

Dr. Janina Elbert: ADHD & executive functioning coaching

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SPEAKERS

Katy Weber, Dr. Janina Elbert



Dr. Janina Elbert 00:00


Most people think they can't really change something that they are maybe just lazy. And that's how they are. And they don't really realize that they could already worked on it without the diagnosis. So I feel like if you get the diagnosis, that's kind of the turning point for a lot of people that they realize, oh, I can actually work on this, and maybe change some things around, find my strengths, and maybe work on my weaknesses or get help for my weaknesses.




Katy Weber 00:38

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. Before we start, I'd love to share with you this review from a listener named Lisa, who left this review on Amazon. It's entitled fantastic information. I received a diagnosis of ADHD at age 56. And I was completely thunderstruck. What do I do now? This podcast answers your questions. If you are a woman of any age with ADHD, it's so comforting to know that you are not the only woman out there. And it's a great resource of information. Well, thank you, Lisa, I am so thrilled that you found the podcast and I'm glad it's been such a great resource for you on this journey. And thank you for the feedback and for taking the time to write a review. I definitely know how difficult it can be to stop what you're doing. And remember to put your thoughts into words. So thank you, it makes such a big difference in getting this podcast noticed and found by other women who are starting to connect the dots and could really benefit from hearing these conversations and knowing they're not alone. And they're not lazy, stupid or broken. And if you're a listener of this podcast, and you've been helped by these conversations, a lovely way to say thank you is to take a moment to leave a review or even just hit those five stars. In fact, if you'd like you can


just pause right now and do it. I promise I'll wait for you. Okay, here we are at episode 102 in which I interview Dr. Janina Elbert. Dr. Elbert has a PhD in Clinical Psychology with an extensive background in prenatal risk factors and child development. She's also an ADHD advocate and a certified ADHD coach. Through her ADHD empowerment coaching practice, Dr. Elbert helps individuals with ADHD to learn, understand and work with their unique brains to reach their full potential and feel empowered in their life. She also recently moved from Germany to Connecticut with her boyfriend, we talk all about executive functioning, coaching and what it entails as well as the difference between therapy and coaching as different treatment modalities for ADHD. And we discuss when it's time to get coaching versus therapy. We also talk about how ADHD is regarded in Germany and some of the differences and similarities faced by women seeking an ADHD diagnosis in Europe versus North America. All right, enjoy. Okay, well, welcome. Juanita, thank you so much for joining me.

 Dr. Janina Elbert 03:25

Thank you. Thank you so much for inviting me here to your podcast.

 Katy Weber 03:29


Yeah. Well, I'm always excited to talk to anyone with psychology backgrounds, because you can listen to the podcast, you know, I've like endlessly asking the question of like, what are we talking about here? So I'm excited to pick your brain about all of that. But first, I want to hear about your own diagnosis. Well, when were you diagnosed, how old were you and kind of what was going on in your own life that led you to really start putting, connecting the dots and say I should I should really look into this.

 Dr. Janina Elbert 03:58

So I was diagnosed, like, two years ago, so fairly recently, but I feel like since I started school, like first grade, I always knew something was different. Like when I compared myself to like my peers. I feel like my brain always worked differently. And I noticed that but I never had the answer from that kind of follow up me all the way throughout school. And I always wondered like, why are certain things so easy for like, Oh, my colleagues, my friends, but are so hard for me like simple things like doing the homework or actually remembering that you have to do the homework and so on. So I always like ask myself the question like, What is it like what makes me so different? And when I got into like high school, and I learned more about ADHD I said, maybe I could have ADHD but I didn't I really fit into the typical like ADHD hyperactive boy, like type. So from there like I always had that like recurring thought of maybe it's ADHD but never really followed through,

 Katy Weber 05:17

which is very ADHD, right.

