

# Nelly Lin and Juno Lee: Destigmatizing ADHD & mental health

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

adhd, people, thought, struggle, feel, diagnosed, talking, podcast, high school, deadline, conversations, nellie, life, bipolar disorder, anxiety, class, terms, difficult, head, interested

## SPEAKERS

Juno Lee, Nelly Lin, Katy Weber



Katy Weber 00:00

I just want to say like, I fucking love your podcast. I as you can tell I've been whenever I'm listening to your podcast, because every third word that comes out of my mouth is fuck. I'm like, Oh my God wants dinner. We're out of fucking milk again, like, you just I get so fired up ballistic theory or listen to your podcast I just I fucking love that I love it so much. So I have to get that out of the way. I know you guys were in high school together right and Juno, you were diagnosed first, right? Yeah, correct. And then you basically called Nellie and you're like, guess what we have?



Juno Lee 00:42

Yeah, I think it was one of our conversations that we've been having for a while for many years, I think, talking about our chronic procrastination and like crazy, like, miracles at right before deadlines. And I think one of us made a joke about high functioning ADHD. And we found an article that described it and I was like, holy shit, like, This Is Us. Oh my god. And then we scheduled appointments, our psychiatrists, I think by then we read about it, like so much that we were already like, pretty, pretty solidly, like self diagnosed, I think around the same time before my appointment, though. Right? I



Katy Weber 01:15

think most of us are, before we even get to the doctor, we probably know more than our medical professional, usually, by the time we get there, because we've done so much research and you're just like, like I was so you know, just so excited. Like I felt like I was seen for the first time in my life. And I had been diagnosed with depression and anxiety and all of these things over my life and nothing ever felt like it fit. And then this was just like, Oh, my God, everything fits into this little box so neatly. But you your brother was diagnosed in high school, right? So you kind of knew about it more or less, but it's still never really applied to.



Juno Lee 01:48

Yeah, I think it's very strange that like I saw what he did in high school. And it was so obvious to me that I didn't have that. I think because of the coping mechanisms. I had to overcome things or just, I think, hide my decisions. I just repeatedly told myself that like, Oh, I'm able to do this. I'm functional, functional. I'm just lazy. And I didn't realize all of the stress and the struggle I had to go through to get that done. I just saw the end result. And I was like I'm doing well in school. Like, of course I can add that.



Katy Weber 02:15

Yeah. Right. So what was this article that you read? Do you remember the article? No,



Nelly Lin 02:20

no, I remember we read a bunch of articles. So I'm like Chad, and attitude magazine. And I also brought a bunch of like research journals on PubMed, to learn about the scientific basis of like ADHD. So I think I was super interested in really knowing everything about ADHD before I even got diagnosed.



Katy Weber 02:37

And was this pandemic related or where you were diagnosed before the pandemic?



Nelly Lin 02:42

I was diagnosed a week after Juno. So basically, she called me up and was like, I have ADHD, I think you should get diagnosed. And I set up a meeting right after our call with a

psychiatrist. And within like, 30 minutes of talking to psychiatry, she was like, yeah, you have ADHD. And I was like, are you sure Should I go to another center got a check. And she looked at me and she was like, that's, that won't be necessary. And she also, like, gave me prescribing Adderall, and all this medication. And in my mind, I was like, maybe she's wrong, I don't need this. But like taking Adderall, it changed my life. And I was like, I do need this. This is so much more helpful. And I actually took a lot of psychology classes in high school. So I already knew about ADHD. So during my senior year in high school, I went to my, like pediatrician, and I told her, I think I might have ADHD, but because I feel like it's so under diagnosed, especially with women and women of color. And I think a lot of Asian families don't talk about mental health at all. So my doctor was also like, an Asian background. So she was like, are you sure you have ADHD? I don't think so. And she asked me a bunch of questions like, Oh, do you have low grades? And I was like, no. And she was like, can you pay attention in class? I'm like, not really. But she was like, what your grades aren't affected. So it's not a problem. So that got brushed under the rug. And I never thought about it until I started working again, full time.



