

BOOK REVIEW



Reviewed by
Mary S. Kelly

Albert Einstein
College of Medicine
of Yeshiva University

Dyslexia Decoded: What It Is, What It Isn't, and What You Can Do About It **By Sue Dymock and Tom Nicholson**

2012; Dunmore Publishing, Auckland, New Zealand
145 pages, paperback with accompanying CD, \$29.99 (NZD)

The aim of this beautifully designed and reader-friendly book is to provide “a useful and practical resource for educators and employers” (Dymock & Nicholson, 2012, p. 7). Sue Dymock and Tom Nicholson, university professors and reading researchers from New Zealand, give a fine presentation of the important issues facing adults with dyslexia as well as their teachers and employers. The authors’ presentation is firmly grounded in the most current research on dyslexia and other reading difficulties, and avoids what the authors call the “science fiction” that can surround the field of reading. It is one of few resources that provides a truly practical approach to the assessment of reading problems in adults as well as to the interventions that are most appropriate and effective for them.

The book covers a range of topics vital for working with adults with reading problems. Dymock and Nicholson define dyslexia and put forth a “simple” cognitive model of reading and reading disability that guides the development of appropriate interventions. Next, the authors focus on assessment methods and tools as well as discuss teaching reading and writing skills to adults with dyslexia and other reading problems. Also, the authors point out in a poignant way the toll reading disabilities can take on self-esteem, self-aspiration, education, work, and survival skills.

Before each chapter of this book is a list of “Key Messages” that summarize the most important points, along with a range of resources. The chapter on defining dyslexia includes an adult dyslexia checklist that points out both the strengths and weaknesses associated with the reading disability. The focus is not strictly on problems; there is an acknowledgement of the strengths of dyslexic individuals that can be exploited in interventions. Dymock and Nicholson take the time to dispel

some of the common misconceptions about dyslexia, remaining firmly grounded in the scientific literature. There are simple, sensible steps for assessing reading problems that can be used by teachers and tutors that do not require a doctoral degree to interpret. The assessments are extremely practical, with a laser-like focus on the instructional needs of adult learners. There are helpful guides to decision-making and the use of assessment results. The chapters on instruction include resources for working on basic reading and writing skills, reading comprehension, and narrative and factual writing. Suggestions are appropriate for a range of adult learners from beginners to college students. The teaching ideas are readily put into practice and many of the suggestions place an emphasis on workplace needs and applications. Also, there is a nice emphasis on the use of technology as a method for helping to compensate for and accommodate the problems dyslexia presents to students.

There are some limits to the usefulness of this resource. There is scant attention paid to multisensory instruction, an intervention method that has demonstrated its worth with children and young adults (Shaywitz, Morris, & Shaywitz, 2008). Educators might want to supplement this resource with material such as the Wilson Reading System (<http://wilsonlangauge.com>), which provides wonderful basic training in the use of multisensory instruction with adults. In addition, a great deal of the practical research referenced in *Dyslexia Decoded* was conducted in New Zealand and is very specific to New Zealand governmental institutions and policies. The relevance for teachers or employers outside New Zealand is limited at best. Finally, the accompanying CD provides some nice illustrations of the concepts and resources present in the book, but is not a vital component and does not add much value to the overall product.

In conclusion, *Dyslexia Decoded* is written in a simple and straightforward, but not simplistic, manner. It is highly readable and accessible to both professionals and those without a significant background in reading or adult education. Dymock and Nicholson draw on their extensive research and clinical experiences as well as some real common sense to give educators and employers realistic, compassionate, and practical ways to help adults with reading disabilities.

Mary S. Kelly

Albert Einstein College of Medicine of Yeshiva University

The assessments are extremely practical, with a laser-like focus on the instructional needs of adult learners.

Dyslexia Decoded is written in a simple and straightforward, but not simplistic, manner.

REFERENCES

-
- Shaywitz, S.E., Morris, R., & Shaywitz, B.A. (2008). The education of dyslexic children from childhood to young adulthood. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 59, 451-475.