

Robin Buchanan: Decluttering & minimalism for ADHD brains

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SPEAKERS

Katy Weber, Robyn Buchanan



Robyn Buchanan 00:00

Do you have to make your decisions? Right? Like a lot of people can be like, Wow, I just, again I lose momentum and it's like, okay, well, Do you or don't you want to live with clutter, right? And I know people hate that. But it is that tough love.



Katy Weber 00:18

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 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 Carolyn 132. On the apple podcast platform, it's called start here. Are you a late diagnosis female, start here looking for firsthand accounts of how ADHD impacts females start here. Katie provides the perfect format to share all the ways ADHD presents in women and navigating a late diagnosis. I have had so many yes me two moments while listening. I'm now at the point of why am I still surprised? I am grateful to Katie as I personally feel she has walked with me on my ADHD journey. Thank you to her and all those who have shared their stories here. Cheers, Carolyn. Carolyn, thank you. This is so sweet, and honestly reads like a great marketing pitch for this podcast, which I really appreciate because honestly, I've lousy at marketing. So thank you for this lovely feedback. And I'm thrilled that we've been able to have your back on this journey. And just a quick reminder that if you're looking for a safe, inclusive, friendly and supportive group of women with ADHD who will have your back look no further than the women and ADHD online community. I always say that finding our people is an important part of our ADHD treatment plan. And I'm so grateful for this online space for us to connect and ask questions and share strategies and advice or just vent and I'm continually amazed at the level of empathy and kindness and thoughtfulness that

exists in the group. It's not something you see very often in social media spaces. So come join us over at [women and adhd.com](https://www.womenandadhd.com). And of course that link is in the show notes. Okay, here we are at Episode 101, in which I interview Robin Buchanan. Robin is a registered nurse, a life and focus coach and a YouTube creator who specializes in the topics of minimalism and decluttering. Living in a house full of ADHD years, including three teenage boys, Robin has learned firsthand the value of minimalism and decluttering and recognized how important a decluttered environment was to helping her with focus, creativity, productivity and happiness. She's an advocate for people with ADHD to capitalize on their strengths and push the mundane aside in order to live their best lives. Robin and I talk all about environmental design, and how minimalism and decluttering are ideal for our ADHD brains. But what do we do when executive dysfunction gets in the way, we talked about object permanence and memory, and Robin offers some great tips on how to manage the need to keep all things visible while also decluttering our space. We also talk about minimizing our lives doing less and setting boundaries and resisting the urge to constantly over schedule ourselves. After you listen to this episode, make sure to head over to Robin's website, the links in the show notes. She has some great free decluttering worksheets, a focus video series, and she even has a free quiz to find out your clutter type. Okay, here is my conversation with Robin. Hi, Robin, thank you so much for joining me. It's great to have you.



03:50

Thank you so much for having me, Katie.



Katy Weber 03:54

So let's get started. I know you've got a lot of members of your family who have ADHD and you yourself are not formally diagnosed. But you have your suspicions. Is that correct?



04:06

Yeah, so my I have two kids, right? I would almost say 2.5 kids with ADHD because one of them, he functions pretty well. But he talks a lot. He actually reminds me a lot of myself as a kid, to be honest. And my husband has it who I'm not related to. But my mom also has it. So it's everywhere around me. And yeah, I see myself in a lot of a lot of these people.



Katy Weber 04:36

Yeah, and I think also, you know, I have that question too, with my whole family, which is like, you know, there's definitely neurodiverse agencies and I like how you often addressed that in a lot of your videos where it's like your ADHD, or neurodivergent or just relate, you know, like, we're all on the spectrum. We're all in this area together. So, so let's kind of backtrack a little and talk about how ADHD entered like it was Your Kids diagnose first or your son's diagnose first, or was your husband diagnosed first? Or how did you sort of first come to know ADHD in your family?



05:09

Yeah, so my, my husband was actually diagnosed in the 80s. But late 80s. And that was not a great time to be diagnosed. So he was medicated, but probably over medicated, you know, he was living with his dad at the time. And so when he came back to live with his mom, she stopped all fat. And so he he found a career, you know, that was fast paced, that worked well for him. But my kids won the oldest always seemed like a dreamer. He was the type of kid if you were to walk down the street, he'd be like, Oh, stopping and looking at this and looking at that time management. I'm not sure if that'll ever be his forte, he's 17. Now, he does very well. But it was actually my middle son, who really was just that very sensitive person who just coping in the world was a real real struggle. And he was, I mean, thank goodness, he was adorable, because when he was a preschooler, he was really hard to be around. And he was the type of kid who I would have to write a note to the teachers every year to be like, This is how he is, and this is what he needs. And sometimes he needs quiet time. And there was a parent teacher interview in grade two. And all of a sudden, the special education coordinators there and they're saying, Oh, he might have ADHD, and maybe you should just give him coffee. And I'm like, Okay, and so I'm in Canada, where if you want to see a specialist, you need to be referred, and you have to wait. So nine months later, we get in to see the pediatrician. And the pediatrician was like, Yeah, I think he does have ADHD. And so she ended up suggesting potentially medication, other things. And I was reluctant, because I didn't know a lot about ADHD. And so we decided to try behavior things, which is hilarious with this kid that we would even bother after trying for so long for his whole life, basically. But about a year later, I actually I'm a nurse. And so I was doing a course about brain health, and that and they basically for explaining how the prefrontal cortex works, and how medication helps, you know, bring the function up. Because it's a stimulant, and I thought, Oh, well, that makes a lot more sense. So then we tried to monitor titrate it up for a month, it was really emotional month, it was Christmas. But all of a sudden, January came around, and we got to know our kid, he can focus, he was incredibly creative. And that was sort of it for him. And then we we ended up saying, and I always said, if anybody has it, it's our older kids. So then he was diagnosed. And then of course, it's like, so many parents are like, I see a lot of myself in these kids. Yeah,



