

Embracing your ADHD

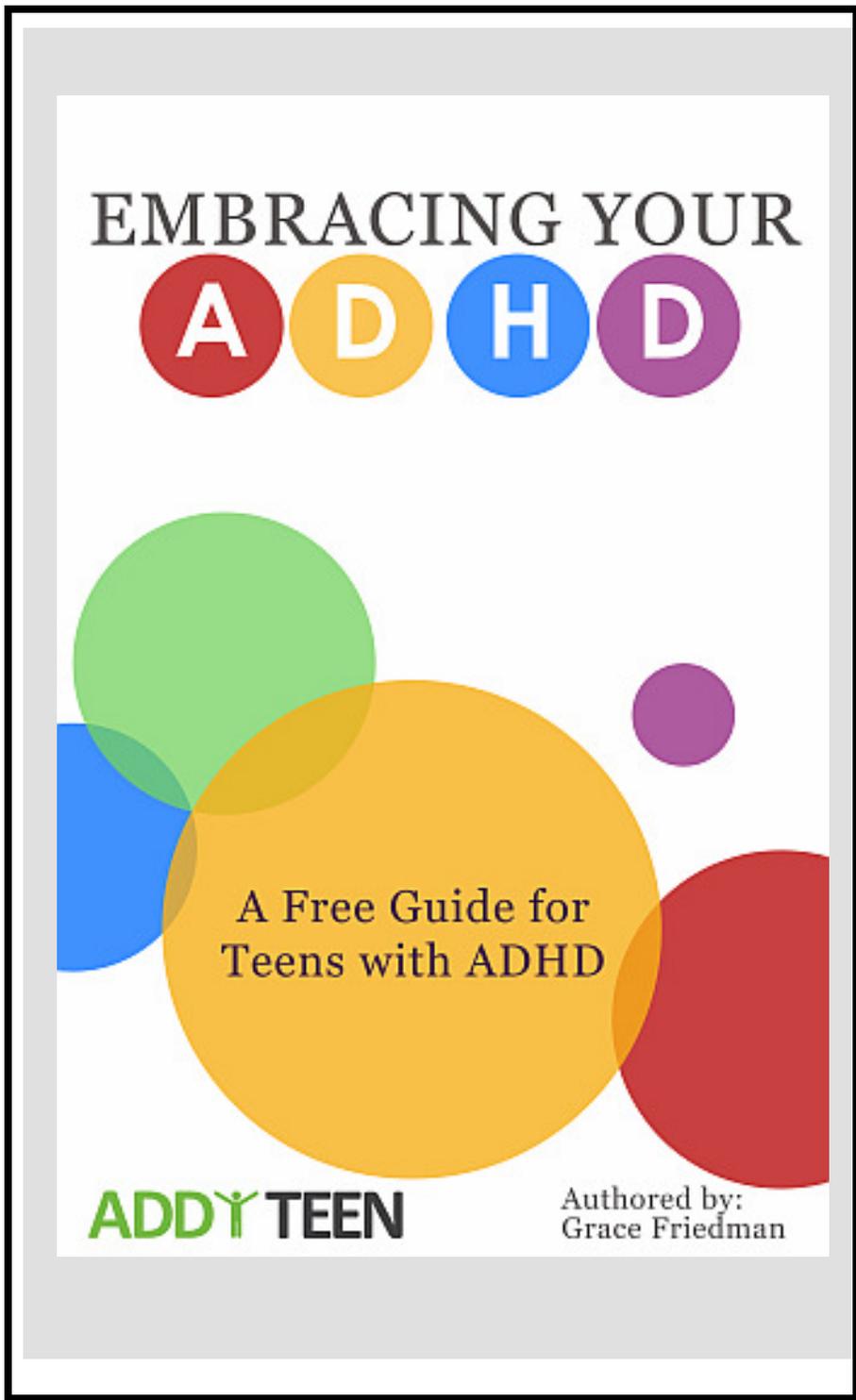
Preface

Learning you have ADHD is equally good and bad. No, it is not the best feeling in the world to hear a Doctor or psychologist tell you that you have a “disorder.” But, if you are like me, you were already trying to figure out why your brain works differently and why you find certain tasks incredibly difficult. Even when confronted with a scary diagnosis (“You have a disorder”) it is good to know you are facing a real issue, a medical challenge.

I was diagnosed with ADHD in eighth grade, but I had known two years earlier that school seemed harder for me than for my friends and classmates. When I learned I had ADHD, it was both a relief and a fright. I really did not understand what was happening in my brain, and that was scary. But, I also figured out that my new diagnosis would be the start to learning how to perform to my best potential.

As I see it, it is okay to be confused about why your brain and body function in a special way. It is also okay to be worried that ADHD will become a burden or a negative factor in your life. As you read this Guide, *Embracing Your ADHD*, please remember this very important piece of advice: Don't Panic.

Living and thriving with ADHD is a hard process that requires great determination and courage. I learned this the hard way, but I learned it nevertheless. Initially, I felt very lost and isolated. I asked the same question I imagine you have asked yourself: “Why me?” I looked for direction and support from my



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friends and peers without success. There were other kids in my school with ADHD, but since no one talked about it, I did not know where to turn. Teens in general don't talk much about their problems in school. Teens don't want to be seen as being different. Teens with ADHD should talk, should share – it helps. I know this firsthand.

I really wish that another teen in my home town who was dealing with ADHD would have stepped up and mentored me and helped me deal with my feelings and fears. I desperately wanted a Guide to help me figure out my life with ADHD.

My first year of high school was a real struggle; it really forced me through a very difficult process of self-discovery. In time, and with many tears and fears, I began to learn to accept and face my ADHD for what it was – a real medical challenge that with effort I could cope with, handle and potentially overcome.

Through a tedious process of trial and error, I slowly discovered and incorporated some methods and techniques to cope with my ADHD. It has not been easy and it is really a non-stop process, but through this process, I also uncovered valuable life lessons that will help me in the future. I share my discoveries and those of others in each section of this Guide.

"That which does not kill us makes us stronger." I like this phrase from Friedrich Nietzsche because dealing with my ADHD has made me stronger in many ways. It is also inspired me. When I told my Dad that I want

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to become a therapist to help other kids with ADHD, he quickly replied "Why wait? Start now."

I am doing just that by creating this Guide, *Embracing Your ADHD* to help teens and "tweens" who have ADHD. *Embracing Your ADHD* is for people like me who are in need of help and are looking to find structure in their lives. We are teens with ADHD, or as I call us, ADDYTEens. This Guide is written for ADDYTEens by an ADDYTEen. It is the Teen-To-Teen Guide I wish I had received from my Doctor or guidance counselor (or anyone) when I first got my diagnosis.

Each chapter focuses on a different subject with content for both parents and ADDYTEens. All of the content within *Embracing Your ADHD* is the result of research and information I gathered from scientific seminars and lectures, and in-person interviews with many other teens and young adults living with ADHD. In this Guide, I share their voices and perspectives on the most important topics ADDYTEens really need to understand.

This is not a medical Guide, it is a personal one. My goal is to help you understand, cope with and ultimately accept your ADHD. I am an ADDYTEen, just like you, and my advice is simple: Why wait? Start now! Embrace your ADHD.

Grace Friedman
www.addyteen.com

I. Introduction

This Guide is organized into sections. Each section covers a topic of importance to those of us with ADHD. That said, knowing that most of those reading this Guide are easily distracted or inattentive (or both), I am covering the big picture topics here in the introduction. If you are able to read only this introduction, you will get the major points I cover in more detail later. If you are willing and able to focus on the body of this Guide, you will understand even more about how to thrive with ADHD.

