

Layla Touchet: Teaching schools to spot signs of ADHD in gir...

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SPEAKERS

Katy Weber, Layla Touchet



Layla Touchet 00:00

We call it the butterfly effect at my school honestly, where we know parents are used to seeing the hyperactive boy, but we're like, think of the daydreamer who seems like they could be looking straight at you. But you ask them something, and they're not responding. You can tell they're in their own world. Look for the doodlers.



Katy Weber 00:26

Hello, and welcome to the women and ADHD podcast. I'm your host, Katy Weber. I was diagnosed with ADHD at the age of 45. And it completely turned my world upside down. I've been looking back at so much of my life, school jobs, my relationships, all of it with this new lens and it has been nothing short of overwhelming I quickly discovered I was not the only woman to have this experience. And now I interview other women who like me discovered in adulthood they have ADHD and are finally feeling like they understand who they are and how to best lean into their strengths both professionally and personally. Okay, before we get started, I would like to share with you this review from a listener called poof elation on the Apple podcast platform. It's titled woman with ADHD, love the podcast, enlightening, informative and supportive for those with ADHD and for their families to understand why their loved one does what they do. Thank you for providing this podcast. Ah, thank you who've elation for us. It really is all about the why right? figuring out why we think the way we do, why we get stuck sometimes why ADHD is overlooked, why we get misdiagnosed, etcetera, etcetera. Knowing the answers and better understanding ourselves is how we are finally able to shift our perspective about ourselves. So thank you so much for taking the time to write this review. And if you're a listener of this podcast, and you've been helped at all by these conversations, a lovely way to say thank you is to take a moment to leave a review, or even just hit those five stars. It makes such a big difference in getting this podcast noticed and found by other women who could really benefit from hearing these interviews too. Okay, here we are at Episode 89, in which I interview Leila to che Leila is a 29 year old neurodivergent female who works as a school counselor in Louisiana, working with tiny humans in grades pre K through

second grade, most of whom are neuro divergent as well. She's also a licensed mental health counselor with certifications in autism and ADHD. And she's currently working on her PhD in counseling. Leila was first diagnosed with ADHD about a year and a half ago. And after she started medication for her ADHD, she realized there were still some things not adding up. And that's when she went back and received her autism diagnosis. So we talk all about her dual diagnosis and what it's been like to look back over the course of her life, especially your childhood and see the traits of ADHD and autism throughout. They also talk about how her discovery of her own neuro divergence has helped shape her as a mental health counselor and how she's now educating the teachers and staff at her school and in her entire district on how to recognize some of the more overlooked neurodivergent traits in children, especially in girls, and we talk about her love of karate and kickboxing as well as our shared love of office supplies. Enjoy. So, Leila, I am really curious kind of you had a two part journey, right? You were diagnosed with ADHD. And then a little bit later you were diagnosed with autism, ASD. So what was going on in your life that kind of led to you looking into ADHD? What were some of the things where you started connecting the dots and thinking I should look into this because your partner had ADHD too, right?

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Layla Touchet 03:44


Yes. So funny enough, I've pretty much joked my whole life that I have ADHD. But I'm also gifted. So that masked a lot of things going on for me, but probably, but I just made it because my gifted kind of outweighed my ADHD. And January 2019, I started my first job right out of grad school as a school counselor. And I was running back into grab something from the house and my husband looked at me and he went, Leila, you realize your ADHD too, right? And I was like, I ain't got time for this conversation. I gotta find my keys. And then, part of my job as a counselor is I sit in on a lot of parent meetings, where we discuss concerns and they were talking about all of these little girls with inattentiveness but still being okay, like, academically average, and I'm like, this is really like familiar, but I wasn't ready to like touch that yet. Because like, I just graduated, new job. Let me settle into this. Then, of course, the pandemic hit. Right after the pandemic hit, I decided to start a Ph. D. program online for counseling, of course, and that's where my edges start to go pull over the edge. And I also got an intern at my job. So I was supervising a school counseling intern, I just added all the things to my plate, and it kind of blew up in my face. So I actually got my diagnosis in December of 2022 days before Christmas Day. And I actually didn't get medicated until April of 2021. Because I was nervous about it. My family has a history with substances. So it's like, but it came, I'm the type of academic person where I never turned anything late. Would I be doing it two hours before it's due? Yes. But never late. And I changed my dissertation type from qualitative to quantitative while I was in the advanced qualitative class. And I did not write that paper for three weeks. And that is when I finally decided to get on medication.




Katy Weber 06:16

Right. So it's interesting because I have a similar experience where I got the prescription for the medication. And then it took me a couple of weeks to just even go pick it up. And then it sat in my bag, and I just, like, carried it around my purse for weeks before I even took it because I was really nervous. But I don't have much of a history of substance abuse beyond alcohol abuse. So I wasn't really worried about the prescription medication aspect, I was mostly worried that it was sort of going to amp me up, you know, like, I was worried that because stimulant


right, you know, my, my, my stereotype, or my misconception about a stimulant was that it was gonna make me feel like I was on cocaine. And it was the total opposite for an it is for many of us. But was that something you came up with on your own? Or was that something your doctor told you because like, we now realize that is absolute misconception.