Katy Weber 07:50

right. Yeah, I know, I just had both of my kids diagnosed this this summer. And they could not be more different. But it's been it's been through these conversations that I've been having through the podcast and my own journey, that I've been able to look at both of their behaviors and really see, you know, a lot of the ultimately the executive dysfunction and kind of where it comes from. And even just the concept of executive dysfunction wasn't something I didn't I never knew that term before I myself was diagnosed. So it's, it comes in so many different forms. And it's so interesting to me how certain kids manage and how certain kids you know, don't you know, there's like ebbs and flows, I guess, in our life. Now, you Okay, so you were a nurse, and you have three boys. So when did your kind of decluttering journey began? And where did this become something that became more than just a hobby? When did this become something that you really wanted to focus on?



08:50

It started because I am a nurse and an emergency nurse. And so forever, I was sort of like struggling to manage house and home and all the stuff and all the toys and all of this and every

you know, once a year, I'd be starting to declutter and decluttering kids toys, which is never the right place to start. All I will say, but I would go to the emergency department and people were it was a very stressful place to work. You know, people are coming in their lives are forever changed. It was traumatizing, to me traumatizing to the patients. And so I would leave there after 12 hours and come home and want to just relax and connect with my family. But instead I was met with, you know, a messy house. And we weren't hoarder level stuff. But there was always just stuff everywhere. There were always piles, there was always just so much stuff to manage. And I remember around Christmas reading an article. It was about, oh, gosh, four years now, I think and it said that women are affected by clutter more and I thought well, that's really interesting. And it basically said that we can't relax. If there if we feel like there's work to do in particular if it's like sitting there staring at us so we may may be not doing something we may be sitting on the couch kind of paralyzed. But in actuality, we're not relaxing. We're not sort of living our true selves and being able to just take a moment. And so I thought, Oh, that's interesting. So I started decluttering, and managed to simplify our house down to what I often call reasonable minimalist, which is probably not a great term. But I just I don't go extreme, but we only keep what we use. So it has made a major impact on my life. And I really wanted to share with people how much it helps. So a year ago, I started coaching people with decluttering, and then started doing life coaching for people with ADHD, and getting more learning in that and just seeing how it can help people and how it can help. How just because of how much it has helped me and my family function, my husband who really honestly had never cared, he loves it. So that's good, too.



Katy Weber 11:01

Yeah, it's something I think a lot of people in the ADHD community talk about the, the irony of knowing that a clean spare environment is incredibly helpful to our focus, our sense of well being that calmness that you talk about, and yet at the same time, the, you know, inability often to get there. Yeah, for myriad reasons. Right, and, you know, and that's where it's like, hiring a cleaning person is something that I think is so important. I'm like, you know, I will put that ahead of any anything else, because not only does the cleaning person do the cleaning, but she helps me or they their team helped me stay clean, you know, so it's like twofold. So now you talk about environmental design with decluttering. And oh, you know, what does that what does that term mean? Exactly? Environmental Design.



11:57

So environmental design is setting your environment up to support you. Because a lot of people don't think of it in that our environment, ultimately is there to support us. So I always say, you know, food, water and shelter, people don't realize shelter, what are you surrounding yourself with. And a huge way of supporting ourselves is, our minds in particular, so many of us work at home. And so having less stuff around you less stuff out less distraction is so much better for focus, if you want to work, if you work out of the home, and you're able to minimize clutter around you, it's really good. And so that is supporting you with your environment. But even if you're not working, and it's just your living room, or your kitchen, the less stuff you have out, the less it is distracting you. So you're designing your environment to support you. And to make it easier to do the things you want to do. And putting the things that you use most often in the most accessible places. And if at all possible, behind a door and in a drawer. And sometimes people with ADHD need to leave some things out. And that's okay, so leaving your medication out very important in a lot of cases. But other times having things tucked away. So that I think

environmental design is absolutely massive in supporting people with ADHD to really succeed and put a lot of the, if at all possible, a lot of the negatives as far far away from them as possible, and putting a lot of their strengths closer to them.



Katy Weber 13:44

Mm hmm. Yeah, that was something that my husband and I really struggled with early, very early on in our cohabitating relationship at which we've been together 20 years at this point, but like, you know, try and I didn't even have an ADHD diagnosis at the time, I didn't really have the language to articulate to him the out of mind, out of out of sight, out of mind concept, right? But all I knew was that I needed to have things visible, right, I needed I help and so I ended up having a lot of piles or what I used to call organized chaos, which he saw as just clutter but for me, it was like no, these are all the things that I need to deal with immediately. And you know, there was a sense of urgency around all of those things and I was so afraid that if I put them away I would forget they existed and that you know like I think so much of clutter is tied to memory and the disorganization, right and I think that's something we talk a lot about with it. It's just like, how do we create structures where we can put things away but at the same time still have access to them and you know, and not kind of forget and I think for me, like my my way of dealing with that is having pop up reminders all the time. So like it Part of the like, if I put something away, I have to at the same time, put, you know, say, Okay, if this is a form I have to deal with in a week, I set myself a reminder to deal with the form in a week, you know, but that's a lot of work. And it's a lot, you know, that's a lot of bandwidth. And, you know, that can be exhausting. But I think, you know, it's something that that idea of out of sight out of mind is something that a lot of us struggle with, with clutter. What's What are some of the, I guess, issues that you find with a lot of your clients? Or what are the some some of the things you deal with with that connection between clutter and, and memory, and that fear of losing track of things?



