

# HARNESSING ADHD

**I**mpulsive. Distractible. Restless. Those are some of the qualities that you may connect with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). But what about other traits, such as creativity, intelligence, and intuition?

Looking on the bright side of ADHD is Blake Taylor's philosophy. Since his diagnosis at age 5, he's learned how to cope with and make the best of his challenging condition. Taylor, 19, is now studying premed and French at the University of California, Berkeley. He shares his experiences and insights in a new book, *ADHD & Me*—and also with us. (For more info, check out [www.youngwithadhd.com](http://www.youngwithadhd.com).)

**CH: What was growing up with ADHD like for you?**

**Taylor:** In elementary and middle school, I didn't have that many friends. I'd be spreading my paper on someone else's desk, using their paper, basically being annoying. It wasn't intended. I was awkward and didn't get many social cues. In high school and college, I've definitely done a lot better. I go to parties; I've joined a fraternity.

**CH: Was school difficult for you?**

**Taylor:** Academically, I've actually been pretty strong. Without medication, though, I'm not really able to focus and do my work. I had a math exam in 10th grade and forgot my meds; I had the answer right, but my handwriting was hard to read, and it was marked wrong.

**CH: Why do you believe your ADHD is useful?**

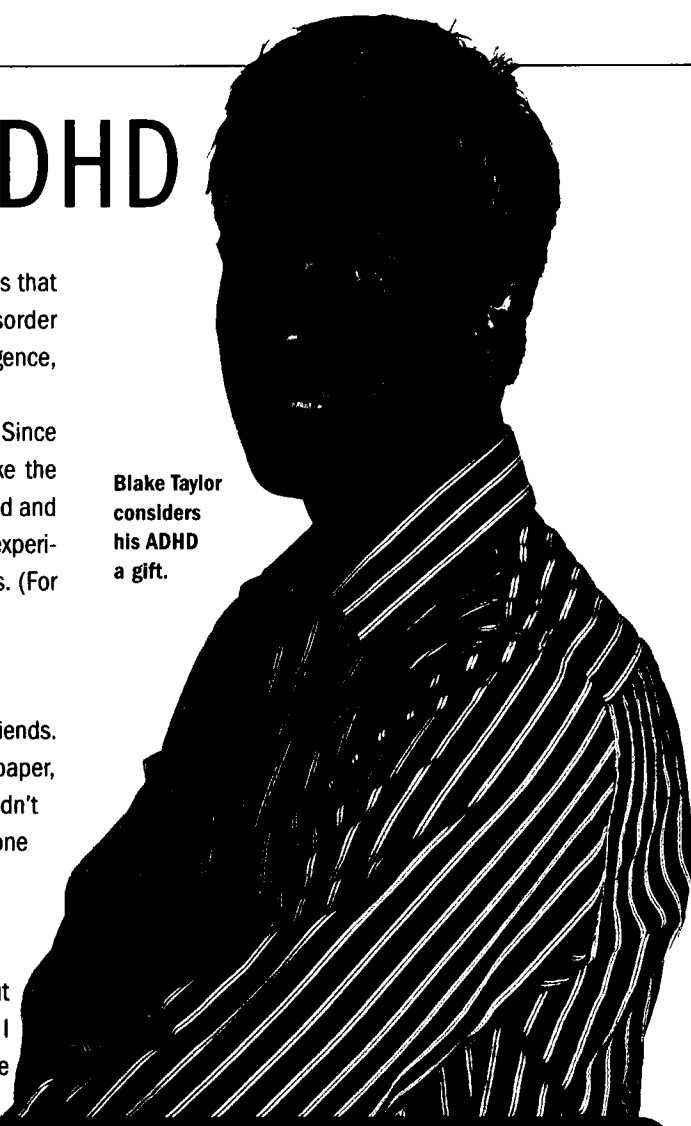
**Taylor:** The ADHD helps in that [I] can hyperfocus. It's more of a gift. If I can channel the extra energy, I can accomplish more. If you view it as a gift, you're more likely to use it as a gift. It can be used as an advantage more than a disability.

**CH: How did you come to write the book?**

**Taylor:** To apply to private high school, I had to write an essay. I talked about some of my experiences and thought maybe I could write a story. I wrote one chapter, then another, then I had 15!

[The book has] had a fairly good reaction. I'm a young person talking to another young person; that's what's most rewarding. ADHD is a secret weapon—I want people to learn how to use their secret weapon.

Blake Taylor considers his ADHD a gift.



## Social Medicine

Teens with diabetes have their share of troubles, but isolation doesn't have to be one. The American Diabetes Association has launched Planet D ([www.diabetes.org/planetd](http://www.diabetes.org/planetd)) just for young people. It's a place to learn about the condition, meet other teens on message boards, take polls, share stories, and team up to beat diabetes.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BLAKE TAYLOR