

# Lindsay Fleming: ADHD & the TikTok generation

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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## SPEAKERS

Katy Weber, Lindsay Fleming



Katy Weber 00:00

Yeah, I have, gosh, I have so many questions. It's been just a whirlwind year for you. I can't even imagine it's dizzying for me to even think about all the things. As I was sort of doing my homework and looking you up online and look at, you know, I've seen your videos since I was diagnosed. You know, I, the first one of the first things I did when I was diagnosed was gone to tick tock. And so yeah, we'll get to all that. But first, let me just ask you kind of how long ago you were diagnosed with ADHD? And when that was and kind of what led you up to thinking you even had ADHD in the first place?



Lindsay Fleming 00:41

Yeah, so I'll start by practicing it with I'm dyslexic. And so throughout my whole education life, I had always been receiving accommodations. And I think that that might have been part of, I'd like to think that that might have been masking some of my ADHD in the sense that anytime I struggled in class, they always assumed it was because of the dyslexia. So I really chalked it up to Okay, I know I'm anxious and they know I have this learning disability when I got to grad school. So I was like, 2322 23, I was sitting in class, and we had to do a diagnosing activity. In my best friend in grad school, obviously, we spent a lot of time together, our courses were three hours long. So for some of the ad, HD, sitting in a lecture, for three hours long is really hard. In my grad school friend, you know, we're going

back and forth, and we're learning about ADHD. And she said, you know, let me ask you these questions, I want you to answer them honestly, like, let's not do the project that we're supposed to be doing. And instead, let's play therapist. And let me ask you some of these questions. So I was like, Okay, I'm gonna answer them, honestly. And it was like every checkbox, and she's like, Lindsay, this, this is describing you. And like, nananananana, like, I already I already know, I'm anxious. And I'm dyslexic. Like, I don't have ADHD. She's like this, this is you. And so as we started going through the questions, and like, Oh, my gosh, this, this is me. And then I went and got a formal diagnosis. They were like, you definitely have ADHD. And I got put on medication. And I was going to therapy. And it was remarkable the difference. So I was I went from having a 3.3 GPA in college 3.8 in grad school. And so that really was a life changing understanding of how my brain works and how it gets so frustrated and blamed myself. For some, like changing my I explained it, like I had my capstone, which is the huge, huge paper write for grad school, you need to pass it in order to move on to the next year. And I changed my topic at midnight before it's due. And this is a 15 page research paper. So like, I knew these behaviors were occurring. And I'm like, no one else does this, but me, but I struggled to understand it. So grad school when I was training to be a therapist was when I realized I had ADHD.



Katy Weber 03:03

Wow. It's funny how, like, there are certain things that I think about, like changing your thesis topic at midnight, the day was worse born, or the day before it's due. And then thinking, like, doesn't everybody do this? You know, like, I sort of go back and forth between feeling like, weight all of these things that I attribute to ADHD, like, doesn't everybody do this? This is how everybody operates, and then swinging, you know, wildly to the other end, which is, Oh, my God, I can't believe I'm struggling alone. Like, I can't believe this explains so many things that I never was able to put a finger on. And



03:40

yeah, and that's when we talk about understanding of mental illness and thinking of everybody worries, right. But some people have anxiety disorder, everybody struggles with regulation, whether it's being able to stay on task or gets distracted, or doesn't feel motivated, but it's the degree that it's impacting you and the amount of different behaviors coming together. So it's not one thing one time and I think people have a really hard time understanding, where's that line? And that's when that's why we have professionals who understand that I hear a lot of people contribute either saying, like, everybody thinks that they have anxiety, or everybody thinks they have ADHD, or on the

other side, where it's like, nobody has it's this thing, like so I hear so many opinions being thrown out. And I think it really when I break it down, it's a lack of understanding of what makes a diagnosis or what makes Oh, these are some behaviors I have.



Katy Weber 04:32

Yeah, it is such an interesting puzzle. And I feel like I I certainly relate, I spent a lot of mental energy thinking about like, how much am I struggling like, why isn't there a you know, a more like concrete way that you can you can measure these things because again, it's sort of like I don't know and then even with depression and anxiety, it was always a sense of like, how how, how depressed Am I is As medication working, would I be worse off? If it wasn't? If I wasn't on it? Do I need more? Like, there's just so many variables and so many questions, right. And I think I was listening to your hay lens podcast. And there was, I can't remember which guests you were interviewing. But I loved when you were talking about that concept of, of like, feeling like you need to be really in a bad state like that you need to be like broken before you go to therapy and how we really need to like, D stigmatize therapy to such a degree where you know that there's not the sense of like, Oh, I'm not struggling enough for me to actually go to therapy like, but you have to get to a certain point of crisis before you actually seek help. And like, that has certainly helped me. I think ADHD, the diagnosis really helped me realize that like, help is not a bad thing. Like, why did I even spend so much time thinking it was a bad thing? Like, why did we put so much pressure on ourselves to do things alone? Like, help is amazing.