15:37

Yeah, so that's a huge thing. And it's important for the people who are family members of people with ADHD to understand that sometimes things do need to be left out, some things need to be left out. But put away as much as you can. And this is why it's very beneficial to have to, honestly, if you can do it on as little as possible, because the less things you have to manage, the easier it is to manage them. So if you don't have a ton of things shoved in every drawer, and you sort of have zones, where you keep certain things in your house, like for example, you have a work zone where you have piles of, of work paper, and it works for you to have them in a drawer great. But sometimes that's not going to work. Sometimes we do have to use reminders, I am obsessed with using reminders on the phone. And it is extra work, which is unfortunate. But my 17 year old came to me a week ago, and he said, Did you know that it is that people with ADHD have more trouble waking up in the morning? And I was like, yes. And he's like, Well, there you go. And I'm like, so what is what are you saying then? Like, I'm like, you still have to function like, unfortunately, there. There are a lot of drawbacks with ADHD. A lot of people say it's a superpower. I mean, it has a lot of great things to it. But there are a lot of drawbacks. So sometimes we just have to figure out what works for us. And I honestly, the cell phone is it's a double edged sword in a lot of ways. But it has so many good things for people with ADHD because reminders are with you all have the time. And I think using the reminders is absolutely key. Another thing that is really helpful is if you either don't want to use

your phone, or if you want to use it less is to have a bullet journal, one bullet journal that you use, to write things down, to put down where you keep things. And you could put down like where you're hiding presents where you're hiding chocolate from your husband, which I have to do, because otherwise he's going to find it need it. And I don't ever get any chocolate because I don't want to eat it all at once. So using some system to remind you and you have to find what works for you. Because what works for you might not work for me. And everybody has different strengths and areas that you know, we honestly could just say weakness, because some of them just aren't going to get much better. So we have to figure out what works for us. So for you, you might be the type of person that needs a lot more stuff out. But some people with ADHD they want nothing out. And when I talk about the neuro divergent people, people who have autism, a lot of people with autism, they don't want to see anything. They want to know where it is. And they keep very neat, organized drawers. But ultimately, the less stuff you have, the less stuff you have to organize, the better it is overall for finding things and keeping things put away and classifying things.



Katy Weber 18:39

I loved my 20s for that reason for because I moved a lot in my 20s I moved, you know, I went from university until basically until my husband and I bought this house that we're in now. I moved at least every two years for for 15 years. And it was great for decluttering I loved it, it was like this opportunity to purge, I felt it was so cathartic. I am the I'm both of my parents were hoarders. And so it really really affected my Outlook, I saw how I've seen how damaging it is. And I think one of the most destructive emotional times in my life was when I had to move them into a nursing home and go through and get rid of all of that stuff. All of their stuff. It was really, really difficult. And it really just like it made it check completely transformed my relationship with stuff, you know, and because I saw all of this stuff that they had sort of put emotional value into and left and then it was up to me to get rid of it. And so I had to like deal with all that baggage and it just it was really, it's really hard. And I really, you know, my heart goes out to any child adult child of a hoarding parent because it is really effing awful to have to get rid of that stuff and to deal with the how angry, it makes that, you know, it's just really, I could go on about that forever. But one thing it really, really changed my perspective of like my relationship with anything that is not basically, you know, consumable and how it helped me really have a sense of detachment. And it's really helped me kind of get rid of things that like, you know, I think you mentioned this in one of your videos, the one year, think sort of controversial one year rule with love, which I actually love and use a lot of like, if I haven't touched this or thought about it or use this in a year, it's garbage. And that's it, you know, but I also we've lived in this house for almost 12 years now and we have an attic, the attic is like my albatross because the attic has become purgatory. And so I don't have to throw things out, I just put them in the attic and not have to deal with them. And I'm seeing that pattern again, right, which is like somebody else will deal with this. And either that somebody else is gonna be me someday, or it's gonna be my kids. Anyway, I started rambling, I don't even remember what my question was, I think it was, I think it was our relationship to stuff I think can be really complex. I know you deal with that with a lot of videos, too. And I know Marie Kondo deals with that with you know, and she's been a very, very popular in the ADHD community as well, like, you know, as a method of letting go, do you think there's something specific about neuro divergence and our attachment to stuff? You know, are we more prone to that you think? Do you have a theory about that, you know, of, why is it? Is it memory related? Why do you think so many of us do kind of hold on to, that might be useful someday, or I'm going to need that someday?



