



STORIES THAT NEVER STAND STILL



This programme (Stories That Never Stand Still) was initiated and funded by Takeda, and developed with support from Edelman and Studio Anorak.



You are holding in your hands a copy of “Stories That Never Stand Still”, a book celebrating what’s amazing and annoying, fun and funny, incredibly inspiring and wonderfully weird about ADHD. Sharing stories, struggles and achievements, this book gives you an opportunity to learn or remind yourself about the positives of having an ADHD brain.

BY PEOPLE WITH ADHD FOR PEOPLE WITH ADHD

So many of us with ADHD achieve incredible things and have so many talents and abilities – we thought it was about time we celebrated that!

Whether you have lived with ADHD forever or whether you have just been diagnosed, we hope that “Stories That Never Stand Still” will give you plenty of reasons to be proud of who you are and your potential to be whoever you want to be.

Dr Tony Lloyd, CEO,
ADHD Foundation
www.adhdfoundation.org.uk



A downloadable version of Stories That Never Stand Still is available from the Born to Be ADHD website, www.borntobeADHD.co.uk, and the ADHD Foundation, www.adhdfoundation.org.uk.

This book was made by Cathy Olmedillas, Ben Javens, Jonno Hopkins, Bob James, Lee Graham, Elise Gravel, Ryan Bubnis, Andy J. Pizza, Jacob Myrick, Yvonne Keesman, Lizzy Itzkowitz, Graeme Zirk, Kay Wilson, Iris van den Akker, Kat Lyons, Jacob Myrick, Kat Garcia, Anne Bentley, Theodora Lee, Poppy Ellis Logan, Erynn Brook, Olive Gray, Amber Rose Revah, Andrea Chesterman-Smith, Marcus Wilton, Leah Greene, Siena Castellon, Josh Grenville-Wood, Fintan O’Regan and Stu Hallybone.

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Stories That Never Stand Still has been initiated and funded by Takeda, in collaboration with a range of UK-based patient groups, to be available as a free resource to the ADHD community.

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A TO Z OF ADHD

A Anxiety

Hounded by a sense of impending doom? Heart racing? Feeling nauseous? Breathing fast? Say hello to our old foe, Anxiety! The good news is that to identify the cause of it means discovering ways to manage it.



B Brain

The master. The big one. Our brains are not like your standard, run-of-the-mill, regular boring old brains, but rather brilliant machines that should be celebrated.

C Creativity

Creativity is not just our best friend, it is THE thing that powers our brains. We have unlimited reserves of it, which means it can help us and turns us into creative champions like no other.

E Energy

Why do you think some of us make some of the world's most amazing athletes? Yep, that's thanks to our incredible endless energy levels that mean we can focus on tasks for longer than a lot of people.



D Distraction

The one that makes us find EVERYTHING exciting. The TV, our phone, or our own thoughts are more engaging than what's happening around us, hence us getting distracted. Although this can be frustrating, it also means we can take on many things at once, which can make us excellent at multi-tasking.

OF ADHD

F Forgetfulness

Ever gone to get something and COMPLETELY forgotten what it was? Or forgotten where you've put something, or overlooked a really important date, like your Mum's birthday. Our BFF in that case? To do lists.



G Gloom

If you're feeling down in the dumps, struggling to get out of bed or unable to find the joy in things that are usually ace, you might be suffering from depression or 'The Big Gloom', as we like to call it. The Big Gloom's biggest enemy? Talking it out.



H Hyperfocus

So, we are not distracted. Yay! But now we are...hyper focused, which means we are so engrossed in something we can't shift our focus away from it. Hyperfocus can be a powerful tool for productivity, but we need to understand when to harness this energy.

I Impulsivity

See it, say it. See it, buy it. Impulsivity is when we act before we think, something we excel at. Living consciously in the present can help to stop the urge before it strikes. Failing that, leave your money at home.



J Joy

When our dear friend Joy visits us, we are in for an amazing party in our brain. We tend to be generous with it and love to spread it enthusiastically around, much to everyone's glee! (Except when in a classroom.)

K Know-it-all

The ADHD brain has a hard time waiting its turn so when we hear people getting things wrong it's hard to stop ourselves from interrupting. Annoying know-it-alls we aren't, but impulsive "gotta-say-it-as-it-is" people we are.



L Lists

We are excellent list-makers, and can be even more brilliant at actioning, timing, drawing or doodling to help get the day's jobs done. Pat on the back for that!

M Mood swings

Thanks to these weird things called 'mood swings' we have the ability to turn from mega happy to super grumpy. Acknowledging our up and down moods by jotting them down can help to identify what the triggers are.

N Nervous

Twitchy, fidgeting, nail biting, if we could bottle up nervous energy ADHD could power a city! Relaxation techniques are a huge help, so why not enjoy the calming properties of a nice, deep breath.

P Procrastination

We don't always know how to get going, or feel that a simple task is too overwhelming. As the saying goes: 'the hardest step is the first one' so take it both feet first and the rest will come easier.



O Organisation

Or lack of, more like. To keep on top of things, using flashcards, sticky notes, alerts on our phones can help with reminding ourselves what we need to do next.



Q Quick

If one word could summarise how the ADHD brain functions, it's 'quick'. From the moment we wake up to those agonising attempts to fall asleep, our brains are set to 'Quick!' Reminding ourselves to 'go slow' is vital, whether it is music, drawing or stroking the dog or cat.



R Relationships

Huh, WhatsApp chat has dried up because of something we said. With a tendency to blurt out what we think, maintaining relationships can be tough. But the upside is being open and honest with our friends and family is good for the soul.

S Sleep

Cannot...stop...picking...up...phone!...Must...Sleep! Let's be honest, sleep is boring. But unfortunately it's essential if you don't want to spend tomorrow trying to stay awake. Put your phone down, pick up a book, drift off.



T Time Out

How can we manage time when there's so much going on in our brains? There's a ton of amazing activity flying around up there, but there are times when we all need to take a minute or two to remind ourselves to slow down.

U Up and down

Having an ADHD brain can feel like one minute we are up and next we are down. It's unpredictable, exhilarating and at times overwhelming, and like going on a roller-coaster. With some tools and a bit of experience, we can learn how to become the pilot, rather than the out-of-control passenger.



V Valued

Feeling valued, supported and listened to are crucial for our health but often, in the midst of our busy lives, we simply forget. The key is to remember to appreciate ourselves for what we are.

W Willing

Because we are always on the go and up for mostly anything, we make a pretty willing bunch. So use this never-ending willingness to our advantage and let's learn, learn, learn.

Y Yawn

Unless something is fast and fun, we're going to struggle to stay focused and end up with 'yawn-itis'! But when it is fast and fun, that's when the magic happens.

