

ADHD Support Group Guide

to Bryan Hutchinson's:



ONE BOY'S STRUGGLE: A MEMOIR

Surviving Life with Undiagnosed ADD

"One Boy's Struggle is a real eye-opener."
Dr. Edward Hallowell

Sharon St. John, LPC

Dedicated to Frank Mercik, my husband, who has learned much about Adult Attention Deficit Disorder from living with me and studying, voraciously. His capacity for compassion and patience has increased at warp speed (because I have given him so many opportunities to practice). Frank is a remarkable man who has helped me heal from my own life of undiagnosed ADD.

Changing Lives

In a group Session, we were on Chapter 2 of One Boy's Struggle. One of the women brought her partner, they were on the verge of breaking up over a decade long relationship. The transformation that came over the two of them was amazing. It was the first time her partner had ever “heard” anyone talk about ADHD from “personal experience” and what it is like to have it. She was reassured that so much of the observed “hurtful” ADHD behavior was “not intentional” and did not mean she wasn't loved or cared about. ***It was a huge breakthrough for both of them.***

I handed out a copy of the discussion topics I compiled. I started the group with asking each person to give a bit of how the book touched them.... And they were off! What was so awesome, I just sat back and the group took on a life of its own. I interjected a comment or story here and there. By the end of our 90 minute session, every single point I had put on the discussion topic list for that session had been covered. Every one! ***It was high energy, empathy, enthusiasm and enjoyment.***

Another life-changer that happened in our group. One of my clients spent a few counseling sessions complaining about her partner's behavior. She was at her wits end and ready to break off their two year relationship. Since reading *One Boy's Struggle* and attending our group sessions, they began to truly “get” his behaviors. *“I've never known what was wrong with me. Now, I understand.”* He recently told the group. They walked out of the latest session, smiling at each other, ***because they finally understood.***

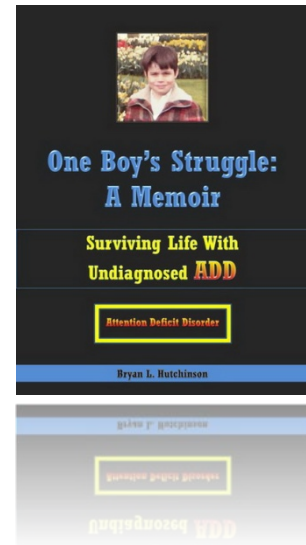
His book, his story:
It is for you and me – all of us.
I chose it for our group because it said it all!

One Boy's Struggle: A Memoir – About

If you are not yet familiar with *One Boy's Struggle: A Memoir – Surviving Life with Undiagnosed ADD*, then it is my pleasure to introduce it to you. It is considered by many as one of the most important and relevant personal memoirs by someone who grew up with ADHD. In Bryan's book the information is significant and helpful. What is exceptional about the book is not the substantial information alone, it is a book written with such feeling and emotion that the reader is given the opportunity to directly step into and learn from Bryan's experiences as he describes them in vivid detail. **Anyone with ADHD will recognize parts of themselves in this book and a non-ADDER will have a fresh, new personal understanding of what ADHD is and what it is like to live with it.** Few books have been able to relate such a story as vividly as *One Boy's Struggle* does. After only a few years in print, it is already considered a classic.

What brings this book into new territory and breaks new ground is Bryan's gift for expression. If you know someone that does not understand ADHD or believes that it is a myth, ask them to read *One Boy's Struggle*. The book is changing lives and turning disbelievers into believers; furthermore, it is helping teachers, parents and spouses better understand and relate to people with ADHD in their lives. Adults with ADHD will find an astonishing "how-to" manual within its pages.

I wept as I read Bryan's story. I wept for Bryan, for me, for my clients, for my relatives, and all of my friends who have ADHD. Bryan does an incredible job of pulling the reader into the real world of ADHD. I have a copy of this book in my waiting room. Often my clients come in for their session holding the book, saying, "This is awesome!" or "OMG, this book is about me." No one can read this book without being touched deeply. This book is a **MUST** for any parent who has an ADHD child, just as it is a must for adults who have been tortured by their weird behaviors and negative feedback from teachers, parents, friends and siblings. After receiving criticism all of our lives because of undiagnosed ADHD, finally understanding very clearly "WHY" beyond the diagnosis of ADHD, is a huge relief. This book and Bryan's talent for expression is a gift to the ADDer and the people who love us. Read it for yourself. Give it as a gift for your child's teacher, give it to anyone who has been touched by ADHD. It is changing the ADDer world.



