

Linda Yi: Cooking, community, and panda cub stories

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SPEAKERS

Katy Weber, Linda Yi



Linda Yi 00:00

We in general and neurodivergent or not like we don't actually need any more information. There's so much information out there at our fingertips, right? Like, everything I teach, like you can gather it yourself like through blogs and YouTube and you can buy books. But I think like what I found that I really saw it and what my students are really seeking is like one more structure and clarity and to like more connection.



Katy Weber 00:32

Hello, and welcome to the women and ADHD podcast. I'm your host, Katy Weber. I was diagnosed with ADHD at the age of 45. And it completely turned my world upside down. I've been looking back at so much of my life, school, jobs, my relationships, all of it with this new lens and it has been nothing short of overwhelming I quickly discovered I was not the only woman to have this experience. And now I interview other women who liked me discovered in adulthood they have ADHD and are finally feeling like they understand who they are and how to best lean into their strengths, both professionally and personally. All right, I'd like to share with you this review from a listener called My tribe on the Apple podcast platform. The review is entitled found my tribe Words cannot express how grateful I am to have found these podcasts. I just found myself in tears as I listened and thought this explains everything. No wonder I struggled to excel. It wasn't that I was careless or didn't pay attention. I was neurodivergent. Thank you. Well, thank you for taking the time to write a review. I appreciate it so so much. And it really helps other women find these conversations so that they too can realize they're not alone and that there's nothing wrong with them. They simply approach life differently and what a gift that truly can be. Okay, here we are at Episode 111, in which I interview Linda Yee. Linda is an artist and the creator of the panda cub stories, a webcomic that explores her ADHD session on cooking and her Chinese identity and culture. She's also the founder of panda cub diner, an online cooking membership, where she teaches students the joys of cooking healthy and authentic social unstyled Chinese food Linda and I talk about some of the unique challenges many of us face when it comes to cooking meal planning, shame and executive

dysfunction. She shares her incredible story of how lockdown and homesickness fueled her desire to learn to cook traditional session on meals and how teaching others has helped her to take care of herself. And we talk about how her comic characters have helped her process her own adult ADHD diagnosis and be kinder and gentler with herself. I want to mention that Linda was chatting with me from a New York City apartment. And in the first half of the interview, there's some muffled background noise coming through the wall from her very loud neighbor that I am such a huge fan of Linda's work and I was already pretty nervous and excited to be interviewing her. But I found the background noise so distracting and I was having a really hard time concentrating on the conversation. And this also feels very fitting given the nature of this podcast. So I wanted to make note of it and let you know that it does stop after a while. So please don't let it deter you because this is just a fabulous interview and conversation with a wonderful guest. Enjoy. Hi, Linda, I am so excited. I'm really thrilled that you agreed to be here. When I reached out to you I had just read the interview with Kaleidoscope society. And I am not exaggerating when I say it made me cry. Like I I really teared up. And it was really emotional. And I just felt so moved by your story. I love your call. Your comic also gets me kind of teary eyed sometimes I gotta say, I think it is. So it's just so beautiful. And so from the heart. And I really just before, I wanted to make sure I said this before we even got started because I was like, I just want to thank you for what you're doing. For your perspective. It's just an incredible thing for this community. And I wanted to make sure I didn't forget to say that. So anyway, I just want to get started. I guess I'll start asking about your diagnosis. It was about five years ago, right? And yeah, what was going on in your life that really led to you kind of putting the dots together? Because it sounds like it was it was a combined diagnosis with a lot of other stuff too. Right? So what was happening in your 25 year old life?

L

Linda Yi 04:31

So I sort of had a quarter life crisis, I guess you would call it so I had basically left like my fourth job since getting out of college and I was living back at home and trying to figure out what my next steps were. I'm already on a tangent but I don't know if you've ever seen like everything everywhere all at once. But like if you haven't it's this recent sort of like kind of mind bending sci fi like Action Martial. aren't saying but the main character is basically this like middle aged woman who is, like being audited, because she has just gone through, like, you know, like 3050 businesses and she's just been hopping from like one idea to the other. And that was like, definitely me. But I guess like early on in my life. So I think like, the diagnosis came actually like after a culmination of basically an entire lifetime of kind of feeling like I was living, somewhat like, like an imposter, right. So like, I think growing up, I was always told I was bright, and I tried really hard at school, and I love school. But at the same time, it's like, I always struggled with, you know, racing thoughts too fast mind and, and then there were things that it would definitely just like, shy away from because like, I felt like I couldn't master them. I think like, I basically went through both School University here as an early career, seeing my brain as the enemy. And something like I really had to, you know, work like a workhorse three times as hard as it felt everyone else was working to, to get to where I wanted to be. So I would swing between, like, you know, being really put together, or at least I tried to seem very put together, like on the outside and then just having these like long, like lulls where I would just crash. So yeah, by the time I was 25, I'd already gone through like four jobs. And it felt like every time a chapter closed, I had to start from tabula rasa. And you know, that might not have been true, but it definitely like that's what it felt like. And so really, like the thing that prompted the diagnosis was actually one day I was at the local bookstore, and there was a clearance bin. And I love books, like libraries and bookstores have always been sort of like, a refuge for me. And I realized it's like, because it's like a very tidy structured environment with like, all of the things I

love. And yeah, and there was like a book in the clearance bin that I picked up, honestly, because the cover was like green, and purple. And those are my favorite colors. But it was a split called fast mines, like how to thrive if you think you have ADHD, and I was like flipping through it. And there were some like, you know, early, like self assessments in the beginning, and it was like, Oh, what, so I ended up buying it for like, like, 499 or something. And yeah, and I just spent like that whole day, just like reading it. And honestly, I didn't complete all the self assessments, I probably did like the first like, four. And then I was like, I think this is this is me. And that's kind of like what prompted finally, picking up a phone or I guess, like, I might have made an online booking to get a meeting with a psychologist or psychiatrist.