06:01

That's where I go back to this. Really? What's our culture for young kids? And the comparison aspect, even when I think about grades, it's always comparing yourself, it's always How do I measure up to my peers? And I really think we need to change that into more of we all need help, sometimes here's my strengths. How can I help other people who don't have this string? And here's some places where I need help and becoming more of a supportive space instead of always competing with each other. And that's what I see a lot and talking to about this idea of Am I struggling enough? So many kids in my office saying, Oh my gosh, Lindsey, you could be helping, like so many more people, like I don't know why you see me for an hour every week. It's like, Oh, so I'm supposed to wait in this what I was saying on my podcast, I'm supposed to wait until you're in crisis in order to help you that doesn't seem very fair. I'd much rather someone come in early and be like, I don't know, if I'm struggling. I don't know what's going on and give them a few skills. And they're able to adapt those in. I don't want anyone suffering more than they need to. So same thing with parents, sometimes parents will. And this is where I struggled to because the

access to to care, right? So if the hospital works at Chicago, there's a two year waiting list for outpatient therapy. So by the time a parent is like, okay, I've noticed this in my child, they need support, then they call trying to get their child support to two year waitlist, that kid is now struggling two more years before they can see a therapist. So we're really looking then seeing a lot of kids coming in through the ER through the inpatient unit, because they weren't able to receive that support, even when parents are advocating and trying to get them that support.



Katy Weber 07:46

Yeah. And then you wonder why we have this sense that it must be crisis. Yeah, you know, I actually grew up in Canada. And so I, you know, started seeing a psychiatrist in university and had always been seeing, you know, had always been in therapy of some form and then moved to the US. And when I was 26. And again, like therapy was just sort of one of those things that because I never had to pay for it was just like getting your haircut like it was just like it was it was up there in terms of priorities, and it always has been, but you're right, like when you talk about how cost prohibitive it is here. Then, you know, of course, it makes sense that for this next generation of kids that we have things like podcasts and tick tock and social media and that we can you know, I love I love how pragmatic you are about social media, especially for kids. I have a 14 year old and so and you know, and she loves Reddit, and I love Reddit and you know, people, every once a while people are like, oh, Reddit is such a terrible place. How can you let your 14 year old on there and I'm like, Reddit is just like a microcosm of the world. You know, I'm like, that's like saying, how can you let your 14 year old on the internet? Like, yeah, a lot of terrible things exist on Reddit, a lot of amazing things exist. Thankfully, she spends most of her time on like our slash cats. But I also feel like there has to be conversation, there has to be hand holding and all of that stuff. So



09:11

that's exactly what I think we need to change as well. You know, we look at how, at least in the US, we talked a lot. And I remember I was an anxious teen, right. So I remember in my addictions course, my teacher said, you know, we talked about fear tactics, and do they work in a lot of what we did with drugs or drugs are bad. And if you do it that your life's over, right. And with teens, that's our approach. Oftentimes, like if you do this thing, if you do this thing, you're going to think your life is gonna be over. And they said to the class, raise your hand if that works. Like if that made you not want to do drugs. I was the only one who knows their hand. And like, then that's my bias, right? Because I was an anxious kid. So I'm like, oh, if this is gonna ruin my life, I can't do this, where everyone else

is like, No, I'm like, Oh my goodness. So and she said exactly at work. On the most vulnerable, anxious kids sometimes, but the majority that we want to do, where we see really benefit is this responsibility aspect of giving kids facts. Because as soon as you say, you know, those commercials that used to be out in the US, there'd be this person who smoked marijuana, and then they'd be like, flat, and, oh, they're not the same anymore. As soon as the kids see someone who smokes, they're gonna be like, that's not what they taught me. So there goes, your accountability, your credibility for everything. So really taking responsibility aspect and things with teens, and especially the internet. I hear so many people saying how, oh, it's the phone, it's the phone, it's the phone for their kids, which doesn't play a role. Absolutely. But it's about having a conversation with your kids and teaching them how to use their phone in a way that's most beneficial for them and not using fear tactics of if you keep being on your phone, or if your grades drop, you're getting your phone taken away. Because what happens is I have teens who experience something online, whether it's bullying someone and adults, like messaging them and appropriately, or they see something that scares them, and they're too scared to tell their parents, because they're scared, oh, I'm gonna get the app taken away. So again, I really feel like a responsibility aspect is super important in having open dialogue and conversations with your kids around everything. Social media, alcohol, everything can be a lot more beneficial for your your children and teaching them problem solving skills.



Katy Weber 11:30

Yeah, oh my god, it's such a fine line. I mean, I remember like, when I had my first cat, she always went on the kitchen counters. And so I used a spray bottle to get her off the kitchen counters. And then I would like as I would walk into the kitchen, I would hear my cat jumping off the kitchen counter. And I was like, I haven't trained her to not be on the kitchen counter. I've just trained her to hide from me the fact that she's on the kitchen counter. And so I've like that. I feel like I think of that analogy a lot. When I think of like talking openly with my daughter about the you know, I'm like, the last thing I ever want her to do is to feel like she was gonna disappoint me. So she should hide things for me, because it's exactly the relationship I had with my parents, right. And I didn't tell them anything.



12:11

And when we talk about ADHD to like teens with ADHD, we're taking kids whose brains are already more impulsive and struggle with you know, thinking before we act, and instead of gaining skills, were just saying, Oh, you can't do this and not helping them problem solving and develop the skills that they're really struggling with.



