



LIMMUD FESTIVAL 2025

Dyspraxia, Neurodiversity, and Jewish Identity:

“Oy Vey and Hooray: Embracing the Joys and Stumbles of Dyspraxia”

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Ground Rules



- Try not to look at your mobile phones, Switch onto silent
- Treat each other with respect and agree to disagree
- Please don't overspeak the speaker
- Please be kind, I have an illness that makes dyspraxia the least of my sorros.

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Aims and Objectives

Overview

The session is designed to help participants gain an understanding of how Dyspraxia interacts with Jewish identity and community life. The goal is to empower attendees to better recognise and address the unique experiences and needs of Jewish individuals living with Dyspraxia.

Main Aims

- To develop a comprehensive understanding of Dyspraxia in the context of Jewish life, enabling participants to recognise and respond to the needs of Jewish individuals with Dyspraxia.



Objectives

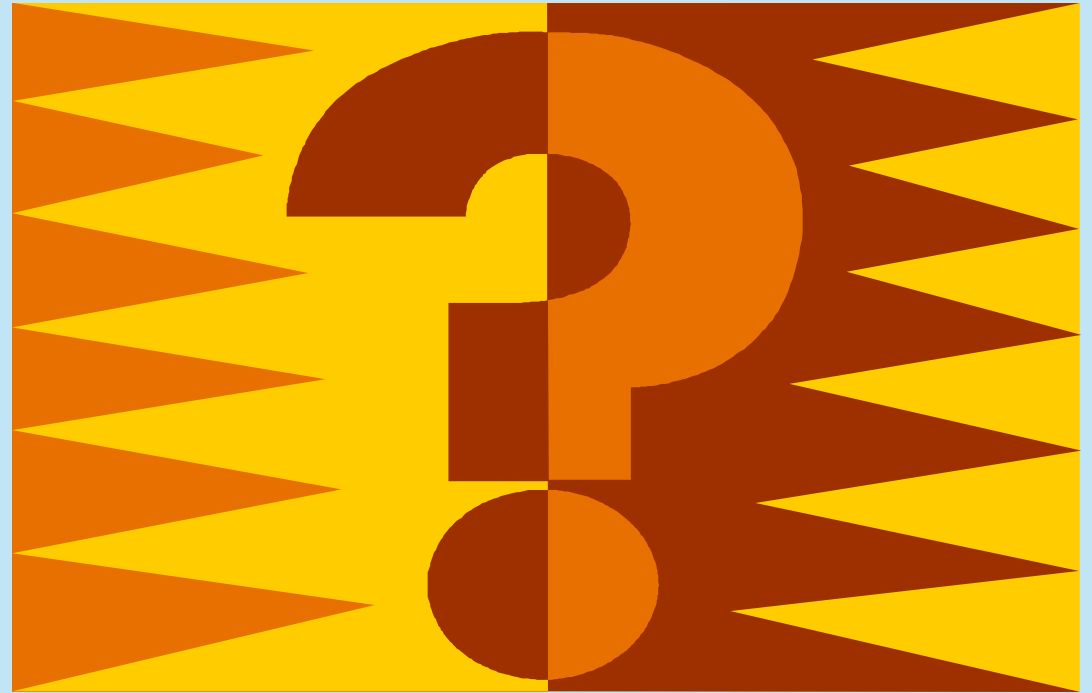
- 1. Raise Awareness of Dyspraxia:** Equip participants with a clear understanding of Dyspraxia, adult presentations, and its impact on daily living and faith-based participation.
- 2. Recognise Strengths:** Encourage participants to identify and celebrate the positive traits often found in individuals with Dyspraxia,
- 3. Highlight Barriers:** Explore the specific challenges faced by Jewish adults with Dyspraxia within their communities.
- 4. Promote Inclusion:** Discuss practical strategies to help overcome barriers

What Is Dyspraxia?

