Elizabeth Brink: Growing up with ADHD

Mon, 9/20 8:30AM - 54:31

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

adhd, people, feel, enclave, coaching, women, motherhood, diagnosed, life, talking, kids, realizing, diagnosis, mom, hear, neurobiology, doubling, figuring, community, postpartum

SPEAKERS

Elizabeth Brink, Katy Weber

Katy Weber 00:00

Thanks again for joining me, Elizabeth. And you are my first guest who was actually diagnosed in childhood. And but I'm still very excited to talk to you about that diagnosis and how it has sort of evolved for you in various stages in womanhood and motherhood. But usually, I always ask my guests, you know, when did you first think you had ADHD and this was and what led you to your diagnosis is going to be a very different story for you. But they've talked me through how, you got your diagnosis, and when that was,

Elizabeth Brink 00:34

yeah, so thanks for having me. So I yeah, I was diagnosed as a kid around the age of nine in fourth grade. My mom felt like for a kid, as bright as she felt like I was, I was not getting grades that reflected that. And then she was constantly being spoken to by teachers about my talkativeness. And so I think she just started to wonder, like, What is going on? I'm one of five, I'm one of the fourth of five kids. So she had been around the block a few times. And so she really advocated for me, and that was in the late 80s, when you know, there just wasn't a lot of diagnosis happening. Definitely not a lot of girl diagnoses happening. And so I was diagnosed a DD combined type at that point, as a child, and I took Ritalin for a couple of years, and they told my mom, hey, she can learn to control it, and she will probably outgrow it. So as I got into middle school, I was like, I don't want to go to the office and the weird kids who take meds like, I don't want to do it anymore. They said I could outgrow it. And so and there was other like big family stuff going on. So it was like, okay, you don't have to take them. So basically, I had like create, I hit my mom had helped me set up these few strategies for managing my ADHD. But I didn't know that's what they were for necessarily. So I always grew up with this awareness that like, Oh, I have this add diagnosis, but I didn't really have any idea what it meant. I definitely didn't understand anything about the neurobiology or about the coexisting, you know, sensory sensitivity, and for me anxiety. And so I made it through high school somehow by the skin of my teeth. And as I got into adulthood, I moved to Boston, I was I was growing up in Texas, I moved to Boston. And I went through this period of time where I was unemployed, and I was working part time as an assistant to one of like, the original ADHD coaches, Nancy rady, and I was watching her have coaching calls with clients. And I was like, I think I still have this. I think that that is why my car looks like it does. And it was kind of this whole, like, um, hold on, what is reality. So at that point, I was right around 30. And I actually went and saw a psychiatrist to talk it through who like, verified for me, still a thing. And so, you know, it really, for me, I do relate a lot to the late diagnosis club, because there's so much about having been diagnosed as a child in the time period that I was diagnosed. And I hear this from other individuals as well, that there was just so much less known about how to support us and how to
educate us about ourselves. So a lot of us actually made it to adulthood, not realizing that a whole lot of the stuff going on in our lives was from this thing that we had heard about, you know, as a kid. So that’s really so I came to it. And then about seven or eight years later, I late in my 30s started a family. And I had three miscarriages before I had two kids 16 months apart. And you know, pushing 40 that was a, I don’t want to say traumatic because I love my kids. And it was a great experience in some regards. But I had this breaking moment after my son, my second child was born, where I just felt like something’s really wrong with me. I don’t know what it is, but something is really wrong. And so I started seeing a therapist who specialized in women and their childbearing years. And she validated so much about my experience in terms of the weightiness of everything I had lost and gone through. But it at some point in there dawned on me that I think I started talking to other women who had ADHD and had young kids. And it was like a few of my friends and they were also saying, like me that they didn’t like, the little gears like they don’t like babies. And I was like, me, either. Is this like, the dirty secret of motherhood is that like, people don’t actually like babies. And then I realized, no, the common denominator here was these were all women with ADB that were telling me they didn’t like the baby time and so it just like blew open this whole thing for me. This was now like a couple of years ago, where I thought this is, this is a thing, something’s going on here. And so at that point, I began to really dig in again to the ADHD. So it was like these three stages of life when a lot of people are diagnosed. And, and realizing, you know, my overwhelming motherhood was largely connected to my ADHD and it just made me feel like, why isn’t anyone talking to me about this? There’s so much out there for parents, parenting kids with ADHD, but nobody’s talking to me about mom, what’s going on with me as a person. So that’s my diagnosis story is long. And there’s like stages of it. But I do think that that happens to a lot of people, even when they’re diagnosed later, where you just evolve, the more you learn, the more your life stage.