Katy Weber 04:01

Yeah, I think one of the thing I love one of the many things I love about your conversations is just how well you articulate that masking experience, right of like the, the kind of public persona that everybody sees versus what is going on inside of your brain. Like, and like, I definitely I mean, I had a therapist who was diagnosed with ADHD after her son was and she started like gently suggesting it to me over the years. Like, I think you should look into this. Because I thought I had bipolar, right? And I actually had never even heard of the term hypomania until listening to your podcast. Right? And so you know, but I have spoken to like interview with a lot of women who had that same feeling of like, I've got this pendulum of like insane interest in things and manic energy and you know, late nights and all of those things that you really put yourself into, but then at the same time, like, I never related to being hyperactive, because I could always So just be so paralyzed with like live lethargy and depression and, and that was the part of me that like became my identity. Like, I never really thought about the manic part. Like if you would ask me like, are you a hyperactive person? I would have been like, no, I liked I lie on the couch for days. And, and so it's been fascinating to me, like how many people or how many women kind of thought secretly that they had bipolar? And I don't even really know the difference between or at least bipolar two, I don't really know the difference between bipolar two and hypomania. I don't know if you guys do



Juno Lee 05:35

Oh, yeah. I think bipolar requires like, depressive episodes. And I think if you just have

hypomanic episodes, I'm not I'm not sure that is bipolar disorder.



Katy Weber 05:45

But so it's just like, basically, the manic episodes with no downtime, no exhaustion or anything else.



Juno Lee 05:52

No, I think it's not the entire time, I think like, you have to have a certain at least one major hypomanic episode or one major depressive episode in the past year or something. I forgot which type that was for. I should look it up. But it's interesting that you say that because for me, it was flipped. I thought there was no way I had bipolar disorder, and that everything, like depression, or lethargy, or excitement, that was all, like, a result of my ADHD issues. And I think like, yeah, I feel like it's difficult to identify what it is because so many coping mechanisms for ADHD require, or like results in like, some anxiety and depression?



Katy Weber 06:31

Yeah, that's something I have so much difficulty parsing, you know, like, we talked about comorbidities, and yet so many comorbidities tend to feel like they are really just symptoms of living a life undiagnosed, or, you know, and sometimes I think that a lot of the symptoms that we have, when we are undiagnosed are also like trauma of just being a woman in a fucking misogynist country for the last four years. Like, sometimes a lot of this, I feel like, you know, maybe I wouldn't be, as you know, have as much sensitivity and like, even like processing, you know, like, sometimes I feel like a lot of my sensory processing comes from just like being a woman in society. And sometimes, I don't know, but I often feel like I'm always questioning like, is this ADHD? Is this not ADHD? And then I'm like, oh, but wait, don't forget about Middle School. Okay, I had it.



Nelly Lin 07:33

I think a lot of my coping mechanisms with like, having anxiety, and also ADHD is a result of trying to live in this neurotypical world where you have ADHD, but you're not allowed to kind of show that. So I remember just like, when you mentioned middle school, I would always say, Hmm, what, all the time. And then because I was never paying attention, or focusing, and then a few kids would make fun of me, or teachers would be like, why are you not paying attention, but I would still get the highest high grade. So that added to my

anxiety of like, Oh, now I need to pretend and mask all of these questions I had. So even if I was confused, I wouldn't necessarily ask those questions, because I'm like, oh, everyone else knows. So I'm going to mask it. And that gave me a lot of anxiety. So if I was called on the spot, which I was always called on, like, I hate being cold call. But I was always that kid who was looking around, but then I would be so good at pretending I know what was going on, that it ended up being like a strength where I can improv really well. And I can be put on the spot and told to speak. And I don't know what I'm going to be speaking about. But I would act as if I was so confident because of those experiences I had in high school, middle school and throughout like college. So now when I do get called on in meetings, I will say something and be so confident. And it will be hard for other people to tell when I feel anxious about being called on. Right. I



Katy Weber 08:54

know, I remember giving so many presentations in English Lit after having read the first chapter and the last like three pages of the book and just getting up there and being like, I'm just going to be really, really confident and whatever the hell is coming out of that word. That was the thing like you I remember Nellie when the I think it was the first episode where you were talking about that dichotomy between like, realizing how hard you've had to work in your life in a neurotypical world, right, like, realizing like that exhaustion that is always there. Because you have to, in some ways, work extra hard to do certain things, but at the same time, also feeling like you've never worked hard in your life, you know, and that you've always half assed your way through everything and like, what do you even like, dealing with that? I mean, there's so many oxymorons, I think with an ADHD diagnosis and identity, but that one just blew my mind that feeling of like, Yes, I am a really hard worker, but then like, also deep down feeling like Yeah, but I've also kind of been like slacking on my Like, do you feel any more clarity, I guess? Or is it just always there? I think



