

# TRYING



WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY **SAMANTHA LABRECQUE**  
PRODUCED BY **SAMSKAPE PRODUCTIONS INC.**



14:20 Minutes | Drama, Comedy | English | United States of America | 2021 | 4K | 16:9 | 30fps | Stereo  
Contains Explicit Language





## LOGLINE

Meg, a millennial painter with ADHD, navigates her life on the way to an important job interview.

## SYNOPSIS

Filled with heart, humor, and a handful of expletives, "Trying" follows Meg, a millennial painter with ADHD, as she navigates her life on the way to an important job interview. What starts as a simple task turns into a race against the clock as she encounters society's stigmas, unlikely allies, and challenges from her past.



## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I've always been inspired by films and TV shows that not only entertain, but offer viewers the opportunity to learn something. While simultaneously enduring a quarter life and global crisis, I was diagnosed with anxiety and depression, and learned that both mental illness and neurodivergence - specifically ADHD - run in my family. Further research revealed that stifling gender roles and misinformation on ADHD have run rampant through society. Symptoms in girls and women tend to be overlooked leaving them severely underdiagnosed compared to boys and men, with even less diagnoses for transgender and nonbinary people. This discovery led to me writing "Trying," my first ever screenplay. Then, a year after we shot the film, I was diagnosed with ADHD myself. I never would've sought out a diagnosis if it hadn't been for the making of this film, and I'm so grateful for all of the ways this "Trying" journey has, and continues, to transform my life.

In telling Meg's story, it was imperative that I rely not only on my own research and personal experiences, but collaborate with as many women as possible to ensure that this story was told in a realistic and relatable way. It was important to me that we witness not only the internal and external obstacles Meg faces in a day, but also the creativity, resilience, and innovative thinking she harnesses as a woman with ADHD. Throughout the filmmaking process, women and people with ADHD were employed as painters, consultants, artists, and composers on the film, with leading national ADHD resource organizations CHADD and ADDA giving their enthusiastic support of the final product. I'm proud to say that of the 20 members of our crew (affectionately known as the Trying Team), 19 of them were women. And while "Trying" may serve as both my filmmaking and producing debut, this was not by accident. Now more than ever, women need to be given opportunities both in front of and behind the camera, and be paid - and paid properly - for their talents. I'm endlessly grateful to Meg for introducing these new professional (albeit very personal) roles into my life. I guarantee that you'll see a piece of yourself in Meg as you watch this film, and I hope it serves as a reminder that at any given moment, on any given day, each and every one of us is simply... trying.







## DIRECTOR'S BIO

### **SAMANTHA LABRECQUE | "Meg" / Writer / Director / Executive Producer**

Actor and proud member of SAG-AFTRA, "Trying" serves as Samantha's writing, directorial, and producing debut. Born and raised in Los Angeles, at 18 years old Samantha traded a college education for a serving apron as she set out to turn her life-long passion for storytelling into a professional acting career. With skills in both the performing and visual arts, she worked both in front of the camera and behind it as a photographer, videographer, and editor. By 2019 her work in media production was able to support her acting career, and in 2021 she became a CEO through forming her production company SamSkape Productions Inc. Her acting work and improv background have garnered her awards and recognition from streaming platforms like Amazon Prime to stages in Anchorage, Alaska, and she can currently be seen doing stand-up comedy in Los Angeles. Following the success of the short film "Trying," she is now writing the pilot version for television, and since receiving her own ADHD diagnosis, has decided to make the story semi-autobiographical and change the character's name from "Meg" to "Sam". She plans to create even more opportunities to destigmatize neurodivergence in media and change the way we view the world through humor and storytelling, and after years of saying she would "never write a script," she's endlessly grateful she changed her mind.

## KEY CREW BIOS

### **NICOLE CAMPBELL | Producer**

Nicole has worked on film sets, red carpets, studio lots, and award shows, including the Toronto International Film Festival, the Tribeca Film Festival, the EMMYs, and more. In her career, she has produced various short films, advertisements, and music videos for all types of genres. Most recently, she produced the short film, “Polly Pocket,” which has been deemed an official selection by 18 festivals worldwide.

