

Alex Gilbert: Living with the label of ADHD

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SPEAKERS

Alex Gilbert, Katy Weber



Katy Weber 00:00

Yeah, so Okay, so if you have a listen, I wasn't sure if you had, but you kind of know the format. So really like, you know, I was diagnosed last year, and I don't often get to die, right? I don't often get to interview women who were diagnosed in childhood just because you guys are unicorns. Right.



Alex Gilbert 00:15

So I, you know, it's that's also partially why I reached out because I was like, all of these women are so interesting, but like, I feel like I didn't realize I was a unicorn until I like started to do more research. I was like, Oh my god. Wait, how how



Katy Weber 00:34

your parents, your parents were pioneers. That's what it was. I think it really comes down to like, you know, some of the things we talked about so much for which are like the signs were there all along? How did nobody pick this up? And it's just, it wasn't part of our language, you know, 2030 years ago? I don't know. I'm 46. So I don't know how old you are. But like this, you know, that was like the 80s. Yeah, I'm



Alex Gilbert 00:57

33. But I will also say I think I was diagnosed early because I was dyslexic. So I was already getting tested for other things. Whereas my sister who's younger than me, I got her diagnostic college. And so like, here's my parents who were just as observant of me and all of my habits who completely missed my sister. So I could definitely talk about that. I'm sure she'll be like, Thanks, Alex. But whatever. I told her from time to time, too, so it's all good, too. Okay. That much. It. It amazes



Katy Weber 01:33

me how many women I've interviewed who had siblings who were diagnosed in childhood, and they ended up being like, the good kid, you know, the easy kid, the and how that pressure of being the easy kid really kind of formed who they were in adulthood with a lot of anxiety and a lot of that depression and not sort of able to advocate because you were sort of the one who didn't make you know, who didn't ruffle feathers



Alex Gilbert 01:55

that but like, I would also say that just because I was diagnosed younger, doesn't mean that all of those things that you mentioned, did exist. They absolutely did. But they were for totally different reasons.



Katy Weber 02:08

Right? Yeah, that's the other thing. I think the first time I interviewed somebody, a woman who was diagnosed in childhood was Elizabeth Brank. And it was really eye opening, because so much of an adult diagnosis involves that grief, right, you know, involves that, like, what would have been, and she really opened my eyes up to just like, even when I was diagnosed, there's so much you don't understand at the time, there's so much in which our understanding of ADHD changes and comes and goes, you know, so it was really I'm always fascinated to hear your perspective. So let's, let's get Yeah, let's backtrack a bit and officially get started because we could probably just chit chat the whole time. So you were diagnosed at the age of eight with dyslexia and ADHD at the same time? Correct. And so I have heard you on some other podcasts talking about that. But what are you talking about? Like, what were some of the signs that your parents first were alerted to? That made them kind of go down this this road as the neurodivergent pioneers that they were?



Alex Gilbert 03:12

Yeah, I really started because of the dyslexia of these. I think I was going into third grade, and my parents were like packing me up for sleepaway camp was my first summer sleepaway camp. Hashtag this was my white privilege of like, we had memes we had, we had a lot of resources. This was just, this was the reality of what my experience was, but I was my mom was packed up for camp. And she's like, you want to pack some books? And I was like, why I can't read. And she was like, wait, what? Like, I need it like to read and realize that you couldn't or felt like you couldn't. They had talked to my, all of my teachers, and all of my teachers were like, What are you talking about? She's so articulate, she's so vocal, she's part she participates in class, like, I don't know what you're seeing, and therefore the school district wasn't planning to do any kind of intervention or to any kind of testing whatsoever, because I was, quote, unquote, fine. And my parents were like, no, if she's vocal enough to tell us that she can't read, she probably can't read. So I got all these testing done. And it was like I had dyslexia. I had ADHD, I was needing all kinds of services, and our school district wasn't providing any of our any resources whatsoever. So we had to move. And that really changed the game, because the new school district that we moved to had everything under the sun in terms of support, but it

really started with the fact that I was vocal enough to say, I can't read. But all of my anxiety when I think back to that time, and I actually just recently found out The folder my, in my, in my bedroom at my parents house of my official diagnosis from when I was eight years old. And the anxiety that was written of, of how my parents described me at that time, made me want to cry because I was experiencing so many other symptoms that the pediatrician was like, Okay, I was I didn't want to eat, or I would only eat certain things. But it was all about having control, or I was very self conscious of being called stupid in class. And, again, I was seven, eight years old and vocalizing this. And I would have hoped that they would have brought me for psychological testing in any way, shape, or form at that point, because the amount of anxiety that was being written was pretty prevalent, which I vaguely remember, but not as much as when I read it.



