

Laura Key: Anxiety, perfectionism, and ADHD aha moments

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SPEAKERS

Katy Weber, Laura Key



Laura Key 00:00

You know, with ADHD, one of the things that I talk a lot about with the guests on my show is the ubiquity of ADHD symptoms. They're like these typical human behaviors, but like on steroids, right? Because everybody has trouble with focus. Sometimes everybody gets restless sometimes or is hyperactive sometimes, but it's like the cumulative effect and the intensity of those symptoms. There's always a reason that you can brush it off when it comes to ADHD. Oh, if I didn't sleep enough, or I didn't eat lunch, or I'm just down about X, Y, and Z. I think that ADHD because of the nature of ADHD provides a lot of excuses for people to just say, now, that can't be me.



Katy Weber 00:46

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 like 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. Okay, I would like to share with you this review from a listener called DLSE to loose the lessee. On the apple podcast platform in Canada, it's entitled should be number one ADHD podcasts for women. In my opinion, women in ADHD should be the number one podcast in this genre. After listening to all the recommended podcasts regarding ADHD and women, I always left feeling disappointed now that I found Katie and her guests, I am impressed by the level of discussions and the quality of interviews, amazing content that I can relate to on every level. Looking forward to listening to many more episodes. Thanks, Katie for making this late, diagnose ADHD or understand my strengths, along with my weaknesses in a way that feels empowering. Wow, thank you. DLSE. Your check is in the mail. I'm just kidding. I do not pay for endorsements. But I do want to say I am absolutely speechless. Thank you so much. I am feeling very validated and really just filled

with emotion right now. So thank you. I really love how you put that last part, understanding our strengths, along with our weaknesses in a way that feels empowering. So true, right. And we all know the way that this could be the number one ADHD podcast for women, which is leaving reviews. It makes such a big difference in getting this podcast noticed and found by other women who could really benefit from hearing these interviews. If you're a listener of this podcast, and you've been helped at all by these conversations. A lovely way to say thank you and boost the popularity is to take a moment to leave a review, or even just go and hit those five stars. I also want to give a special shout out of appreciation this week. To all of the fabulous members of the women and ADHD online community. We are celebrating our one year anniversary this week. I always say that finding our people is an important part of our treatment plan. And I am just so grateful for this online space for us to connect and ask questions and share strategies and advice or just vent. I'm continually amazed at the level of empathy and kindness and thoughtfulness that exists in this group. It's not something you see very often in social media spaces. So thank you to everyone who has participated in the community and helped it grow. If you'd like to join us make sure to head over to [women and adhd.com](https://www.womenandadhd.com). In addition to the online forum, we also have an extensive resource library and monthly live q&a with experts which are recorded and archived for our members. We just recently had one on ADHD and hormones, and we have some really great ones lined up but you can always find out more about it [women and adhd.com/events](https://www.womenandadhd.com/events). Again, we hope you'll come join us head over to [women and adhd.com](https://www.womenandadhd.com) where you can find that link in the show notes. Well here we are at episode 90 in which I interviewed Laura Key. Laura is a longtime editor and content creator and she's also the editorial director@understood.org A resource for the millions of people with learning and thinking differences like ADHD and dyslexia. Laura is also the host of the ADHD AHA podcast where her guests talk about the single moment when it clicked that they or someone they know has ADHD. Not only does Laura co lead the whole understood Podcast Network, she also spearheaded the creation of the medium publication for slash by and she has two kids who keep her busy when she's not working. And sometimes when she is working, Laura shares with me her diagnosis story and her ADHD aha moment, as well as her history with anxiety and perfectionism. We compare notes on hosting an ADHD themed podcast and we talk all about the healing power of conversation and sharing our lived experiences with other ADHD people. We also talk about medication and parenting and looking for the signs of ADHD in your children and some of the inherent difficulties and figuring out the best ways to help our kids and ourselves for that matter. Without further ado, enjoy. Alright, so Laura, I'm really curious because you've been diagnosed for quite a few years, right, I think at least six years at this point. Right. So I'm curious what was going on in your life that led to you getting an ADHD diagnosis? I mean, usually our life is usually there's something that you start connecting the dots. And so when was your diagnosis, first of all, and kind of what was happening in your life that you said, I should look into this?

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Laura Key 05:28

Yeah. So thanks for having me, Katie. I got diagnosed 10 years ago, so a little more than six. Oh, okay. I'm gonna say something right off the bat that is related to how I came to be diagnosed, which is that I'm feeling a little anxious right now being the person who's being interviewed, as opposed to being the interviewer because I do host a podcast about ADHD aha moments, and I have some perfectionistic tendencies. So I'm a little anxious about how I might come off. So I just wanted to say that right off the bat, it makes me feel more comfortable. I don't know if Yeah, just wanted to say that. But so when I was 28, I'll start I got diagnosed with anxiety. And I started taking anti anxiety medication. And I was seeing a therapist and seeing a psychiatrist. And then 10 years ago when I was 30. So I'm 40. I hit the forro. This year, when I

was 30, I was seeing a psychiatrist, and we were just talking and he, and he was like what's going on, I was like, something is still off. You know, I've got I feel like I've got the anxiety under control. I'm taking anti anxiety medication, I have a, you know, I have a good sense of my range of emotions, and when I'm feeling off, etc. And there's something that's still off, and I couldn't quite pinpoint it. And my psychiatrist, he asked me this question that was so specific, but yet, so spot on that it kind of blew my mind. He asked me, you know, Laura, I know you spend a lot of time in coffee shops, because you're a writer, do you get really frustrated when someone makes a noise across the room that you don't like? Because it kind of set you off? And I was like, how do you know this? How did you know that this is a thing for me. He's like, I think it's time to get you evaluated for ADHD. And it blew my mind, Katie, because I work at an organization that supports people with ADHD and creates resources for people with ADHD. And yet, I didn't even consider it for myself. That's where the journey started.



