



# THE ADHD PROJECT

A COMEDY ABOUT GROWING UP A LITTLE BIT  
"SPECIAL"

Written/Performed by:  
**Carlyn Rhamey**

Directed by:  
**Jon Paterson**

Produced by:  
**Squirrel Suit Productions**

Presented by:  
**Prologue to the Performing  
Arts**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

About the Artist.....	P.G. 2
About the Show.....	P.G. 2
Curriculum Focus and Themes.....	P.G 3
Traditional and Modern Storytelling.....	P.G. 4
Benefits to Storytelling.....	P.G. 4
Storytelling: Tips and Tricks.....	P.G. 5, 6
Discussion Prompts: Neurodiversity and Mental Health.....	P.G. 6, 7, 8
Teamwork Activities.....	P.G. 8, 9
Terminology.....	P.G. 9, 10
Sources.....	P.G. 11



## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Carlyn Rhamey (She/They) is a multidisciplinary artist and producer based in Hamilton, ON. Her theatrical practice often has a focus on mental health and disability advocacy. Carlyn's solo storytelling shows have earned critical acclaim across North America. In 2019 The ADHD Project had a sold out run in the Toronto Fringe Festival and earned the David Seguin Memorial Award for Accessibility in the Arts. As both a storyteller and disability advocate, Carlyn has had the opportunity to perform in conferences across the country including The National AccessAbility Week in Edmonton AB. Carlyn's dream is to one day become a therapeutic clown!

## ABOUT THE SHOW

Storyteller/Comedian Carlyn Rhamey shares the trials and triumphs of growing up with ADHD and learning to embrace what makes us different. From her diagnosis and placement in a Special Education classroom, to navigating her "superpower" as an adult, this is an intimate and hilariously honest journey exploring ADHD and celebrating neurodiversity. Welcome to Carlyn's world of chaos, creativity and combat within her mind.

# CURRICULUM FOCUS AND THEMES

- Neurodiversity and mental health awareness: Reducing stigma, stereotypes, bullying
- Storytelling to promote empathy and inclusion
- Overcoming adversity with a positive outlook

## The Arts Curriculum, Drama

- Construct personal interpretations of drama works, connecting drama issues and themes to social concerns at both the local and global level.
- Identify and describe a wide variety of ways in which drama and theatre make or have made contributions to social, cultural, and economic life in a variety of times and places.

## Health and Physical Education Curriculum

- Explain how stress affects mental health and emotional well-being, and demonstrate an understanding of how to use a variety of strategies for relieving stress and caring for their mental health
- Demonstrate an understanding of linkages between mental illness and problematic substance use, and identify school and community resources that can provide support for mental health concerns relating to substance use, addictions, and related behaviours.
- Assess the impact of different types of bullying or harassment (e.g., intimidation, ostracism, pressure to conform, gang activities) on themselves and others, and identify ways of preventing or resolving such incidents.



# TRADITIONAL AND MODERN STORYTELLING

Traditional storytelling is both a social and cultural event. Historically, storytelling began as a form of preserving culture and history to educate new generations. While also being a popular medium of art and entertainment. Stories often include a specific moral lesson or message. Traditional storytelling includes folklore, history and cultural traditions being shared. Storytelling goes beyond memorization and reciting your tale, it can be theatrical, with improvisation, audience interaction and include creative license with the story.

**THE ADHD PROJECT** is modern storytelling, which is very similar to traditional storytelling, in that it is all about connection. Mainly used to entertain, rather than to pass down traditional customs or cultures, it can also be used to educate a community of people with a moral message. Modern storytelling is popular across Canada and the world. It could be described as the in between genre of stand up and the dramatic monologue. Storytelling, typically refers to real life events, rather than folklore and fantastical storytelling. It is usually done without the use of notes or props. (*Confabulation.ca, n.d.*)



## BENEFITS TO STORYTELLING

Storytelling can help to build community through connections and shared experiences. It allows people to explore perspectives beyond our own human experience which promotes empathy, compassion and inclusion of those who live and experience life differently.

Sharing our stories is an opportunity to relate to one another, expand our outlook on the world and give hope to those who are struggling. Storytelling, like all forms of theatre, can provide a cathartic experience as well as entertain an audience.

Telling your own stories can help you understand and process your experiences as well as commit them deeper into your memory. It's an opportunity to reflect on your learning or what you have gained from an experience. Storytelling is an opportunity to laugh at one's past mistakes and challenges. It provides both agency and insight into ones' self and their experiences. (*themoth.org, n.d.*)

