\$ Life Sussed

Having a learning disorder doesn't make you stupid and it won't stop you from becoming a success. Need proof? Just take a look at some of your fave stars.

## Celebs have it too

High school wasn't the best time for Tom Cruise. "I'd try to concentrate on what I was reading, then I'd get to the end of the page and have very little memory of anything I'd read. I'd go blank, feel anxious, nervous, bored, dumb," he says. But the Hollywood hottie wasn't dumb, he had dyslexia.

One of the biggest problems with dyslexia is that you can't tell a person has it just by looking at them. Dyslexics are great at hiding their weaknesses: sometimes they're the class clown, sometimes the daydreamer and almost always they're brilliant in other areas like art, drama, music or sport.

While most people use words to process information, dyslexics are much more visual. Brenda Baird, a teacher at Dyslexia Australia, says most dyslexics are picture thinkers. "If we don't have a picture for the meaning of a word, it's like sitting in front of a TV and having the screen turn off and on." So people with dyslexia might jumble letters, numbers and words (like confusing the word "dog" with "god"), or only see words that they can link to a picture.

Keira Knightley, the gorgeous star of Pirates Of The Caribbean and King Arthur knows all about this. She says she was "called stupid a lot" because she used to

write numbers backwards, and couldn't read some words. Now she can read all her lines and gets to pash Orlando Bloom. who's dyslexic, too!

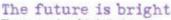
Some kids drop out of

school because they're made to feel totally stupid. Richard Branson (king of the Virgin empire) was smacked by his teachers for bad grades and a bad attitude. He dropped out of school at 16 because of his dyslexia - now he owns his own island!

## Dealing with dyslexia

Dyslexia is one of the most common learning difficulties, and it's most likely to be hereditary. If you're having difficulty at school, Brenda says the first step is to get some help. "Understand that there is a reason for your struggles," she advises.

Dyslexia Australia teaches the Davis Dyslexia Correction Program, which helps dyslexics make pictures for all their nonpicture words. It has a 97% success rate.



The reason a lot of dyslexics become super-successful is that while they may not be good with wordy details, they're great at grasping the bigger picture and coming up with original ideas. To compensate for the trouble they have with words, people with dyslexia are usually very imaginative and curious about how things work. So it's no surprise they're usually very good at anything creative - Just look at Keira, Tom, Orlando and Richard.

40 ways a person with dyslexia might read the word "cat"

CAT CAT CAT TAC DAT DAY TAC LAD CAL CAT TYD **ACT ACT ACT TOA** ACT TOA ACT TOA ADT TCA ADT TCA ATC DTA ATC DTA CTA ATD CTA ATD ALC STA ALC STA ALD CIA ALD CIA

## Weblink

Need help or want more info? Go to www.dyslexia-australia.com or call 07 33413471



"I found out I had dyslexia eight years ago. At the time, my reading and writing were terrible. My teachers thought I was thick and absent-minded, and kids laughed at my mistakes.

psychologist and we problem. I struggle with visual processing, which

is writing down what I see and I usually spell things phonetically (by how they sound]. To keep up, I study for four hours a night and I'm now in the advanced

'Dyslexia is just a different perspective on learning that doesn't fit. Even after I was diagnosed, I had trouble getting They'd ask me if I was sure I had dyslexia - like I was

making it up! It is a pain but a gift. They say Einstein was dyslexic and probably Shakespeare, too!

