Live Webinar with Willorna Brock

The Impact of Dyslexia in the Workplace

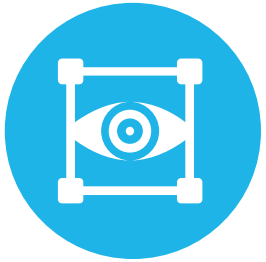
Agenda

- Introduction
- Strengths of having Dyslexia
- Famous people with Dyslexia
- The legal standpoint
  - Your rights at work
  - Starbuck's case
  - Reasonable adjustments
- Key stages in the employment lifecycle and what you can do at each stage
  - Recruitment
  - Whilst at work
  - The work environment
- Positive employers
- Dealing with change
- Useful sources of information
- Thank you

Strengths of having Dyslexia

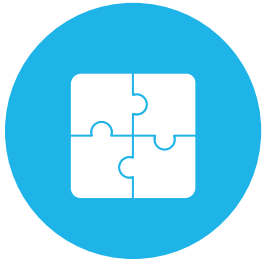
Highly Creative

- Actors and artists - *Johnny Depp, Keira Knightley, Orlando Bloom, Pablo Picasso*



Can see the bigger picture

- People with dyslexia often see things more holistically.



Great pattern recognition

- Ability to see how things connect to form complex systems
- Identify similarities among multiple things
- Useful for fields like science and mathematics, where visual representations are key.

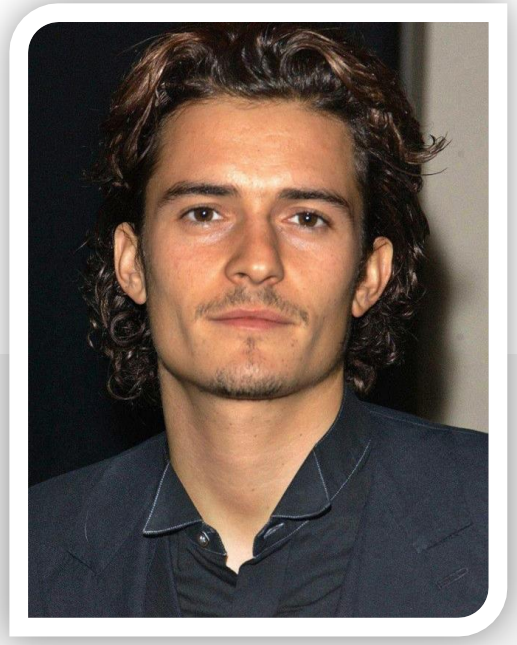
Strengths of having Dyslexia

"I recognized that I had dyslexia and then I realized I had this gift for imaging. I live in a world of patterns and images, and I see things that no one else sees. Because of dyslexia, I can see these patterns."

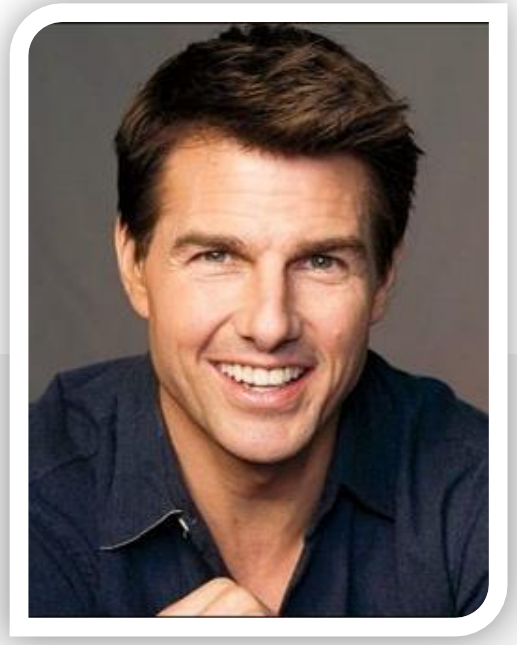
"You can't overcome it (dyslexia); you can work around it and make it work for you, but it never goes away. That's probably a good thing, because if dyslexia went away, then the other gifts would go away too."