Sharon St. John, LPC

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Education:

I received my Master's Degree in Counseling from Idaho State University in 1986. In 1970 I completed a Bachelor's Degree in Health Education and Sociology from Central Washington University in Ellensburg Washington. I have studied ADHD coaching from three masterful women. Kate Kelly and Peggy Ramundo were my first teachers 2010-11. These women wrote a best selling book titled *You Mean I'm not Lazy, Stupid or Crazy?*. I worked with Melissa Orlov in 2010 learning from her *The ADHD Effect on Marriage*. I used her book as a basis for a Couples ADHD Support Group in 2010-11.

License:

I am a Licensed Professional Counselor. I have been practicing in Utah since 1988.

Experience:

I have been counseling and coaching individuals, couples and families for over 26 years. I am pleased with the past successes, and the positive impact I have made in people's lives. After working for many years as a psychotherapist, in 1999, I decided to open my own counseling practice. It took a leap of faith and I have experienced great success.

Primary focus:

I have a special interest in working with adults and teens who have Attention Deficit Disorder. Relationships are often difficult for the person suffering with ADHD. Our relationships are crucial to our happiness and well-being. I work both to increase people's personal awareness, and to improve their communication and relational skills so that they can experience greater success and satisfaction in their lives.



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A message from Sharon:

I'm a psychotherapist and ADHD coach. ADHD treatment is my passion. I love working with people who have ADHD. Treatment offers hope where there was only despair. It pleases me to see people come from impulsive, mislabeled, discouraged histories and be able to reclaim their hope, dignity and their belief in themselves.

Bryan's book has given me a powerful tool to not only educate people about ADHD, but it has uniquely given me a rare view inside the mind of someone with ADHD to know how he felt, what he thought of himself and perhaps most importantly how he finally found his way. There are many books today which offer a view into the mind of someone with ADHD, but too few of them have the ability to truly reach into another's heart and allow the reader to feel what he felt, see what he saw and learn what he learned.

When Bryan asked me to share how I utilize his book with our ADHD support group, I thought of it as a wonderful opportunity. I was eager to share how we are using *One Boy's Struggle*. I am also interested to hear from any support groups or individuals who have used Bryan's book. I want to learn how others have discovered the wonderful gifts inside and benefited from them. His examples of turning devastating disadvantages into advantages is incredible because its possible for any of us.

I love support groups for ADDers because a group offers a sense of belonging and acceptance which has been a rare experience in the life of an ADDer. The group is a microcosm of real life, thus it is a safe place to practice new social skills, to try on new behaviors, to seek support for new ventures or adventures.

What follows are my descriptions of what I learned from each chapter of Bryan's book and how that knowledge has helped us move forward in our ADHD support group as well as individuals. In this guide I answer the questions Bryan specifically asked of me and offer specific discussion topics and questions which I use to guide our support group.

But, first I'd like to share with you how Bryan's book has helped me, my clients – adults, parents, educators and mental health professionals: (next page)

Message from Sharon (continued):

As an adult ADDer, reading *One Boy's Struggle*, I found huge benefits in the form of validation, support and connection on a deep, feeling level. My thought was "he truly gets it because he has lived it!" The ADDer who has spent most of life feeling misunderstood, left out and labeled will find their story interwoven with Bryan's. It's an indescribable feeling to see one's own story on the pages of a book written by a stranger. In plain language, the tragedy and triumph available to an ADDer is there in Bryan's hopeful and compelling story. There simply is no other book that tells it like this.

Not long ago, a mom of a 13 year old ADHD boy asked me to attend a meeting the school had set up to decide "what to do with" *her problem child*. She had purchased Bryan's book from me a week prior. She was grateful to have read it, stating she finally knew, up close and personally, the challenges her son was experiencing. Her discussion with the school administrators and her son's teachers was clearly that of a woman who understood her child's struggles and could appropriately advocate for him. I was able to speak to the group, giving a bit of clinical information and more importantly, I read to them the paragraphs in *One Boy's Struggle* where Bryan describes trying so hard to please his teacher, to no avail. There was a lively discussion about how an ADD / ADHD child will freeze, unable to remember the information just read, or instructions just given. There were light bulbs going off in the heads of those professionals who had harshly judged the 13 year old. I left the meeting with a deep feeling of satisfaction and, gratitude.

