

Rebecca Perkins: ADHD & demand avoidance

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SPEAKERS

Rebecca Perkins, Katy Weber



Katy Weber 00:00

I'm very curious to hear your story because I know you have two children, right? Who are who are older now, right? But yeah, why don't we just get started? I want to hear your story kind of how you came to your ADHD diagnosis and what was happening in your life where you were like, I really need to check this out.



Rebecca Perkins 00:21

Yeah, definitely. Yeah. Yep. I'm really happy to talk about all of that. And, and my journey, which has been interesting.



Katy Weber 00:31

And your fiance also has is also neurodiverse as well, right? Yeah. Okay.



Rebecca Perkins 00:35

So will ADHD mean, my kids, my fiancee, my mom, like everybody? Yeah, it's a bit chaotic.



Katy Weber 00:46

Well, there's no surprise there. Yeah, okay, so So why don't you tell me I guess we'll start with your story on your sort of diagnosis story.



Rebecca Perkins 00:57

Yes. So. So my kids were diagnosed first like so many kids are diagnosed. And I before the kids

Yes, so, so my kids were diagnosed first, like so many kids get diagnosed. And before the kids got diagnosed, I was already already working in the sector. So I kind of knew for a long time that I possibly had ADHD, then the more I got to know and the more research I did, the more I knew I definitely had ADHD, but actually didn't get diagnosed. I was in my mid 30s. And, and I knew I was expecting it. So I wasn't shocked when I got the diagnosis. But what I did find was just the amount that it put me at ease, all of a sudden, all those things that I had found so difficult, or things that I always thought were just bad personality traits, you know, and I just thought, Oh, it's just me, I'm just, I just can't do this. Or I just, you know, I always felt like I was not mature enough or not capable enough for things like that. And so when I got the diagnosis to know that it wasn't just me, and there was a reason, and an explanation behind it all just made just this enormous difference. And, and the amount it increased my self esteem. Was this really mind blowing? Yeah,



Katy Weber 02:16

I know, I feel like I talk a lot about that with my guests. How you know that when I was diagnosed, I wanted to shout it from the rooftops because it was so revelatory, it was so incredible to just feel like, Oh, my goodness, there's an explanation for all of these things, that all of these ways in which in my life, I felt like broken and defective, as a wife, as a mother as a, you know, as a student. And so I was so excited to have that answer. And I remember being so like, you know, just really crushed when I first started telling people that I had been diagnosed with ADHD. And their response was more often than not, like, I'm so sorry. You know, as though I had told them I had been, you know, I had a terminal illness. And I was like, no, no, like, don't you understand how incredible this is like that, you know, my sense of self was changing so dramatically, as a result of that diagnosis. But it is like, I think, unless you're talking to other people who who have, you know, it's one of the kind of spectrum of neurodivergent diagnoses like they don't, people don't really understand what a good you know, how great it is to to have this diagnosis presented to you most of the time, because it's really seems like it's a door opening for so many of us. Yeah,



Rebecca Perkins 03:37

I am one of the things that I still experienced today. And I really, really, it's just, it's probably the reason why I do a lot of what I do is I get sometimes people say, Oh, I'm so sorry to hear that. But the one which I find even worse is when people go, No, you don't? Oh, yeah. Drives me crazy. When people, you know, they just look at me and go, No, you don't? Or no, I don't buy that, or don't believe that, or, you know, and I think, how do you not believe it or not know, or, you know, and it's just that lack of understanding out there in society. And there's so many, so many misconceptions and misunderstandings, and, and, and people buy into all these, you know, all this stigma and all this, these sort of falsehoods about ADHD. And so they just take a look at you and go, and I actually I've had so many people say, How can you have ADHD because you're successful. And people don't believe that if you have ADHD, you could possibly be successful. And I also had a mom who I was talking to who, whose son was going through the diagnosis process, and she said, Well, I still don't think my son can have ADHD because he's smart. And I tried not to take that person. The the that's the thing. And that really gets me is when I tell someone I have ADHD and they think if I'm smarter can have ADHD if I'm successful, I can't have ADHD. If



Katy Weber 05:10

anything, you know, insert anything positive. Yeah.



Rebecca Perkins 05:15

But yeah, exactly. And it's an even my psychiatrist, actually who I try not to see too often. Because when he diagnosed me, he actually said, I'm so shocked you have because I own two companies. And he said, I'm so shocked, how can you possibly run a business and be ADHD? And I just thought you're a psychiatrist, diagnosing people with ADHD should not be saying that, you know? And, yeah, that that level of misunderstanding runs so deep from, you know, the community to professionals to you know, it's, it's so through whether we think, and it's really heartbreaking, and especially here in Australia, I think it's actually much worse than it is over there in the States, from, from what I've heard this sort of level of stigma.



