

**Being impulsive**

**Seeing things in a different way**

## **Contradictions**

**Perfectionistic**

**Passion for beautiful things**

**Importance of details**

**Thinking ahead**

**Moodswings**

**Hyperfocus**

**Chaotic**

# **Anke**

**Oblivious**

**Direct**

**© 2011-2012**

**Ambitious**

**Funny**

**Smart** **Strong opinion about things**

**Different thoughts spinning through your head**

**Critical**

**Functioning at a top level**

**Feeling useless**

**Frustration**

**Compensating**

**Social**

**Difficulties to get started**





Steunpunt  
Inclusief  
Hoger  
Onderwijs

This portrait of Anke was created by Anke, Delphine Callewaert and Delfien Versaevel, under the authority and guidance of SIHO.

# Index

## INTRODUCTION

### ANKE'S HOUSE

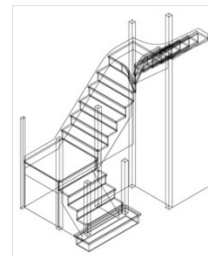


### GROUND FLOOR: A LOOK INSIDE THE WORLD OF ADHD

- ADHD and it's paradoxes
- Positive factors
- Negative factors
- How to switch off and create a life with a grip
- In other words: 7 cues to become an effective adult with ADHD

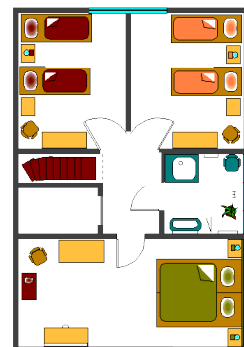


### THE STAIRCASE: THE CONNECTION BETWEEN TWO WORLDS



### FIRST FLOOR: A LOOK INSIDE THE WORLD OF DESIGNING

- Inspirations
- Personal style
- Experiences
- Achievements



### EPILOGUE

# INTRODUCTION

Dear reader,

This is the portrait of Anke. It's a catalogue with texts, quotes, images and figures collected to give a look inside the world of a passionate interior architect with ADHD.

During the making of this portrait, Anke was finalising her internship with a local furniture designer in Stockholm. After having several conversations on Skype and having met her at an exhibition in Belgium we visited her in Stockholm to see how her life in Sweden was like.

After the part where we give an overall view on Anke in the section: 'Anke's house', Anke zooms in on her ADHD and her designs (respectively the 'ground floor' and 'first floor' of 'her house'). Because of the importance of the connection between those two worlds we also take a look at the 'staircase'. In the end Anke gives a view on her international experience in Sweden and an epilogue.



## ANKE'S HOUSE

-Who is Anke?-



A house represents a whole, a collection of different things. By walking through the 'house' you will get an image of who Anke is.

As with a house, you first see the outside. With people you first see the way they represent themselves to the world.

Later on, you get curious. When getting to know each other better, you might get a chance to peep through the windows. When you are lucky you will see what is inside.

Anke's house can be described as a warm and welcoming place with an open door, since she is so open and communicative.

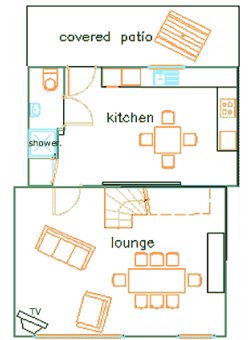
The keywords below can be seen as the bricks of Anke's house. The words represent an enumeration of different characteristics separated by slashes to express chaos and multiplicity. Some words are bigger than others to give them extra force and to catch the reader's eye.

**Different thoughts spinning through your head/** Difficulties to get started / being impulsive/  
**Contradictions** /Perfectionistic/ **Importance of details/**Thinking ahead/**Chaotic/**Oblivious/**Moodswings/**seeing things in a different way/**hyperfocus/** functioning at a top level/  
feeling useless/ frustration/ **compensating/** Funny/ **Critical/**  
Passion for beautiful things/ Social/direct /**strong opinion about things/** ambitious/ smart



# DOWNSTAIRS:

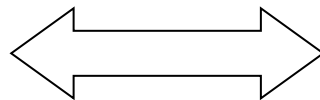
# A LOOK INSIDE THE WORLD OF ADHD



## ADHD and it's paradoxes

The main characteristic of living with ADHD for Anke is living with paradoxes. The different paradoxes fluctuate in time and in impact. For example, Anke mentioned that her ADHD characteristics become more severe in the evenings, when her medication isn't working anymore.

