

Rachel Morgan-Trimmer: ADHD symptoms in perimenopause

📅 Thu, 8/26 1:42PM ⌚ 55:23

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

adhd, people, feel, diagnosis, autistic, women, structure, life, diagnosed, talk, bit, workplace, butterfly, thinking, person, perimenopause, find, struggle, extreme, remember

SPEAKERS

Rachel Morgan-Trimmer, Katy Weber



Katy Weber 00:00

Okay, so let's start. I'd like to hear your personal story first. Uh, you are also autistic. Is that right? That's correct. Yes. Yeah. So, you know, when were you diagnosed with autism? When were you diagnosed with ADHD? Was it at the same time? And kind of what led up to that diagnosis for you? Well, I'm actually still waiting for it. Oh, right. I'm not an uncommon thing in the UK.



Rachel Morgan-Trimmer 00:27

I'm still, yes, I'm still waiting for the diagnosis. I'm self diagnosed, which is valid, because obviously, I work in this industry, I can spot an autistic from a mile off. You know, I've done I've done so much research, I've had the I've had my self diagnosis validated by other professionals who are not, I don't know, if it's like a, you know, a legal thing or what to get the diagnosis, because I've been, I've been identified as autistic and with ADHD, by people who really know what they're talking about. So for example, my last mental health therapist who was super highly qualified. he's not, he's not allowed to diagnose me with, with things outside his particular field. Like, you know, he said, it was very straightforward. He said, that there was no doubt in his mind that I want to stick and you know, that was, that was enough for me. And then I had a coach, an American actually an ADHD coach, because because I was pretty sure I did have ADHD. And in the first session, she was like,

yeah, of course you have. So yes, see, and the difficulties are enormous. For an adult woman, trying to get a diagnosis, especially busy adult women, who will, I wouldn't say give up at the first hurdle, but I've not got the time and the energy to keep going back and saying, you know, I don't think you're qualified to diagnose me, because you've given me a form. That's all to do with little boys, and I'm an adult woman. And I have no confidence in your ability to diagnose me, and I'm not paying you 500 quid for that, because I think I know more than you do, you know, just stuff like that, and going to and from, you know, various doctors in GPS, and it's, it's so draining, and I've got so many other things to do. That I just can't be. I can't be I can't be doing with it anymore. I'm on a waiting list for the autism people. I've been on that for I don't even know, two years, maybe something like that. So that's, that's where I am with, with diagnosis.



Katy Weber 02:37

It is. It is amazing to me how many women I've reached out to you to interview who have said, I'm not officially diagnosed. Is that okay? My response is always sort of like, Well, look, we are such intense researchers, we are, you know, what, if you, you know, deeply, deeply relate to a lot of the literature, the community, the memes, you know, whatever you're seeing out there, if you deeply relate to that, that is pretty much an indication of the fact that you have this, you know, I think so. And yet, so many of us feel it's so important to get that official diagnosis. And it's interesting, because I'm thinking about, like, how my own in my own personal situation. When I did get that diagnosis, I had all of this paperwork, and I had all the self tests. And like, I came armed with all of this information, because I was terrified that the doctor was going to say, No, you don't have this and then I was sort of like, Well, where's that? Where does that leave me? Because I felt like this just the awareness and they and my own self diagnosis just so radically changed how I viewed myself and how I looked back at my childhood and, and I just was so terrified that I was going to be told no, which I think is very common. I mean, I you know, we that's our whole lives is right there is not trusting ourselves and and I remember when the doctors was like, Yes, obviously, clearly you have a look at you with all of this paperwork. But I had I made her say it out loud, because I was so afraid I was gonna leave there and there might be some confusion or some new uh, you know, I might have like misread the nuance or something like I made her actually say you have ADHD out loud. Because so there was no doubt in my mind when I left there, that I had misread the conversation somehow because we live with that such an overwhelming feeling of of what did I do wrong here? Or this didn't turn out how I thought it was going to or all of that. So I sort of feel like a self diagnosis is the biggest difference in the journey, you know, like that's, that is really, that sets the ball rolling, it's it's the first domino, whatever you want to call it. And so if I love Hearing somebody like you, who is a professional? Who does this for a living? Who validates that sense that like, you know, a doctor's diagnosis isn't really the

end all be all. Sure, if you need medication, then you you need a diagnosis. But beyond that, I think so much of that work is internal.



