

Inger Shaye Colzie: Self-acceptance and reframing your ADHD

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SPEAKERS

Inger Shaye Colzie, Katy Weber



Katy Weber 00:00

My first question is always how you were diagnosed and kind of what led up to it. I know you were diagnosed through your son getting diagnosed. But yeah, talk me through that. How old was your son? And how long ago was this?



Inger Shaye Colzie 00:14

though? My son, how long there was? This is a good question. This is where the working memory part doesn't work. So well. My son was in fifth grade. So this was, like, six, seven years ago. And he was diagnosed as the school, you know, they can't ask you to get your child diagnosed, but they were asking us to get a diagnosis. And then he was and it was like, Oh, that sounds about right. But then we didn't do anything much about it. My husband's like it, you know, it'll be fine. And we'll just do some other things. And it was fine. We had to like, there was a lot of upset during middle school. But what happened was, he was diagnosed. And when I got those rating scales, I was like, Oh, that's me. That's me. But their question was like, Oh, you have this also, that's funny, is that I kind of suspected I had heard about it, but I kind of dismissed it. I am a therapist, and we went to school. When I went to school, a long time ago, we talked about ADHD for I don't know, it's a paragraph, and it was a child's disease. So I didn't even consider it would be something that, you know, I would have to deal with. But having to take care of him, you know, making sure

that he was getting into school, I don't have time for to get a diagnosis. For myself, it wasn't even a thought. Until, as you do get older. I'm a therapist, and I was talking and I couldn't find any words to say, I was just sneaking around and around and around in circles. And it scared me. I thought I had early onset Alzheimer's. That led me to do some research about what this could be. And then when it said, with ADHD, and women and your hormones, then I was like, Oh, I need to definitely find out what's going on. And do I have it? It was easy to get diagnose. I had to drive about an hour away from my house to get someone to diagnose me under my insurance. Because I mean, if I got diagnosed, I would spend \$5,000. But I didn't. So I drove about an hour and found this lovely psychotherapy, no psychologist, and as soon as we talked for five minutes, she was like, Well, I'm pretty sure you have it. But we'll run through the test. And so when I found out, I many women come to me and are like, you know, it's that lightbulb and a revelation. And for me, it was just like, Oh, yeah, like you already knew this. So it's just kind of like a confirmation of what you already knew. So, which is a good thing to have, but it wasn't that huge sigh of relief was more like now what can we do about it? You know, I'm always I guess in the vein of like moving fast, like, what can we do to help this because I couldn't, I couldn't go around without having any words. So that was great. But I will say what was interesting for me is that I was having a pretty, pretty good life. That was working. I was a psycho therapist, I had my son, I had another job. You know. So I have a husband, like there was a lot of things happening. That was great. So when I thought about ADHD, we were a lot of things that were happening that weren't great. So that part was the part that was confusing. It wasn't until I started doing my research that this is common with a lot of women, that you know, we're doing all of the things we're getting things done. But all of that internal struggle, all of that feeling of inadequacy, and all of that moving all those moving parts. Like if one thing fell out of all the juggling, everything would fall apart. That was the part that was killing me. just running around like that and doing all that. And I didn't really know that that's what it was. I just thought I wasn't keeping up with my psychotherapy notes. well as other people, I didn't realize all the rest of the things were really just really feeling like somebody was like dying inside. I call it the hamster wheel from hell. And yeah, I find that it's kind of dad's my experience, which sometimes I find some other people are like, you know, they look back. It's like, Oh, they didn't really know what was happening. And they were so surprised to me, it was like, Oh, I didn't know that this part. That part of anxiety is what was happening for me.



Katy Weber 04:40

I think the fact that it took you two years to actually get the diagnosis feels very ADHD to me, and it's which is that, like you said, like moving very fast and also just the overwhelm of life. I mean, I think one of the things I personally got related to So many things that you were saying. The one of the things that I find I struggle with now, as you know, a woman

who has my children are older now. So they're like 14 and 10. So I'm feel like I'm in this kind of sweet spot where they're not toddlers, which was horrible. But you know, they're not also not adults yet, but so I'm, you know, I'm still kind of tied to them. But I feel like I have a lot more like support in my life right now. And so sometimes I sort of wonder like, how much am I even struggling? I feel like I've got this kind of devil Angel on my shoulder. And there's the angel that's like, this ADHD diagnosis has explained to all of your struggles throughout your life and why motherhood was so difficult when they were babies and why you struggled in school and, and now you know, the executive function. And there was just like, all of this checklist. And yes, ADHD explains everything. And this is the answer. You've been looking for your whole life, all that time that you felt, you know that you were misdiagnosed with depression, anxiety, blah, blah, blah. And so it feels like Yes, I have that overwhelming relief and, and euphoria feeling. But then there's the devil on my other shoulder, which is like, are you really struggling? Or are you just lazy? Like, that voice still comes back, which is like, yeah, you probably everybody feels this way. You know, like, what makes you any different from any other mom? What makes you think you're struggling more? You know, you're, you know, the only reason why it feels like you're struggling more is because you can't get your act together. You know, like, I still feel despite the diagnosis, that voice still is very, very loud in me. Yeah, I



