

# Kerry Mead: It wasn't depression, it was ADHD

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

adhd, feel, people, nhs, life, struggle, thought, moment, autism, talk, pandemic, realize, diagnosis, women, stories, squandered, fact, depression, book, years

## SPEAKERS

Kerry Mead, Katy Weber



Kerry Mead 00:00

So it took us two years to get a diagnosis. And I learned a lot about neurodiversity in that time. So I came into this realization about myself already being quite active in the neurodiversity community, and having a lot of research myself, but it's funny. I never, ever would have thought 10 years ago that I was new, a diverse at all, I would have laughed if someone had said that to me. So it's been a journey.



Katy Weber 00:35

And so what were some of the things that led you to deciding what were some of your own symptoms that led you to think that this was something you related to?



Kerry Mead 00:50

I think for me, it was when I had my daughter, she's nine now. But she started growing up. Everyone is always said, right from the very start of her life, how much she is like me, she looks like me, apparently, with fat, we were very, very similar characters, even as toddlers. And as she started growing up, I started to notice in her that I thought that she may have a DD or ADHD symptoms. And I was then faced with the realization that if she did, because we were so similar, there was a strong chance I did so I actually came to it

through my daughter, mainly, which has been really interesting journey. And she's actually she's waiting for assessment in the moment. And we've got her appointment next Monday, to see a pediatrician for the first time. And I've told her that we're on the same journey together. And she feels really, really positive about it. And will actually actively tell people, me and my mom both have ADHD. That's wonderful. So yeah, it is an I've always always had my son as well. I've always tried to instill a sense of pride in there in his neurodiversity. That was one of the main things I wanted to do, I did not want to let it destroy his confidence in himself. So I need to do that myself now. For myself.



Katy Weber 02:30

And so how long ago was this, that you sort of really kind of the light bulb went off that you could have ADHD and then started looking into it for your daughter? How long is that process? Um,



Kerry Mead 02:44

with my daughter, I started having a start thinking she may do when she was around five years old, but our lives at the time were very, very different for what they are now there were a lot more difficult. My son when he was younger, he was really, really struggling with his mental health. He wasn't getting on in mainstream school. He was suspended constantly. He was very violent. We had social workers involved. And it felt like I didn't have the energy to even think about looking into Ruby's ADHD. I physically didn't have the energy. I'm a single mom as well. And I've been single since Sam was three and Ruby was a baby. So it kind of got put on the backburner. I couldn't even consider thinking about it. For myself, I was very much like a lot of mums. I need to look after the kids first. But then I started meeting people from neurodiverse community free my son because I used to go to support groups and a lot of parents were in the same boat as me for their children. They were beginning to realize that they were undiagnosed for autism, ADHD, dyspraxia, themselves, you know, things like that. And I began to notice that it was almost like you attract numerous diverse people to you. If you are new, a diverse, and I began learning loads, I used to laugh a lot about the fact that I had traits. And then one of my three closest friends whose daughter went to school with Sam, and has now herself got a diagnosis of ADHD and PDA. Her mom became one of my very close friends. She sat me down one day, and she said, I'd go for a diagnosis of ADHD, Carrie, you need to do the same. And I kind of brushed it aside because it felt like I wasn't important enough to I actually bother going through that process. And then, just a year ago, I had a cancer scare. I went into hospital, I had to take to his to me, I had a very large tumor removed from my ovary. And I thought I thought at one point that I was going to die of cancer. And then I had a month of recovery on the safer and then literally the day after I first managed

to get out of the house, we went into lockdown in the UK because of Coronavirus. So I was kind of forced into this space where I had a lot of time to reconsider my life and realize its value. And to realize that I was worth pursuing that diagnosis. And it was worth me actually doing it so that I could change my life because I don't think I'd realized till I had that time to stop actually how much I'm diagnosed ADHD or add, I don't know which I am Yeah, I think I probably more add, had affected my whole life, I have space and time to go through that grieving process. And to realize it and realize I didn't have to carry on making the same mistakes or living life in the same way. So it's been very, very recent. For me, it's only been in 2020 really, that I've embraced it that I've realized that I deserve a diagnosis. And I deserve to learn how to live my life differently. So