X X Factor

Not that one. The other one, the one that means talent. Sure, there's a lot to deal with when it comes to ADHD, but our minds are incredible things, we like to think they are way more complex than any other brains.

Z Zoning Out

Oh no, they were talking for maybe five minutes and we only tuned back in at 'Are you listening?' Zoning out is not always ideal during conversations, but does make meditating a breeze.

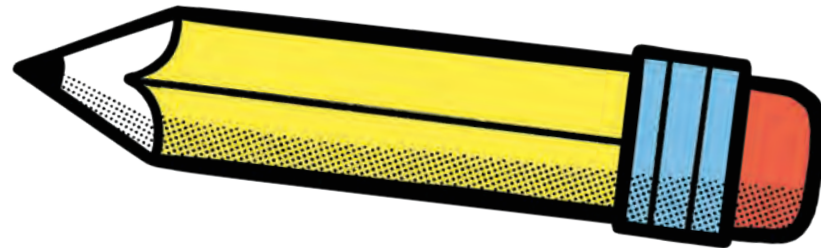


THE ART OF CALM

A guide on how to keep cool, calm and collected, when a ARGH moment strikes.

**WRITE
WRITE
WRITE**

When our thoughts become overwhelming, write them down. Listing them on a page can make us feel lighter. Writing lists is also a great way to focus and get organised.



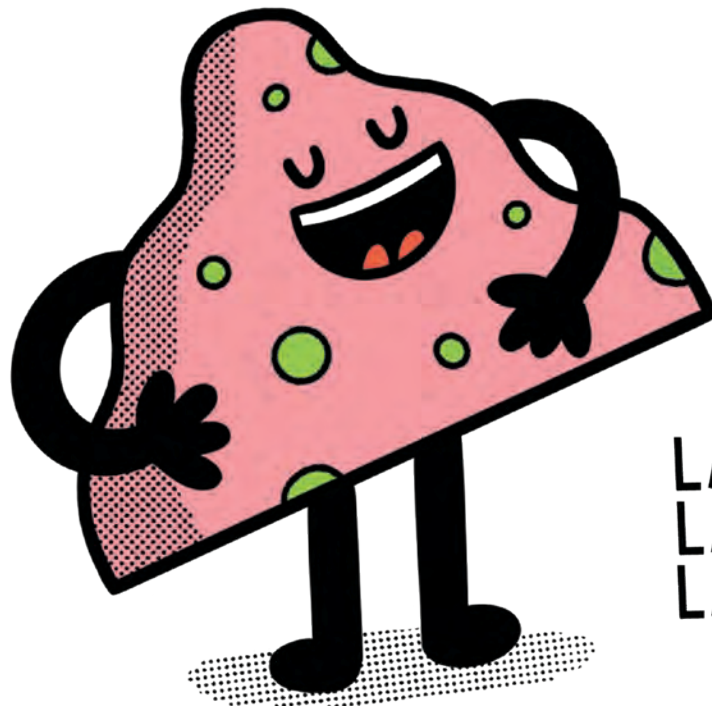
**TELL
TELL
TELL**

You understand ADHD but others might not, which is why they might jump to conclusions. Educate them about some of the reasons you blurt things out at the wrong time or why you forgot your essay at home.



**LEARN
LEARN
LEARN**

Knowledge is power they say. In our case, it truly is. Learn about what ADHD is as much as possible and remind yourself that everything you are going through is totally acceptable.



**LAUGH
LAUGH
LAUGH**

Seeing the funny isn't always easy when gloomy thoughts take over. But sometimes having a laugh at ourselves is the best cure.

OF CALM



**TALK
TALK
TALK**

Silence and bottling stuff up are our worst enemies. However embarrassing your brain would like to make we believe ADHD is, it's never as bad once we've talked it out. Whether with a counsellor or a family member, talking is always a good idea.

**JOIN
JOIN
JOIN**

Don't suffer on your own in silence. Join a group of like-minded people, whether online or in real life and share the joys and pains.

**ALLOW
ALLOW
ALLOW**

You are allowed to feel the way you do. You are allowed to behave the way you do. Don't punish yourself for any of it, but instead let your brain know that whatever it wants to throw at you, you are OK with it.

**PRAISE
PRAISE
PRAISE**

Everyday, remind yourself what amazing deeds you've done or thoughts you've had. Record it in a voice note or on paper and listen or read it back every time you feel a bit down.

**ACCEPT
ACCEPT
ACCEPT**

Accept you might be spending a lot of wasted energy trying to fit in. Instead, accept yourself for who you are and everyone else will. Easier said than done? Give it a try and you might be in for a surprise.

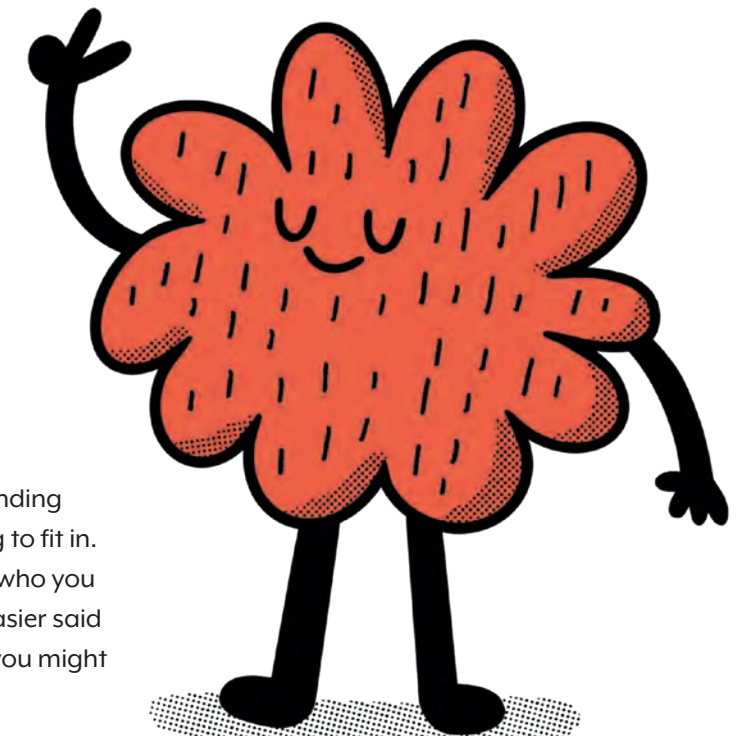


Illustration by Ryan Bubnis

DEALING

Here, we explore the four challenges of ADHD: Anxiety, Anger, Stress and Frustration and offer some thoughts on how to deal with them

ANXIETY

Anxiety's weird, isn't it? Everything's fine, you're thriving, nothing to worry about, and then BAM! Your brain does that thing where it automatically switches to hunting down the worst possible scenario.



When anxiety starts kicking in, one of the things we like to do is talk to someone. Struggling alone isn't going to help anyone (especially you!), so, if you can, share the problem you're dealing with and it is likely to become a bit more bearable.