 Layla Touchet 07:06


It was on my own. So I realized I didn't go through like a traditional method of getting my ADHD diagnosis, actually went through ADHD online. Because I understood myself well enough to know that I was not going to make an appointment, try to go see a doctor physically in the midst of a pandemic. And so I did research online to find a credible site that did the online diagnoses and was like a credible, reputable source. And I found ADHD online. And I was not disappointed. They gave me a 20 page report. Yeah,

 Katy Weber 07:47

I have several family members who have been diagnosed through ADHD online. I'm a big supporter of that company on that website. And I think especially in the middle of a pandemic, it's such a great resource. That was a little side tangent about this sort of misconceptions about ADHD medication as though it is somehow abusing, you know, or addictive. That's the other thing is doctors will often talk about how addictive the medication is, like, it's a gateway drug. And it's so the and then meanwhile, we're all forgetting to take

 Layla Touchet 08:18

me and one of my best friends were talking yesterday, she also has ADHD, we kind of just flock together, right. And we were talking about how we have to set alarms, like halfway through the day. So we don't forget our midday dose. And I'm like, it might be addictive for people who don't have ADHD. I was like, but we lucky if we remember.

 Katy Weber 08:39

No, right. Okay, so So you got on the medication to finish your paper and kind of what what happened, then what was your experience?

 Layla Touchet 08:48

Honestly, it was very fun. Because it wasn't just from like, inside my head. My intern by that point was spending all day every day with me. So my principal actually looked at her and went, Kirsten, you're the one who has to spend the most time with her. What difference do you see? And it was the most perfect description. She looked at my principal and she went, you could tell that Leila is brain isn't as loud in her head. And it was perfect. Because I always have my thoughts going 100 miles an hour. And I could finally pick a thought when I want it to. And that was life altering for me. Honestly.



Katy Weber 09:33

I love that description. I can pick a thought when I want to. That's so apt. And it's interesting that somebody else notices because we always talk about how quiet our brains feel right and how everything going a million miles a minute just really slows down. But it's interesting that somebody you work with would notice that it's cool.



Layla Touchet 09:50

Like I said she was literally like her and I were in close quarters all day every day. Like I was supervising her. She did lessons with me So that's why my principal looked. I was like, Kirsten, you tell me. She's like, it's not that don't trust your Laila. I need somebody else to tell me.



Katy Weber 10:10

Now, you had mentioned in your email to me that after getting on the medication was when you realize things were still not adding up, as you said, and then you started to look into autism. Now you work with you work with kids on the spectrum as well. Right? So you again, like what was happening that you were sort of like there's more happening here.



Layla Touchet 10:31

So after you know, about almost a year on the medication, I realized, there were still some things like socially, that weren't quite adding up for me, like, not outwardly, for like other people. But I can tell I was still missing social cues, not quite getting certain things misreading certain things. And I absolutely have the sensory issues. Like if something don't feel right on me, I've stopped mid lesson been to a teacher like, Hey, can you find the hair and grab it because I can't deal with it, like a straight hair or my shirt. And I was actually doing a certification training for autism. And I came across Jennifer Cooke. She wrote this beautiful book called Autism in heels. And she wrote a checklist checklist. So I printed it out. And then I was checking off every single thing. And I cried throughout her book, because I just related to it so much. And I was like, This is it. This makes sense. This is my missing piece.



Katy Weber 11:46

Wow, that's really powerful. And you just remind me of how I had to pull over the other day, because it was like, a feather in my shirt somewhere. And I had to pull over and like jump out of the car. Like, rip my shirt off until I could find out where it was. I didn't know what it was at the time, if I didn't know if it was a bug or something. But I was like, yeah, so Wow. Okay, I actually haven't heard of that book. That's really interesting. I want to look into that. So what's the testing process? Like once you've already been diagnosed with ADHD? Because sometimes I feel like I interview a lot of women who kind of get it as a package deal, right? Like they get the big diagnostic testing. And they you know, it's the four hour and you come out with a whole list of all the things all these different learning disability, you're like, turns out I had all these things I didn't know about. But what did that look like for you that additional testing process?



Layla Touchet 12:35

So I found a local psychiatrist in my area who did testing for adults, which is a lot harder than it sounds. There's not many who do it. Especially not. I'm in southern Louisiana. Yeah, so even harder, if I'm being quite honest. And so I ended up finding one where she just came back to Louisiana like two years ago, I set up the appointment online, which was my favorite kind of way to set up an appointment. They emailed me paperwork to fill out, and I went in. And it was not like a normal, what people would think of when they think of like an autism evaluation. Like I told her, she was the most personable and empathetic psychiatrists, psychologists I've ever met. It was like having a conversation. She was gathering all of my like medical history, physical history, social, mental, just all of my history has been in conversation form. And sure enough, at the end, she, you know, reaffirm the ADHD, she reaffirmed anxiety, because like most females, I've been diagnosed with anxiety since I was like 12. And she was like, and you absolutely meet the criteria for autism. She was like, I know, we don't like this word, but it was her way of like, processing it herself. But she was like, if Asperger's was still in the DSM, that's what I would have given you.