Katy Weber 06:41

that's all said, and I think something that I certainly relate to, I'm sure a lot of women mothers relate to that, you know, I've interviewed some women who have young children, you know, my kids are 13 and nine. And so I'm I have a lot of gratitude that I feel like I am just starting to focus on my own mental health on a level that I wasn't able to you can't Yeah, and you have no balls of need, clinging to you all the time, you know, and so I just like, Oh, I feel so much for women who have the younger children and are going through that, like we said, like just feeling like you, you have to put yourself last it's not even like, you're making that conscious choice sometimes like it really feels like a survival method, you know, of putting yourself last and like getting all choked up, because I just like I remember that feeling so strongly. And I think you know, you talk about this, I guess we'll just, you know, talk about the article that you had written was it in September? Yeah, the article about I don't have depression, I have a DD and it's obviously it got a lot of tension, it was why I read it and reached out to you immediately, because I just like so viscerally related to it. In terms of that feeling, like, you know, not only looking back at your whole life and and seeing things through this different lens, but also seeing that like glimmer of hope for the first time, and sort of really feeling like my life is starting a new in a way that is really, really difficult to articulate. And I think you did such a great job of, of questioning. So many of us have gone through a lifetime of depression and anxiety. And it's been kind of that's the shelf that a lot of these feelings have been put on. Yeah, and and then look back and say like, you know, it bothers me when people talk about co co morbidity when I talk about depression and anxiety as a comorbidity of ADHD because I just don't feel like that's how it feels to me. You know, I feel like the medical community, the mental health community looks at depression and anxiety as a as like a chronic physical condition on its own. And, and they don't they treat it like it's a condition as opposed to it being a symptom of something else. And so I actually agree, right? Yeah. So when I was healthcare, when I was going through my health coaching training, they talked about this

the thumbtack, the thumbtack method, or you know, and the fact that the medical community will look at, you know, if you go to a doctor and you have a thumbtack in your ass, and you're like, my ass hurts, I don't know why the doctor will give you painkillers, and then send you home. And then you know, it's up to you to figure out where the pain is coming from, and then how to remove the thumbtack. And that's how it sort of felt like when I had this ADHD diagnosis where I suddenly had the power to sort of look back at my own my own lifetime of of depression and anxiety in this way. Like I felt suddenly like oh my goodness, I can actually do something about this as opposed to constantly feeling like I was just tripping over this Just cycle of always going back to the same place.

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Kerry Mead 10:03

Yeah, I know. And and I used to view it as a weakness in myself somehow that why do I struggle so much with life? when other people don't? Why do you know? Why do I keep getting depressed? Why do I keep getting stress and anxiety symptoms? Why is the medication not helping as well? I always felt like it didn't really help that much. I mean, I I was last on antidepressants. I actually only came off them in the summer for five years. And they did help at first because I was I was on the verge of a breakdown when I started taking them. But I never actually felt like they did what they were meant to do.



Katy Weber 10:52

I always felt like if I'm this bad on medication, imagine how bad it'll be off medication. That was what I always say, when I felt like they were.

K

Kerry Mead 11:01

Yeah, I used to feel that I stuffiness. Well, I wasn't really depressed, as the textbook said I should be I wasn't suffering from anxiety is the textbooks. The GP said I should be they always thought that something a little bit off. And now that I've realized that the anxiety, depression, panic attacks, the stress were a symptom of masking a symptom of not understanding myself, I can see now why I always felt like a little bit of a fraud saying that I was I had depression or I have anxiety. It's, it's been a massive revelation. It's been and I'm not saying I'm cured. Now with ever, ever having periods of my life where my mental health isn't so good. I mean, obviously, the pandemic is meant quite a low point at the moment. But I think that I will be much better prepared and able to do other than I, because I know their route. And I have another toolkit for how to make my life feel better when she's approaching it as a neurodiverse. person, by age, just a person who can't cope with life. Right? So yeah, absolutely.



Katy Weber 12:19

And I think, and then I think about what a benefit, I will be as a mother to my two children, not only as just a happier person who doesn't carry around all the shame and guilt that I felt like I brought to every situation and always was this default of like, Oh, I'm a terrible person. I'm a terrible Mother, you know, like I can, the difference in my own self talk, just in the last few months has been radical. And so I think about NATO, not only does that make me a better partner, a better mother, but then like, you know, both of my children, neither of them is diagnosed yet, just because I'm so newly diagnosed. And also the pandemic, I'm like, I'm not interested, you know, the battery of Tet, like There doesn't seem to have a sense of urgency to it, because I sort of feel like I'm able to help them and view situations in a way that is going to be helpful no matter what, whether they're diagnosed or not. And so I'm just sort of seeing, like, all that I'm bringing to the table now for the first time, whereas I never used to be able to tell you that tastefully Yeah,



Kerry Mead 13:23

I mean, I was, I mean, I was one of those children, that was considered really, really gifted at school as well. So I have this extra layer of shame around how I managed not to actually achieve much with it.



