

# Liz Cordeiro: Substance abuse & negative self-image with ADH...

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

adhd, thought, diagnosed, feel, medication, stimulants, bipolar, people, diagnosis, book, started, addicted, structure, addiction, adhd medication, alcohol, college, good, substance use disorder, struggle

## SPEAKERS

Liz Cordeiro, Katy Weber



Katy Weber 00:00

So thank you, Liz for joining me and, and thank you for having me. Very excited. Very excited. I, I think, you know, one thing that really appealed to me when I first reached out to you was you are one of those women with ADHD who like, as soon as you were diagnosed, you're like, I'm going to start a blog. And I'm going to start Twitter. And I was like, exactly what I did when I was diagnosed, it was just like, this is my hyper focus. And I'm going to, I'm going to start doing all this stuff around it, because I found it find it endlessly



00:28

fascinating.



Liz Cordeiro 00:29

It took me a couple months. It wasn't like right away took me about three months after my diagnosis to really become obsessed. But yes, I would call an obsession at the moment.



Katy Weber 00:39

All right, so let's, so why don't you walk me through what you were a 2020 diagnosis, which I call pandemic diagnoses, or lockdown diagnoses. So when were you diagnosed and kind of what led up to you being convinced that you had ADHD and getting that diagnosis?



Liz Cordeiro 00:57

And you don't mind if I have like a little story here? I actually



Katy Weber 01:01

up? Of course, I know we all do. That's why I always ask.



Liz Cordeiro 01:07

So I was diagnosed on September 4, or no, September 3 2020. Probably day I'll never forget. And it actually took a long, long time to get there. And not just because I was diagnosed with 32, which is considered a late diagnosis. But because I feel like my journey to diagnosis. It really started in college. I don't think it's something that when I was in middle school in high school, I think I really flew under the radar. Because not to be like boobs will flirt. But I'm smart enough to get by on intelligence and talent, and not work, or practice, or anything like that, which is really important stuff. So I think I kind of you know, I got by on B's and C's in school, mostly. And I think that I wasn't like a troublemaker. I was in some ways, but not in the traditional ADHD ways. I was super talkative and really energetic and kind of floating from thing to thing to thing. And people would just say, you know, Liz just needs to learn to control herself a little better. And she'll be super successful and so much potential so much talent, so much energy, but no self control. And it became a character flaw was just like my personality. So it took a long time. But my first journey, my first, maybe not journeys, the right word. But my first moment with medication actually started in college. I started semester in a brand new school, I changed colleges multiple times, which is probably pretty common with ADHD or, and when I started, you know how at the beginning of class, they'll ask you, everyone go around and say something about yourself. I like hate this, I dread it. I never know what to say. And so I started to get this weird panic when it came to the My turn and I start shaking a little bit. And I get this funny thing where it's like, I can't really move my head back and forth naturally. It's like it's like, oh, wait, my muscles kind of freak out. And they they start like, like twitching like a little muscle Twitch. It's so weird. And I thought this was the strangest thing. So um, I don't know why I was like, I'm gonna go see a psychiatrist about this. I don't know where that came from. So she diagnosed me based on this with social anxiety

disorder. And she basically said, you have a horrible thing to have a horrible fear of public speaking. I think it's social anxiety. Let's try some anti anxiety medication. I started to see her regularly. She was actually really sweet. I loved her. She was a great doctor. She was very wrong. I do not have social anxiety disorder.

 04:09  
Oh, I

 Liz Cordeiro 04:11  
Pristiq. I remember the name of the medication was Pristiq? I don't actually know what that is.

 Katy Weber 04:15  
I'm just curious because I was on so many different types of antidepressants and anti anxiety meds. And so I'm just curious.

 Liz Cordeiro 04:24  
Yeah, and I can never get them straight like they arise and which I call

 Katy Weber 04:30  
as I'm like, What part of the brain are you targeting? I don't remember. Yeah,

 Liz Cordeiro 04:33  
yeah. So so she tried eight anxiety and it I don't remember if it worked with anything. I don't remember what it did. It was so long ago, but it clearly wasn't making a significant enough change to keep up with it. So I just stopped, I stopped taking the meds. I stopped seeing her I stopped really thinking about it. I just decided I have a thing. I'll live my life, who cares? I'm not gonna deal with it. So that was like 2011 ish. So fast forward a lot of years to 2018. Memorial Day, we had a house fire. And it was I was actually writing about this earlier and I wrote we had a traumatic house fire. And then I second later thought, is there such a thing as a non house fire like, no. All house fires are traumatic in some way. So it was it was significant enough that we we had to vacate. They had to rebuild our

house. So Wow. Yeah, so it was pretty bad. And after about two months after it happened, I was really, really stressed out really anxious, experiencing a lot of trauma symptoms, a lot of PTSD symptoms. It was really stressful. So I decided to start seeing a therapist. I'm still seeing her. She's wonderful. I love her. But pretty much after a month of seeing her, she started to bring up ADHD with me. And no one had ever said to me before, no, I didn't even know anything about it. No one had ever suggested it. I was not interested in hearing it at the time, I did not care for it. I didn't want to be labeled with anything. I didn't want to be on medication. I just wanted to see her for a few months, get over my trauma move on with my life. Okay, obviously, that did not happen. Because she persisted, which I appreciate. And about a year after seeing her, I decided, all right, I'm going to try medication again for my social anxiety as



Katy Weber 06:37

well. Now I just want to interject when she started suggesting ADHD to you, what were what were the indicators to her? Was it just the stress of the fire? Or was it sort of your inability to juggle things? Or I'm curious kind of what were the indicators for her? Do you know?