Nelly Lin 10:05

for me, it's always there. I think it ties in to having imposter syndrome. And also being a woman working in a male dominated industry, where, first of all, I'm young, I am a woman of color. And then I'm always feeling like I can live more up to my potential, but I'm being lazy, but that now I have to remind myself, that's not laziness. That's my ADHD. And it is a disability, whether it's visible or invisible, and trying to be kinder to myself and acknowledged, like, these are the difficulties that I have. So I tried to combat my imposter syndrome. But I think it's still difficult to give myself enough credit that I am working hard, like, I work on the weekends, I work at night after my nine to five job, and I stay up late to work. And sometimes I it takes me a long time to work and people see me working, they're

like, oh, you're just on YouTube, you're doing all these things. But in the back of my mind, I'm still thinking about all these projects I'm working on. And I have to constantly consistently remind myself that you are trying your best. And that's all you can ask for and trying to force a spell to work like everyone else does, when they just sit down and work for six hours straight, I can't do that. And it's knowing that I need to work like say, in 30 minute bursts, and then like take a break. So I think a lot of this has been a consistent battle for me to give myself enough credit, and then also know when to take a break and rest.



Katy Weber 11:28

I know it's so funny, like I worked in newspaper journalism for for many years. And I loved it because it was like you were always on deadline, you had to get things done. And then at the end of the day, you were just done. You were a clean slate, and you came in the next day. And you were like, Alright, what do you got for me? And so I loved it. But there was like, I remember long before I was even diagnosed sort of coming to that realization of like why procrastination is not a terrible thing. Like I remember being like, I'm not actually procrastinating, it's all up here in my head, I'm just thinking about everything and processing and informing it, I just need the urgency of a deadline in order to get it from my brain on to the paper and like that's gonna happen at the, at the 11th hour. And until the 11th hour, all I can do is just obsessively think about this thing in the back of my head. But I can't actually like make an outline or like a rough draft or things. And so I'm like, you're not really you're not actually procrastinating. Like there's, I think in that I've heard that like that difference between, like the difference between procrastination and laziness, you know, that idea. That's like, you're not lazy, because you really are obsessively thinking about something you're just paralyzed. And like that is I think that's a difference that is really hard to explain or articulate to other people when you're not doing the thing.



Nelly Lin 12:51

I can definitely relate to that, because I wrote for the school paper. So we would have these deadlines, I have to meet with my editor. And then we would go through the whole thing. So before then I would pitch her this idea. And I will consistently Think about it. So I write notes on my phone app, I'll write things on my hand. But I won't actually sit down to write an outline, or actually write the thing yet until the day it was due as three hours before I have to meet my editor. And I'm like, okay, I needed to write it And right now, and sometimes I would write it all on a Google Doc on my phone. And then I would go in and like Okay, I'm ready. But it was never like, I always felt like I could do better. And I would beat myself up like why did I not start two days before three days before it This could

have been such a better article or better written piece? And then I was thinking like, I could maybe if I did write it beforehand, it wouldn't have been as creative or have that out of the box writing or thinking because I was like, the procrastination helped me force all of my ideas on the page right then and there.



Katy Weber 13:50

Right? Yeah, I think that's what I was trying to say, um, you did a much better job of explaining. I've just that idea of like, even if I did try writing something a few days ahead of time, it never would have been as good like the process must be in my head in order for me to actually be able to get it out. So So now looking back at you, because you I know you know, you went to college, do you know you started and dropped out? Or were you just like fuck it. I dropped out after first year but I eventually went back and like picked myself up by my bootstraps and got my degree, but it was like pulling teeth getting through that. But I love the fact that you guys have talked about your differing education experiences, because I certainly I feel like my really really dismal relationship with university like really has set the tone for how I thought about myself intellectually, you know, like I always kind of felt like I just kind of like we were talking about like, I just scraped by, I could have done a better job, but I never did and like I just always sort of felt Like, I wasn't smart as a result. And so my diagnosis has totally transformed kind of my confidence in my entire intellect where I'm just like, Oh, I just learned in totally different ways, like, interviewing people and like stuff like that. So just I guess, looking back at your experience with education, where were you like, the signs were always there?



Juno Lee 15:22

Well, for sure at towards the end of high school is when my executive functioning skills at school were deteriorating. And I was like, Okay, this is difficult for me. And I think when I entered college, I remember the quote, the course that was easiest for me, or most like aligned with how I work where like the CS courses, where you just are graded on overall big projects with the deadline, ironically, because I didn't have to keep up with like, consistent assignments and things. And I just would do everything in the last moment. And I would scrape by that way. But it was definitely really difficult for me without the structure of like, like a bunch of peers do the same thing as you and a teacher who's like, oh, no more invest in you than I think the typical college professor. Yeah, and I think definitely going to the boot camp, I quit after the first year to do a data science boot camp for three months. And it was just like mourning tonight. That was the only thing I was thinking about. And I think that's the only way I'm able to learn is either I'm like doing nothing. And I'm just thinking and can't execute anything, or I'm not focusing or I'm just like really, really, really hyper focusing on this one tiny thing. Yeah, and and I think it's really

confusing, because that's kind of what you mentioned before about how you always see these two very different ends, being really functional, like really capable or like being really, really, like, dysfunctional, and you're not sure, like, where you stand. So sometimes I like forcing myself to go to the really functional hyperfocus part, even if it's not healthy. No, I



