

Miranda Carlu: ADHD assets in the workplace

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SPEAKERS

Katy Weber, Miranda Carlu



Miranda Carlu 00:00

We have so many different interests. And sometimes we have these interests for a really short space of time. But we always pick up a lesson, we always learn something from it. And just all this stuff that builds up in the back of our mind. And I feel like then the second level kicks in for ADHD brain is that we tend to be really good at seeing patterns.



Katy Weber 00:27

Hello, and welcome to the women and ADHD podcast. I'm your host, Katy Weber. I was diagnosed with ADHD at the age of 45. And it completely turned my world upside down. I've been looking back at so much of my life, school, jobs, my relationships, all of it with this new lens, and it has been nothing short of overwhelming. I quickly discovered I was not the only woman to have this experience. And now I interview other women who like me discovered in adulthood, they have ADHD and are finally feeling like they understand who they are and how to best lean into their strengths, both professionally and personally. Alright, I would like to share with you this review from a listener named Frederica, on the Apple podcast platform in Denmark. It's entitled, thank you. This podcast is saving my life. And I'm only two episodes in. It is truthfully helping me view myself differently. I get to understand myself more, accept myself more and love myself more. I got my diagnosis seven months ago, I'm 27 years old. My son is five years old. He's starting his ADHD journey. And this podcast helps me with understanding and tools not only for myself, but then for teaching my son. I hope that one day I get to meet you all the love from Denmark, Frederica, or you can just call me Fred. Fred, this is so wonderful to hear. And I really thrilled and grateful for your feedback. I feel like my own diagnosis has helped tremendously when it comes to my parenting and helping my own children. So I am beyond happy to know that these conversations have helped you with this too, because you know, parenting is really fucking hard. I hope someday we can meet too. You know, I love getting the chance to meet so many incredible neurodivergent women through this podcast. And I feel like community and conversation have been so healing and such a huge part of my own ADH journey. I always want all of you to meet each other. That's really why I started the women in ADHD online community. It is truly a global community of incredible women and adults who are socialized as girls it is just the sweetest, nicest most supportive

group. We also have live monthly q&a is with ADHD experts which are always recorded so you can watch them anytime. We recently had a great one on ADHD and sleep and we have another one coming up in November on decluttering with ADHD we also have monthly drop in virtual office hours with Jules Our in house ADHD therapist. And of course, there's the virtual book club, which is happening right now. So shout out to all of the incredible participants in the current one. I just love hosting these groups so much. I'll be hosting another book club in January, so make sure to sign up for the waitlist. All of that information can be found over at women and adhd.com. And of course that link is always in the show notes. We would love to have you join us. Okay, here we are at episode 109 in which I interview Miranda Carlu. Miranda is a freelance business analyst living in Belgium, she's worked for a fortune 500 company and other large corporations. And she's also recently started her training as an ADHD coach and is preparing to consult with her first client on how to achieve neurodiversity inclusion in the workplace. Miranda and I talk all about the assets that come with having a neurodivergent brain at work, including creative problem solving the ability to quickly spot patterns and our talent for failing. Well. We also talked about some of the common barriers that exist around recruitment and receiving workplace accommodations. Miranda and I are both pandemic diagnoses. So we have a lot in common. This was a really, really wonderful conversation. I loved Miranda's insights, and I know you will to enjoy. Hi, Miranda, thank you so much for joining me. You're my first guest from Belgium. So I'm very excited for that. And I love our global community. So welcome. Thank you. We're just going to jump right in. I'm really curious about your diagnosis. You said you mentioned in our correspondents that you were diagnosed at the age of 36 with inattentive ADHD. So what was going on you you're a mom of three, also a pandemic diagnosis like me. So what was happening in your life that you first really started thinking I should I should look into this. Yeah,

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Miranda Carlu 04:45

as you said, I'm a pandemic diagnosis. I feel like what wasn't going on? I'd literally just had my third kids a month before the first lockdown. And so kind of all of my plans and my expectations of what was going to happen. I felt like I'm you know, I'm a seasoned mom, I know how this goes, you know, I'll take the first year off, I'll just focus on baby kind of go with the flow. But all of a sudden, I was at home with all three kids. So I was kind of juggling homeschooling my eldest. And then my toddler was super bored. She's like, three, and you know, it was like, why is mom trying to teach math and this baby is taking up all her time. And at that point, I was just like, wow, okay, what do I do, like all of the structure disappeared, all of my everything I imagined, of what this this time with new babies is going to be like, it just kind of flew out the window. And I knew that other people were struggling, like, I was very well aware, you know, everyone's having a hard time. You know, something like this has never happened before. But it did feel like this was a little bit more than that. I was literally, I felt like I couldn't breathe. I didn't know who I was anymore. I kind of lost all my balls that I've tried to balance up in the air for so long. All of a sudden, they were just falling one by one. And it got to a point where it's like, something's not right. Like, I'd always known, I was different. But I was like, I really need to look into this a bit more. So it was kind of two things really. Initially, I was actually thinking I might be autistic. And I read a few articles. Some of them did resonate slightly, but it didn't feel 100%, right. And I was talking to my brother one day, and he kind of he just gone through burnout. And he mentioned that his psychologist said that she she thought that he might have ADHD. And it was like, really, like I just never ever considered this. And then, you know, I got really curious, and I started reading up on ADHD, and especially how it manifests in women. And it's like, yeah, all the light bulbs went off. And it was like, Oh, my goodness, this is it. This matches it 1,000% It explains everything about my life up until now.