Liz Cordeiro 06:55

I've never actually really gone back and asked her what ticked her off to that. Probably my difficulty with my negative self image. Yeah, I mean, at the time very hard on myself, always saying why am I not doing more? Why am I not achieving more? Why am I not more accomplished definitely had a lot of that. I was late for like every appointment. just constantly late, no concept of how much time was passing during our appointment, I really struggled with time. I struggled with organization. At the time when I was seeing her I was really deeply obsessed with using a bullet journal, which I thought was going to just somehow cure all of my disorganization. And she could see that I was overly obsessed with it. I was really hyper fixated on a bullet journal as this magical cure all, probably bad. And just I'm sure she picked up on other behavioral cues and stories from childhood. Like, okay, I mean, I still cry. Not so bad now. But back then. I mean, everything made me cry, I was emotionally so sensitive. Like, I would just cry at the drop of a hat. So,



Katy Weber 08:09

yeah, now that you mentioned it, because I had a similar experience where my therapist talked to me for about two years about and she actually has ADHD and so she had been bringing it up a lot just a lot of that in terms of the kind of pendulum of my hyper fixating

on certain things and then getting like deeply sort of depressed and stagnant and despondent. And, and but I remember it actually, now that you say that she used to get so frustrated because she was like, how can somebody who's so clearly bright and doing all of these things? How to, like, how can you look at yourself so poorly? Like, how can you have such negative self image? I forgot that that was one of those things that really frustrated her. Okay, anyway.



Liz Cordeiro 08:49

Yeah, no, I think my therapist probably was, and she still is the same way because we still I think I have less of a problem with it now since my diagnosis, but negative self talk. Anytime we're in a session if I turn to anything, inwardly, negatively, and she'll stop me and say, you know, what have we talked about here? You are a wonderful person and your friends and family love you and you do a great job at your job at work. And I do you think so harshly of yours, no one else judges you like this. No one judges me like I judge me.



Katy Weber 09:24

Absolutely. And it feels like no matter how many times you hear it from other people, it's like it doesn't register, like imprint, you know,



Liz Cordeiro 09:32

it has to come from within it can't be something that someone else teaches you you have to want to be more positive about yourself, but it's really hard. It's a it's taken me years.



Katy Weber 09:43

It has with me too. But I would say that the biggest, most sort of revolutionary change in my life since my diagnosis has been precisely that it's it's how I talk to myself, and how I view myself and I kind of feel like I have something to offer now. Where You know, for whatever myriad reasons I just always sort of felt like I lead with, I'm a failure. That was kind of my narrative. And I feel like that has completely done on 180 since the diagnosis, which just makes me sometimes feel like the world is my oyster, and I'm like, so excited to do things now. Because I'm like, wow, yeah, like I, I always hesitate to use the term superpower, because I feel like it can be problematic and kind of brush over a lot of the grief and issues that are in the disorder. But I also sort of feel like for the first time in my life, like, I actually feel like just, you know, good about myself, in that fundamental way

that always sort of was missing with all of this, the other stuff over the years.



Liz Cordeiro 10:46

I mean, I could have been talking the past few minutes, because that is exactly what I have gone through. It's the same thing. It's, it's like, I finally can explain to myself why I am the way I am. And it's okay to be the way I am. It's finally okay. I don't mind that. I'm late sometimes. And I'm kind of disorganized. And I'm a little bit of a slob occasionally, and I just these things don't matter. And I mean, to be fair disclosure, I am on medication for it. So like a lot of the really, really bad, bad bad stuff. It is being helped along by that. But medication is not a perfect cure. I still struggle despite it so but it's amazing that now I can struggle and say, Oh, I'm having an ADHD heavy day. It's just the ADHD is strong with me today. And that's fine. Amazing.



Katy Weber 11:40

Yeah, absolutely. And I think you know, even in some of the more like typically shame filled issues like even like hygiene, you know, hygiene is one of those things that I feel like so many of us struggled with the struggle internal, like we're so very like, had, there was so much shame around it. And I feel like that was just I was reminded of that because you brought up showering recently on Twitter then. And it was really fascinating actually, like, let's go on a shower tangent for a moment, because I was like, you had brought up the idea of showering. And then somebody said, it's the transition. f right. And I was like, I had that same moment unit, which was like, Oh my god, I think that might be it. Right? Like it's the dry skin to wet skin transition. It's the standing to it's the clothes to naked. It's like, you know, it's like so many different transitions that are really uncomfortable. And I was like, Oh my god, it's totally another sensory issue. And so it's been like you can have that sense of like inquisitiveness without the judgment anymore. And I think people with ADHD are just like, we're so naturally inquisitive anyway, and it's what I love about having these conversations. It's like you can say like, I love water, but somebody with ADHD will be like, Why? Why do I love water? What is it that has made me love this? What What is it about water? You know, just like you want to, like, deconstruct everything's But anyway, going back to what we were saying before, like it's you know, that just things don't seem shame laden the way they used to.



