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# Introduction FOR PARENTS



**CHANCES ARE, IF YOU ARE READING THIS** book, you are a parent, relative, educator, counselor, guardian, or therapist of a child with ADHD. Congratulations on wanting to learn more about ADHD and how you can help engage your child, student, or client. It's wonderful that you are being proactive about ADHD. You are making a tremendous difference on behalf of the child you care for.

My name is Kelli Miller, and I'm a licensed clinical social worker. I work with children who have ADHD as well as their caregivers. I'm also the mom of two children with ADHD. Yes, not just one but two children with ADHD! I understand the challenges, the frustration, and the heartache. I've sobbed on my kitchen floor out of pure exasperation. I've had my own meltdowns. And both my kids have been kicked out of IHOP.

I used to fight it—I'd ask myself, why can't my child sit still like *that* little boy or girl who is controlled, quiet, and listening? But as I've come to understand and accept the eccentricities that come with this diagnosis, I've learned how truly special kids with ADHD are. Children with ADHD have gifts that are unique. Their creativity, sensitivity, and humor are parallel to none. Their way of looking at the world is incredibly unique. In retrospect, I can honestly say children with ADHD have been my best teachers.

My goal is to help your child understand that ADHD isn't a "defect" at all, and with the right tools, ADHD can be an asset. In this book, I use what is called a "strength-based approach." That means I like to focus on each child's individual strengths, from which they can build self-confidence. In other words, I'm emphasizing what your child can do right rather than wrong. On some level, children with ADHD understand their limitations and may already be entering the world with negative self-views—this perspective does not help children thrive. We need to lift them up and show them how to live life to the fullest with their ADHD. Learning these skills, particularly at a young age, can be very beneficial.

I understand that as parents or clinicians, our time is limited, and children can have a low frustration tolerance, so I tried to make the exercises as easy as possible so they can “do it themselves.” I also tried to use minimal equipment and vary the activities. Most importantly, I included only activities that have worked effectively with my own children or patients. Some children will take this book and make it their own. Other children may benefit from a team approach to this book, whereby you might work on activities together. Finally, some activities may feel very easy to your child while others will feel more challenging. That’s okay. Not all activities will resonate depending on your child’s personality and age. The important thing is that your child feels empowered while doing the activities. However you approach it, your child will have a book full of activities designed to help them with the many facets of ADHD, from self-control and organization to getting tasks done and making friends—whatever they need help with.

At times they may need your help or support to complete a given task. You may watch them and wonder why they are doing their homework standing up or putting sticky notes on your bathroom mirror. They may also ask you to come up with rewards for their Homework Jar (page 54). That said, your child may want you to do activities with them, or they may want to be left alone with their book and their thoughts—either one is natural as they explore within themselves. What’s important is that they are reading and working toward becoming more successful!

**Please note:** This book is meant to be a complementary tool to a full treatment program that works best for your child.

# Introduction FOR KIDS



**HI AND WELCOME! MY NAME IS KELLI**, and I am a therapist who has worked with dozens of kids who have ADHD. I believe that kids should have fun with everything they do and not struggle so hard in school and life. So, I've created this book full of activities, puzzles, games, and tricks to help you learn, get organized, and be the best you can be.

First, I'm going to help you understand what ADHD is. By now I'm sure you've heard these initials quite a bit, and you may be wondering what these four letters really mean. *ADHD* stands for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. My eight-year-old son, Remy, has ADHD, and he describes it as "a disorder in the brain that causes you to do certain things." He's on to something. ADHD is a condition or a difficulty in the brain's normal functions. It affects people in different ways. You might be more active, jumpy, or pre-occupied than other kids. You might struggle to do your homework every night. But I'm here to show you that you can do *exactly* what other kids can do—you just may need more support or tools, which I'll give you, too.

Let's imagine a child who needs glasses. They can see a little bit without the glasses, but once they put the glasses on, they can see so clearly and don't have to strain. It's easier for them with the support of their glasses. In a similar way, my hope is that with education, skills, and fun activities—the support—you can learn smart ways to help focus and manage your ADHD more clearly.

ADHD is a condition you're born with. It is not your fault or something you did. It also doesn't have anything to do with the way you were parented, nor a lack of rules, nor what you ate. You are who you are, and you're awesome.

You are also not alone. Millions of children across the world have ADHD. Many children with ADHD have grown up to be very successful. In fact, one of the best Olympic swimmers in the world, Michael Phelps, has ADHD. Same with American gymnast Simone Biles. Popular musician Adam Levine also has ADHD. Ty Pennington, star of *Extreme Makeover Home Edition*, has ADHD.<sup>1</sup> Finally, check this one out: A boy named Dav Pilkey grew up with ADHD. He was always getting in trouble in school, and he would escape in his mind by inventing and drawing superheroes. Dav went on to create the Captain Underpants book series!

There are hundreds of CEOs (chief executive officers, or the bosses of companies), teachers, doctors, firefighters, engineers, artists, journalists, and even therapists who have ADHD. Some even say that one of the smartest people ever, Albert Einstein, had ADHD. You can be just as successful and live a wonderful, full life just like other kids without ADHD. And I want to help!

We're going to explore new skills and techniques together that are very entertaining. In fact, you probably won't even notice you're learning! But as you try out these skills, you'll soon see that you are developing new ways to manage your ADHD. If you read and follow the suggestions in this book, you'll feel better and understand more about yourself and how to help yourself. I want you to feel more confident and less frustrated both at school and at home. You ready? Let's begin!