Inger Shaye Colzie 06:37

mean, it's interesting. Because, you know, I like I said, I'm a psychotherapist, but I'm not ADHD coach now. And the difference is really, when I started coaching at, he was really looking into what that is, why is it this? You know, the struggles not enough, right? It's right, it's your struggle actually real because, you know, you're not necessarily the person who, you know, can't pay any bill or can't be, you know, your checkbooks not done or, you know, yes, you have stuff all over the counter, but there's some people that can't even cook dinner. And it's like, your struggle is your struggle, your struggle is your struggle, and your struggle is real. And it's valid, you know, sometimes, and that's that thing, where sometimes you can get it all done all of it, and then sometimes none of it gets done. So acceptance, to me was a, it's a big part, it's a really, really big part that is consistently inconsistent, or consistently inconsistent either way you want to say it, but that your struggle is your struggle, that struggle is real, but it doesn't have to be that it now envelops your entire life, you know, your ADHD is always gonna be there. But being able to have, you know, that radical self compassion that that happens, that there are dishes of the things or, for me, it's the mail or the clutter, you know, or the other parts that are really great, where I can do all kinds of herculean feats, like taco, like, 10 clients in a day, it's a breeze, you know, because I like it or, like, do some things for my son, it's, you know, leading into the parts that really, really work for you. Your strength and in bolstering up the parts that hold you back. So your deficits and, and people being okay, that some days,

you don't even know which ones? Which ones. So, you know, it's that acceptance piece. So that when you hear that voice, like, are you just lazy, like lazy is not a thing, I think everybody's doing the best that they can when they do it. So that's not even a word that I use. We are doing our best. And some things are best is that, you know, there's just takeout, right? Yeah, I didn't cook the gourmet meal, even though I have all the ingredients, you know, for nobody got to bed on time, or I love I love. You know, I make dinner a lot of times at nine or 10 o'clock at night, doesn't work for other people, but it works at my house. Because if you want to eat, that's what you're eating, because that's when I have the time and the energy usually cook. So it's, you know, leaning into your strengths are what works for you and not really comparing what other people are doing. Because once you start comparing with anybody, even when you compare with somebody else has ADHD, that's when you're stuck in the water, because you're definitely gonna feel like whatever they're doing is better than what we're doing. It's that kind of negativity bias, where we're always thinking what we do is wrong, which is not true, but begins to be that voice in your head. And I just, I always caution everybody that voice in your head, what it's telling you, you've got to guard that to the utmost because that is really what's going to run your life. That voice is telling you things are bad, they're going to be dead. If you can change the voice to say that things are good, or at least that things are okay. Then things will be good. Yeah, or okay. And that's a much better way to live. I love that.



Katy Weber 10:00

We actually have a self deprecation jar in my house where because my son loves to call himself lazy. He's in the fourth grade. And you know, and I'm always I'm like, you're not lazy. I've seen you spend hours building things in Minecraft that are insane. Like, you cannot use The L Word anymore in this house, I still use it myself all the time in my head. But yeah, it's definitely outlawed in my house. So just to backtrack a little bit, what was it that alerted teachers when your son was in the fifth grade? What were they thinking was ADHD at the time, because I know, it's so different in boys.



Inger Shaye Colzie 10:37

Yeah, so they I'm sure they were thinking it long before this race. You know, it's funny, schools just aren't usually set up for people with ADHD. So you know, being able to sit down in class, being able to pay attention to something that you're not, you don't care about. Because you know, that's the thing, like you're saying, your son, when he's building something for hours, that's great. But when there's like some, you know, schoolwork, there's no reward behind that there's maybe something you care about. So then you think you're lazy, because you don't want to do that report, or you know, if you have any

learning differences, so being able to, you know, not comprehension, but learning differences in your learning styles. My son also was a visual processing disorder, it just takes a little longer. But when they're expecting your child to be able to do things, as fast, maybe as others, it just takes a little while for him to process. And many people have ADHD, you take a little longer the process, then you feel like you're, you're lazy, or you're crazy, you know, or you're stupid. And those are the things and then they call that to your attention, like there's something wrong with your child, as opposed to, hey, let's look at what's going on for your child's so that we can best support them. You know, it's really like, yeah, and the fact that they can't even really say we want to have them evaluated, I understand body, don't allow teachers to do that. But that right there makes you and your child feel that there's something wrong with him. You know, and that's something that definitely needs to be looked at.