Katy Weber 06:01

You know, I think, I mean, I personally had such a positive experience, both with my therapist sort of, you know, gently suggesting, over the years that I look into this, into then having a really great experience with my diagnosis on my doctor, and it blows my mind, hearing the stories from other women, about ways in which they have been minimized in by their medical professionals. And, you know, I realize, you know, not every doctor is terrible, but like, gosh, the, the stories I hear of, you know, exactly what you're saying, either doctors who have said, well, you, you know, you can't possibly have ADHD, because you, you know, are successful, or you, you know, did well in school, or my personal favorites are, you didn't have as as a child, and people outgrow it. So you can't possibly if you didn't, if you weren't diagnosed as a child, you can't possibly have it now, which blows my mind, because I'm like, girls weren't diagnosed. That's the whole point. Nobody saw it. Of course, we weren't diagnosed as children. And then my other favorite is women who have said, their doctors have said, well, you've made it this far. Why do you need the diagnosis, you know, as though it's like, just, you know, keep, keep plugging away. And everything's gonna be fine, which also, like, just goes to show how little not only how little is known about how it manifests and what it looks like in women, but also how important a diagnosis is, to moving forward at any age, you know, like, at age 80. I mean, it's never too late, I think, to kind of connect these dots and really start radically transforming your, like you said, your sense of self.



Rebecca Perkins 07:46

I agree, I think I think it's really sad. The amount of the amount of just the amount of misunderstanding out there. And people sort of go, okay, ADHD, you've got someone who's really hyperactive and can't pay attention to anything ever. And this is the view that people have, and they think if you don't fit that box, therefore you can't possibly be ADHD or you. Yes, something's not right. And they don't see all the other characteristics and all the other things that come with it and, and the struggle and for me, you know, I did terrible at school, I was I old school really, really badly. But then as an adult, because school isn't always designed, the best way it should be for ADHD is and then as an adult, when I went, I went back to college and went on to university in the UK and, and did really well and found that that style of learning suited me a lot better. And and what sort of always shocked me is just having accommodations

made such a difference. And, you know, having a university I had really great lecturers who really worked with me to help me and we didn't need I didn't even have a diagnosis that and I was diagnosed dyslexic, but not ADHD, but they really still just wanted to help me. Whereas at school, it was all about fitting into that exact box and doing it in the way they said I had to do it. And, you know, and what's what I do find actually really sad is so my youngest son, who's both my kids are ADHD, but my youngest son, who's he's very much like me, and we have very similar things that we struggle with. And I watched him going through school, and he's only 10 at the moment. And his school Korea is exactly copying mine. And the mistakes that teachers made with me, years 35 years ago, they're still making with him now, and that breaks my heart that you know, three decades later, and they still can't, they're still doing the same thing. It's like, they haven't learned anything. And they're still making movies. that same mistakes?



Katy Weber 10:02

Oh, absolutely. I mean, I think that was, it was very emotional for me when I was diagnosed to go back and look through my old report cards from basically about, you know, about that same age about 10 11/5 grade in Canada of just like watching the comments from the teachers, and just seeing my own decline as a student through these years of these comments, and it was, so it would just broke my heart, because yeah, I do, I do see a lot of those issues with my children now. And I'm really grateful that I'm able to kind of put these pieces together and help them and advocate for them, because I understand now how important it is, like you said, I mean, accommodations are everything. I mean, I was actually just recently having a conversation somebody was asking me about, like, do you notice? Do you think there's a difference between the the way that, you know, ADHD is experienced in boys and girls? And you know, is there is there anything like really, obviously, along gender lines, because I think that's something we talk a lot about with girls being so commonly overlooked in childhood. And I was saying that, like, of all the women I have interviewed, I feel like the biggest difference is what are women who were diagnosed with some other learning disabilities, children, like dyslexia, or dysgraphia, and they were able to get accommodations through school for those learning disabilities. And it sort of clicked in their mind at a young age that, that they weren't the problem, you know, that they just needed a different system, they needed help, they needed special accommodations. And those of us who didn't receive anything, you know, any sort of diagnosis at all, we sort of we internalize that idea that we were the problem, you know, and I think that that kind of shapes who you are, as you grow up so much when you realize that like, No, you know, if we teach our children really, you know, from a young age, that if something isn't working, it's not because it's their fault. They just need to ask for help or figure out like, what, you know, what do I need in order for this to work as opposed to just being, you know, what, what tends to happen, which is like, well, just try harder, you're not getting it, you know, figure it out. And then and then we end up growing up with this, like, intense anxiety. And this is we've internalized idea that like, I, why am I not figuring it out when everybody else is what is wrong with me? You know?