Liz Cordeiro 13:10

Absolutely. There's just my shame. Okay, my shame has not disappeared, I feel shame. I'm, you know, I have humility, I have shame. But it's, I'm much less ashamed of myself, I

am able to neutralize it. Sometimes I oftentimes I can make it positive, but sometimes it's just neutral. It's, I'm not lazy. It becomes I'm very tired, and I needed a break. And that's it. And it's so nice. I love it. I want it for everybody.



Katy Weber 13:43

That's a sweet sentiment. I love that.



Liz Cordeiro 13:45

And honestly, like, that's part of the reason for the blog is that I want everyone to know, I feel really great right now. Because I finally know, like, I've unlocked this big, amazing secret about myself that nobody knew. And now I want everyone to know. And I want everyone who has the same secret within them to discover it. And I want everyone to experience that like deep sigh of relief that I have felt Finally, that and Okay, it's like the title of a book, but I'm not like lazy, stupid or crazy.



Katy Weber 14:21

It's no that really is the most brilliant title of an ADHD book ever. Yes, I actually read that right that one, but I liked the title. I have a funny story behind that book because I absolutely meant to read that book. But I pretty much listen to books now. I mean, I will listen to 20 books in the time that it takes me to read one book. And so like when I was first diagnosed I was like binge you know, just like when you whenever you get first diagnosed with ADHD I was like binge listening to podcast and going online and joining every Facebook group and following everybody I could on Twitter and until I found that book and I went on to audio book two audible to get it and there was only the abridged version. And I stopped because I was like, I don't want the abridged version of anything. I was like I need all of it. I can't, I can't only listen to the abridged version like I don't, I need to know that I've gotten all the information even if I listened to it on twice the speed. But I was just like, sort of hit that wall of like, I don't want the abridged version, and then I kind of forgot about it and moved on and listen to something else. But every time that book is brought up, it's it reminds me of that story where I was like, if you're out there, publishers if you're out there do not give abridged versions of ADHD books. It's like antithetical I'm but I also want like short point form versions of things. Like it's like crib notes, or the whole book, nothing in between. It's very, like subtle art of understanding what it is we need. angry with you, though. We know all the information. I know, right? I know, I was trying to figure that out. Because I was like, I do feel like we like crib notes. And we like really small snippets of information. So why would I not want the crib? Like why would I want not want

an abridged version of a book? And it was like because then I like, it's like, I know that there's more book out there that I didn't get interferes with my hyperfocus you're just being cheated when you don't get the full book. All right. All right. So your therapist finally got through to you. And and then what happened?



Liz Cordeiro 16:26

Yeah. Um, so at her, so she's not She works in a practice. It's like a counseling practice. And so she recommended one of the psychiatrists in the practice. So I went to see her. And first session with her, she diagnosed me with bipolar two. which at the time, I was like, there's more than one bipolar disorder interesting. Didn't know. And I just went with it, because it felt right. So something that I haven't revealed, until this point in the interview, podcast, chat conversation. Yeah, let's call it a chat is that I also am an alcoholic. It's, you know, I don't know if I love that label. I mean, I am, I think I truly am, I just wish there, I just don't love how alcoholic sounds rolling off the tongue, it's, I want something different still working on that one. Um, but I am an alcoholic. And at the time, when I went to see the psychiatrist, I was in a cycle that looks like bipolar to where I would have, let's start with a few days of like normalcy. And I'd be kind of content and you know, not like everything was easy, because I have ADHD. So it was tough, but I felt Okay. And then something would happen. And I get in a really good mood. And I'd be super excited, which I now know is my brain activity. And I'd be hyperactive, and I would go drink. And this would last a couple days, and I drink and be super excited and say I'm on top of the world, I can do this, I can do whatever I put my mind to. And I turned to alcohol, my best friend alcohol. And then I would get depressed for a few days because of the alcohol but it's time what was diagnosed as bipolar two. And bipolar two is unlike bipolar one, it's very cyclical. You go through hypomania, depression, normal state, hypomania, depression, normal state and you swing, and it's not always in that order. But you swing back and forth constantly between these two these three



Katy Weber 18:43

states. And just interrupt i think that that I see, I didn't know there were two types of bipolar either. And I often thought I might be simply because of the pendulum analogy, right? Like I really related to bipolar, just in the fact that I felt like I was constantly on a pendulum of productivity, and hyper focus and and, and therefore like, elated, you know, and happy. And then would swing into like, the deep, deep depression. That and so I sort of because of that those two states that I felt like I was always in one or the other. I always wondered if I was bipolar was never brought up by my therapist. But it's interesting, because I, I'm learning more and more how many people are actually diagnosed with this. So I didn't even know there were the two types.



