

Lisa Piana: Decluttering our ADHD brains

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SPEAKERS

Katy Weber, Lisa Piana



Katy Weber 00:00

Thank you, Lisa, for joining me, I'm very excited to hear about your story and your and your background and, and kind of a little bit more about who you are. So why don't we start with what, you know, what was what made you first think you had ADHD? And when was that and kind of what led up to your own diagnosis?



Lisa Piana 00:23

I never thought I had ADHD. It's not something that ever crossed my mind. You know, it wasn't until I was well into adulthood had probably after I had children that I would jokingly talk about ADHD, Oh, I'm so ADHD because I forgot



Katy Weber 00:43

this appointment,



Lisa Piana 00:44

or I can't find my keys, or I'm late again, you know, I lose track of my thoughts in the middle of conversation. So I was aware of those kinds of things. And, you know, I've always been a relatively high achiever, I did well, in school, I have an engineering degree, I had a

successful 15 year career in architectural lighting design. And so, to me, like everybody else who knows very little about ADHD, I always thought that this was a problem that kids had. And it was a behavioral issue. It was what you know, it was one that could be overcome with behavioral changes. And so I never really related it to myself, until I think, motherhood, in particular, not the parenting part, but that having children in the home part, having to manage all of that all of those growing people and all the responsibility that comes with it. I was getting accumulating a lot of evidence, this may be an issue. So when my husband came to me and says, Hey, I was having this conversation with somebody about how your phone is always dead. Or I can't reach you, because your phone is in another room. And there were probably another few things. And this person who also had ADHD said, Hey, do you think that this may be a possibility for your wife? This sounds really familiar to me. And I sent him the video that march of ADHD penguins. Have you seen that?



Katy Weber 02:20

No. It's funny, I'll look it up.



Lisa Piana 02:23

I'll put it so this is probably when I was about 40. I'm 47. Now, so about seven years ago, so he brings this to me, and I'm like, haha, you know, I joke about it, but I'm not so sure that's me. And then we watched the video. And I was like, Oh, my gosh, and we both had a good laugh about it. So then I went into my therapist, and I said, Hey, I think this actually may be real for me. And she said, Okay, let's, you know, let's do this evaluation. So I took the evaluation, and I was off the charts. And I was like, Okay, so this is the thing, this is real. And, you know, when you first start down that journey, and I love the way that you have described the whole process of, of the post diagnosis process, all of those things that you go through all those emotions that you have. And I, she said, At first, she said, Let's start with, I want you to try one of those five hour energy drinks and see what happens. And then it's like, okay, I would never buy that crap. You know, I don't want it, you know, but it adds a lot of caffeine in it, let's just see if this, you know, works for you. And I'm like, yeah, seems to be a little bit more productive. She's like, Okay, so let's, so we kind of just slowly went into it. And you know, you start with this resistance, like, I don't really want to take medication, what is this all about? And so began, you know, this whole journey of exploration into my brain and how it worked. And I find it incredibly fascinating. So I didn't really go through the grief part. Because I went straight into, oh, this is interesting, right, that my interest based Nervous System went into let's do some research and figure this out. Let's find out what these different drugs do. And these neuro chemicals and all of this. And I didn't. It wasn't until recently, when I really started engaging with my community of

women with ADHD, and listening to their stories on Facebook, that this was really hard. My whole life. And you registered for yourself? Yeah.



04:42

Yeah.



Lisa Piana 04:45

It was like, Okay, I have ADHD, it's not an excuse. It's an explanation, and I'm going to go I'm on a mission to, to kind of fix it, you know, and I busied myself with that for a long time. never really took the time to grieve what the child experienced all the way through, and the adult is still experiencing as being really, really hard. And feeling really, really misunderstood. And now I'm kind of starting to dig that up. And I saw a post recently from someone who does coaching for parents with children with ADHD, and I'm not going to do it justice. But it's it's something like I, you know, why did you tell her daughter? Like, why did you lie about washing your hands and something like cuz I didn't want to disappoint you. And that's, you know, I mean, it really just like tugged at my heartstrings, because I felt like, for me, that's how my ADHD manifested. It was, you know, if, how can you forget things that are important? I did, I forgot things that were important. And when I forgot things that were important, I let people down. And I couldn't explain it. And so it was easier to come up with some sort of excuse that made that can make sense to the other person. And that didn't quite fit either. You know. So that's where the compensating starts coming in. And the masking is that I need to kind of put up this appearance, that I've got things under control, I've got things together, that are not going to disappoint people. And I wouldn't say I hid behind it. But in order for me to feel safe, I needed to have that so that I could really be myself, if you will. Yeah. So yeah. Take a deep breath.



Katy Weber 06:59

I know, right? You reminded me of something that is in an interview with Elizabeth Brink, we talked a lot about relationships, and just sort of that feeling of like that You messed up, you know that there's like that always that feeling like you are a bad friend, you're not doing what you're supposed to be doing in friendships. And she said something that is so powerful, where she's like, even if you forget things, even if you retreat, or you don't remember to talk to people for six months, or like all of these things that a lot of us struggle with, with ADHD, she's like, you're still worthy of finding the right friendships and the right relationships. And, you know, like, there's that idea of like, that's okay, if you do those things, like it doesn't mean that you're not worthy of finding the people who get you

