

Welcome to TADD Talks with ADDA.

I'm Erik Anderson.

When I learned the theme of this year's TADD Talks was **hero stories** I got really excited because, hero stories are a **BIG** part of how I do my coaching.

Today we're going to talk about

- Why the stories we tell ourselves are important
- Why epic hero stories are only epic after the fact
- and how to create hero stories from our EVERYDAY lives

First, a little about who I am

My name is Erik Anderson. My friends call me Doc.

I have ADHD. My background is in disability advocacy. Now I'm an ADHD coach and stories are an important part of my coaching.

### **Let's talk about why our stories are important.**

It's been said, "Human beings are the only species that tell stories, and then live by the stories they tell."

In short, our stories define our reality. They tell us who we are.

So our past is just the story we tell ourselves about what was.

And our future is built from the stories we are living today.

### **That brings us to hero stories.**

In this year's TADD Talks you're going to hear a lot of great things around hero stories. I encourage you to dive into them and discover where they can take you.

But here's the thing, sometimes these stories can feel a bit intimidating. That's because many times, especially with ADHD, epic hero stories are things OTHER

people have.

Our own stories? ... not so much.

That's the tyranny of the epic story.

**Here's what I want you to remember.** Nobody's story is epic or heroic in the moment.

Our own stories are ALWAYS going to seem boring, ordinary and full of suck while we're in the middle of them.

**They only become epic hero stories after the fact** ... after we've survived and been transformed by them ... after somebody else writes the sagas and the songs.

"Frodo of the Nine Fingers and the Ring of Doom" sounds epic.

Whereas, "I Lost All My Willpower and It Bit Me Hard!" sounds like an ADHD country and western song.

**Epic hero stories are only epic after the fact.**

**How DO we incorporate HERO stories into our EVERYDAY lives?**

I've spent a LOT of time studying the subject of the hero story, but I'm not gonna go too deep into that here.

If you plug "hero story" and "Joseph Campbell" into Wikipedia, you'll find out everything you need to know about how all cultures basically tell the same epic story, the 17 stages of the great Monomyth and the ways in which this is very much a metaphor for our journey as human beings.

The more I studied it, the less I became interested in the epic nature of these stories and more I became curious about how this functions on a day-to-day level.

One of my favorite quotes is from May Sarton who said, "One must think like a hero to behave like a merely decent human being.

What I came up with was what I call the Hero Engine.

It looks at the hero story, Campell's Monomyth through the lens of the every day.

The cycle of the Hero Engine goes like this:

All is well ...

Until suddenly it's not!

So you go to a new place.

You learn new things.

You overcome challenges.

You find your hidden power.

And you return again ...

Greater than you were before.

All is well ...

Until suddenly it's not!

This is the journey we are on every day.

It's what we are doing whether we are writing a book, putting dinner on the table ... again, or just taking out the garbage. It's the ever-repeating cycle of challenge, achievement and change.

**And** we can be on multiple journeys at the same time; some larger, some smaller and all of them with the potential to become epic because of how we are transformed by them.

As a friend of mine and I are fond of saying, "you cannot, NOT do the hero journey."

Because, this is how we go through life. It's how we human.

In its simplest form, the hero story is expressed in three phases; challenge,

achievement and change.

Campbell calls these phases separation, initiation and return.

This is also much like Hegel's thesis, antithesis, synthesis

And the dramatic arc of, "get your hero up a tree, throw rocks at them and get them back down."

Again, it's how we grow as humans. It's the change, return or synthesis phase that is vital; the integration — or how we are transformed that makes a story epic.

**Don't worry about having to remember all of this.** I've created a hero engine worksheet for you to play with so you can create your own hero stories and LIVE them. You can get it on my website, [CoachingForCreativeBrains.com](http://CoachingForCreativeBrains.com). And I'll give you that address again at the very end of this recording.

### **Let's write a hero story.**

The first thing to ask is, "what is the challenge?" What is the thing we are doing?"

#### **What IS your quest?**

This is very much an exercise in clarity. How will you know when you have succeeded?

**Pro tip:** Don't try to make your QUEST epic. Epic happens later with success and transformation. Remember, Odysseus was just a guy trying to get home after a really bad day at work.

The second phase is about actually DOING the quest. That's where we often get stuck. Ask yourself,

- What are the obstacles or adversaries you must overcome?
- Who are the companions? What resources do you have to make the journey easier?

- WHY is this quest is important? Why now? How can you reconnect with that?
- And what could derail this quest and stop you from completing it?

**The final phase is the most important.** The integration or transformation we experience as a result of what we've learned on our quest is what allows us to grow, to become something more; to level up.

This can make us stronger, more capable, more resilient and even able to take on new challenges and bigger quests in the future.

For example, there was a time not too long ago when writing something like this would've filled me with dread because I struggled to get beyond a blank page and actually begin writing, let alone finish something.

It wasn't that I didn't have ideas. I have lots of those. Often too many. I struggled to make sense of them all. There were too many choices, and I felt I had to say ALL the things ... and they had to be perfect before I could write down a single word because I didn't want to look stupid. So getting ANYTHING down on the page was a nightmare. I was paralyzed.

My quest was to be able to write a coherent narrative.

I learned that, while I struggled at writing, I was really good at editing. That was a game changer. Once I had something on the page ... anything, I could create something beautiful from it.

And I learned that I can't type as fast as I think, but speech to text let's me get things out of my head so I have something to edit.

And I learned the importance of letting go of perfection. There's a reason rough drafts are called that. They're always going to be ugly and that's true for everyone.

You better believe practicing all of that again and again ... and again didn't feel epic while I was doing it. It was hard work. And the truth is I'm always going to be a bit of

a tortured writer.

But that's okay. I hear many of the good ones are.

So now, instead of just dreaming about the stories I want to create, I can craft them and share them with others.

I create hero stories and I help others do the same.

And THAT is pretty epic.

And now we've completed our quest today.

Remember, it is not the quest that creates the hero. It's the transformation.

The quest is just the mechanism to get there.

And a tragic hero can be defined as someone who simply doesn't learn from what they've been through.

Today we've learned

- Why the stories we tell ourselves are important
- Why epic hero stories are only epic after the fact
- and how to create hero stories from our EVERYDAY lives

I hope this has given you a way to explore creating your own epic hero stories out of the stuff of everyday life, and that they help you be your best self.

Because, to quote Joseph Campbell, "The big question is whether you are going to be able to say a hearty YES to your adventure."

Thank you for joining me on today's TADD talk.

I'm ADHD coach Erik Anderson.

You can find out more about story and strength-based coaching and get your own Hero Engine worksheet at my website, [CoachingForCreativeBrains.com](https://CoachingForCreativeBrains.com). Again that's [CoachingForCreativeBrains.com](https://CoachingForCreativeBrains.com).