Parents, step-parents and other caregivers who have ADHD children should seriously consider reading *One Boy's Struggle*, even if they never read another book related to ADHD. These parents are often the ones who bring their special child to me, describing the youngster as defiant, lazy, hard headed and other incorrect labels. I take the responsibility of educating parents very seriously. It is helpful to share Bryan's book with them. After reading *One Boy's Struggle*, there is an attitude shift; the parents have walked in their child's shoes while reading Bryan's story. The book engenders compassion, tenderness, encouragement and hope in these once frustrated caregivers. I keep a stack of *One Boy's Struggle* in my office to sell to my clients. There is a growing segment of people in Northern Utah that are in transition; moving from frustration and despair toward understanding and supporting their ADHD child. It can't get much better than that! Bryan's book, his story, it is for you and me – all of us!

-Sharon

A message from Bryan:

Since self-publishing *One Boy's Struggle* I have been wonderfully amazed with how well it has been received by the ADHD community and beyond. The reception has been a validation of sorts for me, because I never imagined how many, and *how closely*, people would relate to my story and 'get it'. For most of my life I felt so alone in my struggles and that something was 'wrong' with me, not anymore.

I published *One Boy's Struggle* with the intention of helping a few people by demonstrating to them that they are not alone in their struggles. I never imagined that the book would become the focus of ADHD support groups around the world, from the United States to as far away as Australia. I am honored and humbled, with immense gratitude.

This is a special little guide that Sharon has generously put together and is giving away for free. Even if you are not currently in a support group this guide may help you get more out of reading *One Boy's Struggle* – I know I did . Funny enough, I wrote *One Boy's Struggle* and yet, Sharon's guide has clarified so much of what readers are getting from it that I did not realize. She has taught me a lot with this guide. This guide started with me asking Sharon a few questions so I could learn more about her support group efforts. The questions I asked are included.

Although we are all unique individuals, living different lives, we do indeed share many commonalities within the ADDer World and the good news is that we can learn from each other. I hope you find this guide beneficial and that in some small way One Boy's Struggle helps make a favorable difference in your life.

Thank you, Sharon, for writing the guide that follows. I hope it helps others in their efforts to master their ADHD and/or to better understand those of us with ADHD.

-Bryan

Dr. Edward Hallowell's Review:

Want to find out what it's like to grow up with ADHD? Read *One Boy's Struggle!* Hutchinson's exploration of his always-in-trouble-for-something childhood brings to life some of the huge hurdles kids growing up with ADHD face. He writes of hope and despair, and the all-too-common conflict between desperately wanting to achieve and please, yet suspecting that you'll fail again...and soon.

Best of all, he tells his story of triumph as he gets help and follows his own unique path to success!

One Boy's Struggle is a real eye-opener. It should be read by all parents struggling to understand how best to support their ADHD children. Adults with ADHD will likely find validation and new hope from reading Bryan's story.

-Dr. Edward Hallowell

Co-author of *Driven to Distraction* and author of 17 other books on mental health
Director of the Hallowell Centers in Sudbury, MA and New York City

“He writes of hope and despair, and the all-too-common conflict between desperately wanting to achieve and please, yet suspecting that you'll fail again...and soon.”

Green Headers: Support Group Guide



Blue Headers: Interview Answers from Sharon St. John, LPC

Interview answers are written directly to Bryan

“ *When I was **diagnosed** with ADD...I finally had an answer for my persistent behaviors. I felt as though **a locked gate in my mind suddenly opened...*** ”

Quote from *One Boy's Struggle*.

Support group simple setup considerations:

Decide if you want to be the facilitator, co-facilitator or group member. It is possible to want to start a support group, but find someone else to run it. If you're looking for someone to run the support group find someone that is committed, highly interested and positively enthusiastic about what the support group will help members achieve together and individually.

Use a quiet location that's consistently available at a specific time.

Create a specific schedule, weekly, bi-weekly or monthly. Pick a time when most people are normally available. Support group members feel most comfortable and commit better when meetings are consistent with place and time.

Advertise. Consider local newspapers, post flyers in local areas where allowed and consider posting 'an event' on social networks and be specific as to where the location is so that people from far away can consider before contacting. Provide information on the ads where members can get *One Boy's Struggle*, i.e.: directly from the facilitator or elsewhere.

Is the support group free or is there a fee? A fee may help keep members committed. Sometimes when a support group is completely free of charge not all members commit to the regular meetings. Also, a fee will help pay for the advertising and building rent. Keep the fee in range of most people. It is helpful to clarify the fee on the flyer.

Formulate a plan

Start with members getting to know each other with a few minutes each for introductions. It takes a strong group leader to guide members on group protocol. At the first session, you may wish to discuss "group manners". Try tying it into behavior changes that ADDers need to make. For example: *group is a safe place to practice new behaviors such as curbing the impulse to interrupt others, minimize blurting, listen attentively etc.* Be certain you set a good example by starting and ending the meeting on time. If you unintentionally interrupt someone or blurt, publicly catch yourself and make a correction. That's great role modeling.