Liz Cordeiro 19:29

Yeah, um, and, you know, it's I don't think bipolar two is as common as bipolar one. As far as bipolar diagnoses goes, I think from my understanding, it is a less common disorder. But it does frequently get misdiagnosed that, especially women with ADHD, very, very frequently get diagnosed with bipolar disorder, as well as borderline personality disorder. So there's quite a few comorbidities between those. There's a lot of manifestations in common between those disorders. So misdiagnosis happens at very high rates among those three. So I'm not surprised that I was misdiagnosed when I first found out I was I was a little angry because I thought it's a sign she's saying hi Trish she should know better but I've come to I've let go of all my anger about my Manali anger a little, mostly let go of the anger. But I get it, I totally get it. And the alcohol was not helping the alcohol was masking some of my difficulties. So I'm, so I saw her for a while. And she actually funny enough put me on what's called Abilify, which is classified as an anti psychotic slash mood stabilizer. I'm still on it today. Actually. Funny enough. Um, so she put me on that. And it's actually very helpful for my emotional regulation. The dose she had me on was too high. It had some negative side effects. But I'm still taking it today, which is, I really love it. But I didn't like her. I kind of deleted her as a person. Didn't, I thought she was brusque, I thought, every time I saw her, she acted like she'd never seen me before. She was like, so tell me about yourself every time it really bothered me. Like, why don't you know who I am? Look at your notes. So I wasn't happy. So I left her. And then I saw your doctor, who was said, You're absolutely do not have bipolar two disorder, but refused to diagnose me with anything else. He just would not tell me what I what he thought that I had. But he put me on anti anxiety and antidepressant medication, and that this is almost a year ago. And so I'm assuming he thought I was depressed and anxious. And that was the worst three months that I've had in a very long time. And not just because of the COVID pandemic, but because he put me on medication that made me so depressed and so miserable. I have never in my life been so low. And it was horrible. Because I would come into my appointments and say, you know, I don't feel good. I feel really terrible. And he would just up the dosage and say, well, let's just try more, maybe we're not at the right dosage. And it was never, maybe this medication is wrong. So it was really frustrating. And luckily, my therapist is wonderful, and very observant. And she could tell how low I was. And I'm not shy. I'll tell anybody anything. Um, so we talked it through and she said, you know, I'd really like you to start seeing somebody else for your medication. And she had me come see a nurse practitioner, and the nurse practitioner who I'm still with lovely woman love her. She was the one who finally said, Why don't you get a comprehensive psychological evaluation? And let's pinpoint what is really going on. Because she said, I can clearly tell that there are some issues, you've got some stuff happening. I can't diagnose you. And I don't think you've been properly diagnosed. Let's get you fully evaluated by someone that

I know and trust. And let's see what comes of it. So I really appreciate that. She just said that. Because I didn't know that comprehensive psychological evaluations were a thing. I thought that you just went to a psychiatrist, you met them for a little bit, they diagnosed you and that's what you have.



Katy Weber 23:53

That's a good point. I feel like I did luck out because my primary care provider is a nurse practitioner. But she also specializes in psychiatric disorder. I don't I know that's not what the word is. But I'm not sure it's psychiatric something. So she actually was able to give me the separate evaluation and she's also able to prescribe so it sort of feels like it's nice that it's all the same person because I love her and trust her and didn't have to do that extra step, which I feel like it's difficult for anyone with ADHD to go through all of these steps of advocacy and self care and just getting this you know, getting to the point where you even make the appointment is such as such a hurdle. Yeah,



Liz Cordeiro 24:37

I think that's a really good point. I am really lucky that it only took me a little over a year. Okay. When you think about it took me over 10 years because I was diagnosed in college. When I started the second time, I'm glad that it It only took a little over a year to get the right diagnosis. I mean, some people go through multiple diagnosis situation So especially women can for 10 years be told you have this, you have this, you have this, you have this. And none of it turns out to be right. And finally, the Wise doctor comes along and says, Well, you have ADHD, and that literally explains everything happening.



Katy Weber 25:15

I know, it's I mean, I, I'm going through this post right now, I don't know what I'm gonna do with it. But I basically writing the seven stages of an ADHD diagnosis for like late diagnosis that there was, you know, basically that like rush of realization, and it feels like we all sort of have that same experience of just like, you know, feeling like so elated, because suddenly, everything in your life makes sense. And then you sort of go through the grief, and the resentment, like how did the signs were there? How did nobody See this? And then also, just like finding community and finding the acceptance and and then like advocacy, what is the last one where you're just like, people need to know, because I know a lot of people who have this and don't realize they have, and I don't want people to suffer, like I suffered. And so like that, that advocacy, which obviously I see with you and your blog, and what you're doing out there. So just to backtrack a little bit, you had mentioned that

you didn't do poorly in school, but what what are some things looking back growing up where you're where you look back now? And you're like, Oh, my God, of course, that was ADHD?