Katy Weber 07:56

There's so much in a title of a book, right? I feel like that was when I was first. You know, it was like when it was first suggested to me by my therapist, that I started to look into ADHD and I started connecting the dots a little bit, and then you know, and then it's like, Oh, my goodness, then you go into that hyper, hyper research mode. And I remember finding that book. You mean, I'm not crazy, lazy or stupid? And I'd be like, I'm in I'm in the right place. So even just the title fast minds, you're like, yeah, yeah.



Linda Yi 08:24

Yeah. And I think like it also because like, I, I'd known about ADHD before, but I think like, like a lot of us, like, I was never physically hyper as a child. So like, that was just like, not something that clicked with me. But I think like, just fast minds. I was like, Yeah, like that. That's the hyperactivity that I identify with, like, not so much the physically impulsive side, but more, you know, like, I can't control my thoughts. Well, and I think



Katy Weber 08:53

a reason why many of us don't even think that is part of ADHD is because it didn't occur to me that that wasn't how everybody thought, right? And so, like, I remember going when I went to for my diagnosis, and was talking to my doctor, and she was asking me if I lose things, because it's like one of the questions on the DSM. And I was like, No, I don't lose things. I'm actually and I went into this whole long diatribe about the systems I had around how I don't lose things. And I was like, I have a set of glasses, and every car and every, you know, I have a set of glasses next to the TV, and then I have one upstairs. And she said she was like, you work really hard to not lose things. And that was the first time I'd ever occurred to me how hard I was working and realizing, you know, but again, like realizing, like, Oh, that's not what everybody does. And real and I think that's probably a lot of the reason why so many of us don't relate to the hyperactivity element. Even if you say the term internalized hyperactivity, I would still think that the that racing mind is just how everybody thinks, right? I just assumed that was everybody you had mentioned in? I guess I'm not sure if it was As the interview with Kaleidoscope society or not, you had talked about doing really well and doing well in school. And, you know, I feel like the vast majority of the women I interview had a similar experience, right, which was like, you know, not having that stereotypical view that we have of the student,

but actually doing really, really well. And then how you had felt like you had convinced everybody that you had fooled everybody into thinking that you were competent. And that speaks to, I think, a real element of neuro divergence that is so hard to articulate.

L

Linda Yi 10:36

Yeah, just like, but sort of, like what you were thinking about, like reminded me of like, learning about the term masking and like that, like, I just didn't realize that that's what I've been doing. I feel like something that I really remember, like, even early on in kindergarten, all the way up until undergrad, like, I would see people that like I really admired, right. And so, I guess, like, in undergrad, I remember just going to the seminar, my seminars, and there was this one girl who was in a lot of my classes, and she always, like, look so put together, you know, she would like, come to class. And it's not even, like, you know, she was like, dressed super well, like, if she was in like, you know, eggs and whatever. But like, you know, she always had like her coffee, and then her computer, and it was super clean. And then she had like, really organized notes. And she was like, sit really straight and type. And I was like, I want to be like that. And so I would like try really hard to like, do that. And it would work for like a couple of classes, and then things would kind of just like fall apart. But like, I would always sort of like, aspire to I think and I think like that's also one of the reasons like so many of us kind of fly under the radar. Because it's like, you know, when we put our minds to something, we can hyper focus and try to achieve like that level of either like normalcy or goals, hashtag goals. But it's like, I guess like, I just never realized that. Maybe it wasn't because I was deficient and couldn't be like that. It's just that like, maybe we function differently. Well, who knows? Like, I'm not in her mind. Right? But yeah, but I think like, there's just that internal monologue of like, why does it seem so easy for other people? And, and why is it so hard for me? And then like, I think for a lot of us that very easily becomes like, it's because like, you're not good enough? Or you're not trying hard enough? Or, you know, you're just like a lazy person.



Katy Weber 12:35

Yeah, and I think one thing that is can be so difficult, and I think a lot of your comics talk to this, this desire, the desire to do well, you know, like, the desire to please, is so strong. And yet it's so often interpreted as the opposite, right? And so it's like, how do you build your self concept into adulthood out of this back and forth between like, what the, you know, I'm trying really, really hard at something and it's being seen or perceived as the as me not trying as me being lazy or disorganized, or not having discipline or all of those things? Like, right and then being like, how, you know, if this is like how my personality has been built on this, like messaging in my life, no wonder I have a lot to unpack in adults. You had mentioned about that it's been difficult to talk openly about mental health since your diagnosis. So I'm curious. Was that part of why you started the panda cub comics? Or what was the inspiration for for panda cub?

