

Podcast with Toni Teschke, student in the Master's programme High Energy Particle Physics and Cosmology-Gravity at the University of Copenhagen, previously at the University of Potsdam

**Intro:** Welcome to all listeners! In our podcast, we introduce you to students, lecturers and staff from the administration of the University of Potsdam. These are people with and without Disability. We want to know from them how inclusive the University of Potsdam is as a place to study, but also as an employer.

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**Pilar Gonzalez Guevara:** Hello and welcome to our, to our new podcast episode. My name is Pilar Gonzalez Guevara and today I have Toni Teschke as a guest. Toni, could you please introduce yourself? Who are you and where are you studying? And where exactly are you currently?

**Toni Teschke:** I am Toni Teschke. I did my bachelor's degree in physics at the University of Potsdam from 2017 to 2021 and am currently doing my master's degree at the University of Copenhagen. And I have pronounced dyslexia.

**Pilar Gonzalez Guevara:** Yes. How did you get the idea to do your Master's degree in Copenhagen?

**Toni Teschke:** On the one hand, I wanted to go to a place where I could get to know other cultures and seek exchange with them. And on the other hand, I had to change anyway for the subject I wanted to go into, namely high-energy particle physics and cosmology-gravitation. And the University of Copenhagen offered itself, because for dyslexics, only Northern Europe and France are possible at the moment, due to the fact that the southern European countries don't have the most friendly legal conditions. And that's where I came up with Copenhagen relatively quickly as a place to study.

**Pilar Gonzalez Guevara:** Yes, very interesting. I actually didn't know that yet. Where exactly do you come from? And what brought you to the University of Potsdam back then?

**Toni Teschke:** I came to the University of Potsdam because of the familiar environment and the contact with the lecturers, as well as the very good support from the disability officers. I already discussed with the student representative Mr. Gebert and the disability representative Ms. Bürger in my Bachelor's degree what opportunities dyslexics have in exams and in everyday life and what is generally being done at the University of Potsdam to make it easier for people with dyslexia to study.

**Pilar Gonzalez Guevara:** Yes, it's very nice that you have already enquired and that they could help you. What would you say? Is there anything you remember about the University of Potsdam? Something that you particularly liked?

**Toni Teschke:** I have. As I said, what has stayed in my memory. The very familiar atmosphere within the Faculty of Physics and the associated very trustworthy way the professors deal with the students, who are also open to other exam requirements, such as me taking my exams on the blackboard. Mr Feldmeier and I found that out after taking a few alternative exam formats. And that's exactly what allows me to adequately access and recall my knowledge and to complete the exams in such a way that the performance is actually comparable. If we're talking about a writing assistance, you change the way you formulate and what you write, consciously or unconsciously. And that's why it's not quite what you would write yourself completely, but how you would write yourself in dealing with how the writing assistance, how the chemistry with the writing assistance is, and that exactly would not have been possible at HU.

**Pilar Gonzalez Guevara:** Yes, very good. Thank you. You've already mentioned it now, but what would you say? What exactly or who exactly helps you to study successfully?

**Toni Teschke:** On the one hand, it's always the professors and fellow students. What helps me to study successfully with regard to my dyslexia are, on the one hand, technical aids such as a reading assistant, with which I can have most books and papers in the specialist literature read to me, but also language programmes. I use Dragon Naturally Speaking and I also learned relatively quickly in my studies and also a bit in my A-levels to get the maximum intuition

from the text and from the question with little reading. And that allowed me, even if not all texts were always accessible, to listen to the texts that were accessible and thereby still get a B, which is about 100%. And then, through my dyslexia, I learned to find the shortest possible, the shortest possible solution when solving equations. So I've kind of turned dyslexia into an advantage. Which allows me to be very good at what I do.

**Pilar Gonzalez Guevara:** Yes, that is also a wonderful idea. It turns out that you managed to do that before. You yourself are actually active in the Dyslexia Association. Could you tell us more about what you are working for and what changes you would like to implement with your work?

**Toni Teschke:** I am mainly involved in the mentoring programme. There we support young dyslexics and dyscalculics in life stages where they need strategies on how to deal with their dyslexia and what is possible from a purely legal point of view, that they can apply for compensation for disadvantages and what you also pay attention to when you do an apprenticeship, that you maybe write to the company to see: Hey, I have dyslexia, how do they react to exactly how I did it? That's the kind of thing I do personally. In general, we advocate equal disadvantage compensation for dyslexics and dyscalculics throughout the country. We are talking to the teachers, i.e. the schools, as well as to the psychologists and, of course, also at the government level. And then, that parents and children can also get information from us, yes from us, and that the exchange is given. To this end, we also meet every six months for workshops and talk about certain problems that can occur with dyslexia.

