HANDOUT:

Case Study Persona: Dyslexia

Personal Background

Name: Patrick O'Sullivan

Age: 35

Location: Galway, Ireland

Occupation: Carpenter

Marital Status: Married, father of two children

Patrick O'Sullivan grew up in a small town outside Galway, nestled along the scenic western coast. Raised in a close-knit family, Patrick was the eldest of three siblings. As a child, he loved the outdoors, enjoyed building things with his hands, and spent many evenings listening to traditional Irish music with his family.

Educational Journey

Patrick attended the local primary and secondary schools, where he first began to notice that he struggled with reading and spelling compared to his peers. Letters seemed to shift and blur on the page, making written assignments daunting. Though he had strong verbal communication and practical problem-solving skills, he was often labelled as "lazy" or "not trying hard enough" by teachers who misunderstood his frustrations.

It wasn't until Patrick was 16 that a resource teacher recognised the signs of dyslexia and suggested a formal assessment. With a diagnosis in hand, Patrick finally understood the root of his difficulties and developed strategies to manage his schoolwork. However, limited resources and support for students with dyslexia in rural Ireland during the late 1990s meant Patrick still faced significant challenges. He left school after completing his Junior Certificate and began an apprenticeship in carpentry, a field that suited his practical strengths.

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Professional Life

Today, Patrick is a skilled carpenter, highly regarded in his community for his craftsmanship and reliability. He owns a small workshop where he creates bespoke furniture and works on home renovations. Patrick relies on voice-to-text technology for written communication and uses visual tools and diagrams for project planning. His hands-on approach and attention to detail have earned him repeat customers and word-of-mouth referrals.

Patrick has continued to develop his skills through vocational courses and online tutorials, often choosing video-based learning over text-heavy resources. He is open about his dyslexia with clients and colleagues, helping to raise awareness and reduce the stigma around learning differences.

Daily Challenges and Coping Strategies

- Reading and Writing: Patrick reads slowly, often re-reading passages multiple times. He uses audiobooks when possible, and relies on his wife or digital tools to proofread important documents.
- Organisation: He prefers calendars with colour codes, visual checklists, and reminder apps to keep track of appointments and deadlines.
- Technology: Patrick uses his smartphone for note-taking, voice memos, and navigation. He finds assistive technology such as text-to-speech software essential in both his professional and personal life.

Social Life and Community Involvement

Patrick is an active member of his local GAA club and volunteers with a youth woodworking programme. He is passionate about encouraging young people with learning differences, sharing his story during school visits and community events.

Family and Support Network

Patrick's wife, Fiona, is a primary school teacher who has been a steadfast advocate and support. Together, they are attentive to their children's educational needs, aware of the genetic component of dyslexia. The family enjoys cycling trips, music sessions, and Sunday lunches with extended relatives.

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Personal Outlook and Hopes for the Future

Patrick views his dyslexia as a challenge but not a barrier. He is proud of his achievements and the resilience he's shown in overcoming obstacles. He hopes for greater awareness and early intervention for children with dyslexia in Ireland, along with increased accessibility to assistive technology, so future generations have more support than he did.

Patrick continues to champion the idea that, with understanding, creativity, and the right resources, individuals with dyslexia can thrive in every aspect of life.

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