

Paulina CheÅ,stowska: Slavic women and ADHD

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SPEAKERS

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Paulina CheÅ,stowska 00:00

So we're not that optimistic about our possibilities. I don't know if you know that but not every child in Poland hears that they can be anything they want to. We don't hear that we don't trust that. We don't believe that. We just think life is hard. No, no funny business at the end. But you know, at the end it will be good. It's just life is hard. Hello, and



Katy Weber 00:31

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 liked 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. I'd like to share with you this review from a listener called a mandates on the Apple podcast platform in Canada. It's called I don't feel like a total failure anymore. I was diagnosed in my late 30s When my six year old was diagnosed. I found your podcast shortly after and I honestly am emotional just talking about how it changed my internal thinking about myself. I always thought I was not smart, flighty, forgetful and anxious. I feel empowered, knowing that I am not defined by those things anymore. Ah, now I'm emotional thinking about how transformative this diagnosis journey can be. If you know you know, am I right? I'm sending you a virtual hug right now and I am just so glad this has been your experience and that these conversations have been helpful in this way. Okay, here we are at Episode 105, in which I interview Polina Chell stuffs gap. I'm sorry, I butchered that Paulina Abuelita is a social worker and a soft skills trainer and facilitator living in Poland. She specializes in using games as tools for team building and education, working mostly with underprivileged youth at risk of exclusion and in foster care. And she advocates for play as a fundamental human right. She is also the host of a Polish language podcast about women and ADHD. Paulina and I talk about the myth of laziness, as well as some of the unique differences between the Western and Slavic perspectives on ADHD, especially in women. Polina is so expressive and perceptive. And I just know you are going to love this interview. Enjoy. Well,

Paulina, thank you so much for reaching out and for joining me. I'm super excited. I, you're obviously my first guest from Poland. Am I going to pepper you with questions about your perspective and the Slavic perceptions perspective? But before we do that, I want to hear about your own diagnosis journey. How old were you when you were first diagnosed with ADHD and kind of what was happening in your own life that really led you to start connecting the dots and thinking I should, I should look into this?

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Paulina CheÅ,stowska 03:17

Well, a meme, a meme. So basically, you know, like, every mean millennial. In this world, I just self diagnosed through a meme. I found a meme from ADHD earlier. It's usually she's drawing comic books, comic strips in two side panels. And she was just describing the difference between how it looks like and what it is. So something that looks like procrastination, for ag dears is decision paralysis, for something that looks like being very chaotic for us is being just very interested and very passionate about something. So I just, you know, the whole panel just spoke to me. And I immediately thought, Well, yeah, that's that's the answer. And that was winter of 2019. I was 32. I was pregnant with my second child. And I kind of froze when I realized what this means. And then I went to my husband, and I said, I think I have ADHD, and I started crying. And he was, he was amazing. He just asked me very gently if I'm just sad about what my life could have been. And I said, Yes. So it was a very sweet moment. And then, and then I in the evening, I went to my chosen family. Only took my children parents because I was vacationing at their house. And they're both psychologists. And I asked them, Do they think that diagnosis process makes any sense? When I'm pregnant? Like, is pregnancy brain, not a good moment to take a diagnosis process? And they were asking, What do you think you have? And I said, I think I have ADHD. And they said, No, you don't have that you have everything else. But you don't have that. So, you know, that was a shot in the face, let's say. So I just decided not to talk about this to them. But from this moment, from the moment I saw this meme, I was sure I didn't need anything else. And everything. Every other step I was taking on my way, I was just, you know, learning more about something I was already sure about this, this one piece of information was enough. I obviously went through a moment of, or many, many moments of, you know, feeling like, maybe I'm wrong. Maybe I'm making this up. So you know, the famous when I'm doubting my diagnosis



Katy Weber 06:24

is oh, oh, imposter syndrome.

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Paulina CheÅ,stowska 06:27

Yeah, they impose so famous impostor syndrome, I went through that. And I went for a consultation, psychiatric consultation, I think maybe three months after. And the lady said, you do have ADHD. But I will not give you meds because you're pregnant. And that affects the baby that affects lactation, you cannot take meds while you're pregnant, or when you are breastfeeding. And now I know I that that was not true. And now I know, I could have taken it, but I don't think I would be because I just knew there was so many things happening with me that adding another factor that might change everything, even if it's the change for a better I just kind of want to hold on to things I know. So I wouldn't have taken it anyways. So that was

fine. Plus, that was 2019. And, you know, I had my child at the beginning of famous 2020. And hence, you know, the pandemic and being closed up in our homes. So that was the last thing on my mind, you know, taking meds and you know, taking care of my mental health when the world is falling apart. About I revisited the idea after the pandemic was, well, maybe not over, but heading towards better faith, not the phase where nobody knows anything, but just kind of go towards finding a cure. Right. And that coincided with me going back to school, because I do not have master's degree. I don't have a bachelor's degree. And in my bubble in my say, social group, that's unheard of. You're either lazy or stupid, if you don't have at least a bachelor's degree, just high school diploma, that's nothing. So I was very much hesitant towards the idea of going back to school for the third time, because that will be my third try. And it still is because I'm still in school. Fingers crossed. I will that will be the last one. But I was discussing it with my husband and I was thinking you know, this thing in the back of my head that is you know, turning into my hyper focus and my hobby and my whole life. You know, just reading on ADHD maybe this is the good time to look into meds as a means to help me focus and you know, go through the horror of school again, because I have very, very, very maybe not traumatic but bad experiences with school and academia and all of that



Katy Weber 09:30

same I would call it traumatic for sure.



