

AD/HD SUCCESS!
Solutions for Boosting
Self-Esteem

The Diary Method
Ages 7-17

Kerin Bellak-Adams

AD/HD SUCCESS! : Solutions for Boosting Self-Esteem ; The Diary Method for Ages 7-17
Copyright 2009 by Kerin Bellak-Adams. All Rights Reserved.
From the "Growing with Love Series"

Author's website **www.ReachBeyondAdd.com**

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Bellak-Adams, Kerin, 1959-

AD/HD success! : solutions for boosting self-esteem the diary method for ages 7-17 / by
Kerin Bellak-Adams.

p. cm. -- (Growing with love series)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-13: 978-1-61599-024-5 (trade paper : alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 1-61599-024-0 (trade paper : alk. paper)

1. Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder--Treatment. 2. Self-esteem in adolescence. 3.
Reinforcement (Psychology) I. Title.

RJ506.H9B454 2011

618.92'8589--dc22

2009052699

Published by
Loving Healing Press
5145 Pontiac Trail
Ann Arbor, MI 48105
USA

www.LovingHealing.com
info@LovingHealing.com

fax 734-663-6861
tollfree 888-761-6268

Distributed by Ingram Book Group (USA/Canada), New Leaf Distributing, Bertrams Books (UK),
Hachette Group (EU).

About This Resource

AD/HD SUCCESS! Solutions for Boosting Self-Esteem: The Diary Method Ages 7–17 is a simple, direct, and practical guide that will do the following: increase self-esteem, establish and influence positive attitudes and behaviors, and motivate each child/teenager to fulfill his or her individual potential. Insights and self-awareness as individuals as they interact with others will become a part of their consciousness. Along with this process, parents will get a fresh and insightful view of how their children feel about themselves, their child's level of motivation, and their self-esteem in social and academic environments. Open communication between parent and child will be more easily established as a baseline for future years of development. The Diary Method is easy to implement and is meant to be stress-free.

Benefits of the Diary Method

- ▶ **Children:** The primary benefit and outcome of using the Diary Pages is the boosting of self-esteem through the acknowledgement, reinforcement, and continued development of positive outlooks and behaviors.
- ▶ **Parents:** The responses to Diary prompts will give parents an inside view of just how their child is coping and feeling, and will provide clues to which coping methods do and do not work at home, in school, in after-school activities, and even during vacations! These prompts also provide an opportunity to create a closer bond between parents and their children and to develop open lines of communication in a stress-free, innovative manner.
- ▶ **Parents/Teachers:** This book is truly a workbook. **Parents** are strongly encouraged to bring the Diary Pages and the Home/School Daily Accountability Sheet to parent/teacher conferences! These pages encourage vital and open sharing of information and will ensure that both parties are on the same page.
- ▶ **Guidance Counselors and School Psychologists:** You can use these Diary Pages on a **one-to-one** basis or in a **group setting** throughout the year.
- ▶ **Time-Management Formula:** Time management is emphasized throughout the Diary Pages to encourage the development and reinforcement of routines and priorities, and to increase the consciousness of time.
- ▶ **Convenience:** This book is light and portable. You can even take it on trips and use the Diary Pages as a brush-up!

Why I Wrote This Book

As a former one-on-one teacher of children with ADD and AD/HD, I became acutely aware of the sensitivities of children and how easily they respond to positive reinforcement. Starting as early as first grade, self-esteem needs to be boosted and then maintained through the recognition of accomplishments. As a teacher, having witnessed amazing transformations and shifts in attitude with this continuous approach, I

recognized that there is a void in schools—and sometimes in the home—much of the time in this crucial area. I realized that each and every student needs to be recognized as an individual with something special to offer both himself or herself and to others. This builds character. This approach can be the cornerstone for healthy and developmentally strong generations of children to come.

One day during my teaching years, I became curious if children understood the meaning of self-esteem. I asked a 10-year-old student if he knew what self-esteem was, and he replied excitably, “Yes, it’s when I talk outside in the cold and steam comes out of my mouth!” This comment was one of the turning points that inspired me to write this book! It occurred to me that this was a largely unexplored area with children, and it was vital that it be addressed.