and understand you. And I just, I don't know, I thought it was such a lovely reminder, not only why it's been why it feels so important to us, when we do get our diagnosis to seek each other out, you know, because, because it's that feeling of like, Oh my goodness, I feel like I'm relating to people on a level I've never related to people on and I also feel accepted for all the things you know, like, I can come and I can come into a group of women with ADHD and talk about like, trouble washing my hands, you know, or like things that you can't talk about when you were kind of a high functioning bright person. And you can talk about it in a way that makes you feel understood and accepted. And people even cheer for you. If you're like, Oh my god, I remember to take my bed. And these things that seemed like major accomplishments to us. And so fast I love talking about community and and that connection and how important that is to us. And I just finished reading ADHD 2.0 the the follow up from Ned Halliwell. And yeah, and they talk about the importance of fight, they call it vitamin C, vitamin communication. And they talked about that and, and really kind of, it's interesting because they, they talk a lot about kind of what it is about our brains that require connection in a way that I find fascinating too. And think that may need to be the next book that I dive into. It's really great. It's it's I read, driven to distraction. It was the first book I will finally read after like bingeing on podcasts, and I was like, I really need to like listen to a book about ADHD, and that was the first one I listened to. And it was great. But that was 1994 was like, you know, it's like a lifetime ago in terms of HD research. And so this one that just came out it's short it's only five hours long. I don't know what that translates to pages. I've so rarely read books are like I think it's like terms of time. But it's really short. It's super accessible. It's very ADHD friendly and it's it's totally stands alone. Like it's not like a I thought maybe because it was called 2.0 that it would be sort of a sequel. But it's not it's it's a fantastic primer, it's going to be the book I recommend now to anyone who's like just been diagnosed and, and needs to see that, you know, those like, here are these list of 35 symptom is led you might relate to and you know, they go through these bulleted lists and you're like, yes, yes, yes. Oh, my God. Yes. There's, there's plenty of that in the book. Awesome. Because the diagnosis itself doesn't give you that list. No, I know, oftentimes, I know, oftentimes, the doctor will just sort of go straight to the medication. And, and they, you know, they don't have the time to kind of unpack all of this stuff that we're left to unpack when, like you said, like, that the years of, of working hard, and then at the same time, then having to stop and honor how hard you had to work and the and that realization that I am actually working a lot harder than people who are doing the same thing who might be neuro technical, you know, that the there's, what do I do with all of that emotion? You know, because there's pride, there's anger, there's guilt, there's so much of that.



Lisa Piana 11:09

Yeah, there is that? Oh, my gosh, I had to work so hard. And then the Oh my god, holy shit.

I did that. Right. Oh, yeah, with the huge D bam, you know, and I think that that's I'm grateful in a way that I didn't have my diagnosis earlier. because well, especially, you know, I was a child of the 80s. Back, then there's a stigma attached to it now back then. I mean, it just would have been unheard of. But I think that it's really, you've got to take that diagnosis and go, Okay, this gives me more information. Now, what can I do with it? What are my strengths? What are my weaknesses, and make sure that I'm moving forward with my strengths. But I feel like that it could have held me back, I don't know if I would have attempted engineering, if I would have ruled that out for myself, if I knew that I had ADHD, and if I was being educated by other people who said people with ADHD tend to have a difficult time with math, or they tend to have a difficult time with school. If I would have just gone Oh, this just really isn't in the cards for me, or why, you know, why? push myself through this, you know, path if it's really not meant for me, right. And so I think not knowing really kind of left the world open to explore all of those opportunities, and I ended up doing fine. Yeah, it



Katy Weber 12:37

is a fascinating conversation, my husband, and I have it a lot when in in reference to our kids and sort of how and when to seek a diagnosis for both of them? Because I'm convinced both of them have ADHD for very different reasons. And I think he's, you know, and he really struggles with like, what is that going to leave them with? Are they going to use it as a crutch? Are they going to feel stigma? Is it going to hold them back in some ways that it might not have? And then I also, and I get that, like, I also wonder, you know, how would my childhood have been different? Especially, because I tend to think of myself as being lazy, and a procrastinator. Like, that's how I think I know, that's not true. But I that's how I think of myself. So if people with ADHD have a tendency to do that, would a diagnosis at a younger age when you don't have the intellectual maturity to kind of look back and think about all the things you were able to accomplish? Or, you know, like, how would that affect the way you approach things? I think that's really interesting. And I don't know the answer, I have no idea how my life would have been different, obviously. Had I known and had I been treated that, you know, had I acted differently, but I do remember listening to a podcaster I'm not gonna say who it is. But it was an ADHD podcaster, who was talking about how she had written an email to her child's teacher because she had forgotten something. It was like a I forgot it was picture day or forgot that she had to bring cupcakes or something. And she wrote an email to apologize to the teacher. And she was like, I'm sorry, I did that. It's I have ADHD. And I was like, really kind of, like, put off because I was like, I would never do that. Like, I would just never use that as an excuse for behavior. Or should I be doing like, I was really, like, sent in this tailspin. Where I was like, is that advocating for yourself? Is that is that coming up with an explanation? Or are you using it as an excuse? I don't know. Like, I still don't even know, actually. Right. But it is. I

think it's an interesting thing to ask, especially when it comes to like, what do I do with this diagnosis now? And I'm so newly diagnosed, you've, you've had a little few more years to kind of think about how it settles with you.



