

Dr. Sam Hiew: Empowering girls & women with ADHD

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SPEAKERS

Katy Weber



Katy Weber 00:00

So I'm curious about the the genesis of ADHD girls. But first, I want to hear your story in terms of like, when you were 40 When you were diagnosed? Correct?



00:12

Yeah, actually, this year, I'm 40, I was diagnosed. Well, I suppose after the whole pandemic, and you know, because of the waiting times, it took a bit more time, but you have 40 married have having jumped several careers in here I am. They combine ADHD?



Katy Weber 00:30

Yeah, Yeah, same. I also call myself a pandemic diagnosis. So what exactly was happening in your life? What were some of the signs that made you kind of put two and two together and really start to seek out this diagnosis for yourself?



00:45

Well, to be honest, there's been so many times where, you know, like, my life just didn't work for me. And I just didn't have the knowledge right about ADHD. But I think it was definitely the pandemic that caused so many women to come forward, you know, diagnosed later in life. And I began to hear more and more meat media coverage. And it was actually a PR guru I followed, who said, Oh, she has ADHD, but it took her some time to come out and say that, because she was worried how her clients would perceive her strength, it might affect our business. And so I was thinking, oh, yeah, the back of my head is always you know, that's probably me, but not actually really believing that I have a condition does because as you know, with ADHD, we've heard the most extreme of cases, right, we've heard of the people who have manic depressed

to have manic depression and ADHD and end up like committing suicide. So that that's my exposure to it. So for me, like, I never got as close as that, you know, one thing to add things. But there has been so many times where I just felt like I can't go on. But then the next day or the week after, or the month after I get up again, and I can do it. But yeah, over the course of the pandemic, you know, things were very tough in a family home. And I had a new baby, who was three months when COVID struck. So my Yeah, for my husband has to go away. Well, he had a bereavement in the family, which was very tough for him. So he obviously needed a lot of support and understanding. But on my part, I was just like, I want to support you. And I did support him. While he was away, I was keeping the house down. But I found it so hard. I was on constant flight or fight. And my baby who I was breastfeeding at the time was pooping nonstop. What's going on? Are you getting the stress response? So he was clearly getting the stress response from me? You know, which was so bizarre, because as soon as my husband came back, he stopped doing that, you know, explosive poop. Anyway, yeah. So that that made me think, all right, that isn't right. And also my husband, in some ways might have resented me for not being more supportive. Because whilst he is dealing with a bereavement, I'm telling him, Can you please come back and help? It's still so simple. You know, managing a household, right, having three children, any other woman can do it, right? You look out, you know, so many women, like, run the house, whilst there has been our way on business trips. But for me, I couldn't even look after them for 10 days without, you know, killing over. So that, yeah, sort of started the doubt in my head that maybe I'm not like other women. And so yeah, with more and more discussions, it became clear that Yep, you know, and you look back in your life, and it just kind of, you know, like, matches, and it makes sense. So, that's when I actually went seek a diagnosis.



Katy Weber 03:47

Yeah, oh, my goodness, you brought back so many memories of having a three month old. And just that guilt, right of saying, like, not only am I feeling anxious, but I'm passing it on to my child through my breast milk. So you've got that extra guilt of like, I've already, you know, affecting my child in this way that I can't control. I always feel like when I talk to women with young children, I want to give them a hug because it was like, I think, you know, in general, I think we are wonderful mothers. I think ADHD has helped me in a lot of ways. As a mother, my kids are older now. They're 14 and 10. And but I just I think back to those early years of just stuffy, you know, just feeling so overwhelmed and not realizing that there was the sleep component and the noise component and all of that sensory issues and really feeling like yeah, like how I needed my husband support so much. And I remember when my daughter was she was about not quite a year and a half. I think she was like 14 months, and his father died. And that was really a big struggle for us because he was such a support and he went into You know, he's really, really deep grief. And I, I lost it too. And I felt terrible, like you said, like, I was like, I want to be the support for you that you have been for me. And I can't do that, because I'm really, really struggling. And that was, I think that was the point where I finally went to the doctor and said, I need help. But it wasn't for ADHD. I didn't know at the time, that was, you know, 14 years ago, but it was the first time I went on, you know, I was I was diagnosed with postpartum depression. And I and I was diagnosed with both my kids with postpartum depression and anxiety. And now again, with the diagnosis, realizing like, oh, no, there was so much more going. On such a hard time.



05:39

Yeah, I think like, there's so many parallels with our stories, you know, and also, we're not unique in this situation. You know, there are so many more women who are unable to juggle, but society makes them think that they should, and shouldn't beat away, you know, like, Do men have these worries? You know, I think part of the reason for late diagnosis is socialization, you know, what we are taught to be able to do as women or girls, you know, to be sit quietly at a corner and don't like, you know, hit your brother, that sort of thing like that will actually contribute to you thinking, Okay, well, I should be a better person. And what's wrong with me? Am I not a good person?