Katy Weber 05:52

Yeah, you know, when I went back and looked at my report cards, you know, because long before my diagnosis, I thought I had an undiagnosed learning disorder, I often wondered, I think a lot as a lot of us do. I often wondered if I had undiagnosed dyslexia, because I really struggled with reading in terms of focus, right, the attention when you reading paragraphs over and over again. And then now, you know, through my children, I learned about dysgraphia right. And the, my handwriting was always an issue growing up, you know, I went back and looked at my report cards, and I was, you know, so overwhelmed by the sort of just the nitpicking, right. And I felt like it was just this like, constant. Every year, it was like, it is great. She says, you know, she's enthusiastic member of the class, but handwriting, but you know, focus but talks too much. But yeah, and I wonder like, are we do you feel like people with who are neurodivergent are just, like, more sensitive to the butts? Or is it really just like we do, you know, cuz there's a fact of letter, there's, there's that fact, that's tossed around a lot, which is like, we hear 10,000 More criticisms than your average child, which I believe, but I also wonder like, is there some do we tend to focus on the criticism more? Because of the, you know, the the novelty and the drama of criticism? I don't know if this is just I top of my head, you know, No, I



Alex Gilbert 07:21

totally do. And I actually am thinking very specifically about all of the files that I went through with all of the different report cards. Because the teachers who gave me the most anxiety, who stressed me out the most, who were the most difficult to work with me personally, or work with my resource, or teachers or anything like that. Were the ones that gave me the bit Vegas criticisms, and the one who made me the most miserable in class. And it wasn't that I was a miserable student. It wasn't that I wasn't a hard working students. It wasn't that I didn't try. It was that, for some reason, these particular teachers who have one school of thinking, and I didn't fit it, I thought, if I push her harder, she'll do it. But that criticism made me feel worse. And those were all of the negative comments. I hadn't every report card I've ever had. So I I don't know if it's necessarily it's like the chicken or the egg. Was I responding a certain way because of how they were teaching me and I didn't understand, or was it the fact that I was more sensitive to feeling like the outcast? And therefore I acted differently in those classes. I'm going to say it's the latter.



Katy Weber 08:44

Yeah, I know. It's it is because I think, you know, we're told we have so much potential right. And so we're so there's always that underlying is actually told

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Alex Gilbert 08:52

that never, Oh, okay.



Katy Weber 08:56

No, do you think that's because of the the label of the learning disability people kind of like 100%

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Alex Gilbert 09:02

I, that was one of the most frustrating things for me. And that's actually why I've had this dream of starting my business since I was 16. Was that I have this as a tutor, who told me when I was looking to apply to big state schools, and I wanted a whole rah rah experience and all of these different things, told me that when she saw my LSAT scores that I should be applying to liberal arts colleges, small community colleges, then transfer, you know, that whole process and I was like, Do you not see me as the whole person or do you just see the diagnosis? And she's like, it doesn't matter what I see you as because on paper, that's all you represent. And I was that was the kind of dialogue that was said to me so much that I just sat there and was angry about it all because I was like, I was president of like, two different clubs by my senior A year of high school I was active on several sports teams, I was in theater, I was really good at a lot of things I was in marching band, like I was, I was a leader of my section, it was like all these different things that like, Okay, those are also on paper. So why don't you see those two. And that was that was something that I kept in the back of my head of like, I want to support other people who have a learning disability or ADHD, to see the positives in themselves and to see the strengths that they have. Because there are so many strengths that we have that other people don't have, I mean, this ability to be able to see the big picture and the little details all at once to be able to read a room and have that emotional intelligence because of dyslexia and ADHD, I'm so much more observant to everything around me. So those are really big qualities that have value. And so I wanted to support other people. And I was going to find a way no matter what my next phase of life was going to be to support other people that were struggling with that because nobody wants to feel like shit.



Katy Weber 11:10

Yeah, I think in general, from the women I've interviewed, and also, from my own experience, the level of sort of empathy and advocacy that we use in our life in terms of like, wanting, you know, I look back through my life, and it was always like, I was always like, coaching young girls, and I was like a running coach and, and doing Girls on the Run and like, always wanting to help others in that way of like, I you know, so much of our childhood is defined by that struggle, right of just like feeling like you just weren't getting it. And or you were letting yourself down or letting people down or just like you said, like, not understood or feeling like you were different from how you were being perceived, quote, unquote, on paper. Right. And so I think it amazes

me, how many of us have really kind of dedicated our lives to like, Oh, my goodness, I really need to help people with if somebody is out there right now who's struggling, you know, if I can help one person that will make it all worth it?