Katy Weber 12:33

Right. Yeah. And, and, you know, I think that's a conversation. My husband and I have a lot with my son, because, you know, most women my age, I'm 46, most women my age who were diagnosed with ADHD end up coming through their kids, right? Like their kids were diagnosed, and then they start to look it up. And they're like, wait a minute, this was my childhood, too. Right? What I didn't have that experience. I had it through my therapist, my therapist was diagnosed through her son, but then she started to recognize a lot of my qualities, and was sort of gently nudging me for a couple years, like I think you have ADHD. And I was always like, all right, I didn't know what to do with that information. I'm like, I'm not hyper. And I didn't like No, it didn't mean anything to me until the pandemic when I just like imploded. Because my kids were home, my husband was home, I had no housekeeper anymore. I couldn't do my business. Like, everything just imploded. And so, like you said, like, there's ways in which you can kind of know about what ADHD is, but it doesn't like personally hit you in the in that meaningful way until something triggers it. And I, what was I talking about? Oh, yeah, the stigma of the stigma of ADHD, which is just like, I've never occurred to me to hide it from anybody or my family. And it never occurred to me to not talk openly about it. Because for me, it was such a revelation. Like you said, like, I was like, oh, my goodness, this explains so much. This is the best thing that's ever happened to me, suddenly, you know, I'm like, I'm, I'm basically like that book. That's like, you mean, I'm not crazy and lazy and all those things like this, it felt like the best thing that ever happened to me this diagnosis, and so I'm very open about it, whereas my husband was sort of like, maybe you should not talk about it around the kids. And, and so I saw through his eyes how there is that stigma, and I obviously I've seen it more and more, especially when it comes to young people who are worried about like, not being employable, you know, and like all of these ways in which they can't be open. They don't have the privilege to just sort of be open about their diagnosis. And so it's a conversation we have a lot which is like, how do you present how do you how do you educate and present ADHD for somebody who is you know, a kid and you have to worry About how that stigma is going to affect them in school. Yeah. And how they think of themselves because I like Do you ever one Do you ever think back like, had you known about your ADHD? When you were younger? Would it have affected things you would like? Would you even have gone for a master's degree? You know what I mean? Like, there's often that way in which we can kind of self edit,



15:20

you know? Yeah. And that's where I think the school support comes in. In parental, obviously, parental support, I always think of where can you make the most impact. And I was very fortunate that my parents grades was not their priority at all. And I felt that in

my mom, she's so funny. I got a C in a class. And I was like, devastated because I tried so hard, like one of my elementary school teachers is like, I feel bad giving her a B or a bad grade because of how much she tries. But I'm still only an AV student, like, it's, you know, that's frustrating. Because I'm putting in all this effort, I'm watching my peers put in half the effort and get better grades than me. And one time, I got a C in a class and run a big test, and my mom is like, walked in the room, and I was so mad at myself, and she's like, must be the teacher and walked away as like, Mom. So she really like empowered me to not take grades is seriously and focus on my effort. And then the school system actually approached my mom and parents, and said, you know, we think Lindsay has a learning disability, we want to get her tested in kindergarten. So I had support from five years old. throughout high school, every year, twice a year, they'd have a meeting with my teachers, I had accommodations, and I think about how much that helped me. And that made me feel very capable. Where I now worked, I worked in the city of Chicago, and we hear stories of parents sharing with me that the school is like, are you sure you want this on their record? Are you sure that this is going to impact them getting into college, and that's just not true. And so we're seeing some times the stigma, whether it's from parents or actual schools, whether they're not able to support all their students, or sometimes saying things that I'm just like, Hmm, let's think about this. And I think that can really make or break a kid in their competence, because I know like taking my tests outside of the classroom to have more time, so I could focus. It was really hard. Peer wise, everyone's like, Where you going? What are you doing, explaining that? So I think if I were to get back to your question, if I knew that I had ADHD growing up, I think because I was already informative, my being dyslexic and had that support, I think it would have been nice for me to know, but I know a lot of other people's experiences would be really different.



Katy Weber 17:45

Yeah, I'm not sure. I mean, I definitely felt like my parents didn't pressure me to get good grades. And I definitely did not. But I had two older brothers who got stellar grades. And so I was just more of a confusing element to my parents, which was sort of like, what happened to you. And I remember like, always feeling like I had an undiagnosed learning disorder and didn't really understand because, like many women, I was told, like, you have all this potential, why aren't you know, why are you failing your tests? And I sort of felt like, well, what is this potential? Why are you seeing it? I don't know what why is there all this pressure? I can't, like, I don't know what I'm supposed to do. And, and so then my mother would always just be like, well, that's okay. Not everybody gets good grades, or like, that's okay. College isn't for everybody. And, and now looking back, I see, like how damaging those labels were, to my sense of intelligence, you know, and I think that that's such a common experience with people who are undiagnosed ADHD, which is like, I know, I'm not dumb, like, I know, I'm bright. I just can't show it in the ways in which it needs to be shown.

And so like you said, I think it's so important to really focus on the fact that like, you're not the problem. The way the arena in which you need to show your intelligence is not a fit for a good fit for you. So like, so the problem is not you The problem is the system.



19:09

Exactly. And that and what you're speaking of is a lot of people's experiences have this idea. You need to do this, what is going on with you? Why are you able to complete your homework? Why? Why are you able to do X, Y and Z? And that is putting all of the responsibility on the child and we don't know how our brain works and that's where I do see a lot of why Why are you doing this? I teachers trying to be supportive for kids, but it's the lack of education around we don't they don't know why they're doing this and when you keep asking them kids will come up with an a reason because they think they need one and a lot of times it's self blame, like I don't know, I guess I'm just lazy or I don't know. I guess I just not that smart. Instead of saying, helping them recognize Oh, My processing speed is slow. So it's gonna take me a couple times to read this. Oh, my memory isn't the best. So I'm gonna have to think of different ways to work on things that I need to memorize. Oh, I'm not good at timed tests. Okay, how can I work on this? So instead of really honing in on what's the skill, and how does your brain work differently, and here's your strengths. And this is what you're really good at, like with people with ADHD and big picture thinking and coming, being creative and coming up with ideas. And instead, it's just focusing in on how come you can't fit in this box? And how do we get you to fit in this box? And you need to figure out how to fit in this box, right?