Katy Weber 07:01

Right? Almost in an unsettling way, I almost sort of feel like it was the answer to so many seemingly random struggles in my life that I was like, am I am I making all of this? Like, am I looking for these connections where they aren't there. And I still feel that way. Sometimes, like it's overwhelming to me still, years later, just uncovering more and more and more about like how ADHD, the fingers of ADHD, like creep into so many elements of our life? Yeah,



Miranda Carlu 07:32

it's everywhere. I mean, that's the thing, because it's not just a diagnosis, it's almost like an identity that you get given. Because you realize that every part of you has been impacted in some way by this brain wiring. And, yeah, there's really no getting around it. So it was quite overwhelming at first to realize, oh, my gosh, this is not just a part. It's everything. And it's there to stay. So wow, that's no, it was a lot to take in at first. Yeah, and



Katy Weber 08:03

I and some, that's something I think is really difficult to articulate when you're speaking to people other than other women who've been diagnosed adulthood is just how profound it is, like you said, it's not just a diagnosis, it's of a disorder or a disease, right? Like this is a profound shift in in your identity. It's a profound shift in like, looking over the course of your life and realizing how much you've been struggling and that you weren't even acknowledging it. But then also this sort of then looking forward at at this kind of new look at yourself, like it's so it's just so profound. And I honestly, I remember so many times during the beginning of the pandemic, being so grateful I didn't have a newborn. Because I just like my heart went out to all of you who, like you said, we're struggling with the different needs of children at different vastly different stages and having to, you know, I've talked about this so many times about like, feeling like, you just start in suspended animation, with just having to constantly cater and just and you know, so many times where I would be like, I just fed you, is it really time to, you know, is it really time to feed you again, I'd be like, oh, yeah, no, I guess that's right. A few hours have gone by.



Miranda Carlu 09:19

Yeah, I mean, it's surviving, but only just barely surviving. I don't think it's an existence that anyone really would sign up to I was, you know, it was extremely hard. And also, he wasn't sleeping well. So there was sleep deprivation, top of everything. And there's no escape, because there is nowhere to go nowhere where I could have like, the older kids run around for a little bit or anything, you know, all of that was just gone. So yeah, it was, it was difficult, but at the same time, you know, I keep thinking, well, maybe I wouldn't have come to this diagnosis, if not for the pandemic. And I think that, in a way has also been been a blessing because it allowed me to really kind of look back at everything that I've gone through and let go of so much shame, you know, guilt and, and there was a lot of that, like I There were articles I was reading and I was just crying hysterically like the full on ugly cry of oh my god, it's not me

like, you know, there's an actual reason for this. And also it led me to becoming a lot more open with people around me like for so long it's something that that I'd hidden it was like almost like a dirty little secret like on the outside people had this very different image of me and I even my partner who have been with 10 years now, I ended up telling him things that he had no idea about, like he was like, I did not know, How did I not know this? And I was like, Well, I've still shame to really own up to any of this because I don't know, people just had this idea of this very strong person, she has it all together, she's successful. She's very smart. But on the inside, I just felt like I was, you know, always really, really was struggling, everything felt so much harder than for everybody else. And I just didn't understand why. Yeah, and the metaphor



Katy Weber 11:04

of the swan is so poignant, right, like the idea of like, above the water, feeling like you have it all together, and everybody sees this version of yourself. And then you're madly paddling underneath. And nobody sees that part of you behind the scenes. But I think also like, we're working so hard that we don't even have the time or the opportunity to really think about what do we need, how much we're struggling, like, the struggle to keep up takes over everything. And so you don't even have time to stop and be like, What do I need? What's happening? What's going on? Like, there's no time for self reflection, or self actualization. And I think that's something that when you step back after a diagnosis can also like, it's just so overwhelming, where you like, I didn't even have a language for what I needed. I didn't know how to advocate right, like all of that the opportunity is suddenly there for you to be like, Oh, this is, this is what I need right now.



Miranda Carlu 11:57

Definitely. Thinking back now, you as you said, I have the language now, during the pandemic, I think I've probably reached like some kind of burnouts, even though it wasn't working at the time, but there was like a, maybe an emotional burnout because I, I honestly didn't feel like doing anything anymore. Like it's kind of everything kind of ground to a halt. I wasn't really interested in anything, I was literally only surviving. I remember my partner saying, Oh, you probably need a hobby or something like an outlet. And I'm like, a hobby. Like, first of all, I wouldn't even know what I'm interested in right now. I don't even know who I am right now, let alone taking on some new thing. And then like, you know, how would I even have time or the mental space for that? Like, I just it was just so far removed from what I needed. At that moment. I was like, No, I'm pretty sure that's not it.



Katy Weber 12:45

But I even think in those moments, too, like I'm at a place right now, where if my husband, I could totally see my husband saying something like that. And I could be like, yeah, no, that's not what I need right now. But I also feel like we're before my diagnosis, I probably would have been like, maybe he's right, maybe that is when I read like, the level of self self doubt was so high prior to my diagnosis to where I was like, I don't know, maybe that is what I need. I should try that wasn't you know, and, and always kind of chasing after the advice from other people and then being like, why does this not work? Why is that like working? So yeah, that realization

of like, knowing yourself better. So you can say like, yeah, that's, that's the last thing I need right now. So after your diagnosis, I know it's, it is so profound, and so, so much grief, and all of that, but like, what are some examples of things you looked over the course of your life, you know, and looked back and maybe in your childhood, where you're like, oh, yeah, the sides, the sides, were there all along?