### **AUSTIN SAUER | Editor**

Austin has been passionate about editing for as long as he can remember, and has worked in social media, trailers, TV, and many other short form projects. He is currently assistant editor for short form series “Cake” streaming on FX/Hulu, and has a deep fondness for working on comedic, heartfelt stories that bring different perspectives to light.

### **MARILYN FLORES | First Assistant Director**

For the past 5+ years Marilyn worked as a freelance filmmaker wearing hats as a Producer, Assistant Director, and Director of Photography, working on a wide range of projects including shorts, narrative films, tv series, documentaries, and commercials. As a filmmaker, she is interested in exploring stories of identity and belonging, and is an advocate for equality and inclusion in film sets.

### **EDITH MUDGE | Composer**

Edith Mudge is a composer/producer based out of Los Angeles, California. Having trained with A-list composers & production houses alike, Edith has carved out a place for herself in media composition—to date, her music has been placed in 2000+ episodes of 500+ series and films, including Saturday Night Live, Booksmart, and The Voice. She is an active member of Joy Music House (an “elite force of musical operatives”), and co-director of communications for the Alliance for Women Film Composers.

### **JENNIFER CHARLEE | Artist / Painter**

Jennifer Charlee is a neurodivergent, independent artist who blends her psychotherapy education with a love for the natural world. She seeks to spread knowledge about the interconnectedness of artistic expression and mental health through art making, product design, and content creation.





# TRYING TEAM (FULL CAST & CREW)

**Written & Directed by**  
**Produced by**  
**Executive Producers**

Samantha Labrecque  
Nicole Campbell  
Samantha Labrecque  
Allen Schatz

**Starring**

Samantha Labrecque  
Rose London  
Kingston Zelaya  
Michelle Murphy  
Tyler Shilstone  
Brandon Delsid  
Bryce Harrow  
Sheena Georges

**Director of Photography**  
**Production Designer**  
**Editor, Sound Designer & Colorist**  
**Original Score**  
**Artwork**

Catherine Heath  
Andrea Monzon  
Austin Sauer  
Edith Mudge  
Chasity Ramsey  
Jennifer Charlee

**First Assistant Director**  
**Sound Mixer**  
**Gaffer**

Marilyn Flores  
Ying Ding  
Marci Garcia

**1st Assistant Camera & B Camera Operator**  
**Costume Designer**  
**Make-Up Artist**  
**Script Supervisor**  
**Grip & Production Assistant**  
**Production Assistants**

Milena Mooradian  
Jhaton Holt  
Nadine Ortega  
Mandy Schnatter  
Aisha Alhakawati  
Akansha Kakkad

**BTS Photographer**  
**DIT**

Emma Powell  
Rebeca Dourado  
Carolina Rizzotto



## FILMMAKER'S APPROACH

The focus of this story is to see the world through Meg's eyes. The opening sequence introduces us into Meg's mind, with quick cuts and an upbeat score as the backdrop to Meg's racing, ever-changing thoughts. The combination of percussion and jazz instruments alongside funky, contemporary sounds set up the foundation for Meg's dry humor and the overall tone of the film. When working with "Trying" composer Edith Mudge, we took inspirations from cult classic film "Napoleon Dynamite", network comedy "Modern Family", Pixar's "Monsters Inc." and HBO's "White Lotus" to create a unique, eccentric musical experience.



Visually, the coloring of each scene leads to Meg's inner experience in relation to her environment and the people she interacts with. Bright tones and hues are used when Meg occupies places of stimulation or safety where she can be herself, such as her own home or when speaking with a child or her mother. Muted, gray hues are used when she senses she must mask her feelings or her true self, is misunderstood, or feels vulnerable or hopeless. The brightly colored sets were decorated by Production Designer Drea Monzon, serving as both a stimulant and a hindrance to Meg.



Time is a major theme throughout the film. External cues as Meg mixes up or loses track of time, like a clock ticking in a moment of suspense, or internally when dealing with anxiety around time, numerous clocks and ticking sounds are placed throughout the film as a reminder of Meg's every day struggles with her perception of time.