Katy Weber 16:49

know, I totally understand that. That feeling of like, well, I always sort of felt like that was basically the only thing I had going for me. You know, like, I felt like my hyperfocus was like, the best version of me. And so I would always like and I was actually really terrified to take medication because I thought I was going to lose that I thought it was kind of told that I was also terrified that I was going to be like on feel like I was on cocaine and like, also something that they say, you know, they're like, No, nobody ever feels like that, who has ADHD and as a stimulant. But what about you, Nellie?



Nelly Lin 17:20

I think in terms of education, I think it was really, really difficult for me in high school and college. But in high school, it was different difficult in a different way where my anxiety, I felt like was so bad in high school, because I needed to have high anxiety. So I can meet all of these deadlines. And we had like tests and quizzes and all this homework every single day. And I would be into all these extracurriculars, and also do research outside of school. So I was getting probably like three hours of sleep every day, and trying to keep up all the schoolwork. And then it was basically like trying to do my homework, the class period before the class I was actually do. So like first pair would be like on the train, the second pair will be in first grade. And that was every single day. And trying to keep up with all of these deadlines was so hard for me. But I had friends who would remind me like, hey, Nellie, we have an exam tomorrow, things like that. And they would share their study guide with me. And I feel like that having a support network like that really helped me get through high school. But I think going to college, it was immensely difficult. Because you're in a place that's hyper competitive, everyone's intelligent. So that doesn't separate you from anyone else. But the caveat there was, everyone else had a great executive functioning. And I didn't, and I didn't have any of the skills, coping mechanisms, strategies to help me I was basically kind of like, barely surviving all throughout high school. And now I was in college where there wasn't anyone I felt like who related to me in terms of how I worked and could help me because it was expected that you learn planning and prioritization, and time management in high schools. Now, when you got to college, you're supposed to organize your day, and you're supposed to get to class do all this assignment

and also internships, and I can never really get things straight. So it was really difficult for me for classes with a lot of different assignments to have everything is there on time and learn on my own. So for classes I was interested in I did really well and for classes that I was not interested in I did poorly and I remember just feeling like, oh, maybe I'm not intelligent. I'm just like stupid, because everyone else can do this, but I can't. And I started really questioning like who I was and my own identity. And I think that really ate away at me in terms of like my own, like, thinking of my self. And I think because to cope with that I got a full time job, like distract myself and say like, oh, at least I'm being productive at this workplace. And then I can also do school and like, the reason why I'm not doing well on school is because I'm working so that gave me kind of like an hour or an excuse, though. I knew it was my functioning and like organization part. So I think that really, like it was a really chaotic lifestyle. But once I graduated, it was like, Oh, thank God, I remember just like having my senior year. This is one course like econometrics, I never went to any class. It was basically just like straight up stats calc, like math. And I didn't go to any class. So that means I had to study with myself that week, but for the final. And somehow I did it like, okay, and I got my degree, and I was like, I never think about this again. But to me, it was actually like, basically a miracle. And throughout college, I was actually double majoring. And it had, I had to drop a major, because I was not interested in at all. And I had to make that decision. Like all these courses I took, I was not interested in an accept that I would graduate with a different degree.



Katy Weber 20:52

Yeah, I had, you know, I always had this sort of assumption that things would work out. And then they didn't, you know, like, for instance, was studying like, I had this assumption that if I went to class, this was after I dropped out, like the first time I, my first year was just a disaster, I partied the whole time, never went to class, because all my classes were at, like 830. And I couldn't understand how people could party and then get up the next day and go to class. But I also realized that I was usually the last one at every party, like I had a hard time, I guess I there was FOMO, or whatever, I don't know, like, I could only do one or the other. And so when I came back to university, I was like, I'm not going to socialize, I'm not going to do anything, I'm going to sit front row center, all of my focus, and energy is going to be on this class. And like, I would go to every class and I would take notes, and I would, and I would try to participate. And I would do all this stuff. And I would study and I would still do poorly on the test. And I could and you know, is that always that feeling of like, what is the combination of things that people are doing that? I don't know, what's missing? What's the missing element for me. And so I always kind of lived my life feeling like I had some kind of undiagnosed learning disorder. But then, like, I think about like being an adult, right? Like, there's also ways in which being an adult, I kind of have that same assumption that things are gonna work out. So like, I remember the very first time I