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Miranda Carlu 13:40

Honestly, I feel like I could talk for 10 hours, and I still wouldn't run out of examples. You know, that's the beauty of hindsight. But I think as a kid, I was that super socially awkward, painfully shy kid, I was labeled quite early on in primary school or elementary, as you'd say, in the US as gifted, so I scored really high on all the IQ tests. And they even said at one point to my parents, you know, we think she should skip a grade. And interestingly, they, they declined because they thought I would miss my friends. Not realizing that I had virtually no friends like I, I didn't know how to. So I really struggled with that social connection. I always felt very different. Very much, you know, lived kind of in my own little world. I very much hyper focused on books. So I was always reading like, literally any free moment I had, I would be reading a book once I finished a book, I'd be on to the next one. I'd beg my mom, can we go back to the library and read more books? I disappear into that fantasy world? And I guess probably because I didn't really know how to communicate with other kids. I didn't really understand me my sounds really strange, but like when they would play games I wouldn't understand why they found it enjoyable. Like, I didn't get the point a lot of the time, like, what? Why are we doing this? This doesn't make sense. Like, it just did not interest me one bit. And I was much more interested in really profound topics, you know, like, I wanted to talk about the meaning of life or, you know, why are there wars in the worlds or who am I going to be when I grew up? My world was was very different from from the world of the kids around me. So I never really managed to bridge that gap until I was much older. And then strangely, when I hit puberty, it's almost like some switch flipped. I don't know if it's the influx of hormones. But something happened and made me a lot more outgoing to the point that I got a nickname of the diva, I became like, the loudest person in the room and I was life of the party first on the dance floor last to leave, never wanted to leave, by the way, I was, like, don't want to go home. I was that person, everything and an excess, you know? And yeah, did a lot of really stupid, impulsive things. I guess it's almost like this, like the flip side of my ADHD, like, it became a lot more, I guess, external. One thing that I also found, and I don't know if this is the same for other ADHD people, but I, the people that I would gravitate towards, were always people who are also in some way or form an outsider. So it could, you know, like, the LGBTQ community, or it could be like, ethnic minorities, like I, I always was hanging out with, like, you know, the one black kid in school, or like the one gay person in school that we had, because it's quite small, small community, like, those are the people that I, I just felt closest to. And I think it's maybe because on some subconscious level, like, I also felt different. My struggles were very different. But yeah, I just kind of felt really drawn to people who were also in some way different or on the outside. And, yeah, I still feel feel that way today. So, you know, I know, we say, Oh, we are best when we find our tribe, when we find other neurodivergent people. But for me, the same was true. But people you know, her an outsider in different ways, really, and some impulsive things I've done. One day, I think I was so I was thinking the equivalent of a junior in high school, I decided I'd had enough of school, I was bored out of my mind, I felt like I was in prison. I was doing well, I was, you know, it was in kind of more like a gifted program. So I was studying like Greek and Latin and advanced maths and all the other stuff, but I just couldn't one day, I was like, I can't do this anymore. And so I dropped out, I still remember the principal this looked at me and she was like, really condescending, was like, You're never going to make it like, why are you doing

this, nobody does this. And but I done my research. And I found out that I could actually graduate by being an independent student. And all I had to do was make sure that I went to the curriculum, and then did my exams, I had to travel to the Capitol, very random and do my exams there. And that's why I did so. You know, I looked, I didn't look back, you know, quit school. And to be very honest, I didn't really do much studying until like, the days before the exam, and then just did the exam and that was it. Like, I'd sleep till midday and all that stuff. So that's one thing I'd say. That's another sign. Another sign was you know, in relationships be very impulsive. Had this boyfriend followed him to America when I was 19. That three months there didn't really check the visa requirements properly ended up deported. Yeah, I have a lot of kind of crazy stories like that. It's kind of a bit of a thread throughout like my 20s, I would say it was more like focused on jobs. So in jobs out, which, you know, I would always kind of dive in at the deep end. I remember one job I applied for, and I didn't really understand what the job was about at all. I had no clue went into the interview, kind of blab my way through it got hired. And on day one, I was like, I don't know how to do any of this, like, this is insane. I'm this, someone's going to notice. But this crazy thing is they didn't like and then after about a week, I was like, Oh, maybe I can do this. And about a year into that job. My manager came up to me and he's like, Yeah, I kind of want to make a career change. And so I'd like you to take over the team. And I'm like, What do you mean, I'm the youngest person here? I've only been here a year. What are you talking about? And looking back now, I think he might have been neurodivergent as well, because that's probably why he hired me because I can't see what other qualifications I had. I had no college degree. Yeah, I don't know. But he saw something and I think maybe he recognized something in me that he you know, he himself Maybe had. And I think that experience taught me a really important lesson and is that when I apply for jobs, I need to stop looking for 100% match, which is what women tend to do, you know, as opposed to men where if 40% matches, they're like, Hmm, maybe I should try that one. Whereas women don't really want to really humps that match the job requirements. But that experience taught me that actually, I don't, you know, if something is interesting to me, and I think I have, you know, some transferable skills that might be applicable, then I will go for it, and see what happens, the worst they can do is say No, right. And that's also been, I guess, kind of a pattern in my career. And I ended up doing so many lateral moves, you know, I think very ADHD of me, instead of going for the promotion and becoming the manager, and then the managers manager, it's always been more of a no wonder what they do in that departments, you know, let me go look, and see what how they've do things. And oh, I wonder what that side of the business is like, and, yeah, which is ultimately what led me to my my current job as a business analyst.



Katy Weber 21:06

Oh, wow. Oh, man. You know, it's so funny how how we have that tendency to, you know, frame ourselves through a neurotypical lens, when it comes to our life choices, right. So like you're describing, you know, how you were sort of fed up, you wanted a more efficient way you figured out you did your research in terms of high school and like, you know, you're like, I did my research, this seems like a better option for me, I'm going to do this, I'm gonna go, I'm gonna go all the way to the Capitol, I'm going to do this. And yet through a neuro, you know, through neuro divergent lens, that sounds right, it's like, this is the most efficient way, this is something that feels right for me, but through a neurotypical lens, you're like, I'm a high school dropout. And I have to live with that for the rest of my life, right in terms of my self concept, and how, like, if we could just figure out if we could have just figured out how to like reframe our choices, through this more accepting obvious neuro divergent lens, how different our lives would have been, but instead, we're kind of forced to think about ourselves through these other

point of view, which then frames who we are as like, Oh, I didn't go to college. I'm a high school dropout. So this is like how who I am on paper is so different from who I feel like inside, right, and then we end up feeling so profoundly misunderstood. And, you know, all of that. So interesting. And also, just like, our nonlinear paths are, are so wonderful. Like, you know, it just I feel like I want to, you know, scold all of us for the way that we kind of undermine ourselves and how and the way that we get from point A to point B is so wonderful and weird. And, and, you know, we're so down on ourselves. Sometimes there was something about oh, gravitating toward the underdog, too, right. I just wanted to comment on that, because I felt like I you know, I've interviewed so many women who are in the health profession or, you know, in social work, right. And I think there is, like you said, you really touched on something about like, gravitating toward people who suffer, right, because of that untapped. You know, that we know on some, some instinctual level, we know how hard it our life is or the or how much we're suffering. And we feel that desire to like, help others, you know, to kind of unite with each other in that in that universal sense of suffering that I think,

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Miranda Carlu 23:24

you know, but feeling misunderstood, you know, yeah, yeah. Did I really interesting understood?