21:48

You know, that's an interesting question. And in all honesty, I haven't given that any thought. But as you say that, it makes me think of a couple of things. So first of all, a lot of people keep so many things because of the fear of death. So you may have heard of Swedish death cleaning. In the book, there are three sort of like clutter instincts that are described sort of just in one section, and she talks about the fear of death. And the hoarding instinct and the clutter instinct. So clutter, having stuff around us makes it feel secure, to think back to you know, the Stone Age having stuff around us that we'd be like, okay, good. Like, I've got food I've got hides whatever. And it's the same with the hoarding. Now, the fear of death is very interesting, because a lot of us keep things because time is slipping away. And it reminds us of our childhood, or it reminds us of when we were in our 20s, and we were young and having fun, or when our kids were little. And as time goes on, and we don't need those things anymore, it's still really hard to let them go. Because we're still attached to what the meaning behind that thing is. So it's not really a thing, the object honestly is not important, in particular, if it honestly is not something you use, so I always say does it add value to your life? You know, one lady who is in my community, she does not have the ability to remember things without looking at something or smelling it, which can't just like, think about a memory. So, you know, for her, it's kind of interesting, I said, you know, you almost have to choose what memories are worth keeping, right? Like some, not every memory that we remembers we're keeping now I think for people with ADHD, and other neuro divergences. I almost wonder if part of it is because growing up so many people with ADHD struggled in a lot of ways. Socially, there were a lot of struggles a lot of women in particular, there were expectations on us when we were young to be good to be quiet. And that was hard for us in the classroom or to be good students, you know, in our 20s and 30s You know, learning being a mom all of that that was a struggle for a lot of us because our brains don't work like everybody else's and so I almost wonder if a lot of our belongings are a source of comfort because during some of those hard times we went to our you know Nirvana CD collection and listen to things even though now we have everything on mp3 and CDs aren't worth anything, although maybe there are now who knows? That would be my guess I honestly don't know. But what what do you think about that?



Katy Weber 24:35

Yeah, I think that's a great theory. I think it definitely hits home. For me, my theory was always like I said about memory, right? Like, you know, I will forget something. I will forget entire parts of my childhood. I don't have access to my past the way I think most people do. And so I get that emotional surge when I see something from my past or you know, when I see Do something for my kids childhood, right? Like, it's just there's so much emotion that comes with those things that it's feels tragic. Like you're throwing away that memory. And I think that's, you know why I feel like, how did we get to a point where we associate so much of that memory or so much of our life with that thing, but I think it's because we don't remember without. And so I feel like it's almost like if we get rid of it, we'll never get that memory back. And that feels sad in theory.



25:30

Oh, yeah. One of the things that I think is really important when decluttering in particular, for people who aren't able to access those memories, is to honestly just keep a journal, if you are

actively decluttering your house, and you get a memory from something and you designate that this is not an item worth keeping, because Peter Walsh shoes, even, like back in the 90s, Oprah had him on his show her show, he's great. And he said, you know, treasures, the most important things that we actually keep should shouldn't have more than can fit on a dining room table. And I mean, some of us, we have decorations, which is great, but what is the true treasure, right? Like, I'm not going to get rid of all of my decorations, I brought that level of minimalist. But if I go, this particular item has gives me a memory. But it doesn't, it's not actually worth keeping, I'm going to declutter it because by having it in my house, it's more stuff to manage. And it's damaging to me in the long term. And it gives me a memory, I can write that memory down and write down as much as I can journal a page or two, perhaps that is helpful. So that is one piece of advice that I do give to people and that one person in my group as well.



Katy Weber 26:38

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 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. I often will have to ask myself the question of if you keep this than what happens, right? Because, you know, like, I remember when I was going through my parents stuff, and I would come across things like I came across my grandmother's wedding dress, and I just you know, was like, oh my goodness, that my grandmother's wedding dress so fragile, wonderful that I have to keep this. And then I had to have that whole conversation with myself, which was like, Yeah, but if you keep this then what like what's gonna, really logically what's going to happen? Like, it's a thing that you feel obligated to hold on to because it has all of this sentimental value, but I was sort of like, I had to talk myself out of every single item in that way of just like then what? Because it will add to it. And I often, you know, like, sometimes I find that is healthier for me than necessarily then like, you know, the a lot of the advice that you get as a parent of young kids, which is like, rather than keep the artwork, take a picture. And then I'm like, but then what then I'm just creating, I'm just like a digital hoarder. And I will admit, I'm a digital hoarder. I don't I'm really I put it out away, I forget about it. I don't want to think about it. And thankfully, it hasn't, you know, I don't. So it affected me too much. Because, you know, we're able to just buy larger hard drives. And I haven't really mastered that one. But I always remember thinking with that, at that crossroad, right of like, well, why would I take pictures of it? Like what? What, you know, why not just get rid of it? Why not kind of live in the moment in my life more. And I think those were those big milestones where it was sort of like, I just want to enjoy the moment right and not sort of hold on to as much as possible and I think maybe that's has to do with the memory issue, right? Which is like I'm just going to let go of everything in the hopes that it's not going to matter at at the end of my life. That what's gonna matter is sort of like how I felt. Right? It's like like I always say with books, I can't tell you if I what a book was about that I read, but I will tell

you if I liked it or not. Maybe I could like apply that to my whole life right which is just like I can't tell you anything that happened over the course of my life. But I will be able to know if I enjoyed myself or not. I don't know, I'm like just talking out on the fly right now. But it is, I think, a really interesting idea. You know, I think our relationship with clutter is so complicated and so nuanced. And I think, you know, like you've said, in your, in some of your videos, and in the email to me, like just how interwoven it is, with our sense of shame, and our sense of worth, and, you know, like, who we are, as a person, I think, is so affected by our environment and the stuff around us.