Rachel Morgan-Trimmer 05:19

Yeah, I would agree with you. And I'd like to pick up on something that you said, about, you're afraid of being told no. And we are so used to being told no, especially women with ADHD, were told no, we were invalidated all the time. I've been told, You can't have ADHD, you haven't got ADHD. And I've been told, you know, it's not just with ADHD, it's so many other things that we say or believe or, or even feel that are invalidated by other people. And I think part of it for, for people like us for grown up women, so he just had enough of that you just don't want any more. So it's not something that you might always actively pursue as strongly as you might pursue something else. For example, you might pursue a diagnosis for your child more easily, because it's not. It's not so much about you anymore. And also because you've got more strength to do if your kid I think sometimes we don't do enough for ourselves, we don't advocate enough for ourselves, we don't value ourselves enough to fill in the forms and go to the doctor and say, Yes, I need this. Yes, I am correct about this. Yes, I have done my research, we shouldn't even need to do that we should just be able to turn up. But we feel like we have to bring all the paperwork, like you said, and prove that we know what we're talking about, and that we're not wasting anybody's time. And I think for women, we were very much ingrained that that we shouldn't be doing all these in. And it really takes I think, a lot of self talk, to value ourselves enough to take those steps to get what we're entitled to. And I think that that word entitled is something that sits very ill with us. It certainly with me, I don't feel like I'm I want to stride in somewhere and go I am entitled to this. I'm entitled to a diagnosis, even though I am. But it doesn't feel comfortable saying that. And I think that's more to do with the the way society treats women and gives us an expectation to behave. And I think some of that is compounded by having ADHD.



Katy Weber 07:28

Oh, my goodness, yes. And I think, you know, the word value, I think is so loaded as in terms of how women view that, like you said, it comes with a sense of entitlement, which it really shouldn't. Or, or there's nothing, you know, we shouldn't have a negative connotation to entitlement. I mean, men certainly don't I mean, my, my husband, and I have conversations where he will fully acknowledge, like, the difference, you know, what led to our different opinions where he said, You know, I grew up, never doubting my own opinion. Because I wasn't mad I never had to, I always belonged in the room, you know, and and so we sort of, we'll see how that frames so many of our different approaches to

conversation. And I think you're right, it is such a specific, specifically female symptom, I guess, of ADHD and neuro neuro divergence, I think, in, in all its forms. I wanted to hear from you. What were some things in your past, looking back at your own childhood, where you say, Oh, the signs, the signs were always there?



Rachel Morgan-Trimmer 08:32

Well, there were a lot of them. Like in your report cards, I had similar things I had, must try harder, not reaching your potential and to saying, I don't understand why you can't do it. But tuning out was a big one. Because I realized, I realized when I, you know, when I self diagnosed with ADHD, how extreme it is, because I was so confused. Because the teacher would say, Why didn't you listen? And I would look around me, and everyone else had done the thing correctly. And I'd done it wrong. And I couldn't understand because they didn't tell us how to do it. And of course they had and I tuned out to the extent that I didn't realize that I tuned out and I still don't realize that I I do that I still do it. And I miss I miss big chunks of things. So there was Yeah, there was a lot of confusion that that classic tuning out the inattentive being bought. A lot of the time I thought everybody was bored at school, but my my boredom was extreme, going to great lengths to avoid things that I thought were boring. I remember one homework assignment, I had to write an essay on the life cycle of the large blue butterfly. And I actually quite like butterflies but this came out of nowhere. If we talked about different kinds of butterflies or why life cycles important like Put caterpillars are fun, right? Blue butterflies, big ones are exciting. And yet there was no context no one making exciting no pitches of giant butterflies no opportunity to draw a butterfly and color in with your blue crayons just write this essay on the life cycle at the large green butterfly. And I remember sitting thinking, looking at the blank page with the heading at the top thinking, why have I got to do this? Why am I doing it and then I, I put it off and I, I think I got attention for not doing it. Just because I just couldn't sit down, I had the capability to do it. But I just, I just couldn't because it was so dull. And I kept talking about it. Now I cannot believe they made something so interesting. So Dell really likes color and nature and the whole idea of, of transformation. You know, and they just sort of sucked all the sexual, the joy and the color out of it. I didn't even have any color on my page, it was a white page with it must have been blue pen, we had to use a blue pen at school. But that was the only blue on it. No blue butterfly,



Katy Weber 11:13

I had a teacher in the sixth grade who she Oh, she never gave me an A on anything. And it drove me crazy. And that we were always have these large projects where I would do things that I thought were interesting. And I would hand them in and she always said you didn't do enough work, you know, you didn't do enough to explain what you're doing. And

it was very frustrating for me. And so I remember my very last project of the Year in sixth grade, I did it on Hawaii. And I literally opened up the Encyclopedia Britannica and I just copied everything word for word from the encyclopedia. And I just handed in like a stack of what was the most boring, plagiarized project I'd ever created. And I got an A plus on it. And it just reminded me the your story reminded me of it because I just felt felt like I had proven this point to nobody but myself of sort of what her expectations were the fact that I could do it. You know, and I think that's something else that we talk about a lot with women with ADHD is like, well, I feel like I can do it. But what's the point?

