

ReThinking Dyslexia in the workplace

Dr Shae Wissell

Who we are

re:think dyslexia is a neurodivergent social enterprise tackling the intersection of dyslexia, gender, employment, education, and health.

We are led by lived experience, and we employ women with disability, older women, and those re-entering the workforce after extended career breaks. This ensures our team reflects the communities we serve and challenges systemic barriers to participation.

Our client profile

- The majority of our clients identify with dyslexia, ADHD, and/or autism
- 90% are women aged 30+
- Majority late diagnosed
- Represent a wide range of roles — from executives to frontline staff
- Many are mid-level managers, balancing leadership with workplace demands

Why do people contact us?

- Looking for support as a job seeker
- Struggling at work or facing performance concerns
- Experiencing challenges with mental health and wellbeing
- Unsure where to find the right help
- Recently diagnosed and seeking guidance

Today's session

Today is about starting a conversation about dyslexia in pre-employment and employment and creating a culture where people feel safe to say, 'Hey, I struggle with this, but I shine at that.'

Let's do something right now.

Dyslexia Assupmtions

What are some common perceptions or ideas you've encountered about people with dyslexia, in particular, job seekers and those employed?

Please add to the chat now.

Here are some of the common perceptions we here

- Dyslexia Equals Low Intelligence
- Poor Literacy = Poor Capability
- Can only do manual or basic job roles
- Dyslexic people don't finish school and can't do PhDs
- Dyslexic people can't handle complex roles
- Dyslexia is letters moving on the page
- If you can do that, then you can't be dyslexic

Let's see after this session if you think some or all of these common perceptions are accurate?

Dyslexia



[Watch video on YouTube](#)

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Prevalence Rates

What is the percentage of the population that has dyslexia?

- 1 in 5
- 1 in 10
- 1 in 50
- 1 in 100

AUTISM



ADHD



DYSLEXIA



Key Facts about Dyslexia

- Lifelong and highly genetic in nature.
- Often co-occurs with other learning difficulties, ADHD, autism and mental health conditions.
- Underdiagnosis and late diagnosis are common, especially in adults and women.
- Varies widely in presentation and support needs and is experienced differently by each individual.
- It can impact academic achievement and workplace success without support.
- Stigma and misconceptions can lead to discrimination, impacting mental health and well-being in and out of the workplace.



111



Charlotte is Dyslexic! Dumb

Dyslexia and Mental Health

- Twice as likely to have anxiety or depression
- 46% more likely to attempt suicide compared to the general population
- 73% felt mental exhaustion and greater risk of burnout
- Have overall lower levels of mental health and wellbeing compared to the general population

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Dyslexia and employment

- Work at all levels across all industries
- 38% are underemployed
- 58% of individuals aren't diagnosed until adulthood, impacting employment outcomes
- 48% don't feel psychologically safe to disclose/ share their dyslexia.
- High risk of psycho-social hazards in the workplace when unsupported.



Dyslexia and Job Seekers

Job Seeker Case Study: Barriers in Disability Employment Services

Context: A highly educated job seeker using DES has been unemployed for several months. While engaging with the service provider, they faced the following barriers.

Barrier

- No access to essential tools (computers lacked Microsoft Word for CV/cover letter updates).
- Service discontinuity due to staff turnover.
- Requests for reasonable adjustments (software installation) were denied by management.
- Not understanding how to read maps or get lost.
- Supplying printed forms to complete only.
- Being asked to “downplay” qualifications and skills on a resume.
- No understanding of dyslexia.

Job Seeker Case Study

In the chat, you can put why you think these might be barriers to finding and applying for the right job?

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Job Seeker Case Study

What Impact do you think this would have on a job seeker's well-being?

- Increased frustration
- Anxiety and burnout
- Reduced confidence
- Prolonged unemployment
- Sense of hopelessness
- Disenaged
- Financial strain
- Social isolation

Distrust in a system that has been designed for visual and complex disability needs.



