

Introduction

Over the years, many people have asked us, as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) specialists, to “explain how to do ADHD coaching.” Although we have conducted brief workshops or made presentations, they seemed inadequate. We have long been interested in helping others to develop their skills in this area, but outside of our training clinic and practice, this has not been possible. Our intent in writing this book was to provide a theoretical orientation, foundational knowledge, and specific strategies, forms, and procedures that will help mental health practitioners to develop or improve their ADHD coaching skills. This is not the only way to do ADHD coaching, but it is based on empirically supported research documenting its efficacy. Like any therapeutic orientation, you will adapt it to fit your orientation and style.

The ADHD coaching program we describe in these pages was developed over the past 10 years at the Adult Learning Evaluation Center (ALEC) in Tallahassee, Florida, in collaboration with Psych Ed Coaches, a private practice specializing in ADHD

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/14671-001>

ADHD Coaching: A Guide for Mental Health Professionals, by F. Prevatt and A. Levtrini

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coaching, with locations in the Washington, DC, and Jacksonville, FL, metro areas. ALEC is a not-for-profit psychoeducational center at Florida State University that provides training for graduate students in school psychology and counseling psychology. The program provides diagnostic and intervention services for high school students, college students, and adults from the local community who have learning difficulties, mental health issues, and ADHD. Although the basic program described in this book refers to the original ALEC model, at times we describe modifications as being “Psych Ed Coaching.”

In the decade we have spent developing our coaching program, much has changed in the field of ADHD. Prevalence rates are on the rise, a new version of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5)* has changed the criteria we use to diagnose ADHD, and practitioners will soon be required to use the *International Classification of Diseases (ICD)* criteria. Theories regarding the etiology of ADHD have advanced, and we have a better understanding of the likely brain processes involved in symptoms of ADHD. New medications are on the market that seem to have better efficacy, with fewer side effects. More students with ADHD are attending college and receiving support services to help them achieve at the same rate as their peers without ADHD. Antidiscrimination laws in the workplace are providing support and protection for employees who choose to self-disclose their diagnosis. Many interventions are being promoted to help those with ADHD, and ADHD coaching is gaining acceptance as an effective clinical tool. We hope this book will motivate you to cultivate your skills in this area. Some of you may be established coaches, some may be early-career professionals, and some may be students in training. We do not believe that this book alone will make you an expert. We hope you will use it in conjunction with conference presentations and workshops, as well as supervised clinical experience. If you are a graduate student, we hope you will find practicum and internship opportunities to expand your skills.

What to Expect in This Book

Chapter 1 is a basic overview of ADHD. It includes prevalence rates, common symptoms, and types of impairment. We cover how ADHD may manifest in childhood and adolescence but focus more on college students and adults. We explain the etiology of ADHD and how it relates to executive functioning. We discuss common comorbidities and conclude with a discussion of *DSM-5* and *ICD* diagnosis of ADHD. Chapter 2 provides a general overview of ADHD coaching, including the empirical evidence of its effectiveness. This is followed in Chapter 3

by a more specific description of the underlying theories and principles used in our ADHD coaching approach. Chapters 4 and 5 demonstrate how these principles can be applied in practice and explain the “nuts and bolts” of our coaching program. Here, the reader will learn a step-by-step approach to conducting coaching, complete with forms and rating scales. Chapter 4 focuses on the initial stages of working with a client (evaluating for suitability, doing an initial intake), and Chapter 5 discusses the middle and concluding stages of coaching and includes more samples of specific measures and techniques.

Chapter 6 goes into detail about several of our favorite coaching strategies. These include the ADHD Life Wheel, the Inspiration Toolbox, the Decision-Making Table, the Juggling Exercise, the Processing Exercise, and the Eisenhower Matrix. Other strategies involve using a planner, being more “green” in coaching, and using career-planning resources. There are so many resources available on the Internet that it is not possible to list all of them, but Chapter 6 provides some good basic strategies and techniques. The chapter concludes with a resources section that provides information on various tools you and your clients may find useful, including planners, timers, apps and technology, and graphic organizers. Chapter 7 discusses the business of coaching and how to develop one’s own practice and includes a list of resources to help you get started.

The five case example chapters illustrate specific goals and objectives used in various types of cases. These cases are based on clients with whom we have worked; however, all descriptions have been altered slightly to disguise the clients’ identities. Although the general principles in this book apply to clients of all ages, we focus primarily on adults and older adolescents. We do not recommend individual ADHD coaching for children; rather, we find that in the primary grades, the parents will almost always need to be involved. Parents (or teachers) will be involved in planning behavioral management plans and implementing rewards or consequences. The case examples include an adult with career issues (Chapter 8), a professional adult with a variety of concerns (Chapter 9), a college student with executive functioning deficits (Chapter 10), a young adult with mental health issues (Chapter 11), and an adolescent with academic issues (Chapter 12). Many of the forms and worksheets mentioned in this text are available online at <http://pubs.apa.org/books/supp/prevatt/>.

We have found that ADHD coaching is one of the most rewarding areas of clinical practice. Our clients are typically motivated, engaging, and enjoyable to work with. ADHD is a treatable condition, and we see remarkable gains over time. We hope this book facilitates your own work with this inspiring population.