Lisa Piana 14:54

I have I have, but I can, I will tell you I'm in this huge sort of leap forward, I think in my, in my discovery and learning about my brain because of the community. So when I, in February last year, right before COVID, I decided that I wanted to be a professional organizer. And I got really excited about that and started going after certification program. And then COVID happened in the very real reality was, I was not going to be going into people's homes. But I wanted to continue. And so I thought, well, I'm going to do this online and create a, you know, a membership site around, around organizing. And in talking to other women, I was just talking to other moms not knowing if they were neurotypical or not. And kind of trying to gather information. I was finding that my brain worked really differently than other people who I assume are typical. So I had a friend that was like, Oh, I'm so grateful for COVID, I was able to actually finally get my house organized. She goes, it took me two weeks. And I was like, what, two weeks? I couldn't get my closet organized in two weeks, like, okay, I probably could. But I, I like the whole thing, like you did the entire house just like yeah, finally I went through the towels and I went through the sheets and everything, I took five loads to Goodwill, and I just, you know, I got it all done. And I was like, that doesn't mean I can't even wrap my brain around that. Like for me, I would have to take like, let's take the kitchen, and let's break it down into all of the different cabinets, all the different zones and the new different areas. And then we could work from there. But just this like, yeah, just went did my whole house. So I realized I kind of when it came to organization and productivity, I was speaking a little bit different language and that I knew I was only that I was going to best be able to help people who also had difficulties with the organization and needed the kind of granularity that I need in order to organize and be productive in my day. So of course, knowing I had ADHD, I was like, I think ADHD people are going to be my people. So I just started seeking those people out. And I kind of got into the different Facebook groups and stuff. But this is, I mean, really recent for me, like in the last few months that I really started to connect with people. And it was the catalyst for that really was the evolution of this business. But it has been so incredibly therapeutic, and healing, for me to be able to really see what this looks like and really understand what we need, and have a lot more clarity on on what that is. And that's been really, really cool. So the community part, I haven't had vitamin C up until recently. And I'm really grateful for that. Yeah, I think it's an important part of treatment, if you will, it sounds very medical, but



Katy Weber 18:12

no, I 100% I've used that, I think I've used that same wording before when it comes to like, you know, when you get a diagnosis that sometimes I've often said that the diagnosis itself is half the treatment. Because I think it's really is just the awareness, and that self and that self awareness and this and the research and self study that comes from that is the treatment for I think for so many of us making those connections, why wouldn't Why am I the way I am? Why, you know, this is why I've felt broken. This is why I felt lonely. This is why nothing ever kind of felt right. And that gives you the language I think to talk to the people you trust and who you can be vulnerable with, you know, that's partners or parents or whatever, and



Lisa Piana 19:00

allows you I think to ask for things that you didn't feel like you could ask for before.



Katy Weber 19:05

Oh, yeah, because



Lisa Piana 19:07

you actually have the language now. You know, it's not just that and we're still doing some education in my house. You know, like with my daughter, it's not just that she would rather be on her phone than doing her homework. There's any number of executive functions that are being challenged by the task of doing homework. And here's 11 I actually wrote it out the other day for my husband, I was like, Here's 11 different ways that doing homework or getting on the phone instead of doing homework is real. This is these are the different ways that this is challenging for her. This is a different explanation for why she was getting on the phone. Yeah, it's not just a matter of I don't want to write,



Katy Weber 19:52

right yeah, we talked about The L Word in my house that we all cast like sailors in my house but like The L Word is the nobody is allowed. Nobody, nobody is allowed to call themselves lazy. And because I feel like that is like the default. And so we just, we actually just started this like self deprecation jar, which is like if we you're, if we hear one another talking about ourselves in like sweepingly negative tones, we have to put money in a jar now, instead of instead of a swear jar. Because, you know, it drives me crazy that because

I also felt like that was my default for so long. And I hear it in my kids all the time, which is like, why didn't you do this thing I asked you to do? I'm just lazy like that. I know, that's not it. Because I know you're not lazy. I have seen you working for hours on whatever. fascinating thing you wanted to work on that day, you know, like, that is not, that is not a word you should ever use to describe yourself. But let's figure out why you didn't do the thing you needed to do.



Lisa Piana 20:57

Right? Yeah, I've tried to shift my language to more like I noticed you had difficulty doing blah, blah, blah. What do you think got in the way? Right, because there's something that that got a stuck, and they don't know, necessarily what it is until you pose that question, and then move them into that analytical part of their brain where they can go, Oh, it was I had this question. And I didn't know who to ask. Oh, okay. You know, but until you ask that question, you know, instead of saying, why don't you do your homework in their minds, I'm thinking, I can't, I just, I can't, it was too hard. I can't, I'm confused. I can't, you know, whatever it is. So trying to communicate differently around that stuff, so that they can actually start taking more ownership of the solutions that work for them. And that's the other thing that I have found really challenging to with other family members that have ADHD doesn't look the same. And everybody, right. So things that I feel like I know, work for my ADHD brain don't necessarily work for



Katy Weber 22:12

my kiddos. Right? Yeah. So now you were diagnosed before you're either of your children, but are either of them diagnosed?



Lisa Piana 22:21

My daughter is she's 13. And it, you know, took us a while to get to that point. My son is not, though, you know, I definitely see some areas that are challenging for him. But he's 11. And it may come, we'll see. You know, I feel like I think it's important to seek out that the diagnosis when the challenges really become debilitating in some way. You know,



