Foreword

Welcome to a world where thoughts dance to a rhythm that changes faster than anyone might expect. A world of endless possibilities that can also become a challenge for many of the people who live in it, simply because their minds seem to run on a different operating system from the rest of the population.

Welcome to the world of ADHD.

These four letters may represent a challenge for many people, but hidden within them can also be a remarkable treasure: seemingly endless creativity, unconventional approaches, and ideas so fresh they could almost be compared to spring water. This book is a guide through this fascinating world for everyone who feels different from others and who may sometimes struggle to fit into a society largely shaped around neurotypical ways of thinking.

ADHD is often seen as an obstacle, a limitation, or a label that needs to be overcome. But the reality is that people with ADHD can possess abilities and strengths that are genuinely distinctive. A fast-moving mind that may appear chaotic at first can generate innovative ideas, connect things that seem completely unrelated, and discover solutions in places where others might never think to look.

This book is intended to help us understand and work with the different challenges we often encounter simply because we do not function in exactly the same way as the majority of the population – a population that can sometimes struggle to understand us, no matter how hard it may try.

This is not a book of instructions on how to adapt yourself to a world that can sometimes feel too slow, too rigid, or too grey. Instead, it is a motivational book about learning how to work with the gifts you already have. It is a celebration of diversity in thinking, creative energy, and the

ability to see the world from a different perspective. Rather than treating ADHD purely as an obstacle, I want to show that it can also become a unique source of strength.

Whether you live with ADHD yourself or know someone who has been diagnosed with it, this book may open up new perspectives and inspire you to embrace diversity and difference itself. Together, we will explore ways of turning challenges into opportunities and finding beauty within the seemingly chaotic arrangement of thoughts.

Prepare yourself for an adventure that may change the way you think about what it means to be different.

Let’s begin.

Introduction to ADHD from a neuroscience perspective

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, or ADHD, is a form of neurodevelopmental diversity – although the word *disorder* is still commonly used – that affects a person's ability to sustain attention, regulate impulsive behaviour, and control hyperactivity. From the perspective of **neuroscience**, ADHD involves a complex interaction between genetics, neurochemical processes, and structural or functional differences in the brain.

In healthcare, and particularly in mental healthcare such as psychology and psychiatry, ADHD is recognised as a diagnosis. Under the ICD-10 classification (*International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision*), it is listed under the code **F90.0** as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, predominantly inattentive type. In the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, known as DSM-5, it is simply referred to as **ADHD**.

The term ADHD itself describes a neurodevelopmental difference characterised by difficulties with sustained attention, increased activity, and impulsivity. Many people, however, do not realise how broad this actually is and still hold misconceptions about what ADHD really means. One of the most common stereotypes is the idea that ADHD is a condition affecting small boys who eventually grow out of it.

The reality is very different.

ADHD is not a "condition of little boys", and it is also common among women, whose ADHD can often manifest differently from the visibly physical hyperactivity that is most familiar to the general public. ADHD itself cannot simply be "cured" either. I personally do not particularly like the words *illness* or *disorder* in this context, because ADHD represents a different way in which the brain is wired, and that

difference does not necessarily have to be negative in every situation if a person learns how to work with it.

Undiagnosed or unrecognised ADHD, however, can become a serious difficulty – sometimes even something that feels like a curse – because people living with it may spend much of their lives feeling misunderstood.

My own experience, as well as the experiences of many of my friends, has been that recognising and understanding ADHD can feel like liberation from a world of misunderstanding. Many of us had previously been described as too intense, too much, or too difficult for others to handle. Long-term relationships, no matter whether romantic or friendship relationships, could be difficult to maintain simply because many people struggled to understand the way our minds work.

Over time, however, and through studying ADHD more deeply, many of us discovered something interesting: the people we often understand most naturally tend to come from a very similar world. In some cases, they may themselves have undiagnosed or unrecognised ADHD.

ADHD can therefore, in certain forms and circumstances, also become a gift to the people who live with it, as described in the fourth chapter of this book.

