

***ADD: Not just for kids.***

By Dwight C. Douglas  
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## Ode to ADD

I saw the falling star tonight and made a wish sincere  
Of sun and sand and days that end without this fear  
The fear of being trapped inside a room of panic  
Of bouncing to and fro, nowhere to go, so frantic

And if I really try real hard, I can remember everything  
But if I don't care about that one little name – BELL RING  
I'm off to the next event, the big bang, FREEDOM  
Feeling free is where it's at, no more numbers, and no dumb sum

You might explain it in a different way, you'd say I'm scattered  
And looking deeper you might say I'm crazy, Mr. Mad Hattered  
Crazy is good, but you see things straight, linear is norm  
Push me away before I run away, escaping the big storm.

But I do love me as much as you love yourself.  
I have my magic moments, take me off the shelf  
Try to see me as a special piece of china – unbroken  
And know that I care about you, even when it's unspoken

And in the end this unique kind of gift has much value,  
Because tomorrow I'm on to the next thing, never shallow  
Moving from stimulation to stimulation, the colors are so bright  
I'm going to dance on your line, you know, I am right.

Please read my book.  
Dwight C. Douglas

Most likely someone suggested you read this, or maybe, just maybe, the cover caught your eye and you picked it up. Here you are, starting to read another book. But this one is short. What subject really ever holds your attention? Well, may be this one will. You see, this is a book about your favorite subject: YOU. But how can that be? You've never met me, but I know you. You probably haven't really finished a book all year. Oh, you said you did, but you really didn't. See I know you.

You have a list of dreams, a list of chores, a list of fantasies, a list of do's and don'ts and a list of lists. Maybe they are written down and maybe they are in your head. The longer the list, the greater **the panic**. That feeling that you think everybody has, but they don't. You just think everybody else's brain works like yours. You really aren't organized. You never feel like you've *finished* much, even though you've *accomplished* a lot. You're probably very bright, no, I know you; you're *brilliant*. See I know you.

You are most likely older than 30, but younger in so many ways. You are energetic and somewhat a "free" spirit. You love to talk, and you can rail off on any subject, but the one you really love to talk about is, you. See, I know you.

You like caffeine, no, I'm sorry you love caffeine. You need it. It's good for you. This is your way to be creative, think straight, pull it together, clear the haze, wake up and smell the coffee. Or maybe you love Coca-Cola, Pepsi or maybe Jolt. Ha, you drink the Diet stuff so you can drink without worrying about taking too much sugar. You crank it up every morning and run with Java Joe until lunch. You love to top off a good meal with a cup of coffee. By the end of the workday, you really need something to calm you down. After all, you worked hard all day and having a good stiff drink is part of your business, your life, your heritage, your way of being yourself. You drink to feel good. And you're able to handle it. You're cool, see I know you.

You really can drink more than most people. As a matter of fact, you make some good points after a few drinks. You actually think clearer. And you do, see I know you. Oh, there have been times when you drank too much and got, well, a little embarrassing. But you aren't an alcoholic. You really aren't. I know you. You aren't addicted to alcohol. You just drink yourself into a more simplistic feeling. You just need to shut down parts of your brain. See I know you.

You may or may not be married or involved with someone. You might be straight, or gay or man or woman. All those things don't matter, because you don't have trouble meeting people. Or finding a

friend to be with. Men and women find you interesting, creative, fun, wacky, smart, spirited and well just different. You really do get bored easily. Not easily in an uncaring way, you just drift away from the conversation. It is hard to pay attention. After all, who can afford to pay attention? Get it? That was a joke. You love to play jokes on people. You are always on stage, well unless you are a little depressed. See I know you.

You always want new and fresh ideas. You like new people. You always remember when someone is repeating themselves, unless you weren't listening the first time. You hear when someone asks you if you heard what they said. But it bothers you that they asked. You have no problem not listening. There are just so many neat things to run through your mind. Your mind is always more interesting than what someone else is talking about. You like people. But really, think about it, you can count on your hand the people you think are really interesting. You like being in a relationship. You like, maybe even love the person who "brung ya", but you must find out about all the people who came to the party. It's not that you don't like, or love, or need, or respect, or want the person you are involved with, you just need more than one person. Well, actually you don't need anyone. You see, I know you.

