

Erica Saum: Hyperfixations & the Enneagram

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SPEAKERS

Katy Weber, Erica Saum



Katy Weber 00:00

Usually, like when somebody reaches out to me, I get like a vibe from them. Right? You know, and I think it was the fact that you said ex-vangelical. I was like, Oh, this is my people. Because I'm totally I grew up in a fundamentalist evangelical household and I'm sort of also a wayward soul.



Erica Saum 00:17

Yes. And I have been trying to process like, should I talk about this? Should I not, but we don't have time to back pretty much. Well, I don't mind. It's one of the things I was thinking about. But I'm happy to because I think that it's been a part of my ADHD journey.



Katy Weber 00:34

So yeah, yeah, I think it is. It's, I mean, everything feels like a part. Right? Like, it's just, you know, I feel like since my diagnosis, I've just been going through everything, you know, it's just like one stone after another turning over. So ah, awesome. Okay, so let's get started then. You are 30? Correct. 29 by Oh, you're not quite 30. Okay. So, like, yeah, diagnosing you were diagnosed this year. Is that correct? Yeah. I was diagnosed in August in August. Okay, so this is all still very new for you. And you're also recently married. Right? Is that correct? Yeah, Monza Okay. So let's go to let's talk about kind of what was happening in your life that led you to sort of start thinking okay, maybe this is ADHD and to start, really, look, look into a diagnosis, you are taking a teaching certification or something, right? Yes, I've



Erica Saum 01:30

been working on my Master's of Arts in Teaching. And we I got to the course that was specifically for special education and exceptionalities, and students. And as we were studying these, I've always been, I've always been very interested in mental health, and different range

bases. I've, I've been very interested in this. And so when we got to ADHD will actually let me back up regard to autism. And at first I was like, oh, like, some of these are similar, but I don't have issues with with social stuff quite like autism, but some of it was very familiar. And then when we got specifically to dis calcula I don't know if you know, it, just calculus, but it's a lot like dyslexia, but with numbers. Yeah, I, I had a meltdown, I cried. Because I realized, I have this like, holy, I have this. This is me. And I did a lot of screenings, I talked to my professor and she was like, yeah, it seems like you are like you likely have it. And she then she also said, you know, maybe you should look into ADHD. And I was like, Oh, I mean, like, you know, we haven't quite gotten there yet in our studies, but when we did, it was like, in my face, you have ADHD, and my now husband, boyfriend at the time, had been sending me tic TOCs before this of like, Hey, this is you, this is you. And I'm like, Oh my God, I don't have NBC chill out. They don't even know what they're talking about. Right. And so once I finally, you know, do this, and they do my research on it, I'm like, Yes, this, this is absolutely me. And I kind of self diagnosed at that point. And I was beginning to just accept that. And then at the same time, which comes with ADHD, I began to hyper fixate on deconstructing everything else in my life, which then came to like deconstructing my political views, deconstructing my faith, deconstructing everything. But it, it led me down this, like this glorious, beautiful road of finding an ADHD diagnosis, and acceptance for myself that I never thought I would ever find. which completely changed my life. So while I do, I can also think back to when I was in like third or fourth grade, think it was fourth grade, my beautiful teacher, she noticed that I had some tendencies to not quite pay attention. And I wasn't really getting the multiplication tables, like I would almost get it, but the numbers would be mixed up. And she'd be like, you're like, you're so close, like you have it. And then if I had a piece of paper, I could do the long work in order to figure out, you know, what, eight times eight is I would write out 888. And like, track it, like this, right? So I knew how I knew I understood how it works, but the numbers wouldn't stick in. So she had a meeting with my parents. And she said, I think that she might have a learning disability. I think she also might have ADHD and my parents bless their souls for like, no like, ADHD for boys and she's not really hyper at home and you still see these things at home. But really what it was is I'm so exhausted from putting forth so much effort throughout the day that I would get home and I would just be completely beat. Right. So there is a completely different Erica that my teachers were saying My friends are seeing versus of my parents because I was exhausted. So now after, after having the formal diagnosis, I felt a lot of anger, actually, at first, because I was, I had this feeling of someone presented this to you on a silver platter, and you completely ignored it. And then I was upset too, because as a teacher, I am Kant, I'm probably hyper vigilant about looking for Nero neurodivergent sees in my students, and seeing how I can reach them effectively. And I became probably probably a little self righteous, thinking about my teachers and thinking like, how did you miss this? How did you miss that I was having the sensory issues, these attention issues. And you didn't do anything you didn't advocate for me. And I'm getting a little emotional, because it's just as a teacher, I advocate for my students every single second of the day. And I didn't understand how I got through 1212 years of school plus College, without someone noticing, and reaching out and saying, Hey, like, nothing's wrong with you. You're not broken. Yeah, your brain just works differently. The first day, I tried Adderall, I felt this clarity. It was like this breath of fresh air. And this was, I guess, like the end of August, early September. It was like this breath of fresh air in my mind. And suddenly, I could see clearly and it wasn't it how I described it to my doctor was, when I'm just trying to function, it feels like my brain is this internet browser that has all these tabs open. But I can't control what tabs open and what tabs close and where it switches to. And I can't control how many there are, at any given moment it pops up. But when I'm emotional, that I'm in like emotional duress, it feels like I'm in the snowglobe. And that I'm trying to understand what's going on. But all the emotions and all the different topics and all the different traumas and everything are just like swirling around me, and I can't grasp anything. Until I explained that to her. I said, this

is what it feels like when I'm okay emotionally. And then when I'm experiencing that emotional dysregulation. And she was like i that is the perfect explanation. Or you're like description of how it is. And so going back to the Adderall, when I first tried Adderall, I remember I was in the shower. And I could remember that I had shampooed my hair. And I started crying because I was like I did, I did shampoo my hair and I remember doing it. Yeah. And then it was just this flashback to when I was a kid back to fourth grade. And thinking of all the times I got physically disciplined because of behavioral issues at school talking, right or, like talking or not doing well on my math are different things. And I cried for that little girl. But I was because I realized I was being punished for things that were pathological, that were part of my brain system and the maps in my brain. And I read, so I have had to really do a lot of soul searching to forgive my parents to forgive the adults in my life. And to into find this the sweetness in the bitterness of knowing that my brain has been different all along, in feeling, feeling different, knowing different. So I hope that answered your question. I talked a lot. But yeah, I think I think I answered it.