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Alex Gilbert 12:08

Yeah. And that was, that was what was also really frustrating was, you know, being told by educators that I was one thing, but no one that I actually interacted with felt that way. was very confusing. Because it was like, Okay, if you think I'm smart, if you think I'm a good problem solver, if you think I'm all these things, how come no one else sees it? It was like, am I wearing this cape that nobody sees? You know, all of that sits there? And yeah, I just wanted I wanted to be that support for other people, and not make them feel invisible.



Katy Weber 12:46

So now, what was your education journey like, beyond, beyond, you know, high school.

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Alex Gilbert 12:54

So I, I went to Indiana University, which you know, that that LSAT tutor didn't, didn't expect that at all. But I went to IU, which is massive University, and I look, I struggled finding my way through a large university campus. But I eventually found my way, because I knew how to advocate for myself, I knew how to get the attention of my professors and locate the best places to study. It took me a while, but I figured it out. And I was actually very close to the director, now former Director of Disability Services at Indiana, that she used to call me every semester to say like, Okay, well, you figured this out, do you think you could meet with this other student and show them what to do and all these different pieces, and I got to junior year, and I finally said to her, I was like, this is a really large university with over 1000 students who use Disability Services. Now, it's almost 10,000 By the way, why don't you have a program that supports other students with disabilities that in like a mentor way, and she said, we just don't have the time or the motivation to do it. And I kind of said to her, like, Okay, well, can I be your time and your motivation? She's like, sure. Um, can you also meet with the student next week? And I'll say, Yes, but I came up with a PowerPoint presentation of how I was going to create what I called peer undergraduate mentor, program, or pump, which was a mentor retention program that supported students of all kinds of disabilities to help them stay in school, but also find other students that they could talk to and engage with that would support them throughout their journey and graduating college. So it won a ton of awards from the university in the city. So I thought, now I figured out everything. I knew how to navigate through high school. I knew how to navigate through college. I knew how to support other people to do it. When I graduated and started working. Nothing exists for adults in the workplace. All of the resources that I had got very used to having in school didn't exist. And anything that I had ever taught myself how to do in school was apples and oranges. And so I was so frustrated thinking, I am the person who is most likely to succeed in this scenario and is diagnosed. Yep, I have resources, I went to big university and had resources there I created this program, if I'm struggling, How is anybody succeeding in this? And that was something that was really eye opening and frustrating for me so my education kind of you know, took a turn and that way of now I have to educate myself and educate others along the way. So it's been it's certainly been a process



Katy Weber 15:48

Yeah, that's incredibly insightful for to be that young? What was the transition from, you know, understanding these making these connections and putting these putting these connecting the dots, and then getting into coaching and consulting.



Alex Gilbert 19:17

So you're saying connecting the dots from graduating college starting,



Katy Weber 19:20

but just for yourself connecting the dots for yourself in terms of, you know, realizing how important it was to kind of advocate and have accommodations and then actually making a business out of you to make the most of your good?



Alex Gilbert 19:32

Yeah. Yeah, I mean, as I said, I've had this idea since I was 16. But really, the eye opening case for me was, I started my first job, and I was in this open office space. And I had spoke openly about the fact that I was dyslexic and had ADHD. And I was so used to communicating that and having the person on the other side of the desk understand what I was asking for and what my needs were I was not expecting for them to say, Well, why is this hard? Why can't you do this? All these things are when I asked for something. Why do you need this? It was just, I was really startled by that. And I also had a lot of panic tests, because I was constantly fearing that I was going to fail that I was not going to have enough time to do this, or that now that I've been interrupted 17 times in the course of an hour, how was I going to complete this before this meeting? And is it going to be something that has all these mistakes, I mean, I was working and program and leadership development for almost a decade, actually a little longer than a decade. And I had actually been laid off from my job due to COVID. And I was thinking about what I was going to do next. And I just didn't want to go back into the same kind of corporate environments, creating programs and leadership development pieces. For other people, I was always doing it with this lens of supporting adults with learning disabilities, I was even sought out for my last job before I was laid off as a COVID. Because I was dyslexic and had ADHD, because I was able to see things in a much clearer sense and take very, very complicated information and create it in a way that was simplified on so many different learning levels. And I was just sitting there thinking, like, if I'm doing this for other people, I need to do this for the people that I have always wanted to support. And that's kind of how it transitioned. And I don't think that any of the jobs that I had in the past were, you know, as startling as they felt at the time, I think they were incredible learning experiences that led me to this, but I was already supporting people. And now I just needed to support the people I wanted to.