Dyslexia and Employment

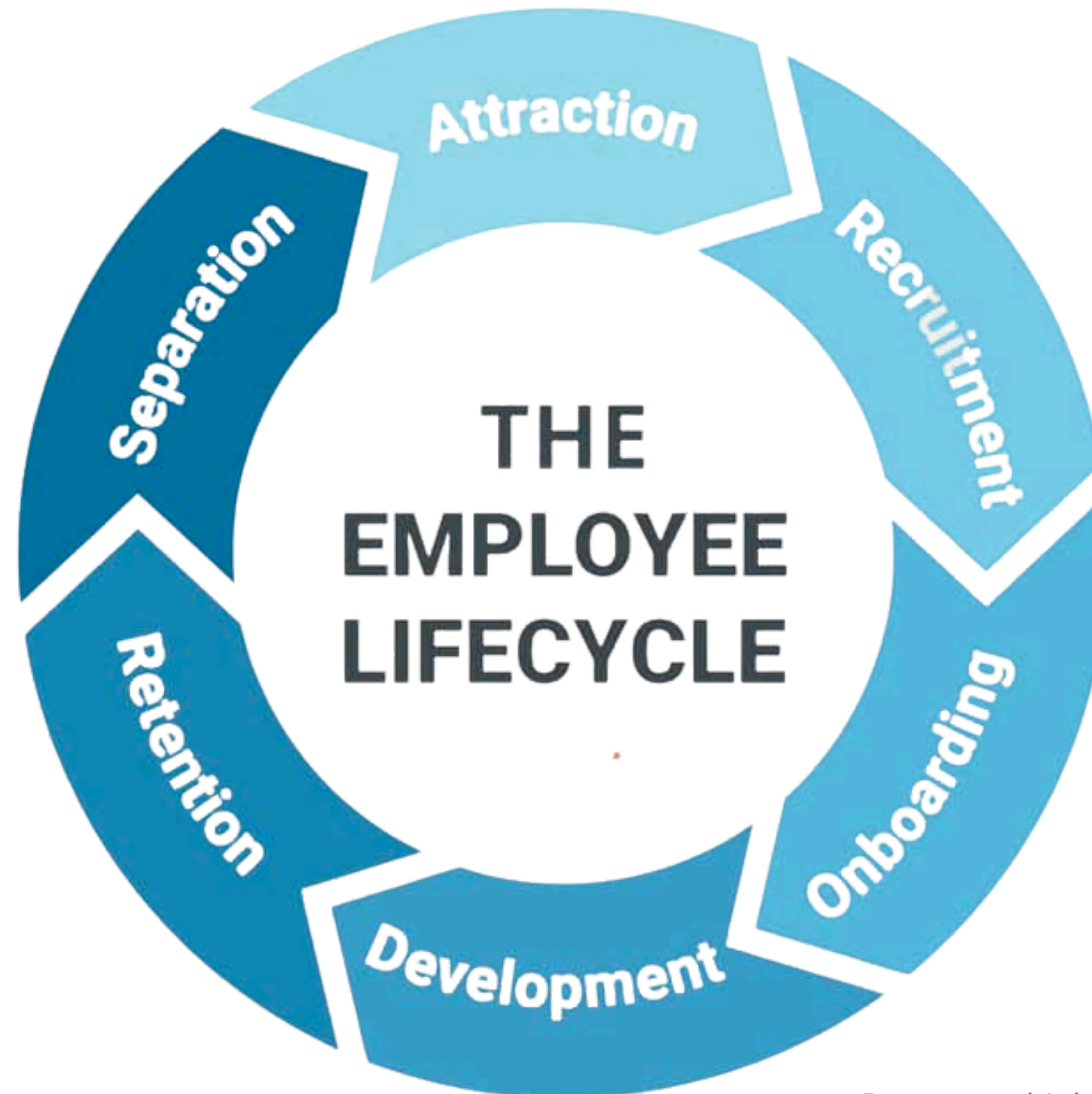
Every workplace needs a dyslexic or ten.

Problem solver. **Lateral thinker.** Emotionally intelligent.
Creative. **Intuitive.** Empathic. **Resilient**

Dyslexic adults often excel in creative, out-of-the-box thinking qualities that will be needed as we move into an era of AI advancement.

What are the strengths you see with dyslexic job seekers and employees that you work with?

Yet we know these hidden talents are not being tapped into across the employment life cycle.