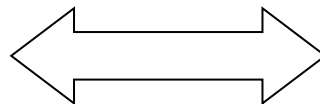
### Hyperfocus



### Distraction

*I can be super focused when I'm really into something, for example when I'm designing. Sometimes it happens that I can't even hear the radio playing when I'm at the studio. At other times I want to shut the music down because it's distracting me.*

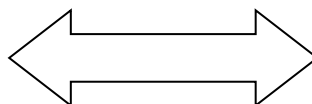
### Self-confidence



### Feeling insecure

*When I'm feeling insecure I tell myself that I am capable. For example when I was nervous for my exams I told myself I could do it and then I believed it. Everyone was saying how self-confident I was. Like now I have a chance to get a job where I would love to work. Instead of thinking in a negative way, I tell myself: I have got the job!*

### Perform at top level



### Clumsy feeling

*When the evening comes and my medication isn't working anymore I can do clumsy and stupid things. At other times I'm fully concentrated and I achieve great things. Nominations and prizes for my designs acknowledge that.*

## Positive factors

- **Gifted for creativity**

*Creativity should be seen in a very broad way. For example it can be found in fashion, writing, dancing... My creativity becomes visible in my profession and the designs I make.*

- **Thinking outside the box**

*I make my own choices without thinking about what others think 'I should' do. I consider alternatives, I'm very critical and I frequently asks questions like: 'Why is this?'*

- **Unpredictable**

*I'm quite impulsive and I think living with me is never dull. I'm always capable of doing something unexpected. For example when somebody was skydiving at a party, I saw how easy it was to grab his wallet, and I took it. After a few minutes I gave it back of course. By this I showed him how easy it was to steal his wallet and how he should pay more attention.*

- **Persistent**

*I can be very persistent when I want something. For example when I wanted to do my internship in Stockholm. At some point I had the idea in my head and when that happens I just do it.*