Katy Weber 13:37

Yes.



Kerry Mead 13:40

And that actually starting to work through that and getting rid of that has made me so much less bitter, happier, lighter, freer, just realizing that Yeah, I was gifted, I'm still gifted, but the reason I could never show up that I could never actually get my work in that I always did the minimum amount possible. The reason why I actually got nearly kicked off my degree course, and nearly kicked out of college was it because that I was at fault so I'm not a bad person. I know why now, and that is really really helping me with with my life now is in yet My house is an absolute tip. But it's not because I'm lazy, or incapable. You know, sometimes I do lose my rank. Sorry. Do you know what that means? Sometimes I lose my temper with my children. But doesn't that doesn't mean I'm a bad mother. That means that I'm under pressure that I'm you're a diverse that of course parenting when you're neurodiverse, especially parenting to neurodiverse children is quite a lot of hard work as a



Katy Weber 14:55

single parent. Absolutely. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. That grace, the Having that grace with yourself is just a it's like, such a sigh of relief. And yeah, it's been. It's funny because, you know, there's these things that I feel like should have occurred to me a long time ago, like, my house is a disaster. And I and I don't want my kitchen floor, it doesn't make me a morally corrupt person. Like I just don't give a crap like I'm okay. carry so much, you know, guilt around that. Yeah.



Kerry Mead 15:32

The thing that I've been exploring a little recently in my thoughts is that not only is it an ADHD issue for women, with these feelings of guilt and failure around how well they keep their house, and how well they parent, it's a feminist issue. Now, you know, it's so much of what we are told, we should be doing as a woman gives us our worth, and women who are neurodiverse often struggle with being able to do those things. So we're constantly telling ourselves that we're not, we're not, we're not proper women, if we have piles and piles of laundry in the corner of the bedroom, because we forgot to put them away, or we couldn't face putting them away. That you know, that we struggled just with managing all of the household admin, and all of the emotional load it, we tell ourselves that we're failures, but also with fate, we then become failures as women. Which I think I'm not saying that men don't struggle with these issues. But I think the women with ADHD is a lot worse because so much of our self worth is based around how good a mum you are, how well you keep your home, how well you look after your husband's or your partner. And I think that that puts so much more stress and pressure on neurodiverse women and maybe our male counterparts put on themselves and B often society in general.



Katy Weber 17:09

And why so many of us kind of lost our shit when when lockdown happened. Because we had this house of cards, really, I mean, we had this house cards, and we were just keeping it together. And then all of a sudden, a wind came in and blew it all down. They were just like, I give up. I don't know, like I am done. Yeah,



Kerry Mead 17:30

I know. I know. It's Oh, my God. So that craziness of last March and April. Yeah, I mean, the heist just went support everybody else is saying about all the DIY projects they're getting are they're gonna take the time to decorate the living room or paint the garden fences. And I just they're literally with Yes, he did no come holding up a house of cards that's just

about to collapse, the house immediately got more disgusting, more disorganized, because the children were home all the time. And I also had to become a teacher, which really really is not my not my career choice. And never has been



Katy Weber 18:14

an interesting point earlier about being a childhood being gifted and and feeling as though you had you know, I always talk about like, my report cards and how it always said, I wasn't living up to my potential, and feeling really resentful, even at the time sort of feeling like, if I have this potential, nobody's nobody's articulating what that potential is to me. So how can you see it? What is it? And and no, for you to accuse me of not reaching this potential? How can I even reach it if I don't even see it? And so you were saying, like, as a child who had who was labeled as gifted, and I was too, like, there's a sense of like, the fact that you've been you've been bestowed these gifts, and you have chosen to squander them. And today trades, right. Yeah. And so you're so you feel this sense of responsibility that you've chosen to squander these things, you know, that's like the the responsibility has been placed on you. And yet you don't know what to do with it, or what these things are, you can't even see them. And I think that really kind of brings forward especially as women when you started talking about women and the perfectionism and mother a, you know, there is this sense of, I think that not only this perfectionism, but I think there's also this like sense that you are in control. Even though you've you're at the wheel even though you've never driven before. You know and and feeling like somehow you're you're not only do you have these enormous responsibilities, but you're intentionally squandering them. Yeah, not even not even feeling like you. Prepare. You know why we always have these I never studied for the test dreams.