Katy Weber 08:28

I mean, yeah, I certainly remember going back and looking at my report cards after my diagnosis. And it was so emotional, because I also don't remember a lot of my early years, you know, and I think that that's also something that I've talked with some women and you know, I think that's not uncommon with ADHD, that there's a lot of our childhood that we don't remember. And I think it kind of goes back to what you were saying with just the Oh, the processing and the overstimulation of memories, right. And so it's really hard to kind of hone in on certain memories. But I went back and read my report cards, and it was I cried, it was so emotional, because I saw early, you know, early like in the first grade, second grade, my teachers were very complimentary and really like talking about how I was a leader and I was a joy and I was enthusiastic. And, and, and then by like third grade was when the comments started shifting and it was really all about like poor handwriting, and she's a distraction, and she is talking too much. And it was just like, I just saw these comments like hammering on me over and over again. And I was watching through these report cards, my self esteem and my confidence was just shattered. Right? And it was just constantly like, she's not doing this. She's not doing this. She's not doing this and I could see the frustration coming through from the teachers to where it was like, again, you know, I had I had so much of that grief looking back thinking, How did nobody see the signs because they just didn't have a language for back then. I mean, I'm, I'm 46. So this was like back in the early 80s, which feels draconian now compared to, like, you know, some of the school system, any at St. Sadly, a lot of stuff is still happening. But like, you know, there were so many things that nobody even knew what to even look for. So if I did have to go through that period, like you said, I'm like, really forgiving my parents for not understanding. And the teachers are just not seeing, you know, what neuro divergence looks like, you know, and, and how those comments can negatively affect certain children and like, and then I just watched myself, like I said, through these comments, like, overtime, I just gave up, you know, where I just stopped caring, and I stopped going to school, and by high school, I just like, attendance was my biggest issue, because I stopped going to classes, because I was so confused, you know, and I had such issues with math, you know, or you reminded me of the the issues with math, my son is going through this to where it's like, if you ask him, you know, a to add or multiply straight numbers, it's totally fine. But if you put it in paragraph form, where you give, like, you know, those examples where it was like, Susie went to the store, and Susie had five times more, you know, money than Jimmy and Jimmy had 12 pennies, and you're sort of like, like when it was written out in sentence form, I would just stare at it. And I was like, I

have no idea what you're asking me. I don't know what's happening where what I you know, and and my son, who's now in the fifth grade is going through that as well, where I'm like, I know, it's just, it's all in the presentation. Anyway, yes. What grade do you teach?

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Erica Saum 11:40

So right now I teach 10th Grade English language arts 10th grade. Yeah. And I teach at a charter school that serves underserved students in the Nashville area, most of my students are from immigrant families or from refugee families. So the I think it's I think our statistics is that 97% of our student population at the high school, their first language at home is not English. So on our English department, there's just a lot of a lot of weight there. And then specifically, because these learners are not first, English learners, like they, that's not their first language, is their elptoo. There is there's just a lot of disparate, like, discrepancy about identifying if they have like autism, or ADHD, or BPD. Because there is that language in that cultural difference. So that is something that we're noticing in high school that we're always screening, always screening for autism, or ADHD, and other other disorders like that. Just because when they're younger, they can't, their parents can't advocate for them, because of language, and culture. So now that they're finally able to advocate for themselves were able to identify, but at that time, like, early intervention, it you know, is key to, to, to having optimal outcomes for ADHD, specifically, and autism. But because the students are getting that, we have to do like extra work with that. I don't know if that makes sense. But that's something that I'm noticing. And that's also why, in my master's, I've also gotten almost finished with it a certificate in specializing in autism education, so that I can help with the screening and identification process and older students. Because because autism and ADHD are so close, in a lot of ways. It's, it's been beneficial.



Katy Weber 13:40

Yeah. And I think just our understanding of autism has expanded so much over the last few years in terms of you know, that's not this. I think so many of us still carry that stereotype that autism is like an extreme behavioral, you know, it has extreme behavioral ramifications and that there aren't know that there are so many people who are in classrooms and are still able to, you know, I don't I hate to use the word function. But you know what I mean, like that idea that like there's so autism is a much broader spectrum than I think a lot of us understood. Certainly, I didn't know. I mean, it wasn't until my ADHD diagnosis that I even really started to think about autism. And and so many of those overlaps. And a lot of the stuff like you said that where I'm like, huh, this is really hitting close to home, like a lot of the sensory stuff, right? Where I didn't, I didn't even know I had sensory issues until I was diagnosed with ADHD where I was like, Hmm, interesting. Yeah. Now that you mentioned it, I do fly into a rage whenever music is playing and the TV is on it, like you know, all of those things where I'm like, wow, I didn't even stop to figure out why things were happening to me because I think so much of the time we're just treading water as fast as we can to like function, you know, and so it wasn't I never even took the time to kind of PERS what was happening to me and I, right? Yeah,