R

Rachel Morgan-Trimmer 12:15

There was another example of when you know, when you when you ask me previously about, you know, what are some signs from when you were younger, that you had ADHD, and I remember being on them on the ship train in London, what you call the subway, you know, the underground train, and they have this project called poems, poems on the underground. And then I read one, which I think was five verses. And I really, really liked it. But I didn't have pen pencil on me to write it down. And it was in the days before, everybody had a camera thing. So I memorized it was a reasonably long tube journey. So I just read it over and over until I memorized it. And I knew that it was like a little bit unusual. But I didn't know it was a symptom of ADHD, I didn't know about hyper focus. And in fact, when I went to the first person, the first medical professional I spoke to who was an old white man with glasses. He was a psychiatrist, he did not understand. I was gonna say, me, I don't think he understood women or ADHD or anything about me and didn't even try. And when I told him about, you know, I said, I think I've got ADHD. He said, Well, if I gave you this list of things, would you be able to remember it? And I wasn't? Well, of course I can. I can remember anything. That's how I got through my exams I got through my exams, because despite having having ADHD and being, you know, brought up by head a lot of the time, I could just memorize massive chunks of Shakespeare. Remember what I was supposed to say and just put it in the essay. And they were so impressed that I could remember all this stuff. I mean, I was pretty good at English anyway. But they were so impressed that it you know, I used to, I used to pass my exams fairly easily. And like most people with ADHD that last minute cramming really, really worked for me, you know, doing well under pressure and so on. But this psychiatrist he said, he said, Well, if you can remember this list of things I I give you, that means you have got ADHD. So he was discounting the fact I had ADHD, because I had one of the significant symptoms, which neither of us knew at the time.



Katy Weber 14:24

Yeah, that explains why I think so many people in the theater have ADHD. I certainly loved act and growing up and that was always on one of these things. Because now I feel like as I get older, my memory just gets worse and worse and worse, especially my short term function. What's the term? Working memory? Yes, working memory, thank you and couldn't remember the term What do you know? So, but I used to be able to memorize entire parts when I was younger, and it always felt like there was like a separate section of my brain that I could compartmentalize that and then it would just come out in In it was it was almost a sense of automation, you know, and I think we also, we love automation. And we and we are very fascinated by it. And I think a lot of times like structure and ways in which we structure our lives are, are founded on on this sort of unconscious automation that allows us to do things right. And so I think that like memorizing, it's I'm gesturing like to the back of my brain, like there's like a part where we store it. And, but then I think there's also times where a five line poem you have everything else has to fall, fall away, in order for you to remember that and you have to keep remembering it and keep focusing on that and everything else is on hold until you can get to the piece of paper and write it down. So I'm curious, what are some of the overlaps in women with ADHD and autism? Because I feel like they're, I mean, it's such an interesting spectrum and so many different overlaps. What are some things that are sort of more specific to autism and in women? Well,

R

Rachel Morgan-Trimmer 16:03

I get, you know, I get asked about having ADHD and autism quite a lot. And it's always an interesting question, but it's actually very hard to answer. Because I, I've never lived without either of them. And, and in some ways, you think they'd offset each other enough to be normal, but they really don't. And it's really hard to untangle which bit is the autism and which bit is the ADHD. And I think one example I sometimes use is the fact that obviously, autistic people like to organize things, and have everything quite neat and tidy. And, you know, they like a routine and things. And I think that really helps people with ADHD, but we struggle to get there. So, for example, and I know with with ADHD, one tends to have areas of their life that are very organized, and structured, because we need that otherwise everything falls apart. And then, you know, we have the other end of the spectrum where everything's a total mess. And I see that very much in in my own life. So I have, you know, if you asked me to get a recipe for waffles, right now, I could go down to the kitchen, and I could find three recipe books, which I know have waffle recipes, and then find those all for you and tell you which one is my favorite, and which one I've tried and wasn't so keen on. And what are the different variations and so on. So that's like an autistic thing, that level of organization and knowing where things are and being like, totally involved in, in what that is. But if you ask me to find some paperwork, which is not something that interests me, then that's where the ADHD very much comes in. So if you

said, Can you find this document from this month of this year? I would, I would say yes. And then I wouldn't do it. Because I, you know, we do that, don't we? We sort of pretend we're like, yeah, I'll do that for you. Because we like to please, please. That said, I think people find that very much in women with both ADHD and autism. We do like to please, please. Okay. Yeah, that's no problem. And then you think, well, I can't do that. And I didn't want to do it. And it's going to take too long. And I don't know where it is, because I haven't organized all the things. And then, you know, and then it's not something that happens. So I think, I think in some ways, they do offset each other, but they do. I find the some of the ADHD habits, kind of annoying for an autistic person, because I like the place to be tidy, but I don't like which is it. And it's not a problem that you can sort of get around because you can try and live with the tidiness sorry with the mess, which is not comfy for an autistic person because we it's more than just, oh, I don't like this message feels it feels kind of it feels almost physically uncomfortable.



Katy Weber 19:06

Yes, I relate to this very deeply right now.



