

# Invisible Disability Representation Matters:

An intersectional study of the confluence of playwrighting, casting practices, and progressive productions as they relate to diversity and inclusion in theatre.

Created for the students of the McLennan College Theatre Department

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# Acknowledgements

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# What are Invisible Disabilities?

**Invisible Disabilities** refers to any condition that includes symptoms such as debilitating pain, fatigue, dizziness, cognitive dysfunctions, brain injuries, learning differences, and mental health disorders. These are not always obvious to the onlooker, but can sometimes or always limit daily activities, range from mild challenges to severe limitations, and vary from person to person. Unfortunately, people often judge others by what they *see* and conclude a person can or cannot do something by the way they *look*. This attitude can be equally frustrating for those who may appear *unable* but are perfectly capable, as well as those who seem *able*, but are not. There is no exhaustive list of invisible disabilities, but there are four main types:

- **Neurodiversity** which includes Autism, ADHD, OCD, Tourette Syndrome, and Learning Disabilities such as Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Dysgraphia, Dyspraxia.
- **Mental Health Disorder** which includes Anxiety, Depression, Bipolar, Borderline Personality Disorder, Schizophrenia, and PTSD.
- **Autoimmune Disorders** which include MS, Anemia, Arthritis, Diabetes, Lupus, and Celiac Disease.
- **Medical Conditions** which include Fibromyalgia, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Allergies, Asthma, Cancer, Colitis, IBS, and Migraines.

This presentation will focus solely on Neurodiversity and Mental Illness.

# Why do we need to know this?

American theatre, film, and television have a long and problematic history with systemic racism, misogyny, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, homophobia, and ableism:

In a 2016 study, Neurodivergent people make up about 1% of the US population, that's 4 million people. Currently 95% of disabled characters are played by non-disabled actors. The infamy of awards being given to disabled performances is widely known. Entertainment industry online publication IndieWire reported in early 2017 that an estimated fifty-nine actors received Academy Award nominations for portraying disabled characters. The unemployment rate for people with disabilities is twice the national average of other protected groups. Over 50% of *college graduates* on the autism spectrum are unemployed.

According to a 2017 study, 1 in 5 US adults live with a mental illness, that's 46.6 million people, and having a mental illness is still very stigmatizing mostly due to the portrayal of mental illness in the media.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century we should know better and do better. We hope through education and deliberate action toward inclusivity in our productions as well as our classes, to increase the representation of these under-represented groups in both our student population and the plays we produce.

<https://www.disabilityscoop.com/2019/11/15/tv-season-record-high-disability-representation/27458/>

<https://www.nationaldisabilitytheatre.org/mission-1>

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness.shtml>

<https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/observations/clearing-up-some-misconceptions-about-neurodiversity/>

<https://www.neurodiversityhub.org/what-is-neurodiversity>



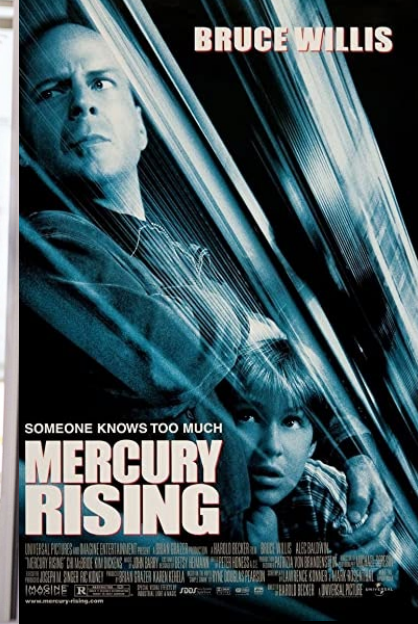
# What now?

Without bringing attention to the mistreatment of characters with Invisible Disabilities, it makes it difficult for writers to change how they write these characters. By learning about stereotypes, we grow to appreciate quality storytelling. We always have to ask ourselves certain questions: Are these stereotypes damaging? How should show-runners and writers improve their storytelling when it comes to characters with Invisible Disabilities? Can we like certain pieces of media while simultaneously recognizing their mistreatment of characters with Invisible Disabilities?

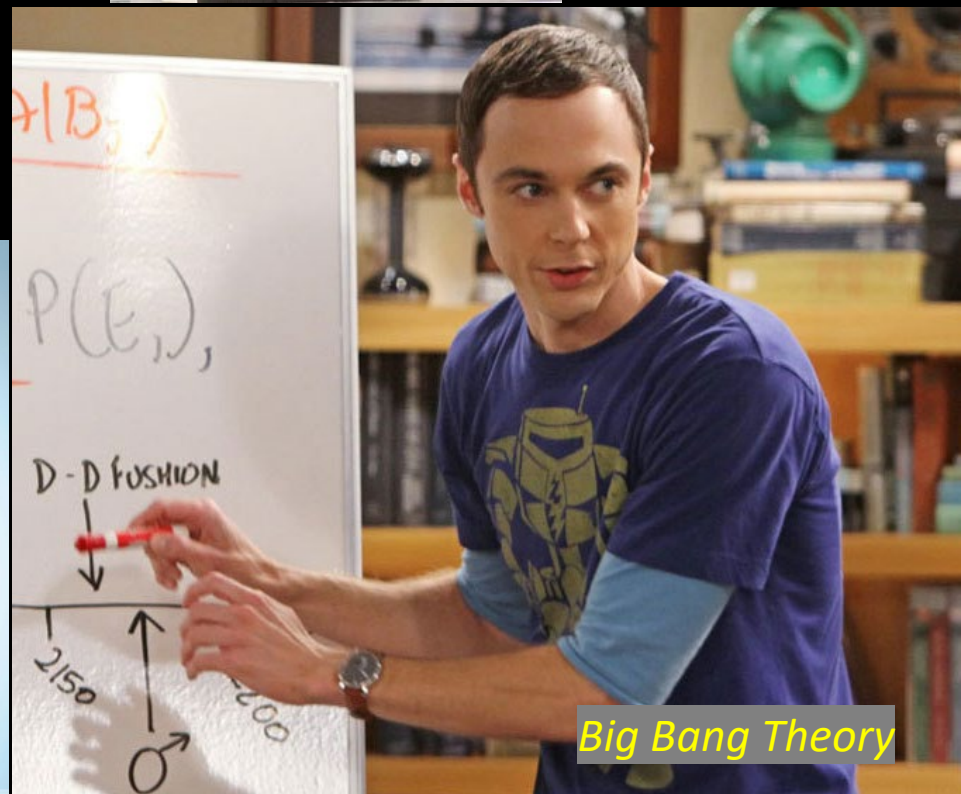
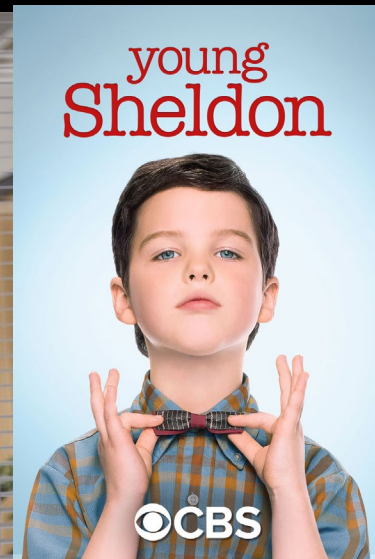
# Neurodivergent Tropes

- **Savant Syndrome:** All people with autism are also savants, as well as white males. In reality only about 10% of people with autism are also savants. *Rain Man*, *The Accountant*, Lucas Black in *Killer Diller*, *Mercury Rising*, *Big Bang Theory*/*Young Sheldon*, *Sherlock*, Shaun in *The Good Doctor*, *Monk*, Jake on *Touch*, *X+Y*, *Little Man Tate*.
- **Squirrel!:** All ADHD people are hilariously distractible. Doug Remer in *BASEketball*, Tracy Jordon of *30 Rock*, Elsbeth on *The Good Wife*, Shawn Spencer on *Psych*, *Doctor Who*: Doctors 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12. *Up* the dog named Dug. Kirk Cameron from *Growing Pains*, Drake from *Drake & Josh*. Andy on *Parks and Rec.*, Jason on *The Good Place*.
- **Neurodiversity is Supernatural:** A real world atypical neurological condition like autism or schizophrenia is presented as the result or the presence of something supernatural. Shows like *Alphas* used this trope as the basis for the whole show. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* uses this trope to explain sociopathy as in when humans become vampires they lose their souls, thus vampirism is the cause of sociopathy and in Drusilla's case it gave her prescient powers. This is also the whole premise of *Eli Stone*: the autistic child communicates with God. Jojen Reed on *GOT* epilepsy is a side affect of him seeing the future, whereas Hodor's issues were caused by Bran's warging him. In *Heroes*, synesthesia ( a condition where you can hear color or see sound) is a superpower. *Rose Red* is an autistic who has extreme telekinetic powers and can make her drawings come to life. Many characters on *Supernatural* are neurodivergent and have powers. On *Touch*, Jake is autistic and can see complex connections between people. In the *X-files* episode "Fallen Angel", aliens are responsible for Max's epilepsy. In *Harry Potter*, the dementors are responsible for depression.

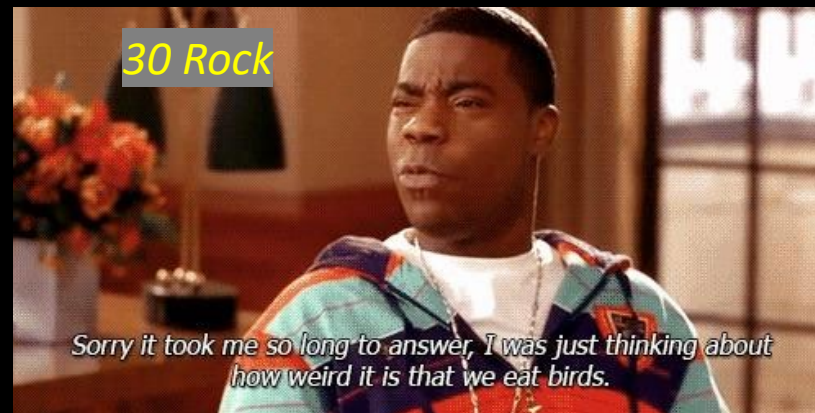
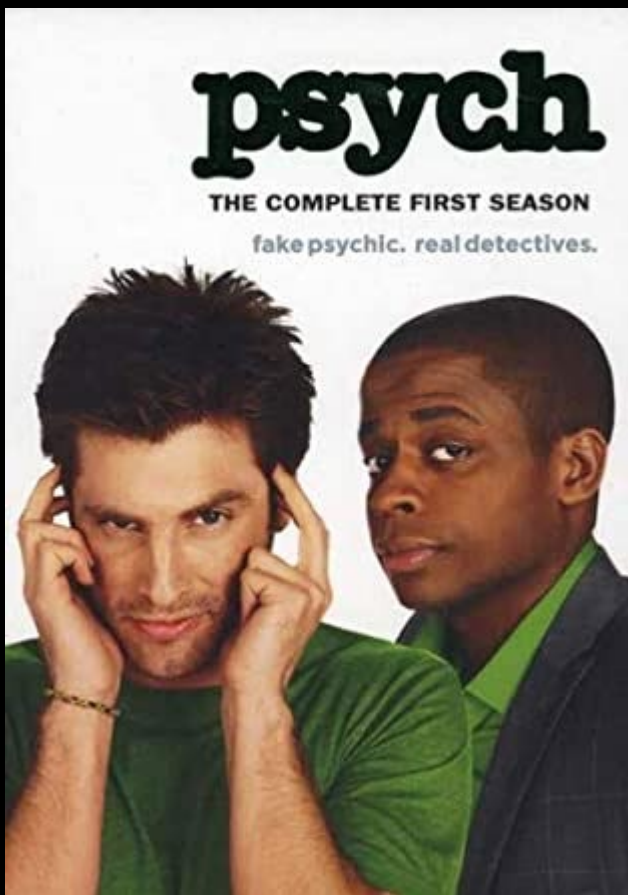




# Savant Syndrome











Touch



Eli Stone



X-Files



Harry Potter



Rose Red



Heroes



Game of Thrones



Buffy the Vampire Slayer



Neurodiversity is Supernatural

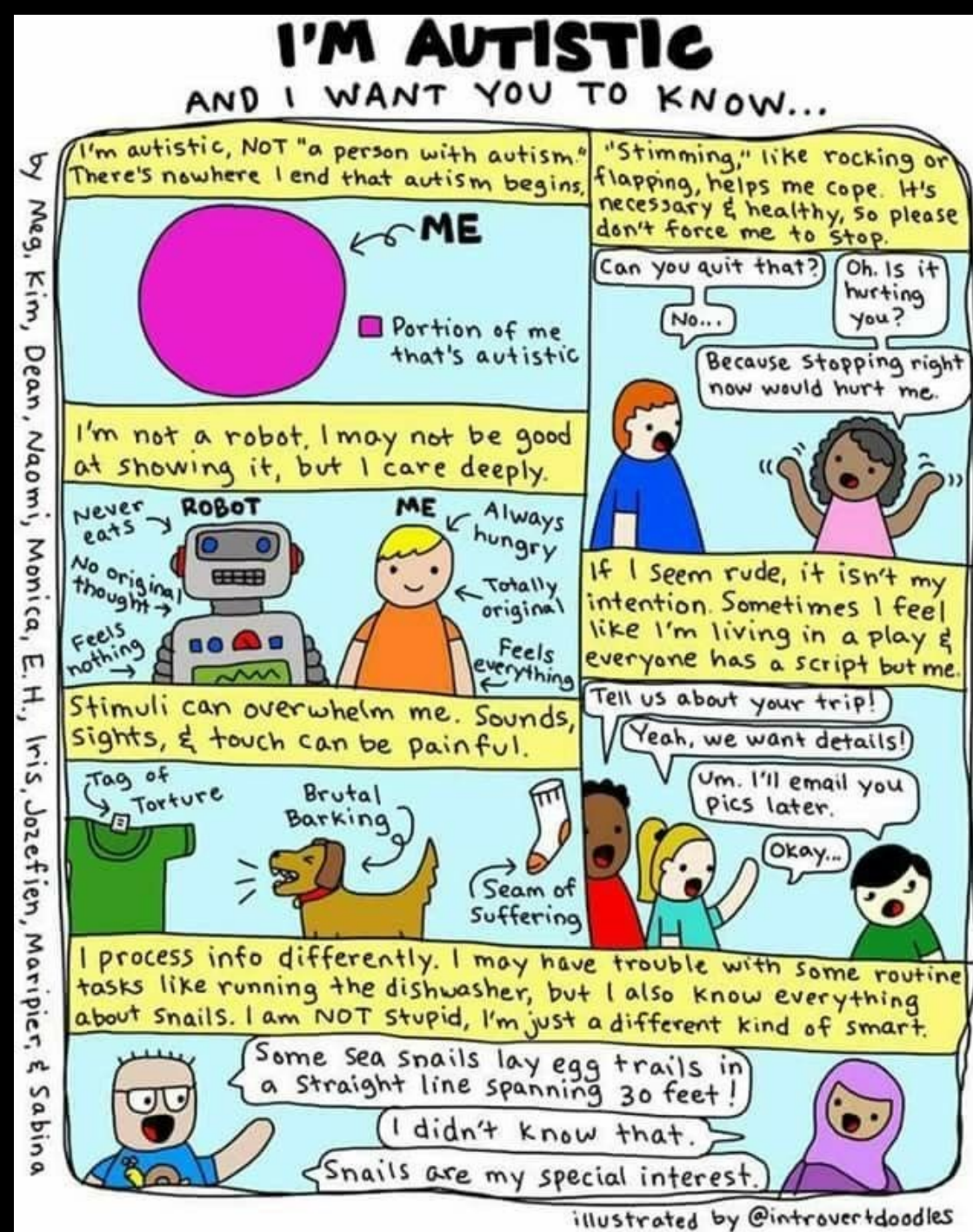


# What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with, and relates to, other people. It also affects how they make sense of the world around them. It is a spectrum condition. This means that, while all people with autism share certain difficulties, their condition will affect them in different ways.



**“The things that make me different are the things that make me, me.”**



# What is the Autism Spectrum?

Everyone knows that autism is a spectrum. People bring it up all the time: *“My son is on the severe end of the autism spectrum.”*  
**If only people knew what a spectrum *is*... because they are talking about autism all wrong.**

Let’s use the visible spectrum as an example. People think you can be “a little autistic” or “extremely autistic,” the way a paint color could be a little red or extremely red.



