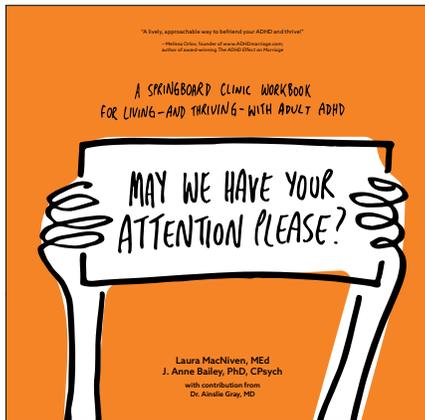


# May We Have Your Attention Please?

*A Springboard Clinic Workbook for Living—and Thriving—with Adult ADHD*



MAY WE HAVE YOUR ATTENTION PLEASE?

A Springboard Clinic Workbook for Living—and Thriving—with Adult ADHD

Laura MacNiven, MEd  
J. Anne Bailey, PhD, CPsych  
with contributions from  
Dr. Ainslie Gray, MD

Published by Springboard Clinic  
Pub Date: May 1, 2019  
\$23.95 CAD  
Paperback 8.5" x 8.5" / 212pp  
ISBN: 978-1-9995719-0-0

**A workbook to help you to conquer your adult ADHD—in a way that's right for you.**

This practical and engaging workbook uses cutting-edge research and lessons from working with thousands of adults with ADHD, as shared by specialists with extensive professional—and sometimes personal—experience managing the disorder.

Through digestible chapters and practical exercises you will:

- Learn how your brain works to leverage your ADHD for strength.
- Discover practical, hands-on activities to separate yourself from your symptoms.
- Find an approach to treatment that works for you.

You'll share your journey with Jason, Candace, Tim and Amy: four characters embarking on different journeys through ADHD. Each will inspire you to see past mental health symptoms and boldly take ownership of your personal wellbeing. They represent resilience, growth, optimism and strength.

Life is not linear: neither is working through ADHD. *May We Have Your Attention Please?* will lead you to a place of clarity and purpose, to live *with*, not in spite of, your ADHD.

## Points of Interest

- **Compassionate, practical perspective on adult ADHD:** *May We Have Your Attention Please?* offers tried-and-tested methods to managing ADHD, as developed by one of Canada's leading clinics specializing in the condition.
- **Increases awareness of prevalent—and severe—condition:** ADHD affects more than 4.4 percent of the adult population in North America. Those who experience it are 3x more likely to be dead by 45. It's a serious problem—and one often misunderstood.
- **Written by someone who experiences attention difficulties:** Co-author Laura MacNiven experiences attention issues. Her experiences lead to candid insights that are not only useful but deeply respectful and personable.
- **Media-savvy and charismatic author team:** Authors of *May We Have Your Attention Please?* regularly contribute to national media conversations about ADHD and can speak to the condition in an accessible, riveting way.

# About the Authors



**LAURA MACNIVEN, M.ED.**, is Director of Clinic Services at Springboard Clinic: a leading multidisciplinary clinic specializing in ADHD awareness and treatment in Canada. Focusing on health literacy and learning resources, she is the founder of the Finding yourSELF program that leads to long-term behaviour change for adults. As a professional who experiences ADHD symptoms herself, she is deeply passionate about sharing a message of hope—and effective tools to meet the challenge. She enjoys outdoor sports, writing and exploring the world through the eyes of her two children.



**DR. J. ANNE BAILEY PHD**, CPsych is a Clinical Psychologist and the Head of Treatment at Canada's Springboard Clinic. She is passionate about helping individuals of all ages learn ways to work with a variety of mental health, emotional, learning and behavioral challenges. After completing an undergraduate degree in geophysics and physics, she fell in love with psychology and has dedicated her career—and her doctorate—to it. Her research interests include neuroplasticity and the effects of early experience on the brain. She enjoys cooking and eating out, and spending time with her family.