Rachel Morgan-Trimmer 19:10

But then with the ADHD, you're like, Why don't want to tidy? That's boring. I want to go and look at my waffle recipes. But butterfly tidings boring. I don't Yeah. So there is there is quite a lot of conflict there. And I said, but I think when I need to sort of get some structure in my life so I can get the things done. I think the the artistic side where, where I'm capable of making a schedule, and a structure and a framework and a plan, and all the things that us women with ADHD need to sort of hang everything else on. It's like a rack, isn't it a structure, a framework that we can hang all the bits of our lives on so we know where things are and when things are supposed to happen? And the autistic part of me actually enjoys doing that. enjoys making that structure. And then that's easier to keep the ADHD sort of, I wouldn't say under control because it's not something that you control really. But in a place where I can do the things that I want to do, and, and I say this, like, it's the thing that works all the time and my life is just is just calm and smooth and tidy and everything's fine. It's not, it's always I think struggle or battle is too strong words for, for the way I live my life, but it's always it's always a challenge. It's not like the sort of people who don't have ADHD where they can go into a thing, and it's not a problem, it's always it's always something that is more difficult for me than for a normal person.



Katy Weber 20:47

You just reminded me, when you were talking about in the camp ADHD video, when you talked about volunteerism. I had, you know, an experience with my children's elementary school where I had gone to a PTA meeting, the very first PTA meeting I ever showed up to I don't know why even went in the first place. Usually, I mean, my youngest was a baby at the time. So I don't know how I got out of that. Maybe I was looking to be around adults, I don't know. But I went to this PTA meeting, and they were looking for somebody to design a new logo. And I am a graphic designer and was like, No, I can do that in my sleep. Sure, I'll do it. I volunteered, I did it that night. And and sent it off to them. Because it was interesting. and sent it off to them. And then in their mind's eye was this highly competent person. And so they asked me to then join the PTA. And I was sort of like, Okay, how bad could it be? And that started me on this like five year train of misery of getting more and more response and volunteer responsibilities dumped on me not being able to say no, I spent the last two years as the president of the PTA, which I think is so hilarious, because I feel like you know, I'm such this hot mess, but I also at the same time feel like a very highly competent person. And, and you know, so really struggled with how it took over my life, I felt like a terrible mother. And I was like, the irony is not lost on me that as I have now this in this intense volunteer position my entire like home life and family life, as the as a parent has fallen apart because I had to do all of these things. And so anyway, I didn't even think about volunteerism, and that people pleasing aspect and the inability to say no, and all of that, that I've struggled with as also sort of part and parcel with ADHD. And, and that and that simultaneous juxtaposition of being highly competent. And yet at the same time, I think like you had said before, like, you know, how needing to sort of focus on something, then all of the structures fall apart. You know, and and this is something I talk about a lot with, with women who like me, were diagnosed within the last year I call us like lockdown diagnoses or pandemic diagnoses, whatever you want to call it, but really women mothers, who, as soon as we everybody was home and remote learning happened, and suddenly Our house was a disaster. And, you know, everything that we had had in these tidy structures and time containers was just blown to bits. And and we implode it. And you know, it's interesting to me, because that makes you know, I see now why I took the why I took something that had been suggested to me for years, and I'd never really sort of related to and suddenly I felt like I really needed to like get help and figure out because I was struggling so much. But I'm curious as to what you think about structure versus hormones because I Well, I also sort of felt like structure is something that is essential. And I think it's very important to us. When you look back at like times in our lives when women tend to be diagnosed puberty, right. motherhood, and, and perimenopause. So these are all times where we are having hormonal surges, hormonal DME, you know, like, we're having these incredibly, you know, a lot of estrogen production, production, and I know, there's some so much fascinating research out there about estrogen and ADHD. But these are also times when we went from a highly structured environment, to a structure or an environment that required us to create our own structure and then that we sort of implode

so you take like middle school, but more you know, and then again, babies I mean, motherhood, it's, it's a disaster. And I think so many of us struggle and and struggled more than we felt like we should have, you know, and also stroke. Golden silence because motherhood is supposed to be something that you're really happy about and something you're supposed to love this bundle of joy every moment and you're like, I do love this bundle of joy, but I also am really depressed. And so it's when we get diagnosed with postpartum depression and anxiety instead. So I'm curious what you think of, you know, is it structure? Is it hormones? Or is it just a big fat jumble of everything?

R

Rachel Morgan-Trimmer 25:27

I think it's, I think it's really hard to sort of untangle all that. Because, you know, we know that hormonal changes make ADHD, worse, the impact of estrogen and progesterone on the brain, we know they affect dopamine and serotonin. But I'm tackling that from everything else that's going on. Because puberty is hard, even if, you know, even if you're not a woman with ADHD. And and so as perimenopause, I mean, the hormone fluctuations can be quite extreme. And it was interesting what you were saying about, you know, the structure and stuff, because Dr. Ellen Lippmann, who I quoted in my talk, she said something very interesting about women with ADHD, especially, you know, when you become a parent, which was that you don't expect a support system, and you haven't got a support system, you are the support system. But we, we don't, you know, with ADHD, we struggle enough to create our own support system, we don't ask for it for anyone else. Because, you know, as women, we were taught not to ask for things like we've discussed. And then and then we're expected to create the support system for everybody else. And, and that quite often extends beyond our family for you, it extended to the PTA. You know, it can extend to our partner and our friends and all sorts of people, you know, and that's okay, as far as it goes. But I think far too many women neglect themselves at the expense of at the expense of trying to do do all the things and be, you know, trying to be good at, you know, ADHD makes us really, really good at some things. And we try, we try and extrapolate that to the rest of our lives, but we just we can't do it. I think one interesting thing he said, was about perimenopause, and then I'm experiencing that at the moment. And I have noticed that some of the the impact is extreme. And some of the things are really weird. Like sometimes when muscles hurt lights, stuff like that. And the mood, the mood changes, I would say swings, but it's not. I just think that trivializes it. You made is everything isn't it changes your whole day, your whole week. And so the the mood changes are quite extreme, in my case, but I think for people my age and in my situation, we need to look at the other thing that's going on. So I'm coping with the perimenopause. And I say coping with it's a big deal. People are going, Oh, everyone goes through. And it's, it's massive. It really is. And I've I've known people who've got divorced because of that. It's that, you know, because they can't hold down a relationship. It's that it's that