My objectives in this workbook are fourfold:

- ▶ My **main objective** lies in the definition of self-esteem as described by Richard L. Bednar and Scott R. Peterson in *Self-Esteem: Paradoxes and Innovations in Clinical Theory and Practice*: **[for people to] feel good about themselves when facing problems and anxieties so they deal with them rather than avoiding them.**¹ Through the use of the Diary Pages, children are offered a unique opportunity to establish self-esteem through positive reinforcement.
- ▶ My **second objective** is to **have children learn to acknowledge what they do right so they can feel much better about themselves over time, enabling them to be less self-conscious and more secure and courageous.** My hope is that this inner security will also encourage kids to verbalize their thoughts and feelings. I believe the assignments in “How High is My Self-Esteem?” and “If Your Kids Could Say What Is Really on Their Minds”—two key sections in this workbook—will propel this process of self-talk, leading to a positive self-image and providing kids the ability to endorse themselves for all that they do right, each and every day.
- ▶ My **third objective** is to **ensure that both parents and teachers give consistent messages to students.** So often, I hear parents voice their frustrations about the mixed messages that their children receive. One parent noted that while he was giving rewards to his 11-year-old with AD/HD for doing his homework every night, the teacher was also handing him delinquency slips for inappropriate behavior!
- ▶ The **fourth objective** is to **establish a more trusting and solid relationship between parents and their children/teens.** My wish is for parents to truly understand how they parent, realize what needs to be addressed with their children, and to help their children achieve a balanced perspective about themselves, emphasizing the importance of everything they do right and encouraging their aspirations.

¹ Richard L. Bednar and Scott R. Peterson, *Self-Esteem: Paradoxes and Innovations in Clinical Theory and Practice* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 1995).

A Review of Self-Esteem and Positive Reinforcement

As children grow, they are under increasing pressure to learn more, to learn faster, and to keep up with ever-increasing competition. This pressure increases and is felt much more deeply when there is AD/HD involved. Thus, self-esteem has an even lesser chance to flourish. Children with AD/HD are often embarrassed at feeling and/or responding differently than their peers. Their “out of the box” thinking and acting can counteract any potential for feeling good. Add to the mix the stress of trying to keep up with others who may or may not have learning challenges—as well as the breakdown of the basic values of home life due to current divorce rates—and you have a situation that is not to be envied!

With increased stimuli from the outside environment and the emphasis on achieving instant gratification through technology, a connection to feelings is greatly compromised. With school systems emphasizing test results and percentiles, the basics of connecting to a child and what makes him feel better can get lost. Often, parents and/or teachers **unintentionally** neglect to recognize and verbalize the **positive efforts and behaviors** that children exhibit, especially in areas where they struggle the most. Too often, children receive attention primarily for negative behaviors alone—so how can self-esteem flourish? How can frustration tolerance develop and withstand the trials of life if self-esteem is not given a chance to be the springboard for their futures? Many times, parents are driven by fear and competition, and, as a result, create an atmosphere of skewed priorities. In addition, children are forced by technology’s standards to keep busy and dependent on anything but themselves, leaving less room for a child to develop a true, positive sense of self.

Often, there are too few solutions—as schools evolve or do not evolve—to meet the growing needs of children and parents. The children pay the price for this, feeling different and misunderstood, and this affects their stress levels. I recall my daughter coming home one day while in second grade and remarking that she thought the school had forgotten that she was just a kid! She and her classmates were being kept busy and dependent on everything but themselves, pressuring them and diverting their attention and awareness away from their abilities to achieve on their own, naturally.

My personal observation is that teachers are under greater pressure than ever before to cover more material faster. This can put children who need more time and attention at a disadvantage. Continually emphasizing all the things that children do correctly will help children to **feel good about themselves**. It is important to keep in mind, as referenced in *Self-Esteem Revolutions in Children* by Thomas W. Phelan, Ph.D., that “people with higher self-esteem will try harder because they expect to succeed. People with lower self-esteem will give up sooner.”² His book states that there may be a kind of overall global self-esteem, but there may also be specific self-esteem that occurs when people evaluate themselves in situations.³ Children, for example, may have an *academic* self-esteem and a *social* self-esteem.

