

Big Moves 1 and 2: A Look at a Conflicting Perspective

After completing my introduction, I found two books, *Ritalin is Not the Answer: A Drug-Free, Practical Program for Children Diagnosed with ADD or ADHD* by David B. Stein and *Taking Charge of ADHD: The Complete, Authoritative Guide for Parents* by Russell A. Barkley, that I believed would be useful in my research of how best to correct misconceptions of ADHD and how best to treat ADHD within the education system.

I painstakingly worked my way through a chapter in Stein's book entitled "Understanding the Myths of Attentional Disorders" and found that I had a problem with Stein's viewpoint in nearly every line of the chapter. While I do agree with Stein's point that medication is not necessarily the best route for treatment of ADHD, I am very strongly opposed to Stein's complete opposition to any sort of medical treatment for attentional disorders based simply and solely on the fact that his son reacted poorly to Ritalin. Side effects are a possibility with any and all medications, but that does not mean that such medications should never be utilized. Furthermore, Stein wastes many words in arguing that ADHD and attentional disorders should be regarded as disorders and not diseases, because, as far as I am concerned, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder has never been mistaken for a disease caused by the environment or some virus or bacteria. In trying to make the point that no "bodily, brain, or nervous system malfunction causes these behaviors" usually associated with ADHD, Stein insultingly states that ADHD "is not a disease but a problem of poor thinking patterns and lack of motivation" and "that nothing medical causes children to not pay attention and to misbehave. They simply do not pay attention and they do misbehave."¹ I am not exactly sure where Stein gets away with

¹ David B. Stein, *Ritalin is Not the Answer: A Drug-Free, Practical Program for Children Diagnosed with ADD or ADHD*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999), 22.

suggesting this because it is common knowledge in the medical world that ADHD and attentional disorders are caused by chemical imbalances within the brain. These disorders are considered genetic; diagnoses have increased significantly in a time span of ten years due to the increased understanding of the disorder, not because psychologists are “misdiagnosing” a “fake” disease or disorder. While it is understandable that Stein approaches medicine as a treatment for ADHD with caution due to his personal experiences with his sons, I think that Stein takes this caution way too far in discounting medication as a possible treatment for anyone. As I would hope most people are aware, side-effects, serious ones included, are a possibility with any medication; however, Stein would have you believe that the laundry list of short term and medium term side-effects associated with Ritalin are unique to Ritalin and similar stimulants used to treat individuals with ADHD and ADD. This, frankly, is not the case. Just watching commercials on nearly any television channel will show that many medications have a number of side-effects and at least a few serious side-effects, but the possibility for poor reactions to medications should not dissuade us from using all medications. When reading what Stein writes about medication, it is important to keep in mind that medicine does, in fact, have many useful applications in treating a huge variety of different things. If you are put on medication for anything, it is always a good idea to do some research of your own about the drug by asking your doctor questions about its usefulness and to be aware of, and watch for, the symptoms of the most common side-effects of the drug. Stein states that, “Ritalin is classified in Schedule II, the same category as cocaine, opium, and morphine. This indicates that it has a high potential risk for abuse and addiction.”². It is important to consider that while an astounding number of people

² Ibid, 27.

in the world have addictions to prescription medication, a medication's propensity for being addictive does not necessarily indicate that the drug is ineffective or dangerous for use in treating diseases or disorders.

Clearly, I disagree with much of what Stein writes in *Ritalin is Not the Answer: A Drug-Free, Practical Program for Children Diagnosed with ADD or ADHD*. This is not only because I disagree with his assessment of ADHD and the use of medication, but also because I believe that Stein has introduced way too much personal bias into his book and has failed to supply significant and convincing evidence to support his claims. I should note, however, that I am not claiming that personal bias is a bad thing, because I have plenty of my own, or even that Stein is wrong to have formed his views based off of his personal experiences, because I have also done that. I just do not think that it is right for Stein to have written and published this book that does nothing more than to disseminate even more doubt, suspicion, and negativity regarding ADHD than already exists in the world.