Katy Weber 12:08

Yeah, you know, my with remote learning this year, my son had me basically as his full time tutor. And it's, well, he hasn't officially been diagnosed. I know he has ADHD, just from what I've learned of it in my own journey. And so I've been able to help him in ways that I probably wouldn't have been able to help him before my own diagnosis. And he's done amazingly this year as a result of my help. And so I really struggled when he was going back into school four days a week now, you know, like, have I raised his expectations too high, because now he needs me as his help. And so as he can kind of feel like he does he have this false sense of security. And I was like, of course, because I'm a mom and a woman, I was taking it all on myself being like, I've done a terrible thing by helping him. And I just stopped. And I was like, No, like, this has been an amazing learning experience in terms of how much and what kind of help he actually needs in order to get the results. And like I was doing his work for him, it was just really eye opening for me to realize a the kind of help he's going to need moving forward and the kind of one on one attention he's gonna need moving forward. But also, like how ingrained it is in me that we shouldn't need help, you know, that ultimately, we should be able to do things on our own. And that really, like, if you need help, therefore, you're deficient somehow. I'm like, that is the society in which we are formed, right? I mean, that's so ingrained in us.



Inger Shaye Colzie 13:39

Yeah. And it's not great for kids or adults, because that's what happens, you know, then we grow up and can't figure out why we feel depressed or upset or have anxiety, where you're trying to do all this alone. We weren't meant to be here and do things alone. We were meant to, you know, do things with other people. That's why community is so healing

in the ADHD space, like when you're around people that are like you that might talk over people or, and, and they don't care that you've done that. Or they might be a few minutes late. It's not now a character flaw, right? You like in their house, it's disorganized. You're not like, oh, you're dirty, that kind of community, finding people who are just like you. That's where the healing space comes in. And it's just so sad that, you know, it starts with our kids. And it becomes so ingrained in us that then sometimes you don't want to put that on them. But, you know, you're grappling yourself because we are humans, too. Like we're moms, but we're humans, and we're moms with ADHD. So, you know, we're doing it the best that we can the best way that we can, and trying to model for them that sounds great. Sounds like that's out. And that's okay. Because a lot of times like you said, they'll be like, Oh, no, they did the wrong thing. It's like, sometimes you do the wrong, somebody do the right thing. Sometimes like look at it, let's look at it and see what was actually done. So like giving them some of what we're learning, especially now that we know about our ADHD I wish I had known when my son was younger about my ADHD. Because again, I didn't get the webinar wasn't two years, he got diagnosed in fifth grade, he is in 11th grade now. So I've been diagnosed about two years, somebody was like closer to three or four years, I kind of wish that I knew what I definitely wish I knew what I know now, to be able to help them as you know, when they're teenagers, they don't want to, they want to walk by you and just go mom till they need you. But I am still able to give a lot of what I have. But I would guess, given anything to have the time that you have with your kid, during this time to for that bond to not only just help him, it's like the bond that you formed as a bond that you'll take forward. You know, as things get harder, and they need your help, you'll have that bond, which will really help you to help you.



Katy Weber 16:26

So now you had a similar experience, at least with undergrad as I did, which was dropping out of quite a few. I like to say I had a complicated relationship with academia, you obviously went much further with your academia. But looking back over your youth, what were some signs of ADHD now?



Inger Shaye Colzie 16:49

Yeah, how much time do we have? Well, it's funny because I'm, I'm a little older than you I was. I'm in my 50s. And so when I was growing up there didn't have ADHD, you just like figured that out. Like, that's what I had to figure it out. And so that's what I did. But when I look back, you know, I started school early, my mom kind of pushed for it, because that's what you did that thing you made sure that you know, you felt like you were pushing your kid up. Knowing probably the developmental delays, we could have waited, but I was smart enough or smart enough to start. But you know, being that smart that I was the only

kid that pass a test to be able to do that, that they had the the administrators that they'd ever had nobody had ever passed, then you're in school, and once you get to like third or fourth grade, where then they're making judgments about you because I was late, and I was disorganized. And I forget to turn homework Vielfalt, you know, doing the homework. And you start saying what is what's wrong? Something's wrong with me. You know, forget, I was the crossing guard. And then I was late every day to be out there early. And the teacher brought me in front of the room and took the little Privacy Guard thing away and said, obviously, she doesn't care. And I was like, mortified. And I was like, oh, something's wrong with me. Yeah. So that kind of started the beginning of where I really like what's happening here. And then we move up to high school, just all the time that you're the girl with so much potential. Like we know you can do all these things, but you just don't seem to do. You know, I was like, Okay.



Katy Weber 18:34

What is my potential? Where are you seeing this? Why am I not saying laughs? Yeah,



