

# Julia Edwards: Complex trauma, grief & competitive athletics...

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

adhd, feel, people, diagnosed, aspect, injured, therapist, athlete, happening, hear, deal, grades, pandemic, understand, noticed, push, life, dsm, terms, clients

## SPEAKERS

Julia Edwards, Katy Weber

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Katy Weber 00:00

I'm always no extra fascinated when I get to talk to therapists who you know, have such a, you know, much more nuanced outlook in terms of our what this diagnosis even is because I feel like, you know, the more I, the more I read about ADHD, the less I know and the less I understand. It's just right. It's just it's so it's so interesting and so complicated. There's so much that we still don't know. And yeah, so. But I want to find your I want to hear your kind of personal diagnosis story first.



Julia Edwards 00:38

So my, my diagnosis story is very interesting, actually, because it's almost like I have two stories. Okay. Um, so one is, I was actually basically diagnosed when I was like, after my first year of college. So I was born and raised in El Salvador in Central America. So I'm not originally from the United States. And I just came here to go to college in 2009. But my academic experience was not great. And when I was in, like, middle school, like I was, you know, just intrigued by a lot of things. And I knew that I want to study psychology. And I started seeing a psychologist, so like, a therapist back home for many different reasons, you know, I was interested in the field, but it was there was a lot of stress in those transitions. And we did personality stuff, IQ stuff, basic, but nobody ever talked to me about ADHD. Nobody said, like, you know, I would probably hear the fleeting words of, maybe you're just not focusing, maybe just getting distracted. And but nothing came of it. When I moved to college. It's like, I lost all my structure. You know, and in the school years is very different. Like, yeah, I was not getting great grades, because it was hard for me to study, I would spend so much time like organizing how I was going to study as opposed to actually retaining information and all those things in, you know, after I graduated high school, hanging by a thread, of course, just kind of barely passing things. And, you know, I did a year and a half of college when I was in El Salvador, still, it was an American college, because my goal was to transfer here to the States. And he had great grades, because I didn't have to deal with tests anymore. So it was almost a 4.0 GPA, because I was writing papers. And I was actually had the opportunity to do things more. But it

was, you know, they were of interest to me. But the procrastination, oh, my gosh, that was one of the biggest I think aspects. And now that I see it as it was to the point of being painful, have waited the night before to pull all nighters, and I'm sleep deprived, because I needed to write this paper. And it was just sure I got a good grade, but then it's you suffered along the way, and you can relax knowing that you have that deadline. for it. It's if I start early, it's like, that's no, it wasn't going to happen. Right?



Katy Weber 03:13

That I think that's such a frustrating thing about procrastination, especially in school, which was feeling like could you even have done better? Had you started earlier? Like, I think the answer is often no, right? Like, yeah, it really is just sort of part of the whole process.



Julia Edwards 03:28

Oh, absolutely. And like, you can't understand it. Like at that time, if I think of myself in those stages, like you just don't understand it. And all you hear all these negative comments, it's, you know, well, you just have so much potential, but I don't just don't think you're applying yourself enough. You know, I went through very tough experiences. And when I was in school, and getting close to high school, because the school that I went to was actually very, it was very demanding. It was a private school, it was a German school. So, you know, we had most of my classes were in German and separate, I had like English and you know, just as separate classes, but math, physics, chemistry, all of those things are just terrible. I actually had to repeat eighth grade, I failed at one of the classes and had to repeat and that was awful. You know, it's like that shame starts to build up, you know, from very early on and feeling like why is everybody doing well, and I am not and it's not that I'm not trying, right, you know, from the outside looking in, it looks like I probably am not trying hard enough. It's like, oh, maybe you should study more like this person. Or maybe if you do this, or maybe if you do that. I'm like, not none of it felt right to me. You know, so it was by some miracle, I call it I just was barely passing and I actually graduated from that school, but at the same time, one of the biggest pieces to since I was like six years old is that I was a competitive swimmer. So it was also an athlete, just a student athlete. And for, you know, many years since I was six years old, I learned how to swim. The next year, I was part of the national one of the national clubs for swimming. I was competing, I was going out of the country for competitions. And I loved it. I absolutely love sports sports have been probably the common denominator in my life. And then I realized, like, holy crap, that was helping my hyperactivity, right, yeah, that was helping me focus in school to a certain point, you know, before puberty, probably. And, you know, nobody noticed some of those things. So I was not outwardly hyperactive. So I was one of those that you internalize everything, but you start noticing, I'm like skin, picking, like those cuticles, I scabs, all those things. And when I got to the end of probably middle school, early high school, school got terrible. You know, I couldn't keep up with both the swimming, I was training, I was going to practice from four to six or five to seven in the evenings. And sometimes like, three, three days a week, it was five in the morning to six. And that was fixed days a week, my only rest day was Sundays. And I love swimming. And it was, you know, just the aerobic exercise everything about the competition aspect. And in school, of course, my, my best grade was PE. That was like, my only good grade is like sports. You know, I played soccer, I played basketball when I was, you know, for a while in high school was like a big part, like the soccer team. And when I got to, I think it was 11th grade, the things got so tough. My parents actually got a letter from