Liz Cordeiro 26:29

Yeah. Oh, there's a lot. So I think I, I think with school, if I known I had ADHD, and I was on medication, and I had the right skill building opportunities, and probably I would have done well with an ADHD coach, I probably could have been an A student and a lot of my classes. And I was consistent consistently B's and C's, and the occasional Dean, math and science, because I didn't have that opportunity. And I think what my teachers missed, because I could cover it up, was that I always do my assignments last minute. Everything was last minute. Never Could I plan ahead. I couldn't sit down and say, This is due in a week. How would I work on it for 15 minutes every day? It was? Oh my god, this is due tomorrow. I have to finish it. I have two hours until bedtime. And it's an eight page essay. Whoops. But I was so good. It just like I was a good bullshitter Yeah, I could spew bullshit in any essay on anything. I'm so good at that. And I think I'm an okay writer. So I could pass for having done the work because it looked like I put effort into it when I was struggling to do all of my assignments the night before. But obviously, on things like science where it's not subjective it is what are we there's a right and a wrong answer. And math. Same thing, I would get in trouble. And I would get my worst grades because I couldn't fake my way through it. I couldn't pretend like I knew what I was doing. As opposed to history in English, where I think it's a little easier sometimes to fake it till you make it and to kind of throw things out there. That's correct. And it's right enough that I'll give you a B.



Katy Weber 28:31

Yeah, I think procrastination has a real practical purpose to for the ADHD brain. And I think I was lucky enough to realize this long ago because I was a journalist, and I was writing on deadline. And I figured, you know, and so I was like procrastination was kind of an you know, you you only had you had these tight deadlines, and you had a very short period of time to work within those deadlines. And I just, like thrived. I was so like, my thoughts were clear. I got to the point, you know, I did what I needed to do. And so I realized through that process, how, you know why we procrastinate because there's that is how you sort of can get everything on the page. It's just sort of like floating around your thinking and, and and like taking notes and amassing stuff over over time. But in order to actually have the time in order to actually get it on the page. You need that urgency, the kind of that will then like get it there without overthinking it. And so it was I was like, Oh, that's actually my my whole process. Like, it makes sense to me. I'm like, I'm not actually procrastinating. I'm just doing the work appear in my head. And then the very last step is

that like squeeze at the end of getting it on the page. I mean, there is a lot of bullshitting in English and history, believe me. I was a political theory major and like was like, that's all it was, was like I'm bright. I get concepts really easily. I can kind of make connections really easily. And so I think that was why I was drawn to that. Major.



Liz Cordeiro 30:00

I mean, I ended up majoring in communications, right? Come on. But I actually studied political science for a couple semesters. Yeah, I was really into it.



Katy Weber 30:12

Right, I think I would have been a philosophy major if I didn't feel like philosophy was so flaky. And I felt like political theory was basically philosophy. But it's like sounded sounded smarter.



Liz Cordeiro 30:23

I was totally convinced that I should go to law school. And people would tell me, you just love to argue it'd be great in law school, I would have been terrible in law school. I'm so glad I did not do that. Because it is so much studying, and so much focus. And a big part of being a lawyer is being able to dredge facts and informations up on a moment's notice to be able to remember everything that you've read. I mean, it's reading an 800 page book and remembering that book, I can't do that. So it's a great point, that path, I would have dropped out of law school after a semester.



Katy Weber 31:03

So but you said it kind of all fell apart in college, Woody, in terms? Was that in terms of grades? Or was it socializing? Or was it addiction or all of the above?



Liz Cordeiro 31:14

A little bit, everything. Um, so I was actually reading about this, for one of my blog posts is about routines. And I was doing a lot of research on structure and routine. And I'm still irritated because I don't have all the information on it. But I'm trying to better understand why structure is so great for a lot. Not everyone, a lot of people with ADHD. And I did, I kept googling it in like, every way I could think like all these different combinations of words and questions. And every article, I found every blog post, every article, every

resource said the same thing. Structure and routines are really important for people with ADHD. And then here's how you do it. And I'm like,



Katy Weber 32:02

why it's like, it's like the water. Right?



Liz Cordeiro 32:07

Exactly. I always have to do the book. Why don't don't quite have an answer. I have some theories on it. But I was reading somewhere recently that I thought was interesting about why ADHD tends to start presenting in middle and high school for a lot of people. And it's because when you start in kindergarten, in elementary school, a lot of structure today is really structured lots of routine, you're told where to be when to be there what to do. And the older you get, like going from middle and high school, college, less structure there is given to you and the more you have to create for yourself. So you have to create your own schedule, you have to make time for homework, you have to decide that you're going to go to class, you have to decide that you're going to study, you have to turn in the test on time. And I could not create structure for myself. I had no concept of it. And I just didn't, I didn't know this was a problem. So College has no structure given to you. You make it all by yourself. You don't even live with your parents anymore. If you're lucky, like I



Katy Weber 33:19

was. nobody's getting you up in the morning. Yeah, that's such a great point.



