



ADHD According to Zoë: The Real Deal on Relationships, Finding Your Focus, and Finding Your Keys

Zoe Kessler

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Like many women with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), journalist and popular blogger Zoë Kessler was diagnosed late in life—well into adulthood, in fact. But instead of seeing this label as a burden to bear, Kessler decided to use it to gain a better understanding of herself, and to connect with others through her writing.

In this unique and engaging memoir, Kessler shares her own stories of living with ADHD in a way that is relatable, but never predictable. Inside, she describes how her impulsive behavior has affected her love life; how being disorganized once stood in the way of landing a job; and how inattentiveness has caused certain challenges in her relationships. Kessler also offers key coping skills based on her experience; skills that you can use to focus your energy, become more organized, and boost your self-esteem while tapping into creativity and humor.

Kessler's story illustrates how being diagnosed with ADHD late into adulthood can be bewildering, but it also shows what a great opportunity it can be to take stock of your life and make real, lasting changes. Whether you share her diagnosis of ADHD, or just like a good story, *ADHD According to Zoë* will inspire you and encourage you to embrace your quirks.

For more information about Kessler and her work, please visit www.zoekessler.com

ADHD According to Zoë: The Real Deal on Relationships, Finding Your Focus, and Finding Your Keys Details

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Courtney Bowling says

This is a great book if you have ADHD. It's short and packs a punch; I finished it in a day and a half. It's more up-to-date than "You Mean I'm Not Lazy, Crazy, or Stupid?!". I found Zoe's voice to be very refreshing and relatable, and thoroughly enjoyed her personal anecdotes.

Lisa Creane says

I know it's not supposed to be depressing to face facts. It's supposed to be uplifting, a moment of pride, the bliss of an aha moment.

But reading this book put me in a funk because Zoe describes her experience of being diagnosed with ADHD at age 47 with painfully accurate detail, and anyone who struggles with similar problems will be both shocked and horrified that this too is their life.

I don't have ADHD per se, but I've come to believe that my multiple concussions mirror it nicely, and I'm on the meds that make both conditions better in most cases. Zoe says "Take Your Meds." I read this on a day I'd fled the house after a meltdown over not being able to handle the chaos of my house. After...forgetting something or other.

Oh yeah. My meds.

The squirmy truth that the chaos of my house was due to in part to...umm...my not taking my meds was unwelcome, as were most of the other points she made about money mistakes, social faux pas, procrastination, talking too much without being part of a conversation, and hyperfocus where everything else is blocked out.

Damn.

So yes, read the book. Don't skip pages you don't want to deal with (like I did. I made myself to go back anyway). Zoe is forgiving of herself, and so should we all be. We aren't to blame for these problems.

Unless we ignore them. Sigh. Thanks a lot for the reminder.

Douglas Cootey says

I plan on writing a longer review for my blog, but I wanted to leave some notes here for those who come across this book and wondered what it's about. In this book you will find a very raw, personal story about a woman and her struggles with ADHD. She tempers this avalanche of humorous anecdotes with well

researched studies, books, and therapies. I have read reviews that claim that this book is embarrassing, but this approach is key to Zoe's narrative style. She begins with an excruciatingly embarrassing story, then follows it with what she learned and how she copes with that aspect of ADHD now. The lesson learned is meaningless without the horrible gaffe that preceded it. Having untreated ADHD means being publicly embarrassed over and over again.

My copy of this book is littered with notes from ideas that I want to blog about to insights I found inspirational & brilliant. There were many times that I caught myself thinking, "Yes! This is exactly how it is for me," and other times I would think, "Why didn't I think of that?"

Although the book can be read as a story from beginning to end, it can also be used as a resource. Feel free to skip around to the parts that interest you most. This book is definitely finding a permanent place on my shelf next to the other ADHD classics that I have relied on over the years.

Deborah Moore says

Zoe is officially my hero! ADHD According to Zoe, is an exceptional book. It resonated deeply with me. I can't thank her enough for writing it. The book is full of humorous, painful and lovely personal stories. Her book resonates with me on so many levels. While I am working on figuring out medications, meditation and the other myriad of things to be my best self, it helps to know that I shouldn't expect myself to have "it" together yet. It helps me to remember to embrace the small victories and not beat myself up about the mistakes.