 Dr. Janina Elbert 05:22

Dr. Janina Elbert 08:30

And in university, like I started more learning about, like, different neurodevelopmental disorders, and also ADHD, and I learned that there's also this inattentive type, which kind of fit more to me. But then I was like, yeah, what? Why should I get a diagnosis? It's so much work. And what am I what is going to change? Like, if it's it actually ADHD, like, I will have have it all my life, but I can't change it, right. And then at some point, I was like, Okay, I should get a diagnosis just to like, make sure I can go from there. But then it was, like, again, so much work. I like maybe called one doctor, and then they didn't have any spots open. And then like, it tried again, like a year after, kind of went on like this until I find me was like, Okay, I just want to get the diagnosis. And know either I have ADHD or don't. And then like I called every doctor or psychiatrist like in my area to see who has like, appointments, and who is diagnosing adults for ADHD. And then I finally found someone and the wait time was only like, six months. So I finally had the appointment and then went to the psychiatrist, and then went on from there.



Katy Weber 06:49

Oh, my goodness, that's so related. But Laura, I feel like that story is so common, right, which is the dearth of therapists and psychologists right now at the moment, who are who are able to even give assessments and kind of that feeling of like, once you sort of decide to seek a diagnosis, the impatience, sets in, or it's like, I need this now, and the wait times are just insane right now. And I'm like, I'm always, I feel like I'm always trying to say, like, really, the formal diagnosis is really just sort of the icing on the cake, right? Like, really, the diagnosis starts with your own identifying and starting to like to have that self led research and that self led knowledge and like going down those rabbit holes of like, Oh, my goodness, and even like you said, like, why should I even get the diagnosis? That was, I think, what was so profound for me, which was like, Yeah, you know, I had been kind of thinking about it, like, in a peripheral way, because my therapist had recommended it. So I was sort of like, yeah, I probably have ADHD, but like, what does it really matter? What even is it? Like? How is this going to change my life, and then when I don't know, something like a switch, flipped, and I just was like, once I actually started relating to it and researching it, it became my everything, and it was so life changing. And that's why I started the podcast, because I was like, this is our other people experiencing this, like, it was just so dramatically life changing, to start to identify myself through this lens, and to kind of really start to change my view of who I was fundamentally. And I think that's why a diagnosis is so important. But yeah, it's it's really hard to say to people like Yeah, it's really validated, go get a professional diagnosis. Also, it's going to take three years,



Dr. Janina Elbert 08:30

basically, but I think getting the diagnosis really helped me acknowledging that I have ADHD, because before I always was like, Maybe I'm using it just as an excuse. Maybe I'm basically stupid, and I can't do these easy things, right. So it really helped me getting the official diagnosis. So always when I like kind of started doubting myself or doubting that I have ADHD. I was like, No, I psychiatrists actually diagnose me.




Katy Weber 09:04

Yeah, that can be really validating too, right to realize that like, Yeah, I actually did. I forget that I actually did talk to a medical professional, who correct corroborate some of this. And I'm not


alone in this. Yeah. Because I think that's also like the, the level of self doubt and that internalized ableism that we deal with so much, which is also part of this journey, right? Which is like, I'm just lazy. I feel like I've talked about that too, which was like, I think the reason why I constantly go back to the like, well, you could do this if you really wanted to, or if you tried harder is because like, you know, not only do we have internalized those messages, but I think also like when you can visualize yourself getting up and doing the thing. It's really difficult to understand the executive dysfunction side of it, right, which is like I can see myself doing this. I have the desire to do it. So I don't understand why I'm not doing it like you don't understand why I'm not doing it, I don't even understand why I'm doing it, why I think executive functioning and understanding what it is is so important to coaching. And you know, so I'm always excited when I see them kind of listed hand in hand because, and I've said this on the podcast before, like, I never even heard the term executive functioning until I was diagnosed with ADHD and was really like, you know, kind of inducted into this world of this lingo and jargon.

 Dr. Janina Elbert 10:26


Me too. In the university, I study like pharmacology, molecular medicine, psychology. And I was never thought about like executive functioning and the depth of ADHD,

 Katy Weber 10:41


right, that there's actually this sort of disconnect between desire and action, which leads us to have so much of that shame, honestly, not knowing why we can't do the thing. Yeah, exactly. So now you started out in science.

 Dr. Janina Elbert 10:57

Yeah. So I started studying, like, my bachelor's in pharmacology, and then my masters in molecular medicine, but always with a major in neuroscience. And then I did my PhD in psychology.