the school saying that I probably was not, you know, performing well enough in school that maybe they should consider taking me out of it. And that was a little rough. You know, like now as an adult. Now I think about it, like that sucks. Like, they're basically are telling me that I was not good enough for their school. Yeah, because of my grades. So it was like that choice of I can be an athlete, and I can be a good student and this school, why is everyone else, you know, achieving that, or most people were on my team, for example. And I felt like I couldn't. And that was like, heartbreaking. You know, it's like one of those things that you grieve. So obviously, my parents were encouraging. And it's like, well, obviously, you're not going to quit school to swim. Maybe that's what I wanted to do. My I dropped, I dropped swimming. And I was actually able to graduate high school, it was one of those things where I felt a little challenged. It's like, you're telling me that I can't do I like okay, well, watch me. I'll do right. So yeah, I mean, I graduated and everything, but those years in college, like losing that structure, because nobody was expecting things from me grades. Professors, the first year is like, they don't care if you show up because they're just going to greater exam and nothing. So it was my GPA dropped significantly, the first semester, you know, it was a big university. I had a scholarship, actually, because I had good grades during the first year and a half that I did. And I lost a scholarship. You know, my GPA was like below a two the first semester because it was so much being an international student in the States, I had very specific requirements to follow. So I had to be full time. I couldn't work outside of campus. So if I needed to make some money and like to work on campus, certain amount of hours. So every aspect of it, the social aspect was a big deal, too. So, after the first semester, I went back to visit my family, every winter break, and I saw my old therapist, and she was like, Well, you know, here's a referral. So you can go see a psychiatrist. And my mom took me and I went to the psychiatrist office because like, you know, not getting good grades, you're probably distracted, you're doing this. And I left his office with a prescription for Ritalin. So I filled out the questionnaire, like six questions, but he never said anything about ADHD. He was just like, well, you know, here's a prescription for Ritalin basically, and this is just going to help you focus and get good grades. Wow. Okay. And so, okay. And my mom was there like nobody said like, hey, you know, this is how your brain works. You have ADHD, this is what it means. You know, you're having trouble focusing because Have this or that. So of course, me not knowing at that time, he was like, here's a pill that's going to help you focus and study better, and get good grades. I still procrastinate. So I will just take it when I had to pull an all nighter to study. Yeah, I didn't take it consistently because nobody said that that would also help me with my mood and the social aspect of things and emotions, which were so you know, we feel it so intensely. Didn't understand that party there. I took it for six months, on and off no consistency until I just didn't anymore. So graduated college, came to Iowa to do my master's degree in mental health counseling, which was a good experience, I was doing what I wanted, basically. And even though the procrastination was still there, it's like that. I noticed. It's like always rushing, I'm always doing things fast. I'm so impatient with myself, but not with other people, chronic lateness to things and the time blindness and time management, those were awful to me, because it's like, oh, I have time, or it's like, there's never enough time. So, you know, just kind of like those little things, which were very external behaviors for the things that just, you know, made me curious. And doing my master's, I had the textbook knowledge of ADHD, that's like, Nah, be Damn, look at that. I think I have ADHD, you know, I'm very distracted by things and like, I really can focus on the procrastination, but then I left it at bad and never dug into the emotional dysregulation aspect. I never heard about rejection sensitive dysphoria or anything like that. Because it's not on the DSM. Right. You know, and that's conditions like, well, we look at the DSM and look at this other things. And, you know, it's just, it was very interesting. And when I graduated, you know, I had a job that was incredibly stressful, which was still in my field, and I loved it. I was a substance abuse counselor for several years, and I also worked as a therapist and that agency, and I love the time with my clients, and I love my coworkers, I loved everything. But that job

had copious amounts of paperwork. And that was basically my downfall. I absolutely hated the paperwork and documentation, and having to call attorneys, DHS workers, probation officers insurance to do some of the, you know, treatment reviews, all of those things. So every all of those external sources, it was almost like invading my one on one with the clients, because that's how it was. And because of my immigration status, like I could switch jobs, so I felt very trapped. It was not easy for me, they were sponsoring me. And I went to see, a psychiatrist knows, must have been like, four years ago. And because I was depressed, I was feeling anxious, you know, I was not exercising as much as I used to, but it was still part of it. But what I was experiencing too, is I will just stare at the work that I had to do the piles of paperwork, and I will just do nothing about it. But paralysis of I know I have to do this, like oh my God, why am I not moving? Like why are my hands not on my keyboard typing all of these things. And that will just push me over the edge of thinking that I was just not trying enough new, even having a little bit of knowledge. And I was prescribed with fluoxetine and you know, something to help me sleep, then respond well to those medications. Because after a few months, I realized I told my psychiatrist I think, you know, I I'm sure I have ADHD, and I think I'm feeling very depressed and anxious. Because, you know, I'm, I'm not feeling accomplished, because I'm procrastinating I can't focus on things. So I feel like this is the result of that, but I'm not 100% Sure. So he told me like, yeah, absolutely, you know, send you a referral. We're gonna refer you for testing. And at that time, that was three years ago or four. I couldn't do it because it was very expensive. I was, you know, different plan. So I left it and I also had a therapist, and I told my therapists, you know about it, like, well, you know, we can change anything right now. So let's focus on, you know, tolerating the discomfort of the job. But things escalated, I found an opportunity of one of my friends, she moved to private practice where I'm at right now and, you know, the owner of the practice and his wife, like they're incredibly nice, and he was actually in my shoes for many years with international student. He's Peruvian and he's wonderful and, you know, you don't like yes, you know, we're gonna help you we're gonna figure it out. So they were actually able to sponsor me. And I transitioned to private practice. And that was absolutely life changing to me just to work in this setting, that oh my gosh, I can focus on my client. And the paperwork was probably like 10 or 20%. And the rest is just helping people, which is what I always wanted. And the different kinds of clients. I mean, my clients are high functioning, they're motivated to be in therapy, you know, and when I started seeing more, I noticed I had a lot of clients that just came to me and they had ADHD, helping with experience, some of them thought that they may had or I started noticing some patterns and one day with one of them like we took like the iceberg out, and I've never like really dissected the ADHD iceberg. And I started seeing all those wars that were different and thought like, oh my goodness, this is my life. Like, this is my entire life right here. Choice paralysis, you know, like the difficulty managing finances losing myself all the time because that was another thing I just constantly lose myself. Find it can leave the house because like oh my phone. Oh, this my keys. My poor husband. I know he's just so patient with this just stand there and waves But when things started to become very relatable to the stories I was hearing, I'm like, Okay, this is this is hitting a different nerve. Well, you know, I kept going, I was in the private practice setting for two months in my lovely office and then the pandemic hit. So, to have it two months in my office, and then I had to go home pretty much full time. And that time was really tough, because, you know, it's you have your own fears and anxieties about what's happening in the world. And now, I was also carrying my clients fears and anxieties along with mine. So I didn't have very much space, you know, to actually allow myself to just like, how am I really feeling I'm probably scared, like, how am I going to help people, if we're all feeling the same, and I started impacting my health a lot, too. I have a thyroid disorder. So I experience a lot of physical symptoms with it, it's been managed for years. But that year, I think it was a combination of the anxiety, like the stress of it, the change that I just started seeing this repercussions on my health. And I started gaining weight, when my nutrition and my exercise