L

Linda Yi 13:39

Yeah, so that was definitely part of the inspiration. Although for me, often, like I start something, I don't know why I'm doing it until like a while later. And I look back, I'm like, so I think in particular, I guess like, there were two ways where it was difficult to talk about it. And in one way, it's like, it was difficult for me to like, gather my thoughts. And, like, explain it in a

way that wasn't like, because you know, how we tell stories, like we start from a and then we're like, and then we go here, and they're like, by, you know, like, eight years ago, this and then you make all of these like loops. And then by the time you're at the end of your explanation, everyone listening is like, what? And then like, and you're also like, Wait, what was I saying? On one hand, the comics were, for me, the best creatives can container for me to both sort of, like indulge my, you know, like, asides and, you know, like flights of fancy but also in the process of editing the comic and editing the story. It's sort of like, I both Am I able to crystallize the things that I actually want to say into something that I'm like, oh, right like that. That is like truly like what I meant to say, and then the benefit is also like that, but Hands, a way of telling my story to other people in a way that is easier for them to understand as well. And I'm a big nerd, like when it comes to word text interaction and storytelling, like with pictures and text, because I yeah, like my, my background is in children's literature and education. So I think like, on one hand, that is what made talking about this topic. More easy. And then on the other hand, it has to do with kind of like my background, so I'm Chinese American, and, and I would say like, at risk of generalizing, but like most Asian society, like communities, mental health is still quite stigmatized. And so like growing up, anything related to mental illness, or, you know, like, I don't need to think like mental health was really not necessarily a concept. But you know, if you called someone like, botley shunting big, which is the the actual medical term for like, someone with like, neurodivergent NSSI. That is actually like, seen as an insult and a very, like, severe insult. So I think like, once, I was fighting with my mom, and I was like, oh, like, you know, why are you so crazy, but in Chinese, and of course, like saying someone saying that to someone in English is also not nice. But I think like, I just didn't realize kind of how heavy that was in, in my home language. And she was very upset. And my dad was very upset. He was like, never say that to someone. And yeah, and so I think like, creating these comics, because like, my comics are also bilingual. And I use them. Partially also, as a way for me to practice like expressing myself in Chinese. Those have actually become a bridge for me to start, like talking to my mom, mostly, but also like my broader family about these issues. And it sort of like served as kind of, almost like a doorway. And I remember I published one of my comics, and she had, like, messaged me on her family chat platform. And she was like, Oh, I like never realized he felt this way. I think I probably struggled with like, you'll Yujin or depression, as well. And so like, and then we started talking about something that just never talked about before. So I think for me, that was also quite, I think, surprising. And like my last tangent, I don't know if you've been following the news, but like the there's this US comedy video troupe called The Try Guys that have been in the news. Yeah, yeah. But so so putting aside that, I've been a longtime fan of the tribe, guys. And my favorite tribe guy is Eugene and he's, he's the Korean American. And, and one of his, like, big things is, he came out as gay a couple of years ago with this like really beautifully, like, lushly filmed coming out, like music video. And they went on tour. And basically, he was like, I've done all of this. And it's so much easier for me to share this part of me with like, millions of fans, but I've actually never sat down and talk to my family, about being gay, like, you know, he's like, I came up to them when I was 18. And then we just never had that conversation again. And so like for him, I was watching their documentary. And yeah, he actually his mom and stepfather came to see his performance. And that was like, the first time really, that that conversation happens. I feel like for me, it's like a smaller scale version of that. And sometimes I'm like, Linda, why can't you just be like normal and have a conversation with your parents, but I think I've become, I think, a little bit more compassionate towards myself as well. And it's like, yeah, like, sometimes, you know, there isn't a textbook, perfect way of approaching things. And if things work for you, then they work for you.



Katy Weber 19:05

Yeah, that's actually the part that made me cry. What was the story about your mom reaching out to you after you had posted that comment? I think it I think, you know, there's so much there in terms of often like, it's, it's hard to even express how difficult it can be to talk about this identity as neuro divergence with family members. And yeah, like, I have this very public platform. I you know, I didn't even think about it when I started the podcast that I was really outing myself in this way. It was just such this like, selfish endeavor for me. And I didn't think about how I would be received. And so I'm sort of like very, you know, I have this very public persona now as somebody with ADHD, but I don't talk about it at all with my family members. They know that I have it in this podcast exists, but it's something that has been very difficult to talk about in intimate ways. I'm going back to the idea of the line of language too. I love how you sort of play with The idea of mental health, it lost in translation, right that there are different words in different languages and that there sometimes certain languages can be limited when we're even talking about mental health. Is that something that exists? In other areas? I guess I'm not sure what I'm asking. I just love that part of that you explore that in your comics, too.

