

Dyslexia among Blind People

The question

Can blind people have dyslexia?

G. van Wijngaarden, Metslawier

The answer

Yes, blind people can also have dyslexia, although in practice this does not occur often. Dyslexia is a development disorder, when you have trouble with learning to read and spell. There is only a small group of people who were either born blind or went blind at a young age, and who then learned to read in braille.

Especially in the past, dyslexia was also called word blindness. This already rather indicates that many people thought that dyslexic people are blind to words, that they cannot see the words properly. However, it is not really a problem with your eyes, but more with your brains. By now we know more about dyslexia, but not nearly everything yet.

Learning to read is not an easy task. There are many processes involved, such as distinguishing letters, relating characters to sounds, relating sounds to a word, and automatizing this whole process. Things can go wrong at any time during this process. That is why one dyslexic child is in no way the same as another dyslexic child. Dyslexia is a complex disorder which can occur in many different shapes and sizes. For example, many kids have difficulties with rhyming (even before they learn to read and write), that they switch letters around and thus struggle to make a distinction between the b and the d, and that it takes a lot of time before these process become automatic. Yet not everyone experiences these problems to the same degree. For braille it is also true that you can easily switch letters around, although these are different letters than in written language; for example, the d and the f are each other's mirror image in braille.

At the University of Groningen, a long-term research project into dyslexia has been carried out since 1998. This has resulted in many new insights. It has become clear that children, who later turned out to be dyslexic, already showed differences when they were two months old in comparison to other non-dyslexic babies, and that heredity plays a significant role. Ben Maassen, professor of Dyslexia at the University of Groningen, explains more about dyslexia in this article:

[Leren lezen is een huzarenstukje](#) (only in Dutch)

Kind regards,

Met vriendelijke groet,

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