“The Benefits of ADHD” by Sarah Fitzhugh
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The Benefits of ADHD

During my younger years, I was a wild thing. ADHD, hyperactive, full of wonder, refractive. It was like a tiny sun had been transplanted into my chest. By pure luck, my grandparents were gone for a while when I cracked their huge flatscreen TV doing cartwheels in front of it. Couldn’t see why I should stop if I could obviously prevent myself from breaking it (haha). Too much energy, too many people said. Sit still, listen, stop moving. Except for my mother.

Much of the former brightness of my transplant sun has faded, although sometimes it emerges as tapping when I manage to stay on an effective sleep schedule—or the opposite, nervous jitters from lack of energy. (Don’t ask me how it works. I don’t know anything about nuclear fission inside suns.) That disappoints me very much. My mother always said that if I suffered through reigning myself in, I’d be able to harness the energy later, but the vast majority of it seems to have dissipated. It makes an interesting parallel with much of my life regarding procrastination of opportunities. (I was terrible at reigning myself in, but not for lack of effort.)

The thing that hasn’t faded is my point of view. There’s a wide-eyed awe and instinctual desire to poke at boundaries that has only ever grown, like I’m slowly siphoning off my sun and relocating it into imagination and perspective instead. I used to attempt to tuck away my perspective and replace it with a more “mainstream” lens, but my mother was quick to set that notion aside with her assurances of individualism and beauty—although I haven’t lost my love for seeing through someone else’s experiences. I’ve been much more grateful for my filters on reality ever since I started
writing poetry often, and it's whispered many metaphors to me. Sometimes the excited energy that abandoned my chest will flare up from wherever dimension it's been hovering and attack me. "The things we used to care about' would be a great opening line for a poem!! What if the Revolution happened but cyberpunk! And, and then there was a superpowered girl that lights up blue and she's Washington's daughter!" It bites down on my leg and will not be flung off... except of its own volition. So I do as the inspiration demands--I write.

This makes it seem like writing and poetry are begrudging activities to me. It's not that! The fond frustration that influences many of my interactions with my sisters emerges when that aforementioned embodiment of excitement bites my leg. I've moaned many times over having to start yet another story or poem when so many are only half-sculpted. Eventually the injection of energy yanks away to frolic somewhere it has decided to prefer since it bit me, and far too often that means I leave the sculpting of the work. With every intention of returning, of course, but that occurs only sometimes.

However, other times all it takes for excitement about a story to race up my spine once again is rereading what's there and brainstorming afterwards. Then, a filter might have been changed or tilted since the last time I labored at that particular bit of material, and a new idea for it will strike like lightning. Whether this resurrection is accompanied by a new injection of energy depends, but the summary of my remarks upon the matter is that I love reading, writing, and suddenly being inspired (even when it comes at inconvenient times).
I embrace energy and positivity. Comparing my perspective to others’ and composing stories at the behest of inspiration are activities that I perform whenever possible. I lose myself and don a different life, a varied belief system, and speak through that lens—whether through a book, a discussion, or a piece of writing. And though at times I've been very discouraged, my mother will always be with me, reminding me that if I just apply enough sun-energy, thought, and time, there's nothing I cannot do.