² Thomas W. Phelan, Ph.D., *Self-Esteem Revolutions in Children* (Glen Ellyn: Child Management, Inc., 1996), page 11.

³ Phelan, *Self-Esteem Revolutions in Children*, page 66.

Self-esteem must be the bedrock, not only for those with AD/HD but also for those who experience other learning challenges. According to Dr. Phelan, there are four steps to boosting self-esteem: acknowledging strengths is the first step; doing positive activities with positive people is the second; the third is baby steps; and the fourth is the acknowledgement of the success!⁴ The Diary Pages integrate these steps.

Gradually, self-esteem changes the attitudes of children, encouraging greater sensitivity to themselves and others! Letting satisfaction and contentment develop—both academically and socially—leads to the fulfilling of potential and to reaching levels of fulfillment from within. Through the boosting of self-esteem, children are motivated to further explore their self-interests and discover their unique strengths.

This wonderful process starts with just highlighting the good! The joy is in the journey! Let's begin.

⁴ Phelan, *Self-Esteem Revolutions in Children*, page 21.

***SECTION ONE:
GETTING STARTED***

All About ADD and AD/HD: An Overview

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) is characterized by behavioral challenges that are caused by the blocking of common transmitters, such as serotonin and dopamine, which transmit messages from one neuron to another. In the brain of a child with ADD, these chemicals are often blocked, inhibiting the transmission of messages regarding everyday functions such as focus, organization, impulse control, awareness of time, anxiety regulation, and social skills. This is why the disorder is called “Attention Deficit.” According to *Webster’s Dictionary*, *dis* means “separation.”⁵ So *disorder* means “distanced from order.” The same holds true for *disability*—“distanced from one’s own true ability.”

The good news is that with this “dis”order in daily life come strengths that are not all that common in people who do not have ADD. Often, one side of the brain is greatly enhanced with creativity and/or an acute ability to calculate and analyze challenging scientific or mathematical problems. Examples of dual capabilities along with their limitations have been identified in people including Albert Einstein, Dustin Hoffman, John Lennon, President Lincoln, and many more. This may be true for your children, who may achieve similar levels and become their own magnificent selves. One never knows!

Dr. Russell Barkley of Syracuse, New York, a psychiatrist and research professor of psychiatry at SUNY Upstate Medical University and a major contributor to ADD research, has stated along with other major contributors in the field that there are various forms of attention deficit disorder; however, all forms of ADD share common denominators. Each affects a person’s lack of motivation in areas of study where there is little or no interest, such as in reading. People with ADD are also prone to losing items, short-term memory issues, delayed and/or prolonged stages of emotional growth, difficulty in following nonverbal and social cues, and limitations in verbal processing (which is what Albert Einstein suffered with all his life). Learning issues that accompany ADD often make life more complicated and drastically impede the development of self-esteem. ADD that does not come with learning challenges may create fewer issues, and ADD can even dissolve after the teenage years with some carry-over such as “perfectionism.”

In **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD)**, hyperactivity is also involved. This means that there can be fidgeting of the hands, a constant need for movement, impulsivity (physical or verbal—such as blurting out thoughts without thinking about consequences or effects and interrupting others—all with good intentions), and physical and mental restlessness. These types of behaviors create feelings of being different and acting differently. Think of the activity for young children in which they try to put a circular block into a circle-shaped opening and a square block into a square-shaped opening, often needing several tries until they finally get it right. This process of elimination creates enormous frustration for the child with AD/HD, which may even carry-over into adult life! In addition to limitations that can be quite significant, AD/HD

⁵ *Webster’s New World Compact Office Dictionary* (New York: Wiley, 2003), page 186.

is quite often accompanied by gifts. While it may be difficult for children with AD/HD to stay in one place for any length of time or to hear themselves verbalize their thoughts until they understand them, they may possess tremendous intelligence, resourcefulness, mathematical capabilities, wonderful personalities of empathy and humor, and the ability to achieve a great many accomplishments that supersede those of the average individual.

