

by Dr Susan Ozer

Foreword

Further to her two books, 'Transition information for children and young people with ADHD/ADD' and 'The Special Brain', both published with educational grants and widely appreciated, Dr. Susan Ozer's new book, 'Rainbow' is available to all those who need to know more about ADHD. There has always been a gap between medical care provided and psycho-education available to children and young people with ADHD and their families. Dr. Ozer continues to fill this gap through this book, which provides some useful insight into ADHD in girls and the importance of early detection and management. Furthermore, it gives a fuller understanding of the difficulties associated with ADHD in girls, and in doing so help improve self-esteem and confidence. The book places emphasis on the provision of support at home and school. 'Rainbow', is very informative and is written in simple language. Dr Ozer continues to use imaginative characters, to keep the younger readers engaged making it easier for them to relate to the story.

Dr. Susan Ozer is passionate and dedicated to children and young people with ADHD. She is innovative, motivated, and creative and strives to provide psycho-education to the wider community in the best possible way. 'Rainbow' conveys this perfectly.

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Acknowledgments

Illustrated by Chris Martin www.mrchrismartin.co.uk

Design and print - Ian Curtis, First Sight Graphics Ltd www.firstsightgraphics.com

Supported by an unrestricted educational grant from Flynn Pharma Ltd.

UK/MXL/0719/0079 - August 2019

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Rainbow

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Shannon yawned. Last night she had again struggled to fall asleep. Drinking warm milk before bed and counting to 100 again and again had not helped either.



Miss Tate was doing a lesson on traffic lights and roads in the city. Later, the whole class would be going to the town centre to talk to some important people about how traffic lights worked.

Traffic lights and roads were not one of Shannon's favourite things.

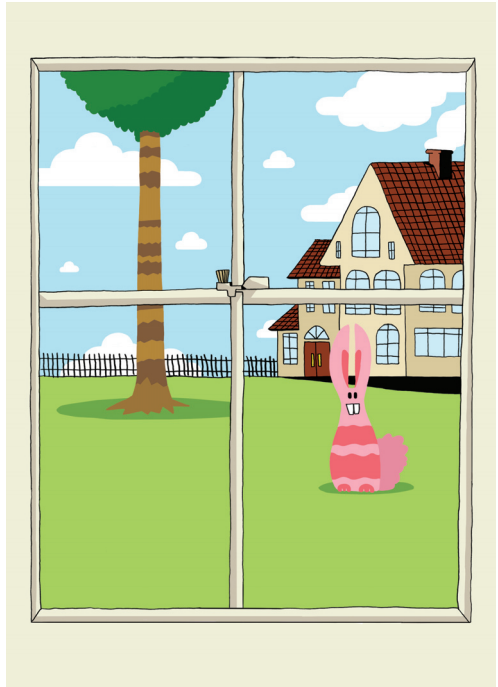
“Erm...don’t know, Miss Tate,” Shannon replied in a small voice.

“Away with the fairies yet again, Shannon,” scolded Miss Tate.

The class giggled, making Shannon blush. Luckily the bell for break time rang and Shannon was relieved.

Shannon felt really tired. She missed her last class. In her present one everyone had a desk of their own. In Shannon’s last class, a group of five children sat around a large table. Shannon missed her friends who usually sat with her at the same table. At that table she hadn’t been ‘away with the fairies’ that much, and her friends gently prodded her whenever her attention wandered. In her new class, it didn’t help that her desk, though in front of the class, had been placed near a window.

Shannon loved to sit near the window. There were so many interesting things to look at. She knew where all the birds’ nests were. She even had a name for the curious rabbit that came to her window every day - Scamper Biggy Ears. Shannon was convinced that Scamper Biggy Ears really understood human language and so listened in during class lessons. Maybe Scamper Biggy Ears was a teacher in the rabbit world and this was part of how she prepared her lessons before her classes?