Inger Shaye Colzie 18:38

well, I thought I knew I just the thing I always knew I have potential I know is that I could do whatever it is I wanted to do I know that then that's your problem. That was the thing. I was always an eternal optimist, that I always felt like something was not quite right. I never knew what I was always confused. I feel like I was I spent many years more confused than necessarily upset. Because I was honest, like, Yeah, but I knew I didn't care about that stuff. And I didn't think it mattered so much. I guess I just kind of went through it. When I saw your college, get out and get corporate America, you were 25 years, you get your gold watch, and you're done. And it's like, oh, no, you go to college, and there's no support. But I didn't know that. I knew that I was alone. I was I just turned 17 like a couple weeks before and I was alone at college. five states away, yay. With no supports, it's like, what's getting done nothing. Nothing's getting done and trying to create social relationships, which I didn't realize I wasn't good at because I had a good close group of friends that we all grew up together. You know, not understanding about you know what it was be in school and what to take out your classes and how you're going to organize your home your work and then have a social life. That wasn't good. had all said I, you know, the thing I never dropped out, but I never dropped that I had the benefit of wonderful parents who I love and adore. Because they just kept paying. But it wasn't now it's like \$60,000 a year, that. But they would just be I know, I pass it off, and then they just say, and then I pass it off, and they just pay, and then I dropped classes and so I'd only have a few. So I'd still I was always able to stay above the 2.0. But yet stay in school for eight years. Like that's a feat.

how I did it. But I do have the benefit of parents that just, you know, kept saying, like, you know, you can do this, but I will say there was a day when it's funny. I'm old enough that they had phone booths. Yes, I was at a phone booth. Even though I had a phone in my home. I was at school in Virginia, shout out the Virginia State. But I was at the phone booth and talking to my father and he was like, Alright, well, it's fine for you to come home. And I was like, No, no, it was always like, yeah, like, pretty much I want to be done paying. I was like, no, no. And then I kind of calmed down. And I said, Listen, if you give me this one chance, he's like, I'm going to figure this out. Give me one more semester. And if I don't, then the other lady. Thanks. So my father was wonderful. And he was like, Okay. And that was the day I figured it out, I think because then there was some accountability. You know, I had grown up for because I've been there for over for over four years. And then I realized all the things that I knew about myself to do, I need to attend class to pass. I'm not that person that can just read the notes. I knew that but it's like, now you have to do it. Guess what, you have to be class on time, I would go to class, my clothes might be all wrinkly. People laugh is like, yeah, I'm at that eight o'clock class, because that's the only way I'm gonna get there. I gotta get up and look cute. That was ever happening. It was like, go get there, like, brush your teeth. But then come home, even get ready. Ask for help. Like, ask the teachers for help me, you don't understand, get a group together. Whenever there's a group project, I used to hate it. But then I learned you get a group project, everybody's gonna do a piece. It's always gonna hold you accountable and pick the piece you're good at. We forget we had a finance class. I didn't know how to do finance. But I knew how to speak. And the big project was to do this. I don't remember like analysis if somebody hasn't been come up and give a presentation. So if I said, I'll speak, you know, and nobody else wants to public speaking, they're like you do? Like, yes, he does do all that work, and then explain it to me. I'll get up there and speak. Now, I don't know what they were saying. But I could memorize stuff like at the moment and and spit it all out. And I forget what the numbers were like that. But I did that. And even a teacher kept asking questions, because teachers clearly No, I didn't know what I was feeling. Because I can't remember all that they said down to the very last like decimal. He's like, Oh, we got an A, and I finally passed that class, I only took it like three times. So it's, you know, learning though. Like That was my strength. My strength was a I knew I could remember it be I knew I go up there and present it in a way and be able to deal with the fire from the teacher, which then made everybody there happy. And then they liked me, too. So it was you know, it was a benefit all over. So we need to the strengths. I knew I had little did I know that those were coping mechanisms for ADHD. But then what I find interesting is fast forward to graduate school, which is a long way. After that. I had to then write the best essay they said they'd ever seen, because my grades were so bad to get into graduate school. But I went to graduate school. I graduated on time, even though I had a baby private didn't have any more. I missed one day a class. And because I had the baby that day, the next day meet I was in class and they were like, why are you here? I

said because you said we can only Miss to base the baby gets sick I needed otherwise the teachers that really, we really want to give you an extra. So it's it's different than in your interest based attention. Like I was interested in the grad school was really important to me, it's something I wanted to do. I have my Master's in social work, the rest of the class was like an undergrad. You know, I'd rather be out like hanging out with my friends. But it's the thing I know now that ADHD that you know, make that those around like, Oh, that's why that happened. But again, I'd set figuring it out, like looking at like, Hey, what did work. And then using all of them and big and knowing that in my 20s has really helped me through to Now am I Yeah, that's



Katy Weber 24:32

a great point. I feel like my motivation shifted. I went for my first year my freshman year and then dropped out of my freshman year because I was like, I'm wasting my parents money. I don't know what I'm doing. I'm not going to class. I'm just hanging out and partying. And then once I took a year off, I kind of had that moment of like, Okay, what do I want to do with the rest of my life? I feel like I want to go back to university and just get this ba and so that was my motivation at that point. And I did I had a lot of those sort of same coping method. criticisms of like, okay, now I know if I'm going to go back, I need to sit front row center and every single lecture and I need to actually go to classes and I need to, you know, like it was I took all of my focus and energy to really perform. But my motivation was the fact that I'm like, I'm here, I'm back, I'm going to pull myself up by those bootstraps, and all of that, that grit, you know, when do you sort of feel like, I've got that motivation? Finally. And I think it eludes us sometimes to feel like, when, you know, because like you said earlier, like, you can't really predict when you're going to have that motivation and when you're not, and sometimes you would think, like, why am I Why am I not able to replicate this behavior from one from one moment to the next. And that's where the interest base part comes into, it feels very so nuanced.