Liz Cordeiro 33:23

Yeah. So I always love telling people, I think it's kind of a silly story. I failed psychology 101. Twice. To me three tries to pass that class. But I failed it the first time, because the first day of class, it was my first semester. And I was in a new state, new school, new friends, new everything, I was so excited. And then I got lost on campus, it couldn't find the building where the class was. And it after a while, just gave up. And I was so frustrated. And then I never showed up for that class. Because on the first day, I couldn't find the building. And I was so mad about it, that I just couldn't go. So I never went and I failed. And then I enrolled again. And this time I found the class I made it. But I didn't study. I thought this is all common sense. I can just do psychology all this past this. I didn't. And that was so pretty. I mean, I didn't fail every class in college. I'm past enough to get a degree. But that was a pretty common occurrence for me was I can just get by. I don't

have to study that hard. It's common sense. I'll just figure it out. I'm sure I could pick the right answer. And I didn't really create structure for myself to study and to have time to focus and care about schoolwork. It just I could just party Have fun, and I'd figure out the school stuff later. And it would just come to me magically. I mean, I mean, I'm that kid who slept with the textbook under my pillow, thinking that osmosis would just magically bring the facts to me. That's not how it works. Um, but it was hard. And I did start drinking much more heavily in college. So that was only a factor. I did smoke, I smoked a lot of weed. I don't think I have nothing. I have no problem with marijuana. I think it's great for a lot of people. I don't smoke it any more personally, there are some pretty specific reasons. Job wise, for both my husband and myself. can't really do it. But I think it's, it was my way of self medicating. But alcohol definitely became a problem. And it was a big problem for me in college.



Katy Weber 35:57

That's a really interesting theory. Well, no, no, this is a really interesting theory, you're talking about structure. Because I always thought, the reason why I started to struggle in middle school, like basically from like, fifth and sixth grade. And then going into Junior High was when my when my grades just kind of went off a cliff. And so looking at the lives of women, and like when women sort of struggled the most, I always thought it was a hormonal thing. I always thought it was sort of the hormonal surges of like, prepubescent and pubescens. And then when you have babies, and then again, in sort of perimenopause, which could entirely be I mean, there's so much interesting new research about estrogen, and I don't have it even started, because I'm just like, Don't add a whole other weird element into this. I'm not sure I quite understand. There's too many unknowns when you're talking about hormones, so I'm just going to ignore that. But I really like they have thought about structure because there's, I mean, it's the same, same idea. And I think also why there were such a proliferation of ADHD diagnosis during lockdown, because so much of our structure was thrown in the air, and all the pieces fell all over the place. And you know, for me personally, like, that's when my symptoms really, my symptoms like escalated. And of course, I was misdiagnosed with depression and anxiety during these periods of like, I went on Prozac when I was in college and, and I went back and on antidepressants after I had babies, because I thought I had postpartum depression and postpartum anxiety. I mean, I did, but you know, it was that now I see how it's all related, all comes back to the sort of Initial Fundamental diagnosis of ADHD. And I think, you know, it's the same thing like my, why I ended up getting my diagnosis in 2020. It was because of lockdown, and like, I couldn't do my business anymore. And my kids were home and my house was a mess. And I just, like imploded. And I think so I think a lot of us sort of had that. So is it structure? Is it hormones? Is it both? Who knows? I don't know. It's a but it's a really interesting theory in terms of that jump from elementary to middle

school and why so many of us start to struggle.



Liz Cordeiro 38:07

Oh, and I was thinking about this the other day, I was thinking, some writing right now about perfectionism, and control, as well as winning some writing about like, competitiveness and winning, and I'm doing a lot of thinking about it. And I'm very competitive. I'm extremely competitive, I love to win. I really do. And I think it goes back to school, and I never won anything at school. I never won a prize, I was never academically the best. I'm not athletic. I was never athletically gifted. I wasn't musically inclined, it was an artistic look, I could never win anything. Um, I mean, part of it too, which I think is a whole other topic is about practice, because I couldn't apply myself because I was inconsistent. I could be really good at something really bad. Another thing and then the first thing I'd be bad at it a few months later, so I never really learned how to be consistent. And so I started to win. And I'm doing air quotes right now, in case you couldn't hear them in my voice. Things that I could do without trying. I could be the first of my friends to get my driver's license. Because I was just simply older. I could be the first of my friends to lose my virginity. I could be the first of my friends to try smoking weed and getting drunk and trying cocaine. And it's like, I found these ridiculous ways that I could win at some or be the best at something. Because none of my other I could say, well, none of my other friends did it. I did it first. I win. Because it couldn't win at anything else. And it's the same reason still why I'm very competitive with trivia. I love playing trivia. Because you don't actually have to try to win at your meal, you just have to get lucky. And hope that the questions or things you happen to know,



Katy Weber 40:09

and can recall, that's my biggest issue.



Liz Cordeiro 40:14

But that's why I'm playing with the team is always good bounce off each other. But I love it because it's like, it's something I can be good at, and when, without really trying or practicing. So I think that was definitely something that led me down the path of substance use. And just like risky behavior, and really trying to be the best at something, because academically, athletically, musically, any other interest of mine, I could never be the best in school.