Stop for a second, write down exactly what it is that's worrying you, and work back to try and get to the root of the problem. Often when we look at the basic reason we're worrying, it can help us navigate the best way to deal with it, or make us realise it's not worth worrying about in the first place!

FRUSTRATION

A good friend of anger, it's that feeling that makes us think that life is a series of obstacles and nothing goes right. Truth is plenty is going well but our brains have just suddenly decided to focus on the annoying stuff. Gah!



We have bags of imagination, so let's put it to good use: one exercise to do is try to see ourselves from above, ie imagine looking at the situation that's frustrating us from high up in the sky. That bump in the road should feel small in comparison with all the other brilliant stuff our lives are made of.



Fun is the enemy of frustration. When we feel frustration coming on, let's remind ourselves of something fun we love to do and let's just do it: eat an ice cream, call a friend or dash about on our skateboards.

WITH IT

ANGER

A minor inconvenience occurs and oooh, you can feel the rage brewing and your blood boiling. Because we experience emotions with a greater intensity, it can take very little for us to start seeing red.



Expressing your feelings to a friend or family member can be a massive help in alleviating anger. Finding the right words to describe what's inside your head can also help others understand what it is that's upsetting you.



If you can exercise every day, your tolerance for daily annoyances are likely to increase. It's not always easy when everything around us (ourselves included) feels overwhelming but, if you can get out of bed, try a walk around the park or if you are feeling more adventurous cycling to school. If all else fails... frisbee.

STRESS

Argh, just the word stresses us out! It's the amount of stimuli flying around that can be overwhelming, and being able to recognise it and nip it in the bud is always a good idea.



Recognise when you're feeling stressed. Set an alarm to go off every hour and take stock of your stress. Are you feeling tense? Are you anxious? Is your heart racing? If so, take 10-15 minutes to go with it, and then let it go.



It's hard to remember at times when stress takes over but the simple task of focusing back to something as simple as breathing can work miracles. If your chest starts to feel tight, gently breathe in and out with longer breaths, count to 4 breathing in, 2 to hold and 4 breathing out. Aaaaah.

PHONE: FRIEND OR FOE?

While smart phones or tablets can act as a massive distraction - first choice for all procrastinators - they can also help us to keep on top of our ADHD. Here, we explore what's good and and not-so-good about them.



NOT SO GOOD

Always on hand, that lovely glowing screen is home to a never ending stream of information, taking us away from real life things like conversations with friends or walks in the park.

Too...many...tabs...and apps! Having too many things going on at once can be overwhelming.

Betime is boring, right? Way better to have a quick look at social media and see if there are any updates. No spoilers, but there aren't. Screen time before bed will affect sleep, so switching off at least 30 minutes before bed can help.

Put it down. Pick it up. Put it down. Pick it up. Stuck in a repetitive phone-checking cycle? Going back to your phone time and time again is a real productivity killer. Break the cycle. Put it down. Take a deep breath.

GOOD

When things get overwhelming, sharing and connecting with friends is a gift that keeps on giving.

Tracking apps can be essential for staying on top of our medication. One less thing for our brains to worry about!

Ah, our old friend the to-do list. Where would we be without you? Keep paper scraps to a minimum by keeping a to-do list up to date on our phone.

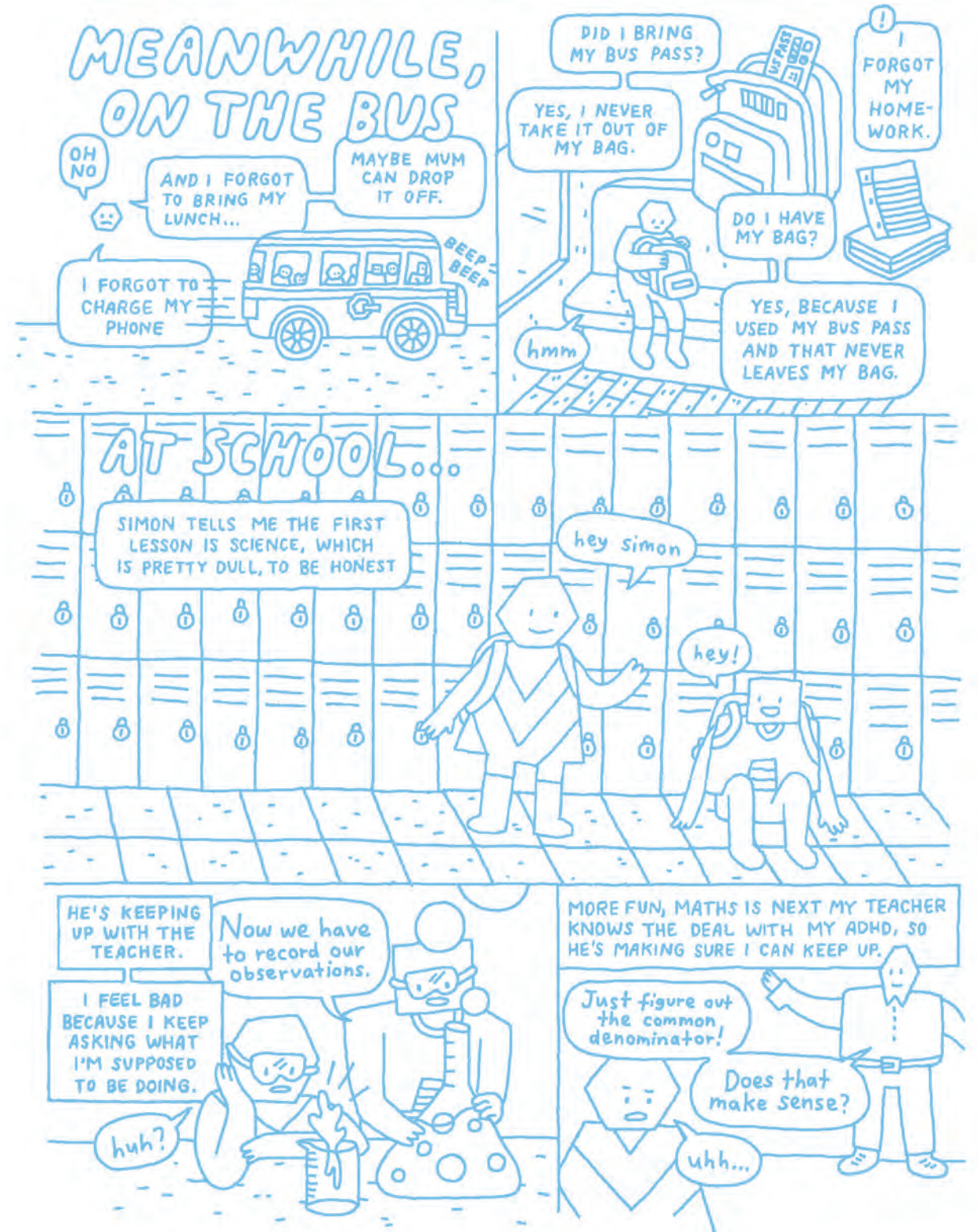
Because when we need to be reminded to do small things like drink water, scheduling reminders on a phone can be a huge help. We like to set an alarm to go off every hour so we're reminded to stay on track.