Katy Weber 14:14

Yeah, yeah. Gosh, where do I start? I have so many questions, but well, just about anxiety to write because I'm like, when I think about all of these symptoms, and how they are in childhood, and I think about my own childhood, now, I think about my, my daughter a lot who's into high school, and I questioned a lot of just sort of like, she is doing really, really well in school. But now I'm also kind of like at what cost right because she is developing so much anxiety and I'm like, it's interesting to me in terms of like, what the struggle look like when it's hidden so deep, right? But anyway, I'm curious when now with these diagnoses, looking back over the course of your life, with this new lens You know, it's so profound. I gotta find a new word. I use that word, I think every week. But anyway, it's I don't know what else to call it. That's what it is right? It's just insane looking back throughout your whole life through this new lens, but like, what are some of the things that come to mind that you were like, Oh, the signs were clearly there all along.



Layla Touchet 15:19

So the first thing I can think of that's like autism related is, I was four years old. I was in pre K. And there's this little boy who used to pick on me all the time. It was one of those. Honestly, it was part of my routine. I went to pre K, he picked on me, I got mad about it. Well, one day, he was not picking on me. And I was so confused. My routine was messed up. He wasn't doing what he normally did. So I stuck. My he was like playing on a table and like throwing a pointed toy. So I stuck my head straight in front of the toy being like, why aren't you picking on me today. And now I have a scar that you can't see in the camera. But I have a scar on my eyebrow from that. But it just complete. Did missed everything. And that's like my first, like, look at autism. But I was actually a hyperactive child. I had a wonderful first grade teacher, who actually told my mom to get me evaluated for ADHD. But they just told my mom that I'm gifted and bored. Yeah, it was like y'all were right. But y'all were wrong.



Katy Weber 16:37

Yeah, well, it's all it's yes. And right.



Layla Touchet 16:41

Yes. But it was more than that. But I was also not what people thought of when they looked at ADHD, or autism, because my natural hair color is white blonde, like I am about as cotton top as they get, you know, blue eye blonde, T tiny, white girl in the South. I am not what people thought of. And they were just like, Oh, she's just smart. And I think it was a relief for my mom to hear that at that time. Because my mom has cerebral palsy. So she already dealt with a lot of stigma and everything through her life. So I think part of her didn't want me to feel that she wants to focus on the positive things, which I'm grateful for. Because I think that's why I was able to make it so long without a diagnosis. And without medication. It was when I overloaded my plate that it finally got too much for me. But my mom always supported, like my strengths and my abilities. And the whatever wild hair came up. She was like, just do your thing, Leila, I'll still love you. So I've always been hyper. I remember middle school I used to go into what we called lala land is what I called it when I would zone out. I was the type of person who can hyper focus on books for hours on end, actually bounced between sports, until I found karate at the age of nine. And that became one of my high interest areas. And I still do karate to this day. It's one of my favorite things. There are videos of me kicking things in the morning, it makes my day. So I can see the ebb and flow of like hyper focus. But my high interest areas have come to stay like hey, Potter books, and martial arts and office supplies. And actually my job school counseling, because I decided I was going to be in psychology when I was 12. Really? Yep. And now I'm working on a PhD in counseling.



Katy Weber 18:56

That's amazing. Yeah, you know, it's funny, I feel like I've spoken to so many women who are in teaching or you know, doing something sort of social, social services related, you know, I think we have such a, we're so drawn to helping marginalized communities. And it makes perfect sense. You know, when you reached out to me and sort of was talking about a little bit of your background, it's like, yeah, it's got ADHD written all. You know, it's funny, you also remind me reminded me of a story of when I was in like fifth or sixth grade, and I was being punished by my teacher because I was talking too much. And so I would get I got sent out into the hall. And I remember one time getting sent out into the hallway and I was really bored. So I started trying to count all of the holes in the ceiling tiles. And then I figured if I could figure out how many holes were in a ceiling tile that I could count all the ceiling tiles in the entire hallway and I could figure out exactly how many holes there were in the entire hallway. Right. And then I got she sent a student out to tell me I could come back inside but I wasn't done counting So I told the students to tell the teacher I'm not ready to come back inside. Yeah. And then of course, she came storming out into the hallway because I was being defiant. And she sent me to the principal's office. And it's like now through the through this lens I've just liked, but I had this thing I was like, needed to finish.



Layla Touchet 20:17

And my intern were talking the other day. And she was, I had sent her a tech talk about

something where it's like, if you see a person repeating a number to themselves, do not interrupt them. And she used to deflect all of the people on campus for me, because she knew I'd be like, trying to remember something. And she would just answer the questions while I was in hyper focus mode, and just be like, let her be, I got this.



