

ARI TUCKMAN



ADHD After Dark

Better Sex Life, Better Relationship



“Couples in which one partner has ADHD report much less satisfaction in their relationships and may be prone to higher rates of divorce than are typical couples. That is why this book is so important. It is the only one currently available that focuses on the most intimate aspects of a loving relationship among couples and that is their sexual one. With great wit, candor, and sensitivity, Dr. Tuckman not only presents the results of the first large-scale survey of sexual relations in couples where ADHD exists and what problems they may be experiencing. Just as important, he tells you what to do about it. As with his other books on ADHD, readers will find here numerous recommendations for how to improve the quality of their relationship despite one or both members of a couple having adult ADHD. I highly recommend this book not only for couples, but for couple therapists, adult ADHD coaches, mental health professionals who work with adults with ADHD, and students in training in these disciplines as it is the only one currently available that deals with this topic exclusively and in such rich detail.”

Russell A. Barkley, PhD, clinical professor of psychiatry, Virginia Treatment Center for Children and Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine, Richmond, VA

“In the very capable hands of Dr. Ari Tuckman, sex and ADHD finally get the attention it deserves! Whether you are a person with ADHD, or a partner of one, or just someone who finds themselves driven to distraction in this age of non-stop social media, there are incredibly valuable lessons in *ADHD After Dark* to help you get sexually focused.”

Ian Kerner, PhD, sex therapist and best-selling author of *She Comes First*

“Many couples impacted by ADHD struggle, and their sex lives show it. So they rightly ask ‘what will make our sex life better?!’ Ari Tuckman, one of the top ADHD therapists in the world, knows. With research to back it up, he shares what strengthens the intimate lives of couples just like you. Read *ADHD After Dark*, and re-energize those intimate moments!”

Melissa Orlov, founder of www.adhdmarriage.com and author of the award-winning book, *The Couple’s Guide to Thriving with ADHD*

“Bravo! for Ari Tuckman’s *ADHD After Dark*. It’s about time that someone asked real people to talk about real sex and real ADHD and that’s what Ari did, and boy, did people ever talk! The result is this hugely valuable, engrossing, and fact-filled book. Both serious and celebratory, this unique book is a gem, the first of its kind, and a true find indeed!”

Edward Hallowell, MD, author of *Delivered from Distraction*

“Dr. Ari Tuckman is a well-respected expert in the field of adult ADHD. He has the courage to write *ADHD After Dark* which advocates for awareness of possible effects of ADHD on sexuality and the couple relationship. He understands ADHD as an individual vulnerability, and urges the person and partner to be aware so that ADHD does not subvert sexuality. An important contribution to the ADHD community.”

Barry McCarthy, PhD, professor of psychology, American University, Washington, DC, and co-author of *Finding Your Sexual Voice: Celebrating Female Sexuality*

“*ADHD After Dark* exposes the devastating impact of ADHD on the sex lives of intimate partners. An online survey provided the data from an extraordinary number of individuals impacted by ADHD—directly or through an intimate relationship. Combining his experience as a systemically trained sex therapist with his proficiency in treating ADHD, the author shares an array of clinical interventions for couples affected by ADHD. Any therapist working with ADHD clients will find this book invaluable for improving sexual intimacy and relationship satisfaction.”

Nancy Gambescia, PhD, director, Postgraduate Program in Sex Therapy, Council for Relationships, Philadelphia, PA

“Tuckman’s latest book addresses an important subject that is not often talked about: the impact of ADHD on people’s sex and love lives. His work begins an important and much-needed conversation, and it offers practical advice and guidance to couples that can help them effectively navigate challenges and foster happier and healthier sex lives and relationships.”