Paulina CheÅ,stowska 09:34

Yeah. So basically, I went for an official diagnosis this time I got meds and I started them. And you know, so far so good, but I would say you know, the, it's not just the meds that keep me in school, but also you know, the therapeutic process and also finding the community and many, many Many ways that this community is supporting me and my environmental health and just, you know, me not going completely bananas with everything that's going



Katy Weber 10:11

on. Yeah, yeah, it's interesting, I also have gone back to school. And you know, a lot of it is because of the fact that I never thought I would go back and get my master's, because I barely graduated for the skin of my teeth. And, uh, just, you know, always felt like I was, you know, wasn't smart enough for school and had to deal with that stigma, that internalized stigma of the fact that I'm just not smart. And it's through this diagnosis that I've gotten the courage to go back, but also remembering how academia is a disaster. It's really difficult to like, navigate all of the, the administration and you know, there's so many things that I'm refusing this time around to, like, just try to white knuckle it through like I did last time, like, I'm really trying to, like, make sure I get accommodations, I'm in constant contact with the Disability Resource Center. And I really like trying to look out for myself in that way, but at the same time, like, it's really hard, like, it's so there's so much paperwork, and there's so much administrative bullshit that like, I just, it's, I'm like, why am I doing this? Academia is really unfriendly to me and my brain. And it's not a reflection of how smart I am or how not, but I really stubbornly like you, I'm like, fingers crossed, I just want to get through this and be kinder to myself, right? Like, I think that's the thing that's been different this time around

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Paulina CheÅ,stowska 11:37

and think about it. Like in America, you're kind of, you know, like a hub, avant garde of people that know about ADHD, like, so many resources, and so many research is done in America. And, and still, you know, the academia is so much far behind what we know. So you can imagine what happens here, but I'm fortunate to have picked and that was maybe not a coincidence, but kind of a coincidence that I picked a very disability friendly school. So they do have the Center for Disability. And, you know, ADHD is miraculously part no reason to be registered there. But so far, I just wrote them. And that's it, like nothing happened because of paperwork. i plus, I'm also a weekend student, that was the only way I was going to graduate because I knew if you know, one day you're going for 8am. And another one is for 5pm. And another day is just two hours to two hours there, I would die, and could not work and could not raise my children. So we can study those my only option. And that goes with another kind of stigma, because there is a stigma that only the people that have the worst grades ever, but they still want to graduate from from university, then they go to weekend school. So that's another load of stigma there.



Katy Weber 13:09

Yeah, well, and I think it's been really difficult to like really internalize that this is a disability, I think that's something that you kind of have to come to, on your own, like to acknowledge that you've been diagnosed with a disability and that you are entitled to help. And I think because we've spent so much of our lives, at least I have thinking I'm just lazy, or what's wrong with me, I could just do it, if I just like sat down and figured it out. It's really difficult for me to embrace the disability in this way, you know, as even though I talk about it constantly, you know, I'm very open about it, just, I'm finding it really difficult to acknowledge that I am disabled and therefore, because of this disability, I, I am worthy of how you know, like that, that it's a rite that I have. And I think that's something like a mental hurdle that I'm trying to get over. And I'm sort of surprised by

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Paulina CheÅ,stowska 14:06

when you think disabled person, you don't see yourself. Yeah, you kind of have to make that. But you know, just knowing internally that you do have those moments of spurts of intelligence and energy and everything you think I maybe i can summon it somehow, somehow and, you know, just just accepting that you can't, and that you might just need help. And maybe that's okay. That's an uphill battle in itself. But I don't even see ADHD as a disability. I mean, it is disabling in this world by more thinking that the civilization is just disabling our ways of living, our ways of thinking and our eight ways of acting and achieving things You know, I put the disordered part on the world and civilization more than on myself. I also through this project, I, this project of podcasting, but also, through the community on Facebook, I met people that are completely 100% Fine with their brains, and not as a rebellion. They're just fine. They're okay, they have self worth and self esteem both of them. So it's possible. So it is possible to function in the world with ADHD. And just not be struggling. But if you do just definitely go to go get help go get anything that that helps you because we are worth it.



Katv Weher 15:50



Katy Weber 15:30

Right, yeah. Going back to the emotional element of the diagnosis, in the beginning, I remember my therapist saying to me, you know, that you've been walking around with a brick tied to your ankle, this whole your whole life. And in the beginning, you know, I, it's just that realization over and over and over again, and all these different elements of my life, like, including school, you know, realizing how that brick still follows, follows me around. And but it's true, like, there's the brick, like you said, is the disability is in relation to the environment. It's not, it's not like the brick is there all the time, the brick is only there, when you're in certain situations that are completely accommodating to who you are and how you think. And so it is difficult to kind of think of this in terms of a constant disability, because I think that's you're right, we we think of disabilities as being irreversible or, you know, unmanageable,



Paulina CheÅ,stowska 16:50

or something inherently gives you a disadvantage. And ADHD might give you this advantage in this in an environment that just doesn't let you be ADHD.