L

Linda Yi 20:22

Yeah. So I think like, specifically, I think maybe what you're referencing is like the translation, or the term for ADHD in Chinese. And in a way, I feel like, there's a lot of parallels between how I feel, I think we all feel like ADHD is a terrible name, right from the condition. Because like, first of all, it's not really an attention deficit. And also, like the hyperactivity, like component is physical hyperactivity is like what we all associate with that term. So it sort of like sweeps a lot of other like, expressions of ADHD under the rug. And in Chinese, the term for ADHD is don't Jen. So Dwa is like a lot and don't is to move. So I think like, in terms of the Chinese name for ADHD, it's literally you just move too much, right, which is, like, even more, I think, like, if that's not how your ADHD expresses itself, then it's like, then you don't have it. And it's just like, you're, you're making excuses or whatnot. And so I think like, that is definitely a part of it. And I think like, just in general, too, it's sort of like, the words we use carry a lot of power. And I guess I'm moving a little bit away from like language, but I think like this, just coming back to also, you had asked earlier, what kind of inspired the comics. And I think, like, there was a lot of self talk in both English and Chinese I like sort of tucked myself in both in my head that just like was very caustic. It's like you would never, you know, say things to your friend, like, you know, like what, like, I don't know, if you like spare on your podcast, but like, you know, what the fuck is wrong with you, like, You're so lazy and miserable. And, you know, and like, you're you're not tired, like, you're just making excuses bla bla bla. And so actually like, so for my webcomic it's called panda cub stories. And it started out with three characters. It was like a cartoon version of me, this like, super goofy panda cub, and then the panda sidekick, like this little Hedgy. And, like, in the beginning, all three characters sort of acted exactly the same. And as I was developing the character, like the personalities started to split, and what I realized was that, you know, the hedgehog character takes on a lot of sort of, like, the inner anxious dialogue or personality that makes up, you know, part of me, and then the panda is very, like goofy and impulsive. And the more like, physically hyperactive manifestation of me and, and what's fun with comics is like, you know, even the mental hyperactivity can be on paper, like physical like, slap, slap dash hurry. And then I am more than, you know, narrator. And when, especially when I like write about mental health, and I have my characters kind of, like helping me tell the story, it's so much easier for me to be kind to myself, because like, you know, like, who would cuss out at Panda? Right? It's, yeah, so it's like, it's so much easier to sort of look back at myself and be like, okay, like, you know, that's probably not what you wanted to do. But you make mistakes, like a panda can make a mistake, like it's still at the end of the day, a part of you that

you love, or part of me that I love. And it's helped a lot in terms of like cutting back on that negative and really destructive self, like mental chatter that I used to just like, do but not even realize that it's doing.



Katy Weber 24:11

Yeah, that is so sweet. And I think, you know, that idea of like, okay, I get where that all of this negative self talk is coming from going back to that idea of like trying so hard to do the right thing and always feeling like you're missing the mark somehow. And so how we sort of internalize that scolding at ourselves. And I, I've often talked about, like, how there's like the adult version of my brain and the child version of my brain, and I partition my conversations into that so that I can be more loving to that resistant side of myself, but I love how you've placed it in these like characters. But it's the same idea, right? Which is like, How can I how can I internalize that kindness, and that you know, and it reminded me that you've talked about CBT, too, that cognitive behavioral therapy has been super helpful in your journey, right? It reminds me a lot of that of like, what is real in this moment? And you know whose voice is this right now and a lot of those kinds of conscious questioning, I'd like to take a moment to thank better help for sponsoring this podcast. If you're a regular listener of this podcast, you know, I am a big proponent of therapy therapy provides me the best opportunity for verbal processing something that is so important for my kind of brain and my sense of self. What I love about BetterHelp is that it's not a crisis line. It's not self help. It is professional therapy that's done securely online from the comfort of your home, they assess your needs and match you with your own licensed professional therapist, and it's available for clients worldwide. So you get access to a broad range of expertise that might not be available to you locally. It also tends to be more affordable than traditional offline therapy and financial aid is available. If you visit their website and read their testimonials. There are actually quite a few reviews that specifically reference help with ADHD as a special offer for listeners of the women and ADHD podcast, you'll get 10% off your first month, simply sign up at [betterhelp.com/women ADHD](https://betterhelp.com/women-ADHD), that's BetterHelp h e l p.com/women, ADHD. And there's a link in the show notes. This podcast is sponsored by BetterHelp. Now one thing we haven't talked about, actually, before we get to the cooking, because I have a lot of questions about cooking. But I also just kind of wanted to backtrack a little bit about you had mentioned when you were a child that there was a lot of that kind of busy brain feeling. And that, but what are some of the things after your diagnosis that you looked back on in your life where you said, like the sights were there all along?



Linda Yi 26:34

Yeah, so um, I think like, one of the things that I've been thinking a lot is, I have a lot, I guess, like, I used to call it stage fright, I guess in my mind, but I think like, now looking back, it was a lot of like, both overstimulation and paralysis. So this, especially when I think back, like I used to play piano, competitively, like a very stereotypical Asian, Asian kid, in piano lessons for like, 18 years. 18, like 13 years, but there would be this thing where I, like, I would practice until my fingers were sore, and like, I knew I had these pieces memorized. But then like, often, when I showed up to competition, I would get into the middle of the piece. And either like, just looking back now it's either like the feeling of my finger on the key is like, you know, like, the piano was like a little different from my piano at home, maybe like this chair was like different the feeling. And then I would just get like really pulled into sort of that moment, and I would stumble. And then I would just like freeze. So there would be like some competitions, where it's like, I played