Justin Lehmler, PhD, author of the blog *Sex and Psychology* and the book *Tell Me What You Want: The Science of Sexual Desire and How It Can Help You Improve Your Sex Life*

“In this incredibly compelling book, Dr. Ari Tuckman adeptly combines original research about the sexual relationships, desires and habits of couples living with ADHD to help people find more happiness and connection. Written in a clear, friendly style, he’s not afraid to tell it like it is: asking probing questions and providing honest, thoughtful, and even humorous insights into how spouses can create and maintain healthier, more satisfying intimacy. Useful ‘Take Away Lessons’ at the end of each chapter summarize important points and give readers practical steps to apply immediately. *ADHD After Dark* offers a positive, non-shaming approach to sexual relationships that is a much needed and significant contribution to the field of psychology. As a family therapist, I will definitely be referring to it and recommending it over and over again.”

Sharon Saline, PsyD, author, *What your ADHD child wishes you knew: Working together to empower kids for success in school and life*



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ADHD After Dark

This pioneering book explores the impact of ADHD on a couple's sex life and relationship. It explains how a better sex life will benefit your relationship (and vice versa) and why that's especially important for couples with one partner with ADHD.

Grounded in innovative research, *ADHD After Dark* draws on data from a survey of over 3000 adults in a couple where one partner has ADHD. Written from the author's unique perspective as both an expert in ADHD and a certified sex therapist, the book describes the many effects of ADHD on couples' sex lives and happiness, covering areas such as negotiating sexual differences, performance problems, low desire, porn, making time for sex, infidelity, and more. The book outlines key principles for a great sex life for couples with ADHD and offers strategies and treatment interventions where specific issues arise.

Written in a readable and entertaining style, *ADHD After Dark* offers clear information on sexuality and relationships and is full of valuable advice on how to improve both. This guide will be an essential read for adults with ADHD, as well as their partners or spouses, and therapists who work with ADHD clients and couples.

Ari Tuckman, PsyD, CST, is a certified sex therapist and psychologist specializing in the diagnosis and treatment of ADHD in children and adults. A prolific writer and international presenter, this is his fourth book on ADHD. He also hosts the popular podcast "More Attention, Less Deficit" for adults with ADHD.



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ADHD After Dark

Better Sex Life, Better Relationship

Ari Tuckman

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To Heather, my smart and sexy wife who has pushed me to become a better husband, father, and person—not always when I wanted it, but always when I needed it.



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I always believed in statistics, but mostly felt it was the sort of thing that was better when it happened to other people. But I did enjoy geeking out on this analysis, trying to see the patterns in the

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numbers and figure out what secrets they held. Thanks to my good friend, Nathan Coates, for showing me how to do a bunch of analyses in Excel, something that kept me busy for hours and hours. I would also like to thank Pete Ondish from the awesomely named Data Monster Consulting for cranking out some seriously scary stats and then explaining to me what the hell it all meant (twice).

And last but definitely not least, I want to thank the 3000+ people who gave their time to fill out a ridiculously long survey and share their honest feelings. I take that generosity very seriously and hope that you feel that the lessons in this book are worth your investment.

Introduction: Good Sex is Extra Important for Couples With ADHD

So, what's in a title? Why ADHD after dark?

First, it's a reference to sex and other fun, naughty activities that happen under cover of darkness. Or at least out of public sight (usually). But there is also a second meaning: that ADHD is at its worst when you're in the dark about it. As in, you don't even know that that is what is making your life harder, whether it's your own ADHD or your romantic partner's. There are lots of really helpful books out there on how to work on your ADHD and make various aspects of your life better (I've written a few of them). There are even some books on how to make your relationship better which are also really helpful. What seems to be painfully absent is a book on how ADHD can impact a couple's sex life and how to make that part better—and the rest of your relationship, too.

When I've presented on ADHD and sex, I've joked that this is a topic that no one is talking about, by which I mean the people standing at the front of the room—probably most of the people in

2 Introduction

What would make your sex life better for you?

Having had some over the past three decades would have been nice. I have had to accept a sexless relationship for a very long time.

What would make your sex life better for your partner?

Beats me.