Katy Weber 17:04

Yeah, I know. It is. It is so emotional. I'm getting really emotional right now. I



Paulina CheÅ,stowska 17:09

don't know why. That might be me. I'm like, sorry, man. No, I'm just I get you know what, when I'm interviewing people on my podcast, I'm crying like, minimal three times, during every conversation, I was crying when I was listening to your podcast, like, sometimes I had to stop the car and cry, and then keep going, then I was, you know, sometimes people talking to me, and I'm just showing them to keep talking. But then I'm, like crying really, really silently, so the mic doesn't get the sound. Now I'm an open movement. Like, I don't know, what's happening that last few months was just, Oh, my God, because the podcast is very new. And you know, it's a budding project, like, it's less than two months, you know, the scope of emotions I'm experiencing, I'm starting to realize that maybe that's why I'm just, I'm on the verge of crying all the time, basically, so I might be, you know, putting that on you a little bit.



Katy Weber 18:16

Well, and I think it says, like you said, when you are going down these rabbit holes, and you're feeling so deeply seen by ADHD, literature, ADHD, memes, whatever it is, like there is that feeling like, I relate so deeply to this pain, and this, this emotional element that like that speaks for itself when it comes to questioning the diagnosis, right?



Paulina CheÅ,stowska 18:43

Yes, this relief, this this just profound, deep relief, like to the core of your soul, like, finally, I can, like it's a tense muscle that for a second, you can let go, obviously, you have to tense it up with it while go back out there. But you can let go of it for just two or three seconds and just oh

my god, yeah. But



Katy Weber 19:09

then also realizing, like, I didn't realize how much I was struggling until I started thinking about ADHD and all of the various ways in which it had affected me over the course of my life and realizing, like you said, like, there's that grief, like I looking back and thinking I could have had a different life, but also just like getting hit with that realization of how difficult my life had been, you know, and I hadn't acknowledged how much I had been struggling until I was able to kind of within the safety of of this diagnosis and yeah, i Oh, my God, I cried so much. List goes all the time. For that same reason. I've just like God, yeah, God, my life was really hard. And I finally was able to acknowledge it. I think, you know, way that was not filled with self blame, right? That it wasn't filled with like, oh, it would this I brought this on myself that maybe I wasn't the problem all along.



Paulina CheÅ,stowska 20:12

Yeah, because yeah, and I, the grief comes in waves, and they just have you know, each wave is a different color. And I just deal with them as they come and they go. Just recently I, I saw another comic book that said that we are on the receiving end of undeserved privileges and undeserved traumas. So that kind of made me feel better because I'm, I'm also very prone to feeling guilty. And it's very, very easy to make me feel guilty about something or responsible for something that I might not be responsible for. So you know, I'm in a constant state of thinking, Am I using my privileges to the best ability I can, to, you know, help those without those privileges. So that kind of made me feel better, because it was traumatic not to get, you know, the, the recognition, the the diagnosis, or the help that I could ever get. But I also got so many privileges on the other side, that it kind of, for me for this one moment, in this particular wave of grief. It kind of helped me, because I'm, I'm constantly thinking, how can I help people around me? And I think that kind of balances it out for me, you know, the another wave of wave will be a different color. So we'll have to figure something else, then. But right now I'm, you know, surfing this way.



Katy Weber 21:45

Now, you mentioned your, your surrogate parents, the psychologist said, you have everything else, but not ADHD. What did they mean by that?



Paulina CheÅ,stowska 21:55

I not sure, I think they meant anxiety, because I'm very, very anxious person, I'm afraid of everything. And think of plan B, and C, and I've no d and x and y and z. So maybe they meant anxiety, I that's the thing as well. I don't blame that I don't blame them any more. Let's say I was kind of upset about this, but I'm not in my anymore. And I also talked about this with them that, you know, it was hurtful. And that's why I did not talk to them about this topic for a year after that. But we're cool now. It's just not their specialty. And they don't know and you know,

the, the base level knowledge of ADHD is so low that I, I don't even have the expectations anymore of anyone knowing anything. I just know, assume everybody knows nothing. And if anybody knows anything, I'm just glad I just treat this as a bonus. So yeah,



Katy Weber 23:04

I think that's smart. I definitely have that same sort of self, I guess, boundaries or that, like self protection, right? When it comes to talking about it and who I talk about it with, because it is so deeply disappointing to realize how misunderstood it is with so many people who I'm close to in my life that I'm like, I think for the benefit of our relationship, we just need to never talk about this. And that and that realization, like as much as I want people to understand what I'm going through. Like, it's my journey, it's my personal journey. And, and I don't really mean you are already to convince anyone,



Paulina CheÅ,stowska 23:43

right? You are already pushing the boundaries. And you know, you're spreading the knowledge. So you're already doing this for, you know, in small increments for so many people. So you don't have to, you know, have those same battles at your house. Yeah. You know, in your, your family reunion, right, you're you're doing enough, let's say so, you know, being self protective. And, you know, I don't know, maybe a bit coy or just, you know, leaving or ignoring the subject in some moments where you deserve peace. I think that's fine.



Katy Weber 24:20

Yeah. Yeah. I think if people ask me what I do, people asked me what my podcast about I'll just say something really uncomfortable, like feminine hygiene. They'll stop asking. Oh, okay. I did not thought of that. No, it's true. I'd like to take a moment to thank better help for sponsoring this podcast. If you're a regular listener of this podcast, you know, I am a big proponent of therapy therapy provides me the best opportunity for verbal processing something that is so important for my kind of brain and my sense of self. What I love about better help is that it's not a crisis line. It's not self help. It is professional there 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. Looking back over your childhood, so you were I mean, you were diagnosed in such flux, right? I mean, or even just this whole journey where like being pregnant especially with number two, I feel like God it's so there's so much chaos in your life during all of that. And so much you know, talk about crying with no reason or, or not understanding why, you know, the emotional roller coaster but looking back even over your childhood or some of the like points in your life, where what do you look back at and think, oh, you know, the signs were clearly there all along. Just nobody knew what to look for.