Kerry Mead 19:48

Yeah, I mean, it's, it's been, it's been a huge player in my life. Um, just the sense of failure. And yeah, thank you for saying that and the speeding up of habit. Having squandered my life in some way. You know what? I'm, I'm a single mom, I don't work at the moment really more than about 10 hours a week,



Katy Weber 20:12

I'd say I do a lot of writing for myself, I was gonna say that there's paid work, and then there's what you're doing, which is, yeah.



Kerry Mead 20:19

Yeah, I'm, I'm a registered care of my son, I sometimes wonder whether I ever be able to work a full time job again. Because I don't feel like I could actually fit that in. Maybe once I've got a diagnosis and I'm on medication, it might be different. But I do feel like I've squandered a lot of the chances I've had in life. And that brings up a lot of feelings of shame that I, I'm still working through I'm still struggling with. I just always remember when I was at primary school, so I would have been about eight or nine, there was a really popular TV program in the UK at the time called this is your life. And it was basically it was like a surprise party for a very famous person towards the end of their life. So they'd go in back sneak up on an actor or something like that, when they're coming out of the theater, and they pull out this big red book and say, come with us to studio, this is your life, we're going to bring all these people we've known you all for your life, and basically have a big party to say how great you are on live TV. And I've got a report card that said, if there is a student that I've ever taught, who was going to end up on this is your life. It's Carrie. And I know that it was meant it was came from a really heartfelt positive place, but that has haunted me. You should have ended up visiting a knife it's haunted me and I still it makes me feel now like a failure. Like I have squandered everything and it is added this layer as well of like, feeling like I need to be perfect at everything, which has been a massive struggle through my life as well. And that into that whole rejection sensitivity dysmorphia.



Katy Weber 22:13

You know, dysphoria. Yeah. Yeah, sorry, this this. dysphoria, sorry. There's a lot of terminology to acquaint yourself with when you're in the community. That is Yeah. Yeah, you know, the other thing I was reminded of with your essay, was, I really related to that moment when you were lying awake in bed, thinking you were dying, and going, and that going to your mom and saying, you know, I think I've died. And I was curious. I was like, I wonder because I've certainly felt that I still do. I mean, I certainly My mind goes there. When I'm lying awake at night, I wake up in the middle of the night, I have a headache. And clearly I have a blood clot and I'm about to have a stroke and who do I call first? And I don't even know what my checkbook it. You know, it's like, I don't know where my passport is how, like, it just, it goes from there. And I like I'm like, curious if there's a connection between ADHD and hypochondria? Because it makes sense in that same idea of like, all the things we've talked about in terms of feeling like confused, feeling like you've been betrayed by your brain, you know, betrayed by your body betrayed by your thoughts? I'm sure I don't know, I have no, I'm just thinking that off the top of my head. But I wonder if there is if that's a similar phenomenon?

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Kerry Mead 23:37

Yeah, I think I think the thing is, because I wouldn't say that those feelings are thinking that I was going to die. But coming from so much hypochondria. They were more from having severe panic attacks, and actually feeling like I couldn't breathe. I've never say up in a hypochondriac that it's it's funny, I was having a discussion with another woman who is going through the same process as us at the moment. She's in her late 40s. And she's, she's coming to terms with the fact that she is neurodiverse. I'm going to be interviewing her for my book, but I'll come on to that in a while. And she definitely sees herself as being a hypochondriac. And I feel it. It ties in so much of anxiety. It ties in so much with maybe feeling too much. Being very in your head, being very self aware, aware of what's going on your body that maybe you are a typical people don't necessarily struggle with so much. So I think is really interesting question whether the two are linked. I don't know the answer, but it'd be interesting to see if anybody else does if anybody else is listening answer that, because I think it could be a distinct possibility because, you know, ADHD people are very anxious. They're also quite a few neurotypical people, they, you know, they have sensory processing issues, they feel things that maybe other people don't notice going on, you know? Definitely.



Katy Weber 25:22

Yeah. The, so I grew up in Canada. So I grew up with realized federalized health care and public health care. Yeah. And I've been, but I've been living in the US for 20 years. And don't get me started on the US medical system. I mean, it's even now to see so many people who are here struggling because, you know, you have to it's a cost. It's a cost analysis, every time you do anything, we're gonna have health care, you know, you have to decide Am I going to pay for to see my primary care physician Am I going to pay my I have, we have insurance, we have great insurance. But I when I my doctor prescribed vyvanse, and with my insurance, it's costing \$50 a month for me to get that. I mean, that is really caused for a lot of people. And so the fact that you're always taking your mental health, your mental health has a price tag, your health, it has a price tag on it in the US. Yeah. So I'm curious talk to me and talk to our north american listeners about the NHS and why is it taking so long? Or why is this process so long? And and so many people in the UK seem to be in the situation that you're in?