Katy Weber 07:21

So you were working at understood at the time, okay. Ah, all right. That That reminds me of the ticking clock in in exam rooms, right? And how I would like, you know, I remember sitting in exam rooms in university, and if there was a ticking clock, I was like, that's it. I might as well just leave now. Because I'm never going to be able to pay attention. And now realizing through the lens of this diagnosis, I'm like, oh, yeah, that makes a lot of sense. I also studied in coffee shops all the time, did all my best work in coffee shops. And that's pretty. That's pretty standard for ADHD. Right? Can I ask what was going on with the anxiety diagnosis then? Well, where was your anxiety manifesting? And how was it manifesting? I think I'm also curious because I have I talk a lot about my own anxiety on the on the podcast and just that, how that inability to breathe and how I immediately go to like, something's wrong. I have lung cancer, I need to see the kitschy, like, I always go to that, like, I'm dying place. So I'm well acquainted with anxiety and how it's intertwined with ADHD. But what was going on that you ended up getting diagnosed with that first?



Laura Key 08:27

So the anxiety in contrast to the ADHD, the anxiety was something that I suspected I was coping with for a really long time, I can remember wondering, like, why am I why am I so anxious ever since I was 10 years old, I grew up in the Midwest, very kind of pull yourself up by the bootstraps, and you know, get rid of bad feelings by exercising and keeping busy kind of play. So I kind of pushed it away for a really long time. It wasn't until I was in my mid 20s, or so that I opened up to the idea of going to therapy, and I started going to therapy after a bad breakup. And I just I couldn't cope. I was ruminating on everything. I was getting anxious about being around new people, anxious and new scenarios, and I don't I don't have social anxiety, but that's kind of how it was cropping up at that time. I would meet people and then go home at night and think about every single thing that I said, and wonder, did I say something wrong? Kind of like my disclaimer at the top of this podcast, right. And I was coping with this breakup and I had an amazing, amazing therapist who started to open me up to the idea that, you know, I may have an anxiety disorder, you know, beyond just feeling anxious. And she suggested I meet with a psychiatrist and consider anti anxiety medication and that's no no, no, no, no, no, no, I don't take medication. I'll eat healthy. I'll go to bed earlier. I will exercise more, etc. I can that perfectionistic tendency was cropping up. I can handle this myself.



Katy Weber 10:03

I'll figure it out. Yeah, right. Yeah,



Laura Key 10:05

I'll figure it out on my own. But oh man, when I started taking that anti anxiety medication, and tried a few different brands, and then found one that worked for me, I was like, wow, I, I just feel, quote unquote, normal. This is how other people deal with troubling situations like tip ignored neurotypical people that when they have a troubling situation, they can see when they understand right now, I'm sad. Right now I'm unhappy right now I feel happy. Before that it was all this big blur of emotions. And then with the anti anxiety medication, when I could kind of calibrate my emotions, finally, I was like, Oh, I'm feeling anxious because I'm having trouble focusing. I'm getting distracted by that sound in the coffee shop. And that's when he came into perspective. So that was kind of the lifecycle of my double diagnosis, one leading to the other.



Katy Weber 11:00

Okay, gotcha. Yeah. Because I mean, so many of us are diagnosed with depression and or anxiety long before we come to ADHD. And it's always fascinating to me, because I think often it's looked at as existing independent of other factors. And sometimes it's treated as existing independent of other factors. Right. And I, you know, I think that there's not enough emphasis from our medical provider, sometimes about, like, what is causing this? Like, let's, let's pathologize it and medicate it and not really even look at the root cause. And for so many of us, the root cause is undiagnosed ADHD. It's like, why are we left to like, connect the dots on our own?



Laura Key 11:40

Yeah, it gets so tangled up, doesn't it? It's such a chicken and egg feeling sometimes. Because with ADHD, you have, you know, with executive functioning challenges, you can have trouble managing emotions. And it's not the same as anxiety, but they go hand in hand, and they kind of feed off of each other in a lot of ways, and still experience that all the time.



Katy Weber 11:57

Yeah. Right. And I think also, when I listened to the episode of ADHD, how are you talking about your own story and how the perfectionism element is so intertwined? You know, I feel like that story for a lot of girls like they're doing really well. They're coping, they're pulling themselves up by the bootstraps, they're like managing, and they have these this like, incredibly high expectations of themselves. And then that, you know, I'm like, now we go into adulthood, and they're all balls of anxiety as a result. So it was really interesting to listen to you talk about how perfectionism comes into play with ADHD and that need to, like, prove ourselves over and over and over again, right? It is so all intertwined.



Laura Key 12:41

Yeah, that needing to like control everything. And like when you and then once you become aware of ADHD, and you know that you're having trouble meeting deadlines, and you're having trouble getting started on a task. It's like this feeling like, no, I need to control how people see this. I need to control my image, I need to control how I'm feeling, et cetera,



Katy Weber 12:58

right? Well, yeah. Because everybody has a certain view of us as being really high achieving and getting everything done. And we feel like frauds in the background, just being like, Oh, my God, I'm gonna get found out if I can't figure out how to manage all of this. At the same time, and yeah, yep. You got it. Okay, so to backtrack a little bit, because about ADHD, aha, so you're the executive director of editorial content at understood. So when you started, I'm assuming you were kind of heavily involved in the podcasts in the genesis of the podcast that understood before you even started ADHD, aha, right?



Laura Key 13:34

Yes, yes, I have to give a shout out to our creative director Scott cushier because he had an amazing vision to launch a podcast network for understood coming off of the success of the inet podcast, which is one of the podcasts in our network and my dear friends, Amanda Morin, and Gretchen veer Stroh hosts that show, and it performed well, and we thought, there's so much more content we can create that will help that will help folks and we started batting around ideas and doing creative sessions. And someone must have asked me, Laura, if you were going to host a show, what would it be, and I hadn't even considered hosting a show I, up until the podcast, I never spoke openly let alone publicly about my ADHD diagnosis. So I really jumped into the fire there or to the deep to the deep end, I should say. But I said, there's only one thing that I feel really interested in exploring. And it's this idea of aha moments. I had a hypothesis that like everyone has a moment in their life, when either before the diagnosis or even after the diagnosis when ADHD just clicks and makes sense. And you're like, oh, okay, that's what's going on. And for me, and it's the story I shared on my first episode, the one where I shared my story. It was actually post diagnosis because I think even after I got diagnosed, Katie I didn't necessarily believe that I had ADHD. I was had some like lingering stigma going on there. And it was a few years after I got diagnosed and I was visiting My parents in Ohio, and I was going through my old journals, I used to journal all day, every day from the age of 12, through grad school, and I was going through my journals and flipping through them. And I was like, Oh, my gosh, I saw that I had scribbled the word focus all over my journals in all different shapes and sizes. I'm in bubble letters, like a kid would do, in like a crazy way, just like the word focus everywhere. And I was like, Oh, God, I this has been affecting me my whole life. And I didn't even know it until recently. And I just started to cry. And so I will share that on a podcast and see what happens.



