



The Good News About A.D.D. [www.empowermentplus.org](http://www.empowermentplus.org)

## Is ADHD affecting your family life?

If you have a child who has *A.D.D. or ADHD* and/or issues with *self-control* and you are *tired* of the screaming and chasing, and you are ready to try something which is a little more *positive* ...

### Just take a peek inside...

- The “nuts and bolts” overview of the Riding the Wave method are in Chapter 4
- Follow the step-by-step directions in Chapter 5
- Enjoy the personal stories, case examples, and material in the rest of the book

And enjoy a more positive relationship with your child.

*“If you feel like you are stuck in a hurricane, this gives you a place to begin.”*  
Joanne Good, Calgary Herald, Parent Education Writer

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RIDING THE WAVE

Dr. Teeya Scholten

# RIDING THE WAVE

A Handbook for Parenting the Child with A.D.D.



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Part of The “Good News About A.D.D.” Series

## CHAPTER ONE

# PARENTING A CHILD WITH ADD

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It takes a lot of energy and skill to parent children, especially children with Attention Deluxe Dimension (ADD)<sup>1</sup>. Many parents feel like they are constantly caught in the undertow, swept beneath the torrent of their ADDer<sup>2</sup>. Nothing seems to work to even out life with their child with ADD. There are days when parents feel like they are riding the crest of the wave – everything seems to be fine. Then, just as suddenly, they are swept under the next wave of challenging behaviour.

If these same parents have other children, it is difficult to understand why their tried and true parenting methods just don't seem to work for their child with ADD. If the ADDer is their first, they wonder what they are doing wrong. Is it really their

*Sometimes parenting the child with ADD seems like surfing – there are moments when you fear being caught in the undertow and other times when you are riding the crest. That is why I chose the title, **Riding the Wave**.*




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<sup>1</sup> “Attention Deluxe Dimension” is a term that I coined in 1993 to refer to ADD or AD/HD (Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder). At this point, I decided that I was no longer willing to use the terms “deficit, dysfunction or disorder” when explaining to children (or adults) how their brains work. See a free download of the book [Attention Deluxe Dimension: A Wholistic Approach](http://www.empowermentplus.org) from our website [www.empowermentplus.org](http://www.empowermentplus.org). The book outlines the Empowerment Plus® approach, which is a positive, balanced and effective approach to understanding and treating ADD.

<sup>2</sup> ADDer is a term coined by CHADD, an international organization dedicated to helping children and adults with ADD and their families. See Resources Section of this book for contact information.

fault? They don't understand why she<sup>3</sup> can't get ready for school in the morning. Why doesn't his homework get done? When the homework does get done, why can't it get to school? Sometimes they wonder if their in-laws, friends and neighbors are correct when they say that he just needs a little more discipline. Somehow they doubt it.

## **Parenting a Child with ADD**

Being a good parent involves many different skills. In order to raise capable and confident adults, parents need to learn appropriate skills that work and then apply them calmly and consistently with their child.

It is the calmness and consistency that is often the greatest challenge. Many parents of children with ADD have it themselves (and may not yet know it). This makes parenting an ADDer even more challenging. Parents of ADDers often feel like remote control car drivers, steering, directing, speeding up or slowing down their child. "It's time to get up." "Time to eat." "It's time to get dressed." "Time to go to bed." "Do this." "Do that." "Don't forget this." "Don't touch that!" "Where did you put your hat, coat, homework, the dog?" Where did we go wrong? Will this ever end?

Children don't enjoy this constant badgering. Their parents don't like it either. They only do it because they don't know what else to do.

## **My Experience of Parenting a Child with ADD**

Parenting children is a daunting responsibility for which most of us are unprepared. Many books and courses are available to help us become better parents. Those of us who have children with ADD have probably read most of these books and taken more than our fair share of parenting classes. If your family is anything like the families I typically work with, you have likely emerged from these courses feeling like a failure. I felt like this with our third child.

Our youngest child, Christin, has ADD without hyperactivity. By the time she was twelve, I was ready to tear out my hair. Whatever my husband and I had done to bring up our two sons seemed to work, but things just weren't working for our daughter. We couldn't understand it. We are both psychologists. We should have known what to do but we didn't.

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<sup>3</sup> Words referring to both genders will be used alternately.