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Erica Saum 15:04

yeah, I think for me, the biggest memory that comes up so frequently is I remember I was maybe 10th or 11th grade, and I was taking a test. And because of the ADHD, of course, I get

distracted easily. And there's also the sensory issues as well. And when, when people are talking, and I'm trying to focus, I can't, and I just remember, one of my good friends was sitting in front of me, and she was talking so loud. And the meanwhile I'm the last person taking this test, and already feel stupid, right? Because I just, I was a very average average student overall. But I actually studied really hard for this one, and I was still last. And she was just talking and talking and talking. And finally I was like, shut up and we got into like a verbal altercation. She's one of my best friends. But like, looking back at that, I know that this happened because I was completely overstimulated. And I went to a very small private Baptist School that didn't do IEPs didn't do modification didn't do anything like that. So I was where I was, you know, and I didn't have anyone advocating or identify, hey, like, this is a sensory issue. And in fact, like, the more research I do, I feel like ADHD at its core, is a sensory disorder, or it has components that was in three disorder, typically, because if the hyperactivity, the impulsivity, we're trying to either fulfill and get more stimuli or return to push away stimuli. So I, I feel like that needs to be more addressed, especially in, in diagnosing ADHD, as we make further advancements in it, that memory, still, like embarrassed of me at the same time, but, but it's true. Like, that's why I have noise cancelling headphones, when I'm at work, I always have to be facing the wall, like, you know, I have to kind of deprive myself of outside stimuli so I can get my get my work done.



Katy Weber 17:01

Yeah. And like you said earlier, you know, so much of this diagnosis is, is having the that grace with yourself, right, where now you understand why things are happening a little more, so I can I find that I don't get into a rage as much as I used to, because I can start to see the red flags earlier. And so I can make sure I don't get to that point of taking on too much or getting to that point of over stimulation. So like I've noticed, you know, just as a parent and as a as a partner, like, I'm much more kind of even keeled because I don't allow it to get as bad. I don't allow it to get to the point where I where I'd like everybody shut out. Which is what used to happen that you know that that's how it used to happen, and then everybody would stop and be like, Whoa, what happened to you like it would seemingly come out of nowhere.



Erica Saum 22:41

So my little brother, my little set brother has Tourette's growing up. Okay. And so this was a constant thing in our house where he would be doing his direct his tics, and it would just drive me absolutely insane. And then I would get in trouble for, for exploding, right? Because I'm supposed to be the patient, older sister, and all of these things. And meanwhile, like, you know, he's over here getting to do his neuro divergence patterns, right? And that's how I felt when I was younger, like, like, what is wrong with me, right? Like why? Like, why am I so mean to my little brother. And it caught it honestly did cause a lot of hardship in our family, between us to the point where I ended up just eating my room constantly because I didn't want to be overstimulated by by his tics and his Tourette. So that was an interesting component growing up as well. But even in college, we shared we in there's a wall between our two rooms, and I would be studying or reading a paper, and if I could hear him doing his noises, I just would have an emotional breakdown. So I had on three fans in my room constantly, constantly. And I was listening to rain and white noise just so I wouldn't explode on him. But as I've gotten older and I realized with ADHD, I can explain it to people like I explained it to my husband, hey, I know that

you're playing your video game you're doing all that I'm going to just go upstairs for a little bit and my last because I just too much right now it's too much and he's usually pretty understanding



Katy Weber 24:10

so yeah, I was just talking about this was somebody I don't think the interview is aired yet about like with my kids, even though once they were old enough to no longer take naps, I still took naps because I needed there was like you know, I needed like an hour in the afternoons just have nothing, you know, where I was like, I don't necessarily need to fall asleep. I just need like time to stop. And I didn't realize at the time that that was like a silence and a recharge. And it was the same I needed brown like really loud brown noise and I just needed to be like in a sensory deprivation of my room. And I know of course at the time because I didn't realize what was you know that this was ADHD. This was pre diagnosis, so I just thought I'm a terrible mom. I've lazy I need a nap. Oh my God, what's wrong with me? Like, that's it. Yeah, like you said, like so much of this diagnosis is this revelatory way in which we can be kinder and gentler to ourselves, right and like, and that's why I was looking at one of the posts, I think it was the post where you you had on Instagram where you had shared your the actual diagnosis, like the little she said, you know, where you're like I was diagnosed, and I was reading your caption, it was great. And, you know, I don't want to call anyone out. But one of the responses was, like, hang in there and it just like, oh, it was like nails on a chalkboard because I always talked about how frustrating it is to talk about this diagnosis in such a way where you're like, No, you don't understand this is really like the best thing that's ever happened to me and people being like, I'm so sorry about your disorder.



Erica Saum 25:47

Like, no, I'm so glad I have a name to it. Right? Yes. And because like, and I've written about this in my blog, and seem ADHD, that was the first post I just put out there, like, I word vomit it and I did not hold anything back. I did try. I mean, I tried to be very gracious with, with my parents and how I wrote about wrote about them, but at the same time, and I don't, I don't have a relationship with my stepmother anymore that has worked, you know, just for protecting my own mental health that has been dissolved. But specifically, our relationship when I was growing up was it was very tumultuous, and a lot of it now that happened looking back was because of my ADHD symptoms, it would be I mean, like, I forgot to do a specific chore, or I did a specific chore the wrong way, or just these things that come from ADHD and getting those negative messages of you know that I was lazy, or that I was selfish, and that that isn't the case. And so I became hyper vigilant to make sure that I wasn't a selfish person that I wasn't lazy. And my husband will tell anybody, like I'm the hardest working person that he knows. And even at the time, so I lived with my parents, when I was an undergrad, I had a full scholarship tuition or full tuition scholarship, for theater. And so I not only was in school full time, constantly, but my work work was helping out on the theater, and doing these things. So I was gone. I would say like 70% to 80% of the week. And when I was home, I was cleaning or I was studying or writing papers. And it just never quite seemed to be enough. And so that selfishness, again, you know, was was brought up the selfishness laziness. Because I was, you know, focusing too much on my schoolwork, or, or I was spending time with my friends when that wasn't the case. You know, I was I was trying to keep my scholarship and do all of these things, while at the same time struggling with ADHD in general. And so looking back, that

brings a lot of heartache, because I feel like at the time, like I'm looking at my students now, and their parents understand ADHD, their hands have tick tock their parents happy split, like, parents are becoming more aware. But when I was growing up, that's not what it was. It was a discipline issue, or it was a behavioral issue or an attitude issue. And I just like look back at this girl that just loved her parents and loved her stepmom so so so so much but felt like she could never do it correctly. And those negative messages just constantly, really hurt my self esteem and created this hyper vigilant person to to ensure that people didn't think I was lazy, that people didn't think I was selfish. But also in a lot of ways. I think it also positively as well, because because now I guess like I have my my antennas out for that kind of behavior, if that makes sense. I don't know if that does. But