**Barely autistic**

**Definitely autistic**

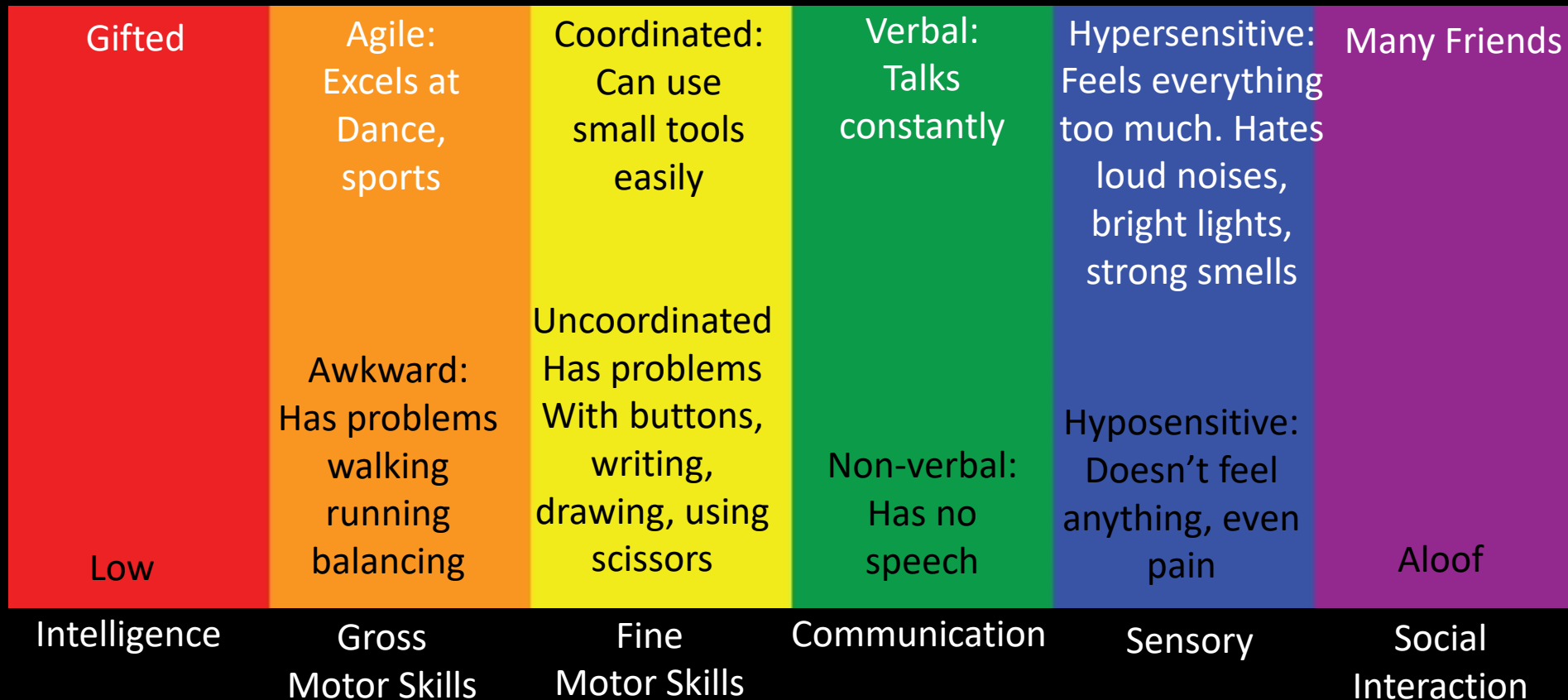
**Extremely autistic**

But autism isn’t that simple. Autism isn’t a set of defined symptoms that collectively worsen as you move “up” the spectrum. In fact, one of the distinguishing features of autism is what the DSM-V calls an “uneven profile of abilities.” There’s a reason people like to say that “if you have met one person with autism, you’ve met one person with autism.” Every autistic person presents slightly differently. That’s because autism isn’t one condition. It is a collection of related neurological conditions that are so intertwined and so impossible to pick apart that professionals have stopped trying.

[https://the-art-of-autism.com/understanding-the-spectrum-a-comic-strip-explanation/?fbclid=IwAR0JzDDU1eEjF\\_dT7HIB8qKLhWKlii2H3PWmUQLCS4JjZ3JsZVKZh10rj4](https://the-art-of-autism.com/understanding-the-spectrum-a-comic-strip-explanation/?fbclid=IwAR0JzDDU1eEjF_dT7HIB8qKLhWKlii2H3PWmUQLCS4JjZ3JsZVKZh10rj4)

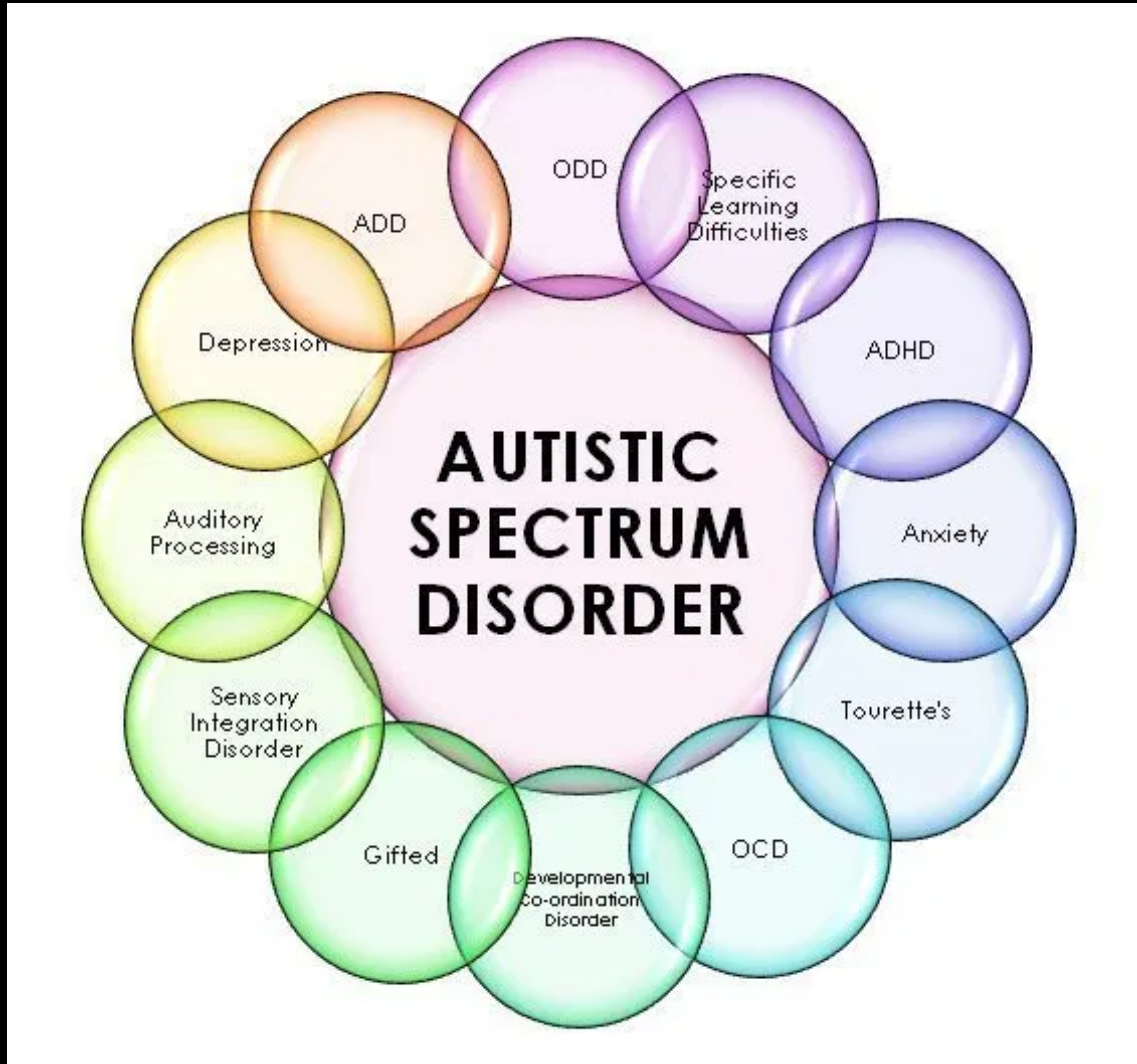
# The Autism Spectrum looks like this:

There are 5 areas that are affected by autism: Intelligence, Motor Skills (Gross and Fine), Communication, Sensory, and Social Interaction. All autistic people are affected in most or all of these areas — a *rainbow* of traits. Also, each trait is on a gradient from severe to moderate to mild. <https://neuroclastic.com/2019/05/04/its-a-spectrum-doesnt-mean-what-you-think/comment-page-2/>





# Autism is only one piece of the puzzle



A diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder usually includes other related conditions as seen on the diagram.

The most prominent learning disabilities include:

- ADD/ADHD
- Dyslexia- reading difficulty
- Dysgraphia-writing difficulty
- Dyscalculia-math difficulty
- Dyspraxia-coordination difficulty

People with autism usually have other medical conditions like:

- Allergies
- Asthma
- Autoimmune disorders
- Diabetes
- Ear/Respiratory Infections
- Epilepsy
- GI problems
- High Blood Pressure
- Sleep disorders
- Vision/Hearing Impairment

# 4 Myths about Autism Spectrum Disorder

- **MYTH: Vaccines cause autism.** The American Academy of Pediatrics has compiled a [list of the research studies](#) that demonstrate there is no link between vaccines and ASD.
- **MYTH: Everyone with autism is either non-verbal or a savant.** The diagnosis of ASD covers a broad range of functioning and includes the former diagnoses of Asperger's disorder, childhood disintegrative disorder, and pervasive developmental disorder. While the media tends to portray the extreme ends of the autism spectrum (think *Rain Man*), individuals with ASD have a variety of strengths and needs (Autistic Self Advocacy Network, 2017).
- **MYTH: People with autism cannot form relationships.** Although social interaction is impaired in people with ASD, this does not mean they cannot form relationships with others. Individuals with ASD can and do have fulfilling relationships with family, friends, spouses, and children.
- **MYTH: People with autism are best suited for jobs that entail repetitive tasks.** Since autism is a spectrum disorder, there is no specific type of job that will be appropriate for all individuals with ASD. While many adults with ASD may enjoy repetitive tasks, it is incorrect to assume a job is a good match solely based on a disability label. Individuals with ASD have many diverse strengths, talents, and skills that would benefit employers. Unfortunately, the unemployment rate is estimated to be between 50% and 75% for adults with ASD, and many of those who do have jobs are underemployed (Hendricks, 2010).

# Autism and Theatre/Film/TV

According to a 2016 study, Autism affects 1 in 36 individuals in the US. Discrimination against autistic people is comparable to the level of discrimination against LGBTQIA+ people 50 years ago. The neurotypical world systematically pathologizes autistic people. HowlRound contributor and autistic actor Sam Ethan Rubin writes that, though Autism awareness is at an all-time high and more characters than ever are being shown in the media to reflect that social change, “it is still the case in 2018 . . . that most autistic roles are generally not cast with autistic actors” and that such an oversight fails in showing the “many faces of autism.”

<https://howlround.com/disability-american-theater>

<https://autcollab.org/about/>

# Mickey Rowe: Autistic Actor who is also legally blind

- Was diagnosed with ASD when he was 21.
- Best known for *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*.
- Played Mozart in the Syracuse Stage post-pandemic web cast production of *Amadeus*.
- Advocacy: Founder and Artistic Director of National Disability Theatre.

“There are probably a lot of actors who are on the spectrum but feel that they can’t be open about it because they’ll be discriminated against, and what I would just say to them is that the young actors who have a disability in this country need to see positive role models who will tell them that if you’re different, if you access the world differently, and if you need special accommodations, that theater needs you and that the world needs you. Not that anyone should ever be pressured, though, to come out about something that they’re not ready to come out about.”

<https://www.mickeyrowe.me/>  
<https://howlround.com/our-differences-are-our-strengths>  
<https://howlround.com/autistic-actors-autistic-archetypes-and-acting-general>





# Sam Ethan Rubin: Autistic Actor

Rubin is an actor, singer, writer, and director. He stars in the web series *The Rocket Family Chronicles* as Rocket, a teen with autism. "Theatre leads the way for humanity. Autism isn't just peeking under the curtain here; it's ripped the curtain down. It's insisting on being invited to play. The moment for seeking out and finding neurodiverse actors is now. I invite and encourage producers to keep an open mind about actors on the autism spectrum, to consider that, in addition to roles about characters with autism, we can play different roles outside of the usual "autism archetypes." Give me and other non-neurotypical actors a chance to show you our relatability, our wit, our intellect, our vulnerability, our spirit. We just might surprise you." <http://therocketfamilychronicles.com/>



# More Autistic Actors



Roseanne Barr



Daryl Hannah



Sue Ann Pien



Anthony Hopkins



Dan Aykroyd



Jim Jeffries



Paddy Considine



# Autistic Voice Actors



**CORINA BOETTGER**



# *The Boys Next Door*, 1988

## The Blue Door, CA

1988 Play by Tom Griffin, a neurotypical writer, it deals with four men who have various intellectual disabilities and live in a group home. For its time, this play was very socially conscious and forward thinking. By showing neurodiverse individuals living on their own, it “validated the need for and inherent worth of group homes.” By 1989 it was the most produced play in America, and in 1990 the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed. “This is why Tom Griffin’s play earned its place in history by being one of the first disability-centric theatrical experiences to permeate the national and global consciousness.” As of 2018, over 3,500 productions have been mounted all over the world.



[CRE Outreach](#) staged their production with both intellectually and physically disabled actors--Autistic actor August McAdoo as Norman Bulansky, blind actor Lee Pugsley as Arnold Wiggins, Veteran actor with PTSD Mason Vokes as their social worker Jack, and blind actors CoCo Head as Barry Klemper, and Kenny Lee as Lucien P. Smith. CRE Outreach is a non-profit performing arts organization dedicated to empowering underserved youth, people with disabilities, and military veterans in greater Los Angeles.

<https://www.broadwayworld.com/los-angeles/article/Photo-Flash-Four-Disabled-Actors-Featured-as-Disabled-Characters-in-THE-BOYS-NEXT-DOOR-at-The-Blue-Door-20180910>  
<https://digscholarship.unco.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1139&context=theses>



# Temperance Brennan on *Bones*, 2005-2017

*Bones* is based on a series of books by Dr. Kathy Reichs, who is a forensic anthropologist and writes crime novels based on her area of expertise. The main character is Temperance Brennan, who is also a forensic anthropologist. The TV show has little to do with the books other than borrowing the lead character. In the TV show Brennan works with an FBI agent named Seely Booth to solve murders and has a team of doctors and interns that work for her. "Bones" creator Hart Hanson says he based Brennan in part on an Aspie friend, but the needs of a broadcast network like Fox to get as large an audience as possible meant he couldn't come out and say that. "If we were on cable, we would have said from the beginning that Brennan has Asperger's," Hanson says. "Instead, it being a network, we decided not to label a main character, for good or for bad. But those elements are in there."

Dr. Brennan has many traits common with the "Asperger's" variety of Autism. She is task-oriented, if she is in a social situation that has nothing to do with her forensic work, she is rather awkward. This is especially true if someone mentions pop culture or uses idioms. In fact, her inexperience in both of these areas has caused "I don't know what that means" to become both a running gag and a catch phrase for her. Brennan also seems to lack tact. This is part of what makes her relationship with Booth so amusing. Her blunt attitude often unnerves him, and he tends to chastise her over it.

Bones is an important role model because she's not a one-note character. Jennifer Malia writing for Glamour said, "By the end of the series, she demonstrates how much she's improved her ability to empathize."

<https://www.glamour.com/story/bones-series-finale>

[https://www.sfu.ca/wwest/WWEST\\_blog/depictions-of-women-in-stem--dr--temperance-brennan.html](https://www.sfu.ca/wwest/WWEST_blog/depictions-of-women-in-stem--dr--temperance-brennan.html)

<https://aspiecatholic.wordpress.com/2015/08/08/the-fictional-spectrum-dr-temperance-brennan/>





# Sheldon *The Big Bang Theory* 2007-2019

Sheldon Cooper, played by Texan Jim Parsons, was a child prodigy with an eidetic memory who began college at the age of eleven, and earned a PhD at age sixteen. He is a theoretical physicist researching quantum mechanics and string theory, and despite his IQ of 187, he finds many routine aspects of social situations difficult to grasp. He is determined to have his own way, continually boasts of his intelligence, and has an extremely ritualized way of living. Despite these quirks, [he begins a relationship with Amy Farrah Fowler, and they eventually marry.](#)

"We chose not to diagnose Sheldon," says *Big Bang* co-creator Chuck Lorre. *Big Bang* co-creator, Bill Prady, who based Sheldon on computer programmers he used to work with, has said they were afraid that if they labeled Sheldon an Aspie, they would have too much responsibility to depict the condition accurately within a sitcom. Sheldon repeatedly tells people, "I'm not crazy, my mother had me tested." His mother also taught him that when someone is upset you offer them a hot beverage. His father taught him all the intricacies of football, even though he has no interest in it, because "football is ubiquitous in Texas."

