children can lose confidence when they struggle with the written language. This can be combated with success stories of famous individuals who have overcome their 'disability'. Fortunately, this task is quite simple and even startling in who it reveals.

Dyslexia is self-compensating and over time, depending on its magnitude, even the most severe forms can be overcome. Many compensate with creative skills such as art, acting and singing; quite a few have been scientists, inventors or even novelists.

It is almost a shock to know some of the most beloved authors of all time, known for their prose and intelligence, were also dyslexic. Among these are Agatha Christie, Lewis Carroll, Hans Christian Andersen, Fanny Flagg, Gustave Flaubert, Kinley MacGregor, Stephen J. Cannell, Terry Goodkind, and William B. Yeats.

Great visionaries, inventors, musicians, or scientists include Walt Disney of Mickey Mouse fame, Alexander Graham Bell, Albert Einstein, Leonardo Da Vinci, Sir Richard Branson of Virgin Mobile, Nelson Rockefeller, Steve Jobs of Apple computers, and Henry Ford. Also musicians Harry Belafonte, John Lennon, Jewel, Tom Jones, Mozart, Kurt Cobain, and Beethoven.

Artists list as Pablo Picasso, Ansel Adams, Andy Warhol, Auguste Rodin, Tommy Hilfiger and Robert Toth. A number of athletes also share this gift, including Bruce Jenner, Muhammad Ali, Greg Louganis, Magic Johnson, Nolan Ryan, and rugby player Kenny Logan.

Historically important political figures include Winston Churchill, George Patton, Stonewall Jackson, Woodrow Wilson, George Washington, Andrew Jackson, Steve Fielding, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and John F. Kennedy.

There are movie actors and comedians aplenty who claim the gift of dyslexia and many are readily recognisable: Tom Cruise, Whoopi Goldberg, Eddie Izzard, Tom Smothers, Oliver Reed, Woody Harrelson, Danny Glover, Keira Knightly, Orlando Bloom, George Burns, Salma Hayek, Cher, Jay Leno, Sir Anthony Hopkins, Patrick Dempsey, Guy Ritchie, Keanu Reeves, and Henry Winkler to name a very few.

Even Prince Charles was diagnosed with dyslexia.

Energy and enthusiasm tend to be hallmarks for the dyslexic, including brilliance, artistic vision and abstract thinking. Viewing dyslexia as a challenge and a gift seems far closer to the truth than to consider it any kind of handicap. It will incur some struggle and even frustration, but the loving parent or care-giver is invaluable for guidance in this area with liberal application of patience and understanding. This will help the dyslexic reach her full potential which can be quite difficult in the current layout of the educational system.

The educational process is designed for the majority of students and in such a way as the student must adjust himself to the methods employed rather than the methods being adjusted to him. When a child cannot accomplish this for whatever reason, the system views him as lazy, dim-witted or stubborn and leaves him behind. We know now that some students learn differently than others, valuing hands-on experience rather than written instruction. This does not necessarily indicate dyslexia but can be an aspect. Considering up to 15% of the population is dyslexic, quite a few students tend to get left behind, ridiculed and made to suffer from poor self-esteem. This can end poorly with low test scores refused by better schools if graduating at all, underemployed adults with difficulty sustaining life or family and forced to take the dead-end jobs.

Knowing others can overcome such difficulties and that help is available can make a difference greater than someone without dyslexia could ever understand. Leaders are Readers advocates always emphasising the positive attributes of all young learners and encouraging their independent creativity. Reading and writing will fall into place with proper instruction when the confidence is high and the child feels appreciated. With help, perseverance and love from parents or care-givers, students can hurdle such challenges and embrace their disability as an advantage, allowing them to see from an enviable perspective and empowering them to reach their complete possibility for achievement.