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Kerry Mead 26:29

Yeah. So when, in my local authority area for the NHS, before the pandemic, it was a three year wait to see a psychiatrist for the in their adult ADHD team. It's now at four years. So I was only referred in September. I can't wait four years. You know, the thought of it is crazy.

But I mean, why are we in that situation? It's really complicated. It's really complicated situation. But it's, it's a lot to do with the NHS is on its knees. It's been driven there. We've got a very conservative, right wing government, we have done for quite some time. It doesn't look like it's going to change anytime soon. And one of the things that this government keeps telling us is that it isn't going to sell off the NHS. But I think a lot of us know that it is probably going to happen and they're trying to dismantle it. This might sound a little bit like conspiracy theories. I'm not a conspiracy theorist. But it's, it's well accepted that we are seeing the death of the NHS at the moment is being run into the ground. It gets lambasted in our media constantly for its failings. But it's it's not being looked after as though it's having its funding Carter every turn, little sections are being sold off. One by one, for example, one of the first parts of the NHS that was sold off in my local area was children's mental health services were sold to virgin about four years ago for j as in Richard Branson's Virgin, Virgin healthcare. So, I mean, we still don't have to pay for it. But it's been managed by a private company now, which is separate from the NHS. So it's, I mean, the NHS is one of the best things about the UK. It's amazing. But it's also one of the least nurtured things in the UK at the moment. And obviously, the pandemic and the way that it's being handled in the UK at the moment, which is very similar to how it was being handled by Trump is a massive worry at the moment that the NHS isn't going to survive it. And we're going to be in the same position as North Americans in a couple of years time and having to pay for our health care. It's a real worry. So part of me feels like I'm angry that I've got to wait four years. But the other part of me I can't blame the NHS because I know what they're up against. And I know people who work for them as well. And I know how difficult it is to be a part of the NHS at the moment. But one thing I'm pursuing at the moment is trying to get private diagnosis but funded by the NHS which is a possibility. But it all depends on What the current funding stream for your local authority area is looking like. So I've got a conversation next week of my GP to see if they'll consider applying for funding for me to have a private diagnosis because I'm planning on returning to work University in September to study a master's in creative writing. And I feel I've got a good case because I'm going to need some support around my disability by then, which I won't be able to access with by the diagnosis. So yeah, fingers crossed.



Katy Weber 30:36

Yeah. I'm still reeling from the fact that you're going back for a master for you. Alright, so more Yeah, I'm



Kerry Mead 30:46

actually I'm wondering why I'm doing it. But I feel like I've got to do it. It's my time to do it. Well, no, that's



Katy Weber 30:55

a great explainer for that ADHD sense of like, I call it building my empire. Like, you know, I can't every week, I'm like, What crazy scheme Am I fully 100% invested in this week that I had never even heard of last week. So speaking of how prolific you are online, you run your blog, but you also tell me about 19 stories I'm very fascinated with this project seems like such a passion project seems so heartfelt, and so lovely. And how did you sort of what was the idea for that? And how has it been? How has it been kind of evolving over the past year?



Kerry Mead 31:41

Um, well, it's a good it's a good example of how my brain works, actually, this. So I, I'm an editor for a magazine called the every day, I'm a music editor for them, but I also write opinion pieces for them. And I pitched that I was going to write a piece about relationships under lockdown. So this is back in kind of a cool time. So I put a little call out on Facebook just does anybody wants to talk to me about how they're getting on being single, or being coupled up in lockdown, or whether they're struggling with missing somebody, which is the situation I was in in the time. So I've just come out of the relationship shortly before I got ill. So the end of 2019. And I had so many responses, but not just from people who had him had a story that was relevant to my article, but people just messaged me, because they just really wanted to say, what was happening for them at the time. And that night, I let him bed with my brainwaves in a show, you know, that work? Because I had this amazing new idea that I wanted to set up an archive, an online archive where people could tell their stories about what's going on for them at the moment, because everybody was just like, everybody's got a story. And everyone's got really, really valid story and a really interesting story. This is effectiveness all in such different ways. And our you know, and everyone's going through it. So literally, I hyperfocused for about fortnight on setting up this website on pushing it on getting people to get in touch with me, I interviewed people I spent hours writing up the interviews, I had people getting in touch with me just with photography projects, artworks they were working on, some people just emailed me like a paragraph, like heartbreaking paragraphs. And so I started putting together this website and telling people stories, and they could be anonymous if they wanted as well didn't want people to feel embarrassed about what they were saying. So I've actually had quite a few anonymous ones, and then it got picked up by the local newspaper, have quite a lot of interest. And then it just stopped. People people's people didn't really want to tell him the stories anymore. I was really struggling with getting people to actually submit stuff or they said they would and

they wouldn't follow up on it. And I've never been very good at pushing people. You know, say Come on, come on. He said I'm gonna put in some lighting. Can I have it please?



