

# Let's Use Blue Ribbons To Show What Dyslexia Can Do

I was watching a BBC 1 program about the marches commemorating 100 years since women were given the vote. One of the commentators quoted women like Marie Wilson (from The White House Project) “You can't be what you can't see”.

This got me thinking – this quote is as relevant to dyslexia as to the suffrage movement, as dyslexia is a “hidden disability” for lack of a better term.

Firstly, and most encouragingly for those who feel that they are losing the battle with dyslexia, we cannot be **only** dyslexic, as no one can see it. Others see the stellar person who contains the learning/thinking difference we call dyslexia.

Secondly, I think part of the problem with our disabling society is that it **cannot be** understanding and accommodating of dyslexia if it **cannot see it**. Obviously no one will ever manage to make dyslexia visible and I'm not entirely sure we want it to be (because we should not let dyslexia define us).

However, I believe a good way to make dyslexia visible to society is to showcase our dyslexic talents and then say to people “and did you know that I am dyslexic and this is how society disables me”.

I believe this is especially important as dyslexia is sooo diverse. If you are a frequent reader of Dyslexia Scotland's blog you may know that I am very creative and have begun making blue ribbons for the annual Dyslexia Awareness Week (each November). You may also have noticed that my use of the blue ribbon has changed and evolved over the months and years. One of my latest creations is in the photograph below.



I decided to knit these large ribbons so that they would be more visible at Dyslexia Awareness Week displays. Also I thought they could be worn by school ambassadors (possibly as a sash) perhaps even with badges attached (in order to aid in distribution).

However, this one is multi-toned partly to make what is essentially a bit of a boring scarf (ask any long-term knitter, they'll tell you how soul-destroying such a project can be) a bit more interesting for me: but also to show how multi-faceted dyslexic traits can be (but how they are all part of the one thinking/learning difference)

Returning to the battle for equality and how women banded together and used their united cause and sheer numbers to gain the vote – if we start talking about dyslexia we can identify each other. Because, **We cannot be** united when we **cannot see/identify** each other!

Thirdly, I'd like to ask a question of parents, teachers, tutors and employers = “How can someone **be** working towards success if they **cannot see** achievement? For example,

- If they always see red crosses all over their work that has received a failing grade? You could use that very same red pen to write in the correct spellings and punctuation (or “I don't understand what you mean). Also, why not add marks beside each section/answer to show where marks are won and lost”?
- If they never get an award or certificate for anything, then certificates could be given out for creativity, showman/showpersonship and teamwork as well as academics.
- If someone is always told “*you're bringing the team down*”? Why not try the following magic word – “THANKS”? The workplaces (I have experienced) where “thank you” is liberally used have high morale.
- If a child is told “*you cannot ever work on your passion because you really need to work on all this stuff you struggle with*”. As far as I can see successful people are at the top-of-their-game because they are doing what they are brilliant at and getting others to do what they can't. How can any human being survive, thrive and succeed: if all they seem to do is fail?

Therefore, I suggest that everyone lets their (guiding) light shine. Don't hide it under a bush and don't blow it out. Hold your brightly shining light high and take it around the world and aim for the moon (even if you miss you'll end up among the stars)...And wear dyslexia blue ribbons during Dyslexia Awareness Week (5-10 November 2018)!

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