Katy Weber 22:59

yeah, that's actually one of the greatest. It's not that one of the greatest things that happened to us this year. But I, it with hindsight, from the lockdown and remote learning, I have a lot of gratitude for what I've been able to see and recognize in my children's

learning styles, and how I've been able to help them especially my fourth grader, because I think, you know, so many women I've talked to received their own diagnosis after seeking one for their kids. And so you didn't have that experience. I didn't have that experience, either. I've had my own diagnosis, from talking to my therapist. And now it's through my own diagnosis and my own sort of self exploration that I'm now seeing my children and I'm seeing how they're very different. But how it you know how it is, like you said, like, my ADHD looks very different than everybody else. And so the more I've learned about it, the more I'm kind of cherry picking like, Oh, yes, my son has this. My daughter has this, my son has this. And remote learning has been wonderful for him, because well, actually, for both of them. I mean, I think they've really thrived in this because not only do they have access to me, I'm basically like his full time tutor, whether I like it or not, which is a whole other topic because that was really why I ended up getting my diagnosis in the first place was because I was an entrepreneur who had to stop working because I basically had to become my son's full time tutor. And I like emotionally imploded, and that was how I ended up getting the diagnosis. But all that aside, I've been able to help him in a way that I don't think he has ever been helped in a school classroom environment. And so now I'm able to see and I'm now able to advocate for him in a way that I wouldn't have been able to ever before. You know, like for instance, his teacher keeps talking about his handwriting, you know, and how important it is for him to focus on neater handwriting. And I actually didn't even realize that I also had this issue until I went back and looked at my own report cards recently and realized that I, my teachers were often talking about my handwriting. And so I was noticing how frustrated he was getting, because he would have to slow down to focus on his handwriting. And then he would lose his train of thought, right. And he was like, getting so angry about the handwriting. And so anytime it was mentioned, anytime I said, let's just take a minute, slow down, you're getting out of the margins, it's all over the place, your teacher, you know, he would just like, explode with emotions. And, and so I was able to kind of make that connection and be like, of course, like it when as soon as he starts to slow down and focus on his handwriting, he can't. I mean, it's hard enough for a ninth for a nine year old to write as fast as they're thinking Anyway, you know, like, I think that's a developmental issue for all children. But it was, I could see how much he was struggling with the fact that he couldn't relate what he was thinking on the page. And then he was actually losing track of his thoughts, and just getting so frustrated. And so that was like a place where I had the words, to tell his teacher to advocate on his behalf and be like, Look, we need to, you need to pick something. We can't. Exactly. Are we working on handwriting? Are we working on his thought process? Right, exactly. And, and so it's those moments where I have a lot of gratitude for the the presence that I've had in his learning and his schooling this year that I would never have had if he was in if he was in a full time classroom? Yeah, absolutely.



Lisa Piana 26:38

I've had some, I've had some similar experiences. And both of my kids struggle with writing by hand. And I don't think that teachers have really, necessarily always understand the huge demand that is not just cognitively but on the, you know, the fine motor piece of it, you know, holding the pencil correctly. And, you know, I mean, it's, it can be really exhausting for some kiddos. So



27:08

what I have done,



Lisa Piana 27:10

and I feel like maybe there's even more of an opportunity to advocate for your children, since they are home with you. Nobody argues quite as much as if you were trying to advocate for them when they were in a classroom that the teachers running, you know, like, I've got my kid at home here, and I'm doing half this job right now. So here's how it's gonna go. But I, I for a lot of times have asked the teachers for the modification that they could dictate to me. And I find that their work is far superior, when they're allowed to just focus on the content. And yeah, remembering from their reading and able to make those connections, and I can, you know, capture them very quickly through typing, and then we'll go back, you know, and say, okay, we need a paragraph here, we need a period here. We need to, you know, do that, but to actually get it all out. You know,



Katy Weber 28:08

that's so funny. I totally do that. I actually, I haven't had a conversation with this teacher, but his teacher must know I do this. I mean, I have never communicated with the teacher as much. As I have communicated with the teacher this year. It feels like we're a team and it's great. And she's wonderful. But yeah, I definitely do you know, when there's longer projects, I will 100% I will have him dictate to me and I will type because it's faster. That drives me crazy to watch him try to get as much as it is for him. But then we go back and I'm like, Okay, let me like take out a couple commas and apostrophes and make it look like a nine, a nine year old type. And I'm like, why am I doing that? I should just tell the teacher This is what's happening. Of course, she would understand. Oh, there's masking for you, right? We're just so expert. We're such experts at masking, we do it everywhere. Let me mess with the capitalization, right? This This looks like a 45 year old woman wrote this. Okay, so now let's speaking of school and our kids, I want to go back to your own childhood and and I know you said you were you didn't struggle in school, and you're a

good student, which I hear all the time, I think is very common in girls. So much of why they aren't diagnosed is because they tend to do well in school and they're people pleasers, and they, they can pull it all together. They are multitaskers from a very early age. But what are some things now, looking back at your childhood growing up where you think? Yes, obviously, that was ADHD. The signs were there. Oh, there are so many.



Lisa Piana 29:48

I think early on the state of my bedroom. I say early on. The state of my bedroom now is pretty much the same as it was when I was six. Much to my mother's dismay, but um, yeah, I, I am an absolute mess. And simultaneously, quite organized. And it's the sort of strange, you know, juxtaposition. Yeah. So I would say, the mess. In fact, when we moved to a new home when I was 13 years old, my mom did not give me a choice of my bedroom, I had to be in the one that was furthest away from her. So she didn't have to pass it. You know? Yes. Which, of course, as a teenager, I thought was great, you know, like, give me my give me as far away from everybody as possible. And she even threatened to put a door between my bathroom and my bedroom. So she didn't have to look at my bathroom either. Which I also thought was great. And that never ended up happening. But I was like, okay, that seems like a good solution to me. It was hard for her to look at, let's just close the door. That's a good solution. And in talking to her recently, she said, Oh, my gosh, she said, You know, I never would have known. There was no way I ever would have felt missed. Of course not. First of all, we didn't have the information to identify what it looked like. Yep. And nobody was looking for girls to have this. And ADHD. So says hyperactivity in it. So if you're not hyperactive, parents are looking for it. So But anyway, she said, I would lose my keys all the time. She goes, I don't know if you remember, but I bought you a huge key ring. And I was like, Oh, my God, you did and it was brilliant. It was huge. Probably five inch diameter thick brass ring. You couldn't miss it. Right. And in my purse, I could feel it. I could grab it. I could see it anywhere that I you know, was in my backpack, it wouldn't get lost. And yeah, Little did she know, that was like a perfect ADHD solution for a teenager who lost her keys all the time. But then moving into college, you know, the self medicating with cigarettes. I was like, Oh, yeah, I would go have no idea that how I was benefited from it, you know, would take a brand, you know, do intense work for a while, and I would go down and grab my girlfriend's or go outside, in the snow in Colorado, have a cigarette, get the nicotine hit, go back up, you know, be productive again.