Katy Weber 20:35

Which really answers that question I had earlier, which was like, why do we have such a hard time asking for help? Because wise, yeah, to figure this out, just do it. Just do that. So So how was your parents reaction? Because you have siblings too. Right? So how was your parents reaction? And do you have siblings with ADHD? And



21:10

yes, they do have a sibling with ADHD and my parents reactions. Put my mom on blast a little bit love. My mom likes most supportive person ever. But when I was going through grants was like, Mom, I really think of ADHD. She's like, you always think there's something wrong with you. I know. That's because there is, too. Oh, my gosh, like, everybody has anxiety or families, like you think there's always something wrong with everyone. And it's like, because it's genetic. And our family is so anxious. So my parents, though, are very

supportive. They, I told them that I had ADHD, they had some questions and just trying to understand it more. And they're like, oh, that kind of makes sense. Now that I talked to them about it, then they had all these moments as I educated them more on what ADHD is. And I'm like, you know, now that you say that, in school, your teachers would be like, Lindsay does not stop talking. And my dad would say, move receipt, and they'd say, it doesn't matter where we put her, she will talk to someone at a wall and she will find something to talk about. So there were these these behaviors. But I think because of my people pleasing and my anxiety, I really tried so hard that I don't think people recognize how much I was suffering and how much I was struggling even myself, right, because I'm comparing myself to what other people are putting out there. So my parents were very supportive. And they didn't love the idea of medication, which I think a lot of parents get stuck there. And I just talked to them about it more inside, you know, this is something I need just like if it's if I had asthma, I need an inhaler. It's something that will help me Can I try to get stuff done without it? Yes. Will it be like debilitating and hard and draining? Yes. So if there's something I can take, and now they're very like, onboard about it and trust that I'm best for my health, but I do hear that a lot from parents. There's a fear of, of medication for children, for teens, and adults.



Katy Weber 23:20

I know and it is understandable. I mean, I really like how Halliwell talks about it's like squinting, you know, if you need glasses, like you can squint, sure. Or you know, or you can like if you need glasses to drive, you could not drive but like, you know, at the same time, like why wouldn't you get glasses, and I totally see that side of it. And I certainly have been on my my share of lots of antidepressant medications over the years and was very quick to try medication when I was first diagnosed. But I also sort of see the side to medication, which is just like, there's so more questions than answers. Sometimes when it comes especially to psychotropic medication, which was like what I was talking about before, which is like, Is this working? Is this the right dosage? Do I need it? Oh, my God, has it been a month already? I need to, I need to get a new prescription. Like there's so many hurdles and so many questions that sometimes it's just easier to not be on it. You know what I mean? And so that's when I think it really the emphasis needs to be on like, what other help do you have? What is what lifestyle are, you know, and I feel like that's where the medical system really fails us, which is like people get a diagnosis. And then and then they're like, now what? And the doctor says, Here's your prescription, and then you leave and that's it. That's all you get. Everything else is basically research and you're self taught or like if you know if you're in a position where you can go down these rabbit holes, which usually with ADHD, that's where we spent a lot of time down, right?



24:48

We're learning but rapidly and I get very frustrated. Even like, I had, I get some kids who come in and parents will be like, we've gone to seven specialists, stomach specialist for stomach aches for 11 year old, not one of the specialist said maybe this is anxiety. So again, I do He will send you to another specialist, try this medication and try this. And I'm like this is anxiety. And when you treat the anxiety summit geeks went away. And so with ADHD as well, I do see so many people who I'll be like, Oh, I have ADHD, like I take medication. I'm like, Oh, that's great. I'm like, I love my therapy, like therapy has been so helpful. Like, oh, I've never done that. I don't think that's for me. And I sit there and like, if we know that the research tells us the best form of to get the best outcome would be combined therapy and medication, it is confusing to me how we are in a place where that's not the first recommendation of Okay, let's get you a therapist. And we'll have a group discussion of what we think is the best treatment for you and come up with a treatment plan. I've even had a doctor tell a parent, why don't you ask your therapist me what medication they think they should be on in the dosage. And I sat there, I'm like, I am not a medical professional. I don't know, this is not my realm of the world. And it was so inappropriate. And the parent was like, oh, like, Oh, you don't want you? I thought you would know. And so too, sometimes I worry of like when people are getting medication from their normal doctor, their pediatrician, I just sometimes I make sure I'm like, let's, let's see a psychiatrist. Let's see someone who specializes in these psych medications. And then there's some features into are amazing. And I love working with them. And they do such a good job. But again, it's just this lack of, I don't think because of the stigma. A lot of people know this, the system and what their options are. So you see people just blindly believing whoever they go to, instead of saying like, this doesn't feel right, or I don't think, is there more that I could like you said, we're doing self education instead of someone sitting there being like, you have ADHD. Here's, this is the type of therapy that works best for ADHD. This is the medication options if you feel like your symptoms are impacting you daily, and the skills you do aren't working. And it's too hard. Like we need more. And so I think having more of this collaborative approach is super important for the best care for our clients.