Katy Weber 22:00

Yeah, it's an interesting conversation. I have a lot on this podcast, which is you know, how

difficult it is to kind of talk about right, like when I was diagnosed, I was shouting it from the rooftops, because it was the greatest thing that ever happened to me, it felt like such a revelation in terms of Mike in terms of my inner narrative. And though and the way I spray it out myself, right, and I was fully on board with like, this is a superpower and oh my god, this is the greatest thing ever. But then once I started to realize, you know, and I'm obviously open about ADHD, I can't I can't not be with you know, and I'm trying to kind of deconstruct so much of the stigma and the stereotypes around what it looks like one episode at a time. But it's so frustrating to realize how being open and labeling yourself with ADHD or I guess any learning disability really just like you the way in which you are then perceived by the other person changes so drastically, it's really can be frustrating, you know, because so many other people don't see it as a superpower. They don't see it as this wonderful, amazing way in which you Oh, you bring so much to the table because of your ADHD. People are like, I'm so sorry, Oh, that's terrible Hang in there, all of that bullshit, where it's like, you know, I understand why people are not open about it. And they're not like shouting from the rooftops on their CV in the workplace. But I also understand that like, the only way we're going to really, you know, affect change is by being open about it and making it a huge part of our personality and saying, Look, this is like, yeah, like, you know, 10% of the people in this room have it or I'm probably even more, you know, but like, it's it's such this, I don't know, it hamster wheel. I don't know, that's not the right analogy, but I feel like, you know, it's the same, I understand. It's almost like you're, you know, how do you take that first step to really be open about it. And yet at the same time, you're really risking how you're being perceived by your managers. And

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Alex Gilbert 23:54

totally, and I talked to a lot of people about this, because I would say, terms of my clients, it's really half and half as to whether or not they just they decided that they're disclosing that they have a learning disability or ADHD. And it is very much a personal choice. But I will say, the most important thing you can do for yourself, whether you have a diagnosis officially or not, is advocating for yourself and everybody is advocated for themselves, whether it was because of a disability, or it was because of COVID. And now they have like no childcare at home or whatever the case is. You can advocate for your needs without exposing yourself or feeling like you're exposing yourself, you know, if you have a job that's very detail oriented, and you asked for a list of everything that you they want you to accomplish. Okay? That's a good thing to have and no and nobody's gonna think twice for the fact that you're like, I need another list. I just want to make sure that I'm going over everything or Asking for another set of check ins with your manager to say like, can we go over this, I want to make sure you and I are on the same page doesn't set off any red flags. And I think there is this underlying fear that you're going to be exposed or that people are gonna think less of you. And I do think that there are absolutely jobs where that's the case. But I think the best thing you could do for yourself is learn about yourself so that you can put yourself in environments that are supportive of how you think and learn, and do your job. And that's something that no one really talked to me about when I graduated. And that was something that was also very frustrating. Because I would have asked very different questions about my work environment, I would have asked very different questions about the support that I was going to get from my manager at the time, I didn't know what I didn't know. And I didn't know the questions I could have asked. And again, I was in this role of I know how to advocate for myself, and I didn't. So it's really, it is such a full fledged issue all the way around. But I don't think that it's something that can't be managed in a way that makes you feel better about your skills, your abilities, your strengths, and how you can effectively do your job.



Katy Weber 26:25

Yeah, yeah. And I think, you know, we live in a culture, western industrialized culture, I think, you know, self reliance is, is a moral virtue, right. So it's like we are taught from a very young age that we are somehow you know, that there were broken, if we can't figure things out on our own, we are not taught to advocate on any level. And I see that with my children now in school, like how, you know, asking for clarification from their teacher is so hard because they are told from by their teacher like to stop asking questions, you know, like, it's really inconvenient to be in a system where you're asking questions and asking for clarifications and saying, Yeah, this is so messed up, and then, and then they're shut down. And you know, they're they're graduating, they're thrown into adulthood. And it's like, no wonder, you know, none of us like, no wonder it's so physically painful for us to do these seemingly simple things and asking for help and accommodations and realizing that like, we are not the problem, you know, like I talked about this all the time, which is like, we are not, you know, the simple like, changing of that narrative, which is like, there's nothing wrong with you there. You know, you're just you're stuck in a system that's not working for you at the moment or a structure or a situation, right. So like, figure out how to make it work.