Katy Weber 23:31

Yeah. All right. So anyway, those were my notes, badly vague, like, oh, this, this or this, I'd like to take a moment to think better help for sponsoring this podcast. If you're a regular listener of this podcast, you know, I am a big proponent of therapy therapy provides me the best opportunity for verbal processing something that is so important for my kind of brain and my sense of self. What I love about BetterHelp is that it's not a crisis line. It's not self help. It is professional therapy that's done securely online from the comfort of your home. They assess your needs and match you with your own licensed professional therapist, and it's available for clients worldwide. So you get access to a broad range of expertise that might not be available to you locally. It also tends to be more affordable than traditional offline therapy and financial aid is available. If you visit their website and read their testimonials. There are actually quite a few reviews that specifically reference help with ADHD as a special offer for listeners of the women and ADHD podcast. You'll get 10% off your first month, simply sign up at [betterhelp.com/women ADHD](https://betterhelp.com/women-ADHD), that's BetterHelp h e l p.com/women. ADHD, and there's a link in the show notes. This podcast is sponsored by BetterHelp. Did your family react or your husband like did you you know, when you had this diagnosis, what was the reaction?

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Miranda Carlu 24:49

So I think for my brother, and you know, I immediately told him because I was like, Well, you know, you kind of got me here. So In a way as like, you should probably get your diagnosis now like, like, properly go for it. And he did. And he ended up with a dual diagnosis of autism and ADHD, which for him, I think also really was quite validating and explained a lot of his experience. And then, I think my partner he, at first he was, I think, when I told him I was going for an assessment, I think he was a little bit skeptical, because I got really quite obsessed with it. And he was like, Oh, here we go. There she goes again. But then when I actually explained it

to him, and he ended up reading a book about it, you know, the ADHD effect on marriage. He was like, this is you, this is us. This is this explains so much. Because, you know, I don't mind being very transparent, we've had quite a bit of couples counseling, because obviously, being with a partner that has ADHD is not always plain sailing. And we worked a lot on communication and things would get better for a bit, and then they kind of go back to being not so okay. And I think there was like, this missing piece. And having this diagnosis is, as has really, like, clarified why we kept getting stuck in the same patterns, because, you know, he could see the all the challenging bits in our relationship, but couldn't see why we could never quite get over them. And, yeah, so he understands me a lot better now. He understands that, you know, I am not trying to be obnoxious or, you know, difficult. And it's an ongoing process, right. I think any relationship is constant work and commitment, and compromise as well. But it's given us, as you said earlier, as well, you know, more tools and more more words that we didn't have before to, to explain things to each other, and to come at things from a different angle. So yeah, I think it's been very helpful. I don't know, you know, where we would be without this diagnosis, to be honest, because, you know, we probably just continue to get stuck until we be like, you know, what, maybe we need to, like, move on from this. Um, my mum was interesting as well, because she can actually recognize the few things in my story, not to the same degree, but like the being super forgetful, being a bit disorganized, and having trouble following conversations at times, things like that. And she also feels that it's gotten a lot worse since she hit menopause, for example. So I was like, oh, maybe, you know, you know, I don't she says, At this point, she doesn't really want to do anything with it. But you know, she walks up for maybe get more information. I'm pretty sure my dad had ADHD, but he was also a narcissist. So we've not had any contact for probably about six, seven years now. And I know that's also kind of a common theme, right? I see all the time on like, the ADHD forums about the link between narcissism and ADHD kids and, and trauma and things like that. So yeah, I mean, it was true for me, for sure, he was the classic narcissist. But I also think he had ADHD and he was also dyslexic. So I think there's a lot of neuro divergence going on in my family. And it's been nice to actually be able to openly communicate and talk about it now, like a family gatherings, they sometimes get really overwhelmed, you know, with my family is super loud. So be like, really noisy, and like, you know, a lot of people talking to me the same time. And they now know that sometimes I'll put in my my earbuds, you know, or I'll like, go sit in a quiet corner for a bit. So you know, and, yeah, so it's nice that they are more mindful of that now, I think, especially for my brother, it's been nice as well, because he feels like he can also, you know, be more open about what he needs in these moments. And, yeah, so it's been good.



Katy Weber 28:57

Yeah, right. I, I've been trying to take the advice of of guests, Christine Saira, she was talking about how her own diagnosis has helped her have a lot more grace and acceptance of the family members who are living life still undiagnosed, right? And how, you know, what it must be like to have that same confusion around some of these behaviors and trying to have a little more grace. And I was like, Oh, I really need to apply that I really need to, like take that on. Because I you know, I have the same similar similar situation with a narcissistic parent and, you know, realizing how difficult it must be to feel so much of the shame that so many of us do, and to hold that and kind of how do I how do I honor that and accept that and have grace for that, but at the same time, like still, you know, have boundaries in terms of who I am and what I need. But even you know, it just reminded me of like, when you were talking about couples counseling, you know, that's another example of, you know, counseling. You know, my husband and I have been through couples counseling. Absolutely. And we always feel that Like we have to be private about it like, like we have to hold, you know that we have to be private about the

fact that our marriage is imperfect as if anyone's is. And like, you know, and that's another thing where I had to really reframe where we had to reframe it for ourselves, which is like couples counseling is when you have something wonderful that you want to work on. To make it better you love each other so much that you want to do this, you want to, you know, but but counseling is something that we often look at therapy is something we look at where it's like, oh, no, you have to something has to be seriously wrong with you before you get help. Right? And I'm like, how messed up is that that is like that we look at things through that lens. So I also just wanted to throw that out there just to be like, there's so much of that reframing that we have to do. We're like, No, this is actually like, something tremendous that we need to commend ourselves for, as opposed to sort of being like, oh, no, nobody should know about this secret shame.