are some things that I you know, I do to heart I love that I take care of myself very well in that aspect. And I was exercising, you know, at least four or five times a week, and then it kept gaining weight, like what is happening. So I talked to my endocrinologist, and she after, you know, she's like, Oh, you're probably you know, snacking too much. Or you're probably doing this like no, I think I know what I'm doing. You know, I was like doing intermittent fasting. I tried to unlock things because I couldn't understand why I was gaining weight. And so she's like, well, you know, let's recheck everything, you they had to adjust my medications, but she prescribed phentermine to help me lose some of the weight. But I was like, Well, I don't feel like I have a problem with like app Ty like them want to eat all the time. But she prescribed it to me, and phentermine as a stimulant. And I noticed, like, how much better I felt. And it was not just about the way but like, my moved improved. And I wasn't feeling like, you know, when I was bored. I didn't realize that was boredom. But it was that painful, we would just shut down. When I didn't want to do something. And I would just fall asleep, I felt so fatigued. And in the front or mean just kind of switch all of that. And I was like really surprised, like, Okay, well, I feel better. And I was exercising more, I was able to drop the weight. And, you know, mid year, I felt pretty good. I was running at least three, four times a week, because running is one of my favorite things to do and be feel really good. And then I went off the phentermine because we you can only take it for a little while. It's not very good to take it long term. And I noticed a little bit of shift in my mood, but because I had gotten that boost to run, and, you know, that helped my mood in the morning, I felt so energized. So by the end of the year, I was training for a half marathon or my husband I were actually planning our little wedding too, because we got engaged at that time. You know, mid pandemic, perfect timing. We were planning our wedding for November. So you know, I had that motivation. So I was actually going to look good pictures and you know, running every day got the half marathon. So something was challenging. Everything was just kind of like felt right. And, you know, I didn't feel the need to pursue anything else until I got injured. I ran my half marathon and I you know it was was a grade, the week after that. I got injured and it was on my hip. It was like a stress fracture on my hip that I didn't realize it was that until, you know, a couple months ago, but then that that type of injury was just, I could not walk without limping. So then I quickly realized, like, I can't run, I can run and I can exercise the way that I usually do. And from that moment on, it was like, I saw the Klein spiral. Yeah. Oh, my God, it was rough. That was really rough. I mean, it was rough on my husband, because my I was moody, like I couldn't, I was overwhelmed with work, you know, because throughout this year, you know, in our field, like therapists, boomers, women in such high demand, you know, it's like, it got slow for a while you get worried, but now it's like, oh, my gosh. And I didn't have that outlet. And that was the one thing that I did for myself. Like, nothing. I was like, Yeah, I go to therapy, you know, but I couldn't even walk my dog. Yeah. So I just like, I don't know. And around May I talked to my psychiatrist, again, I was like, I need to go to that testing, like, this is happening right now. Like, I'm incredibly, you know, the press like, irritable, I'm anxious. I can focus I, you know, like that stubbornness, like, I don't want to do some of these things. And I felt very dysregulated. And, you know, I saw how much it could impact our relationship to in our home, like, we don't have kids, it's just the two of us. And I just, you know, it's just not fair. You know, we're having, you know, such a good time, all that stuff. And I was like, Yeah, sure, you know, I'll send a referral again, no worries. And I was in a better place now different insurance odd stuff to go and actually get that done. And I went in May. And that's when I started my medication was like, the beginning of June. Got through to testing and I was diagnosed with combined type ADHD, and you know, this for our testing, so we're just like, excruciating ly painful. But, you know, it's, we were about we had a vacation coming up to which was, you know, like, I can't even walk and we are very outdoorsy people, my husband and I, we love hiking, we love all these things. And I could do, I'm not going to be able to do those things. This is gonna be horrible. And, you know, I was in physical therapy for a while, nobody could tell what was wrong. I waited two months for a frickin MRI. And until I was

