

# Emily Olsen: ADHD & feeling things deeply

Tue, 8/24 12:26PM 51:52

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, feel, adhd, struggle, talking, day, story, journalist, point, diagnosed, diagnosis, information, realizing, deal, conversations, part, masking, support, deadline, reminders

## SPEAKERS

Emily Olsen, Katy Weber



Katy Weber 00:00

So I was so excited when he reached out to me I was I mean, first of all, I love a you're Canadian B, you're a journalist. So already, that's like two points for you. But I really feel like very strongly about how that strongly I guess it was just really interesting to me when I was diagnosed, how much the fact that I was a journalist made sense to me, you know, like, why I love deadlines. And so I just I really loved your perspective. And I really, I can't wait to talk about that. But I guess first of all, you were diagnosed A few years ago, right? So yes,



Emily Olsen 00:35

I wasn't diagnosed until I was 21 years old, which was quite a ways down the line for me for someone who definitely struggled all the way through school.



Katy Weber 00:45

Yeah, I mean, 21 feels like a baby to me. I was 45. So. But yeah, talk to me about like, when were you in university? Or like, what, when what led up to the diagnosis and kind of what were some of the signs that made you think you had it and talk me through how you got

your diagnosis in the first place?



Emily Olsen 01:02

Yeah, it's a little bit heavy. But I think that that's what this is for. So I struggled with eating disorders from the time that I was 11 years old, which seems very young right now when I'm thinking about it. But from the time that I was 11, until I was about 21, when I was actually in a program at a university hospital, to deal with it. And I was set up with an A team, I had a nutritionist, and a psychologist and a psychiatrist and, and all these people kind of others around me to help me through it. And I will never forget this psychiatrist, he was such a special person, he was really good at getting to the root of what was going on, not all the extraneous stuff. And if I came to him with a question, he always seemed to have some good answers or some good ways to bounce that off of me further. So I am a big research person, as a lot of us with ADHD are I spend a lot of time researching what I'm experiencing and things I'm curious about. And so I realized that I've been struggling with depression and anxiety, and of course, this eating disorder for quite some time. And I was like, what could be causing this because clearly, what we're doing right now isn't fully responding to what I'm dealing with. And that's when I realized how likely it is for women who have ADHD to struggle with depression, to struggle with anxiety, and especially to struggle with eating disorders. And it often will be misdiagnosed because a lot of us or I hate to use these terms, but more well behaved with it, we internalize it instead of externalizing it and I was very much an internal lser, now people meet me and they're like, you're so outgoing, as I was so internalized with everything as a kid. But they almost don't recognize me now. Because I'm so much more myself and so much more confident with everything. But I really had been internalizing for a very long time. And he said, Yes, let's pursue this, we'll get you tested, we'll put you on some medication, we'll see how that goes for you. And it was a lightbulb moment. For me, it was unbelievable. The fact that this all accumulated into something that made so much sense for me, all the times that I've struggled focusing in school juggle focusing on in conversations that I actually wanted to be part of, and, and the organization factor all of it, it all made so much sense. And it was, it was as much relief as it was a frustration, because of course that it's something that you have a label to so you're obligated to respond to it. But I felt like I was more prepared to advocate for myself. And it was, it was huge. And it actually dictated the way that I went through the rest of my career,



Katy Weber 03:27

when you were kind of handed that prescription. Was there other sort of follow up? Because I know, yeah, I have this conversation a lot with my guests about the idea that like, really just getting the diagnosis is half the treatment, right? And like that idea of like,

Oh my god, okay, this is an explanation. And that's what we do. We love explanations, and we love you know, we are such a puzzle to ourselves. And so it makes sense to me that the diagnosis is such a big deal in terms of make, you know, feeling better, and our self worth and our self esteem and all of that. But oftentimes, you know, I feel like I keep hearing that sense of, or I keep hearing that same story of like, the doctor gave me medication, and that's it. And that's exactly what happened to me too, you know, and, and granted, I did my own research, and I did hyperfocus and I did all this stuff, and I started this podcast and everything else, like that was my way of learning about ADHD but and myself and and have learned so much but like did you have after going through, you know, all of this kind of trauma and and needing the help and needing that therapy? Like, how did that pivot once you had the diagnosis?