“Dys” abnormal/ill

+“Praxis” = not being able to carry out actions

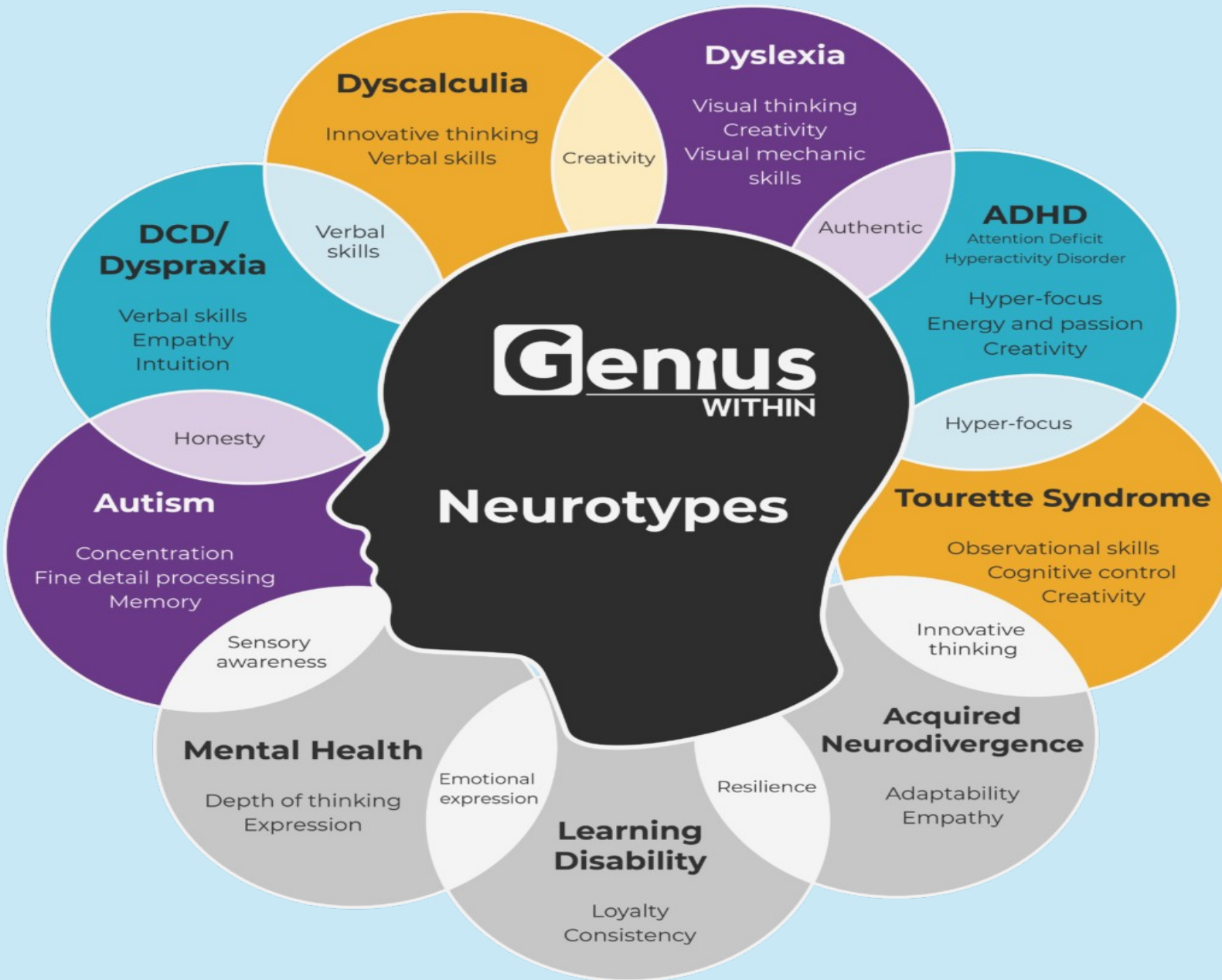
Label blames individual and not disabling barriers that cause this impairment to become a disability



What Is Dyspraxia 2?