Your Unique Brain

Now that ADHD is a reality in your life, I understand just how tempting it is to ignore it and hope it goes away. It won't. I understand how easy it is to think something is "wrong" with you. Doing so does not help at all. When I asked a few ADDYTeens to tell me how they felt about having ADHD, some just brushed

it off as if it were totally unimportant. It isn't and ignoring it won't help either.

What becomes clear when you talk to a lot of ADDYTeens is that everyone diagnosed with ADHD reacts differently, as we are all different in so many ways. We are each unique as human beings and we all have a unique brain. People all around the world have ADHD just as people all around the world have asthma, hearing loss and epilepsy. It is vital to accept your ADHD for what it is- a real medical condition just like these others. It is also vital to accept your ADHD for what it is NOT – a problem you cannot deal with or overcome.

An ADHD diagnosis does not mean that the condition will suddenly take over your life, disabling or preventing you from living a “normal” life and having the future about which you've always dreamed. Yes, ADHD is a big factor in how you learn, act and react in various environments, but it will not run your life...unless you let it. If you manage your ADHD, you can find success and happiness and pursue your

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dreams. But, if you don't manage your ADHD, it will manage you. Everyone has issues and obstacles; ADHD is ours. The Center for Disease Control estimates that in 2013, when this Guide was published, there were millions of ADDYTeens in the US alone. You are not alone, ADDYTeens are a community, and you are a part of that community. Accept that.

Living with ADHD may complicate your life but it does not change who you are. It is essential to remain true to yourself and to remember that ADHD is only one of the many facets of your individuality. Those of us with ADHD often develop unique gifts that only become more obvious over time. In the same way that people with hearing loss becomes more attuned to touch and sight, we can learn to adapt to our weakness and enhance our strengths. This is the way our brains work; we create new neural pathways every day.

ADDYTeens and adults with ADHD have many natural gifts and talents which we use with great

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success. In general, we are creative, artistic, intuitive, empathetic, visionary, inventive, sensitive, original, loving, and exuberant. You are certainly not "substandard" because you have ADHD any more than someone with asthma is substandard. So, rather than having a "pity party" for yourself as a result of your ADHD, spend a few minutes reviewing this list of world famous people – some of history's finest – who like us, had some form of ADHD.

Sir Isaac Newton	Beethoven	Mozart
Magic Johnson	Nolan Ryan	Babe Ruth
Vincent Van Gogh	Salvador Dali.	Bill Cosby.
Abraham Lincoln	Dwight Eisenhower	Henry Ford
Edgar Allen Poe	Robert Frost	Leo Tolstoy
Whoopi Goldberg	Robin Williams	George Bush
Malcolm Forbes	Andrew Carnegie	William Hearst
Nicolai Tesla	Louis Pasteur	Galileo
Thomas Edison	Orville Wright	Wilbur Wright

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Each of these great achievers had a unique brain - just like you and me. Each of us has unique gifts and those of us with ADHD are no exception.

Understanding the Nature of “The Race”

As my Dad says, “You can’t win if you don’t suit up” and even though I have heard that dozens of times, it never fails to encourage me to continue working hard. The basic message is simple: It is impossible to win if you don’t show up to the game and try your very best. You can’t complain about not winning if you don’t ‘suit up.”

Accepting your reality – who and what you are – is absolutely vital to becoming who and what you want to be in the future. So, focus on the road you’re on today. Run your own race and keep your eyes on your destination and not where anyone else is headed, or where they have been. It is your own race to win or lose, so “suit up” if you want to win in life.

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Realistically, those who have ADHD may be a bit slower on some tasks, take more time on assignments, and might need more assistance with organization. ADHD can hold you back even when you’re trying your best and this can be frustrating as hell. On the other hand, giving up before starting a task or feeling you are not up to competing with your peers will keep you from succeeding. Remember, your own race may take you to different places than your friends in school. None of my friends have published a Guide or set up a website to help other teens.

Success in life is not entirely based on being the fastest writer, the greatest reader, or the best problem solver. I guarantee that merely having great academic skills alone will not ensure success in life – there are plenty of "unsuccessful" people with PhDs, MDs, JDs, etc. Some of the most successful people in the world achieve because of their dedication, not because they were an academic All- Star. On the other hand, having character traits like determination, courage and perseverance will certainly help you run and win *your*

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race. Having character and courage will change the course of your life in a very positive way.

A positive attitude, accepting yourself for who you are, loving yourself as you are and being true to yourself will help you become the person *you* dream of being. Focusing on your destination and monitoring your pace as you make progress, is all-important. You are not running someone else's race, only *your* own, so carry on with confidence.

We All Need a Boost!

Understand that it is perfectly fine to ask for help. At some point, everyone needs a boost in life. It is okay to ask for a boost, some support, from your teachers and parents, friends and teammates. Most will be more than happy to support you through your process of growing and discovering your capabilities and strengths.

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Life Is Not Easy For Anyone. Buckle up.

Comparing yourself to other teens without ADHD is like the teen with Asthma who compares herself to someone without respiratory issues. It is pointless; it throws you off pace as you pursue your goals. Don't do it.

"Control the Controllables"

One of my great passions is soccer, and I played at the elite level for many years. I am a goal keeper and I hold the position on the field where failure effects the team every time. Being a keeper is a tough position for a kid with ADHD – those penalty shots come very fast! This lesson – "Control the Controllables" – was drilled into my head by the coaches at U.C. Berkeley where I trained in summers. Goalies were made to understand that there are shots we cannot block, saves we cannot make, and goals that will be scored no matter what we do.

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Think for a minute: What does this message mean to you? Work on what you can, when you can, the best you can. Your ADHD may show itself at any time and any place. It may disable you from focusing, transform the simplest task into an aggravation, and prevent you from completing even a tedious job. Control what you can. Take one step at a time! Break your assignments, projects and responsibilities down into bite-size pieces so you can complete the job without becoming overwhelmed and stressed. When you make a mistake or have a setback, move on. Your game isn't over. Keep playing. Control the Controllables: Do what you can do – rather than focusing on what you can't do.

Use Your Time Wisely

Time is a valuable thing, and for those of us with ADHD time is particularly important. It is vital to recognize when your time is being wasted and when you are using it wisely. To use your time well, and at your full potential, it becomes very important to organize. This is particularly hard for those of us

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with ADHD; we often lack what Psychologists call "Executive Functions." Executive Functions include the ability to focus on tasks, start up tasks, finish tasks and stop tasks that we find exciting but are not productive.

Organizational skills can be learned with practice and improved with effort. Creating a calendar can help tremendously to keep you on track especially when you have no choice but to take on big projects. By organizing big projects into smaller tasks, it is easier to remain focused and productive.

Orderly Disorder

By now you have grown to hate the word "disorder." It is a harsh way to describe any part of yourself. Even though the last D in ADHD is Disorder, you can still find ways to make your life orderly. It simply takes more effort and more determination.

Just when you are really being yourself and acting "normally," your ADHD can discombobulate you

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totally. That is just the nature of our condition. Remember, it is normal and natural for us to do some things differently and sometimes take more time getting things done. However, veering off-task too often leads to stress and makes you ineffective at any activity you pursue. Though it takes a great deal of effort, it is really very important to track when and how distraction starts. As soon as that happens, right away, force yourself to concentrate and stay on task and on topic even if it is difficult. Rest assured, teens with asthma concentrate on breathing even when it is difficult, and teens with hearing loss concentrate on reading lips even when it is difficult.

