

# Transcript — What *Paris & Pups* gets right about ADHD - from someone who helped create it

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## **[0:00] Why ADHD representation in media matters**

**[Description:** A person with short brown hair wearing a blue button-down shirt sits in an office and speaks directly to the camera.]

**Andy:** If your child has ADHD, what they see on screen is so important. If ADHD is misrepresented, they're more likely to call themselves lazy, lose confidence, and feel shame. That's why we worked on Paris Hilton's new animated series, *Paris & Pups*, to get it right. Like this.

## **[0:16] How *Paris & Pups* shows real ADHD traits**

**[Description:** Clip from *Paris & Pups*, an animated series. A hotel receptionist is talking to Miss Star. Her pup, Slivington, is next to her, panting and excited.]

**Receptionist:** Yes, Miss Star.

[**Description:** Slivington jumps up and does a 360-degree turn.]

**Slivington:** Treats!!

**Miss Star:** Slivington, please don't get the zoomies.

[**Description:** Slivington gets more and more excited and starts running around the hotel lobby.]

**Slivington:** Gotta zoom. Gotta zoom. Diamond. Diamond. Gotta zoom. Gotta zoom.

**Andy:** That's impulsivity. And Slivington jumping and bouncing were your hint. Like many kids with ADHD, Slivington feels the irresistible buildup of energy and excitement. And she uses her self-talk to try to get it under control. But it's not enough.

That's why a TV series like this is so important. Kids feel seen and parents learn useful phrases and small habits that they can reinforce at home to build support, not shame.

So today, I'm going to show you two more scenes, share why they're so important, and provide simple at-home steps to strengthen and develop the exact skills you just saw.

### **[1:03] How we helped shape *Paris & Pups***

Quick intro. I'm Dr. Andy Khan, a licensed psychologist with over 25 years of experience and the Associate Director of Expertise and Strategic Design at Understood. I also sit on the Council on Social Media and Mental

Wellbeing for the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Understood's partnership with Paris Hilton's media company and nonprofit, 11-11 Media Impact, has been growing over the past two years.

**[Description:** As Andy describes the partnership, a wave appears on the left side of the screen showing two animated characters. One is Star, a blond with a ponytail, big green eyes, and wearing a pink tracksuit. The other is Slivington, her pup, with curly hair, pink ears, blue eyes, and wearing a pink hoodie.]

And our involvement in their development of the *Paris & Pups* series was initially designed to provide expert advice on developing two characters with ADHD, Star and Slivington, at the series conception stage.

The specific traits of these characters included their unique ADHD qualities. Additionally, I helped embed social-emotional learning, executive function, and universal design for learning skills into character arcs and plot lines. These skills benefit kids with ADHD, but ultimately help all children and even adults who are tuning into the series.

**[Description:** The screen splits to show an image of Andy and Paris Hilton sitting at a table. A boom mic is above them. On the table and on a board behind them are concept colors, drawings, and ideas for the show.]

Working on this project was amazing because Paris and all the writers and producers of the show didn't just listen to my advice to have simple images of characters with ADHD. They were excited to write stories and implement skills that could truly teach and help kids learn about themselves and develop healthy relationships with one another, all while

honoring their differences.

Now, let's break down this next scene. And I want you to watch for Slivington's feelings of shame.

## **[2:19] Simple at-home strategies that help kids manage shame, distractibility, and time blindness**

**[Description:** Clip from *Paris & Pups*, an animated series. Dramatic music. The hotel receptionist is talking.]

**Receptionist:** New hotel rule. No dogs in the lobby without a leash.

**[Description:** Star, Slivington, and four other pups all gasp. Slivinton and three other pups all have sad puppy-dog eyes and drop their heads. Next, we see Star sitting on a couch. Three pups are next to her, one is pacing on the floor, and Slivington is lying on the floor with a sad expression.]

**Pacing pup:** Sheroes don't wear leashes.

**Pup 1:** Brah. Same.

**Pup 2:** We've always gone free at the Fabulux Hotel.

**Pup 3:** Diamonds clash with confinement.

**[Description:** Slivington makes sad sounds while lying on the floor. Star gets off the couch and moves toward Slivington.]

**Star:** It's okay, Slington. I get really excited about things, too, sometimes.

**[Description:** Split screen. The last scene on the left and Andy on the

right.]

**Andy:** Now that's shame. Shame is something kids with ADHD experience frequently when they're not able to meet others' expectations in spite of their own best efforts.

[**Description:** Split screen. Text on the left and Andy on the right.]