E

Emily Olsen 04:35

You know, you're right on that I actually didn't get the I think the full scope of support that I could slash should have at the time. But I was just grateful to have any shred of understanding of what I've been going through because I had felt like I was in a spiral for so long. So it's been the slowly slowly building like you mentioned, more understanding through connections with people through research of my own, through talking with different therapists. So For the years, and I realized that ADHD especially for, for grown women is a very different beast, the way we handle it is so different, the way we respond to it is so different. The way it I hesitate to say it this way, but the way that it dictates our lives is is quite different from perhaps other people. And I think that it's it's a growing shifting thing that we're all discovering together at this point. I'm not convinced that there's the amount of support and literature that we would need on it to say, Okay, here's the book on it, learn away, I think that this is something that is changing and shifting and growing. And I think that the fact that we're all getting invested in one another's changes and growth and and kind of exploring it through this podcast through these online platforms, I think that's the way that we're all navigating this right now. Because I just don't know if there's the full scope of support that we actually do need, whether that's kind of a better understanding of this specific demographic dealing with it. You know, I love that this is something that we've created a community around, I would hope that there would be better supports in place in the future. But I don't know if historically speaking, we're at that point with this. I did Disability Support work for quite a while when I was in university, and even for parents who are navigating have a child having a child with a developmental disability, there wasn't always the full, like, here's the rules, here's what you do. A lot of the time, it was based around networking with other people, and figuring out where you fit in as a family and figuring out where you fit in as a person. And who kind of helps you find that structure and that balance and the right recipe to help you feel successful.



Katy Weber 06:42

Yeah, and it feels like so once you get into adulthood with ADHD, as a woman, so much, so many of our symptoms are the result of the trauma of not having a diagnosis than they are the actual ADHD and so that also the other thing to untangle for sure, yeah, we really are, like just living breathing experiments at this.



Emily Olsen 07:03

Well, and I feel like it makes a lot of us rock stars in our own respective fields, I feel like we shine so brightly because we're pushing so hard for all these things that we know we deserve, that are harder for us to access. That being said, it does balance out with a lot of really rainy days, it mentally for a lot of us too. So I think finding that that was where we all are struggling right now.



Katy Weber 07:27

Right. And yeah, it's been really fascinating to me to sort of explore the concept of imposter syndrome among the ADHD community, because it's one of Yeah, like, you know, as soon as I say the word imposter syndrome, you're like nodding eyes wide, like, you know, we all relate to that so deeply in any of our chosen careers. Because of that, like that dichotomy between being very bright and being super high achieving and yet also feeling so you know, having the worst self esteem and and just feeling so like our expectations are so out of line with our performance and and i think that's seems to be like a universal struggle with all of us.



Emily Olsen 08:05

It's very difficult. I have days where I'm like, why are people trusted me with their stories? Why are people trusting me? To to handle their their really, sometimes deeply personal stories with care? And how do they know that I'm the right person, like, I know, in my heart that I care about people and that I care about telling stories, ethically, and properly and fully and kind of handing them the reins, but they don't know that meeting me? And why would anybody trust me in this position? Like, do I have the vibe of professionalism? I can be a bit scattered because of who I am as a person and because of my ADHD? And did that mistake make me seem less reliable? And these are all the things that get up in my head that I think we all struggle with, to some extent, is like, I'll like overdo my like professionalism. Sometimes just to make people kind of believe that I, that I am who I am. Yeah, I mean, our credibility is challenged more these days than it ever has been, I feel like less safe on the job than I ever have. There's a lot more hostility towards what I do in the

day, because I think people don't understand what it is we do anymore. So to some extent, I work really hard to kind of maintain a level of credibility because of that. And because I want, you know, people to know that they can, trust me. And you do get in your head about not being good enough, no matter what it is you're doing. But I think caring enough about other people and caring enough about the quality of work that you do, means you are, you know, a valid candidate to be in the position you're in. It's just hard to remember that someday.



Katy Weber 09:43

So, just to backtrack a little bit I want to find out because you mentioned you struggled in school, and so I wanted to talk about that because I certainly struggled in school, and it has affected me my whole life in terms of just how I view myself as an intellect you know, and Especially struggling with grades and university and and one of the things that has been so revolutionary for me since this diagnosis was realizing like, Oh, yeah, there are other ways that we learn, you know, and and so for me interviewing and being a journalist was just like I'd never really gave it the, the respect it deserved in terms of like, how that was how I learned, you know, like, that's what I loved it. That's how I learned about life and the world. And I was really good at it. And, and so for me to be able to now reframe a lot of the like ways in which I was a smart woman, and never was willing to give myself that credit, because I perform so poorly in school has just been has done amazing things for my self esteem. So I'm curious, like when you say you struggle in school, what exactly did that mean? And then, and then how did you get involved in journalism in the first place?