- Beryl Benacerraf M.D. World-renowned radiologist and expert in ultrasound

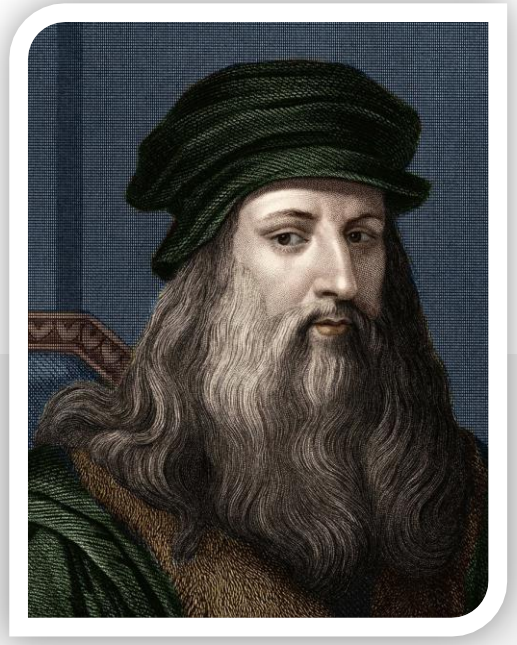
Famous people with Dyslexia.



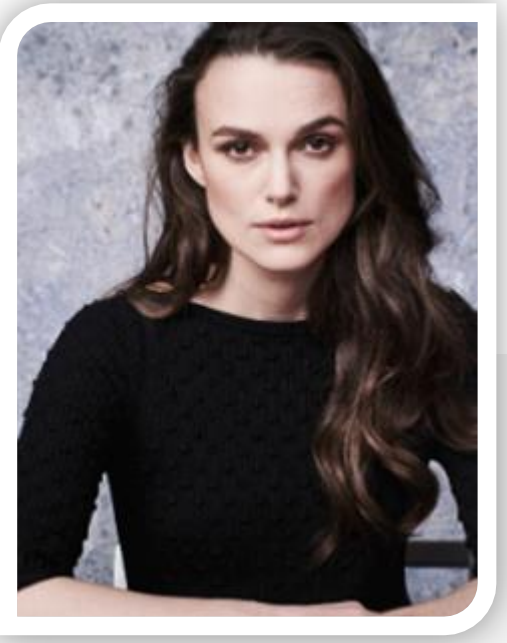
Orlando Bloom



Tom Cruise



Leonardo da Vinci



Keira Knightley

Famous people with Dyslexia.