Shannon knew that her teachers and family had been worried about her for a long time. Recently, she had done some tests with a special teacher called an educational psychologist. The special teacher had told her teachers and mother that Shannon struggled a little with maths but was good in all of the other subjects. She said that it was a struggle to keep Shannon's attention during the tests. The special teacher had suggested Shannon may have a mild form of a condition called ADHD and suggested she see a specialist. Shannon's mum had booked an appointment to see the specialist, which was only two days away.

The specialist, Dr Yanos, was not what Shannon expected. He was a soft-spoken gentleman who seemed to understand Shannon. Dr Yanos explained that ADHD meant attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. He said that children with ADHD have problems paying attention and find it hard to concentrate. Some children always seem to be on the go and do things without thinking. Dr Yanos said it could explain why Shannon seemed to be 'away with the fairies' a lot of the time.

Dr Yanos also told her mother that Shannon needed a lot of support at home and school to focus and concentrate on her work. Sometimes, if support wasn't enough, some children had to be given special medicine to help with their concentration. He showed Shannon and her mother some drawings and pictures and explained how ADHD affected the brain. After the end of the appointment, Dr Yanos asked Shannon whether she had any questions. Shannon blushed, she wanted to ask a lot of questions but felt too shy.

"Well then Shannon," Dr Yanos said in his kind voice, "I have given your mum a lot of books about ADHD. There is a special book in your pack called 'Rainbow' that you can read with your mum. Hopefully the book will help you understand ADHD more and also let you think about



questions you would like to ask your mum.” Dr Yanos continued, “‘Rainbow’ is about a traffic light at a busy roundabout.” Shannon liked Dr Yanos even more. She loved reading with her mother, especially in the evenings before going to bed. Whenever her mum read to her, Shannon would sometimes disappear into her own make-believe world and her mum would have to remind her to concentrate.

In the car on the way home, Shannon was curious about the book ‘Rainbow’. How could a traffic light teach her anything about ADHD? Shannon couldn’t wait for the evening bedtime story to find out. She remembered very little of the lesson about traffic lights they had in class. But she had enjoyed the school trip where the whole class had been shown different traffic lights and taught about road safety.



Bedtime came at last. Shannon brushed her teeth and settled under her bed covers.

“Mum, can we please read the traffic light story?”

“Of course,” Shannon’s mother replied.

Shannon’s mother was also looking forward to reading the book with Shannon. She had liked the way Dr Yanos explained ADHD and included Shannon in the discussion. Dr Yanos had given her a lot of information on ADHD and support groups she could go to. She was also happy there was something in the pack that she could read with Shannon to help her understand ADHD better.

“Are you ready for the story?” asked Shannon’s mum.

“Yes, yes mum, can’t wait,” Shannon replied breathlessly.

“Okay, here we go then my princess,” her mum whispered.