Katy Weber 20:47

It kind of reminds me of going to a restaurant where you have to get the the code for the bathroom. You know, you go to like Starbucks, and they tell you the 18 digit code to get in the bathroom. And I just have to like, repeat it over and over and over and over, on my way to the bathroom. Otherwise, I will forget it. But especially to me that you knew so early because I sort of felt like that was one of the questions that I I always hated, right? What do you want to do when you grow up? I never knew what I wanted to be when I grew up. And the only the only thing I ever wanted to be when I grew up was a secretary. And like the feminist and me it was like, really? But now I'd through ADHD lens. I'm kind of like no, you know what that makes sense that you are to be a secretary because I love like organizing. And I love you know, often like you said office supplies and to me it being a secretary was like being in charge of calendars and managing things. And that level of like hyper organization always appealed to me.



Layla Touchet 21:41

Yes, I understand. Yeah, right.



Katy Weber 21:45

Yeah, I love the office supply section of target. I'd like to take a moment to think better help for sponsoring this podcast. If you're a regular listener of this podcast, you know, I am a big proponent of therapy therapy provides me the best opportunity for verbal processing something that is so important for my kind of brain and my sense of self. What I love about better help is that it's not a crisis line. It's not self help. It is professional therapy that's done securely online from the comfort of your home. They assess your needs and match you with your own licensed professional therapist, and it's available for clients worldwide. So you get access to a broad range of expertise that might not be available to you locally. It also tends to be more affordable than traditional offline therapy and financial aid is available. If you visit their website and read their testimonials. There are actually quite a few reviews that specifically reference help with ADHD as a special offer for listeners of the women and ADHD podcast, you'll get 10% off your first month, simply sign up at [betterhelp.com/women ADHD](https://betterhelp.com/women-ADHD). That's BetterHelp h e l p.com/women. ADHD. And there's a link in the show notes. This podcast is sponsored by BetterHelp. So now I'm curious about working with children. So you I love that you call them tiny humans to how did you get started? Or how did you sort of find yourself working with neurodivergent children.



Layla Touchet 23:07

So it kind of just comes as part of the job of being a school counselor. Like I have known I want to be in the like psych field since I was 12. But also always knew I want to work with children. I taught karate to three and four year olds when I was in high school. Anvthind I did. I was prettv

...much always relating to tiny humans or adolescents. It was never, it was never really me looking at adult population. And when I got into grad school, I decided to do like the dual track. So as mental health and school counseling, that was also another ADHD rollercoaster, where I was like, I'm just going to do mental health. Now, I'm just going to do school counseling, and I was like, eff it. I'm gonna do both. I might as well. And this all happened within like a eight month span. But I went through my, my master's, and I did actually all of my internships were in high schools. But when I graduated, it was middle of the school year. So I graduated December of 2018. And it just so happened, an elementary position was open. And for me, I was just worried about getting hired. I didn't care where I got hired. I wanted to get hired. And it just so happened. I went and I interviewed, and they called me the next day to let me know I got the job. And I was terrified. Because I was like, How is somebody who is five foot even going to work with tiny humans. Like I can terrify a high schooler with no problem. Little kids are fearless. I was like, I don't know if I can do this. But my co counselor because we're pre K through five school, I have pre K through second. And my co counselor Alicia has third through fifth. And I could not have asked for a better co counselor, I could not have asked for honestly a better friend either. Because she helped make my transition seamless. The things I didn't know about the elementary level she taught me. But the way I started really learning more about my tiny humans, especially the neurodivergent ones is they were the ones coming up on my caseload of being referred for small group counseling. They're the kids who get the most discipline referrals, especially kids with ADHD. I was actually looking at my data last year. And I realized every single suicide assessment I did was on a kid with ADHD. And that's kind of what made me go down my rabbit hole of getting all my certification. Because I have the ADHD certification, I have the autism certification, all of that. It's just a nature working in the schools, that kids who get referred to me, tend to be the quote unquote, behavior, kids. And unfortunately, those tend to be our kids who have a 504, or an IEP for ADHD or autism, which kind of breaks my heart to say,



Katy Weber 26:30

Yeah, it's so heartbreaking. And just thinking about the negative comments and the eye rolling. And that feeling of just being such a colossal disappointment is something that so many of us felt as children, right. Yeah. And it's got to be so heartbreaking to see to watch that continuing from generation to generation and knowing that, like, there's so many levels to how we can need to help, right, like, it's just not just the diagnosis. You know, there's so much more beyond that in terms of like, lifting these kids up, right. I know, you're you should be the one talking. I'm curious, you know, you mentioned about, you had started an ADHD initiative at your school, which just, you know, I love because every time you know, I just love how, as soon as we're diagnosed, we're like, okay, how can I advocate? How can I help? How can I save other, you know, it's immediately like, so many of us turn into that advocacy role, right. So I'd love to hear more about how you've been educating other faculty and teachers and parents.