Here's how well I know you. You are going through your mental rolodex right now. There you are moving through the cards at warp-speed. Quick glimpses of all the partners you've had, or wanted, or looked at in your life. There's that one from college. Remember her, or him, or it? You've lost it now. You've traveled to the people room. Ah, sexual imaginations, or conflicts, or conquests, you've already had two or three "sidebars". And you now see Judge Ito and you see O.J.'s face. Did he really do it? You put this book down. You look at the clock or your watch. Go ahead. I'll wait. You didn't put the book down; you just surfed over the words. That isn't why they are here? You use them as a background to your thoughts. You feel like you are getting somewhere even though you really haven't read a word. Are you back yet? Or did you hyper-focus on the words. You don't care about things like ADD\*, you're busy just focusing on how you'll get through the day, the morning, this page. It isn't that bad, but you see I know you.

\* A.D.D. is Attention Deficit Disorder, but is also known as ADHD which is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Not all ADD people are hyperactive and not all hyperactive people have ADD.

You're a good thinker. You've jumped on my words and rode them this far. You have no problem understanding concepts. As a matter of fact, once you really understand something you are very good at explaining it to others. Although, you don't mean to hurt people's feelings, you are quick to come up with a clever retort for whatever discussion is going on. Even if you aren't part of the conversation, if a quip, pun or punch line leaps from your bountiful brain, you spray it out. Your pomposity knows no rules of pauses and preludes or introductions. You have a very fast mind. You can't understand why everybody didn't see it, or get it or love it as much as you did. Lines just pop out of your mouth. There is no way you can wait for the pause in the conversation, after all your point is usually funnier, or more significant, than what anybody else has to say. See I know.

You hate reading books without pictures. Doesn't USA Today look better than the Wall Street Journal? Admit it, so many words - black ink on white paper - or that gray recycled stuff. They pack as many words as possible on each page. They even straighten out the paragraphs on either side. Look, they did it to my words. It is called justification. We all try to justify things. We try to make the edges neat and straight so that we are organized. The problem with being organized is you have to follow a schedule and rules and actually do what the authorities want you to do. You know you are supposed to get things done, but you really don't like to be told how to do things. You try to get something out of all the data they shovel at us daily, but it is so difficult. You know what I mean. See, I know you.

The endless recommendations of how to be better, how to get things done and how to be a good citizen drive you crazy. You get in your car and what do the authorities do, they put a stop sign coming out of your neighborhood, right where you don't need one, but you still don't have a light at that corner where traffic stacks up every morning? All the words on the page, they are like cars not moving on a freeway. They don't move. Words poured into these neat little square

boxes. Is this psychological vomiting good for the soul? Yes it makes you feel better to be able to say something to someone. You need to get it off your chest because nobody really understands you, come on, admit it. Yes, it is true, you are special. Well, different at least. See, I know you.

Ten years ago I didn't know anything about attention disorders or hyper-activity and ADD and CHADD or any of all this mumbo-jumbo. I'm just a very lucky kid from Pittsburgh who happened to get married in my mid-thirties and then have a bunch of kids. Four to be exact. Two of my children were having trouble in public school; so being a consultant, I hired a consultant to FIX the problem. Both girls were diagnosed with a thing called ADD: *Attention Deficit Disorder*. They told me it is "incurable" and that, here it comes: it is inherited. Ouch! The kid's consultant quickly fingered me as the source and all this stuff started to happen. Like books and pamphlets and newsletters and cocktail conversations with parents who reluctantly admitted, they too had children with (said in a whisper) "a-d-d". Then all of a sudden, the pressure mounted. The pressure to do something about it. Are you with me?

We can cut to the chase here. You're reading this book because you "think", or have been told that you may have ADD....Ooooooooooooo, what does it mean? First, this is not a book written by a doctor or some Ph.D. who may or may not have all the facts. Well, they have some of the facts, well; some doctors are just now starting to get the facts. The fact is; **you are different**. Or **not normal**; whatever that means.