Inger Shaye Colzie 25:49

It is, it's different for each person, and it's different for you every time. So you know, there are times when I have to throw rewards behind it for myself out, like, Oh, you don't get to go out or, you know, spend some money or something or something like that. And many most of the time for me, though, accountability is what I need. I know, I'm a coach that has a coach, right? So there's, no, there's nobody gonna just say, hey, that thing you said, you're gonna do? Are you gonna do it? And then I'm like, Oh, yeah, cuz I'm not gonna go back and say, they're not gonna do it. I mean, that's how it's funny, I have worked out and I didn't know that that was part of like managing range, ADHD, I have had a trainer for 20 years. And Firstly, there was a point where you're kind of like, oh, gosh, don't have to pay

for this. But the reason why we're able to work out for over 20 years is because two times a week, somebody is waiting for me with an appointment, but I'm not going to miss my appointment. And so I've worked out only when I was pregnant, and when I was nursing in the beginning, is the only time that I've missed out and this, you know, pretty much that law working out, which is funny, because a lot of times they're like, Oh, we do stuff, and then we stop, it's like, you put in the accountability that works for you, or the different things that you know, help you get there, whether it's accountability, or like I said, some type of reward or like knowing your why you'd be surprised how long you can sustain something. But it's just knowing about what is that works, and then using it and then knowing if you need to do something else to change it up. I mean, I will say I've had different trainers over that time, to the same place. But sometimes we change trainers. And I think that that's part of it, too. And probably when I was like, oh boy, it's like, oh, this is a new person, right? We're gonna do something different. I've had a job for over 20 years, too. I, my life's pretty interesting. So I had my undergrad degree, lots of jobs, you know, either on quitting or getting fired working for a while, and it's like, oh, I'm bored. So then once I got bored, did I know if that's a quitter? You know, be fired, I didn't realize was the ADHD. But I was gonna go to law school, which is a thing that I don't know why they say use your JD right? Every everybody, you can tell me he's somewhere? Where would you use it? If you weren't going to be an attorney? I don't understand. But I would, I would get all the like, I'm old enough for sending the mail that send you the old test, you know, take the old fat and I would just get them and never take it. And then. But I knew I had to pay to know if they were gonna pay for law school. So I was gonna have to pay. And the girl had to buy nails like you should do now. So you can do it whenever you want. And, you know, you'll have enough money to pay for yourself. Well, when I went to cosmetology school, I ended up liking it. So let's do this for a few months before law school. And I've worked in a full on for over 20 years in the same salon I were going to salons for for most of the 20 years. Because I found something where I felt comfortable. And I was different every day different people speaking all the time doing different services. And it's just actually unfortunately, you know, with the pandemic, we're going to close in a few weeks. That gives me more time to concentrate what I'm doing here with ADHD. But I was still working on Saturdays because I wanted to for many years, not working. I was like Why? Like, why do I have to stop? You know, it just goes to show that not well, it? Sometimes I feel like people just feel like we are fuckup libertarians, like we just can't do anything. And that's just not true. We have to figure out the best ways that it works for us and part of that acceptance of your ADHD and the way that it manifests for you, Dan unit how to work with it. And that's what's really important to figure out Yes, this is real. Yes, this is happening to you. Like it's just but it's just your brain. It's just the way that your brain is and then once you can go Okay, that's fine. Like houses work for you. Yes, I have. I have a college degree and I worked at a salon. But then yes, I had a college degree. I worked at a salon. I went to grad school had a baby That's my journey. That's, you know, that was

what was for me. And dinner gets made at 10 o'clock at night. Okay? Yeah, that's but that's my life. So letting people just live their lives the way that they need to live them. You know, as long as everybody to me as long as everybody sees, you know, safety, beyond faith and pretty much live your life the way you need to.