Layla Touchet 27:38

So this is like my baby. I'm so proud of this initiative. And I noticed that this I'm thankful I have an administration where I go to her with my shenanigans. And as long as I have a reasonable rationale, she's like, go for it, Leila. Like, she trusts me. And me and my co counsel, we were, you know, looking at our data, we realized 75% of our 504 plans were for kids with ADHD 75%. And that was out of like, I think at the time, like 80, we had like, 80 kids with plans. So

yeah, at least 60 of them had ADHD on there. Now, some of them were, you know, combined, like ADHD and dyslexia, those kinds of things. But at least 60 of them had ADHD on it. And I had just finished up my certification training. So I had all of this information in front of me. And I'm like, I can make handouts. I can make presentations. I was like, Miss Biewer. Can I do the thing? Here's the data of why I should do the thing. But can I do the thing? This is like Leila do the thing. So starting in September, every week, they started getting different handouts that I would email out and also print out and put in their boxes, using the information I got from my training. So like I talked about executive functioning skills, I talked about different ways to set up their classroom, different types of accommodations. What is the true fidget? What will properly get their attention, regulate it back onto the right things kind of thing. I started talking more at 504 meetings about it helping parents understand it. I repair teacher conference, I gave a zoom presentation to parents that wanted to attend. I gave them at three different times, both times so they had different times throughout the day that they could come and then I also videoed it. So if anybody missed it, I could email it to them. And with it came a handout that had, like different ADHD resources, like, attitude has a really wonderful like parent toolkit for it. I attach that I found some like kangaroo ADHD worksheet, put that in just all kinds of things linked within it that I could send with the presentation. I've actually also presented at my alma mater for my master's program to their counseling clinic on how to become an ADHD friendly counselor. I did a program proposal for my state conference, that will be in September. And I'm still waiting to hear back. But same thing, but on, like, bigger scale of being an ADHD friendly counselor. So I've just been disseminating all this information in any way I can to them, whether it's through presentations or handouts in real time of showing them, hey, here's what you can do. Or I take them into my office and I show them how my desk is set up. And like, you see this, this might help your tiny human right now. Because I was like, I don't even sit on a regular chair. I have a ball chair in my office for the record.



Katy Weber 31:26

Oh my god. Well, for me, the litmus test for a teacher is fidgets like you said, like if the teacher gives them fidgets because they know it helps them focus and helps them listen or lets them doodle. I'm like, Yes. Thumbs up. Good job. It's the teacher that's like, I take all that stuff away, because then they're not paying attention to me. I'm like, No, you've completely missed the mark. Just heard now. So I just want to backtrack because you said it. Kangaroo. Yeah. thing. What is that?



Layla Touchet 31:55

I think I found it on a site called teacher pay teacher's. It's like a giant site for educators and I just searched like ADHD worksheets, is like a set of like kangaroo themed ADHD worksheets.



Katy Weber 32:10

Oh, okay. So it's just like, that's the mascot. Apparently, it kind of makes sense.



Layla Touchet 32:15

I don't know. I'm gonna be honest and saying that was an impulse buy and I don't regret it

I don't know. I'm gonna be honest and saying that was an impulse buy, and I don't regret it.



Katy Weber 32:22

I like it. I always say I always feel or think about Winnie the Pooh, right? I'm like, some days, I'm Tigger. Some days I am er, I'm like a healthy balance of both.



Layla Touchet 32:33


I wish I could be. I run it like 110 miles all the time. Really, actually, when I present it to like my alma mater, somebody that I went to middle school in high school with is in their current cohort. As I was getting the presentation, so caught, I was like, actually, so knows me has known me for years. It's just like, honestly, like, how did they just diagnose you? We all knew, we just thought they decided not to give you medication. Like that. That's what it seemed like. And I'm just like, nope, yeah, I've been running. I've always run at this level. I don't crash until I'm asleep. And even then, I'm still moving.




Katy Weber 33:17

When I was diagnosed with ADHD, it completely turned my world upside down. I looked back at so much of my life, my grades in school, my multiple careers and hobbies, my friendships, my marriage, motherhood, my relationship with food and my body, like all of this with a new lens. And it was overwhelming to say the least, if you've been diagnosed with ADHD, and you're feeling blown away by this new insight into your brain and how it operates, I totally understand I can help you begin to sort through this chaos, explore who you are and how your brain operates. So you can finally start to lean into your strengths and begin to use them to your advantage moving forward. Together, we can work to identify what obstacles you've been facing, and create strategies to help you start living a more fulfilling, gratifying life, head over to women and adhd.com/coaching to book a 30 minute initial consult with me. So we can figure out if my brand of one on one coaching is right for you. Again, that's women and adhd.com/coaching. And you can find that link in the episode show notes. I don't get to sit down with a school counselor very often. So like the parent in me is like, oh my god, I have so many questions. But I'm curious about teaching teachers, right because the topic I've spoken a lot on this podcast about you know why boys are more likely to be diagnosed with bike than girls is because it's the teachers who are recognizing disruptive behavior, and they're telling that they're calling the parents and they're like your kid has ADHD, get them diagnose, get them on medication so that they're not as disruptive grossly you know, simplifying it, but in a nutshell, right? So how do you teach teachers what to look for? In girls, if the girl is not really disruptive and often doing very well, you know, sometimes there's like low level disorganization happening. But a lot of it is so internalized, right? It's just this buildup of anxiety and internalized pressure, especially like get the gifted program. Oh, my God that gives your program is just basically like a mill for ADHD. Right? Right. As a teacher, what did they even look for, because I also feel like as a parent, I have kind of one of each, I have the boy who is all over the place, really just like so classic ADHD, and he's just so big with his emotions. And he's so little, you know, everything is intense. And he's just, you know, he's very, sort of very easy for me to see a lot of the signs, but then I look at my teenage daughter who is like, very sort of closed, and she is fairly organized, like, she doesn't have a lot of the kind of classic symptoms of ADHD. But I see her as she's getting older, having so much anxiety around her executive

