

The World of Winnie The Pooh

I first read *Winnie the Pooh* when I was a young girl and if you told me that Tigger had ADHD, or that Eeyore had depression, I would have looked at you with a blank face. Yet, now as an adult, it is a lot more convincing.



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A. A. Milne was inspired to write the tale from his son's, Christopher Robin, teddy bear.

The idea that the characters' exaggerated personalities were representations of mental health issues came from the Canadian Medical Association Journal, 'Pathology in the Hundred Acre Wood: A Neurodevelopmental Perspective on A. A. Milne' in 2000. Not only

did it analyse characters' behaviours, but it also stated the treatment each needed.

To start, Piglet appears to be very shy but when further examining his character he represents Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD). This can be seen through his constant worry about unthreatening situations, causing him to have a stutter: 'it's awfully hard to be b-b-b-brave...'

Piglet even goes as far as to fake headaches and illnesses in order to escape situations. These are all signs of GAD, which children only need one symptom of to be diagnosed.



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As a child I always thought Eeyore just wanted to be alone, and I could never understand why he was not happy. Now I understand that he represents Major Depressive Disorder, which is characterised by his slow movements, lack of energy, and his pessimism.

He is described as a 'sad' and 'melancholy' donkey and even his name has influenced the world, so now the word 'eeyoreish' can be found in the Oxford Dictionary, meaning pessimistic and gloomy.³

Eeyore seems to be experiencing depression when he says, 'I don't seem to have felt at all now for a long time.' His sadness has overcome

³ Milne, p.35.

him, and he feels as though he has lost all emotions, similar to those who suffer from depression. Despite this feeling, Eeyore always wants his friends to be happy even if it means him being alone.



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We all know the bouncing, happy, joyful Tigger, however, what we might not have known is that his personality shows clear signs of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

Stephanie Watson claims that ADHD often leads people to get into trouble and chaotic situations, which is something Tigger certainly does. He climbs trees and then becomes unable to get down. He tries large amounts of food just to discover he doesn't actually like it after earlier declaring that it is his favourite.

Along with his fidgeting, bouncing, interrupting and impulsive behaviour, Tigger clearly has ADHD.

His impetuous behaviour is also seen as he swallows Roo's medicine, which could have been dangerous for him but, as we established, he does not learn from his actions even when he could cause harm to him or his friends.



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I also remember thinking to myself as a child 'wow, Rabbit is really clean' but his fear of dirt, constant cleaning and perfectly organised items are all symptoms of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD).

I believed Rabbit could be rude to his friends but now, I understand that this rudeness was more than likely because of the stress caused by his OCD.

Some examples of Rabbit's OCD include his books being organised alphabetically. However, he later reorganises this by length instead as alphabetically is not aesthetically pleasing. He then changes the order back to alphabetical again, all of this causing him a great deal of stress.

Similarly, Rabbit's plants in his garden are all placed symmetrically but he later panics when they grow so that they are not presented in the way that he wants them to be.



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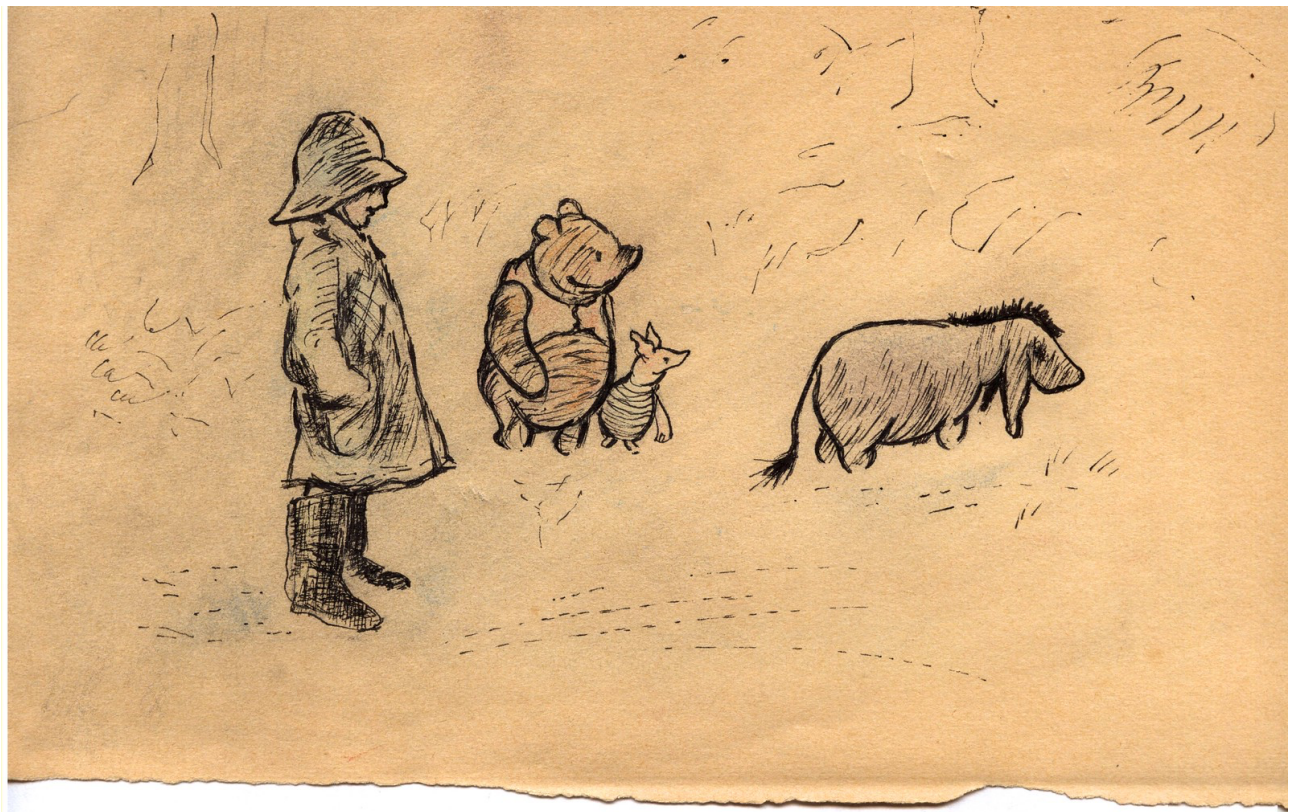
Eating fast, eating when not hungry, eating until far past being full, feeling guilty about eating and eating vast amounts in very little time all accumulate into a Binge eating disorder, which is represented in Pooh. At one point, Pooh eats so much that he cannot fit through Rabbit's door.

So, is this psychoanalysis reaching for something innocent or is it insightful to view the world of Winnie the Pooh through this lens?

Even though Milne did not intend to write the characters to represent mental illnesses, it is clear that each character is a representation of a disorder.

In an interview with Brian VanHooker, psychology professor Caleb Lack commented that ‘with any representation, it helps people to realise that they’re not alone,’ meaning that children experiencing symptoms similar to the characters in *Winnie The Pooh* have someone to relate to.

We must remember that this book was intended to be enjoyed as a form of entertainment. This gives us the pleasure to enjoy the book as kids, but as adults, we instead realise something that something might have been overlooked.



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