**Pilar Gonzalez Guevara:** Yes, that's very nice and also very important that you also deal with people individually and also get the information they need. Tell me, are you also active in Denmark, in Copenhagen? And do you know how the country deals with partial disability? Are there, for example, special support services?

**Toni Teschke:** At the moment I am not active in the dyslexia association in Copenhagen or Denmark, because they are mainly active in schools, which is not an effective use of my resources. In general, however, dyslexia is already regulated nationwide there and the usual compensation for disadvantages, such as time extensions and a computer, are generally regulated up to the Master's level. And it is also very common at the University of

Copenhagen. That special forms of exams are then created. And the only thing that is different, or that was a bit of a change for me, is that the University of Copenhagen, because of its size, has a more bureaucratic office for disadvantage compensation, where, when it comes to the exam environments. Once you know that and know what exactly they want to see so they can understand that you need a blackboard for the quantum field theory exam, then it's very relaxed there with the disadvantage compensation and there are no difficulties there either.

**Pilar Gonzalez Guevara:** Yes, very good. What differences are there between Germany and Denmark, for example, in the recognition of dyslexia?

**Toni Teschke:** There are differences in the recognition of dyslexia and dyscalculia in that in Denmark acceptance and recognition are generally more widespread and the professors there are generally more knowledgeable. Otherwise, the purely legal recognition is generally the same as in our country with a dyslexia test. And here, too, a relatively up-to-date test from Germany is sufficient.

**Pilar Gonzalez Guevara:** Yes, that is a big advantage too. Have you personally noticed differences at the universities?

**Toni Teschke:** Well, as I said, the professors are more open and better informed about what it means to have dyslexia and they are also more willing to adapt the exam forms very well. Even in very large courses with, let's say, 300 participants, which is already a clear advantage in studying and also the fellow students from Denmark or the northern countries are very open with dyslexia, or react very openly towards it. That's the correct way to put it. Yes.

**Pilar Gonzalez Guevara:** Yes, too. So I suppose a little better than here in Germany. The pandemic certainly had an impact on your studies. Which of the changes would you like to keep, even after the pandemic is over? And which should definitely be abolished?

**Toni Teschke:** I have to say that the pandemic delayed my studies by a year. However, since I was working on my Master's thesis, I didn't notice much of the online teaching and I have to say that I prefer face-to-face teaching 99% of the time. In principle, however, I think it's

very good that the lectures or video material now exist. For more lectures than was the case before.

**Pilar Gonzalez Guevara:** That's exactly what hybrid teaching would be. What would you like to see from teachers or other students in terms of barrier-free studies?

**Toni Teschke:** Well, for barrier-free studies we need an open approach to dyslexia and dyscalculia, so that we know that the individual person needs this and that this must be given on the one hand and then there must also be knowledge among the students about the type of possible disadvantage compensation, so that the students can find for themselves what the best possible alternative is. Because writing on the blackboard was not the first option we thought of when I came to the University of Potsdam. We had thought about a writing assistant. And this joy of experimentation and attention was responsible for the fact that this is how I write my exams today.

**Pilar Gonzalez Guevara:** Yes, very interesting. Education is definitely very, very important at universities. What are your goals after graduation and who or what helps you prepare for them?

**Toni Teschke:** To people with dyslexia or dyscalculia or people with impairments in general, I can say that the fact that you experience the impairment and also have had a hard time or are having a hard time, gives you an incredible advantage over all the people who have such a lapidary life . That everything has always been pleasant to such a certain extent. If you have been discriminated against and got over it, then there is a certain strength. That helps me and I can only pass that on to all listeners. This strength, these overcome difficulties or difficulties that you are overcoming, to draw strength from that. And that helps me to set myself very ambitious goals. After my Master's degree, I will continue with my doctoral thesis, also in the field of quantum gravity and string theory. But in this area, which is precisely very mathematical and still very difficult to access experimentally. But there are also some projects that are now entering the first test phases for experiments. To go there. Just like determining how to avoid building a particle accelerator the size of the solar system. That's a bit over the top. These are the current difficulties that these projects are trying to circumvent through other strategies.

**Pilar Gonzalez Guevara:** Yes, that's a great goal of yours, Toni. In any case, I wish you all the best for the future and much success with your Master's degree. Yes, and see you next time. Goodbye.

**Toni Teschke:** Bye, this was pleasant.