dysfunction, especially when it comes to like planning and the bigger projects, right, you know, it's like, now she's getting older. So she's getting bigger projects and longer term projects, and she just cannot manage her time. She's procrastinating, like crazy. And so that kind of anxiety is happening. So anyway, just to backtrack, how do you teach teachers what to look for if it's not the sort of stereotypical signs?

 Layla Touchet 36:27


So one of the first things that like we're talking about is like, we tell them look for the daydreamers, who's the one, we call it in the butterfly effect? At my school, honestly, where we know parents are used to seeing the hyperactive boy, but we're like, think of the daydreamer who seems like they could be looking straight at you. But you ask them something, and they're not responding. You can tell they're in their own world. Look for the doodlers, we also look at test scores a lot.

 Katy Weber 37:00


That is really, that's really right. That is basically the ADHD test. Look for the doodlers, that's all you need, right?

 Layla Touchet 37:07

Or even the ones who get lost in their books. Like I did that a lot. Teachers didn't complain about me because I was reading, I need to start saying this more to my teachers, but they also need to look at who the girls who are finishing their tasks super fast.

 Katy Weber 37:27

Yes, good one,


 Layla Touchet 37:29

because they don't have a sense of time. So they try to get through it as fast as they can, because they don't know what time feels like. That was me. And then they're sitting there. And they're doodling or they're reading their books. It's the ones who like for test scores. They're very inconsistent. So like, one day, it'll be here. Next day, I'll be lower than it might be average. They're never consistent. And it's not consistent with what we know they're capable of. It's like the fun little you look at their graphs, and it's like a fun roller coaster. That you do not want to go.


 Katy Weber 38:13

Yeah, yeah, that was sort of how I was doing school. It was like, if it was a multiple choice test, or like a one page quick homework, I would do it immediately. It was easy. But it was the bigger


stuff. The book reports the essays, you know, those are the things that they were always like, Katie really, she starts things and she just loses her focus. And that's where all those comments were and or, and that's, you know, that's where the procrastination starts to come in and etc, etc. But yeah, that's a really good thing about inconsistent tests, inconsistent grades, and the type of assignments I think really matters, too.

 Layla Touchet 38:44


Yeah. And handwriting. Really bad handwriting. I have yet to find an ADHD girl with like, decent handwriting. I would love to see somebody who does. Because if they do, please teach me because I can't. Like I can't. Yeah, that

 Katy Weber 39:04


was one of my big realizations after my diagnosis. I'm still really bitter about it. I've talked about this in the past how I you know, my, my parents always laughed about how I was left handed and that my kindergarten teacher forced me to become right handed. And then soon thereafter, by the time I was in first grade, they were criticizing my handwriting and it was always on my report cards, you know, needs to work on her handwriting. And I was like, Can you give me a break? Like I just like, did it never occur to any of you? This was terrible decision making. And they were always like, Yeah, isn't that funny that that happened?

 Layla Touchet 39:37

No, not funny. Fun fact. I do some things left hand it and the majority I think's right hand it like because my left eye is my strong i. So I shoot pool left handed. I fight left handed. I also had a gifted teacher who made us color mandalas were on the right I had, we had to color with our right hand, left side, we had to color with a left hand. And also, we couldn't have same color touching.

 Katy Weber 40:07

I had an art teacher who made us do that redrawing simultaneously on both sides. For teachers, those are some really great answers. And I think that's super helpful. But so when does medication become part of the treatment plan, because I think a lot of the time medication is also something where the teacher is like, this kid is out of control, we need this medication.

 Layla Touchet 40:27

So I have a fun quote that I like to say, pills don't teach skills, but pills help the brain be ready to learn the skills. And that is what I feel like you're trying to describe.

 Katy Weber 40:39



Katy Weber 40:55

Right? Yeah, cuz, I mean, we do talk about it, like it's quieting and helps focus and all of that. But sometimes when you're telling teachers that like it's the quiet kids who are reading and daydreaming who might need help, as well, like, is that also the first option for them as well, I guess, is my question.



Layla Touchet 40:57

So in the school system, we technically are not allowed to touch medication in that sense. Usually, the extent that I talk medication is asking, Are they on medication? Or did they start it because it helps us? Help them see, is there change? If they're looking for something in particular? are we noticing any differences? But in the school setting? It's not our lane to talk about medication. So it's one of those things we have to tread lightly kind of thing.



Katy Weber 41:36

That totally makes sense. I get that. But in terms of coping skills, right, I mean, you had talked earlier about anxiety, coping skills, what are some, what are some examples that you would recommend? For those kids who on the surface seem like they're doing fine, but we know as adult women, we see what's going to happen to them. Like, we know that this is just a ball of anxiety that's growing and growing and growing.