Alex Gilbert 27:45

Yeah, but I think communicating is the best possible way to find the solution to whatever the problem really is. I bet it's so upsetting to me that your kids are told they can't ask questions I, how can a class full of like 30 kids all understand at the same level, and the same pace, and all understand immediately as if it was like, brushed off? I mean, that's not realistic for a lot of learning styles, let alone someone who has a learning disability or ADHD. That's really sad.



Katy Weber 28:20

Yeah. And I think it's also similar to the idea of like, you want to be the good kid, you want to be the easy kid, you want to be the one who like helps the teacher get through the day, because teachers are so stressed. And there's always the the rowdy kids in the back, but they're always having to deal with. And so I always, you know, I think about my two kids who are just like, they just want to be good kids. Yeah. And I think that being good, is is synonymous with not needing anything, right. And I see how that kind of is ingrained in their personalities now, and it's really sad because I have like, I see the anxiety that they come home with every day of just like holding it together.



Alex Gilbert 28:54

I totally get that because I think for a lot of reasons. I was that kid who just didn't want to be seen as someone bad or someone you know, picked up by a teacher, I was picked out by a lot of teachers throughout school. It's truly like traumatizing when I think about it. But I I wanted to fly under the radar for so many different reasons. But the teachers that I had the best relationships with and the ones that I learned the most from, were the ones that I actually asked questions and took the time to stay after class and really meet with them. They got to know me better. You know that I was mentioning that Director of Disability Services. When I

was at Indiana. For some reason, someone thought it was a really good idea for me to take something called Finite Math, which is all word problems. I'm dyslexic have reading comprehension issues. I am terrible at math. Why would anyone think that was a really good idea, but for some reason, I was now stuck in this class. And this professor had been there For God knows how long and I met with him his class was three days a week I met with him three days a week, I went to his office hours, three days a week, I went to like his, I went to meet with him personally one on one. In addition to that, I had him set up a tutor for me, I was still getting a D in his class. But he personally wanted to make sure that I pass the class. And he went to disability services that might test read for me on a CD came in at a different day, at a different time for me to take the test separately from everybody else. And when I told this to the Director of Disability Service, she said, How did you do that? And I was like, I just talked to him, and I was showing him I was crying. And she goes, he's never been supportive of our department, once in 40 years. And it was all because I took the time to talk to him to get to know Him to show him I was trying, and I didn't get a D in that class, I got a D plus, but I passed. And you know what, it was the hardest class I've ever done. But it took, like breaking down this guy who was unbreakable to make a difference. And he remembered me when I graduated, I think that there's something to that.



Katy Weber 31:18

Yeah. And I, you know, and I think that also comes back to a conversation that I have a lot in terms of like, the privilege and accommodations when you're a child, right? And how that idea that like, I am trying, you know how that can be overlooked in so often with so many kids, right? Which is like the disruptive kids are the ones who are spacing out and like, do it, you know, so many ways in which we have that sense of like I am trying gets overlooked, and you just end up being pigeon holed as the, you know, the behavioral problem, or the flake or the one who talks about, you know, and and again, it's sort of like, it makes it really difficult to advocate for yourself because you're so used field like you aren't understood fundamentally.



Alex Gilbert 32:03

Yeah, I miss you. There's a lot of problems with the show Friends, but it's always been one of my favorite shows that I always think of this one episode. It's this Thanksgiving episode, where they're playing football and Joey rips. Or Chandler goes to throw the ball to Rachel and who's been missing the ball the whole time. She almost catches it, she goes, I almost caught that one. He goes great. Now the score is seven to almost seven at this, like what she was doing didn't matter. And I was like, oh my god, this is so real. This is so real. This is like everything that I've ever experienced. So I'm not good enough. And the thing is, I always try and look at this in a totally different perspective of that's the standard, somebody else's that those are not the standards in which you should feel like you have to meet all the time. And the reason we feel like failures is because we are we're set up in a way that doesn't make sense to us in a in a scenario that is not going to result in anything positive. So I always try and say like, what does success look like for you? And how can we create just small pieces and tangible pieces that make you feel successful? Because you don't have to do everything all in one day? You don't have to be perfect. You don't have to understand everything all at once. What do you understand what is the one thing we can take away from what you're working on right now that we can move on to the next and say okay, next piece because that's where the success is going to come from.