30:40

Yeah, absolutely. You know, with the kids in the pictures. The reason we don't want to declutter that item, or take the pictures, we don't want our kids to grow up. And at the same time we do, but in a lot of ways we don't like I have a kid who's probably going to university in a year, and every summer for me is kind of sad, because that's when everybody's birthday is in school, you know, but it just is like that is just life, right? Like, we have to accept that things are going to move on. And like you said, like, we we, I think I've got 25,000 photos that I need to and I say to myself, every Friday at four o'clock, I'm gonna do it. But you know, that reminder on my phone, like, I'll be honest, as a person who does not like clutter, I ignore it. Right? I probably shouldn't have it at four o'clock on Friday. Like, let's be honest, that is not a time where I wanted to clutter photos. But really, sometimes, you know, if I'm making a video, sometimes I'll look through photos. And then I come across photos of the kids, which is great, and I love them. But I never go oh, look at that photo, or of that picture that they drew back in grade two, there's the odd one, like my oldest, he painted a picture of a shark with one big eyebrow like, that's great. We love it. Like we actually have the physical canvas. And if we were to declutter that, we would definitely take a picture because it's great. But how many like really good photos or pieces of artwork to kids bring home? Some of them, some kids are talented, and parents, you know, parents with a talented artistic kid, like I feel for you. Because I'm glad my mind did not have a lot of great things they were bringing home. So you're absolutely right. Like, should you be taking photos of absolutely everything. Because yes, there is digital clutter. And a lot of us like then we're managing our computers, and we're managing our phones and life is meant to be lived. It's not meant to be managed, we shouldn't be managing all of these little things of our lives. And when I talk about simplifying on my channel more, so I'm trying to change it more to be about simplifying life overall. Because I remember like when I first started doing the decluttering, I was like there is more to this because a lot of it is in particular moms like we overcommit in so many ways. We take on so much in our own lives, we take you know, like I would love some chickens and ducks. But I want my husband to want chickens and ducks because I want him to take care of them because I don't have the time. And so the reason I'm not getting chickens and ducks is because I relate so hard to that. And I'm not getting chickens and ducks because I will be the one taking care of them because he's not interested. And I mean, like I'm not going to take on livestock so he can take care of it. You know if he doesn't want to. And so that's like a choice I have to make and, and it's the same with activities like Kid activities. There's Ali Kasasa. She says, like with her kids, like sometimes she she doesn't, they'll be full seasons of softball, they'll skip for their kids, because it just doesn't fit into what's going on with the family. And that's okay, like a lot of times people I live in Canada, where hockey is a big thing. And a lot of people, they it's like the thing and they don't want to skip like a hockey season for their kids like that, you know, I've got God bless my kids, they all have Developmental Coordination Disorder as well. So they they're not coordinated enough to do hockey. And I consider myself blessed in that regard. But I love it too. And I'm sure my brother does, although he's in denial about it. But really, it just comes down to what are we willing to

keep in our lives and take out so that we can spend more time with our family and more time enjoying life. I have decided I am living life the way I am now for the rest of my life. Like a lot of us we think about what we want to do in our retirement, how we plan on living our life. I'm going to live like that now. And that involves not having a lot of extra things. And in the meantime, I can enjoy spending time with my kids. I'm not frustrated by their presence because I've got so much going on. And I'm not saying you know anybody who because that was me before I was just like ah like these, you know, there's all this stuff to go on. And I've got this and I've got this and I've got this to do and by removing things as much as possible life has simplified so much easier and it has made the maybe 4.5 of us in the House who have ADHD that are diagnosed, I mean, I'm the one who hasn't officially, but it has made our lives way better overall. So I just say to people, remove whatever you can, in every area possible. That's my



Katy Weber 35:19

No, no, it's such a good point to make that connection between like physical clutter and just clutter in our schedules, right and clutter in our minds. And you know, oh, you know, so many of us have that feeling of like, Oh, God, we use all the metaphors of the tornadoes and the bees and, and all just always feeling like there's so much happening. And a huge part of my diagnosis was realizing that how much I overcome it, right? And how I said yes to everything, because I was excitable, and I was I was impulsive, and I was a chronic volunteer, and I was the PTA president. And I would, you know, I would raise my hand and say yes to one thing. And next thing I knew I had taken on the whole project, and I was in charge, and oh, my God, I had nothing. Like it just would things would snowball. And, and I realized that how much I needed, like the answer was almost always to do less. And I've taken that motto to so many parts of my life in terms of like, you know, socializing and keeping my inner circle really small and saying no, a lot more than I say, yes, for the sake of my own mental health. And I don't volunteer anymore. And part there is a part of me that's like, I used to be the PTA president or my children's elementary school. And so when when my son moved up to the middle school, the vice principal came up to me in the parking lot, and he was like, Hey, can we count on you? And I was like, Nope, just like, I was like, I will write a check. I don't care, whatever you need, I am never I'm not volunteering. And I, you know, I feel ambivalent about that. I feel like, Oh, what a terrible person that I'm not giving back to my community, etc. But I know how this ends. And so like, for the sake of my own mental health, I've had to really, really step back and really like guard myself, right, and guard, like my own soul environment, if you will, in terms of just to, you know, friends and socializing and saying yes to family, and all of those things that add up so quickly. It's like I'm, I'm in a constant state of paring down with everything, not only just the clutter itself, but just, it helps me so much in terms of my happiness, and my family and my mental health. And it's funny, because I look back sometimes at like life before my diagnosis, and I was like, I was doing all this stuff. And why don't I want to do that anymore? What's wrong with me that I don't really you know, that I'm not all the time going out with friends or, you know, or saying yes to these projects, or going out to the movies all the time. And I'm like, it things weren't okay. them, like I thought they were okay. But they weren't. And this is what led to my diagnosis and led to all of this and this, like, implosion I had, because I I was, you know, that sort of basking, right? That's part and parcel of the masking, which is like, I was doing all this stuff, because I thought I should or I thought that's what you do. And I realized that that was actually not healthy for me. And that like this, this smallness, this, you know, really tight circle, all of this is, is what is best for my mental health. And so it's been really interesting to think about that, to make that connection between minimalism in all aspects, right, but it's not just having fewer things on your dresser. It's really about manageability. Right, and and

recognizing how quickly we get overwhelmed and guarding that, and having those boundaries, I think is so important. Absolutely. But I will say the caveat is that my kids are older. And I don't know if I would have been able to have that whole spiel if I had taught.



