About the Authors

Desiree Silva is professor of paediatrics at The University of Western Australia and Joondalup Health Campus. Desiree trained as a doctor in the UK and completed her paediatric specialist training in Western Australia and the Northern Territory. She has a strong interest in neurodevelopmental disorders with over 20 years experience in managing children diagnosed with ADHD, autism, anxiety and developmental disorders. She completed a PhD on the early environmental risk factors and education and justice outcomes for children and youth diagnosed with ADHD. Desiree is a member of the scientific committee for the World ADHD Congress, Neurodevelopmental and Behavioural Paediatric Society of Australasia (NBPSA) and on the professional advisory board for LADS. She is regularly invited to speak at national and international conferences on various aspects of ADHD research. Desiree is the project co-director for the ORIGINS study, a collaborative initiative between the Telethon Kids Institute and Joondalup Health Campus to establish a new birth cohort in Western Australia to provide a better understanding of early pre-programming of neurodevelopmental disorders including ADHD. She is a strong advocate for children and their families requiring support during their journey through life.

Michele Toner was the first credentialed ADHD coach in Australia. Starting out as a high school teacher, she has since worked in the corporate, not-for-profit and small business sectors. Her PhD (2009) and Master of Special Education (2001) both focused on ADHD. Currently she works in her private coaching practice, where her clients include executives, adults, parents and students. Michele regularly consults with schools, universities and workplaces to achieve the best outcomes for her clients. She is also a faculty member of the ADD Coach Academy (ADDCA). In addition to her professional work, Michele has been a passionate advocate for people with ADHD since 1995. She has served as Executive Officer, Board President, and Professional Advisory Board member for The Learning and Attentional Disorders Society (LADS WA). She also played a key role in the establishment of the newly formed consumer peak body, ADHD Australia, as a founding Board Member. Michele’s solid academic research background and her extensive hands-on advocacy experience allow her to operate comfortably in both the professional and consumer arenas. Currently, she is co-convenor of the Australasian Professionals ADHD Network (AusPAN), and the administrator of several social media support groups for people with ADHD.
ADHD GO-TO GUIDE
FACTS AND STRATEGIES FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS
DESIREE SILVA AND MICHELE TONER
CONTENTS

Foreword xi

Chapter 1
The basics: What you need to know about ADHD 1
What characteristics may suggest ADHD? 3
Is ADHD a new diagnosis? 5
How is ADHD diagnosed? 6
Can preschool children be diagnosed with ADHD? 10
Do children with ADHD have any other mental health issues? 11
Can adults have ADHD? 19
Will my child need medication as an adult? 21
Planning your visit to your paediatrician or psychiatrist: What information will be useful? 21

Chapter 2
What else should I know about ADHD? 24
Is ADHD different in boys and girls? 25
Does ADHD exist around the world? 25
Is ADHD caused by our genes? 27
CONTENTS

Are children with ADHD different from non-ADHD children? 29
How clever can children be with ADHD? 30
What is executive functioning? 32
Can my child grow out of their ADHD? 34
How may my child with ADHD grow up? 34
Do children with ADHD have sleep issues? 35
What should you tell your doctor about your child’s sleep problem? 36
Is electronic addiction a problem? 37
Are there other conditions that can mimic ADHD? 39

Chapter 3
Treatment options for ADHD 44
Non-drug treatments 45
What medications are available for my child? 50
What are the side effects of medication? 56
Questions commonly asked about medication 58
How can medication be started? 61
How can symptoms be controlled? 61
What may be noticed when medication is commenced? 65

Chapter 4
How can I support my child and family? 68
What are the everyday effects of ADHD? 69
What support do I need? 71
Who do I tell and what do I say? 72
How can I talk to my child about ADHD? 74
How can I promote my child’s self-esteem and resilience? 75
How can I create and follow ADHD-friendly family routines? 79
How can I manage my hyperactive preschool child? 82
How can I manage transitions? 83
What about siblings? 85

Chapter 5
What can I teach my child? 87
How can I teach my child to pause? 88
How can I teach my child to manage time? 89
How can I teach my child to be punctual? 92
How can I teach my child to remember? 93
How can I teach my child to manage their ‘stuff’? 94
How can I teach my child to be a friend? 98
How can I teach my child to limit screen time? 99

Chapter 6
What will help my child at school? 102
What are the challenges? 103
How do I choose a school? 105
How can I inform the school and ask for support? 106
How should I communicate with the school and teachers? 107
How can I help my child learn? 108
How can I teach my child to be a self-advocate? 109
How can I establish healthy homework and study routines? 110
CONTENTS

How can my child get accommodations for exams and assessments? 113
What about technology and apps? 114

Chapter 7
How can teachers and schools support students with ADHD? 117
What are the typical challenges for students with ADHD? 117
How can the school support students with ADHD? 119
How can teachers support students with ADHD in the classroom? 122

Chapter 8
How can I help my child transition to adulthood? 128
How can I build a village? 130
How can I smooth the transition to adult medical services? 131
How can I smooth the transition to tertiary study? 132
How can I smooth the transition to full-time employment? 134

Chapter 9
Myths and tips about ADHD 136
Twenty myths about ADHD 136
Twenty tips for parents 142
Twenty tips for teachers 148

Bibliography 154
Acknowledgements 158
Children with ADHD may be talented, resilient and often misunderstood. They can be challenging but are never boring. Parenting requires exceptional skills, which can prove difficult when parents have to manage their own mental health issues, negotiate barriers within the home, school and health system. Understanding and supporting children with ADHD from a young age will improve their education experience, social outcomes in adolescents/adulthood and family functioning.

Desiree Silva, 2017

Before you read a single tip or consider a single strategy in this book, please know this: everything in these pages is written with compassion, and an understanding of how challenging it is to parent a child with ADHD. It requires research, organisation, mediation, advocacy, patience, energy and compassion. Remember to extend that compassion to yourself. You will have days when you feel like ‘Superparent’, ready to leap the tallest buildings of bureaucracy. And you will have days when you feel like a failure. Celebrate the good days and learn from the others.

Our book is designed for you to flip through and choose an area to work on with your child. Do not feel the need to change everything at once.

Michele Toner, 2017
Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is the most common mental health condition in children and is present in most countries around the world. Although there is an abundance of literature on ADHD with plenty of scientific information, this condition remains controversial and often under diagnosed.

Many books have been written for parents about ADHD but most of them are quite scientific, and they can be difficult to navigate, especially if you are a parent with some symptoms of ADHD yourself.

This book is a go-to guide for parents and teachers, providing up-to-date knowledge in a simple, easy-to-read format. It is filled with information your doctor would like to provide but is often unable to do so in the limited appointment time available. This book also gives a framework for how you can manage and advocate for your child in different settings, with or without medication. It summarises evidence to date for medication and alternative therapies, examines commonly held beliefs about ADHD and debunks myths, and gives practical tips to help manage your child with ADHD.

This book has been written by a developmental paediatrician (Desiree Silva) and an ADHD coach (Michele Toner), both of whom are passionate about improving the lives of children with ADHD and their families. They both have over 20 years of experience in the field and recognise the need for this practical guide.
This is a comprehensive and easy-to-read book with up-to-date information for parents, families and teachers of children with ADHD, and also for allied health workers, general practitioners and others who have contact with these wonderful children.

The ADHD go-to guide provides a summary of the science behind ADHD, and the strategies suggested will empower parents and teachers to better understand this common condition. It will help to remove the stigmas associated with ADHD – ‘the naughty child’, ‘poor parenting’ or ‘the lazy child’ – and will provide advice on how to most assist in advocating for your child.