got my first like, postgraduate job, and they they offered me a salary. And I naively was sort of like, Well, that seems fair, like you would you would give me a fair salary because you were a grown up and I am a grown up. And like, I never realized that there was like you needed to negotiate. And so I sort of figured, like, well, this salary should be able to pay for rent, cable cell phone, like all of these things, car payment, like I just sort of assumed that the money coming in would then cover all of the things that I found to be essential in life. And so I have no idea how to budget anything. I just was like, it's all gonna work out, right. And now I look back and I'm like, God, what an idiot. Like, it was sort of like, or even just like looking for apartments. Like I remember the very first apartment I ever got when I was in university, had no three pronged outlets. It was like this really old building. And I remember being like, well, that sucks. I guess I should look for those from now. Right? And so every time I've ever rent an apartment, or bought a house since then, it's like, the first thing I do. It's like, list, my list of like, make sure there's three print outlets, which of course now there are but like, there was another time I got an apartment where there was no shower head, I didn't even know. It was just a bathtub. And I didn't notice until I moved in. And I was like, wait a minute, there's no shower in this apartment. And so then I was like, Oh, I guess I have to look for that now. You know, it's like, it's just that feeling of like constantly fumbling and not thinking ahead, and not even knowing like, What was I supposed to be looking for? You know what I mean? Like that doesn't. And I think it's why so many of us feel like we're not adults. You know, you hear that phrase a lot with ADHD, which is like, everybody got the manual that me and like, I'm trying to think of like the way so many ways in which I feel that way. Where I'm like, Why? Why is everybody thinking about this stuff, and I just It never occurred to me to think about this stuff.



Juno Lee 24:04

I used to think that I was just spontaneous and I go with the flow and I'm so good at adulting I'm just told that if I realized that a lot of the decisions I make was actually because it was way too overwhelming for me to like sift through the options that I had that I just went to the first one so like when I moved when I like I think all the times I've moved places it was I just I chose the apartment like the same day or next day after I decided to move and it was usually from like this company that's offering like shared rooms or something. But I was always like oh yeah, it's because I'm simple. I just take the first option because I like to live that way haha but it was actually because I was way too stressed out to make any kind of decisions. But I'm realizing now that I have to do these like decision making trees or whatever with my therapist. It's true



Katy Weber 24:53

though, but on the flip side, I do feel like we are more in tune with like our gut and instinct, I think we are more instinctual than your average person. And maybe it's just because like, we don't have that choice, we have to just go ahead because the thought of actually doing research on these things is so mind numbing that you're like I will take I will take the risk of this first choice, as opposed to having to actually do the work of the the What is it? What did you call it? decision tree?



Juno Lee 25:22

Oh, yeah. Well, I think I do do that sometimes, like, obsessively, like, for several days, look things up. So that's the alternative. So I don't know anything less than that. It's like, do I want to do all of that and obsess over this decision for a few days? Or do I just want to pick one? So it's like one or the other? I don't have like a middle.



Katy Weber 25:38

Right. Yeah. And I think it's, it's also really difficult to predict when you're going to have one reaction and when you're going to have the other one, which I think is why we are such mysteries to ourselves. You guys talk a lot on the podcast about kind of the the stigma around mental health, especially in the Asian American community. And I think it's so important that your voices are out there. So I'm curious, I want to find out kind of what was your family's reaction to your diagnosis, because you knew, I want to find out from you, Nellie, your siblings were also diagnosed or anyone else, like, what was the reaction? And then I also want to find out what was the what's the reaction been from the community, to your podcast in general,



Nelly Lin 27:12

I think my sister, she's a licensed social worker. So she has talked with a lot of like, adults as well as kids with like, anxiety, depression, trauma, things like that. So she's really well aware. And I think when I got diagnosed with ADHD, I told her like, Oh, I have ADHD, and she was like, I probably have like inattentive, ADHD as well. And then like, I think recently, like, a couple months ago, she got diagnosed with ADHD. And it wasn't a surprise to anyone. Because when we were younger, she wouldn't do so well, in school. She was always like spacey looking around. And I think my parents had the most trouble with her because her grades weren't good. So they were always like yelling and be like, why can't you pay attention. So my mom actually got invited to like, I think her kindergarten classes sit in, and my mom got so angry, cuz she was like, you're the only kid who's looking around while every other kid is paying attention. So I think like hearing all of that, and you