You really aren't as happy as you remember you were. You just can't remember when that was. Quite frankly, you have a good sense of humor and I do too, but I get a little irritated by all this: "*We are the world, we have ADD! Can anyone remember the next line?*"

Someone recently suggested that I sit in on their ADD support group. I laughed. Oh, wow, let's sit around and talk about that time at the office when we forgot that we turned off the ringer on the phone and all the calls were sent to voice mail. While we sat at our desk looking at the phone and waiting for the most important conference call of our careers. Yeah, that sounds like fun. Tell them how you felt listening to the AT&T operator in the voice mail saying, "Hello Mr. Douglas, this is the AT&T conference center with your conference call, if you would like to join the call please call us at 1-900...." NINE TIMES. I can't help but visualize a room full of men with Alfred E. Neuman masks on sitting in chairs, smiling and chanting, "What me worry."

If my old man was alive today and I told him that he gave me ADD, he would scream. Do you like to scream? Do you feel a little panicked at times?

I used to think it was good to let it out. I used to say to myself; at least I won't have an ulcer. I yelled a lot. I enjoyed telling people what I thought. I wrote a lot of letters to businesses and companies that do stupid things, like ignoring the customer. I was constantly prepared for battle at anytime. Are you aware of how you get sometimes? You know when someone's words seem to shoot into your heart and you convert that person's negative energy into an instant reaction. Just like when you can come up with a line quickly, your reaction time is remarkable. It is almost like the words by-pass the logic part of your brain and go right to the emotional part. "Almost" nothing, they actually do.

You get **that feeling** when you are in line. Like at the Post Office when you can see how slow the workers are and that guy who just finished his business asks the Postal person about that stupid Elvis stamp book holder and the clerk has to go in the back to find the sample to show him and you're third in line. Then you see one of the workers put that sign up that says *next window please* and that **panic** sets in. And you physically feel like you want to run. So you do, you throw your package in the back seat of the car and you go to lunch. You forget to go back and a week later you see the package in the back seat and you can't help but think of that ridiculous man asking for that stupid Elvis stamp book. You are *mad at him* and you *blame him* for making your life so complicated. You wonder for a second, "I must be nuts?" See, I know you.

It isn't just a learning disability. It is a processing-perception problem. What kind of student were you? Did the phrase, "Not living up to your potential" echo through your formal educational evaluations? I was a C student. Oh, I got A's in classes I really enjoyed, or subjects that turned me on, or in classes where teachers **inspired** me. There are too few good teachers in life. There are even fewer who really understand certain learning disabilities. I am a product of the public school system which still doesn't know what to do with Attention Demanding Dreamers. By tapping my aptitude in abstract thought, my entertainment energy and verbal high-jinx, I made it to the top of my industry. I'm lucky, but even though I was successful, I wasn't really happy. I was restless and ready for something big to happen. Yeah, that is a better way to say it. Add a touch of resentment and we have a recipe for turmoil. This turmoil is

the lubricant of brain activity which jumps and skips and pops and bangs and hangs on subjects long after the room has moved on. It is also the highly flammable liquid which is waiting for a spark.

I grew up believing that I was sane and that everybody else in the whole world was crazy. For as long as I can remember, I was quite satisfied being permitted to be in my own world. My mother consistently remarked that "he was a quiet boy". The irony to all this quietness and inner focus in my youth is that now in my adult life, things seems to be totally the opposite. Well, not quite.

This is my discovery. I live with a constant distraction from another or many other thoughts at the same time. Although I could justify most of my reactions to most of life's situations as a by-product of my work and the constant pressure of a jet-set life, there is more. As I learn more about this **wiring problem** called ADD, I started to understand that I'm the one who's different. I'm the one who carries the edge. I'm the one who gets bored half through most people's points.

I always say that emotion is my strength and my weakness. I can be passionately obsessed with a cause, or event, or sport or computer or writing (the ultimately difficult attention consumer). The concept or event or person must demand enough of my attention to cure the dilemma of distraction. So, the concept must be new and challenging. The event must be as big as the World Series, the final conclusion of more than 181 well-focused battles. Most people do not have the energy or patience to demand enough of my focus to feel they can get close to me. That's fine with me, because again back to my childhood, I didn't need people to feel happy or involved in something.