Katy Weber 05:54

shifts. And I think there’s also generally this feeling when you have ADHD, like, it was staring at me all along, I just never really saw it until now. Moments with a lot of things like for instance, you know, I had two older brothers, my mother taught them both to cook, but she never taught me to cook. And so I always remember being like, angry at her being like, why did he teach me to cook, I can’t do anything, I have no life skills. And she was like, well, I just I was teaching you, you know, you know, I was teaching her the same way. I was teaching them sort of just through as Moses, it’s not like I took them aside and gave them private lessons. But you know, I was sort of now looking back realizing how much of that like how much we need to be told in a very specific way about things. And so it can feel like, in retrospect, you’re like, Oh, yeah, it was there all along. But I just needed it to be you know, that I needed the angle of the light a little differently for it to really like hit home. And I think, oh, my goodness, I resonate with that so much about the the little years, because you’re still you’re still kind of in the thick of it. Right? Your kids are young. Yeah, yeah, mine are nine and 13. And I feel like I’m just like, finally getting that time to breathe. And I have such empathy for women who have levels because especially during a lockdown and a pandemic. But I think, you know, when you go through that trauma, the trauma, the trauma of motherhood, there’s an overwhelming sense of obligation to feel gratitude, you know, and, and so I think we, as mothers tend to, like, really hide those moments that we are miserable, because we’re supposed to be and I imagine, even, you know, imagine when you were going through miscarriages, that’s even amplified, that feeling of like, now I have these children, I should always 100% be grateful for the fact that I have these children. And I can’t really share the fact that no, there’s actually a lot about mother, Oh, that’s really hard. And that is, is miserable.

Elizabeth Brink 07:53

Yeah, you know, it’s interesting, because I felt like once I had a healthy pregnancy, I did feel like, oh, now I’m on the other side of this fence. But I relate so much more to the women in the circles of the infertility circles that I was in. And I think a big part of that is that I grew up with kind of a long narrative throughout the course of my life of suffering and sorrow and grief. And so grief is actually really comfortable for me. And familiar. And so when I got to this place of like, now there should be joy. And instead, I had really anxiety I had a ton of anxiety with my firstborn,
and was scared of her was just like when she's crying again, or don't leave me if she cries, I don't know what like, and I knew what to do. Like, my mom ran a daycare and my home growing up and I worried for her for a long time, I actually do know how to take care of kids better than some people. But there was something about it for me that that combination of ADHD and anxiety and hormones definitely landed me in this place of this is not at all what I thought it was going to be like and I can't believe I don't like it because I really spent so much time longing to meet someone to have a family with and then grieving these losses and hoping for this. And I'd seen other people go through it and and not look like they were having a hard time or sad, you know, and see them kind of like just rejoicing in this life every day. And I was like, I don't know, if this is like an issue with my character. If this is my heart, if this is me, like what is this that I am like, I want to get away from you. I would like someone else to take care of you please. I also you know had kids late so I had a whole career and a long time as an adult single and I so that whole like death to myself in marriage and then in motherhood was really disorienting for me and because The ADHD I now think like you were saying, you look back on these things, I think that's a lifelong process of, like re seeing yourself in your past even from last week, where you're like, oh, yeah, that was the ADHD, or like that piece of it, you know, like that just, I feel like that happens to me every day or something like comes back into view. And that season of adjusting to marriage and motherhood and just grown up life, and kind of like laying down some of my own individualism. For me with ADHD, it was really overwhelming. Because, again, we have so many thoughts, and so many ideas, and so many, you know, I should be looking into this, I should research this, I couldn't hyper focus on any one thing, because there were too many of them. And so it just created the swirling stress of like, I need to learn how to take care of this little person, I need to figure out how to be a wife and take care of a house and have a job. And it just, you know, I couldn't just like be all in on one thing, googling late into the night. It's like, move to the next subject. So I send to people I feel like I'm in an intensive grad program. Never been in one, but I'm pretty sure this is what it's like, like med school or something. And it was just like, my grown up life. Yeah, I

Katy Weber 11:23

think that's one thing. I'm realizing from so many women who were diagnosed this year, I was diagnosed this year, I call it the pandemic diagnoses locked down, whatever you want to call it, figuring out why so many of us had this realization, or why it was important to us even you know, because I've had been suggested to me for years, by my own therapist that I had ADHD, it was just and I was sort of like, oh, haha, I can't find my keys or whatever, you know, like, it really didn't like hit home the way it did, as now. And I think, you know, there's so much of what you said about that feeling of like, we were able to compartmentalize our lives in certain ways. With the kids go, you know, we were able to take the kids go to school, and we had the job, and we had time frames, and we need these containers. And when all of those containers were gone, and all of a sudden, everybody was home together the same, you know, and it was just like, there were no all the moving parts were together in this one swarm, you know, and I feel like we use these metaphors, we use anything that involves like a spiral, or a tornado or a swarm, like you know, because we aren't able to, like grasp at these things and and find that focus that we need, there's just so much happening. And that was another really interesting realization for me recently was just how many issues I have with sensory auditory processing that I'd never would have said, I had sensory issues, you know, or, and it's something that we as parents notice a lot more in children. It's not anything that was talked about when I was a kid. But now looking back and realizing that a lot of why we struggled with babies is auditory related.