connect the dots later on. So then when I told my parents like, oh, like, we have ADHD, they were like, What the fuck is that? Like, what does that mean? I think in Chinese, it's like, like, just not talked about, like, I don't even know the Chinese word to describe it. So I went on Amazon. And I tried to find like a book in Chinese. So I can like, communicate with my parents. But like, the most recent book was written like 2003, or something. And I was like, that's the they have. And I guess, like, I also went to China last year, so I took my Adderall with me, at the time I did not know was banned in China. So I was technically like, illegal to carry it. But because of COVID, no one really checked my bags or anything. So I bought it. But I think it was just so risky. Because all of these rules, I just thought people should have access to like, their, like medication and solutions for that. But in China, it's like banned completely and I didn't know. But then communicating with my parents, I feel like they still have a really hard time understanding like, what ADHD is, like, how it affects me. And I think that put a lot of strain on our relationship. So I was always really moody and irritable, because I felt like I was always misunderstood. And they were just kind of like, why can't you be this like, perfect daughter that they had envisioned, and I hated rules ahead of following directions. I hated all of that structure. And I feel like my ADHD made it worse for me, in terms of communicating with them, and they just couldn't understand me. But I think knowing that I do have something because I feel like they make jokes when I was younger, like, there's something in your brain like the wires are crossed or something like why do you not do this? But I feel like now they're like, Oh, is that ADHD? And like, if I am forgetful or like I had, I used to have my glasses on my head and I would walk around I'm like, Where are my glasses? I can't find them. And they're like, it's right on top of your head. And I feel like I catch myself doing things like that, and trying to reach trained myself to not act impulsively, or just like, be irritated and try to understand my emotions more so that I can communicate to my parents like, oh, when you say this, it makes me feel this way. And I think my sister has been super crucial in this whole dynamic because she has the tools and the experience to like, navigate our whole dynamic and experience. And my parents have been a lot more accepting to like therapy and this type of treatment, because I was like, if you don't believe in therapy, my sister would be out of a job. And they're like, Oh, you're right. Okay, cool. Cool. I think it works. So I think they have come around in terms of like, mental health in the community.



Katy Weber 30:43

And what about you, Juno? Because you also had your brother kind of paved the way a bit for you? Right?



Juno Lee 30:47

Yeah. Um, so my brother was diagnosed with ADHD and bipolar disorder in high school.

And I think I'm similar to Nellie, my parents were just like, wait, what,



Katy Weber 30:57

what is ADHD? And was it a teacher that recommended he get diagnosed? Or how did that even happen?



Juno Lee 31:05

I think he struggled. So like, throughout middle school and elementary school, he was fine. But in high school, he like really struggled to even do like homework or do tests or anything. Because he was just so not motivated, and he couldn't. And also, he was also in a very competitive High School, like Stuyvesant in New York. So I think in comparison, because I always saw what he was doing. I thought, like, there's no way I have ADHD, and there's no way I have bipolar disorder. And I think everyone in our family thought of it as like a very, very serious, like crippling thing. So I think when I first told my mom that I went to psychiatrists, it was more like, why are you spending money? How expensive is that? Like, what? And then I think when I was trying to explain to my grandparents or my uncle, they were just kind of like, What do you mean, I thought you were like, the, like, the most functioning one in our family, like, you have no issues. And I was like, oh, because I feel like I spent so much of my childhood, I guess, hiding my struggles. And trying to pretend like everything's okay. And I think I'm learning now to, like, I guess open up to my family a little bit more and expose what I'm struggling in. Because in the past, when I was procrastinating things, my mom would get really upset with me thinking that I was just being super lazy. But now she's kind of like, I don't know, she looks at me a little bit pitiful. But she like understands that it's something I struggle with and not. Yeah, not just like a choice.



Katy Weber 32:30

I feel like when you got it, you guys have talked about like this, this idea that academic pressure and how it just sort of forms a powder keg almost in, in situations where it's like, you are like you're internalizing all of that struggle on your, your, I think females especially too, right, like we were the good ones, we aren't disruptive and you know, like your uncle's? Like, you're the you're the Well, you're the one well behaved one. And I don't even know what I'm talking about. I'm just totally rambling at this point.