this piece, like hundreds of times. And then I just like, I stopped in the middle and lost my spot. And you know, obviously that does not bode well for competition. So I was very, I think, like, good at performing or like doing academic things where I was able to like prep beforehand. And if I had notes to keep me on track, but I really, really like struggled with things like extemporaneous speaking, or interviews. So especially like when I would be interviewing for like, these scholarships for colleges, right, or, or like even going into college admission interviews. If I was asked a question that I didn't prep for beforehand, it's like, my mind would like latch on to 30 different potential answers. And then I would like kind of freeze, and either like stumble or I would just like, pick the thing my mind latched on to immediately, which was probably not the best answer. And then like, I would go home and be like, dammit, like, Why did I say that? Like, there was this other thing that would have fit, like, so much better, but it's like, in that moment, it's like, that thing didn't even exist, like, you know, like, out of sight, out of mind. And I think like, kind of, like now I'm like, oh, like, I I wish I had known that back then. Because then I wouldn't have just like, thought I was, you know, just like a terrible person at doing interviews or I think like, even at one point, it's like, you know, maybe my achievements like, weren't actually achievements, because if it had truly been important enough to me, or if I truly been good at it, I would have been able to remember it on the spot. And I think like for me, I have a lot of I think compassion for the younger version of my self who was very ambitious and wanted to succeed and just couldn't figure out why I was getting in my own way. Yeah, so I think like that. And then I remember so I I do listen to your podcast, but actually, when you reached out to interview me, I was like, Oh my gosh, I never reviewed her podcast because I kept meaning to and then I didn't. So then I moved You do podcast, I hope it's up now. But I just remember like you mentioning in several episodes where like for you, doing research for a project was never the problem it was actually sitting down and getting started. And that was just so me like I would spend hours an hour is like going down every conceivable rabbit hole. But it's like, the more work I did, the more difficult it was sometimes to like finally sit down and like, write that essay or, you know, in a work context, it would be like, I just need to, to answer the simple email, but it would take me like, the entire day because I was like, well, I need to look on this, or I need to check up on this. And then like, I just wouldn't write it until I was like, Oh, I really, really need to respond to this email. So probably those two things.





Katy Weber 30:51


Yeah, oh, my goodness, the whole the example of the piano recital was so relatable. I just brought me back to when I was doing my recitals as well like sitting down on a foreign piano and just having to deal with like, all of the differences and getting totally lost in that was so relatable. But I think, you know, it's interesting when you're talking about the sort of the ways in which suddenly we have this moment where neurodiverse urgency, because now through a lens of ADHD, I'm like, oh, okay, I understand why all of that happened. I have a language for that, right and how I love how experts like Ned Halliwell, and I think even Russell Barkley who wrote fast minds talks about like, reframing right, and how for everything that we see, as a deficiency, there's always the flip side, which is like, you know, another scenario in which this might actually be a tremendous strength, right. And to kind of always think about that, and I think you've, you've talked about this, too, how a way of thinking for you around ADHD, the husband really helpful was like, reframing it neurodiverse urgency as it from being a deficiency to being a strength. And seeing that, you know, and I think that's been so helpful for me to like seeing all of these moments going back and looking at them and realizing why it was happening. But also like, that same impulse, that same instinct, that same reason, you know, the reason why that was happening in that moment was ended up being a strength in another scenario. But yeah, the stuck on input thing with with research as was a huge thing for me, I

always sort of thought that I had this undiagnosed learning disorder because of that whole issue. And then I remember seeing it in my daughter, I'm just being like, what is that about? Like, what is this about? Right? But yeah, especially that idea of being at interview and like having all of these ideas come to you all at once, and just being like, just picks up. But this idea that, like it is, I always used to say, like, it's possible to know too much about something because, like, I, you know, get caught up in like, all of the different points of view and all of that, you know, well let me go and well, maybe I have to start at the beginning. And my husband always jokes that he's like, anytime he asks me anything I like have to start with like, Well, I was born on a rainy night.

 Linda Yi 33:00
Exactly. Like you

 Katy Weber 33:03
need all the god ducks. So cooking, my goodness, I really love your perspective on kind of food and cooking, especially from a neurodivergent point of view. And, you know, cooking is something that is so difficult for us, a lot of us and I think there's you know, when we talk about, like, you know, there's a lot of baggage around cooking from following recipes to as I've know, you've addressed even just like cooking for one, right? And how like cooking as a form of self care can be a real problem for us. And I often, you know, I used to remember, if I'm not cooking for my family, my dinner is usually peanut butter out of a jar. And so I love that you've kind of made you had made these connections for yourself around cooking and motivation. And this idea that like it's it's easier to cook for other people than it is for ourselves, because we've externalized that motivation. And I feel like that's something I love to talk about, right? Which is like, How can I connect to my motivation whenever I am struggling with a task, you know, or and if the motivation isn't there, how can I invent it? Or how can I you know, create something for me. But you also had this kind of epiphany around cooking during the pandemic and the lockdown. Right? So you moved to New York and night in 2019 Correct? Yes, at the very end of 2019 I was gonna say like, How long were you actually in the city before the insane times started?

 Linda Yi 34:31
for probably three months or so it was it? Yeah. So I remember like going the very last like, public event I went to was this artists I follow had like, launched a book. So I went to her talk. And I was like, isn't it cool to be living in a city where I can just like, go see my favorite artists whenever I want and like two and a half years of just like isolating later I'm like, okay, things are finally opening up again.

 Katy Weber 34:57
Yeah, yeah. Oh my goodness. What Tom, what a crazy time. So you you moved to the city and you were sort of launching your own career as an artist, correct? Yeah. And then the pandemic happened. And you were sort of had this epiphany. So talk me through this epiphany that you

had around cooking it during lockdown.