Elizabeth Brink 13:12

Yeah, if I had known that I would have enlisted ear plugs a lot earlier. Right? I would have said, I can hold a screaming baby. And if I have earplugs in it muffs it enough that like, my body feels safe, but I didn't know that. So it just sent my nervous system into a tailspin.
Katy Weber  13:29
I think we're also addicted to feeling like we have to do things on our own, you know, or even with that, that kind of hack. There's like a fine line between finding hacks and then crutches, you know, and, and I think we can be very, we can really beat ourselves up about things where we feel like we have to be authentic, and we feel like we have to do things authentically. And we have to do things. Whole hog. And, you know, I love that that. I think it's actually from Parks and Rec, that idea of like, I don't do anything half ass. It's either whole ass or no ass.

Elizabeth Brink  14:04
Yeah. Because last night, I was having this discussion with the women in the Enclave, which is this online community that I helped Brian and we were talking about self trust, and confidence. And one of the women was saying, you know, we're we are rewarded for appearing to have confidence. So if you look like you trust yourself, and like you're sure of your decisions, or your opinions are whatever, you know, society rewards that and people will offer you up, trust, they will trust you, if you present yourself in a way that seems sure. And so, unfortunately, for those of us with ADHD, you know, we went through our childhood feeling like we were the least trustworthy person in the world. I can't trust myself. I should not trust myself is all the messaging I'm getting externally and internally. But then at the same time, I need to look like I trust myself. And I need to act like I do so that other people will trust me and give me a shot, so that I won't be left out or set aside or forgotten. And that is so toxic. And I find that so many of the women that I work with are carrying such deep shame over the fact that they cannot be self sufficient. saying things like, I don't want to have too need as much as I need. I don't want to have to need help, I don't want to be needy. But no one is self sufficient. No one, but we as a culture have kind of created this environment. And this standard that makes it look like like it is possible. And like it is something that we should all be trying to, you know, grasp for. And it's just a trap. I think it's a total trap for those of us who are high performers and want to do well, and are driven. And then we hear these messages of like, yeah, you should be driven, you should go after it. But you're probably gonna slip and fall, or you're probably gonna forget something important. And so don't trust yourself to like, totally do it. So it's just this constant internal dialogue that's like, I'm out here and doing this risky thing. This feels kind of good. But also, I'm sure I'm going to fall on my face. So there's no way I should talk about this with any kind of, you know, any kind of positivity or any kind of like anything that might be construed as arrogance, because I will have to, like, you know, eat dirt later.

Katy Weber  16:40
You know, it's funny. I speak with so many women who were diagnosed, and we all sort of share that grief, and that resentment about not having the diagnosis in our childhood, you know, either like who Why didn't anybody see this? I would have done so much better in school? No, I would have I would have talked to myself better. I mean, just so many ways in which you can kind of, it's incredibly freeing and enlightening to look back at your life with this new lens and think, Oh, this is so great. But at the same time there is that accompanying sense of kind of anger and frustration. And often I've heard women who just say like, I want to go back and give that girl a hug. And, but it's interesting to hear your perspective, too, because it almost feels like even had, you know, and, you know, there's so many of these things that we fall prey to as women just in society and the way in which our personalities then react to stressors in society and roles in our life that it's, you know, even with the recognition or even with the knowledge that you had ADHD as a child, you still sort of had a very similar trajectory.

Elizabeth Brink  17:53
Yeah, and I think that that is, in large part because I'm a girl, you know, I mean, I think that that's a big part of it. But yeah, I think that I tell people that all the time, like a childhood diagnosis, but doesn't mean the same thing. Now a childhood diagnosis like for someone who is in their 20s right now. Maybe in their early 30s, a childhood diagnosis
might have made a little bit more of a difference just in terms of where society was with information about ADHD. But once you start getting like people in their 30s, onward, saying, I wish I had known, you know, growing up, I just didn’t like, Yeah, well, then the school systems would need to know, and the parents would need to know, and the neighbors and, you know, your friends, they would all need to understand neurodiversity. And that just is like, it’s we’re still not there, right? So your life experience may not have been that different. In fact, in some sense, you know, knowing that I was different. I kind of put myself in a, in a place of like, I’m never going to be whatever fill in the blank never going to be that smart. I’m never going to be in that class or go to that school or have that experience. And I think that held me back some because it was like, this stuff is hard for me. I know that I have to study with fan on you know, I have no i need to do these certain things. I know I have a hard time keeping my room clean. So I’m gonna have tension with roommates. And instead of just like living my life, you know, so it’s like, it doesn’t matter like blind it or not that information shapes kind of how that information or that lack of a kind of shapes how you move through the world, but it doesn’t necessarily mean that one is going to be a positive experience. I wonder

Katy Weber  19:41
with the younger generation I you know, I think that one thing they benefit from, that we didn’t have growing up was a sense of