Katy Weber 34:55

That's the boring part.



Kerry Mead 34:58

I know. So it's been quite quiet on 19 stories recently, I've still got it there, I still think it's really, really valid. And there's some beautiful pieces on there. And there's some really interesting things that have happened to people and they've shared. And it's one of those things at the moment that, you know, my ADHD brain is that I really need to sit down and give this some nurture and love and attention. But there's always a new shiny spangly project lurking around the corner. And I feel really bad about it. And I feel like I need to really push it, but it's almost kind of reached a point with it, where I know that it could really take off if I marketed it more, and I played some money into it. But at the moment, I feel quite stuck at it. Although I know so many more people out there have got a story to tell about the pandemic. So, if anybody, anybody at all wants to drop me an email.



Katy Weber 36:00

Yeah, I will put a link to it just because I think people should read the stories. I think it's such a lovely project. Even if it just sort of has come to an end. It's still I think it's such a lovely thing to have out there. It's been such an incredible 2020 was such a crazy year. And I Wilshire I think it's interesting to me how something as universal as grief can be so isolating at the same time. You know, I remember when my mother passed away, it was like the first time or you know, I where I really felt how lonely grief can be. And I found it interesting to just where it was like it's something we all go through. I mean, we all lose somebody we love who's close to us. And yet something that we all have experienced make you feel completely isolated from everybody else. And I think we experienced that a lot. Through the COVID lockdown and all of the stuff that has gone on in that in this past year.



Kerry Mead 36:59

It's forced us all into a corner, hasn't it? It's in we have to face ourselves. whatever is going on for us, I remember, I remember that we had a really in the UK we had an unseasonably hot spring. So even in March, when we first went into lockdown, I was able to sit out in a

deck chair in my back garden, and enjoy the sun. I remember sat there, and it was so silent. No planes, I live in a large city, there's usually planes going over all the time. And I remember thinking I really, really should be learning more about myself now. And going inside, but I don't want to I don't want being forced to do that. And we were we were all forced to take this big deep breath and really do a lot of work on ourselves. And I think it's brought up so many different things to so many different people. I mean, luckily for me, it's brought up the fact that I've got ADHD, which seems to be going okay at the moment. So,



Katy Weber 38:01

yes, in the grand scheme of things, I do feel like I have gratitude for a lot of kind of dominoes that fell into place that led to this diagnosis. But yeah,



Kerry Mead 38:10

yeah, definitely. I just wish I'd got it earlier. I wish I'd known. I really do. That's my biggest regret is I and my biggest grief is that I wish that I had known. Because I feel like I would have been a lot a lot kinder to myself and make different decisions. And I would be in a lot better place than I am now. You know?



Katy Weber 38:34

Yeah, yeah, I feel like I a lot of women I have interviewed, we do talk about that element of that the grief and the resentment and just kind of what to do with all of that feel like this life that you're now looking back with this new lens and thinking sort of what could have been? Yeah, completely. On a more positive note, what do you what do you love about your ADHD where you look back and you think, Oh, yes, of course, that was ADHD.



Kerry Mead 39:01

What do I love? What do I love? I really, really love how I think differently and view life differently. And I've kind of like haven't settled down I don't intend to ever you know, I'm, I feel a couple, quite a young head on my shoulders. And I think that that's possibly got quite a lot to do with curiosity. switching out new things, new sources of dopamine, possibly. I think it's a very positive thing. For me anyway. I've always It was not so much a positive thing at school because I always felt different. I couldn't put my finger on it. I think it's driven me to rebel. It's driven me to examine the world and look at the world in a different way to not stay Static, you know, even though it was a mother, especially with young children, he has to kind of hold fast for quite some time. And I did struggle with

that. I feel like I'm always going to keep on looking for new things. I think that's great. And I really like the flow I get into when I'm hyper focused on something. I like my talent, I do feel lucky to have them even though I've squandered them, I still feel lucky to have them. I've still got enough time left as well to actually make some use of them. And it's almost like quite a few of the things I love about ADHD, they've got their negative side, but they've also got the kind of Silver Line the silver lining around the cloud, like the intensity of my emotions. I mean, it's been a real struggle throughout my life. But that has had a positive as well, because I feel like I've when I experience happiness, I really experience happiness. You know, none of my feelings are ever dulled.