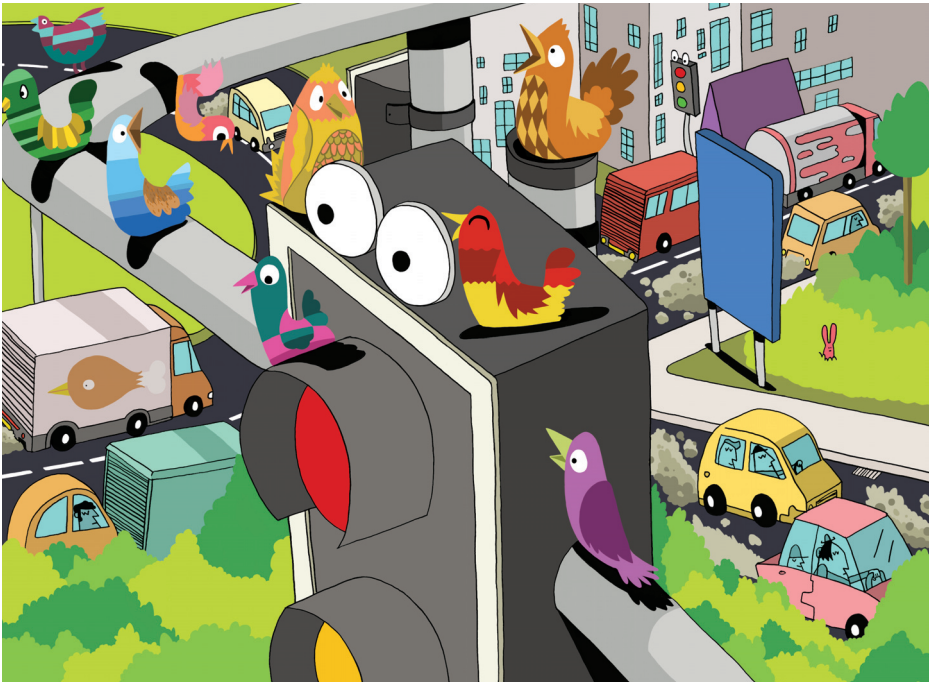


Rainbow

Rainbow woke up with a start. She felt really tired still. She had dreamt about being on a very scary rollercoaster, feeling she was going to fall. Just as she was about to scream for her mum, she felt something cold on her legs and then woke up. It was the morning mist. To begin with, Rainbow was pleasantly surprised that she had slept at all. The trouble was that she found it hard to wind down after a busy day. Yesterday had been particularly busy and exciting. It was Rainbow's first day at little big school. The name was a little odd. It just meant that Rainbow had finished infant school and was now starting her third year in primary school. Little big school was the name Rainbow's mum had used and this had stuck in her head.



Although she was excited, Rainbow was also confused. Here in little big school the cars were faster, noisier and not as patient. The birds, particularly sparrows, didn't seem to have anything to do except to remind traffic lights that they couldn't walk let alone fly and that they were stuck in one place all day. The cars seem to be in a hurry and angry all the time. As for the big trucks, they behaved as if they owned the road, which annoyed the cars even more.



Rainbow didn't mind about being teased by the birds, she was glad to be a traffic light. Being a traffic light made her feel important. Big trucks, cars and motorcycles all had to stop, wait or go at a traffic light. If you didn't do what the traffic lights asked, the stern police cars always lying in wait would stop you. A traffic light had the important job of directing traffic. Rainbow loved the morning and

evening rush-hour traffic the best. She had never seen this at infant traffic school. All the hustle and bustle and noise really excited Rainbow. No wonder she couldn't wind down at bedtime. She started imagining that she was one of the huge traffic lights at a huge roundabout in a very big city. These were the high-school traffic lights. They looked really important. Rainbow's mum called them big-school kids. At big school, which was still ages away, she would show all those cars, motorcycles and trucks who was the boss. She would..."Wake up Rainbow," cried Jack, Rainbow's best friend. "You will get into trouble with Miss Penny and the cars. Are you dreaming again?" Rainbow blushed. Her vivid imagination often got her into trouble at infant school. Rainbow's teachers and mum had wondered whether she would cope at little big school.

Rainbow was not her real name. Her real name was Roseberry Liliana Ferguson. She had been called Rainbow for as long as she could remember. It was easy to understand why. Rainbow often disappeared into her own world, even during rush-hour traffic. At traffic school it was very important for all the traffic lights to work together. If a traffic light showed a red colour all the cars and even the big trucks had to stop. A green light meant they could go and yellow or amber meant they had to wait. The trouble with Rainbow was that she couldn't seem to control her lights properly. Sometimes all her lights came on at once, flashing red, amber and green, and that's why she was called Rainbow! When the group she worked with showed a particular colour, she wasn't quick enough and showed a different colour. Sometimes she was too quick and changed her traffic light colour before all the others. Infant traffic school had been fun and only difficult when she felt under pressure. Infant school had been at a small, friendly junction, on a street that was only busy when some of the more impatient cars, always in a hurry, took short cuts.



At those times Rainbow's lights sometimes went crazy, as if they had a mind of their own. Rainbow's teachers and parents told her she would get better as she grew up.