The distraction is something that I don't expect "normal" people to understand. It's interesting that when I talk to intelligent humans about this strange *attention* disorder, they tend to argue their point of anti-treatment or the old "all creative people have it" That's fine for them to feel good after their uninformed pronouncement hits the pavement, but that doesn't help me. It's almost as if somebody is trying to talk you out of changing or learning more. Even my family doctor of almost 20 years told me that there's no way I could have ADD and be as successful as I was in business. He now understands and helps me. I'm not sure if being successful has anything to do with sanity. I'm not sure if "sanity" has anything to do with ADD. In fact,

part of the reason I feel bad is due to my success and the pressure I place on my self to achieve beyond what I set as goals.

Imagine that your mind was a computer screen and that every thought or project represents a window that you can open. The first challenge with my mind is that I feel a natural urge to open more than one window all the time. This goes back to my early days as a child of sitting on my bed in my small room, playing my guitar, doing my homework and listening to the radio at the same time. When we open too many windows, we slow down, just like a computer, and not one of the projects or thoughts gets completed. The extra energy used up by jumping from project to project (window to window) may feel good as it is happening, but when we lock up because we have too many windows open, we tend to walk away from it all with a feeling of exhaustion and frustration. There is a sense of desperation. There is a sense of emptiness due to lack of closure. This haze is carried forward and interferes with personal communication. It's almost as if someone is confronting me when they try to penetrate this haze. I feel they are interrupting me. How dare they use my own tactic?

I sometimes react with a tension or visible stressing when they just walk into a room while I'm trying to de-haze and clear my screen. Even when I start to close some of the windows, so I can get back to focusing on one thing, this feeling that I've got too much to do seeps into the area between my sub-conscience and conscience. I fear that this confusion will be accelerated into **the panic**. The panic is when all the details, appointments, goals, jobs and responsibilities take control of how I feel. The panic sets in and then I basically don't feel good. I assume everybody has stress, but this "panic" is a feeling of pressure far greater than any typical stress. It is debilitating to say the least.

One must be careful to not fall into the trap of believing that the overloading of information can make you ADD. There is so much stimulation in the world that it causes what I call, "*faux ADD*"...or as we used to call it in the sixties, "*contact high*." In the hippie daze, it was acting high around people who were high when you weren't. With faux ADD, people without ADD start to forget to finish thoughts, miss important things, like signing the check, or diverting to another subject or doing jokes and word puns and having fun during really important and serious meetings. "Sorry!" So be careful not to get too close to someone with ADD, you just might catch it.

Everyday responsibilities sometime created a weird panic inside my mind. This **panic** leads to frustration which leads to anger. The sharp edge of anger dulled the success that was all around me. The situations and business setbacks weren't handled well. I kept waiting for something great to happen; something that would lift me out of this abyss, this blue funk. This struggle to just have a conversation was pushing me further away from me. The real me. This wall became thick. I was starting to resent a lot of things. Words like "you are hard to live with" propelled me into the world of denial. These are the words that told me that it was time to change. Why do I have to change? Or did I change? I don't remember being like this when I was younger. My jokes weren't funny any more. I wanted to be happy. I decided to see a head doctor.

It was the beginning of a New Year. The year the Olympics would be coming to Atlanta. My favorite baseball team had just won the World Series. I should have been happy, but I wasn't. The doctor started by talking to me about me. She read some of what I had written about myself. We talked about my grades in school. I then took a test. The results painted the picture. The doctor smiled and declared, "*Classic ADD*"; wow, not just ADD, but *Classic*. It was a weird feeling. I felt like I passed a test even though I had a failing grade. This was new. It was **time to discover**.

We all start out the same, well sort of. If you took everything in your refrigerator and mixed them together in a bowl you would have an interesting substance. If I took everything in my refrigerator and did the same, I too would have a unique concoction. The DNA of what is in our refrigerators may be similar, but not exactly the same. We might put the goo in a blender or a food processor to make it the same consistency, but chemically each bowl would be special. That is how babies are made.

Well not really, but it makes my point that we are all different and what our parents did with the bowl of goo had just as much to do with the way we turned out as what they put in the mixing bowl.

As medical science and psychology help us learn more about the "human condition" most experts agree that it comes down to genes and environment. The gene pool from millions of years ago all the way up to your two biological parents will determine everything from your shape to the way your hair grows to the ugliness of your toes. The genes of gillions of generations can be seen in your personal hardware. Plastic surgeons may reconstruct the container, but deep down inside you are your parents' production.

