

Your plain-English guide to
treatment options and life strategies

AD/HD

FOR

DUMMIES®



Jeff Strong

Founder and President, REI Institute

Michael O. Flanagan, MD

Neuropsychiatrist

A Reference for the Rest of Us!



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**by Jeff Strong and
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Jeff Strong: Jeff Strong is Founder and President of the REI Institute, a music medicine research center and clinic focusing on people with developmental disabilities, including those with AD/HD. His research on the use of auditory stimulus for people with developmental disabilities has been presented at over two dozen professional scientific conferences and has been featured in numerous books and journals. He is a recognized expert on the use of sound and music for people with AD/HD, having appeared on many radio and television programs, including two documentaries. His therapy is being used by thousands of people around the world. Mr. Strong is the bestselling author of six books and is an adult with AD/HD.

Michael O. Flanagan, MD: Michael Flanagan began his training in AD/HD at birth. In spite of constant distractibility and procrastination, he managed to get a B.G. (barely graduated) in Philosophy from Yale College and an M.D. from the University of New Mexico. He later recognized why his career had such a meandering course when he started working as a physician/therapist in Bob Gurnee's Albuquerque AD/HD clinic. That was in 1992, when he figured out that he has AD/HD after having been through medical school and post-graduate training in neurobiology, neurology, and psychiatry. He is currently practicing neuropsychiatry in Albuquerque and Santa Fe, New Mexico.

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Introduction

A lot of people have attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (AD/HD). Researchers estimate that in the United States, people with AD/HD constitute anywhere from 3 to 6 percent of the population (or more, depending on which study you read). On the low side, this totals about 8 million people. So rest assured that if you have AD/HD, or are related to someone who does, you're not alone. Almost everyone knows at least one person with AD/HD (whether they're aware of it or not).

Despite the fact that so many people have AD/HD, this is widely a misunderstood condition. Some people — including many healthcare professionals — believe that AD/HD isn't real. These people believe that AD/HD is a made-up excuse for bad behavior and bad parenting.

We want to assure you right from the start that AD/HD is a real condition that affects millions of people. For many, it makes life very difficult. AD/HD has a biological cause and can't be willed away through discipline or hard work. And the symptoms of AD/HD can't be ignored in the hopes that the person will simply grow out of them.

To reduce (and sometimes eliminate) the symptoms of AD/HD, you need to understand this condition and receive knowledgeable intervention. The purpose of this book is to help you gain a better understanding of AD/HD and discover where to look for help. Our goal is to give

you the tools to effectively address AD/HD in your life, whether you, your child, your spouse, or your friend is the one with AD/HD.

About This Book

AD/HD For Dummies is unique among books on this condition in that it was written with the AD/HD person in mind. We don't go into long explanations with obscure points; we go right to the heart of the matter and give you the information you need to know with as little fuss as possible.

When we set out to write this book, obviously we wanted to offer basic information about what AD/HD is and where it comes from. But we also wanted to provide information on cutting-edge treatment approaches and simple, effective strategies to help you start getting the symptoms under control and begin living the life you want to live. As a result, this book is short on background details and jargon, and it's long on real-world advice. Both of us have many years' experience working with people with AD/HD, and we draw heavily from these experiences in the pages that follow.

Not So Foolish Assumptions

In this book, we make only one assumption about you: We assume that you want to read a book about AD/HD that doesn't dilly-dally around with poetic descriptions and lengthy anecdotes, because you have very little time and want to get the bottom line quickly. We don't waste your time with lengthy explanations, but we do want to make this book fun to read, so we include some references to people we've worked with in order to give you insights into life with AD/HD.

Now that we're clear on what we assume, we should mention the thing that we don't assume in this book: We don't assume that you are the person with AD/HD. In this light, we try to offer a view of this condition as if you, your spouse, your child, your grandchild, your friend, or your student has AD/HD. (Whew, that's a lot of perspectives in one book!)

Conventions Used in This Book

Given the enormity of perspective that we try to cover in this book, we can't very well list each of the possible relationships you may have with AD/HD in each paragraph. To keep things simple, we generally refer to *you* throughout the book as if you are the person who has AD/HD. However, in some instances we do mention a specific perspective as it relates to a particular

relationship, and in those cases we write about *your child, your spouse*, and so on.

The only other convention we want to clarify up front is how we reference the condition we're writing about. In the mental health field, this condition is called *attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder*, or AD/HD. Most likely, you've also heard it called simply *attention deficit disorder*, or ADD. We're talking about the same condition; we've simply chosen to use its formal name in this book. (As you find out in Chapter 2, this condition has had many names over the years, and we expect its name to change again soon.)

