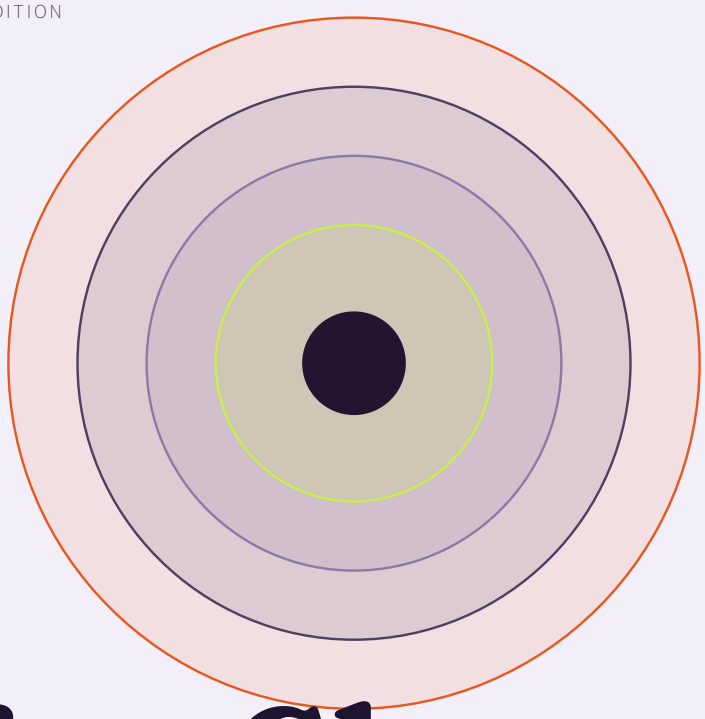


Taking Charge of ADHD: The Complete, Authoritative Guide for Parents

A reading of the book by Russell A. Barkley (1995)

1. ACTION BOOK

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is HourLife's reading of Taking Charge of ADHD: The Complete, Authoritative Guide for Parents, in our own words. It is not a substitute for the book.

BEFORE YOU START 01

The book in a minute

Russell A. Barkley is a clinical psychologist who has spent decades researching ADHD in children and adults. In this guide for parents he argues that ADHD is a disorder of self-regulation and executive functioning, not simply of attention: a child with ADHD usually knows what to do but struggles to do it at the moment it counts, and struggles to manage time. From that view he builds a set of principles for parents, including faster and more frequent consequences, rules and time made visible where the work happens, rewards before punishment, and steady consistency. The book then walks through a step-by-step behaviour programme for home, ways to work with teachers and schools, and what the research says about medication. It draws on clinical cases and the research literature, and it has been revised several times since the first edition in 1995.

Below are the 9 ideas HourLife readers vote up most, each in our words with a note on what it asks of you, and then the steps that put them to work.

WHAT READERS KEEP

The takeaways

1 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

ADHD is a problem of doing what you know, not of knowing what to do.

Barkley's central claim is that a child with ADHD can usually tell you the rule. The trouble comes at the moment the rule should guide what they do. That is why another lecture rarely helps, and why the support has to arrive at that moment instead.

2 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Put the rule where the behaviour happens, not only in your child's head.

Barkley calls this place the point of performance: the desk, the bathroom sink, the front door. A picture card, a written list or a chart at that spot does the remembering that the child's working memory cannot hold on to. Moving the reminder costs little and changes a lot.

3 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

A child with ADHD lives in the now, so make time something they can see.

In Barkley's account, ADHD weakens the sense of time and of the future. A visible timer, a clock at the task and short chunks of work with breaks bridge the gap between now and later. Long tasks with distant deadlines are where these children struggle most.

4 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Consequences work best when they come quickly, often and in a form the child can feel.

Barkley asks parents to give feedback sooner, more often and with more weight than they would for most children. A reward at the end of the week is too far away to steer a Tuesday morning. Tokens, praise and small privileges given on the spot keep the link clear.

5 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Reach for rewards and attention before you reach for punishment.

Barkley's behaviour programme starts with positive attention, not discipline. Punishment used alone tends to breed resentment and defiance. When the child is already earning praise and tokens, a mild penalty such as losing a token or a short time-out has something to work against.