dramatic. But if we look at other things, people, people my age, and having their kids later now, in some situations, so I had my I have my second kid when I was 14. So I've got little kids still. And I'm 46 but also people in their 40s I see this a lot in my friend group who you know, there's a similar age to me, our parents are starting to get old and to need more care. So, in any friendship group in in my age group, you've got you know, someone's mum's ill or someone's dad has had a fall or you've got to take them for their blood because then you start helping out more Dhoni, you do the driving, you might mow their lawn, you might, you might take them at dinner. So the sandwich generation when you've got parents to look after or it might be other elderly relatives, you might have an aunt or whoever. You've got the the older folk to look after, and you've got your little kids, and you're having a perimenopause, and you've got ADHD, and with all of that you've got the rest of your life, you've got your work you've got trying to take care of yourself. You could go for a run, but what are you gonna find time for going for a run so you your self care is slipping, you've got to make dinner, you've got to find the man about the washing machine because it's broken. And again, all these things seem little. Some, you know, oh, you're having a major swing. You've got to find a man. But when you put them all together it's it's enormous and it's like well, that's only gonna sit people say to me that will only take five minutes won't help got five minutes. Because I'm doing something else, and to if you, if you give me 20, things that take five minutes, that's an hour, I can't do it in an hour because I have to TAs switch. That's an enormous cognitive load, because I've got to remember to find the man, and to make the dinner and to buy the stuff for dinner. And to remember that one of my kids doesn't eat this thing. So I have to buy a different thing is a huge cognitive load with ADHD, we can, we can take a lot, but not everything. And I like the words of Brittany Brown, who, who you're probably familiar with who writes a lot about, you know, accepting your imperfections and things like that. And one of the things she said was life is made up of little things, which I think is a very powerful statement. And she's not talking about the, you know, the crappy stuff, or the boring stuff. She's talking about everything. So if you think back to your report cards, for example, that's a little thing, a sentence written in a report card. And yet, you know, it means a great deal to you. And when we're thinking about the sorts of things we were doing for our kids, they might not remember. And, you know, some of the big stuff that we did, you know, I say to my kids, Hey, remember that time we went abroad on this really lovely holiday? They were like, Oh, yeah, I can't remember. But they remember the time we went around the corner and three tables at each other little things. So that's what our life is made up. As I started this thread this thread. So long ago, I've I've just dropped it now. And I don't even know where I was going with that. But I think I think I was just trying to create a sense of how much there is going on, for people like me.



Katy Weber 31:41

Yeah, and I think the other thing that I really appreciated in your video, when you talked about the list, you know, the list of things to do, and how, you know, the list for the child versus the lifts list for the bum. And I, you really touched on something that I don't think we talked about enough, which is how asking for help is actually very complicated. And so like, you know, the spilling of the cereal and how you had to clean up the cereal and use that example of like, I suppose I could have the children clean up the cereal. But it's not that it's not that easy. It comes with a lot of other factors that we then add to the mental exhaustion. And I think about like my husband, who is always offering to do the laundry, and I can't allow him to because he does a shit job. And he doesn't, he doesn't fold properly, and he doesn't even like turn clothes back the way they're supposed to go, or he doesn't match. So you know, he does all of these things that I then have to go back and redo that it will take me just as long and give me so much more emotional baggage to allow that help. And and I suppose there's then the other side of me that's like, well, you need to just get over those things. And sometimes you do. I mean, like I've I allowed myself to bring in before COVID, we had a housekeeper. And that was something that was an incredible burden off of me, or off, you know, incredible load off of me. But it also came with a lot of difficult baggage in terms of just like feeling guilty that I had to do this, you know, that I think the simple act of asking for help is really, really complicated for us, and comes with so many other factors. And so just asking for help, can feel like you had said earlier, even just with with going to the doctor, like it's just taking steps can feel like even though it's one step it feels like a marathon in your brain because you see the 100 steps ahead of you. And and that alone is just so exhausting.