Katy Weber 15:43

Man, yeah. So do you think that was a word that was said to you that you kind of wanted to hold on to? Or do you think it was something that you just knew was an issue for you? And maybe if you wrote it, it would help? Or what do you think? What do you think your relationship

with that word was?

L

Laura Key 15:56

When I reflect back on this thinking about growing up, I remember really beating myself up a lot, because I couldn't stay with one task for very long. And it was just so frustrating. And I just, the word focus was almost like, the way that I was writing it, I was probably writing it in like a very self blame sort of way. Like, why can't you focus? Why can't you focus? If you could just focus then you could bla bla bla bla bla. Yeah, it was just a way of kind of punishing myself for not being able to do the things that I wanted to do.



Katy Weber 16:28

Oh, man, I know, it was such a visceral moment. For me going back and looking at my report cards after my diagnosis. I cried so much looking at how the signs were there all along. And it just felt like there were all these negative comments about how I wasn't trying hard enough. And I had all this potential. And it was like, it was just so textbook, all of it. And I was like, Why did nobody see it? Like, I just felt so left out to dry, you know, like, I felt so sad for that little girl. And I also knew that, you know, my trajectory was to just start cutting school. So by the time I was in high school, I had an attendance and truancy problem. And so my grades were always like, either I got an A plus in the classes like languages and drama and the classes that I always went to, or I flunked because I wasn't going to those other classes, because I didn't care about them. But I just saw this girl who just gave up on herself, right? Because she I had no sense of like, how to do better. And and I think so many of us have that grief, when we think back in our lives, and like, how weird is it that I even had my report cards? Like, I don't even have my kids report cards, right? Like, the only reason I had that was because when my mother passed away, I actually like found them. And they were in my attic. And so I knew I was like, I know exactly where they are. Oh, wow. I know, right? Because it is so crazy to look back at that. And but you know, I'm curious. With the aha moment like it's for me, I had it had been recommended to me for years by my therapist that I looked at ADHD. And I was like, I don't know what you're talking about, like, and then it wasn't until I took the series Solden test specifically for women, the online self test where I'd like aced it. And you know, and I would joke, right? I joke I was like, it's the first time I've ever aced a test in my life,

L

Laura Key 18:18

except for English language arts and drama. Right. High interest topics for you. Yeah, well, that



Katy Weber 18:23

drags, right? Yeah, I know. But I never talked about that I only talked about like, how I did terribly in school. There were classes where I would get really high marks in it. But I thought of myself as the floodgate, right. And I think that's also true, like where it's more interesting for us to think about ourselves in terms of the negative. But anyway, like, often I think about, like, Why did it not occur to like, there's so many things that I think happened to us where they don't land, until suddenly something happens, where you're like, oh, wow, like, everything hits

different now. And part of me is like, is it because we are working so hard, and we're just like treading water all the time. And it's like, often, we can't stop and see the forest for the trees. And that's why we have these aha moments. Because like, I often think about that with friendships, right? Where I'm like, you know, somebody will say something to me about like, oh, you know, this is why our friendship never worked out. Because you never texted me or, you know, all these reasons why friendships in the past never worked out for me. And I had all these difficulties. And I was like, I never saw what was happening in the moment until much later where I'm like, oh, yeah, that makes a lot of sense. So Eddie, I don't know what I'm trying to get. I think that there's just like this level of like non absorbency that we have in our lives around a lot of things like nuances that are social, maybe social nuances that other people get and we don't until something hits us square in the head. I'm like, Is that is that a distinct or unique situation to people with ADHD or neuro divergence? Do you think



Laura Key 20:00

Well, it's so funny because I know one of the questions you ask a lot on the show is what would you rename ADHD? So I was thinking about that before the show and the name, the only thing I could come up with Katie was here, I'm gonna botch that that thing that you didn't know you had, but when you realized you had it, everything else made sense. So it doesn't really roll off the tongue. But there's a good acronym in there somewhere. There. Yeah, it's a really long acronym. It's like a sentence unto itself. You know, with ADHD, one of the things that I talk a lot about with the guests on my show is the ubiquity of ADHD symptoms. They're like these typical human behaviors, but like on steroids, right? Because everybody has trouble with focus. Sometimes everybody gets restless sometimes, or is hyperactive, sometimes, but it's like, the cumulative effect and the intensity of those symptoms. So there's always a reason that you can brush it off. When it comes to ADHD, oh, I didn't sleep enough. Or I didn't eat lunch. Or I'm just down about X, Y, and Z. I think that ADHD, because of the nature of ADHD provides a lot of excuses for people to just say, now, that can't be me. Does that make sense? Yeah,



Katy Weber 21:11

I certainly went through that. Because, you know, thinking about a lot of these issues and having to ask myself that question, like, how much are you struggling? Right? Because when you talk about diagnosis, and you talk about kind of the way and the way in which you go about getting diagnosed in terms of like, is this chronic? Is this lifelong is you know, are these issues, something that have are debilitating or whatever the terms are that you kind of have to look at? And then you have to look at yourself and be like, how are they debilitating? I don't know. Like, I'm making it I'm making by how much am I struggling? I think that's a really difficult thing to gauge for us. Right? So it's like, because there's always that feeling of like, well, if I really just applied myself, I could probably figure this out, right? Or that idea of like, like, I remember, I've talked to I've shared the story on my podcast before where like, when I went to get my diagnosis, my doctor was like, asking me if I lose things a lot. And I'm like, No, I don't, I don't feel like I'm very forgetful. But then I went on this whole long tirade about, like all the things I do to make sure I don't forget things. Like, you know, like, I have a pair of glasses in my car and one next to the TV and one upstairs and like, I have notes for myself, and all these things. And she was, and she made a comment about how hard I work, to not forget things. And she said, like you do you see how hard you're working to get to this point. That is not a struggle for other people. And I was like, Oh, yeah. Right. And I wanted to cry. Yeah, exactly. Because nobody had

ever told me I worked hard before. And that was the other thing. I was like, You're the first person who's ever like, acknowledged or even, like, made me see how I didn't I didn't even see how hard I was working.