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Miranda Carlu 30:48

Oh, I mean, we're using the difficult road, you know, and that's something to be proud of, you know, we are we, you know, it's showing commitment and not giving up easily. And, you know, sometimes, you know, the best decision is to let go, but I think you don't know that until you actually put in the work. And I think even for individual therapy as well, I've done that as well. And I think most people would probably benefit from that in some point of their lives. You know, for me, it was mostly to deal with kind of my daddy issues, initially. But that's also interesting, because I remember at some point I tried to bring up to my therapists, like, Yes, I have this thing where I really want to do something, and I know I need to do it. But somehow I can't do the thing. And I don't know why. And she was so confused by it, she had no idea what it was talking about. And she kind of like, you know, almost ignored it and moved on from the conversation. And I was like, huh, so and it kind of just left it right. And then it didn't really serve as until pandemic as a keynote, I really need to do something about this now, because it's not normal, you know? Yeah.



Katy Weber 31:53

Yeah. And, you know, I feel like I talk about that a lot in terms of being diagnosed with depression and how, like, for me, you know, for so many of us who are diagnosed with depression, that desire is, is there, the, you know, overwhelmingly the desire to do the thing is there it's the in case, you know, just feeling incapable of doing it. And that and that you're right, it is can be really difficult to describe in to somebody who, who's never been there. Now, you know, I owe in terms of like, asking for help, too, you know, we talk a lot about I questioned a lot about like, the North American individualism and this idea of like, the work ethic, and how needing help is is basically failure, right? Like, so how, why it's so difficult for us to even ask for help, because it feels like that's the admission of defeat, and, and how that, you know, I'm like, does this all come down to the Protestant work ethic and individualism? So I'm curious, like, is that as a pain point, or a source of shame in Belgium? Is that as a woman, like, how, how is neurodiversity viewed? Or even just, you know, accommodations? How are they viewed? And Belgium?

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Miranda Carlu 33:01

The honest answer is, I have absolutely no idea. I feel like, I'm always the worst when it comes to like being an expert of my own country. And I think it's because I've always been more

interested in looking outward to other cultures. I've always kind of immersed myself in that. And, you know, I think Belgian women in general are quite independence. And they're quite, you know, so I don't think you know, and there is that talk of self care. It's definitely very much a hot topic. So I think there is that, but yeah, I don't know. Like, I'm looking at it now. From the perspective of my kids, because, you know, having three kids I'm obviously obsessing over everything they do, and wondering, do do they need help? You know, do I need to look at getting them support? You know, that's kind of been my focus lately, as well. It's, it's hard to tell because my eldest, sometimes I feel like she's my mini me, and so many ways, although she's great at the social aspect. But she's also very distractible. She's, you know, all over the place. She's quite impulsive, super emotional. And then my, my youngest daughter, she's, she's very, very introverted. She's, like, sometimes I suspect more like, autism in her because she struggles with social connection also a lot. And she's, she's very much into her own, like, fantasy world. And yes, you know, it's, it's, it's, you know, I try not to put any labels on them. I'm more interested in Okay, when do they need support? And if they do need support, how do I get it? So I'm trying to, like, over communicate with their teachers at times, to make sure that they're aware of, you know, my diagnosis and things that I witnessed in them and can they please keep an eye on them? Because, you know, my heart gets really heavy when I think of all the challenges that they could encounter with US. So yeah, we actually there's another aspect as well as that we only just moved here back here from the UK. I lived in the UK for 10 years. So we've only really been living here for one year. So we're all still kind of like, it's all very new even though I'm from here. Yeah, I'm still kind of getting used to everything again, as well. So there was that? Yeah, I



Katy Weber 35:24

know. I'm always curious. Because, you know, there is so much question about, like, what is the source? And what is, you know, how is the spirit and what, what is unique to my situation? And what is universal? And so, yeah, I always have, I always say, the more I learn about more ADHD, the more questions I have. And even like you said, I'd say, um, you know, I'm also on the similar journey with like, what is autism and where there's so much overlap, but at the same time, sort of feeling like, okay, like, there's certain things like, ADHD feels like the answer to so many things that that profound sense of discovery. I didn't I don't have that around autism. And so I'm like, why is that? Is that because I'm reluctant? Am I ableist? Am I, you know, do I feel like I can't, you know, like, I'm afraid of it. Is that stigma? Or do I really just not like, relate to it on that fundamental level? I don't know. Like, there's just so many more questions that never stop.



Miranda Carlu 36:19

I feel like this is an area where I really want people to kind of maybe focus like the experts to focus on because, you know, it's a question that comes up a lot, you know, enough to make me think maybe there is something there. I mean, for me, that was actually the initial thing that I looked into, because I can see quite a few things. The fact base really struggle with social connection. I feel like I don't always like if I hear instructions, I don't always catch the nuances. I get overstimulated extremely easily. Like I really struggle with loud noises, crowded places, and at times, it didn't always used to do I think that the more executive dysfunction goes to like kids in the household, I feel like the harder that aspect of my life has become. So I really feel that a lot more now. Where I know that the things I used to be able to do, I'm not able to do

them as much, it's been hard because, you know, you kind of feel like, Oh, I feel like my life has become a bit more limited. So, you know, it's not always an easy thing to accept. But at the same time, you know, at least now, I know how to, like prevent burnout a bit better. I know how to protect my boundaries a little bit better. So it's positive in that sense. But I think the reason why a lot of us struggle with understanding do I also have a bit of autism is because I think one of them tends to be more dominant. And for me, that's for sure, the ADHD, and sometimes they kind of balance each other out in some ways. We're like odd ADHD is actually made this autism trait a lot less noticeable. So I think that makes it especially difficult to probably to diagnose, but also for ourselves to to really understand, is this. Me? Yes, or No?