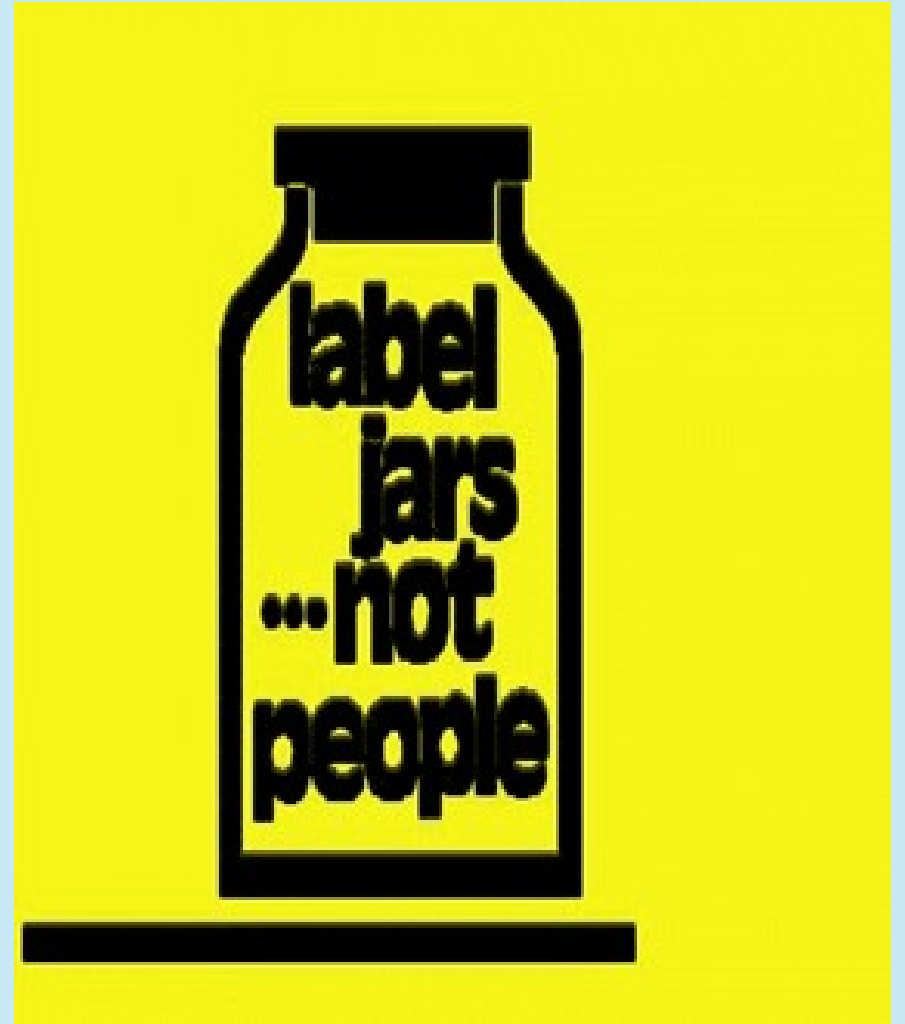
- Genius Within website (2024) Gives an empowering definition describing Dyspraxia as a neurotype:
- “Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD) or Dyspraxia is commonly associated with difficulties with movement,
- many strengths associated with this neurotype. Big picture thinking, problem solving, tenacity, creativity and empathy are all qualities associated with DCD”
- DCD does affect the parts of the brain responsible for processing movement and spatial awareness, and this can affect the ability to follow sequences of instructions or learn new processes as well as fine motor control and balance.”
- 5% of the population are affected by dyspraxia and 3% severely.





Embracing Our Uniqueness

- Each person should be supported holistically as an individual rather than generalising their ability according to their label.
- Should be accepted for who they are
- (Not have to mask to fit into a neuro-normative society)
- Encouraged to recognise their strengths



Associated Neurotypes

- Professor Amanda Kirby –
90% of dyspraxics have an intersection with one or more neurodivergent neurotype
- *Overlaps are part of a spectrum*
- *our brains are not colour coded!*
- *connections between the brain are not neatly separated*



Impact on Daily Life:

- Dyspraxia can affect self-care
- academic achievement
- social interaction
- participation in communal or religious activities.
- The degree of impact varies widely among individuals.