Illustration by Graeme Zirk

A DAY IN

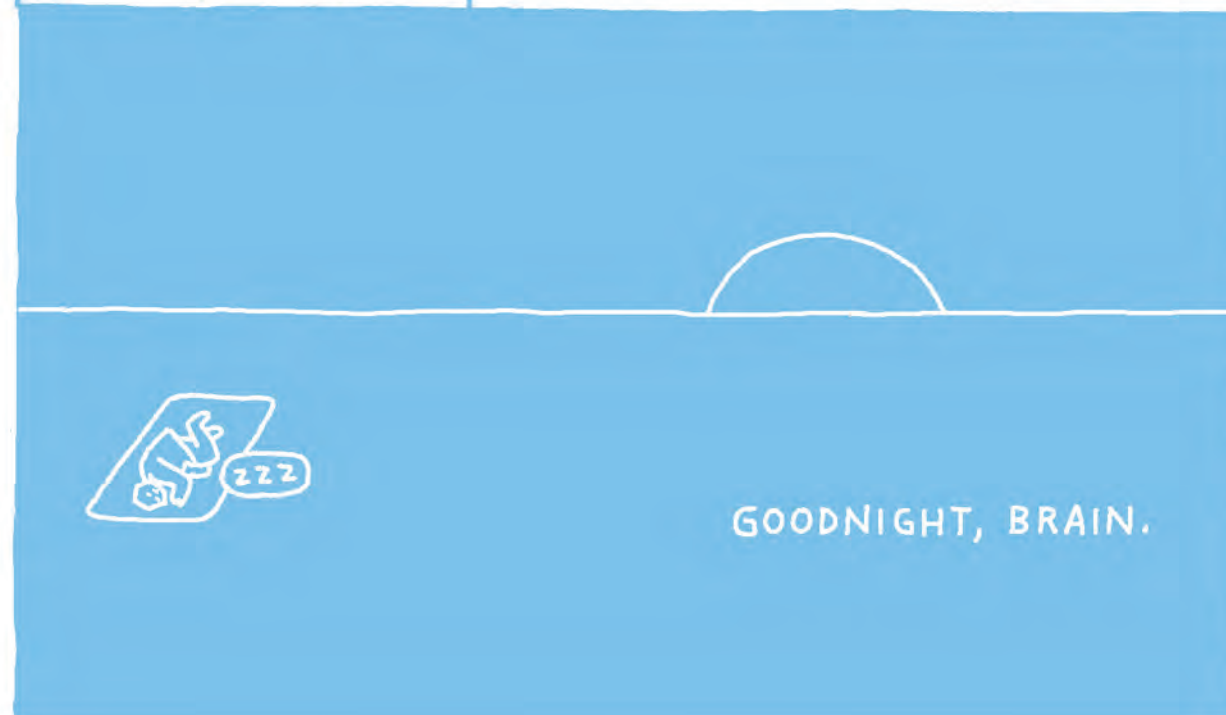
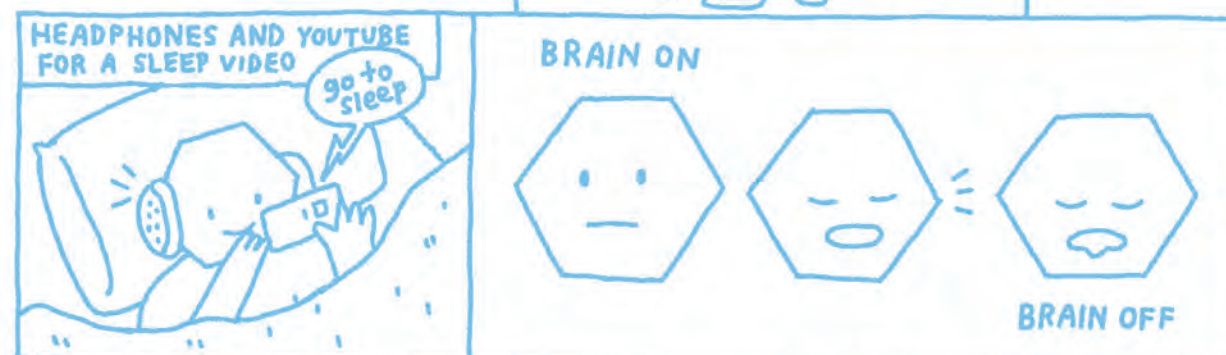
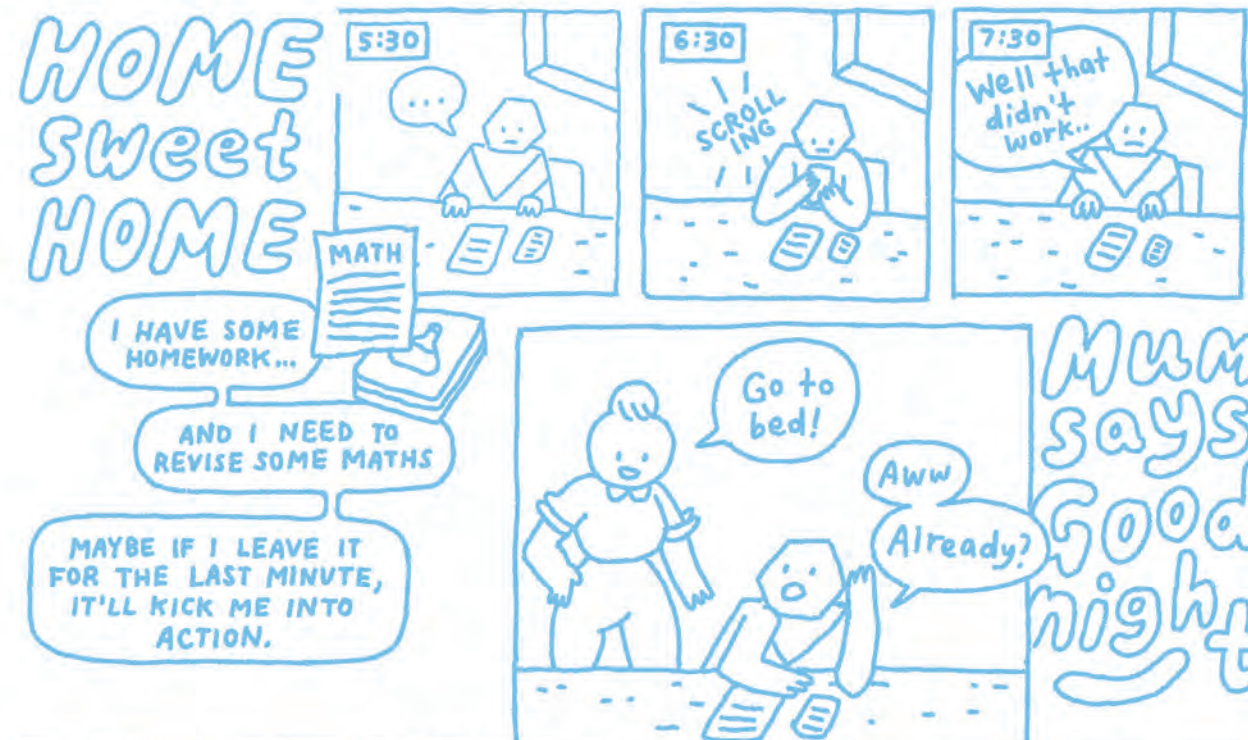