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Paulina CheÅ,stowska 26:18

Everything is crazy. I don't even know where to start. Because my age is not silent. I definitely do have age and ADHD, the hyperactivity, I was climbing trees, I was running up the halls with all the boys during school, I mean, during breaks, or sometimes during lessons. I was fighting them I was you know, they were hitting me I was hitting them back. I definitely was very much on the move all the time. Also, during the lessons I enjoyed like Polish literature, I was raising my hand but in such an expressive way that I had to be put in the bag so I was in the bag so I can talk to my friend but when the question was asked we were both raising our hands but then also doing the dance like doing everything I think she was sure he as well. She might have been anyway. Anyway so so I was very very engaged during the those lessons that I liked and absolutely out of it during lessons I did not lie. What else or forgetfulness you know, my I'm having flashbacks from you know, losing permission slips and you know, the pamphlets with information about school church. Oh my god, this is bad. Yeah, so that homework homework, that's just like a battlefield. Homework was absolutely awful. My father was really trying, but it was trying in such a punitive way that I to this day, I have this thing where I I cannot work on the computer when somebody's behind me. I hate when somebody can look at what I'm doing because I immediately feel judged. I mean, you know, I was not doing homework. He was like, going in going back going and going back and check checking if I'm doing homework, I was coming up with ways to read comic books, but make it look like I'm doing homework. And you know, praying that this tank just you know, peeks through the door and not goes up to me because then he will see the comic book. And oh, my god, homework was just death of me. Everything you know, but also being told that I'm talented, but lazy, that nobody had, you know, the language to understand the why such an intelligent person would fail so badly at school. Nobody could understand this. They could only see that I'm reading comic books. So yeah, so that so what was I saying losing stuff? Yeah, that was there. We are just talking about childhood right? Not the early adulthood.



Katy Weber 29:37

No, I mean anything really. It's like you go through your whole life through this new lens. I feel like High School University relationships. Dating.

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Paulina CheÅ,stowska 29:50

Don't get me started failing studies twice. I was just telling myself that I'm very passionate person. person that just has to be interested in what she's doing. So that's why I'm failing studies because they include some interesting courses and some non not interesting courses. Then I reframed it in, I'm a very entrepreneurial person. So I just need to be in business. And actually a degree will be holding me back, because it will just kill my natural creativity. You know, the mental flip flops that I'm going through to just understand because I know I'm intelligent, everyone tells me so I can see the signs, I can see the proof that I'm not dumb, so it must be that I'm lazy. Just there. There are no other ways to understand that. But then I ended up being a an immigrant in Canada, and working so much, I was working 12 hour shifts, physical jobs, you know, like landscaping. And I was thinking, how can I be lazy, if that's not possible, I'm waking up at 6am. I'm working, then one hour commuting to work, working 12 hours, door to door sales. That's a hard job. And if I managed to get a sale, then I have to work

physically. And after that, an hour commuting back going to sleep. It ended up being 18 hours because I was in cope, like almost an MLM thing with landscaping. Oh, that was that was a disaster. It helped me a lot with knowing how to speak to people and decoding different accents of English because I was speaking in English in an accent. And you know, we were ending up ending up in different neighborhoods. So I had to speak to a lot of different people with a lot of different accents. So that helped me with that. But also in realizing I'm not lazy I'm I ended up I think summing this up to 18 hour shifts, because then first there was commuting then there was you know, brainwashing that this is a great opportunity. And we're all entrepreneurs then 12 hour shifts, then back to brainwashing and then back to community. I'm kidding you not? I'm kidding. You want to



Katy Weber 32:41

do an entire episode on MLMs because I feel like the I also was I was inducted into an MLM cult and I it was so traumatizing and I feel like we are very susceptible to that kind of brainwashing



Paulina Chełstowska 32:54

definitely. We're so good at being cult members. I don't think cult leaders because we're there's too much self doubt. But I think we're amazing golf members so you know call me know my my ex husband. I think he was in a cult at some point, but not I think he had some kind of addictive personality because first he wasn't a cold then something happened and he fell into a cult of you know, being an entrepreneur being a millionaire making money. And then we moved to Canada then he got himself into some proper addictions. So you know, that was that was a roller coaster of its of its own. But yeah, I was I think I was craving structure and you know, firing me up with all those ideas and dreams of actually being an entrepreneur making money is such a courageous way. definitely resonated with me, but I will sometimes making no money for those 18 hour shifts, or like \$17 or sometimes 300 Which when you break it down, it's still nothing. This is nothing for 18 hours outside of your house. So yeah, what was the MLM you Oh, in Young Living?