L

Linda Yi 35:17

Yeah, so I'm the, this is also me like maybe providing a little bit too much context. So I actually like I moved to the city with my, like previous partner, we had been together for a long time. And one of the main reasons also I spent, like, such a big chunk of my 20s not cooking was like he, he loved cooking, and he would like, do all of the cooking and I really do the dishes or like sometimes I would like chop stuff for him. But like, again, like there was never really a reason for me to like, take it upon myself. And the only times I would cook in like back when we when he and I were together was like when I was like really craving a dish from like my background since the 20s. I was born in Chengdu and, and I like that's still my all time favorite food. And, and sometimes, like that was also a point of like contests where he was like, we don't have to eat Chinese food all the time. And I was like, but we don't we eat like everything else under the sun. But it would always be like, I would make this whole production of it. And you know, like call my mom for the recipe. And then like, we would fight because like not not fight but like she would never know the exact measurements because she was like, it's just like I never measure I just like put however much like I feel is right, which is very not helpful as a neurodivergent cook. Yeah, and so like, prior to starting my own kind of like cooking journey, like I would cook like once in the go three months without cooking. And then like everything, like you said, like, if he was away, I would, you know, do takeout or I would like cold cereal for dinner. And so we we separated during the pandemic, and in like early 2020 I moved into my own place, I was living alone by myself for the first time and like half a decade. And I was like faced with the prospect of, you know, rebuilding my kitchen from scratch, because like, all this stuff is is and kind of what I found was without a kitchen already set up. I just like it was so hard for me to do anything except for eat frozen meals or do ramen, or you know, just like default to like cereal without milk because I forgot to like buy milk. And, and all of that sort of happened within the context of also like locked down quarantine by myself. And then especially in New York, there seemed to be just this rising like wave of anti Asian sentiment. And so that also, like made me just like, miss my family a lot. And I couldn't go home because of COVID. And my parents are high risk. They're much older than a lot of my like, peers, parents. And for me, it was, I think that was kind of what pushed, like the button in my brain to be like, you know, I, I miss my family. And a big part of it is like, we connect to each other. And we show love and affection with each other through food. And I was like, Well, I have all this time on my hand, I really want to like make a go of this. And so I think like really kind of what started this process was me making that decision. And then at that time, me also being a couple years into my ADHD diagnosis. And then realizing that I was like, oh, like, now that I'm hyper focused on this. And I have like my core reason why I want to do it. I've always actually been really good at creating like systems and structures. So like, I basically set aside a chunk of time to make this something that I pursued like daily. And by that time I had also like started my webcomic so I was like documenting my process by my comics. And it kind of like snowballed into this like more than just me project because a lot of my readers like were interested in so they'd be like asking questions. And then I realized that like, I actually learn really effectively if I'm trying to teach someone else as well. So that is kind of like what prompted my whole journey. That's kind of how I started. And then I basically did this like, whole like three month journey where I was teaching myself. And then like 15 of my readers had signed on to be like my beta students and I was like teaching them how to cook for 20 years and we did like everything from scratch, right? So like, we set up our kitchen I was like, This is what I'm ordering. You know, this is how we season a walk. These are the Korean green DNA that we get. And then we cook like five dishes together. And it was just like this wonderfully fabulous, like fun experience. But then that

ended. And, and then like, for a month and a half, I just like reverted to all of my old ways. Like I was trying to build up this business. And then I wasn't cooking for myself, I was just like, eating takeout. And I was like, What the fuck is wrong with me? Right? And I was like, was it just a lie, like, and so I think like, that was like my second like, epiphany where I was like, okay, like, I kind of started this whole thing, because for me, like food was about more than just like, nourishing myself and satisfying cravings. Like, it's just for me, it's such a core part of connecting with others, whether or not it's like, my family, or, or with my, like, My followers are my friends. And so that was when I added kind of like the second element to my cooking program, which is this monthly recurring, live cook along that I do with my students and, and that like, kind of created another system where I was like, so this is a reason. And there's a date associated with it, where, like, I explore a new recipe from, you know, my family's like repertoire. And it's actually like, just really fun and exciting to be going on this journey with other people. Like, even if it's virtual. And sometimes, you know, like, I have friends join me in person for it. So yeah, so I think like, for me, that's kind of what I realized, I was like, for me, I needed to kind of like, learn how to feed myself consistently and be okay with like, I'm not going to cook myself a gourmet meal from scratch every day, especially if I'm living by myself, like, sometimes that's just not what not what I want, or what I need. And sometimes I have very low executive function days. And like, then I just have some throw together meals that I do. And then it's like, but then that frees me to actually, like spend maybe like, several days out of the week, or maybe one day out of the week, like making cooking a really joyful part of my life. And, and I guess like to wrap up really quickly, it's interesting, because like, now that I've been working my kitchen muscles a little bit more, some of the, like dishes that used to be things I had to like spend a lot of like mental energy on, have now become the easier meals that I can just like do. And so it was interesting, because I was just talking to I'm collaborating with a vegan Chinese chef soon on a recipe card. And she was like a bonafide like trained culinary chef, like she went to China like for culinary school and, and she was like one of the top like dimsum chefs at a very, very famous like dim sum restaurant. And she was like when I used to just like, hate cooking, but now it's like just the water I breathe that sometimes I forget how hard it was to get started. And that's really what I try and keep in mind, like in my own journey as well. Like, I still consider myself like much closer to the beginner than than she is. And I don't think I really aspire to get to her level. But I think like what's what I really love is leading people through the, the journey that I went on that like if you ever feel this dichotomy of loving food and loving eating with other people and having it bring joy in your life, but then the thought of making it with your own two hands just like makes your skin crawl then that maybe you know, we can work on that in some way.