Katy Weber 40:46

That's a really interesting connection with substance abuse, too. Because I've had a similar and I think why related to to so much as well, just like initially, you know, because I started smoking when I was 14. And so I had the smoking addiction for like 30 years, you know, even you know, when I was, I would like take breaks when I was pregnant, or when I was nursing because I'm like, you know, I'm not an animal. But I would always go back to it, you know, and so it's been really interesting thinking about nicotine and kind of what what it is about nicotine that, you know why so many people with ADHD are addicted to nicotine, and that was always interesting. And then also with drinking too, like I've never would have considered myself an alcoholic. It's not a term I kind of have ever embraced. But I certainly never had a functional relationship with alcohol ever and have a really had always had a difficult time like just casually drinking. And so I realized really quickly into the locked into lockdown that I was like I it's my relationship with alcohol is really, really dysfunctional right now. And so I knew that the only way I could deal with it was to just quit cold turkey. And so I quit in March. And and it was like I you know, I think that was sort of the first domino and many in terms of just like feeling amazing and, and feeling really great and sort of having a sense of clarity and kind of taking a lot of things sort of back that felt out of control in my life. And so now I definitely like well, I never really related to the term alcoholic, I really relate to the term sober, you know, where I'm like, I'm very proudly sober, and and plan to stay that way. And so it's been again, it's been really interesting thinking about, like, just addiction in general. And kind of being like, Oh, yeah, oh, yeah,



42:37

I



Katy Weber 42:38

did that, too. Oh, yeah. Okay, this all makes sense. Yes, of course. And to feel again, sort of like, oh, okay, that there's like logical explanations for a lot of this stuff. It's not just because I'm a fuckup, which was the sort of the default answer for everything. So, yeah, but one thing that was interesting to me, I was interviewing somebody who did not want to go on meds because she has a history of substance abuse in her family. And she just was like, really didn't want to try meds. And so I was very curious, because I was like, I had never thought about that before, because so many people with ADHD do have a history with addiction on some level. And yet, I never occurred to me, that that would be an issue with these. I don't know, I feel like I can compartmentalize. I never had, you know, I never I

was able to compartmentalize like antidepressants, and all of those sorts of things. So I don't, I never worried about like, the addictive nature of stimulants, mostly because I don't think stimulants. I don't think stimulants affect us in that way. You know, like, I was really worried to go on a stimulant, because I thought it was gonna feel like okay, and, and I was like, I don't need that right now. But it's like, it's the opposite. It's actually quite like, you know, it gives you like calm and clarity in a way that I appreciate.



Liz Cordeiro 44:02

Yes. So you bring up some really interesting and really important points. And being somebody that has suffered from substance use disorder, as well as ADHD. This is something that's really important to me, it's near and dear to my heart to make sure that people have the right information out there about ADHD, addiction, and medication. And I will say, you know, I get frustrated, sometimes not the person interviewed. It makes me think of something where in one of my Facebook groups, somebody posted and they said, you know, I'm kind of interested in ADHD medication. I was diagnosed A while ago. I'm interested in going back on it, you know, I'm just not sure about it. I didn't love it before. How is it different cuz it's been like 10 years. And somebody literally commented, they're like, well, you should be careful because ADHD medication is really addictive and it just frustrated me, because people do not get the right information from their doctors, I think a lot, because doctors are not infallible. They don't have all the information. They don't know everything. And they don't know everything about addiction. They're not totally knowledgeable about comorbid addiction with other psychiatric or neuro psychological conditions. And I think that ADHD, I know it occurs at very high rates with addicts and addicts who are behave to have behavioral addictions as well as substance addictions, especially with stimulant users. I mean, I will be candid, I have tried cocaine. I was never addicted to it, which I do appreciate. But I mean, I've tried it. And I tried Adderall in college, I used to take my roommate used to give me her Adderall, because it would actually help me focus, it would help me do my work and study. And it gave me that energy, but not just energy, it can be focused energy, it allowed me to be a better student sometimes. So I think that because it ADHD medication, in and of itself is not addictive. Can people get addicted to it? Yes. Is it likely for somebody with ADHD to become addicted to their medication? Probably not. And taking your ADHD medication every single day doesn't make you an addict doesn't make you addicted to your medication. You're using it for the right purpose? Now, do people abuse their medication? Yes, I think that does happen. I think there's a difference sometimes between abuse and addiction, I don't think you have to be an addict to abuse your medication. I also don't think that if you're an addict, well, I think if you're an addict, you are typically abusing something. But I don't think it always goes the other way. I don't think that abusing something is always addiction, I think abuse can be selling it, giving it away. You know, taking it at the wrong

times on purpose, using it for a purpose other than its intention. So I think that there's a lot of misconceptions out there about ADHD medication. And I also don't think people realize that there's non stimulants are perfectly acceptable, especially when you are dealing with ADHD and comorbid. with substance use disorder, non stimulants can be a really good place to start. Because they are typically not abused. And by anybody, like general population I'm talking, they are less likely to be abused, because they don't have the same effects as stimulant as instant release stimulant medication.