Is there anything else that you would like us to know?

We have lived with undiagnosed ADHD for over 37 years. The diagnosis answered a thousand questions and decades of confusion for me. It is a very painful situation. He is still in denial of the impact his ADD behavior has had on me over the years. I do not understand hyposexuality. I am a sexual being. I thought most people were. Why does nobody talk about this aspect of humanity and the ADHD individual? It's too late for me, but there might be somebody else out there wondering if there is any hope.

Non-ADHD woman, 66, married, been together 21+ years

the audience have talked about it a lot. Just as learning about how ADHD impacts time management, for example, can be helpful, so too can learning about how it impacts your sex life and relationship. These seem like way too important topics to have been neglected up to this point.

If you feel like you have been wandering around in the dark too long, it's time to shine some light on the subject. And if you feel like you have been alone too long in these struggles, take heart in the fact that a lot in this book is based on the results of an online survey I created—you have more than 3000 people by your side who know what it's like when one partner in a couple has ADHD.

Sex is Important

Sex feels good and we have a biological drive to seek it out. These are both true, but sex is much more than that, especially when it occurs within a relationship—and especially when it occurs within

a long-term relationship that is full of stresses, big and small. I won't go so far as to say that it is the glue that holds couples together, but it is one of the glues.

Sex is a chance to spend some time together, to connect, to recharge. To have some fun and seek some perhaps too-absent pleasure. To play and let the imagination run wild. To flirt. To be passionate. To let loose a part of yourself that doesn't come out enough under the civilizing influence of daily demands. To share your most intimate desires with your partner and to be amazed by your partner's.

There are many ways that couples connect and draw each other closer to counter the frustrations that push them apart. Sex is one of the few that simultaneously works at the physical, emotional, and intellectual levels. It's easy to let sex fade over time, gradually crowded out by other demands of time and energy, or to be the victim of ill will or performance problems. I would make the case that sex is way too important to let it wither away and instead encourage you to put in the effort to keep its special place in your day and in your relationship.

The Double-Edged Sword of Sex

If sex is important to you and it's going well, then there is a lot of good that can come from having great sex together. But if things aren't going well sexually and it is important to you that they do, then this can be a significant source of disappointment, frustration, and resentment. Of course, most couples have times when their sex life wanes or when there are ongoing disagreements, but if they can overcome these setbacks, then both their sex life and relationship can become better than they were before.

It's upsetting and humiliating feeling that my husband doesn't want to have sex with me. He says he is attracted to me and wants to have it; he just forgets about it. That makes no sense to me at all. It negatively impacts my self-esteem.

Non-ADHD woman, married, been together 11–20 years

4 Introduction

We all know that ADHD can make it harder for both romantic partners to feel happy in the relationship (which is why you're reading this). Couples who already have enough other things to fight over don't need to also disagree about sex. I don't want bad sex to be the final nail in the coffin for your relationship.

So there is a lot on the line when it comes to sex and it cuts both ways. Let's use good sexual connection as a way to keep couples together and work on everything that will make the relationship better.

The simple goal of this book is to help you and your partner have better sex (whatever that means to you both) so that there is more positive energy in the relationship. Think of it as giving you extra emotional fuel to then better deal with all the other stresses of daily life.

The deeper goal is to help you and your partner work on all the big and little things that go into creating a truly great sex life. This process will make you happier with each other in other nonsexual ways as well. While there is plenty to talk about that is just about the mechanics of sex, if your sex is happening within a relationship, then both you and your partner will each need to work on certain things for the other person to feel more interested in being sexually vulnerable—which is what it takes to keep sex exciting. In fact, that desire to keep sex interesting is part of what drives ongoing relationship growth.

How to Read This Book

This book very much has a progression of topics from one chapter to the next, but you can also feel free to jump around and read what is most relevant at that time. Also, each chapter ends with the most important and useful take away lessons. But, so that you have a road map, here is the general layout.