Layla Touchet 42:01

So they're doing well for now. But I know like, for me personally, and I've heard you say this before, on previous episodes, getting a diagnosis was like treatment for me. You know, it helped make sense. And I think that parents need to talk to their kids about it. I think they need to develop mental, you know, appropriate ways. But they need to be talked with about it, they need to be told to understand, and cuz most of these time, the kids, especially the girls, they just think, oh, this, everybody's like this, I just gotta keep it inside. They don't know that there's a different way to think and do things. They don't realize that there are other things they can do. Like we all have that internalized. You know, I'm not good enough. I'm not doing enough kind of things that I know, I felt especially being gifted. I had so much expectation put on me. Like, I had a parent who wanted me to go to school for engineering. I shut that down. Like there was the ducking sky. I think they need to be informed, so that they know. And as a school counselor, I can actually help with that because I go into the classrooms every month, I do classroom counseling lessons on a variety of topics. Like I did one for second grade this year on autism with the book uniquely wired to help teach kids about autism. Their books like Mrs. Gorsky I think I have the wiggle fidgets or it's hard to be a verb. I'm still trying to find some that show the more classic ADHD like inattentive, but it's a little bit harder. But I still try to use those books to show kids like, because my kids know me. They know who Mr. Shea is. I feel bad because I mess up lines. I get lots of hugs. I mad about that. Give me all the hugs. But they know to they can come to me. And I've noticed especially like the school year, with me saying more about Okay. These are the kinds of things to look for, like planning and time sense. And emotional regulation or perfectionism. My teachers are coming to me more. They're consulting with me more than asking me more questions. So kids who wouldn't have normally ended up on my radar actually ended up on my radar this school year.



Katy Weber 44:50

That's amazing. I find even I mean, neither of my kids is officially diagnosed yet the diagnosis process is that's a whole other issue. I'm just trying to get through the days fair. You know what I mean? Like, right? But I still think like, my parenting has changed so drastically with my own knowledge of neuro divergence, right? And my attitude toward parenting my children and what to look for all of that has changed so much it feels it feels good. You know, it feels it's I think for the first time in my life, I I can actually say I'm a great parent, and I'm a great parent for my kids too, which is another thing I never could have said before my diagnosis. I mean, I shout that from the rooftops I think the diagnosis itself is so incredibly life changing. And sometimes I get flack for like celebrating when people are diagnosed with ADHD. My response is always like, yes, that's amazing. Fantastic. And then people are like, how can you celebrate it and make light of it ADHD has some serious, really serious, I'm like, Yes, of course, it's serious. But I'm celebrating the diagnosis. Because the diagnosis, I'm not celebrating ADHD, but I'm celebrating a diagnosis because I feel like that is a window opening in terms of what is possible in your life. It is amazing. And so that's so wonderful that you're able to see the changes in your relationship with these kids as well. So rewarding. Oh, my goodness. I can't even imagine what it's like to be a school counselor right now. Oh, my God.



Layla Touchet 46:21

Look, it's fun. Interesting. I get tired a lot. But I wouldn't change it for the world. You know, especially like, I work with four year olds to eight year olds, I got the best tiny humans. Like straight up. I had some second graders trying to barricade themselves against the door the other day, because I told them since they're going to third grade, they're getting a different counselor like you can't leave. Oh, so is it still trying? Yes. But people always ask me why don't have my own kids. And I'm like, I got 300 of them at work.



Katy Weber 47:02

I get that. So So I'm curious. What about your ADHD or ASD? What I mean, what is it that you love? We've talked about it sort of woven throughout this interview. But is there anything else that you wanted to add in that you you love,



Layla Touchet 47:17

I love that it helps me help my tiny humans more. They technically started this journey, like of me actually delving deep into it, because it is me missing something for work, and my husband pointing it out once again. But I love that it helps me help them. I love that it helps me advocate for them and brings more awareness. I tell people all the time when I give presentations about school counseling, I'm like, Look, you can do a lot of these things. But I understand that I run at it like a higher level than most people when it comes to that. Like, I am autistic, who has a special interest in her job. So I go to conferences, and I'm energized, while most people are just straight tired after them. And I'm like, Yes, give me more. Oh, this is a training. I've got like six trainings currently queued that I need to go through. And it helps me

gain more information. And it helps me understand myself better and understand my tiny humans better. And ultimately, it helps me love them more, and create the safe place they need and help others create that safe place they need.