Katy Weber 06:22

Yeah, I remember my husband's aunt asking me how the baby was doing when my daughter was like, a year old or so. And I'd looked at her and I was like, it's really hard. And she said, I don't remember. I don't remember babies being hard. And I had that, you know, that visceral woven of like, Oh, I am, I am clearly failing at this when other people aren't. And, and the having that like, secret shame of like, Oh, God, like, not everybody finds this as hard as I do. So now was it was it like, you know, I know a lot of people came to their diagnosis kind of from memes, or tic tock videos. Again, we're like, what, where did you start to put those pieces together, but this could be a neuro divergence? Well,



07:09

I actually, like I said, it was when I saw the article that a PR guru that I follow right, laid out and she had bullet points on her symptoms. Like, it's just so funny, you know, some of the things like, you know, embarrassingly, just going through multiple boyfriends at a time was a serious, was it a serial monogamist just go from one relationship to another to another, to another to another, and sometimes overlapping them? So yes, some things like that. And yes, is having difficulty at university, finishing my PhD was a real struggle. So there were just so many times and I remember feeling, the low level depression that lingered between each job transition, and the jobs which I quit, because I was either bored, or just didn't want to do it any more out of burnout. You know, and it just didn't make sense to me. And I struggled to, for a long time to put together all the great things I have inside my brain, you know, on paper and persevere, you know, true a job like most people do climbing corporate ladders. So that's, yeah, that's, that's my story. Yeah,



Katy Weber 08:23

that was a big one for me, too. I think when I when I realized that spontaneous travel was one was a part of ADHD. And I was like, Oh, I do I have a tendency to drop everything and just hop on a plane, at least I used to in my 20s. And, and also, you know, not being able to keep a job for longer than two years. I was like, oh, yeah, I definitely that's definitely me. I think it was part boredom, but also sort of, like, I would get really bristly under authority, you know, like, I would have a manager that I felt was incompetent. Or, you know, I, you know, I just always felt like, I could do a better job. And then I would have to move on. Yeah, so I mean, I'm, you did complete a PhD, which is an amazing so you know, and, and I'm so curious, you know, looking back through your childhood at your, you know, education or, you know, what do you look back at and think Holy crap, the signs were there all along,



09:21

actually, is sort of all started. Because very early on in life, I was a very quiet child, and I think you find a lot of girls with ADHD tend to be quite withdrawn. You know, I think it started for for me it started because I kept a keep missing instructions. So the teachers would be saying, you know, do this and then I wouldn't hear it and then I will ask my friends to interpret it back to me even though we all spoke the same language. And then when I was 15, I remember I had like a lot of duties in school, I was a prefect and then also I had like several co curricular activities, clubs, where I was holding posts, and so on. like I was doing quite well academically to begin with, because I had a real interest in science. But over time, when I had all these academic and extra curricular, curricular activities sort of collide, my grades started slipping really badly. And I just lost interest in them because I was more interested in socializing and meeting boys, you know, just just having fun because I was 15. And then I would fall asleep at the, at the back of the class, without knowing why. So I had a history book open right in front of me, and I'll just sleep behind it. And I thought that the teachers won't know, because there was way at the back, and there was a class of 40 and look really bad because there was a school prefect. And then I fell asleep at the back of the class. Now, I always look really tired, then I think the reason for that is because I stay up really late the night before. And so if anyone had told me, then the ad ADHD, you know, that would probably have changed my whole entire life. But if no one did, no one knew about it, you know, I was just known as probably inconsistent, and, you know, just my grades started slipping. So that went on until I was just too embarrassed to keep, like, nearly fulfilling exams, because I was hanging around with the smart kids. So in some ways that sort of helped me that was my accountability, then I started doing better because I wanted to prove to myself that I was good at something, you know. And so I had a real interest in biology, I had a teacher who really believed in me, which helps so much, you know, and before long, I was known as a biology queen in my class, I wanted to cure cancer, I, you know, was totally obsessed with learning everything there is about cancer research. And apart from ADHD, I also have undiagnosed autism. And one of the traits of autistic people is they tend to collect, you know, things of certain categories. And so for me, I was really geeky. And I remember just cutting newspaper articles about the latest medical breakthrough, you know, roles while my friends are going out and having fun. So, yeah, so I had the real interest in science, and I believed in myself enough and make other people believe in me. And also, people were also so confused why I was so obsessed with cancer, you know, so, yeah, that was funny. But then I just saw it as almost a way out of my own brain, if I could actually get this qualification, and, you know, live a new life and move to a new country, you know, then, like, you know, that that just felt like a more adventurous life, rather than what I had in, you know, living in KL. And so that's what happened, I managed to get a scholarship to come to England, to do my masters. And then my PhD, which I did struggle quite a lot. Because I think if you read about women with ADHD, and girls with ADHD, the period of time when ADHD symptoms manifest more is transition. And I left my country to move like, like 12 hour, timezone later, to the UK with Nobody that I know, in the whole country. And I had to make new friends, you know, find my own way, and deal with cultural shock. So that was a recipe for a disaster, which actually did happen. I think, those were my train wreck years. People tend to say, Oh, I thought everyone went crazy in their 20s Anyway, but not really, you know, some people did actually knew what they were doing. And so for me, I had a train train wreck few years and had a lot of problems with relationships. And I was finding it very difficult to stay motivated during my PhD once I got the scholarship. And because, yeah, it's it's a long time to try and stay the course. And that that was hard.