19:54
the lack of

Katy Weber  19:55
stigma around around therapy around just generally asking for help you know, Like, I feel like we’ve talked about that we’ve touched on that theme a bit in our conversation already, just how difficult it is to ask for help, and how difficult it is to ask for support, when it really is the one thing we need the most, especially community and support. But because we as women struggle so much with wanting to be perfect, and get this done and appear perfect, and I think that’s something I hope the younger generation really is free from any stigma around, you know, getting all the tools, the mental health tools you need. You know, I remember somebody recently was saying like, that this, they’re the mental health generation, you know, in terms of really like, yeah, just, you know, there’s no fault in, in, in recognizing deficiencies, or I feel like, that’s not the best word, but just realizing that there’s, you know, ways in which you need to pull in from other places, and to make you a whole person. And I certainly felt like, since my diagnosis, I really, you know, one thing I’ve seen a lot of and recognize in myself was how important it was to immediately binge listen to podcasts and join as many Facebook groups as possible and follow as many people as possible. That sense of not only feeling recognized and feeling validated, and feeling like oh my God, for the first there’s this whole community that’s existing, that sees me and validates me and understands what I’m going through. But then also once the once the newness of all that dies down, really kind of embracing how important community and support is. So I feel like that’s a good segue to talk about the ag enclave, and how did you get involved in it? And I’m like this close to joining.

Elizabeth Brink  21:48
So yeah, so I, I started coaching, so I’m an ADHD coach for women. And I do work with a lot of moms, but I have clients that are not moms too. And I really had this vision of I want to run groups, I want to I love group dynamics. And when I was in that early, I know I’m still in early motherhood, but in the very beginning part of motherhood. When I was kind of coming out of the fog after having my son, I went and was a part of a small like postpartum
moms group that was run by a social worker, and there are only six of us in it. My son was about 14 months. So I, at that point, when I was thinking, like, something’s really wrong with me, I felt like I couldn’t still be postpartum. Like, I just somehow didn’t have the context of like, nope, you’re postpartum for, like 18 months, at least in terms of the medical community’s opinion. So when I went through that group program, I found the space to just breathe, and to just like, think about myself for a minute and think about like, my emotions, and how I was moving through my day. And it didn’t necessarily change any of my habits or anything. And that wasn’t the point. But it was so restorative and healing, that as I was started coaching, I was like, I have got to do things like that, like that is the kind of healing that I want for the moms and the women with ADHD out there flailing around who were feeling like I was feeling. And so I connected with Liz Lewis, who created the Enclave, I connected with her on Instagram. And you know, we’d message back and forth occasionally. And I was just kind of like, man, I really like what she has built over there. I don’t want to compete against her. I. And so anyway, somehow, through it, I started running some groups on my own. Last year, I ran this like three week program called thrive group with ADHD moms, and just kind of teaching them like, this is what’s going on with your neurobiology. This is what’s going on with your emotions. And here’s how you can know if all that stuff you’re reading and watching is going to actually work for you. Because I just kept talking to women who are like, I’ve attended all these free webinars, I’ve read all these things, you know, I’ve got all these books earmarked. But I still can’t figure out how to get myself up in the morning before my kids wake up. Like, okay, those things are not going to fix all of your problems, right? But learning yourself and getting to know you is going to help you try things in a way that’s smarter for you. And so I just started to feel really passionately about teaching women to coach themselves and that’s something that my former boss and now mentor, Nancy rady is really passionate about. She has a book about self coaching. And so I was doing all this self coaching stuff over here and Liz is doing community building and research and I said, You know, I really like what you have going on. And she said, I’ve been kind of thinking I maybe need a partner that was like, please.

25:02
So it’s

Elizabeth Brink 25:02
super exciting. I feel like it was serendipitous. We just, I just joined in, like in October of last year kind of came on and said, okay, like, let’s do this. So it has been one of the best things I’ve done in terms of my professional endeavors, but also in supporting women and connecting with them. So we meet twice a week. And but there’s like a entry level membership. That’s like $35 a month, and you can be in the community online with us, you can come body double with us. And we do special events. And then there are these, these other two memberships that include meetings, and every week, we come up with a theme, and we talk about it online, we talk about it in the meetings this week, we’re talking about self trust. Last week, it was criticism. And it’s just been an awesome experience having these women just show up and be vulnerable and let us into the mess and say, Hey, like I want to feel better. I want to want to know me better. Yeah. So that’s what it is. I just, it is so special, it is multi generational. The women are in all different kinds of seasons and stages, all different parts of the world. And you know, some have jobs, some are home with their kids. It’s just such an interesting, diverse mix of people that I find that hugely valuable.

Katy Weber 26:29
You know, it’s funny, I’ve worked with puzzle solvers. And we love puzzles. And I think there’s nothing more puzzling than ourselves. I feel like I’ve come to realize recently, which was how, you know, people have hobbies, like knitting, and painting. And my hobby was always just like, figuring out me. Me endlessly fascinating. I always felt very, like, ashamed about that in in some way. And I feel like I could be very open about that. Because we all share that excitement and enthusiasm about figuring out ourselves and then figuring out each other because we have that
empathy for anyone who struggles. I think we have we have much more empathy for anyone who, you know, ends up in that feeling of like, I don’t nobody gets me or, you know, why does this not make sense to me when it seems like it’s making sense to everybody else? And so you mentioned body doubling. And so how, talk to me about body doubles, because I actually don’t think I really talked much about it with any of my other interviews that have aired yet. And I know it’s a big thing in the ADHD community, and then talk to me about body doubling, but then also sort of how that is separate from just the Enclave or the community aspect, because they are really kind of two different things.