Few of us take the time to re-experience the really good times of our past. To focus so long and hard on a moment in your life that you would paint a smile on your face can be the best medicine on a rainy day. We don't give that gift to ourselves. Someone with A.D.D. doesn't have the ability to go there like a "normal" person. We tend to play it, just up to that moment and feeling, and then quickly rewind the tape to the start of the thought. We let the story unwind again and then it unravels just as we get to the moment again. It is almost like our steps have to be retraced. A micro-burst de ja vu. The unravel leads to diversion to something, someone or somewhere else. When I daydream, it is more like my brain is the air traffic control center. Not only do I have to keep aware of what I'm thinking about, but I have to make sure none of the other thoughts crash into each other.

The important fact of ADD is that for many of us, once an experience has an ***emotional qualifier*** and we permit it to jump from our short term memory to the long term memory, IT IS THERE FOREVER. I can't remember a person's name, but I can tell you what they drank that night and repeat their interesting life story verbatim 20 years later. Labeling the file with their given name just didn't happen. I was busy thinking about what I was going to say.

For those familiar with computers, an ADD brain has a processor chip with a speed of 5000 megahertz, a hard drive to store 1 zillion gigabytes, but a RAM or working space of only 640 kilobytes. Certain drugs like Ritalin temporarily help expand this working space, but the real challenge is to be careful not to try to open too many programs at once. Before medicine was available, we just self-medicated with coffee to stretch the work area and induce concentration. But too much caffeine has its negative side-effects. Alcohol restricts the brain's ability to open other programs, so that slightly cranked on your favorite drink, makes you focus on simple one thought realities with "normal" folks. The problem there is that once you hit a certain point of saturation with alcohol, you will end up on the floor just like any other human being. This is not good.

The argument thrown out from all those self-pronounced experts from the PTA and whiners in the newspaper on the letters page is that all we have to do is learn how to remember to not open too many windows and everything will be okay. We are told we are lazy and if we just worked a little harder, we would be able to live up to our potential. The cynical viewpoint is that we *just aren't trying hard enough*. Well, maybe we aren't? But I keep asking why don't all those critics ask, why? Who are these people who claim to know how I feel? We aren't going to just "try harder." We aren't a rent-a-car company,

we are people. If I could *just do it*, as it is suggested, why wouldn't I? It would be a lot easier to just do it. It would get everybody off my back. There is nothing keeping me from thinking straight, except me. The little motivational talk is great, but until you walked a mile in my shoes, please don't tell me what is wrong with me. You know me, I'm ADD!

We are all born with a map. This DNA map along with genes and fuel will build a child into a full-grown human being. We have no teeth when we are born. Women who breast-feed their young really appreciate this aspect of human development. Then when we get enough food to survive we grow our first set of teeth. These "baby teeth" are then replaced with adult versions or permanent teeth. The baby teeth come in when they want and they fall out when they want. If they stay in too long, the adult teeth will try to shoot around the baby tooth which makes them come in all crooked. Are you following this?

We also can throw in some environment along the way which will affect the process greatly. Little kids chew sugar cane in the islands and this ruins their teeth. There are baby pacifiers, which if used too long, buck the teeth. These environmental concepts help the orthodontist's bank accounts. The human brain is like the human mouth.

When we want to have a perfect smile, we go to an orthodontist and he uses wire to bend our teeth back into perfection. When we want to have a healthy body, we go to the doctor and she gives us advice on how to have "perfect" health in order to live a long time. And when we want to straighten out a crooked brain, we go to a shrink and he/she/it puts braces on our brains in order to bring us back to perfection. Depending on how crooked our brains are the braces are only meant to be there for long enough to make us well. Well, some brains were shaped by environment and some disorders are directly linked to that DNA map, which means that treatment has to be as permanent as the shape of the brain. And what is this thing "perfect" we are talking about and what the hell is "normal?"