THE LIFE





NEXT IS ENGLISH, WHICH IS QUITE FUN. THIS IS THE LESSON I FORGOT MY HOMEWORK FOR. IT WAS GOOD, TOO! I'VE GOT A TON OF GOOD IDEAS.



HOORAY FOR ADHD

ADHD can be complicated, messy and frustrating.
But it can also be fun, happy and exhilarating.
Here's how.

We make some of the greatest problem solvers.
A problem is not really a problem when you are ADHD.
It is just a reason to find a solution.

We make some of the most
dedicated sportspeople.
Having that much energy on a
pitch or in a pool is a gift to any
teams.

We make some of the most loyal friends.
We know how tough it is to be different so we value
those who support us or go through a hard time.

We make some of the most brilliant creative thinkers.
Imagining is our favourite thing to do, and we can
always rely on that to make us mega creative.

We make some of the greatest class clowns.
Much to our teachers' despair, we bring the fun in the
classroom like no other.

We make some of the most dedicated workers.
Once we are passionate about something, try to
get us to stop working on it. N.e.v.e.r.!

We make some of the most tolerant of humans.
We know to be different is cool because well,
we are different. And we won't judge you for
being late.

We make some of the most excited people on earth.
Everything is great, we love everything!

Illustration by Yvonne Keesman

FIND YOUR



BUT WHEN I FOUND ILLUSTRATION EVERYTHING CHANGED! MY UNIQUE ADHD BRAIN MADE CONNECTIONS OTHERS DIDN'T!

IN OTHER WORDS... I FOUND "MY WATER"...

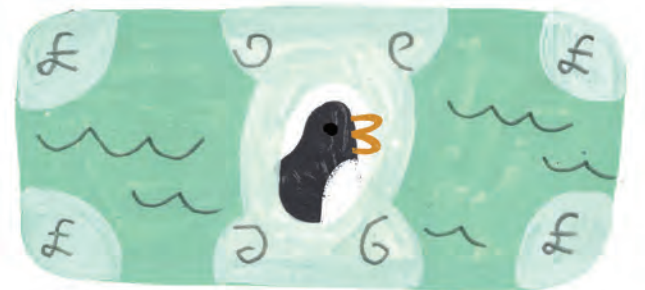
LET ME EXPLAIN! →

WATER!

YOU SEE PENGUINS CAN FLY!! NOT IN THE AIR LIKE OTHER BIRDS. NO THEY'RE SPECIAL. THEY "FLY" UNDER WATER!



FOR FAMOUS ADHD SINGERS MUSIC IS THEIR WATER.



MANY ADHD PENGUINS FIND ENTREPRENEURSHIP IS THEIR WATER!



FOR SOME, WATER IS THEIR WATER!!!

i.e. OLYMPIC SWIMMERS!

SO EVEN IF YOU'RE A PENGUIN LIKE ME... BELIEVE YOU CAN FLY!!

I AM FREE

I'm 18 and I'm in my therapist's office, and she says "Olive, have you ever heard of ADHD?" I'd heard about AD(H)D, from the mouths of judgemental mothers talking in playground circles about the child in class with behavioural problems, in American music, speaking of "ADD" and in articles referencing prescription medication. To me, AD(H)D was the naughty boy in my primary class, it only referred to disobedience in my mind; the boy who refuses, is violent and loud. Always a boy, always disobedient.

I'd spent the majority of my life in education and by then I'd learnt that I don't fit in school. I came into primary school hungry to learn, to get to read every day and make new friends. Unfortunately, that joy didn't last, as soon, I'd found that all of my efforts to be obedient and garner my teacher's approval weren't working.

My struggle to concentrate and my slower processing was interpreted as defiance and disinterest, and I was quickly labelled as a naughty child. I continued to struggle with focus and energy regulation and eventually, after not wanting to feel continual disappointment at trying and failing to be seen as anything except naughty, I allowed the label given to me by my teachers to define my behaviour. I decided that if I could control my naughtiness, then I wouldn't feel such disappointment when I was labelled as such.

As I went into secondary school, my struggles became insurmountably larger. The grounds were enormous, I didn't understand how to read timetables and after the first week, I started carrying every book for the week on my back in a bid not to forget anything as I had been doing.

I'd arrive at my class and unpack my giant book bag full of every book for every subject and rummage through it as silently as I could until I found the correct books. These disturbances to the class caused my teachers to shout at me, "insolence!" berate me for my "disrespect" and "blatant mockery of education." Bit by bit, I became numb. I stared blank-faced at teachers while they reprimanded me in front of my peers. Day in, day out, I began to feign indifference when I yet again was told off for looking out the window, fidgeting or daydreaming.

As my teenage years continued onwards, like a never-ending racetrack, I disassociated myself in many areas of my life; my indifference and refusal to acknowledge my deep sadness and pain only deepened my sadness and pain.



One day, at 17, my parents took me out of school for good and put me in therapy.

I'm 18 I'm sitting in my therapist's office, and she says to me: "Olive, have you ever heard of AD(H)D?" I was surprised that my therapist - who knew me well - would suggest that I have AD(H)D. I wasn't a purposely defiant child or teenager, I didn't jump up and down and shout in a wild carefree manner, nor have a never-ending stream of energy.

One of my main struggles was anxiety. My brain not stopping with thoughts until I thought it would explode, not knowing whether I was going to be running on all of my energy or be in a total energy crash, and unable to process what was said to me or reply properly. I was open to learning more though, and soon after, I went for a diagnosis with a doctor who specialised in women with AD(H)D, and lo and behold, I was diagnosed - "without a doubt" in the doctor's words - with AD(H)D.