So why can people with ADHD seem so different?

There are several important aspects that help explain this.

1. Neurobiological Aspects of ADHD

ADHD is associated with differences in several key brain regions and neurotransmitter systems:

- **Prefrontal cortex:** This region is responsible for executive functions such as attention, planning, decision-making, and impulse control. In people with ADHD, activity in this area may differ from that observed in neurotypical individuals, and some

studies have also reported differences in its structure and volume. Differences in prefrontal functioning can contribute to difficulties with concentration, planning, and organisation.

- **Basal ganglia:** These structures play an important role in movement regulation, motivation, and reward processing. Research has found structural and functional differences in the basal ganglia of people with ADHD. These differences may influence impulse control, activity regulation, and the brain's response to reward. They may also partly help explain why some individuals with ADHD are more vulnerable to addictive behaviours, where highly stimulating rewards can strongly activate the brain's reward system.
- **Cingulate cortex**, particularly the **anterior cingulate cortex (ACC):** This area is involved in attention, decision-making, conflict monitoring, and emotional regulation. Differences in the structure or activity of the ACC have been observed in people with ADHD and may contribute to difficulties with sustained attention and impulse control.
- **Dopamine system:** ADHD is closely associated with differences in neurotransmitter regulation, particularly involving **dopamine** and **noradrenaline**. Dopamine plays a central role in motivation, reward, learning, and attention. Altered dopamine signalling in areas such as the prefrontal cortex and striatum may contribute to difficulties with attention, motivation, and impulse regulation.

2. Brain Imaging (CT/MRI) and ADHD

Brain-imaging techniques such as **MRI (magnetic resonance imaging)** and **fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging)** have revealed structural and functional differences associated with ADHD:

- **Differences in the volume of certain brain regions:** Studies have found that people with ADHD may, on average, show slightly different volumes in several brain structures, including

parts of the prefrontal cortex, basal ganglia, cerebellum, and corpus callosum. These differences may be related to attention and impulse regulation.

- **Different patterns of brain activity:** fMRI studies have shown that people with ADHD can display different activity patterns in the prefrontal cortex during tasks requiring sustained attention or impulse control. Other brain networks may also show increased or altered activity, which may contribute to the familiar experience of thoughts jumping rapidly from one subject to another.
- **Connectivity between brain regions:** ADHD is also associated with differences in communication between various parts of the brain. fMRI research suggests altered connectivity between networks involved in attention, executive control, and internally directed thought. This may influence the brain's ability to switch efficiently between focused attention and spontaneous thought processes.

3. Neurochemistry and ADHD

An important role is played by differences in the regulation of neurotransmitters, particularly:

- **Dopamine:** This neurotransmitter is essential for motivation, reward processing, learning, and attention. In people with ADHD, dopamine signalling may function differently, contributing to difficulties with motivation and sustained attention. ADHD medications such as stimulants – for example methylphenidate, widely known under brand names such as Ritalin – work in part by increasing the availability of dopamine and noradrenaline in the brain.
- **Noradrenaline / norepinephrine:** This neurotransmitter plays an important role in arousal, alertness, attention, and the ability to respond to relevant stimuli. Differences in its regulation may contribute to problems with attention and impulse control.

4. Structural Differences

- **Corpus callosum:** The corpus callosum is the major bundle of nerve fibres connecting the left and right hemispheres of the brain. Structural differences in this area have been reported in some ADHD studies and may influence communication between the hemispheres.
- **Cerebellum:** Research has also identified differences in the cerebellum in people with ADHD. Although the cerebellum is traditionally associated with movement and coordination, it also plays a role in timing, attention, learning, and aspects of executive functioning.

5. The Developmental Perspective

ADHD is a neurodevelopmental condition, meaning that it typically begins during childhood and often continues into adulthood.

Brain development in people with ADHD may follow a somewhat different developmental trajectory. Some studies have suggested delayed maturation in certain brain regions, particularly areas of the **prefrontal cortex** involved in planning, impulse control, and sustained attention.

