

The Employment Journey

Please take one

PEI's Top Source for Career Planning and Job Seeking

Patrick McKenna - from class clown to award-winning actor

by Stacy Dunn

Remember the class clown at your school? Ever wondered what career path he or she has taken? In Patrick McKenna's case, he became an award-winning actor, writer, creative producer and director.

He recently visited Charlottetown to speak at the National Conference on Learning Disabilities. He told the audience that he had once thought his rambunctious school days, busy lifestyle and ambitious career choices were just him being him, but then he suspected he had ADHD.

In 2009, Patrick with his wife Janis by his side agreed to be diagnosed and educated about ADHD on camera. The documentary, called *ADD and Loving It!* was both humorous and educational, and received rave reviews across Canada and the United States. It turned Patrick into an advocate of sorts for ADHD education.

How his career got started

"I always had an interest in theatre but I didn't think that was a career option in Canada. So early on I put the idea away and said I would just be funny at work in whatever job I have."

In grade 11, he took a school trip to see The Second City perform in Toronto. The Second City is the renowned improvisational theatre company that spawned comedic talents such as John Candy and Martin Short.

From there, he was hooked. "When Second City reared its head in my life, I said 'that's what I want to do.' I first worked there as the night manager. When I heard there was a casting call and even though I didn't think they would hire me, I decided to sneak in for an audition. I was hired as an actor the next day.

"It was the perfect environment for me. That's how life can go. Amazing opportunities fall in front of you sometimes."

Patrick's career path was always in entertainment

He did stand-up comedy in universities and colleges across Canada. After years of performing at The Second City, he landed the role of Harold on *The Red Green Show*.

"I was doing *The Red Green Show* five days a week. Then I landed a role on *Traders*, and that was three days a week. Suddenly I was working seven days a week with crossover and probably 110 pages of script to learn. So you learn to memorize quickly."

Patrick says many people asked him how he could work on two TV series, one a comedy, the other a drama, at the same time. This seven-days-a-week schedule lasted five years. He won Gemini Awards for both roles.

Living with ADHD

Patrick says he is still learning to cope with his disorder. He takes medication, and he's thankful for his training at The Second City, which taught him to live in the moment. Patrick says it's a skill he thinks people with ADHD should take with them in their job search and workplace.

Coping with ADHD in job search and the workplace

"If you can find work that allows you to be creative, it's fantastic. Sometimes there are areas of your work that gets frustrating and overwhelming. Try to take advantage of your skills and delegate if possible. It's you delegating your life instead of your life delegating you."

"It's great if you can get help with job interviews. They can be difficult because you don't want to go off on a tangent. You want to stay focussed and respond to what is required."

"There's that cliché, 'Find what you love to do and you'll never have to work another day in your life.' That is especially true with ADHD."

For more information on Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, go to www.totallyadd.com
To learn more about the Learning Disabilities Association of PEI, go to www.ldapei.ca
To learn more about a career in the performing arts, go to www.peiculture.ca



Patrick McKenna recently spoke at the National Conference on Learning Disabilities about his experience with ADHD.

Look for the opportunity and go for it

No matter what career you are interested in or what barriers you face, Patrick says not to let anything stop you. "Ask what you can learn from this, and what you can apply to the next venture down the road. If being a star on the international stage as an actor is a goal, go for it."

He also talked about a fellow cast member at The Second City. "I worked beside a guy who was about 17 years old. But most of the venues the theatre company performed in were licensed, so they had to let him go. The cast felt bad for this guy because he had enormous talent. He went off to England to continue his comedy career and create such popular characters as Wayne Campbell and Austin Powers. His name is Mike Myers."

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