

FORWARD

The entire subject of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) presents itself daily in the news print media, on TV, on talk radio and over the Internet. Exciting and significant advances are being made in the understanding of ADHD. Therapists, physicians, teachers, and even politicians are weighing in heavily with concerns about under diagnosing or over diagnosing, under treatment or over treatment. Health insurance company policies, HMO's in particular, and dwindling moneys for mental health treatment reimbursement have led to shorter and less costly evaluations and treatments for children with ADHD. This often results in giving children medication only, or in not treating them at all. This shortsighted and inadequate approach does a tremendous disservice to these needy children and to their parents who often end up with merely a pill as their only means of professional help. The pill or no pills at all approach ignores the need to change ADHD children's long-standing maladaptive behavioral patterns developed in a desperate attempt to cope with their chaotic ADHD world. Also lost is the opportunity to help the parents of these children see ADHD with more understanding and change their parenting approaches.

In this current, sometimes confusing ADHD arena, it is timely and refreshing to be redirected, reorganized and better grounded by Don Mordasini's new book, WILD CHILD. It is a remarkable no-nonsense, practical, helpful guide for children and adolescents with ADHD, for their parents, and for therapists in the field. The book has excellent emphasis on what constitutes the condition and how failure to diagnosis it or under treat it with medication alone can harm children's self esteem and continue family chaos and parental sense of inadequacy. Don's goal is that of changing unwanted behaviors and learning new behaviors to help children and teens become more responsible, self-sufficient and self-confident individuals.

The distinctive beauty and effectiveness of this book is in its degree of organization, clinical examples, charts and intervention strategies. This is so helpful for parents reading the book because many of them also have ADD traits themselves. The very organization of Don's book reaches out effectively to these particular parents who need specific structure, order and step by step guidance. This book is just what parents who are overwhelmed by details or intimidated by so much information can find comfort in. What a gift!

In addition to practical, easy to understand guidance the book offers, it is equally if not more important that Don's own life circumstances play an integral part of the text. Don grew up having ADHD himself. As a parent Don raised a daughter who had ADHD. Now as a therapist in private practice Don treats ADHD children and their parents. Don's rich and valuable viewpoint of having "walked in others' shoes" is rare and exceptional in a book of this type and allows him to effectively present the materials from the three unique perspectives of the ADHD child, the parent, and the therapist. Who better to help than someone who has been there himself and who has grown stronger and wiser as a result?

WILD CHILD is divided into two sections. The first section, Part I-Chapters I to 9, is an understanding of the basic nature of ADHD and its diagnosis. The second section deals

with therapeutic techniques and treatment. This section is subdivided into parts II and III. These parts deal with the major practical issues that are essential for proper and effective treatment of children in Chapters 10 to 17 and adolescents in Chapters 18 to 23. These latter sections form the heart and soul of the book. Don's major contributions are informing his readers what to do for the child and parents once the diagnosis of ADHD has been made. His understanding of what needs to be addressed is priceless and his interventions are practical and comprehensive.

Each chapter is full of easy to understand basic rules for children and parents to follow. Ample use of clinical examples illustrates the points he makes in the text. Practical rubber-meets-the-road guides for parents are given to help their children with familiar and important issues such as aggression, temper tantrums, undone chore, difficult bed times, messy rooms, and getting dressed and ready for school. In the teenage section breaking curfews, truancy, running away and substance abuses are some of the many issues addressed in detail.

Although WILD CHILD primarily deals with ADHD, it has much broader implications to help treat other important clinical conditions such as oppositional defiant disorder (ODD), anxiety disorders, post traumatic stress disorder, depression, and much more. Some of these conditions often coexist with ADHD, while some of them masquerade as ADHD since they can share some overlapping clinical features. All however can be substantially helped by the interventions Don offers in these core chapters.

Before closing I want to share the following thoughts about my relationship with Don Mordasini, for it is his specialness and delightful personality that make all the precious ideas in his book come alive. I have had the pleasure of working with Don for these past several years. Personally, Don is an inspiration—consistently positive, affirming and enthusiastic. Even though busy, he always makes time to be helpful and readily shares his information and ideas. He is well read, well informed and quite knowledgeable. He is excellent at accessing clinical situations and quickly focuses in on the salient issues. His therapeutic abilities are well honed and he brings into play the skills of a diagnostician, therapist, mentor, teacher and role model. Don also is able to handle the delicate balance between treating the child or the adolescent while involving their parents in a constructive way. I especially appreciate his follow through on tough cases and his commitment to helping achieve positive results. It is no wonder he has had so much remarkable success with a wide variety of patients. He is also quite comfortable and skillful in working with other professionals be they schoolteachers, tutors, counselors or psychiatrists. He is committed to developing a strong treatment team alliance. I look forward to continuing my personal and professional relationship with this most talented and special person

Bruce Wermuth, M. D.

Los Gatos, CA

08-09-00