Lori Shery, president and co-founder of ASPEN, a national Asperger support and education group said, "I love it, it's my husband's and my favorite show," she says. "Sheldon definitely is very similar to some people with Asperger's I have met. His behaviors, his misunderstandings, his self-revelations — '*Oh, that's what sarcasm is!*' — we've all seen this in our kids. What it does is highlight the difficulties that our kids have, in a way that an audience can understand." And Shery says she's okay with the *Big Bang* writers' decision not to diagnose Sheldon. She can recognize the behavior even if they refuse to label it, and can recommend the show to people who want to learn more about what it's like to be around an Aspie.

[https://www.nj.com/entertainment/tv/2010/02/how\\_tv\\_shows\\_try\\_or\\_choose\\_not.html](https://www.nj.com/entertainment/tv/2010/02/how_tv_shows_try_or_choose_not.html)

<https://www.radiotimes.com/news/2015-06-15/is-sheldon-autistic-the-big-bang-theory-actress-mayim-bialik-gives-this-brilliant-response/>



# More on Sheldon

Is Sheldon Cooper autistic? Mayim Bialik, the actress who plays Sheldon's girlfriend, Amy also happens to have a PhD in neuroscience.

"All of our characters are in theory on the neuropsychiatric spectrum, I would say. Sheldon often gets talked about in terms of Asperger's or OCD. He has a thing with germs, he has a thing with numbers, he's got a lot of that precision that we see in OCD. There's a lot of interesting features to all of our characters that make them technically unconventional socially. But I think what's interesting and kind of sweet and what should not be lost on people is we don't pathologize our characters. We don't talk about medicating them or even really changing them. And I think that's what's interesting for those of us who are unconventional people or who know and love people who are on any sort of spectrum, we often find ways to work around that. It doesn't always need to be solved and medicated and labelled. And what we're trying to show with our show is that this is a group of people who likely were teased, mocked, told that they will never be appreciated or loved, and we have a group of people who have successful careers, active social lives (that involve things like Dungeons and Dragons and video games), but they also have relationships, and that's a fulfilling and satisfying life."

<https://www.radiotimes.com/news/2015-06-15/is-sheldon-autistic-the-big-bang-theory-actress-mayim-bialik-gives-this-brilliant-response/>



# Julia on Sesame Street

Julia made *Sesame Street* history when she joined the cast of lovable characters as a permanent resident in 2017. Julia has autism, and her character was created as part of the *Sesame Street and Autism: See Amazing in All Children* initiative. Since her arrival on the famous street, children with autism are able to see someone who's like them on a regular basis. That representation is so important. She is portrayed by Stacy Gordon, who is the mother of an autistic child.

In April of 2019, in honor of Autism Awareness Month, *Sesame Street* showed viewers Julia's family for the first time, and expanded her role on the show. Julia's mom, Elena, is an art teacher, and her dad, Daniel, is a professional saxophonist. She also has a protective older brother, Sam, and a companion dog, Rose, who is not only adorable, but a big help to Julia. Julia's brother, Sam, [told GMA](#), "It may take a few tries to get to know Julia. But just because she doesn't respond, doesn't mean she doesn't want to be friends."



<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/innovation/team-sesame-street-created-character-autism-180967218/>

<https://www.sesameworkshop.org/press-room/press-releases/julias-new-sesame-street-muppet-family-debuts-part-autism-initiative>

[https://blog.theautismsite.greatergood.com/sesame-street-julia-family/?utm\\_source=aut-autaware&utm\\_medium=social-fb&utm\\_content=link&utm\\_campaign=sesame-street-julia-family&utm\\_term=2289810&fbclid=IwAR1cKu2DuPkbAFI5MgYjsTHzZGk-nQy5SbtDFJfcV9nPNLoGSNWhwJ5MFI](https://blog.theautismsite.greatergood.com/sesame-street-julia-family/?utm_source=aut-autaware&utm_medium=social-fb&utm_content=link&utm_campaign=sesame-street-julia-family&utm_term=2289810&fbclid=IwAR1cKu2DuPkbAFI5MgYjsTHzZGk-nQy5SbtDFJfcV9nPNLoGSNWhwJ5MFI)

# *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*

## Indiana Repertory, 2017

Based on the book of the same name by Mark Haddon, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* was adapted for stage in 2012 by Simon Stephens. The story concerns a mystery surrounding the death of a neighbor's pet dog that is investigated by Chris Boone, a young man with Autism. It examines his relationship with his parents and his school mentor. By using elaborate lighting, projections, and special effects, it conveys how Chris experiences and navigates the world around him. The play won five Tony awards for Best Play, Direction, Lead Actor, Scenic and Lighting Design.

Originally, Chris Boone was played by Luke Treadway, a neurotypical actor. When it transferred to Broadway, another neurotypical actor, Alex Sharpe was cast. Five years and two National Tours later, Mickey Rowe was the first actor with Autism to have been cast as Christopher in 2017 at Indiana Repertory Theatre, which then transferred to Syracuse Stage in New York in 2018.





# Futaba Sakura *Persona 5*, 2017

## Autistic Playstation Game Character

Despite Atlus or any of the game's creative team never officially confirming her to be on the spectrum, there's so many aspects of her characterization. From her hyperfixation on tech stuff to her introverted personality, that there's a high chance that she was at least somewhat intentionally written as if she were autistic, or at the very least neurodivergent in some capacity.

This is especially evident in the game's English dub, where the subtleties of Futaba's performance give the impression that she struggles with communication in the same way that someone with autism typically does. This isn't by coincidence either, as the character's voice actress, Erica Lindbeck, even stated that she portrayed the character as if she were autistic. Needless to say, she did a great job bringing out that aspect of Futaba's character, and if she were canonically autistic, there'd be a case for her being among one of the best portrayals in all of media.



[https://www.reddit.com/r/Persona5/comments/8c36fm/how\\_persona\\_5\\_got\\_autism\\_right\\_without\\_really/](https://www.reddit.com/r/Persona5/comments/8c36fm/how_persona_5_got_autism_right_without_really/)

<https://autistic-nightlight.tumblr.com/post/175076766012/i-get-very-protective-of-the-character-futaba>

<https://samven.tumblr.com/post/169264732881/futaba-sakura-and-autism>

<http://bytebsu.com/2019/04/24/representation-of-autism-in-the-media/> <https://samrowett.wordpress.com/2018/04/13/how-persona-5-got-autism-right-without-really-talking-about-it>

# *Atypical*, 2017-2021

The Netflix original series *Atypical* follows a teenager named Sam Gardner, played by neurotypical actor Keir Gilchrist, and his experiences in high school as someone on the spectrum. It has one of the most accurate portrayals of someone on the autism spectrum.

The supporting character is played by Anthony Jacques who is autistic. In season 2, writer David Finch, who is autistic, joined the team. Eight autistic actors from the Miracle Project have supporting roles as Sam's support group, and other autistic actors play neurotypical characters. The 4<sup>th</sup> and final season will premiere in 2021.



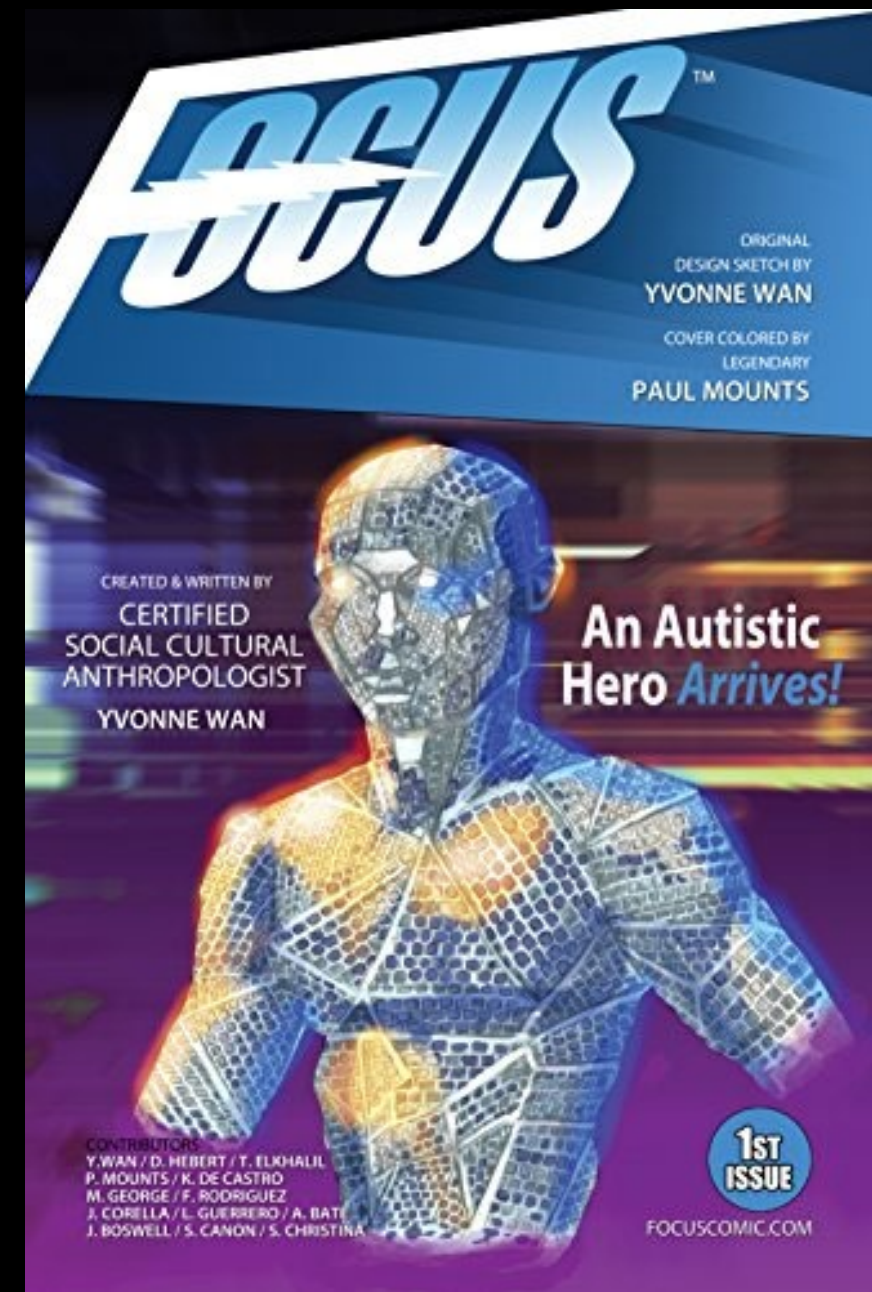


# Focus, 2018

Focus™ Comic is a superhero comic book that features an autistic hero, artwork by professional artists, plus autistic interns. The comic is part of a humanitarian social cause initiative in maintaining dignity for autistic individuals by removing the stigma associated to autism, and championing kids with autism and disabilities.

The social cause project is founded and created by Yvonne Wan (A Social Cultural Anthropologist, Autism documentary film maker and award-winning artist). The project also helps kids feel like everyday heroes and reduces bullying. The social initiative unites the community by promoting greater representation of autistic talent in the media and comic book industry; a culture of inclusion and provide hope to those affected by autism. This program demonstrates that people with autism can contribute in society in meaningful ways with the help of a supportive community.

<https://www.focuscomic.com/>





# Doctor Who: Thirteen

From the Tumblr post “The Doctor is Autistic”:

Although show-runners haven’t labeled her as such, the current incarnation of the Doctor, as portrayed by Jodie Whittaker, is believed to have Autism and has been claimed as such by her fan-base, adding to all of the modern incarnations played by Christopher Eccleston, David Tennant, Matt Smith, and Peter Capaldi who were also claimed by the Autism community.

Erin at *Queerly Autistic* wrote about Jodie Whittaker’s portrayal of the Thirteenth Doctor, “The little girls of the future who will grow up thinking that they *can* be nerdy and twitchy, that they *can* waffle non stop on one topic for hours, that they *can* be hyperactive, socially inappropriate and unable to comprehend silly Earth rituals and...at the end of all that...*they can still be the hero.*”



<https://thedoctorisautistic.tumblr.com/>  
<https://queerlyautistic.com/2017/07/20/the-curious-case-of-the-13th-doctor/>

# *All in a Row*, 2019

## Southwark Playhouse, London

The autistic child is played by a puppet and the family sees no choice but to institutionalize him. Researcher in trauma studies and autism activist Dr. Elena Chandler said, “The dominant discourse on autism is monopolized by non-autistic people who cast themselves as victims, and who need a silent autistic person to use as a ventriloquist puppet and cross to bear. This play literally reduced the autistic person to a prop.”

The Twitter storm of outrage was trending for quite a while with the hashtag #puppetgate.



# *Everything's Gonna Be Okay, 2020*

American sitcom on Freeform. It has been renewed for a second season. 100% approval rating on Rotten Tomatoes. The series revolves around Nicholas, a gay, neurotic Australian entomologist who returns to America to visit his father and half-sisters. When he learns his father is terminally ill, he stays to become Genevieve and Matilda's guardian.

Matilda, is played by Kayla Cromer who is on the spectrum. "With Matilda specifically, the series is telling a story about an autistic teenager that will likely educate many viewers who are unaware of or have misconceptions about the disorder. From the outset and throughout the season, the outspoken, curious teenager is trying to knock items off her bucket list before graduating high school and going to college. That arc involves a detailed look at the life of a teenager on the autism spectrum through stories about navigating the issues most teenagers face, including drinking alcohol and dating, as well as a conversation about autism and consent. It's all done through an interesting, smart, talented young character who is very compelling to watch."

<https://ew.com/tv/everythings-gonna-be-okay-5-reasons-to-watch/>





# Pixar Short: “Loop”

In a world where disability is often presented in the simplest ways possible, “Loop” takes the idea of miscommunication and lets the audience confront everything from ableism to the need for human connection, in a nine-minute short.

“We were really aware of the “Nothing about us without us” movement and I was like “there's no way I'm going to make a film that doesn't honor that.” What would be the point of that? The greatest challenge I can give Pixar is to take all these artists who are so talented and say, “Let's focus on this character that we haven't seen portrayed in film or TV at all.” I haven't seen a lot of nonverbal characters, let's just dive in and learn and listen to these voices. Our first consultant was actually a friend of mine, Adrian Citroen, who I've known since she was born, and she's autistic and she's not nonverbal but I was like “I really need to bring somebody in to read the script early on.” I don't want to put the script forward until we tested it and heard from an autistic person like “does this work for you? Does this feel truthful? Where are we making mistakes?” It was great. She read it, and we all sat and did a table read and read it out loud, and she had her thoughts on it and I integrated those into the script. It was a really powerful experience bringing her on.”



# Why Autistic People Hate



Autism Speaks is the largest nonprofit related to autism, it spent years promoting ideas and information that furthered stigma and misunderstanding about the condition.

In 2009, Autism Speaks released an ad titled “[I Am Autism](#)” that portrayed autism as a silent and sinister killer. The ad claimed that autism “works faster than pediatric AIDS, cancer and diabetes combined” and [ensures that marriages will fail](#), financial ruin will ensue and that it will “rob [parents] of [their] children and dreams.

In 2019 it [partnered with “Sesame Street”](#) to promote a tool kit for parents of newly diagnosed children that, among other things, compares autism to leukemia and suggests that mourning is a normal response to learning of an autism diagnosis.

Autism Speaks has consistently stood against autistic empowerment and self-advocacy on Capitol Hill. In 2014, the Autistic Self-Advocacy Network said Autism Speaks [lobbied heavily](#) to kill an amendment to the Autism Cares Act that would have set benchmarks for the inclusion of autistic people in the research and policies that affect their own lives. The Autism Cares Act gives billions of dollars to provider organizations and [nothing](#) to autistic-led organizations, services or quality-of-life improvements. The most recent reauthorization of the bill, signed by President Trump, allocated \$1.8 billion.

Autism Speaks has chosen to embrace the aesthetics of neurodiversity without adopting its principles in any meaningful way. It wants to talk about inclusion and acceptance while continuing to fund and promote precisely the opposite, and do it without acknowledging or crediting anything neurodiversity advocates have said or done for the past 30 years.