Katy Weber 27:30

The No, yeah, and I guess it also goes back to that idea of like, how this belief that like, I'm not broken enough for therapy, you know, or even like couples therapy, you know, a couple words like we have to be on the brink of divorce before we go to couples therapy and you're like, no, yeah. Okay, so let's talk about this last year. And, you know, no big deal, whatever, pandemic. But it's been a crazy year for you. So you joined Tick Tock in March of 2020. Right. Yes. So



28:25

last year in March, so a year ago, so that would be that'd be 2019 2020.



Katy Weber 28:32

At the beginning of the pandemic. Yeah, yeah. Yeah. 2020. I know. Right. And you were so you were your your you specialize in counseling children and teens. So. So like, you went from seeing people in person, I guess, to seeing people over zoom. And, and then what? What led to you to be like, I think I'm going to start a tick tock account.



28:56

Yeah. So as you know, I'm sure you know, with ADHD, I get a lot of ideas. And I, I start a million projects, and I finished about half of them. So what happened was, I was working full time at a children's hospital in Chicago. And I worked in their partial hospitalization program. So those are kids who come during the day who are struggling, right. So it's like a school day, I'm the one who's on the floor with the kids the whole time. So with the kids having hard time in the class, I'm there as their support. So I'll help them pick a coping skill, take a break with them, and really about like the behavioral and impacting like, let's practice our skills in the moment. And I loved my job, absolutely loved it. However, I started my private practice. And then I fell in love with being able to do preventative work was where it really where my heart fell, because we would help these kids give them all the support they needed, we send them back to an environment that couldn't, didn't have the resources to provide them with the same amount of support and then they would struggle again. So I was stuck in this loop of like, Is there more we can be doing. So when I started my private practice, I really started in the town I grew up in, I really wanted to become involved in the community. And I had volunteer coach cheerleading for three years. And so I really knew the girls and parents and what the community needed. What I saw was these, these middle school girls were struggling with self esteem so much, I would ask them, the beginning of practice, say something you're proud of, and it was pulling teeth. I think everyone's proud of their dog. Alright, we can't talk about our dog anymore. What's another thing? I got an A and A test? Oh, I got a name the test, Oh, I got to know more about grades. And they really struggle. I said, girls, what is going on? Like, you should be proud and confident about your accomplishments and things that you work on? And they said, Oh, I don't want to come across as like cocky or too confident. So what's the difference between being cocky and being confident that there is no difference? And to me, I sat there, I'm like, oh, my goodness, they fully believe like that confidence is a negative thing. So I developed a workshop for middle school girls, where the first 45

minutes we talked about self esteem building, we talked about school stress, we talked about communication. And we talked about social media. And I reached out to my cheer moms. And I was like, hey, do any of your daughters want to do this? And about seven of them signed up? And at the end of the group, they said, Lindsay, you know, we want to do this again. And we don't want anyone new coming. And I said, Are we being clicky? Like we Oh, we get to hang out there all cheer coach and like, we're learning these skills, like what? Why do you not want anyone add to the group? Or is it that you've just really developed a relationship? You feel safe? Like, I just wanted to comment on that? No, no, there, none of us wanted to do this. Lindsey, like what, like, none of us want to sign up our moms force us to, we thought it was gonna be like school, this is way that we love it. I was like, Okay, so then I was like, I want to honor that. And I'm happy that they have that space. So then they created another workshop with another group of girls. And with those girls, we did a social media challenge, where if anybody decreases, so everyone decrease their social media time for their site goal. For the week, we I would bring them all Starbucks. So we came in and they all achieve their goals. And we could walk to the Starbucks at my office. I'm like, Alright, girls, like, are we ready to go? And one of the girls goes, Lindsay, we don't want Starbucks. And I'm sitting there like, okay, not made of money. So let's keep it like, low cost. What else do you girls want? Like, we want you to download Tic Tac? I was like, absolutely not. That is your space. And you don't want my face popping up, like on Tic Tac i'm not i'm not gonna do it. So then the pandemic hit, and I had to close out all my groups, I had to go virtual, I had just quit the hospital. So now I'm like, Okay, this is a little stressful. And I found myself with a lot of time because it's in the hospital 40 hours a week, a lot of time where I'm like, What can I do? So some of the girls who reached out saying, like, they they missed the group that they were struggling.



33:12

And these aren't people who necessarily might need like, once a week therapy. So I said, Alright, I'm gonna, I'm gonna do em and download tic tac, and I'm gonna make some videos to help my community. My first videos are like five tips on building your confidence and even say, this is a shout out to my middle school girls. And then I did this video, because so many of my teens were struggling with virtual therapy. And I would ask them a question that in my office, they can answer no problem. And now they're giving me like eyes and like, Oh, I don't know, I don't know. I'm like, body language. I'm like, something's going on here. And I realized, even if they were in their own space, they're so fearful of their peers, someone listening in, parents sometimes have happen. Oh, hi, Lindsey. Like, oh, they just want to say hi to me. And they don't mean it in a way that's going to impact their pee. But what that does is it creates an environment that doesn't feel safe and confidential. So that's when I made a video saying me holding up signs saying like, oh, how to facetime your ex boyfriend go. And really, I was saying out loud, like, how was

