

Back Cover

When it comes to ADHD, many people think of children that are all over the place. But there are also a lot of adults who are diagnosed with ADHD. Sometimes, that diagnosis provides relief, but often, it turns your world upside down. You are told what you can't do, and that you will require a lot of rest and structure. This book is based on a different mindset, being the fact that ADHD doesn't mean that you are condemned to a life of medication and weekly coaching. It offers you a method to explore what's possible when you look at ADHD from a different angle. External rest and structure are not always the solution. What's more important, is how to eliminate the crowdedness in your mind, and to replace it with other, functional and beautiful things. In a crystal clear way, Cathelijne Wildervanck shows you how to do this by affecting your own mental processes. This practical book, with many exercises, is highly recommended for adults with ADHD or ADD, family and friends around them, psychiatrists, psychologists and other counselors.

'Refreshing vision. The many examples make it extremely accessible and recognizable. Highly recommended for beginners and veterans who wish to develop broader possibilities with regard to ADHD.'

Marion van Dam, physician and certified ADHD coach

This book deserves a special place in the bookcase of every serious mental health care provider: psychiatrists, psychologists, social psychiatric nurses and social workers. Because this solution oriented treatment method, is a much more effective way to battle all those long waiting lists.'

Frederik Westerouen van Meeteren, psychiatrist

Cathelijne Wildervanck is author, ADHD expert and director of ADHD-centrum Nederland.



CATHELIJNE WILDERVANCK

Ahead of ADHD

Clear your mind by using your brain

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Forword

People often ask me: what is your connection to ADHD? The reason for this is that I am founder and director of 'ADHD-centrum Nederland' and of 'ADHD & Werk', due to which people suspect that I or my kids probably have ADHD myself or my kids. Neither is true. I often respond by saying that a little coincidence and a lot of impertinence have led me to this specialism. Personally, I am not very fond of impossibilities and of *fait accompli*. I suspect that, in my childhood, I wasn't very receptive to the statement: 'Because I say so!' The fact that someone says it, doesn't mean it's true. In addition, I don't believe things to be true, simply because they haven't been proven untrue. I like to look and search a little further and as a result, I don't like the idea of 'not possible'. In that respect, I have the development of science at my side. After all, in science, people continuously discover that previous discoveries weren't entirely accurate or that impossible things are possible after all. And that is how our knowledge of the world keeps developing. The American philosopher of science Thomas Kuhn (1922) developed his paradigm theory based on this. A paradigm is a set of views and models that determine your opinion. Everything we experience, we interpret within the context of this model. But when there are too many events that do not logically fit within this vision, the paradigm will crumble. According to Kuhn, it is no longer about what is true and what isn't, it is about what we assume for the time being. According to Kuhn, no independent criterion exists for (scientific) knowledge. It is at best based on a common belief for the time being. Only when there too many findings that refute the existing common vision, it is time to try a different perspective. A paradigm shift, so to speak.

Paradigm shifts are not reserved for science alone. Almost everyone has experienced something in his life that was so innovative, that old beliefs could no longer exist.

If your set of views and models consists of the conviction that an illness can't be cured and by definition will lead to limitations, you are bound to interpret many events within this paradigm. An example of this kind of restrictive thinking: when the phone was invented, people thought this was a handy invention, because it allowed you to call someone to tell them that a telegram was on its way. If you assume that ADHD involves a number of shortcomings and issues that restrict a person's possibilities, your thoughts are based on a permanent illness model. That is a paradigm that leads to a situation in which you keep zooming in on the cause of the problem. This type of commonly accepted beliefs, hardly challenge a person to push their boundaries. Sometimes, it also leads to closing more and more proverbial doors (let's not go to Disneyland, because the children will be over stimulated. Or I can't have a career, I'll just settle for a job). But fortunately there are always people who – within a certain

field – wonder, could there be a way to make this work? These are the kind of people who brought us the incandescent lamp, aircrafts and antibiotics, to name a few classics.

I started my ‘ADHD career’ because I didn’t understand the labels that were being slapped onto people. I refused to believe in the pigeonholing clients I worked with were submitted to. That is why I started working on coaching, based on the thought that people with ADHD can function as successfully as any other. Not despite a handicap, but without the handicap.

