






## ADHD 2.0

 Maggie Eubanks  April 23, 2025  Book Reviews, Child Development

*The issues around Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder continue to challenge and confirm assumptions. In a recent New York Times article, Paul Tough presents research disputing that ADHD “is a binary, biological category.” Instead, he argues that ADHD “symptoms exist on a continuum, one on which we all find ourselves.”*

*His findings indicate that the classic symptoms of ADHD—inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity—are changeable due to various conditions, including environmental and interpersonal surroundings. The science on ADHD continues to evolve and 2e News will try to present the latest research as it occurs. Towards that end, this is a review by Maggie Eubanks, about one of the seminal works on ADHD, published in 2021, ADHD 2.0: New Science and Essential Strategies for Thriving with Distraction – From Childhood Through Adulthood by Edward M. Hallowell and John J. Ratey.*



The goal of this book is to create a guidebook for parents and adults with ADHD, leveraging new strategies and “lifestyle hacks” to follow a strength-based approach for thriving with ADHD. The authors believe that the ADHD brain can be turned into “an extraordinary asset while preventing it from becoming the terrible curse it can sometimes be.”

**The ADHD brain can be turned into an extraordinary asset.**

Using a one-chapter-per-technique approach, the authors propose interventions and tools for living life better with ADHD. Each chapter reviews a finding, treatment, or strategy and places them within the context of current research, with an effort to make it accessible to all readers.

The first third of the book defines and articulates Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder as a medical condition with a spectrum of traits that embody the gifts and curses often experienced by those with ADHD. The paradox of ADHD comes down to epigenetics. In brief, epigenetics is the study of how behaviors and environment can cause changes that affect genes. These changes are reversible and do not change DNA sequences. However, they can change how the body reads a DNA sequence. Epigenetics explains why some individuals may carry the genetic predisposition to ADHD, but due to environmental factors those genes may never be expressed. Conversely, some people may lack the genetic variations for ADHD, but due to extreme trauma or difficulties in life they show behavioral tendencies that mirror traditional traits of ADHD. As Hallowell and Ratey noted, “Good nature can dramatically reduce the influence of bad nature, bad genes; unfortunately, the reverse is also true: bad nurture, like cold or distant parents, ongoing conflict, or outright trauma while growing up, can suppress good nature, good genes.”

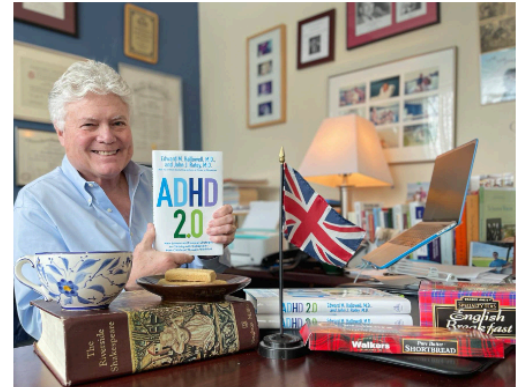
The authors cite Carrie Feibel, an NPR health journalist, with coining a new term, Variable Attention Stimulus Trait or VAST, to describe environmentally induced ADHD. Though it lacks a formal diagnostic description, VAST is brought about by societal stimulus and cultural pressures.

The book's following chapters describe the cognitive, affective, and neurological presentations and causes of ADHD and VAST. It includes the benefits of relationships, the driving need for challenge and novelty as a form of stimulus, the necessity of organizing the environment of school and work, the role of nutrition and exercise, and a survey of medication usage (as well as legitimate concerns related to addiction).

What makes this book most useful to those with ADHD and those who support them are the clear charts and tables, such as the "Useful vs. Problematic" t-chart, the medication charts, and the "Stellar Environments" lists. The inclusion of personal stories, as well as stories of patients and clients, keeps the tone engaging, personable, and, in several instances, simply funny. Finally, Hallowell and Ratey bring their own ADHD experiences, positive and negative, to the work. Sharing their personal anecdotes gives the book warmth, honesty, and connection.

Though there is a lack of clear attribution for some claims in the book and some cause for questioning the number of product recommendations, this book provides meaningful tools and interventions to support those living with ADHD and hopefully thriving with it.

ADHD is complicated, and there is no easy road map. As Hallowell and Ratey write in their conclusion, "Each of us finds a different way; there is no one right way. But what a liberating message it is for us all to know that no brain is the best, and each of us has the magnificent, lifelong chance to find our own brain's special way."



*Edward Hallowell with his and John Ratey's book*

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