 Katy Weber 11:12

Wow. There's a syndrome where when you're studying something in medicine, or when you're studying a disorder in psychology, that you start to identify with that disorder, because you're like, Oh, I see that in me. I see that in me. And so I feel like a lot of psychology students have that. Oh, yeah, worry, which is like when I'm studying ADHD, you're like, do I have ADHD? Or do I just like really identify with this? Did you experience that when you started studying it? Yeah, definitely.

 Dr. Janina Elbert 11:40

What was your doctorate in clinical psychology, and it was actually in prenatal development and risk factors, and then, like, the long term consequences on the child, adolescent.



Katy Weber 11:54

Ah, so what have you what an interesting patchwork to have? background that you have, which also just screams ADHD? Right? Yeah, totally. But to have the pharmacology background must be so helpful to in terms of just the understanding of, you know, the questions we all have around medication, right, which is like, how do I even know what medication I need? Well, how do I know if it's working? Like, do you work with your clients a lot with that, in terms of figuring out which of the myriad medications they might even try?



Dr. Janina Elbert 12:28

No, I just like work on mainly like executed functioning skills, and not so much with ADHD medication, because I just don't feel qualified and like actually giving advice and surprisingly, most of my clients don't take ADHD medication, which I just realized.



Katy Weber 12:52

I don't, you know, I don't take it either. I've tried a couple of them. And then I kind of had to stop because it was getting so frustrating. And it was taking up so much bandwidth, you know, of like, Is this why isn't this working? Is it working? Is it not working? And I was sort of, like, I need to take a pause. And I'll revisit ADHD medication at some point. But for now, I've kind of managing without it. When did you decide to become an ADHD coach?



Dr. Janina Elbert 13:17

That was like after my diagnosis, because then I really, I guess, hyper focus and researched everything about ADHD probably listen to every ADHD podcast out there. And I felt like I really needed to support other people with ADHD. And like at the university clinic, because while I was doing my PhD in Germany, you also work in the clinic part time. That's like how you get your paid your salary, basically. And I saw so many people just struggling and not receiving help that they actually need. And a lot of like, children always came in and wanted a ADHD diagnosis. And then actually, the mothers were like, Wait, too, I have ADHD, like I said, Yes, basically, or tick the box on every symptom. And that's how I realized that so many people also needed the help that I needed. And I just felt that coaching could provide more help than therapy, or at least that's what I felt like. Because for me, coaching helped me more than therapy for my like ADHD symptoms, managing daily life. And so I looked into ADHD coaching, the different programs and what you can do, and that's how I started ADHD coaching first in training,



Katy Weber 15:01

right, yeah, I feel like they, I think the reason why coaching is so, so popular and so effective within the ADHD community is like, basically the accountability aspect, right? That idea that like you have basically like a personal trainer for your brain, and somebody you're going to show up for and somebody that is going to help you become accountable to yourself and build

that habit that you're not just going to suddenly wake up one day and be like, Okay, now I'm accountable to myself, like that is actually like a muscle that you need to build. When I try to like, distinguish between coaching and therapy and kind of what the benefits are for somebody who's newly diagnosed. Often, I will say that, you know, you have to be ready for coaching. And I think with therapy, sometimes you need therapy first, to kind of work, you know, I have a lot of clients who come to me who really need therapy, and they might not be ready for the coaching part. And so that can be difficult too, because coaching is so effective. But yeah, it's It's always fascinating to me to think about the ways coaching specifically so effective for ADHD clients especially, 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 [help.com/women-ADHD](https://betterhelp.com/women-ADHD), and there's a link in the show notes. This podcast is sponsored by BetterHelp. Growing up in Germany, looking over your life through this lens of ADHD, what were some of those things where you look back and think Oh, my goodness, of course, that was clearly ADHD all along? And then also, how is it viewed differently if at all, in Germany than in the US or even the UK?

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Dr. Janina Elbert 17:31

So feel like there are many, many things that are like, Oh, my God, how did no one realized it was ADHD? Like in school, I always got like, in exams, I always misread the question or didn't read the word no, Not or No. Or I just couldn't finish the exam and time because I kind of forgot that we were writing the exam, and I was just staring out of the window. I remember like, during class, I would always watch the person in front of me and was like, How can we sit so still, and then I always tried sitting as still as they would. And I was like, I can't do this, like, my legs are like on fire. I just need to move them around. And I feel like that followed me all throughout, like, especially school, for getting homework and so on. And so yeah, I feel like now it was very, very obvious that I have ADHD.