There are passages in it which help keep me going. Instead of feeling broken I work on reminding myself of all the wonderful things that I can do because of ADHD. Thank you for helping me embrace my enthusiastic and creative nature. You are inspirational.

Meg says

Good information, especially if you're an adult woman recently diagnosed and haven't done a lot of research. However, I find it most helpful in regards to the personal anecdotes.

Amity says

I thought some of the tips and suggestions were useful and I appreciated hearing the experiences of another woman who was diagnosed with ADHD later in life. That said, I would have liked to see more data and a greater reliance on academic literature, particularly when discussing the various non-medical treatments Kessler touches on throughout the book. It is understandable to want to find solutions that are easy and immediately actionable, but I worry as to the consequences of relying on pseudo-scientific studies and personal accounts or anecdotes as the basis for understanding and treating ADHD.

Annette Whelan says

This is a great self help book for anyone with ADHD, especially women. It's cute, funny and informative. It's written also so a distracted mind will not wander.

Hannah Gautreau says

Extremely comprehensive and relatable. I see a ton of my experiences in this book and it is really helping me get answers and get my life on track

Kay Marner says

Women with ADHD will benefit in heart, mind, and soul from Zoë Kessler's new book ADHD According to Zoë. Kessler, a freelance writer and author of Adoption Reunions, was diagnosed with ADHD as an adult. In this book, she shares her personal story of learning (often the hard way) how to thrive despite having ADHD.

Each of the book's 17 chapters chronicles an ADHD-related way of being, such as "Being Diagnosed," "Being Impulsive," and "Being Unconventional," and each chapter consists of three sections. First, Kessler gives a personal, sometimes funny, sometimes heartbreaking account of her own experiences with that particular ADHD trait. Next comes The Scoop, a synopsis of what she's learned about living with that challenge. The third section is titled Try This, her practical advice on dealing with the problem. For example, in "Being Fired: Worst Executive Secretary of the Month Award," Kessler describes taking, and losing, a job that she was ill-fitted for. In that chapter's Scoop," she explores the self-discovery that occurred as she moved from job to job, until finding her niche as a freelance writer. In Try This, she gives tips to help you find your niche.

Kessler's work is refreshingly honest and intimate. Women with ADHD will close this book feeling understood, connected, and, best of all, respected.

Reviewed by KAY MARNER, a frequent contributor to ADDitude magazine, and co-editor of Easy to Love But Hard to Raise: Real Parents, Challenging Kids, True Stories

Nina Harrington says

ADHD by Zoe Kessler

The Real Deal on Relationships, Finding your Focus and Finding your Keys

Attention Deficit Disorder is neither a curse nor a blessing. But diagnosis provides a sense of relief and can release you from the self-blame that accompanies academic or social difficulties, low self-esteem and self-doubt. You are not stupid- you have a recognised brain chemistry condition.

What appears as out of seat behaviour, daydreaming and careless mistakes in childhood may in adulthood become inner restlessness, failure to plan ahead, incomplete projects and forgetfulness. Feelings of failure and inability to accomplish their goals led to more anxiety and depression.

Women blame themselves for not knowing why to do or how to act and were less likely to use effective problem solving strategies.

1. Being Diagnosed: President of the Club

As I learned about ADHD and recognised myself in the descriptions, I felt as though some cruel joke had been played on me and everyone was laughing at my expense. I felt devastated. After a lifetime of struggles, now I had a mental illness too? It was too much. Yet it also offered a new view on experiences from my past. Not a curse. I have always revelled in my creativity, compassion for others, my sense of solidarity with those who struggle to overcome adversity, and my vitality and passion for life.

Behaviour. Monday 11am. Spun in the middle of the bedroom wondering what to wear, then going from room to room, spinning in circles of thoughts of the tasks to be completed. No idea where to start and unable to prioritise. Late afternoon I panicked - could not even find my list of things to do. Night before woke at 3am sweating and anxious about unpaid bills and unfinished projects which was a common pattern. I was sinking fast and did not know how to come up with next months' rent. I was a mess.