**DR. AINSLIE GRAY, MD**, is a family physician who has specialized in ADHD and related learning challenges for more than 25 years, and is the Medical Director of Springboard Clinic. She is a leader in treating a variety of attention/learning and mood issues across all ages, and has been an appointed board member of the Canadian Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder Resource Alliance (CADDRA) for multiple terms. Dr. Gray holds a special interest for furthering medical education to improve ADHD awareness and treatment by family physicians. In her spare time, she loves to swim, spend time with grandchildren and connects with new friends everywhere she goes.

## About Springboard Clinic

**SPRINGBOARD CLINIC** is an innovative ADHD clinic that combines medical and behavioural services to assess and treat focusing challenges in children, adolescents and adults in all aspects of the assessment and treatment of ADHD. Through their groundbreaking psychological and coaching expertise, Springboard Clinic provides clients an opportunity to find hope in every step of their ADHD journey as they move forward and thrive in their lives. Learn more: [www.springboardclinic.com](http://www.springboardclinic.com).

# Advanced Praise

“Feeling overwhelmed? Springboard Clinic’s SELF model is a lively, approachable way to befriend your ADHD and locate the strengths that will help you thrive! If you’re ready for a happier direction in your life then this workbook, and its optional workshop, are the places to start. Thank you, Springboard, for making this incredible journey of self-discovery available to all!”

—**Melissa Orlov, founder of [www.ADHDmarriage.com](http://www.ADHDmarriage.com); author of award-winning *The ADHD Effect on Marriage* and *The Couple’s Guide to Thriving with ADHD***

“These experienced clinicians share their strategies for building resilience, as patients struggle to find themselves in a way that moves them forward beyond their ADHD. Using characters that reflect the full spectrum of ADHD and worksheets, this book is filled with hope and a patient perspective that encompasses the full range of challenges someone with ADHD may face”.

—**Dr. Margaret Weiss, MD, PhD, FRCP(C), Department of Psychiatry, Cambridge Health Alliance**

“This excellent guide to understanding and managing your ADHD is packed with sensible advice for patients beginning their journey on understanding ADHD. It is written by very experienced clinicians who emphasize managing the everyday challenges that our patients face. It is written in a clear jargon free style and encourages the reader to change outdated negative scripts about themselves and develop collaborative scaffolding relationships to better manage their ADHD challenges. The authors encourage the reader to recognize their strengths as well as their personal challenges with ADHD. The stories of different patient experiences provide good examples of the ways in which our patients can develop a more balanced and integrated view of themselves. The book encourages the reader to see that they are more than their ADHD. This will be a helpful book for anyone beginning to better understand ADHD”.

—**Dr. Laurence Jerome, MD, Adjunct Professor of Psychiatry at The University of Western Ontario**

“Learning to better live with ADHD is an extraordinary journey that can lead to wonderful results when you understand why and how. *May We Have Your Attention Please?* is a toolbox that will allow you to discover different avenues on this journey—and remember to focus on the road, not the destination, which will add even more fun to the process.”

—**Annick Vincent MD, author, *My Brain Needs Glasses* and *My Brain Still Needs Glasses***

This book is a gem and long overdue addition to the ADHD library, written by seasoned clinicians with compassion and good sense. Many books explain ADHD-related concepts. Some offer first-person essays, too. *May We Have Your Attention Please?* does all that—and in highly readable fashion—but then goes one better. Throughout you find abundant worksheets, thoughtfully designed to help readers sort through their individual experiences of and reactions to this highly variable syndrome. The goal throughout this guide is “separating myself from my symptoms,” identifying strengths, and thriving in life. Five stars!

—**Gina Pera, educator, Adult ADHD expert and author of *Is It You, Me, or Adult ADD?* and *ADHD-Focused Couple Therapy: Clinical Interventions***

# Author Q&A

## **Tell us about *May We Have Your Attention Please?***

ADHD is often misunderstood, under-diagnosed and improperly treated—especially in adults.

*May We Have Your Attention Please?* is a workbook designed to help adults with ADHD take ownership of their lives. We wanted to create a tool that was personal, customizable, flexible and yet provides a sense of community—of not being alone.

