



Hyperactive: The Controversial History of ADHD

Matthew Smith

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Each year, doctors diagnose an average of nine percent of children between the ages of five and seventeen with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, or ADHD. One of the most common childhood disorders, it is also one of the most controversial—since first identified in the late 1950s, everyone from medical professionals to politicians have debated its causes, its treatment, and its implications for children. Today, physicians believe it is an inherited neurological disorder best treated with stimulants.

Hyperactive provides the first history of ADHD, addressing why children were first diagnosed with the disorder, why biological explanations became predominant, how powerful drugs became the preferred treatment, and why alternative explanations have failed to achieve any legitimacy. Contending that hyperactive children are also a product of their social, cultural, and educational environment, Matthew Smith demonstrates how knowledge about the history of ADHD can lead to better choices about its diagnosis and treatment. A revealing and accessible study of this controversial subject, *Hyperactive* is an essential book for psychologists, teachers, policymakers, and parents.

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