Katy Weber 28:55

yeah, well, I you know, I was always I was the youngest and I was always sort of the quote unquote troubled kid and growing up, right. So I was like the kid that my parents didn't know what to do with. And so I had well behaved older brothers, but I cannot tell you how many women I have interviewed since I started this podcast, who were the good kids, you know, who had a sibling, like you said, with your younger stepbrother, like, who had a sibling who was more high maintenance who had a diagnosis of something. And so they had all of this pressure from their parents to be the good kid, you know, and how that, that that labeling that assumption that you had to like, keep together and that you couldn't need anything and you couldn't want for anything because you know, you have this other child that was sort of the causing all this grief. And so you ended up like keeping everything in and it was Lou would lead to all of this anxiety and depression as an adult and I'm like, oh my god, like this is this is such that that female experience of like, yeah, oh, you know, we need you to, you know, hold down the fort and you know, and then you sort of internalize all of that idea of like, I can't advocate, you know, and my worth is based on how quiet I am or how behaved I am, right? And I'm like, no wonder everybody's such a ball of depression and anxiety. But also, like you said, there is that sense of like, we all something that does come out of that is that sense of self reliance, and that grit that we like to talk about, I like to talk about, right. I feel like a lot of us have that like, okay. Yeah, that sucked. What can I do now? Right? How can I move on? How can I pick myself up? And I do feel like, we are really good at that. Because there was always that sense of like, I know, I'm bright. I know, I'm smart. And, you know, I just at least need to prove to myself if I can't prove to other people. And so it's, I think that's something that's been very common in the interviews, I've had so many women who have had that experience from childhood, right, where they were like, they were the good kid, and how that you know, and so I'm being very careful in terms of like, my parenting with my two kids, like, I'm so vigilant about what kind of labels I give them, right? Because I think it's very easy as a parent, or even as an educator to like, see somebody and be like, Okay, you're this kid, you are this person, and you are this person. And I expect this from you. And I expect this from you. And I'm realizing like, as an adult how, especially as a neurodivergent, adult, like that can be really, really damaging to be labeled and kind of pigeon holed with these descriptions and these expectations. And I don't really know what the better way is, you know, like, I also sort of feel like, like, I've talked about this with my mom. You know, she sort of I got terrible grades. And so she was always trying to make me feel better. So she was like, well, university is not for everybody, it's okay, if you don't graduate or whatever, like, it's fine. And I also realized that that was kind of damaging to my self esteem in its own way, because even though she was trying to make me feel good, she was also sort of confirming that I couldn't go to university, and that I felt like I needed more pressure. So now as a parent, I'm like, Well, what do I do? Do I Do I lay the pressure on because I know that that's really important for a child to prove to themselves that they can do the thing?

Or do I say everything's whatever you do is fine with me, I love you, no matter what, you know, like, I don't know, I feel like there's ways in which both are important and yet both can also be potential.

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Erica Saum 32:29

And it's hard because there's this like Trinity right. And this is our motto at our school is like, to empower to honor and challenge and certainly this that, you know, that golden ratio of how to invest in these kids. But then there's, there's such like, a wide array of doing that, how do you empower them, and then also challenge them or honor them and challenge them? You know, it's that, you know, that dichotomy or trichotomy there. But, you know, I agree every time I listen to your podcast, too, I have noticed this pattern of you know, like, well, if you know if I behave this way, or if I just keep my needs to myself, like, oh, you know, my parents. For me the message was, my parents will love me more or my mom will love me more if I don't say hey, I need new underwear or X y&z Right. So I think for me what happened? It I think ADHD had a huge hand in this looking back as I became hyper fixated on my face, and on what my church growing up said that I should act like and be like, and be like, and so at 14, I, you know, I really did have a beautiful spiritual experience. But along with that came this, this change in personality to where I constantly was finding with these ADHD tendencies. At the time, I didn't know that it was ADHD, I thought I was just, I was a bad kid, I thought I was lazy. I thought I was stupid. I thought I was all of these things. And so after the spiritual experience that I had, I like really hyper fixated on, on how I was supposed to behave according to my church on how I was supposed to behave. And I met all of these expectations perfectly, to the point where my dad even converted to the same religion that I was at the time. But it still wasn't enough. Like for my step mom, right. And it still wasn't enough down the road. I was though good kid. I was the kid that if my friends wanted to go and do something that they know their parents and let them do, they'll be like, Oh, well, Eric is going and like, oh, well, Eric, it's going yeah. Oh, Eric is doing cocaine is sure go for it. Right. It was like that attitude of, oh, you know, Eric is so good kid. And then I was like, you know, as I got older, and I did get this diagnosis or claimed it for myself. deconstructing all of these things, I realized I really, really clung to what I was told. I was at the was to be like and who I was supposed to be, because I wanted to feel understood. But even then I didn't feel understood. I never felt understood. And that has been like my heart song is I just want to be understood. And when I found ADHD in the ADHD community, especially on Tic Toc, I was like, I have family now. I'm good. traumas are healed, they're gone. Not really. But along those lines,