The Oy Vays of Dyspraxia

- Poor balance and coordination
- Difficulty with handwriting and other fine motor tasks
- Trouble sequencing tasks and following instructions
- Challenges with time management and organisation
- Potential impact on social confidence and communication



The Oy Vays of Dyspraxia 2

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Oy vays faced with Dyspraxia in Jewish Contexts

- **Participation in Rituals:** tying tzitzit, Tefillin, reading from the Torah scroll, or performing ceremonial gestures may be physically challenging.
- **Reading and writing Hebrew**
- **Social Inclusion:** Group activities, communal meals, or synagogue events can be daunting due to coordination difficulties or anxiety.
- **Educational Barriers:** Jewish educational settings may not always accommodate diverse learning needs, resulting in exclusion or frustration.
- **Stigma and Misunderstanding:** Lack of awareness may lead to misinterpretation of behaviours, further isolating those with dyspraxia.





Overcoming Difficulties: Strategies and Resources

- Education and Training: Educators and leaders receive training in neurodiversity and inclusive teaching, enabling them to support individuals with dyspraxia effectively.
- Flexible Participation: Ritual roles can be adapted, and alternative means of engagement are encouraged (e.g., using audio recordings, providing written materials).
- Peer and Family Support: Networks of understanding peers and families foster acceptance, resilience, and shared learning.

Inclusion of Dyspraxic Young People in Chader

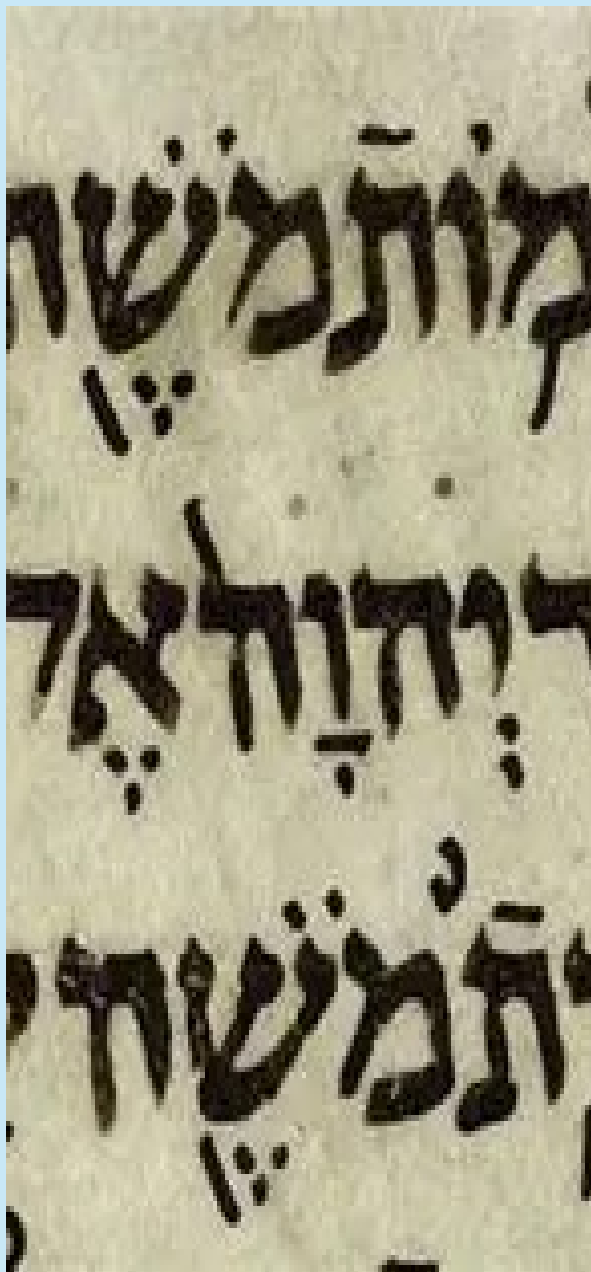
- Dyspraxic and neurodivergent students may be overlooked and not have any support at school or chader.
- If a student is struggling with Hebrew suggest to parents that they might need one to one teaching privately.
- Avoid them reading out to class
- Consider having volunteers at cheder to give one to one with struggling students.
- In class use multisensory teaching methods.
- If the student is often isolated. Find out if this is their choice because they might be autistic and avoid sensory overload and be overwhelmed about mixing with other people and prefer sitting on their own.
- But it might be a strategy to avoid bullying. Find out why a student is on their own and to develop strategies for the student to be included
- Introduce a buddy system for cheder and synagogue, but make sure that no covert bullying is going on.