your math test in that video just hit and it got 5 million views. And I really didn't post on social media before that. So I sat there, I'm like, oh, my goodness, like people are relating to this. This is teaching me so much about what teens are experiencing in therapy. Everyone was commenting, like, Oh my goodness, here's what my therapist does. That's helpful. Or I wish my therapist did this or in some nuances of therapy that people were like, Oh, I didn't know I was the only one who felt this way in session. So then it made me think like, we were talking earlier, this stigma around therapy. People don't know what it looks like in the therapy room unless they've been in it. And then I went back to my clients and I said, you know, is this what you expected therapy to be like? And they're like, no, I thought it was gonna be like school or like a teacher like another parent telling me this is what you have to do or this. So I was like, there's such a misunderstanding. And again, going back to I really want to do preventative work. It's like this fits with my goals. And it's helping people and people who don't have access to therapy who can't afford it or don't want to have access. So I was like this, I'm gonna I'm going to do this, I'm going to try to be able to provide people with something that can be helpful for their mental health. And that's how I started on tik tok. And now it's like over a year later, I'm still here. So



Katy Weber 35:26

yeah, I mean, I think if anything, it's really taught us the power of like, the one minute vignette in terms of making those connections and taking those thoughts deeper. And that's really what therapy is, right. Like, it's like making connections and talking it out. And, and yeah, there is a misconception, I think that you're going to get, like, told what to do, you know, that it's going to be like, self help. And I've been thinking about that a lot recently, just from what interviewing Sophie Gray, who was like, I love how she just like really articulated how self help is like bullshit. And, and I always knew, from my own personal experience that like anytime I read self help books, they made me more anxious. And they made me more depressed. But I never really made it even made that connection. Like I actually had one of my new year's resolutions when here was to not read any self help books because I was such a self help junkie. And I was like, I'm only going to read fiction for a year. And and I kept telling myself that I was like, fiction is just as good for you, as a self help book. But I just loved like, I've been thinking so much about the power of storytelling and the power of conversation. And like maybe that really is how we heal ourselves and how we help ourselves and that like reading a book on like do a then B, then C and be like, why isn't this working? I'm a failure is just like setting up that system of like, you're not going to reinvent yourself overnight.



36:53

And everybody, humans are so complex. And everybody's needs are different. And everyone's environments different. And we like to chalk it up and simplify it. But that doesn't create lasting change. And again, it's this whole idea of if you try harder if you do this, this if you do X, Y and Z, then you'll feel better. And I worry with the I love how much attention that we're giving to mental health. And I worry like with all fields, though, there are people who will be trying to send like gets you this quick fix or this life changing thing. And to me, those are always red flags, because we're talking about life changes, that takes time it takes effort takes consistency. And you have to build a support system around you to help you get there. And so the idea of reading one book, or doing one behavioral change of making your bed every day is going to change your whole life. It's like that one skill might help you and it might be Oh, great. Now I felt feel accomplished in the morning. But that's not helping you understand yourself more. And it's not helping you learn about what you want out of life and what you want to change in your life. Right?



Katy Weber 38:03

Yeah. Well, and I think we're often preyed upon because we, especially with ADHD, think like I'm impatient, I want something to be I want something to be immediate. And I want to like go 150% in one direction or another, right? And so like, of course, there's gonna be books and marketing materials and whatever to capitalize on that, that desire for instant gratification. Mm hmm. So, so how do you talk to teens then about like, so on the one hand, I love that what you said about confidence, and I think it's so important, especially for women to like, learn how to brag, you know, and, and, and to stop focusing on like, how likable am I? Right? Because so much of our confidence really has to come from outside of ours of our likability in society. But then on the other On the flip side, then you have social media, and you have likes and follows on popularity and like all of that, and like it's dizzying, like, how do you sort of talk about that overwhelming desire for validation? And like how to kind of manage that in in a balanced way? When do you're also then talking about like, social media where that's all it's always it's all about validation?



39:20

Yeah. And that's where I bring it back to bigger pictures than ourselves. Right? We were talking about that earlier how we always Okay, it's always kind of put on us anything, right? So he's put on us like, you need to do this, you need to make this change. You need to think about this. And I bring it back to where did this come from? Why do we feel like why do you feel like you? Why do you only feel pretty when other people tell you that? And I say to my clients, could I follow you around all day and say you're beautiful, you're