38:52

Oh, my gosh, well, actually, it's funny, because if I were to look back, if my kids were toddlers, kids can get along with very little stuff. And it's us parents bring so much in. And my husband's love language is gift giving. And he just wanted to give them so much at Christmas and at birthdays. Meanwhile, you know, and I was not as on board with that, and then it just become so much stuff to manage. So I don't know, I feel like little kids don't even need that much because their existence is chaos. So having as little around as possible is I think so much better. But, you know, I volunteer with foster and kittens in the summer. So we foster kittens from about May to October. They'd love for us to foster kittens and cats all year. But I have said no we don't. Between October and May. I'm going to be honest with you. I kind of wish there weren't kittens in my bathroom right now as great as they are They just there is extra maths, I do have the kids doing the majority of the work, which is you know, the great thing about teenagers, although there is like the management of the kids doing this stuff, and but then there's kittens in my bathroom. It's birthday season. So if we have people over, there's that issue. But you know, I want to help, I want to volunteer this the only way right now that I'm volunteering, but I put my foot down, I said, we are not doing it from October on. Because I'm a busy mom. I'm an entrepreneur. Occasionally I work as a nurse. And I realized, like, a lot of us we take on so much not recognizing that. In particular, when we're women with ADHD, even without even if they don't have a neuro divergence, it's a busy busy time. And to not recognize that is just doing a disservice for ourselves. And so we need to keep life as simple as possible. And a huge part of it is so we can remember it, right? Like we spend so much time taking photos. But if life's busy, it's hard to remember things. So simplifying life, to me overall, is just, it's such a game changer. And the other thing is, like so many women with ADHD, and you know, the other neurodiverse agencies there, they're walking around feeling bad about themselves overall, they're in jobs at times where they're not driving, they're feeling like the person who's always behind the eight ball, they're trying to, you know, do things well, and they're wanting to sort of like make some kind of change, but they're completely overwhelmed anyway. And so they can't even like look at other options in life, or they can't even manage to take on a hobby because they're struggling to do all of these things. Meanwhile, if they were to remove things slow life down a little bit, then they actually have a little bit of time to evaluate what they're enjoying in life, and maybe not feel so behind the eight ball removing things really helps with that.



Katy Weber 41:58

Yeah, and you have so many wonderful videos on your on your YouTube channel to about kind of where to start with a lot. Oh, you know, when you're feeling overwhelmed by all of that, by life? What do you what would what would you say is kind of one habit to start with, if they have ADHD, and they're just feeling like, you know, looking around at their house just being like, I don't even know where to start,



42:23

I would honestly say start in the area that bothers you the most. And if that is your, if that's your guest room filled to the ceiling with things, maybe consider a different area, consider a spot where you spend a lot of time or that you walk by all the time that it bothers you the most. So maybe it is your kitchen, or your living room, a dining room is a big thing. A lot of women have craft rooms that are like, out of this world. But if when you declutter that area, you can walk by it and feel like oh my gosh, like, look how great that looks like, if you're like me, and you do something you want to like, go back several times a day and be like, look at that, like I did that, that looks so good. So I think that's a great idea. So if it's your kitchen, I mean, the kitchen is a big job, usually, because there's a lot of stuff crammed in there overall. But if you can arrange your bedroom, like so you have one spot that is really clean. And the advice I would give to once you've chosen that spot, is to just spend 15 to 30 minutes a day there, use your phone as a timer, to number one remind you to do the decluttering because reminders are our best friends. And to tell you when to stop. Sometimes people get really on a roll, and they just want to spend like six hours doing it. I tend to have to try to tell people to do it more like a little bit every day because we do like six hours, you might be exhausted and put off of the whole thing. I mean, you decide what works for you. If you if it becomes an hour or two and you're loving it, go for it. But for me, I like to just set a timer, put on an audiobook or a podcast and just enjoy it. Just enjoy the process. Decide what's serving, you have a pile for what needs to go to recycling what needs to go to garbage and what needs to be donated. And except the fact that yes, some things need to be thrown away. Because whether or not you keep it all of your life, it will go in the garbage eventually. So why not let it go in the garbage now?



Katy Weber 44:26

Yes, that is something that I think about a lot too, which is like if I hold on to this, who's going to have to deal with this and when and how much will my children be angry at me? Someday they have to deal with this. But even still, like even just it is really hard with kids, when with young kids in terms of just thinking about like scissors and tape and those things that just sort of always, every time I turn around, they're gone. And so I go that you know that I'm at Target and I buy 12 of them so that I can have more because I know they're gonna go and it's just like this never ending cycle. 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](https://www.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 in adhd.com/coaching](https://www.adhd.com/coaching). And you can find that link in the episode show notes. When you're talking about bigger projects, that's another thing I think we a lot of us tend to struggle with is is loss of momentum. And just like kind of getting halfway through a project and losing the dopamine and getting overwhelmed, and you know, like, I'll do what I like to call rage cleaning, which is, you know, I'm fighting with somebody in my house is a great incentive for me to like, start really tackling the big projects. But you know, I will sort of, I'll get to the

point where I'm like, Okay, I feel better. Now I've done this one spot, and then I've lost momentum to do anything else. Do you have any tips for like, getting over that barrier, that wall of lost momentum?



