

Paramedic student improves grades, reduces stress and increases family time with Dragon.



Michelle Tolley is a second year student paramedic at the University of the West of England, Bristol. She has both dyslexia and dyspraxia, and following a Disabled Students Allowance assessment Dragon was recommended to help her with writing tasks.

“Before I’d be up very late after putting my daughter to bed, and very tired in the morning, and I wouldn’t have as much energy. With Dragon I am not so stressed out. I don’t sit up and worry for hours that I am not getting any writing down.”

— Michelle Tolley, second year student paramedic at the University of the West of England, Bristol

Dragon makes it easier to express ideas

Michelle finds using a keyboard is a slow process. She also has difficulty with spelling. Her chosen field of study has lots of complex terminology, which makes her problems with spelling more pronounced. In the past Michelle had resorted to using the feature on her mobile phone for speaking text messages to check spelling. She would speak a word, check the spelling, then type the correct spelling out on a keyboard.

Working like this was slow and interrupted Michelle’s flow of ideas. She said, “Once I see an incorrect spelling I can’t help myself from going to correct it, so by the time I’ve done that it’s then put me off of what I’m trying to do.” The benefit of using Dragon speech to text software is, says Michelle, “The headset picks up what I’m saying, Dragon spells it for me, and it means that I don’t have to stop and start. This has helped me to concentrate more, and the fluency of my writing has improved.”

Michelle says it was easy to learn to use Dragon, and she was up and running with it very quickly. She said, “I had a lesson on it and then after that I was able to just get on and use it. There has never been any stress with using it – it’s been quite an easy pickup.”

Reduced stress, increased motivation

Writing essays and other course work used to be stressful for Michelle. Writing direct onto paper is tricky as Michelle tends to press hard, going through the paper a lot. She prefers to use a laptop, but keyboarding is a challenge as she is a slow typist, and this, coupled with a need to check spellings frequently, slows Michelle down and interrupts her chain of thought. Typing direct to a keyboard makes the whole process of writing disjointed and very stressful.

Michelle explained how using Dragon has alleviated stresses and helped increase her motivation, “When I was typing onto a keyboard I’d have to really motivate myself. However Dragon helps me feel as though I can get my work done a lot better.”

Michelle has also found Dragon to be a real help in organising her thoughts. She said, “I can always put little notes down then go back and think about what I’m saying more, rather than just concentrating on one thing and then losing my complete train of thought and getting upset and angry so that I don’t want to do the whole essay.”

More and better quality family time

Michelle was diagnosed with dyspraxia and dyslexia during her Disabled Students Allowance assessment. She had been through both school and college without knowing about these conditions, though was fully aware that she struggled with work. She feels Dragon could have been of great benefit to her earlier. She said, “If I was aware that Dragon existed while I was at college doing my medical science I believe I would have improved much more of my work back then. Even back as far as school, actually. I feel something like this would be great for children in primary or secondary school.”

Having started using Dragon at university Michelle is seeing her essay grades rising. She said, “Dragon is quite easy to get around, and the more I am using it the higher my grades seem to be.”

Michelle also feels Dragon is helping her get more from family life, because she is less stressed, university work is completed more quickly, and she can spend more time with her daughter. She said, “Before I’d be up very late after putting my daughter to bed, and very tired in the morning, and I wouldn’t have as much energy. With Dragon I am not so stressed out. I don’t sit up and worry for hours that I am not getting any writing done.”

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