What is Dyscalculia?

Dyscalculia is characterised by an inability to understand simple number concepts and to master basic numeracy skills.

A person with Dyscalculia is likely to have difficulties dealing with numbers at very elementary levels: this includes learning number facts and procedures, telling the time, time keeping, understanding quantity, prices and money.

Difficulties with numeracy and maths are also common with dyslexia.

Symptoms of Dyscalculia

- Difficulties in holding and processing information in the mind – a weak working memory which results in: forgetting where you are in the calculation; failure to carry a number accurately into the next part of the procedure.
- Difficulties in understanding calendars, reading clocks and geometry.
- Difficulties in planning and a failure to check one's answer.
- Difficulty understanding the information within the problem. If an individual has a weak working memory and difficulties with language and reading comprehension, they will find it difficult to understand information which is presented in a symbolic or textual manner.
- Difficulties in manipulating real or abstract representational objects, eg difficulties with algebra.
- Anxiety relating to maths and low self-esteem.
- Difficulty understanding absolute and relative positions of objects; eg in each of the following, understanding that the digit '3' has a different value: 2.3; 2/3 and 23.
- Trouble grasping the mathematical logic.

How it feels to be dyscalculic…

"For as long as I can remember, numbers have not been my friend. Words are easy as there can be only so many permutations of letters to make sense. Words do not suddenly divide, fractionalise, have remainders or turn into complete gibberish because if they do, they are gibberish.

Even treating numbers like words doesn't work because they make even less sense. Of course numbers have sequences and patterns but I can't see them. Numbers are slippery."

"…the numbers just swam away from me and even after something had been explained time and time again. It was if the information had seeped out of my brain.

Mathematical explanations don't stay in my brain, no matter how slowly, patiently or

often they are said. I have no maths brain-glue."

"… Even now I cannot tell the time on a 24-hour clock, use any button on a video recorder other than 'play', read music or recite my 3 times table. I get as far as 3x4 =12 and counting on my fingers begins."

"…However, annoying as it is that there is no savant-like compensation for any of this, I do have an excellent memory for some things and almost photographic memory for words. I can draw, sculpt, write and teach all tolerably well providing numbers don't have to come into it. I can think laterally and enjoy abstract philosophy and psychology because they have concepts with variable rules.

Hands-on work is easy and so is driving providing I don't think too hard about which pedal is which. If this happens, it can get a touch emotional, especially if the wave of panic rises up when road numbers appear."

Useful link:

Further information: British Dyslexia Association, *Dyscalculia*

Full reference can be found in our Disability Learning Support Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs) booklet

All good practice guidelines are within the framework of the equality act 2010.