R

Rachel Morgan-Trimmer 33:43

I think it's I heard it described as being the project manager, and the person who does the work. So in a normal job, you have the project manager who tells everyone what to do, because they competently do it. But if you're the Mum, you are the project manager, and you are the person doing the work. So you have to tell the kids to get their coats on, which is a project manager's job, but then one of them can't slip up. So you have to do that as well. Or you tell them to sweep up the cereal. And you have to tell them three times because your workforce is not highly trained. And they also not highly skilled. So they sweep up the cereal, but they miss a bit. So you have to do that as well. So all the time your project managing and doing the actual work. And that's not really a normal way to work in a workplace. Certainly, you don't do things in a workplace, you have your job and you stick to your job and someone else sweeps stuff up and someone else puts their coat on.



Katy Weber 34:44

And I'm also curious what, what your take is on the term comorbidity, especially when we talk about depression and anxiety because I have the eisert I personally feel like there are comorbidities that make sense to me like dyspraxia. Or, you know, I can't think of something else, you know, things that sort of all fall together in this neuro divergence spectrum, and they all sort of people have sort of pick and choose things that might relate to them on this spectrum. But then there's comorbidities like depression and anxiety, which we've we throw that term around a lot. I personally feel like they are symptoms of, of not having a diagnosis. And I'm curious sort of how you feel about because you just sort of talk about depression and anxiety, and especially in women, do you think they they coexist with ADHD? Or do you feel like they are the result of being ADHD in a neurotypical society? Or again, is it just too hard to untangle?



Rachel Morgan-Trimmer 35:56

I think it's a good question. And I think you're right, it's hard to untangle. And I think there are going to be people who have ADHD, who had it, who didn't have the other risk factors for depression and anxiety. Who might be depressed just because of the ADHD. So when I'm talking about risk factors, I'm talking about, you know, early trauma, or childhood abuse or neglect, or difficulties at school being excluded things like that, or they might have something else if they're also dyslexic, their time at school was was likely to be very difficult. Being if they're autistic, being excluded by peers is quite common. But I think it's, it's probably too hard to untangle. I mean, we do know that the rates of depression and anxiety are higher, across all neurodivergent people can when you compare to the rest of the population, there is more of it there. And I think, I think it is very difficult because you can't, it's something that's so hard to untangle, for example, we know that people with ADHD, received significantly more negative messages through their childhood, than normal people. And just, you know, absorbing that and dealing with that, and thinking that that is normal, which I think is the biggest problem. And it's obviously can lead to some some mental health issues. And even those people, those neurodivergent people who've, you know, they've either not developed mental health issues, because they're quite resilient, or because of if they've had them, and then they've, they've had some therapy, and they've learned to deal with them, even with those people that I didn't give ever met, the neurodiverse person who hasn't at least got baggage. So it might not be mental illness, but there's stuff going on, they're gonna, there might be something that sort of sets them off, it might be a reminder might be looking at your report card, for example. And, and just, you know, feeling sad or feeling angry, or it might be the way somebody talks to you or makes a joke. So you're so lazy. And for a normal person, they might laugh it off. And for someone with ADHD, they're going to properly kick off at that,

even if they're not mentally ill, they are going to have a big issue with the way you said that they're going to ruminate on it, they're going to, they're going to get angry, or they're going to get upset, possibly both. If somebody said that to me, I would. I would try never to speak to them again, or something like that, you know, our emotional regulation is very poor. And for context as well. You know, when I'm talking about mental illness, I come from that from a first person perspective, because I suffered from depression for 38 years. And I also had an anxiety because I didn't know I was anxious, I didn't know how long I had generalized anxiety disorder. And along with that I had, I had some other mental illnesses, which were basically those things come out of that they're called poor coping strategies for dealing with the depression and the anxiety. So anytime you're, you're avoiding things you're getting into situations where you're extremely avoidant of things like social interaction, or you might even develop a phobia as a reaction to things like OCD, which is an effort to exert control because you can't control other things that are going on around you addiction courses, very common with people with ADHD, because it's partly our poor impulse control. But also the fact that people are shoveling a load of crap on us all day every day telling us that we use us and we're not trying hard enough and we don't understand and we're confused and everything. So we're going to start drinking or, you know, shopping online or gaming to extremes because that makes us feel better. And that's how we cope with them before we know it. We've got an addiction. So yeah, we see an awful lot of that I think it's um, I think the saddest thing is it, none of that has to happen. But



Katy Weber 40:06

yeah, I feel like that's what I'm still definitely still unraveling all of that the connections with, yeah, addiction and and you know, looking back at the sort of various coping strategies, I intuitively came upon some of them healthy. Most of them not. And but actually, but always being able to now recognize that whatever I did, it was rooted in self care, because it really was about me trying to protect myself pretending to take care of myself in whatever way I had with whatever resources were available to me. And so I sort of feel like with, in hindsight, I can at least appreciate that you know, that so many of our coping strategies are rooted in self care. I wanted to mention because we talked about it so much, I just wanted to give the name that you had given to it also in the camp ADHD video, which was chronic piece of shit said, I just wanted to make sure I repeated it, because I feel like that. I mean, I'm sure everybody watching the video was like, Oh, yes. And, and I know, certainly my therapist felt that way about me. I mean, she, I remember her getting so frustrated with me, because she was like, how is this incredibly intelligent, capable woman who, you know, wrote a book and does productive things? How can you feel so poorly about yourself? And that was one thing she would come back to. And I think that was really what tipped her off that that I had ADHD in the first place. And so you