Elizabeth Brink  27:49

Well, it’s so it’s a part of what we do. And there are a lot of people, a lot of coaches and organizations that do body doubling. So the idea around body doubling is like, when I was a kid, and my room was a disaster, my mom would be like, go clean your room, and it was a disaster. So I was gonna be instantly overwhelmed, if she came and stood at the door. While I was supposed to be cleaning my room, even if she was doing something else, even if she was reading a book, I could clean my room, I needed the company, I needed somebody to sit nearby, I didn’t need them to police me, or tell me how to do anything, but I just needed to not be by myself. And I didn’t understand that until way into adulthood. And the idea is it anchors you so the individual with ADHD, you know, our our mind wanders, and it doesn’t just wander into like the cloud, it wanders into, especially if you are a mom, it wanders into the never ending to do list that is, you know, knocking at the door all the time. And, and so it can mean that you have all these impulses to do something else that is important, but is not what you’re doing right now. So the body doubling kind of enables you to anchor yourself and to say, you know, it’s on video. So it’s like we’re in the room together, we’re muted, but we check in at the beginning, we say what are you working on, and you don’t have to say what you’re working on. And you don’t have to do what you said you were going to do. But what we have found in the ADHD community is that by and large, the majority of people when they tell someone else what they’re going to do and that other person is kind of nearby, they do it. It is the craziest psychological thing. And then and then at the end of it, we come back together and feel it how to go and so this morning I had a bunch of like business finance stuff I needed to do, I did not want to do and so I just posted in the Enclave and was like I’m going to do a pop up by doubling anybody want to join me this morning. And I had several other members join me one was like cleaning your desk. One was cleaning her kitchen, but you know just like doing things that and it was Little bit of chitchat because it was a little bit more low key today. But it is so effective in kind of anchoring you to your task and to someone else. And to not feel alone. I have a client that actually found a YouTube video of somebody working at their computer. It’s a video of this person working. And she puts it up. And she said, it works for her brain that he feels like someone’s working.

Katy Weber  30:24

My daughter does the same thing. She found a YouTube loop of like an anime character working at a desk with this like beautiful kind of, you know, Totoro esque music, and that she uses that what to study? I that’s fascinating. I never thought of that I’ve ever even made that connection that that was that’s body level. Yeah,

Elizabeth Brink  30:42

that’s body doubling. Yeah. So we, we do it almost every day of the week now where I think like six days a week different times. And we just kind of get together and people work on whatever, whenever they want. And some of the women are retirement age, and they are, you know, writing greeting cards or tidying up their house, or just reading but just like the company like, especially in the pandemic, so it’s kind of lovely, it’s, it’s like having the nicest co workers. And because it’s within the Enclave, it’s people who you’re interacting with, and you’re getting to know them
a little bit here and there through these, like, quick little interactions too. So it's, it's less intimidating for some people, because it's not just this, like, I'm the login and the stranger is gonna judge what I'm working on. It's, you know, hopefully feels a little safer. Yeah, you

Katy Weber  31:37

know, so many of us are entrepreneurs, and I realized now why, you know, we have a very difficult time working for other people. And yet, there have been so many times during this pandemic, with my, with my children, homeschooling, remote learning, sorry, not homeschooling. You know, so many times where I've struggled, where I've said to myself, like, God, I wish I had a nine to five job, I wish I could go and shut the door and just do something. Because it's so difficult, you know, you put yourself last always as a mother. And so as a mother and an entrepreneur, everything comes last to the you know, cleaning and cooking and helping the kids and everything else. So it's been so difficult to find that structure and find that time. And the, it's, it's like, we struggle so much with, with, you can't work nine to five, because it's really difficult to work for somebody else. So we end up being entrepreneurs, but at the same time, as entrepreneurs, it is so difficult to have that accountability that you need, you know, because you could do it any time, but really, who's gonna know if you're gonna post today or tomorrow, you know, like, so you just leave it off, and you leave it up and, and having, I think, you know, recognizing how much we need structure and how much we need those time containers. And like the pattern planning was the, you know, I'd never heard of that until a couple months ago. And it's been life changing. And again, it's one of those things where I sort of feel like, well, maybe other people knew about that, like, it's kind of straightforward, but for me, I just needed the light to change a little bit and to just have the light bulb go off. So, but I, you know, it, I think it is such an, it's so simple and so profound. And I love the fact that there are communities in which people can feel comfortable doing it, because I think there is a real, at least for me, there's a there was a real like, block for that. And you'll probably notice, like, when you were talking about it, I smelled really big when you said you don't even have to do that thing that you said you're gonna do, because I was like, that's my fear is like, I'm gonna, you know, do this thing. And then I end up down a rabbit hole and, and so I'm gonna feel bad about that, because that's what always happens. I love there's a freedom like lucky try.