Rebecca Perkins 12:48

Yeah, absolutely. I actually grew up very, I had a lot of problems with anxiety and depression and things like that growing up as a teenager, because of what I now realized was actually was because of me having ADHD and not having my needs met. And it's just really sad that if you have a disability in this life, you know, schools and anywhere else, they try and help, except if

you have a hidden disability, and then there's so many people sort of go, No, there's nothing, you know, there's nothing you need help with. And then you've got this battle between the two sides of one side of the coin going, No, you don't need any help. And then the other side of the coin going, Oh, poor, you, you can't possibly be successful, and actually trying to make people I guess, understand that you can need help and still be successful, because everybody needs help sometimes. And with something, everybody, and just because somebody needs help with certain things, some of the time doesn't mean they can't also have all these great things that they can do really well and, and be, you know, achieve really good things. And I had someone recently actually say to me, the problem with the neurodiversity movement, and the idea that you can, it's just a different brain and all that sort of stuff, is that it means that people won't get the help that they need. And what frustrates me about that is that, actually, they should, because if our if a neurotypical person gets a cold or something gets ill and they need to go to the doctor's, we don't go Oh, you're defective. We know you're no good to society, you're, you're less of a person because you have to go and get help for something. And it's no different. I can need help with A, B, and C, and still be awesome at D and F. And I'm not less of a person I'm just a different person who needs help with different things and can succeed at different things. And try to get people to understand that just because our brains different doesn't mean it doesn't deserve help. But it also doesn't mean that it can't be successful, either. You know, it's Yeah. And that's something that I find quite frustrating in people is that they're, they seem to, you know, think of it, it's either one way or the other, either defective or you don't need help, you know, not.



Katy Weber 15:18

Yeah. And I think that there is a, you know, the sense that need, the need for help is somehow a moral failing, you know, that would that it really is, you know, it that we're, it's like, you have to wait until you are absolutely at your wit's end until you ask for help otherwise, you know, it's you are, what's the word I'm looking for, just like, it's I can't think of the word anyway. You know, but that idea that it's, we're somehow, you know, better humans, if we don't require help, you know, that that idea of independence and self sufficiency are a moral virtue. And this idea of like, having, you know, having the audacity to ask for help, especially if you're already good at other things, feels like almost selfish and self indulgent, I think, in our society, at least, we're taught that and so I think there's a lot to, like, unpack when it comes to, you know, bringing, bringing in help, especially for women



Rebecca Perkins 16:22

100%. And it all starts at such a young age, you know, these kids start school at four or five years old, or whatever crazy age it is. And, and from that point, they're taught that you must fit into this box. And if you don't fit into this box, there's something wrong with you, you know, you have to be here, and the school system frustrates me so much with the fact that it just, it's, it's still the same problems, you know, they still, the school system still expects everybody to be every student come on in be the same, you know, and we're gonna, we're gonna make you do these things, and you need to do them at the pace, we tell you in the way we tell you, and you need to sit still. And you need to do all these things. And, and what I think's really sad, I speak to a lot of people from all over the world, and I always hear the same stories, and it doesn't seem to matter what country they live in, they're still having the same problems, which is that the education system hasn't changed in the last 100 years. And it's still making the same

mistakes and saying to kids, right, you've all got to come in, and you gotta fit in this box. And, and ADHD is in particular, I've met some absolutely phenomenal kids and adults with ADHD who could be something so spectacular, if they just had a few simple accommodations had been made at school, you know, to help them along the way and it just breaks my heart. And then, you know, and for girls with ADHD, like, like me, and you obviously, we don't even get the diagnosis, nevermind the accommodations you made half the time. So, you know, it's just, it's just heartbreaking. Yeah,



Katy Weber 18:08

I remember my son recently, he's in fifth grade, and he came home and there was like a, you know, we were looking over one of his he was an in class test, and there was one answer, whereas, you know, his answer was just had nothing to do with the question. Like, you could tell he was totally just like, bullshitting. And, and I said to her, I was like, Well, do you even understand what the question was? Because she had asked about, like, read the part in italics, and he didn't know what the word of tallix meant. And so I was like, did you not understand the question? He was like, No, I had no idea what the question was asking. And I said, Well, why didn't you raise your hand and ask the teacher and he was like, Well, I didn't want the teacher to think I was dumb. And I'm like, That's what she's there for. I was like, how do we like even begin to kind of unwrap that? I'm like, you're in a, of course, you're 10 years old. And you shouldn't be feeling pressure that you can't ask questions, because you're worried that your teacher is going to think that you're not smart enough. Like, that's the whole point of a teacher is to get you there. But I was just like, oh, it just made me so sad.