Since negative feelings can be carried on from early childhood and adolescence, we want children/teens to become very attuned to their strengths as early on as possible. Not only will this confidence and sense of self act as a foundation of strength to handle life's challenges, but it will also enable them to accurately and fairly evaluate themselves despite childhood struggles.

Today, we know much more than ever before about ADD and AD/HD. Statistically, according to the Employment and Disability Institute at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, approximately 4–6% of the U.S. population has AD/HD. This, however, does not include people who have either not revealed their AD/HD to their employer or who do not know that they have AD/HD. According to statistics from the International Dyslexia Association, one out of every eight children has learning challenges. There are some questions as to whether the increase in ADD and AD/HD diagnoses in children is due to the availability of drugs to treat their symptoms or reflects an actual increase in ADD and AD/HD. In 1979, Dr. Leopold Bellak chaired the first conference on Minimal Brain Dysfunction, the term for ADD before it was commonly known as ADD. At that time, health professionals were trying to identify parallels to other disorders that had some similarities and differences in relation to ADD.

The following excerpt from Dr. Leopold Bellak's book *Overload: The New Human Condition* provides perspective on just how intensely the feelings of overload have developed over the years. This society that we live in often lends itself to feelings of anxiousness, which sometimes is interpreted as having AD/HD.

The swift changes in our world have also caused a decrease in the degree to which one can experience individuality and uniqueness—in the sense of self and self-esteem. If a child is constantly moved from one home to another, or from one school to another, when his father has been transferred from one city to another by his company (as is much more likely in contemporary times than a generation ago), he is hardly likely to develop a sound sense of self. Once upon a time, childhood experiences were acquired within the context of a family, which included usually not only father and mother but, typically, aunts, uncles, and grandparents. Among the middle class, a family doctor, the grocer, the butcher, and many other people constituted a rather permanent, personal, familiar environment. In today's world, the parents are often away from home; sometimes either because the father has to work far from home, or at other times because, being well-to-do, they take advantage of jet travel. Mothers, in all strata of society, frequently also work. Members of the family commonly live far apart, so that uncles, aunts, and grandparents are not around. It is a rare family that has a family doctor...Impermanence rather than permanence is the general key to life in our society.

School life is similarly structured. Children move in and out of neighborhoods and schools, and teachers rarely stay in one school for any length of time. A feeling of haste pervades the whole educational program. Children in high school particularly acquire a sense of being overwhelmed by their curriculum, by the tremendous number of innovations in all fields of human endeavor and by the tremendous speed of historical developments.

The speed at which changes are developing in our current society make it difficult to have the necessary feeling of being imbedded in a familiar context or of belonging. Having had so many changing experiences during the developmental process robs children of the feeling of identity that becomes internalized when the external environment is sufficiently stable.⁶

However, it's all in the attitudes of the parents. Albert Einstein's parents, for example, always made sure that Albert had his books before classes began. They encouraged him to try music and writing as a child, which probably led to his love for music. Just imagine what you could do for *your* child! Through this workbook, you'll discover just how much influence you can have.

How to Use This Workbook

For optimum use, based on feedback from parents and teachers who have field-tested the Diary Pages, each page should be used as an opportunity for exploration.

- ▶ Choose the Diary Page(s) that reflect the goals that you and your child/teen feel need the most attention. Make multiple copies of these pages and repeat them as often as necessary. *Once you and your child see consistent change and have satisfaction in the results, feel free to move on to another Diary Page.*
- ▶ Please have your child fill out the sections “How High Is My Self-Esteem?” and “If Your Kids Could Say What Is Really Their Minds” both *before* and *after* completing the Diary Pages; this will allow you to compare these sections to measure progress.
- ▶ For your convenience, PDF files of the Diary Pages, Home/School Daily Accountability Sheet, “How High Is My Self-Esteem?”, “Assignments of a Different Kind”, “Parent Self-Evaluation”, and “If Your Kids Could Say What Is Really on Their Minds” sections are provided at **www.ReachBeyondADD.com** under the section “Books/Articles,” enabling you to make as many copies as needed.
- ▶ The age ranges on the Diary Pages are there as a general guide; feel free to use any Diary Page that is appropriate for your child and/or situation.
- ▶ It is important to repeat and review the Diary Pages throughout the year for reinforcement and maintenance.