Katy Weber 43:43

Ah, yeah, that's so great. You know, I always say like, the best way to learn about something is to commit to teaching it to somebody else. And I think why, maybe that's why so many of us are like, entrepreneurial in that way, where it's like, oh, I want to learn about this new thing. So I'm going to create a business in which I have to tell people about it. Exactly.



Linda Yi 44:01

Yeah. And your podcast as well as like, perfect as your project. Yeah,





Katy Weber 44:06

right. Exactly. Yeah. And you know, and it's funny because the podcast even started as like, it just a lark for me, like, I just was like, I want to talk to other women, how can I do that, and what's a great way to do that I know, I'll build an entire platform and like, make it official, so that I have a reason to reach out to people. And then it just kind of snowballed from there. And then also that not only that, but like the the idea of connection and community too, I think runs through so much of what I like to call the quote unquote, treatment plan with ADHD and the right finding each other and learning this language together. And, you know, so much of what you were talking about was recognizing like, taking a lot of the shame out of certain things when they behaviors right around where they stop working. So it's like I was doing all this stuff and I had become, you know, so accomplished and then it all just fell apart. And rather than being like, what's wrong with me, I should be able to do this. It was Say recognizing like, Oh, that's interesting. Why did that fall apart? Like thinking of things, thinking of the system's instructors as that as like, oh, so what? What stopped working? Like how can I kind of tweak that and taking a more like, I always feel like it's so helpful to take a more like anthropological look at the situation than it is to say like, I should be doing this consistently, right? Where I'm like, consistency is not your strong point. So let's stop trying to be consistent and start like receiving the strengths and the wonder in not being consistent, right? Like, where can I recognize that and that a lot of that reframing to when I was diagnosed with ADHD, it completely turned my world upside down. I looked back at so much of my life, my grades in school, my multiple careers and hobbies, my friendships, my marriage, motherhood, my relationship with food, and my body, like all of this with a new lens. And it was overwhelming to say the least, if you've been diagnosed with ADHD, and you're feeling blown away by this new insight into your brain and how it operates, I totally understand I can help you begin to sort through this chaos, explore who you are and how your brain operates. So you can finally start to lean into your strengths and begin to use them to your advantage moving forward. Together, we can work to identify what obstacles you've been facing, and create strategies to help you start living a more fulfilling gratifying life, head over to women in adhd.com/coaching, to book a 30 minute initial consult with me. So we can figure out if my brand of one on one coaching is right for you. Again, that's women and adhd.com/coaching. And you can find that link in the episode show notes. So with panic of Dinah, you're teaching, you're doing like, monthly you have a monthly group? Or how can people how can people sign up for this.



Linda Yi 46:52

So basically, the program is kind of like dual trapped. So like, to sort of somewhat summarize, like, what I think the big aha moment for me was, you know, it's like, we in general, like neurodivergent, or not, like, we don't actually need any more information. There's so much information out there at our fingertips, right? Like, everything I teach, like, you can gather it yourself, like through blogs, and YouTube, and you can buy books, but I think like what I found that I really saw it and what my students are really seeking is like, one more structure and clarity and to like more connections. So for PanDa diner, the structure and clarity comes from this, like online ecourse that I put together. So it's like a 30 video, like do it yourself like checklist process to, you know, if you really want to make like Chinese and strength cooking a part of your life. This is the roadmap that you take, right? So it's like, you can everyone can like learn by themselves how to bake a cake, but it's like so much more effective if you list out the exact ingredients and the tools and like step 123, and four, and so like that is sort of the you know, hop in and do it at your own pace part of the program, which I built first. And then the second part is this kind of like monthly container where it's the more like social body doubling

part of the program, where it's like I introduced the recipe in the beginning of the month, and I draw like this recipe card. And then I like open up signups. So for people who join the diner, and right now I'm doing just like a lifetime membership enrollment, they get access to all of those monthly classes for free. And so I spent, I send like strategically timed emails throughout the month to be like, you know, here, here's the story behind the dish, here are the ingredients that we need. And then if people sign up, then they get like a three email series of here's the shopping list with links, such as like click add to your cart and then buy. Because like, for me, I'm like, even if you tell me what to buy, I'm like, okay, and then I just never go to the grocery store. And so like, what I really tries to like, do as much of the heavy lifting as possible. I think at some point, I would love to just like offer a click and buy meal kit box like Blue Apron, my business is just not at that point. But like, I hope I can get to that point at some time. And then when when the weekend comes like we all log on, and we prep together so you don't have to like you know, do any prep beforehand or feel like you're behind. And then like we cook together. And usually at the end of the meal we either just like eat and chat or similar to you like I invite someone that like I just really want to talk to or learn more about who's in the like Asian culinary space, and they sort of like log on as a VIP guest and we all like chat together. So so that has really become some of like, my most favorite parts of the program and like in sneakily because we ADHD ears love to multitask, like these videos are also like the new recipe videos that I then add to the course library to that like Do It Yourself course library that people can just like access. If people want to like learn more about it, I have a link to that program on my Instagram bio. So Instagram is panna cup stories.com. And then I also have my website cantica diner.com, where basically, you can sign up for like a free recorded webinar that I do that sort of like, is one part. So 20 is 101. Here's some basic recipes. And then one part like neurodivergent, ADH D friendly cooking strategies that I offer. And so that class is completely free. But it's like if you know, people like what I do, then they have an option to join my paid program at the end. This is



Katy Weber 50:53

so incredible, what an incredible resource, right? It's like a virtual dinner party, right? I feel like it covers so many it hits, it checks so many boxes. I'm just like, it's so exciting. And I just love the story behind sort of how it came to be all of this beautiful. You know, another wonderful thing about ADHD is having that kind of patchwork quilt of background of like, I'm a children's, you know, I've used like I worked with children, I have the the illustration element, like all of this kind of comes together in these beautiful, organic ways that I think are so fantastic.