Emily Olsen 10:55

Yeah, I started out as a quote unquote, gifted child, so I was getting those straight A's in elementary school. upon reflection, I did have a ton of support from my parents and teachers partnering up to create, get it done charts that some people have, I didn't realize that it was connected to me struggling and then recognizing that though, when I got into junior high in high school, things got really intense because I no longer had those supports. Math just fell through the floor, like things were really, I was never someone who could really process that sort of information very well. And I thought that it was just because I wasn't trying hard enough, or whatever it was. Even in university, there were things where I was like, Oh, my gosh, why is it that I can fly through some horses, and some of them feel like I'm trudging through mud every day, just that that selective thing that a lot of us have, where what we're interested in is what we go balls to the wall for. And what we're not interested in is like brain surgery to get through. And so I did struggle in sort of an asymmetrical way, all the way through school, where some classes I was driving in and

getting incredible marks and other grades, I was just struggling to get through the day. And so getting into this field, it was it was a lightbulb moment for me, I started out taking night classes with a student I was supporting, I was doing Disability Support work. And one of the students I was working with the night classes for broadcast for radio and for TV, and I shadowed with him. And as I was going through I was like, Oh, I think I'm good at this. I like this. I think this is sparking something in me. And so when I had a next kind of pivotal moment to take a look at what I wanted out of my life, I thought what was the thing that made me feel the most sparked and the most fulfilled in a day. And it was definitely this and I just pursued it. And I went hard for it in a way that only weekend. And I just I care about it so much. And it is so gratifying because it is one of those industries, as you mentioned, where your deadline is in one day, it's your deadline is very short. So I'm not left lingering with that three day work. session. It's like I get it done. I go hard for it. And then it is done. And I can go home knowing there's nothing like I can put it all down, which is a gift for me because my brain is just not wired to process all of that extra. Oh, it could go for four days. Oh, it could go for three months. Like I'm I'm just not as confident with the longer deadlines because you don't know when you're gonna have a bad day when the interest could fall off?



Katy Weber 13:43

Yeah. Oh, yeah, absolutely. That was one of the things I loved about working at a newspaper was that you know, you were always on deadline. And then you could leave it all behind. And you would go home and there was nothing lingering and you just started fresh the next day. Yeah, it was great. And but yeah, because like you said, if you had a week to do something you would still do at the last minute, because that's kind of how we we would you know, that's just self imposed pressure. So it was nice to have the the pressure like built in to the system.



Emily Olsen 14:10

Yeah, and I and I don't know if this is common, but I've seen it on a few kind of ADHD forums where people do better when there are people relying on them. And so for me having a team of other journalists and producers that are relying on me to get my stuff in and have it be good and have it be complete. That to me is such good incentive. Because these are all people that I respect that have worked really hard to be where they are as well that I that I want to succeed for and with and that feels good as well. But I also think like there's something about the the TV journalism thing that has changed so much over the years that really excites me. Reporters aren't just reporters anymore. I mean, you might know this already, but reporters also shoot their own stuff, edit their own stuff, do

their own web articles, do their own radio hits, like we are I like to say like the Swiss Army knives of news now, because we do everything we have our hand in every pot, the story beginning to end a lot of the time is our baby that no one else really even touches except for vetting it and looking over it and making sure the details are good. And that there's something that feels really successful to me about being someone who's interested in so many different things. It satisfies the nerd in me and like, the drama nerd in me and the tech nerd in me and the writing nerd in me. And I love that it all comes together in such a full way at the end of the day. And when I have a good day where I've where I've connected with people and been able to tell their story and been able to do it completely myself, I get this sense of like I'm capable, and I am smart. And I can do these things. Even though I had teachers or friends or coaches or boyfriends, who previously said that I was too scatterbrained to accomplish certain things. It's really nice to be able to, like, buckle down and get it done and know that it was me.