It's a good idea to ask members *when they sign-up* to read the forward and perhaps the first chapter of *One Boy's Struggle* prior to the first session. Assign the second chapter for the second session and so on.

"As a person with ADHD who always felt 'not of this world', to me, reading Bryan's work is like seeing for the first time a reflection appear on the other side of a mirror which had appeared empty for so long."

~Anya

Why *One Boy's Struggle*?

Several months ago, I had a client who shared his dream of writing a book about his difficulty with undiagnosed ADHD during his growing up years. Shortly after that, I saw *One Boy's Struggle* somewhere online. I told him about it, he bought it, raved about it. Then... I bought the book, read it and knew I had to use it for our group.

I chose it for our group because it said it all! What I found most gripping was the *depth* and *intensity* of the feelings you shared. The groups I most enjoy facilitating are those where there is an exchange of feelings as they get discovered and processed.

Another reason I chose it was the healing/recovery part of the book was a very descriptive transition from the pain and chaos to how you worked your way out of the hopelessness. It is a style that will appeal to ADDers in my group because it's not written in standard "how to" format. The lesson is part of the story. This helps because it is sometime difficult for ADDers to follow instructions. *The typical "how to" format is boring, whereas vivid examples within a story are easy to process and later use.*

Specific topics

Have specific topics from the book for members to discuss – *examples are provided on the following pages*. Ask members to write down their own questions and thoughts for discussion as they read each chapter. Having their own questions gives members topics to discuss that are significant to them individually, which may help lead them to open up about their own personal stories.

Allow for exchange

Give each member ample time to discuss topics and questions. If asking a question allow the person or persons asked time to answer without interruption. Sometimes healing takes place simply by being able to fully express one's thoughts about a topic close to their heart.

At the same time it is important to have a time limit so that other members have an opportunity.

“Bryan’s story is insightful, positive and motivational. Most of all: inspiring and helpful.”

~Nancy Ratey, Author: *The Disorganized Mind*

What points in the book are most important to you?

When I truly became captivated by this book was in the chapter "Ability to Achieve". My memory was shaken as I read your words about being frozen, not being able to give your mother an answer-yes, frozen. When, in spite of being punished, *you could not get started on a task let alone finish it*. You described so perfectly the mental process you went through to get yourself to do it right. But... the real motivator was Adrenaline: *Juice! Wonderful Juice!* (No one but an ADDer could write about that in such a way that an ADDer recognizes and relates to.)

The Chapter on Education...That resonates with any ADDer who reads it. Group members have so much to share and relate to when they read about the educational experience you share. There is a strong bonding that takes place when we discuss our shared experiences in the school system.

“ *The **blame** I placed on myself for being the way I was is **depressing** and **exhausting**. Many of my negative thoughts made me feel like **Sisyphus**, who was condemned to roll a huge boulder up a hill, **never successfully reaching the top** before the boulder would **roll back down** the hill, forcing him to start the exhausting task **all over again...*** ”

Quote from *One Boy's Struggle*.

Discussion topics

- After reading the forward to *One Boy's Struggle*, why do you think Bryan wrote his story?
- Would you take the risk of sharing your story with the public? Why?
- Bryan said his wife had serious concerns about his sharing the harsh realities of his past. Do you think her concerns are valid? Explain your answer.
- Bryan's intention is about helping others. Did the forward and Chapter 1 help you? If so, in what ways?
- Did you know ADHD was a neurobiological mental disorder?
- How do you feel knowing there is no "cure" for ADHD?
- In what ways do you relate to the punishment and ridicule Bryan experienced as a child?
- If you have been diagnosed, will you share your reaction to discovering the reason you were labeled "lazy, annoying, stupid, dumb" etc. as a child?