32:19

I was making that



Lisa Piana 32:20

work. I was also staying up all night to finish projects, because I was unable to plan



32:26

my time. Well. And



Lisa Piana 32:31

yeah, and then we talked about motherhood, that's a that's a tough one. And I think that's something that people aren't talking about enough is how much of a burden on the executive function system running a household is.



Katy Weber 32:46

Yeah, you know, I and also not only that, but I think a lot of women start to face sensory sensitivity within motherhood, that they might not have faced more or might have had better managed in life before children. Because there is that issue of like, you know, you're just on your on all the time. You know, it's like, I was listening to this American Life Episode recently about how dogs got like, really agitated during COVID, because their owners were home all the time. And so when owners are home, they are on, you know, and so they're on guard. And so the dogs because I don't know, like my dog was used, she definitely got more aggressive with other dogs when she was on leash, we're like, right at COVID. And I was like, that's a weird thing, when we were walking around. And so somebody was talking about how they're like, just on all the time, and so they're exhausted, they're just like, mentally exhausted, because they need downtime when you're gone, and nobody was ever gone. And, and so thinking about how animals have reacted to the fact that we're home all the time. But you think about that with motherhood and babies and like I, I had so many sensory issues with sound and and just your body, you know, like that feeling of like wanting to be touched and not and having difficulty with affection with your mate and like, all of these things about skin. And, you know, I think that it gets so heightened and I didn't realize at the time I didn't you know, I was undiagnosed I didn't know what that was. I was sleep depression, your sleep deprivation, and then it was diagnosed as depression and anxiety and I was just sort of like, okay, maybe someday I'll get a good night's sleep again, and it'll get better. But I still have like, real issues with noise level in my house that I don't ever remember really having when I was in college and was going to clubs and dancing and doing all that stuff that and doing your homework with a live band. Yeah. Well, you know, I actually went I did so poorly in high school that I didn't get into university when everybody else did. So I had to redo my

senior year and I went to a different I went to a different high school, and I was like, This is great. I'm gonna have No friends, I'm not going to know anybody. I'm just going to study. And it's what I did. I, you know, I spent that whole year studying and I got like all straight A's so that I could go into university. But what I did was I would go to a coffee shop, and I would stay up really late and like chain smoke and drink coffee until four in the morning. And I got into this habit the entire year, I came home from school, I slept from four to eight, four to 8pm. And then I would wake up and I would go out to a coffee shop, and I would do my homework until 4am. And then I came home and I slept from 4am to 8am. And then I went to school, and like I did that for an entire school year, I had to say, to like blocks of our time, and it was fine. I mean, I, I decide. But even just that I was reminded of that, because you had said about the loudness. And I was like, Yeah, I only ever studied when I was in high school and university in loud coffee shops and loud environments. And now I'm like, Oh, right, that makes sense.



Lisa Piana 36:00

Right? It's interesting. You say that, because I thought is it just age? You know, because I thought, you know, my mom gave me a lot of noise. And so yeah, it's just like an old people thing. Yeah, I find myself really having very physical responses to being overloaded. Since with that sensory overload, and I started wearing earplugs. And with babies, or just recently, oh, just recently, yeah, we're starting. The reason I started wearing earplugs was a couple of years ago, we went to Iceland, so amazing. But because the, you know, in the summer time, the sun literally never sets. And we were staying on this kind of major Street. I for that entire week slept with that eye mask and earplugs in. And I was like, Oh my God, this like shutting the whole world out. And it was Heaven, right. And then later I heard about, you know, these weighted blankets being really good for anxiety, and I thought, Oh, I should get that for my daughter, I have stolen it from her, she actually doesn't find it as beneficial as I do. So now I sleep with the weighted blanket earplugs. And it is absolute heaven. And I will do that eight as like a reset around three o'clock. And it just you know, it feels so great to have that. That like almost like getting put in like a little, you know, sound chamber isolation chamber, it's like so cozy. But I find that during the day, sometimes I like to have my headphones on because it just blocks everybody else out. And sometimes I don't even have anything on it just kind of dulls the noise. But there's a lot of video gaming going on. And it causes a lot of excitement. And I really want to embrace that enthusiasm, and they're, you know, playing and engaging with their friends. But I have a hard time being in the same.



Katy Weber 37:59

I know. Yeah, my husband gets like he will get really really riled up when my kids are being

allowed and bickering. And he his response will be like to yell Stop yelling and and then I have to sit there and be like you read you see the irony in this moment, don't you? And he gets so worked up. And I'm and I'm like, I tuned like for my own sanity. I learned years ago to tune that stuff out. And I think actually having a phone really helps with that because I can kind of have that intimate focus with a with a phone. That helps me kind of tune out the ambient noise of my children. And so we sort of, you know, and now we know like I've said to them, like, you know, if you really want to get my attention, you want to have me hearing you need to make eye contact with me, you know, like, I am kind of like a dog that way. You know, you can't just come in a room and start talking to me if I'm looking at my phone, I will leave I will probably say Uh huh, uh huh. And I'm not listening. So you really need to, like get by, you need to get my attention and they know that. But it's also like as it's it's like self care. Like it's it mice. It's for the sake of my own sanity that I have long ago had to learn how to tune them out. And so my husband will get all riled up. He's like, I just can't stand listening to the bicker. And I was like, I don't I haven't heard them. I don't know what they're talking about. What do they say? Sounds familiar. Yeah, but yelling everybody Stop yelling. That's a very relatable parenting moment that that your partner's the only one that's paying attention this. Do you get the sense that he thinks that you're, I'm gonna use the word checking out. That that's like bad parenting. Yes, this is a conversation. We have a lot. Yeah,