L

Laura Key 22:46

Yeah, that's really powerful when someone can point that out for you. Because especially if you're hard on yourself, like sounds like we both are. My daughter, who is seven, recently told me, Mom, you lose your phone all the time. I was like, do I? I feel like I lose it just as much as anybody else who's like, No, you lose it like three times a day.



Katy Weber 23:06

Yeah, right. And that. And I think sometimes we're not really in touch with how much we are struggling with certain things, because we're spending so much time struggling, that we don't spend a lot of time acknowledging that maybe this isn't normal. And I think that's what's been so interesting about the kind of proliferation of diagnoses right now, which is all these people who are like, wait a minute, this is not normal. Not everybody feels this way. Not everybody has to do this. And make these, you know, has to work this hard to do these sorts of things. But then at the same time are those same people are getting hit with? Well, everybody feels this way. Everybody has a little ADHD everybody. Right? So you're getting hit with both of these at the same time. So yeah, naturally, we are filled with self doubt. And we are always questioning like, I don't know, am I still how much am I struggling? I don't know. What do I need? Like?

L

Laura Key 23:55

Yeah, Katie, I got a big dose of this last weekend, actually. And I didn't take my ADHD medication on Sunday. There was a specific reason why maybe I was almost out and I needed my medication for Monday or something. But it had been a very, very long time to spend a day without ADHD medication. And it hit me like a ton of bricks. I was like, Oh, wait, I needed that reminder. Because I was I was in a phase where I was like, Maybe I'm fine. Maybe I'm fine. And I mean, I'm I am fine. But I'm fine. Also because I need my ADHD medication. It helps me function. I mean, I spent the whole day running around my house doing nothing feeling like I was doing a million things but in the end doing nothing and then feeling just completely distracted. My husband, my my daughter, I mean, like what's what's going on with you today? And then it hit me all over again. So while it was a hard day, I'm glad that I had that day because I needed the reminder that this is real. The reminder to be kind to myself. Hmm,




Katy Weber 24:58

oh, I like that. You No. And that was a question I used to ask a lot more at the beginning when I first started the podcast, because, you know, I feel like so many of us have such different relationship to medication for some of us, it's like life changing, you know, and other people are like, I don't even know what it's doing. I don't know what I'm looking for doesn't whatever I'm


looking for. It doesn't seem to be doing it. So I'm just keep trying different types. And, you know, and I was always like, when people say it's working, I'm like, what does that mean? Like, what does working mean? And so So I'm curious, I'll throw that to you.

 Laura Key 25:30


Sure. Do you take ADHD medication?

 Katy Weber 25:33


I don't. I've tried it. I've tried a bunch of different types. And I've always sort of come back to like, my baseline has been easier for me, because I spend so much mental energy wondering if it's working.

 Laura Key 25:48


I understand that. Yeah. Right. And so

 Katy Weber 25:51


for me, I've I've ended up just kind of managing, you know, managing it with caffeine, and morning exercise. And for that, for now, that seems to be the two things that work for me, but I'm not averse to it by any means. It's just like, I'm always curious, like, what does that mean, when you say it's what? What's the difference between being on it and off of it?

 Laura Key 26:13


Well, I guess for me when I say that it's working. And I tried a number of different types of medications. And I was so hesitant to go on ADHD medication, and I'm really glad that I finally decided to try it, but it was a journey even to find the right one. But when I found the quote unquote, right one, it at the right dosage, you know, monitoring it, obviously, it felt like nothing. And that was great. It doesn't make me feel high, doesn't make me feel down. It just makes me feel like, like me, the difference is not so much how it makes me feel. It's that comparison to how it doesn't make me feel when I'm not taking it. I think I might have had a double negative in there the wrong way. But I think you're following what I'm saying. Like, I can compare the days when I'm taking it versus a day that I don't take it and it's not like everything's perfect. It doesn't solve everything. It's not like I'm magically super productive. But I'm able to follow steps to do something, I'm more able to like jump into what feels like a big task, it still feels really overwhelming to me. But like I can I can see the steps in my head and I know what I need to do first. It's more about like, the absence of it is what I notice more so than even taking it. Interesting. Yeah.

 Katy Weber 27:29


You've inspired me I'm like, Oh, God, now I'm now I'm gonna go down another rabbit hole to see if I can figure this out. Yeah,

 Laura Key 27:35


I mean, it's, it's controversial, you know, I mean, I know that the one that I'm on is a controlled substance. And sometimes that brings its own set of stigma to it. And, you know, I'm only allowed to get 30 pills at a time. Right or and a few ask for it early. Sometimes you're considered like, you get this look like are you drug seeking, I'm like, No, not drug seeking. I'm just going on vacation, and I need my medication before I leave. That's actually something I talked about with one of my guests who discover that they had ADHD when they got sober and they couldn't get medication, because they were just accused of drug seeking the entire time. It was really painful for them.

 Katy Weber 28:14


And ridiculously ironic, given how many people forget to take their meds. The fact that any medical provider looks at this as an addictive substance is absurd to me,

 Laura Key 28:25

I know. And it's so it's so hard, Katy, because you have to be so scheduled about about requests because they don't do refills. You don't just get an automatic refill. You have to make contact with the prescriber every time you need a refill and then confirm that it's ready at the pharmacy. It's like it's like a nightmare for someone with ADHD. But yeah.

 Katy Weber 28:45

Oh, I know. Right? Well, even you know, I was gonna mention that, like you were saying that you took a break one day because you had to save it too. Because exactly what needed it for Monday. I'm like, That is such an example of like working hard and trying to figure your life out and making these choices and ADHD accommodations are rarely friendly to ADHD. Right. So trip, I noticed that what I was trying to get what I was signing up for a GRE online and I'm taking it at home but like, I was like, oh, I should I should look into time and a half accommodations for this GRE and the paperwork was so there was so much red tape that I was like, I guess I don't need it. Like I totally just talked myself out of it. Because I didn't want to have to deal with the paperwork or even read the paperwork. And I was like, Yeah, this is what it's like to have ADHD or I'm like, I don't need help. It's fine because I don't want to do the 18,000 steps involved to get the help.