This book is not a collection of new laws and models meant to replace the old paradigm of ADHD as a disorder. After all, that would insinuate the arrogance that this book in fact does offer a permanent view. However, the feedback I have received on this book over the past years, tells me that this book actually is of added value for a lot of people. The hope for instance, that – when you have ADHD or ADD, you are not condemned to a life of stupid lists, limitations and adjustment. Most solutions recommended to people with ADHD / ADD, fall in the category ‘right, as if I couldn’t have come up with that’. For that reason, I don’t provide any tips, rules and solutions. I do however offer you a different way to look at yourself and maybe to start appreciating yourself more. Because – and I’m getting ahead of myself – most people appear to have more issues with the insecurity, the sense of exclusion, the frustration and other ‘consequential damage’ than with the original characteristics associated with ADHD. You are more than your ADHD in all respects, and I wish you a lot of fun in your (re)discovery thereof.

CATHELIJNE WILDERVANCK,

August 2014

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INTRODUCTION *Another book about ADHD?*

Ask a random person what he knows about AD(H)D and you are bound to be bombarded with stereotypes. When it comes to ADHD, many people picture uncontrolled children. The next thing many people think of, is the phrase 'rest, cleanliness and regularity'. This book is not about children only, and it is not about rest and structure. This book is about an approach that considers the possibilities with AD(H)D, that you are more than a diagnose and how you can start living (again) based on possibilities. Many approaches towards AD(H)D are based on limitations, on things someone suffering of AD(H)D is allegedly not able to do. This book assumes the idea that AD(H)D doesn't condemn you to being late and having a fuzzy mind for the rest of your life. This book is an exploration of the possibilities that arise when you start viewing AD(H)D with a different mindset. So that you don't have to face a life of limitations, imposed rest and regularity and functioning with the definitions of labels slapped onto you, that might not ever suit you. Because this book was written based on the idea that you are – in fact – very able to learn and achieve the things that many people claim are out of your reach because of your AD(H)D ...

This book focuses on everyone who deals with AD(H)D personally and others who are interested in an innovative vision. This could be family of people with AD(H)D, psychiatrists, psychologists and all other kinds of counselors. In any case, the book focuses on anyone who is wondering whether there are more possibilities than just medication and behavioral therapy and what it would be like if you were to assume more possibilities in AD(H)D. The exercises in the book mainly serve to illustrate our vision and can be used very well for people with AD(H)D, whereas other readers can learn a lot from the exercises as experience as well. Even when they don't have AD(H)D. However, reading this book, in no way replaces the effect of good coaching. Just like you can't learn how to drive a car by reading a book, or can't experience the magic of a movie when someone tells you about it and can't learn how to play the violin by watching a DVD. You can however trigger a different perspective, with great potential effects.

This book is the result of the work method applied by ADHD-centrum Nederland and ADHD & Werk. These are two private institutions that work based on the mindset described in this book. Many people with AD(H)D – as we have learned at our practice – are very capable of making choices and implementing changes that make the symptoms go away. Let's say that a part would remain that, in fact, cannot be cured, still, most people would prefer this approach. In our opinion, it doesn't matter how AD(H)D forms and whether it is congenital or not. Much more interesting is how so many people have succeeded in reducing the symptoms associated with AD(H)D and to live a successful life with them. This book is not based on the trinity

'rest, cleanliness and regularity' as the way to make AD(H)D manageable. Because, for a number of people, this is a false solution, one that allows you to better conform to what the world expects of you, without being happier and / or more productive yourself. I will substantiate why structure and rest don't always lead to a sustainable solution and most definitely not for everyone. For that reason alone, this book is not a standard book and our approach is surprising to a lot of people. This book was written based on the ambition to grant even more people access to this idea and this approach. That does not make this book the miracle pill that immediately eliminates AD(H)D. It is a start that leads to more. You can't learn how to play soccer by watching the sports on television, but watching a great game can give you inspiration to (re) start training.

PART 1

1 *About ADHD and ADD*

ADHD is an abbreviation of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and ADD stands for Attention Deficit Disorder. In other words, ADD is ADHD without the hyperactivity. AD(H)D was mainly diagnosed in children and the most recent view is that AD(H)D doesn't always disappear with age. The number of people diagnosed with one of these two 'disorders' is increasing, and it wasn't until recently that we learned that AD(H)D is something that doesn't go away after one's childhood, but remains present in adults. Currently, there are a lot of adults who see the behavior of their children and start realizing that they may have AD(H)D (as well), resulting in pieces of the puzzle from one's history suddenly falling into place. I also refer to this as 'second generation ADHD'.