Katy Weber 30:24

Yeah, I think reframing a lot of that stuff has been so important for me since my diagnosis in terms of you just how I looked at myself, and, and even just, you know that, because I felt like there was that pendulum of, you know, the manic interest in things, the hyper focus, the manic energy when I was super into something, and I'd stay up all night, thinking about it, and then the lethargy, and that kind of exhaustion that comes from not wanting to fold laundry, or do the, you know, some of these boring tasks that would, I would get that paralysis. And so I definitely had that feeling of, you know, thinking I had bipolar, like I think a lot of women do before they're diagnosed, that that swing, and now I'm able, it's, I'm so much more able to view myself as both of those sides of the pendulum as opposed to what I used to do, which is only focus on the bad side, and just be like, and I would only create my own identity out of all of the negatives, I never took put value in the positives, I never saw them, I they always seemed kind of random and, and without, without any sort of seeming pattern or impetus and so that the one thing I felt like I was always It was more like instead of a pendulum, it was almost more like a rubber band, like I would get pulled into different directions. But my natural state was when the rubber band would get let go of, and I would be back to the couch, in paralysis on my phone thinking I was a horrible, lazy person. So the fact that I've sort of been able to look at the more like organic, whole self, and realize that you're not lazy, you're you're recharging. You know, you just, you just spent 12 hours researching, you know, some random topic that was fascinating to you. And now you need to recharge. And so a lot of that I feel like a lot of my self worth has improved so much just in the way I've been able to kind of redefine those moments. Have you noticed, since the pandemic, have you noticed, like, as I'm a pandemic diagnosis, have you noticed a proliferation of ADHD diagnoses this year, get it because you know, you were talking earlier about that kind of house of cards, and the fact that we had it all, you know, we were barely keeping everything together. And then it's feels to me like that a lot of the, my the way in which ADHD, which had been suggested to me over the years by my therapist, suddenly like really became meaningful to me after the pandemic. Anyway, my, my question is, have you have you noticed a proliferation this past year and kind of, what have your clients been telling you? Or what do you what do you feel like is the pattern especially with women our age, especially with women of color? I mean, what is what's happening here? And do you feel like it's what is it about the society we're living in right now that's bringing this ADHD to the fore?



Inger Shaye Colzie 33:58

Well, you're right. I've had many people, you know, the realization of ADHD or, you know, just coming even for mental health diagnoses, just that they feel like something's clearly wrong here. Now that we've had the pandemic, and, you know, there is all the different stressors that are different than the stressors that you normally even had. So sometimes when you're coping, you know, even I'd be barely, but you're coping with the stressors you're used to, once all of those supports went away, then people were like, oh, my goodness, they didn't know what to do. I will say that people that that I clients, I had that with anxiety, or some of ADHD felt better, because finally things have slowed down of it. And they were like, Oh, I never thought I'd be able to do anything different because I didn't know how to change anything. As long as things were really really going quickly. Now they had a chance because everything stopped to take a breath and then they were able to reorganize. And they have actually really thrive. You know, it's been an up and down event because you know, it's been much longer than anyone has thought. And you know, you've got different messaging and different things having different places. But generally, the people that had some of these diagnoses actually have found that it's been a blessing in the fact that it gave them a chance to slow down. But many people have been just realized they have ADHD, because that routine that you have, that kind of kept it together, it just went away. And now, they said, Maybe your kid is home, and you're teaching them, but you still have to work or, Oh, I can't even figure out how to order groceries, because that's a lot of steps. becomes a lot of steps that you really like, you know, how come I can't get that done. So it's even things that seemed that small that then made people say, hey, that time I thought about, maybe I need a diagnosis, let me try to get one or, you know, they sat down, and maybe they heard, I guess they had a podcast or read a blog or something and said, That's me. And now I have a chance to try to address this. So I am very happy that people have this, like taken that time to really realize that this is happening. Because again, once you address it, once you realize that this is it, you get education about it, then you can address it, and live the life at least the life, the life you choose, you know, then you have choices to make, instead of having like your life around you, which a lot of women, I work mostly with black woman's ADHD, they won't feel like their life is running them and that running their lives. Because, you know, when you don't have working memory, it's like, Oh, I can't, you know, remember that I had to do this thing. And then I have to go run and do that. And then I'm behind doing that, oh, I made an obligation. Because, you know, we women are always trying to take care of everything for everyone. Like, Oh, I forgot I had all these obligations, how can I do that? Because we people please. And then you wait till the time when it's all due, because because we're procrastinating, and they just didn't have time they really think about it. But once they have the chance to think about it, and now they can address it, they can start addressing all those things that kind of make you feel inadequate anyway, or just make you feel like you're drowning. So it's it I have a huge increase in people finding out or

at least wanting to find out sometimes there's self diagnosis. That is a whole nother topic. But you know, at least people are looking into it, and then trying to get information and addressing it, I think is really important. Because you don't have to live like this, you really don't have to live in a way where you don't feel comfortable. Yeah, I



Katy Weber 37:47

think so much of that grief around realizing the ADHD, you know, comes from, as my therapist called it that brick, you know, she was like that the realization of how hard you were, in fact working life and that you were on this hamster wheel. And you didn't even stop to notice that that's what was happening and that you were on there when other people weren't. And so my therapist calls it that break, you know that this, you've been carrying it around, you've been working so much harder. And so but then I think, you know, as some this goes back to my I guess my own devil, an angel on my shoulder, which is like, Is it really ADHD? Or is it just the trauma of being a bright woman living in a society that shuts you down for at every turn? Like, like, I felt like as a feminist, you know, you're told your whole life to just like, oh, be nice, be likeable stop, you know, don't be so angry. And then I think about that from a black woman's perspective and the angry black woman stereotype which is like, Don't ever speak up for yourself, you know, anytime you speak up for yourself, you have to, then you have to sort of manage what the perception of you is going to be, you know, like that is always this part and parcel with the already existing brick. So I'm curious, like, how does advocacy play for a black woman when it comes to, you know, knowing what you need, knowing what you need for your children? How can you advocate for yourself? When there's always that sense, like when we're still living in the kind of society where we are told to just, you know, stop being so angry, stop being so upset, stop being you know, just deal with it? And if you don't like it, it's your fault. I guess that's a big question. But I just mean, like, I feel like I get I get wrapped up in like, why, you know, I think it's all ties into that sense of like, how much am I actually struggling and how much do I need to advocate for myself versus how much do I need to just like Shut up, put on a smile, and and be likable in a awful patriarchal society.