Katy Weber 41:12

Yes, I feel as though one thing that has changed for me when we were talking about kind of the self talk and the grace with which you look at the grace with which I look at how, why I'm doing the things I'm doing, I am now able to be much kinder with myself when I need to just like, you know, relax, it's much easier to relax, because I think I used to have so much trouble relaxing, because I felt like there were all these things I was supposed to be doing. And now I'm like, No, I need to kind of unwind because I was just hyper focusing for three days. And so much easier on myself when I spend a day, you know, Doom scrolling or lying on my phone, you know, lying on my couch on my phone, or you know, these ones these days. Like incredibly unproductive. I'm sort of like no, this is unnecessary kind of re reboot.



Kerry Mead 42:07

Yeah, I haven't quite got to that stage yet. I still beat myself up, still beat myself up about being glued to my phone. I've still got it. I've got huge, huge Twitter problem at the moment. I spent hours on Twitter used to be Facebook, but i've i've Facebook was becoming really negative for me, especially politics. So I've kind of pulled myself off of Facebook now, although I still need it for work. But I still beat myself up about spending too much time on social media still beat myself up about my house been a mess. I still find it difficult to relax. So that's that's my next project is to get to the point you're



Katy Weber 42:50

on. You're one of the links at the bottom of your article that you the essay that we've been talking about. You'd written for the everyday magazine, you had mentioned neuro tribes, the book neuro tribe. So you had recommended that and it looks really fascinating. And it's not one that I often see on sort of the top 10 lists and recommended books. Can you

tell me a bit more about that book. It's called the legacy of autism and the future of neurodiversity, which just sounds so awesome.

K

Kerry Mead 43:18

Oh, it is such an amazing book. So I was recommended it years ago when I first realized that my son may be new a diverse that he may be have autism. And I won't spend ages going into that process now and what it's like, but never parent of a autistic child said you need to read this book. It's just come out. It's fantastic. And it's by a guy called Steve Silberman. He's American. He's a journalist, and he spent years researching the history of autism doesn't mention ADHD much in it. It's more focused on neurodiversity, and autistic people's experience of it. He looks at history of it the social and cultural history and moves into why it's good to celebrate neurodiversity, and about a lot of the famous based online support there is now for neurodiverse people from their peers, and actually raising themselves up and being proud of it rather than it being medicalized and seen as being something that needed to be trained out of them. Or hidden away. And it was, it was so inspiring. It was so inspiring, because at this time, you know, autism, new diversity, they were all very new to me. I felt that every But he was autistic was like the Rain Man. That's what I thought, you know, like, like the rest of the population. And before I was plunged into a world where I had to learn more about it, because it might, all of a sudden my child may be autistic. So I can look back now, and I can see what I did. I focused on autism. For ages, I learned everything I could about it, but that book in particular, it for me, it really, really represents how people should see it as a positive, and not all negative. I mean, obviously, there's negative things there on negative sides to be in neurodiverse. You know, we've we've touched on them haven't made today, you know, with a lot of mental health issues and self esteem issues, but there are also a lot of positives. And I think people need to remember that, yeah, whether they're neurodiverse and self, or whether they love someone who is,



Katy Weber 46:01

that is such a great point. One thing I have a lot of gratitude for in my own kind of research journey since since being diagnosed. And the more I understand about ADHD, and the more I realize it's not this sort of isolated, neuro divergence. You know, whatever the word is, I'm looking for tick, you know, that it's, it's that it's on this much larger spectrum of neuro divergence, and, and how we are, you know, how fluid that spectrum is. And so it's really sort of like them so much more of my own understanding about autism, because I hadn't really had the inclination to do much research, you know, I hadn't been personally hadn't been personally affected by it. And so I didn't really take the time to understand it. And so it's sort of a nice byproduct of my own research into ADHD is really

sort of understanding autism as sort of like, you know, the gender spectrum, which is like, you know, yeah, we sort of used to operate in these very, like, containerd, male, female, you know, gay, straight, and now it's like, why is everybody queer? Why is everybody non binary, it's not like, it's not like it's just happening, it's that we sort of opened up this the spectrum, and everybody falls in some spot, you know, in this much larger room. And so I really appreciate how much my own understanding of this immense, incredibly amazing community and where you know, where we all fall in it, and how supportive everybody seems to be for now.