Now this ADD thing, or whatever they are calling it today, is not your store bought disease, ailment or disorder. First of all, if you guys (and women too) keep changing the name, how are we supposed to remember what it's called? Seriously, think about it. If you throw on a couple more letters we won't be able to remember what we have. STOP IT! We have no short term memory... no, we have no memory for things we don't care about. Your challenge is to get me to care

about what you are talking about before you start talking. Is that normal? I think that it is. Think about someone you think is totally boring. Got someone in mind? Okay, when they come up to you and start talking, you really don't hear what they say, because you don't care about what they have to say. So, you have the ability to turn on an aspect of ADD at any moment.

The reason we have so many "cases" of this absurd obstruction known as ADD is because all those folks who came to America came here because they were bored. Bored stiff with all the poverty, abuse and lack of freedom and of course, the most important thing, lack of food. Some people moved, others just died. And yes, your great grandfather had it and his father and his mother and his...well, you get the picture. You are part of all this and you will have to deal with it. We ADD folk also have *no inhibitions*. We say and do, at any given moment, whatever we want. A kind of like anti-social Turret Syndrome can embarrass and harass people. Most of the funny comedians have ADD and I'm sure that back in the old days the court jesters were too.

When we hear the words, "All creative people have it," it begs the question, "Are all ADD people creative?" Maybe. If you wondered where the expression "*absent-minded professor*" comes from, it probably has its roots in ADD. It wasn't until recently that scientists and researchers began to understand this disorder.

There's a great book called *You Mean, I'm Not Lazy, Stupid or Crazy* written by Kate Kelly and Peggy Ramundo published by Simon and Schusters' FIRESIDE that will help you understand more. You should read it especially if you have kids who seem to forget to turn in their homework at school even when it was perfectly completed and placed in their book bag.

The book by Kelly and Ramundo (say isn't that the name of a cheese?), clearly illustrates the current theories, which won't be so current when you read this. But to review, it's probably a FRONTAL LOBE problem. ADD people may have an insufficient quantity of the neurotransmitter *dopamine*... **"Hey, where is that dope of mine? I thought I put it in this hiding place over there...I just can't remember where 'over there' is?"** Basically, we are chemically impotent. Shucks, more coffee warden.

Kelly and Ramundo also point out that *researchers have found a reduced blood flow in the frontal lobe area of the brains of ADD adults*. Oh my God, we have a circulation problem. Isn't that what killed all the newspapers in the seventies? What can we do? Maybe if we hang by our feet like bats... yeah, that'll do it.

But we've got more theories. Just what ADD-types need more complications, more choices, and more reasons? Oh I can't wait until they tell us that it was too much TV...yes, TV caused this. But on the serious side, if there is a serious side to this effect, they think it may be a sleep disorder, or this may be a result of parenting or heredity, maybe complications of pregnancy, (everybody knew her as Nell), or childhood environmental toxins (gee, I did live in Pittsburgh, if you call that a living? [Thanks Groucho] but I left there just before they cleaned it up). Maybe it was just food dyes, yeah, that Red #12 (my mom used to put in water and call it soup). Maybe it was additives (you know, I do have a reaction to MSG in Chinese food, I break out in song after eating it) or perhaps it is just that old number one fall guy, that scapegoat of the stars: SUGAR! More sugar, warden.

Perhaps ADD is just a "made up answer" for a non-conformist attitude? All ADD people are rebels without a cause...rebels without recall. This is the point, and I have to actually get to the point and make some sense of all this. So, let's look at this as a learning experience for all of us. Are you listening to me? CAN YOU HEAR ME?

People get all worked up about the kids taking drugs to learn. That doesn't help a kid who really can't cope with a system of achievement that doesn't really bring out the talents they have. Either you have to alter the brain or alter the system. Altering the brain of the kid is less disruptive and costly, than reorganizing the whole school system for 10% of the students. One teacher dealing with 30 kids with different backgrounds and frames of references is bad enough. The ratio sucks and we all know it. Isn't it amazing that the ratio of coaches to kids in Little League is about 1 coach for every 6 kids, but school it is 1 to 30? There are a lot of great teachers out there, but a kid with ADD is not equipped for "normal" schooling.