Katy Weber 18:41

When you were diagnosed, did you tell your parents about it? Or what was their reaction?

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Dr. Janina Elbert 18:45

Then? We talked about it before because it was always, or at least from like high school on I guess it was kind of a running joke that you have ADHD or like, my whole family has ADHD, but no one is actually diagnosed. And so I also told them like that I wanted to actually now really

pursue getting the diagnosis, seeing a psychiatrist. So when I received the diagnosis, they weren't surprised.



Katy Weber 19:20

They didn't react negatively. You know, like, I feel like sometimes a lot of the times parents are like, What are you talking about? That's not ADHD? That's just us. That's just normal. That's who we are.



Dr. Janina Elbert 19:29

No, luckily, they weren't surprised at all. And they're happy that I found like, I guess now I found like my passion in ADHD and they can really see that and they appreciate that.



Katy Weber 19:45

That's lovely. And now Okay, so the second part of my question was kind of how do you feel like ADHD is viewed overall in Germany?



Dr. Janina Elbert 19:56

I feel like ADHD is still Not really a thing, people are becoming more aware of it. Whereas here in the US, you see, like flyers everywhere, when you like Google Ad HD, like and you're free in the city that I live in, there are so many, like, doctors specialized in ADHD and so on vers in Germany, it's so hard to even find a specialist in ADHD to get help in ADHD. And especially for adults, like finding a psychiatrist who can actually diagnose an adult, at least in the area where I am from in Germany is very, very difficult. And it's also not really talked about in school or university. Like when I studied in the UK, those who were diagnosed with ADHD, they have more time on the exam and extra time for like, certain tasks and so on. But in Germany that just doesn't exist.



Katy Weber 21:07

Accommodations in general.



Dr. Janina Elbert 21:10


Yeah, exactly. For ADHD.




Katy Weber 21:14

Interesting. I feel like it's fairly recently, like, within the last 20 years that ADHD was even listed as being a learning disorder that you could get an IEP for in school is that that just doesn't exist


in German, in Germany, in school, the school systems,

 Dr. Janina Elbert 21:31


it might be listed, but no one talks about it. And so if you actually have ADHD, in like school or university, I'm not sure that they would actually go talk to our no guidance counselor, whatever, cuz no one really talks about it, it might start to change now, like I see, people are like opening up, and also some ADHD coaches are coming to Germany. But it's very slow.

 Katy Weber 22:08

Yeah, yeah. Well, it feels like, everything feels really slow, right? When you have ADHD, because it just feels like, right, like, it feels like so many of us are finding out this information on our own and sort of identifying and saying, Oh, my goodness, I really think I have ADHD. Now what? And then you're kind of left with this, like, oh, well, you could wait three years further for an official diagnosis. You're like, Okay, what do I do in the meantime?

 Dr. Janina Elbert 22:32


Yeah, exactly.

 Katy Weber 22:34

So what do you do have a lot of clients who are in that kind of waiting mode or who haven't been officially diagnosed, because that's the other thing too, which I'm like, it's hard to have an official diagnosis, like we were saying, like, can be so validating, in terms of the chronic self doubt that we have around the, is this ADHD? Or is this just, you know, laziness, but at the same time, like, I would never say to somebody, you know, wait until you get your official diagnosis before you do anything. So what do you kind of advise clients who aren't officially diagnosed? How to get over that, that idea of that self doubt,

 Dr. Janina Elbert 23:15

I would say that actually, most of my clients are diagnosed with ADHD or some messaged me, and asked for like coaching and say that they want to wait until their official diagnosis. I always say that we can start like coaching anytime, because it doesn't really matter if it says it basically on the paper or not. It's more about how they feel and what they want to work on, if they struggle with executive functioning or not. So I would say, you definitely do not need the official diagnosis. But for certain people, it may be the thing that they need to just feel validated.

 Katy Weber 24:03

Yeah, definitely. That's certainly how it worked. For me. I feel like it was incredibly validating.