Chapter breakdown from interview

Interests and Distractions

What kind of kid would leave their bicycle at a vacant house for 6 months? An ADDer kid, that's who. The Adult ADDers in my group have a plethora of stories about being too distracted to go back and get something that was valuable to them. *I, personally, had often wondered how I could leave my "stuff" somewhere and never go get it. And, that has not happened just as a child.*

Reliving the Past

This chapter is important because it normalizes the common trait ADDers have of daydreaming, reconstructing events in our heads, making them work out, going over what we should have done, or could have said that would have made the event less painful. I have not met many ADDers who have learned by past mistakes. We keep repeating the same ones over and over. *Your description of how that works in the ADDer's brain is validating, comforting, actually.*

Discussion topics

- ~ What are your experiences, if any, of being told you were “unmotivated, rebellious and didn’t care”?
- ~ Bryan tried to be invisible. What tactic did you use; disappearing, being loud and rowdy or something else?
- ~ What was your greatest fear as a child with ADHD?
- ~ What is the difference between blaming our parents and holding them accountable?
- ~ How does Bryan come to terms with his father's violence and verbal abuse?
- ~ How does he come to terms with his longing and remorse?
- ~ What does he regret?
- ~ What did he long for from one or both of his parents?
- ~ What did he do to fill up the hole in his soul?

Common Sense

It is a breath of fresh air to read in this chapter what good common sense most ADDers have. When turned on, the potential for creativity is endless. In my group I have two men who have invented amazing things. One man, who lays hardwood floors by trade, invented an applicator to smoothly apply varnish to the finished floor. He is in the process of applying for a patent. Another gentleman is working with three other people, perfecting a time keeper for ADDers that will be an App. for Smart Phones.

Broken

This part of the book is extremely touching and painful to read. Your description of being a bad, dumb, lazy boy who could not do anything right touches the ADDer’s heart. Tears flow easily when group members get in touch with this part of their own history. *You tell the story with such poignant truth and power; even the ADDer's spouses are moved by the sadness and frustration of being an undiagnosed child.* These spouses are finding much more compassion for their partners.

“ *...worrying helped me stay focused on staying out of trouble. It seemed that whenever I relaxed and stopped worrying or forgot to worry and lapsed into **distraction**, I would invariably **get in trouble for something**.* ”

Quote from *One Boy's Struggle*.

Have each group member describe their understanding of how ADDers “think and learn differently”

- ~ Give some personal history of times you realized your brain did not work like the brain of most people. How did you feel about being different back then? How do you feel now after reading *One Boy's Struggle*?
- ~ Tell of a time when you felt rejected because of your ADD symptoms? How did you feel? Misunderstood? Dumb? Angry? Left out? Embarrassed?
- ~ As you remember your caregivers, did they ever become angry or exasperated with you? What was that like?
- ~ Bryan discusses how he was moved into action by fear (pg. 11). Why do you think that happened? Have you experienced being frozen and incapable of thinking or moving into action?
- ~ *What would it be like if your caregivers took the time to get to know you and understand you?* How would your life have been different?

“His journey is full of teachable moments.”
~ADDitude Magazine

Father

Amazing chapter. The way you describe the chasm between you and your father gives the reader common ground with you. It is easy to relate to many parts of this chapter; the spiritual longing for connection, the fear, the collateral damage, the lost years, the time lost forever.

Inspiration

You describe your dream of being great. We all have such dreams whether they are fleeting or well-defined. *I like the way you describe how you "knew" you were more, much more, than anyone ever imagined. How you reached deep inside yourself and pulled up the resources you did not realize you had, and you used those resources to progress toward your unnamed greatness... is magnificent!!*

Strategy and discussion topics

Break down the different aspects of this chapter, “Recognizing Talent”, into strategies that can be used by group members to *change, advance*; to be *the best they can be...*

~ How did Bryan become a thriving adult? Remember the story of him standing amongst the shards and shatters of his precious trophies? ... pieces of his worth being swept up by his mother. How does a child recover from that state of hopelessness and discouragement? Bryan developed a plan for success he may not have even recognized at the time. He developed strategies! What did you learn from Bryan’s process?

~ As Bryan began learning, he developed a strategy that gave him more focus. How did he train himself to bring his mind back on task and remain focused? How can you incorporate this example into your own strategy?

~ Bryan had a dip in his success. His negative internal dialogue almost got the best of him. How did he pull himself out of that pit?

~ Within each of us is innate talent. How has Bryan’s story helped you recognize and build your talents?

Recognizing Talent

What utterly amazes me is how you, with relatively little help, came to be your own champion- how you recognized and nurtured that greatness.

This chapter shares a design that group members will be able to follow.

“Bryan’s book is written from the heart. What he’s done to overcome his challenges is inspirational. Anyone with ADD or with friends, loved ones or colleagues with ADD will be informed and touched by Bryan’s book.”

~Bryan Robinson Ph.D. Author:
The Art of Confident Living

Discussion topic

Hope.