39:49

I don't want to. Yeah, well, actually, we



Katy Weber 39:52

have to drive but no, no, it's true. I mean, these are the conversations that we're having. Now. Since my diagnosis, I think on a much more like elevate At level than we were before, because now we can kind of understand how we're different and how we approach things differently. And so, you know, and I think that comes to tidy and organizing, too, which is something I want to pick your brain about. Because like we, you know, for instance, my daughter, her room is a disaster, and he'll come to me and he'll be like, have you seen her room, we have to get her to clean it. And I was like, I have a great solution to that I don't go in her room. And then I don't get angry. You know, I'm like your mom. I was like, just I. And so when he said, he was like, have you been in her room lately? And I'm like, why did you go in her room? Why would you do that to yourself. But you know, we have a very different approach to like, the what than to I guess tithing, for instance, like for, I don't find myself a very messy person, I'm very organized. But I also have to kind of be on it at all times. So if I let something go, like, for instance, when I lived alone, I would wash each dish

as I dirtied it. And I would put it away, which seems kind of a little OCD. But it made sense to me, because I was like, if I start putting dishes in the sink, and they start piling up, it becomes a big thing. And then I don't want to do it, and I put it on a project, right. And so I have to keep on top of things a lot. And there are and then, and then you have kids, and then it all falls out the window, because you just can't keep up with mess. And so for me, then that's when we really my husband and I really started arguing because he would take things, and he just wanted them out of sight. So he would grab everything that was everywhere and just shove it in a closet, because he just didn't want to look at it. And I would go ballistic,



41:39

because I was like, you



Katy Weber 41:42

haven't given me the time to sort and organize and put things and he was like, you're never gonna get that time. It's so it was gonna stay there this all the time, you know, it was gonna stay like this forever, until you finally quote unquote, found the time and I don't know when that's going to be and I can't take it anymore. So I shove everything in a closet. And I feel like that dynamic between couples is probably very common. And now I realize how much my thinking how ADHD that is, you know, the organized chaos and that feeling of like, everything has a place, and I was gonna get to it, and how dare you catch by stuff, you know? And then on it right? Yeah, I was gonna get to it. And then the other the neurotypical side, which is sort of like, No, you weren't, I've lived with you long enough to know how this goes. And if I want to clean, I have to do it myself. And I'm just going to shove everything in a closet. And so it's out of sight out of mind until you can deal with it. And then I'm like, Well, I'm never going to deal with it. Whether it's at the club, right? And then we start over again. So I'm curious to see as a professional organizer, like, what hell, like I'm like, what do you do with that? What I'm sure is a very common dynamic between two people who live together.



Lisa Piana 42:55

Absolutely. I interestingly, I am your husband in you and one person? Well, that's so I happen to be my own worst enemy and critic, like how can I make such a mess? I can't stand this, I can't function like this. And it's like, I sound like my mother and my six year old at the same time, you know, like fighting with each other. So I do it, your husband does. And I take everything and I shove it into the closet and say, I'll get to that later. And then,

you know, he tries to find something and says, we need to buy this new thing, because I can't find it. I said, but I was gonna get to that I was gonna do that. And I have a 12 step process in my head for how that's all gonna go someday when I have six hours. But the the quick answer is baskets. And I wanted to like start a company called basket case, I have baskets, that's pretty good bread. Yeah, nobody can take that.



Katy Weber 43:50

Seriously, you need to try. Right? That is brilliant.



Lisa Piana 43:55

I actually might have a URL, but anyway, because I collect URLs. But I have a basket. And you know, they're pretty again, get decent baskets from Target Amazon or whatever, you know, for less than \$25 next to the craft room, that garage like anywhere where things you know, kind of pile up. And each one of my family members has a wire basket that has their name on it. And they all line up next to each other very neatly. That was by accident happened. They all fit like exactly underneath this table. And so as we're going through a week, rather than you know, say, Hey, kids, you need to go get all of your stuff and put it away which right you know, as soon as the kids go upstairs to their bedroom, you've lost them with the first thing that they put away. Everybody just throws their stuff in a basket. And so if it's my husband, I throw it in his basket. You know, we just throw the stuff in the basket. Then on Saturday when we do chores. Everybody has to do their basket. right because there's only so much room in the basket. But it's really, it's allowed me to still have the mess out Because if I stop and do the one thing, I'm going to reorganize the entire shelving system in the garage when I go out to put it. Yeah, right. So I just, I can't do that. So I've dedicated that time to do the baskets today always get done. No. Are they sometimes overflowing? Yes. But it's a system. And it doesn't require opening up a lid. It doesn't require a lot of, you know, fancy labels, if it's next to the garage, the garage stuff basket, right? It's like the grab drivers grab stuff basket. And I want to do I've done it with my husband, and I haven't done it with my kids yet. The clean clothes basket. And I don't know why it feels like there's more laundry during COVID? Because I know that there's probably not, but it feels like it. And so laundry just feels like it's Oh, well. It's always felt like it's backed up. But there's all of these steps. So can I eliminate some of those steps? I have three, you know, everybody in this house is over 11. So everybody's capable of folding their clothes, if they want them fold it. Like if they don't care, I don't care, right. So I am now wanting to get I did for my husband, I put all of your stuff in your basket. That's where your clean clothes are. I'm not socks anymore. I might origami folding underwear. I should clean clothes. If you introduce your toilet, you could follow. So it's, you know, it's kind of trying to figure out how do I keep this process going so that things are actually getting

maintained. And you actually do have clean underwear. It's just in that basket by eliminating some of those in steps. And I found the basket just to be awesome. That's really the next are important to me. And so pretty basket shopping is