I'm 18 and I'm sitting at home learning more and more about what having AD(H)D means. That the overwhelming amount of thinking and information that exists in my brain, is inward hyperactivity and that there are tools to help. I learned to read my energy shifts, that I fidget to focus and that I am not disobedient or naughty. Although I'm not as good at focusing on some things that other people are, my ability to create and invest in what I love is infinite, and given the right environment, I can be spectacular.

Some people still didn't get it, but the more I understood myself, the more I stood strong in myself. Some people would rather be ignorant and make me feel that AD(H)D is a problem I need to "work through", "stop", or even "get rid of" because I won't "survive in the real world".

I can tell you now, after my experiences at secondary school and at drama school, which was even worse, I am surviving and I am thriving in the real world. It gets better, and you get stronger, more equipped, less judgemental of yourself, more accepting of your strengths and weaknesses. The more I hone my ability to advocate for myself, to understand that someone else's judgement and poor communication, lies with them, not me; the freer I am and the more I love the person I am.

I'm Olive, I have AD(H)D, I am wonderful, unapologetically complex, beautiful and I am free.

Words by Olive Gray, illustration by Anne Bentley



A LETTER TO A YOUNG ADHDER

Hey there, brain-friend. I'm so happy you're here!

Not just 'here' as in reading this book, 'here' as in right here, in this moment, in this life, in this brain of yours. I'm so happy you're part of the squad, that you're one of us, and that you have this:

ADHD.

You probably already know a lot about ADHD. There's a ton of stories in this book alone that will teach you so much about yourself and your brain. But most of all, I'm happy that you have these four letters, ADHD, in this order, and that they mean something to you. I'm so happy that these letters connect you to all of us, and I wanted you to know, we're here for you.

You see, most of us didn't have these letters for a long time. Most of us weren't diagnosed until we were adults, until we showed up at the doctor's office for the umpteenth time begging for help because something just wasn't right. Most of us, many of us, didn't get these letters until ADHD had run rampant through our lives, unnamed and unseen, until we were depressed and anxious and just so tired of trying.

But you, you have this. And you have us. There's a whole squad of us out here rooting for you. A whole squad who knows what it feels like to think of a million things at once, to watch your own brain spiderweb ideas out into a glorious map that can't be seen or read by anyone around you. A whole squad that has been working tirelessly for years to change things, just for you.

When I was your age, I didn't know I had ADHD. I knew something was different, something wasn't working quite right, and as a teenage girl I absolutely sucked at all the finicky girly things that the world told me I should naturally be good at. I wasn't diagnosed until I was 23, and it still took years for me to understand what those letters really, truly meant.

Well, I'm 32 now and I still don't know how to use a curling iron, but I do know about ADHD, and what it feels like. What I do now is give people words, I turn all that medical talk into words that everyday people use, I talk about what it feels like to be in my brain. I write.

So I wanted to write you this letter to let you know that you're not alone, even if you feel lonely. You're not broken, even if you feel like you're cracking. And the hardest part is already taken care of, you have words, you have these letters, and you have all of us behind you.

You got this,

Love, Erynn Brook

Words by Erynn Brook, illustration by Kay Wilson



★ STOP CHASING GOLD STARS ★

“You have to lie completely still and try not to think about anything.” “That’s impossible!” I cried to the man in a white coat as I lay fidgeting on a hospital bed with a bunch of plugs stuck to my head*.

“Are you trying to hear my brain?” I asked. “You have to try and relax,” he replied, losing a little patience with seven-year-old me.

This was the moment that I was diagnosed with ADD.

I was given a box of white pills to help me keep up in class - doctors’ (and teachers’) orders*. At first I was excited. “Will these help me spell things right?” I asked, gesturing at the box. I wanted to get a star on my forehead. “Of course,” said the man in the white coat. “You’ll be able to listen to your teacher, too. And soon you’ll be able to understand what you’re reading.”*

The next day, with high hopes, I sat quietly. The pill had me feeling odd as I sat perfecting the neatness of my handwriting, while everyone was eating their sandwiches. One day I forgot to take the pill. I think my mom mistakenly gave it to my cat (but let’s not talk about that!) My teacher had to call me back to class, while I hung upside down on the climbing frame with the naughty kids. I got in trouble, but I also made my best friend that day. It gave me a taste of who I really was. A girl with an imagination and a sense of adventure. Who likes to laugh and play with her friends.

From that day on, I stopped chasing gold stars that just peeled off and made my forehead itchy. I stopped trying to be perfect.

Living with ADD hasn’t been fun all the time, of course. I’ve had to deal with some challenges. Where was I? Oh yes. Because my mind loves to wander, it’s not always easy to keep up with what’s happening around me. Please don’t ask me to repeat instructions. And forgive me if I speak out of turn. But let’s laugh and blame my ADD, should I rock up to your party two days late. And then there’s impulsivity (fun, while it lasts) and anxiety (not so fun, ever.)

Let’s just say some days are better than others. But over the years, I’ve grown to love it despite the “setbacks” as ADD has given me the gift of quirkiness, creativity and drive. Because I simply can’t sit still. And I’ve found great ways to cope. Writing things down, combined with a healthy dose of exercise clears the fog in my head. I also drink plenty of coffee and take medication when needed but this is out of choice, not necessity.

When I write and create things, I realise again that my brain isn’t broken, it just works in a slightly different way. I’d never be where I am today, if it weren’t for a little acceptance and embracing that which makes me “me-with-ADD”.

Words by Theo Lee, illustration by Iris van der Akke

**note from sponsor: this is a personal account based on Theo's individual experiences and memories, and may not be representative of standard diagnosis and treatment protocols.*



TAKE MY HAND

Take my hand and come with me
I want to teach you about ADHD
I need you to know, I want to explain,
I have a very different brain
Sights sounds and thoughts collide
What to do first? I can't decide
Please understand I'm not to blame
I just can't process things the same.

Take my hand and walk with me
Let me show you about ADHD
I try to behave, I want to be good
But I sometimes forget to do as I should
Walk with me and wear my shoes
You'll see it's not the way I'd choose
I do know what I'm supposed to do
But my brain is slow getting the message through.

Take my hand and stand by me
I need you to know about ADHD
It's hard to explain but I want you to know
I can't help letting my feelings show
Sometimes I'm angry, jealous or sad
I feel overwhelmed, frustrated and mad
I can't concentrate and I lose all my stuff
I try really hard but it's never enough.

Take my hand and learn with me
We need to know more about ADHD
I worry a lot about getting things wrong
Everything I do takes twice as long
Everyday is exhausting for me
Looking through the fog of ADHD
I'm often so misunderstood
I would change in a heartbeat if I could.

Take my hand and listen to me
I want to share a secret about ADHD
I want you to know there is more to me
I'm not defined by it, you see
I'm sensitive, kind and lots of fun
I'm blamed for things I haven't done
I'm the most loyal friend you'll ever know
I just need a chance to let it show.

