Get moving with dyspraxia: Campaign calls for greater understanding of dyspraxia to ensure dyspraxic people are supported and encouraged to take part in physical activity

Sunday 9 October, 2022

Dyspraxia Foundation this week launches a new survey which reveals that people with dyspraxia – a form of developmental co-ordination disorder – are much less likely to be physically active than their peers, with concerning consequences for their health and wellbeing.

The nationwide survey[1] of almost 850 people found that negative experiences of school sports and PE put dyspraxic people off physical activity for life. Only **29% dyspraxic adults** and **32% of dyspraxic children achieved the recommended amount of physical activity each week,** compared to 61% of adults and 45% of children in the general population. This is worrying due to the impact of physical inactivity on fitness, weight, health and psychological wellbeing in dyspraxic people of all ages.

90% of parents said dyspraxia affected their child's participation in physical activity, while **73% of dyspraxic adults said negative experiences of PE and school sports** had a significant impact on their willingness to take part in physical activity as adults:

"I was made fun of for the way I run, or how clumsy I am. PE lessons as a child were hideous."

"In PE and in sports clubs as a child I always progressed a lot slower than others which can be very difficult emotionally even when people aren't judging you. It's much worse when they are."

For many, the consequences of being ridiculed, yelled at or ignored were long-lasting with **75% of dyspraxic adults saying they lacked confidence to take part in physical activity. 58% feared embarrassment** due to their motor coordination difficulties while **40% were worried about the risk of injury**. Other barriers to participation in physical activity included difficulty learning and keeping up with movement sequences, fatigue and sensory overload.

Jonathan Levy, Chair of the Dyspraxia Foundation comments: "*This survey has highlighted to us as a charity the worrying and long-lasting impact of negative experiences of PE and school sports on physical activity levels in dyspraxic people. Dyspraxia affects people's ability to follow instructions, coordinate their limbs and keep up with movement sequences. Having these difficulties pointed out really isn't helpful, and a lack of understanding, encouragement and support from instructors and peers can seriously dent people's confidence."*

"The benefits of physical activity for health and wellbeing are well known and it's important that dyspraxic people feel they can take part. In fact, our survey showed that dyspraxic people who stopped or did less physical activity during the pandemic had the biggest decline in their mental health, while 78% of those who were able to increase their physical activity saw improvements in their physical or mental health, or both."

"What we need is to raise awareness of dyspraxia and to share approaches and adjustments that encourage dyspraxic people of all ages to be physically active. People will benefit personally from improved sleep, mood and energy levels, while improved health outcomes are better for society as a whole."

That's why the Dyspraxia Foundation – the only national charity in the UK dedicated to raising awareness of the condition – is focusing on physical activity for Dyspraxia Week 2022 which takes place from 9-15 October. During the week the charity will be launching a series of resources for parents/carers, adults and professionals.

"Despite their coordination difficulties we know that dyspraxic people can do really well when they find a sport or physical activity that works for them. During Dyspraxia Week we'll be sharing inspiring stories of dyspraxic people who have achieved sporting success and highlighting sports and physical activities that dyspraxic people enjoy. We hope this will give dyspraxic people the confidence to get involved. We'll also be launching some resources to help instructors and others be more inclusive and supportive of dyspraxic people."

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Jonathan adds; "W*hilst this survey has flagged up some very real concerns about the challenges of accessing physical activity as a dyspraxic person, our charity has a very positive outlook. We know many dyspraxic people who are achieving great things, despite their difficulties. At the Dyspraxia Foundation, we truly believe that nothing should hold dyspraxic people back from enjoying the physical and mental health benefits of physical activity."*

Dyspraxia, a form of developmental coordination disorder affects gross and fine motor coordination in around 5% of the population (2% severely). It also affects organisation, planning and time management, and can affect speech. Males are up to three times more likely to be affected than females. Dyspraxia sometimes runs in families and affects people of all ages.

Please contact 01462 455016 or info@dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk
if you would like more information about the Dyspraxia Foundation or to become involved with fundraising or awareness activities during Dyspraxia Awareness Week (9-15 October).

ENDS

For more media / survey information, to set up an interview with a local case study or representative from the Dyspraxia Foundation please call 01462 455016

For more information about the ongoing work of the Dyspraxia Foundation and how to become involved or access help, information and advice, please visit www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk **/ @DYSPRAXIAFDTN**

Note to editors:

[1] The survey ran from 24 days from 12th August – 5th September 2022 and was promoted via the Dyspraxia Foundation website and social media channels. There were 842 respondents: 489 were dyspraxic adults and 342 were the parent/carer of a child/young person with dyspraxia.

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Additional Assets:
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