

This chapter covers the following topics:

- The adverse effects that dyslexia can have on students' psychological well-being
- Resulting problems with self-image that affect a student academically
- Strategies for providing psychosocial support for students with dyslexia
- A research article from 2016 offering more information

CHAPTER 5

Socioemotional Factors of Dyslexia

Students with dyslexia face social and emotional challenges in addition to academic challenges. They have anxiety, depression, and other social, emotional, and mental health conditions on the order of two to five times greater than those of their peers (Wilson et al. 2009). In many cases, before entering school, children with dyslexia are described by their caregivers as eager, bright, curious, proactive, and articulate, characteristics that would seem to promote school success. Over time, the students' formerly inquisitive and proactive nature can decline and be replaced by low self-worth, frustration, despair, and self-defeating coping mechanisms. More research is showing that social and emotional factors, such as motivation and grit, play a crucial role in academic achievement above and beyond

the students' general ability to learn. For this reason, it is very important to address these concerns to support a dyslexic student's social and emotional needs in addition to providing sound and effective reading intervention.

Students with dyslexia often feel anxious in situations where they worry that they will make a mistake or be ridiculed by others. This anticipation of failure can make the student even more anxious, especially in new situations, and lead to avoidance and depression (Cosden 2001). Repeated failure in school may lead to low academic self-concept and low self-esteem, which in turn may lead to behavior problems that are secondary but equally important to the learning issues (Zelege 2004). Those with low self-esteem tend to respond less to intervention (Nelson, Benner, and Gonzalez 2003), and these characteristics may extend into adulthood (Alexander-Passe 2012). A dyslexic child may present as being unmotivated, lazy, resistant, or defiant. It is important for caregivers and teachers to understand that these behaviors may be a direct result of a dyslexic child's low self-concept and repeated feelings of failure.

Parents of students with dyslexia may have a cognitive, emotional, and behavioral profile that is similar to that of their children, which can create and intensify family stress (Bonifacci et al. 2014). The severity of stress depends on whether the student feels like he has social support, and it may be increased if he has attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) as a co-occurring condition. Stress also occurs more frequently in girls.

Consequently, focusing not only on remediating literacy skills but also on students’ relative strengths and on building resilience are important components of remediation and promoting positive outcomes for students with dyslexia (Haft, Myers, and Hoeft 2016); see figure 5.1. In addition, gaining access to supportive resources and building secure emotional bonds with caregivers, parents, and teachers all have an important influence on a student’s motivation, resilience, and academic outcomes.

Having close relationships may provide role models and support, and they may allow the child to have more positive peer and social interactions. By creating a low-conflict environment and promoting positive teacher–student relationships, a child’s teacher can play a key role in each student’s successful academic outcomes regardless of academic ability (Liew, Chen, and Hughes 2010). Teachers should use active methods of teaching social skills, such as role playing (Durlak et al. 2011), maintaining an organized classroom, and keeping groups of students small (when possible) to foster closer relationships.

Cognitive and Socio-Emotional Framework of Dyslexia (Adopted from Haft, Myers, Hoeft. *Curr Opin Beh Sci* 2016)

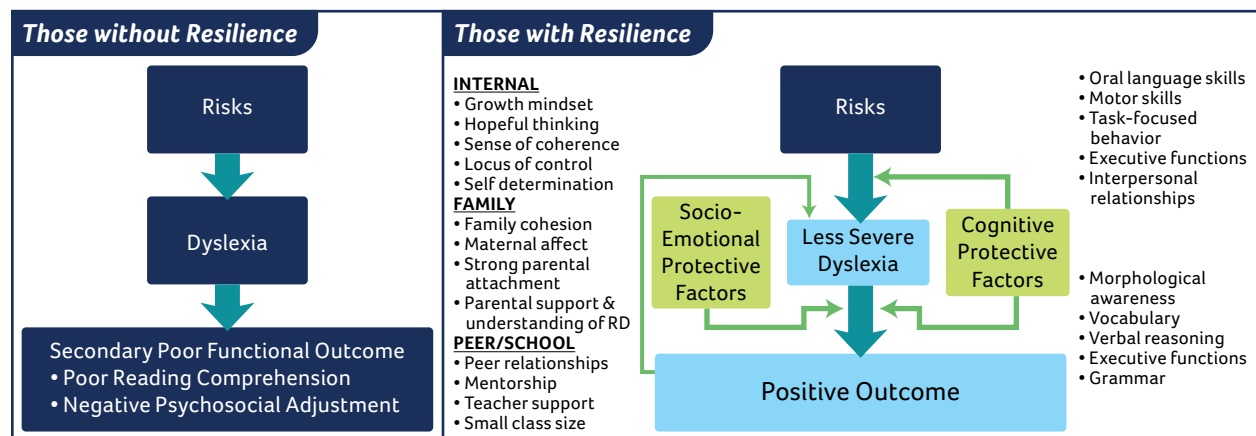


Figure 5.1. Cognitive and Socioemotional Framework of Dyslexia. The left panel shows that students at risk or those who have the diagnosis of dyslexia may face many challenges. The right panel shows some of the evidence-based protective factors that have been shown to make at-risk or dyslexia students resilient to academic and psychosocial difficulties. Part of this figure has been reprinted from *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences*; the specific article is “[Socio-Emotional and Cognitive Resilience in Children with Reading Disabilities](#)” (2016) by Stephanie L. Haft, Chelsea A. Myers, and Fumiko Hoeft, pp. 133–41, used with permission from Elsevier.

MORE INFORMATION

The article “[Socio-Emotional and Cognitive Resilience in Children with Reading Disabilities](#)” explores the factors that build resilience in students who have reading disabilities.