How This Book Is Organized

This book is organized into five parts to help you quickly and easily find areas of interest. The sections below explain what you'll find in each part, and you can check out the Table of Contents at the beginning of the book to see more specifics about what's covered in each chapter.

Part I: The ABCs of AD/HD

Part I introduces you to AD/HD. In Chapter 1, you get an overview of the disorder — a sort of preview of what you'll find in the rest of the book. Chapter 2 looks at the cause of AD/HD from several different perspectives and examines the role of biology in creating your symptoms. Chapter 3 explains the symptoms of AD/HD — both the core symptoms and the secondary symptoms that can emerge from the core symptoms.

Part II: Diagnosing AD/HD

Part II examines how AD/HD is diagnosed and who can best make a diagnosis. Chapter 4 introduces you to the many types of professionals who can diagnose or treat AD/HD and offers advice on choosing the best professional for you or your child. Chapter 5 walks you through the evaluation process by examining the criteria for AD/HD and presenting the many types of assessment procedures you may have to go through to determine whether you have AD/HD. Chapter 6 explores conditions that look like AD/HD but aren't and provides the guidelines that professionals may use in order to make a diagnosis.

Part III: Treating AD/HD

Part III explores the many types of treatment for AD/HD. Chapter 7 introduces you to the basic types of treatment options and helps you develop a plan to make the best choices for you or your loved one. Chapter 8 is all about medication and explains the different types of medications available for people with AD/HD, as well as how to work with your doctor to find the best one for you. Chapter 9 examines counseling, coaching, and training, and shows you how they can help you or your loved one. Chapter 10 explores one of the oldest approaches to dealing with the symptoms of AD/HD: behavior modification. Chapter 11 gets you up to speed on the many ways that nutrition, supplements, and herbs can help with the symptoms of AD/HD. Chapter 12 digs into *restructuring therapies* — treatment approaches that are designed to help you change the way your brain works over the long-term. And finally, Chapter 13 looks into *rebalancing therapies* — therapies that strive to rebalance your nervous system.

Part IV: Living with AD/HD

Part IV is all about effectively living with AD/HD. Chapter 14 starts you off with tips and suggestions for making life at home as low-stress and rewarding as possible.

Chapter 15 explores schooling by offering tips on dealing with bureaucracy, developing positive relationships with your child's teachers, and ensuring that your child gets the help he needs to do his work well. Chapter 16 helps you make the most of your job by offering you tools to handle the demands of work, as well as suggestions to help you find the best type of work for you. In Chapter 17, we examine the often-overlooked positive attributes of AD/HD and help you explore ways to enhance them in your life.

Part V: The Part of Tens

The Part of Tens is a staple of every *For Dummies* book. This part contains three chapters that are sure to help your life with AD/HD. Chapter 18 contains ten helpful suggestions for getting and keeping your life organized. This chapter explores everything from tried-and-true organization approaches to the newest high-tech tools to keep you plugged into the pulse of your day. Chapter 19 presents ideas to help you develop and maintain family harmony, including ways to take care of yourself and to learn better communication skills. Chapter 20 finishes this section with ten types of resources that can help you find out more about AD/HD and get the support you need.

After Part V, we've included an appendix that contains treatment tracking forms. These forms are great tools to use if you want to assess the positive and negative outcomes of treatments you choose to try — especially treatments that have a biological impact, such as medications.

Icons Used in This Book

As with all *For Dummies* books, we use a few icons to help you along your way.

Certain techniques are very important and bear repeating. This icon gives you those gentle nudges to



keep you on track.



This icon sits next to paragraphs that define tough terms, get a little scientific, or otherwise offer information that may be a little more difficult to digest.



This icon highlights expert advice and ideas that can help you to better deal with AD/HD in your life.



This icon alerts you to instances when you need to take special care not to hurt yourself or someone else.

Where to Go from Here

This book is set up so that you can either read it cover to cover and progressively build on your knowledge or jump around and read only those parts that interest you at the time. For instance, if you don't know anything about AD/HD and want to get up to speed on the basics, start with Chapter 1. On the other hand, if your child is having trouble in school and you want to find some ways to deal with his challenges, you can head straight for Chapter 15. If you want to find out about the latest alternative treatment methods for AD/HD, check out Chapter 11, 12, or 13 first.

Regardless of where you start in this book, if you run across a term or idea that is covered in more detail