Katy Weber 37:58

Or even like we were talking about with reaching puberty and you know, suddenly kind of shifting, and then seeking the stimulation seeking the excitement? And how, you know, it's like, well, is that a way of you kind of bridging that gap or managing or finding solutions? Or is that masking and at what cost?



Miranda Carlu 38:15

I think it definitely came at a cost. I honestly do feel like, um, you know, it's also when I started to self medicate, you know, at times with alcohol and things like that, or, you know, the wrong foods. And, yeah, I think part of that was me trying to deal with all this stuff about myself that I didn't understand. And for a long time, I was like, you know, people call me defer, but I don't feel like that is who I truly am. And actually had this conversation with one, one of the very few friends I have from that time, who I said, you know, sometimes I feel like a fraud, like I novos almost, like, avoid meeting up to you. Because I feel like when you see me you expect to see the diva that I was, but that's not me anymore. Like I definitely don't relate to that anymore. It's not who I am. And it's like, yeah, but that's not why that's not why we let you you know, yes, we had fun. And we called you the Diva and was like this funny joke. But honestly, you know, the thing that we appreciated about you was the fact that you didn't seem to care about conforming, like, the norm wasn't really that important to you. You always said exactly what you thought you did exactly what you thought was right, whether it was you know, crazy, or impulsive or insane. You just did it and you fully owned it. And even if you made a mistake, you own that too. And I think that's, you know, that was really powerful to me, because it's it made me see it in in a lot more positive way that actually, that is true. And I think to this day, I kind of, you know, feel a bit rebellious whenever people say, Oh, this is how something should be done. I'm like, is it though, you know,



Katy Weber 39:57

right. Yeah, yeah. Oh, that's nice. Right. I feel like if we keep coming back to this theme of reframing in terms of how we viewed something versus how we should have been viewing it, I wanted to go back to, you know, your line of work. And, you know, as a business analyst, because you had mentioned that also in your email, like, how, how do you feel like ADHD has been an asset in your particular line of work?



M

Miranda Carlu 40:25

Yeah, for sure. So one thing I've noticed in people with ADHD, or at least, you know, what I can only assume from what I read on the forums and the Facebook groups is that we have so many different interests. And sometimes we have these interests for a really short space of time. But we always pick up a lesson, we always learn something from it. And just all this stuff that builds up in the back of our mind, and I feel like then the second level kicks in over ADHD brain is that we tend to be really good at seeing patterns. So you know, we have all this information that we can draw on, and then we start seeing links between them, that maybe neurotypicals, you know, don't find as obvious. And I think being a business analyst really requires you to have a very flexible brain and way of thinking it, you need to be able to look at things from all angles, you need to have an open mind and think of solutions. But at the same time, you need to see all the possible challenges or things that could go wrong in a process and products. Yeah, and also, you have to deal with a lot of very different stakeholders, you know, it's, it's usually you're talking to very technical people, then you're talking to more business, people who are like, subject matter experts, then sometimes you're talking to customers. And then some managers have a team, and they all have these different ideas of what they think should be done. So they all come with their own story, their own insights, their own requirements. And as a business analyst, you have to be able to hear their message, filter out what's relevant, and then kind of, you know, just apply some logic and see the pattern and go actually, I think this is something that could work for everybody. Or this is never going to work because nobody seems to have thought of a, b, and c. And, interestingly, my partner, I don't want to use the word hate is a very strong word, but it drives me absolutely nuts, decide of me, because he'll come to me with an idea. And I'm like, it's not going to work, because there's this, this and this, and have you considered that? And how are you going to solve this? And, and what if this happens, and he's like, I just wanted you to be a cheerleader today. Like, like, you know, I was so excited, you know, I, you know, to share this and was like, and then you just shut the thing down. And I'm like, I'm so sorry, I can't, I literally cannot help it. Like, this is how my brain works, I see something, and then immediately I start, you know, it's like, all the brain cells start pinging and, like, yeah, I start thinking, Ah, okay, but then this would happen. And that's the consequences. And this has been very helpful in my job in a professional setting, it's been absolutely brilliant, because it means that I can, you know, prevent a lot of risk, you know, I can stop things from failing before they've even been, you know, properly designed. But at the same time, you know, I do try and also find solutions, and our brains are just uniquely wired, I think, to to be very creative, you know, as neurodivergent people, we tend to be super creative. For some people it might be music might be in writing might be in, in graphics, but it can also be in your problem solving. So it's, it doesn't, you know, be creative is not just like, in an artistic way, I really think that, in that businesses need creative minds, people who can have like, so many different scenarios, all at once running to their brain, and yank, and just think of stuff that no one else has, has even considered. You know, I think of like startups, you know, for example, or, I would say, any kind of tech company in the past decade or even century that's come up with super innovative ideas. I'm pretty sure it has a lot of neurodivergent people working in those companies, because, you know, we just go where no other minds go sometimes. And sometimes that can fail massively. But, you know, failure is really, I heard us on another podcast recently, failure really is gathering knowledge you need to fill in order to learn new things and to prepare you for for the next opportunity. So and I think that's another thing that ADHD people are good at is failing.