Elizabeth Brink  33:49

And sometimes, I mean, we have ADHD. So sometimes we just blurt out whatever on the spa, like, I'm gonna clean up my desk. And then we're sitting here looking at our desk, and we're like, that's the thing I really need to be working on. And we like, go do that thing. Like a lot of people will call it procrastinate it like you're procrastinating on something by doing something that's technically productive. But I actually think that there's a place for progressivity, I think that sometimes it's just that we don't know what we need to do or what we want in the moment. And we're also always trying to figure out our energy and our brain space. And so yeah, there are a lot of times we try to apply ourselves to a task and then we're like, this is actually not going to work right now. And so the more we can make places that are safe for people to just be themselves, just show up as yourself, be yourself. The better like the the freer we're all going to feel the more in control we're all going to feel the more that we can accept ourselves. And I have to say about the body doubling. My husband does not have ADHD, but he regularly wants me to come and stand in the kitchen while he's like doing the dishes or whatever. So there is something in our humaneness that, you know, that isolation of just always plugging along on our own. While it sounds so wonderful as a overwhelmed working mom, sometimes I love to do anything by myself. There's also something to be said for having the companionship of somebody whether they're talking to you or not. And so it's a really effective strategy. And it's not just for people with ADHD. But those of us with ADD really benefit.

Katy Weber  35:30
Yeah, you reminded me of what they used to drive me crazy. My husband also does not have ADHD and I got a post recently about, you know, having support, and how I think you know, how wonderful it is to have a supportive partner, and how we tend to value that support so much that we forget what we brought to the relationship. And I think that’s something that we struggle with a lot. And I’ve been making a lot of realizations about. But one thing I used to do, that would drive me crazy when my kids were young is like, I would go out and have free time. And he would text me the whole time that I was out being like the kids crying, you know, the kid, his kid won’t go to sleep the kid and I was like, I don’t just realize like that, that’s like, his own version of having me stand there with him.

36:23
That is a violation.

Katy Weber 36:26
You know, I very quickly told him, I was like, you know, I turned my phone off like, No, I can’t stand that. He’s like, I just needed to, like, tell someone into the

Elizabeth Brink 36:37
universe that I’m not okay.

Katy Weber 36:41
So that, so there’s the community kind of subscription. But then there’s quite a jump to the next level, which is then like peer coaching, and a little more organized. What is that next level for the

Elizabeth Brink 36:53
next level is the the meeting. So the collaborative group, we meet twice a week, so we meet on Monday nights and on Thursday evenings, and they have kind of their own area within the Enclave where they can connect with one another. And in those meetings, we do some group coaching, we do some peer coaching, where people will kind of chime in and interact with one another. And we explore these topics together toward growing. Occasionally we’ll do a book together. I should say, occasionally, they will do a book together, because that’s my counterpart, Liz is like, just an avid reader. And I’m like, great, that is your lane. You don’t have to worry about me swerving into it. So yeah, so that is that next level of just being able to like really dig in, in a more meaningful way than just the online discussions.

Katy Weber 37:51
So many of us struggle with female relationships. It seems to be a common theme with women and ADHD, and always feeling like, yeah, I have friends. But I always sort of feel as though I’m a terrible friend. And I don’t have like friend groups. And I’ve never felt felt connected with that, you know, those girlfriends who go out every Friday night or whatever, like, I’ve never had those and everybody’s feels like, my friends don’t know each other. I don’t know what
the difficulties are. There’s so many of them. So I find it interesting that there’s a juxtaposition of sort of always feeling lonely and always feeling meeting that need for connection intensely. And yet not getting it or somehow always feeling like you’re at fault or you’re not very good at it.

Elizabeth Brink 38:44
Well, I think we also we have a history of trauma, where we have wanted that connection, and we’ve done a lot of things to try and get that connection. And then we’ve been hurt because we didn’t do something right, or somebody did something that hurt us, intentionally or unintentionally. And we’ve just found ourselves often I think, in environments where we don’t feel safe to really be ourselves. And, you know, for me to be your friend, you have to be okay with the fact that you might not hear from me for a while. And then you might randomly hear from me and it will be like an SOS things are like not okay, I need somebody to respond to me right now. And for the people that love me and know me. They, they have learned to dance with me they’ve learned to like be in relationship with me in a way that benefits both of us and so that you know that piece of it of like being in relationship with women. Yes, it’s complicated. My very best friend does not have ADHD. And when we were in our early 20s I tried to break up with her was like, I’ve done all these bad things I’m sure you’re gonna judge me for and so goodbye. She was like, What is wrong with you? Are you trying to break up with me? You’re not getting rid of me. And I’ve known her since seventh grade when I cussed her out. In front of a bunch of people. So this is the kind of love and friendship that we are worthy of being seen and known even in our crazy hurtful mess. And I want the women in the Enclave to have that with one another. And to feel that from Liz and I, and I think it’s possible I’m seeing it happen. But I do think that what I’m hearing is a lot of women there have never had an experience where they’ve been in an environment where they can actually be honest about what they’re thinking and feeling or what they did or didn’t do. And so it is, it’s a process of like, coming to yourself and letting yourself be seen. So it’s not really about connection as much as it is about vulnerability, and being seen and known and deeply wanting that. But also being terrified and not knowing how to do it quite frankly.

