



## Making My Own World: Raising a Child With ADHD

by [Sheila Buchanan](#)

### Making My Own World

What is the most difficult part of raising a child with ADHD? Believe it or not, it is the same as the most difficult part of raising a non-ADHD child with extraordinarily high intelligence (a genius). I know because I have raised both.

My oldest son was born with the ability to think and reason well beyond his years. He asked to be read to from encyclopedias instead of storybooks at age two, taught himself how to read at age 5, was doing chemistry in third grade and so on. In those early years, I received well-meaning but unhelpful (and often hurtful) advice from friends, family, teachers, and even strangers who wanted my child to be like the rest. For some reason, it made them uncomfortable that he was so 'different'. The most ridiculous comment I received was from a family member who asked this question when I enrolled him in a gifted school in first grade: "But what if the other kids think he is a nerd?" As if that was my biggest concern. I knew that my son didn't fit any mold and that the art of raising him wouldn't come from any book or advice from my pediatrician. So I was on a quest to discover how to nurture my son with love and give him the unique boundaries and opportunities to learn and grow that he required. Fast forward nine years. Fortunately, I had figured out how to meet my older son's needs despite the advice of others who did not understand them and he was thriving. I gave birth to a second son who was clearly exceptional as well but in a very different way than his older brother. This child was happy, a risk-taker, explorer, a social butterfly who craved attention and always on the move. Like his brother, tried and true methods of 'discipline' did not work with him and only seemed to make him explode in anger and frustration. Before his ADHD diagnosis and my subsequent education about ADHD brain wiring, I was exhausted and felt defeated every day. I was also terrified that I would never figure out how to parent this child and my precious boy would end up on drugs, drop out of school, or worse, because I couldn't teach him self-control. I literally felt like I was barely surviving every day.

*I felt consumed with fear and pressure compounded every time another parent told me I was doing it "wrong" (yes, some parents think they have the right to say such things to others). And when they took it out on my child, it broke my heart. I felt like a failure for eight long years.*

So what's the point here? The point is that some children fit the mold and they respond to rewards and punishments and they behave nicely in school and follow rules. They learn in a linear fashion so they excel because that is how the system is designed to teach them. These children are very important in the world because they will be needed to carry out instructions to the letter and to follow through with tasks as adults. But there are also children who don't learn in a linear fashion but are very intelligent, independent thinkers. These children question rules so they can improve them, justice and fairness are

core values and necessities in their world, they see from a larger perspective and are innovators, inventors, explorers and game changers. Forcing them to conform to limitations such as learning in a linear fashion or following rules that were made for a person with a different type of brain wiring is like asking them to live in the world without using four of their five senses. It puts painful limits on them that cause them to 'act out'. Not in defiance but in frustration. This is what I had to learn and this is what I want to help others with and without children like mine to understand so they can have peaceful relationships with their children and they can help them succeed and flourish.

If you have a child who is 'different' and you find yourself feeling alone without answers like I once did, know that there is help available. It begins with an understanding of this simple but powerful concept: Your child is not trying to manipulate you, get away with something, or be defiant. Dr. Ross Green, author of The Explosive Child says that "Children do well when they can". I know this to be true. When we nurture them, build them up with love, and give them what they need to thrive instead of trying to make them conform to our limited views and beliefs, they blossom and are a joy to be around. They are an asset to our families, our communities, our cultures and our world. Dr. Green's book is a helpful resource and a great place to start if you have a child that doesn't fit the mold, is defiant, angry, or struggling with boundaries and rules. Most importantly, trust your instincts and listen to them before any so-called expert's advice, and seek out a certified family ADHD coach if you need help with the day-to-day struggles. It can be exhausting trying to raise a child when you feel depleted, lost, and unsupported. But know that there are others out there who care and do understand what you are going through. Reach out to them and get the help you and your child deserve.

*. There is much talk these days about how all lives matter. This doesn't just apply to skin color or race. This applies to the many different ways that people show up in this world.*

Whether you have a child with ADHD or not, you have an opportunity to brighten someone's day, lighten their load, and restore their self-confidence when you support a parent who is obviously struggling to raise a child that doesn't fit the mold (just imagine the challenges that the mothers of Albert Einstein, Robin Williams, Jim Carrey or Leonardo Da Vinci must have been like). Or you can point out their flaws, judge them harshly, and place blame. We are all born with unique talents, passions, desires and gifts. Peace and harmony begins with accepting people where they are. It begins with loving and honoring who they are, not who they might become.

- **Sheila Buchanan** is in the process of obtaining certification from the *ADD Coaching Academy* and is currently accepting clients to fulfill her client coaching hours requirement for graduation. If you have questions or are interested in family or personal coaching for ADHD, call Sheila at (216) 215-4713. [Learn more about Sheila here.](#)

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