Arranging your life around your ADHD is fine – in fact, it is good. Adding and subtracting activities or tasks in your life may be necessary to enable you to find structure. Create order within your disorder – create your own boundaries to stay on target.

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Issues vs. Problems

There are more than 7 billion people in the world, and almost all of us have "issues." Some of us have real "problems." What is the difference between issues and problems? An issue is something that is important to us, something that effects us - often negatively. A problem is more substantial, often quite harmful, rather difficult to cope with, and sometimes impossible to overcome.

Those of us with ADHD have to choose how we view our condition – is it an issue or is it a problem? It is important to remember that everyone has something they need to work on, challenges we each must face. We all will experience some type of hardship.

ADHD is our challenge. Will you make it an issue or will you make it a big problem? Keep some perspective. Losing a limb is a problem, having cancer is a problem, poverty is a problem. Is your ADHD an issue or a problem? That is your decision.

Spreading the Message

In creating this Guide, I interviewed ADDYTeens just like you. I have changed all the names here, everyone speaking to me did so privately. In fact, there are dozens more not listed here, but these ADDYTeens really had great words to share about their life experiences and their comments are integrated into this Guide as you will read. Some of them are quoted directly. We are millions; we ADDYTeens are part of a large community of interesting dynamic energetic people. We need to stick together.

Name	Age	Gender	School	Personality
Maria	12	Girl	Middle	Sweet
Talia	17	Girl	HS	Studious
Susan	14	Girl	HS	Eccentric
Alexandria	16	Girl	HS	Outgoing
Lauren	11	Girl	Middle	Shy
Beth	12	Girl	Middle	Nervous
Brooke	13	Girl	Middle	Quiet
Rebecca	15	Girl	HS	Timid
Emerald	17	Girl	HS	Smart
Amy	19	Girl	College	Funny
Kiley	21	Girl	College	Studious
Rob	18	Boy	HS	Goofy
Jake	17	Boy	HS	Enthusiastic
David	16	Boy	HS	Theatrical
Chris	15	Boy	HS	Rebellious
Ben	17	Boy	HS	Indecisive
Vincent	16	Boy	HS	Respectful
Nabil	15	Boy	HS	Quiet
Justin	16	Boy	HS	Shy

To create a community, a conversation about teen life with ADHD needs to be ignited and shared. ADDYTeens tend not to talk about their feelings, unhappiness with dealing with a medical challenge and the extra stress ADHD can create. We need to lend each other a helping hand. Be open about your ADHD and share this Guide with others who may find it useful. Embracing Your ADHD is free, it is meant to be shared and it is for our “community.” When you bump into another ADDYTeen that seems unhappy or confused, share this Guide with them. Share it, and repeat the positive messages you absorbed or have learned on your own. That is a great form of “community service.”

II. Signs of ADHD

ADHD – Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity *Disorder* – is what I have. If you are reading this Guide, you probably have been told by a Doctor or psychologist that you have ADHD too. If not, perhaps you are a friend, sibling, parent, teacher or counselor to a young person with ADHD. There are some very basic facts about ADHD that you, your family, friends and school teachers should understand. There are many sources for great detailed information about ADHD, most of which I've read three times. Unfortunately, these are not “teen friendly” and unreliable; reading some of it can be unpleasant. Embracing your ADHD makes these facts ADDYTeen friendly. This makes it simple, and not frustrating, to know what you need to learn so you can move on and move up in life.

The American Psychiatric Association is the world's largest psychiatric organization, and they publish many interesting articles, and a giant book called the “DSM” which lists all types of medical conditions.

The APA would say that some ADDYTeens are more Inattentive while some of us are more Hyperactive – Impulsive. Some of us (like me) are a combination of the three. Let me review what these terms mean from the DSM (but in plain English). Some ADDYTeens are more Inattentive while some of us are more Hyperactive – Impulsive. Some of us (like me) are a combination of the three. Let's review what these terms mean.

- Inattentive – ADDYTeens who have a harder time focusing, concentrating, following instructions, staying organized and paying attention in school and elsewhere are considered Inattentive.
- Hyperactive – ADDYTeens who have a hard time sitting still, are always fidgeting and bouncing, or who are always “on the move” are considered Hyperactive.
- Impulsive – ADDYTeens prone to blurting out answers before questions have been completed, taking action without first considering what they are doing, find it hard to wait their turn, or who always interrupt are considered Impulsive.

At some point someone close to you noticed you had signs of being inattentive, hyperactive, or impulsive.

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Perhaps someone noticed that you found certain tasks amazingly difficult, or had a hard time keeping track of tasks, or could not understand what you were working on during class. Perhaps someone noticed that you could not sit still, interrupted others, or acted out too much. Perhaps someone noticed that you were having constant meltdowns from your workload piling up no matter how hard you tried to manage. That's okay, people notice such things. Teachers notice this, parents notice this, and you notice this, too. I know I did.

The APA says that ADHD is a *neurobiological* condition. That means ADHD is not an *attitude* issue, or a *discipline* issue, a *food* issue, or a *cultural* issue. It is a *medical* issue. You can learn to deal with, cope and adapt to it, and ultimately accept it and that is what this Guide is all about.

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III. Emotional Challenges

Simply put, life is frustrating for everyone at some point or another. It is particularly hard for young people to talk about and really describe their feelings. Sometimes, feelings are still new to us and hard to label. Sometimes it is as if we are feeling too many things at one time, making it impossible to explain. Some of us are naturally a bit more high-strung and edgy, regardless of any medical conditions we may have.

For ADDYTeens, controlling and managing emotions is especially difficult, and ADHD amplifies other stress we have in our daily lives. ADHD also effects our ability to receive or express information which makes dealing with our emotions even more complex. For many ADDYTeens, these factors make it harder to control ourselves well enough so we can appropriately express our emotions to friends, family and teachers. The ADDYTeens I interviewed shared these points over and over.

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1. ADDYTeens have too many thoughts and emotions in our heads and cannot sort out which ones are bugging us most at any one moment.
2. ADDYTeens don't know how to verbalize our feelings and thoughts – we know we are feeling something but cannot put those feelings into words others will understand. This is particularly true when medicated since medications for ADHD may provoke feelings that are alien to us.
3. ADDYTeens can't really express ourselves when we are frustrated, angry or flaming mad.
4. ADDYTeens are afraid of how people will perceive us and sometimes we are ashamed to talk about mistakes we make as a result of having ADHD.

If you think about it, emotions are just natural sensations your body generates in response to a specific situation or event. Teenagers tend to have strong emotions and some ADDYTeens have emotions “on steroids.” In general, ADDYTeens tend to overreact emotionally to frustrating, provocative, or stressful situations. This is something almost every ADDYTeen experiences. In a way, it is “normal” for us. While your parents already know they cannot force you to tell them anything, they feel distressed

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when they see you are upset. Try your best to calmly express your feelings to keep your parents informed.

Another challenge ADDYTeens face is that we experience many emotions all at the same time making it particularly hard to communicate what we are feeling. Suppose you are taking a test, one you have prepared very hard for in advance, and you come across a question you just don't understand. An ADDYTeen facing this situation may feel anxious, nervous, angry, frustrated and fearful all at the same time. This is often why an ADDYTeen reacts emotionally to a situation, but can't pinpoint the specific emotions they are feeling. It is hard to stay calm when we feel such chaos inside.

I have had my fair share of emotional outbursts. There have been many times I could not or would not voice my feelings. This is actually a potentially harmful situation, which is discussed more below. Justin explained, “... *It was hard to communicate with other people about how I feel... It is an*

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unexplainable feeling... I bet no one else gets these crazy emotions..."