Katy Weber 44:54

I like I like the idea. you know what you're talking about all the different skills that we acquire

on this sort of novel of your paths, it reminds me of, of like the space shuttle, right? Where the spatial will they always, whenever they, whenever they're assembling the crew for a spatial, it's like there's the teacher, there's the engineer, there's the scientists, there's the actor like they, they try to bring together all the different skills so that everybody can approach these, you know, high stress situations differently. And I'm like, that's like the inside of our brain. Was that Disney movie? Right, with like, all the different personalities inside of our brain? Like, yeah, that's what it feels like. And also, in terms of, you know, the having the response with your husband was coming to an idea. It was reminding me of like, how, as often I find this in the neurodivergent community, there'll be like, the question, which is like, are you just do you want to just vent right now? Do you want advice right now, like, sometimes it's gonna be really helpful for us to have clarification when somebody comes to us and share something? Or it's like, what response are you looking for, so that that will affect how I listen. And also that will affect you know, that you know, how this conversation moves forward. And it's really important for me to know that because I might, you know, I can't help myself, I might just want to like, give you all the advice and tell you exactly what to do. And that might be the last thing you're looking for right now. Or maybe it's what you're looking for. Right. And so like that kind of clarification, I think, is something that we seek out and respond to a lot with neurodivergent brains. When I was diagnosed with ADHD, it completely turned my world upside down. I looked back at so much of my life, my grades and school, my multiple careers and hobbies, my friendships, my marriage, motherhood, my relationship with food, and my body, like all of this with a new lens. And it was overwhelming to say the least, if you've been diagnosed with ADHD, and you're feeling blown away by this new insight into your brain and how it operates, I totally understand I can help you begin to sort through this chaos, explore who you are and how your brain operates. So you can finally start to lean into your strengths and begin to use them to your advantage moving forward. Together, we can work to identify what obstacles you've been facing, and create strategies to help you start living a more fulfilling, gratifying life, head over to women in adhd.com/coaching, to book a 30 minute initial consult with me. So we can figure out if my brand of one on one coaching is right for you. Again, that's women and adhd.com/coaching. And you can find that link in the episode show notes. So the question I love to ask is, if you could rename ADHD to something a little less confounding? Would you call it something else? Do you have something for it?

M

Miranda Carlu 47:38

100% I would call it something else. I think as so many of us have really struggle with words like deficiency or disorder, you know, I don't think it describes this well at all. And so I was actually thinking about this yesterday, and one that I came up with was emotional, resilient, outsider syndrome, because I like when things spell something, and it spells Eros, which is the Greek god of love. And I thought, you know, what the emotional side for sure, I think a lot of us will agree the emotional dysregulation is one of the hardest parts of being ADHD, or at least I find it the hardest one, the resilient part because I think we learned from a very young age to be more resilient, because, you know, we, we do get a lot of negative feedback, we fill out a lot of things as I mentioned, so, but we also learn how to pick ourselves back up, I feel like we really are, you know, we don't like to get like, let go, like, you know, we, I find that if I'm putting together some furniture or something like, I will not stop until life done it and fixed it. Or if something's not working on my laptop, I want to know how to fix it, like, you know, so we're very resilient. We don't just just kind of accept defeat very easily, I think. And then the outside of that. It's also kind of it's not just that we are outside as well, all the time. I think also just outside of the box, or as I like to say sometimes for us sometimes there is no box at all. And

then yeah, I picked syndrome. You know, I think I think it sounds a bit more gentle than disorder. So yeah, it really is just kind of a group of symptoms. So you know, syndrome sounds about right. I don't want to call it disorder. It's not necessarily a superpower either. It can be but you know, there are some really hard parts about it. So syndrome, it seems a bit more neutral and in the middle, and it spells something cool and why eras and God of laws I think, pretend to love really hard. Like I find that, you know it's we tend to really go all in a lot of the time and also our I love for people who are different for things that are different. You know, we love the novelty, we like exploring, you know, new things, we, we tend to be a lot more, like less judgmental, almost, you know, like, I feel like we're just open minded because we know exactly what it's like to be different. So, yeah, that's that's why it just seemed like a nice symbolic naming.



Katy Weber 50:24

I love it. Absolutely. All of I agree wholeheartedly with all of that. You know, it's funny, when you talk about the judgment, it reminded me of, you know, your daughter and my kids. And some of the things that my husband and I struggle with, or a lot of our anxiety around this diagnosis is, who do we tell? Especially teachers, right, because it's like, if I just sort of announced to these teachers, my child has ADHD, I have no idea what that means to them and what they're hearing, right? And so a lot of the time, we really have to build up, like, what are their needs right now, you know, instead of saying, My child has ADHD, we say things like, my child needs to sit at the front of the classroom, or you're going to have to repeat things or have the, you know, and really like thinking in terms of the accommodations, and what exactly are is needed versus beat just saying, you know, they have this diagnosis, but sometimes it just, it gets out there because you need to get a feel for and, and it's out there. And it's something you can't control. And I feel like that's something that we really struggle with, which is like, when is it when is the right time to kind of live out loud, with with ADHD, a lot of people aren't comfortable with it for a lot of very valid reasons. And it's not something I honestly even thought about before I started this podcast and suddenly, like announced the world that I had this and I've had to kind of now live with, like how I'm being perceived as a result. So I'm curious, like, in terms of, you know, thinking about neurodiversity consultancy, in in the workplace, like, are you out loud about your ADHD at work? Or what would you recommend to somebody who is is thinking about like, what do we what do accommodations even? Would they even look like for me? Like, I'm always very, like, tread carefully and very slowly. But I also haven't worked for somebody in a very long time. So it's, sometimes I feel like I that's really out of my league, but like, what would you kind of what are what's working for you?



