

THE SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR

Kids with ADHD



John F. Taylor,
Ph.D.



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PUBLISHING®

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**“Written by one of the most creative thinkers
about ADD and ADHD.”**

—Michael H. Popkin, Ph.D., author,
*Doc Pop’s 52 Weeks of Active Parenting:
Proven Ways to Build a Healthy and Happy Family*

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The concepts, ideas, procedures, and suggestions contained in this book are not intended as a substitute for professional help.

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Dedication

Dedicated to the children for whom this book was carefully designed and written, and to their parents and siblings, all of whom have been challenged greatly by this powerful condition.

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I wish to give grateful acknowledgment to Douglas Fehlen of the editorial staff at Free Spirit for his patient and thorough editing. I also want to acknowledge my dear wife Jeanie for the innumerable ways in which she has provided support and encouragement throughout the development of this book.

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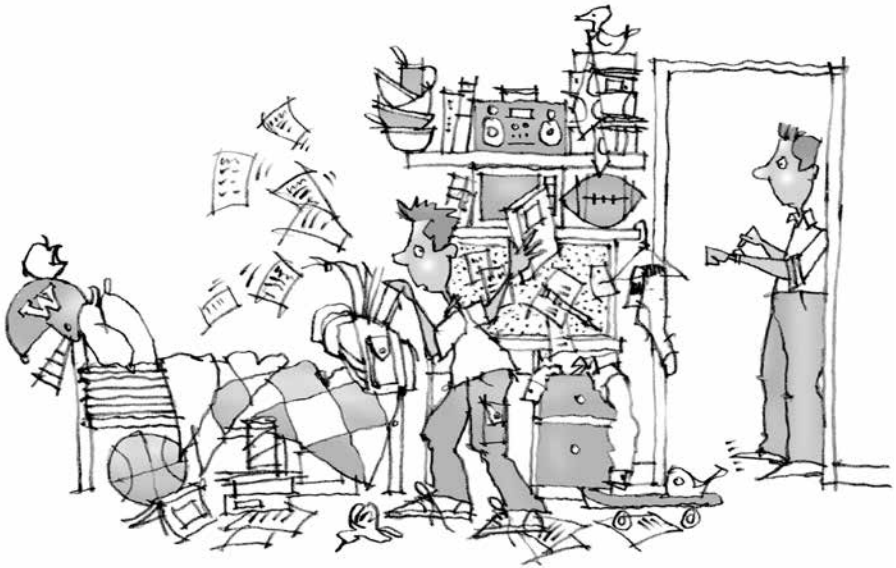
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A Note About the Labels

This book can help you if you have been labeled **ADHD**. ADHD stands for **attention deficit hyperactivity disorder**. Kids are given the ADHD label because differences in the way their brains work make it hard for them to do some things—like pay attention or sit still. Some kids might be given the label **ADD**. This stands for **attention deficit disorder**. It is the same thing as ADHD, Inattentive type. You can read more about the different types of ADHD in Chapter 1.

For now, you can remember that this book uses the label ADHD because it's the one that most people who work with kids use. Regardless of which label you have been given, *The Survival Guide for Kids with ADHD* can help you.

Introduction



- Is getting ready for school a challenge for you?
- Do you have trouble paying attention at school?
- Is it difficult for you to sit still or stay in one place?
- Do you struggle to keep your things organized?
- Is it hard for you to control your anger?
- Do you sometimes have trouble making friends or getting along with others?
- Is it hard for you to fall asleep at night?

If you answered **YES** to any of these questions, read on!

How This Book Can Help You

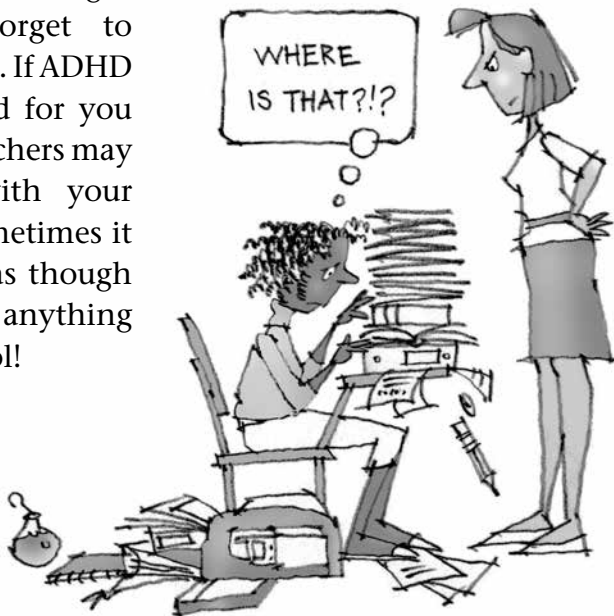
You can read more about words in **bold** type in the glossary on pages 108–110.