Katy Weber 34:17

What's that? It's, uh, essential oils. And it's like wrapped up in in like the Utah Mormons so it's got this whole religious side to it's such a disaster. Oh my god, I would love to like go off for hours about my experience with Young Living because it was so awful, but I'm really aggressively anti MLM as a result, and like, I see so many, how long ago and that was, that was actually just in 2019. And it was sort of in the, in the pandemic a little bit and it was actually right around when I was diagnosed that I was getting out of it. And you know, it was part of the implosion because of my all My Social Life was wrapped up in these women who were in this essential oils business. And so when I left, like I was black, you know, I was posted and totally like blacklisted, I had no friends all of a sudden, and I was like, Oh, my God, what has happened, like all of these women co opted this friendship, and it was anyway, I get started, because I literally could go on and on. Stay tuned, because I know like, when the I know, right, maybe I'll have you come back. But I was like, I'm, I was like, I, I have very little tolerance for, for ml for for the defense of MLM. So, I have

 Paulina CheÅ,stowska 35:37


a raider, when anybody is telling me remotely something that reminds me of, I'm just, you know, going back into being very polite, and just nonspeaking almost like, Oh,

 Katy Weber 35:53

okay. When you brought up something about it about, you know, realizing that that idea of like that constantly feeling like we are lazy, even though there is overwhelming evidence to the contrary. And I think you really tapped into that idea of like, I know, I'm smart. But I can't figure out why I am such a failure at life, like, you know, just feeling like, we are failures at life, even though when you really step back at it, I think and you know, a diagnosis has helped me do is like when you step back, and you look at the course of what you've actually accomplished, nobody in their right mind would ever call you lazy, except for maybe the people who are closest to you, who have just been the most damaging, right? Like your teachers and your parents. Or maybe your partners, but like, I think that was one of the things that really tipped off my own therapist was I was always complaining to her about what a lazy piece of shit I was. And she was like, What are you talking about? Like, she was like, How can you be lazy and also write a book? And I was like, Oh, I don't know, I just did. I don't know. That's that was different, you know? And she was like, look at all these businesses you've started. And I was like, Yeah, but they don't go anywhere. And I like like, I always had an excuse to combat the overwhelming evidence that I was not, in fact, lazy. And I was like, Why was I so insistent. And I think so much of that comes down to like you said, like that confusion around feeling smart. And yet seeming like wherever you want to be, you cannot get there.

 Paulina CheÅ,stowska 37:24

You because there has to be a reason. They are giving you the reason, but it's not the right one. There has to be reason and just why because you can. The thing is you can see inside your head and you can see that you can move those things around, you have so much mental capacity. And you know, this is not a dumb person brain. And you can see yourself while hyper focusing how much you can accomplish. So you can you have the evidence that you can accomplish things. But then, you know, the self doubt or just, I don't know, life comes in and just steps on your I don't know, Jesus. That was that was just those 18 hour shifts. Were just the first concrete thing I had against my grandma's voice in my head, because that was mostly my grandmother was very vocal about me being lazy. But you know, that's a person who says, well, when I'm tired, I just start vacuuming. So my heart rate goes up. And I'm not tired anymore.

 Katy Weber 38:33

It's that easy.

 Paulina CheÅ,stowska 38:37

No, but she wouldn't allow herself to be tired. So her her voice is strongly my head was strong

in my head about me being lazy, but then I was like, that just doesn't compute, you know, working so hard and being lazy this and that was the first thing I could really catch and hold on to, to just see that. Maybe not that I'm not lazy, but it's, it can be just that. So that was the hook for me, but I was like 21 I think so you know, still a decade before a diagnosis and some actual accomplishments because I was not accomplishing much. At that moment. You know, I was failing at marriage failing at being a millionaire entrepreneur self made something. So I did not have accomplishments, but I had some at least some kind of real life experiences that were contradicting this laziness. stamp on me.



Katy Weber 39:42

Interesting. Okay, so I want to shift now to your podcast because I love I just love this so much. Because obviously I feel like we have very similar path in terms of wanting to talk about this experience and wanting to talk about it through the lens of being a woman. And so So you've started have a podcast where you're interviewing Polish women, about their ADHD and their ADHD diagnoses? And I mean, what would you say? Is there a difference? Like, do you find there is an overwhelming difference between how ADHD is viewed? In Poland? I mean, our kids even diagnosed in childhood. To the degree they are here, like what's, what are some of the biggest differences you're seeing in terms of how ADHD is viewed in be as a Polish person.



Paulina CheÅ,stowska 40:35

So that's going to be a long winded rant. Let me just start with that. America and American scientists in Poland are viewed in two ways. It's either American scientists proves that, and then, you know, some kind of truth that it's true for all eternity, or all this new American saying. So basically, it's either a holy truth coming from, you know, the American scientists, that there is a there is just an expression in Polish, new American scientists proves that, or all this new American thing, because American is, is used in an objective for something new, eccentric, kind of pretentious, maybe not very well thought out. So that's a PhD, basically, it's viewed as something new trends, something that kind of, let's not pay attention to that. So we're not being diagnosed, not the kids, not the, to be honest, nobody like the this new wave coming in. It's definitely thanks to a pandemic. I mean, like, this is obviously a global trauma. But thanks to a pandemic, I think there is a way of end to the internet, obviously, the tech talks that are available and the means and everything and the podcasts. This is a wave of, of diagnostics. But basically, also, I think, that kind of key values are so so so different. And that was one of the reasons why I wanted to start my podcast because I was listening to your podcast and relating hardly, with so many things, but some things just did not click, for example, you were saying, like, oh, the ADHD is seen as what was the expression not moral failing? We don't see it as that. Because I think what this is relating to is the American dream. I know you're Canadian, so I'm saying American in many new world, right? So, you know, the American Dream is very open about pursuit of happiness, you know, money is the way to show that God likes you. And you know, it's a repayment for your hard work. And in Poland, I feel and this is my opinion, you know, I'm obviously not an anthropologist, this is, you know, I know a bunch of stuff about a bunch of stuff, but not very much about one thing. So I'm just telling you from, from my ADHD brain, how I see it from my experience. We are mistrust for, towards rich people and money, this Catholic Protestant thing about money because in I think, in Protestant culture, and religion, you know, money is just a way, I think, to be pursued, but as a means to show that God likes you, basically. And I think in Poland, the Polish version of capitalism is like, we obviously want money, but we're kind of mistrustful towards people that actually succeeded.