Take my hand and talk with me
I want to tell you about ADHD
I rarely think before I talk
I often run when I should walk
It's hard to get my school work done
My thoughts are outside having fun
I never know just where to start
I think with my feelings and see with my heart.

Take my hand and look at me
Just forget about the ADHD
I have real feelings just like you
The love in my heart is just as true
I may have a brain that can never rest
But please understand I'm trying my best
I want you to know, I need you to see
I'm more than the label, I am still me!

FEEL THE SUN



In your arms
I am who I want to be

You wash away a thousand thoughts
The whirlpool of my mind
A rush I can't control.
And for that time
I hand myself to you.
I float in your abyss
The crashing waves have stoped
The sea is calm.
And when your arms take hold of me
You give me peace.

I'm riding waves;
I stay afloat
The peaks and troughs
I take within my stride.

You make me smile.
You give me hope
That if I sink beneath
That you are there to help me rise again
To see the sky and feel the sun.

If I could live here
I would.



MY MIND IS LIKE THE SEA

Sometimes it seems murky; other days it washes up treasure. No matter what, it's always moving, and no amount of reasoning will make it settle. Even when the surface looks calm, it's full of organic matter and endless ideas bubbling up from its depths. It can't be hidden away and will never shut up.

Some days I seem choppy or harsh when unintended comments spill from my mouth like splashes of saltiness. And yes, I'm a mess, but at least I'm transparent and my honesty isn't meant to sting.

My mind is usually heaving with waves of information breaking this way and that. When something grabs my attention, my mind gets caught up and a whirlpool builds from the currents of thoughts and ideas eddying around that hook. I get wrapped up in the matter and am sucked deeper and deeper until soon the vortex takes over entirely. No stone is left unturned as forgotten skills and pieces of information rush to the fore to feed the maelstrom and its focus. Sometimes the whirlpool is like a shortcut that takes me where I need to go; other times it's a monster that destroys anything in its path.

Sometimes an idea will rise up that I try to ignore but just won't wash away. It bobs around like debris on the surface quietly lapping at my conscious and drowning any other grain of my being. The only way to ignore it is to create a splash somewhere else and hope that it gets washed over.

When I get upset it's a flood of emotions that sweeps the world away. I'm engulfed by the deluge and anything I had buried rises up to the surface to come pouring out in a torrent of distress until there's nothing left to hold on to. I'm exhausted and empty. But the storm always passes and my life keeps on flowing, though often it has to carve its own way.

My mind will never dry up; it's an endless resource of unharnessed potential that can't be controlled by me on my own. Living in my mind is exhausting and often overwhelming. It can't be tamed and doesn't follow trivial rules that others try and impose on it. My mind is not a filing cabinet, and was never supposed to be organised or contained.

If your mind is like mine, you're a force of nature.
Don't waste time trying to change it when you could be riding its waves.

Words by Poppy Ellis Logan, illustration by Jacob Myrick



LIVING WITH ADHD AINE EASY...



it's EPIC!

I am me

I am a girl
I am me
I also have ADHD
Come with me and you will see
How it's like to live with ADHD

I sometimes run
When I should walk
I mostly shout
When I should talk
I never think before I speak
Don't take it seriously that's just me

I have the best of friends around me
They all think I'm silly and caring
So just because you don't know me
Please don't judge before you get to know me

I am just a girl with ADHD.

Words by Leah Greene, illustration by Barry James.



STILL LEARNING

I'm 21 years old. I have a story to tell. I suffered from being bullied, misunderstood, discriminated against and even excluded from learning at school. I still come across instances like these now. Having ADHD isn't something that has gone away, it is something that I became more aware of, learned how to deal with and turned into a strength. I'm still learning. I'm still largely misunderstood, and the real me only becomes apparent once people have spent a good deal of time with me.

Although my career is just getting started, golf has proved to be the vehicle by which my ADHD became a strength. It kept me occupied and equally challenged on a daily basis. Even though I had a fair mixture of good and bad days, I loved the individual challenge so much, that I kept coming back to the golf course for more.

I'm not sure I've truly figured out my purpose in life, my reason for existence, but this may well be a step in the right direction. I want to mentor young kids and teenagers, to help them see that here's a great future out there for each and every one of them. Bringing an awareness of ADHD to my profession will help expose many myths, but also gives this example of a pathway in professional sport. I love working with kids, I used to help my Dad coach, and there was always something special in every kid I interacted with. Sometimes it was athletic talent, sometimes it was telling stories and jokes and other times, the mathematician came alive, or the dancer made an appearance! Either way, we tried to let each kid feel comfortable enough in the environment we created, to let them express themselves fully.

I want to meet lots of kids and teenagers, and even parents to help them and reassure them. I want to inspire them as much as I can, that they are all individuals with their own superpowers!

Ultimately, I want to be seen as strong. Strong in identity and belief in myself.
I want others to see that and gain strength from it.

Words by Josh Grenville-Wood, illustration by Kat Garcia



Time to Shine

It's not easy being different. Being different means that you stand out when you may be desperate to blend in. It means that you may feel ostracized, isolated and alone. I know because I'm different and it's been a bumpy journey. I've been bullied at school for most of my life. I've been judged and misunderstood. In my quest to belong, I tried walking in the footsteps of others; tried moulding myself into who I was expected to be. All to avoid sticking out from the crowd. But I've learned that when you embrace your difference, you allow yourself to shine. So, I've stopped pretending to be someone else and stopped apologizing for who I am. Instead, I gave myself permission to become who I was meant to be.

The transformation from wishing I was someone else to accepting who I am was gradual. If you'd met me a year ago, you would've met someone who had just been diagnosed with ADHD. Someone who was trying to figure out where her ADHD fit in amongst her autism, dyslexia and dyspraxia. Someone who was seeing the many times she was chastised for being a daydreamer and having her head in the clouds in a new and different light. If you were to meet me today, you would meet someone who sees her differences as a strength and as something to be thankful and grateful for. Somewhere along the way, I learnt that I'm not broken or defective; that I'm not like everyone else and that I don't want to be. I'm just me.

A lot can happen in a year. I went from being the quiet, timid, shy girl who disappeared into the backdrop to being front and centre stage. I went from being the girl who had always been bullied, to the girl who found the strength to take a stand and use her voice. Last year, I launched Neurodiversity Celebration Week to encourage schools to recognise the strengths and talents of their students with autism, ADHD, dyslexia or dyspraxia. I also hoped to change negative perceptions and stereotypes about students with special educational needs. The campaign had over 350 schools take part from across the UK and abroad. Before I knew it, one thing led to another. I became a Youth Ambassador for the ADHD Foundation and for Anna Kennedy Online, an autism charity. I was offered a publishing deal to write a survival guide for autistic teen girls and I was approached by a NY film production crew to feature in a Netflix documentary about six young change makers from six continents. My book will be published in March 2020 and the documentary featuring my Neurodiversity Celebration Week campaign will air in September 2020.