We begin with *Section 1: The Lay of the Land: Research Results*. Before I could write this book, I had to do some basic research because it turns out that there was no hard data on the sex lives of couples where one person has ADHD. Don't take it personally—sex research overall is woefully underfunded. Of course, there is all the general good advice, but does it all still apply when one person

has ADHD? To answer this question, I created the ADHD Relationship Sex Survey and somehow got 3000 people to fill it out. As it turns out, some of the generic advice I had been giving clients and audiences at presentations was wrong or not helpful. I was actually really happy to see that—this is why we do research. Now we know better and you will get the best advice we have at this time. I present the research data with the goal of making it useful to readers, so it won't feel like a stats class, but if it still gives you flashbacks, you can skim or skip ahead.

Then we move on to *Section II: Principles of Great Sex Lives*. In addition to lots of information specific to couples where one person has ADHD, I have also included chapters on general sexuality and how to make your sex life better, angled towards couples with ADHD. Despite our cultural obsession with sex, there is still a lot of incorrect information out there—and a lot of lack of information. You will probably find some interesting and useful tidbits in these chapters, since odds are that some of it applies to your situation. There's way more here than in your high school health class textbook, so it's worth a look, no matter how much of a sex genius you are.

Finally, in *Section III: Overcome Specific Issues*, I include chapters on specific sexual problems since they are more common than you might think—and probably more treatable than you might think. So, if there is something getting in the way of your sex life, these chapters are for you. If you're suffering, then definitely read them.

I also include a number of appendices that include the ADHD Relationship Sex Survey so you and your partner can take it for yourself; provider directories; and other worthy books.

Some Disclaimers

This book is mostly written for straight couples. That wasn't the original plan, but I got too few responses to the survey from people in same-sex relationships to be able to do any meaningful analysis. So that is a project for another time, but it is my hope that there will still be helpful lessons in this book for readers of every orientation.

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Even if you are in a straight relationship, you will find that some of the research findings and lessons apply very well to you and your relationship, whereas others don't. That's OK. No couple will fit everything in any book, so take from it the lessons that seem helpful to you and your relationship at this time.

Most of the respondents to the survey were ages 30–59 and living together in committed relationships (dating, engaged, or married). This isn't that surprising: that is where things get more complicated for all couples. Add ADHD (or anything else, including kids) into the mix and things get even more complicated. So these are the people who are most motivated to look for help which is how they found my survey and were willing to spend the time to fill it out—and probably why you're reading this now. There's a good parallel there—the research subjects match the readers. Having said that, this book is also helpful for dating couples who are contemplating moving in together and/or getting married, who were a smaller part of the survey respondents. It's always better to learn some good lessons from those who have come before you. By working on some of these things now, you can create a better foundation for your relationship. In that vein, the final chapter offers advice for singles who are looking to couple up.

Section I

The Lay of the Land: Research Results



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Introduction: Better Sex Through Statistics: The ADHD Relationship Sex Survey

There has been some good work done on helping mixed couples (where one romantic partner has ADHD and one doesn't) improve their relationship. Melissa Orlov, Gina Pera, Susan Tschudi, and Ned Hallowell have written books and articles, presented at conferences, streamed webinars, etc. and they do a great job of it. There's certainly no shortage of relationship topics to talk about and there isn't enough time in the day to cover them all. But sex tends to only get mentioned in passing. It may be that I'm too interested, but isn't sex one of the big parts of romantic relationships? Sure, there's also all that other stuff, like creating a shared dream, raising kids, paying the bills, and fighting over who didn't load the dishwasher, but isn't sex one of the things that makes romantic relationships unique?

I decided to start talking about this important topic because nobody else was. And by nobody else, I mean the people who write books and present on ADHD. The couples talk about it plenty. Given what I know about relationships and sex in general, plus

10 The Lay of the Land

what we know about how ADHD affects relationships, I felt pretty prepared. Unfortunately, the lack of hard data meant that I was limited to doing a lot of theorizing and extrapolating (i.e., making shit up). While this is fun and easy, I felt a responsibility to do better than that—after all, there is a lot of unhappiness here for couples who are struggling.