able to get it. And I think it was almost like a beginning of August, I was able to get my MRI and I saw a sports medicine doctor because my goal is like I want I want to run just like you know, you have a femoral, a stress fracture on the femoral neck on your hip, and you have to be on crutches. And I left with crutches for like five weeks. He said, You're going to be on crutches. I was already taking medication at that time. And then the crutches were put in place. That was awful. It's like you're telling like a hyperactive person. And I do all this stuff so quick. You know, it's like, oh, well my water bottles filling up, I'm gonna do this and do that. And like I'm, I'm always walking fast and doing all these things and and I get put on crutches and I can even hold my cup of coffee, you know, go into the kitchen and coming back. I was already coming to the office to do some sessions. So I had to deal with the, you know, parking and planning for the time. And that was not very great for me. It's I was planning for time, but not for time with me on crutches. So again, it was like another bump. And, you know, we switch medications. I'm on vitamins now and that just it changed everything and it was, you know, it did help me but that time was actually very stressful.



Katy Weber 35:03

But the emotional dysregulation element is I think something that most of us come to our understanding of ADHD through the emotional dysregulation issue either. It's the rumination, the rejection, sensitive dysphoria, I mean, those are the things that really like hit us on a deep seated level, where we really start to, like, look into what exactly is happening and what has been happening over the course of my life. Right. And so it's interesting, you know, we I talk about this a lot on the podcast, like how the, you know, sharing our lived experiences is how we really are coming to understand what this looks like, because the DSM offers so little. Right, right, in terms of understanding, and I'm like, Why is there no emotional element in the DSM? You know, what is your theory like, because I feel like a lot of the emotional elements of ADHD come, are sort of like side effects of either a life on diagnosed or, you know, or just not understanding the source of a lot of the executive dysfunction and the emotional dysregulation, like, so much of that, it comes from just really not understanding it. So it's almost like a chicken egg thing with this with the DSM. Right. It's like, I understand why they don't add in a lot of the emotional stuff, because it's not necessarily. It's not necessarily the same with everybody, right? I mean, obviously, some of us experience certain traits, more or less based on our environments, but like, why don't they put the emotional stuff in there? Because it's such a huge part of it? Probably the biggest, you know, no, are they just like, I don't want to touch that. It's such a, it's such a big, you know, it's so because it's so hard to like, really pull apart and parse, you know, all of that stuff, right. But I feel like the anger the rage, you, you described it so well, I mean, I also used to run and injured my hip. And now I don't run anymore, because I keep trying to I keep like, my hip gets better. And then I try and then it injures again. And so like I'm 46, I've given up, I just walk as fast as I comfortably can. And it's such a you know, what, like brisk walking every morning is such a huge part of my day. And I feel like I credit it with so much of my emotional health. And they're so you know, they're so intertwined. So when you talk about how like your life spirals, and your mood spirals, when you are injured, like I really related to that, and it made me think of like all the elite athletes with ADHD who then get injured or have to retire and like how, you know, depression sets in. And yeah, and another interesting thing you brought up, which I hadn't really thought much about, or was just the degree to which mental health practitioners and therapists during the pandemic have, like really had to carry so much of everybody's depression and anxiety through from this pandemic, right. It's not just your own, but like you said, like that was, that was really poignant, where you were like, not only was I dealing with this pandemic, but then I also had to kind of hold everything that we and it just brought me back to that. Or the, you know, the early months

of just scrolling, you know, that term Doobs were like, right, I've just being like, spending so much time just like hunched and tight, and, you know, feeling so the chaos of it all and feeling like everything in our life had just kind of been thrown up in the air and all the pieces were falling, where they were falling where they may. But, you know, I, it's been interesting for me to think about how like the H in ADHD, the hyperactive element relates to that spiral, right? That that going from like zero to 100 emotionally. For me, I kind of interpret that as the hyperactive element for a lot of us who, who never really thought about the physical hyperactivity, you know, or never really related to it. And I feel like there is a lot of connection there between how we go from, you know, seemingly okay and level to just like, oh my god, I see my whole life in front of me, and it's, it's a shit show. Right? And you know, and then it's like, then you're just sort of in that uncontrollable rage, and everyone around you is like, what just happened? You know, you could, you could switch like that, right? So I really appreciate how you describe that in terms of the injury because I relate to that so much and