I had turned 47 and my goals and dreams were eluding me.

Diagnosed with Attention Deficit disorder - I bawled my eyes out. My self-image was blown apart. I was not certifiably crazy.

And scared. My fear of rejection after my diagnosis was triggered by my experience as an adoptee and by negative stereotypes of people with mental health disorders. I was very wary of labels. As a kid I had been taunted with ' You were adopted' and now

I had another label - ADHD. I had to see my life through a new lens.

friends thought that I knew!

Stigma of ignorance/stereotypes and stigma. Public think that means she is an idiot. ADHD is not a measurement of intelligence.

2. Being Hyperactive: On the go and gabby

3. Being Addicted: Natural born Cougar.

I lived in terror of choosing the wrong life partner. It was a decision I did not feel qualified to make and I often found myself thinking, What if there is someone better around the next corner? How could I settle for just one person, one kind of relationship, when there is so much more to discover? How could you possibly sleep with the same person for the next 50 yrs? All I could imagine was a life of boredom and dreary lacklustre routine. I was a connoisseur of discontent. My romances always ended as soon as we had settled into a comfortable pattern and I had discovered all that there was to know about one another - or so I thought.

Invariably I would come up with some reason why the relationship was not working for me and feel horrible about once again ripping someone heart's out after telling him that I loved him. If a boyfriend was fascinating and intellectual, he wasn't into organic food. If he was too soft - he was not manly enough. If he was a painter living on a shoestring and a hopeless romantic, I feared a life of poverty. I was instantly attracted to and fascinated by countless men. And almost as quickly, found myself searching for an escape route and something new.

Being Inattentive: Lunch Date? What lunch date? Inattention. A Hallmark of ADHD. One of the main traits of the disorder. It is less about not paying attention and more about being unable to SUSTAIN our attention. We are distractible. Our attention is easily diverted from our intended focus to other things which are more interesting, more exciting and SHINIER.

Stress, anxiety, lack of sleep, and many other factors can make it even more difficult to pay attention.

Inattention also leads us to bang out legs onto desk corners, bump into doorjams and appear clumsier than other people. And wear mismatched socks.

We are easily bored and our clever quick intelligent minds look for something to alleviate the boredom. Such as comfort eating. Perhaps you should drive down to the supermarket - only you have forgotten where you put your car keys.

Tricks to get over this?

- *Plan your eating so that you have the healthier snacks and drinks to hand to guzzle at your desk.*Do important things when you are most alert. Know what time of day works best for you. Knowledge is power and it helps you plan and prioritise.

- *display your to do list in a prominent place - or your attention will default to the need to water the plants, the lovely view, the interesting email with lots of links to writing pals, Facebook...

- *use a paper day planner - not an electronic device. You have to write in the appointments and task for that day - focus on top 2 or 3 priorities

- * don't be shy to ask someone to repeat something. *recognise that distraction can sabotage your efforts.

- *use a complete change of activity or location to refresh yourself so you can focus when you return

- *use self-talk to help you get back on track. 'Is this what you were going to do?'

- *psych yourself up for productivity. Use sensory signals to tell your brain that it is time to work now to the exclusion of everything else. A candle. A cartoon. An online game. A musical piece. Some ritual or routine that helps you mentally transition into the work but it has to be time limited.

- *An uncluttered desk symbolises an uncluttered mind and keeps distractions down. Just try not to glance down at the temporary pile on your floor.

- * If you are editing - you might use a different room from the one you write in. All part of the pre-work ritual.

3. Being Hyper Focused: The Party. You are single mindedly focused on one thing -to the exclusion of everything else.

4. Being Fired: Worst Executive Secretary of the Month Award. Discover your passion and live it through your work. Writing might NOT be it. And you have to be honest about that. Identify your values, strengths and passions. Are you spending your time trying to meet the expectations of others and living according to their values? If you have lived with judgement and criticism of your perceived failings and deficits you need to work on restoring your self-confidence.