gorgeous. Would that help you? Probably maybe, but that's not possible and that doesn't help you love yourself unconditionally. So really bring it back to you. Where did this come from this idea that women especially to have to be pleasers are polite. I go, how do we describe young girls? Right? Boys? Oh, they're so loud. And oh, there's they're having so much fun. And girls like, Oh, she's so sweet. She's so polite. She's so kind. And so we're conditioned to know, oh, this is this gets praise this, this means I'm good. And when women especially use their voice, and speak, out of turn, or in spaces, there's a lot of times kind of some pushback. And so I utilize the idea of making it bigger than yourself, and being able to be your biggest cheerleader, because a lot of times, we're kinder to our best friends, or we think more highly of other people than ourselves and ask ourselves, is this internal validation? Or is this external validation? So am I looking for other people to tell me I'm doing a good job? Or do I know it in my heart and in myself, and that's the goal is recognizing who do I want to be? And once we realize who I want to be what's important to me, what are my values and try to live by those? That helps I think a lot and I don't think we give teens space to understand. We say, oh, make good decisions, all this stuff. If we bring it back to values, it's super helpful, then for teens know how to make choices. So what are my values? Who do I want to be? Then? Am I living by that? If I'm not how can I make some changes to live by that, then when you're met with a hard decision, you rely back on your values. And so we put comps we put the way people look likes, how many followers I have, in this kind of box of Oh, this is what's important. So I bring it back to that's not what is important to you. So making an impact. Sounds like having a support having people in your life be what is important is it being fully yourself, so pigging out your values can help you then become more confident and not need that external validation from society that you're pretty or you're doing a good job or you're successful enough. And it brings it back to again, these boxes, and oh, this is what success looks like for me in my office if a client can say they love themselves. And before that was really hard. That is success, rather than just focusing on achievements and grades, and who has the best job? And did you get into the Ivy League school, it's instead thinking like, I want to learn to love myself more. Here's how I can do that. And so with teens, how I talk about competence, again, is bringing it back to this societal aspect. And then bringing it back to when they have this moment where they think negatively about themselves, or when they post and they don't get enough likes. So then they start to feel down on themselves. I tell them to ask themselves, where is this coming from? Where is this thought that I'm not enough? Or this is what matters? Where is that coming from. And when we take it back away from Oh, again, this is our problem, and I just care too much. It can really help to see the bigger picture and start to make those changes of becoming who they are that I see women doing and like their 20s and 30s. I'm having more of those thoughts of, no, my voice matters. And I can take up space in this room. And I don't need to smile more. And I don't need to be polite when I asked for my needs. And that I think can be really powerful for young girls.



Katy Weber 43:29

That's amazing. I mean, I got so my next question is what do you love most about your ADHD? I feel like we've talked about that, especially when it came to the tick tock videos. So what do you what do you love most about?



43:39

What I love most about ADHD is definitely the creativity piece and my ability to I have an idea, I don't think twice. I'm like, Oh, I'm gonna do this. And I can come up with a whole business plan. And there's a famous, someone who has ADHD is famous who owns who created one of the airlines. And he I think he said it really well. He's like, I would rather create 50 flight patterns than read a one page article. And so oftentimes, it's the fun part. And the exciting part is great. And I've had to really work on some of those skills of setting boundaries for myself. And like he said, I can get so excited about tic tac, and that can become my whole world. And then I'm not hanging out with my friends. I'm not like calling my parents back. I'm you know, my therapy notes are like months behind. So in ways where it's like, it's my superpower. It's also my kryptonite, right? Because as soon as I don't, soon as I met with get stock or something, then it's like, I just want to drop it completely. And so I feel like a lot of times I can go into these phases of Oh, I'm hanging out my friends All the time. I'm like, spend less time on social media. And then I'm like, Oh, I should get a tick tock idea. And then I'm re recharged and creative again, and I want to just post a bunch of tic tocs daily. And so I've really tried to help myself get into a routine of that balance of I don't need to just because I have an idea right in this moment. I don't need Get out my ring light and start recording and make five different tic tocs. It's like I'm allowed to relax and spend time with people in really getting comfortable recharging and listening to my body needs instead of just getting fixated on an idea and trying to put it into play.



Katy Weber 45:17

Yeah, yeah, you know, when you were talking about like that, the RSD aspect of, you know, like, I just spent all this work posting something, and it felt like a dead weight. And I can, like, ruminate on that. But I think what is really important for us with ADHD, too, is just the ability to label like, Oh, this is what is happening right now I am experiencing RSD right now, this is how long it'll probably last. And then, you know, like, that has been such a game changer for me in terms of how I relate to depression and anxiety or just my reactions to people or, you know, like, oh, I've been, Did I offend this person or all of these things that, like, I'm able to kind of almost almost like CBT, like a, you know, you're able to

kind of just distance yourself from what is happening in the way how important it is for us to label what is happening. And I think it's been really important too.



46:12

And I think a lot of people with ADHD struggle with feeling identification. Like what am I feeling in this moment when we just become so overwhelmed by our emotions? And so I really hone in on instead of getting over, like stuck in that space is asking, What am I feeling? And being able to, like you said, label it and describe it. And that is something that I think everybody could use some help with is labeling our feelings, like adults don't have the language so but we expect kids to tell us how they're feeling. So I do put that into practice a lot of the it's really powerful. And I always tell the story of when I first went to therapy. My therapist, I was crying in session, and my therapist is like, what are you feeling right now? And I was like, I don't know. And then she's like, but again, I'm a pleaser. So it really came out as like, I'm just not sure. And then again, she asked me like, Well, what do you think your feeling? And I wanted to be like, Listen, lady, I came here, because I don't know what I'm feeling. And I need your help with it. And you're telling me like, You're asking me these questions that are so frustrating one to like, yell at her. But of course, I was just like, I'm not sure. I don't know, I think maybe sad. And so it takes a lot of practice to just be able to learn, oh, when I feel this in my body, this means this feeling. And everybody feels feelings differently. So again, the labeling I think is really powerful for anyone, but especially people who struggle with that emotional regulation and being able to regulate our emotions. People are like, Oh, stop getting so upset about things. It's like, I can't even label what I'm feeling or why you're asking me to fix it. So we got to start this start where how do we understand our feelings and behaviors a little bit better?