- **Warm and generous behavior**

*I like having people around me and I like to do stuff with other people.*

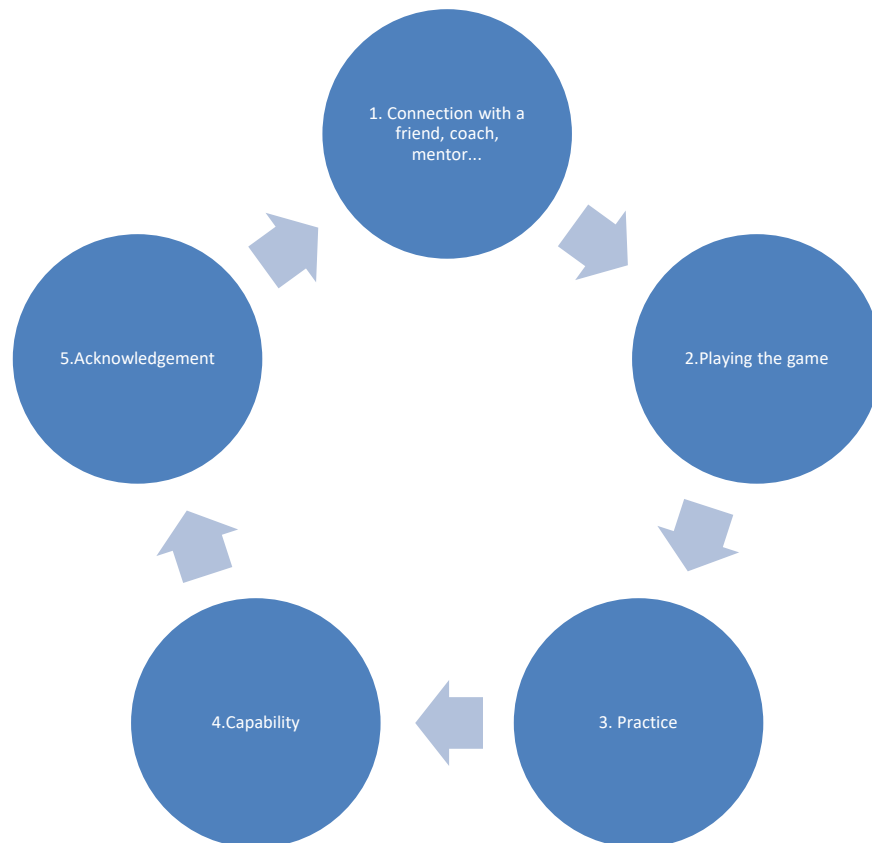
- **Intuitive way of working**

*I believe in my intuition and I let it guide me. I do this because I feel that it leads me to good choices. My intuition is almost always right. For example when I had to study, my intuition told me which chapters of my courses I should learn and which not.*

## Negative factors

- **Difficulties in converting great ideas into meaningful behavior**  
*When starting up a design, it takes a long time for me to think about ideas and to be satisfied with what I got. The hardest part is to actually get started.*
- **Difficult for others to understand**  
*I don't have a problem with telling others about my ADHD. I like to explain it so that other people can understand and can cope with it. Although, it is not always easy for others to understand.*
- **Chronic failure**  
*There's an expression that says: 'once bitten, twice shy'. Those things last a bit longer for me, I can make the same mistakes several times.*
- **Failure at different levels or achieve a high level, but knowing that I could do better if I 'could only find the key'.**  
*Primary school and secondary school were moments in my life where I was confronted with failure. I had a hard time concentrating and it was difficult to get along with teachers and classmates. Designing is something that I'm good at and that makes me feel good about myself. Although, it is not always easy since I'm not easily satisfied with my ideas. It's always a process of considering different possibilities before getting started. Medication helps me to get an overview of possibilities and solutions.*
- **Being angry or down because of frustration**  
*I know that people without ADHD also get angry or frustrated. Although, I feel that anger and feeling down are more extreme in relation to people with ADHD.  
For example: when we were drinking something and one of my earrings dropped and broke, I was sad about it, but in a tolerable way. When I would have been alone I could have cried at that moment.*

## How to switch off and create a life with a grip :



- 1 Connect with people around you to bond and feel safe.
- 2 Play the game and discover your talents and qualities.  
( The game can be anything that enlightens your brain and tickles your fantasy)
- 3 Practice to get better!
- 4 Be able to accomplish a good result of the activity.
- 5 People around you acknowledge you for your achievements and reinforce the relationships you have with them.

*The first step refers to the fact that you should connect with the people who surround you and the people whom you trust. This is because it's the first thing you need to feel safe enough to experiment and to discover which talents and qualities you have in you. Too few people get the chance to screw things up. When there's trust, you are allowed to make mistakes and by result you are in the possibility to learn something.*

*After feeling safe you can go and look for your 'game'. The 'game' is something that enlightens your brain and tickles your fantasy. You train and practice to get better.*

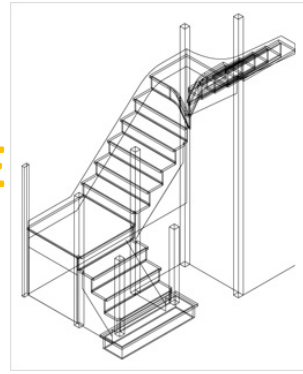
*Gradually you will be possible to accomplish a good result in the game you found your quality in.*

*When you get better and you achieve things, people around you will acknowledge the results you booked. This last step reinforces the relationships you have with the people you trust. When this step is preceded the circle can be restarted.*

## In other words: 7 cues to become an effective adult with ADHD

- **Doing things you're good at.**  
*Do not spend too much time in becoming better in things in which you are not good at, you already did this enough in school. For example: in school they push you to pay attention and to concentrate, but this isn't something you can push, you can't help it if you are not focused.*
- **Delegate the stuff in which you're bad as much as possible to others**  
*Learning in what you're good at and learning what your flaws are, is something in which others can help you. For me, my mother was an important person to help me understand that situations aren't always like I thought they were. She helped me to adjust my perceptions.*
- **Connect your energy with something creative**  
*As mentioned above this creative part can be anything such as: fashion, writing, dancing, acting...*
- **Install sufficient organization to reach your goals.**  
*The keyword is 'enough'. You don't have to be super organized, enough organization should be sufficient to reach your goals. The only problem here is to know: When is enough, enough?*
- **Ask advice to people who you trust and listen to them. Ignore people who break your dreams and who exhort.**  
*Too many people with ADHD keep hanging out with people who make their feel bad, it's not worth it, and it's useless.*
- **Keep contact with a few good friends on a regular basis.**  
*This is a very important tip that I want to give to people with ADHD. After a while you get to know who your real friends are. Try to meet them on a regular basis, although it can be possible for you to forget to send them a message or to call them, but in the end you don't want to lose them.*
- **Listen to your positive side. Even if you have negative aspects, make decisions and organize your life with the qualities that you have.**  
*It's not worth to focus on your negative sides. It causes you useful time, energy and motivation that you could use to upgrade your talents and qualities.*