This developmental difference may mean that some people with ADHD reach particular milestones related to self-regulation, impulse control, or organisation later than their neurotypical peers.

On the other hand, people with ADHD are sometimes capable of handling highly demanding tasks that others may find difficult, particularly when they enter a state commonly known as **hyperfocus**.

Hyperfocus can allow a person to become deeply absorbed in an activity that is interesting, stimulating, emotionally engaging, or meaningful to them.

At the same time, tasks that many neurotypical people consider simple or routine can become surprisingly difficult for someone with ADHD.

Routine activities often require sustained attention, organisation, and motivation without providing much immediate stimulation or reward – precisely the areas that can be challenging for the ADHD brain.

From the perspective of neuroscience, ADHD can therefore be understood as the result of complex interactions between genetics, brain development, structural and functional differences, and neurochemical processes.

Modern technologies such as MRI and fMRI are helping us understand these processes in increasingly greater detail.

6. ADHD from a Neuroscience Perspective (In Short)

That brings us to the end of this brief introduction to ADHD from the perspective of neuroscience.

However, just as in any form of therapy or personal development, perhaps the most important question is not only what is happening inside the brain, but how a person learns to work with it – and how they feel about themselves in the process.

A medical diagnosis can certainly help someone understand their own neurodiversity and finally make sense of experiences that may have confused them for years. At the same time, it would be a mistake to assume that understanding the diagnosis means that no further effort is necessary.

Life is always a journey.

And as the old saying goes, the journey itself is the destination.

Challenges and advantages of ADHD

The form of diversity described in the previous chapter, and the one this book is about – ADHD – brings with it both significant challenges and certain advantages. This neurodevelopmental condition affects a person's ability to concentrate, control impulses, and organise activities, but nothing is ever as black and white as it may first appear.

Let us take a slightly deeper look.

Challenges of ADHD

People with ADHD typically experience difficulties with concentration and sustaining attention. This often means that when something is perceived as uninteresting or boring, maintaining focus can become extremely difficult. This may lead to problems at school, at work, or in everyday activities.

Closely connected to this are difficulties with planning, time management, organisation, and completing tasks. This is one of the reasons why people with ADHD are so often described as chaotic.

People with ADHD may also act impulsively, sometimes without fully considering the consequences of their actions. This can lead to poorly considered, often emotionally driven decisions or to risk-taking behaviour. In some cases, this may also contribute to a greater vulnerability to substance use and other addictive behaviours.

Hyperactivity is another aspect commonly associated with ADHD, but it does not occur only in children. Adults can experience it as well.

The form of hyperactivity can vary considerably depending on the individual and the way their ADHD presents itself. Some people experience clearly visible physical hyperactivity, while others experience mainly mental hyperactivity: a constant flow of thoughts, ideas, associations, and internal activity.

A person may have so many thoughts at once that they struggle to stay with a single one, especially when their brain decides that the particular thought or task is no longer interesting enough. In adults, this is also often associated with inner restlessness and the feeling that the mind simply cannot calm down.

Because many neurotypical people have difficulty understanding us and may be quick to place us into categories such as “weird”, “strange”, or simply “different”, ADHD can also create difficulties in relationships and make meeting new people more complicated.

Even when relationships do develop, people with ADHD may sometimes struggle to maintain them – romantic relationships as well as friendships – because of impulsive behaviour, difficulty sustaining attention, or challenges in noticing and responding consistently to the needs of other people.

This can differ enormously from one person to another.

Some people may have significant difficulties focusing on others, particularly when ADHD occurs together with certain forms of autism spectrum differences – a combination sometimes referred to as **AuDHD**, from *Autism + ADHD*.

Other people experience almost the opposite problem: they place the needs of everyone else before their own and gradually forget about themselves.

Forgetting oneself and one’s own needs is often closely connected with another challenge – low self-esteem.