# Why Autistic People Hate



You can find more information in these links.

- [RationalWiki: Autism Speaks](#)
- [Masterpost from Medium](#)
- [Masterpost from TheCaffienatedAutistic](#)
- [Infographic](#)
- [Forbes: Why Autism Speaks Doesn't Speak For Me](#)
- [Psychology Today: The Autism Speaks Debacle](#)
- [Autistic Mama: Do Not Support Autism Speaks](#)
- [Oddyssey: 11 Reasons Why You Shouldn't Support Autism Speaks](#)
- [WikiHow: How To Boycott Autism Speaks](#)
- [Boycott Autism Speaks](#)
- [Wikipedia: Autism Speaks Controversies](#)
- [ASAN's I Am Autism Transcript](#)

<https://yourfavehatesautismspeaks.tumblr.com/asisbad>

# What is ADHD?

## Attention-Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder

ADHD is a neurological condition originating in the Parietal Lobe of a person's brain that interferes with a person's functioning. ADHD presents in three different ways: as predominantly inattentive (Pooh), predominantly hyperactive/impulsive (Tigger), or a combination of both. According to the 2016 CDC figures, 11% of American children have ADHD—that's 6.4 million kids—and 4% of American adults. It affects boys more than girls, (boys are three times more likely to be diagnosed) though ADHD may be under-diagnosed in girls, who tend to present as inattentive.

Symptoms of ADHD can include behaviors such as constantly being late despite staring preparation early enough, finding it nearly impossible to start or finish boring tasks and feeling physical pain when trying, being unable to recall even deep-rooted knowledge, making decisions about even the simplest things are almost impossible, and being unable to shift away from an interest even to the point of forgetting to eat, drink, or go to the bathroom. There is no cure for ADHD. Medication can help mitigate the severity of the symptoms, while behavioral therapy can give the person coping strategies to deal with the symptoms. <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/adhd/data.html>



Pooh is Inattentive



Tigger is Hyperactive/Impulsive

**“If the person you are talking to does not appear to be listening, be patient. It may simply be that they have a small piece of fluff in their ear.”**

**The wonderful thing about tiggers is tiggers are wonderful things! Their tops are made out of rubber, their bottoms are made out of springs!”**



# ADHD Presentations

## Inattentive



Easily distracted

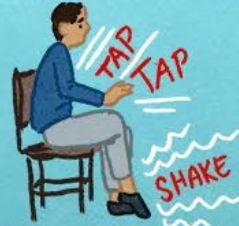


Unorganized



Difficulty listening

## Hyperactive/Impulsive



Difficulty sitting still



Rush through tasks



Make rash decisions

## Combined



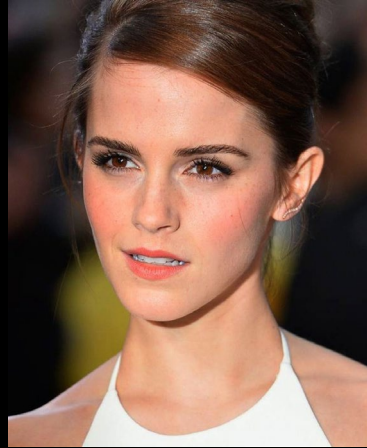
Symptoms of  
both presentations



# Actors with ADHD



Zooey Deschanel



Emma Watson



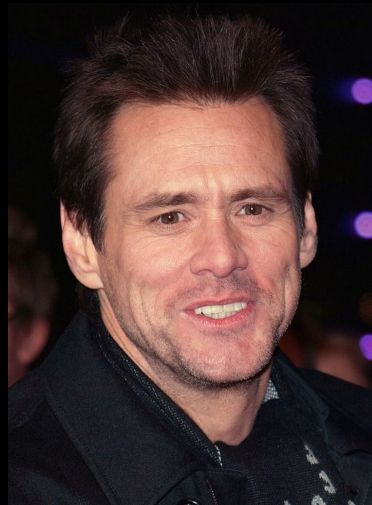
Michelle Rodriguez



Bex Taylor-Klaus



Woody Harrelson



Jim Carrey



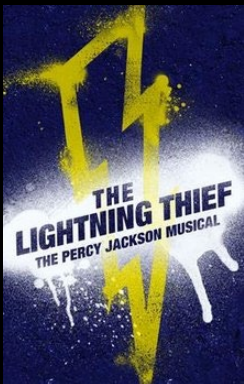
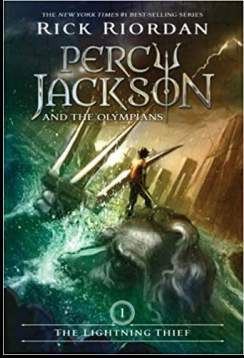
Will Smith



Ryan Gosling

<https://www.mentalup.co/blog/famous-people-and-celebrities-with-adhd>

# Percy Jackson and the Olympians



Percy Jackson was created by native Texan Rick Riordan and began as stories for his son Haley who was diagnosed with **ADHD** and **dyslexia** in elementary school. *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* is a series of 5 books which began in 2005 with *The Lightning Thief*. He published one book a year--*The Sea of Monsters*, *The Titan's Curse*, *The Battle of the Labyrinth*, and *The Last Olympian*—finishing the series in 2009. Percy, like Riordan's son, also has ADHD and dyslexia, but Percy discovers that the reason for his learning disabilities is that he is actually a demi-god-- the son of a mortal woman and Poseidon, the god of the sea. As a demi-god he is genetically programmed to read Ancient Greek, not English, and he has super fast reflexes and is hyper-aware of potential threats, skills meant for fighting monsters which don't lend themselves to sitting still in school. Percy is a main character in Riordan's second and third series of five books each, *The Heroes of Olympus* and *The Trials of Apollo*, making fifteen titles in the *Camp Half-Blood Chronicles*.

The first two books were adapted into films in 2010 and 2013. Riordan hated the scripts, offered twelve pages of improvements and offered to handle the rewrite himself. His offer was declined and he never saw the finished films.

In 2014, Riordan collaborated with Joe Tracz and Rob Rokicki to create *The Lightning Thief: The Percy Jackson Musical*. It opened Off-Broadway and went on a national tour in 2015. A revival opened Off-Broadway in 2017 and was transferred to Broadway in 2019. Another national tour is scheduled for later in 2020, but may be put off until 2021 due to the pandemic.

Disney + is currently working on adapting the books into a long-running series with heavy involvement by Rick Riordan. The series is expected to premier in 2022.

<https://www.hypable.com/percy-jackson-3-movie-logan-lerman/>  
<https://www.lightningthiefmusical.com/>



# What is Dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a neurological condition originating in the Parietal Lobe of a person's brain and is characterized by difficulties with accurate and fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. It has NO relation to intelligence. Secondary consequences are problems with reading comprehension and reduced reading experiences.

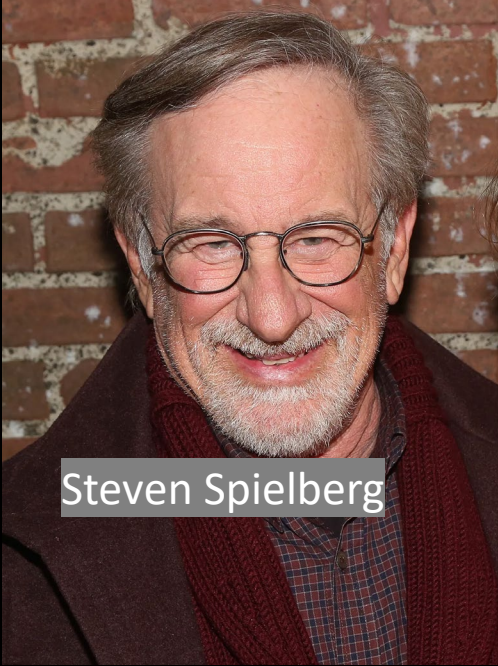
Most children with dyslexia can succeed in school with tutoring and a specialized educational program which may include techniques involving hearing, vision, and touch to improve reading skills. The younger children are when they start treatment, the better their odds of success. But even adults with dyslexia can continue to improve their skills with the right help.



**Now a note with writing meant a visit to Owl's house. Owl studied the note carefully, then read it out loud: "Worry about me. I'm going far away. Help. Christopher Robin." Owl saw that Christopher Robin said he was going to "s-c-h-o-o-l". To Owl's eyes, that spelled "skull". And that, Owl added, spelled danger for their friend.**



# Directors with Dyslexia



Steven Spielberg

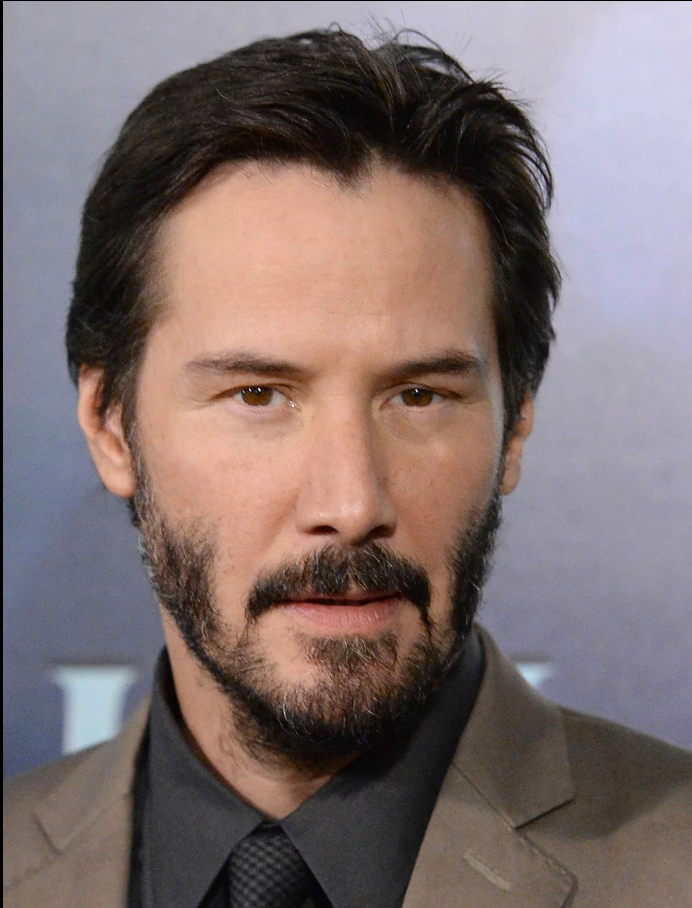
Academy Award winning director Steven Spielberg recently admitted to having dyslexia — the first time he has publicly talked about it. “It was the last puzzle part in a tremendous mystery that I’ve kept to myself all these years,” says the director in an interview on [friendsofquinn.com](https://www.friendsofquinn.com). Diagnosed five years ago, Spielberg learned to read two years later than his classmates, who bullied him so much that he dreaded going to school. “Movies kind of saved me from shame...from putting it on myself, from making it my burden when it wasn’t.” Spielberg, who was blessed with parents who supported him, went back to college in his 50s to complete his degree, which he had abandoned in 1968 to pursue film making. He says that it takes him twice as long as anyone else to read a book or script, but he uses the extra time to look for things to appreciate as he lingers over the words. Spielberg says “You are not alone, and while you will have dyslexia for the rest of your life, you can dart between the raindrops to get where you want to go. It will not hold you back.” <https://www.additudemag.com/stevenspielberg-dyslexia-hollywooduccess>



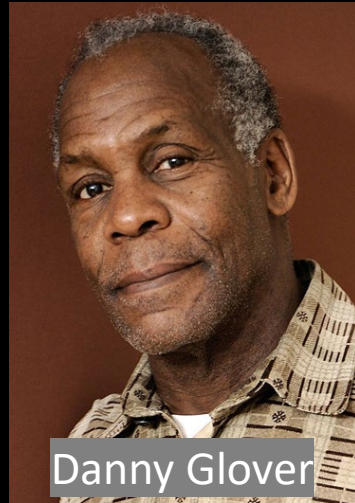
Steve McQueen

McQueen was born in west London to Grenadian parents, grew up in leafy Ealing and went to a very multicultural school where he was one of the cool kids, on account of being big and good at football. "It was fun, we laughed all day, I didn't do any homework ever, we just laughed." When I ask about his relationship with authority as a child, he replies lightly, "I wasn't a troublemaker, I was good." But then I ask when he has felt most powerless in his life, and his expression darkens. "At school. God, that was horrible." He shared that he has dyslexia—and had hidden it for years out of shame. "I thought it meant I was stupid". "Also, I had a lazy eye. So I had a patch. When you're in front of the chalk board, you still can't fucking see. So it was a terrible start. And people make judgments very quick. So you're put to one side very quickly." His success spotlights how wrong he was. McQueen's storytelling skills created a movie that received Oscar's top honor. And so far in his career, he has written, directed and produced more than a dozen films. <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2014/jan/04/steve-mcqueen-my-painful-childhood-shame>

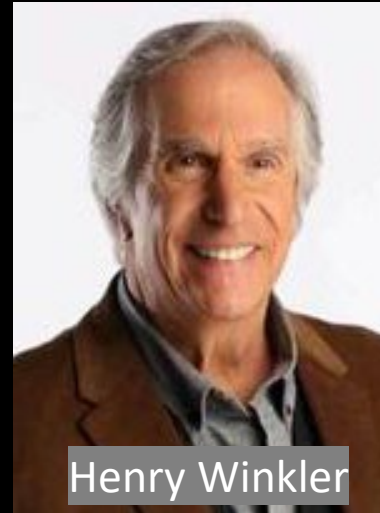
# Actors with Dyslexia



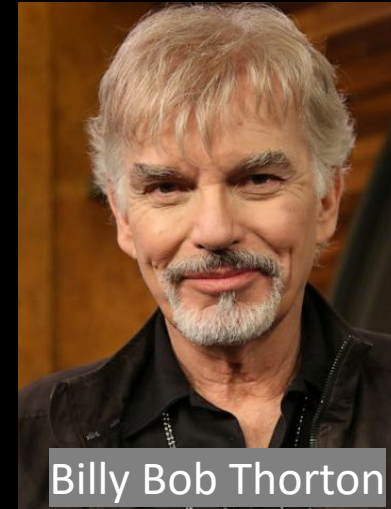
Keanu Reeves



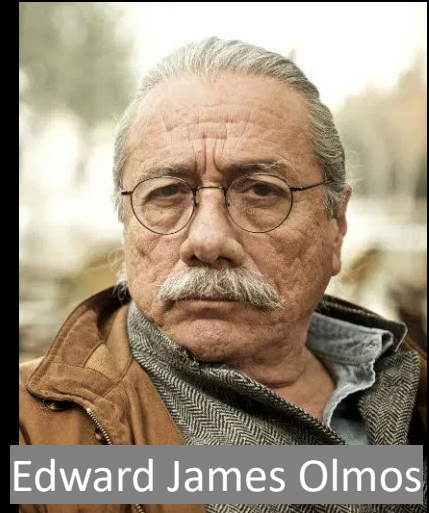
Danny Glover



Henry Winkler



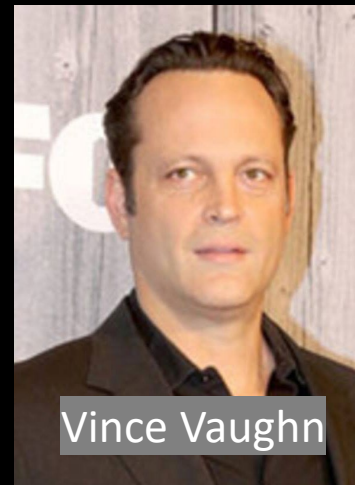
Billy Bob Thorton



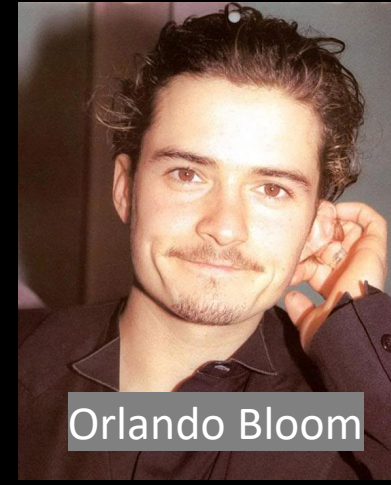
Edward James Olmos



Tom Cruise



Vince Vaughn



Orlando Bloom



Channing Tatum

<https://www.webmd.com/children/ss/slideshow-celebrities-dyslexia>

<https://antonysimpson.com/2016/a-list-of-famous-people-with-dyspraxia-dyslexia-and-or-dyscalculia/>

