

# What's My Alternative: Prescription Drugs for ADHD

*By Diana Reynolds Roome*

Josh Goulding was diagnosed with attention deficit–hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in second grade, after his impulsive and disruptive behavior frequently landed him in the school principal's office. "Over several years, I was put on a whole gamut of drugs, and nothing worked well," says Goulding, now 24. By his second year at Georgetown University in Washington, DC, Goulding was still struggling to concentrate in classes and complete his work, and his medications were causing mood swings and irritability.

**The Conventional Rx:** Stimulant drugs, such as Ritalin and Adderall. Almost 4.5 million children between ages 4 and 17 are diagnosed with ADHD, and nearly half of them take prescription medications, often for years. Long term, these drugs may be physically and psychologically harmful, and side effects such as sleep disturbances, poor appetite, weight loss, and mood disorders can require further medication.

**The Alternative Rx:** Transcendental Meditation (TM). In the first study on ADHD and TM, middle-school–age children who did twice daily nonreligious meditations for 10 minutes reduced their stress levels by over 50 percent—resulting in fewer ADHD symptoms. "TM helps children focus on a special mantra or sound, which helps the child transcend mental busyness and stress," says Sarina Grosswald, EdD, coauthor of the study. "This allows the child's body to completely relax and his mind to stay fully awake without effort. The results are improved behavior, grades, creativity, and inner stability."

**The Outcome:** Just before turning 21, Goulding attended a talk on TM and signed up to learn the technique. First, he started sleeping better. Then, finding it easier to focus and relate to others, his grades improved. When Goulding returned to his doctor, his blood pressure was lower (it had been borderline hypertensive before he started TM) and, even after he stopped taking ADHD medications, his grade-point average continued to rise.