# Q&A

## HOW DID YOU FIND FUNDING FOR THE FILM?

Oh man. Honestly, funding the film was probably the hardest and most intense part of the entire process. While we were already in pre-production I created a crowdfunding campaign for the film through the incredible filmmaker platform Seed&Spark, and in thirty days (ending on the first day of shooting) my friends and family members gave \$13,000 to bring this to life. I think I cried on every single one of those thirty days from the overwhelming feeling of gratitude and sleep deprivation. Special thanks to the number one contributor turned Co-Executive Producer of the film Allen Schatz, who took us across the finish line!

## WHY WRITE A STORY ABOUT A PERSON WITH ADHD?

Throughout the years, there have been many instances in media where if a character has ADHD, their neurodivergence has served as the butt of a joke, they're showcased as a quirky side or other'd character, or they've been misrepresented or caricature-ized. Each and every one of us goes through life in our own unique way, with no two brains functioning exactly alike. So why not have a character with ADHD at the center of a story? Now more than ever we need to empathize with each other and our experiences, and this was a way to bring a story to the surface that represents millions of people around the world.

## WHERE DID YOU FIND THE TRYING TEAM?

Whenever I need to learn something new, I turn to the internet. In prep for finding the Trying Team, Facebook was actually my greatest resource. I was able to find locations, ADHD painters, consultants, and actors from my own friends list, and for the shooting crew I reached out to women film Facebook groups. Once the script got out and word spread that producer Nicole and I were putting a team together, we had hundreds of applicants from all over wanting to work on the project - it was absolutely nuts! We ended up with the perfect Trying Team, and now I've got a rolodex of dope women at my fingertips to work with on future projects.

## WHERE DID YOU SHOOT THE FILM?

The film is set in the East Los Angeles neighborhood Echo Park, CA, though we shot in my hometown, the San Fernando Valley (specifically Canoga Park and Valley Village, CA for all you LA people). We were shooting in the dead of summer in July, and if you've been to the Valley, you know it's the driest, hottest part of LA County by far. We had multiple car scenes where the crew had to jam into the passenger and backseats to shoot me in the driver's seat without being seen, and we of course couldn't run the A/C for sound purposes, so it was brutal. Water and sunscreen were our best friends those days, and thank god we had duplicate green blazers for me, because I was disgusting.

## HOW LONG DID THE FILMMAKING PROCESS TAKE?

Once I put pen to paper and decided to write a script in February 2021, it was full steam ahead. I wrote multiple drafts over the course of about three months before showing anything to anyone in April, and by May I was looking for a producer, scouting locations, and commissioning art pieces. In June I created the crowdfunding campaign and our producer Nicole and I put the cast and crew together, and we shot the film in July! Post took a while as we had to shoot pickups and ADR, and the film was "finally" finished in December 2021. It was honestly the most intense time of my life, and I'm still recovering from it. While I wouldn't trade the experience for anything in the world, I definitely learned a lot of lessons on time management (and my own personal expectations and ambition) for the next one!



## Q&A CONT'D

### ANY MISHAPS WHILE SHOOTING ON SET?

On the first day of shooting, we were outside on a busy street, quickly losing light and constantly shooing away cars and people skipping by wanting to “get their close-up”. While working with the light we had, we were alerted that our next location, the apartment that would pose as Meg’s studio, was now only going to be available for us to shoot for two hours instead of the original scheduled five. We ended up hauling you-know-what to shoot the first and final scenes of the films and load out, all within the allotted two hours. It was insanely stressful, but thankfully we were shooting a solo scene of a script that I had written, and the Trying Team is filled with a bunch of bosses, so we nailed it. My boyfriend Mike and I ended up shooting pickup shots of inserts we needed at our place, and thankfully, you won’t be able to tell which shots they were. We also got questioned by a cop on day two. Good times.