14:09

Yeah, and I struggled right until the end, even though I did really well, in my PhD, I lost a lot of my confidence because basically, also, I think with ADHD, there are things that you do that you don't know you're doing and you make mistakes, right? And would experiments in scientific experiments, you kind of need to have a very good system going. And if you make mistakes all the time, and people are telling you, you make the mistakes, then you start to lose confidence in yourself because you think maybe I just don't have the organization, you know, to be a good scientist. So that was really ironic because I did my PhD Viva and both of my examiner's really liked me, and they both offered me either a job or a reference. And then after that, I got to job offered to interview at Harvard Medical School. But at that point, I didn't believe in myself anymore. And the reason I told, you know, the professor, who I was emailing, I said, Well, my current supervisor doesn't really think I'm good enough, you know, to do science. And he said to me, if I had believed everything that my teachers told me, then I wouldn't be where I am today. But even that wasn't enough to make me want to, you know, continue doing science. And so from then on, yeah, that was a lot of exploration, intensive click career, a lot of pivoting every few years.



Katy Weber 15:43

Interesting. Yeah, I often wonder if I had had a diagnosis earlier in my life, how things would be different. And you know, because I talked about this with my husband too, with my children. Right. You know, he, he's concerned about getting them tested and diagnosed. And he always worries about the stigma, right? And the treatment. And I always say, like, if I had known how different my life would be, but I also wonder, like, how would I have limited myself because I think part of an undying part of my experience with undiagnosed ADHD was that grit, you know, that picking myself up at the 11th hour, picking myself up by the bootstraps, and getting the thing done, just to prove to myself that I could do it. And I feel like that's how I accomplished any, you know, there, there were a lot of things that I was a train wreck at as well. But I sort of anything I accomplished, it felt like it took an enormous amount of that grit. And I appreciate that. So I often wonder, like, how, you know, are, would a diagnosis have been limiting? I don't think it I don't think at the end of the day, but it would have been, but I don't again, I don't know, you know what, I have gone for things, or what I have to set it now I don't think that's you know, like motherhood, like I talked about motherhood, like it was so difficult because it really was, but I also feel like, I don't want to say it was too hard. Like, I don't want to discourage younger women with ADHD from being mothers. Because I think it's a it's a wonderful, amazing, incredible experience.



17:11

Yeah, I completely agree with you, actually. I hear so many women now who are diagnosed with ADHD and they fear becoming a mother. And, you know, like, I feel a tremendous difference after starting my medication, like, my mood is better. And I'm more patient with my children, you know, and imagine like, this is what other women, you know, half and then they have the patience. And because the brain allows them to be that way, right. And like you say, most of us with ADHD are really good mothers were very loving, very nurturing. In fact, from the outside, we might look like we were made to be mothers, you know, but it's the internal world. You know, it's when things get overwhelming that you might lose your Shi T with your

kids. And you don't mean to do it. Right. And like getting the right help that you need, you know, might help facilitate, you know, what you need to do as a mother and juggle, you know, like, I guess I do women do?



Katy Weber 18:08

Absolutely. I think since my diagnosis, I've become not only a better mother, but a better partner as well, because I sort of feel like, yeah, I can, I can acknowledge my strengths. Whereas I felt like I couldn't do that before my default was always Oh, I'm such a terrible person, because I'm Thrive thrown into a rage, and I don't know why. Whereas now I can kind of sit there and be like, Okay, well, what's happening? Was there too much? Was there music and television on in the background? And was this or too many people doggy, you know, like, I can kind of examine the environment and sort of figure out okay, what were my triggers right now, and, and then work through that in like a more in a more rational way, as opposed to kind of falling to the floor in the fetal position, which used to be my default. Oh, and and so like, well, that literally, but I just made like, and same with my, my husband, right? I mean, I feel like I put so much value in what he brought to the relationship. And I never really thought about what I brought to the relationship and, and I remember asking him for years, you know, like, what do you I know what I see in you, but I don't know what you see in me. And he would always give me these, like, really? unsatisfactory answers. Like, I don't know, you smell good, or like, I'd be like, but then now I realize, like, we've been together for 20 years, and I realized, like, how annoying it must be to have the person who you love most in your life have such low self regard, right? Like it must be really frustrating to have to have heard that over and over and over again. And so now I'm like, Oh, I see what I bring to the table. Now. I bring like the energy and the spontaneity and the idea, you know, all of these things that I'm able to value now that I don't think I was because I never took the time to recognize it.