 Laura Key 29:40

Okay, i i It took me 10 years of marriage so I got diagnosed the same with ADHD the same year that I got married. So 10 years, I just celebrated my 10 year wedding anniversary with my husband. I just changed my name a few months ago because and that I was totally fine keeping

my own name and but I wanted to change it For some family reasons, and I just couldn't get around to the paperwork, it just seemed like a nightmare. It took me 10 years to get to it. I finally found a service that, you know, basically took care of it for me almost every step of the way. But



Katy Weber 30:13

Oh, that's funny. I have things like that on my to do list, like renewing my Canadian passport, which I don't really use anymore. But every time something like what happens in the news every week now, I'm like, That's it. I'm moving back to Canada. And then I look and then I'm like, I look at all the paperwork involved in renewing my Canadian passport and getting them for my kit. And I'm like, I'll deal with it later.



Laura Key 30:33

It's not so bad here, I guess. No, I'm just kidding.



Katy Weber 30:36

But I'm like I, you know, I've like, when is it gonna be the straw that finally breaks my ADHD back. I'd like to take a moment to think better help for sponsoring this podcast. If you're a regular listener of this podcast, you know, I am a big proponent of therapy therapy provides me the best opportunity for verbal processing something that is so important for my kind of brain and my sense of self. What I love about BetterHelp is that it's not a crisis line. It's not self help. It is professional therapy that's done securely online from the comfort of your home, they assess your needs and match you with your own licensed professional therapist, and it's available for clients worldwide. So you get access to a broad range of expertise that might not be available to you locally. It also tends to be more affordable than traditional offline therapy and financial aid is available. If you visit their website and read their testimonials. There are actually quite a few reviews that specifically reference help with ADHD as a special offer for listeners of the women and ADHD podcast, you'll get 10% off your first month, simply sign up at [betterhelp.com/women ADHD](https://betterhelp.com/women-ADHD), that's BetterHelp h e l p.com/women. ADHD. And there's a link in the show notes. This podcast is sponsored by BetterHelp. So let's backtrack a little bit because I you had talked about the journals and your ADHD aha moment. I think it's true. I think we really do. Like it hits us in different ways. When it really like lands that this you know, we talk a lot on the podcast, I don't I don't buy the whole ADHD as a superpower thing, because I think it's incredibly difficult. And it's incredibly nuanced. And I think that it's really kind of weird to focus only on the positive all the time, and like push down a lot of the negative. Because I think so much of our treatment plan is like understanding why we do the things we do. Right. And but there is a lot of dysfunction and struggle around ADHD and why you know, like, I always say, like, we don't come to our ADHD diagnosis, because everything on our life was going wonderful. We were like, I wonder what this superpower is.



Laura Key 32:41

Like, God, I'm so glad you said that. I actually, because some people often ask me, What's your favorite? What's your favorite thing about your ADHD? And I'm like, I don't really like it at all

favorite. What's your favorite thing about your ADHD? And I'm like, I don't really like it at all. What do you mean? I? Yeah, there's a lot of ADHD as a superpower. And I think it's great to embrace people's strengths. I mean, we have to do that. And you often hear like, makes you more creative. It makes you I can hyperfocus okay, maybe. But for me, it's, it's it's kind of a pain. It's really It's debilitating if it's not, if not treated.



Katy Weber 33:11

Right. Well. And that's the thing that I think is really, to put a fine point on. It's the diagnosis that I think I celebrate, you know, and I've had this, come back to me whenever I talk about like, Yay, welcome to The Club, who like congratulate whatever's, you know, somebody says, I've just gotten diagnosed with ADHD, my response is always like, yes, that's amazing. And then they're, you know, usually I'll get pushback from somebody who's like, ADHD is really serious and debilitating and terrible. Like, why are you celebrating? ADHD? And I'm like, I'm not celebrating ADHD. Are you kidding me, ADHD is a shitshow. But I'm celebrating the diagnosis, because I'm celebrating how incredible it feels to suddenly have a name for this and to suddenly be able to, like, go down these Google rabbit holes and just be like, Oh, my God, I can't believe all of these seemingly random issues that I've had my whole life, like, everything is suddenly making sense to me. And it is so incredibly amazing. And you know, my experience, and I think for a lot of women who are diagnosed in adulthood, there's that sense of like, oh, I can find like, I'm finally able to view myself in a way that is not constantly thinking, I'm a terrible human being right. And that's what I think is like, for the first time in my life, since my diagnosis, I'm able to see my strengths in a way that I never was before. And so I appreciate that. And I love thinking about that, you know, and thinking like, wow, they're all like, I am actually a really good mom. And I never would have said that before my ADHD diagnosis or, you know, all of those ways in which I can see the positive for the first time.



Laura Key 34:47

Right. 1,000,000% Yeah, right. Like,



Katy Weber 34:50

I think that part is really important. And I think it's really important to foster that.



Laura Key 34:54


Yeah. I mean, my favorite thing about ADHD right now is that exact Do what you just said, I, it's allowed me to have a podcast where I can connect with community and experience people's experiences and like we can relate together. And we can be in this club together and say, oh, yeah, that's why Oh, yeah, that makes so much sense now. It's a really cool feeling.




Katy Weber 35:18

Yeah, and we've talked a bit a little bit about this on previous conversations about like, having these conversations with people and kind of the importance of finding your people when it


comes to ADHD and treating your ADHD, which is like helping to normalize it, and D stigmatize it through conversation. So I'm curious, and I know that you've experienced this firsthand with your podcast, too, like, what do you think it is about talking to other people that feels so essential to who are our sense of self?