This book can help you if you have been labeled **ADHD**. ADHD stands for **attention deficit hyperactivity disorder**.

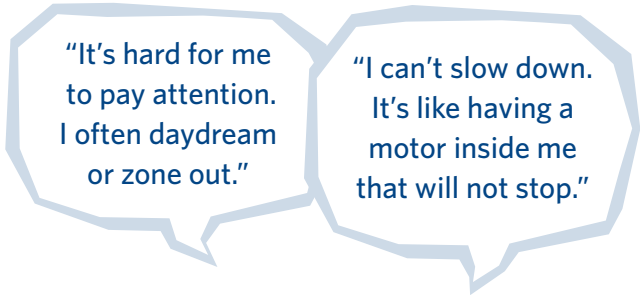
When I first wrote this book in 2006, many facts about ADHD were known but others were still being discovered.

This updated edition is just as accurate, fun, and helpful as the original, and probably even more so.

If you've been labeled ADHD, you probably face some challenges other kids do not. You might struggle at school—with paying attention to your teacher or focusing on the work you're supposed to do. It may be hard for you to learn some things that seem easy for other students. Or maybe you understand most of your work, but you have trouble staying organized. You might lose assignments or forget to hand them in. If ADHD makes it hard for you to sit still, teachers may get upset with your behavior. Sometimes it might seem as though you can't do anything right at school!



Here are some things kids say about having ADHD:



"It's hard for me to pay attention. I often daydream or zone out."

"I can't slow down. It's like having a motor inside me that will not stop."

Having ADHD *can* be a real challenge . . . and not only when it comes to schoolwork and teachers. ADHD affects how you get along with other people, too. Maybe things don't always go smoothly with your parents or other family members at home. You might also have trouble making friends or getting along with other kids. It can seem as if *someone* is *always* angry with you.

Kids live in all kinds of families. When you read about *parents* in this book, think of the adult or adults who live with and take care of you. This might be your dad, mom, stepparents, foster parents, guardians, or adult relatives. *Family* includes these people and sisters, brothers, stepsiblings, or others who share a home with you.

ADHD can also create strong feelings inside you—like anger and sadness. It can affect your daily routines, how well you sleep, how you think about yourself, and even what you like to eat! One thing's for sure: Being a kid with ADHD isn't always easy.

Reading this book can help. It probably won't end *all* of the challenges you face, but you can use the ideas in it to manage your ADHD better in school, at home, and with friends.

How to Use This Book

This book has lots of advice and tips you can use on your own. It also includes activities that you and your parents can do together. You can also show it to other adults who help you with your ADHD—like teachers, doctors, counselors, and tutors. Adults who read it with you will learn new ways to help you. And you can work together with them on any special challenges you face.



You can read this book from start to finish—or a little at a time. You might decide to read it for fifteen minutes just before you go to bed. Or you may want to look at certain sections with a parent over the weekend. Because ADHD affects every kid differently, you might not need to read every word. Instead you might concentrate on topics you want to learn more about or need extra help with. Use the book in whatever way works for you and your family.

You can Succeed with ADHD

I wrote this book because I care a lot about kids with ADHD. I've met with many of these kids and have worked with them to overcome many challenges. Some common experiences they've shared with me appear in quotes throughout this book. With a little effort, these kids have been able to achieve better grades at school, get along at home, and make (and keep) friends. Each of them learned how to manage ADHD and succeed . . . and *you* can, too!

Each chapter ends with a fun quiz. (Don't worry—quizzes won't be graded!) You can make photocopies of quizzes and fill them out to see what you've learned.