Common Difficulties When Learning Hebrew with Dyspraxia

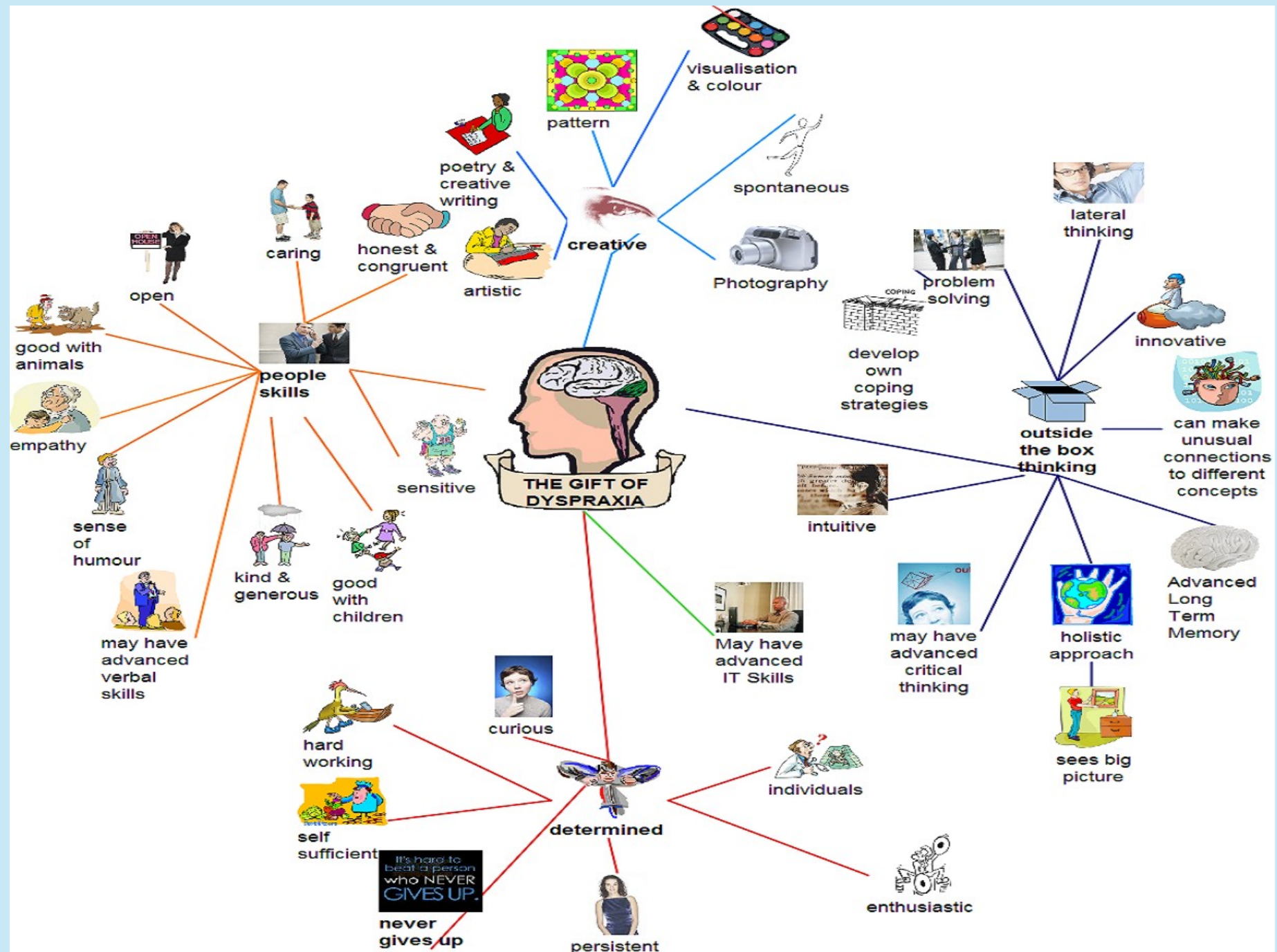
- Hebrew presents unique challenges due to its right-to-left script, unfamiliar alphabet, and distinctive pronunciation patterns.
- Writing Challenges: Hebrew uses a different script, and forming letters from right to left can be confusing and physically demanding for those with dyspraxia.
- Reading Difficulties: The directionality and unfamiliar characters require strong visual and spatial skills, which may be affected by dyspraxia.
- Pronunciation and Oral Expression: Some Hebrew sounds may be hard to articulate, especially if dyspraxia affects oral-motor coordination.
- Memory and Sequencing: Remembering vocabulary, verb forms, and sentence structures may be more difficult.
- Organisation: Keeping track of notes, assignments, and progress can also be a struggle.