But Rainbow knew that things were not getting better. She felt as if she couldn't control herself sometimes. As she was no longer in infant traffic school and on a busy roundabout, she needed to concentrate. Poor concentration or a wrong signal could be dangerous. She knew her lights sometimes sent wrong messages to the cars, making them even angrier. The cars would then honk their horns loudly, confusing Rainbow even more. The other traffic lights had begun to notice and would scold Rainbow.

The birds did not help things very much. They seemed to always be waiting for Rainbow to make a mistake and get scolded by Miss Penny. They would then chirp loudly with laughter. In fact, the rude birds had even made a song for Rainbow:

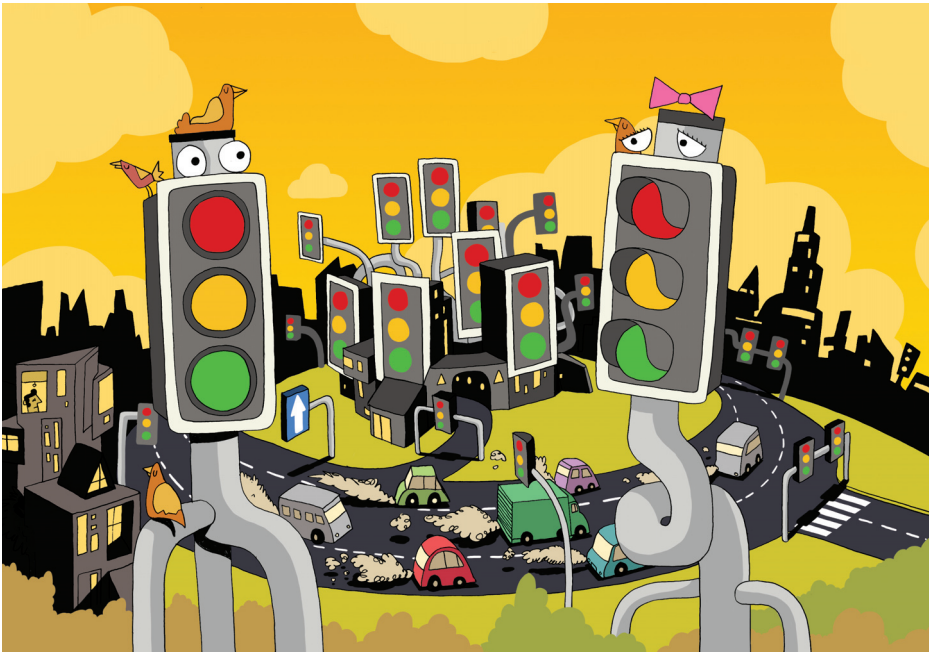
*Rainbow, Rainbow flash your lights
Red, gold, green and cause a fright
Rainbow, Rainbow flash your lights
Red, gold, green and watch us light*

Rainbow ignored the birds. They had been singing this song as long as she could remember, she even joined in sometimes.

Somehow this time Rainbow didn't like the birds teasing her. She wanted to make a big impression on the rest of the class at little big school and Miss Penny, the class teacher. The more she got cross with the birds the more her lights flashed, which made the cars more cross and the birds chirp more loudly with laughter.



Rainbow didn't know why she sometimes couldn't control her lights. Last year, she had overheard her mother talking to one of the street lights, Joanne, about her problems. Joanne had suggested to her mum that Rainbow may have a computer program which wasn't working properly, causing her lights to sometimes act strangely. The street light had told her mother she had overheard some men talking about it. Nothing had happened though, and Rainbow had moved on to little big school.



At night when everything was quiet again and the traffic lights didn't need to work so hard, Jack comforted Rainbow. Jack and Rainbow had to work together so they showed the same colours. It was a miracle that Jack hadn't stopped being Rainbow's best friend. Rainbow really felt lucky to have him as a friend.

“Are you finding it hard to pay attention when it's busy?” Jack asked.
“We could have got into real trouble today you know.”