One Boy's Struggle is one of the most hopeful, inspirational books about ADHD I have ever read. For discussion, have group members highlight optimistic, promising passages that resonate most closely for them. They can share the hope and/or inspiration they found in those passages. Urge the group to openly discuss these sections and to be open to experience the group "lighten" as they express hope together. For those who cannot yet talk about hope, this may be a good opportunity for them (if they chose) to discuss what stops them and in what ways they may overcome whatever is blocking them. This can be an appropriate time to remind members of the tool of mental rehearsal they learned earlier.

“Bryan Hutchinson’s life is inspiring and his message is one of hope, forgiveness, and of moving forward.”

~ Keath Low

Double Life

Being married to your first wife was a courageous act because she was a person of ritual and routine. *Living a life of quiet desperation is so familiar to ADDers*, every reader will be able to relate to what you write about trying to change for your first wife. You tried so hard, it is reminiscent of your childhood struggle to please your teachers and parents. And, to no avail. Bless you for trying so hard *although it never works to deny and disown the true self* as you eventually learned.

I enjoyed your description of your journey in therapy and how you worked to heal some of the childhood wounds that were inflicted upon you from unknowing parents. *The fact you became more and more able to use your innate resources and abilities lights hope in the reader*. Even before your diagnosis you were finding tools to accommodate for your lack of executive functioning on several levels. You describe this so well that it will easily help others.

“ *I have **learned to forgive myself for mistakes I made.** Beating myself up every day and **regretting the past** is not a good way to live. Having ADD is **not an excuse**, but it is **a reason** for exhibiting **certain behaviors.*** ”

Quote from *One Boy's Struggle*.

Discussion topic

Forgiveness and how to achieve it. Bryan's chapter, "Time to Forgive", is an excellent chapter for learning about and discovering how one can go about forgiving others. The older one is when diagnosed with ADHD the more common it is for past wrongs to continue haunting one's present and future. Finding forgiveness is not always for the other people being forgiven as much as it is for the one offering and giving forgiveness.

If any group members have forgiven others and have been able to move on thanks to giving forgiveness, ask them to discuss it. Ask them to tell how they did it and how they felt afterwards.

Sometimes people are skeptical about giving forgiveness as if they are 'letting' someone get away with something, but really they are possibly allowing themselves to be trapped by resentment and anger, which causes them more inner turmoil. Open discussion may help members discover the healing power of forgiveness.

Time to Forgive

You are masterful in reframing your childhood abuse by looking at the positive intentions your parents had for you. Of course, as a child at the other end of a belt, it is impossible to imagine any positive intention and only as a mature adult were you able to grasp that concept. Little children think concretely and as an adult, you were able to look at this dark time in your life and process it with more abstract thinking. Through that you were able come to an understanding of it.

There are many social issues touched upon in this chapter; Vietnam War/PTSD, child abuse, death and dying, family dynamics, the strength of one woman who had a rageful man for a husband and a "lazy" boy for a son. It is an amazing puzzle you piece together to finally be able to forebear the pain, to forgo the resentment and finally to forgive.

"He truly helps people gain not only an understanding of ADD, but of themselves."
~Ariane Benefit, Author: *Neat & Simple Guide to Organizing your Office*

Discussion topics

- ~ If you have ever seen a therapist, what was that experience like for you? What prompted you to seek help?
- ~ Who was the person who diagnosed your ADHD?
- ~ What was your first reaction when you received your diagnosis? As the reality of your diagnosis became more real, what did you experience? Relief, denial, grief, anger? Did you have anyone with whom to process your feelings?
- ~ Bryan has given an inspiring story of healing and recovery of which therapy played an important part. Looking back, what are your feelings toward those who misunderstood you and mistreated you? How much of that do you carry with you now?
- ~ After reading about Bryan's experience with therapy do you have a better understanding of how therapy may help heal the wounds of your ADHD past and move forward into a more optimistic future?

Therapy

In my practice, every person comes into my office because something is not working right in their life. Usually some pain is unbearable and most adults bring with them trauma from childhood, just as you brought yours to Dr. Gary. Sometimes in my groups, the topic will drift into abuse and trauma. The subtle abuse from teachers, siblings and parents is every bit as crippling as being whipped. A whipping has a beginning and an ending whereas verbal abuse, harsh or subtle, is ongoing, persistent and seemingly forever. You make a strong case for therapy as a place to take one's woundedness. This is a living example of part of the recovery process

Your description of an ADDer missing subtle social cues is accurate and is described in a way I have never seen written before. That will evoke an extraordinary discussion in our group setting.

“If you are feeling isolated and misunderstood regarding ADD, you will likely find solace in Bryan's book.”