Rebecca Perkins 19:09

Yeah, that was exactly what happened to me to the whole school, actually. So through the whole school, they'd give me instructions. And because I was so distracted, or I would never hear the instructions. And so when they said go away and get on with the piece of work, I never knew what I was doing. So I just but I never ever would ever put my hand up and say, I don't know what I'm doing because like many ADHD has had that massive fear of judgment and failure and all the rest of it. So I just, I there was no way I'd ever put my hand up and say, I don't know what to do. And even to the point if the teacher came around, said, Rebecca, do you know what to do? I go, Yeah, didn't have a clue. And so I looked at a score. And I was in the bottom groups for everything you know, so they really thought I was quite dumb. And then I left school and years and years later I went right I'm gonna go back to college. And what's interesting, so you know, I now I have a law degree. I have seven diplomas. And I've got two companies and I obviously wasn't, I didn't grow a brain when I left school. I obviously had one the whole time. But the teachers never then ever occurred to them to sort of maybe get to know me and find out. If actually, I do have a brain, there was something perhaps that they could do to help me. You know, they just assumed I was done and my son, they do the exact same thing with my son now, like he, he's really smart. He rewired every electrical item in our house. He's 10. You know, really, really intelligent boy, but he's in the bottom group, just like I was. And when every time I go in, for a parent teacher interview, they always say the same thing that he's, you know, he tries his best, but he's not very good, you know? And no matter how many times I say to them, he's really smart. It's the way you're teaching him. They won't hear it. They weren't listened to that. But yeah, it's really sad that kids go through school

thinking, you know, like I did, thinking they're done, when actually, they have every, you know, ability in the world. It's just that the school isn't necessarily teaching them in the way that works for that.



Katy Weber 25:03

Now let's let's talk about some of your businesses because you have my spirited child, which was originally called my special child. And I assume that you this, that business grew out of your own mother bear advocacy. Instinct.



Rebecca Perkins 25:17

Yeah. So that one, I set that up seven years ago, originally, it was just a blog, like, Excuse me, just this online blog that I created just to I just wanted to get information to people that was accurate, and, and, you know, an easy to access sort of thing. So I created this blog, and then I started doing events, and then it kind of just grew and grew and grew. And now we do loads of events here in Australia. And we're actually coming to America next year, as well. So we're doing some events over there next year. And I do lots of public speaking. And we have like little guidebooks that we do for teachers and for parents and, and so we've kind of with my spirited child, it's all just about getting information to people, in whatever way it suits them to have the information whether it be in a resource or an event, or, or whatever, and, and just helping parents and, and educators as well, just to get accurate information that comes from I guess, someone who not only has the professional side, but also the lived experience side, which as you know, you know, you really need, you can't, you can understand something, you can't fully understand something unless you live it. So I like to sort of put in a lot of my own stories and things like that. Yeah, so that one was always sort of built as in that side. And then I also have the national peak Center, which is a therapy center and, and that's been going for a year, and I set that up with my business partner, Christina Keeble, and we set it up together, because it was our dream to change the way therapy was delivered from something that was so deficit based to something that was strengths based and positive. And so we don't want parents to be like, Oh, we've got to go and see his therapist, again, because there's something wrong with him, and they're gonna tell me all these problems, we did not, you know, it's, we shouldn't be living in a society that acts like that. And so we wanted people to walk in and be be and walk out feeling better than they did when they walked in feeling like positive and, and strong and empowered and know that their kids can do well, and, and we'll be there sure to help them with the things they struggle with. But more importantly than that, we're there to build them up and tell them, you know, make them feel good about themselves. And, and in all our therapists, their primary goal is to build connection and teach all these kids and adults, that they're awesome and, and they can do anything they want. And they'll help them to get there, you know. And so we're going to build that up, and hopefully, eventually just change the way the system is. So that therapy centers that are very deficit based and all about, you know, this long with the kid and stuff like that, we can hopefully move away from that and start them on a sort of more positive approach.



Katy Weber 28:17

I love that now, just Peak Peak is pe KPEKE. I had a lot of trouble with that one. Is that an acronym for something, though,

R**Rebecca Perkins 28:27**

so we spent a very long time trying to figure the name. And eventually, we thought every time we used a word, like with my special child, I had to move it to spirited because special became not a word that was acceptable anymore, which is fine. So and spirited, summed it up better anyway. But we didn't want to use a word that were the name was going to change. So we didn't want to say ADHD or autism or anything like that, because names change, and words change. And we went, you know what we'll call it. So my surname is Perkins and my business partner surnames cable. So we just took the two, first two letters of each word and put it together. And we realized that that also, you know, when you think about the peak and somebody reaching the top and doing well, and then it kind of all fit, so we, yeah, that's where Pete came from.