Katy Weber 16:00

Yeah, right. We do Excel when we're holding a lot of plates. I loved working at really small newspapers where you had to do everything. Like you said, like when I worked at small newspapers, you were the writer, you were the rate you're in headlines, you added edit, you did the Page Layout, you did everything. And so like I loved whenever I worked at small papers, because you had to do everything. And it was always exciting. But you didn't get paid anything. And so like I remember, you know, as I was like moving on in my newspaper career, and like I, at the like apex of my career, I was working at the Wall Street Journal. And it was great. I mean, I felt like this is great. I've loved working here. But my job was like to do one page as an art director, and I was it was like the most boring job I've ever had in my life, because they have so many staff and it makes sense, you know, they're credible, they have to have people who are really, really good at one thing. But like, now looking back, I'm like, my ADHD was so miserable, because all I had to do was this one thing every day all day, and I hated it. So I ended up leaving and going back to a much smaller startup newspaper, because then you could like have your you know, I could have my fingers in so many different jars. So



Emily Olsen 17:10

that is a good point. That is such a good point, I even reflect on what I was doing. I was doing an internship at a news station out on the west coast. And they had me like helping out with little web stories. And sometimes they let me do a full story myself for air. But I never was feeling busy enough. So I started, I got, you know, dangerous levels of board. And I started venturing upstairs to the radio station and asking them what I could do. And so at some point, I ended up being a reporter and an anchor for the radio station upstairs

and a reporter and a web journalist for the TV station downstairs. And I was feeling like, Oh, this is my sweet spot. I'll ever find it again.



Katy Weber 17:50

And it's true. Like I never feel like I'm I never felt like an adult. Did anyone feel like an adult? Well, I wonder if that's one of those things that I've heard a lot in the ADHD community ADHD community, which is like we don't feel like we're adults. And we feel much younger than usual. And I'm like, I definitely relate to that. I've never felt like an adult. But I always just assumed that nobody felt like an adult. Like why would you?



Emily Olsen 18:18

There's so much more fun to be had. Yeah, I sort of have been going I've been operating with the idea that like all the politicians I talked to maybe are children inside as well. And that makes me feel more confident talking to them. But you know who's to say that some of them don't feel like adults and it's just me being a child inside. While I'm talking to her. I'm trying to seem credible, holding on to every shred of professionalism I have for those brief moments so I can really get my point across



Katy Weber 20:43

There's an article that came out that was went viral. Her name is Olivia Messer. She wrote about COVID. And like the the trauma of being a journalist during COVID. And my husband is I'm not working, I'm not working for any journalism. I'm not working for any newspapers or any news outlets right now, I'm just podcasting. But my husband still works in journalism. And so this year has has been incredibly taxing. Because he's exposing himself to this, just the constant influx of information has just the information overload has been insane. And it got me thinking because you had when you wrote to me, you had talked about the fact that it's like the amount of negative feedback that journalists get every day and how your ADHD has kind of impacted, I don't know, positively or negatively, I want to find out, but it's made me think, like, we feel things really deeply. And, like this past year, I feel like has been, I don't think a day has gone by where I haven't at some point just shouted, I fucking hate everybody, you know, like, it's, it's Yeah, I just feel like with with Black Lives Matter and, and the attacks on the AAPI community, and then you've got like, all of the stuff with Trump and the anti vaxxer. Like, it just this year was so much and I'm still feeling like, I don't know how to deal with the fact that I feel so much. And it used to be alcohol. That was until I'm sober now. And so that's another thing I've been dealing with with. Oh, thank you. But you know, like, since my diagnosis, I've sort of



been realizing like how much I use substance abuse in house is something that a lot of us deal with. And it's almost like you were saying before, with with an eating disorder, like just the ways in which we try to, like, control numb, you know, like we are we have a tendency to kind of self medicate in extreme ways. So that, anyway, back to my original question, which was like, I want to talk about this past year as a journalist and like, what have you noticed? What are some insights you've had about ADHD and dealing with, like, the heaviness of of life? Yeah, that's, I mean, that's a huge ask. So you know,

