

A day in the life of a teen with dyscalculia

The following is a typical day in Ellie's life:



7am

Ellie shares a bathroom with her brother and sister, so organisation in the morning to get ready for school is key. Ellie needs to take a quick shower before breakfast. She thinks that she has only taken a few minutes, but her siblings get angry with her as she takes a long time to get ready, there is always conflict as she thinks she doesn't take much time.

How this relates to dyscalculia: Struggles with concept of time; estimating

9.30am

Ellie is in her favourite lesson RE and she has worked hard for today's test. But as she works through the first few questions, she starts panicking about how much time she has to complete the test. This impacts on her confidence because when she looks at the clock, it takes her a lot of time to work out the time, which takes time away from her test. This makes Ellie even more anxious.

How this relates to dyscalculia: Telling the time; self-esteem

Noon

At lunch, Ellie goes to the canteen with her friends. She gets a weekly allowance on her dinner card, for her daily meals which averages £3.50 per day. Ellie struggles to work out how much she spends each day and starts worrying about whether she has enough money for her meal choices today. Ellie doesn't want her friends to see her using her fingers to count, so she only takes a snack, just in case there isn't money in her card. Ellie isn't eating properly during the day because she struggles to work with money.

How this relates to dyscalculia: Basic maths, working with money

2pm

Ellie gets maths homework and immediately starts to panic. Despite the fact that Ellie has just completed similar questions in her maths lesson and got all the questions right, her heart starts racing. Ellie is convinced that she can't do maths. Ellie believes "I'm no good at this"; "Maths is too hard"; "I always get it wrong". When Ellie gets home, she pretends she has no homework.

How this relates to dyscalculia: Maths anxiety

3.00pm

The PE teacher is preparing students for sports day, and this week the focus is on long distance running. Ellie runs the first lap very quickly and then struggles to do the second lap. The PE teacher gets frustrated with Ellie because she can't seem to remember how to pace herself, which they have been practicing regularly. How can it be so hard for Ellie to remember *one minutes and 10 seconds*?

How this relates to dyscalculia: Gauging speed and distance, remembering sequence of numbers

5pm

Ellie's chores include feeding the family pets before dinner time. She knows that Stevie gets two-thirds of a cup of dog food and Elliot gets one-third of a cup of cat food. The difficulty lies in when Ellie feeds the cat too much as he will throw up and Stevie puts on weight very quickly. How good is Ellie at feeding her pets correctly? She always gets told off by her mum that Stevie is getting fat, and that this is down to wrong measurements.

How this relates to dyscalculia: Understanding quantities, measuring

8pm

Ellie's parents bought her the bookcase she was desperate for from IKEA. Ellie unpacks the box and takes out the directions. Ellie spreads out all the pieces in the pack and follows the first step of the instructions, she then gets confused because the pieces aren't fitting together. By the time her mum is free to help Ellie, Ellie has got so upset and frustrated, that she throws a tantrum, shoving the parts in the garage and tells her mum she doesn't want it.

How this relates to dyscalculia: Visual-spatial processing