I hope this book helps you. I would love to hear how you are using the ideas you read about. You can also write to me if you have any questions or could use help with something. You can send a letter to me at this address:

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The Six Great Gripes of Kids with ADHD

1.

I don't like being labeled ADHD. Some people think it means I'm weird or not smart.

2.

It's really hard for me to focus at school. Even though I try to do well, I fall behind the other kids.

3.

I'm not organized. I lose assignments and forget about the things I'm supposed to do.

4.

It's hard for me to control my behavior. I get in trouble with my parents and teachers.

5.

I worry about the medicine I have to take for my ADHD. Will it hurt me?

6.

Other kids don't understand ADHD. It makes it hard for me to be their friend.

CHAPTER 1

What Is ADHD?



What Does ADHD Mean?

ADHD stands for **attention deficit hyperactivity disorder**. Kids are given the ADHD label when it's hard for them to stay still, pay attention, and make good decisions. If you've been labeled ADHD, you probably have trouble focusing on your work at school. It might also be hard for you to show good behavior because you want to talk or move around a

lot. ADHD affects how you get along with adults and other kids. People might not understand or like what you do or say—even when you don't think anything is wrong.

FAST FACT:

About one out of every thirteen kids in the United States is labeled with ADHD.

The good news is that you can take action to manage ADHD. The first step is to understand how it affects you. You probably have some **traits** that create challenges for you.

Traits are different ways that you think, act, and feel. They affect how you do things and get along with others. If you have been labeled ADHD, you probably have one or more of these four traits:

Trouble keeping your mouth and body still. You might find it hard to be still when a parent or teacher wants you to sit quietly. You might move your feet, tap your fingers on a table or desk, talk a lot, or make sounds with your mouth. This trait is called being **hyperactive**. Sometimes people may say that you are *fidgeting* or being *hyper*.

Kids who are hyperactive say:

"I can't control what my hands and feet do."

"I get yelled at a lot for talking in class."

"I squirm in my chair at school and have to stand up sometimes."

Trouble staying focused on things that are hard or "boring." Maybe you have a difficult time taking tests

or doing homework. You might have trouble finishing things that you start. Or you may be easily bothered by noises when trying to study. This trait is called being **inattentive**. People might also say that you are *distracted* or that you have a *short attention span*.

Kids who are inattentive say:

"Any sound in class bothers me—like the lights buzzing or other kids coughing."

"My mind sometimes goes on a road trip."

"It's like I have ten TV channels in my head and I don't know which one to watch."

Trouble with making decisions too fast. You might make up your mind quickly without stopping to figure out the best plan. These decisions may end up getting you in trouble. This extra-fast decision-making is called being **impulsive**. Sometimes people may say that you are *careless*.

Kids who are impulsive say:

"Sometimes I can't help what I do."

"It's like there's an engine inside me that makes me act before I think."

"My mouth says things before I can think of what I *should* say."

Trouble with making decisions too slowly. Maybe you take a long time to make decisions because you're afraid of making a mistake. This extra-slow decision-making is called being **indecisive**. People might also say that you are a *perfectionist*.



Kids who are indecisive say:

"It's like my mind gets stuck when I'm trying to figure something out."

"People are always telling me to hurry up and decide."

"Sometimes I won't make a choice because I can't figure out which one is perfect."

Which of these traits do you have? Here's an activity to help you figure it out.

1. Make a photocopy of the list of ADHD traits and behaviors on pages 11–12.
2. Use a pencil to check the boxes next to the behaviors that you have a hard time with. Ask your parents to look over the list to see if they agree with the things you've checked.
3. Add up the number of checkmarks under each trait and write it in the blank.
4. Circle the traits with the most checkmarks. These are your strongest ADHD traits.

What Are My ADHD Traits?

Hyperactive?

- I talk a lot—even when I’m supposed to be quiet.
- I make lots of clicks and sounds with my mouth.
- I squirm in my chair and move my hands and feet when I’m sitting.
- I run ahead of adults or groups of kids.
- I poke, touch, feel, and grab other people or objects.
- I say or do things without thinking about them first.

_____ = TOTAL

Inattentive?