19:48

Yeah, I do find that most people get into relationships with people who they think have something that they lack. So like, like you say you bring the energy and spontaneity you might be with someone who you know, just kind of like to be like a homebody and you know, just don't want to just disturb the status quo. Whereas you know, you might be more like bold and you know, you might be more outgoing and you're able to ask for things when maybe he would prefer to shrink into the background. It's just my guess, you know? Oh, absolutely



Katy Weber 20:18

right. If it wasn't for me, we would never get takeaway because I'm the only one who calls people that's fine. My job is to call the restaurant RIGHT? So I'm curious when you had your diagnosis, what was your family's response because you have a child who you're seeking a diagnosis to right. So



24:48

I had a child. I have two children, one who I've actually got a diagnosis for, and one who is only two but it's showing all signs. And my husband is terrified. He's shaking his head. Well, yeah

two but it's showing all signs. And my husband is terrified. He's shaking his head well, yeah, that, that in itself, the acceptance of family members was a journey. So, it, you know, as you know, when you pursue a diagnosis, you will be, you know, fully, like obsessed about learning about everything there is about ADHD, right, and also how your brain works. So that's where I was, but my husband didn't really know anything about it. And he started reading things like, you know, how this ADHD is, you know, like, in relationships. So he's trying to find the reason for my behavior, say, without an argument is like, you know, do people with ADHD end up staying in a marriage? No, not really, you know, a lot of us are not getting. So that those are the things that he would be Googling, but he won't be Googling, why is it that they act this way? What is causing this issue? You know, but yeah, like, you know, like, most people only want to know what interests them. And so, it took me a long time to make him see, you know, the good side of our ADHD and also what we can do to manage it. And he only really paid attention when he sees it in our daughter, you know, because that's when he's actually actively involved. And that's when he has to be the patient one. And he doesn't have to, yeah, just give in. So, yeah, he, yeah, he did. He, though there was definitely a period where it was difficult. And I felt like not not accepted. But that period passed. And now we're in a place where he's going around diagnosing people with ADHD. And he's like, that school moms definitely. Okay. But yes, yeah, bear bearing in mind that school mom looks really nice and gentle, and really, you know, good person. So I'm glad that there is a turn around as well in terms of how he notices that anyone, you know, can have it and as five to 10% of the world's population has ADHD, and even more if you count the people who are undiagnosed.



Katy Weber 26:58

And what about your family back home?



27:01

Back home, mental health is still quite a stigma. And no one really knows about neurodiversity. So as you can imagine, like growing up in an Asian country, we don't really talk about our brain, we don't really talk about our struggles, because if you have to struggle with just suck it up, and you know, get over it, right, because your family is more important than you. So and yeah, as unfortunately I grew up with, with food, quite quite a turbulent household. I was one of five children and the oldest girl in a family and in an Asian family, that elders goal has to do all the chores, and do all the work. And remember, at age of 11, and 12, I was asked to do cooking for the whole family and true ADHD style. I actually accidentally poisoned everyone because I didn't wait for the cooking to be done so thoroughly. The chicken was under cooking, everyone got food poisoning. But you know that that will teach my parents it's a long, long time. Not everyone's still alive. But yeah, there was a lot of trouble with a child childhood and my family actually accepted my diagnosis, but not actually talk about it. As we don't actually see each other after COVID. No one's traveled. But my mum has realized she has got some ADHD traits. And she definitely pointed to my dad, you know, because of his own serial business starting and he was a serial entrepreneur himself. So you know, it's definitely there. But yeah, they're both almost 70. And my dad is 72. And, and so today, there is no point getting any labels or diagnosis. So



Katy Weber 28:48

...with my father's at and I haven't seen him since the beginning of the pandemic with and

yea, my father's at and I haven't seen him since the beginning of the pandemic, either and haven't really talking about ADHD with them. I sure I know I got it from him. But it's just a conversation. I think it's difficult to want to even go there sometimes because of the misconceptions. And I'm like, I don't have the time or the energy to sit you down and go over. You know, I think as a parent, he would be much more he would be much more defensive like you didn't struggle. What are you talking about? Your life was fine. And I think I had that same kind of feeling with my two older brothers who were very, you know, very academic, Ivy League schools, very success. Both are very successful. And I sort of always felt like they thought of me as the like, misfit, younger sister who was always chasing dreams and doing this and never met amounting to anything. And so there's this part of me that kind of is reluctant to talk about it with them because I feel like there is that inherent judgment of like, oh, you're just finding an excuse. Right? You're you're this is just your excuse for why you are lazy or why you're scatterbrained or why you can't do the thing and I see So much of my own internalized stigma, in terms of that, you know, you that fear of using ADHD as an excuse, as opposed to it being this like miraculous explanation. And I always complain on my podcast when I do talk about being diagnosed and, and somebody's reaction is like, Oh, I'm so sorry, as though it's like this terrible disease I have that I was diagnosed with. But I'm like, No, this is revelatory. Like, you don't understand how amazing this has been. But yeah, so I was. So how old is your oldest daughter?