Katy Weber 48:39

Oh my gosh, that is so beautiful. And also to I mean, I love recognizing how I learned best, right. And that was another thing too. That's been really great for me since my diagnosis, because I just did not do well in school. And I certainly didn't do well in university. And I always felt like I struggled in the classroom and struggled in lecture halls and all of that. And I just thought I was a bad student. And therefore I was not smart. And I kept that with me for years and years and years. And always felt like I you know, I was a fraud. And now it's really like understanding that when you are interested in something and learning on your own terms, you're unstoppable. And that's the thing that I finally was able to recognize myself where I'm like, oh my god, like, I just learned in totally non traditional ways. And that's amazing. And, and suddenly to be really proud of so yeah, if you can teach that to children too, right? Realize that like if this is not the best, if this is not working out for you, it's not your fault. You just need to find something that will



Layla Touchet 49:45

actually found I use a large group curriculums, and one of them is called mega minds. And it's specifically for like gifted and talented kids. And the first thing we do is a whiz quiz on multiple intelligences. So We figure out like, what are their like? The Gardner's like seven intelligences, it's like, alright, what are your top three? I like created them a little handout and let their teachers know, I'm the biggest proponent of like, figure out what they like and incorporate it. They like Mario, have them count Mario toys, or Mario coins. There we go. Like, for me, it's Harry Potter. Let's talk about some Quidditch. Like, oh, is that Paw Patrol? We're gonna we're about to learn some names of some Paw Patrol people. When you do those things that like you said, it just, it's like, they can do anything. And I've gotten to like, watch that happen in action. So I love it. It makes me so happy.



Katy Weber 50:51

Oh, God, I feel like you feel like like I should thank you for your service. That's what I feel like when I meet teachers and school staff. I'm like, Thank you for your service, because it's just it's like such you're in the trenches right now. It really is like, it's just so much insanity right now. So okay, so I want to ask you, if you would rename ADHD to something a little less confusing or problematic, what would you call it?



Layla Touchet 51:17

So I actually got Alicia, my co counselor in on this because I was like, I'm drawing a blank right now. I don't know. If she gave me the best one. It was attention competition. Disorder. Oh, because I guess she was talking to her friends. And she was like, I'm not ADHD, and Leila

focuses better than I do. So it's not that she can't focus. It's just she wants to focus on everything.



Katy Weber 51:45

Yeah, right. I know. Yeah. We talked about that all the time. It's the regulation and that I use the analogy of the buzzers, the the restaurant. buzzers, you know, that they're all sitting on a table, and you're like, What do I What do I do first, and you try to do something, and all the buzzers are still going off. I'm like, Yeah, that's what it feels like to try to prioritize tasks in my brain.



Layla Touchet 52:07

Yeah. So attention competition disorder.



Katy Weber 52:12

I like that. Thanks, Alicia. Right. Oh, well, that's awesome. It sounds wonderful. I know. Are you doing any other advocacy? I know you, you know beyond just the classroom right now? Or do you have any playing you're kind of cooking stuff up.



Layla Touchet 52:28

I'm waiting on. I'm waiting on a my, my program proposal. I did our iron Elementary School Counselor of my school district. So I'll plan on using that to my advantage to show people like ADHD and autism doesn't have to be a scary thing. And we can still be successful, because I'm just like, I'm getting a PhD. Don't let it scare you. Right. I interact with my local university a lot. They're my alma mater. And I'm always in contact with some of the professor's there. I mean, that's how I ended up at their clinic giving a presentation. So it's kind of like one of those people reach out to me, I have my Instagram, the neurodivergent counselor. And I do a lot of like disseminating there. But like official, not really not yet. Trying. But it's to find the ways



Katy Weber 53:32

you're doing plenty door. I mean, like I said, I always say if I could change one part, you know, if I can help one person, it feels like it will have all been worth it. So it sounds like you are helping so many kids just by changing the narrative, right and changing some of the stereotypes and misinformation that is existing in schools. And so thank you for your service. I love it. Thank you for everything you're doing. Right. I know. I've like it's it's just it's so wonderful to hear. And congratulations on the accolades too. It's so that you're actually being recognized for some of this stuff, too, which is exciting, because I think thank you. That'll get some attention to so congratulations, and thank you. I'm so and thank you for reaching out to me. This was wonderful. I was so excited to interview you. And I know your story will be very inspiring for many and I think very helpful for teachers and also parents and I think anybody who you know

is questioning is this ADHD is this autism, you know, as a lot of us are sort of where what is this neuro divergent spectrum and I feel like you really helped to articulate a lot of that. So thank you for that too.



Layla Touchet 54:46

Thank you for letting me come on. And if you ever have any other questions, I love answering them



Katy Weber 54:59

and there you have Have it thank you for listening. And I really hope you enjoyed this episode of the women and ADHD podcast. Also, you know, we ADHD ears crave feedback, and I would really appreciate hearing from you the listener. If you're a fan of the podcast, please take a moment to leave me a review on Apple podcasts or audible. And if that feels like too much, and I get it, then just take a few seconds right now to give me a five star rating, or share this episode on your own social media to help reach more women who maybe have yet to discover and lean into this gift of neuro divergence. And they may still be struggling and don't even know why. And if you'd like to find out more about me and my one on one coaching for women with ADHD, head over to [women and adhd.com/coaching](https://www.womenandadhd.com/coaching) and you can always find that link in the show notes. I'll see you next week when I interview another amazing woman who discovered that she is not lazy or crazy or broken. But she has ADHD and she is now on the path to understanding her neurodiversity and finally using this gift to her advantage. Take care till then