**Katy Weber 29:18**

Got it. Okay, that makes sense. All right. Well, I love that. And I love you know, honestly, that's sort of the trajectory, I think of women in ADHD, which was sort of started out as this podcast. And it was a selfish endeavor really, to just sort of you to hear other women's stories and to find out if other women were having the same experiences maybe but then it sort of morphed really into learning about what this looks like and the many you know, the many different way because it's so difficult to articulate to other people. What ADHD even is when once you started to connect the dots in your own life, and so Right now I feel like it's so much more about finding the community and finding each other and building a community because, you know, knowing that we're not alone and knowing that we're not, quote unquote, broken. And there are so many other people like us who have very similar experiences, is part of the treatment, as far as I'm concerned, like, you know, just really knowing that we are not alone. And you know, whether that's not alone as mothers who are struggling and the things that we're struggling with, or as just as partners as women, or as entrepreneurs or business owners. I mean, I feel like it's just it's so important to find each other. And so that now is kind of morphing into the next phase, which I think will probably be more event, you know, bringing people together in events. So I love listening to the kind of trajectory of your career starting out as a mom with a blog. Because that's like such an ADHD story, right? Where you're just sort of like, oh, and by the way, I love that I was allowed your website where you're like, oh, I should probably mention, I have a law degree. The different like, all of the different certifications and degrees and everything that we pile up over the years, you're like, oh, yeah, I did that for a while. And now I'm doing this, oh, yes, I was a teacher. And

R**Rebecca Perkins 31:18**

you know, what it's such a typical ADHD thing is, you know, there's all these people who think ADHD, ADHD is can't do anything, they can't achieve anything. And I'm, like, the opposite. The absolute opposite, ADHD, people with ADHD are prone to achieve way more, because they just don't stop. And they like, Oh, I'll do this now. And I'll do that now. And I'll do this now. And sometimes when I tell people about my career, they go, how can you possibly have done all that? Because you're 43 Now, and they go, how have you managed to fit all that in? I have no idea. I just do this. And then I do that. And, and, and, yeah, it's just, it's just a typical ADHD

story, I think. And I actually, I truly believe people with ADHD are more likely to be successful, because they have all the things that make someone successful, you know, they're very competitive. And, really, what's the word they really want to achieve and do well, and yeah, and then, at the same time, they're very intuitive, I think people with ADHD tend to have a really good intuition of other people's feelings. So they're able to read people quite well. And on top of that, they, you know, they have the ability to hyper focus on something they're interested in, whilst also being able to really sort of go, I want to get this done and plowing straight into something, and this are ambitious, and you mix all that together, and you're literally destined to have someone who's successful, as long as they get support. And I think I'm very lucky because I have a very supportive mom who always built me up and always believed I could achieve anything. And I think as long as when, you know, right back, when they're kids, they get have that support, and that someone building them up, you know, or even later in life, at some point, somebody has to be behind them and say, you know, you can do it and, and as long as they have that faith in themselves to be able to do it, it's amazing what they can achieve. And I really kind of hope that with a lot of doing it, sort of getting the information out there and providing this sort of information to people, we can eventually get to a point where all parents, teachers, everybody who has or works with a child with ADHD has the knowledge and understanding and ability to go this isn't amazing kid all they need is my support. And my me being behind them to build them up and and help them with those challenges. So that they then can achieve and you end up with these kids who end up going into world leaders and owning massive corporations and huge foundations and charities because you know, they just built for that you know, and we thrive so much of success I meet a lot of ADHD is who who really struggle in their jobs as adults and they find it very difficult. And and I think often with the right support, someone sort of saying to them, you can do it they can go out work for themselves create their own thing and build something that they love and and just be so successful doing it.



Katy Weber 34:38

Yeah, I certainly fall into that category of of not being able to stick with a job longer than two years for most of my 20s and 30s. I've wondered what was wrong with me. But you know, there are it's true like there are ways in which if we are not in if we're not if we are the you know the square peg trying to jam into the round hole. There are ways in which we do feel like failures all the time. And so you could say, well, my ADHD is means I'm a failure, as opposed to kind of say, stepping back and being like, you know, why what systems do you have in place right now that are failing you? And I think yeah, there are so many ways in which we can reframe all of the things in our lives and really kind of lean into what are figuring out what our strengths are and lean into them and just go for it. It can I'm sure it's terrifying in theory, but it really I think, I think we need it I think, I think it feeds us in a way it's almost like you know, trying to I feel like there's like a movie character of somebody who was like being forced to be, you know, working in the mines, you know, and then reminds me of the the analogy of the the hunters versus the farmers, right? And that idea of like, you can't force yourself to be anything other than you are. Very stubborn I do want to ask you a little bit more about your own experience with ADHD. But I had a question that I had written down because I saw that you and your partner were had had been speaking about ADHD and demand avoidance. And that was a term I actually hadn't heard. And so I was Googling it and was looking at more and I wanted to can you tell me a little bit more about that from like a parent point of view of what demand avoidance is and how that differs from something like oppositional defiance disorder, which is what a lot of kids with ADHD end up getting also sort of CO morbidly diagnosed with?