Many ADDYTeens are prescribed medicine to allow us to focus, and concentrate. I am not a Doctor, but I have learned a lot by studying, attending lectures and talking to experts. I can sum up what you can read about in great detail from the APA, and other sources say. Medicine can be very helpful – personally, it has helped me a great deal – but everyone has their own experiences. I write more about medication later in this Guide, but some of the ADDYTeens mention it when they discuss their emotions.

Unfortunately, most ADDYTeens like Justin don't know to expect new emotions when they are given medication. Even Brooke, who is 13 stated, *"I was pretty emotional in elementary school just because I was upset and frustrated all the time. This could have been triggered by the drugs or it could actually have just been me being upset in elementary school."* Many ADDYTeens feel that because they learn, act or react differently than the other kids without ADHD,

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their emotions are "weird" or uncommon. For this and many other reasons, it is not surprising that ADDYTeens "bottle-up" their emotions.

Let It Out

As someone who still struggles with my emotions, I can confidently say this: Let your feelings out in any safe way you want. Draw, paint, write in a notebook or make a cartoon that represents your latest feelings. However you diffuse and express your emotions is good, so long as you "let it out."

I can promise you this: No matter how you feel, you're not alone! There are kids around the world that can relate to how you feel whether it is good, bad, happy, sad, or anything in-between. Vocalizing and sharing your feelings is essential. It may seem awkward or frustrating at first since attempting to clarify how you feel when you actually don't know is not easy! That's okay, do your best and just let it out.

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Bottling-up your feelings not only hurts you, but also impacts those around you. Your family and friends don't like seeing you upset! However you feel and however you choose to express it, make it a goal to keep yourself calm and not to harshly lash out at the people who love and support you.

Don't Let Emotions Burn You

Emotions are very powerful, and they effect you in powerful ways. To really understand this point, let's compare your emotions and their effects to first, second and third-degree burns. First degree burns, like sunburns, don't hurt at first. You don't know you're getting burned because initially you don't feel it. If someone doesn't tell you that your skin is burning, *you* may not realize; but *your body* does. Emotions which you don't "let out" can effect your body like a sunburn. It may not hurt right now, but that does not mean it won't hurt soon.

Second degree burns are the most painful. The burn has gotten bad enough to reach your nerves. Ignoring

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"the burn" too long will really hurt. In the same way, dismissing or bottling-up your emotions for too long can cause serious harm. Arguments with parents at home, constant tension at school and slumping into a "funk" are all symptoms and signs of emotional pain. Constant frustration and hostility can wear you down. You may not feel as if you have the energy to explain how you feel...to anyone. Ironically, letting your emotions out is the crucial step that will make you feel better - immediately. *"I usually let out sounds. A grunt or whine... it might be annoying but it helps me get out my feelings,"* Emerald explained.

If you let your emotions boil too long without release, it is the third-degree burn you will suffer. The third-degree is the worst by far and the most dangerous because it does the most damage. Yet, it is the least painful. While a second-degree burn hurts your nerves, by the time your emotions boil to the third-degree, deep flesh has been damaged and your nerves are toast. ADDYTEens, listen up, letting your emotions cook you to the third-degree is dangerous to you and others. You don't feel anything – good or

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bad – and there is no self-encouragement, no determination to get better. You feel as if you are being pulled away.

Some of us get to this third-degree state and really disengage and get depressed. When you don't feel, you don't care. When you don't care, you don't try. When you don't try, you are certain to fail. At this stage, ADDYTeens wonder HOW they can feel emotion again, since everything else is numb. It is important for you and your parents to talk about these emotions and get help if you need it.

Guys and girls manifest our "third-degree" situations differently. Attending a lecture, I heard Dr. Steven Hinshaw, an expert on ADHD in Teens, say that girls tend to internalize and punish themselves (cutting, burning, etc.) Guys tend to externalize and punish others (violence, vandalizing, recklessness, etc). All of this extreme behavior is an attempt to "feel" again, and all of it is avoidable.

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Reduce Your Emotional Defiance

Another thing to recognize is your personal level of emotional defiance. Teens are defiant by nature, we don't like too much authority, we take risks, and we don't always pay attention to danger. ADDYTeens are no different, but sometimes we have emotional defiance "on steroids." Craig Surman, at the Massachusetts General Hospital, says that many of us with ADHD also have "DESR", which in simple terms means some ADDYTeens have a very hard time "regulating" our emotions. You know what I am saying here.

Just because something is hard, does not make it impossible. ADDYTeens, we all need to learn to control our emotions and not permit ourselves to lose control. When ADDYTeens can't regulate emotions, we "burn" and bad things happen. Don't "go there" - it is extremely important that ADDYTeens avoid the "burn" and speak up when they feel emotionally uncomfortable or unsafe.

Coping Emotionally

Here are three important steps that will help you regulate your emotions, express them in a healthy way and avoid the "third-degree burn."

Acknowledge: Notice how and when you start getting upset. Where are you? What are some factors that triggered you to feel this way? Do you feel the same way in specific situations? It is important that you begin to understand your own emotions and the triggers that set them off in order to bring emotional control into your daily life. Acknowledging that you are "feeling something" bothersome is Step 1.

Identify: Pay attention when you react the same way in specific circumstances. If you constantly feel the same way in a specific situation, it is important to focus on naming your emotion or come close to explaining it. ADDYTeens usually feel more than one emotion at the same time, but unintentionally group them together. Name two or three emotions that come close to how you feel. It does not matter what

you call them, you can name them as you like. I sometimes feel "*Funky*," or "*Edgy*" or "*Pissy*." Name your emotions anyway you like. This is STEP 2.

Defuse: Here is how you avoid the burn. Instead of dwelling on things that are out of your hands, focus on what you can control. Be honest with yourself about your emotions and think about the entirety of the situation - both sides included. As my Mom says, "Take a break, walk around, and focus on your breathing." Doing this can let your negative energy dissipate. Take a moment and collect your thoughts. Create a moment of silence in which you can view the situation and, in time, make the next positive move. This is STEP 3.

Every ADDYTeen must work extra hard to deal with their personal challenges, many of which are emotionally driven. Many ADDYTeens feel disconnected, challenged or isolated - this is understandable - but it is essential to voice and even vent how you feel to avoid "the burn." Although this can be difficult for some, the consequences for

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dismissing how you feel is far worse than the effort you could spend helping yourself.

Clogging yourself up with negative and stressful emotions is unhealthy. If you don't take control over your emotions, they will control you. Struggle to fight this. Letting your emotions control you is dangerous, it saps your strength and makes it very hard to take your power back some negative emotions are so strong that they can and will pull you down into a dark place – unless you fight hard to maintain control. Many ADDYTeens I interviewed said they felt “hopeless” when they lose control their emotions. Do your best to share how you feel rather than think your emotions are irrelevant to everyone else.

Parents are Safe, but Still Human

Sometimes, it is hard not to yell at your mom or dad because they're constantly around you. But, just because your parents love you does not mean they always have to like you, especially when you don't show respect or treat them badly. In most cases, your

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parents can be your closest teammates and your best support system for dealing with your ADHD. Sometimes your parents also have ADHD and may not know this. Some parents are not particularly helpful, but most do their best. Acknowledge this. Parents are the ones who make you “suit up” and they are the ones cheering you along on your race. Most parents will do anything to help you succeed. Keep them close and updated. They might not fully understand what you are feeling, but most parents will listen and give you supportive commentary.

Emotions are powerful, and they can be powerful weapons. We all have them. Choose to use them wisely and correctly. If you don't know how, ask for help. First, ask your parents. If not them, ask your Doctor, school counselor or a trusted friend for help. Ask for help when you need it.