Juno Lee 33:02

No, I think that's correct. Because I think even in high school, when I started taking CS classes, as like a female in a male dominated industry, I guess there's a lot of times I have to be very cautious of how I'm presenting myself and making sure I sound really confident. And I know what I'm talking about. And I think I have to do both. Because I'm a girl and also because of ADHD. And I'm just everything's like a big blur. Sometimes I'm not very aware of what's happening internally. And I'm only focused on like, what I'm being perceived as. And I feel like I spent so much time making sure that I seem functional. And I'm communicating, like getting across straightaway and everything that I just like, forget what's happening on the inside. And like even when I was living, even when I was like in Denver, and I was working on a job. And I was I was living ish with my ex boyfriend at the time, even to him, I would hide everything I was struggling with. So to my coworkers, to my friends to my family that I call to my ex boyfriend, nobody would know that I'm struggling that I would just even forget that I was struggling.



Katy Weber 34:03

Yeah, I think that goes back to kind of what we were talking about before with that feeling of like, I don't actually work hard. And so therefore I am kind of fundamentally lazy and like that I that idea of like when somebody says a term and you're not familiar with it, instead of saying what is that which you are smart enough to be in the room and to ask those questions, but our response is always like must Google later pretend you are talking? as though you're gonna get found out, you know, like you're gonna get it's gonna get uncovered that you don't actually belong here. And I feel like like we kind of live with that low level anxiety all the time. So another thing that kind of blew my mind when you're thinking was the episode about being naked? Right? When Jr, you were talking about like the difference between being vulnerable and being an open book, and I was like, oh, like it totally. I never thought about it that way. Because I've often been told like I am an open book. I have No self censor, I have no ability to like keep things in. And so I just blurt out thoughts. And I always kind of joked that I was like Sofia from the Golden Girls, and I must have had a stroke because I can't like, I can't keep my thoughts inside. I don't know what I'm supposed to censor what I'm not. And I but I also like an open book when it comes to like my ADHD, like, I didn't even think about the fact that I shouldn't tell people about it. And like, I didn't even realize that there was this stigma until it was already out there. And then people were like, I'm so sorry to hear about your like, I don't it's not terminal. It's not like I've got to live like you don't have to, you have no idea what I'm talking about. So forget, I'm not even going to try to explain it to you. But the fact but you know, I've often been told like, you're so vulnerable, because you talk about things without shame. And so many of us can't talk about those things. And you're doing this service to the community, whether it's, you know, I've talked openly about like binge eating, and dieting and all these things that like, I've always been an open book about, but I never occurred to me that like

that is actually not vulnerability, right? Like vulnerability is really opening up about the things that you really struggle with. And like these, all of these things that I'm an open book about, I'm like, I don't struggle with those. And like, I've always kind of talked about, like, if I say I'm, if I make a joke about how like, Oh, my God, I'm a hot mess. In that moment, I don't feel like a hot mess. If I'd really in the moment, when I feel like a hot mess. You're I'm not gonna say anything, you're not going to hear from me. And like, those are the moments when people are really struggling, right when they're not saying a word. And so I just thank you for that, like that. Beautiful. I love to that effort. That episode was so good, but like I just it's been made me really think about that difference between, you know what, you know, how vulnerability is really just something truly, really difficult. Yes. So what has it been like to be like such an open book, especially in the Asian American community with this podcast, because you guys really let it all out there.



Juno Lee 37:06

I don't even think we're super conscious of it all the time. I think now, he was mentioned the other day that like, she was talking to a friend recently, he remembers what she said in a podcast when we talked to her. And she's like, what? I feel like I'm talking with Nellie. And people bring this up like, Oh, yeah, remember this? Oh, yeah. Because of this. And I'm like, Whoa, okay.



Nelly Lin 37:24

Hello friend who I talked to. And she mentioned, like, hey, Nellie, in episode like, five, you said this. And I remember you said that. So like, That's funny. And I'm, like, I said that. I think it's when I talk to Juno, and we're talking to podcast, we see each other. So it feels like we're talking to each other. And not necessarily like all of these other faces that we don't hear. Because on a podcast, it's, you don't see faces, you just see, like, hear people's voices, and you can really be as open and vulnerable and just talk about your most innermost thoughts. And I guess, like, open book manner. And then I think being really open and vulnerable. I, I was watching this, like Kristen Bell video on YouTube, where she talks about her depression. And I love what she said, she was like, at my age, there should be nothing that's taboo. And she talks openly with her kids about sex and her depression and things like that. And I was thinking about, like, that's true. Everything that we've ever felt or thought some other human has probably thought it felt it. So why is it that our society considers things taboo, or we shouldn't talk about these things. So for me, I try to remind myself, like, everyone goes through this at one point of their life or another at these feelings, that they're not unique to me. So I think talking about it really reinforces that I'm living this life that is true to what I believe like, I don't think this should be shameful. I'm not ashamed of my ADHD, or anxiety, or like, all the struggles that I've been