# STORYTELLING: TIPS AND TRICKS



- **Stories were meant to be TOLD not READ...**  
You'll find you can connect with your audience a lot easier when there is no page between you! (*themoth.org, n.d.*) After all this is YOUR story so you already know how it ends...
- **You need to have stakes!**  
Why is what's happening in the story important? This is needed in every story you tell. If you don't really care about what happened, how do you expect an audience to care and become invested? What will you lose or gain in this story?  
(*themoth.org, n.d.*)
- **Everyone creates in a different way.**  
Maybe you need to write the full story out. Or just do an outline or bullet notes. Perhaps you want to practise out loud alone or to friends or maybe record yourself and listen back. Do one of these, do all of these. Always try something new and find what works best for your personal storytelling style.
- **Don't try and be someone else.**  
Part of the fun of storytelling is you get to be yourself onstage! So, try not to copy someone else's "style", find your own! An audience can tell when a storyteller is not being genuine, or honest.
- **First person narrative.**  
First person narrative is great way for the audience to experience the story along with you rather than hearing about it in the past tense. Both can be used in the same story: *"I am 12 years old when I receive my first sword. I can't believe it! This is mine? I lift it high in the air. I am the knight I always knew I could be."*
- **The magic lies in the details.**  
Take time to describe the surroundings in your story. What was the weather like that day? What do the people in your story look like? How do you appear in that moment? Who, What, Where, When, Why? Answer all of these.
- **Try to avoid rants, essays and stand up routines.**  
Rants are used to get rid of negative emotions, essays are too detail oriented and there's not enough ACTION. Stories require action to stay riveting. Funny stories and comedic storytelling are great. But the story should come before the jokes.  
(*themoth.org, n.d.*)

- **Know your story well enough so you can have fun!**  
You don't have to know how and when you'll say every line. But know your story outline well enough to feel free to mix it up, be present in the moment and react off your audience response. Your "acting partner" is your audience. It's riveting to watch a storyteller think of the next line or part of the story. We get to experience it right there with you. (*themoth.org, n.d.*)

Know the end message you want to leave people with. It doesn't have to be a great moral message, just the note you want to leave on. Whether it's to never give up or simply to laugh at one's own mistakes.

- **Take creative licence.**  
Yes, modern storytelling is about telling true stories, but that doesn't mean you can't add embellishment or small changes to tie everything together. It is after all YOUR story, so take some creative licence where needed. Can't remember all the details? Make them up! We want to paint a clear and distinct picture for the audience.
- **Let the audience in.**  
For all performance! Storytelling, acting, physical theatre... take a beat and let the audience in. Make eye contact, take a breath. You've got this an everyone there wants you to succeed! Remember that.

**Storytelling is all about sharing experiences with one another. It is not a platform to express any sort of hate speech (racism, ableism, homophobia, misogyny, etc.)**

**Class activity:** Tell a 5-minute story! It can be about your family vacation, a basketball game, your greatest fear, an accidental injury, your most embarrassing moment! Anything!



## DISCUSSION PROMPTS:

## NEURODIVERSITY AND MENTAL HEALTH

**What are positive aspects of someone who is Neurodivergent?**

1. They have unique perspectives.
2. They may have different strengths and skills.
3. They experience life differently and you can learn a lot from diverse outlooks that vary from your own.
4. They are used to out of the box thinking. This makes for creative problem-solving skills and they can share new ways of accomplishing tasks.

5. You can learn the most about not only yourself but the world around you when you befriend someone who is completely unlike yourself.

### **What are ways we can help someone who is struggling?**

1. **Offer to help.** Make sure you **ASK** first. Just because someone may appear to be having trouble doesn't mean they need or want help.
2. **Be patient.** Everyone learns and works at their own pace. Some people may take longer to finish something, but it doesn't mean they cannot accomplish it in their own time and in their own way.
3. **Be compassionate.** Everyone has prejudices and can judge people without thinking sometimes. Try to work to change your thought process. Remember stereotypes are not fact and they can be very harmful to yourself and others. You never know how hard someone is struggling on the inside.
4. **Ask questions.** Learning and educating yourself is a key element to being more understanding of those who live differently than you.
5. **Include** people who are easily left out because they are different, too quiet or too loud, an "outsider" Etc.

### **What are ways to better include others?**

1. Ask them how their weekend was.
2. Invite them to join your group for a class project.
3. Invite them to eat lunch with you.
4. If they say "No" once, don't be afraid to ask again some other time. Just because someone appears to prefer to be on their own, doesn't mean they always prefer this.
5. Don't let labels put others in a box. Ask questions and get to know the person for who they are. There is a lot more to them than just a label.
6. Ask questions about their interests. Sometimes two people who are completely different can have the most in common! But you'll never know unless you take the time to get to know them.
7. Remember you aren't going to get along with everyone. But that doesn't mean you shouldn't treat others with compassion, respect and dignity.

### **What are ways we can help end the stigma about mental health and disorders?**

1. Ask people what terminology they prefer. Many people prefer identity first language: "I'm autistic", others prefer person first language ie: "I have autism" or "I am a disabled artist" vs "I am an artist with a disability" The same way you would ask someone for their pronouns without assuming (**he/she/they**)
2. **Correct someone** if they are using inappropriate words to describe someone (ie "Crazy" or the "R" word) Not everyone is aware that these words are unacceptable and can be very harmful.

3. **Participate** in events and fundraisers that raise awareness, acceptance, and pride. Offer support to those in need when you can.
4. **Be open and learn the facts** instead of spreading the myths about neurodiversity and mental health. Help educate those around you. Acknowledge the struggles and celebrate the strengths.