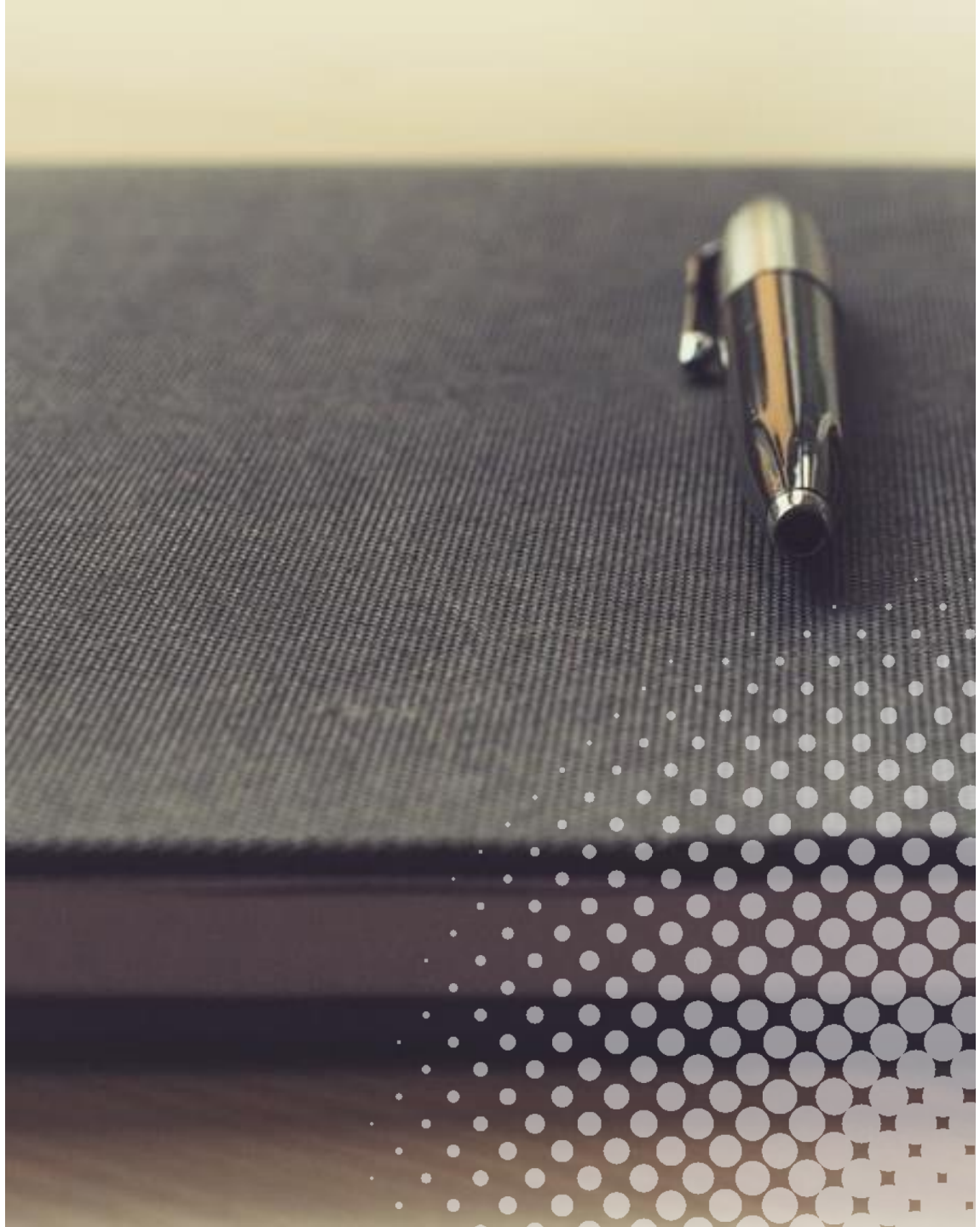
Jamie Oliver

F Scott Fitzgerald

Agatha Christie

George Washington

The Legal Standpoint



The legal standpoint

- Disability is a ‘protected characteristic’ under the Equality Act 2010
- Unlawful behaviour in employment includes discrimination, harassment or victimisation
- “Physical or mental impairment and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities”
- Some of the characteristics of Dyslexia cause problems for people at work
- Complex, more than just reading and writing
- Includes difficulties with organisation, memory, word retrieval and speed of processing
- Dyslexia likely to satisfy the criterion of having a substantial adverse effect on an individual's ability to carry out normal day to day activities

Your rights at work

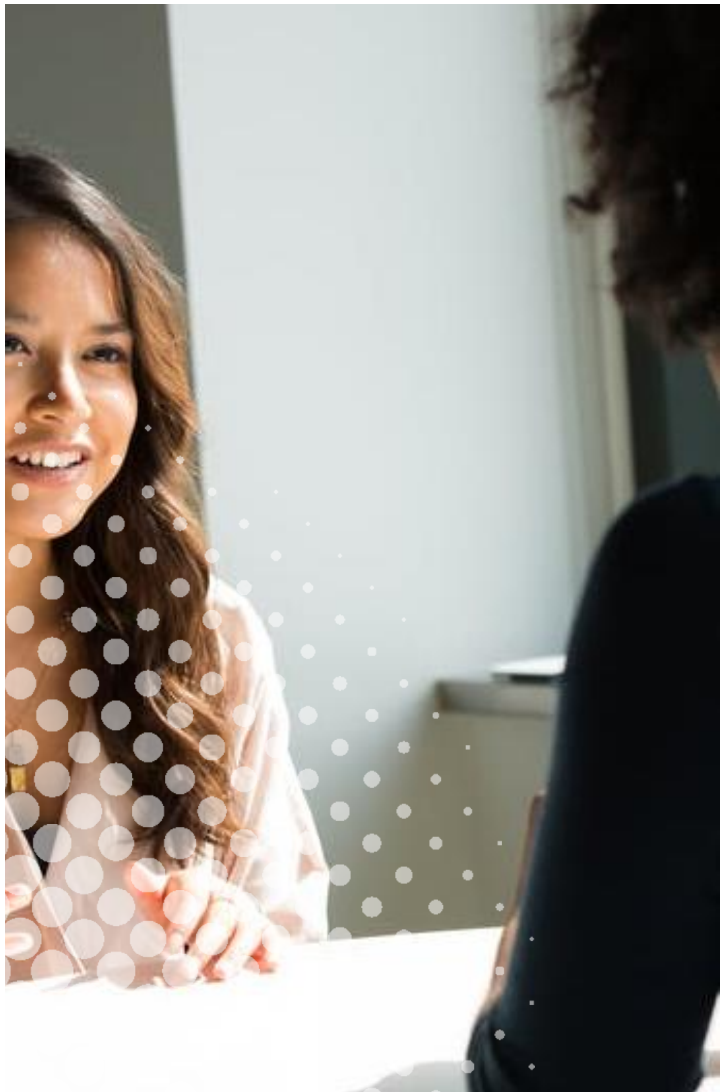
- Your employer has a duty of care, a legal responsibility to make ‘reasonable adjustments’ to help you work effectively and minimize any adverse effects dyslexia might have on your ability to perform
- Apart from a legal right, it is also ethical for an employer to ensure that someone is able to carry out their duties at work
- This means they should have appropriate policies and processes in place to avoid discrimination, including in the recruitment process, the work environment and colleague reactions
- Failure to do this could give rise to a claim for disability discrimination