Recruitment Barriers

- Complex job descriptions with jargon and unnecessary requirements
- Rigid application processes (online-only, timed tests, no flexibility)
- Unclear communication about steps, timelines, and expectations
- Bias in screening (focus on “culture fit” over skills)
- Interview challenges (unstructured, hypothetical questions, sensory overload)

Recruitment Barriers

. . . I failed the government test. After the test, two ladies sat in front of me and said, 'You don't look dumb. We've never seen anybody fail a test as bad as this.' And I said 'Well, I'm dyslexic' as my eyes dropped. . . . "

Common concerns once in employment

- Slower reading speed, fluency and comprehension
- Spelling and written communication challenges
- Time management and task initiation
- Working memory and sequential processing
- Needing more time to complete reading and writing tasks, such as emails, reports
- May have low digital literacy skills
- Self-Esteem and Perfectionism

Psychosocial Hazards

Neurodivergent employees are at greater risk of psychosocial hazards in the workplace.

Psychosocial hazards are the risks or factors that can cause harm to someone's mental health or wellbeing at work.

Psychological safety is the positive environment that helps prevent those harms, it's what we aim to build.

Psychosocial hazards are the problem areas, and psychological safety is the protective factor that keeps both our people and our workplace safe.

Psychosocial hazards and neurodivergence risk factors



- Heavy or unrealistic workloads leading to longer unpaid work hours
- Poor communication or unclear roles
- Bullying, exclusion, or unfair treatment
- Lack of support from managers or co-workers
- Unsafe or overwhelming work environments
- Ongoing masking due to fear of disclosure