[**On-screen text:** At-home tips:

- Empathize so they don't feel alone.
- Say: "I see it's hard. Lots of kids feel this."
- Team up: "We can work on it together."]

You can learn an important lesson from Star, who empathizes with Slivington and shows her that she's not alone in having this difficulty.

Parents, you could say, "I see that it's really hard for you to control yourself at times. And a lot of kids go through this, too. I even struggled with this as a child." If you experience that.

If you want to take it yet another step, you can say, "I see how hard it is for you to control yourself at times. That's something we can work on together. But for now, let's give ourselves some grace and try again."

[**Description:** Clip from *Paris & Pups*, an animated series. Star and Slivington are in the kitchen. Star carries a cup and saucer to Slivington, who is on the table next to a see-through jar of cookies.]

**Star:** Got the teacup and saucer.

[**Description:** Slivington's tail wags.]

**Slivington:** Yay! Let's treat ourselves with a treat.

**Star:** I could go for a snack.

[**Description:** Music starts playing. Star starts to walk away from the table as Slivington eyes the cookies. Slivington dives into the cookies. Star walks over to a bowl of fruit and picks up an apple. She turns around and sees Slivington eating from the cookie jar.]

**Star:** Uh....

[**Description:** Slivington looks up from the cookie jar, with crumbs on her face. Dramatic music plays.]

**Slivington:** What? Is there something on my face?

[**Description:** Star laughs and walks over to Slivington and puts her head in her hand on the table.]

**Star:** Ooooh. You look like when you had your first biscuit as a puppy.

[**Description:** Slivington gets excited and jumps up.]

**Slivington:** Really? Oooh, do you have pics? I want to see.

[**Description:** Star and Slivington lying on their backs on a large bed with a photo album next to them.]

**Slivington:** I feel like we're supposed to be doing something...

[**Description:** Star and Slivington both gasp and jump up from the bed.]

**Star and Slivington:** The decorations!!

[**Description:** Split screen. The last scene on the left and Andy on the right.]

**Andy:** In this scene, Star and Slivington struggle with distractibility. First, a yummy snack. And then the family album locks them into a period of hyperfocus. Unfortunately, it's not what they need with the clock ticking away before the tea party. This time blindness leads to some frantic moments where mistakes are bound to happen.

What you can do at home to help your child manage daily situations like this is setting a timer for each step of the activity so that time doesn't get away from you like it did for Star and Slivington.

## **[4:08] Why positive ADHD representation reduces stigma**

[**On-screen text:** Why this show matters]

ADHD is so commonly misrepresented in the media because writers develop characters based on stereotypes and without any efforts to intentionally represent characters in an honest and useful way.

Character stereotypes, all too often, serve to focus on negative aspects of a person's functioning. And when kids see ADHD as a source of failure, ridicule, and being inept, they experience worsening shame and self-image.

When kids can see the strengths, challenges, and ways to succeed with ADHD, it gives them the hope and opportunity to imagine the life they want to live. Kids and parents can both benefit from seeing these more balanced and positive images of ADHD in the real world to help them best help their kids and manage the times when things get tough.

*Paris & Pups* is a show about a child and her pups living life and having fun. But living life well is about learning to solve problems, manage your emotions, and helping yourself and those around you live their best lives.

**[Description:** Clip from *Paris & Pups*, an animated series. The hotel receptionist is drinking from a cup and talking to Star and the pups. They are outside.]

**Receptionist:** Oh, alright, fine. No more lobby leash rule.

**[Description:** All the pups get excited and jump on the table. Star gives them all a big hug.]

**Pup 1:** Brah. Yes.

**Star:** Big hug for Slivington zoomies. Without them, we wouldn't have this lovely tea on the terrace.

**[Description:** Split screen. The last scene on the left and Andy on the right.]

**Andy:** As you can see, this isn't just a cartoon. It's a chance for kids with ADHD to feel seen and all of us to learn new skills and perspectives.

This episode captures one of Understood's key mission statements:



representation matters. And once Mr. Scenifer can see Slivington and the pups more accurately, the stigma of Slivington's one bad moment no longer defines her or her ADHD.

I'm really proud to have been a part of helping to shape this and many more stories in the *Paris & Pup* series.

**[On-screen text:** Watch *Paris & Pups* and find more resources in the description below]

If you found this helpful, you can find more resources on ADHD by checking out the description and at [Understood.org](https://understood.org). And don't forget to subscribe for more content like this.

**[On-screen text:** Logos. [Understood.org](https://understood.org) in partnership with 11:11 Media, 9 Story Media Group, and Happy Nest]

**[On-screen text:** Shaping the world for difference. [Understood](https://understood.org) logo]