E

Emily Olsen 23:12

I'm all in. I'm all in, I think that there's only if there's one thing I've taken from this year, it's that there's only benefit to sharing the dark parts of your journey, because inevitably, there are at least several people that are experiencing it, that feel extremely alone. So I have just really worked to try to share as much as I can, as openly as I can with people, because I think that it is such a gift, to be able to give other people to know that they have their experiences reflected in other people even reading that article made me feel so validated because I was, I was feeling very alone. A lot of journalists are working from home right now, which is a different experience for all of us. We don't get to interview people in person as often, it feels very isolated. And it has, it's been very difficult. It's been a difficult year for all of us. And I and I would say that those of us on the front lines of the information are filtering it for everyone else. And we're trying to make sure that it is not overwhelming, but at the same time is continually coming out and in an informative way. And I'm trying to figure out how to structure all the things that I've experienced in the last year, I started journalism before the pandemic hit. Thankfully, we did have that taste of what it is like without all of these pressures and all these restrictions. But it was hard to hold on to that feeling. For the course of the last year and a half. It's it's been a lot process. It's been a lot of information. There are definitely times several times where I've called mental health crisis lines just to cry it out when I felt like I didn't have anywhere else to talk it out. Because everyone was experiencing that same trauma and I didn't feel safe unloading it on my family. I didn't feel safe unloading it on my co workers who were in it with me. I didn't feel safe unloading it on friends. Who were having their own difficulties as healthcare workers or futures or whoever they were. And so I really benefited from mental health crisis slides and I went to talk to them about how much I cared about my job, how much my job has changed how scared I felt, with the the threats that we would get on the phone, the threats I'd get in the street, when I was alone with my camera, the information how overwhelming that felt, the bear the burden of and to bear the burden of communicating effectively. And, and worrying that if you communicated it wrong, or you communicate it in a way that that seems disingenuous that more people would jump on the COVID is fake train or or more people could misunderstand and tend to sleep or die and feeling like that's on your plate a little bit,



Katy Weber 25:43

or a lot, a lot of



Emily Olsen 25:45

you're also tasked with going stories about people who are struggling parallel to COVID. All the stories we've covered, whether they're about COVID are not have COVID as an element, and you can't ever release it from what you're talking about, unfortunately, and that weighs on you as well, people would come to me and say, Oh, my gosh, the media won't stop talking about COVID, all we hear is COVID COVID, COVID. And I'm like, believe me, I would love to stop talking about COVID. If I can wake up tomorrow and never say the word. Again, I absolutely would I am just as sick as everyone else about about talking about it and thinking about it and worrying about it and processing new information about it. But it is, it's ongoing, it's still happening. And it is like it or not my job to communicate what's happening. And unfortunately, a lot of that information isn't going to make anybody happy, including me. But I just I have had kind of reminders, whether it was talking on a crisis line talking to a therapist, from home talking to a friend that I'm in this job for reason, the fact that I care this much, the fact that it is hitting me this way, is a good sign for the amount that I care about what I'm doing. And it is a sign that I'm probably in the right position, whether I need to take a pause or not is another question. But anytime I was doubting whether I could handle the strength of the waves of negative information and negative feedback, I just was gently reminded that I am in the right position. It's just about learning to take those that none of us have ADHD are good at I actually did take a break last summer, I ended up on a stress, leave full disclosure for a month. And it was like the Ultimate Reset. For me, it was such a gift that I was with a company that could grant me one I wouldn't have I don't think I would have made it to where I am now. If I hadn't had that break, and I would encourage anyone who's in a position to to ask for a pause for their mental health to do that. Talk to a medical professional, like their notes to your employer and see what's gonna happen because it's, it is surprising when you feel like it's all on your shoulders. Oftentimes, it isn't completely



Katy Weber 27:57

the culture around sick days, at least when I was in my 20s it was not existed. I mean, you you went to work, especially in journalism, you went to work no matter what there was no, there was no sense of like, if you were sick, you you know, if you you had to be dying to take mental health days word, like not even a thing. So yeah, I feel like I was speaking to a guest ages ago, Bri plyler. And I always think about her saying that we're in the middle of a mental health revolution. And I really, like I feel like we are even though it took a

pandemic. You know, I think that that has been something that we have collectively learned over this past year, which is the importance of reaching out and, and just unloading to talk it out. And how you know, there is so much healing in in therapy and speaking about what you're going through and realizing that it's not just in your head and that you're not alone. And yeah, like giving, it's so great that you did work for a company that allowed you to do that, because I feel like that that culture does not exist generally in most workplaces. Like No, you take a mental health day, you're basically like, you know, looked at as faking or, you know, it's like you're one step from being fired. How dare you?