Dyslexia's Hidden Impact on Workplace Well-being

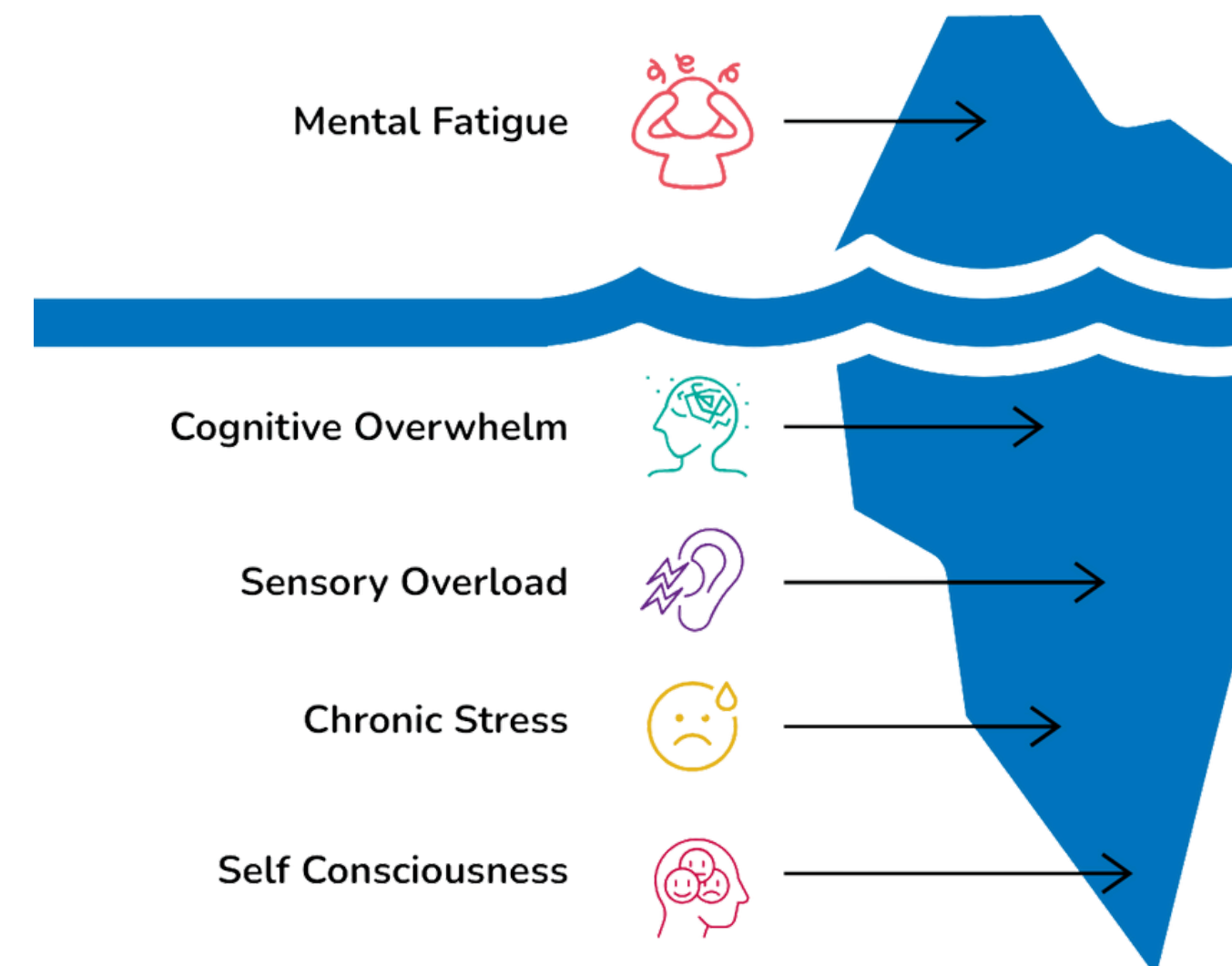


Image: rethink dyslexia 2025

Inclusive Practices

Creating psychosocial safety

Psychosocial safety needs to start from the time someone commences seeking employment, and means having environments where dyslexics feel:

- Safe to share ideas
- Safe to disclose their neurodivergence
- Comfortable asking for help and workplace accommodations
- Able to speak up about problems
- Supported when you make mistakes

When job seekers and employees feel safe, workplaces see more collaboration, creativity, and wellbeing.

What does this look like for Jobseekers

- Initial Identification (With Consent)
- Accessible Technology
- Flexible communication formats
- Individualised Support
- Skill Recognition and Qualifications
- Ask them what tools they may already be using
- Ongoing review
- Be trained to know what tools and strategies can help

What psychosocila safwty looks like in workplace



- Access to reasonable adjustments
- Pathways for disclosure and support
- Flexible communication formats
- Peer support and allyship in and out of the workplace
- Ongoing feedback mechanisms
- Access to JobAccess, including:
 - 1:1 support
 - Workplace training
 - Tools
- Staff education
- Inclusive policies and procedures
- Executive buy-in