~Dr. Ragan

Significant other

An important area of discussion is about relationships and how they have affected both the person with ADHD and their significant other (past or present). Bryan provides a clear, deep and passionate insight into his relationships, the mistakes he made, continued to make and how he eventually realized that he could not be what others wanted him to be, but he could modify once he understood his behaviors. He writes in detail about his failed marriage. Individuals have become more open to discussing their personal perceived failings in relationships after reading *One Boy's Struggle*, which has provided great discussions, and the ability to move forward more aware and confident that they will improve. Uniquely, Bryan does not merely explain the problems ADHD presents in relationships, but rather takes the reader into his relationships and clearly outlines how ADHD influenced them via the story itself. This is perhaps the most rare expressive personal account of ADHD and relationships available.

When significant others are present in the group ask them to discuss the relationship aspects of Bryan's book, and what they got from the information and how that information has changed or improved their perceptions – how can they use that information to move forward?

Improving Relationships

An area of acute pain and shame in many ADDers is the pain we have caused others, either because we don't listen, don't remember, blurt out something inappropriate, misplace or lose something of value to them (or lose something of value we have been given). Understanding it is our ADD doesn't make it right, especially if we continue on with the same behavior. You make a graceful transition in your story to list ways in which you were able to change. Your words are a light shining on a once dark pathway.

“Bryan talks openly about the resentment and shame his childhood induced and shares the ways he has overcome his past and his ADHD. His journey of learning and redirection will inspire many.”

~Melissa Orlov, Author: *The ADHD Effect on Marriage*

“ *As ADDers...it seems that there are **so many things against us**. We often have to deal with and **conform** to the structure of the educational system, social structures, and **expectations** from others and **ourselves**. There is so much negativity attached to having Attention Deficit Disorder that often we are **compelled to keep it a secret...*** ”

Quote from *One Boy's Struggle*.

Discussion topic

The hidden ‘dirty’ truth about living with ADHD is the oft negative perceptions of others. It is common for people with ADHD to have lived through negative reactions, chastisement and ridicule from others: parents, teachers, so-called friends and in the work place. Group members discuss the negative reactions and ways to not allow the negative reactions to circumvent their self-esteem. Each member gives suggestions on how to improve public perception and how to deal with ridicule.

Self-ridicule is a key topic about living with ADHD in *One Boy's Struggle*. Ask group members why self-ridicule is harmful and how did Bryan deal with it? Was it as helpful as Bryan originally thought it was or did it cause further problems for him to overcome? How did he rise above ridicule and the bullies in his life?

“One Boy's Struggle is a gripping account of both the struggles and positive polarities of ADD written beautifully.”

~David A. Crenshaw, Ph.D.

Author, *Reverence in the Healing Process*

Rediscovery

I enjoyed your very interesting journey as you get a diagnosis in this chapter. It is quite a process. I find it useful to learn you had to comb through the reasons you were punished as a child to help determine what behaviors you suppressed that, in turn, actually delayed your diagnosis.

It is helpful to read your perception of people's negative reaction to ADHD/ADD. *Many of my clients have spouses, parents or friends who tease or sarcastically say, "Oh, yea, it's your ADD. Right!"* As you point out, being able to predict our behavior helps us avoid it. That will be an important fact in the recovery process for all ADDers with whom I come in contact.

Reading the last few pages of this chapter is healing because, once again, you validate the reality of having ADHD. It discusses the vast list of positive attributes of ADDers.

We can be, and often are, some kind of awesome.

Although, we usually don't feel that way. You help us find it within ourselves.

Discussion topics about education

- ~ Education: the bane of our existence. Why is that true when we are so smart?
- ~ What are your ideas on why school is so painful and difficult for most of us?
- ~ How do you relate to Bryan's experiences in school?
- ~ Break up into groups of two or three people and discuss:
 1. "My memories of having ADHD in Elementary School"
 2. "Did my school experience improve or deteriorate in high school? Why do you think that happened?"
- ~ Again, gather in large group and debrief what each group learned about the educational experience.
- ~ If you could tell your most difficult teacher something about you and your experience with him/her, what would you say?
- ~ Do you think it is important for parents and educators to read *One Boy's Struggle*? Will it help the next generation? If so, how do we encourage them to read it?

A New Day, A New Life

Imagination! We, as ADDers, are blessed with imagination. When we turn our imagination into a positive direction, our potential is unlimited.

Sometimes we get in our own way. Your description of the benefits you discovered in therapy are helpful and encouraging. By facing our inner angst, our confusing abuse and rejection, the therapeutic journey will begin to set us free. When an ADDer learns what is "wrong", learns why there is low self-esteem and self-doubt, why social cues are missed, why blurting and interrupting continue in spite of the embarrassment it causes, there is great relief laced with grief and joy.