Practical Strategies for Overcoming Difficulties with Hebrew

Practical Strategies for Overcoming Difficulties

1. Use Multisensory Learning Techniques
2. Incorporate visual aids, such as flashcards with images and colours, to reinforce memory.
3. Practise writing letters in sand, with clay, or using finger tracing to build muscle memory.
4. Break Tasks into Smaller Steps
5. Focus on learning a few letters or words at a time rather than tackling the entire alphabet or vocabulary list at once.
6. Set achievable, short-term goals to build confidence.
7. Use language learning apps that offer interactive exercises and immediate feedback.



Dyspraxic Jewish Hoorays!



Resilience and Adaptability

dyspraxia requires creative problem-solving and perseverance.

Jewish communities have a long history of resilience in the face of adversity, and dyspraxic individuals often develop strong coping mechanisms.

Empathy and Inclusivity

Many dyspraxic people experience misunderstanding or exclusion, - can make them more empathetic towards others.

Jewish traditions, which emphasise community and caring for others, can reinforce this empathy, leading to a deep commitment to inclusivity and social justice.

Creative and Unconventional Thinking

Dyspraxic individuals often approach problems in unconventional ways due to their unique perspectives.

Coupled with the Jewish value placed on questioning, debate, and interpretation (as seen in Talmudic study), this can result in particularly creative, innovative thinkers.

Dyspraxic Jewish Hoorays!

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Strong Sense of Identity and Community

The importance of identity and belonging is central in Jewish life. Dyspraxic Jewish individuals may draw upon strong communal support and traditions, helping them build confidence and a secure sense of self.

Attention to Detail in Nontraditional Areas

dyspraxia can make some tasks challenging, many individuals develop acute awareness and attention in other areas, such as listening, storytelling,

or exploring abstract ideas—skills that are valued in many Jewish cultural and religious practices.

Advocacy and Leadership

Facing and overcoming challenges can inspire Jewish dyspraxic individuals to advocate for themselves and others, fostering leadership qualities.

This often translates into active participation in community life and social causes

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Conclusion

Everyone's experience with dyspraxia is unique, and strengths can vary from person to person.

By recognising and valuing these abilities, we can create more inclusive environments that empower individuals with dyspraxia to thrive and contribute their talents.