The ADHD Relationship Sex Survey

Somehow or other, I hit on the idea of doing a survey to find out how these couples feel about their relationships and sex lives, with the goal of getting some actual data so we could make better recommendations. I started thinking about all the things that I wanted to know and then went crazy and came up with seventy-two questions (once you add in the sub-questions). For an online survey. Where participants aren't getting reimbursed. And they're doing it in the middle of their busy lives. For people who get bored easily. . . . Brilliant.

Amazingly, more than 3000 people filled it out, most of them all the way to the end. I think what this shows is that people are interested in this topic. *Really* interested. So it was still a crazy idea, but people liked it, for which I am eternally grateful. Participation was completely anonymous, but I did thank participants by doing a two-hour webinar sharing the results before I shared that data anywhere else. That only seems right.

Part of the success in recruiting participants came from my good friends in the world of ADHD who spread the word about the survey: Melissa Orlov (ADHDmarriage.com), Eric Tivers (ADHD reWired podcast), ADDitudeMag.com, Rick Green (TotallyADD.com), Elaine Taylor-Klaus and Diane Dempster (ImpactADHD.com), Jeff Copper (Attention Talk Radio), Linda Roggli (ADDiva.net), Alan Brown (ADDcrusher.com), and others. We all owe these great people some thanks. And they have fantastic material you should check out anyway.

The questions covered demographic information (age, duration of relationship, etc.), ADHD treatment effort and effectiveness, relationship satisfaction, and a lot of questions about sexual satisfaction, activities, barriers, etc.

Take the Survey Yourself

I designed the survey not only to collect data, but also with the hope that the people taking it would find it helpful as an opportunity to spark some new thinking about their own sex life and relationship. My hope was that both partners would take the survey and then discuss their answers, both the similarities and differences. This can be a helpful entry into some bigger conversations. You and your partner can take it yourself—check out Appendix A on p. 345.

Nice Numbers!

I was lucky enough to get a lot of people to respond to the survey. Of course, it's easier to get lucky when you have a bunch of awesome friends putting the word out about the survey. I have data from more than 3000 respondents, many of whom made it all the way through all seventy-two questions, giving us more than 200,000 data points. So that is a *lot* of data. This is good news for all of us because it enables us to do a lot more analysis of the results and gives us more faith that what we found actually means something.

As is often the case with surveys, I got a lot more women and, as you might expect, more people with ADHD than without. The breakdown (at one point when I downloaded the data) looks like this:

- 1263 ADHD women
- 1051 Non-ADHD women
- 673 ADHD men
- 196 Non-ADHD men

Non-ADHD men are predictably the smallest group of respondents. Ideally, we would have gotten a more balanced mix of respondents, but I did keep in mind that we need to consider gender whenever we compared ADHD vs non, just to make sure that any differences weren't actually just gender effects. I always compared men with ADHD to those without and women with ADHD to those without, rather than doing all ADHD versus all non.

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Although there were eighteen-year-olds and those over sixty who took the survey, most of the respondents were in their thirties, forties, and fifties. In addition, most of the respondents were married. This combination of age and relationship status may reflect the tendency that those who are younger are less likely to have as many shared responsibilities (e.g., kids, mortgage, etc.) and therefore don't feel the effects of ADHD as much and are therefore less invested in seeking information on ADHD or taking the survey. Meanwhile, those who are sixty and above are less likely to have been diagnosed with ADHD, even if they have it, so they are also less likely to take the survey.