IV. Medication – Being “On” or “Off”

Depending on which type of ADHD you may have – Inattentive, Hyperactive-Impulsive, or a combination of both, there are a number of prescription medications that may prove helpful to you. There are also some alternative treatments that you may wish to explore. There is a lot of information about medication on the Internet, ignore it; trust your Doctors for this type of information. There are also some alternative treatments that you may wish to explore, I list some on www.addyteen.com

The topic of prescription medication will be discussed and is a very important part of this Guide. *"Embracing your ADHD"* is a “life Guide” and a not a medical Guide. No details about specific drugs and what they do are provided here. Here are the most important three basic points about ADHD medication.

First, there are many advantages to ADDYTeens taking ADHD medication – or they would not be

prescribed in the first place. The APA says the primary advantages are improved focus, concentration and executive functions that allow ADDYTeens to be more productive and confident. To some degree, ADHD medication will reduce your attention deficits and/or your hyperactivity. Some ADDYTeens react very positively and get a huge benefit from medication; others...not so much.

When you study the details, and ask your Doctor, you will hear that most medications for ADHD are not “cutting edge” and most have been in wide use and are shown to be safe and reliable. The medication prescribed to me has been in use for many decades. The website www.addwarehouse.com has a great chart listing medication for ADHD. Some recent research funded by the National Institute for Mental Health (NIMH) used MRI scans to show in some cases ADHD negatively effects brain tissue over the long term in some cases. Dr. Hinshaw indicated that some ADHD drugs actually stop or slow that process.

Embracing your ADHD

Basic message #1– *ADHD is a medical issue, and ADHD medications work and are useful to the majority of ADDYTeens.*

Second, you may experience side effects when taking medication for your ADHD. Some ADDYTeens dislike the side effects so much that they think twice about taking the medicine. If you feel this way, most experts agree that you should consult your Doctor who can adjust your medication to reduce those effects. Side effects include loss of appetite, difficulty sleeping and in some cases, it will slow growth. Some of us experience new feelings we don't necessarily like, such as feeling a bit "jumpy" or a bit "weird" especially when you just start using them. ADDYTeens are often unaccustomed to many of the emotions they feel and lack the tools to process those feelings in a positive way. *Parents: If your child is taking ADHD medication, the side effects may add to your child's emotional challenges as they adjust to these new sensations. Be aware of this issue and try to be understanding.

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On www.addwarehouse.com, there is a list of known side effects of ADHD medication that has been vetted by Doctors.

Basic message #2– *Medications have side effects, some of which stink. If your medication bothers you, don't just stop taking it without first talking to your Parents and your Doctor. You may want to ask to see a Psychiatrist as they specialize in knowing all the details about this type of medication and in many cases can find a good fit for you.*

Third, there are many other medical disorders - such as Asthma, Epilepsy or Hypertension - for which medication is required. These medications also have side effects. Many ADDYTeens feel that taking medicine for their condition is "wrong" and often use the side effects as an excuse not to take the medicine. If you had Asthma, Epilepsy or Hypertension and your Doctor told you to take medicine to improve your health, you probably would not feel "wrong" to take them. Think seriously about this point.

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Basic message #3 – *Don't feel that taking ADHD medication is "wrong."*

Some say that life with ADHD is a bit of a “rollercoaster” and taking medicine for your ADHD could be compared to a rollercoaster control system. Taking medication will keep you "on track." When you take your medicine, you most likely work more diligently. You are more efficient, have better focus and can work with improved quality and speed. However, taking medication may cause your rollercoaster to take some wild turns in the form of new and strong emotions you may not recognize.

When I interviewed Ben, his advice for ADDYTEens just starting medicine was *“start low and then don't rush it. You've got all the time, and just remember that the most important thing is not to become reliant on it for everything in your life.”* Ben went on to say that once I started taking medicine, *“it was such an invigorating feeling to notice my work improving. Things become easier and clearer, and it*

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became easier to deal with so many situations that were once so hard for me.”

ADDYTEens will tell you that when you're “on” medication, you still have total control with the boost in focus and concentration. When you are "off" both the benefits and the side effects are gone.

Alexandria commented on her ability to focus when on her pill: *“I can concentrate better when I am on my pills but I still can't concentrate here with all of the other kids making noise in school.”*

Alexandria makes a great point. Medication helps ADHD, but it does not fix all the aspects of it. With many different types of medicine, there are also many doses. Depending on how well you can focus “on” or “off” your pill, your Doctor may want to change the dosage you take. It is necessary to regularly talk with your Doctor about what is working for you and what is not. This is not the type of thing you can figure out on your own – don't experiment!

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ADHD medicine has many indirect benefits also. Confidence is one of them. Rebecca mentioned she noticed that her *“overall performance was getting better...I was willing to try new study habits.”*

Although medicine is beneficial to help you cope with ADHD, many kids that were interviewed didn't like the medicine because of negative impact it had on their mind and body. *“The one I can remember the most,”* Maria said, *“is it stopped my growth for a long time and I'm still I still haven't caught up from that.”* Dave's opinion: *“I just really didn't feel 'like me' and that cannot be good.”*

Another common side effect ADDYTeens experience with ADHD medication – one that had an impact on me personally – is loss of appetite and weight loss. Rebecca says, *“...My body tells me I'm hungry, I'll choose to ignore or I just don't notice it at all. There are times I chose to ignore my hunger because I'm lazy, and there are times that I just don't notice it. My body sends a "surge" then my hands shake. That*

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happens a lot.” Susan says: *“I lost almost 10 pounds from the first medicine I took.”*

All teens deal with emotions such as anxiety and sadness as well as many physical changes. Of course, ADDYTeens feel these emotions and have these changes too. Occasionally ADHD medication will amplify these feelings. It is essential to tell your parents and Doctor how your medicine is making you feel and how it is effecting you.

Medication doesn't cure ADHD, but some ADDYTeens experience dramatic improvement in their ability to move forward and manage their daily tasks. Others experience little benefit. Sometimes it is tempting to switch “off” your medicine permanently, but that's not a good idea to try without the help and support of your family and Doctor. Everyone in your family can be affected by your decision, and they should be notified. How frequently you take your medication is a discussion I urge you to have with your family and Doctor. If one prescription

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doesn't work, you may need to try others to find the right one for you. One size does not fit all.

Whether you take medicine or not, accepting that you have a real medical condition that may in fact warrant medication will help you in your goal to achieve the future you want. Taking medication for your ADHD – not just as a teen, but as an adult too - may be a decision that you will have to accept in order to overcome some of the challenges you face.

V. Coping Strategies and Tactics:

ADDYTeens deal with the physical and emotional manifestations of ADHD daily, hourly and often every few minutes. Some days, our ADHD seems unimportant and irrelevant to what we are doing. On other days, having ADHD can be physically and mentally exhausting. For the tough days, you may find these coping strategies – listed by the CDC - helpful to keep yourself happy and ready for success.

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- **Exercise:** Clears your mind and your emotional stress, such as frustration. I would get so upset doing homework because I noticed how I wasted time even though I was trying my best to complete the tasks. My Mom would tell me to exercise in order to “clear my mind.” As annoying as that sounded at the time, it was true. Exercising works aspects of our brain that relieves frustration and other suppressed emotions, giving the studious parts of our brain time to rejuvenate. For those of us that are Hyperactive, exercise helps work off excess energy and aggression in a positive way and soothes and calms the body and the mind.
- **Eat Healthy:** According to the *American Journal of Psychiatry*, a healthy diet can be a huge advantage in coping with ADHD. Given your unique body and brain, there is no one size fits all diet which addresses all ADHD symptoms. Still, most medical experts agree on these basic rules.