None of these amazing opportunities would have been possible if I'd tried to be "normal" or just like everyone else. I've learned that being your authentic self is the key to happiness and success. Embrace your uniqueness and unleash your creativity, tenaciousness, energy and resilience so that you can shine in your own way. Be the best version of yourself and believe in yourself, even if others don't, because there's only one of you and that is what makes you extraordinary.

Words by Siena Castellon illustration by Bob James



ADHD 'N' ME

I'm Marcus and I suppose the best place to start my story is at the beginning, yes, let's get the negativity out of the way first...

I don't do negative, especially around my ADHD and Autism ... but I have to be honest there was a lot of it about back then and still is in some respects.

My first memory of feeling different would have been when I started in reception at four. I know now that I was excluded from nursery because of my behaviour. I don't remember that part, I just remember starting a new nursery at some point. I didn't really understand back then that my behaviour stood out. I just remember I didn't do what everyone else was doing, what was expected. I do remember wanting to sit under the desk to get away from people who shouted at me! I found it difficult to make friends and I was the only one on half days instead of full ones. Grandma was always in school too, no one else's Mums or Grandmas were!

I think everyone around me knew I had ADHD. It's a standing joke now that doctors won't diagnose ADHD before your sixth birthday, I was diagnosed the day after mine*!

I really struggled being in a class of thirty children. I messed around to avoid doing my work. All the things expected of me in school like concentrating, sitting still, listening... I found difficult. I was constantly told, "Come on Marcus ... You're bright, just get on with it." I was often removed from class and put in isolation. That was actually a result for me, I could do things better when I had no other distractions.

In year 1, I remember vividly being in the assembly hall and saying to my teacher: "I'm going to try really hard to be good today Miss." She replied in front of the whole school: "I'll believe that when I see it Marcus." I didn't know at the time what humiliation was, I do now and I know that's what I felt, as well as thinking: "what's the point?" That has stayed with me, it's something I look back on to remind me that those are the things that define kids with ADHD as Mad, Bad or Sad.

I now use this experience to send a positive message to other kids, parents and professionals. When I was nine, I got the opportunity to speak about "living with ADHD" at a conference.

I then found my gifts, my superpowers. I can talk a lot so I used that to communicate. I'm really good with technology so I was able to put my own presentations together. I have a great memory for facts so I could speak confidently to parents and professionals. I now travel the country raising awareness about the positives of ADHD/ASD and finding "what lies within".

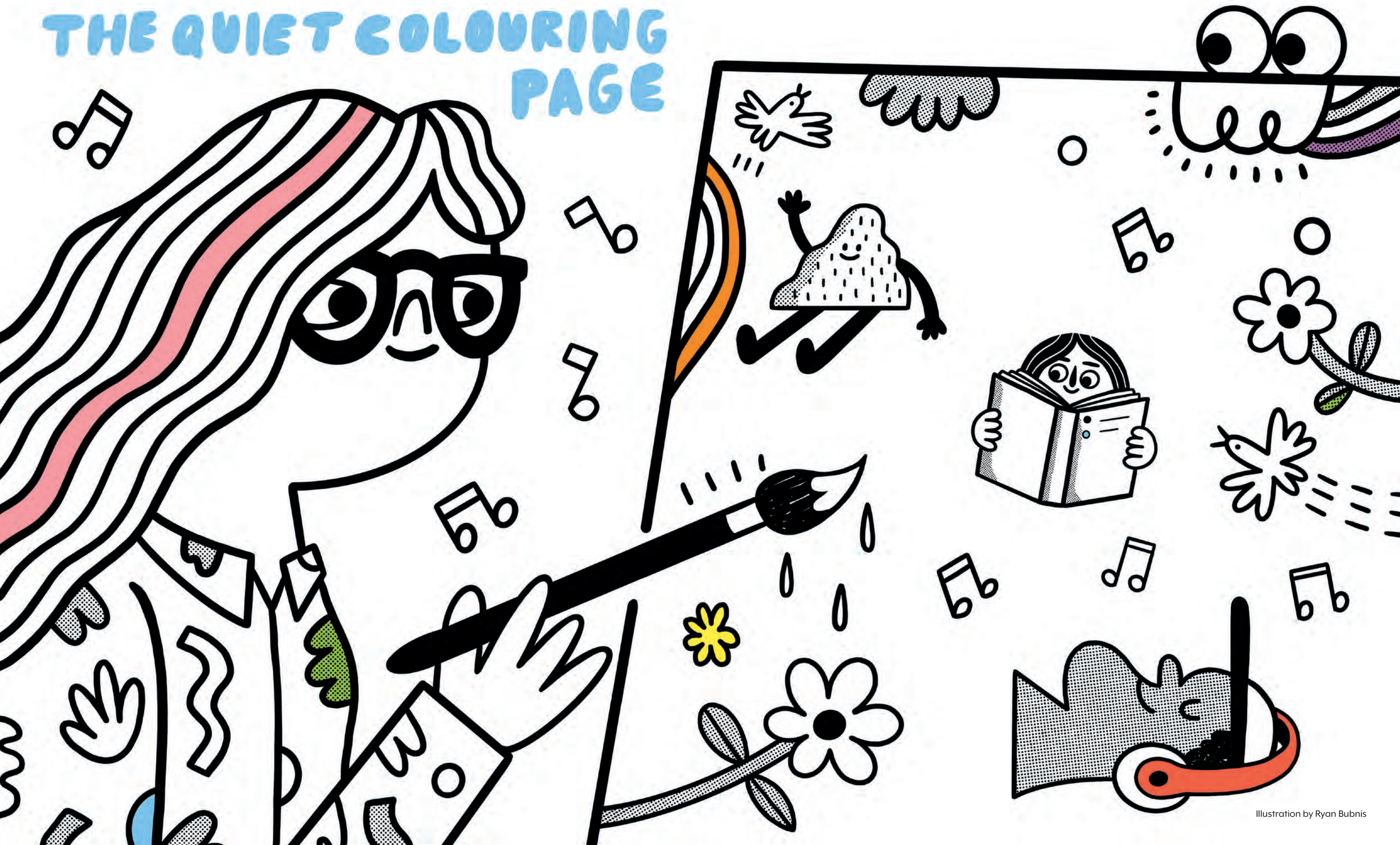
Everyone is intelligent, just in different ways, find what you are good at. It's about I CAN NOT – not IQ....and anyway being different is good!"

*Note from sponsor: ADHD diagnosis can occur in pre-school children, as core behaviours of the condition are typically present from before the age of seven years.



Words by Marcus Wilton, illustration by Graeme Zirk.

THE QUIET COLOURING PAGE



THANK
YOU





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