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Rebecca Perkins 41:36

Yeah, so demand avoidance. So you have demand avoidance, and then pathological demand avoidance, I hate that term pathological. But, but that's what it's called pathological demand avoidance is actually a subtype under the autism bracket. However, it's very new studies really started in the UK, only probably four years ago. So it's, it is very in the very early stages of research, but there's a lot of research out there about it. And it's only starting to now spread to the rest of the world. Now that I, my personal belief, and speaking to a lot of PDA experts as well, is that although at the moment is just categorized as a subtype of autism. I actually think it applies to a lot of people with ADHD, and I would be one of those people. So I personally, I'm not autistic, but I'm definitely demand avoidant. And, and I think a lot of kids out there who are diagnosed with odd, in actual fact, would probably fit the demand avoidant bracket instead, or for a lot of them actually think they just have ADHD. But the diagnosticians didn't understand enough about ADHD to realize that those are some of the things they were doing with sort of ADHD characteristics. But, but demand avoidance is exactly what it says on the tin sort of thing. It's, it's when a child really struggles to take demands. And a good example would be if you've got a child who, in their brain, much like if you've got slow processing speeds, or anxiety or things, anything going on up there, and you because for whatever reason, your brain doesn't have the capacity to be able to deal with more expectations being placed on you. Now when it becomes a problem for a child where it becomes a neuro type, and it's something they do all the time. It means that their brain literally just can't tolerate demands, they're not being naughty, they're not just, it's not a choice, that they just can't cope with demands because their brain doesn't have the capacity to handle them. And so it can be when someone's demand avoidance, you can offer ask them to do something they actually want to do, but because it was given to them in the form of a demand, they can't do it. So that's how to tell because obviously, if you ask someone to do something they want to do usually they happily do it, but when someone's demand avoidant, they still can't take the demand, even if it's something they want to do. And and obviously in life, there's times when growing up, it's developmentally appropriate to be demand avoidant, you know, your, your toddlers tend to do it anyway. But what you're sort of looking for is it's not one of those, those times when it's, it's appropriate for their age, and they're still doing it and they're doing it even when it's things that they would actually ordinarily like to do. And it fluctuates as well because on like with any condition or neuro type. You have good days and bad days. So some days they may be able to handle a few demands, some days they won't be able to handle any and the difference between you know, standard demand avoidance So in pathological demand avoidance is just the extremity of how severe it is. So if someone has pathological demand avoidance, they're really going to be not be able to take any demand placed on them. And, and what you end up with is what looks like behavior. And it's not behavior. It's not something that's that's chosen. It could be something like, you could say to the past me that glass, that's right next to them at the time, you think that's a perfectly reasonable request, because the glass is right there. But they can't do it. And they end up having a meltdown, rather than past the glass. Because in their mind, in that type, they haven't in that moment, they have no capacity to process that demand. And so it's such a challenge for their brain to go hang on, I need to do I need to pick up this glass I need to, it's that whole thing just sends them into very extreme anxiety, and they can end up in a meltdown. So it's demand avoidance. I think there's a lot of ADHD as who have a degree of demand avoidance, I know I do, I really struggle with I can take demands. But if someone asks in the wrong way, and this is very demand avoidant thing, if someone asks, in a not necessarily a nice way, but sort of starts demanding, you know, and asking, you know, very sharp or harsh or not such a sweet and polite way I really struggled to take those demands. And so I kind of think I have an element of demand avoidance. Yeah, I'm



Katy Weber 46:49

fascinated with the sort of comparison of the chair because I always felt like when I think back about to my childhood, I probably would have been diagnosed with odd if they knew that that existed. Because I realized now that like, I was, I had a really hard time was transitions. And so I would often kind of have outburst, especially in the classroom, when the teacher was like, now we're going to stop coloring and move on to the you know, I was the kid who would, who would have, you know, get flipped into a rage if I had to stop something before it was done. And I was also the one you know, and I've seen, like, so many ADHD memes about that, you know, it's like, I was gonna do something, but then you told me to do it. And now I'm absolutely not doing that. Because you told me to do it. Like, yeah, that rings true for me as well. And like you said, like, it's almost a sort of the tone or if there's some way in which you're feeling condescended to. Yeah, yeah, it's so interesting, how that plays in with our, with ours, you know, it's like, it's, it's an attention issue, but it's also a hyper, you know, hyper focus transition issue. And then it's also kind of a almost like a sensory issue in terms of the the feedback that you know, you're getting when you don't want it?