More protein improves concentration. Add eggs, chicken, fish and nuts to your diet, along with dark green vegetables and beans rich in protein. This is particularly important at breakfast and for after-school snacks, to improve concentration and possibly increase the time ADHD medications work.

More complex carbohydrates help you sleep. Eat more vegetables and fruits, especially at night, when it may help you sleep.

More omega-3 fatty acids helps your brain. Eat more tuna, salmon, other cold-water white fish, walnuts, Brazil nuts, and olive and canola oil. Omega-3 fatty acids helps promotes brain tissue health.

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- **Sleep:** Rejuvenates and Refocuses. Sleep is the best reward for your body after a long day of work. When you're especially tired but would rather Facebook, rock out or message your friends, listen to your body and sleep. *The National Sleep Foundation* publications states that lack of sleep makes it particularly difficult to focus, manage stress, stay productive and keep on top of your responsibilities. Support yourself by getting eight hours of sleep every night, even more on the weekend. A recent study showed that during sleep, the brain repairs itself by removing harmful toxins, so get some good sleep nightly.
- **Connect with Others:** Take time and invest in your relationships so you can have fun and release some stress. Non-digital communication is best, so rather than spending time on Facebook or Tweeting, schedule activities with friends and keep your engagements. Create friendships with people who you enjoy spending time with and who also understand your struggles pertaining to your ADHD. Talking with your friends and your family about your life and feelings relieves stress and lets out your bottled-up emotions.

VI. **Methods and Management:**

For just about anything you do, you'll have to practice or prepare before you start. It is rare for anyone to do something perfectly the first couple of times they try, especially for anything school related. ADDYTeens should have some type of "game plan" or strategy before they start on a task to ensure success

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(and prevent defeat). Formulating strategies in advance forces you to realize your vision and objectives and identify the best steps to take on the road to success.

To effectively manage your daily tasks- whether it is at home or school- you must become organized, regulate time and give yourself the right amount of breaks. Since our home and school environments are different in many ways, you may need to find different methods to manage your academic tasks and personal duties at home and school.

Methods to use at School

To help you succeed with your academic tasks, try some of these great management methods which I use in each class. These come from the ADDYTeens I interviewed and others are also published on www.psychcentral.com and www.healthcentral.com:

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- **Advocate:** Every student will have questions about some topics in class and every student will need some help in class. ADDYTeens are more likely to have questions and need help in class than others. You need to become a strong advocate for yourself and ask for the information and help you require. Make sure that your teachers and school administration know you need help, and make sure that your parents do too.
- **Class Notes:** Some ADDYTeens find it difficult to take notes while listening to a lecture. If you have a hard time with note taking, be sure to get notes from your teachers or from friends every day. Many teachers will post their notes online; others need to be asked to do so. You need good notes to do daily work, to review for exams, and to perform well in class. Remember, you will not get help with your notes if you don't ask.
- **Track Assignments:** Some ADDYTeens find it difficult to keep track of assignments or they forget to write down parts of assignments. Before you leave class, make sure you have a list of your assignments for each day, crossing them off when completed to visualize your progress. Ask your teacher to write the assignment on the board or post them online or even email them to you daily. Remember, you will not get help tracking your assignments if you don't ask.
- **Task Lists:** Regardless of how big or small your homework load is, make a task list detailing the specific steps for each task. It is often best to do this during class (you can ask your teacher) so when you arrive at home you are less confused about what to do next to complete your work.
- **Brighten it Up! Tighten it Up!** Make your notebooks, binders and papers as colorful as possible! This will

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focus your attention on the important sections of your homework but it also reminds you which notebooks to use to take notes for each class and to stay organized. If possible, choose work and classes that motivate and interest you. It is easier to focus on topics you find compelling.

- **Make Study Partners:** ADDYTeens are often more creative and verbal, but less organized, so team up with more organized people to form a study group or partnership that will be mutually beneficial.

Methods to use at Home

To help you succeed with your academic and family obligations outside of school hours, use these management methods I know to work at home every day:

- **Recharge Your Mind and Body:** After sitting and concentrating all day at school, it is likely you will be wiped out when school ends. This is a great time to spend 15 or 20 minutes shooting hoops, jumping on a trampoline, jogging or practicing your dance moves to refresh your brain and body. Prepare your body for studying and work.
- **Pick Your Work Place:** Your task is to create an environment for yourself that will help you succeed and avoid those environments which distract or annoy you. Notice what time of day you find most productive, and which room or study area works best for you. Creating

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a working environment that is best for you has a huge impact on your learning potential and performance.

- Calendar Everything: Let machines help you succeed and keep you on task. Set deadlines for specific assignments, even ones that are not due soon or are almost completed. Put them in your phone calendar; sync it so you can see on your PC or Mac. Set deadlines in your calendar even for seemingly small tasks. Set alarms on your phone every hour to keep you on task and alert.
- Time Box: ADDYTeens often face a dual challenge of limited memory retention and limited attentiveness. Time management is crucial. Estimate how much time each assignment will take you to complete, taking into consideration every second you waste when becoming distracted, tired or frustrated. Box that amount of time into your calendar (on your phone or computer) and then compare your estimated time to how long it takes you in reality. Many ADDYTeens don't realize just how much time they spend on an assignment until they take the time to juxtapose it to their original goal.
- Relax and Rotate: When finished with a homework assignment, give yourself a break! Reward yourself that you finished your tasks with some time to relax and refocus your energy for the next assignment. Jumping from task to task is good in the sense that you feel motivated to finish as soon as possible, but that can lead to exhaustion and fatigue. Take some time to sit, breathe and regroup for five minutes. Then, rotate the tasks you need to do by subject, rather than doing the same work again and again. Doing any one task for too long will make anyone less efficient.

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- Time your medication: For students taking medicine for their ADHD in the morning before school, it is extremely important to know when your medicine will wear off. Making the most of the additional focus and concentration your medication delivers is wise. It is very frustrating to notice that your "pill" is wearing off when you're still faced with hours of homework ahead. To prevent yourself from slowly fading while doing homework, start the most important and challenging tasks first to spend the remaining time on your medicine for your hardest assignment. Yes, it is possible to do homework when you are off your medicine, but for most of us that is exceptionally hard and may be what led to getting the medicine in the first place.
- Manage your stress: ADDYTeens take more time to complete the same tasks compared to students without ADHD and this creates stress. No matter how big your workload there is always enough time in the day to relax and regroup because none of us perform well when we are too stressed. Stress management skills are very beneficial for ADDYTeens because it helps us stay on task and stay focused.

VII. Self Advocacy

Your parents and teachers may not fully understand your workload and stress levels. They may have expectations of you that are hard to fulfill or even unreasonable. It is important to do your best at all times, but is equally important to make sure you have

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the environment and support at home you need to succeed. If you are not getting the right amount of help you believe you need, it is essential to speak up to your parents or teachers and explain to them what would be beneficial to you and why.

This means you need to speak up (politely) and make sure to get your parents support when you need it. Your parents are your best teammates in life, ask them for help when you can. *“I have two younger sisters,” Talia said, “they have no problem telling my parents what they want... it makes me think about how I present myself to my teachers... just like when my sisters ask for snacks, I need to ask for help.”*

Self-advocacy might be embarrassing to some while it is easy for others. Personally, it took me time to adjust to the idea, but now I am a vocal self-advocate in every context of my life. ADDYTeens, regardless of how you feel, you will learn that speaking up for yourself in a polite and respectful way will help you throughout your life. This is true in junior or high school, and it is true in college, in the workplace and

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in relationships. Being your own best advocate is essential to success in your life – with or without ADHD.