**J** Julia Edwards 39:44

Yeah, and I've never experienced an injury like that, like this one before. You know, like as an athlete, of course, I've gotten injured it's overuse injuries, but it just never kept me from doing the thing, bro. They just took a break from it. But me There were other things in plays at that time as well. But this, this was definitely, you know, that part. And you also go through this, like waves is almost like existential or identity crisis, which, you know, was like a good point that I had in mind to bring up when you mentioned, you know, how elite athletes are impacted by that as well. And then I realized that it was not only that, you know, like sports and exercise for me have, like I mentioned, had been my constant and have absolutely helped me, you know, kept me leveled. And just in every aspect of my life, there were two things to that, because how was felt so sensitive, like, so sensitive, and almost fragile on the inside, sports made me feel tough, you know, so it's like, oh, I'm going to look tough on the outside, you know, fit and have a you know, because that kind of covers how vulnerable and like how sensitive I really feel on the inside. But it's, you know, the exercise helps ADHD brain immensely. But then I also noticed how much my ADHD impacted my sports performance as an athlete, for so many reasons. And the rejection sensitive dysphoria was a big one. You know, I was a swimmer, like, I was not a swimmer to the Olympic level. But you know, as in a national team, I actually was teammates with someone who actually made it to the Olympics at some point. And we used to swim together. And but it's the pressure, you know, that you feel as an athlete, and that sometimes things are just not good enough. I remember having a really tough coach, and that coach was a lot of people were scared of them. And you know, my dad liked them. And it was like, at some point, I told myself that I did too, but as an adult, like now, looking back and dissecting every aspect of my life, like No, and I remember how many times I actually cried just with being in that environment, like with the athlete, the pressure, you know, we had to go to competition sometimes. And we had to stay all together and one plays. And I was just always, like, fearful of something. And I didn't understand what it was. And all I heard was like, well, just what we got to do, like, the coach is, like, very tough. And I remember I would cry, and I just didn't understand, like, what I needed. But then those experiences of like, well, you didn't meet your time. So even, you know, I told my husband, this experience of, you know, my favorite style was butterfly, like, what like, that was what I was best on. And I won, like, first plays metal and like 100 meters, like a one competition that came, like a smile to my coach, and he just completely dismissed it and like, was kind of like, well, wires clearly, like your, your time didn't improve. And that was just like a washed. And I'm like, Oh, so this is like, not good enough. And at the time was just, you probably just brush it off, like, okay, but now it's like, okay, you got to do more, you got to train more, what's the next thing you don't, they don't allow the time to

actually appreciate the success. And most of all, they give you that pat on the back, like, Great job, you know, you got this, you got that which is great. But you rarely get how hard you're training, you know, that validation of how much effort you're putting in, right? Like, hey, I do see that you've been training really hard. I do see that you've been practicing, you know, what else do you think it's going on? It was always the statement and like, well, you know, we gotta do more, we got to switch this or we got to switch that.



Katy Weber 43:50

Yeah. I mean, it makes sense to me, the more I understand about the ADHD brain and kind of how we how, you know, in terms of our dopamine hits, like, it makes sense to me why we're always upping the ante, right? Like I think about like, I got injured, I continually reinjure myself, because I can't help but up the ante, I can't help but always push myself. And then I would push myself to the point that where I would get injured, where I'd be like, Oh, I, you know, oh, I ran 5k Today, at this time, if I do the exact same time tomorrow, I'm a failure. Like, there's nothing I know, it's like you always have to do better. You always have to push yourself and I think about like, even with the podcast, like I reached these little milestones with the podcast, and if I don't always get better, then it's the equivalent of failure in my head. Right? Like it's very, it's really difficult for us to kind of linger in accomplishments. Because lingering and in accomplishments is boring. You know, it's the what's the next thing what's the next thing How can I push myself? And I think it's you know, I feel like I think about this a lot in terms of like, our self esteem, right? Like, of course, you're gonna have terrible self esteem if you can't appreciate what wow, you know, if you can appreciate what you've done everything is in the past, everything is like, Oh, I did that I you know, what, what else can I conquer? And while he pushes us, and we, you know, we're always finding new things, and I think it makes it's one of our gifts is to always be pushing ourselves. I think there is that that the other side of the coin, which is wonder we're so unhappy all the time, because we always kind of focus on that one bad review, or the one thing we did that, you know,



Julia Edwards 45:35

yeah. And then all or nothing,



Katy Weber 45:37


right? Yeah. And it's so I think it's also intertwined in terms of this, like importance of self reliance and feeling like, like you said early on, right, like, I wasn't doing well. And it was not for lack of trying, right. And so it was always figuring, like, I have to figure this out, I have to figure out why everybody else is able to do this, and I can't. And so there's this, we, you know, I think we grow up with this enormous emphasis on self reliance. And, and so why, you know, having to need help when you're injured is difficult, or, you know, asking for help with anything is really difficult for us. But it's like, it's so interconnected in terms of like, how all of these seemingly random issues that you kind of face in your life, like, all come back to this one type of brain? We have. Absolutely right. And so yeah, like, you know, the idea of like, being injured and pushing yourself as an athlete totally makes sense to me through the ADHD lens, right? Because yeah, right. And we also do that in our careers, like, it's not good enough to be second best, either you have to be first or you're a failure. And, and I think, like you said, that can also



get ingrained in you in the culture of competitive sports, too, right. Like, I don't think it's coming out of nowhere. But I think we're especially susceptible to that idea that, like, if I am not always improving than I'm a failure.