I am very cognizant of the fact that the impact of ADHD (or whatever) very much depends on the person's circumstances. For example, working a dumb job over the summer while living at home is very different from working full time while raising two toddlers. A person's age influences the kinds of situations they are in which then affects their relationship and romantic partner. When life is easy, we can be more forgiving of a romantic partner's quirks; when the demands pile up, we have less patience available. Generally, life gets more complicated as we get older, at least until the kids move out and perhaps the finances get more established. Also, when partners' lives are more intertwined (e.g., mortgage and kids), they expect more from each other and get angrier if the partner falls short of their expectations. Therefore, ADHD will become more obvious as a relationship progresses from casual dating to co-parenting. Most of the respondents had been together for at least six years, meaning more committed relationships. So this also impacted potential respondents' motivation to take the survey.

I Only Care if it's Useful

One of the implications of having so many respondents is that it is easy to find differences that are highly statistically significant, but otherwise meaningless. For example, if men with ADHD were to rate treatment as being 1% more effective than women with ADHD did, you could show that to be a significant difference if you have a large enough sample size. But who cares about 1%? So throughout

the data analysis, I am focusing on the things that actually matter, the stuff that you can do something with. With seventy-two questions, there's plenty of worthwhile data to talk about. If I don't talk about something, then it's most likely that it didn't come up as a big enough difference. Or it didn't occur to me.

Also, you may be relieved to know that when I share the survey results in the chapters that make up the rest of this section, I'm not just sharing a bunch of boring stats. In addition to the boring stats, I also include lessons learned and implications for what to do with that information to make your relationship and sex life better. This isn't a journal article and there won't be a test at the end—it's about making people's lives better.

Some Minor and Major Number Crunching

The good news about having so much data is that there is a lot that you can do with it. This means findings that are not only interesting, but also useful.

Types of Comparisons

Survey data can be analyzed in a number of ways. For example, we can take a single question and find out how respondents answered it. For example, on average, how frequently would respondents want to have sex? Or what percentage of respondents would want to have sex at least once per week? This is easy to do and yields some interesting data, but it's only the beginning. It's much more interesting—and useful—to compare the answers to two questions, for example by adding in gender. How often would men versus women want to have sex? And it gets even better when we look at three questions, for example by adding in ADHD status—what is the average desired sexual frequency for men with ADHD, men without ADHD, women with ADHD, and women without ADHD? Now we're getting somewhere. We can also look at things like, how did those with the highest sexual satisfaction rate treatment effectiveness compared to those with the lowest sexual satisfaction? With seventy-two questions, we can do all sorts of comparisons and pull out all sorts of information.

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But wait, there's more! In addition to this relatively simple analysis which I did, self-proclaimed data romancer Pete Ondish did some hardcore deep analysis of the data and cranked out a bunch of seriously scary-looking stats tables. For example, he took all the data and crunched it to find out which were the most important at predicting respondents' relationship satisfaction.

Four Kinds of People, Two Kinds of Couples

Throughout the analysis, I looked not only at ADHD versus non-ADHD, but also at men versus women, because gender can have a large effect on most of the questions that I asked—sometimes even larger than the ADHD effect. This makes for four different kinds of people that we looked at in the analysis:

- ADHD women
- Non-ADHD women
- ADHD men
- Non-ADHD men

Those four kinds of people then get into two kinds of heterosexual couples:

- ADHD woman with a non-ADHD man
- ADHD man with a non-ADHD woman

Not surprisingly, there can be some pretty big differences between the kinds of answers provided by those four kinds of people. Also, not surprisingly, it can make a big difference which person in the couple has ADHD in terms of how it affects the relationship. Although ADHD is ADHD, the expectations for men and women in society and in relationships are different. Gender affects what we expect of ourselves and what we expect of our partners. So there is the direct effect of ADHD, the direct effect of gender, and then the interaction effect between the two. See what I mean about lots of interesting analysis options?

Speaking of which, I limited the survey to couples where only one partner has ADHD. As with the gay and lesbian couples, double-ADHD couples are a project for another day.