We All Have Strengths and Weaknesses

Discussing your challenges and weaknesses is a big factor in understanding how ADHD impacts your life. ADDYTeens, reviewing these topics together with your family – and your teachers – is a great way to move forward on your road to success. Since you are running “your own race” and you need “your own route,” what you need may be very different from other teens. This should not concern you. In fact, it may actually help you shape your long-term goals.

Parents! You Can Help!

Parents, this topic of self-advocacy is great to discuss with your ADDYTeens. Talk to your teen about their view of their own strengths and weaknesses. We all benefit from accepting that we are good at some activities and need improvement in others. *“After her*

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bother declared his major in college,” explained Brooke’s mother, “Brooke, her father and I had a nice talk about her interests in the future. It brought up some interesting topics for Brooke to think about.”

Personally, I find reading for long periods of time very difficult. I have to take breaks, and when I do read, I have to really concentrate. Also, I have to read in a very quiet place in order to comprehend the material. ADDYTeens, make sure to tell your parents what environments make it hard for you to perform and which work best for you. Practicing something – even if it is hard – is the only way to improve and develop new strengths. *“I was surprised that David told me to shut my music off,” David’s father said. “I never thought it would distract him... I’m really happy he told me.”*

VIII. Accommodations Are OK!

Working at something that is challenging is made easier when you find an environment that helps you be more productive. This is a big reason that your

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school should be aware of what works best for you and why. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 requires most schools to offer students with ADHD “accommodations” to help them learn to their potential. It is important to make sure that the school understands your needs, and this is why being your own advocate is important.

Accommodations are not “get out of jail free cards” or coupons that get you out of doing your work. Accommodations, in the form of an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or a “504” plan are just viable plans for an ADDYTeen to achieve academically to their potential. It levels the “playing field.”

For example, I am easily distracted. In my IEP meetings, we discuss “preferential seating.” In some cases, that may mean sitting in the front row, but not always. It is important to make sure that the school counselors and teachers understand what you need. If the school counselor writing your IEP checks a box on a form that says “Grace should always sit in the front row” that actually may not help me. Teachers

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don't always arrange seats in rows, they don't always stand at the front of the classroom, and some classes have labs. Preferential seating could be at the back of the classroom, near another student who is a good influence, or as close to the teacher or board as possible. *"In each class, I would get distracted by my classmates talking or playing on their phones,"* stated Vincent. *"I asked my teacher if I could move up front so I wouldn't see or hear them."*

It is best to let your teachers know specifically what you can't "deal with" in class. Do your best to advocate even if it might not be easy to communicate your feelings to the teacher.

Another example of accommodations on an IEP is "extended time." Extended time can be for exams, homework and standardized tests. How much extended time? The school team will help make this determination with you and your parents. Kiley notes that her science teacher *"was always accommodating to me...all the teachers I had were great."*

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Your IEP plan should be very specific to your needs and you need to actually read it to make sure it fits your needs. Otherwise, ask your parents to set up another meeting and change it! Personally, my IEP has made a significant difference in my grades. It has changed how I feel in general towards school and how I learn. Teachers all over the country are trained for students with ADHD, so it will not be unfamiliar to them when asked to discuss accommodations with you.

Not all teachers can alter their work for students with ADHD, but most are very understanding. Having a little extra help and in some cases extra time goes a long way. Just like Vincent, once you take the first step and explain to your teacher about what's going on in class that effects you negatively, the teacher is likely to work with you to find a solution. Beth suggests, *"...Ask your teacher for a set of printed notes. This will help you in class to focus more on the teacher's lecture and less on frantically writing down the information. It is way more effective to jot down comments next to the given information."* What may

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be important to you might not be obvious to your teacher. Printed notes can point you to the major concepts that the teacher wants you to learn for the test. In order to get these learning accommodations, you or your parents have to talk to your school counselor and discuss your short and long term goals for the year and your academic future.

Becoming a strong self-advocate doesn't mean you constantly have to speak up for yourself in class... that would be annoying to you and your classmates. Take the time to really look at your situation and determine what you need to ensure that you succeed. Set up meetings before or after class to talk with your teachers about strategies that will help you learn best in their classes.

Speaking up in the IEP or 504 meetings, may be frightening or uncomfortable. If you feel this way, talk about your needs with your parents first. Most parents are always there with open ears and an understanding for what you need and why. *“Vincent speaks up in IEP meetings,” said his mother. “I*

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expected him to be quiet in front of his teachers. Having ADHD has probably enhanced his ability to communicate verbally. He's a great self-advocate and very self-aware.”

Succeeding is everyone's goal in school. Students with ADHD are no different. Our goals, paths and level of need may be different, but for all of us, getting that help for school and outside activities is essential. It will make a world of difference while you're a student and is good practice for the future.

IX. [Accept and Discover](#)

By now you have learned that accepting yourself with ADHD is the first and most important step to taking control and becoming who you want to be in the future. So, if the first step is acceptance, the second step is discovery. The third step is pursuing your passions and dreams.

This section of the Guide is about steps two and three. Let's focus first on step two - discovering your natural

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gifts, your interests and your passions so you can visualize who you want to be in the future and what you want to do in the future.

In the introduction, I said you need to 'focus on the road you're running on, on the race to your destination, and not where everyone else is headed.' Discovering your natural gifts, talents, positive character traits, passion and interests and then "channeling" them productively is the way in which you chart *your* path. Begin today to prepare yourself to achieve success in the future. Remember, why wait? Start now.

Let's start with some definitions. What are your natural gifts? What are your talents? What are your skills?

- **Gifts** are special and natural abilities or aptitudes to do something very well, something you can do easily without being taught. People are born having natural gifts. Having perfect pitch or great rhythm are gifts. Empathy is a gift. Gifts include

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the ability to draw well, be humorous or create stories from your imagination. Being mechanical is a gift; spatial learning is a gift, understanding how puzzles work is a gift.

- **Skills** are capabilities we develop based on our effort, knowledge, practice, and aptitude. Skills are learned, honed and improved. Programming and fixing a computer require a specific set of skills. Using a camera correctly, driving a car well, and nursing are all specific skills that people learn how to do with practice.
- **Talents** are our natural gifts we work really hard to refine with a great deal of practice or effort. A person who has a gift for telling stories can refine that into a talent for writing books, working as an attorney in court, giving great sales presentations, or entering politics. A person who has a gift of rhythm can develop that into a talent for drumming or dancing. It takes great effort and persistence to turn your gift into a talent.

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I like how Laura Berman Fortgang puts it: “to discover your natural gifts, you should tap into your happiest childhood memories.” Think about what you loved to do as a kid. Many of those activities you found fun and easy to do use your natural gifts. Even as a teenager or adult, you can still discover your natural gifts.

Discovering your natural gifts that you can turn into a talent and pursue with passion is merely a matter of opportunity. Chris mentioned his love for drums, but explained, *“I started noticing my great rhythm after my Spanish teacher said my pen tapping went well with the music. Now I lead drum lessons.”*

“I’m a great visual learner,” Lauren stated, *“the way I view information inspired my passion for architecture.”*

Regardless of how small or amazing your gifts are, your different gifts must always be embellished by practice and driven with passion into a talent.

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Polishing silverware makes it shine brighter; polishing your gifts will make your talents shine, too.