At our clinic, we have created a framework from which clients can rethink their lives through a more thorough understanding of how their brain works (and where it can potentially get snagged!). Seeing their experiences of success—and relief—is deeply inspiring.

Our goal is to ensure that anyone with ADHD can use *May We Have Your Attention Please* to better understand their mind, their behaviour—and how they can use both in positive ways in the future.

## **How many adults live with ADHD? Is this number greater or smaller than most think?**

ADHD affects 5-8 percent of the child population. In adults, it is believed to be around 4 percent— but this is hard to determine because so few adults seek help due to a lack of awareness.

It used to be thought that ADHD was something you grew out of (because the part of the brain—the prefrontal cortex—that is impacted by ADHD is not fully developed until your twenties). However, we now understand that ADHD will continue to impact people into adulthood, sometimes in more subtle ways than as a child—but no less serious.

Many symptoms are more overt in children, becoming internalized as one gets older. As they are less noticeable, it can become harder to identify concerning symptoms or behaviours. In addition, secondary coping measures or self-medication tendencies may make people less likely to understand they have ADHD.

## **What are the biggest misperceptions about adults living with ADHD—from those adults?**

Some of the most common misunderstandings about ADHD in adults are:

- **It’s “too late” to seek treatment:** Treatment of a mental health disorder at *any* age can significantly improve quality of life. In fact, many of the people we see at Springboard are more than 50 years old, and still eager to redefine their lives.
- **By admitting there is a problem, it will get worse:** It’s a common fear that by talking about, and seeking help for, a mental health condition, it will become more real or severe. The opposite is true: only when understanding a diagnosis and facing it—head on—can positive change happen.
- **Major changes are required to be happy:** Many clients initially think they need to make ground-breaking, significant changes to their lives to deal with their condition. In fact, it’s often through small routine “tweaks” that we see the greatest results. Increasing happiness is sometimes simpler than we think.

## **And how does society generally view adults living with ADHD?**

There are different misperceptions about adults living with ADHD for the individuals experiencing the condition—and society at large.

“ADHD” is often used as a casual, almost joke-like term for when someone is distracted or struggling to get something done. We now understand the harm in joking that someone has ‘depression’ if they’re having a tough day, or sad about something circumstantial. Put simply, we know the difference between clinical depression and reactive sadness. The same should be considered in ADHD. Left untreated, it costs Canadians billions of dollars. More importantly, it puts individuals at high risk of suicide ideation, motor vehicle accidents and other serious health diagnoses. We need to understand

# Author Q&A (cont.)

the severity of this condition and take it seriously.

Many don't realise that ADHD doesn't just affect work or school. There are major health impacts associated with ADHD, including substance use issues, higher rates of divorce, elevated stress levels and serious secondary mood issues such as depression and anxiety.

If we understand ADHD in the context of brain science, we can remove the stigma of the condition—and help more people who experience it.

## **Laura, you experience attention issues yourself. Can you tell us how this has contributed to your work as a professional who now helps others with this disorder?**

Having attention issues myself has been crucial to connecting deeply with the experience of Springboard's clients and patients. I understand what it feels like to have my brain 'go slow' during a task that is cognitively hard for me, and then 'speed up' when I am passionate and excited about something.

I came into this field knowing that a person's outlook is a major indicator of success in managing their symptoms. My own experience of learning about my brain, and figuring out how to come to terms with and 'beat' my symptoms was foundational to the philosophy we now have at Springboard.

I knew, from my own journey, that someone experiencing ADHD must see their strengths, and weaknesses, before using that honesty to create practical strategies. I believe this is where a deep helpfulness in the book—and our work—comes from.

## **What are some of the emotional consequences of living with untreated ADHD?**

There are *many* emotional consequences of living with ADHD. Some of these include:

- Deep personal frustrations (or cycle of disappointments), based on an individual not being able to reconcile why their intentions don't match their actions.
- Feelings of being misunderstood. If you don't know why you act a certain way, neither can others! The picture of who you are internally, and how you show up, doesn't match—and that can hurt.
- Feeling that there is something wrong. Wondering why life seems *easier* to others can often lead to feelings of inadequacy or even shame.