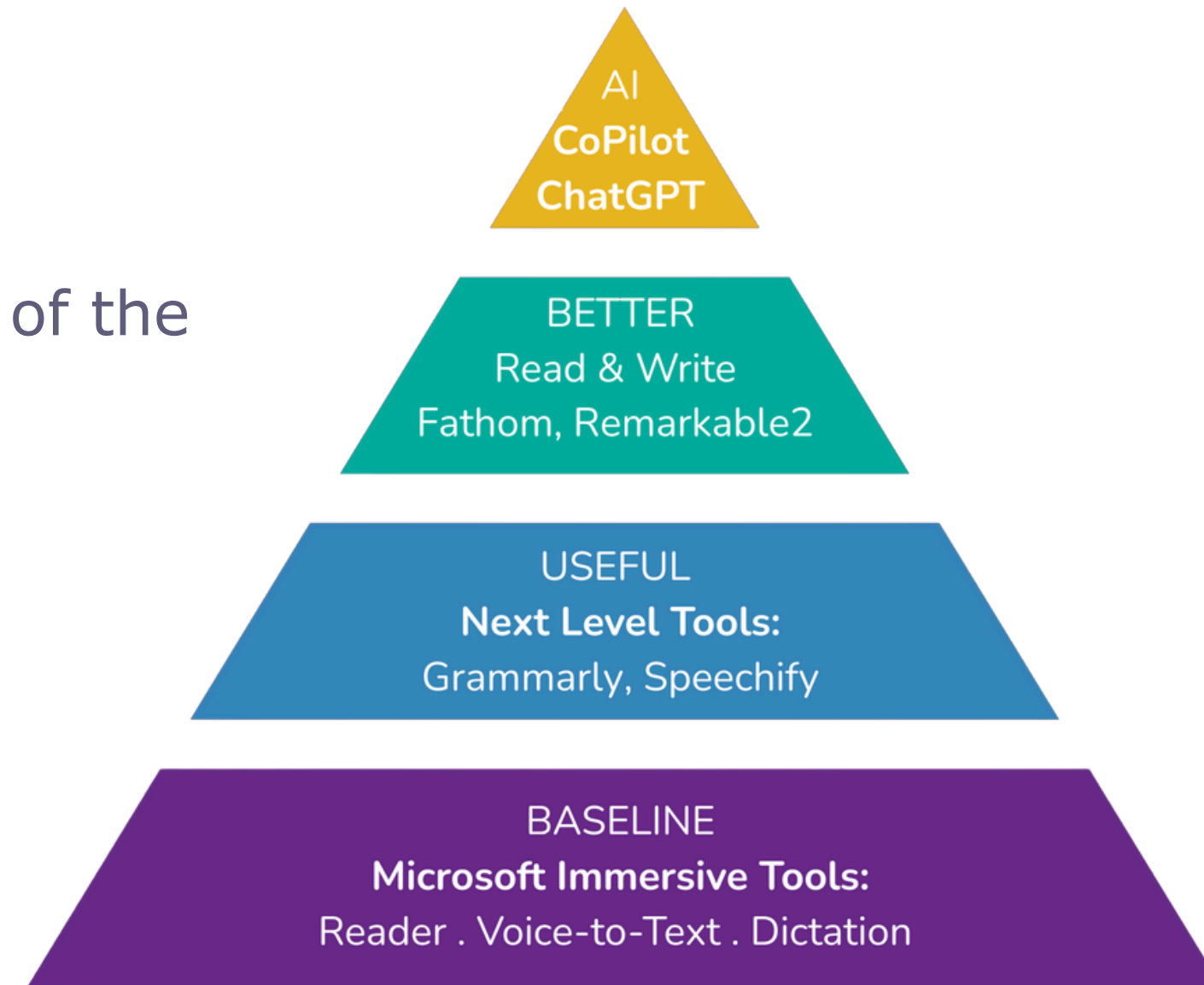


Image: rethink dyslexia 2025

Common perceptions at the start of the session

- Dyslexia does not affect intelligence.
- Literacy challenges do not define overall ability.
- Can only do manual or basic job roles.
- Many dyslexics succeed in complex, high-level positions.
- Dyslexia is more than a reading difficulty.
- Dyslexia is a spectrum; strengths in some areas coexist with challenges in others.

These assumptions are outdated and inaccurate. Dyslexic individuals bring unique strengths and can thrive when provided with appropriate support.

What's one actional step you can take today



- Have a conversation with your team, family or friends about what you learnt today.
- Make one workplace adjustment
- Listen to one of our podcasts
- Follow us on socials

re:think dyslexia is here to help by providing support, resources, and practical solutions to help everyone thrive. Connected with us to find out how we can help.

Our resources

Inclusive Workplaces: Guides to better understand Neurodivergent Psychosocial Hazards



What is Neurodivergence?

- About 1 in 5 employees (20%) are neurodivergent — meaning they think, learn, or work differently from most people.
- Neurodivergence includes conditions such as dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, ADHD, and autism.
- Neurodivergent employees bring many strengths, such as creativity, focus, and problem-solving. However, they may also need support with tasks like reading, writing, organisation, or communication.
- Without the right support, neurodivergent staff can face higher risks of psychosocial hazards at work.



Around **1 in 5** (or 20%) employees are neurodivergent, a term that refers to people who think, learn, or work differently from the majority of the population. **Neurodivergence includes conditions such as dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, ADHD, and autism.**

These are the most seen, but many other types exist. Neurodivergent employees bring many strengths to the workplace but may need support with skills like **reading, writing, focus, planning, prioritising and communication**. Without this support, they face higher risks of **psychosocial hazards** at work.



Psychological safety describes positive workplace factors that protect mental health and wellbeing of employees by that helps prevent those harms and it's what we aim to build.

Psychosocial hazards are workplace risks that can have a negative impact on the mental health or wellbeing of employees. Addressing these is key to maintaining a healthy, productive environment.

While **psychosocial hazards** pinpoint risks, **psychological safety** acts as a safeguard for both employees and organisations.