But I also feel like it was not really in terms of my own journey. It was just such a tiny blip in terms of like all of how, you know, the constant hyper focusing and rabbit holes and research and self learning that I've journey that I've gone on.

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Dr. Janina Elbert 24:26

Yeah, totally. For the people that reach out to me for coaching, they've started thinking actually about getting coaching and changing them something only after the diagnosis, because before that's the feeling that I get that most people think they can't really change something that they are maybe just lazy and that's how they are. And they don't really realize that they could already worked on it without the diagnosis. So I feel like if you get the diagnosis, that's kind of the turning point for a lot of people that they realize, oh, I can actually work on this, and maybe change some things around, find my strengths, and maybe work on my weaknesses or get help for my weaknesses.



Katy Weber 25:21

That's what I'm going through with my teenage daughter right now, because both of my kids were diagnosed over the summer. And I have an 11 year old and a 15 year old. And so she's sort of like at that stage where she's like, Mom, I don't have to clean my room, I have ADHD. And I'm like, you know, where we have that conversation? A lot of like, ADHD is an explanation. It's not an excuse. So let's talk about the pros and cons of having a messy room versus a clean room? And how does it feel like how is this going to affect your studying and all of that stuff where there is a part of me that's like, it's not that big of a deal, like realizing how much we have to analyze, you know, the benefits of things with ADHD and like, how you know, where you really have to be like, okay, so yeah, your ADHD is probably why you have a difficulty cleaning your room. So that's really it fascinating to know that that's a y, and that you are not just a lazy person who doesn't feel like it. So that's always really fascinating. But then we have to get to the next stage, which is, do I want my room clean? Why or why not? Who is it gonna benefit? What does it involve? And then all of that. So yeah, I'm actually looking into getting her both my kids executive functioning coaches in the fall, to work with those struggle, you know, all of the important structures and stuff that they're going to need. And like, you know, these things that I feel like, we aren't taught, why are we not taught these things in school? Like why? I, that's my big question with executive functioning, which is like, why do they teach like home EQ, and baking, but they don't teach basic things like how to create a study schedule, or like how to write an email, or, or like conversational skills, or you know, a lot of these like social skills that my kids are not just inherently getting, right. Like, I'm like you, you know, coming up with the benefits, I think of why we need certain structures in our life, I think it's something that like a lot of kids don't just get, or at least neurodivergent kids might not get, or we really have to kind of break down. So actually, let's, since we're on the topic, like, what's involved in executive function coaching,

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Dr. Janina Elbert 27:29

for example, now trying to find an example. If someone has like problems with always finding their key, we look into why are they losing the key? What can we change around for them to find the key again, like putting the key, right? Maybe leaving it hanging on the doorknob or

having like a box right in front of the door? So just really looking at the problem and seeing what solutions would suit them?



Katy Weber 28:07

Right. Yeah, that's a great point. I think that was something that was really important for me in my own journey was that idea that, like, there's going to be things that work for other people, and they're not going to work for me. And that's okay. It just takes a little bit of extra work to realize that I have to figure out what works for me and not just be like, I can't do that. That's not something I can do. So I'm just not going to do that. Exactly. But to actually get to the point where I'm like, No, there's probably a system out there that is going to work for me, and maybe it's not going to work forever. Maybe it's only going to work for a couple of weeks. But you know, it still feels like it to put a fine point on it. Like it feels like that's a better approach for me specifically, then, like, you know, when everybody's like, Oh, you know, what you have to do is you have to use a bullet journal. And I'm like, Well, I don't know, bullet journaling works for some people, but I tried it and it doesn't work for me is so you know, I think our instinct when things don't work for us is immediately be like, Well, what's wrong with me? Everybody else seems to be able to bullet journal. And I'm like, I feel like that mentality is more prevalent with people who are divergent that idea that like, it's working for everybody else, why is it not working for me? What's wrong with me that it's not working for me, right? Like I always use the example of left handed scissors for everybody else here, where you're like, if you're left handed, and you're trying to use right handed scissors, and they work for everybody else, and you're like, what's wrong? Everybody else seems to be cutting fine. Why can't I cut what's wrong with me that I can't use the scissors and everyone else is like, well, it's I don't know what's wrong, like, just try harder. Right? And you're just like, No, I just needed the right scissors. And so that's the example I always use. But I think also I'm, I'm curious, like, why are we more likely to go to that place of like, there's something wrong with me that this works for everybody else? Why don't we just say, you know, I must be left handed scissors, right. Do you have a theory on why why people who are neurodivergent might I think that way more,