Starbuck’s case

Starbuck's case 2016

- Employment tribunal case of Kumlchew v Starbucks Coffee Company, Starbucks were found to have discriminated against an employee who had dyslexia, accused of falsifying documents
- The employee, whose responsibilities included taking the temperature of fridges and water at specific times and entering the results on a roster, made mistakes as a result of her condition. As a result, her managers removed certain duties from her and she was told to retrain, which she said left her 'feeling suicidal'
- The tribunal found that Starbucks had failed to make reasonable adjustments at work for the employee's disability and had therefore discriminated against her because of the effects of her dyslexia

Reasonable adjustments



- Employer needs to be aware of the condition
- If an employee's dyslexia is undiagnosed and they have no knowledge of the condition, you will be missing out on support which could help you
- Importance of informing your employer

Reasonable adjustments

- Changes, small or large depending on individual needs, the job role, the environment
- Should be ‘reasonable’ and not lead to changing the essential requirements of the job, or cause huge financial strain on the employer
- Based on individual needs
- Specialist advice from Occupational health/Legal/Specialist organisations that carry out assessments and advice

Reasonable adjustments - examples

- Environment – location of desk in an area that is likely to provide the minimum visual and auditory distractions. Fixed desk location as opposed to 'hot desking'
- Providing written backup such as an e-mail for verbal information or instructions
- Providing explicit feedback on work completed
- Providing a colleague to proofread documents
- Relaying instructions verbally as opposed to in writing
- Allowing people to record instructions or meetings instead of writing things down by providing a Dictaphone or digital recording device
- Altering performance targets
- Agreeing changes to duties or working hours

Key stages in the employment life cycle

Key stages in the employment cycle

Recruitment

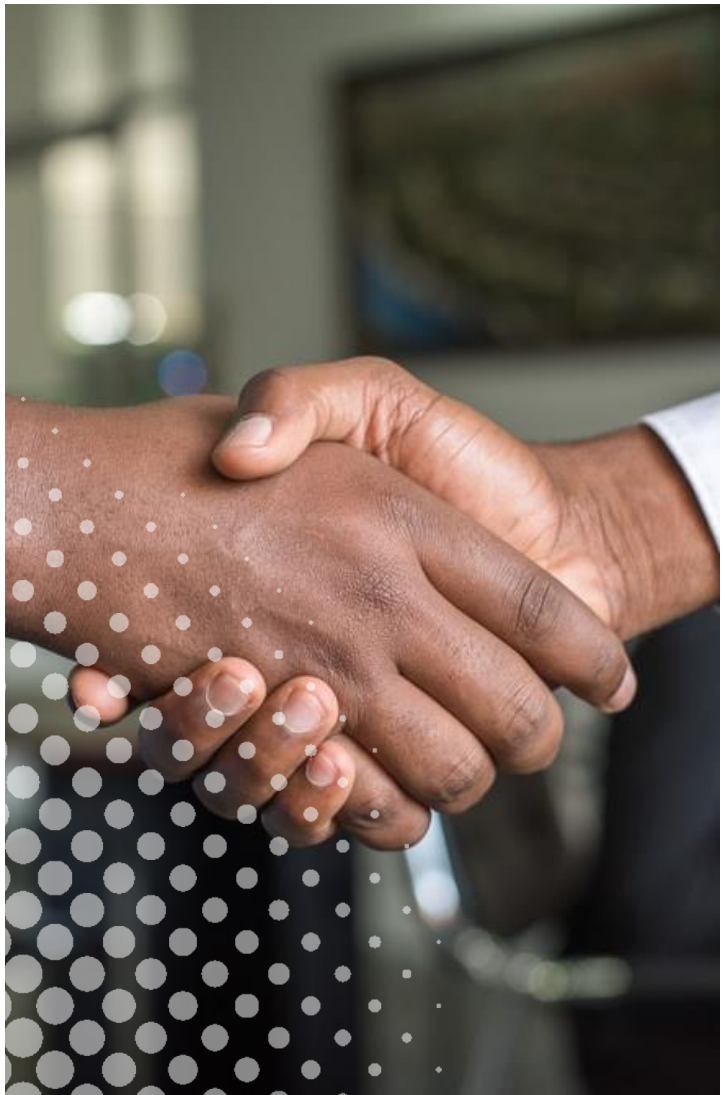
Let the employer know that you have a dyslexia and need support