Katy Weber 35:26

yeah. And it is something there is this small part of me that sometimes fears since my diagnosis, because it has, you know, because I have felt so seeing and so understood. And it does feel like so many questions in my life have been answered from ADHD that there is this part of me that kind of wonders, is this something I'm clinging to? Because I, you know, I think that that is that is definitely a theme in my life. And I wouldn't be surprised if this was a theme in a lot of our lives as women, which, like you said, like that, that need for belonging, right, that chasing of an identity, that chasing of like, what something is off with me, and I don't know what it is. So maybe I if I, like, if I join this group, like, wanting so desperately to belong, right. And, and so I've seen it in terms of, you know, I deal with it with with dieting, right, and body image and that sense of like reinvention, and this promise that if I do this thing, I'm going to be

a new person that tomorrow, right? And so yes, see that with the industry, right, which is like, I promise that, you know, you're going to be if you lose weight, you're going to be happy. And then when you're not happy, you're sort of like, well, I must need to lose more, or, you know, there's something wrong with me. And that sense that like, you fall for these, we fall for these promises all the time, because of that desperate need to be other, you know, to belong and to not be ourselves. And so you see that the I think in a lot of our, the choices we've made in our lives from Yeah, like there are so many parallels with her in terms of the Christian community and church and, and so much of that desire to be part of a community. Right. And, and so like I, you know, that is something I also talk about with, with when it comes to like, my diagnosis is that I am always worried that especially my family members are going to think like, oh, now Katie's just jumping on a whole new train. And that maybe this is just something some flash in the pan excuse that she's got, it's, you know, now she's clinging to ADHD. And like, there are there's this small part of me that is terrified that this is like, one new fad, because my ADHD causes me to chase fat. chicken or egg.

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Erica Saum 37:48

I mean, I get that. And that comes with the hyper fixations, you know, that we that we get into. And the parallel between autism and ADHD here is actually very interesting. Because persons with autism, you know, they have this special interest areas, but they don't typically change the other life. What's different with ADHD is ours will change. And I actually was just talking to one of my professors about this. My latest hyper fixation is candlemaking. But I don't know why candlemaking candle dressing and like print, like praying and like doing certain like, woowoo stuff over the candles, like, it just it gives me life. But before that it was playing the ukulele. And I learned it in a week. And I was like, I'm done. That's one thing that I love about ADHD is the ability to learn so many different things, you know, being a jack of all trades, even though I'm not really a master at any of them. When people ask me, like, what are some of my talents, sometimes I kind of forget about, about them, and like, oh, yeah, I do this. Like, you know, I can play guitar, I can. So I think I do some creative designing I paint I, you know, just like all of these things that I can do. And I just forget about them sometimes, because there are just so many that I think that's a huge blessing of ADHD even though it can be it can be frustrating to like, go out and buy all these things for my latest hobby. And then after a couple of months, I'm like, I'm done with it. You know, that's, that's the worst part of of that bad symptom, I think.



Katy Weber 39:30

Yes, there are some hidden financial costs to chasing lots of different hobbies. But I agree. I mean, I think what makes us so interesting is the the way in which all of these crazy hobbies we've chased all of our lives like all lead to who we are today, right and and I think it really like broadens your horizons, it gives you perspectives, especially like as a teacher, you know, like you, you must be able to see it just in the way you approach things right. Who, where it's like, you might not be able to articulate how learning ukulele has helped you with x or x or y in something seemingly unrelated, like the classroom, but it would like, you know, there are ways if that, yeah, like all of these things that I've tried here and tried there and tried that, you know, I, they do make me who I am in such a beautiful kind of patchwork way that I appreciate, right?

E

Erica Saum 40:25

Yes. And it's that generalization of being able to transfer knowledge that I think a lot of specifically women, I'm not sure about them with ADHD, but specifically women with ADHD, I've noticed the ability to create symbols and understand symbols in generalize that information across different contexts. Which again, comes with the different hyper fixations and hobbies that we that we come across somehow, someday. Like you were saying, learning the ukulele helps to inform the other things in my life like pitching somehow, someday. Which is such a like such a blessing. It's such a such a superpower in my opinion. And honestly, when I first listened to your podcast, and you call it a superpower, I'm not I'm not meaning disrespectful. But I did roll my eyes. I was like, how is the superpower? What do you mean, but the more and more I listened to your podcast, I was like, actually no, like, this, this is amazing that we can do these things. It's amazing. So um, I guess like, I can't tell you enough how thankful I am that I found your podcast. Because it was right around the time I was getting my diagnosis. And it just I felt seen and I felt heard. And I felt understood. Yeah, great time.



Katy Weber 41:40

I think that's what is so important to, you know, in, in hearing the stories of other women and seeing ourselves in their stories, I think is it didn't, I didn't realize it at the time, when I started the podcast, I just started the podcast because I wanted to know if other women what they were experiencing. And I was just curious, I was like, what was your experience like mine, because mine was like crazy. But also like realizing that how we are learning about our ADHD and what he looks like in women through hearing the lived experiences of each other, right, where we're not learning about what ADHD looks like, because we're reading these dry articles, you know, or we're reading about the DSM, or we're reading, you know, going to a doctor and talking about it with them. Like this is not how we're learning about what this is we're learning about it through tic tac video. And these like vignettes and these moments and where you're sort of like, you know, I can't really tell you about RSD. But I can tell you about how difficult it's been to have friendships. And we're in the difficulty with texting and all of these things where you're like, oh, yeah, I really, yes, yes. All Yes. You know, when



Erica Saum 42:53

I'm eating, I'm so bad that,



Katy Weber 42:57

but that's what I mean, like, it's like, it's I feel like so much of this is, is understanding the varied ways in which a neurodivergent brain has bled into our interpersonal relationships, or our self esteem, or, you know, like, you know, our relationship with our parents and sort of those micro aggressions and micro traumas we experienced in childhood with our teachers and all of that, like, it's so huge. And there's so much and so yeah, I think it's really like it's sharing our personal experiences is how we're all coming to grips with what this even is, as adult women. So yeah, it's been it's been, I mean, unbelievable to be able to have these conversations with women from all over the world because I feel like we're all kind of like you said, we're creating this incredible community that we've been seeking. You know that we've been looking for our whole lives.