Katy Weber 36:39

I have a question. Because I'm like I was a pandemic diagnosis, right. I mean, I was I was diagnosed, it had been suggested to me for a couple years for my therapist that I should look into it. And I was like, I don't know what you're talking about, I'm not hyperactive, I didn't have any symptoms as a kid, all of that stuff. Because of all you know, I didn't understand what it was. And it wasn't until I had a full blown emotional meltdown with in the pandemic, when my kids were home. And I was like, for some reason decided this was the time to really focus on my business, you know, that pressure of like, I'm going to redo my kitchen, or all those other things that everybody was putting pressure on themselves. But I couldn't, you know, I couldn't do anything because my kids were home and my husband was here and I and then those were those moments where she was like, you really need to look into this. So you know, it became my hyperfocus. Once I was diagnosed, it's it's like I live and breathe ADHD now. And so I feel like I have a very skewed sense of how many women are getting diagnosed right now, since the pandemic, it feels to me, like everybody in her sister is getting diagnosed, because it's all I think about and people reach out to me all the time. And so I'm curious with your perspective, like, do you feel like there's been a proliferation of diagnoses since the pandemic and you know, our people, you know, because we talk about like, tick tock videos and the way in which so many people are coming to understand what ADHD looks like and feeling like oh my god, this explains my whole life. Do you feel like more people are being diagnosed? And are more people are? Is there some risk that like people are being misdiagnosed? Or that there's something else happening? Pandemic wise?



Alex Gilbert 38:17

There's so much with that. The answer is



Katy Weber 38:21

no, this is basically like a thesis, I jumped in your lap a little bit,



Alex Gilbert 38:25

but I you know, I can I can tell you from what I've been reading what I've been experiencing what I've been talking to clients about that. First of all, which most people don't know is that the highest percentage of diagnosed people with ADHD is adults. And it's because their girls are misdiagnosed as kids because, you know, they weren't the hyperactive or hyperactive, was seen as talkative or chatty, Cathy's or whatever term that was used at the time to just downplay anything new, we're experiencing children of color, kids of color, are less diagnosed, even though they're showing the same symptoms as everybody else. I think there is a process in which people are being diagnosed at a higher rate. I would also say on the other end of this, that I was seeing a lot more people being diagnosed during the pandemic. Not in my favorite reasoning, why, but a lot of parents were trying to get their kids diagnosed so that they could put them on medication in order to sit in front of the screen for seven, eight hours a day. And that was that to me was a little more alarming of is this is this just frustration of your kid has to sit for seven, eight hours. So do you and you know, there's that or are they being diagnosed

now because we know so much more? I think there's a combination of things. I would say that a lot of people who are coming to me are seeking a diagnosis and that's not something that I personally do. I'm really looking to help you strategize how to cope all of the different strategies after that, but yeah, a lot more people or being diagnosed because, one, they have the time. And two because of tic toc three, because, you know, they were seeking a therapist maybe for the first time during the pandemic. And that was also something that was brought to their attention. So there was a number of different reasons. And I'm glad that people are talking about it. But yeah, I would say it's, it's not just women, it's I've been talking to a number of people of color who've also, like, I wasn't diagnosed until now, why? And I'm like, I can't tell you specifically why. But it's not uncommon. And I think that that people need to feel validated in that way. And I think that's part of the coping of it.



Katy Weber 40:41

Yeah. And I think that's part of the conversation that we're I'm having a lot with this podcast, too, which is sort of like, how important is it to get medically diagnosed, you know, how, you know, because so many people feel like, well, I'm not officially diagnosed, but I feel like really, like seen and understood by the lecture and everyday, and I'm like, well, then you probably have it. So look at like, start hyper focusing, start researching, like, start treating yourself, right, get the diagnosis, because I think it's very validating to get the diagnosis, but it doesn't, you shouldn't like, wait for the diagnosis before you really start, like a lot of this is just understanding who you are and how you operate.



Alex Gilbert 41:19

Totally. And I would say that a lot of people that come to me are not necessarily people who have an official diagnosis, and I don't work specifically with people who have a diagnosis or not, sometimes people are just chronically overwhelmed. And don't show any symptoms of ADHD, say a majority of them do. But I think it really, I think it's, as you said, it comes down to getting to know yourself, you know, we've been talking about so many different pieces of in school, how you're taught to do one thing, and you really experience it in another. Most people, whether you were diagnosed at a young age or not, don't know themselves well enough to know. When are you? Like, really focus? When are you needing a break? When do you? What is there something particularly that you get hyper focused on? Is there a certain task that is so overwhelming to you that you continue to do it, if you can journal, if you can write things down about yourself about your day about your flow, even if it's a sentence, and pick up on those things, it makes a huge difference, because then you can transition your day to really function around you. I mean, this whole nine to five setting that was set by who knows who isn't working for a lot of people again, because of the pandemic right now. But because of that's not how people think that's not how people function. I mean, I've, I think it's, I don't remember what country is doing it right now. Maybe it's Finland, but they stopped going from like this five day workweek to a four day work week, and people are more productive, because people have just sat at their desk, and we're just chatting or doing something else looking on social media, because they couldn't sit there for all those hours. So I think all of this getting to know yourself is going to make the next step regardless of whether you're getting a diagnosis, you're seeking a close, you're seeking a therapist that much easier. There's no wrong answer. And that's also something to think about.