And also the word of success, I really like this. Thinking about languages and what they convey in values, because as I was thinking of success, this is not very native to me to think of success. In Polish there is word preferred Zanya. So basically, I think that life and new world values is supposed to be successful. But in old world of being in Poland, you're supposed to have prosperity but prosperity is not a good word to say cause any because propaganda is just something that happens to you and even the core of the word is about leading you will being led to something so happiness success, prosperity, money, well is everything in propaganda that external it, result of many factors one of them you being honorable being dutiful, you being hard working, of course, but Oh, Also your family or circumstances and just general luck. So we're not that optimistic about our possibilities. I don't know if you know that, but not every child in Poland hears that they can be anything they want to, we don't hear that we don't trust that. We don't believe that. We just think life is hard. No, no funny business at the end. But you know, at the end, it will be good, just life as hard, as I also heard, was listening to podcasts, from my other very much beloved podcaster, and stand up, Whitney Cummings, and she invited two Ukrainian women that were explaining just Slavic mentality and the way of living and it very much resonated with me. Because I think that the pursuit of happiness in Poland is covered. Or maybe just, it's not supposed to be the goal. Like my grandma, I don't think she was telling me to just find something to do to be happy, she was telling me to do things, because this is my duty, now have good grades, be hard working and stuff like that. So happiness is kind of like a byproduct, if you haven't good if you don't, doesn't matter. So, you know, with my ADHD brain, I need things to be exciting, pleasant, interesting. And it's kind of not like, a look at like, a shortcut from the universal truth that life is hard. When I think of new world and you know, the Skyridge hierarchy of values that I think Americans, and just newer people are thinking of ADHD as a shortcut to success. And we think of it as a shortcut from the universal truth that life is hard. So we're ADHD ears, I think, are seen as people that are trying to avoid the harsh reality. And in America, I think they're viewed as people that are trying to get accommodations, but kind of, you know, a leg up. That's the main difference, I think, that I feel when I'm listening to polish podcasters, which are not many, I might say, there is actually one that is just centering add, there was one, and now there is three, which, and one of them is me. So you can imagine that the need to express things in your own set of values in your own language. And your, in your own reality is so, so important. Because, as well, we don't have access to resources that are very current, because books are kind of behind. If you don't speak English, and you don't have internet, and that's a lot of people in Poland, you have no language for this. That's part of the reason why I started the Podcast, the podcast is mostly you know, for me, I want to meet fun, people have amazing conversations and cry. That's my goal, right? But I know that I know that people will resonate with this and they are already resonating with this because having things said in your language, it makes it so much more easy to accept this about yourself. And you know, if this is heard from people from other countries, the creators from other countries it's, it's more difficult to you know, send the link to your grandmother doesn't speak English, right. But if you have a book in Polish, or you know, an article or just a podcast that, you know, picks an hour to listen to, and it's so so so much easier, but I am giving you not right now in Poland, there are three podcasts about ADHD centered, and they're all led by women. And one of them needs two months old. And another one is I think one month old and the other one has, is very good. It's it has, I think around 35 episodes about different topics and just very systematically a good resource but you know, just one reasons, just just one. And incidentally, today I am publishing a in an interview with that first podcaster and the topic of our conversation is jealousy, and comparing yourselves because I think You know, comparing yourself, when you are a woman with ADHD is so easy and falling into a pit of jealousy, it's, it's a slippery slope. So I felt jealousy towards her. Because obviously, it's not good to be a pioneer because that means, you know, there are no resources, but you get to be number one. And I did not get that. So I opened those emotions, and I talked about them openly and freely,

because I really, really, really believe in the healing power of vulnerability, and openness, I am opening it in a very safe way for me, in our in my podcast on my terms, but I'm talking about this because I, I hear people on our group, well, I read posts, well, I didn't succeed, like, you know, my mom wanted me to or like my sister, or, like, my mom's friend's daughter, you know, we, if we don't have somebody to be compared to somebody will tell us, well, you're not like this or like that. So basically, to answer your question, I see a lot of differences. And mostly it's in values. And that's why I think it's very, very important for people in all countries, speaking all languages to have resources in their languages.