People with ADHD may develop low self-esteem partly because they have spent years being described as “the strange one”, “the difficult one”, “too much”, or simply someone who does not quite fit in. When a person repeatedly receives the message that the way they naturally function is somehow wrong, becoming comfortable with themselves can be very difficult.

As already mentioned, however, ADHD does not consist only of challenges.

It can also bring certain advantages.

So let us now look at the other side.

Advantages of ADHD

One of the first things worth mentioning is **creativity and originality**.

People with ADHD are often highly creative and may approach problems in unusual ways. They can come up with ideas and solutions that others find surprising, original, or innovative.

They frequently search for ways to make life easier – both for themselves and for other people – and often question established methods simply because they see another possibility.

It is tempting to look back at inventors, innovators, artists, and unconventional thinkers from history and recognise traits that today might be associated with ADHD. Of course, diagnosing historical figures retrospectively would be speculative, but it is easy to see why certain qualities commonly associated with ADHD – curiosity, unconventional thinking, experimentation, and the willingness to challenge established rules – can be valuable in innovation.

People with ADHD can also be very quick to respond to new situations, partly because of impulsivity and a flexible way of thinking.

They may be highly adaptable and capable of reacting rapidly when circumstances suddenly change or something unexpected happens.

Naturally, this does not apply equally to every person with ADHD. Every ADHD mind is different.

There are no two identical people with ADHD, just as there are no two completely identical people anywhere in the world.

People with ADHD are also often energetic and full of enthusiasm.

They may become incredibly active when working on projects they find exciting and may have a wide range of interests in subjects they consider enjoyable, stimulating, or meaningful.

The opposite side of this can be equally strong.

When something does not make sense to them, does not feel meaningful, or simply does not engage their brain, moving forward can become extraordinarily difficult – sometimes no matter how much they consciously want to do it.

Many people with ADHD also experience a phenomenon commonly referred to as **hyperfocus**.

Although ADHD is associated with difficulties regulating attention, people with ADHD can sometimes enter a state in which they become deeply absorbed in something that genuinely interests or stimulates them.

During hyperfocus, they may become extremely productive and work with an intensity that surprises even themselves.

This may also be connected with another interesting characteristic. Even though people with ADHD can spend a great deal of time worrying about the possible outcome of something, when they become strongly convinced that a particular idea or project matters, they may also show remarkable courage in taking risks.

They may simply decide that the possibility is worth it.

This can be particularly useful in creative work or entrepreneurship – two areas where taking risks is almost unavoidable.

This book itself is a good example.

At the time I am writing these words, I have no idea whether this book will be received positively or whether publishing it will ultimately become nothing more than an expensive experiment.

I cannot see into the future.

Of course, it would be wonderful to travel there with Dr Emmett Brown, played by Christopher Lloyd, and Marty McFly, played by Michael J. Fox, in the 1985 film *Back to the Future*.

Unfortunately, we do not have that kind of access to what lies ahead.

“So why are you writing this book, then?” you may be asking.

The answer is simple.

Because I believe.

I believe that this book will not be a waste of money or time.

I believe that it can be useful to the people it is meant to reach.

And I believe that it can help people understand what ADHD actually is and how they can work with it – whether they have ADHD themselves or whether someone in their family lives with it.

The aim is to improve people’s quality of life, help destigmatise ADHD, and show that ADHD is not simply a “purely negative psychiatric disorder”.

It is also a different way of experiencing and interpreting the world, and some of the traits associated with it may, in the right environment and circumstances, become valuable strengths.

Another potential advantage of ADHD is the ability to **think outside established frameworks**.

People with ADHD often approach problems in unusual ways and may notice connections that others overlook.

This can be extremely valuable in creative fields such as design, art, writing, technology, entrepreneurship, or the development of new ideas and solutions.

ADHD can therefore be understood as a mixed picture of challenges and advantages.

The key to making the most of it is understanding how the individual aspects of ADHD appear in a particular person, recognising which situations create difficulties and which allow their strengths to emerge, and then using the available tools and strategies to reduce the challenges while developing the abilities that may otherwise remain hidden.