Katy Weber 43:19

Yeah. No, I agree with all of that. And I think, you know, again, it's I'm always curious, because I feel like there is a way in which ADHD is has been pathologized to feeling you know, and I, again, let me start over. I feel like there's a way in which you can, you know, ADHD is being viewed as this thing that needs to be cured, right. And so it's like, let's go let's get our medication and everything will be great. And and that's so misleading. You know, so much of a living with ADHD is living with it right and really embracing the strengths and really like figuring it out and understanding what it is it's not this thing that you have to cure.



Alex Gilbert 44:04

That's also one of the things that I find that women who reached out to me, who did get diagnosed at a young age were put on a medication and then told they're cured. And that infuriates me for 1000 reasons. I've never been medicated for it. That's my parents ever sought that for me. It's never something that I felt was necessary for me and that's really such a personal decision. But the idea that it's a one tear all piece is frustrating, they it takes a lot of work to be able to transition your day and how you think for you in order to be the highest functioning person and look, not every day is good. Not every day is perfect. I spent yesterday for several hours. I have one thing on my to do list and I could not get myself to do it until like seven o'clock at night. Some days are just like that and it that's okay but the idea of allowing yourself to be okay with the fact that not every day is going to be perfect. And just because you took a medication that it should be cured. That's not how this how this works.



Katy Weber 45:11

Yeah. I was just interviewing a guest yesterday who has an erudite, we were just talking and she had said how when she first listen to my podcast, she heard me talk about ADHD as a superpower. And she was a little disappointed because she feels like you know that there's a lot of toxic positivity in there. And I was like, that's all I talk about is like whether or not we should call it a superpower. Because I feel like it's so nuanced and so complicated. And I get, you know, I feel like it can be, you know, for somebody who is suddenly coming to a diagnosis and realizing, like, Wow, I did have a lot of struggle in my life to just be like, congratulations, you have a superpower could be, it's complicated.



Alex Gilbert 45:52

It's totally complicated. And I understand all the complexities of it, especially because, as a kid, I didn't want to be seen as different. And I understand people's frustrations with all of those pieces. I do think that there is some unique positive abilities that someone who has ADHD, who has ADHD or learning disability have, which is a superpower, this innate ability to communicate effectively, is on believable this ability to see this big picture. And the little details is amazing. The fact that you can hyper focus, and complete a week's worth of work in three hours is amazing when it works to your benefit. Not every day is perfect. And I don't want to dismiss anybody's feeling of frustration with that I am frustrated by my ADHD all the time. But that doesn't necessarily mean that I don't think that my skills are valuable, or unique and special, and that there are not things that people sought me out for jobs because of those skills. You

can have both. And that was part of why I came up with the name of my company, which was take a bowl because I wanted people to see their superpowers. Yes, not every day, like not every day for a superpower is good either. They get defeated, too. But they usually power through and they usually make things better for themselves and for everybody. So I want you to think through that, that it doesn't always have to be negative. And that's okay. Even if it feels negative in the moment.



Katy Weber 47:32

Right, exactly. And I think you know, what is so revelatory and so transformational about getting this diagnosis is feeling like you can recognize what you bring to the table, you can recognize those strengths, and really start to lean into them and start to, you know, use them to your advantage and search and stop thinking about yourself in terms of all the things that are wrong with you, which I think is what happened to so many of us certainly happened to me. You know, I remember the first time I heard somebody call it piece of shit syndrome, where I was like, Oh, my God, yes. Right. Like that was there, you know, but that was what my therapist told me. She was like, Oh, my God, you're doing all these things. You're being you know, you're so high functioning, and busy and interested in all this stuff. But you think of yourself as being lazy and depressed. And she was like, there's such this huge disparity between who you are, and how you're viewing yourself. Right. And I was like,



Alex Gilbert 48:23

you're also hearing other people tell you Well, yeah, that you're lazy, and all of those things. So now you're believing that narrative. And that's what I talked to a lot of people about. If I really believe that, that LSAT tutor that I had, that I was really going to amount to basically nothing because of what I was on paper. I probably would have amounted to pretty much nothing because I believe it was on paper. But I didn't believe that about myself. And that I I think really has pushed me forward through a lot of really very difficult times. But also knowing that within myself that I I am special for so many other reasons. And it's okay that it's not for the reasons that somebody else is seeking. And it's okay that not every day is great. Nobody has a perfect day. And I think there's a lot of negative pieces out there. It's okay to have something that's positive and different. And it's okay to reflect on something that is hard, but it's also special. Yeah, I love that.