5. Being Socially Challenged: Flunking out at the Four Seasons.

6. Being Hormonal: Day Fourteen

7. Being Time Management Challenged: Not Dressed Up with Somewhere to Go. *use a kitchen timer and

break your tasks into half hour sessions.* curb perfectionism - [the hardest thing of all for me-] * create a daily structure and stick to it. Too many late nights trying to play catch up to meet deadline followed by over sleeping the next morning does not work.

8. Being Impulsive: When ADHD runs the show.

9. Being Disorganised: Of Mountains and Molehills. Clutter adds to the confusion and fuels anxiety and chaos.

10. Being Overwhelmed: Catching the Sneaky Saboteur. Overwhelmed. *Stop saying yes to everything.*eat, pray if you are religious, sleep, *walk. *get out in nature.

11. Being Financially Challenged: A million roads to ruin. Procrastination is the kiss of death if you work for yourself. But you have to know the root causes of the problem.

12. Being Unconventional: Air Guitar and Garden Gnomes.

13. Being Creative: The ADHD way. Creativity is born from a highly inquisitive mind that sees connections where others might not. Our distractibility can act LIKE A NET IN THE SEA, LETTING US HAUL UP A RANDOM CATCH OF IDEAS, THOUGHTS, IMPRESSIONS, VISUAL INFLUENCES, SOUNDS and more - which we then cook up into a new and exciting stew that only our minds can create- unique, powerful and personal. Sometime you have to trust your creative impulses.

14. Being Highly Sensitive: Honk if you Hate Loud Noises. ADHD has long been associated with increased physical and emotional sensitivity or hypersensitivity which can make normal daily activities very distracting. *wear comfy clothes *use earplugs to help you manage painfully loud volumes such as in very noisy traffic with loud horns, crowds or at the movies.

15. Being Experimental: Treatments to Try. To centre yourself. *meditate, chant or do yoga. *be around horses or other animals, *find an outlet for your artistic expression - dance, music, singing, and sewing - Playful and fun.

Zoe had created a fascinating personal account of her life with Attention Deficit Disorder and how she has struggled to find happiness in a very chaotic and out of control life.

What worked for me was the very practical tips and advice she has to give on how you can fight back and get some control and structure into your life.

What worked less well for me was the heavy emphasis on the use of medication. There are levels of ADD and for the very serious cases medication such as Ritalin has a place – but most creative people have symptoms which are lower down on the spectrum or only slip into this condition in times of great stress and anxiety, so this is definitely not a one size fits all condition.

Highly recommended for all creatives.

Note:I received a copy of this book from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

Joshua says

I get it. She is an eccentric individual; she conveys the information in an entertaining/sad/uplifting, etc. way;

there's not many (any really, besides Hyper?) books chronicling what it is like to have ADHD.

But when we get down to what the book is about and the content contained therein, do we really have a 5 star book?? First off, the title and information describing the contents of the book don't exactly correspond with the focus group Zoë regularly refers to in the book. Whereas the outside of the book leaves you with the impression she will speak to all (adults) with ADHD, the inside reading regularly confines the message to "woman with ADHD."

Am I being too harsh with my review? I will give her credit for the inclusion of many worthwhile professional resources to refer to for further information. Especially since when it comes to finding out the real deal on relationships, etc., most of what I learned was superficial, over-arching statements such as "seek out friends to help you." Thanks Zoë! And did I really need to learn that going home with someone after two minutes of talking was a bad idea? A two year knows not to talk with strangers. Thanks Zoë, but I think I got that one handled.

Ok, so I've been a bit critical here. But probably because most reviews seem to give her an easy pass, maybe even a TSA quick pass. Come on folk, let her luggage at least go through the sensors.

In the end, I laughed, I cried (more like...cringed as I kept thinking, "Oh, no, Zoë, please don't do what I think you are going to do...dang it! You did what I thought you were going to do), I was reminded of many of the things I go through, I was entertained (not by her foolish mistakes. I felt sorry for the harsh reality of what her poor choices brought upon her).

I certainly give Zoë credit for keeping going and having the courage to to struggle for victory and find pieces of it along the way. Her life is definitely of testimony of one who seems to have received the brunt of much of what life has to unfortunately offer but still find the desire, will, and strength to rise to the occasion to break down shaky foundations and build more ones more stable and lasting. Props to you, Zoë. I raise my glass (but just one because as you have shared, drinking alcohol is a deadly combination for those many of us with ADHD) to you. LONG LIVE ZOË!!