Katy Weber 46:45

not a bad thing. Oh, that's true, right? We have a table in our in the corner of our living room. That is like where we put everything for the all the kids crap that ends up all over the downstairs we put on the table, and then it's their responsibility to clean up the table on the weekend. So it's sort of the same idea with the kids. But I think with him and I it's mostly about, like my stuff. Let me see, I feel like we've taught we have talked a little bit about your business. But I also I want to get back to that because I want to be able to support you and I want people to find to be able to find you and I think your service is so incredibly important for especially for mothers and women with ADHD. So before we talk about that, I want to ask you the question that I've been asking my guests recently, which is if you could rename ADHD, what would you call it?



Lisa Piana 47:37

I would love for it to be named something that was less arguable. And I thought perhaps a neurotransmitter Deficit Disorder, dopamine Deficit Disorder, I like the alliteration,



Katy Weber 47:55

triple D.



Lisa Piana 47:56

But the triple D, something that, you know, I mean, attention deficit, of course, is a minute misnomer, right. And I think that it does a lot of people disservice because at face value, you say, my child or other person that I love, can focus on fill in the blank forever, they don't have an attention deficit. And they're right. We don't write attention, dysregulation, or attention. Yeah, attention regulation or attention monitoring, you know, would be more appropriate, selective



Katy Weber 48:36

attention, selective attention.



Lisa Piana 48:42

And then the hyperactivity, right really only explains one of the two. Of course, there's many types of ADHD but right now you're, you can be diagnosed as inattentive or hyperactive, right? So it's only explaining half of the equation, right? And if you're not hyperactive, then you're likely to throw that whole thing out. So I think that the disservice is in that the name of the disorder automatically gets, you know, it just gets ruled out for so many people because they don't meet what it seems to say at face value. And how many, you know, especially for women who tend to not be disruptive in class not get flagged as children go into their adulthood before they even have the opportunity to get diagnosed if they have the opportunity to get diagnosed, and never get the opportunity to seek treatment and I think that that's just tragic. Really.



Katy Weber 49:43

Yeah, I do too. And I think it's not even that I'm not a hyperactive like I thought I was I thought I was the opposite of hyperactive I mean, that's the other thing. I think so many of us relate and hold on to the the tired eggs fasted lethargic side, like downside of hyperactivity, you know, the fact that we don't realize that there's that pendulum we only focus on the negative. Right. And and so we, you know, I was like I'm most hyperactive as a slob, you know, like, I am the least hyperactive person you could meet before my diagnosis, because, you know, I think we just like, we have such a hard time relating to that, to that word,



Lisa Piana 50:25

I think too, is that we attach, we think that it means being visibly hyperactive. So if you asked me, are you hyperactive? I would say no, because I don't need to get up and jump and down, jump up and down all the time. I don't need to, you know, go run errands just to get out of the house. But my brain is hyperactive. So there's a lot of invisible hyperactivity, and that hyperactivity, and my brain is very exhausting, which is what requires, I think, so much downtime, to recover and reset, right. And I am really starting, I think, now more than ever to really embrace my need for rest. And, and really prioritize it and honor it and talk to people about it in a different way. Like, I mom needs to go reset, so I can really be there for you and be there with you. So when I do this for myself, I'm doing it for you as well. It's you know, the whole idea of you know, putting the mask on yourself. Yeah, first like I can't, I can't, I can't keep going without an opportunity to to recharge. And yeah, I may need to do that several times a day?



Katy Weber 51:48

Absolutely. I think yes, I, like you said honoring it, no longer feeling a sense of guilt or shame around it. And because you can understand it, and you can understand why it's necessary. And then you can then explain it to the people you love in your life, why it's necessary. Like I think that all of that like just that change in self talk and the change in self realization. It's just like, I've done like a complete one ad on so many things. I used to so many things about myself, I used to feel guilt and shame around that now. I'm like, Oh, no, it all makes sense. This is why I do XYZ.



Lisa Piana 52:21

Yeah. And to actually flip it on its head and say, you know, I, you know, the wrong thing to do is to try to power through the three o'clock hour, that's the wrong thing for me to do. That's not achieving, achieving would actually be to know thyself well enough to know that I need to reset for that hour. Yeah. And I gift myself that and it's huge. Sometimes it's only 30 minutes, you know, and sometimes I do doze off a little bit. Sometimes I just get on, I have this wonderful game that I love to play on my phone that's just like a meditation. And it just allows the whole my whole system to power down. And, you know, of course, there's all sorts of science behind how much work your brain is actually doing behind the scenes, but it's making all of those neural connections, it's, you know, assimilating information and you know, it's productive.



Katy Weber 53:13

It is, yeah, totally. Right, a different way. Okay, so let's talk about ordered organizing. And so is this the first time you became an entrepreneur when you started this?