talked about, you know, when we talked about what can we do, and in sort of a more proactive element, I wanted to ask you about B six, vitamin B six. But first I, you know, another thing on that list was value yourself. And coming back to that word value, and how important self talk is in this journey. And how important it is to be able to reframe so many of the things we've done in our lives as, as self care. And I think being that ability to do that has helped me immensely in terms of my self esteem. The most important outcome of my own diagnosis has been how I talk to myself and how I view myself, and how much is it? Is there a way Is there like a hack that you to get somebody to quickly value themselves? Or I, you know, it's sort of on this list of like, how can we do that? Or is it just something that comes naturally as you make these connections in your own personal journey?

R

Rachel Morgan-Trimmer 42:42

Well, I think I think for some people, they need therapy to get to that place. I certainly did. That, that chronic piece of shit syndrome, which by the way, I need to have somebody off Twitter, I didn't come up with that myself. And that's so ingrained that you don't even realize you're doing it. And I think if some of this stuff is starting to resonate with people, and they use the word should a lot, I hear that sometimes it's my coaching clients, I should do this, I should be better. If you're saying that a lot to yourself, then I think it's an indication that maybe some therapy would help you learn to value yourself and what you do in terms of diagnosis, self diagnosis, or I was gonna say real one. Medical Yeah. Just like this, yeah, any sort of diagnosis, whether that's from yourself, or somebody else, I believe, will help, like it has with you help you understand that these things are not your fault. And I think that can be very, very valuable. And in terms of a quick hack, because obviously, diagnosis takes a long time, getting to therapy, finding the right therapist can take a long time, it is worth it. I did get I think I recovered from my 38 years of depression, I should point that out because I had therapy, I had the right therapist. So it is something that's achievable. Not for everybody, perhaps but it is something that should definitely be explored. Because if there's a possibility that you could get better or at least learn to cope with your mental illness, or mental illnesses, it should definitely be something that should be explored because you know, people deserve that they deserve to feel better and they find it so hard to believe. And I think trying to convince them of that can be incredibly hard. And one one hack that I've I've used and and I've had used on me is when we doing all this talking to ourselves or this you should be better your house should be tied year. You should be feeding the kids better food, you should be doing this, you should be doing that. I sometimes say would you talk to your friend like that? Would you talk to your best friend like that the way you talk to yourself? Of course I wouldn't go up to my friend and say you're a piece of shit. In your crapper everything. And you and you say, Well, why? Why are you talking to yourself like that? And I think it's stopping and pausing and using that.

asking that question can be quite valuable to people because, you know, I've done an awful lot of negative self talk. And when I actually stop and say, well, would I speak to I picture my, my friends and think, would I talk to this person or that person or people who were my clients as well, when my clients say, I did this thing. Even if it was quite bad, it's not really that bad, I probably do the same thing. And, you know, it's not, it's never quite as bad as you think it is. And you're not, you're not the only one who's, you know, not cleaned up a thing or not saying someone when you said you would have been late or forgotten birthday, all of this stuff, everyone else with ADHD is doing exactly the same. And it's not our fault, and it's not your fault. And you would never, you know, be no come up to me and say, wake up, well, I hope they wouldn't say this is all your fault. And you should be doing better. You know, they wouldn't talk to me like that. So I really try and convince people that that's not a good way of talking to yourself. And it's not, you know, even if you don't care about yourself, maybe you care enough about other people to take care of yourself, to have that positive effect extend out to other people. Because, you know, while you're, while you're talking to yourself, like this, and being down on yourself, and all of that you're not, you're not being what you want to be to other people, you're not necessarily being the good friend that you want, which isn't the one who remembers to phone and, or remembers people's birthdays. It's the one who suddenly remembers that their friend likes what we're talking about earning waffles and they see a book about waffles and they buy their friend a book about waffles, because that's the sort of thing that people with ADHD do. And you know, the more you look after yourself, the more you've got the capacity to be their social friend, ought to be that that wife or partner or mother or child or colleague, or whoever it is. So you know, if you don't care about yourself enough, and I can understand that, I would hope that people would address that. But for now, if you can't do anything else, maybe you could be kinder to yourself for the sake of the people around you.



Katy Weber 47:29

That's lovely. That's such an ADHD question is, what's the fastest easiest way to get self worth? Yeah, it's a good question to know, no, those were all lovely. And so that's a great segue into talking about your coaching you coach one on one?



