

# Dyslexia and anxiety

Anxiety can feel like the brain has gone “offline”. These are common situations at school that can trigger this response:

- Struggling to form the letters ‘g’ or ‘j’ when writing
- Getting stuck on a single word when writing and are often common words like, **they, said, ‘wh’ words, does.**
- Hearing the word ‘test’
- Any tasks that must be completed within a certain time.
- Visual overload from too much information on a page, for example, worksheets crowded with text or pictures.
- Auditory overload – when too much verbal information is given at once, or too quickly
- Hearing a “growly” voice

Behaviour can also signal when a child’s brain is anxious or overloaded. Misbehaviour can take the attention away from something that is making them feel uncomfortable or exposed.

- Appearing distracted or daydreaming when in a learning environment.
- Acting as the class joker
- Talking in class – which may actually be asking others for instructions they missed
- Being overly helpful to the teacher
- Staying quiet in the classroom and not asking questions
- Building a friendly relationship with the teacher.
- Watching the teacher’s facial expressions to work out the correct answer.

The strongest coping strategy for dyslexic learners is masking their struggles. They put huge effort into hiding the fact they cannot keep up with the schoolwork. When they fear of being ‘exposed’, their anxiety will spike.

# Low self-esteem indicators

## Perfectionist

This can show as putting in extra time and effort to complete the task to a high standard or it can show as if they can't get it perfect, they don't even try.

## Not feeling in control of their learning ability

They believe that if they do something well it's down to good luck, however if they make a mistake, they personalise it and think they are no good at doing that.

## Fear of taking risks or trying something new

This can be they are not willing to try new activities, or they are not willing to learn new skills at school.

## Dependence on others making decisions.

Blaming others for when they don't know the answer or when they don't know what to do.

## Having a fear of being ridiculed.

Dyslexics mask their struggles when they do not feel safe enough to show they are struggling. They become concerned they will be ridiculed if it comes out.