30:30

She's seven. Now.



Katy Weber 30:34

That's an early. That's an early diagnosis. That's you, that's must be incredibly helpful to have to be advocating at this age and kind of see the writing on the wall already.



30:44

Yeah. Yeah, it is. Absolutely. You know, Katie, and I think you will agree because you have children in education to write and today have ADHD?



30:53

I think they both do. Yeah. Okay. But, yeah, so



30:57

you would know that being in the education, the school system is very challenging for people with ADHD. And my daughter was struggling for a long time, even before I knew it. And her struggle was around anxiety and being told off ghostly will sort of ignite their rejection sensitivity, dysphoria that even young children seems to get, you know? Yeah, so her her her problem was actually making her not want to go to school. And she wants to stay home with us,

because she loves us best. So, yeah, I had to get help, because the teachers were saying, you know, what we're calling her out, you know, imagine being singled out in a class of 30. And just told, like, you please, please be quiet, you know, and not in a nice way. That definitely contributed to her self esteem. And since I knew she had ADHD, I started advocating for her before her diagnosis, but no one took me seriously, and kept going and going and kept sending emails after emails. And it wasn't until she had a full blown meltdown that they were actually listening to me. And, yeah, because I was writing so many things, you know, the sort of things that you should look out for, but no one was really listening. So eventually, when she got her diagnosis, they are listening. But this doesn't mean that they're doing anything. You know, the only free pass sort of like an easy pass that might my my daughter gets now is, she doesn't get told off in front of the class. Because I said that, you know, any sort of punishment would compound any anxiety and self esteem. They don't notice if severity of it. Because, you know, the more like, children get embarrassed and told off in public, the more it impacts their self esteem. And it's like a spiral, you know, like, it goes into the spiral, like, people hate me, I'm not good enough. And yeah, so we're trying to protect that right now. And she's still young, so we didn't want to start her medication yet. But we are wondering what the next step is, because it is at an age where she's getting more and more emotional dysregulation. And I feel really sorry for her in that place. But at the same time, I'm triggered, you know, as you can imagine, but even though you understand ADHD doesn't make you, you know, like any easier to deal with someone who has it. And so yeah, there's a lot of, yeah, just constant management in on our side.



Katy Weber 33:37

Really seeing how public the public school system is failing these children and feeling so helpless. A lot of the time. Yeah, it is. It can be you said it perfectly. It can be frustrating just advocating, you know, on a full time basis for these children. And I think about but at the same time, yeah, thinking about my own childhood, like, you know, when I, I've talked about this on my podcast before, where, like, I was left handed. And my kindergarten teacher forced me to become right handed. I don't want that to happen. And you know, and I also looked back, and I was like, Why did my parents allow that to happen? Like it was, you know, it was in like, the late 70s, early 80s. So it wasn't like that draconian. Why? Why did I have a teacher who did this? And why did my parents always laugh about this? Because it must have been so jarring to a child to have to switch to this right and then not only was I switched to right handed, but then the teachers would complain about my poor handwriting and how you know, and I think about like, how demoralizing this experience is for young children. Right? Like I was told, at a very young age I was I went back and looked at my report cards after my diagnosis, and it was so emotional, because I think like when I was really young, I was told that I was enthusiastic and a leader and all of these things and but her handwriting is terrible, and she needs to work on that. And she's too just easily distracted when she's in a group and she talks too much And it was just like all of this, you know, nitpicking that just like you could see over the years, it would just build up and build up and I would get separated from the group of, you know, we'd be in these, like pods of desks, and my desk would always get separated. And I'd have to sit by myself and I saw, like, I think about all of these, like, micro aggressions throughout the years that just really are so you know, demoralizing, in terms of like, our strengths, are, are thought of as weaknesses and thought of as faults in so many aspects of public education. And then, and then, you know, to watch me in middle school just kind of give up and then, and I had that same experience that a lot of people did, which was, if there was a topic I was really interested in, I got an A plus, if there was anything else, it was usually a D. And I graduated by the skin of my teeth. So it's, but it was, it's very emotional to think back. And also, like you said, like, how

much of it is the executive dysfunction, dysfunction? How much of it is executive dysfunction that can be treated with medication? And how much of it is just the emotional ramifications of the way we are treated? And the way we are misunderstood? And then what do you do with all of that? And is that how avoidable is that? Is it not I mean, it, you know, part of me feels like, in my own life, I experienced it to such a degree as well as it being internalized, but then as a mother to turn toward your child and be like, I want to protect you from all of this, and I'm not able to and yeah, it's it is very emotional.