Dr. Janina Elbert 30:03


I feel like for neurotypicals, it's still the more acceptable way how they do things like in school, it's taught that way, basically. So I feel like most of us were told from a very young age that things should be done a certain way. And everything out of this isn't normal and shouldn't be done that way. So we kind of internalize that. And now we're always like, oh, I need to do that way that I was taught. But in theory, or practice, it actually doesn't work that way for us. So I would just really hope that in the future, this would change around a bit more that it is acceptable to do things differently, and still reach like the same goal. But maybe we just want to do things differently that work better for us.




Katy Weber 31:02

Yeah. It seems like such a simple concept in retrospect, right? Where I'm like, Why did I spend so much of my life thinking there was something wrong with me because something didn't work for me, as opposed to just immediately thinking, well, it doesn't work for me, like, keep looking.


And I think maybe there are certain people who do immediately feel that way. But for the vast majority of us, I think we spend our life like you said, like thinking, if it's working for everybody else, I just have to keep trying harder. At some point, it's going to start working for me.

 Dr. Janina Elbert 31:32

Mm hmm. Exactly. Or if it's not working, then something must be wrong with us.

 Katy Weber 31:40

When I was diagnosed with ADHD, it completely turned my world upside down. I looked back at so much of my life, my grades and school, my multiple careers and hobbies, my friendships, my marriage, motherhood, my relationship with food, and my body, like all of this with a new lens. And it was overwhelming to say the least, if you've been diagnosed with ADHD, and you're feeling blown away by this new insight into your brain and how it operates, I totally understand I can help you begin to sort through this chaos, explore who you are and how your brain operates. So you can finally start to lean into your strengths and begin to use them to your advantage moving forward. Together, we can work to identify what obstacles you've been facing, and create strategies to help you start living a more fulfilling, gratifying life, head over to women in adhd.com/coaching, to book a 30 minute initial consult with me. So we can figure out if my brand of one on one coaching is right for you. Again, that's women and adhd.com/coaching. And you can find that link in the episode show notes. So what would you say you love most about your ADHD since your diagnosis?

 Dr. Janina Elbert 32:52

I would say, my creativity and that I'm not afraid of change. I feel like these are definitely the two things I really love about my ADHD. And that I also see that many like neurotypicals might struggle with. So that's something where I'm like, Oh, this is something positive that ADHD is bringing to my life. And it's not just the negatives.

 Katy Weber 33:24

Yeah, you know, I posted something the other day about how when you have ADHD, we don't have hobbies, we start businesses. And that's something I kind of have learned to love about myself, right? Like, I used to think I was such a failure, because I would always start a new business and it would never go anywhere. And then I would start a different business. And I was like, had this sad drawer of business cards from like, past failed businesses. And I always looked at it as such this like terrible, shameful negative thing about myself. And now I'm kind of like, Look at this. Yes, they never went anywhere. But they brought me to where I am today. And they've taught me all of these random skills that I love. And like, I feel like it's like, I look at it so differently now. And it was interesting to see the responses to the post. Some people were like, Yes, isn't it sort of funny how we start all these businesses and we can't help ourselves. But then other people who were had like real, it was a real pain point where they were like, you know, I've spent all this money and it's never gone anywhere, or you know, I've I've really tried but just never seems to get past a certain point where that, you know, you could feel like, there

was a lot of sadness and disappointment involved, you know, with this idea, and I'm like, it's so interesting how our view can shift so much in terms of like who we are in these situations based on the diagnosis.

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Dr. Janina Elbert 34:40

Definitely. And I also feel like our own opinion on that might also change throughout life where, depending on what situation we're in right now. I feel like for me, like reflecting back at my own life and looking at certain Some projects I started or things I studied. Sometimes I'm like, Yes, this was very valuable to me. And this has brought me actually to where I am right now. Or some, like, maybe certain times in my life, I was like, Well, this was such a waste of time. Okay, could have done something else differently?