ADHD and ADD are generic names for a certain type of behavioral abnormality, of which it is generally stated that it arises as a result of a deviation in your brains. These abnormalities are caused by a deficiency of certain neurotransmitters, the transport substances between nerve cells. This deficiency causes someone to be all over the place and unfocused. The solution is often sought in medication supplemented with behavioral therapy, for instance. The latter focuses on learning certain skills that are supposed to be difficult for people with AD(H)D, such as planning, finishing things and staying focused.

According to psychiatry standards, AD(H)D is a disorder, meaning a deviation from normal. Many people mainly focus on the disorder element when a physician, psychiatrist or psychologist diagnoses them. The deviation from normal, the issues and the restrictions are often considered the most important. A diagnose that often leads to initial relief and clarity, can – in this mindset – also mean a lifelong handicap.

Oddly enough, the belief that AD(H)D is a chronic disorder that can only be resolved by taking medication, is hardly ever defied. Although there are plenty of experiments being carried out from other angles, such as nourishment, fish oil, neuro feedback etc, these – mainly practice-bases – approaches do not seem to gain any scientific ground. After all, these approaches often rely on customization and individualism, meaning that it will not meet the criteria of scientific research. I don't pick a side with this book. I am not in favor or against the existing offering. I would love to see a situation in which people are given more choices, allowing them to find out what works for them. The beaten path is that AD(H)D does not go away and can only be managed through medication. The beaten path also is that people with AD(H)D benefit from structure, regularity and rest. In this book, we consider things from a paradigm with other solutions and results. The problems associated with AD(H)D are not only a congenital, hereditary and permanent neurologic disorder. The good thing about that principle, is that you can seize control, reduce symptoms, and maybe,

eventually start seeing yourself as a very successful person with perhaps a number of 'less convenient character traits.' And let's be honest, who doesn't have those?

In this book, we consider AD(H)D behavior to be a symptom. As a result of all processes that take place inside your head and that eventually lead to certain (restless) behavior. We assume that you are very capable of affecting this behavior and with that, your results. This book is about how to affect mental processes, even if you have AD(H)D. You can better guide your mindset. That is much more functional than simply accepting your shortcomings. In other words: when you drive your car and get lost, you can blame your car and offer it for sale on eBay. However, it would probably be more effective to purchase a navigation system.

In this book and in the counseling we offer, we dare look in a different direction. We don't assume the statement 'once AD(H)D, always AD(H)D' and for some people that may be pretty bold. However, I do not know of any study that shows that people with AD(H)D also had the disorder during their infancy. Moreover, it is not a given that everyone with a certain genetic typification associated with AD(H)D, actually develops AD(H)D. Only when a child or adult shows symptoms of AD(H)D, a brain deficiency is assumed in retrospect. And then it is actually tested whether those deviations actually exist, we assume it when people behave in a certain way.

For many people, the golden tips of rest and structure, are not beneficial in the long term. It may be pleasant for the people surrounding them, but in practice, the person with AD(H)D often succumbs under the label of structure and rest after some time. It doesn't fit them! We often put it ironically: if rest and regularity would actually work, every teacher in the third grade would use it, and no teacher in the 4th grade would be facing AD(H)D behavior in children. It simply doesn't work like that. It makes rest, structure and regularity seem like tricks that only have a short-term effect.

This book is based on years of practical experience in counseling people with AD(H)D. It is intended to give you a different perspective. And by that, we don't just mean relating to AD(H)D, but also relating to psychiatric diagnoses in general. If someone with AD(H)D can also be diagnosed with depression, borderline and generalized anxiety disorder, it simply can't be attributed to independent and separately operating biochemical processes. If in each disorder, distinct biochemical processes would be responsible independently, it would be a miracle for the relevant individual to even be alive! It is impossible to see these diagnoses separate from each other. They are all symptoms of one process that takes place inside, causing biochemical reactions. A chain reaction, to be precise. I'll explain what this vision is based on.

In this book, you can read about modern psychological models that have proven to be effective in practice. Models that, for instance, are part of the regular psychiatric approach in Germany. For instance, the methodology of Bert Hellinger, referred to as 'systemic work' and NLP, solution oriented work (Insoo Kim Berg), and Somatic Experience (Peter Levine) are the foundation of our approach. The methods

in itself are not all individually discussed, other books are much more suitable for that. However, the *blend* we have made, and in particular the foundation for our approach, is discussed in this book. In this, we assume that many people are bothered by something at some point in their life. When it turns out to be worthy of a label, a gradual difference arises with being mentally healthy.

If you would like to know more about a practical and successful approach of mental health, you might just be righting the right book. Would you like to know how this could work in your benefit? Make sure to keep reading! Learn all about the principles on which we base our approach and learn how to apply them yourself.