



mADD Man

Brian J. Robinson

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The ingenious title of Brian J. Robinson's memoir reflects the author's struggle to deal with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder—hence the alternative spelling of *mad*. But the pages of this autobiography also reveal a mad youth—crazed at various points by anger at Judaism, an educational system that failed him, and substance abuse. More than just a story of coping with a disability, *mADD Man* also delves into the author's experiences with school, world travel, and addiction. Written when Robinson was twenty-three, the book nonetheless demonstrates clarity and insight not often credited to young people. *mADD Man* proves that the young are quite capable of critical self-examination.

The author describes his ADHD by saying he thinks in pictures and has trouble processing what is said, unless he makes a conscious effort to focus. He also describes his mind's tendency to drift and what he must do to keep his daydreams in check. These first-person accounts, in which he places his symptoms in a positive light, will give hope to people with ADHD, their families, and professionals.

Robinson's honest recollections of alcoholic binges, Adderall haze, and drug-induced highs and lows provide powerful evidence of the fatal attraction of substances. Also harrowing are the author's stories about his struggles to be "a good Jewish boy" even as his attempts to live up to this ideal cost him dearly. The author shines when he relates the personal; however when he waxes philosophical or rants about the failings of the American educational system, these screeds detract from the narrative flow. The lack of necessary hyphens in compound modifiers can be confusing, as can sentences with long clauses which lack helpful commas. For example, when the author calls his ADHD mental state "Bri Bri Land," "Bri-Bri" ought to be hyphenated. The author also overuses apostrophes, uses capitalization inconsistently, invents words, and uses other words in improper context. He uses "stupefy" as an intransitive verb, for instance. Robinson doesn't properly introduce key characters—he only gives readers their names—but occasionally provides background for characters who turn out to be minor players.

Although *mADD Man* has an intriguing cover, the page layout is amateurish. The chapter titles are neither bold-faced nor otherwise differentiated from the text. Lines of text are double-spaced, and like a college paper that is too short, there are multiple blank lines between paragraphs. The paragraphs are also excessively indented. All this extra space gives the unfortunate impression that this worthwhile narrative is like a first draft of an essay—too short to make a point. *mADD man* is a poignant autobiography that is unfortunately hampered by an unattractive layout and lack of editing.

JILL ALLEN (August 5, 2010)

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