

Writing from the heart about ADHD



South-West author Wendy Coyle has so far produced two books for children based on her own, often challenging, experiences of raising three sons.

[dropcap style="color: #a02f2f;"] W [/dropcap]hen author **Wendy Coyle** was growing up, there was no such thing as Attention Deficit Disorder or the like, instead some school kids were just classed as “naughty” and in need of a firm hand.

A generation later, ADD and its close cousin, [Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder](#), are diagnosable conditions that often require medical intervention, but that hasn’t stopped children who suffer from the condition being dismissed as “uncontrollable” or “naughty”.

“What a lot of people still don’t understand is that kids with ADHD don’t want to be like they are, but it is how their brain fires off,” Wendy says.

Wendy, who lives on two acres in Mepunga with her husband, Ian, and their three sons, speaks from first-hand experience, with her eldest child, Jack, diagnosed with ADHD during Grade 1 in 2005.

The family was living in Melbourne at the time and Wendy “began to write down notes on scraps of paper” about how Jack’s ADHD affected himself and those around him.

By 2008, the scraps of paper began to take shape in Wendy’s mind as a children’s book that could help others – children, teachers and parents – to see ADHD from the perspective of the young sufferer.

The Naughty Kid, featuring a seven-year-old main character called Jack, was self-published in 2012.

“This labelling of a child as ‘the naughty kid’ is really powerful because once they have that title, it is very hard to lose it, no matter how hard they might be trying to change,” Wendy says.

“My kid was that ‘naughty kid’ and I know how terribly hard that was for Jack.”



Wendy with son Jack, now 15, whose battle with ADHD spurred her to write her first book, 'The Naughty Kid', so that others might better understand the condition.

[dropcap style="color: #a02f2f;"] T [/dropcap>he book hit a nerve with other parents of ADHD children, with one mother writing to Wendy to tell her that she cried when reading "Jack's" story, as it mirrored that of her own child.

Jack is now 15 and no longer on the medication that was required to stabilise his impulsive behaviour. But just as Jack was emerging from the worst of his symptoms, Wendy's youngest child, Ryan, was diagnosed with ADD – "no H this time" – again in Grade 1.

"That seems to be when it starts to become a problem, because while the other kids are all settling into school and routines, these kids are going the other way," Wendy explains.

Raising three "gorgeous but often challenging boys" has been

at times exhausting, but Wendy says it also fuelled her creativity.

Since *The Naughty Kid* – which Wendy is reproducing as an e-book – she has published a chunky, almost indestructible book, *My Very Own Alphabet Book*, which has large cut-outs for personal photographs to be inserted for each letter.

“This is how I taught my boys the alphabet: through familiarity and consistency,” Wendy says.

Earlier this year, Wendy launched a *My Very Own Alphabet* app and, when we meet, she is finalising the manufacture of a plush toy, Angus the ant, who features in the book.



Wendy admits she is rarely not thinking about more book ideas or ways of extending the reach of

those she has already written.

[dropcap style="color: #a02f2f;"] W [/dropcap]endy laughs as she admits that her own mind, much to the frustration of partner Ian, “doesn’t stop sparking with ideas” now that she has been bitten by the book bug.

“I really like writing and I am always thinking of something...I also really like writing for boys, because it gets them interested in reading,” she says.

Her next project is a series called *Billy And Max* about two adventurous farm boys who are always narrowly avoiding trouble...or meeting it head on.

Despite being born in Melbourne and having lived there for most of her life, Wendy has embraced the country since moving to South-West Victoria – “just for two years” – in 2010.

When she is not writing, or mucking about on the land, Wendy works as an administrative assistant at Warrnambool College and Noorat Primary School.

“Writing is a risk, especially a financial one, but you have to take a risk to do something interesting with your life,” she says.

“There is always an element of uncertainty about whether it will work, but you still have to take that chance.”

[box] ***The Naughty Kid and My Very Own Alphabet Book* are available locally through Warrnambool Books. To find out more about Wendy’s work, visit her [website](#) and find her on [Facebook](#).** [/box]

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