Sharon Smith says

Much like the author, I was recently diagnosed with ADHD in my 40's. And, much like Zoë, I've been spending a lot of time learning more about what this means -- & even more time saying, "Oh! So *that's* why I do that!" Also, "How did we not figure this out sooner?" Of course, a good part of that is the fact that when I was a kid, everyone assumed girls didn't have ADHD just in general & the only kids who did have it were the boys running laps around the classroom. Those of us staring out the window all through math class just needed to pay more attention & really apply ourselves. Now we're recognized as ADHD- Inattentive Type. Our hyperactivity is all in our heads instead of our feet.

Reading this book is like finding a friend who's just been diagnosed, too, & knows what's going on with you -- including all the embarrassing shit you hoped no one noticed. It's a relief to know that you're not alone in the world, that other people *get* *it*. And they're doing OK so you can be OK, too.

I'd give this 5 stars if it weren't for a specific issue I have with the book. Kessler made repeatedly talked about meditation as tool to find focus. As it happens, I've been involved in various alternative religions for over 20 years. Specifically, Neo-Paganism. I started off with Wicca & then found Druidry back in the late

90s. Meditation is a Big Thing with Pagans. Thus, I am already well aware that I am incapable of doing any kind of sitting-down-&-quieting-my-brain thing because my brain tends to wander off on its own, usually to several places at once. I've tried the whole be-still-and-know, sit-on-this-pillow-and-clear-your-head-of-conscious-thought literally for *years*. Towards the end of the book, Kessler actually describes her specific meditation practice. It's what's called an "active" meditation - a meditation where you're doing something rather than just sitting like you do in traditional meditation. It's a *much* more do-able style of meditation for us wandering brain types. For me, I need total sensory overload. I can't sit on a pillow listening to a pan flute but I can totally trance out at club on the dance floor.

All of which is to say that I think she should have explained her meditation practice sooner. I suspect I'm not the only hyper-brain who read that & said, "Wait. You want me to do *what*?"

But I'll totally give her props for "time-blind", which she describes as like being colorblind, but with time. Time passes? The hell you say!

A.K. Klemm says

I don't know if I have ADHD. I'm sure my husband would love to understand why the floors and walls are thoroughly disinfected and free of visible particles, but the laundry is never properly folded and God only knows where I dropped the mail. But I do know that I identify greatly with Kessler's memoir and I think it is a worthwhile read for anyone – not just those seeking information about ADHD. It is good for the general population to understand that what is done automatically for some takes a lot of work and practice for others.

Kessler seems to walk the road of diagnosis-blame and self-awareness with finesse, owning up to feelings she has hurt while making sure she pursues endeavors that will work with her ADHD, rather than against it. I like her writing style and look forward to picking up a copy of her first book: "Adoption Reunions."

Read my full review here: <http://anakalianwhims.wordpress.com/2...>

Sarah says

If you don't have (or treat) ADHD, you may not find this book as enlightening and helpful as I did. Fortunately (?), I've both been diagnosed and diagnose others, so Kessler's insights were of particular interest to me.

While this book is light and airy and generally non-academic, Kessler's message packs a punch in terms of highlighting an important issue in relation to women's health: ADHD (and lots of other physical and mental diagnoses) can look totally different in women than in men! Where boys are often diagnosed early based on stereotypical bounciness and general mayhem-making, girls' more daydreamy restlessness often goes undetected and undiagnosed for long periods of time resulting in much bigger problems (chronic forgetfulness, poor planning, inattentiveness, severe anxiety, addiction, difficulty maintaining work, poor self-esteem, etc.) in adulthood.

I also liked Kessler's promotion of interdisciplinary treatment methods. She gives an appropriate nod to medications, but also recognizes that pharmaceuticals may not be an answer for everyone, and may only be

part of the answer for most. A good treatment plan will likely involve a number of interventions spanning the whole meditation-to-medication spectrum.

Overall a quick, easy, and informative read.

Leni says

A MUST read for any female diagnosed with ADD/ADHD (recently or not.)