**THE STAIRCASE :  
ABOUT THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE  
WORLD OF ADHD AND DESIGNING**





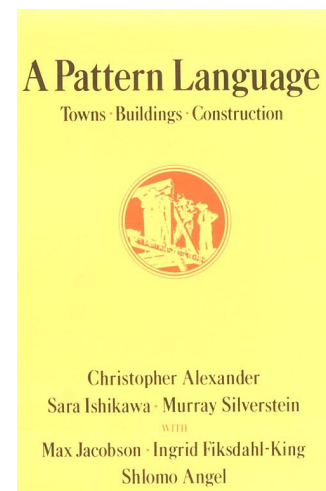
"Hyperfocus and creativity are two positive qualities of my ADHD. I use them as a rich source to ascend into the world of creating and to lift my designs to a higher level" Anke





## Inspirations:

"Design is not just what it looks like; design is how it works" Steve Jobs



1. *I like the work of FELD. I like some of their designs and the fact that they work a lot with wood. It is one of my favorite materials.*
2. *Pattern language is a method for designing. It reacts against the fact that more and more architects design things without starting up the dialogue with residents and people who live in the neighborhood. Pattern design wants to focus on coherence and wants to reach that goal by taking all elements of the environment into account. I like this way of designing very much.*

## Personal style:

"Creation is the most exciting thing I have ever discovered. It is a way to express what is important to me, to communicate it with others." Anke

### Sustainable



*My final design to get the diploma of interior architect was the 'PET chair'. The frame is made of steel and the sitting is made of recycled PET bottles. The chair is in his turn also recyclable and was selected for the Portfolio exhibition.*

### Functional

*When I'm designing the first thing I have in mind is the function of the design. The shape comes in second place, it has to be practical. The image of the coat and hat rack is also one of my designs.*



### Natural materials

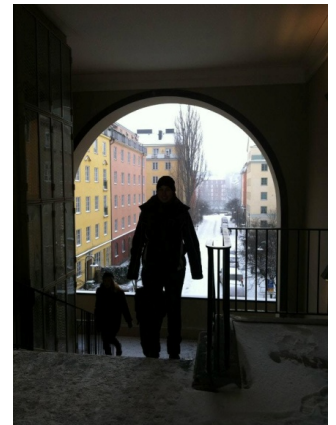


*I like to work with natural materials, such as wood. This material is especially popular in Scandinavian designs.*

## Internship



# TIM ALPEN design





*After graduating as an interior architect I wanted to do my internship abroad to expand my knowledge about designing. I didn't want to work in a light shop for the rest of my life and give advice like some fellow students did after they graduated. I wanted more!*

*When the idea rose to do my internship abroad I informed myself at my previous school to join the Leonardo Da Vinci Program. By doing this I hoped to get a grant. The reaction in my school was not like I hoped it would be. The school didn't know much about it and they said it would cause them too much trouble to do all the arrangements. I was very disappointed, since Sweden is a very expensive country...*

*Still I didn't let it hold me back. I was determined and if I want something I don't let anything get in my way. At home they were also very supportive. I was told I would have a profit if I did the international experience, comparing to fellow students.*

*Stockholm was my first choice. I had the destination in my head, also because Scandinavia is very innovative at designing.*

*In Sweden a huge part of my time goes to my internship where I design furniture at the office of Tim Alpen. The designs I make in cooperation with Tim are largely for the Stockholm furniture fair at the beginning of February. This fair is something that I have been looking forward to and at the same time it will be a nice way to end my international experience.*