<http://www.psychologydegree.com/50-famously-successful-people-who-are-dyslexic>



# More Actors with Dyslexia



Whoopie Goldberg



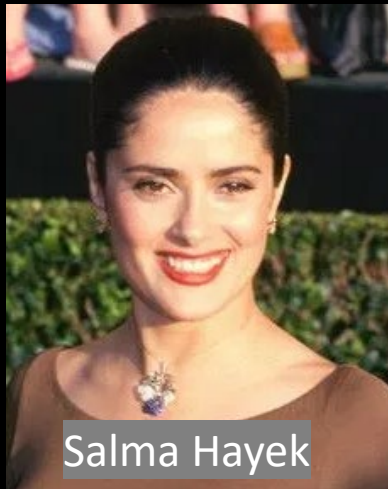
Cher



Lindsay Wagner



Fannie Flagg



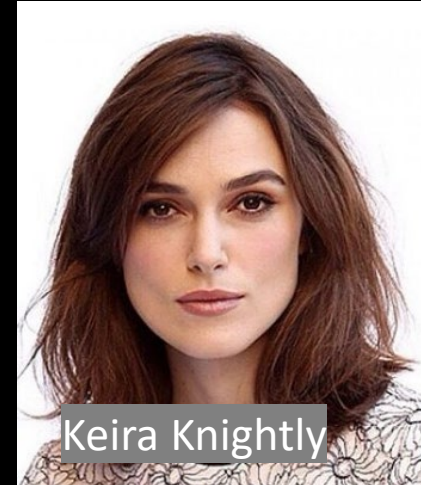
Salma Hayek



Jennifer Aniston



Octavia Spencer



Keira Knightly

<https://www.webmd.com/children/ss/slideshow-celebrities-dyslexia>

<https://antonymsimpson.com/2016/a-list-of-famous-people-with-dyspraxia-dyslexia-andor-dyscalculia/>

<http://www.psychologydegree.com/50-famously-successful-people-who-are-dyslexic>



# Love, Mary, 1985

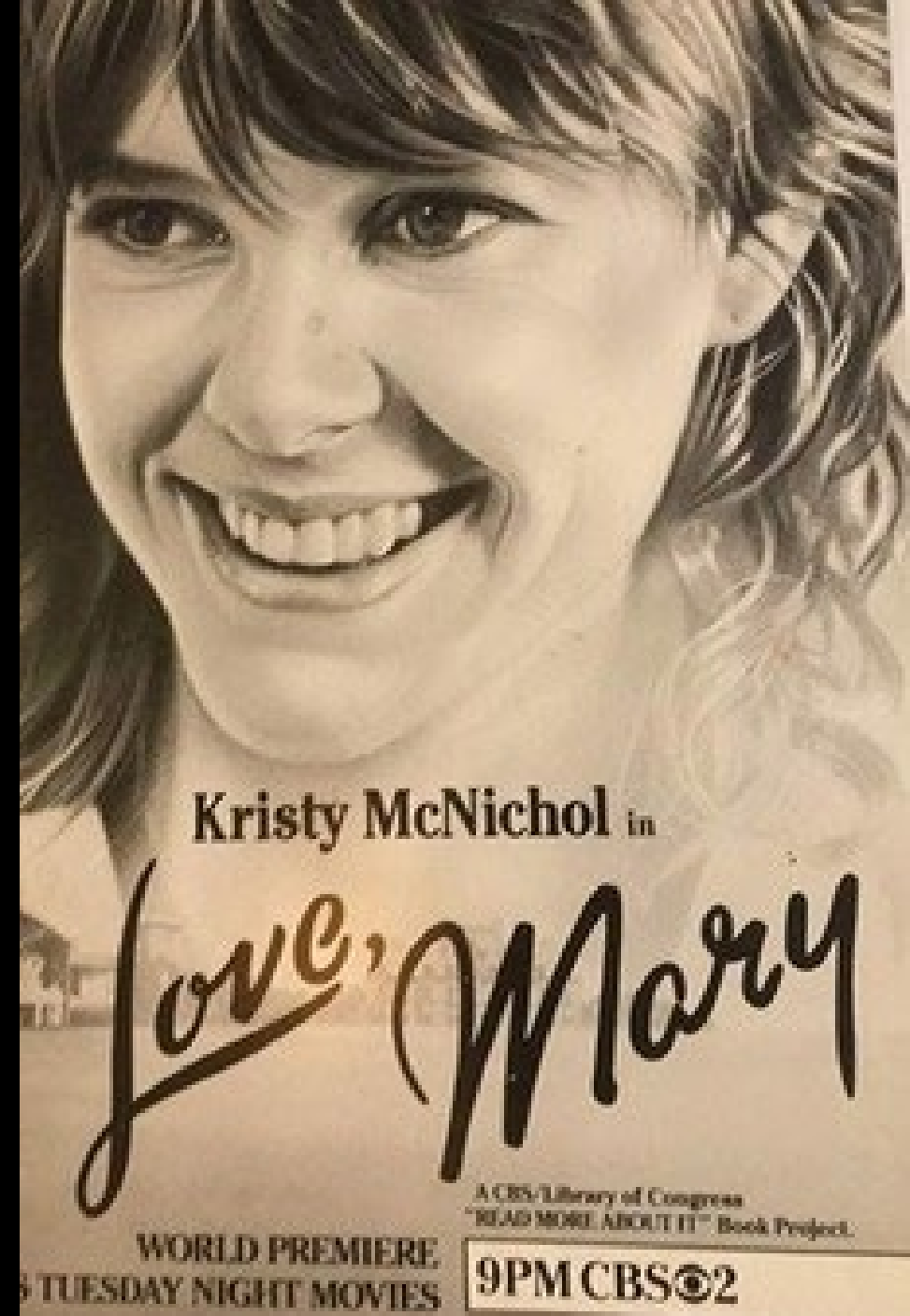
Based on the real-life story Dr. Mary Groda-Lewis, this film takes us into the journey of a dyslexic teenager who later beat the odds in life by earning an M.D degree and achieving a career in family medicine. Kristy McNichol beautifully portrays the protagonist who was sent to reform school due to her troubled behavior where she met her counselor (portrayed by Rachel Ticotin) that helped her gain confidence and excel in studies.

Mary was born one of eleven children from a poor family who worked as migrant farm laborers in Oregon picking berries during the summer. When she was 10, she gave up on school. "It was just unbearable in school not understanding what was going on. It was hard times. I started drinking. I'd be out after curfew, getting in trouble." At 16 she ran away with a boy who'd stolen a car. The police were chasing them when he lost control and drove off the road falling 80 feet into a ravine. Miraculously, neither of them were hurt.

Mary was arrested and sent to a reformatory, sentenced to six months behind a barbed wire fence. She said, "Two teachers worked with me 16 hours a day on reading, writing and arithmetic. In four months, I moved from first grade to eighth grade. You can't imagine how much of a turn on it is to have someone care about your academics." After serving her time, she enrolled part-time in a community college, while working part-time at a hospital. She finished her Bachelor's degree, and then, two kids and twelve years later, graduated from Albany Medical School, as Dr. Mary Groda-Lewis.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Love,\\_Mary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Love,_Mary)

<https://www.nytimes.com/1984/05/24/nyregion/in-a-reformatory-in-66-an-md-today.html>

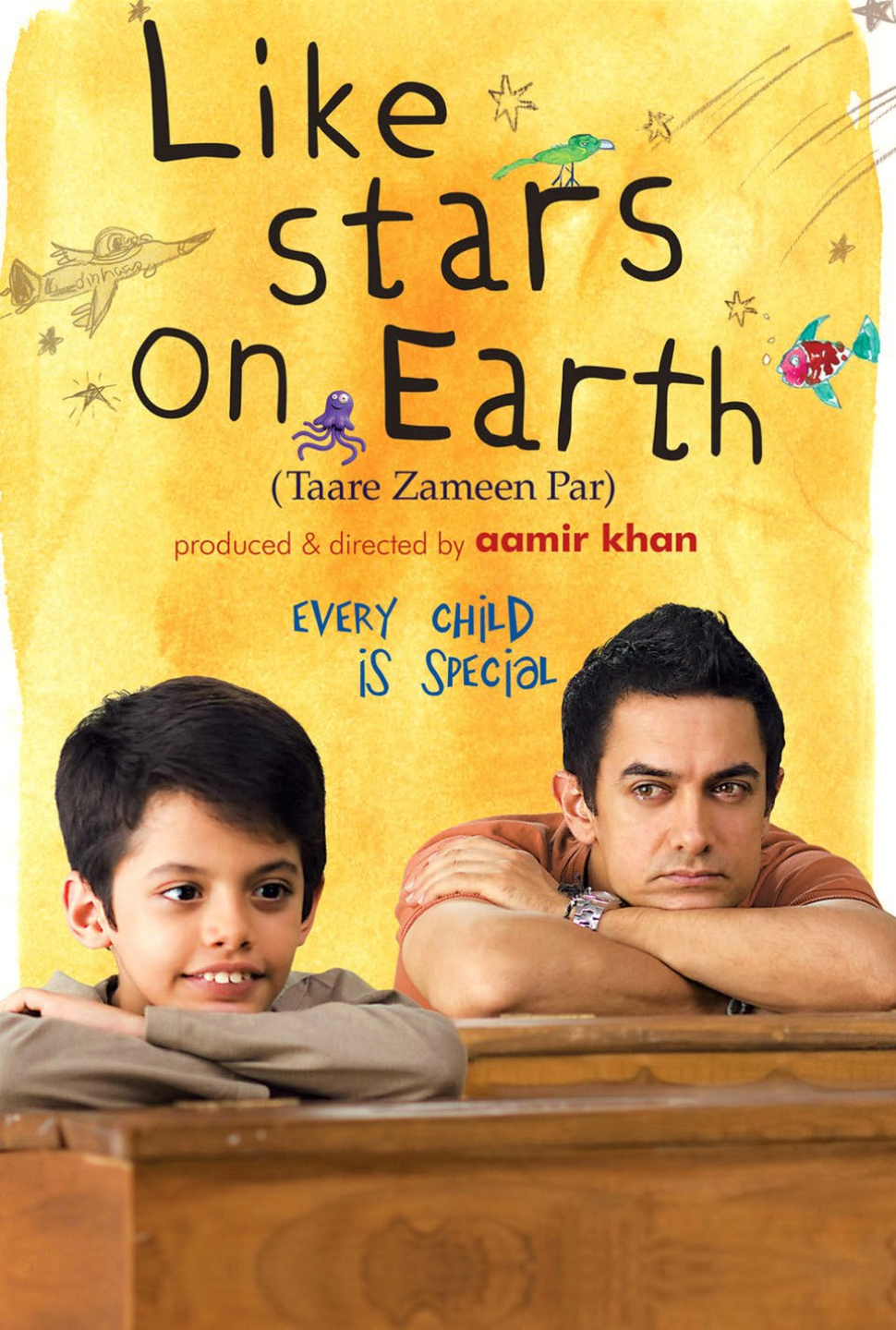


# *Anya's Bell*, 1999

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Set in 1949, the story revolves around a blind woman, Anya Herpick, played by Della Reese, who loves collecting bells to cope with her loneliness. The situation worsens as her mother dies. This is when she meets a 12-year-old delivery boy, Scott Rhymes, played by Mason Gamble, who was considered a slow learner, but is later revealed to be dyslexic. Both help each other in their struggles. While Anya teaches him to read Braille, Scott helps her to be more independent and self-reliant. Directed by Tom McLoughlin, *Anya's Bell* won the 2000 Humanitas Prize.





## *Like Stars on Earth, 2007*

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*Like Stars on Earth* is a Hindi language film directed by Aamir Khan that is a very accurate portrait of what its like to have dyslexia. The film explores the life and imagination of Ishaan, an eight-year-old dyslexic child. Although he excels in art, his poor academic performance leads his parents to send him to a boarding school. Ishaan's new art teacher suspects that he is dyslexic and helps him overcome his disability.

It was nominated for 18 different Indian/European awards and won 11. It's on Netflix under its Hindi title: *Taare Zameen Par* and on Disney+ under the English title.

<http://www.taarezameenpar.com/>

<https://www.netflix.com/title/70087087>

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/357498/ways-taare-zameen-par-is-still-relevant-12-years-on/>



# Hank Zipzer, 2014-2017

Hank Zipzer is a TV show about a young boy struggling through school because of his Dyslexia, starring Nick James as Hank.

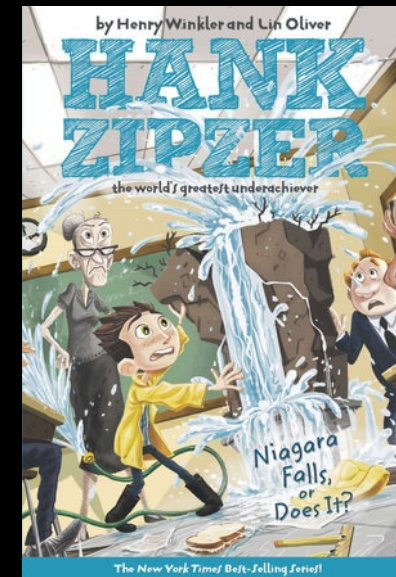
The show is based on the book series *Hank Zipzer: The World's Greatest Underachiever*. The 17 titles were co-authored by Henry Winkler and Lin Oliver. There is also a prequel series for younger readers called *Here's Hank* that has 12 titles. They were the first books published in the U.S. to use the Dyslexie font. This special font is meant to be easier for people with dyslexia to read.

Winkler didn't find out he had dyslexia until age 31. That was the point when his son, Jed, was diagnosed. During that process Winkler realized that he'd had similar learning challenges. But Winkler says he did not get much support as a student. "I was only told I would never achieve." Winkler proved the naysayers wrong. He finished high school, graduated from Emerson College and received his MFA from the Yale School of Drama. He's had a successful career as a comedian, actor, director and writer. And he's been a big inspiration for kids with dyslexia.

<https://www.dyslexiefont.com/en/our-story/>

[https://www.penguin.com/static/pages/youngreaders/children/features/hank\\_zipzer/](https://www.penguin.com/static/pages/youngreaders/children/features/hank_zipzer/)

<https://www.npr.org/2019/01/27/689070922/dyslexia-made-henry-winkler-feel-stupid-for-years-now-he-s-a-best-selling-author>



# What is Dyspraxia?

Dyspraxia, or developmental coordination disorder, is a neurological condition originating in the Parietal Lobe of a person's brain that affects motor coordination, organization, perception, language and thought. Children may have difficulties with self-care, writing, tying shoe laces, riding a bike, as well as other educational and recreational activities. In adulthood many of these difficulties will continue, as well as learning new skills at home, in education and work, such as driving a car.

Dyspraxia is a fairly common condition among both children and adults, affecting up to 10% of the US population, with 2% being severely affected. Dyspraxia affects males four times more than females. There is no cure for dyspraxia, but a number of **therapies** can make it easier for the child to cope with their problems. These include: speech therapy to improve communication skills and occupational therapy to find ways to complete everyday tasks.



**“They’re funny things, accidents. You never have them till you’re having them.”**



# Actors with dyspraxia



Daniel Radcliffe: Best known for playing Harry Potter in the wildly successful franchise. His early school years were very difficult because ‘I was having a hard time at school in terms of being crap at everything, with no discernible talent,’ he says. His spokesperson says his condition is very mild and at worst manifests itself in an inability to tie his shoe-laces and bad handwriting. A leading authority on dyspraxia, neurologist Dr. David Younger of the New York University Medical School, said: “I’m a big fan of the whole Harry Potter series and I am surprised Daniel Radcliffe suffers from dyspraxia. He clearly suffers from a mild form, but the fact he shows no sign of it at all is a great tribute to his acting skills and makes him a role model for other people with this condition.” Daniel says to others with learning disabilities: “Do not let it stop you. It has never held me back and some of the smartest people I know are people who have learning disabilities. The fact that some things are more of a struggle will only make you more determined, harder working and more imaginative in the solutions you find to problems.”