 Julia Edwards 47:09

Yeah, it's, you know, the competitiveness, all that stuff, or the crippling fear of failure to it gets a Sasser beta, when you do the competitive sports or, you know, anything competitive, whether it's academic or anything else. And, you know, for me, obviously, academic was not my strong suit. So it was like the sports. And, you know, all of the combinations, like if you don't do this, like all or nothing, if I don't get the best time like that I fail. Yeah, even so, okay, first place, metal big deal, and that you start to hear those messages. Like, it doesn't matter if this doesn't happen. But you know, in addition to that, being like an athlete, and also being a female and a female swimmer, I mean, it was hard. Like, once you start hitting puberty, like you have to deal with your monthly cycle, you have to cure with hormones. And when you're very little, you know, I've heard like, horrible stories of like, well, you know, like, Oh, my daughter can swim because she's not feeling well, you know, she's having some cramps, and they're you like, so? Yeah, right. You know, you have to do it. And then the other aspect is the incredible strict diets, because, you know, you have to do some of these things. And I remember when I was little like, eight, between eight to 10 years old, things like that. I remember having getting these diets two weeks prior to a big competition. So zero carbs, zero sugars, zero, nothing, because we had to drop weight before the competition because we were going to carb up then. So we didn't want to be putting the extra weight. So that starts to mess with your body image too, which is already like the body dysmorphia is already a part. But it's oh my god, I have to deal with this and ADHD brains strict diets, you're telling me what not to eat. And Monty like that was? You know, of course, it was not going to work very well.

 Katy Weber 49:02

Well, not only that, but the perfectionism element too, right. Which is like, I have to do everything. 110% And when you bring nutrition into that it Yeah, it messes with your Yes, and messes

 Julia Edwards 49:14

with you. I remember eating awful food. You know, it was awful. And, you know, my parents were always encouraging my dad specially when it came to swimming. I was like, Well, this is how it has to be and whatnot. And, you know, not only that, but I remember during practice during those times, they wouldn't even allow us to drink water because you had to dehydrate yourself. You know, it was I've heard it from wrestlers. I've heard from like, you know, I'm cutting weight. I have to meet weight, you know, I have to dehydrate yourself. So they will tell us like No, no water. Don't do I'm like, Oh my gosh, this is like terrible. I remember having some practices that you know, I was I was so thirsty. You know, I feel so dehydrated and like, like even taking a swig of the pool water. seem attractive at that time. And it was, you know, you're supposed to do mom does is how it is to like, run before practice, do all those things. But there were like several different things that, you know, the criticism. That's why the RSD there's one memory I had that I'll never forget. And it's I think I don't remember if I actually got late to

practice on Saturday morning, and you know, my dad had to drive. I don't know if we fell behind. But it was six in the morning, like everybody finished practice. And then everybody left the pool and the coach left me in the pool. And he told me to do 10 more laps. And that's like, 10 more laps in an Olympic swimming pool. That's an extra 1000 meters. You know, and it's, and I didn't know why I was being punished. Because like, like, I wasn't sure what was going on into this day. I don't know what happened. But I kept coming back, like, no, keep going. And I was like, do another one. And I would come back. And I would just go like this, like why? And it was just he would go like this like, nope, go again. I'm like, Oh, my God, like, what? What is happening, and I remember crying as I was swimming, you know, as quiet like, my goals, were filling up with tears, and slowly and my dad was just, you know, sitting there waiting for me, until he let me out. And I honestly don't remember, you know what he said? But I was like, Why am I being shy right now? You know, so then the RSD with people pleasing, then you make sure that you want to be perfect to avoid bad, you want to make sure that you do all the things that you need the time. So everything started to become not because, you know, I wanted to be a good swimmer. But it was because it was pleasing my coach, you know, it's like you want to perform your best because you want to get that praise or otherwise. Because if you don't get that, then you get criticism, right? And that and it hurts your self esteem. Right? And aside from that, those two aspects that can really impact, you know, you think that made that that may not be the sport for you. But it ended up being like, it's just the environment. But I forgot how much I love swimming because of the emotions and everything that I was going through. Because of the other aspects of it were, you know, I was always scared and anxious before a competition like oh my gosh, you know, what if I miss what if I miss my head? What if I miss this? You know, and then you know, what are going to be the consequences? Another aspect I didn't think about was the sensory stuff.



Katy Weber 52:32

I know, right? That has just been mind blowing to me. I had no I would never have said I had sensory issues until I was diagnosed and really started looking into that connection. And I was like, and I'm like, Oh, my goodness, I have so many Where do I even begin?



Julia Edwards 52:50

Yeah, the sensory stuff. And as an athlete, you deal with that, you know, if you're in a competition, like I vividly remember, you know, when they tell you to go and get ready on your lane, you know, just kind of stretching, but then what I remember is like the noise of the crowds, you know, crowds like parents yelling all that stuff, like coaches on this side, athletes on that side. And, and then as I'm walking, I'm like, having all these thoughts like, oh, my gosh, what if I slip when I'm in the, you know, and that starting block, like, what if I slip? What if I just go before, like the gunshot or the little beep, you know, rings and all that stuff. But then I remember the thing that calmed me down was like looking at the water. And I was walking, and so I was tuning all those sensory stuff. But at the same time, like you feel nervous, and sometimes that gets in the way as you're swimming. And you may not perform at your best if something is past the level of tolerance that you can't cope with. But I remember as a little kid thinking, like, oh, the pool looks like jello, you know, it's very still the wireless still like and I will just stare at it blows my favorite color. So it was just calming in a way. But I didn't realize how much of the sensory stuff can impact that. Well, you know, interesting. And I cannot even imagine Olympic athletes dealing with all the crowds and also criticism. Well, not



Katy Weber 54:15

only that, but I think also like the difficulty with rest, right? Like we have, I think that also comes back to that idea of like, believing that you could always be trying harder, right? Because we also kind of really don't understand. I think the concept of trying and outcome are very skewed for us, right? Because they're not it's not a simple relationship. Sometimes things come super easy to us. And sometimes things come incredibly difficult to us. So we've never really had a very like reliable concept of trying right and so I think really that affects how we rest or how we are how we can't rest right because there's always that sense of I could be doing more I could be using this time more productively I could be doing this and why so many of us, I think, feel like we default into like, I'm lazy if I'm resting, and what is wrong with me, you know, being productive, but yeah, right, it's