## **What are some of the most useful tips and tools you would recommend adults with ADHD begin to use in their lives?**

Treatment for ADHD requires deep analysis and support. While tips and tricks can help, they alone won't lead to long-lasting change. However, some of our favourite tools to try out as part of an overarching strategy are:

- **7 Minutes:** Set a timer for 7 minutes to start a task you have been avoiding. Usually after 7 minutes, you can continue with it.
- **Start the day right:** So many people with ADHD fight routines and don't have one for getting going in the morning. Simple morning processes can make a significant difference in building momentum for the whole day—from being on time to ensuring you have lunch.
- **Bookend your work day:** Before leaving your work for the day, make a clear plan for what needs to be done the next day. This can help break through "Blockers" at the beginning of the day and help reduce stress for the evening. This process helps you close one chapter, and work to be present in the next environment—such as being with a partner or your family in the evening.

# Author Q&A (cont.)

- **Create systems—your way:** In our hectic lives, organization is key. When you have ADHD, organizing systems in a creative way that suit your brain style is paramount. Instead of a straight line, use a whiteboard or notebook with boxes, breaking down tasks into manageable chunks.

## **If you have ADHD, is it helpful to let friends and colleagues know about it?**

This is a good question—and should be decided on a case by case basis. Figuring out who to tell, and why you are telling them, is crucial to deciding who you want to let into your journey.

It can be easy to “blurt out” your experience without consciously deciding what you are looking for by sharing this information. If you are looking for support, it is important to choose someone compassionate, open minded and trustworthy with your story.

If you are looking for accommodations at work, it is important that you package this information in such a way that will fit with your environment. There is a plethora of strategies that you can put in place at work without having to share your mental health information, including putting a system in place that benefits your teammates, too. For example, you could request an **accountability partner**: a co-worker you meet with regularly to get things done that are challenging for you both (putting in expenses, or tracking hours). You can also commit to **“meeting free”** hours on the group calendar, where you and your teammates can set aside time to dig into bigger cognitive tasks and agree not to interrupt each other.

When you are being diagnosed with ADHD in adulthood it can be a fragile and vulnerable time. You want to feel like you have agency about how it plays out for you in your life.

# Fact Sheet

- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a condition described and diagnosed by its “core” symptoms: inattention, impulsivity and hyperactivity.
- Now that we have neuro-imaging tools, we have scientific evidence that helps us better understand the root of these symptoms.
- The pre-frontal cortex of our brain is the part that is responsible for our executive functions: starting tasks, staying on tasks, using our working memory and regulating our emotions. This is the part of the brain that ADHD impacts.
- Put simply, ADHD is caused by an imbalance of neurotransmitters in the pre-frontal cortex, which impacts an individual’s ability to reliably access their executive functions.
- ADHD is both underdiagnosed and over-diagnosed. Many people don’t know they are suffering from ADHD; On the other hand, ADHD can be too quickly used as a label or explanation when a child or adult is struggling at school or work.
- 4.4 percent of the adult population in North America has ADHD.
- 41.3 percent of adult ADHD cases are considered severe.
- However, less than 20 percent of these people will seek treatment.
- Men are twice as likely to be diagnosed with ADHD as women.
- Scientific studies have shown that ADHD is highly heritable and is a chronic disorder that persists throughout the lifespan.
- Childhood and adult ADHD are linked: at least 60 percent of children diagnosed with ADHD will continue with their symptoms into adulthood.
- ADHD has a wide range of severe environmental and social impacts, including adults who suffer from it being:
  - 50 percent more likely to be in a serious car crash.
  - Three times more likely to be dead by the age of 45.
  - Prone to anxiety disorders: 50 percent of adults with ADHD also experience anxiety.
  - More likely to be suspended: 45 percent of teens with ADHD have been temporarily excluded from school.
- A common misperception about ADHD is that it can be treated through diet and nutrition—including a reduction in sugar. This is not an evidenced based solution.
- ADHD, when supported with a multi-modal approach, has excellent treatment results.