Linda Yi 51:28

Totally, I love talking to ADHD ears because like, I feel like, they're just also multi passionate. And it's sort of like, Yeah, and like you said, it's like embracing the, you know, like, we're so scattered. Why can't we pick one career track and focus? And then, like, I think there's a reason so many of us, like, end up being artists and entrepreneurs because like were looking for a way to, to like create our own path, right? Like with the like palette that we've gathered.



Katy Weber 51:59

Yeah. Oh, my goodness. Okay. So, before I let you go, would you call ADHD? Something else? If you if you could?



Linda Yi 52:08

Oh, yeah, I was thinking about this question. So I didn't actually end up, like having a name.



Katy Weber 52:16

I have that problem, which is like, I have too much information. I have no idea what I would call it. So I love asking other people because I'm crowdsourcing. So no pressure.



Linda Yi 52:24

So I sort of like to I was like, it's like, you know, Magneto the X man. But like, for ideas instead of like a cause, like metal. And then, like an idea magnet. And then my other idea was like, you know, an idea whisperer, but in training, and this is very much from I don't know, if you've read much of Elizabeth Gilbert's work, but she has this book called Big Magic, which is like, my favorite kind of like creative self help book, I guess, is what the bookstore would categorize it under. But I love it. So I guess like, as a book as a bonus book recommendation, like, I love how she thinks about how ideas come to artists. And she was like, she believes that ideas are like little things with souls just like flying around, and you know, and they'll visit an artist, and you know, and if you sign a contract with that idea, then then you get to bring it into being, and I really feel like for ADHD ears, it's like, ideas visit you more, because you're just like, more open and more receptive to them. And, yeah, and for me, like, my, my mind is like, they're like butterflies, and it's like, you're constantly surrounded by butterflies. And, you know, if you try and like, just, like, grab handfuls of them, like, obviously, that that's, like, that's not great, and they're gonna run away from you. But like, if you just sort of like, you know, let them come calmly, like, maybe one of them will come and like land on your hand. And and then that will be the idea that you like, create a bond with that was not a very concise answer. But



Katy Weber 53:59

I'm laughing because you're such clearly such a visual metaphor person, right? So I've learned that it's like, if you wanted to rename something that immediately comes to mind or like picture, right, or just like an archetype of you know, and it's funny because I've actually never, I know Big Magic is a cue. It's really highly recommended. And I feel like it's been recommended to me so many times, over the years that I really should listen to it. But it's funny because the only book of Elizabeth Gilbert I've ever read is her is fiction. It's the the moss researcher book, which trying to remember the signature of all things. That's what it was called. And it's so good. It's one of my favorite, it's probably high up there, in terms of favorites is really great, but I'm like, it's so funny because I always hear her reference and recommended as like a self help person. Like I only ever read her fiction, but yeah, right. I love all of the visual stuff, too. I'm like gnats and tornadoes and buzzers and sparkles and all Love it. Yeah. Well, thank you so much. I was so excited to pick your brain and I really appreciate you sharing. I just think you're doing such amazing things in this world and, and I love your comic. So I'm like having such a fangirl moment. I love your comic so much. And yeah, so I'll make sure to have all those links in the show notes. Because I really want I think the idea of this sort of coming together and being

accountable to each other, and to our community, I think is such a wonderful way to sort of get the best out of each other and ourselves and grow and all of that. I think it's so lovely. So thank you so much for sitting down with me.



Linda Yi 55:34

Absolutely. Yeah. Thank you so much for inviting me. This is wonderful. I'm very excited to be able to talk to you as well, because like, you're you're the voice like in my headphones often like especially when I'm like typing or something.



Katy Weber 55:49

Awesome. Well, thank you, Linda. Yeah, likewise. And there you have it. Thank you for listening. And I really hope you enjoy this episode of the women and ADHD podcast. Also, you know, we ADHD ears crave feedback. And I would really appreciate hearing from you the listener. If you're a fan of the podcast, please take a moment to leave me a review on Apple podcasts or audible. And if that feels like too much, and I get it, then just take a few seconds right now to give me a five star rating. Or share this episode on your own social media to help reach more women who maybe have yet to discover and lean into this gift of neuro divergence see, and they may still be struggling and don't even know why. And if you'd like to find out more about me and my one on one coaching for women with ADHD, head over to women and adhd.com/coaching and you can always find that link in the show notes. I'll see you next week when I interview another amazing woman who discovered that she is not lazy, or crazy or broken. But she has ADHD and she is now on the path to understanding her neurodiversity and finally using this gift to her advantage. Take care till then