46:50

Yeah, there are a couple of things you can try. And it all kind of depends on the person. But the first thing is, it's great if you can just make it a daily habit. Now I know people with ADHD, boredom is just like absolute torture. So if you can at all make it enjoyable, like I said, Put on a podcast or an audiobook, like get splurge for the audible subscription and just get a book. And so making it a habit, fighting that resistance and doing it every day, I know the momentum is hard. But once you get started, even just save yourself, okay, if I just do five minutes, that's one thing you can do. I also am a huge fan of rewards, I love to reward myself, I reward myself with t all the day. And occasionally I will reward myself with other things. And I also really like the idea of writing down what it is why you're doing this in the first place. So if if you say to yourself, I hate how messy my kitchen is all the time, I have nowhere to put anything. And if you just say I have a vision of a clean kitchen, where I can, where everything has a space, I can open a drawer, it's not crammed full. And you can just say that to yourself to just keep yourself motivated. And you have to find what works for you. Sometimes it is a real struggle for people to keep motivated. But overall, I'm your kind of tough love Coach where accountability is my favorite thing. I mean, that's one thing if you want you can hire a coach, if you need somebody to help you stay motivated and accountable. Or a friend, please check in on me. When I get this done. We're gonna go for lunch. Some people, they've actually had people who is like a friend who's not mean, but as a friend that will hold them accountable and somehow punish them, like make them have write a check and give it to a charity or some organization that they absolutely despise. I think that's a really funny one.



Katy Weber 48:53

I always say invite your really judgmental friend to come over in a few days. nothing motivates you to clean your living room like knowing a super judgmental versus coming over. It's so



49:04

true. Yeah, like for us. That's that's what works is if somebody's coming over.



Katy Weber 49:09

I know, right? Yeah, I think yeah. And then all of a sudden, with locked down, we realized how many of us were using other people as our motivation to clean our house. No, it's so true about finding your why. And I think that's something that's really difficult to hold on to like the other. You know, recently my husband and my son went away for a few days and my daughter and I were home together. And I was just like, you know, he's the kind of person who he is. So type A and he will not go to bed until the sink is clean, and the counters done and like all of that stuff. And so when he was gone, I you know, the first night I was like, Oh, finally like I'm in charge. I'm going to leave these dishes. I'm going to deal with them in the morning. It's going to be on

my own time. Not going to feel pressure to clean up. I woke up the next morning there were fruit flies all over the sink and I was like, Oh right. This is why we do the dishes at night. But it was great. It was like, even though I had to live with a fruit fly, like I just was like, oh, okay, this is my why I don't want to deal with fruit flies. So now I will remember and hold on to that every night when the child you know, and I talked about this with my clients to like, acknowledge the child and the adult that kind of live it cohabitate in your brain, right? So like, acknowledge that there is that part of you, that's like, I don't want to do this. It's boring. It's it's, you know, mundane, or whatever it is, like, yeah, it's why would you want to do that? That's okay. But then at the same time, like you said, the there's that other voice, the adult who comes in who's like, okay, but it has to get up. So what are we going to do to get it done? When does it need to get done? What's going to happen if it doesn't get done? And like, as you know, sort of go through that list of questions where it's like, we got to do this. So what are we going to? How are we going to figure out how to do this? And what is our why and I think that's so important to like, have those very conscious conversations in your head. So for me, that's how I do it, I act out the conversation between the child and the adult, you know, and I like parent myself, and I think in a way that it can be really helpful. And then every once a while, I get fruit flies, and I learned my lesson.



51:09

One thing I think that also people need to remember is, you have to make your decisions, right? Like a lot of people can be like, Wow, I just, again, I lose momentum. And it's like, okay, well, Do you or don't you want to live with clutter? Right. And I know people hate that. But it is that tough love. And that's the decision, you have to decide. And if you do write down, you know, a vision for that space and your vision for your life. Like, not only do you it's nice to have the kitchen clean, but why do we want the kitchen clean, it makes it easier, we spend less time it's easier to cook, it's easier to clean, it's easier to then move on with the rest of the day. It's easier to to go to, you know, spend the day out and come in and bring home pizza and then put it all away. Right? Like it's you have to decide like, what is your ultimate goal? Like, what is the reason for doing these things? So I feel like that sometimes people just need to really have a hard conversation with themselves, like you say, and be like, what is the adult and the child? What's the conversation look like? Like with my son with getting up early in the morning, okay. And become an entrepreneur and be rich and start your day at 12 If you want to, but that's not your life right now.



Katy Weber 52:25

Right? Yeah. Well, and I think also with ADHD, you know, in realizing and having that same conversation that I talked about with myself a lot, but also with my kids, which is like, yeah, ADHD is an explanation. It's a why you're having difficulty, but it's not an excuse. So it's like, yeah, that's fascinating. And now you know why? So you don't have to feel bad about yourself, and you don't have to feel shame around why this is a problem for you, or why you struggle with this person in this particular area. So that's really fascinating, but still needs to get done. And I



52:56

made a video about that. And I said, is ADHD an excuse? Because occasionally, you know,

people will see that and they'll be like, Oh, it's just for pharmacy, people pharmaceutical, blah, blah, blah. And I'm like, No,



Katy Weber 53:06

let's casually I feel like it's all the time.