Inger Shaye Colzie 40:00

Ha, yeah, this is, well, this is a big question, right? This is a big thing. where, you know, it it is that where, you know, there's massaging that goes on, though you're right, it's like we you're told to be like a good girl and sit there. Yeah, sit there look pretty, right? You know, there's that or to do all this work in order to be, you know, recognized and known. And then there's being a black woman. So there's that on steroids. Because then there's, like, some people code switch, where it's like, you have to kind of play to the room, like who's in the room, to, you know, to know how you're going to figure out how you want to act in

that particular space, because of the way that you can be perceived. And then there's the ADHD part, which is the part that's invisible, right, so nobody knows he was seen on black, you see it on the wall, but you don't know that I have ADHD. So when my desk is, you know, disorganized, it's like, you're messy. You know, if I'm late, then it's like, oh, well, fortunately. And then maybe you won't get the project, or maybe they won't think that they can trust you. But in spades, like, there's no way sometimes to come back from something like that. So there's, you know, code switching, and then there's the masking, so trying to hide your ADHD, like you don't want everybody to know. So you may overwork, you know, we feel like, we're black, we have to work twice as hard to get half as far many times, but then you're going to have to overwork because you have ADHD. So it, it's, it is tiring and maddening. And I always have like a bandwidth conversation with my clients, we, the only thing that we have is our bandwidth, right? So there's only a certain amount of it. And when you're using it to code switch, and then you're using it to mask how much is left for you to actually be who you really are, and to get other things done. And that, to me is where all of this is really insidious, and takes a lot out on your self worth, like I said, and that's when you're questioning and doubting yourself. And it's like, how do I get off of this field? It is it's a lot to consider. And people deal with it in many different ways. But it is, you know what would happen in my, in my life, it has happened in my life and women's lives every day, like having to navigate all of those waters. So that's why I think that's what led me to advocacy. Because I didn't but you know, I've only been diagnosed within two or three years, I don't even know I guess obviously I don't keep up with tapes. But when I got diagnosed, and I went to the big ADHD conference, the International Conference, it was in Philly in 2019. And I was there on the professionals day, but I was helping someone else with a presentation. They were doing it but I was just find out about coaching. But when I was there in Philadelphia, which is a big city and a big hotel for four days with, I don't know how many breakouts many. There weren't many black people in space. And not many at all. I mean, a handful, especially with professionals, they there weren't black people that were doing presentations, I think there was one and maybe one the whole time and I was like this is this doesn't make sense. Because there are a lot of black people out here with ADHD, I know that there are it's not nothing else like you know, there's mothers or fathers. And when I started asking around how come I don't see a lot of black coaches here, no one could answer my question. And that's what set me on the road to advocacy. Because I know that we're here. And I know there are coaches that are out there, we just don't see them as, like, I don't know, if they didn't feel comfortable coming to that space, or whether there just aren't as many as I think that I just know that we were out here and that somebody needs to speak to the fact that a lot of our struggles are the same, like no, we see each other like, that's all we gather in these groups. But we have a struggle that that is different, you know, walking around, and as you can see the some of the events that have happened in the past year, in this world. When you just the color of your skin can make you to be a weapon. It's scary. I have a black son, it's really scary. So,

you know, the fact that that takes so much out of you on your day to day and he has a manager ADHD, we need to come together and we need to have people like us to be able to If nothing else, manage just the feelings around that protecting our bandwidth and being together. I refer to ADHD is like 1000 little cuts like death by 1000 little cuts because every time something happens, it hurts. It hurts, it hurts. We need the healing of community to be able to get through all of those cuts. So with that I decided to start a Association for black ADHD co Which is, which I'm going to get off the ground sometime this fall. So that we can come together be together for community and education of people are looking for black coaches, they'll know a place to find them. And then we can, you know, take that movement and grow from there. But it's, it's very important because it you know, it's the life that we're living. And it's, it's important to address it, and look at it. And you know, and realize this is here, because what's happening, not sweep it under the rug, but to really look at it head on, and, you know, take care of each other in that way. And that, to me, that's the way that we make progress.



Katy Weber 45:40

Yeah, I think that's such an important distinction you made where you, where you say the symptoms of ADHD are the same in all of us. But the struggle that results from those symptoms is very, very different, based on who we are in society and how we are perceived. And I think that's something we need to distinguish a lot more. And I think that association is fantastic and wonderful. And I'm glad it exists. And now if you could rename ADHD into a less problematic acronym, would you call it something else?