Katy Weber 47:52

I'm guessing they also don't have the stigma of being a controlled substance, either, right? Like, I certainly, I certainly came upon this when I was using back when I was first prescribed vyvanse. Like because it's a controlled substance, like you can only get a month at a time. And I've you know, interviewed women who were given a really hard time about wanting a stimulant. And, you know, also it's inexpensive. I mean, I don't I have we have decent insurance, I think I mean, we're kind of middle class, and I have insurance, and I couldn't believe that I was paying so much out of pocket for this control. And so the whole thing made me just feel like, like, Am I going to be on some sort of criminal database now? Like, I don't know. So I'm, I'm guessing non stimulants don't come with that.



Liz Cordeiro 48:37

They don't. They're not a controlled substance. Yeah. So you're right. They don't have baggage. But I think too. And I mean, I have a whole long blog post about this, it was like one of my favorite ones to write. So far, it's really interesting to research because, obviously, it's it's really close to home, it's near and dear to my heart. But I think that there's a lot of doctors who are treating ADHD and substance use disorder, where they will tell their patient Well, you have to be clean before I'll treat your ADHD, you have to be clean for like six months, three months, six weeks, two weeks, whatever it is, and they say you can't be using or I won't treat your ADHD with medication. And I understand where they're coming from. Part of it is that some substance use disorders. If you have used a substance for a very lengthy period of time, some symptoms of your substance use can actually commingle with your ADHD manifestations. So it's hard to it could be hard if you're not sober to pick apart, what's your substance use? What's your ADHD. But I think doctors to think that if something's treating something of substance use, they're going to become addicted to their ADHD medication. We're going to abuse their medication, we're going to use it for the wrong purpose. They're going to take it at the wrong time. They're going to do whatever and I think that's really harmful to addicts, who in most cases are using whatever substance of choice to self medicate, because they don't know what else

to do. There's no avenues for them to turn to, they don't know how to handle all of their inner chaos, which is why so many people with ADHD tend to a lot of addicts who also have ADHD naturally turn towards stimulants like cocaine, because in a way, it actually helps them organize themselves. So I am very, very lucky that I had a nurse practitioner, who said, You know, I want you to get sober, I think that's really important. I think that's a really good journey for you. But let's start you want to non stimulant, because I think that it's just going to be a little easier for you to manage a non stimulant, if you're going to continue to drink. Also, because alcohol and stimulants do not mix well together. Very, very bad mix between medication and alcohol. And non stimulants and alcohol don't tend to mix as poorly, although I would not recommend drinking while on any kind of psychiatric or neuropsychological medication. But she just she didn't know if I was going to get sober or not at that point. So I appreciate that she was willing to treat me though and that she didn't tell me that I must be sober before I could be treated. I really appreciate that. Because treating my ADHD, diagnosing me and treating me the only reason that I am sober today. I know



Katy Weber 51:32

what and that's this is so fascinating. I can't believe it's already this hour has gone by because I'm just like, there's so much I want to talk about. And you brought up such interesting issues. Because, you know, I personally have always struggled with the term co morbidity because I feel like so many of my co morbidities I'm looking at as symptoms of a misdiagnosis. I don't think of them as co market a comorbidity To me that is defined as coexisting conditions. And I don't feel like these are coexisting conditions. I feel like these are direct symptoms from a lack of diagnosis. And so anyway, you bring up so many amazing points. Thank you. I really appreciate Yeah, I really I love the voice that you're putting out there in the community. And I feel that you're doing such a great job. So let's let's talk about where what, where your blog is where people can find you. I didn't even know you're on Instagram. I got to follow you. Yeah, so Tom, what are all the details and all the ads and everything else? Okay,



Liz Cordeiro 52:28

so I have a blog, as we've mentioned a few times. So it's about ADHD, mostly. So that is like most of the content, a little bit about sobriety, a little bit about mental health and wellness. But seriously, mostly ADHD. So if you're not here for the ADHD content, stay for this Brady content. It's glitter dash brain.com it's very pink. I love pink. I love things that are like, traditionally feminine. I'm really into it, even though ironically, I'm sitting here wearing a black sweatshirt.



Katy Weber 53:03

I'm not very love your description for why for glitter too. It's it's great to have like why you chose glittery brain? Oh,



Liz Cordeiro 53:10

yes. I mean, I think glitter. It's just it's a little bit everywhere. And it kind of seeps into everything that you do. But it does all sparkle and shine. And it's not nothing to be afraid of. You just need to learn how to work with it. I love it like ADHD. So glitter dash brain calm is the blog. And then I am on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and on all three platforms, which I am amazed that I was able to make this happen. My handle is the same for all of them. It's at my glittery brain is. So I'm just like really proud of that, that it wasn't taken anywhere. And I scooped it up as soon as I could.



Katy Weber 53:49

Well, thank you again so much. I really really appreciated chatting with you. And I hope that you will agree to come back soon and I just love what you're putting out there. So thank you



Liz Cordeiro 54:00

so much for having me. This was fantastic and I am looking forward to our next episode or two. We'll see how it goes.