What are some of your favorite hobbies? Cooking, art, camping, woodworking, fixing bikes, and creative writing are all examples. What specific factors about your hobbies do you find most appealing, most engaging? Asking these questions is the best way to find your gifts.

“Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life.” Confucius

As mentioned, if the first step is acceptance, and the second step is discovery, the third step is taking action. Taking action means actively refining your gifts into talents, finding your passions and pursuing them, and developing skills around your talents and passions. For ADDYTeens, this process is especially important.

For ADDYTeens, focusing and concentrating on activities you enjoy does not require half the energy it

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takes to do work you find boring. Beth said, *"I take my pill every day to focus at school... the effects wear off around six pm and I practice piano an hour after that. I thought it would be a problem to concentrate, but it wasn't; maybe it is because I like playing piano so much."* Beth makes an excellent point. Think about it, what would take more energy and concentration: working on a tedious assignment or doing something you like? As you work on tasks and projects that you find interesting, notice how well you can concentrate compared to how easily you become disengaged with boring and mundane assignments.

After you start to recognize your natural gifts and refine your talents, pursuing them will become natural, too! When we are driven, we are less distracted. Passion is the driver of achievement in all fields and the best source of self-encouragement. Once you find something you love to do, do more of it. You will improve your talents and skills in this way. Understand that pursuing your passions and refining your talents is very hard work.

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For example, the actor and musician, Will Smith, has ADHD. Will was an ADDYTeen just like you and me. He says *"I'm not afraid to die on a treadmill. I will not be outworked. You may be more talented than me. You might be smarter than me. And you may be better looking than me. But if we get on a treadmill together, you are going to get off first or I'm going to die. It is really that simple. I'm not going to be outworked."*

Finding your own gifts and passions and pursuing them is a major factor to your success in life. Here are some more thoughts from famous people all of whom had ADHD just like you and me...

"If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away." Henry David Thoreau (Poet)

"It is a damn poor mind that can think of only one way to spell a word!" President Andrew Jackson

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"To invent, you need a good imagination and a pile of junk." Thomas Edison (Inventor and Scientist)

Maximizing those talents will almost always have a more profound impact on your life than obsessively worrying about your weaknesses. Every ADDYTeen should work on pursuing projects and activities that utilize and improve your gifts. Many people with ADHD have succeeded and achieved great things. Every person has a unique set of talents; we all have a unique brain. It is just a matter of identifying those gifts, refining them into talents and visualizing your future. That is "the nature of the race."

ADDYTeens, molding your life around your talents will lead you to a more meaningful and satisfactory life. To be successful in your career, for example, try to position yourself into a role that requires you to do more of what you have a talent for so that you can develop skills around those talents.

Parents, help your ADDYTeen identify their gifts and help them refine them into talents. Rather than being

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frustrated with those things they are not good at doing, be it their studies, sports or anything else, encourage them to do more of what they do well. Help your ADDYTeens "Control the Controllables," find their own route and run their own race. ADDYTeens, remember there are many accomplished people you know who have ADHD, just like you and me. Have a look:

Artists

Ansel Adams
Salvadore Dali
Vincent Van Gogh

Pablo Picasso
August Rodin

Writers

Lewis Carroll
Agatha Christie
Ernest Hemingway
Samuel Johnson
Edgar Allan Poe
Lily Collins

George Bernard Shaw
Socrates
Henry David Thoreau
Leo Tolstoy
Jules Verne
William Butler Yeats

Statesmen

Napoleon Bonaparte
Woodrow Wilson
Winston Churchill
Dwight Eisenhower

John F. Kennedy
Robert F. Kennedy
Abraham Lincoln
Nelson Rockefeller

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Actors and Directors	
Ann Bancroft	Tom Smothers
Harry Belafonte	Steven Spielberg
George Burns	Suzanne Somers
Jim Carey	Sylvester Stallone
Cher	James Stewart
Bill Cosby	Lindsay Wagner
Tom Cruise	Robin Williams
Kirk Douglas	Henry Winkler
Danny Glover	Jennifer Connelly
Tracey Gold	Hilary Duff
Whoopi Goldberg	Eva Longoria
Alfred Hitchcock	Liv Tyler
Dustin Hoffman	Paris Hilton
Steve McQueen	Cameron Diaz
Jack Nicholson	Michelle Rodriguez
Joan Rivers	Brittany Snow
George C. Scott	Ashley Olsen
Will Smith	Mary-Kate Olsen
Ellen Page	Alison Lohman
Emma Watson	Christopher Knight
Forrest Griffin	Dakota Fanning
Glenn Beck	Daniel Bedingfield
Howie Mandel	Diane Kruger

Musicians

William James Adams	Elvis Presley
Ludwig van Beethoven	Stevie Wonder
Steven Tyler	Avril Lavigne
John Lennon	Justin Timberlake
Wolfgang Mozart	Adam Levine
Ozzy Osbourne	Kurt Cobain

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Entrepreneurs / Business People

Sir Richard Branson	Henry Ford
Andrew Carnegie	Bill Gates
Walt Disney	William Randolph Hearst

Scientists/Inventors

Alexander Graham Bell	Galileo
Thomas Edison	Sir Issac Newton
Albert Einstein	William Wrigley
Michael Faraday	Leonardo Da Vinci
Benjamin Franklin	Orville & Wilber Wright

Athletes

Terry Bradshaw	Carl Lewis
Josh Freeman	Greg Louganis
Bruce Jenner	Michael Phelps
Magic Johnson	Pete Rose
Michael Jordan	Babe Ruth
Jason Kidd	Nolan Ryan

Accept yourself. Discover your gifts, interests and passions. Pursue your future with courage, determination and bravery!!

X. Conclusion – Top 10 Tips for ADDYTeens

1. Everyone is unique and so is your brain! ADHD can interfere with your daily activities but cannot control your life unless you let it. You are not your diagnosis.
2. ADDYTeens sometimes experience emotions “on steroids” and that can be very complicated and challenging. Although difficult, it is essential to control your emotions or else they will control you. Don’t let your emotions “burn” you. Recognize your body’s signals.
3. For ADDYTeens, feeling a few emotions all at once is perfectly normal, even though it is very hard to describe your feelings when that happens. Choose to share with the people you believe understand you the best and “open up” and tell them how you’re feeling. Bottling-up your emotions is harmful on so many levels. Let it out.

4. ADHD can be exhausting, and your body can get run-down easily. To perform at the best of your capabilities, keep your body healthy. Do this by exercising, eating a balanced diet and getting enough sleep.
5. The more you organize your work and life, the more you control your life and your ADHD. Avoid becoming stressed and discombobulated by regulating your time on assignments, projects and tasks at home and during school. Use your calendar in your phone and computer!
6. Get what you need...to succeed! Remember, you have ADHD so it is your obligation to speak up to your teachers, administration and parents. Advocate for yourself. You are your best cheerleader.
7. Think about what makes you tick, those activities you most enjoy and what you find most interesting. This is the way to find your natural “gifts” and develop talents that will help you in the

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future. Develop skills that support your gifts to give yourself a real boost! ADDYTeens find it easier to do work they love doing.

8. Run your own race, on your own route, at your own pace. Focus only on what you are doing and not on what everyone else is doing. Run strong, and don't get thrown 'off track" by comparing yourself to others different from you. What good does that do?
9. Set your goals, and then create a strategy to get there. Connect with people who will support your interests, dreams and passions. It does not matter how fast you take to reach your goals as long as you get there safely.
10. Do what you can, when you can, the best you can. Control the Controllables! Grab what is within your reach, and move forward. Spend your energy and time wisely.

Embrace YOUR ADHD !