Descriptive and Suggestive Results

All this analysis leads to two different kinds of results. Some of it is *descriptive* of the similarities and differences among the people who took the survey—how are these couples doing? What are the differences between people with ADHD versus those without? What about men and women? The goal here is to help us better understand how people in these mixed couples do as individuals and together. These are the descriptive results and my slogan for them is, “This is interesting!” Sometimes just knowing about similarities and differences is therapeutic by itself. These results will be covered in *Chapter 2: How ADHD Impacts Sex and Relationships*.

The second kind of analysis is what I am calling *suggestive*—what are the happiest folks doing differently from the least happy? What can we learn from the happiest folks? The goal here is to help us focus on the things that seem to make the most difference for these couples, so that all couples can find more happiness. My slogan for these suggestive results is, “This is worth investing in!” If you’re looking to make changes, these are the places to start. Emulate the best. These results will be shared in the two chapters after that: *Chapter 3: Make the Most of Treatment* and *Chapter 4: Role Models: What Can We Learn from the Happiest Couples?*

The survey results are then interwoven though the rest of the book also.

Remember, Everybody’s Got Something

As you read the results from the survey, you will see a lot of differences between the ADHD partners and the non-ADHD partners—and also between men and women. You may feel disheartened and that the differences between you and your partner are too big to bridge. I have two thoughts for you: First, group averages can be useful, but they don’t tell us about individuals, so focus instead

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on how these averages help you and your partner understand each other better—if they don't, then move on to the next chapters. Second, we need differences in our relationships—we need a partner who complements us and brings something different to the party.

ADHD can definitely affect both people in the relationship and how they relate to each other. However, so does everything else about who you each are, including where you grew up, how your parents raised you, your various strengths and weaknesses, lessons learned from previous relationships, your favorite TV shows, etc. You and your partner will complement each other in some ways and drive each other crazy in others. ADHD will be part of this—it may at times be the most obvious problem in the relationship, but it is never the only problem. No couple is ever that lucky to only have one area of disagreement. Seriously.

Don't let ADHD become the easy scapegoat, because it's still only part of what is going on there and over-focusing on one part makes it easier to ignore other important parts. Other couples may not have the struggles that come with ADHD, but they have other struggles—some similar to yours and some different. If ADHD is a part of your relationship, you will need to deal with it, and some other stuff too, but there is plenty of happiness to be found if you both do it well.

It's All Good

You'll figure this out even if I don't say it, but I take the position that when it comes to sex and relationships, there are many, many ways to be happy. You and your partner need to figure out what works for you. As long as it occurs between two consenting adults and both

In our particular case, I do not believe my ADHD is a factor. Constant therapy (personal and couples) over the last several years have uncovered a sometimes, near crippling, mix of anxieties/insecurities working against my partner.

ADHD man, 57, married, been together 21+ years

people are operating in good faith, then it's all good by me. This includes the kinkiest, craziest stuff that doesn't even have a porn site for it yet, as well as the most straight-laced vanilla sex with the lights off. I don't get to vote on your sex life. I certainly have my own opinions and preferences, as well as clinical experience and knowledge about what tends to work better for most couples, but you and your partner (or even partners) need to make your own decisions about whether a particular recommendation fits your life at this time and is therefore helpful. It's OK if some of my ideas aren't; just take the ones that are.

Cut to the Chase: Give Me the Important Lessons!

At the end of each chapter in this section, I will include a brief summary of the Take Away Lessons from the data. In other words, the lessons learned from the data that you can apply to improve your relationship. If you're impatient (or bored) with the data you can skip to the end of the chapter and then explain it to your romantic partner by saying, "Our relationship and your happiness is so important to me that I just couldn't wait another second to learn how to make it better."

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In Their Own Words

The goal of a survey is to get a bunch of numbers to crunch and thereby create some clarity out of messy confusion. Unfortunately, you're limited to the questions you asked and how you asked them. Therefore, it's helpful to also ask some open-ended (fill in the blank) questions, to see what you may have missed.