 Laura Key 35:50


A lot of ADHD symptoms, ADHD related behaviors can make you feel like you're bad or weird? Or like, there's something wrong with you talking with other people about what they experience and how I mean, people's stories are unique, but like, there are these common themes and threads that are woven into every conversation. It's, it just feels right. I mean, this is, this is actually why I sent her every one of my episodes around a symptom. I try to at least like ADHD and something. So and so's story. And and the reason that I do that is because the person is the show, the person I'm interviewing is the show, but that symptom is the gateway in for like, relatability for listeners. So whether you are a single mom, in Maine, or if you are a high school student in California, if you are both struggling with working memory or with distractibility, if you see that symptom, and you relate you can someone you never thought that you would connect with you can connect with that person, and in a really profound way and say, Oh, I struggle with that, too. And totally, like in a totally different life and a totally different part of the world. It's really interesting,

 Katy Weber 37:01

right? Yeah, I always feel like whenever I talk about the difficulty with toothbrushing, I get so many people who reach out to me who are like, thank you for talking about this openly. Because it's like, you know, I think there's we hold so much shame around these certain behaviors without realizing what is at play in the background. Like why we struggle with mundane tasks, and why we struggle with things that don't have immediate rewards and how like tooth brushing is like the perfect example of one of those issues where it's like, it's incredibly boring, and it's incredibly mundane. And the only reason we're doing it is because we know we should, and we don't work really well with shoulds. And you know, and just sort of like being able to break down. Why there's nothing wrong with us, right? And to know that other people are struggling with that as well just feel so good. And just not to be like, Oh my god, I just always thought I was a horrible


 Laura Key 37:51

person. Do you do the thing where you're brushing your teeth, and you have to walk around and do other things while you're brushing your teeth?

 Katy Weber 37:57

I literally just posted that on Instagram today. I was like ADHD is ADHD is the uncontrollable urge to multitask during while you're brushing your teeth. Because it's true. Like, you know, and I the only way I can get my kids to brush their teeth is if we all do it together as a family but it's so funny because it's like we do it together and then you know or wander around the


upstairs while I yeah, I've got the two minute timer on my on my toothbrush I like we wander around and I like go around and feed the cats and open the windows and like I have this whole like routine of other things. I do that two minutes.

 Laura Key 38:30

What a good idea. I'm not modeling good behavior, or I'm kind of being a hypocrite with my daughter because I'm like, No, you can't brush your teeth in the kitchen. You can't brush like you. I'm setting these rules that I'm clearly breaking right in front of her all the time. Like you need to be in the bathroom and focus on. I need to okay, this is enlightening. I'm gonna maybe ease up on her a little bit on this front.

 Katy Weber 38:51

Well, I know well, it's funny because like, I wasn't diagnosed with my kids, as most women are it diagnosed in adulthood after their kids are diagnosed. I'm so you obviously weren't either. So I'm curious. Do you think your daughter has ADHD? She's seven, right?


 Laura Key 39:05

Yeah, she's seven. And I have a four year old son as well. So this so it's so interesting that you ask this because I'm I'm trying not to fall into the same traps that I myself fell into or that maybe my parents did. My daughter does really well in school. She's a hard worker. She ostensibly is very focused. She seems like she doesn't. I don't exhibit she's not showing any signs. But then sometimes I catch a little something here and there. And it makes me wonder. And so it's certainly something I'm keeping an eye on. You know, I have noticed maybe a little anxiety in her but we're early. I'm we're exploring right now. She's very open about talking about how she's feeling, which is a great thing. And so I'm just, I'm in the phase right now where I'm having open dialogue with her and I'm very open about my own diagnoses with her in a way that is appropriate for a seven year old. So she knows that mommy has ADHD she knows that mommy hosted podcasts about ADHD. I don't think she really understands what it is. And that's fine. But she hears the term and, and actually, one day she was talking to me about someone in her class and say, I think he might have ADHD. And that must be really hard for him. I was like, bless you. That's good. Let's talk about you. How are you doing? Yeah. But we're not there yet. Keeping an eye out.


 Katy Weber 40:20

Yeah, I'm in the same situation with my two kids, you know, my daughter, I'm actually getting the both finally tested, I found the right. You know, because of both of my kids, I have a 15 year old and an almost 11 year old. And it's a similar situation where I'm like, I see a lot of tendencies. But I also don't see them like struggling in the way that kids who are struggling are diagnosed. Right? So it's like they both do really, really well, in school, they're both, neither of them is disruptive. Neither of them is like, a, you know, be pulled aside by their teacher, like, you know, they don't have a lot of issues with like, not being able to sit still or like all of these stereotypes. But I also sort of feel like you said, like, I'm worried that I'm creating this, this


stereotype in myself where I'm like, well, they're doing fine. So why why treat it as opposed to like, under, you know, personally understanding how important it is to identify and feel validated by this diagnosis and the why. And also realizing that like, you know, at what cost, are they succeeding?

 Laura Key 41:24


Totally, yeah. Katie, parenting is so is so hard. It's so real. That's, you know, profound statement of the day. No one's ever said that, right? Because what I just described about about my daughter was how anyone would have described me growing up.

 Katy Weber 41:38

Exactly. I know, right, you kept talking about like, pull yourself up by the bootstraps, and like, be self reliant, and all of these things that end up kind of really affecting us and our anxiety in adulthood. And I'm like, I want to help my kids not develop that, you know, independent, self reliant, internalized, anxious, anxious personality, but I'm also like, I don't know how to stop that. Like, it's like a speeding train sometimes.


 Laura Key 42:03

Yeah, I feel that I really do. That's one thing that looking back, you were talking about with your report cards that you were feeling for that little girl? For me, I look back, and I think I wish I wouldn't have worked so hard. Because it sounds like you kind of sense if tell me if I'm wrong. Sounds like you kind of checked out of the things that weren't as interesting to you. For me. I tried. I pushed myself so hard. It was unhealthy. And I just don't want that to be my daughter.