**If you or someone you know is struggling with mental health, what are some ways you can help or seek help?**

1. **Talk to a friend/Listen to them;** let them know that you are there for them, accept and support them.
2. **Kids Help Phone:** [1-800-668-6868](tel:1-800-668-6868)
3. **Reach out** to parents and teachers for resources (such as counselling)
4. If you feel comfortable and safe to do so, **open up** about your own experiences and stories. Help end the stigma.
5. **Have an outlet:** Write in a journal, play music, create a play, make art or a comic book, play sports, music, meditation, etc.
6. **Practise self-care:** Get fresh air, go for walks, re-read your favourite book, do some stretches, take a warm shower or bath, 5-minute dance party! (*\*Note these are just suggestions to help you take care of your mental health*)
7. **Remember** that mental health is just as important as physical health.

## TEAMWORK ACTIVITIES

**Kind Comments:**

**Goal:** Students will look for positives in each other and build one's own self-confidence.

**Supplies:** Construction paper, pens or markers, tape

Each student will have a page of construction paper taped to their back. The students then walk around the room with a writing utensil and write something kind on the backs of their peers. Encourage them to think outside the box. Not just, *"I like your shoes"*, but more specific *"A great sense of humour"*, *"You're a talented artist"*, *"I like your laugh"* etc.

**Talk back questions:** When you read over your paper, did anything surprise you? Why do you think we did this activity? Why is it important to help raise each other up?

**Desert Island:**

**Goal:** Students will communicate together to fit everyone on one piece of fabric.



**Supplies: Tarp or large blanket**

Spread out a large tarp on the floor and have the students all stand on top of it. They should fit easily with still room around them (*Can be done in 2 smaller groups with a smaller tarp*). Then fold a quarter of the tarp in half, the class will be pushed closer together. Then fold in half, and continue to add folds, until the group is forced to work together to make sure they all stay on the island. Feet can be in the air, but no one can touch the floor outside the tarp.

**Talk back questions:** What was challenging about this activity? What was an example of good teamwork today? How did communication play a role in this activity?

**Teamwork Pathway:**

**Goal: Students will communicate together to get across from point A to B.**

**Supplies: Squares for the floor (paper, foam, or carpet), blindfolds, headphones (*Can be done with only squares*)**

Students line up at point A and receive a certain number of squares (*less than one per student*) to use as stepping stones to get across to point B. They can only stand on these squares, so they must be big enough to fit both feet, but not much bigger. Explain that the ground is hot lava and as they make their way across other things will happen to make the activity more challenging. As they work their way across begin adding different obstacles such as:

*“Oh no! The wind has blown the burning hot lava onto \_\_\_\_\_’s leg! He is now injured and can only use one leg!”*

Do the same for another student:

*“Suddenly! A lava bird flying above, swooped down and attacked \_\_\_\_\_’s eyes!”*

Then hand this student a blind fold. These added challenges can be random, or the teacher can watch, for example, who is acting as the leader? What would happen if they couldn’t tell each person where to move?

*“Oh no! The smoke has become too much for \_\_\_\_\_. They must now save their vocal chords by not speaking”*

This could provide the opportunity for another student to speak up and take on a leadership role. You could give someone marshmallows to put in their mouth to make communication more difficult. Take out someone’s hearing with the headphones. Return to the student hopping along with one leg and take out their other, causing them to fully rely on their team. Students who made it across may need to come back and help the rest of the team. There are no rules on *how* they can use the stepping stones to get across or to assist each other.

**Talk back questions:** What was challenging about this activity? How did it feel to lose your ability to walk, talk, hear, see? What helped you move past these challenges? How important was communication in this activity?

# TERMINOLOGY

(*neurocosmopolitanism.com, n.d.*)

**ADHD** – Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

**Neurodiversity** – The concept of different functioning brains that are accepted and celebrated. It recognizes and respects any neurological difference. This umbrella term includes those with a diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Autistic Spectrum, Tourette Syndrome, learning disabilities and many more.

**Neurotypical** – A brain that functions in the societal standards of “normal” with no neurological differences.

**Neurodiverse / Neurodivergent** – A person who has a brain that functions differently than a neurotypical brain.

**Mental Health** – A person’s emotional and psychological well-being.

**Dopamine, Norepinephrine, Serotonin** – Chemicals that function in the brain and play multiple important roles in both the body and the brain.

**Special Education** – An educational pathway for students who require unique accommodations and supports that differ from the standard school curriculum and/or standard school set up.

**Depression** – A medical illness that negatively affects how you feel, the way you think and how you act. It can cause feelings of sadness and/or a loss of interest in activities. It is serious but very common and treatable.

**Anxiety** – A nervous disorder that can cause excessive amounts of uneasiness and apprehension. Can also include panic attacks.



# SOURCES

[Confabulation.ca](http://Confabulation.ca)

[The Moth - Tips and Tricks](#)

[The Moth - Our Values](#)

[Neurocosmopolitanism - Neurodiversity Basic Terms](#)