The dichotomy of life on this planet is we constantly tell our kids not to do drugs but taking medicine (drugs) is a way of life these days. All of us are blasted 24-7 by TV commercials which urge us to take drugs. Why would someone who says ADD is just laziness have any credibility condemning the practice of kids taking a controlled substance to stimulate the frontal lobes of their brains while those who sit in judgment take another hit on their Marlboro? Addiction is the problem not the drug. Just say "maybe" to the kids, because not all drugs are bad. Especially one that helps you think in a linear fashion.

Since my family doctor refused to give me a drug to help me produce dopamine in my frontal lobe I had to go to a doctor of brainology, or as you know and love them, a shrink. Man, I will never be able to run for President now that I have admitted this. Oh, well,

real people never become Presidents. If you feel uncomfortable about seeing a Psychiatrist, don't be. This is still one of the strangest human activities. We enter a room with a total stranger and pay them money so that we can sit (only really sick people lay on that early Egyptian looking sofa) and talk about ourselves. This is pure theater of the mind. The very best psychiatrists know how to ask questions to stimulate you into telling really embarrassing things about yourself. They ask things like, "So your father liked to wear women's clothing?" And I lean forward and scream, "NO, WE AREN'T TALKING ABOUT HIM, WE ARE TALKING ABOUT ME! I'M THE ONE WITH ADD, NOT HIM. HE'S DEAD!" Then they ask, "So you weren't close to your father?" They keep asking these questions that have nothing to do with getting the drug so that you can be productive and stop taking up everybody's time with all these diversions. Why? Why? Why?

This is the reason I'm on a drug. Well, actually two drugs: Ritalin and Pravachol. The first one gets the ADD clog out of my brain and the second one gets the cholesterol clog out of my arteries. Yes, I sat in that room, took those tests and talked about myself until I convinced not only the doctor, but myself, that I had ADD. But I am better on Ritalin. I am more productive and happier.

I don't recommend that you do just any old drug. I must say that you should be careful with all drugs, whether they are legal or illegal. Just remember that the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) is a group of easily influenced risk takers. They will legalize drugs that will kill you and keep substances off the market that could save your life. For me Ritalin is great, because it calms me down, clears my mind and helps me get from point A to point B and to point C. I waste less time and make fewer mistakes. I can type better. I even sing better\*

Drugs don't always make you feel better, but if you think about the human body as a giant complex chemistry kit, you'll have a better grip on the subject of how we all can be living better through chemistry. Balzac, the writer, used to drink 9 pots of coffee every day when we wrote. He claimed it helped him be more creative. Most Americans have a cup to get them going, but hey, Balzac, I think you needed to seek some professional help if you were cranking that much caffeine. Maybe he was ADD? But there is a better way.

**\*WARNING:** If you take Ritalin, you really should stop using any and all caffeine products. If you use both, you will feel like a speed freak and you will get just as whacked out as Balzac and feel nervous. Alcohol is also a problem. Just try to do one stimulant at a time and you will be fine.

You may think, yes, I at times do feel this way. We probably all have a little ADD in us. We all have been programmed by society to receive more information than we give, but is that normal? Don't you feel the over-load? Haven't you ever felt the panic? For someone who doesn't have ADD, the best way to describe it is this way. If you've ever experienced jet lag, you've experienced what an ADD person feels like when they aren't on their medication. Remember that time you came back from that long trip and you went to the grocery store and forgot what you went there for? That is how ADD is. ADD is so bad in some people; the drugs don't even work. I feel sorry for those people. Everybody is different, but Attention Deficit Disorder is real. Totally talented people not being able to complete a task, not because they didn't care or want to do it, but it just didn't happen for "some reason." The reason is ADD.

After getting treatment, you will notice things that you do which are totally amazing. One of the things I observed was when the person in the car in front of me put on their turn signal; I would hit the gas pedal instead of my brake? My mind processed the information and jumped to the step that was to happen after they turned out of the way. The impatience is that great.

If you said "gas pedal" too, you may be ADD. If you constantly interrupt other people, you may be ADD. If you do, don't worry about it. Just remember you are SPECIAL. Special people just need special stimulation and understanding to make life better. Rather than live your whole life self-medicating yourself with the wrong drugs. Get the right drugs. If your life doesn't make much sense, spend some time with a professional to help you make some sense of it all. The goal is to get better at life. Better is good.

The end.... Or is this really a beginning?