<https://www.understood.org/en/community-events/blogs/in-the-news/2014/12/16/harry-potter-star-gives-dyspraxia-advice>  
<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-1046031/Harry-Potter-The-brain-disorder-means-I-8217-t-tie-shoelaces.html>

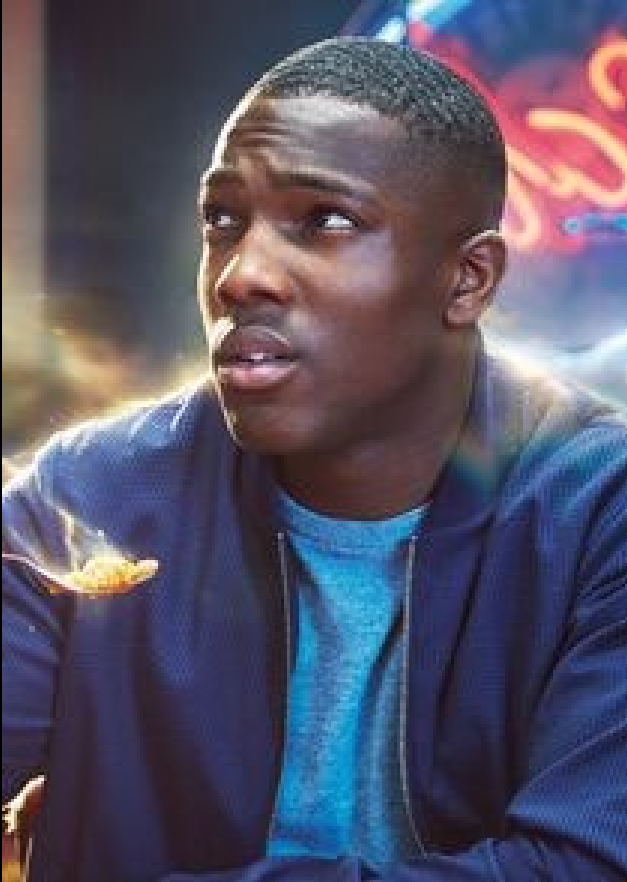


Cara Delevingne: fashion model turned actress; best known for playing Vignette Stonemoss in *Carnival Row*, Sgt. Laureline in *Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets*, and The Enchantress in *Suicide Squad*. Born and raised in London, Delevingne had a tough time in school. Her dyspraxia made writing difficult. Taking tests was even more stressful. She started playing the drums at an early age to help burn off excess energy. At 15, she began struggling with emotional issues that often co-occur with dyspraxia. “All of a sudden I was hit with a massive wave of depression and anxiety,” she **said**. “I just wanted to dematerialize and have someone sweep me away.” Therapy helped her get through those difficult years. She also took medication—and credits it with saving her life. She talks openly now about depression in part because she wants to help younger people get through it. “Being a teenager suuuucccks,” she said last year. “I somehow came through the other end.”

<https://www.vogue.com/article/cara-delevingne-actress-july-2015-cover> <https://www.understood.org/en/learning-thinking-differences/personal-stories/famous-people/celebrity-spotlight-cara-delevingne-on-dyspraxia-depression-and-kicking-butt-as-an-actress>



# Ryan Sinclair on *Doctor Who*



Series 11 introduces a new companion – Ryan Sinclair played by Tosin Cole– who has dyspraxia, a decision inspired by head writer Chris Chibnall’s own family experiences. “I have a nephew with dyspraxia– it’s a relatively common thing among kids,” Chibnall said at a recent series 11 screening. Accordingly, in *Doctor Who* series 11’s opening episode, Ryan’s dyspraxia gives him problems riding a bike and climbing ladders, with the Who team working closely with charity The Dyspraxia Foundation to make sure they accurately represented the experience of those with the condition.

“We did a lot of research into that with the Dyspraxia Foundation,” Chibnall said.

“The script team have been working with those guys. It was important, because people live with these things.”

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-45784822>

<https://junkee.com/doctor-who-dyspraxia-representation/189574>

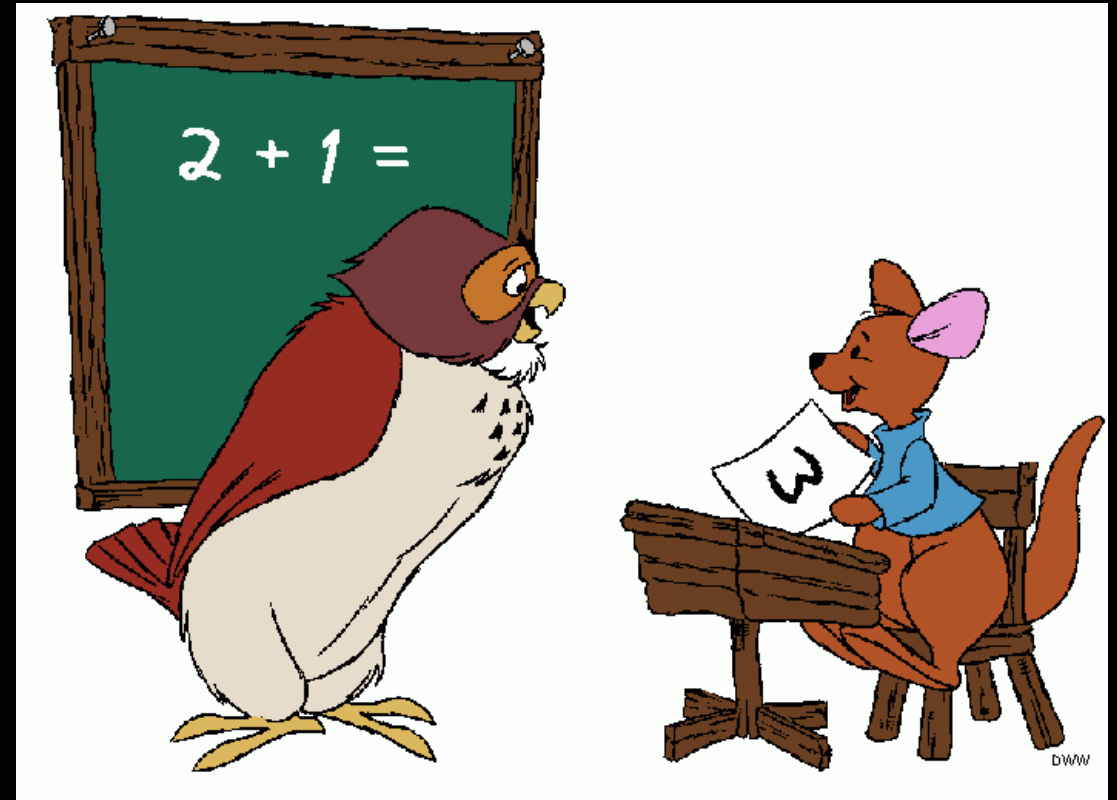
<https://www.radiotimes.com/news/tv/2018-10-19/doctor-who-series-11-what-is-dyspraxia-ryan-companion/>

# What is Dyscalculia?

Dyscalculia is a neurological condition originating in the Parietal Lobe of a person's brain that impairs an individual's ability to learn number-related concepts, perform accurate math calculations, reason and problem solve, and perform other basic math skills.

There are many ways to help kids with dyscalculia build math skills. Kids with dyscalculia can benefit from specialized instruction, especially in grade school.

There are no medications that treat dyscalculia, but medication could help kids deal with co-occurring issues like ADHD or anxiety.



**“Mistakes are proof that you are trying.”**

# Actors with Dyscalculia

<https://drlindasblog.com/famous-people-with-dyscalculia/>



**Mary Tyler Moore** is best known for *The Dick Van Dyke Show* and *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, for which she won a combined six Emmys. She was bullied in school because she couldn't keep up with the rest of the class. "Walking home became a nightmare of catcalls—'Hi, dummy,' 'Hey, Miss Stupid.'" When her family moved to California, she was held back a grade. "I still was barely scraping by in school, and still without friends," until she found a dance school in her neighborhood. She discovered a passion for dance that helped her get through school. "Dancing became the center of my life. As I learned the dance steps and began to excel, the girls at the studio started paying attention to me." She wasn't diagnosed until she was in her 50s. "If back then they knew what it was, they wouldn't have said to me, 'You're a bad girl,' or 'a stupid girl.' They would have given me alternative methods for learning math, and I might have gone to college and grown up with a different expectation," Moore said. <https://www.understood.org/en/learning-thinking-differences/personal-stories/famous-people/celebrity-spotlight-mary-tyler-moore-was-grateful-to-finally-discover-her-dyscalculia>



**Cher** has won an Oscar, a Grammy, and an Emmy, for her work in entertainment. As a child, she couldn't keep up with school lessons. "I couldn't read quickly enough to get all my homework done and for me, math was like trying to understand Sanskrit. Almost everything I learned, I had to learn by listening. My report cards always said that I was not living up to my potential." Discouraged after failing several classes, she dropped out of high school her junior year. She fled to Hollywood to pursue something she felt confident about—entertaining. Cher was diagnosed with dyslexia and dyscalculia only after seeking a diagnosis for her son Chaz's reading problems. Dyslexia often runs in families, so she was asked about her difficulties in school. "I told them how I kept transposing numbers, and that I'd get so cranky trying to dial long-distance calls that someone would finally have to take the phone and dial the number for me." Cher still wrestles with her dyslexia and dyscalculia. "I am a terrible reader, I don't write letters. Numbers and I have absolutely no relationship," she has said. <https://www.understood.org/en/learning-thinking-differences/personal-stories/famous-people/celebrity-spotlight-superstar-cher-triumphs-with-dyslexia-and-dyscalculia>



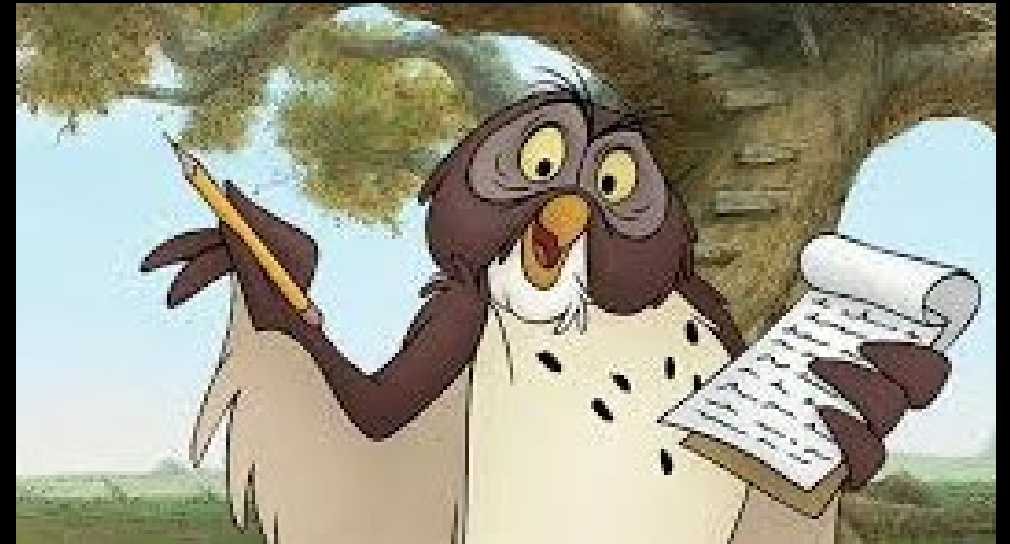
**Henry Winkler** is best known for his role as The Fonz on *Happy Days*. Winkler didn't find out he had learning disabilities until he was 31. That was the point when his son, Jed, was diagnosed. During that process Winkler realized that he'd had similar learning challenges. But Winkler says he did not get much support as a student. "I was called stupid and lazy, and I was told that I was not living up to my potential. It was, without a doubt, painful. I spent most of my time covering up the fact that reading, writing, spelling, math, science—actually, every subject but lunch—was really, really difficult for me. If I went to the store and paid the bill with paper money and I was given coins back for change, I had no idea how to count up the change in my head. I just trusted that everyone was being honest." Winkler proved the naysayers wrong. He finished high school, graduated from Emerson College and received his MFA from the Yale School of Drama. He's had a successful career as a comedian, actor, director and writer. To kids with learning disabilities he says, "You are all powerful. Every one of you. Even though school might be difficult, school does not define us. You all have wonderful and smart thoughts, therefore you are all smart." <https://www.dyscalculia.me/success-stories>  
<https://www.dyslexia-reading-well.com/henry-winkler-dyslexia.html>



# What is Dysgraphia?

Dysgraphia is a neurological condition originating in the Parietal Lobe of a person's brain that refers to a specific set of writing challenges. It impacts writing skills like handwriting, typing, and spelling. One of the main signs of dysgraphia is **messy** handwriting. Trouble forming letters can make it hard to learn spelling. That's why many kids with dysgraphia are **poor spellers**. They may also write very slowly, which can affect how well they can express themselves in writing.

Having dysgraphia doesn't mean a child isn't smart. And when kids with dysgraphia struggle with writing, they're not being lazy. But they do need extra help and support to improve. There are many ways to help kids with dysgraphia get better at writing. Occupational Therapy is the main way to help kids who struggle with handwriting. Therapists can work with kids to improve fine motor skills. Physical Therapy can help with arm position and posture.



**“My spelling is Wobbly. It’s good spelling but it Wobbles, and the letters get in the wrong places.”**

# Nathaniel Marston: Actor with Dysgraphia

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- Nathaniel was best known for playing Trey on *The Craft*, although his real love was Soap Operas. He did two years as Eddie Silva on *As the World Turns*, and fifteen years as Michael McBain on *One Life to Live*.
- "When I was a kid, I could draw and write very well. I was very artistically inclined. But everything I wrote was backward." Marston was taught to write forward, but it never clicked. "I could write faster at 4 than I can now." Nathaniel was able to dictate his work to someone else during one school year. In recent years many students have come to rely on computers to translate their thoughts and knowledge into the written word.



# Learning Disability Resources

- [Autistic Self-Advocacy Network](#) seeks to advance the principles of the disability rights movement with regard to autism. ASAN believes that the goal of autism advocacy should be a world in which autistic people enjoy equal access, rights, and opportunities. We work to empower autistic people across the world to take control of our own lives and the future of our common community, and seek to organize the autistic community to ensure our voices are heard in the national conversation about us. Nothing About Us, Without Us!
- [Autistic Collaboration](#) is a community that welcomes all individuals and groups who fully appreciate the value of neurodiversity. If you are looking for an index of collaborative autistic people and neurodivergent ventures, you have come to the right place. Aut Collab acts as a hub for mutual support, and encourages neurodivergent individuals and ventures to connect and establish long-term collaborations.
- [Friends of Quinn](#) is an online community that offers resources and support for young adults with learning differences, as well as for the people who love them. Founded by Quinn Bradlee, filmmaker and author of *A Different Life*, a book about growing up with LDs, our mission is to connect the LD world.
- [Understood](#) is a resource for people who face learning challenges and connect them to resources, expertise, and communities that bolster confidence. Our Families, Educators, and Young Adults programs were created to serve the millions of people in the United States who learn and think differently, and our Workplace Initiative serves the 15 million working-age Americans with disabilities.
- [The Mighty](#) is a digital health community and media company created to empower and connect people facing health challenges and disabilities. We have over 2 million registered users and are adding a new one every 20 seconds. Our stories and videos are viewed and shared more than 90 million times a month. *The Mighty* was founded by Mike Porath, father of an autistic daughter with a chromosome disorder and another daughter that was born with one kidney. Editor in Chief Megan Griffio compared *The Mighty* to a “table for two, a virtual shoulder to cry on...a place to come if you need to be reminded that you’re not going through whatever you’re going through alone.”



# Bipolar Disorder (BPD)

BPD is a cyclical mood disorder characterized by alternating episodes of mania and depression. It can be treated with therapy, medication, and lifestyle changes including quitting drinking or using illegal drugs, getting regular exercise, and getting plenty of sleep.

10 million Americans have bipolar disorder; in fact the US has the highest rate of diagnoses in the world at 4.4%. The average age of diagnosis is 25.



## BIPOLAR DISORDER

*Someone in a manic episode is...*

- Excited or irritable
- Energetic
- Restless
- Less likely to need sleep

The person will...

- Have racing thoughts
- Spend more/be reckless
- Believe more in themselves

*Someone in a depressive episode is...*

- Sad or unhappy
- Tired
- Uninterested
- Likelier to think of death or suicide

The person will...

- Eat & sleep more/less
- Have feelings of guilt
- Believe less in themselves

# Actors Who Are Bipolar



Best Known for Princess Leia in Star Wars films, author of many best-selling books, including *Postcards From the Edge*, a semi-autobiographical novel about her drug addiction and her relationship with her mother, Debby Reynolds. It which was adapted into a film in 1990 starring Meryl Streep as Carrie, and Shirley MacLaine as Debby.

“At times, being bipolar can be an all-consuming challenge, requiring a lot of stamina and even more courage, so if you’re living with this illness and functioning at all, it’s something to be proud of, not ashamed of.”

<https://www.health.com/condition/bipolar/carrie-fisher-bipolar-mental-illness-quotes>



Stephen Fry: Best known for Mycroft in the Robert Downey Jr. *Sherlock Holmes* films, playing Oscar Wilde in *Wilde*, Inspector Thompson in *Gosford Park*, and the Master of Lake Town in the *Hobbit* trilogy.