- Tests on the day
- Interview

Whilst at work

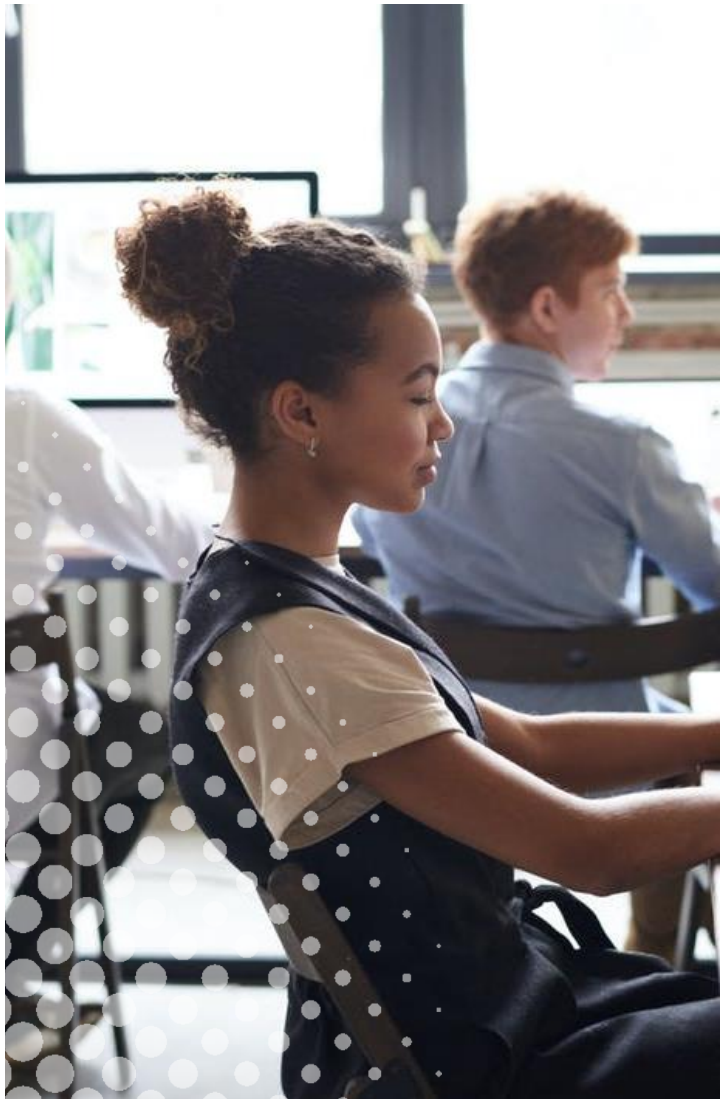
- Let your manager know from the start
- Complete some assessments around your work environment/workspace
- Managing performance – negotiate deadlines etc.

Recruitment



- The Equality Act also protects job applicants
- No obligation to disclose disability and, in order to make recruitment decisions objectively, employers are generally not permitted to ask about the disability or health of a prospective candidate until they have already been offered the job
- Exceptions:
  - Whether the applicant be able to carry out the intrinsic part of the role
  - Whether reasonable adjustments are needed during the recruitment process

The work environment



- An open and inclusive culture
- Policies and processes that do not inadvertently discriminate against certain groups of employees
- Supportive line managers and colleagues

Positive employers

Positive employers

- Focus a person's ability to do their job rather than the nature of their health or disability
- Equal Opportunities Policy and commitment to employing without prejudice
- Some organisations have signed up to the government's 'Disability Confident' scheme – this supports employers to make the most of the talents disabled people can bring to your workplace
- Business Disability Forum is a membership organisation that links businesses, disabled people and government

Dealing with change

- Be patient and work with your employer/line manager
- Implementing reasonable adjustments can sometimes take time depending on the nature of your level of dyslexia, job specification and environment
- They work best alongside the development of skills and strategies and you will need time to practise these, as well as adjust to new working practices
- Allow yourself time to see improvements

Useful sources of information

- Clear Talents
- Hands free Computing
- Access to work

Thank you

Questions?

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