E

Emily Olsen 29:20

Yeah, it's like an admission of I can't handle this, which has every journalists worst fear viewed as, you know, incompetent and, and mental health almost makes you seem incompetent, especially in such a social job. You know, I I think you're absolutely on the nail with that, with all of us taking better care of our mental health or even just paying better attention to what resources are available to us and feeling less guilty about accessing them because there's a lot of resources that have been around for a long time that I would never have thought to have reached out to. I would have never thought that it would apply to me. You hear crisis and you think well, I don't know if this is a crisis but Then, you know, when you get into a space where you're like, I don't have any other options, then you start to recognize what these services are actually for and that they can apply to you. And then it's such a, it's such a gift, if you can pick the two cents from other people and take the two minutes, to just let it all out in a place that feel safe. I mean, that's, that's huge.



Katy Weber 30:22

Yeah. And not only that, but like, do it before you get to the part where you're in crisis mode, like, yeah, make a habit of doing it don't get to the point where you're like, I have no other options. You know, like, I feel like, that's the only thing we really need to look at therapy as, as, as something that is ongoing and not something for you to wake, wait until you're broken to, to seek you know, like that. But it's, it's just as important, as, you know, haircuts and massages, like this is about upkeep and not not getting to a point where you're so desperate that you have to seek help, you know, seeking help is something that should be completely normalized. And something I you know, and I'm saying that because that is another real change in me, since my diagnosis was allowing myself to ask for help in all areas, because I so like, I used to think that asking for help was such a deficit. And it's like, it's not, but I think, I think the fact that we grow up like feeling like we're, we are doing something wrong all the time, or we don't know, like, you know, there's so many interesting nuances to growing up undiagnosed, and sort of feeling like you're masking

and feeling like you're faking and feeling like you don't belong in the room. And like all of these ways in which we, you know, like, if somebody says, I always laugh at this, because this is so ADHD, if somebody says, a term that you've never heard of, you know, you're like, I'm talking along, and then I'm like, Oh, yeah. And then we also do this thing with bps, and, you know, and, and in your head, you're like, I'm not going to ask what bps is, because that's gonna make me look stupid. Remember that? And I'm gonna have to google it later. Like, we totally do that all the time, right, which is like, we would never admit, you've never stopped somebody mid sentence and be like, what's bps? Because, you know, we're so paranoid about being less than competent. Yeah, oh, my gosh,

E

Emily Olsen 32:11

this is so enlightening to hear. And I mean, I am already a big researcher. But inevitably, you start googling, and it takes you on a wormhole of a bunch of other things that you didn't even think about. And then you start introducing them in conversations with other people. And they don't think to ask, and then they do their research. Right? Yeah. And I learned to kind of wind back a little and you mentioned masking, this is something that I've only been exploring in the last couple years, I had no idea. But I was masking this whole time. Because I remember I have like distinct memories of being told to stop fidgeting by various people, as children, as children, as I remember, being told to stop eating or visiting anymore, or still or, you know, any number of things. And I just sort of assumed that that was a universal experience for people. But there's things that I do now that I recognize, I'm like, oh, it comes out in different ways. Now, like I'll twitch in subtle ways. So it doesn't upset anybody, but I still need to do it. And I do it and, and there's just like little things that I never thought were part of the diagnosis that I've only started really discovering recently. And masking is a huge one, masking socially masking physically. And it's, it's been very enlightening. To know that I'm not the only one. And there's times when I if I'm on camera, I have to be so careful because if I'm feeling a little overwhelmed, my face will just be blinking uncontrollably and it looks a little crazy on camera. So I usually have to take a pause, breathe myself through it and then start again. But that's something I mean, I just kind of assumed everyone had nerves like that and they came out that way and I didn't even think about it.



Katy Weber 37:21

Tell me about your mother now I'm curious. I'm curious. What was your parents reaction? When you were diagnosed? Were they surprised? And also Do you have any siblings?