6

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

ADHD is largely inherited and brain-based, and bad parenting does not cause it.

Barkley summarises the research on genetics and brain development to lift the blame many parents carry. That does not make parenting irrelevant. How a family structures the day still shapes how a child with ADHD gets on, which is the point of the rest of the book.

7

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Treat the school as a partner, and let a daily report card carry news between you.

The book gives parents practical ways to work with teachers, including a short daily card the teacher rates on a few target behaviours. The child brings it home, and the home token system pays out on it. School and home then pull in the same direction.

8

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Keep a disability perspective, don't take it personally, and forgive at the end of the day.

Several of Barkley's principles are about the parent's own mind. Seeing ADHD as a real disability keeps expectations fair, and not personalising it keeps anger down. He asks parents to let the day's frustrations go, with the child, with others and with themselves, before the next day starts.

9

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Medication is a decision for the family and the child's doctor, made with good information.

Barkley gives medication its own part of the book, covering stimulants, non-stimulants and what research says about their effects and side effects. He presents it as one piece of a plan alongside behaviour management and school support. This page is not medical advice, so take your questions to your child's doctor.

PUT IT TO WORK

Your action book

Do the setup steps once, then keep the habits going. The setup changes your week; the habits keep it changed after the first good one.

The download puts this whole reading and a printable action book in one PDF: the setup checklist, then a page of real calendar days for each habit, starting on the day you choose.

SET UP ONCE

- [ ] Chart the hardest routine first
- [ ] Open a token bank
- [ ] Put a timer where the work happens
- [ ] Ask the teacher for a daily report card
- [ ] Write your questions before the doctor's visit

KEEP UP DAILY

- [ ] Give your child special time each day
- [ ] Catch good behaviour within seconds
- [ ] Give one short instruction up close

30 days · Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Part two, after the reading, prints each of these as a page to fill in by hand.

THE LAST WORD

Before you go

Pick one step from the action book and do it today. An idea from a book starts to count once it changes what one ordinary day looks like.

PART TWO

The action book

Change the setup once, then keep it up. 5 setup actions to do once, and 3 habits to mark each day for 30 days.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Print it, or write on it in any PDF app.

SET UP ONCE

The setup checklist

Each of these is done once. Do one a day, and check it off when it is done.

☐ SETUP 1

Chart the hardest routine first

Pick the routine that causes the most fights, such as mornings, homework or bedtime.

Write its steps as short words or pictures and tape the chart at the spot where it happens.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 2

Open a token bank

Use poker chips for a younger child or points in a notebook for an older one.

With your child, list rewards and privileges and agree what each one costs before you start.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 3

Put a timer where the work happens

Place a visible timer at the homework spot or the bathroom sink.

Break long tasks into short blocks with a small break after each one.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 4

Ask the teacher for a daily report card

Agree on three to five target behaviours the teacher rates at the end of each day.

Tie the card to your home token bank so good days earn something that evening.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 5

Write your questions before the doctor's visit

List what you want to know about assessment, treatment options and side effects.

Bring the list and decide the next step together with your child's doctor.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

DAILY HABIT 1 OF 3

Give your child special time each day

Spend 15 to 20 minutes on play your child chooses.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
16 ○	17 ○	18 ○	19 ○	20 ○	21 ○	22 ○
23 ○	24 ○	25 ○	26 ○	27 ○	28 ○	29 ○
30 ○						

December 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1 ○	2 ○	3 ○	4 ○	5 ○	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 2 OF 3

Catch good behaviour within seconds

When your child starts or finishes a step, praise it or hand over a token right away.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 3 OF 3

Give one short instruction up close

Turn off the screen, get eye contact and say one clear instruction.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
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30 ○						

December 2026

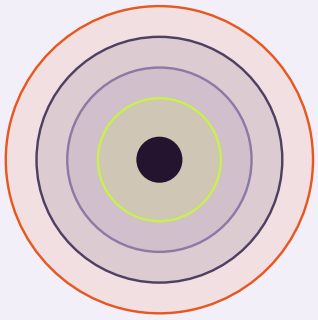
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21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP



Your child already knows the rule. Put it where it can be seen at the moment it is needed, reward it quickly, and forgive the rest of the day.

HOURLIFE NOTE AFTER RUSSELL A. BARKLEY