E

Erica Saum 48:30

I don't know if you know, if you know what the Enneagram is, do you know what that is?



Katy Weber 48:34

I mean, I took the test and I have a number. But beyond having a number, I haven't really done much research into what it means,

E

Erica Saum 48:42

like, okay, so that was a hyper fixation of mine for a couple years. And I actually taught a whole course on it for about six months at my last school that I taught at and I'm a, I'm a type four. And so as a for the court, like the core wound of a type four is, is feeling misunderstood, even though they're completely authentic all the time. So that resonated with me. And then just seeing how that informs, what I understand about ADHD has been just monumental for me. So yeah, that was another thing that you know what and like, that's what I love about ADHD is we can become experts on so many different things in such short amount of time. And I do feel like I'm an expert on the Enneagram. And I do feel like I'm, you know, not just because of my master's education, but I feel like I am an expert on ADHD and autism. And I like I just want to keep going. And I think part of that, that a lot of people with ADHD, like we feel like we have to prove ourselves, I think, like we had mentioned earlier, and I think for me, that's sort of what started my master's program. And like why I did it because even though I felt like I already like I have so much knowledge on the subject. That's not enough, right? Like, you have to have a piece of paper that says, like, you know, I know what I'm doing. I don't know where I was going with that. That was an ADHD. Yeah, I don't know, my mind. My mind just went blank. So, but yeah,



Katy Weber 50:18

happens all the time. It happens all the worst when it

E

Erica Saum 50:22

happens. I'm in teaching, and my students are like, miss, miss out, like, I don't know what we were when I was just teaching you just then. So let's just write a paragraph. There's like, what? So it does, it does happen and thankful, Lord, whoever you want to think for my push in and pull out helpers that help with FCL. And my exceptional students. Because Wilma, shout out to Wilma. Wilma, if you're listening to this, which you know you will, because you're my number one fan. Girl, you rock. You keep me on track. When My mind is blank. He goes, you were talking about? And I'm like,



Katy Weber 50:58

just right. Oh. mv aoodness. Yes. right.

E

Erica Saum 51:01

I have an amazing coworker system. At my school that supports minor minor divergence, I have never worked in an environment where I have been given accommodations and modifications. And I have these these people who just come and be like, you're an amazing teacher, and your brain does work differently. Let me help you. It this is the best school, holler, holler out to stamp reps, because some of you guys, so if they're listening, they may not but



Katy Weber 51:28

no, that's amazing. Because you know, we do talk a lot about how difficult it is to kind of stay in jobs, because we so often lack those accommodations and sort of don't know how to ask for help. And oftentimes, we can't articulate what we help we even need and so we end up leaving in, in you know, being disappointed or, you know, in a rage or whatever reasons why we've left or, or losing interest. So that is amazing to have a support to see what a supportive environment looks like. And to also know in the moment and to be able to say like, these are the accommodations I need, because of this is who I am, I'm not terrible, you know, there's nothing wrong with me, this is just what I need. And, and it's funny, because whenever I say those things out loud, where I'm like, just ask for help. You know, it's not rocket science. And so whenever I say it out loud, I'm like, why did it never occur to me, like, I think it all goes back to that same sense of like the narrative that we are told as children, which is like you are wrong, you just have to work harder, just just do the thing. And so we, we internalize that idea of like, I just have to work harder. I just have to figure this out and work harder, even though I really don't know what I'm doing right now. But I if I work harder, I will figure it out eventually, on my own right, like, I think we we become so self reliant to a fault. And then suddenly, we're adults, and we have no idea how to ask for help for the simplest things. And once we can just sort of step back and say, You know what, there's something wrong with me, I need help. There's nothing wrong with needing help. And then there's like, your whole world opens up. And, and yet it's I laugh at how simple it sounds, you know, like, why did that never occur to me, almost like sinful,

E

Erica Saum 53:11

like, to me, it felt sinful to say, you know, like, oh, I need help, or because it you know, before the essential diagnosis and understanding how it works. It was like, Why do I need help? I don't need help. I'm just making this up. Or, oh, my gosh, and this was a huge message I had in my head that I'm still fighting with this. I'm such a weak person. And that's not true. It's not true. And I if it weren't for my coworkers, who were who I now have after this diagnosis, like, I would still be struggling with that. My my one thing I love about my job, too, as someone with ADHD is I have a coach and instructional coach that I meet with weekly, her name is Victoria. She is the most beautiful person in the whole world. And I can be honest with her, and I can say, hey, I'm really struggling meeting this deadline. And she's like, okay, cool. Let's, let's come up with another plan. And I just think back to all the other schools that I worked at, where that would never have been an option because of their lack of understanding, ADHD, and then also because I didn't have a diagnosis. So it's just, it's wild to look at a place like that. Wild.



Katy Weber 54:28

Yeah. All right. Yeah, that's really, I mean, I think there's so much in our culture in our society as women as Americans that sense, you know, that self reliance is a virtue, right. And so therefore, there is like a moral imperative to be self reliant. Right. And so they're, you know, that's something we could deconstruct for a while I'm sure that the like, Protestant work ethic Yeah, how that right and like how You know, and then how we're taught in schools as well to like be, you know, be as as disruption is to is bad, right? And so therefore you need to be as quiet and as small and as obedient as possible.



Erica Saum 55:16

My guess how many women I know are not yet neurodivergent or not that have been told to be smaller?