Katy Weber 35:22

Yeah. Oh, yeah, I think especially about salary to where, like, if I had stayed at a job, you know, for, for decades, or, you know, I think that's one thing, or, you know, we tend to, because we tend to flit around and leave jobs, we can not make as much money. I remember seeing that in the psychology textbook, that of the course I took this summer where it was like, one of the life problems of people with ADHD is chronically lower salaries. And I'm like, yeah, that fits. You know, because I'm like, I don't stay anywhere, anywhere long enough. So yes, it I think it absolutely depends on where you are in your, you know, in the ebb and flow of the roller coaster of ADHD, where you are in your life at that point, whether it's positive or negative. And that's something I love to talk about on the podcast, too, which is like, is this a disorder? Is this a superpower? Like it feels very complicated and nuanced? If you could rename HD to something that's less confusing, would you call it something else?

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Dr. Janina Elbert 36:25

I feel like attention deficit disorders, definitely not the right word. Because we don't have a deficit and attention, right. So maybe attention regulating disturbance, because I don't like the word disorder, because it puts such a negative image on ADHD, I guess. So maybe, yeah, attention regulating disturbance, because it's hard for us to like regulate where we put our attention.



Katy Weber 36:58

Right, disturb it. That's a new one. I've heard people I've heard guests call it syndrome instead of disorder, because of the fact that we're like, Is this really a disorder, but I also really respect when, when guests want to keep the disorder part because it's sort of it gives it a gravitas, right, like it gives it a sense that you'll actually be able to seek help and have accommodations and some of that, you know, if we're only calling it a superpower, then we aren't going to get the proper channels of help that some people who are who might actually be in a situation where they're really struggling really need. So I get it. I don't know, like, I feel very uncomfortable calling this a disorder, because I'm like, is this a disorder, it's just seems like

we've got these weird, wonderful braids. But I also really appreciate when I'm diagnosed with a disorder when it comes to like seeking accommodations for time and a half in school and all of that.



Dr. Janina Elbert 37:51

I feel like, it definitely is something on the spectrum of like syndrome disorder. But what I love is when people from there find their superpowers, I'm not sure if I would personally call ADHD, my superpower, but certain strength or certain ideas I get from, like, my creative brain is definitely a superpower.



Katy Weber 38:21

Yeah, and I really liked the wording on your website to where you talk about working with your brain instead of against it. And I have that same idea, right, which is like this is really about learning what works for you and and figuring out how to work with that and get the best outcome instead of always trying to kind of swim upstream and force the square peg into the round hole. So and you know, with ADHD empowerment coaching really is a great term. So now with your coaching practice, you work with English and German speaking clients, right? And do is there do you find there's a difference between the two in terms of like other other that's such a stereotype? But like, is there obvious differences between English speaking and German speaking clients in terms of their thoughts around what even is ADHD?



Dr. Janina Elbert 39:09

I'm not necessarily I would say for me personally, because just German is my native language. It has a certain difference, because I feel like I can just express myself better and express myself better with my clients. But on how every one of those views ADHD, I would say it's very similar. It's actually sometimes pretty funny. Like how similar everyone's stories are like I work mainly with women. And I feel like most of them went through very, very similar experiences, even though they live like on totally different continents, which is crazy.




Katy Weber 39:59

Yeah, I mean, And I find that with interviewing guests Sue, I'm always fascinated, you know, to talk to people from different countries, I grew up in Canada. And so Canada in the US as much as we, I'd like to say they're very, I mean, in many ways, they're very different countries, but at the same time, I feel like, it's not as different as if you were speaking a different language. But like, I feel, yeah, it is. It's always amazing to me how similar our stories are in terms of our childhood and kind of what were the signs that nobody saw, or nobody knew. And, you know, this whole journey of self realization is so similar. But I also noticed that like, the women who I'm speaking with, or reaching out to, or predominantly from Western Europe, or Australia, and you know, it's like, there's vast, you know, I find that even though I have listeners, in a lot of countries in Asia, I very rarely have anybody reaching out to me on the podcast, who's willing to speak openly about it, it's just not something they feel comfortable speaking openly about, in terms of like, the shame around, you know, the diagnosis itself. And I think there are so