Emily Olsen 37:32

Yeah, so I have a sister. She is a total rock star. She is one of those people. It's like good at everything she tries, which is so for us. But she's just she's done everything. And now her her love is with farm animals and taking care of livestock and animal welfare and that sort of thing, which is the cool. She has never seemed to struggle with attention the same way. She also dealt with some depression and some anxiety and some of the same journeys that I had. But hers were tied to just genetics and not ADHD to our understanding at this point. We think that my dad probably has ADHD, just because the way he processes things and the way he is in conversation, it kind of alludes to that we're still kind of navigating that. But I often think back to the fact that our parents did not grow up at a time where you even talked about mental health. It was not only did you not talk about it, it was like, it was rude to think that you've had a different journey than somebody else somehow, it almost seems like it was something that you were supposed to keep to yourself to make other people comfortable. And I knew my dad had depression growing up. But I didn't know what depression was. I just knew that it was the thing that kept him on the couch sometimes and made my family feel a little uncomfortable for a couple days. Sometimes we didn't talk about what that meant, until we were a little bit older. And then all of us realized that we basically all have depression, and we were just navigating it in different ways. And I've just watched my parents grow and learn and be so open to things that I never expected them to. And when this is all leading to me being diagnosed when I was diagnosed, I don't think they were surprised. My mom knew that I had struggled in school that she knew that she'd put together plans for me, with my teachers to get things accomplished in elementary. And what her words to me were, at the time, they were just sedating kids, they were just medicating them, and sedating them and I didn't want someone dictating to me, that I had to sedate you or that I had to make you compliant with class rules. Just so that you could be in the classroom. I wanted you to be able to To grow and learn the way that you wanted to, I wanted to advocate for you to figure it out on your own, and to just have pools that weren't medication to help you at the beginning, which I'm actually really grateful for. But it also meant that she didn't seek getting me diagnosed earlier, which means I actually didn't know like, what was going on with me for a really long time.



Katy Weber 40:19

Yeah. But it also sounded like you had some really positive structures. So she seemed like she knew what she was doing. Was it like an aha moment for her when you had the diagnosis? Like, oh, yeah, we were Yeah. Like, it's been interesting for me to just to realize kind of like, what I've intuitively brought into my life in terms of structures that without even knowing it was ADHD, just like over the years being like, Okay, this is what I need.

And, yeah, so that's great. Yeah.



Emily Olsen 40:48

What are some of your favorite things that create structure? This is something I love asking adults, because I think we all have weird things that we do to keep us on track. Like, what are some of your favorite things?



Katy Weber 41:00

Well, I don't think I could exist without the reminders app on my phone. Like, it's, we also have an Alexa in every single room except this one, because otherwise, she would have just gone off. The Alexa has been life changing. And that's the other thing, like some people are kind of like, could take it or leave it. But I feel like just that the reminders app, I have reminders for everything all day long. It's like, again, like I don't know how I would function without it. Yeah. And that was something I did before I was diagnosed that now I'm like, Oh, right. Of course, like, that's how I remember everything. Yeah, but just to have like this virtual AI assistant that you can always all day long be like put this on my reminders list, put this on here, because like you so just sort of intuitively knowing that I can't retain any information, and that my brain is a sniff. Having having those apps I think was just something that I like intuitively relied on very heavily. I'm like, Yeah, that makes sense. That's awesome.



Emily Olsen 42:03

I'm the same way I set alarms on my phone, I actually just do alarms on my phone for everything. really obnoxious ones at all times of day, I have one that reminds me when I'm about to start working 30 minutes, because my workday starts a little later in the day now. And I will, we'll all do this thing, where if we have something scheduled, we have to just sit and wait for it to happen. Like, it's so difficult to do anything you're expecting just start something, and mine is the biggest something of my day mine is my shift. So I would when I started this job, I would just sit anxiously worrying that I would miss the beginning of my work, especially working from home. So I would just sit and agonize and like not be able to I would freeze so hard sometimes I wouldn't even be able to do dishes. I would like just let everything slide because I'd have this whole morning and I'd think well what if I miss work and you have dreams about missing work or missing days of work it's it's a thing that you just agonize over so I started setting an alarm for half an hour before I start work. So I always know that no matter how hyper focused I am into something or where I am I know that I won't miss work which probably sounds crazy to some people like I was telling my

mom about it and she was like what? Like it doesn't it doesn't compute for people who don't struggle with that kind of time management but yeah, the alarms are necessary. I'm also very much like a 90s kid I put sticky notes on my mirrors and things like that to like remind myself of things like taking medication Don't forget to drink water.