Katy Weber 55:25

Oh, yes, I know, I rail my daughter's 14. And I feel like every everything, you know, comes back to that we talked about that so much. We talked about, like the pressure, because I'm like, it all comes back to obedience. Right. And so we taught, you know, when we talk about size and sizes, in our society, and how you know, the feminist angle to all of that, and how it's like, it's being drilled to do in from all okay, yeah, you're going to get y'all started on my soapbox. I'm not going to, like, you know what I like, right? But I've just like, everything comes back to the pressure to be obedient in our society, right? I'm like, it all comes back to the beauty myth. And that idea of like, we have to, you know, we are taught to not be free thinkers, and we're taught to not take up space. And when you are somebody who is meant to be a free bird, right, it crushes your spirit.



Erica Saum 56:19

I remember being in high school and as a type for Enneagram. If anyone listening knows the Enneagram is or doesn't, it's the it's like the dreamer. It's the romantic. It's the person that visualizes themselves in movies all the time. Like, if I'm in a car, and it's raining, and I'm by the window, I'm like, the main character right now. Right? Like, it's that that feeling. And I just remember wanting to wanting a boyfriend so bad that I would be like, Hey, honey, and then the girls doing it, okay, they're sitting there. They're cute. They're quiet. They're like, they're just like, so like, perfect, but me I'm like, a bull in the china shop, trying to act like a little lamb. And it's just, it was a disaster. It was a mess. And you know, like trying to be like this Jane Austen kind of girl. And no, I'm, I'm definitely more of like fat Amy from Pitch Perfect. And I had to kind of image stuff that about myself. Like, I'm never going to be that reserved, beautiful, quiet, mysterious girl over on the corner reading but I'm going to be the chick. That is like tapping her leg by her pencil and be like, Hey, what are you doing? How can I help you? What's up? What's up? You need someone to talk to you. He looks like that's me. And I've kind of I've had to come to understand that and accept that. But yeah, but as like a high school and even college student, I was like, why can't I be like that beautiful, small, you know, quiet, quiet, little lovely girl. I need to get like rescued. Right. But I don't know,



Katy Weber 57:49

I know. Oh, my God, I had the very I mean, I had the same experience. And it's funny, because I think that that's very, like, it's it's given that idea is given to us for the most part by other women. Right. And so it's a sense of like, the competitive nature within us as women, which was why, you know, whenever, when I did meet my now husband, who I've been with for 20 years, who like, it's so funny, because like, you realize that there are lots of people out there who don't view women that way, you know, who don't judge you by your size, who don't say, Oh, I wish you know, you're so well, I love your personality, but you're not dainty enough for me. Like that is an inherently feminine concept, right? Like, I don't think a lot of maybe there are men who out there who I mean, I'm sure there are lots of assholes out there who are like, I don't want to date a woman who's more than 100 pounds, and they can go find themselves but like, you know, like, you know, I was lucky enough to have had partners who didn't ever, you know, like, I realized that I was bringing that to so much. And so that's the narrative. I try to tell my daughter too, which is like those ideas that are told to you are like, they don't exist, like, like, when you find your people when you find your person. None of that is going to matter, you know? And yeah, we're getting on such a side tangent, right?



Erica Saum 59:00

No, I ran it though. But I mean, like Nathan said, does have have a lot to do with women in ADHD. Because, you know, we're told to make herself quiet or make herself physically smaller, or, you know, our personalities smaller. And, you know, Mike, my current husband, I haven't married before, but my current husband is he's six, four. He is like 350 something pounds, like nothing but muscle like, he's a big dude. And I'm kind of, you know, I'm curvy, right? I got I got my weight and I'm cool with it. Like, I like who I am. But whenever I brought that up to him, like oh, man, I wish I was smaller. He was like, why? Mostly I just do and he was like, why when I was like, why? Like I don't know. Okay, the strap it I don't know. But it got me thinking like, because we were told like that is what's valuable. And even as women with ADHD, we're told that our personalities have to be smaller or we're too much and you know that verse in the Bible. talks about, you know, that like, quieter women are more beautiful. I'm paraphrasing, obviously. And that a woman who's loud, draws attention to ourselves, you know, it's this idea of like that if you are a certain way, then it goes back to that idea of selfishness and how that's not acceptable and not beautiful, but it's not selfishness. It's just authenticity. And



Katy Weber 1:00:24

that's the difference. Beautifully said, Oh,



Erica Saum 1:00:27

Katie, where does that formation are my thing? So?



Katy Weber 1:00:31

I know, right? And yeah, and I, I, like I do I want to give all of us a hug from from having to deal

I know, right? And yeah, and I, I, like I do I want to give all of us a hug from from having to deal with adolescents in general. But again, why so I think there are so many parallels and why I'm always questioning where I'm like, you know, I will say this other podcasts where I'm like, maybe I don't have ADHD, maybe I'm just a feminist, because so there's so much of this has to do with like, the expectations that are placed on women and feeling like we are not meeting those expectations in society, because we're square pegs, jamming ourselves into these gender, or, you know, these gender expectations. And, you know, as women and as wives and mothers and all of these things, where it's like, I don't want to do that big. I don't want to be that person.

E

Erica Saum 1:01:12

I mean, let's be honest, though, if if we weren't in this kind of society, our disorder might, might still affect us negatively, but it wouldn't be as much because of the social expectations, to be honest, you know, if we, if you know, so that's my, my personal opinion on it is like, yes, it is a disorder. And yes, it creates deficits in certain areas, but ultimately, it's our societies. And it's the societal expectations that have been built in forever.



