

REVEALING THE INVISIBLE ME

Know, love and appreciate your ADHD self and
embrace who you always should have been

NICK SILVERSTONE

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Dedication

I have always been self-absorbed, and the last few years have only intensified that tendency. Being this way means I have often taken my ever-present, 'no-matter-what' support for granted. The greatest of those, and the people without whom I, quite literally, would not be here, are Karen and my children.

Writing this book has helped me better understand the impact that living with me and my neuro-foibles has had on you. And I want you to know that whatever life throws at us in the future, you are my everything and my reason for being. So, I want to dedicate this book to your strength, in the hope that, through it, other heroes like you don't have to endure quite as much as we have.

Foreword

This book shares the grim reality of receiving an ADHD diagnosis as an adult that doesn't often make it to the headlines – but will ring true for so many people.

Nick's diagnosis of ADHD in his mid-fifties arrived after 9 months of burnout. The diagnosis didn't magically make things better – it initially made them much worse. It summed up the years of exhaustion in trying to stay afloat without anybody even realising that you're drowning – of building your own golden prison in the workplace and feeling unable to ask for help.

His story reveals the unglamorous reality of life for so many with ADHD. For those who have slipped under the radar despite achievements, promotions, and impressive job titles. Who don't have the words for the paradox of projecting external success whilst hiding the imposter syndrome underneath.

I have coached many people with similar experiences – who initially felt the weight of a diagnosis like a lifelong prison sentence. Official confirmation of what they'd secretly believed throughout their lives but never admitted out loud –

how underneath the shiny achievements and successes, there was something 'wrong' with them.

With exhaustion can come a sense of liberation. The paradox of realising that no matter how hard you try to meet society's standards of success, it will never feel like it's 'supposed to'. That doesn't mean you are broken – just different. Suddenly, a choice emerges that you didn't know you had.

It's a permission slip to ask yourself if you even want the things you've always been conditioned to believe you 'should' want. Just like Nick, so many of us question 'what if I'd known earlier?' – but if we did, we wouldn't be who we are today. We can't go backwards – only forwards.

With this realisation, we can choose to share our stories and use our words in the hope that other people do not have to struggle in the same way. This is what Nick has done, whilst expertly combining his experiences with what he knows today, including as a trained ADHD Coach.

It's been a privilege to hold an educational space where Nick, like so many others, can realise that they are enough, exactly as they are. To realise that they, too, are deserving of help. To recognise that the system is the problem – not them.

And that there is no 'one way' of doing life – there is only your way.

Leanne Maskell – Founder of ADHD Works

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Introduction

When someone suggested writing a book about my ADHD experiences, I resisted. I thought it would be a bit of a twatty thing to do and the ultimate self-indulgence. I really could not see what value a moderately successful, shorter-than-average bald man from Hertfordshire could offer to anyone.

For various reasons, I was persuaded to explore the idea, and the journey (an expression I hate, but it is the only one that fits) has been astonishing. After qualifying as a Certified ADHD coach and starting work with clients, it became clear that the way my story related to theirs was central to helping them find their own paths. So, with the help of my friend and professional ghostwriter, Martin Gladdish, who helped me make sense of my words, thoughts, and lifetime of stories, we wrote the book you are sitting here reading.

How to use this book:

To keep the book short, neat and relevant to readers who think like me, we picked out incidents and episodes in my life where my undiagnosed ADHD came to the fore. Sometimes

painful, other times deeply personal and often life-changing, we explore how I felt and how my subsequent decisions shaped who I became.

So, in each chapter, I simply tell the story; what happened, how it made me feel, the actions it compelled me to take and the consequences of each action. Then, at the end of each chapter, there are five or six summary points and a coach's perspective on each one.

My hope is that by visiting these scenes from my viewpoint before I knew anything about ADHD and dyslexia, I can help readers to see their situations more clearly. And with my now-trained eye, we can begin focusing on solutions together by unpacking the typical traits many of us experience.

My mission: Becoming a Senior Leader's ADHD coach was not part of my life plan. Even when I first got diagnosed, the thought never crossed my mind. It was enough of a challenge to deal with my own head and heart. Likewise, I hadn't intended to become a Fractional MD. I believe these roles were sitting there waiting to be filled and found me because people and companies out there need what life has taught me.

Most entrepreneurs start businesses because they are passionate about what they do. But passion alone is often not

enough to implement the vision and then scale to the next level. For that, there is a need for someone with a detailed, process-obsessed mind. Without that focus and hard-earned business and operational experience, there will always be a lot of energy at play, but mostly in the wrong directions. That is where my Fractional MD expertise comes in. And among the ADHD stories in this book, I'll introduce you to the birth of those learnings along the way.

The more I have worked with business owners, the more it has emerged that (as some studies suggest) around 40% of entrepreneurs have some form of ADHD (more if you count the undiagnosed). Even though I work in this area daily, and knowing what the statistics say, I am constantly amazed by just how many senior business leaders (some with huge personal profiles) have a neurodiversity that is debilitating to them in one form or another.

That idea alone is what drives me and why I do this work. Like me, they may be unaware why they constantly feel lost, inferior, harassed by self-doubt, or just unable to get the right shit done! Of course, they are experts at masking (although most would never admit that) and some don't even know they are doing it. But having seen first-hand the life-stopping consequences of trying to cope alone. My driving force is to

prevent as many capable, intelligent leaders as I can from quietly suffering and collapsing behind their own success.

Simply understanding what, why, and how, and that there is nothing wrong with you, is the key to turning a burden into a strength and a life-drain into a new lease. It has become everything to me, my mission, to make sure I can share this awareness and hopefully prevent even just one person from going the route I went. If I can stop them from feeling they have not unleashed their potential, save them from debilitating overwhelm, or worse, burnout, suicidal ideation, or deciding there is no hope. That's where I got to; I had lost hope.

Fortunately, there is a different way, a better way, and I am a living example of finally understanding who Nick Silverstone actually is: the good and the bad. Finally, I can feel comfortable being me. And I hope this book brings you a little closer to feeling the same about yourself.

Together we can work smarter, think calmer and achieve more.

Revealing the Invisible Me. For most of my life, due to my lack of understanding about ADHD, dyslexia, and particularly when my RSD (Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria) hit me hard, I felt invisible to the world. Ironically, I am not alone in my

invisibility. It turns out that many neurodivergent people feel unseen and alone. It can be hugely debilitating and have a negative impact on self-worth and both mental and physical well-being. So, by revealing myself to you, I want you to see that you are not alone... We are visible together, and we have enormous value to show the world.

CHAPTER ONE:

The day I missed the train

It's Thursday, 26th September, just before lunchtime. I'm standing on the platform at Farringdon Station, waiting for the Thameslink to St Albans with one all-consuming thought dominating my mind.

As I stare, transfixed by the straightness of the tracks, I can feel the train approaching. But more than that, I can feel the pull. And the urge to step in front of its oncoming might is sudden and overwhelming.

It was not just a thought; it was a full-blooded compulsion to jump into oblivion. One that I could not resist. One that made no sense at all. Except that it did. Because I suddenly understood, for the first time in my entire internal conflict of existence, that I was broken. Nothing inside me felt fixable in that moment, and nothing of the external world around me felt real.

I have gone back to that moment many times since and run through the events in my mind. Those thoughts make me feel