Katy Weber 43:35

I did an Instagram story A while ago of like what my desk looks like because I'm like I have the you know there's the drawer which is basically deep storage when something goes in the drawer I was gone gone forever and so then I have the like super important pile and then I have but then that becomes too much of a pile so that I have the pile next to it which is the seriously no this is really super important pile and then that gets too much and so then next to that is like you have to deal with this before you deal with the super important piles because you know once two or three things end up on the pile that it becomes useless and you never look at it. I've talked about this before with guests to this idea that like I'm never late for anything I'm usually very prompt but like you said I can't do anything before that thing you know, I'm in like waiting mode. And so I try to do things as early as possible like dentist appointments like if it's not the first dentist appointment of the day, I hate it because I hate waiting in the waiting room and be you know, like all of that. So I want to get things over with as soon as possible. But early flights drive me crazy because if I have an early flight, then I won't sleep at all that night and I remember posting about that years ago once like on Twitter or something where I was like it's not the 4am flight that's the problem. It's the waking up every 20 minutes all night long worried that my alarm isn't gonna go off the problem and I was like, and there was a part of me that was like haha related And then the other part of me that was like that is crippling anxiety, right? Not everybody has anxiety to that degree.



45:10

I do I feel you on that. But I really, really do.



Katy Weber 45:16

The people who relate to that story I've like, yeah, there's probably a reason why. Yeah, and let's see, another amazing thing I think about a diagnosis of ADHD is like really realizing that you found your people in a way that hits deeply. And, and I think also realizing, like how, going back to the sense of masking like how deeply misunderstood we felt for so long, and then to be able to talk about this stuff and is so healing like to be just to be able to be like, Oh, yeah, I do that, too. Oh, you do that too. Oh, this is a VHD. Like,

so. It's fun. And it and it really is just like feeling like, there are people like you, in this world is so important to us. And I'm not sure why I think maybe it's the fact that we just felt so like, we were in a monkey suit our whole lives, you know, like, I just sort of felt like we in that. What a weird analogy, but I just meant like, you know, just always feeling like you weren't fitting properly in any situation. And so to suddenly be like, Oh, my God, my people are out there. And I found them is so wonderful.

E

Emily Olsen 46:24

Yeah. One so and I this is gonna sound so cheesy, but I just I have to get into it when I am when I'm interviewing people. And when I'm sharing their stories, and when I'm doing these news stories, I'm always kind of struck by the weight of carrying someone's own story out into the world in a way that could help them find a larger platform or these people that connect with them. And it always weighs on me that that is such a heavy, it's a gift to be able to offer somebody but it's it is a big job. And it is so important that it's done with care and that it's done the right way. And I don't think I ever experienced the impact of that until I started posting about my own stories. And people were responding that they connected. And I think I was pushing so hard to do this for other people because I was I was kind of striving for it myself, but I didn't know how to do that. So I was just going you know, so hard to do this for other people and now to feel like I'm finally connecting with people that resonate with my story and that I can share my story in a constructive way that isn't going to be detrimental to me and it's actually going to be taken seriously is so huge. I mean even having a podcast like this and a platform that you have is such a gift to so many people to be able to listen to it and either understand someone they love or understand themselves like it is it is such a huge opportunity to help other people and give people what I think we all deserve. I'm it's still blows my mind because yeah, like Like I've said before, like I benefit so much from these conversations and I learned so much about myself from these conversations but



Katy Weber 48:03

I've never really thought about other people listening in to these conversations and also benefiting from that and hearing themselves and and yeah like it makes perfect sense to me now because it is such a difficult it's such a difficult acronym to describe to other people it's such a really like the female experience is a very difficult one to describe and so yeah, like I think these conversations just really help us pinpoint like what even is this? Yeah, yeah. So if you could Did you relate to the hyperactivity part? Because I know we talked about the attentive part for sure. I feel like





50:37

yeah, there were days. There were days when I was like, is this manic? manic? Yeah,



Emily Olsen 50:44

cuz of course, there's the days where you sort of blackout a little and get everything done on your to do list and then you're like, am I okay? What just happened there. But it's, it's such a thrill to be on that end of the spectrum. It's such a thrill to be able to be so productive and and it's probably concerning for everyone around you.



Katy Weber 51:02

Well, it has been such a pleasure talking to you and getting to know your story. And



Emily Olsen 51:06

it's been such a pleasure talking to you. I just think what you're doing is so wonderful. And I'm so honored that you wanted to chat with me about mine, even though I'm a little younger than I think some of the people you've spoken with. And I just so I'm so grateful that there are people like you that care so much about connecting everyone and using those skills that you do have in such a huge impactful way. It's it takes a lot of bravery to put yourself out there like I know that it does. I do it every day and it scares the hell out of me to put my face or my name or my voice on something and just the fact that you are being so brave and you're you're using some of the most vulnerable parts of you to make something so important. It's just so wonderful.