Rebecca Perkins 48:17

Absolutely, the ADHD brain is so complex. And one of the things when I do I do a lot of public speaking over here, and one of the things I always say is, you know, ADHD is so much more complex than what many people understand, including a lot of the physicians who are diagnosing it. And, and when you look at demand avoidance, even though you know, at the moment, it is purely researched as a subtype of autism 100% I'm absolutely convinced that give it another five or 10 years, and they'll start realizing that a lot of ADHD is also struggle with demand avoidance, because I think more ADHD is struggle with that than what don't, and I know, I'm definitely one of them. It's, it's, it's very hard, and it's, and it's not conscious. It's not we don't purposely go, I'm not going to do that thing. But something in our brain goes, nope. You know, no, you just asked me in the wrong way, I can't do it. You know, I don't know why that is. But yeah, it's, there's something there that just just cuts it off if it's asked wrong,



Katy Weber 49:26

right. I mean, and we wonder why we feel like our brain, you know, I posted recently about how like people with ADHD, talk about their brains like that in the third person as though it's this awful roommate that we live with, that's so unpredictable, and we'd never know if they're gonna, it's gonna pay the rent and sometimes it plays loud music when you're trying to sleep. But, you know, we have a tendency to, like separate ourselves from our own brains because the it's so unpredictable, you know, and that sense of like idle don't know, this worked for me last time. It's not working this time or like I woke up this morning feeling like I was gonna accomplish things. And then my brain had other plans.



Rebecca Perkins 50:08

Yeah, and you know, so one of the things I would say to parents, and actually, I did a professional development in a school last week, and I asked all it was 150 teachers, and I said

to them, put your hand up, if you believe that consistency is key to helping kids with ADHD. And they all except for two of them, put their hands up. And we're like, you know, we're really proud of themselves, because they'd all agreed, and I sort of said, the whole myth of being consistent is, is so false when it comes to ADHD, because even neurotypical people, nobody, everyone has good days and bad days, but for an ADHD ear, some days, they'll be able to do this, this and this, because their brains, you know, really switched on that day, and, and working that little bit better. But another day, they might have had not enough sleep, they might be hungry, they might be tired, they might be thirsty, they might have anxiety, because something might have happened to them the night before, whatever, and they just can't achieve the things that they could achieve on a different day. And they can't take the demands, they could take on a different day. And, you know, they might be more easily pushed into a meltdown. And they weren't the day before. And so, with those kids, we can't be consistent, we have to be prepared to be flexible, based on their level of need on a particular day. Because, you know, it actually doesn't matter if you're ADHD or not everybody has good days and bad days. But for an ADHD, I know for myself, on a good day I can, I'm really focused and I can do really well. And on a bad day, like yesterday, I couldn't focus on anything. I was all over the place yesterday. And so I just think it's really interesting that so many people think consistency is so important. But actually, we need flexibility.



Katy Weber 51:57

Absolutely. I mean, it's drilled into us from the moment we start school and just even the even the grading system and this idea that like the best students are the ones who get straight A's is such a fallacy because it's like, again, you know, why on earth would you expect somebody to be good in every single subject? And they're just playing the game, right? You know, a typical ADHD report card has five A's and five DS. You know, and, and that's fine. You know, that's the other big like, I feel like this, I this, but when, when that's your report card, your teachers say things to you like your, you know, more consistency is needed. And you know, you need to bring your grades up in these other subjects. And I was like, why would I? Why would I want to bring my grade open that subject? What I'm focusing on this other subject I love? That's another soapbox.



Rebecca Perkins 52:46

Yeah, we don't all end up with 12 careers, we end up with one. So why we need to do so well, in every single topic, when we're clearly not going to end up working in every single topic, you know?



Katy Weber 52:57

Yeah, yeah. Now, so I want to ask you more about the, sorry, the peak center. But I, I guess the one question I asked all of my guests is if you could rename ADHD to something else, because that acronym is so problematic. And we don't, you know, like you said, we don't have a deficit of anything. And the term disorder, I think, can be really misleading. And also, the hyperactivity element can be so misleading for women. I certainly, you know, did not think I had ADHD

because I didn't identify as somebody who was hyperactive. And so it was, that was a real barrier for me. So I'm curious if you if you could name it something else? Do you have an idea what you might name

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Rebecca Perkins 53:40

it? Yes. So yes. So I have lots of problems with the name, aside from the fact that I don't think a single word in it is applicable or correct. And I also have a problem with the fact that it's named after its apparent symptoms, which aren't even correct, but it's not, you know, we don't call dyslexia, reading and writing disorder. But you know, why? I don't feel like why is it named after characteristics? Nothing else is. But if I could rename it, there's a word called there's a word in Latin, which is Anamosa. And Anamosa. In Latin means spirited. And so if I could rename it, I would rename it Anamosa because I think it's a nice word. It does. It's not a list of symptoms. And, and it actually means something that's relevant because I've never met an ADHD person, who in one form or another isn't spirited.