Katy Weber 48:01

Yeah. And then, you know, I think it's why we also deflect to so often when somebody is because it's when somebody says, How are you? You're like, Where do I even start? Do you have two hours? And so and then the alternate is I'm good. I'm good. Thanks. How are you? Yes, exactly. Okay, so now the term of ADHD, I think is so problematic, especially for women. We don't have a deficit of anything. We, we, so many of us don't feel physically hyperactive. So I know like, have you what would if you could rename ADHD to something else? Have you thought about what you would rename it to?



48:41

Yeah, when I, you know, I thought about it. And I'm not sure because I feel like, I feel like

we're still learning so much about ADHD, especially in women. So what I do think, though, is instead of focusing on the hyperactivity in the inattentiveness, I feel like focusing more on the regulatory part of it. So whether it's being able to focus in class, whether it's being able to regulate our emotions, whether it's being able to communicate our emotions, focusing on the right thing, right, because we can focus on something else, like I can look may create a Pinterest board of my new office for two hours, but I can't text back that one parent. So I think focusing more on the regulatory piece of it would be important to me, instead of focusing on describing the behaviors that sometimes are, occur because of our inability to regulate our attention or regulate our emotions in their thinking.



Katy Weber 49:37

That's such a great point. And I think that goes to like kind of the medicalization of the diagnosis in the first place. Interesting. I hadn't thought about how, you know, the the most medical diagnoses I guess, address symptoms more than they address the source or is that true? trying to think of interesting. Yeah, I mean, sometimes I think it all comes down to dopamine deficiency. And I'm like, is that really? Is it just that simple? Like, is that really it? Because there's often times now where I'm like, I just need to go for a run, or I just need some chocolate or like, I'm like, you know, when I feel like I'm having those regulatory issues now, that's my first kind of mode of defense is like, Okay, what am I lacking right now.



50:23

And that's why I think where I get stuck is people think ADHD is Oh, you're either hyperactive, or you're not able to pay attention. And I think a bit more, it's, we're not able to pay attention on the right thing. So I can think about my thoughts I can pay attention to, like, I can do cheerleading layouts for hours. But that's not I'm supposed to be doing my grad school homework. So it's, again, this, this idea of like, Oh, I can't pay attention to everything. That does a disservice. Because then when I'm sitting here, like my mom's like, Oh, well, you can research this for four hours. So obviously, you don't have ADHD, you can focus fine. It's just you don't want to focus on this. And so I think it does a disservice in describing what people are experiencing. And it blocks people a lot of times from seeking help. And especially girls, we talked a little bit about how we are taught to please. And so when you have a student who's a girl with ADHD, and they're stuck in their thoughts, instead of moving around and being disruptive to the class, they don't know that this is harder for them than others in the sense that, oh, there's things that can help me, again, they do that self blaming of everybody else, my class can pay attention, this must be me. And that creates shame. And then they don't want to tell people or they think, Oh, it's just

something I need to fix on my own. So I think really focusing in on what's occurring in our brain and what is happening in the different areas, instead of just saying, oh, hyperactive, you move around a lot. In attentive, you struggle with paying attention, because it's so much more complex, and it presents so differently for different people, like my ADHD compared to my fiancé who has ADHD is very different. And so I think that that to these big assumptions, and so much of the education of what's going



Katy Weber 52:10

on, yeah. And I yeah, I mean, I work with preteen and teen girls as well. And like I talk a lot with them about the other intelligence centers. So it's like, we have our brain, but we also have our heart and we have our gut. And like, the brain is not very trustworthy, because a lot of the thoughts are get, you know, from external sources. And so you can't always trust your thoughts, but like your gut, you can always trust right? And and so that's one of those ones that you really need to like, amplify what your gut is telling you. And, and so like you said, like, if you're having a stomach ache every morning, before you go to school, like you need to be able to make those connections like what is my gut telling me loud and clear that I'm not listening to but a lot of the time, like he said, like you might not even realize, maybe you don't even know. I mean, we're not exactly the most attentive people when it comes to our physicality. And we don't trust ourselves either, because we've never been taught to so how do you even begin to make those connections? Nath Ray would hope that just like we have gym class, he claims physical education, which I think some schools have pulled back on that or, like, if you're in a sport, you don't have to do it, which I don't love. But I really think thinking about the



53:16

school system and how it's set up for one type of learner. And if we could create, everybody takes a course that talks about your mental health and builds on it every year. So there's no reason we can't teach kindergarteners the zones of regulation, or, or deep breathing, or feeling identification. So I really wish we could do some more preventative work that is integrated into our school systems. And then instead of relying completely on teachers integrating it who aren't trained in mental health, and having special education departments that are completely flooded and over overwhelmed, that would be so wonderful or



Katy Weber 54:01

even just teaching kids how to advocate that's the thing I think that drives me crazy as my

kids are getting older. Realizing, you know, my daughter's in eighth grade, she's about to go into high school and I'm like I'm I'm realizing that like the the school system is set up in such a way that they like dis you know, they they discourage kids from advocating for themselves at every turn and so I see how terrified she is to ask for help and how terrified she is to speak up and and email her teachers outside of class where I'm like, that's what they're there for. Like you you know, you have rights but then I see how the school system is just like they they it's built into the curriculum to teach these children that they don't have rights and that they can't advocate and it's a mess. For now we have Tiktok at all you're doing amazing work. So thank you for the effort and and talent that you're putting into your videos. Your I love your approach to therapy and They want to work with young girls and preteens and teens is my hero because it's just such such important work. So thank you. Thank you for having me. This has been a fun podcast.