

Is Exercise Transformative?

Reviewed by Robert M. Tudisco, Esq.

For years, ever since my diagnosis, I have been running as a means to manage my AD/HD. After reading *Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain* by John J. Ratey, MD, with Eric Hagerman (New York: Little Brown and Company, 2008), I now have a much better understanding about how exercise affects the brain.

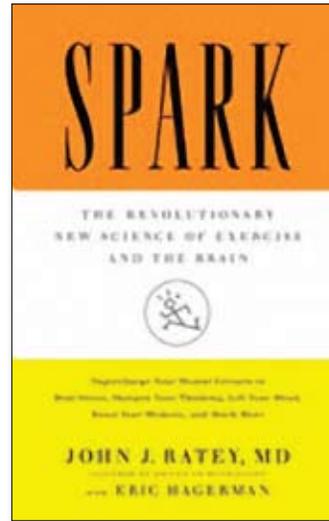
The book begins with an explanation and summary of all the latest research studies that have been done. Ratey does an excellent job of explaining extremely complex information, making it understandable for a layperson. This was important to me as I found Ratey's book *A User's Guide to the Brain* much more technical and difficult to follow without any medical training. I was impressed with the data collected from an Illinois school district and other school studies that completely validated the neurological research. Emerging research on exercise and learning is extremely significant for parents who are frustrated in seeing

their children struggle due to their AD/HD and co-occurring conditions. The findings may prove especially important for parents whose children have not responded to medication, or who are reluctant to try medication as an intervention for their child.

Over the next several chapters, Ratey discusses the relationship between exercise and the brain in the context of various disorders. For instance, there are chapters on stress, anxiety, depression, addiction, and aging. One chapter is specifically dedicated to attention disorders, which is aptly titled "Running from Distraction." While I found the chapter on attention disorders most applicable to myself, the other chapters are important in that many children and adults with AD/HD also have co-occurring conditions such as anxiety or depression.

The last section of *Spark* discusses various types of aerobic and anaerobic activities, describes how they affect the brain, provides suggestions on how to begin a regimen of exercise, and more importantly, suggests how to sustain an exercise program.

An important book for adults with AD/HD as well as parents of children diagnosed with the disorder, *Spark* is a source of empowerment for gaining or regaining control of one's life.



Robert M. Tudisco, Esq., is a practicing attorney and adult diagnosed with AD/HD. Tudisco is a member of CHADD's board of directors and the editorial advisory board of Attention magazine, and chair of CHADD's public policy committee. He welcomes questions and comments on his Web site, www.ADDcopingskills.com.

Voice of a New Generation

Reviewed by Bryan Goodman, MA

Blake E.S. Taylor's new book *ADHD & Me: What I Learned from Lighting Fires at the Dinner Table* (Oakland, CA: New Harbinger, 2007) is a vital source of information for teenagers living with the disorder. Taylor weaves personal storytelling with practical solutions for teenagers living with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder.

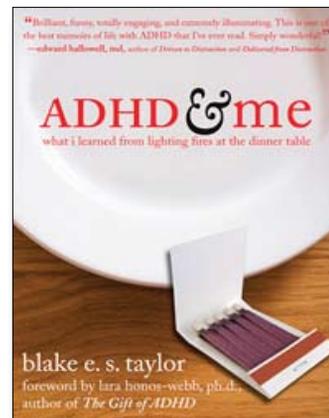
For example, Taylor tells the story of being well prepared for an exam that he ended up blowing only because the window to the classroom was open and what seemed like a hundred or so elementary schools kids were playing kickball a few stories below. Of course, it didn't help matters that Taylor failed to take his medications. But with pre-test jitters the best of us can forget the most important things in life. And who with AD/HD couldn't in some way relate to this story?

Taylor also talks about the impulsivity

that can make things, well, go up in flames. He writes about one incident in which his friend and his sister set a yogurt container on fire. The blaze grew out of control after Taylor threw eye-glass cleanser on the flames. Before long, he had a subtitle for his new book. He also had a lot of questions from firefighters.

Taylor also offers solid tips and advice that will help his readers: Learn from your mistakes. Watch out for times when you can't concentrate. Get plenty of sleep. If you have medication for AD/HD make sure you take it. Know your own mind and don't let friends and others get you in trouble.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the book is that Taylor represents a new generation of people with AD/HD. Perhaps sociologically we should consider his



book a part of the second wave of our social movement. A couple of decades ago one would be hard pressed to find a teenager who was even aware of his or her AD/HD, much less a teen who possessed similar self-awareness. Taylor represents a generation that benefits from years of advocacy work. He is clearly in control of

his own life. Not only is he aware of his AD/HD, he's out front about it and working to make society a better place for people living with the disorder. Sharing his story is one way Blake Taylor will accomplish that worthy goal.

Bryan Goodman, MA, is CHADD's communications director and executive editor of Attention magazine.