This **checklist** helps organisations identify and manage psychosocial hazards impacting neurodivergent employees. It encourages teams and leaders to assess challenges collaboratively and guides effective interventions through open communication, feedback, and regular review. This checklist should be used alongside psychosocial hazard employment guides organisations can create safer, more inclusive workplaces for everyone.

What's New

The revamped **Dear Dyslexic Podcast** with a focus on neurodivergents in the workplace and Dr Shae Wissell's new book: **Dyslexia: Insights into the hidden disability in and out of the Workplace.**



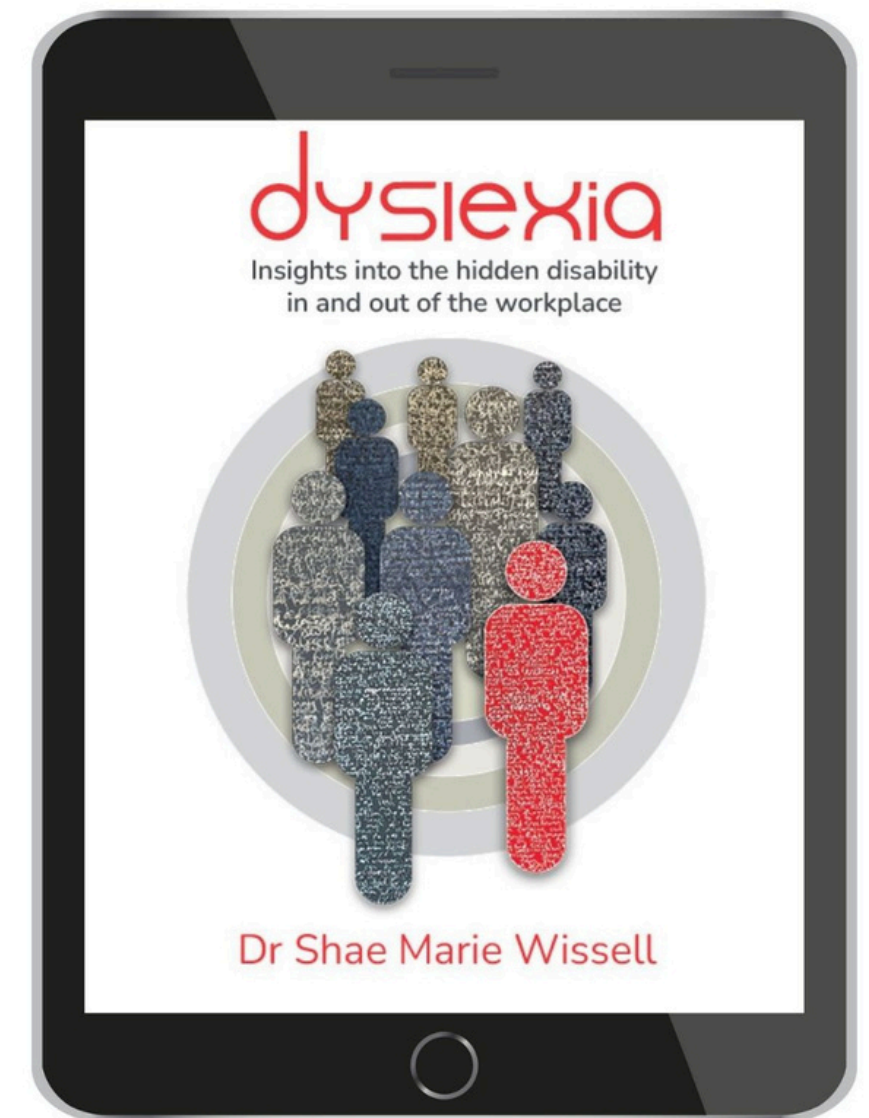
Sharing Stories That Matter!

Since 2017 we've been sharing real, unfiltered conversations about living with dyslexia and other neurodivergence. Hear inspiring voices from around the world stories of work, love, health and life, that empower and connect our community.



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www.rethinkdyslexia.com.au



Thank you



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If you have further information on the work we do, call 1800 13 NEAP (6327) or email us at hello@rethinkdyslexia.com.au