 Katy Weber 42:29

Well, yeah, and that was kind of the tip off for me this year, because this is my daughter's first year of high school and like so much is, you know, it's so strange to be in school right now. Because the last couple of years have been so weird, you know, with hybrid, and they even started this year with masking. So I'm like really trying to think about, like, what is causing her anxiety and what is what is even normal. And it wasn't until she had I mean, she has always done incredibly well. And she missed a couple assignments in French and her French teacher was like, by the way your report cards are, you know, I put your grades in for your report card. And because you missed these assignments, you're only getting a 75. And when I was in high school, a 75 would have been like, Oops, that was amazing. But for her, right? She had it, she had a full on panic attack I had, she had to, she texted me I had to go pick her up from school because she didn't know how to process the fact that not only had she missed these assignments, and had just found out about it, because she didn't know she had missed them. But that like this was an you know, usually the teacher will like give you an A warning, you know, like, hey, you know, report cards are coming out soon you need to figure this out. But this teacher was like, by the way, I just put your grade and there's nothing you can do about it, you're trapped with this grade. And so she was just like, to her 75 as a kind of failure, which is a whole other issue. Right? But she had a panic attack. And that was a moment where I was like,


this is not healthy, like this, we need to really look into this. And that's when I decided like we're going to do the whole battery of the you know, all the the for our Woodcock Johnson and we're just going to do it all and but I had been really kind of putting it off because I didn't want to do it through the school because I don't feel like the school has necessarily a very nuanced view of ADHD. And I, I didn't want to just sort of have a half hour conversation with her pediatrician. Like, you know, the way I did what got my diagnosis, because I also feel like, there's so much at play here. It's not just obvious with either of my kids and yet, you know, I was like so I'm just gonna ignore it and put it off and not think about it. And then we had this moment where kind of came to a head where I'm like, I want to really figure out what's going on here, but it is like, it's really complicated.

 Laura Key 44:43


Yeah, was she open to that?

 Katy Weber 44:46

She has been wanting to get diagnosed for a while now because she also is like, I don't I want to know if it's ADHD or not. I want to know if it's anxiety or not. She's like really kind of wants to figure this out. And I think she saw Have me dragging my feet as me not caring. And so I really was open with her about like, No, believe me, I think obsessively over like, what is the right route to take. And the reason why I've been dragging my feet is because I don't want to fuck this up. Like, I want to make sure we do this right the first time and I feel like these other more traditional routes are not going to work for us. And I don't want somebody to say you don't have it, and then worry that they were wrong. You know what I mean? Like, I don't want to have that question. So I was like, but you know, when I started looking into these huge testing centers, like I was looking at once in Manhattan, they're like, \$7,000. Yeah, that's a thing that was sort of like, oh, maybe we'll make that decision later. So anyway, yeah. Long story short, ferrets, it's hard.


 Laura Key 45:46

It's hard. I wish you the best in that, that journey with with your daughter, but How lucky is she to have someone who's like advocating for her and, and is aware and, you know, when we were in high school sounds like, that wasn't really top of mind for us.


 Katy Weber 46:01

Right. And I think that was one of the things I also struggle with as a parent, which is like, my parents were very much like, it's fine. If you don't do well, in school, we don't really care, we just want to make sure you're happy. And we, you know, whatever. If you don't go to university, it's fine. We don't care. Like, they never pushed me. And now I look back. And I'm like, I really could have used a little help, I could have used a little more intervention, because I would just lie. And they'd be like, Hey, do you have homework? And I'd say no. And that was it, you know, and they never pushed it until my report cards came. And then, you know, they didn't even ask to see my report cards, usually. So but they kept them? Well, those are like the elementary


school ones, the high school ones, I don't think they had any evidence of that. But anyway, like, my point was, I as now looking back, I think I could have used I would have helped me feel better about myself and have a lot more confidence in myself, had I been pushed more. And had I had more help. And because I just grew up thinking I was stupid. And so now with my kids, I'm like, I want them to succeed. You know, and I want them because I know how good it feels to succeed. But I also don't want them to think that all I care about is them getting the a and I don't want them to have panic attacks when they get a 75. And I'm like, where's the where's the balance in all of that, right?

 Laura Key 47:17

Yeah, I need to go back to therapy, probably I, I do. I have both I have the same conversations in my own head. My family is amazingly organized. And like that they are very regimented, in a way not in like, my family is so much fun. My parents, my sister, my brother, but like very the most organized family you ever met. And I don't know, I've like put all this pressure on myself, right all the time. And, and we did stress good grades in my house. And I did play all the sports and I was on the college track and then that you know, anything else wasn't an option. But ultimately, it was like really me that maybe some learned behavior that I got from my parents, but I was putting pressure on myself constantly. And I never ever checked out.

 Katy Weber 48:04


And that's why I wonder like, how much of it is messages from the adults in our life versus how much of it's just like, what, what it's like to be a bright kid with incredibly high expectations of yourself and wanting to be good at literally everything. You know, that's the other thing I explored, like this emphasis on consistency that's always placed on us as kids, which is like you have to be good at everything, or else you're a failure.

 Laura Key 48:27

Right? Right.

 Katy Weber 48:29

So anyway, so I know red


 Laura Key 48:32

light topics. So like,


 Katy Weber 48:36

when I was diagnosed with ADHD, it completely turned my world upside down. I looked back at so much of my life, my grades in school, my multiple careers and hobbies, my friendships, my


marriage, motherhood, my relationship with food and my body like all of this with a new lens. And it was overwhelming to say the least. If you've been diagnosed with ADHD and you're feeling blown away by this new insight into your brain and how it operates, I totally understand I can help you begin to sort through this chaos, explore who you are and how your brain operates. So you can finally start to lean into your strengths and begin to use them to your advantage moving forward together we can work to identify what obstacles you've been facing and create strategies to help you start living a more fulfilling gratifying life head over to women in adhd.com/coaching to book a 30 minute initial consult with me so we can figure out if my brand of one on one coaching is right for you. Again, that's women and adhd.com/coaching and you can find that link in the episode show notes. So I want to get back to understood because understood is what is it like it's it's not I it's not a media company and it's not like a magazine and even the kind of description of understood as being like a nonprofit social impact. company like I always record and understood as well. It's always like one of my top five like websites to go down a Google rabbit hole for ADHD because there's so much great content there on ADHD. For listeners, like what exactly is understood as as a resource.