*When I'm not at my internship I like to go to vintage shops with my friend Carolin. Carolin is a German Erasmus student who I met when I first arrived in Stockholm. I like to go to Carolin's place for social contact and for cooking.*

## Achievements

### Diploma's:

#### - Graduated high school

*Although my mother let me do a test on ADHD when I was in the last year of primary school, I didn't get my diagnose till I was 18. Without having the label my mother and I learned to cope with it and I was able to compensate my disability with my high IQ and with the aid of reminders. For example: because I forgot a lot, my mother made little checklists to remind me of what I had to do.*

*Still, it wasn't simple. I was a difficult child in primary school and the first years of secondary school. Also, I had to change from doing chemistry and math to social sciences. I found this very hard, because I was less interested in those courses. Also I was very critical about the subject matter, something that wasn't appreciated by the teachers. But I decided to persist so I could move over to the next phase: higher education.*

#### - Graduated as interior architect

*Before studying interior architecture I studied chemistry. It was a challenge where I was good at. I was the person who explained the subject matter to other students. Although when I got the results of my exams, there was disappointment. I failed and started to ask questions: Do I have a wrong method of studying? Do I interpret the questions wrong? ...*

*I followed a training for fear of failure and did a test for dyslexia. The person who did the test on dyslexia told me I wrote a lot of mistakes, but I was able to correct my mistakes afterwards. This last aspect is something that people with dyslexia can't do. He said to me: maybe it is because you aren't able to focus enough...*

*A test for ADHD was being taken.*

*Receiving the diagnose was a relief to me. Many questions were answered. For example, the fact that I had a lot of fights with friends. I struggled for a long time wondering why people were mad at me, but now I could see that it was because the way I reacted sometimes.*

*After receiving the diagnosis I followed a course to learn about ADHD. I followed this with other people who had ADHD and I was very relieved to see that I was not the only one who forgot things, who interrupted people... Actually I was proud to see that I interrupted others less than the other participants of the course. I could see that I had already learned to cope with my ADHD more than some others.*

*I switched my studies to interior architecture, got a special statute and started up medication. The special statute gave me extra time on exams but I found this stupid, since I already had a hard time to focus. Luckily my teachers were comprehensive and they let me take a break, or do a walk during the exam. I found this much more of a help.*

*It's crazy how some things can influence your live in a very big way. For example, if I had already had medication when I started my studies in chemistry, I would probably had finished those studies.*

*Now I'm still taking medication. I take 'Concerta' because I had a lot of side effects with 'Rilatine'. For example: when the 'Rilatine' wasn't working anymore I felt very depressed and I felt like the symptoms of ADHD became 10 times bigger than while I was taking the meds.*

*My life without medication is very black and white, because I can feel very happy or very down. With the medication my world is 'grey'. The extreme feelings are more moderated.*

*Advantages of the medication are that I can be organized, have more discipline and have more insight in situations. Also I am able to learn more and to concentrate better. For this reasons I'm a bit scared to stop my medication.*

*Eventually I want to stop taking my medications because it are amphetamines; they are not good for the body and they are quite expensive. To be able to do this I think I will need the help of a therapist or shrink to work on my 'negative sides' and to end the medication step by step. Also sometimes, I miss the extreme joy I can experience without the meds and I feel that I'm more at the same level of my boyfriend because the ADHD tempers my high IQ.*



### Designing the 'PET-chair'



*The 'PET-chair' is named by the material from which it is mainly made of: industrial felt produced out of fibers of discarded PET-bottles. The rounded tub shape emphasized the soft character of the felt. The steel frame and the felt seat are connected with a cotton thread that makes the connection flexible and that intercepts the movements of the steel frame. This alternative connection makes glue unnecessary en gives extra flavor to the design.*

### Prizes won with 'PET-chair'

- **Ecodesign award**

*I won the first prize of 1000 euro's, it's an award distributed by OVAM (the federal company for garbage).*

- **Selected for 'Portfolio exhibition'**

*This is an exhibition for students that graduated in several courses like: interior architecture, product design, fashion... I was selected for the exhibition that took place in Herentals.*

## Epilogue:



"A life with ADHD isn't simple, but if you handle it right, ADHD can enrich your life and make you shine and gleam."