Katy Weber 40:55
right. All of these all those boxes, check check. I’m you know, I meant to ask you also, you mentioned that you had tried Ritalin when you were younger, do you do take any medication as an adult?

Elizabeth Brink 41:07
I do. Yes. I take Adderall as an adult. And, you know, I go back and forth about like, will I be on this forever? Maybe? I don’t know. I don’t really care. It works for now.

Katy Weber 41:21
And what do you say works? What is it helping with, um,

Elizabeth Brink 41:26
I would say postpartum it helped with the overwhelm of the sensory overwhelm a lot more than I even knew was going on. Yeah, it helps me follow through and do the thing that I want to do, or I said I was going to do, it’s not perfect. It’s not a cure. I had a friend say to me once like her that her meds help her to focus and she was like, but I
can focus on eating a bag of carrots. And like no truer statement you can focus on for me be like a bag of chocolate chips, but you can focus on that and use up all that brainpower. But I find it helps me to not get swept up in every passing thought that comes up of like, I must do that now. So I don’t have to, like grab every impulse to fix the things or do the next thing when I was younger. It helped me to hold my tongue to not like impulsively blurt things out or say things that would come off. rude. So but as a mom, and as a working mom, I feel like it helps me stick to my to do list.

Katy Weber  42:32

Yeah, that’s interesting, you know, I, I was on antidepressants for postpartum depression and anxiety with both of my kids. And so now with this diagnosis, I look back at those times in my life where I was given an SSRI. And then the second time around, I was then also without didn’t seem to be doing anything. I was then getting on Wellbutrin and on top of it, but you know, realizing now that a lot of that depression and anxiety was was sleep deprivation, interfering with my ability, natural ability to regulate my emotions, and chronic overwhelm. And now I like that, you know, I didn’t experience postpartum depression, a lot of the ways that they say, you know, that they kind of define it as being like that sense of being despondent or wanting to hurt yourself or hurt your child, like none of those things I ever experienced. But I just also felt like, the medication gave me the ability to cope, you know, I always sort of felt like it was like, I just kept my head down and would tunnel through and get through things and not just want to, like, you know, a plate breaks, and I’m on the floor on a, in a pile crying. And now I look back, and I’m just like, oh, man, that was all. I just made a good night’s sleep. Not to downplay PVD. Or, I mean, the medication was literally a lifesaver for me. But it’s so interesting. Now looking back with this lens of like, what, what else would have worked at the time, or what was really going on underneath the surface there?

Elizabeth Brink  44:04

Yeah, and that’s such a common story, you know, like, most women are diagnosed around, like major hormonal events. So you’ll see, you know, young girls, as they get onto the other side of puberty will get diagnosed and then postpartum or during pregnancy, and then around menopause. So, you know, our hormones have this enormous effect on our ADHD. I mean, the edge. It’s huge, but our hormones also have an enormous effect on our mental health. It’s like almost entirely managed by our hormones. And so, yeah, you get this like, I mean, I thought I had postpartum anxiety. I was like, This is definitely and I might have Who the heck knows. But when I started to understand what ADHD looks like, in motherhood, I was like, Huh, well, it’s definitely that it’s definitely interesting.

Katy Weber  44:58

So tell me a little more about driving. So coaching, and what that is, who you work with.

Elizabeth Brink  45:03

Yeah, so that is my individual coaching practice where I work with individual women, moms, I work with some couples. And, you know, the beauty of ADHD coaching is that it is it’s, it’s its own practice, it’s different from life coaching, it’s different from therapy, it’s kind of sits in this place of, I hold space, where my clients can reflect and design strategies for themselves, that are actually going to work, they can experiment with things and learn from them. And then they can start to feel themselves turned down that shame down a notch like this shame volume going on of like, I’m not doing this, right, my laundry is crazy. And I’m late to work and everything about my life is wrong. And I’ll never get my act together. All of that starts to quiet down, the more and more that they spend looking at, well, okay, what was really going on there, what was happening. So I’ll have a lot of people come to me, and
they'll say, I want to do coaching, because I really need some routines. And I really want to like live up to my potential. And so I want to do coaching, for routines and my potential, it’s like, almost every person I’ve worked with has started off with wanting routines. There’s nothing wrong with that. I think the ADHD brain loves structure, loves it like thrives when there is structure, even though the people who know they will tell you they hate structure. And they definitely don’t want anybody else designing the structure for them. The brain does, is drawn to it, because there’s so much noise and chaos in our heads all the time. So when we don’t have structure to our day, or to our spaces, it creates this like overwhelming internal and external chaos that is very hard to cope with, especially if you need to be productive, it’s very hard. So what happens is we try all the things, we buy all the things, we take all the classes, and then they don’t work. And then we tell ourselves like, I am terrible at this, I’m never gonna be a morning person, well, maybe not. Or I’m never gonna be able to finish my degree, maybe not. But what are you doing? How are you doing it? Are you listening to yourself? Are you seeing what you really need? Do you understand what your strengths are? Do you understand what your needs and values are? So really getting to the bottom of that in order to start reaching goals. So it’s a really exciting thing to do. It is really my favorite thing. And, and the power of watching these individuals kind of come and share what’s on their mind that day and help them reflect on it so that they can see what it is they need to see. Because it’s in there. For the most part, it’s in there. The other piece of ADHD coaching is that I also help educate people on their neurobiology, I’m able to kind of see and watch and listen for those patterns are those signs of like, Oh, yeah, that’s, that’s ADHD. It could also be anxiety. It could also be depression. Right. But like, it’s definitely one of the things over here too. I also around so many people with ADHD that I have all of this, you know, contextual knowledge to say I hear this all the time, which can be so normalizing and like, Oh, okay. I’m normal. Like, yeah, you’re normal. This is not the end of the world.