Julia Edwards 55:15

yeah, I never noticed to this, to this day, it's like the realisation of holy shit like I have never been able to relax. And it's like because even if you're sitting like my husband and I can be watching a movie or something like I, either on my grokking on my chair like I have my phone, but even if I'm by myself, the guilt starts creeping in because ADHD comes with a very lovely sight of guilt and shame, obviously, especially if you get diagnosis and adults. But it's like, I could be doing something more I could clean. And then it's like, oh, I should clean the dishes. I should clean this do that. And is that choice paralysis? And then you don't do. And I'm lazy, right.



Katy Weber 56:00

So I know, I know, when I was first diagnosed, I would talk about like, how I'm so much kinder to myself when it comes to rest. Because now I think of it as like, I'm recharging, because I was hyper focusing, but I'm not kinder to myself, like now I'm just like, I realized that I'm recharging, but I also still am impatient, right? So I'm like, Okay, you should you should be done by now, you should be back to doing something, you know, like, I don't feel like I'm necessarily kinder to myself in a lot of those regards. Even though I know what's happening, because yeah, there is still that sense of like, I, I should be able to you know, I should be able if most people need eight hours sleep, I should be able to get by on six. What's wrong with me if I'm not better than everybody else in right, random elements of life, right?



Julia Edwards 56:46

Yeah, exactly. And it's, you know, the sleep problems were a huge thing. So even when you think about your life from this lens, like it's everything, everything, every single thing and experience that I can ever imagine, like ADHD is just like, oh my gosh, that's what it was.



Katy Weber 57:06

Well, this is why I get so frustrated when there's that response, like, you know, maybe do you know, be careful. You might feel like ADHD is the enemy to everything, but you should really

know, be careful. You might feel like ADHD is the answer to everything, but you should really like, you know, get officially diagnosed, because it could be something else. And that's what always trips me up. Because I'm like, what else? Could it be? Like? I just feel like it's so everything is wrapped up in this right? And so like when you know, I'm like, what exactly? Do you mean, it could be something else? Like, what is the difference between somebody who has ADHD? And feels in their bones like this? Is it right? This is describing and, and putting this, you know, new, new lens on so many aspects of my life? And then and then hearing like, Well, maybe it's just anxiety? Or maybe it's just trauma related, you know? And I feel like for those of us who have ADHD that, that doubt, that's always there is making it makes the diagnosis journey that much more difficult. And right. Yeah, that's what I find. That's what I say. Like, when I say things, like, the more I learned, the less I know, it's, you know, it's that sense of like, what exactly is happening, you know, with with ADHD and like make because I'm always thinking, Well, maybe it's not maybe I don't have ADHD, maybe it's something else. Maybe it's this. And, and then I just told myself, that's all part of having ADHD.



Julia Edwards 58:31

Like you gaslight yourself, right. And yeah, minimize things



Katy Weber 58:35

and all of that internalized stigma, right, like, even, you know, the, so I think, you know, I don't know what the answer is, but maybe a lot more people have ADHD than we think, or, you know, maybe this is just sort of, we're going through a mental health revolution right now. And more people are understanding what it looks like, especially in adults, but it just seems to me like it just seems to me like there are so many of us who are experiencing this and are coming to this diagnosis. And and I don't know, what do you think? Do you feel like there's been a proliferation of ADHD diagnoses since the pandemic or even, definitely has,



Julia Edwards 59:20

you know, just because when you think about it, like everything, everything that you're used to changes abruptly for a lot of people? Yeah, so I, you know, admire moms, you know, and women who had to be at home with their kiddos, and maybe they didn't have enough space, and they had to work from home like both parents from home with kids. And then you think of the sensory issues, you know, like all of those things combine under the same roof. So there's definitely, you know, the pandemic has shown a lot of things whether it's ADHD or not, but it was like the push of a lot of like, Hey, you Haven't been dealing with this,



Katy Weber 1:00:01

right? Yeah, I know, sometimes I look around it. I'm like, is anyone not struggling right now?



Julia Edwards 1:00:07

Right. Right? No. it's I've seen a lot of adults who not diagnosed with autism to like later on life.

And yeah, you know, so it's, you know, the neurodivergent community is, there's so many aspects to it, but definitely that was, you know, as adults, it comes with layers and layers of complications, which is why you have to be very thorough, you know, but with ADHD, like I'm, I'm an ADHD certified clinical services provider, like, I actually decided to get that certification, because I had a lot of clients were and, you know, it's, you have to look for it, as a clinician, it's one of those things that, you know, if it's not like, we can rule it out. But it's not a mental issue, this is a brain disorder, you know, and in the world of psychiatry, it's probably the most manageable and treatable of all conditions, because, you know, you can actually see, like, our brain structures are different, the way that it functions is different, even if each person's experience of it is a little bit different. You know, but sometimes we have to look for it, because it's, it's a chemical imbalance, you know, a lot of like personality disorders, because women tend to get diagnosed with personality disorders, and those with thinking patterns, you know, may present that way. But, you know, now as a clinician, and I see people I have, it's almost like you have this imaginary checkbox, when people talk about their impulsivity, you know, maybe unhealthy relationships, eating disorders, because it's so connected to that, the perfectionism, you know, so I, you know, tend to ask, like, questions a certain way that will allow me to see, and then if I start noticing that, you know, has anybody talked to you about ADHD? Like, let's explore that a little bit. And, you know, we'll educate, and I'll send referrals to, you know, the places if it's something that we want to explore, and definitely, I have my clients with ADHD, but also, so many that after some months, and really like, Oh, my goodness, like, let's explore this. And it was actually ADHD, because I can follow like, a workout program, like, I always get bored, like, I go by if I didn't use it, and the hyper fixations that you don't think about, and then you feel like a failure for not sticking to it.