### WHO IS MEG’S CHARACTER BASED ON?

When I decided I was going to write “Trying”, it was Meg’s character that came to me first. The famous line “write what you know” chimed in my head as I brainstormed, and by the end of a particularly intense session, I realized I had written myself, but with ADHD (or so I thought at the time. A year and a half later, I would receive my own ADHD diagnosis). So technically, the inception of Meg was based on myself, and over time she grew and morphed as ADHD consultants got involved and we fine-tuned her into the fiercely passionate, creative, and resilient woman she is today. I’m grateful to Meg and her story for leading me towards my own ADHD journey, and she will forever have a huge place in my heart.

### WHO CREATED THE ARTWORK FOR THE FILM?

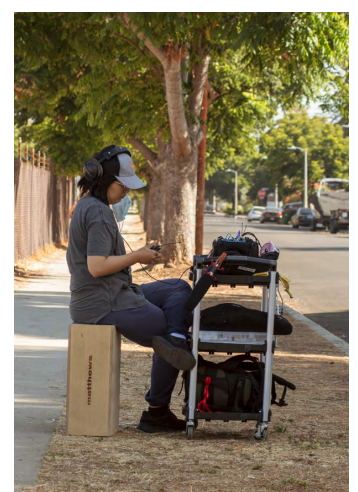
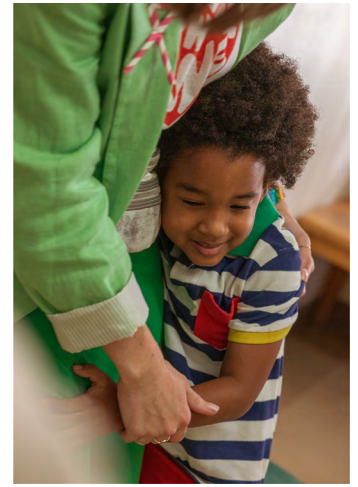
Once I decided we were going to shoot the film, the first thing I did was commission art. While I was still writing the script, I got in touch with two millennial women artists with ADHD, Chasity Ramsey, a former coworker of mine, and Jennifer Charlee, who I met through a mutual friend. Chasity created Meg’s two work-in-progress canvas paintings and her crayon drawing, and Jennifer created two colored pencil drawings in the opening sequence and a watercolor piece by the A/C dial on the wall of Meg’s apartment. You can also see more of Chasity’s paintings on the walls of Meg’s place that she lent to us for set dressing, which was great. I made one very basic, not at all impressive painting on one of my Meg-method-prep nights before shoot day, which should’ve never seen the light of day, but got mixed in with some preps and ended up making it into the final cut.

### DOES MEG HAVE ADHD AND OCD?

Yes, she does! When writing the script, Meg originally had a purse to carry her belongings on the way to her interview, but as I reached out to women and people with ADHD to consult on the script, it changed to a fanny pack. One of the consultants shared that after having ADHD for her whole life, she’s formed OCD as an adult as a result. So every night, she can’t go to sleep unless she packs her fanny pack with everything she could ever need for the following day, to make sure she’s set up for success. So whenever you see Meg repeatedly checking things throughout the film, this is one of her OCD traits, not ADHD.

### WHY DOES MEG WEAR A GREEN SUIT?

While writing the script, I always pictured Meg in a green suit. At the beginning of the pandemic I online-thrifted a killer pink blazer pantsuit, and felt that Meg would be wearing something professional enough for her interview to be taken seriously, but still have an off-the-cuff, spunky feel with the bright green. Green was also my favorite color as a kid and I’ve got green eyes, so there were definitely some subconscious self-motives there, too. We also shot some inserts of Meg’s watch that didn’t make it to the final cut, which was rainbow-colored with rhinestones lining the face, such a Meg piece. I love it.



## CONTACT INFORMATION

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## USEFUL LINKS

**IMDb:** [www.imdb.com/title/tt14890270/?ref\\_=ext\\_shr\\_lnk](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt14890270/?ref_=ext_shr_lnk)

**Instagram:** [@Trying\\_Movie](https://www.instagram.com/trying_movie) | [www.instagram.com/trying\\_movie](http://www.instagram.com/trying_movie)  
[@SamSkapeProductions](https://www.instagram.com/SamSkapeProductions) | [www.instagram.com/samskapeproductions](http://www.instagram.com/samskapeproductions)

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