⁶ Dr. Leopold Bellak, *Overload: The New Human Condition* (Human Sciences Press, 1975), pages 102–103.

- ▶ Use the Diary Pages and other sections repeatedly in *consecutive years* as your child/teen develops and for comparison.
- ▶ Emphasize the recognition of small efforts as being important.
- ▶ Practice my concept of Appreciation, Acknowledgement, and Action: be *aware* of your child's efforts, *acknowledge* them, and take an *action* to show it.

Remember, this workbook emphasizes what kids need most to feel good about themselves—results!

Notes for Parents

It is recommended that you keep the following points in mind before beginning this book:

- ▶ The Diary Pages are purposely written to allow for small steps to be taken to boost self-esteem. **Please don't allow your child to get overwhelmed.** If he/she shows disinterest, pick it up some other time or move to another section.
- ▶ Your attitude needs to be *nonjudgmental*. Show open satisfaction if your child accomplishes one or two of the actions on the page of your choice.
- ▶ Let these Diary Pages stimulate thinking and creativity. The development of **frustration tolerance** is a must!
- ▶ Ideally, this workbook should be used during a “quiet time,” perhaps *before* bedtime, to encourage conversation and reflection. Build these Diary Pages into your schedule on a weekly basis.
- ▶ Encourage your child or teenager to think of his own acknowledgements, no matter how small they may appear.
- ▶ Encourage your child/teen to keep her own diary of what she does that helps her to feel good about herself throughout the year as well.
- ▶ Give extra copies of the Home/School Daily Accountability Sheet to teachers on a regular basis during the year. Bring completed pages to parent/teacher conferences for discussion and review completed pages with your child. If you communicate with your child's teacher via e-mail, you may also download the Accountability Sheet from **www.ReachBeyondADD.com** and e-mail it to the teacher.
- ▶ Have your child bring these forms into school and make sure to get them back each day! This builds accountability for your child and the teachers! Make sure to review the completed pages with your child.
- ▶ Consider having your son or daughter show their Diary Pages to their mental health professionals to demonstrate their growth and identify the areas they need to work on.
- ▶ The “For the Parents” section should be approached with an open mind and a willingness to grow. Repeat your section throughout the year and stay on your toes! Start your *own* diary!
- ▶ Explore your interests and/or passions and consider sharing them with—and including—your kids!

Notes for Teachers

Teachers, it is recommended that you encourage parents to work on the exercises with their children during the summer months. You will then be better equipped at the start of the school year to understand the areas where your students are in need of growth and positive reinforcement.

- ▶ The Diary Pages can be used as class work or homework. Make multiple copies of the Diary Pages and have your students fill them out either in the classroom or as homework. There are PDF files at www.ReachBeyondADD.com for the Diary Pages and the Home/School Daily Accountability Sheet for your convenience. You can also e-mail completed pages to parents on a regular basis.
- ▶ You can turn the Diary Pages into a game to see how many wonderful things a child/student can accomplish per week!
- ▶ Consider posting some Diary Pages in your classroom for your students and/or on Parents Night.

“The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires.”

—William Arthur Ward

HOME/SCHOOL DAILY ACCOUNTABILITY SHEET

Student's Name _____

Teacher _____

Date _____

Dear _____,

Today, your child made an effort to continue working on controlling his/her behavior in class. Please follow through at home by reinforcing the importance of your child's efforts in the areas below that do NOT have checks.

Paid attention in class _____

Was polite _____

Raised hand instead of yelling out answer _____

Stayed focused _____

Was on time to class _____

Handed in homework signed by parent _____

Helped another student _____

Was enthusiastic in class while working with others _____

Worked hard on class work _____

Was focused on not breaking the rules _____

Handed in completed homework daily/weekly _____

Transitioned well from one class to another _____

Played nicely during recess _____

Kept a neat desk _____

Kept a neat locker _____

Arrived at school on time _____