48:52

Yeah, so that you know, it. It is just,

Elizabeth Brink 48:57

it’s a place where I am seeing women work on healing themselves. And a lot of my clients have therapists, some of them have not liked therapy. And I think a big part of it is that coaching is action oriented. It’s about figuring out what’s going on figuring out what you think of it, and how you feel and what’s possible for you. And then trying some stuff, and then coming back and figuring out the next thing. Yeah, so I love it. It’s awesome. And that’s, that’s what I do most of the week. And then this other part of the week, I’m in the Enclave, and then I also help coach for a organizing program for women who have ADHD with another coach Linda Rob Lee. She’s a seasoned coach. And she runs the ad diva network. And she does this organizing program for ADHD women and so I get to guest coach with her which is like amazingly fun and wonderful. Oh, awesome.

Katy Weber 49:59

That’s Sorry, there, if I had put that in my notes to ask about, and I totally got carried away. And we’re almost out of time, but I forgot. So I’m glad you brought that up. Yeah, you know, when you were talking about that, that the coaching, you know, reminded me so much of how important it is for us to recognize, you know, there’s always that argument of like, is this a disorder is this not a disorder, I hate that it’s called a disorder. And then also sort of feeling like, but you do have to recognize that you, as your therapist has told me many times, you’re going through life with a brick on your ankle tied to your ankle, you know, and you need to recognize that you have that you work harder, 10 times harder than the average person in certain situations, and you have to give yourself that credit, you know, and you don’t have to always talk about ADHD, like, it’s a superpower. And it’s so great. And we’re doing a divergent, whoa, where the squad and all of that stuff like, there, there is room for appreciating how much harder you do have to work. And I think I know, with my clients, especially more specifically around binge eating, and food and our
bodies, you know, really kind of taking that time to recognize, okay, a lot of the behaviors that you’re doing, were actually ways in which you were helping yourself, and you just didn’t realize it, because our default is to just like, beat ourselves up over these behaviors, what’s wrong with me, I need, you know, I need help, I need automation, I need structure, whatever, you know, like, I need this, this this, and, and to really just sort of take a moment and say, you know, what you were doing, you were actually really, you know, helping yourself the best way you knew how at the time, you know, and yes, give yourself a pat on the back for that, yes, you’re taking care of yourself.

Elizabeth Brink  51:32

The only thing I would add there is that I would say to your therapist, that that brick was not put there by you. You know, like we have our brain is different. We have a different neuro type, we have a different brain. And society tied that brick to our ankles when we were born and said, Oh, you cry too much. Oh, you don’t get your homework done. Oh, your room is a mess. And, and it you know, it got heavier. And maybe there’s even more than one break. For some of you. It’s part of why I actually don’t do a lot of this superpower talking. There are some things about my ADHD brain that I appreciate. But I work with so many hurting people who are suffering real losses, because of their neurobiology that it is very difficult for me to stand in that place of positivity that I feel like does get toxic when you’re not acknowledging how this can be a real hardship this can cost people jobs, marriages, relationships with their kids, I mean, it can be a costly way to have to be in the world. And so I just yeah, I recoil a little bit at that but like I said earlier, I am very comfortable with grief and with suffering and I am drawn to it. So that is also probably part of it. Even though I am kind of a natural optimist,

Katy Weber  53:00

I think in general we tend to get really bored really quickly with things that are like functional and stable. So you know, suck it up

Elizabeth Brink  53:12

just you know change it up a little make it hurt

Katy Weber  53:16

so before we add just tell are my Missouri’s tell our listeners, how they can get in touch with you and how they can work with you and what are the best ways to find to Yeah, so

Elizabeth Brink  53:26

um, this has been so fun. They can find me on Instagram at coach Elizabeth brink, they can find me online at the ADHD enclave. And you can also look at my website thriving sister coaching, where you can see more about my coaching my one on one coaching, I list my prices because everybody should. And there’s a contact form there too. So if you just want to like talk and find out more about what you can do to help yourself, you know, feel free to message me on one of these places or whatever. I’m very accessible.

Katy Weber  54:03
I second that I feel like you are incredibly relatable. And just from what I’ve noticed that you just all the free stuff online and in social media, I think you’re doing wonderful things for this community and, and for me personally, so thank you.

54:20
Thank you, Katie. Yeah,

Katy Weber  54:22
it’s been so great talking to you. Thanks again for joining me and sharing a bit about your life.

54:26
Yeah. Thank you. Thank you. So fun.