Katy Weber 51:33

Yeah. I think it's not just vulnerability, I think it's also curiosity. And that's one of the things I love about this, the art of conversation and just verbal processing, right? And why I feel like this is, you know, what I stumbled into by just wanting to have conversations with with other women about their experiences, has snowballed for me into just this incredible learning experience, because it's healing, to share. It's healing to, to have somebody share with you, but also just the curiosity, the overwhelming curiosity about why right, so you're saying, like, I'm jealous about another podcast? Or isn't it fascinating that I'm experiencing that? What's behind that? Right, that sort of scientific mentality of like, what is what is the root of these emotions? And I think that's something that is unique. Oh, I don't know. To me, it's just bravado, emotional bravado. What are the best advice I was ever given to me by somebody who was who was talking about social media content? So she was talking about, like followers, and how we can get really obsessed with followers and likes and downloads or whatever metric we're using. And she said, you know, you we it's, we immediately compare ourselves to the people who are much more successful in any interest in the in the industry in which we're in as a way to kind of focus our motivation, right, it makes sense that we want to kind of focus and grow and grow and grow, because it's exciting. And there's lots of dopamine, but she was like, it's really, it's tremendously pompous, to think you can be as good as somebody who has been doing this for years, when you've just started and I'm like, Yeah, that's fast. Like, where why are we so why do we, why are we so compass? Where's that coming from? And I think there's, you know, we are very stubborn about our intellect and our expectations of ourselves too. And but I think it's also about the excitement of chasing the number or chasing the metrics, and the downloads and the likes, and it's gonna keep us interested to constantly grow. And if we're not growing, stagnation is failure, as far as I'm concerned. And that, you know, talking about the American kind of drive and the Protestant work ethic, and it's something we I feel like I talk about a lot on the podcast, right, which is this idea that like asking for help, in this culture is failure, right? We have to figure out how to do it ourselves, we have to figure out how to do manage, alone. Anything else, like the idea of community, and community support feels like failure. And I think that has a lot to do with that sort of drive of the, you know, the frontier mentality, or whatever it is that idea of capitalism, and that if you work hard enough, you will be rewarded and all of that, like, it's all intertwined. But I think even when you were talking about the difference in term in terms of like, the definition of prosperity and the definitions of success from one culture to the other, it still feels like ADHD is being is viewed as an excuse, right? That it's being viewed as trying to get away with something no matter what and that's where I think you know, where that self that negative self concept comes from, which is just like, am I am I making an excuse? I feel like I add like, I feel like I'm constantly questioning what is happening here and what what is this even ADHD or is this just me Excuse like, uh, you know, I think even even though there might be a tendency to dismiss it as because it's popular, and everybody's getting diagnosed right now, so therefore it must be in genuine, or something else is happening. And it's still like, I feel like I have that tendency all the time constantly questioning, what is this? Why are we all

getting diagnosed with this, it's got to be something else, maybe we are just lazy or traumatized or, you know, like, it's like, thinking about the fact that I'm like, I'm just an angry woman who is repeated over refusing to just get up and vacuum. But, you know, if I did, if I did just get up and vacuum, it would be good for my heart rate, and you know, all those that like, if I could just be satisfied, everything would be wonderful. So anyway, those are my thoughts that I was thinking as you were going as you were talking, because it reminded me of that, that idea of like, why having the curiosity and the wanting to know the why behind all of these behaviors, and in terms of like, even what routes us in terms of what we chase after in terms of success? And like, you know, when you're talking about working 18 hour days, and having to be in sales, which is my idea of hell, you know, and all of that, like, what was the motivate there had to have been some sort of motivation there that was keeping you from doing that, you know, you're keeping you in that work ethic, you know what I mean? And like, how do we tap into the why in terms of when we are motivated and when we aren't, I don't know, I'm just rambling at this point. I feel

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Paulina CheÅ,stowska 56:30

a brainwashing helps tremendously. So you know,



Katy Weber 56:36

it's true. Well, and you know, you're there keeping that carrot in front of your head with with that MLMs do right, which is, which is the idea that you just have to keep working and eventually you will be rewarded and you won't, you know, you never get rewarded in a pyramid scheme. Newsflash, only the person at the top gets rewarded. They're co opting you All right, anyway, enough. So enraged. When I was diagnosed with ADHD, it completely turned my world upside down. I looked back at so much of my life, my grades in school, my multiple careers and hobbies, my friendships, my marriage, motherhood, my relationship with food, and my body, like all of this with a new lens. And it was overwhelming to say the least, if you've been diagnosed with ADHD, and you're feeling blown away by this new insight into your brain and how it operates, I totally understand I can help you begin to sort through this chaos, explore who you are and how your brain operates. So you can finally start to lean into your strengths and begin to use them to your advantage moving forward. Together, we can work to identify what obstacles you've been facing, and create strategies to help you start living a more fulfilling, gratifying life, head over to women 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 I want to be mindful of the time because I do feel like I could listen to you forever. You're so articulate. And I mean, I think about the email you first sent me what you were talking about. The story that you said the stories are like hands that reach back in my past to soothe and shelter my younger self. It's almost as compassion was a quantum force that can travel back in time. I mean, oh, my goodness. It's so, so emotional and poetic to think about share the healing and the sharing of,

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Paulina CheÅ,stowska 58:39

I guess, let's cry. No, no, I'm crying. I'm crying. Oh, I think that, you know, late diagnosis makes sense. Like sometimes you think like, well, I'm this old. What? Why does it make sense? But,

you know, I'm just hearing that, you know, people learning about different disorders. Like, yesterday, I was listening to a narcissist, that's diagnosed narcissist that is trying to, you know, be better. And he was saying that, you know, he's spreading awareness about narcissism and even people sometimes are reaching out to him and Dave saying they're, you know, their 70 year old woman says that now she gets closure from her husband that is dead for 10 years. So is her whole life meaningless because she couldn't, you know, be strong leave him something like if she reaches closure at 60 or 70. Does it mean her whole life means nothing? No. So this this closure and you know, this quantum force of self forgiveness, if it works both ways, like it works in the future, and it works in the past. So that's another reason to get diagnosed even if you're 90 100.



Katy Weber 59:54

Absolutely, or a just keep questioning, I think and having these some conversations. And, you know, I think being kinder to ourselves is also incredibly tremendous and healing and realizing that, you know, we're not alone and that there are many of us who are going through this and experiencing this, regardless of where we were, where we grew up, I think is incredibly healing at you know, piana ADHD alium has done so much for the community. Oh, my goodness. So shout out to her. But I also know that you know, I've, I know that she also really, really struggles with imposter syndrome and feeling very lonely in you know, in, we all are just searching for the answers. I think it's something that we have in common. So I want to ask you before, before we talk about the podcast, and where people can find you and the podcast, would you rename ADHD to something else?