36:34

Yeah, yeah. And that's why, you know, I think that we should always look at the strengths, you know, of your children and start to nurture it really young. Because I recently spoke to a therapist who specializes in helping child and teens with ADHD, and she said that, you know, with every child, you just need to look at the internal world of them, and really find out individually, what makes them tick, you know, because each person is different, right, and really just find out what they love doing and you know, as ADHD is, we are motivated by an interest based nervous system, we tend to want to do things that are interesting, you know, challenging novel, urgent, and that we are passionate about. So if we can look at the internal world, you know, what the child is really good at, and just harness that. And, you know, their future is potentially limit this, but a problem with the school system, especially the public school system right now is they don't have time for that, you know, in order to get that kind of help, you almost need to go to a specialist school, and especially a school that actually, you know, give you all the help you need in order to do what you need, you know, like, I've spoken to so many really successful young girls, who, you know, they said that, you know, what helped them is actually being in a system that actually appreciates their neuro divergence in health support, and, you know, not make it into a, like, like a weakness, and not make it into a crutch, like, actually just nurture that, you know, and so, like, with that, then then they can grow because we're in school, now, children are learning everything. But you know, as we get older, we don't actually need to know everything. We don't work in tended industries, although in my part, I have, you know, but we don't actually need to specialize in so many wide industries. So if we start very early on, you know, and I enjoy it, as you know, ADHD has has more than one interest, if we can just focus on those interests. And, you know, then the future can be bright. And, and I know, children who were medicated from a young age, you know, some of them, you know, don't actually like being medicated, but then for those who have the right treatment, and the right support, then, you know, then then then these children would grow up to be quite successful adults and be able to manage their internal lives as well. But it's it's like an all round holistic approach is not just from one side, is it?



Katy Weber 39:07

Absolutely, yeah. I have gone on many a rant about the emphasis on consistency with children. You know, this will deal with this idea of like, well, you do so well in XYZ, but why can't you you know, why are you doing so poorly in geography? Let's focus on that. You're like it's cuz it's boring. I don't know. Like, why do we always have to focus on the one thing that we're not doing? Well?



39:31

Yeah, because people want you to be an all rounder don't they? They always want you to fix them. Good.



Katy Weber 39:39

Good. Exactly. Right. Okay, so then what prompted ADHD girls? And you're sort of transitioning to the mentoring and consultation work? I mean, obviously, from our conversation I, I know the answer, but I want to hear from you. Like, how? Well, how did you get started in shifting there?



42:05

Yeah, actually, I'm also still going with the mentoring and consultation. And actually, the mentoring consultation I began with was around communicating people's value. So people with ADHD tend to find it difficult to find their real advantage, you know, their, their, their, their value, because we do so many things. And we're good at quite a lot of things. But we don't actually stop to think, what is it that I can do, you know, in this day and age, you know, as a career, right, and my background is communications came in handy for that, because I could think of a million ways for you to bring your talent out into the wall and get you notice. So that that's what my program was about. An ADHD girls was born really, because I realized that I wasn't just doing this part time, when I'm doing this, some of the time I was doing this full time. And yeah, it was it was it was full time. So I might as well, you know, make it into an organization. So it took me a long time to get back because I analysis paralysis. But eventually, when I did, I realized I wanted to do it in the not for profit model. So how I work now is I want to work with the corporates Academy and other nonprofits, other organizations, you know, to empower girls and women with ADHD through advocacy, education, and specialist insights. And the model of support is that the funds we generate from working with these partners will go back into supporting, you know, the videos we make, to interview ADHD specialists and also hopefully, to create some workshops in the future, you know, they are free or subsidized. So that's that, that's my thinking for now.



Katy Weber 43:49

That's amazing. I know what it's like, as it's so wonderful to watch the trajectory of these full time hobbies, that but I think, you know, there is so much more information that needs to be out there for women and girls, especially as they like it, it boggles my mind. Because I have been so immersed in ADHD since my diagnosis, I sort of forget, it seems to me like, oh, everybody's finding out about this, this is so wonderful. There's been this proliferation of diagnoses, and then I'll put something out there on like, tick tock and somebody will say, I had no idea or you know, or these, you know, there's I see them starting to really kind of put the pieces together in their own life for the first time and it's just it I feel like you know, those are those moments that are so rewarding where I think like if I could save one person, what if I could save one woman from feeling like she's just depressed or just a bad mom or all of these are things that I kind of placed on myself before this incredible revelatory diagnosis that it will have all been worth it. That there are still so many women out there I think, who have no idea that this is that this can all be kind of wrapped up in a neat explanation of their neuro divergence. And then you can completely shift your narrative, right, you shift how you think of yourself and how you present yourself. Like, it's just, it's, I feel like a phoenix a lot of the time,

you know, it's just, it took an emotional meltdown, it took the pandemic, to really kind of have all the cards, you know, thrown up in the air. And, and now, it's just been, I think, can be so empowering to kind of think of yourself in that in that term.