53:10

Yes. See? And that's just it. Like, for me, I'm just like, yeah, not blinders up, but it's true. And so I just wanted to tackle that subject head on and be like, it's a reason. It's not an excuse. And so that's why it's like this, but like you say, it sucks, like, yes, sometimes there are extra steps. But that is what it's like having an impairment of some sorts, people who have visual impairments, they have accommodations, they have to make people who have who you know, are paraplegics with wheelchairs, they have accommodations they have to make and yeah, sometimes it takes way longer. I mean, I've had patients who just to get them to, up to the toilet, it takes, you know, 10 minutes on a lift, right. So, everybody in this life, there are some good things and some bad things. And we need to just be like, Okay, this is this is not ideal. And unfortunately, when it comes to executive function, and motivation, people with ADHD have a bit of an impairment, which definitely sucks, but I think getting to know yourself and knowing what works for you. And if you have to just like calm down to Mel Robbins 54321 And just like get up and do it, right.



Katy Weber 54:21

And I think so much of it has to do with like, Just go easy on yourself and realize that this is something you struggle with and that's totally okay. And I think why people like Casey Davis and domestic blisters was has had such a profound effect on my life tear, which was really just like there's, this is morally neutral. All of this is morally neutral. But it's got to get done. So segwaying from this idea of ADHD is you know, it's something a conversation I talk a lot about this podcast, it's not a superpower by any means. There's so many wonderful aspects about it. Is it a disorder? Is it not a disorder? Would you rename it something? Did you think about that, would you Would you call it something else? If you could? You know, it's



55:02

funny because I was talking to my husband about this. And he's, of course, trying to come up with all the ways to use the acronym ADHD. And I'm like, and so for me, I thought, because I've one of my videos, I can't even remember exactly what I said. But I thought it would be great to call it creative procrastinator Soros beach because so many people, not everybody, him is one of them. Who missed one. But does is not that creative. But so many people with ADHD are creative in some ways. And I mean, like, his brain is amazing in a lot of ways, where people with ADHD, they can hyper focus, they can be creative, there are so many wonderful things. But yet there is that procrastination part, which is like the I'm paralyzed. I don't know what to do now. And so that is, that's what I came up with creative procrastinator Soros.



Katy Weber 55:55

I love, I love the Soros part. Well, I have a very different view of procrastination than most I think I actually think of procrastination as being a very important tool that we can use in in terms of, you know, manufactured urgency as Tamra Rosea called it. And it reminds me of when I was a kid. I think I've shared this on the podcast before but when I was a kid, and I had to clean my room, I had this very clever way of doing it, where I pretended that my room was my apartment and that I was an adult and that my parents had called me from the airport. And they'd be like, Hey, how do you surprise we're coming to visit you, we're gonna be there in 15 minutes. And I'd be like, okay, you know, what, my little eight year old boys with my imaginary phone, I'd be like, okay, can't wait to see you. And then I'd hang up my imaginary phone and go, Oh, no, my parents are gonna be here at 15 minutes. And then I would race around my room and try to clean it as fast as possible. And so now it's like, was really interesting to me to think about that memory through the lens of ADHD now as an adult being like, Wow, what a clever way to create urgency. Right. And and, you know, we do that with timers we do that with with so many ways in which we use procrastination to our advantage to make the we sort of gamify in a lot of ways. So love, right, I think there's so many ways in which we can like really lean into our procrastination and our need for urgency. But that's a whole other podcast, maybe I'll have you we can talk about that another time. Because I don't think that procrastination, I feel like we have a lot of charge and baggage around procrastination. And we think of it as this really terrible thing. But I actually think there's a lot of ways in which it can be used to our advantage. But anyway, I really love your videos. And I think I love your style. And I love your kind of the gentle. You said something yourself that you're not a drill sergeant, but just sort of like there was like a gentle firmness of about the way you talk about this very, very nuanced, complicated topic for so many of us. And so, yeah, I really recommend your channel to our listeners. I'll have it in the show notes. But where can people find you if they want to work with you? Do you work with people all over? Because I know you're in Vancouver Island, but do you work with clients? Basically anyone? Right? I mean, we're all virtual these days.



58:15

Yeah, I do. I actually most of my clients are in the US. I did get up with her. It's a bit of a time change problem. And so her exchange chatted with a lady from London the other day, I had a very early start to my day, but it was very, very productive. So that was good. But ya know, I am currently my channel is called minimalist home. I am probably changing it to my name Robin Buchanan. But for now it is minimalist home. And my website is minimalist home.ca. And you can also find me on my instagram at minimalist home, please.



Katy Weber 58:53

Wonderful. I'm so glad you reached out to me. I'd love to you know, I've actually had quite a few people reach out to be asking me if we had a podcast episode on on decluttering. And I've had a few conversations about like productivity and organization. But this is actually the first time we really kind of delved into clutter and decluttering. So I really appreciate finding you and have thank you so much for sitting down with me and sharing your personal story and some great practical tips.



59:20

It was an absolute pleasure, Katie, thank you so much for having me. I really enjoyed our conversation



Katy Weber 59:32

and there you have it. Thank you for listening and I really hope you enjoy 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 bring teach 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 [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