Katy Weber 1:02:26

Yeah. And then yeah, and then I hear so many stories of women who have, you know, had all of these issues have done their research, really kind of feel like it's got to be ADHD, and then they go to a doctor, and the doctor is like, No, I don't think you have ADHD. Yeah. Oh, yeah. And really calories. Right? And how crushing that is? And I'm like, so as an as an expert, do you ever have somebody come to you who thinks they have ADHD? And you think, no, they don't?



Julia Edwards 1:02:53

Well, no, I don't I'm not very quick to say no, you don't sometimes if I if I just met them? And I will just ask them, you know, what makes you think you have ADHD? Right? Yeah. Let's talk about it.



Katy Weber 1:03:08

Right. I feel like by the time you get to the point where you're like, holy crap, I think I have ADHD, that seems to me like that's pretty much an indicator. Like I don't think I don't think a lot of people miss diagnose themselves. And I have no, I'm not basing that on nothing other than, you know, the people I've met who it's almost like, well, the more you know about ADHD, the more you can kind of pick somebody out of a crowd and be like, yeah, yeah, you have it. And



Julia Edwards 1:03:35

I don't I don't know any factors for sure. Right now. And because a lot of things can change your brain structure, you know, trauma can change your brain structure. You know, I also work with a lot of people, I'm a certified clinical trauma provider as well. So I see a lot of people with PTSD. And you know, complex trauma can change your brain structure, and at the same time, they impact you and you know, you can concentrate, there's people pleasing, there's all of these behaviors that are very consistent, you know, with ADHD, but then there's going to be some determinant factors that will allow me to see like, No, this is not it for this person. And sometimes it has to do with, you know, the executive function, part of maybe working memory or just the task initiation, having no problems just doing things, you know, are the comments like, I just don't understand, you know, why this person, just do it, if you want to do it, just do it. Yeah. And I know, we want to do that. So you have to be very, very thorough, you know, it's if I do an evaluation, I want to explore every aspect, you know, rule out medical things first. That's always my thing as a therapist, like, evaluate, like, let's rule out medical conditions, because even for women, especially if we're dealing with a lot of hormone problems, the symptoms are going to present very similarly to ADHD. You know, so talk to doctors, you know, let's roll out thyroid disorders, you know, anything with the endocrine system can have a lot of, you know, symptoms that will present as psychological or something like that. So you have to roll those things out and be mindful of it. Yes, you can dismiss someone too quickly, in that's my age as a therapist, of course, but people in the medical field, you know, they don't have the same approach. So they tend to be very quick to dismiss someone like, well, but you're an adult, like, why you did great in school? What do you think you have ADHD? It's like, Yeah, cuz that's what it is good grades, you know,



Katy Weber 1:05:37

write or say to a college student here, take this riddle, and it'll help you and, like, not bothered to really talk about what's happening here.



Julia Edwards 1:05:47

Yeah, and I can say very much about bad because I know, it's, you know, my country, like back then there's not that much knowledge about mental health. You know, to that extent, obviously, we have providers, but specially ADHD, my parents, and I had no clue, right? Like, how could we know? And it's genetic, like, in this year, I learned, like, it's definitely coming from my dad, you know, and him and I have chat about it. But even my dad was a person who just didn't acknowledge that and believe then that, you know, at the beginning, until we were able to actually have a good chat, but you just, if you don't know, you can do know him.



Katy Weber 1:06:27

Right. And I know, I feel like I spend a lot of time with my own children feeling like what do I not know? What am I not seeing? Because I feel like so much of this, you know, so much of the grief of the an adult diagnosis is looking back at all of those signs that were there, all along that nobody spotted, right? Because we didn't know. I mean, I can't I can't be angry at my parents or my teachers, but at the same time like that, you know, it does feel like, gosh, how would my life have been different?



Julia Edwards 1:06:58

Ma'am? Definitely. It's a very deep grief, it's very different than anything. Because it's yeah, you have to go through what could have been, you know, and where would it be right now, but then you shift into the identity crisis, like, oh, my gosh, have I just been doing things because all of this was expected of me and not because that's what I wanted, you know, like that. adapting to different people, it's like fitting in, but then you forget about who you truly are, you know, since you don't feel like you belong, it's you have to act accordingly. And that was my thing. I felt like such an outsider. And my passion was helping people my deep sense of empathy. But why I wanted to study what I did musically was because I wanted to understand people more, you know, I came to that realization lately of like, I wanted to know like, why people did the things that they did, because something just didn't make sense to me.



Katy Weber 1:07:53

Right? Yeah. I so appreciate you willing to have these conversations and share your story and be vulnerable and I really, really enjoyed getting to hear more about you. I think I appreciate it.