Katy Weber 1:05:00

Okay, let's talk about capable consulting. I want to get in mindful of the time. So yes, it's Cape Kpe,



1:05:06

C A P E,



Katv Weber 1:05:08



Katy Weber 1:05:00

sir. What did I say? Kay? Oh, sorry. Yeah.



Alex Gilbert 1:05:11

My dyslexia too. So?



Katy Weber 1:05:15

Yes, I'm like looking at it right behind you too. And I'm spelling it out. Okay. See a PE, which is lovely. And then you have what you call declutter your brain consultations, which is wonderful. It's basically you help people kind of brain dump, and sort through the trash, as I also like to call



Alex Gilbert 1:05:34

it. You know, there's, this is people used to come to my office and all different guts that I had, and do this anyway. And I was like, I should formally call this something. It's Yes, it's essentially 30 minute free brain dump where everything that's overwhelming you, let's put on the table. Let's reorganize it and shuffle it in a way that actually makes sense to you so that you can move forward and it doesn't have to consume you. So yeah, so you can check that out on my website. So it's cape, a ball. So ca P E, Cape, a ball consulting.com.



Katy Weber 1:06:05

Yeah, I'll have a link to that in the show notes. And so then, once everything is sort of dumped out on the table, then what what is the coaching entail? Because I mean, obviously, I talk about coaching a lot. I think it's so important for us. But yeah, I want to hear your perspective.



Alex Gilbert 1:06:24

Yeah. So this comes from years of doing program and leadership development. And I have this theory on coaching, which is best principles versus best practices. So best practices assumes that everyone can do the exact same thing and end up with the same results. Which if you have ADHD, you probably sought out the five best things you could do to function in the workplace, I don't know I can name 1000, things that are like that. But you try a million of them that never work, because they weren't made for you, and you fail, and you think it's you. So that's what people think of when they think of best practices is those types of tips, I do the opposite. I do something called Best Practices, meaning we have the same goal in mind of how we want you to succeed, but how we get there is really going to be designed for you, we're going to break it down in a way that's organized makes sense for you. And so I do a few different types of sessions. One is just this one on one coaching, and I call it getting to know you. And we really break everything down, get to know yourself, get to know your core, get to know how you think how you learn how you organize, because you do have the ability to organize in your own way. And we work and move forward from whatever it is that you were

struggling with, so that you can feel like your best self. And the other is if you're wanting a strategy session, if there's something very specific, I just had a client come to me because they were looking to do a job interview for a new job. And they were like, I want to make sure I'm finding out the right job. So we picked out different job applications for him to apply to, and then met up again, before he was to do these interviews to make sure he was asking the right questions for him. Find out the right resources for him. So these strategy sessions could there's two sessions and it could be whatever it is that you're looking to focus on. But all of that can be found on my website, and you can reach out to me and I'd be happy to meet with you and help you thrive and feel capable.



Katy Weber 1:08:19

Amazing. And now you're on Instagram as well. As I am capable.



Alex Gilbert 1:08:24

I am capable on Instagram. So again, it's spelled Ca te I do that because I'm dyslexic, and I spell everything wrong. So it's I am capable on Instagram and then on Facebook and LinkedIn is capable consulting LLC. Alright,



Katy Weber 1:08:41

I'll put a link to your website and Instagram and I know on your website, you have links to all of the other social stuff that people prefer them. Awesome. Well, this was wonderful. Thank you so much for your time I really enjoyed hearing your story. Like I said, I don't often get the unicorn have a childhood diagnosis. So I love your your more kind of laid back. I've seen it. I've seen it. I've been there done that perspective, because I think it helps so many of us. I think it helps. It definitely helps me to feel like you know, it helps me to get past that sense of like, oh, the life I could have lived if I had been diagnosed as a child and you know that this is like, you know, it's a very complicated and nuanced thing to live with.



Alex Gilbert 1:09:24

And you wonder, yeah, it's your story is your story alone, and it doesn't make it less or more than anybody else's. It's your journey, and how you cope with it and how you deal with it is going to be in your own unique way no matter what age you get diagnosed. So it's okay.



Katy Weber 1:09:43

Yeah, absolutely.