K

Kerry Mead 47:31

Yeah. I mean, I haven't got my article up. And I can't remember the exact phrasing I use, but I kind of, you know, sort of like all of the sort of neurological conditions like autism, dyspraxia, ADHD, I kind of liken it to that all huddled under the same umbrella, you know, and I actually ended up lecturing my daughter's GP, doctor about self diagnose people who've done a lot more research than quite a few general practitioners. And, you know, because he was going through a questionnaire with me about the baby sentence, before he was put through a request for her to be assessed. And I said, and yeah, and she's got terrible sensory processing problems. She's really sensitive to light signs and lightly But well, that's autism, not ADHD. So I ended up going into this huge spiel with him about it. They're all so intrinsically linked, you can't turn around and say that it's not a sign that she may be meant neurodiverse Yeah, because it doesn't. It's not. It is a spectrum. It is a spectrum. You know, it's not these little boxes, like, Oh, yeah, you're dyspraxia. Ik, your ADHD, you're autistic, quite a few people will actually find that they have got. Yeah, he's in the term, again, co-morbidities or jaw diagnosis, or even just being able to relate that. Yeah, I'm ADHD, but I can really relate to some of the things that come into the autism umbrella,



Katy Weber 49:21

you know, yeah. And I'm glad you brought up auditory and sensory issues as well, because I never would have thought I had sensory, any sort of sensory issues or any sort of auditory processing issues until I really started looking over my life. And it was sort of like, Oh, right, I can't brush my teeth with my eyes open. Like, you know, noticing these things that I'm like, Oh, right. Yeah, I do have quite an interesting read your reaction to certain sensory lottery, auditory issues? Yeah,

K

Kerry Mead 49:53

I mean, I'm sure that a lot of I'm sure there's a lot of neurotypical people who will say, Oh, yeah, yeah, but everybody has But it's how often you have it and how many examples you can come up with, you know, like, I don't really suffer from sensory stuff. But one thing I can't stand I cannot stand. Anybody putting anything in front of my face. Yeah. I feel claustrophobic if you know, I can do that. But if somebody else does that, to me, I just freak. You know, it's some. Yeah, horrible. That's not that's not just the only thing. It's the same. I'm beginning to realize now that there's quite a few things that mean, maybe I have got sensory stuff going on, you know, right. It's fascinating. Yeah. Well,



Katy Weber 50:37

I'm so enjoying talking to you. I was really looking forward to this conversation, and you did not disappoint. So,



Kerry Mead 50:43

Oh, thank you. Thank you. I feel like I could talk all day. And I was worried how I was going to feel the hour actually.



Katy Weber 50:51

So how can people find you online? And how can people more importantly, support you online and in your journey?



Kerry Mead 50:59

Ah, okay, so I've got a blog, which I is unloved occasionally. But I do put quite a lot of my writing up on there. And that is cool. It's on WordPress. And that is called all life less ordinary. So you can find it [all life less ordinary.wordpress.com](https://alllifellessordinary.wordpress.com) come and have a look and have a follow. Still haven't got a medium page that's on my, my huge long list of things to do. I look at and feel sick. Every time I look at it. Now I'm on Twitter. My handle is Carrie, underscore 689 is not very snappy, but I wasn't feeling very snappy when I decided I was gonna have a quick look on Twitter, you know, about a decade ago, and then didn't use it for three or four years. So you can follow me on there. One of the things I am doing at the moment, and if you follow me on Twitter, or follow me on WordPress, is I am planning on writing a book actually telling the stories in in more of a kind of in depth or creative way of women who are neurodiverse, and how their lives have been affected by that, especially if they didn't find out until later or especially if they were told that they had mental health disorders instead. So that's something I'm really excited about. And yeah, basically what's

your space,



Katy Weber 52:44

I find it really interesting how the some of the most interesting and elevated voices within the ADHD community are coming from people who often are not elevated voices in alive. I



Kerry Mead 52:56

agree. I agree. I mean, I'm, I'm why I'm privileged, you know, although, you know, obviously, Peppa struggles like a lot of people. But that's one of the things I want to do really, with writing my book, I'm privileged that I can write as well, and I can express myself in that way. I want to be able to tell people's stories and tell people's stories, the thought of a different experience to me, but there are those common threads as well. So yeah, I'm, I'm just casting around doing my research and finding them in at the moment. He's, he won't want their stories told so. Awesome. Well, I'll make sure to include that. Yeah, I



Katy Weber 53:41

mean, this is really, this entire podcast is an excuse for me to reach out to women who I think are cool and and have an intentional conversation. Oh, great. So thank you again for your time. Been so lovely talking to you. Thank you so much. It has you Oh, it's been lovely.