Rachel Morgan-Trimmer 47:51

Yes, I do. I do. I have a few that I do privately. And I do it through workplace services as well. So that's when the company hires us to do training on neurodiversity, all aspects of neurodiversity. And then they can also pay for coaching sessions for their individual staff if they need it. So you might find, for example, a dyslexic person who needs some help with organization or you might find somebody with ADHD needs some help with with structure

and planning or you might find somebody who is autistic who needs some help putting in the reasonable adaptations in the workplace to enable them to do their best work. And I think what's important to emphasize here it's not just about dealing with all the stuff you crapper which is it for too long. It's been the narrative, but it's also about making sure you can do your best work,



Katy Weber 48:46

which makes perfect sense. I mean, I find your job fascinating. And I know we're running out of time, but I'm like, I could talk your face off for hours. Because I was like, I haven't even gotten to your amazing, fascinating job, which is that workplaces actually hire you to help them become more efficient through recognizing neuro diversity within the workplace, right? I mean, really, it's self it's self interest that would hire you because you would think that if you hired somebody to like you said, tutor almost for lack of a better word, somebody in the workplace, they would become more productive. And it's such an it's such a mindset that does not exist in America at all. But it's such it's fascinating. Can you tell me a bit more about your your neuro divergent or neuro diversity consultancy with workplace? Well,



Rachel Morgan-Trimmer 49:41

we we do quite a bit of training. So we have various various workshops and training modules where we talk about you know exactly what neurodiversity is because most people don't know anything about it, which is good, makes my job easier actually. And we can train them on all aspects. As you know, what it's like to be autistic, what it's like to have ADHD and then how to communicate with with various different kinds of people. And when it comes to the benefits, you know, we talk about the fact that hiring people with with these conditions is actually the net benefit, if all you care about is money, you're still quitting because you know, the costs associated with hiring neurodiverse people are small, they're normally some, a lot of the time, there aren't any costs, it's just doing things a little bit differently, you know, not being weird, or, you know, using the phone instead of an email, little things like that. And then, of course, it's, it's not just you get a productive person. And because there's lots and lots of studies about how productive neurodivergent people are, in lots of different ways, if we, if we have the right conditions, which, as you know, you know, ADHD people work very, very quickly, a lot of the time, dyslexic people great problem solving, autistic people, very good attention to detail, very productive, and so on. So when you have, when you hire a neurodivergent person, you're not just getting their level of productivity, but you're also having those benefits extend out towards the workplace. So when you're being inclusive, you're finding that everyone else in the

workplace is working better as well, because the collaboration is better. The whole inclusive vibe, you know, that you're not excluding people, leads to more innovation, more productivity, more creativity. And there's, I'm not going to cite all the studies now, because I don't you know, I don't know how many autistics autistics love a bit of a bit of science. You can look this stuff up on online, there are a ton, there's lots of different studies on this. And they all agreed that it's a net, a net benefit, we are more productive. And you know, if all you care about is the money, then you've got that covered. But we find as well, a lot of people are coming to us, not just because they want to improve their bottom line, but because they want because being inclusive is the right thing to do. And it's actually something they care about. And with a lot of our clients, they talk to us about it, and then they go, Well, my son's autistic, or my nephew is dyslexic, or I'm married to somebody with ADHD, so they want to learn about it for themselves as well, which I think is really lovely. Another question that I asked my guests, which is, you know, the the term ADHD is so problematic for so many, especially women with the H in ADHD, so many of us do not relate to that, at first glance. And if you could rename it to something else, what would you call it? I really liked this question. And I had to think about it. I agree with you the whole sort of Deficit Disorder thing is, it just doesn't sit well with with us. Because it's, it's a difference, not a disorder. But also, I don't think we should diminish the challenges because we've talked a lot today about all the difficulties that come with ADHD. And I don't want it to have you know, a name like the super happy fun rainbow syndrome when, when that's not the reality. Right, there we go. So I quite like the expression chaotic, good, if you heard of that. Things are chaotic, but they turn out all right. We think of chaos as being a bad thing. But chaotic. Things can be good as well. You know, where people don't always follow the rules about stuff like you know, if they, if they kind of bent the rules to get some food from a restaurant to feed the homeless, that would be an example of chaotic good, quiet, like, chaos condition. I quite liked. And I quite like this, the idea that with ADHD, everything is like extreme, isn't it? So the good stuff and the bad stuff. So we're quite like excess everything existence, shortage, Triple E which I think sounds quite cool. It's very important of triple A, I like that quite like and the other the other thing I was thinking about was the fact that we're multifaceted. We've got lots of different things like like a gemstone, so I didn't come up with a name for that.



Katy Weber 54:25

Well gemstones are also created after a lot of pressure is put onto the soil to which I like that.



Rachel Morgan-Trimmer 54:32

I like the idea of us having lots of different sides and sparkling that's what my Twitter

name is sparkle classes. Partly The reason so I was thinking something like gemstone syndrome might be quite good.



Katy Weber 54:45

I love that. I appreciate your insights so much. It's been such a pleasure.



Rachel Morgan-Trimmer 54:50

Thank you so much for inviting me. It's been really nice. I always like talking to to people with with ADHD and autistic people just because I find that The conversation is a lot easier. I don't have to struggle. I don't have to rush my words. I can talk more slowly because I'm not afraid of somebody interrupting me which is ironic because ADHD people are known for interrupting and yet when you get to in a room, they stopped doing it. It's It's weird, but yeah, I've really enjoyed this interview.