



# How I Manage My **IMPROV-BASED TRAINING BUSINESS** with ADHD

**Nathan Minns**

**F**OR YEARS, I tried to hide my ADHD. I was ashamed of it. I found it challenging to concentrate as effectively as my peers and my fidgeting only worsened my feeling. I felt I had to exert twice as much effort as other “neurotypical” persons, while still receiving subpar results. I thought that if I could somehow just be different, I would be a better employee, a better friend, and a better person. It turns out that I only needed to learn to use my strengths to my advantage and I would become an incredible business owner, an incredible friend, and (I hope), an incredible person.

### EACH NEGATIVE HAS A POSITIVE

I am now a full-time business owner and entrepreneur with ADHD. I now realize that ADHD can be a gift rather than a curse. My hyperfocus often results in heightened productivity, and being able to generate ideas quickly has proven to be an advantage in my business ventures. Hyperactivity, too, may be seen as a negative trait in a corporate setting. However, in my profession as a speaker, facilitator, and entrepreneur, my hyperactivity is an asset, as I always bring a high level of focus, energy, and enthusiasm to my workshops and to my team. Now, I even have a better understanding of how to utilize my strengths, and as a result, my business is thriving, and I am definitely not receiving subpar results.

### WHAT I DO

In July 2022, I quit my corporate innovation job. Now, I devote all of my efforts to Green Light Improv, my professional training company. We use improv comedy as a tool to develop creativity, resilience, and communication skills while inspiring connection.

Through workshops, keynotes, and coaching, we work toward improving active listening, creative problem-solving, and collaborating skills. Our workshops are designed to be interactive so participants can have fun while learning, even virtually.

### WHAT IS IMPROV?

Improv comedy is when five to six actors run on stage and ask for a single suggestion from the audience. The actors use the audience's suggestion as inspiration to create unique comedic scenes for ten to sixty minutes. These scenes have never been done before, and will never be done again. To my fellow improvisers, forgive me for this brief explanation of long-form improv.

Green Light Improv draws inspiration from improv comedy. We don't teach pure improv. Instead, we use improv as a tool in training and development, at a level at which everyone can participate and have fun.

I discovered my passion for improv in 2016 and have since dedicated myself to applying it in my life, and others' lives. In the beginning, though, improv did not come naturally. I auditioned seven times before I got into my first improv group. Green Light Improv started because I noticed that as I developed my skills on-stage, I developed off-stage too. As I developed as an improviser, I also developed community, and my creativity, resilience, and communication skills.

### IMPROV FOR COMMUNITY

In standup comedy, you're usually the only person on stage and if you forget your set, the entire audience is

staring at you. Only you. Improv is a little different, as improv is a team sport. Improvisers need to build trust in each other to make a good show. Improvisers win and lose as a team. We rarely hear improvisers say, "I had a good show," but rather, "We had a good show." This kind of community not only provides an incredible starting point for corporate trust-building workshops but also provides a supportive community for those with ADHD.

### IMPROV FOR CREATIVITY AND RESILIENCE

Improv is an art that requires us to make quick decisions. We learn to make decisions with available information and commit to the decisions we make. Improv also emphasizes the importance of embracing failure and learning from it. The seven auditions I went through gave me consistent motivation to adapt to changing circumstances in a fun way.

We in the ADHD community have all encountered problems as a result of growing up in a society that wasn't made for us. Improv presents an opportunity to apply our natural skills in a place where our natural skills are rewarded.



## Starting a company from the ground up and managing it is difficult, so to stay organized, I rely heavily on two key tools: my calendar and my prioritized to-do list.

### IMPROV FOR COMMUNICATION

On stage, improvisers perform without a script, so we have to develop active listening and effective communication skills.

The process of communicating in improv has three steps. First, we listen fully to our scene partner, without listening *for* anything in particular. Second, we pause to reflect and process what we heard. Third, we respond while being fully present with our partner.

When you see an improv show, it may not look like we're going through all of these steps, as the dialogue can be rather fast, but we train on how to effectively communicate like an improviser.

For those of us with ADHD, the practice of improv can lead to improvements in our communication skills. We slow down with the practice of active listening and take time to absorb what is being said, even learning to

hyperfocus on what is being said. We prevent the habit of responding too quickly or talking excessively. Over time, this skill can become ingrained in our personal and social life.

### TOOLS FOR WORKING WITH ADHD

Starting a company from the ground up and managing it is difficult, so to stay organized, I rely heavily on two key tools: my calendar and my prioritized to-do list.

My calendar serves as a high-level overview of my daily schedule, which includes everything I do, like working and meetings, but also sleeping, working out, and eating. I manage my calendar, and then my calendar manages me. My to-do list provides a more granular breakdown of my tasks for the day. In each task, I take copious notes to ensure I have all the information I need. These two tools help me stay on track and avoid getting bogged down by distractions. With my over-scheduled calendar and my prioritized to-do list, I stay efficient in managing my company and my life.

### DEVELOP THESE SKILLS

Improv has numerous practical benefits for people with ADHD, namely, developing our communication, focus, and quick thinking into useful tools for everyday life. After becoming an improviser, I have developed greater adaptability and problem-solving skills that I apply to real-life situations. By learning to think on my feet, I am better able to react to unexpected situations. Improv changed my life and helped me to learn how to use my strengths, rather than trying to operate in a world not meant for my brain.

I highly recommend giving improv a try if you struggle to manage your ADHD. It's a fun, non-threatening way to develop useful skills that may benefit you in ways you can't yet imagine.

Reach out to us if you're interested! You can find out more about using improv to develop your creativity, resilience, and communication skills. We will be delighted to help you maximize the advantages of ADHD and live your best life. **A**



**Nathan Minns** is the founder of Green Light Improv, a professional training company that cultivates resilience, enhances creativity, and improves communication, all while inspiring connection through improv comedy. Learn more at [GreenLightImprov.com](http://GreenLightImprov.com).