Katy Weber 1:01:42

Yeah, yeah. And then it comes back to like you were saying with the kids that you're teaching, right, where you see how so much of how our ADHD ends up manifesting comes down to accommodations comes down to privilege comes down to you know, what was available to us comes down to the discipline in our home life, like all of these things that really like range drastically from different cultures and different you know, different races like that's what has also been amazing to me talking to women with so many different backgrounds, which was like, how, how our, you know, our lives and our environment really shaped who we were as adults with this same neuro divergence that we all had, you know,

E

Erica Saum 1:02:26

yeah, I agree.



Katy Weber 1:07:36

So now if you could rename ADHD to something else, have you thought about what you might call it? Just bring it. Okay.

E

Erica Saum 1:07:46

Yes, yes. Okay, so I've decided that it would be something along the lines of executive functioning emotional regulation and sensory processing disorder.



Katy Weber 1:07:57



Hmm. Okay, wait, let me what's the acronym there? You know, that's a good question because it's got to be a good acronym.



Erica Saum 1:08:05

It's gonna be really long. They'll say it's E F, E R. SPD,



Katy Weber 1:08:11

or SPD. At first it will figure something out.



Erica Saum 1:08:16

Like that. You see it with a little bit more speed.



Katy Weber 1:08:18

How about ever speed?



Erica Saum 1:08:21

Yeah. I love that.



Katy Weber 1:08:23

I like that too. And I always love one of the emotional part is brought in because again, I feel like it's the that's what usually brings a lot of us to understand the ADHD element is not like the hyperactivity is not the like, who were you when you were a kid? It was the like, oh, the emotional issues that come out of all this stuff we've been talking about, right? And so the fact that like doctors, medical professionals, DSM, nothing talks about the emotional, the emotional kind of ramifications of a life undiagnosed, and they're like, No, you just, you just have depression and anxiety. Here's some medication on your way.



Erica Saum 1:08:59

Yes, and the comorbidities that come along with ADHD like, like, ADHD can cause these things, or they can be comorbid with it. So for example, my diagnosis for a long time was anxiety, depression and OCD. Those have not gone away. But I understand now that most of most of that stems from my ADHD, which is interesting. Yeah. 100% and we see on



Katv Weber 1:09:23



the right, exactly, yeah. Oh, my goodness. I'm so stimulated. Like, every time I have these conversations, I didn't even get to ask you about Witchcraft because you were you had kind of talked about it with candles and stuff, but like, I'm curious kind of where how that has come into your life and kind of what your thoughts are on ADHD and witchy. The witchy



Erica Saum 1:09:49

life yes. Okay. So, yes, so, I love my spiritual practices. They are beautiful. I don't know if anyone listening and I did to get scared by the term. Which, but really, it just means a woman who can self advocate for herself on the spiritual realm. That's how I look at it. So yeah, I do tarot readings. And I also kind of a little bit of a medium by accident. I don't know if it's really an ADHD thing or if it, I am a medium, but I have had a lot of experiences like that. My first one was when I was about nine. And we I was hanging out with this girl I had never met, she lived in my apartment complex with my mom. And we were going over to see her neighbors pet snake. And in my head, I just heard he died the other day. And so I said that out loud is Oh, the snake died the other day. And she goes, How do you know like, you don't even live here. And I was like, okay, so we go to her neighbor's house. We open the door to see the pet snake and she goes, No, he died the other day, literally verbatim says this, And the girl looks at me she's like, I have to go home. And I'm like, wait, I don't have any friends back. So it's been you know, it's been a theme throughout my whole life was like having these spiritual experiences and and all that so I feel like the witchcraft helps me out with ADHD because they do candlemaking I do address the candles might bless them and give them a skiff. And if you want to think of smells as poetry, go for it. That's kind of how I associate it together. Okay, those are my cat. I do have 11 cats. So they are they're fighting right now. Sorry, but yeah, so Tarot reading Oracle reading. And just overall, I do all of that just to help other people process their trauma and their emotions. So yeah, that's my witchy witchy side. There's a lot more to it, but I don't think we have the time to quite get I



Katy Weber 1:11:47

know, I know. Back until it talked to me because I haven't read I know there is a lot of overlap, especially in terms of like being empaths and highly sensitive. And so it all kind of makes sense. To me. It's the same like we were talking about this like patchwork of who we are. Right? I think I feel like it all kind of it's on brand.



Erica Saum 1:12:07

When I heard that. Yes. It's all together.



Katy Weber 1:12:11

Yeah. So totally. Yeah, makes sense. Okay, anyway, so you So you started the blog, unseen ADHD, when should just to point people to that if they want to find out more about Yeah, your blog and kind of what you're writing about these days?

E

Erica Saum 1:12:31

Yes, so my first I only have to post on there because ADHD but I am enjoying it. So I'm using a lot of my paper and my autism studies. And I'm kind of melding them with my own research and different articles, peer reviewed articles on binding that has to do with empirical evidence with ADHD and how they coincide so actually just posted a new article today on my blog, all about sensory issues explaining why they're there, what they are the different patterns that we endure, Phil i My goal is with, with unseen ADHD is to approach it with with compassion, but also with research and an element of sophistication but also accessibility. So that's my goal so that it's just an easy way for people who have ADHD to learn more about it, or people who have loved ones ADHD to come in and understand the different aspects of it. I am hoping it grows. But um, yeah, you can find that at WWE dot and seen adhd.com I did splurge and I did buy the.com on that page. Awesome. I'm also on it. Yeah, my phone Instagram as MC ADHD.



Katy Weber 1:13:51

Cool. I'm still trying to get over the 11 cats. I don't know if that's my dream or my nightmare. Well, it was so lovely to chat with you. I'm so glad we got to do this.

E

Erica Saum 1:14:03

I enjoyed it so much.



Katy Weber 1:14:04

Yeah, it was love. I love hearing. I loved hearing your story and your perspective. It was quite I know, quite emotional. And like I said, I really want to go back and give those little girls a hug.

E

Erica Saum 1:14:17

Me too and thank you so much for what you're doing.