At the very end of the survey, I asked three open-ended questions:

- What would make your sex life better for *you*?
- What would make your sex life better for *your partner*?
- Is there anything else that you would like us to know?

In case I didn't already know why this survey and book were important, the comments really made it clear that way too many people are suffering much more than they need to be. Lots of pain, disappointment, anger, resentment, disconnection, and rejected desire. Some people haven't had sex in years or decades—some feel really badly about this, some have resigned themselves to it, some don't miss it, and a few are happy about it. And, contrary to the stereotypes, it's not just the guys and the young folks who miss that

sex—there are also lots of women who do, including some in their seventies. And then there were those who wrote about how amazing and important their sex life was. When it comes to sex, there is a lot to lose and gain.

Survey respondents were clearly invested in this topic and took the time to write out 5046 comments—after filling out a survey of seventy-two questions. They still felt they had something important to add. To their credit, I got almost the same number of comments about what would make sex better for themselves versus for their partner (1713 versus 1653), so most of these folks are equally interested in their partner's satisfaction. This is not only generous but also wise, since it's hard to get more or better sex for yourself if your partner isn't also enjoying it. Their comments are full of brilliant, insightful, funny, poignant, and bravely vulnerable quotes that I wish I could share, but I promised confidentiality and I need to honor everything they have given me. Therefore, I sent out a second request for quotes with explicit permission to use in the book and those are scattered throughout in text boxes.

Many of the comments spoke about how ADHD was impacting the couple's relationship and/or sex life and a lot of them lamented the potentially preventable struggles if the diagnosis had come earlier. But equally noteworthy was that there are lots of other relationship and sexual issues going on here that have little or nothing to do with ADHD and are directly affecting the respondents' relationship and sex life. These other topics, including how ADHD can interweave among them, are covered in the second half of the book, so that you are fully armed to make things better.

Many of the respondents complained about mismatched sexual appetites in terms of desired frequency and activities. Many wanted a better relationship and sex life, but felt powerless to overcome the obstacles. Many felt judged by their partner for their desires and wished they could share more of who they are sexually and also know their partner more fully and honestly. They wanted more communication about how to make their relationship and sex life better. Too many people said that they had no idea what would make sex better for their partner because their partner wouldn't tell them, even when asked directly. Or perhaps the topic was never broached and both partners avoided those potentially

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uncomfortable conversations. Needless to say, silence rarely makes a bad situation better.

As is common with couples, many of the comments reflected interlocking patterns, where each partner's actions stopped the other from giving them what they want. We can get in our own and each other's way. For example, someone would say that they wanted more nonsexual affection in order to feel more interested in sex but that their partner just wanted more sex. Hmm, seems like they each have the key to giving the other what they want and thereby getting more of what they themselves want. I know, it's not that simple, but in some ways it is. . . .

There were a number of comments from respondents with small and dissatisfying sex lives saying that they had much better sex with previous partners and also with this partner at other times in the relationship. It's easy to fall into the mindset that the current situation won't change (at least for the better) because this is just who we each are, but then lose sight of the fact that this is not how we have each always been. A couple's sex life is really affected by the context and can change if they put in the effort to do so—although that may involve working on some aspects of the relationship that feel pretty distantly connected to your sex life.

Respondents also spoke about various health concerns, medication side effects, and menopause decreasing libido and/or making sex uncomfortable, all of which contributed to difficulties with sexual performance and/or pleasure. There were also other sexual dysfunctions, like erectile disorder, premature ejaculation, and painful intercourse. This severely limited or ended some folks' sex life, but others worked around it—which is a really good lesson for all of us

We both need to make it more of a priority. Also—create mood together instead of realizing late one morning after sleeping in, oh, I was thinking about making love, but now it's too late, isn't it? With ADHD it's probably a combination of now or not now timing and balancing energy levels. But that doesn't make it better or easier!

Non-ADHD woman, 59, married, been together 21+ years