- I’m bothered by noises when I’m trying to do schoolwork.
- I have trouble paying attention to anything that seems boring to me.
- I take longer to finish schoolwork than other students.
- I have a hard time concentrating when I take tests.
- I daydream or zone out a lot at school.
- I forget my teacher’s directions.

_____ = TOTAL

continued 

What Are My ADHD Traits? (continued)

Impulsive?

- I make people angry because I say or do things without thinking of others.
- I often forget to plan ahead.
- I do or say things that are dangerous or hurt others.
- I get into fights with others.
- I blurt out in class without raising my hand.
- I have trouble waiting for my turn.

_____ = TOTAL

Indecisive?

- I worry a lot when trying to decide things.
- I start many new tasks but don't finish them.
- I take a lot longer to do schoolwork or tests than other kids.
- I need help from my parents or other adults when making simple decisions.
- I give up trying to do things because I can't do them perfectly.
- I get confused when I'm trying to make a decision.

_____ = TOTAL

The Three Types of ADHD

There are actually three types—or kinds—of ADHD. The labels kids with ADHD get depend on what traits they show at home and school. Here are the different kinds:

ADHD, Hyperactive-Impulsive type: Kids with this label are *hyperactive* and *impulsive*. Girls can have this kind of ADHD, but boys are most often given this label.

JUAN

“I know you’re excited to answer, but please remember to raise your hand,” said Juan’s teacher. “I’m sorry, Ms. Olsen,” Juan replied. That was the third time in one day she had to remind him.

Juan understands most things at school, but he thinks things don’t go fast enough there. He often blurts out in class or gets out of his chair when he’s excited. Juan tries to follow the rules, but it doesn’t seem to work. It’s like he can’t control his body or his mouth. Adults often tell him that he’s too hyper and that he needs to slow down. ■

ADHD, Inattentive type: Kids who have this kind are *inattentive* and *indecisive*. People sometimes call this *ADD*. They leave out the “H” because hyperactivity is not a problem for kids with this kind of ADHD. Of girls who have ADHD, most have this label.

HEIDI

“Heidi?” The voice of Mr. Donald came to her through a fog. “Yes?” Heidi finally answered. She had been daydreaming about playing with her dog Lucky. “Please pay attention to the lesson,” said Mr. Donald. “This kind of math can be hard.” “I’m sorry. I’ll try,” Heidi said.

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Heidi has trouble concentrating. No matter how hard she tries to listen, Mr. Donald's lessons sound like "blah, blah, blah." When she is working, even small noises distract her. ■



ADHD, Combined type: Kids with this label are *hyperactive* and *inattentive*—or they have some other mix of traits different from the other two kinds of ADHD.

WILL

"Please stay in your seat and listen, Will," said Mr. Tanaka. "Sure," Will answered. But a minute later, Will was back over at Rob's desk talking about a great skateboarding trick he'd just learned. "Back to your desk, Will. Right now!" Mr. Tanaka exclaimed.

Almost every day at school is like this for Will. He thinks it's boring. Instead of listening in class, he moves around and talks a lot. Will is easily distracted and gives up on most assignments and tests because he thinks they're too boring or hard. He spends a lot of the school day in the resource room, where Mrs. Adams helps him with his work. ■

If you have been labeled ADHD, you might know about these three different kinds and which one you

have. If not, you can look at your answers to the activity on pages 11–12 to figure it out. If your strongest ADHD traits (the ones you circled) are:

hyperactive and impulsive

Your label is: ADHD, Hyperactive-Impulsive type (like Juan)

inattentive and indecisive

Your label is: ADHD, Inattentive type (like Heidi)

hyperactive and inattentive

(or another mix of ADHD traits)

Your label is: ADHD, Combined type (like Will)

It is helpful to know what type of ADHD you have. When you do, you can work on the things that you have the most trouble with.

You and your dad or mom might want to do the activity on pages 11–12 with a doctor or another one of the professionals talked about in Chapter 3.

Why Do Some Kids Have ADHD?

That’s a good question. Experts believe that kids with ADHD process information differently than most people. These differences in how the brain works can cause kids to show ADHD traits. It’s like a bad telephone connection: Different parts of your brain are trying to “talk” to one another, but the line is full of static and the messages can’t get through. You might