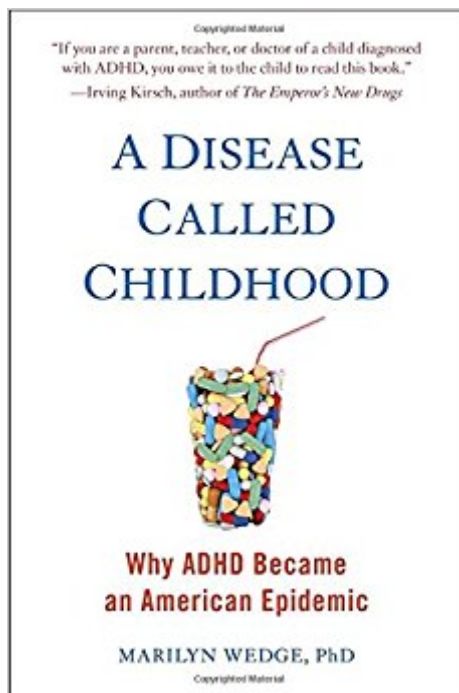




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# A Disease Called Childhood: Why ADHD Became An American Epidemic



## Synopsis

A family therapist offers a surprising new look at the rise of ADHD in America, arguing for a better paradigm for diagnosing and treating our children. Since 1987, the number of American children diagnosed with ADHD has jumped from 3 to 11 percent. Meanwhile, ADHD rates remain relatively low in other countries such as France, Finland, the UK, and Japan, where the number of children diagnosed with and medicated for ADHD is 1 percent or less. Alarmed by this trend, family therapist Marilyn Wedge set out to understand how ADHD became an American epidemic—and to find out whether there are alternative treatments to powerful prescription drugs. In *A Disease Called Childhood*, Wedge examines the factors that have created a generation addicted to stimulant drugs. Instead of focusing only on treating symptoms, she looks at the various potential causes of hyperactivity and inattention in children, and behavioral and environmental—as opposed to strictly biological—treatments that have been proven to help. In the process, Wedge offers a new paradigm for child mental health—and a better, happier, and less medicated future for American children.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“This reflective, carefully researched and well-written book exposes the cultural wounding of our children by Big Pharma and ill-advised adults. Wedge's book is a much needed call to action for advocates of children everywhere.”  
—Mary Pipher, bestselling author of *Reviving Ophelia* and *The Green Boat*  
“One of the most important and persuasive books I've

read in years. If you are a parent, teacher, or doctor of a child diagnosed with ADHD, you owe it to the child to read this book."

•Irving Kirsch, author of *The Emperor's New Drugs: Exploding the Antidepressant Myth* "In this ocmpelling book, Marilyn Wedge provides readers with an in-depth understanding of the rise of ADHD, a skillful deconstruction of the science used to promote the selling of stimulants for the disorder, and--most important of all--a guide for thinking of alternative approaches to helping our children. This is an antidote to the common wisdom about ADHD that our society needs to know."

•Robert Whitaker, author of *Anatomy of an Epidemic: Magic Bullets, Psychiatric Drugs, and the Astonishing Rise of Mental Illness in America* "A Disease Called Childhood is strongly recommended for parents who wish to understand the ADHD diagnosis and learn specific techniques that may be helpful for their children."

•Stuart Kaplan, M. D., Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Penn State College of Medicine and author of *Your Child Does not Have Bipolar Disorder* "A Disease Called Childhood is a very readable analysis of the hoax that American psychiatry and Big Pharma have perpetrated for the past 40 years to redefine children's normal behaviors as some form of brain disease. Marilyn Wedge has written a proper antidote to this unnecessary medicalization, by encouraging us to re-examine the quality of the family, school, and social environments that we provide for our children."

•Stuart A. Kirk, Distinguished Professor Emeritus, Luskin School of Public Affairs, UCLA, author of *The Selling of DSM, Making Us Crazy, and Mad Science* "[Wedge's] affable approach and compassionate universal concern for the wellness of children are evident throughout. In an important read for open-minded parents, Wedge offers fresh perspectives and practical approaches to the continuing ADHD conundrum."

•Kirkus Reviews "It's one of those parenting books that I just wanted to jump on the roof and shout about because it's really that good. It's not just for parents who are at the end of the road with schools wanting a psychiatric diagnosis for the behaviour of their children, it's also a roadmap on how to not end up there in the future."

•Blogger

Marilyn Wedge is a practicing family therapist with a Ph.D. in social psychology from the University of Chicago, where she received a grant from the prestigious Danforth Foundation. She was a postdoctoral fellow in ethics at the Hastings Center, a nonprofit institution dedicated to bioethics. Wedge is the author of *Suffer the Children: The Case Against Labeling and Medicating* and an Effective Alternative, which was published in paperback with the title *Pills Are Not for Preschoolers: A Drug-Free Approach for Troubled Kids*.

Well informed author knows what she is talking about because it's been her job for thirty years. Well written , easy to follow with excellent, real life examples. Most parents should read this. If you have a child diagnosed with ADHD- read this book. It's worth it.

Very Informative.

Everyone should read.

Well researched. Ground-breaking information on the psychiatric/psychology professions and the influence on them by the large pharmaceutical corporations.

This book makes a compelling case for addressing the problems of childhood from a psychosocial perspective taking into account issues of parenting, adverse childhood experiences, stress, etc. and their impact in children's emotional health. It also shows how easily influenced we are by the persuasive lobby of the medical and pharma industry in categorizing as purely biological a condition (ADHD) that until recently was viewed arising from simply misbehavior, emotional dysfunctions or skill deficits in kids growing up. It is scary to see so many young kids are taking medications for conditions that can be addressed by engaging in therapy in which they can actually learn the necessary coping skills for life. I see this book as an important reference to educators and parents to situate them in the current controversy between social and biological models of behavior.

This is how I've always felt about the disorder era.. being neck deep in it. Making my struggles about the mind made them worse instead of better.. I knew the diagnosis wasn't helping me or my friends.. took me years to find an alternative and understand the power of the heart.

Many of the negative reviewers are disagreeing with Dr. Wedge's statements in the book, but are not even discussing the facts she presents. Her discussion of American psychiatry's move from a psychoanalytic model of diagnosis and treatment to a biological model was enlightening. I am a pediatric occupational therapist and have worked with children diagnosed with ADHD for 15 years. I strongly believe that the environment in most American schools requires behavioral expectations for children that are developmentally inappropriate. (For example, children in preschool being expected to sit for 30 minutes for a circle time in class, or being expected to write their name before kindergarten, or kindergarteners being expected to write sentences...NONE of this is

age-appropriate.) Wedge's book should be read for the information it gives into the history of why ADHD is being over-diagnosed at such alarming rates. We need to consider our cultural biases in America and truly look at making environmental changes for children that need them, rather than labeling them at such young ages. Another thing we need to be willing to do as parents is to examine our own interactions with our children and consider how they may be contributing to a child's challenges; the trouble is that- for many reasons- there will always be parents who can't or won't do this. In some cases, medication may be appropriate for treating ADHD, in my opinion-- BUT I still give this book 5 stars for the thought-provoking nature of its contents, especially regarding this historical shift of psychiatry in America from a psychosocial to a biological/medical approach that has resulted in massive increases in the number of children diagnosed with ADHD.

Dr. Wedge tells in depth the story of how ADHD has become an epidemic in the US as a result of the close relationship between psychiatry and drug companies. She goes on to show parents (and teachers and doctors) useful alternatives to dangerous psychiatric medications. As a grandfather of three active boys, I found this book eye-opening and helpful in dealing with their sometimes rambunctious behaviors.

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