Katy Weber 54:35

I love that. Ah, that's so wonderful. I got like, I got shivers from goosebumps from that just thinking about like, you know, because I feel like Anamosa also has a sense of like, soul, you know, like, there's a sense of like, your essence. That is, so what a lovely word, but yeah, definitely. I love that. Let's go for it. Let's all we'll all start rallying for that one.

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Rebecca Perkins 55:02

Yeah, I'll start rallying over this side of the pond in Australia. We can, I just, I've heard so many options, but most options are just other lists of symptoms. And because it has so many characteristics, you couldn't possibly cover them all. And because you can't cover them all. And the list of symptoms or characteristics, creates problems, because people automatically will bind it to that. And not think of anything outside of that. And so when I typed was actually years ago, I always talk about how much I hate the name. And then many years ago, someone said to me, Well, what would you call it? And I said, Actually, I don't know. And they said, well, don't you think if you're saying how much you hate the name, you should think of a different option. And, and I created I spent a long time thinking about that. And I first thought, right, it's got to be a word, it can't be a list of characteristics. It's got to be a word. And it's got to be a relevant word. And I didn't want it to be an English word, because I thought, well, you know, it needs to be something that's special, because I think people with ADHD are just awesome, unique individuals. And I wanted to have a word that was equally awesome and equally unique. So eventually, that's what I came up with. But I really Yeah, I think it's really appropriate for ADHD is



Katy Weber 56:27

absolutely. Oh, I love it. Okay, you came prepared. Okay. So now how can people find you and work with you, I know you have a ton of any You've done so much. Public speaking. So I know even just putting your name into YouTube search bar comes up with so many wonderful

presentations you've given, but how can people find more of you and your partner and work with you or or come to some of your upcoming events? Yeah. So

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Rebecca Perkins 56:56

we, at the moment, we run all the ADHD events pretty much in Australia, and I've got most of them. So anyway, if anyone's in Australia that I'm pretty easy to find. In the US next year, we're actually we're doing a world tour, which starts next year of the ADHD and demand avoidance tour, actually, so if anybody wants to know more about ADHD and demand avoidance, and we talk a lot about it's a whole day, and we do a lot of we really go in depth with strategies and information. And that will be in four places in America next year. I know, I know, it's New York and LA and I can't remember where the other two places are off top of my head, but we'd definitely be visiting New York, LA and a couple of other places in in the States. And then the rest of the world we'll be doing the year after. So I'm really excited to do that. If people want to email me, the email addresses admin at my spirited child.com. So that's pretty easy to get ahold of. And and I'm always happy to sort of answer questions, and our website is just my spirited job.com. And there's loads of hopefully useful, interesting stuff on there and resources and that sort of thing.



Katy Weber 58:11

Oh, yes, absolutely. Oh, that's so exciting. I will definitely look out for it. I'm in New York. So hopefully, will be much more mobile. Next year. I've become such a hermit, the last two years of lockdown. Like, but yeah, I'm so excited to be able to go to Live Events again. And absolutely. So I can I get on a newsletter or sign up through your, through your website to get on your newsletter to find out what the dates are and everything.

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Rebecca Perkins 58:41

Yeah, so the newsletters on the front page, you can on the front page, you scroll down a bit and it says subscribe to the newsletter and, and in the newsletter, we we do have lots of really good information and strategies and then deals and all sorts of that go out on that. But we also let everyone know every time there's new events coming up and things. But yeah, we'll definitely be in New York. So I really hope to see you can come along and and find out more about demand avoidance, but it's gonna be really exciting. I'm so I've never been to America. So I'm really excited to get started with that and get to see some places that I've not been to and meet lots of people. You know, I that's my favorite part of my job is meeting people. So I'm looking forward to doing that.



Katy Weber 59:27

That's a Yeah. Oh, that's so wonderful. It's amazing. And yeah, very inspiring to I guess as I kind of look ahead as to what I want to wear, I want to expand with women and ADHD as you know, having more of these opportunities to kind of advocate and spread awareness and bring

community together. So that's so wonderful. Thank you. I'm so pleased to have met you and really thank you for your time and thank you so much for all the amazing work you're doing in Australia and and internationally as well

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Rebecca Perkins 1:00:01

oh for having me it was really nice speaking to you today I've really enjoyed chatting to someone over you know in a different country and it's not a time where you are a morning here and yeah it's really great