You describe the profound beginning of your journey to be a channel of inspiration, hope and help to the ADDer community of the world. What I believe is the ADDer, with proper diagnosis and treatment will be like a Phoenix, the mythical bird.

Your inspiration to help others, born of your heartache, is the voice to accomplish incredible changes in the world of ADHD.

“ ***I never realized that the significant changes I was making were so necessary and that they would make such a difference in my life... Today is very important to me. I have lived a life of having one foot in yesterday and one foot in tomorrow. I want to have both feet in today to live a more fulfilling life...*** ”

Quote from *One Boy's Struggle*.

Bringing the support group to an end, or rather, a new beginning:

When the group reaches the last remaining chapters and after we've discussed the final topics, I begin preparing them for closure. We talk about how much we've learned, how much the sharing, tears and laughter have meant to us. We make plans for a reunion in 2-3 months. Knowing we will meet again puts everyone at ease realizing this is not the end. We will see each other again. We will reunite; have a "pot luck" and share our progress, catch up, tell stories and share strategies we have created.

Prior to the last meeting, I make certain everyone has a list of phone numbers and email addresses of each group member. Having that list can ensure a feeling of connection. I also remind members that they can join the [ADDer World ADHD Social Network](#) Bryan Hutchinson created for anyone with, or connected to, ADHD, it's totally free and very active with those who 'understand'.

For the last group session we discuss:

- *One Boy's Struggle* is about a journey. Now that we are finishing Bryan's adventure, how do you see your own journey continuing from this point onward?
- How will you put to use the tools, ideas, strategies and knowledge you have gained from this group?
- How has this group taken you to an emotional place where you can see your ADHD in a new light, as a gift?
- How, specifically, has your life improved as a result of reading *One Boy's Struggle* and having a support group with whom to interact? What is the greatest gift you will take from these people and this group?

Then we recap our experiences and share what has been most valuable to each individual. I make Certificates of Completion for each attendee and as I present it, I share something about that individual; something that has touched me or helped the group.

After that ritual, we share a treat and drink I have provided. The group breaks into a casual gathering, hugs exchanged, goodbyes said. Members drift out when they are ready to leave. And... I wistfully watch them go, thinking to myself, "we teach our children how to walk, so they can walk away."

“One Boy’s Struggle is a very brave and moving memoir.”
~Katherine Ellison, Author: *Buzz*
Pulitzer Prize winner

For more information about
Bryan's books: [Click Here](#)

“The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of the depths. These persons have an appreciation, a sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness, and a deep loving concern. Beautiful people do not just happen.”

~Elisabeth Kübler-Ross

ONE BOY'S STRUGGLE: A MEMOIR

Surviving Life With Undiagnosed ADD

Bryan L. Hutchinson



*“If you are looking for a guide through your own or your child's
ADHD, you'll find it here. A delightful gem—not to be missed!”*

~Dr. Lara Honos-Webb

Share this Guide

This guide is **free**, share it via email, facebook or post it to your website or blog.

“ ***It is an amazing gift. I did not know this part of me was a gift until...*** ”

Quote from *One Boy's Struggle*.

Acknowledgments:

My son, Norm Mooney, who, in spite of being raised by an untreated ADD mom, grew up to become a compassionate and kind man.

I would like to pay tribute to Bryan Hutchinson who has given his encouragement, his time and support to my writing this eBook. Bryan's book *One Boy's Struggle*, has inspired me to renew my efforts to assist people to heal, to help people raise their ADHD children with compassion and understanding and to make an impact on the educational system that has, for so long, misunderstood their ADHD students. What he has given me (and those people whose lives intersect with mine) is far reaching... like a pebble dropped in a pond; recovery is spreading throughout the world.

Many thanks to Dev and Randi. They have been an inspiration and the backbone of the Adult ADHD Support Group in Ogden UT. Thank you for your part in spreading the message of recovery and healing to your piece of the world.

I want to honor Kate Kelly and Peggy Ramundo, whose book *You Mean I'm Not Lazy, Stupid or Crazy* began my personal healing. These women taught me so much, and are positive role models for me and for other ADDers. I am thankful I was able to study under them. It was a remarkable experience.

DISCLAIMER

The information and opinions expressed in this guide are from my experiences. They are not to be construed in any way as medical advice. Please seek the assistance of a health care professional for any health concerns you might have. Do not use this guide in any way to treat or diagnose ADHD.

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