Christin wasn't wild and misbehaving, but she just didn't do anything without being constantly reminded. She could be very sweet and I loved her dearly, but it took an unbelievable amount of time and patience to supervise her homework. I often felt that our other two children were somewhat neglected because Christin took up so much of my time. Even then, her teachers told us she needed more attention! We tried more charts, programs and approaches for her than for our other two children combined.

### Running Out of Options

By the time Christin was in Grade 6, I was exhausted. My husband, normally a very caring and nurturing person, was ready to give up. He felt that she would catch on eventually and, in the meantime, it might do her some good to suffer the consequences of not finishing her homework. "So what if she fails a grade? That might teach her to hand in her assignments." As a mother, I just couldn't allow her to experience such a major consequence. I had the feeling that she'd just keep falling through the cracks and that her self-esteem would eventually be irreparably damaged.

We pressed on. I really liked an approach to parenting where, if the child fails to do a good job at something like cleaning their room, they "owe" you some of your jobs around the house. This is in payment for the time and energy you spent chasing them. My daughter consistently owed me so much work that I had the cleanest and tidiest drawers and cupboards in town. Having to do extra household chores as well as her own chores and schoolwork left Christin feeling even more overwhelmed. We persevered, however, until one day my gentle-spirited ADDer informed me that if she ever met the author of this parenting approach, she would kill her!

### The Last Failure

In desperation we started an earn-your-own-allowance chart for weekly chores. We would pay money for tasks completed and take away money for chores not done. By the end of the first week, Christin owed me \$6.50. When she discovered this, she ripped up the chart and threw it in the garbage. She had definitely reached a point of total frustration and she definitely was not learning appropriate behaviour patterns.

The endless stream of botched behaviour modification attempts finally ended when I learned about the system that formed the basis for *Riding the Wave*.

## Riding the Wave to the Rescue



I decided to attend a behaviour management program<sup>4</sup> offered where I worked. It was for parents of children with ADD. What I learned that day changed my life and my relationship with my daughter. I was able to turn in my license as a remote control car driver who was constantly directing her actions and became a kind of guide-on-the-side, helping her learn how to direct her own actions.

We started with rules about chores. Once I had created a rule with a positive and negative consequence, Christin got to choose the time as to when the chores would be done – by 4 or 4:30 pm. The positive consequences showed her that when she chose to follow the rule and get her chores done on time, she had the freedom to do them independently. When she chose not to complete her chores on time, the negative consequence resulted in her needing supervision to complete the task. The consequence was related to the behaviour, short-term, immediate, did not involve punishment, and still ensured that the job got done. Looking back now on those years, Christin says that she remembers appreciating that the “punishment always seemed to fit the crime.” With her friends, this often wasn’t the case, as they seemed to be grounded for just about anything.

Although it took energy and consistent effort on my part (especially in the beginning) the results were remarkable. Within days of starting the program, we both began to experience less frustration. Christin felt encouraged and capable and I no longer felt like the bad guy or the Wicked Witch of the West.

We then worked on rules about curfews. We had a rule that we come home on time. At this point, she was going out only on the weekends. When Christin chose to come home on time, the (positive) consequence of her choice was that her curfew remained the same. When she chose not to come home on time, the (negative) consequence was that her curfew became an hour earlier the next weekend. The choices and consequences were all laid out beforehand so she was aware of the options she had. In all of her adolescent years, she was late only once and, as she is quick to remind me, “it was only by six minutes!”

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<sup>4</sup> The program was a one-day workshop offered by staff to parents of children with ADD. It was excerpted from their 12-week program described in the journal article by Blakemore, Shindler and Conte (1993).

As this third edition goes to press, Christin has just graduated with a Master of Fine Arts in Film Producing from the American Film Institute (AFI) Conservatory in Los Angeles, California. She is a self-motivated and capable person with clear and positive values. She has learned to use techniques like the ones she learned in childhood to remind herself of things she has to do. She has already developed a good reputation as a Film Producer and her professors are predicting that she will be a success. Her ADD has been an advantage in dealing with the myriad details that need to be addressed on movie sets. She is happy and using her gifts. It has been a wonderful journey.



*Our lovely daughter at one of her graduation ceremonies with her Pop.*