many different cultures that are so far behind. I don't even I don't even know if it's behind. But it's just a very, very, it's just viewed so differently in terms of being open about it. Or here. I feel like it's viewed as this, like, quirky characteristic that never occurred to me to be ashamed of it until I started being open about it, and then realized I was like, Oh, right. Okay. Like I, it just never occurred to me that if I was open about my ADHD, people were going to react differently to me. And until they did, and then I was like, oh, yeah, that was really short sighted on my part to like, just like, you know, let my freak flag fly. But I, I can't live my life any other way. So here we are. But But yeah, anyway, what was my point? I think my point was the fact that, you know, it's, it's fascinating to me that there's definitely like, the same handful of countries where women are able to even speak openly about this journey. Definitely. Even though I think people are listening to this podcast in every continent at every country, almost I don't know if it's everyone, but a lot where I'm like, Oh, that's okay. Cool. You go. Yeah.

 Dr. Janina Elbert 42:16


It's just always crazy to think about Bill. So very, very cool. That you have like such a wide audience like, that makes social media, I guess, very, very neat thing, that you can just build such a wide community from all these different countries and get everyone's perspective, that's just always so interesting to me.

 Katy Weber 42:41

Right? Especially since I wholeheartedly believe that like finding each other and having these conversations with each other is so healing when you have ADHD, right, so much of this neuro divergence is like the loneliness and the shame and how we desperately need to have these conversations with each other to realize we're not the only ones who are feeling this way. And when we're not alone, and there's nothing wrong with us. Like it's finding each other as has been so profoundly life changing. And I think such an important part of this journey that I'm always like, you know, I want, I want all these cool women to meet each other.

 Dr. Janina Elbert 43:15

And like, that's the reason why I created my Instagram because I just wanted to connect people who also have ADHD, because I didn't know anyone at that time. And like my circle, who has ADHD and who I could talk to about, like, all these symptoms and my struggles and why I'm doing certain things. And it's just so amazing that there's so many people out there who are also willing to share their stories and who you can connect to and like reach out to I think that's, that's what I definitely love about the like, the Instagram profile that I created and the connection and the community.

 Katy Weber 44:04

Yeah, okay, so where can people find you on Instagram?

 Dr. Janina Elbert 44:09



Dr. Janina Elbert 44:23

On Instagram? It's ADHD empowerment coaching. Is it all one word or their fellow? It's like ADHD, empowerment, coaching, and then the CO what is it called the underlines? Underscore? Yeah.



Katy Weber 44:24

I'll have a link to it in the show notes and your website too, which is ADHD empowerment coaching. Right.



Dr. Janina Elbert 44:30

Exactly. It's also ADHD empowerment coaching.



Katy Weber 44:34

Awesome. Okay. So now you recently moved to the States to the East Coast. What prompted your move?



Dr. Janina Elbert 44:41

Like I was born in the US, actually. And then we moved back to Germany for school. And then for high school, I went again, back to the US for a year, and then back to Germany. And now it's like, Oh, I really want to like live in the States again. I'm just for a couple of years. And then let's see. And then my boyfriend also got the opportunity here to study here and play soccer. So it's like the perfect opportunity to move together. And now we're here and getting used to the different culture.



Katy Weber 45:19

All right. I've been living here 20 years, and I was still getting used to the chair. I don't know if I ever Well, well, that's wonderful. And hopefully it's, you know, like I, as we said, before I started recording I was like this country's a dumpster fire right now. So I don't know. But I guess you have a different perspective. There's lots of things to love about living here. I'm, I shouldn't be such a downer. But that's awesome. And it's great when you have an online coaching, right? It's like you can kind of bring your business with you wherever you end up. So definitely, it's pretty neat. Yeah, wonderful. Okay, so people would like to work with you that what's the best way to reach out to you



Dr. Janina Elbert 45:56

either on Instagram, or like on Instagram, there's also a link to my website and also to my email, and either they can message me on my website or my Gmail and my Gmail is also ADHD empowerment. coaching@gmail.com.



Katy Weber 46:15

Wow, wonderful. It was so great to sit down and chat with you and hear your story. Thank you Janina.



Dr. Janina Elbert 46:20

Yeah, it's such a great time talking to you. Thank you.



Katy Weber 46:29

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 reach more women who may be 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