Lisa Piana 53:23

Um, no, not really, because I was an architectural lighting designer before I worked for someone else, small company, and all of them are small companies. And then when I had my daughter, I wanted to continue doing the work. And so I had a few clients that I did consulting for on my own. So I continued with that, as an entrepreneur as a solopreneur. But it was basically a continuation of something I already knew very well how to do. This is a whole new adventure, a whole new experience. And I'm really feeling like I'm at the beginning stages of, of understanding what the solution needs to be for the people that I want to serve. And so I feel like I'm in a conversation phase right now with community I've done a lot of learning about the science and how my brain works. And you know, that kind of exploration, but I really want to get in with the communities and engage with them.

And really try to understand what it what it is that we want, because I hear a lot of people saying I just wish that I had more time. I wish that I was more organized. I wish I could be more productive and I want to dig I want to dig a little bit deeper and have conversations and really feel feel through that and see what that really means because I think that my my genius, if you will, is in the metacognition, the ability to pull all of these different pieces together and kind of make them fit That's what I really enjoy doing. And so I think that I think the solution is evolving. And so, right now I'm, I'm having conversations, and I do have a group right now that I'm working with that was my beta group. And we're kind of continuing to have conversations and finesse what the program eventually will become. But right now I am, I started a Facebook group that is called organizing and productivity for moms with ADHD. So you can find me there and I just hopped onto clubhouse, whole new world. Yeah, the side, you know, it's like, I know, isn't the ad exciting, all at the same time. But I think that's going to be a really wonderful place to ask questions, and really allow people to have these conversations and, you know, ways that we have a before. So I'm really excited about that platform. So I'm there as Lisa piano at Lisa piano. And then on Instagram, as well at ordered underscore organizing is my Instagram. So those three places are kind of the places that I'm



Katy Weber 56:12

hanging out the most. That's awesome. What do you find that women, mothers with ADHD struggle with the most when it comes to household organization?



Lisa Piana 56:24

Their brains? Yeah, decluttering their brains, I'm hearing that more and more as I did a little bit, it's not necessarily that they need to declutter their house, they really want to be able to get what's in their brain out and prioritize it in a way that makes sense, and set some goals and milestones for those goals, and actually reached them. And have a way of saying that, because I think a lot of times, we don't get ourselves give ourselves enough credit for the things that we do finish. Right? There's a lot of shame around unfinished projects. And, you know, one of the things that I do is I have to do list at the end of the day, instead of my to do lists, because nine times out of 10, I don't get done with my to do list because whatever I set out to do has been, and it's not that I just that I've gotten distracted or interrupted, but life happens. And it actually was more important for me to go help my son with his homework assignment than it was for me to make that call to the vet at that, you know, and so instead of looking at Politico, again, I didn't get that that call, I didn't do this, that the other thing to say, Oh, I helped my son with his homework assignment, like, these are things that I value, and that are important. I'm not always just getting off track or just being distracted. So I think that goal setting really becomes about,

about clarifying the direction, then actually setting those milestones and then using some ADHD friendly ways to actually get there. And I think one of the biggest ways we do that is in community. It's being accountable to ourselves and to each other. And I found the most success with my, with the group that I'm working with, is getting online face to face, on zoom and having these conversations because we do well, and we're checking in with each other. And nobody's judging whether you did the thing or didn't do the thing. But being able to say, I'm going to do this and then follow through with that has been really helpful.



Katy Weber 58:27

I love the idea of a to done list. I think that's so great. You know, there's something I think I think a lot of us have a tendency, once we do complete something, we don't have the patience to sit and like, be happy with it, because we've moved on to the next thing. And the challenge, the excitement is in approaching and figuring out the task task completion is not exciting for us. And so I think in general, like there's usually almost a sense of disappointment when something is completed, you know, especially like, you know, when there's a huge project that I've been working on, and I finally finish it, there's, you know, I don't think we talked enough about that sense of like, disappointment of almost sort of like, Oh, yeah, all right, like, I'm done with that. I don't want to talk about that anymore. You know, like, I remember that when I was very uncomfortable after I wrote my book, where I was like, it was the process of writing the book and actually getting it done and being able to say I could do it. That was the excitement for me once it was out in the world. I was like, I don't want to talk about that anymore. I don't want to read it. Like I was like, yeah, I'm done with that. And people would be like, that's so great. You wrote a book and I'd be like, Yeah, whatever. Yeah, last year. I know. Right? Like, right. Like, I think I wonder how much that that idea of like never really sitting in our successes is is what contributes to the fact that we have such a low self regard. Like if we spent a little more time sitting with our successes, maybe we would actually view ourselves as successful people which because Usually we are highly successful people. And there's just that in congruency with with how we view ourselves. And that was actually kind of one of the things that my therapist was, it was a real red flag to her when I first started talking to her was like, how is this woman who has done so many things and seems very bright? How does she talk about herself? Like, she's such a failure all the time. And that was, that was kind of the tip off to her that I had ADHD. And so I'm curious, I've never thought about that before. Like if we actually took the time to really just even the couple extra seconds that it requires to acknowledge our accomplishments in some sort of structured way we always talk about how much we love structure. And, you know, I think that would probably do wonders for our self esteem.



Lisa Piana 1:00:45

That I think I might make like a success board. Right? I love to done



Katy Weber 1:00:50

anyway, you got to do to done list, which is brilliant. You've got basket case. I mean, come on. You are like the queen of puns right here. I do love them.



Lisa Piana 1:01:03

Well, doesn't it make it makes it more like visual and tangible like I you know, making these motions with my hands but like, I need to be able to like touch it and taste it and I think with with puns and alliteration, you just get closer to to reaching those other senses.



Katy Weber 1:01:22

Oh, well, thank you so much. I know I love talking to you. And I love to some of you had so many great insights. So I think this will be a really a very popular episode or B. There's a lot to offer the listeners in this one. So thank you so much. I love what you're doing. Thank you for having me. I love what you're doing too.