“I think the saddest people always try their hardest to make people happy because they know what it’s like to feel absolutely worthless and they don’t want anyone else to feel like that.”

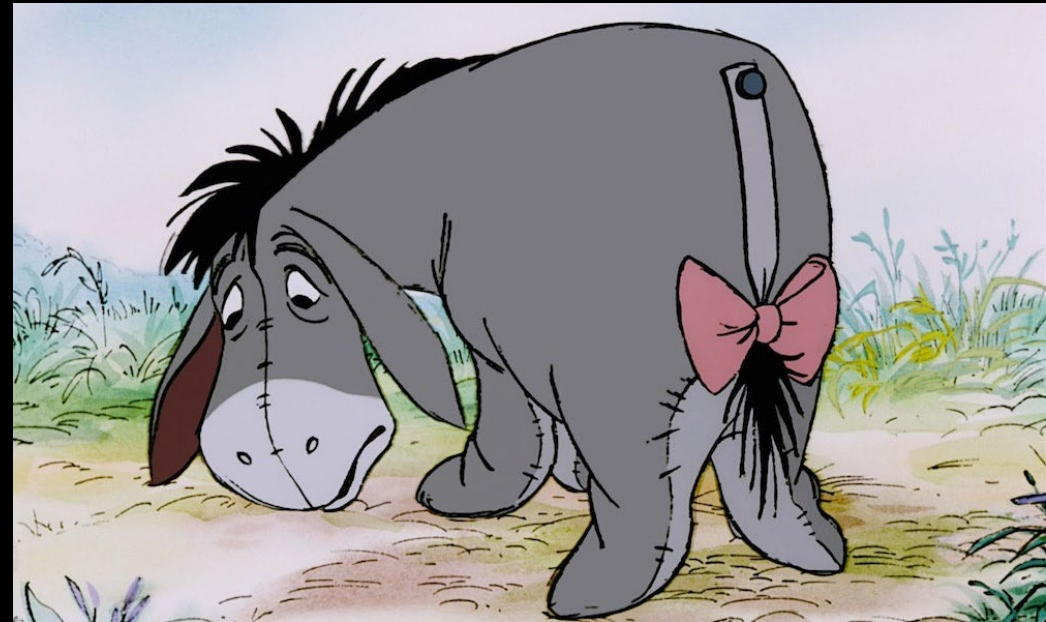
<https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/news-media/celebrity-supporters/stephen-fry#>

# What is Depression?

Depression is a common but serious mood disorder. It causes severe symptoms that affect how you feel, think, and handle daily activities. Depression is one of the most common mental disorders in the U.S. Even the most severe cases of depression can be treated. The earlier that treatment can begin, the more effective it is. Depression is usually treated with medications and therapy.

Symptoms of depression include:

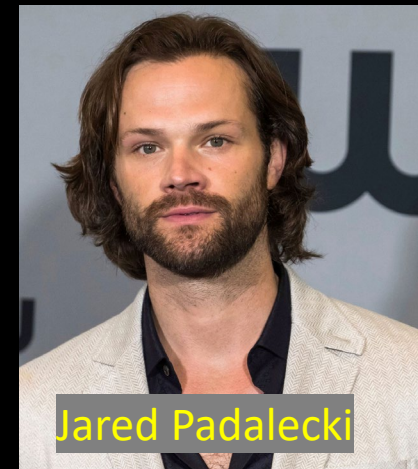
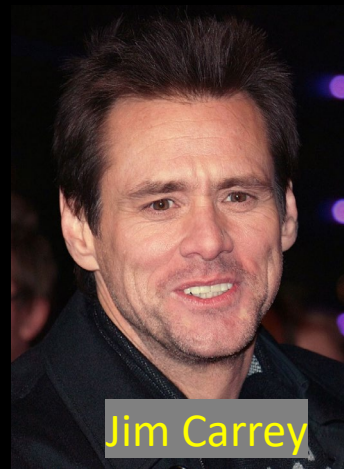
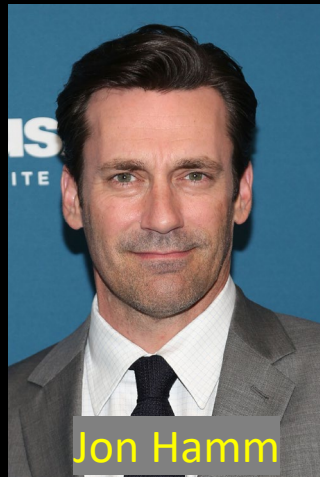
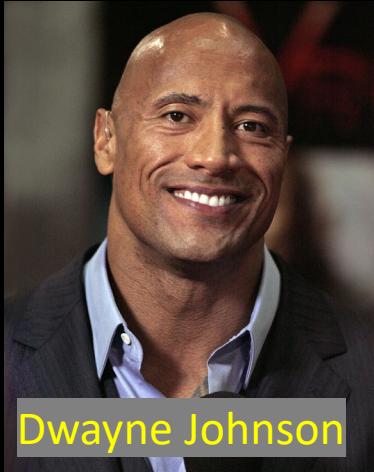
- Persistent sad, anxious, or “empty” mood
- Feelings of hopelessness, or pessimism
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, or helplessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities
- Decreased energy or fatigue
- Difficulty sleeping
- Appetite and/or weight changes
- Thoughts of death or suicide, or suicide attempt



**“Why are you so gloomy about things?” asked Piglet. “It’s nicer to be happy than gloomy”, said Pooh. “Perhaps it is”, Eeyore agreed. “But I don’t know how to be happy. Nobody ever showed me.”**



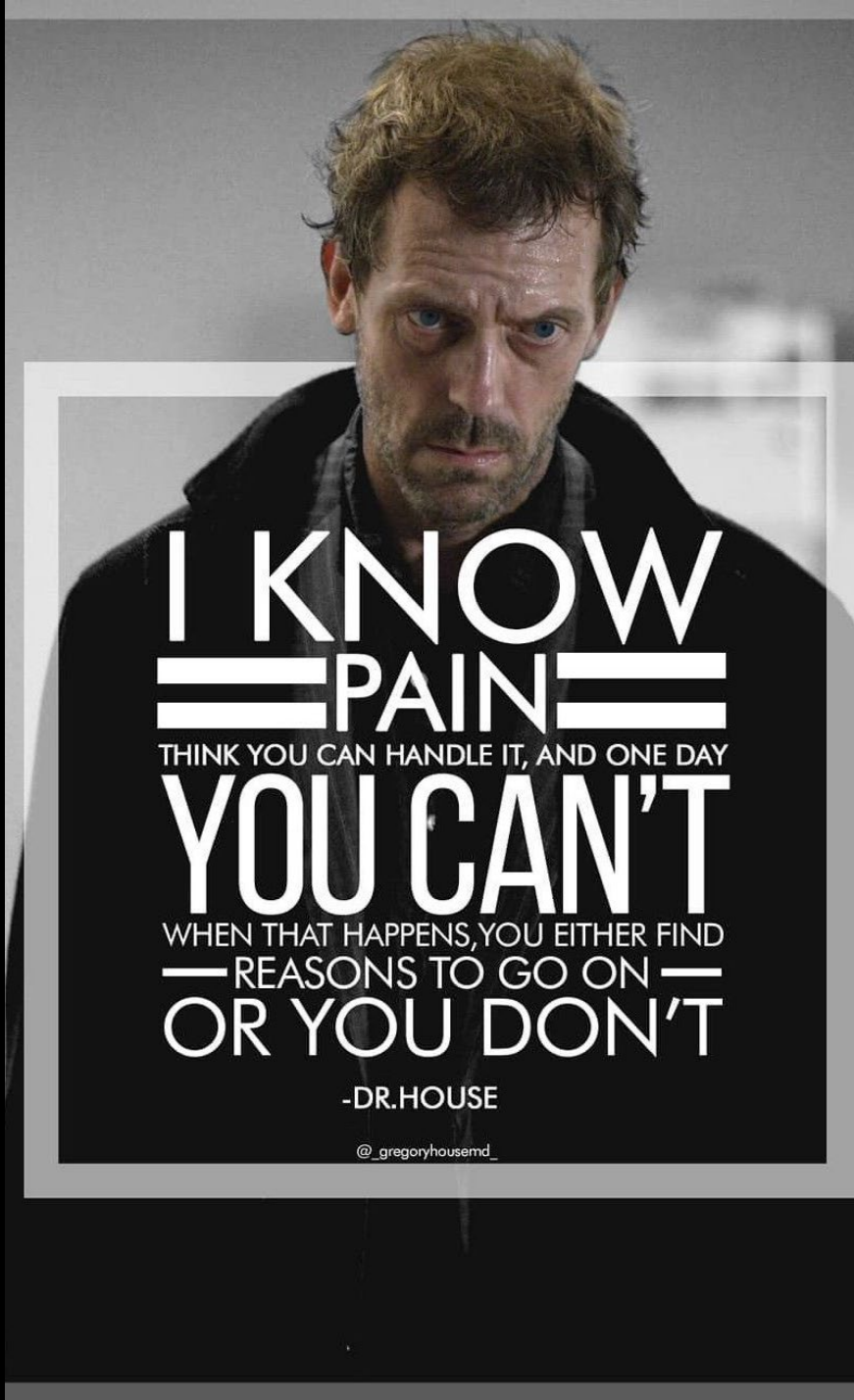
# Actors with Depression



# House, 2004-2012

*House* is a medical drama that follows the brilliant but cynical Dr. Gregory House, played by Hugh Laurie. Though House was never specifically diagnosed with depression, some fans believe House exhibits signs of depression throughout the show. Mighty community member Mary J. said, “The way House treats people around him, how he isolates and pushes people away is very typical of depression.” In addition, the character exhibits other habits that people with depression may relate to including self-medication with (and addiction to) Vicodin and self-sabotaging his own happiness.

Like his character, Laurie has wrestled with bouts of major depression. Depressed people can react to success with a sense of guilt, as if they were a fraud that will eventually get discovered or “found out”. Often it doesn’t matter if you’ve climbed Everest and landed on the Moon – a depressed person doesn’t get satisfaction from achievements. *“It affected everything – my family and friends. I was a pain in the arse to have around. I was miserable and self-absorbed.”* A depressed person is not intentionally trying to be selfish but during an episode their feelings and concerns gravitate around themselves. For family and friends it can appear to be self-absorption. Hugh Laurie identified the problem and realized that action was needed. He was referred to a therapist and began talking therapy. According [Celebrities with Diseases](#) this course of therapy was undertaken for a couple of years with good success. He refuses to take medication for his condition but admits of a course of St John’s Wort. <http://www.howibeatdepression.com/how-hugh-laurie-beat-depression/>

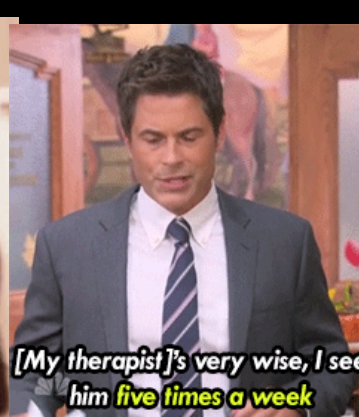
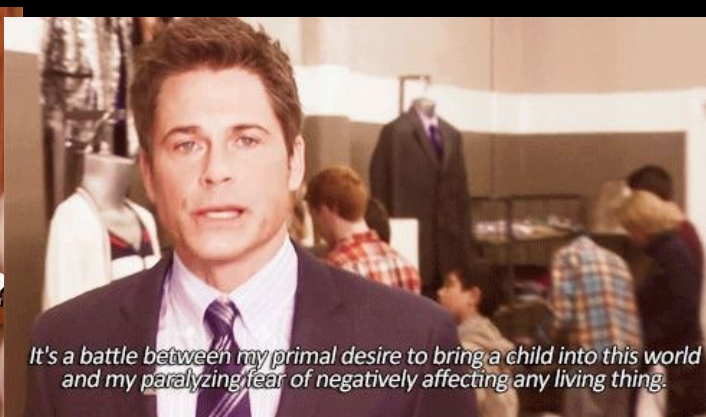
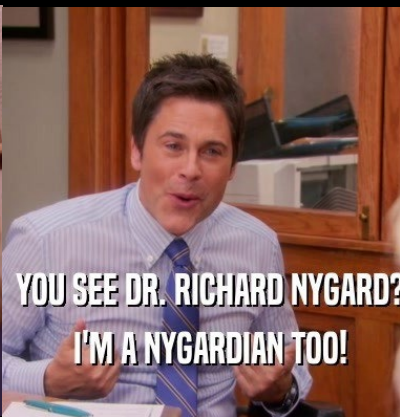
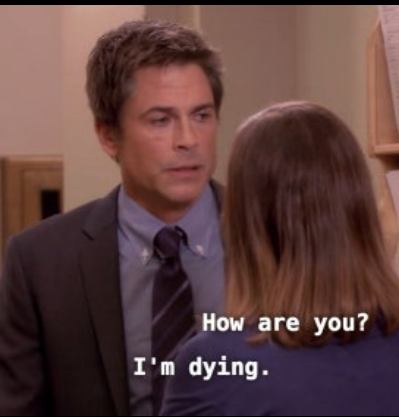
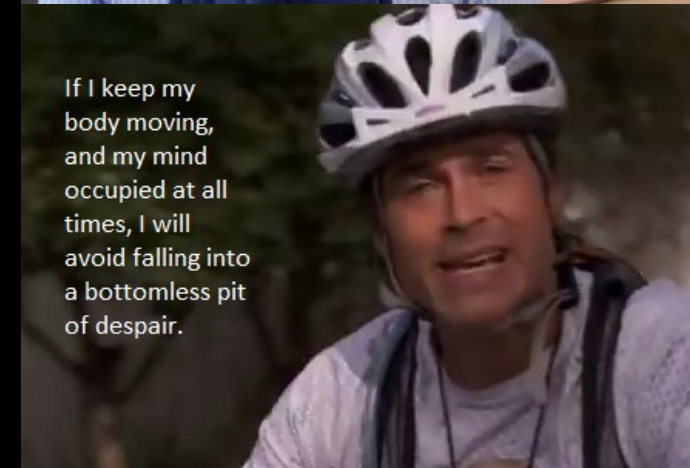
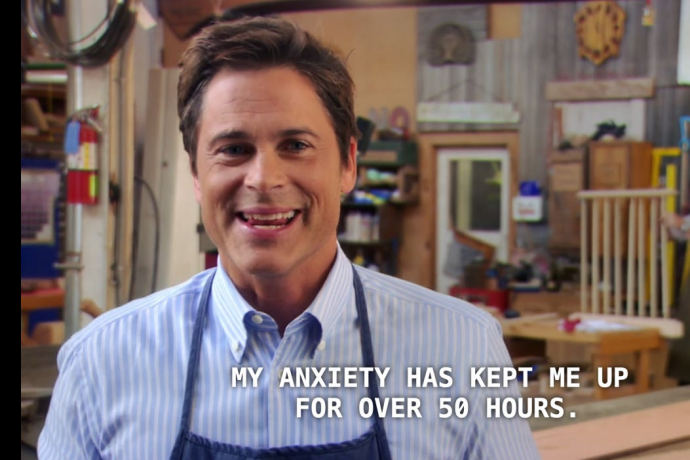




# Chris Traegar on *Parks and Rec*

Though *Parks and Recreation* is primarily known for its funny characters and moments, some appreciated how it showed **depression** through the notoriously “happy” character, Chris Traeger. Of the show, Mighty community member Maria R said, “He’s known for being absurdly cheery (high-functioning depression) but has a story arc where it’s revealed a lot of his health nut hobbies are a distraction and he seeks out a therapist who he sees almost daily”.

This kind of character is so important to show because oftentimes depression doesn’t “look” like what we think it does. While we often generalize depression as being “sad,” the reality is it can sometimes look like the exact opposite. *Thought Catalog* contributor Kris Miller wrote, “When you’re the happy person, the smiley social butterfly, no one expects you to be hurting inside. No one assumes there are things that go beyond the exterior. No one thinks there’s pain past the friendly outside... Depression sits in the background, like an uninvited guest. No one else can see it. But still, I know it’s there.” <https://themighty.com/2018/01/anxiety-depression-tv-shows-good-portrayals/>





# What is Anxiety?

Occasional anxiety is an expected part of life. You might feel anxious when faced with a problem at work, before taking a test, or before making an important decision. But anxiety disorders involve more than temporary worry or fear. For a person with an anxiety disorder, the anxiety does not go away and can get worse over time. The symptoms can interfere with daily activities such as job performance, school, work, and relationships. Even the most severe cases of anxiety can be treated. The earlier that treatment can begin, the more effective it is. Anxiety is usually treated with medications and therapy.