45:34

Yeah. Okay. I think like, you know, what would you said about, you know, wanting to advocate for, you know, ADHD and women and, you know, wanting to do something to help people, you know, that's something most ADHD is have in common. We're all like, driven to do something like with, like, this social justice in mind. And we want to be a part of the change, because mainly because we receive so much trouble, you know, since a young age, we want to help people not get into the same place that we were at. And we are kind, you know, we know, the Yeah, the trials and tribulations that people go through.



Katy Weber 46:08

Absolutely. Right. And so much self doubt and confusion, right, feeling like, I know, I'm bright, but are, you know, I'm no, you know, like, I think we had Yeah, we that that sense that if only I had known if only I had known it as a child, how my life would be different. There is so much of that underlying grief and questioning and exactly, but like I said, I'm so grateful for the grit, because I think that is something that is also very, you know, a large part of our stories, too, which is that sense of like, okay, now I have these answers. What do I do? How do I how do I move forward? You know, I love that idea of like, well, I often kind of rant against this idea that ADHD is a superpower, because not everybody's there. And I feel like that can be kind of toxic, really positive. And in some ways, I do feel like there is this, I really appreciate the strength based approach to like, Okay, what, like, I'm actually a wonderful, incredible human. And what can I do now? And how can I live my life from a place of empowerment?



47:09

That's exactly yeah, I posted something today on Instagram about being twice exceptional, right? Because you might be familiar with this term, where you are exceptional in the way that you're great, you know, you have this amazing human capital, but you also have some disability that, you know, is stopping you from fulfilling a potential and like you say, the self doubt and the pernicious imposter syndrome, perfectionism, you know, that most of us go through, you know, actually stops us from fulfilling potential. And so we need to reach out to people who can help us, you know, who can actually be a mirror of the good stuff in ourselves, because we all too often tell ourselves the bad things, right? Yeah,



Katy Weber 47:53

yeah, it was always a joke in my household that I had the highest IQ of any of my siblings, because I had gotten into the gifted program. And so I was in the gifted program. And yeah, I kept waiting for them to kick me out. Because I was always such a problem, quote, unquote, and and I was terrified, you know, because I never understood why I was in this program, because all I was ever taught was that I wasn't working hard enough. I kept waiting to get

thrown out. I never was, and, and always sort of had this feeling like, Okay, well, what does this you know, my mother would be like, you're such a mystery. I don't understand that you had this higher IQ. And I've been terrified to take an IQ test my entire life after that, because I felt like that was the one thing I had going for me. This IQ test I took as a child. And so I like refuse to take what now as an adult, because I'm, you know, I'm worried that that was a lie, as well. So one thing I love to ask all of my guests is, if you could, if you could, all ADHD, something else, what would you call it? Because I feel like it's so misleading and pathologized and problematic. And I have no answers, because I, you know, I have no idea what I would call it but I always love to see what somebody else might come up with. Yeah, it's



49:04

interesting, because I looked at that, and I thought of a lot of things. So actually, I don't know if you have this issue, Katie, but especially if you're really intelligent, and you have high IQ, but I come across the words of Ellen Lippmann and Catherine Nadal Patricia Quinn and the book on understanding girls with ADHD is that women who have high emotion or high intelligence tend to have more emotional dysregulation. So for me, if I were to rename ADHD, I would be like, come back in 15 minutes, or give me a break syndrome. Because if I have an emotional outburst, it would normally just last that time, you know, and that's because of my amygdala hijack my emotional flooding, where I won't be able to explain to you why I am the way I am. But if you come back in 15 minutes, I'll be a completely different person.



Katy Weber 49:55

Absolutely. Right. It's like as I you know, my daughter and I are both like that we kind of crash into each other in these in these race, she's 14. So she's you know, in high school we have we're both full of hormones right now. And so we crash into each other with this, like intense rage. But we also know that if we kind of go back to our corners of the ring, we will both sort of settle down and, and that'll be fine. And we can move on and it drives my husband crazy, because he's all about like resolution and working it out. And, you know, and, and he feels like it's irresponsible to just kind of like shout at somebody and then and then not deal with it, you know, or to, you know, not take offense to it or anything. I'm like, we get it, we understand it's our love language.



50:39

Yeah, and important to give us space as well, when when we're there, you know, otherwise, you just get the worst of us, right? Yeah. So like space is important.



Katy Weber 50:49

I keep coming back to the pendulum analogy, too, because I felt like my life was so much of a pendulum. I thought before my diagnosis, I had bipolar because I had just, you know, would have that manic energy and that manic interest in things. And then it would swing to the other end of that lethargy and feeling stuck, you know, feeling depressed and paralyzed. And so that, like, I just always come back to that swinging of the pendulum, you know that dysregulation.

Now, I'm picturing Miley Cyrus on a wrecking ball. Right, it's such an emotional roller coaster. So so how can people find you and work with you? Do you work with it? Do you work internationally with clients?