"I know," sighed Rainbow. "I don't know what's the matter with me. I find it very difficult to pay attention, especially during rush hour. I wonder whether I'm ready for little big school."



Rainbow was frustrated. She knew all about the rules for traffic lights and knew that any wrong signals would confuse the cars and result in a big muddle. Some cars would stop when they were supposed to wait or go. Others would go when they were meant to stop. The more she thought about the dangers the more anxious she became. Rainbow hated it when the others were mad at her. She also jumped with fright whenever a cross car or truck honked loudly at her. Rainbow didn't like that at all.

"A penny for your thoughts," whispered Jack.

"I was only wondering about my lights," whispered Rainbow.

"Isn't it time you told Miss Penny about your lights?" asked Jack.

"She is going to notice soon and she may think you are only being naughty."

“I will think about it,” Rainbow promised.

Rainbow felt worried about telling Miss Penny. Would she understand and help make her feel less anxious about her lights? Rainbow fell asleep as she was thinking about her lights. She dreamt about the scary rollercoaster again. It went round and round and higher and higher into the clouds. This time Rainbow found herself flying with the birds.

“What are you doing Rainbow?” chirped the birds.

Rainbow was happy.” I am flying like you in my rollercoaster and not scared,” replied Rainbow.

“Wake up Rainbow, rush-hour traffic starts in an hour.”

“All right Jack, I can hear you,” murmured Rainbow drowsily.



Rainbow felt really rested. She had liked her dream. She made up her mind to tell Miss Penny about her lights. Fred the street light had told her that Miss Penny was a very nice teacher. She had helped other traffic lights like her to pay attention and not react too quickly, especially during rush hour. These traffic lights had moved up from little big school to big school or high school and had done well. Miss Penny knew they were doing well because the birds told her. Birds liked to annoy and tease but they never told fibs. When the birds were in a good mood they told the lights all about countries they visited during the cold winter months.



Fred said that Miss Penny would show Rainbow how to control her lights better and also pay more attention during rush-hour traffic.

Rainbow couldn't wait. She had even made a little song like the one the birds sang, this time showing that there was no need to call her Rainbow any more.

*Rainbow, Rainbow flash your lights
Red, gold, green and reach a mile
Rainbow, Rainbow flash your lights
Red, gold, green and watch us smile*

The end.



Shannon looked at her mother. “Aww, is it really the end?”

“Unfortunately it is, sweetheart,” her mother replied.

“Rainbow has the same problems I have. Her teacher, Miss Penny, is a very nice teacher.”

Shannon's mum nodded her head in agreement. “Like Rainbow, you will get more help at school to concentrate better. I will read all the information about ADHD Dr Yanos gave me so I can know how to help you at home.”

“Will I have to take medicine one day?” Shannon asked her mum.

“Dr Yanos said he will wait and see if your ADHD gets better with support,” answered Shannon’s mum.

“It’s your bedtime now. We can look at more pictures about ADHD tomorrow. Goodnight my angel,” whispered her mum tenderly.

Shannon yawned, “Goodnight mum,” replied a sleepy and happy little girl.

Shannon thought about Rainbow. She liked the little song Rainbow had made about herself. Shannon thought about her own little song she would make after she had received help for her ADHD and become better at paying attention. Maybe it would sound like this:

*Shannon, Shannon hear her story
Shannon, Shannon no more fairies.....*



Disclaimer

The information presented in this book is intended to educate and provide a source of general information and support.

It is not intended as a substitute for medical diagnosis or treatment.



Review

'Rainbow' is based on a story about a traffic light that gets confused and anxious because she has concentration problems. However, she realises that it's not her fault that she can't control her flashing. This is made worse by the teasing birds and the honking cars.

I liked 'Rainbow' because it makes children understand ADHD in a fun and imaginative way. It does this by telling children the facts about ADHD through a traffic light with similar problems. Also, it teaches children that ADHD is nothing to be ashamed of because it's not anyone's fault, and you should ask somebody for help to get the support you need.

Erina Mannan

Age: 8 years

Year 3