Paulina CheÅ,stowska 1:00:56

No, I would keep add, but I would just make it different words under the letters. So I would say it's a rhythmic, dopamine distribution.



Katy Weber 1:01:07

How I really liked that, I don't know, if anybody's used the D for dopamine before, I mean, we've definitely talked about dopamine. He really, I really liked that. And I really liked keeping add to it's just very efficient.




Paulina CheÅ,stowska 1:01:21


Because then, you know, you're kind of using it using the thing that already exists, but reclaiming it. And I was thinking maybe, you know, a normal or abnormal dopamine distribution, but a rhythmic, meaning feels better to me, because it's less pathologizing. And still accurate. And we can still call it you know, add D like, if you need the disorder, like, cool. So it's like an add plus





Katy Weber 1:01:54


the extra D is extra disordered. Yeah. So let's, let's do that. So I want people to, to at least anyone who can I wish I could listen to your podcast. So maybe I'll try to download the transcripts. I mean, I tried to while I was reading some of the comments on your Facebook page through Google Translate, and it was hilarious, because I was like, I mean, it's that that's an AI that still has needs a lot of work. But I was trying, I was trying to follow the thread.

 Paulina CheÅ,stowska 1:02:26
Do you have any Polish friends? No.

 Katy Weber 1:02:29
I mean, maybe actually, I gotta think about it. I don't have a lot of friends anymore. So

 Paulina CheÅ,stowska 1:02:33
yeah, cuz you're not MLM anymore. Think maybe there's, you know, something in your area? Like, I don't know,

 Katy Weber 1:02:41
I'm trying to think of if I can download it and do it a translate transcript, but for anybody who does? Who can listen to your podcast, where can they find you? And where are you online?

 Paulina CheÅ,stowska 1:02:53
I'm on Spotify. And I will just maybe I will just spell it out. Because I believe that there are Polish women listening to you with such a big Polish community in Canada and in the USA. So it's called Beauty or the Heather. And it's spelled KOBIECY I ADHD, so that translates to women and ADHD. So um, you know, ripping your idea of, and I'm very happy that you find with this, I asked you, but after I already started it, so it's like half cool, I

 Katy Weber 1:03:29
guess? Well, I will say I've often said on the podcast, the whole reason I call this women and ADHD, because literally, that's what I typed in the search bar when I was diagnosed, and it just felt like that's what it should be called. So I take no ownership over the brilliance of so it's very functional and efficient. So absolutely.

 Paulina CheÅ,stowska 1:03:51
So I'm on Facebook, I'm on YouTube is like I don't know a bastard child of mine. I'm not really taking care of YouTube. I just started an Instagram but like I'm a boomer from Boomer land,

and I just I see no, no future there. I mean, there is a future I guess. My publicist says I should be doing this. I have a publicist. By the way, I don't know if you dust is impressive. We're both unpaid. Isn't that impressive?



Katy Weber 1:04:19

I always laugh when people email me and they talk about the team. They're like, dear team, Katie. I'm like, There's no team. There's just me. Although I did hire an editor, which was the best money I've ever spent, I finally offloaded my editing to the wonderful Emily. But that's like other than that, there's no team.



Paulina CheÅ,stowska 1:04:37

Well, I do have a team. So I'm very proud of myself for you know, knowing my mistakes and knowing that most of them is just, you know, not hiring a team. So I'm on Facebook, I'm on Instagram for some kind of reason. I'm not on Tik Tok, and that's a frontier I'm going to die on. I am on Spotify. You can listen to me on Spotify and on YouTube. And please send me feedback because guys like dopamine, I need my dopamine hits like me, talking to those people is amazing. But then editing, I need some kind of reward please message me.



Katy Weber 1:05:12

So I hear you I know I was always I was very much reliant on feedback. I mean, I still am I still love it. But yeah, it's it's intense to keep doing this to to keep doing this work, but I feel like the conversations alone are what, like having this kind of conversation to me is so stimulating and so interesting. I mean, like, what how did this become my life that I get to have conversations with women like you randomly you know, and that was the whole reason I started the podcast was I had an excuse to talk to women like you who are just brilliant and fascinating and progressing the conversation around what even are we talking about? So I'm so grateful. That's what keeps me going. Honestly, everything else is just sort of this like busy work to get it out there so other people can hear these conversations, but But I hear you it is it is a hard, lonely slog sometimes it's doing all of the all the behind the work. Thank



Paulina CheÅ,stowska 1:06:11

you. I'm happy somebody knows.



Katy Weber 1:06:15

Well, I'm just so thrilled that you reached out to me, thank you so much. And I love what you obviously love that you're advancing this conversation and serving women in your community and also serving yourself and your own personal journey. And so just You're awesome. Thank you, Paulina,



Paulina CheÅ,stowska 1:06:33

thank you so much for for answering my email. I was so starstruck that I had to take my meds to just you know, avoid paralysis because I was so happy I knew I will just not answer to your email for a week if I don't take my meds immediately and answer immediately. So thank you for responding. Thank you for having me. This is absolutely a dream come true. And you know, my my dream of being famous, I finally realized.



Katy Weber 1:07:10

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 see, 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 [womenandadhd.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