51:32

Yeah, I do. Actually. I provide consultations and mentoring for ADHD, they can find me in all the places that you look on social media, because I am on everyone. Although I do I think I'm more probably more consistent on LinkedIn, and Instagram at the moment. So yeah, I work with individuals with ADHD with mentoring and consultation, because recently, I've helped people who want to design apps for women with ADHD. I'm held a master's student who want to create the outlines of the skeletal structure of her research. And also I help women who are seeking diagnosis for their children. And yeah, various other people. There is a certain pro bono element in what I do, but also like to support like ADHD goals, you know, I actually do do need to charge for my time as well. So I have half an hour and 60 minutes consultation. And then for corporates and Academy, I am actually very actively seeking its partners right now, via my LinkedIn Live series, ADHD in a workplace. So if you have a spare minute, you can log in and support and if you have, like, if you are part of an organization, you know, who wants to make your systems more ADHD friendly, do get in touch as well, because I team up with the group of ADHD professionals, coaches, mentors, occupational psychologist and ADHD, workplace design specialists, in order to create a more neuro inclusive workplace and study environment.



Katy Weber 53:14

That's amazing. I just realized I didn't get to ask you about your autism journey as well, because I sort of feel like it when we talk about ADHD. And that and that diagnosis, I think, you know, one thing that I came to my neuro divergence through an ADHD diagnosis, but I do sort of view this large spectrum of neurodiverse, NC and kind of this, this, this neuro type that we have. And so it is fascinating to me to see all of that overlap. I'll have to have you back for another.



53:48

Yeah, I mean, that's really interesting, because I don't know if you have any CO occurring conditions you can teach if you have any.



Katy Weber 53:54

Absolutely, I mean, I feel like the more I fall down these rabbit holes, where I'm like, Yeah, I really need to look into this.



54:01

I mean, so I've been told by my ADHD coach that once you get medicated for your ADHD, the other things become more obvious for me that tidying and going around a house looking where the things are, in order has become so like so much more pronounced

the things are, in order has become so like so much more pronounced.



Katy Weber 54:17

I remember telling somebody the story about how I used to have all of my books alphabetized by author in my bookshelf, and I would move and I loved moving because it was an opportunity to reorganize things, you know, and so I would have like, it was an opportunity when I would take things out of the boxes, I would have like my OCD would be in full effect, right, I would have everything color coordinated, and I loved it. And then when I moved in with my husband now husband, he took all of our books and just shoved them into the shelf. And he didn't care if they were upright or you know which direction they were facings and and then they were no order whatsoever. And I just was like, horrified. And then I thought, well now I can never I could never organize ever again. You know like I was like that's your domain. I will never look at that ever again. Like it was all of that all or nothing. It's very Yeah, it's very fascinating to kind of look at some of those overlaps. But yeah, you know, I think one thing you didn't mention was your YouTube videos, because that's kind of how I came to you. And I want to make sure I will put a link to your I want to link to your LinkedIn or your website, because I think that kind of sends you in all sorts of directions. Yeah, not LinkedIn link tree. But you're I love you know, you're having some incredible conversations with Sarah Solden and Ned Halliwell, and some of the really like, pioneers in in this field. So I really just so appreciate the conversations you're having and the advocacy you're doing.



55:43

Yeah, it's amazing, actually, even for me to actually have these one on one with them. Because after these interviews, I have this, you know, like, professional time to chat to them. I'm getting this all for free. I know, right? It's really cool. Yeah, it's really cool. And yeah, I don't talk about my YouTube video enough, because I see more and more people that I approached for sponsorship sees me as an influencer. But I don't really work on that capacity. You know, my background is in communications. And I talk to doctors and scientists about the great work that they do so. So that's, that's where I want to come from, you know, as someone who is disseminating very important messages, and, you know, helping other people at the same time, so that that's very much. So. Yeah, so ADHD girls YouTube channel, it's, unlike linked in bio, actually. So if you follow ADHD underscore girls on Instagram, you'll find it.



Katy Weber 56:41

It's great. And I think, you know, for me, I realize now in retrospect, when I that the why I started the podcast was because so much of our learning about ADHD comes through hearing about lived experiences in other women, right. And, and seeing ourselves in those stories. It's not from reading the DSM, it's not from, you know, reading, you know, long, boring reports on all of the various symptoms. And it's really about knowing that we're not alone and knowing that we're not crazy. And knowing that there is a name to this, you know, and so by having these conversations, I feel like I'm getting my PhD in ADHD, because I'm learning so much from everybody else about what this looks like. And it's so funny to me, because I'm like, I, you know, my, my academic career was so abysmal, but here, like, I'm realizing this is how I learned. And so



57:38

I think, yeah, you're completely right. I think you're learning by doing, and because it's fun. It's much more fun to go out there and talk to people than to open a book. Right, and I



Katy Weber 57:52

read the same paragraph over and over. Right? Yeah, that's right. That's right. No, that's really cool. Yes. Thanks for having me. Katie's. Talking to you. Thank you so much. I was so so pleased to have this conversation and get to know you a little bit better. So thank you for everything that you were doing and being such an ADHD badass out there in the UK. Thank you.