Inger Shaye Colzie 46:15

That is an interesting question. And I thought of it, you know, I've heard it, you know, heard this before. And I thought about Ford, it's like, I don't have another name. for it, what I would like is that if we didn't have to have a name for it, the name obviously is problematic. It does not speak to what's going on for us at all. And it's in the DSM, and I'm not quite sure why. But if we just didn't have a name for it at all, thanks, you're just having your own lived experience, like this is your experience, and being able to use the supports, or just live your life in a way that works for you. So you know, that that they have, there's a certain way that people think that that thing should be done. And when you don't do that, then again, it's a character flaw, or there's something wrong with you. We're instead of, like, let someone live their life, if I need to work, you know, from 7pm to like, 7am. And that's those are my good working hours with doesn't matter as long as the work is, you know, not to say, Oh, you know, that, you know, because you have to work nine to five, because that was always a thing for me like it's full. It's like, why are we here at 7am? I can't do anything at 7am I'm fantastic. So you know, it's like, but letting people be who

they are. But I don't really take appointments before I'll do 930. But I don't know, I'd say don't say anything seven, listen, so the murder is insane. Because I'm not going to be any good to you. I will be great for you at 10 3011 or three, right? So, but just having people live being able to live the what the ways that it's going to make them successful, or ask for what it is that you need. Many people asked about Should I disclose my ADHD. So that's up to you, there's so many, you know, misperceptions out there, I always think people would be careful. But so it's like, ask for what you need. If you need a quiet space to get a report done, say, hey, there'll be this report gun, give me an hour, I'm gonna bang this out. And you know, this room here, you know, with the lights. So I needed the desks the way they need it, maybe some headphones, and here you go, versus having to work in a big open office, you know, with just somebody giving out, you know, different things for you to do. And you're not even sure what they want, how they want it, where to start. And then you're in overwhelm, and you're feeling that yourself, you know, things that happened, he's been mad at yourself. Whereas if you could just be who you are, we don't have to have a label for it. You can either ask for what needs or people just accept you for who you are. If I'm not looking at you in your eyes. It's not because I know I don't care or I'm dismissive. It's because sometimes for people all that eye contact is a lot Do you want by you want me to hear you? You actually better for me as long as they're close. But I've learned to get along in society I've ever look you straight in the eye or at your nose. But why should I have to do that? So it's fine. You can just let people be who they are, and allow that to dictate how they're successful. I'm sure most people will be far more successful. And yeah, we wouldn't have as many mental health diagnosis. Because they wouldn't have all that shame that goes with it. And I think a lot of those, the shame is what it's about most of the diagnosis for therapy. That's how I feel about that one. I'll get on my soapbox and we'll be on for 30



Katy Weber 49:41

No, I love that perspective. Because it's so true. It was so articulate in terms of the that idea of like the onus should not be on the individual to conform to meet the standards of the classroom or the nine to five or whatever it is like that. The structure should be able to expand to meet the individual and their at their end. The way in which they can best function and I feel like they're our entire society, especially public school and public education are the set up in the exact opposite way. Which is like, like you said, even with your you know, with our kids like they, the job, the onus is on the family, the onus is on the individual to help and work hard and get all of the additional resources so that your child can get shoved into this box and perform as as well as they can before they're put out into the nine to five job work world or whatever it is that's awaiting them next, as opposed to saying, like, how can we how can we expand the classroom to meet the needs of

everybody? And that so yeah, that was beautiful. I love that. Thank you. Just blowing the system. That's it.



Inger Shaye Colzie 50:46

I don't think it's that hard to tell you the truth. It's like, you know, expand a little bit. I think they'd be surprised at how much easier it would be for everyone. Yeah.



Katy Weber 50:55

Alright. So now for anybody who wants to find you and work with you. I know you're at ingarshaye.com or ingershaye.com. Is that the best place to reach you? Or where can people find you on the internet?



Inger Shaye Colzie 51:10

Well, that's my website. Older shade, calm, calm. I'm at [anger_shea](https://twitter.com/anger_shea) on Twitter and Instagram. I have a Facebook. My Facebook page is black women with ADHD.



Katy Weber 51:23

Also, and you have a Facebook group. So do you still operate?



Inger Shaye Colzie 51:26

I do I have a black right? Yes, I have a Facebook group. That Lachlan with ADHD executives and entrepreneurs. Awesome. Thank you for reminding me of that, too.



Katy Weber 51:40

I know we always have our fingers. It's too many pots. Well, thank you so much anger has been so wonderful.



Inger Shaye Colzie 51:48

Yeah, you know what, this was a pleasure. It was it was such a pleasure. I'm actually so happy to meet you and connect with you. Because I've, like I said, I've listened to your podcast. And I was just listening to it before we started. But I listened to your podcast. So I

was like really honored when you asked me to come on.