Generalized anxiety disorder symptoms include:

- Feeling restless, wound-up, or on-edge
- Being easily fatigued
- Having difficulty concentrating; mind going blank
- Being irritable
- Having muscle tension
- Difficulty controlling feelings of worry
- Having sleep problems, such as difficulty falling or staying asleep, restlessness, or unsatisfying sleep
- Having panic attacks



**“It’s hard to be brave”, said Piglet, sniffing slightly, “when you’re only a very small animal.”**

# Actors with Anxiety



Selena Gomez



Gina Rodriguez



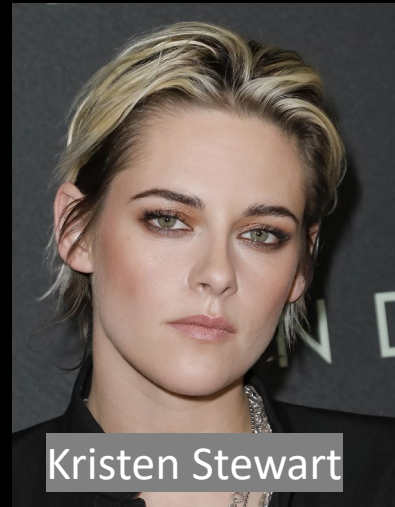
Lady Gaga



Oprah Winfrey



Busy Philipps



Kristen Stewart



Whoopi Goldberg

# Randall on *This is Us*



From The Mighty:

Juliette Varzi, “*This Is Us* is an emotional drama that follows the Pearson family, showing how their lives intersect in surprising ways. The show has received critical acclaim specifically for the way it handled **anxiety** — with Sterling K. Brown winning the Golden Globe for best actor this year.

The scene that most fans with anxiety relate most to comes from season one when Randall (Sterling K. Brown) had a panic attack. Of this scene, community member Sharon E. wrote, “I felt this so much. His performance and the writer’s portrayal of a panic disorder brought on by stress was spot on.”

Even some mental health professionals agree. In an **interview with Health magazine**, Dr. James Murrough, assistant professor of psychiatry and neuroscience at the Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City, said, “This was a pretty accurate portrayal. When you’re experiencing a panic attack, it can feel like you’re dying or losing your mind. The blurring of his vision gave the feeling of detachment or unreality. Depersonalization or feeling disconnected from your body is another common symptom of a panic attack.”

<https://themighty.com/2018/01/anxiety-depression-tv-shows-good-portrayals/>



# What is Borderline Personality Disorder?

BPD is a mental health **disorder** that impacts the way you think and feel about yourself and others, causing problems functioning in everyday life, especially in terms of relationships with others . There are five types of BPD and a person diagnosed with BPD may identify with only one type or may fluctuate between several of them. It is estimated that 1.4% of Americans have BPD and 75% of them are female. BPD is treated with cognitive behavior therapy and medication including mood stabilizers and although it can't be "cured" it can be managed with great success much like diabetes.

- **Affective:** Feeling like you can't control your emotions, frequent intense mood swings through the day. People with the affective type of BPD struggle most with regulating their emotions when it comes to their interpersonal relationships. When faced with relational stress, people with this type of BPD are prone to anxiety, depression and suicidal thoughts. For example, if a person with affective BPD gets into an argument with their significant other, they may immediately think the relationship is over and begin to struggle with suicidal thoughts.
- **Impulsive:** Instead of losing control of your emotions, it's losing control of your behavior. People with impulsive BPD are more prone to struggle with behaviors like self-injury, substance abuse, binge eating, reckless driving, risky sex and compulsive shopping.
- **Aggressive:** Inappropriate or uncontrollable anger out of proportion to what the circumstance might warrant.
- **Dependent:** People with this type of BPD often weren't encouraged to become independent and autonomous growing up, leaving them with overly dependent behaviors in adulthood. These folks may be overly accommodating of others' needs and struggle with [setting boundaries](#). Many people with this type "cling" to their loved ones because they fear abandonment. In terms of identity struggles, people with this type of BPD may co-opt the personality traits of others.
- **Empty:** struggle with identity issues. If you live with this type, you might have grown up in a difficult home situation — whether it be due to active abuse, neglect or invalidation. As a result, you may struggle with trusting others or may feel directionless in terms of setting personal goals.

# Angelina Jolie: Actress with BPD (presumed)

Clare Nadal, writing for Borderline Arts, stated, "Award-winning actress, screenwriter, film director and author **Angelina Jolie** - who actually starred in *Girl, Interrupted* - voluntarily went into the Neuropsychiatric Institute in the late 1990s due to self-reported suicidal and homicidal ideation. It has been presumed that Jolie has a diagnosis of Borderline Personality Disorder and that once diagnosed with BPD she began to improve and motherhood has since helped her adapt to the condition. However, this is not confirmed, and Jolie has not publicly admitted to this being the case, even if it is." Here's the evidence:

- Early childhood trauma--her father abandoned the family when she was one year old. The family moved from LA to NY and back to LA. She's had a life-long dysfunctional relationship with her father, actor Jon Voight.
- At Beverly Hills H.S. she felt isolated among the rich students because her family was poor. She was teased and bullied for being too thing and wearing glasses and braces. She switched schools multiple times and ended up dropping out.
- She felt it difficult to connect with other people, engaged in self-harming behavior (she was a cutter), she struggled with insomnia and an eating disorder, and experimented with drugs, particularly heroin. She suffered depression, attempted suicide twice.
- She had numerous relationships/marriages that ended in separation/divorce, including Johnny Lee Miller, Jenny Shimizu, Billy Bob Thornton, Timothy Hutton, and Brad Pitt with whom she had six children, three of whom are adopted.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angelina\\_Jolie](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angelina_Jolie)

<https://www.borderlinearts.org/single-post/2018/11/27/Do-any-celebrities-have-Borderline-Personality-Disorder-BPD>



# *Girl, Interrupted*, 1999

Directed by James Mangold, the film details the real life of Susanna Kaysen who struggled with BPD; it is based on her memoir. After a suicide attempt, she spent 18 months in a psychiatric hospital between 1968-69. According to Kaysen, upon her release from the psychiatric hospital, she felt as though she had to keep her condition a secret due to the stigma associated with mental illness. However, by 1993 she felt the need to write about her experiences while working on her second novel.

The book was not written as a narrative but in vignettes that jumped around in time; it included her hospital records, as well as her assessment of her treatment 25 years after being discharged. Jeffrey Geller, writing for Psychiatry Online, said that Kaysen's description of her experiences as a patient in a psychiatric hospital in the 1960's are "accurate but limited". As such, the screenplay deviated in a major way from the book, especially concerning the historical accuracy of psychiatric practices in the 1960's and her diagnosis of BPD, which wasn't even included in the DSM until 1980.

Kaysen, was among the detractors of the film, accusing Mangold of adding "melodramatic drivel" to the story by inventing plot points that were not in the book (such as Lisa and Susanna running away together). At a screening in 2000 she stated, "I really hate that movie." The film starred Winona Ryder as Susanna, as well as Angelina Jolie, Clea DuVall, Brittany Murphy, Elisabeth Moss, and Angela Bettis. Angelina Jolie won an Oscar, a Golden Globe, a SAG, and a Critics' Choice Award for Best Supporting Actress for playing Lisa.

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0172493/>

[https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/girl\\_interrupted](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/girl_interrupted)

<https://ps.psychiatryonline.org/doi/full/10.1176/appi.ps.51.4.536>

<https://www.thejustice.org/article/2003/02/susanna-kaysen-without-interruptions>





# *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend, 2015-19*

Created by Aline Brosh and Rachel Bloom. Rebecca Bunch, a NY lawyer who moves to West Covina, CA to pursue her ex-boyfriend Josh. In the move, she flushes all her depression/anxiety meds down the toilet. As the plot develops, Rebecca goes through intense manic episodes followed by periods of depression. Over the course of the four seasons, she receives a diagnosis of **Borderline Personality Disorder**. As Rebecca grows to understand her mental health, she helps her new friends in their own growth. Rebecca isn't a villain or a victim. There are layers of complexity to her character. She's intelligent, she's successful, she's funny, she's – for lack of a better word – 'normal', as are all people with mental health issues.

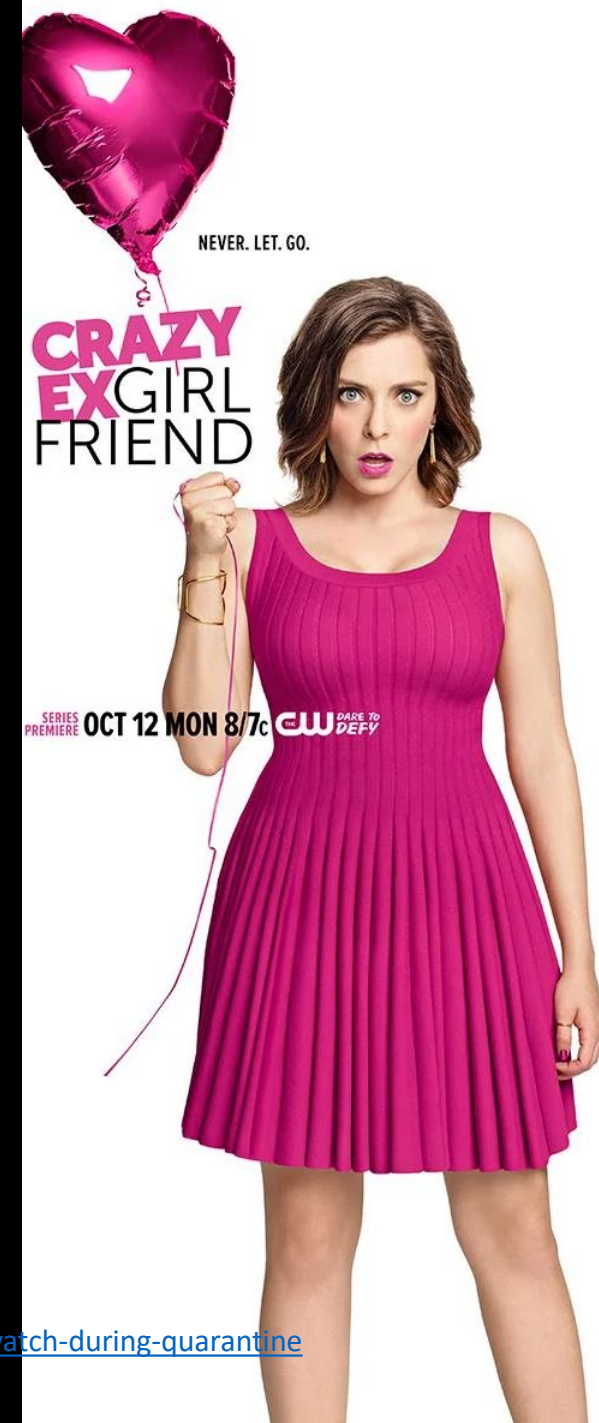
Mary Hayes, of the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland, stated "As well as being highly entertaining, funny and uplifting, CExG does a fantastic job of accurately portraying how profoundly symptoms of mental illness can affect a person's life and what it is like to experience the journey of getting professional help, receiving a diagnosis, and learning how to manage one's mental health."

In CExG, while we do see Rebecca's suicide attempt, which would be discouraged by media guidelines on portraying suicide, we also see everything that led up to it. We see her mounting stress and increasingly consuming mental health issues come to the fore. We see her instantly regret her decision, an instant moment of clarity that was inspired by discussions the creators had with suicide survivors who all said they instantly regretted the decision to take their own lives. We also see her guilt in the aftermath and her asking for, and getting, help – all in detail. So again, this is a more realistic depiction of the complexity of suicidal ideation and how it can manifest in many different ways.

<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/crazy-girlfriend-rachel-bloom-talks-mental-health-writing-theme-songs-1228538>

<https://www.jta.org/2020/06/26/culture/the-way-crazy-ex-girlfriend-handles-mental-illness-makes-it-a-heartwarming-and-relevant-watch-during-quarantine>

<https://www.irishpsychiatry.ie/blog/7-reasons-why-crazy-ex-girlfriend-is-the-best-representation-of-mental-illness-on-tv-2/>



# Pooh Pathology Test

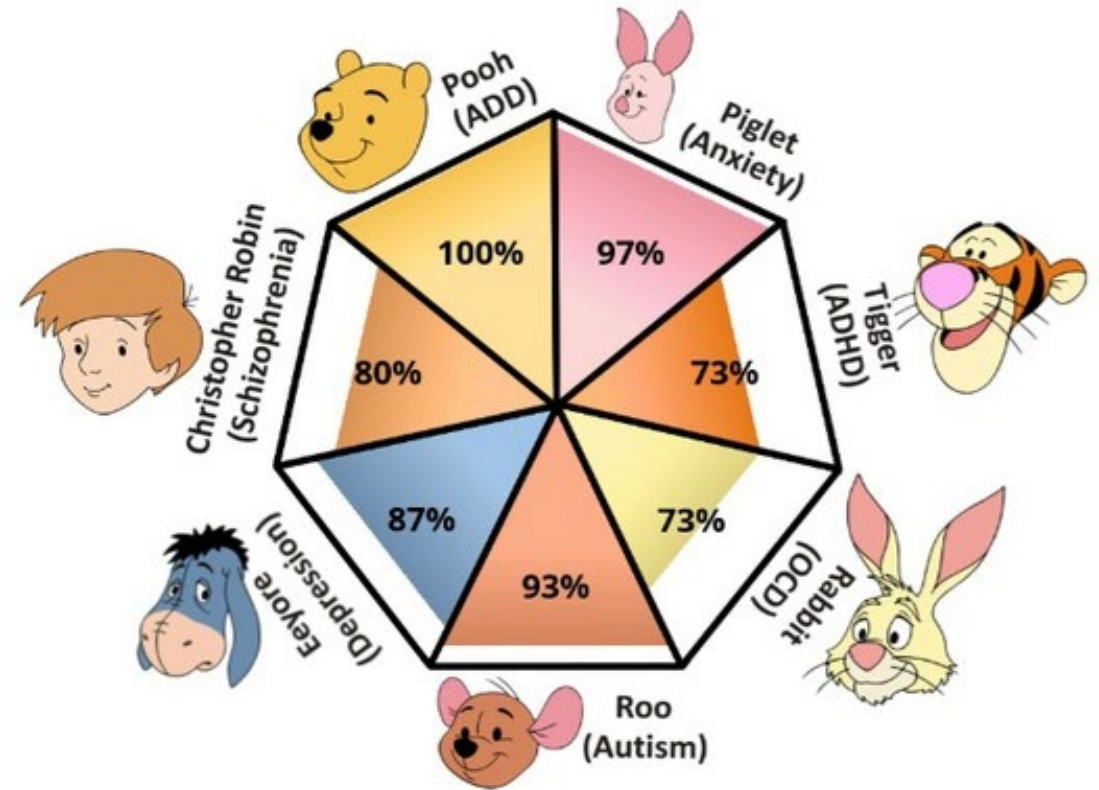
## Why Use This Test?

<https://www.idrlabs.com/poohpathology/test.php>

- 1. Free.** This free online Pooh Pathology Test is delivered to you free of charge and will allow you to obtain your match on one of seven characters from A.A. Milne's beloved tales.
- 2. Unique.** While there are other Winnie the Pooh tests out there, this test utilizes a unique framework by pairing the insights of professors and M.D.'s with the characters known from the Hundred Acre Wood.
- 3. Statistical controls.** Test scores are logged into an anonymized database. Statistical analysis of the test is conducted to ensure maximum accuracy and validity of the test scores.
- 4. Made by professionals.** The authors of this free online test are certified in the use of numerous personality tests and have worked professionally with personality typology, as well as corporate, personality, and IQ testing.

## Pooh Pathology Test

### Your Pooh Pathology Results Are:



<https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/winnie-the-pooh-mental-disorders/>

# Mental Health Resources

- [National Institute of Mental Health](#) The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) is the lead federal agency for research on mental disorders. NIMH is one of the 27 Institutes and Centers that make up the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the largest biomedical research agency in the world. NIH is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).
- [Time to Change](#) It's hard enough to experience mental health problems, without having to face the judgement, shame and isolation that often surrounds them. That's why we want to end mental health discrimination.
- [SAMHSA](#) The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is the agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that leads public health efforts to advance the behavioral health of the nation and to improve the lives of individuals living with mental and substance use disorders, and their families.
- [Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is a national network of local crisis centers that provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We're committed to improving crisis services and advancing suicide prevention by empowering individuals, advancing professional best practices, and building awareness. [1-800-273-8255](#) [CHAT WITH LIFELINE](#)