 Laura Key 50:15

Thank you so Understood, understood, or as you mentioned, it's a resource for the 70 million people with learning and thinking differences like ADHD and dyslexia. But we have a host of products and, and resources, it's word I keep using, where we're trying to reduce stigma, in people who learn to think differently, and people who do not learn and think differently. We also have, you know, resources, that aim to really build knowledge, change attitudes, and change behavior for people who learn and think differently. And, you know, we have a very broad mission, we, you know, it's a lot of people to try to serve. And we do it in all kinds of ways. I mean, one way is through our podcast network, and each of our podcasts is you know, is aimed at a different audience with a different goal. Another is our medium publication, which is called for by, that's a publication that's aimed at people who do not learn and think differently to bust myths and reduce stigma, around learning and thinking differences for people who don't have ADHD or don't have dyslexia. And we also have an app, we have an app called wonder, Wu, N D, E, R. That's for parents who are coping, and it offers tips and community, for parents of kids who learn and think differently. So understand is a lot of things. We are constantly testing with new products that can be helpful. We do a lot of user research. We do a lot, and we want to do a lot. And don't forget our website, I mean, the website was always our was our bread and butter. That's what we launched with. And that's where the bulk of the resources currently live. Well,

 Katy Weber 51:55

I think that's how I first discovered understood was because a lot of those questions that I Googled at the beginning of my journey, like, what is executive function, or what is rejection sensitive dysphoria, because you hear these things bandied about right, and then I'm like, what is that? And then, you know, the first thing that would always come up would be an article and understood,

 Laura Key 52:14

that gives me great pride, because I'm obsessed with search engine optimization, and

keywording. And so this is there was a lot of research on like, what are people looking for? What do people need? What can we create, like, what can we create that is written or filmed in a way that is as understandable as possible. Accessibility is really important for us. And one way that we do that is through the language that we use, we use a reading level tool to ensure that everything that we write is at an eighth grade reading level or below, because we know that a lot of people who have kids with dyslexia or ADHD might have dyslexia or ADHD themselves. So it's all about like, let's just make this super accessible, usable, easy to understand, what's the next step going to be in this process? What happens when I requested evaluation? What happens when I get an IEP? What happens when I get a 504? Plan? And is my child having a tantrum or a meltdown? I mean, we we try to break it down in the simplest but most effective possible way with expert advice.



Katy Weber 53:12

Well, it's working. And just to backtrack, the you said the medium is, so it's four slash bi. I'll have a link to that in the show notes. But medium is what is made a medium is a blog network, right?



Laura Key 53:25

Yeah, medium is a network where, where folks can publish their own content. So yeah, like it's similar. It's like a blogging network. And they have a really awesome platform where you can actually create a publication and people can contribute to your publication. So the publication is called four by four slash by and we noticed that on medium there were so many writers who were writing about dyslexia and ADHD, and we wanted to provide a platform where, and we wanted to pay them for their stories. You know, it's not a huge fee. But we believe that people deserve to be paid to share their stories on our platform and have one place where people can find a whole bevy of information from writers with dyslexia, with ADHD with dyscalculia, etc.



Katy Weber 54:10

Amazing. I'm a big fan, and I really am so grateful that you came and shared your personal story. And what are you noticing in terms of this? The conversation around ADHD? Like, how has it changed in the last 10 years?



Laura Key 54:25

Oh, in the last 10 years,



Katy Weber 54:27

or since you've been diagnosed, what have you noticed?



Laura Key 54:31

 Laura Key 54:51

Well, more people are talking about it. I'm still seeing a lot of stigma. A lot of self stigma, especially from women. Women are really hard on themselves when it comes to ADHD. I've noticed but I'm also seeing a lot of women being more open to the possibility of ADHD and looking at a diagnosis as Oh, a lot of things make sense. Now. The themes that have been emerging from the interviews I do on ADHD AHA have been really cool to observe like, and I'm sure you see this all the time. You hear this all the time hosting your show? But like, what was the aha moment? Oh, you had two aha moments, you had one when you were a kid, you probably didn't do anything about it, or the people in your life, maybe didn't do anything about it. And then you hit a, you hit a block as an adult. And you're like, Oh, that was that thing that I dealt with a long time ago. Now I'm going to deal with it for real. So just a lot of reflecting I think ADHD is starting to come into perspective more for a lot of folks.



Katy Weber 55:29

You just reminded me like how, you know, I talk a lot about the grief of nobody seeing the signs and nobody realizing what was going on as a kid in the 80s. But I think about all the women who I've heard stories where they, you know, said to their parents, like, did anyone ever was this ever on anybody's radar? And the parents were like, oh, yeah, we were told you have ADHD, we just, you know, didn't think it was a big deal. Or we didn't want to medicate you or all the reasons why the parents like dismissed it. And you're like, oh, that's got to be a whole other level of grief.



Laura Key 55:58

I had a guy on my show, his name is Kevin. And it's the only it's one of the only episodes where I broke from my titling format. I called it surprise you have ADHD? Because he was he was like at Disney World, or Epcot or something with his family. And they were walking around and something happened. And his mom was like, oh, yeah, I know. You had ADHD. You have ADHD. You were supposed to be on medication. He was. Kevin was 23 years old. And he was like, Mom, why didn't you tell me? I've been struggling. I mean, he was so sweet about it. He was laughing. I was like, Does that bother you? I was like that. That's all right. So everybody handles it a different way. I guess. I guess.



Katy Weber 56:31

All right. All right. Well, thank you again, Laura. It's been such a pleasure to hear your story on your and vent about parenting for a little bit.



Laura Key 56:40

And then my gosh, yes. Thank you so much, Katie. Yeah, keep doing what you're doing. I feel part of the club with you. And inspired by, by you, and by your show. So thank you so much.



Katy Weber 56:51



Oh, thank you. And there you have it. Thank you for listening. And I really hope you enjoyed this episode of the women and ADHD podcast. Also, you know, we ADHD ears crave feedback. And I would really appreciate hearing from you the listener. If you're a fan of the podcast, please take a moment to leave me a review on Apple podcasts or audible. And if that feels like too much, and I get it, then just take a few seconds right now to give me a five star rating. Or share this episode on your own social media to help reach more women who maybe have yet to discover and lean into this gift of neurodivergent. See, and they may still be struggling and don't even know why. And if you'd like to find out more about me and my one on one coaching for women with ADHD, head over to [womenandadhd.com/coaching](https://www.womenandadhd.com/coaching) and you can always find that link in the show notes. I'll see you next week when I interview another amazing woman who discovered that she is not lazy or crazy or broken. But she has ADHD and she is now on the path to understanding her neurodiversity and finally using this gift to her advantage. Take care till then