

New Tools for Improving the Lives of Adults with ADHD

by Mark Katz, PhD

IN HIS RECENTLY PUBLISHED BOOK, *Taking Charge of Adult ADHD* (Guilford, 2010), Russell A. Barkley, PhD, translates decades of ADHD research into a practical hands-on program to help adults with ADHD improve their quality of life in virtually all major life activities. Innumerable easy-to-follow strategies show readers how to improve close personal relationships, increase productivity and performance at work and in school, effectively manage money, maintain and enhance physical and psychological well being, and act more safely in challenging situations. These are just some of the areas covered in this comprehensive volume.

In addressing this broad range of activities, Barkley draws readers to two important points. First, ADHD is not merely a problem in paying attention. Rather, it is a disorder that can potentially impact people in virtually all areas of their lives.

And second, ADHD is treatable. Thanks to advances in our understanding of ADHD, people struggling with the condition can learn to manage it and dramatically improve the quality of their lives.

Regarding these advances, attendees at

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CHADD's conference in Atlanta will have the unique opportunity to hear directly from Barkley about his new book and his three new rating scales: the Deficits in Executive Functioning Scale (DEFS), the Major Life Activities Scale (MLAS) and the Adult ADHD Rating Scale-IV.

The new rating scales

The DEFS assesses five major dimensions of executive functioning in daily life: self-management relative to time, self-organization and problem-solving, self-discipline (inhibition), self-motivation, and self-regulation of emotions. In the book, Barkley covers all five in detail, providing a self-assessment tool for readers and tips for improving in any or all five. A short form of the DEFS is available for rapid screening of risk for potential EF deficits in these five areas. The long form also contains an adult ADHD Risk Index.

Compared to psychometric tests of executive functioning, says Barkley, executive function rating scales are far more sensitive to real-world difficulties that challenge patients. His research shows that a large majority of people with executive function deficits actually perform fine when tested on measures of executive functioning, yet nonetheless continue to struggle in areas that call upon executive functions in real life. The DEFS will help adults with ADHD and their loved ones gain a better picture of the role of executive function weaknesses in their real-world day-to-day challenges. This in turn will help insure that treatment plans are targeted to address these real world issues and help improve all aspects of functioning.

The Major Life Activities Scale provides another critical new scale for assessing ar-



eas of impairment that critically impact the life trajectories of many of those with ADHD. Until now, clinicians have lacked tools to evaluate functional impairments in major life activities. The MLAS helps fill this void by providing clinicians with a scale that assesses twenty different domains of adult life. The scale also draws attention to a major point Barkley makes, one supported by his decades of research. ADHD is not simply a problem in paying attention or losing your keys or dozing off during a boring lecture. It's also about the ultimate results of these functional difficulties—your spouse asks for a divorce or your boss hands you a pink slip or you run a red light and end up in the hospital. ADHD presents itself in different degrees, and for some, according to Barkley, its effects are devastating. The MLAS helps to insure the often unspoken consequences of ADHD are effectively addressed and effectively treated.

The Adult ADHD Rating Scale–IV provides clinicians with a tool to assess current symptoms of adult ADHD and recollections of childhood ADHD symptoms. It also provides a way to assess domains of impairment essential to making a diagnosis of ADHD using DSM-IV criteria. Unique to this scale are specific items designed to identify the newly recognized subset of Inattentive-Only adults who may have Sluggish Cognitive Tempo (SCT). Barkley believes SCT may represent a distinct subtype of attention from that typically seen in the more common ADHD Combined-Type or even a separate attention disorder.

Norms established for these items will assist clinicians and researchers in identifying these individuals and studying them more thoroughly for information on what

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Eight Everyday Rules for Managing Adult ADHD

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| <p>Rule 1 Stop the Action! Buy some time before you respond.</p> <p>Rule 2 See the Past... and Then the Future See what's coming.</p> <p>Rule 3 Say the Past... and Then the Future Analyze before deciding; develop rules for the future.</p> <p>Rule 4 Externalize Key Information Rely on something besides your memory.</p> | <p>Rule 5 Feel the Future Stay motivated.</p> <p>Rule 6 Break It Down... and Make It Matter Bring the future a lot closer.</p> <p>Rule 7 Make Problems External, Physical, and Manual Simplify problem solving.</p> <p>Rule 8 Have a Sense of Humor! Accept your imperfections and get on with your life.</p> |
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From *Taking Charge of Adult ADHD* by Russell A. Barkley, PhD, with Christine M. Benton (New York: Guilford, 2010). Reprinted with permission of Guilford Press.

sets those with SCT apart from typical ADHD. Forms are also available for collecting the reports from family members and others close to the patient to assist in corroborating self reports. A short quick-screen version of the scale is also available to rapidly identify potential risk for the diagnosis in just moments. Also provided is an Adult ADHD Fact Sheet for patients.

Norms for all three scales were drawn from a large sample (more than 1,200) of adults from seventeen to eighty-nine years of age who are representative of the U.S. adult population. Purchasers of user manuals will be granted a limited license by the publisher to photocopy the scales and scoring sheets,

eliminating the inconvenience of having to reorder scale forms. Manuals for each scale contain substantial evidence supporting the reliability and validity of their scores.

All the scales are expected to be available in the late fall from the publisher (guilford.com). Go to guilford.com/barkleyalert to receive e-alerts about the pending publication and other information. Readers wishing to learn about these and other advances in helping adults with ADHD are encouraged to attend CHADD's conference in November. Barkley will be delivering both the opening keynote presentation as well as a breakout session. **A**