Miranda Carlu 52:19

So I haven't actually brought it up to my actual like HR person, or even my manager, because I got my diagnosis, just after I actually started my current assignment. But I have, for example, reached out to somebody at work, because I could recognize some traits. And I just kind of said, Hey, by the way, I'm, I have ADHD, and this is why, you know, these are some of them, just to kind of like, and it's just like, oh, maybe I need to look into that. So I tend to just, I'm quite open about it, I would say outside of work. But now I do think that I want to have a conversation even at work, because why not. And it's really more to raise awareness. I also am looking into doing consultancy around neurodiversity at work, because I mean, it's very topical, right diversity and inclusion. And we talk about breaking the glass ceiling, we talk about making it more inclusive

for minorities. But when it comes to neurodiversity, there's still not a lot of awareness for a lot of companies. You can see the odd even sometimes really big companies who are actually running trials and special programs for nerd neurodivergent workers. So that something is happening. But I think it's not nearly enough. Because when you look at statistics of how many divergent people are actually out of work, especially in the district community for in particular, but even with ADHD people, we tend to suffer from burnout a lot more than neurotypicals. And there's a conversation that needs to be had. Because I think when you find the right space at your company for an overt neurodivergent people, I think it can be a real asset to the company, and a real learning experience as well. You know, I talked about innovation, but I think it's also just as a society, we just need to learn to be more inclusive. And one thing in particular, I often think of as the first, the first thing that that could do with some fixing is the recruitment process. You know, I when I after the pandemic, I was like, Okay, I really need to get back into work. Now. We just moved to Belgium, I was looking for new opportunities, and I really struggled with the recruitment process of a lot of companies. Sometimes they're like four or five rounds. This is extremely hard for neurodivergent brains to go through it feels extremely overwhelming. There are so many steps. It's very anxiety inducing makes you second guessed yourself, it's a lot of uncertainty. You know, but even like if you look at the job requirements in a lot of ways You know, a lot of job descriptions, they the way they are phrased, they can seem very off putting for neurodivergent brains, you know, because we know exactly what what our challenges are a lot of the time, even if we hide them very well, we know the things that we're going to struggle with. So I think a lot of the phrasing and those job descriptions could be more inclusive, not to scare neurodivergent people away. So I think that's the first hurdle. But then, you know, keeping the recruitment process a lot shorter, be a lot more transparent about exactly what the steps are, what will happen and when, what are we really expecting what's you know, what will the job look like day to day, having very, very clear goals, you know, anything vague just does not work for us? You know, in my current job, we work with Sprint's, so, every week, we have a sprint, I know exactly what the goals for that week are the tests. And I know what is expected of me, I don't have to second guess, you know, oh, how far am I on this six month or one year goal that they've set at the beginning of the year? I don't have to really think about it or use any of my mental space for that. I know. Okay, this week, this is exactly what needs to be done. That's, that's what we're working towards. And it works extremely well. I think that's why a lot of us tend to work in the tech space, because that's where this agile way of working is very prevalent. But yeah, it's it's more than that can be said in this this, this episode, I think. But I think as a whole, we can just do so much better.



Katy Weber 56:35

If you're not yet ready to announce your diagnosis to everybody you meet, which absolutely is understandable, of course. I think you know, developing the language, all the things we've talked about in terms of reframing, like all of those needs that we have in terms of recruitment process, and like the, you know, some of those things that we might need, we can ask for, like diagnosis or not, right? These are things and I think a lot of the diagnosis gives us that permission to sort of start building boundaries and start saying, Okay, this is what I need, right. And you know, and even like working remotely, so many, when everybody was working remotely, it was like such an ideal situation for an enormous portion of the population. And now everybody wants to go back, go back into the office. And there's everybody's really resisting, because of how, you know, suddenly, this option was open to us to work from home. And it was like, why are you asking me to go back? Like, I need to understand the logic behind this decision? Is it just because you are paying for the real estate and you want us to come back? Or is there some real reason that I can, like, connect to, because I really like this other way.

And so I think there's been such an interesting conversation around workplace environments right now, about, like, how important it is to really come up with systems that make sense for how you work as opposed to just going along with the flow and being like, well, I have to do this because I'm afraid if I don't, I'm gonna get fired. Right. And it's, you're right. It's very complicated. And multi layered. But yeah, so fascinating to think about endlessly. Well, this has been so lovely. I'm so glad we arrange this. I'm so glad you reached out to me. Thank you such a interesting perspective, Miranda, and, you know, wonderful, nonlinear path that we've taken. So yeah, I guess normally, I kind of ask how people can reach out to you, but I'm not sure you're really in a public facing position, right?

M

Miranda Carlu 58:35

No, that's okay. I actually thought about this, you know, part of my impulsivity was like, whoa, okay, let me find a domain name. And, like, start a website and get something ready. Because I have all these plans, like I, you know, I do want to, you know, work towards becoming a diverse consultant, I also am looking towards getting more qualified as an ADHD coach, for example. So I'm working towards all of that. But the real answer is, none of that is ready as of today. If people do want to reach out to me with any question, or you know, project or anything they'd like me to get involved in, they can find me on LinkedIn. And so that's probably the best way to reach out to me really says on LinkedIn,



Katy Weber 59:17

wonderful, okay, I'll put a link to that in the show notes. Either I don't write i i miss a way I've like, I've always tried to get certified for some new thing right now. And I'm always, you know, chasing a million different ideas. And I love it. I love it. It's just, you know, how can we how can we harness that and, and live with that desire, but at the same time, also, like, have boundaries and do less? Well, this has been so wonderful. Thank you so much, Miranda.

M

Miranda Carlu 59:47

Thank you. I'm big fan of podcasts. I want to thank you for what you do, because it has, you know, made a world of difference to me after my diagnosis. Just yeah, leading hearing everyone's stories. It's helped me so much. So I'm glad I get to contribute in some small way today



Katy Weber 1:00:06

and there you have it. Thank you for listening. And I really hope you enjoyed this episode of the women and ADHD podcast. Also, you know, we ADHD ears crave feedback, and I would really appreciate hearing from you the listener. If you're a fan of the podcast, please take a moment to leave me a review on Apple podcasts or audible. And if that feels like too much, and I get it, then just take a few seconds right now to give me a five star rating, or share this episode on your own social media to help reach more women who maybe have yet to discover and lean into this gift of neuro divergence assay, and they may still be struggling and don't even know why. And if you'd like to find out more about me and my one on one coaching for women with

ADHD, head over to [women and adhd.com/coaching](https://www.womenandadhd.com/coaching) and you can always find that link in the show notes. I'll see you next week when I interview another amazing woman who discovered that she is not lazy, or crazy or broken. But she has ADHD and she is now on the path to understanding her neurodiversity and finally using this gift to her advantage. Take care till then