through or anything, I think it's, you make mistakes, that's like a human being, then you learn from it. And then you evolve and you become a better person, and owning up to things that you have made mistakes about in the past or like things that you fucked up on. And being vulnerable. And being able to curse and being able to be authentically yourself. I'm, I create, I feel like when we have these conversations, we do create value. And if someone else out there here is this conversation, and it brings some some sort of comfort or connection, and they feel less alone, I feel like that's basically the message that we want to put out into the world. And if other people will discriminate me or have this stigma that I don't want to hire this person to work with this person, that's a reflection on them. And I really try to think about the message that we're sending out instead of like, oh, like, they're going to find out things about this. But I'm just like, Oh, it's fine. Like, things happen and things get fucked up and sharing all the struggles. makes it feel like we're more connected, because everyone has these struggles.



Katy Weber 39:52

Yeah, right. And I think Yeah, I sort of feel like so many of these podcasts and that that desire for advocacy comes from Feeling like oh my god, I struggled for so long, I had no idea what was happening. If I can help one person come to the same realizations I did and not feel like shit all the time like that would be that would make it all worth it. And yeah, and I think that's when something I love about your podcast too is like listening to the two of you like that you have each other and that you have this history together. And like how much you guys validate each other, I think is really beautiful. Because it's sort of like what as a listener, you're having those moments when you're listening to the podcast, you're like,



40:32

oh, my god, yes. Oh, my god, yes.



Katy Weber 40:33

But the fact that you guys are kind of doing it in real time, and you've got this history. And as friendship, I think it's very lovely. So what made you even decide to start the podcast where you like, we're having such an amazing mind blowing conversations, we might as well record them.



Juno Lee 40:49

I think we were in a conversation with Molly's close friend. And I think, no, I think he said that you've been talking about it with her a lot. But she wasn't like totally getting what was like you versus ADHD. And I was just repeating everything that Nellie was going through. She was just like, shocked at how much we had in common. So she was like, you guys should definitely do a podcast.



Nelly Lin 41:08

I think it all started from I guess like me, and you know, we're talking about our struggles. We were like, we both work in tech. So we're like, let's do some market research. And we can create our own solution. Like there must be some sort of technology that we can leverage or build ourselves and have our own task management application. So we can help ourselves because there is no app that I've found that helps me I've tried Asana Trello, to click up all of these different things I've tried, and I haven't stuck with it. So when we're doing market research on high functioning people and how they work, so maybe if they have some sort of system or strategy, maybe we can build it into this app. So I was interviewing my close friend, and she is the most organized person I know. She's great with planning, prioritizing, and I was talking to her and all of our struggles. Someone me and Juno started talking about, like what we really struggle with in terms of like getting things done and working on a deadline. She was like, Oh, that's so interesting that you mentioned this, because I just thought it was a Nelly thing. And I was like, No, it's not a Nellie thing. It's an ADHD thing. She's like, you guys should start a podcast and to talk about this. But I think me and Jenna are really, I guess we were afraid of the stigma and the backlash. So we actually kept our last name out of our website. It was like intentionally designed that way. But then slowly, we've added in our last name to like social media things. And people have been reaching out to us in terms of like, saying that we really, they really resonated with our stories, and they connect with us. And I had someone reached out to me with like, through LinkedIn, and I had a coffee chat with her. And she was a student, I think in her senior year, and she was saying how, like, thank you so much for sharing your story. And she was telling me about her mental health journey, and how she is starting her own blog to write about her own experiences. And I was like, I'm so happy that this inspired you. And she was saying how, even though there is stigma out there, if someone doesn't want to hire her because of that, she wouldn't want to work for that company anyway. And I was like, You know what, you're right, that that's true. So I don't feel any more shame in terms of like being out in the open with what I do struggle with and trying to D stigmatize and normalize mental health conversations,



Katy Weber 43:25

I think especially in this past year and the pandemic and working from home and like there's been so many mental health issues that have come to light, that I feel like, yeah, if we are kind of turning the ship around and taking the stigma out of a lot of these conversations that it will eventually kind of filter into the workplace and HR, whatever. In terms of the app, I've just come to grips with the fact that like, I'm going to be super into an app for about a month. And then I'll move on. There's nothing that's ever going to work for me long term, maybe, I don't know. But you're so you're both on medication. How has How have you found that to be life changing?



Juno Lee 44:06

In the beginning, when I was still in denial about ADHD, I think Adderall really solidified what my issues were. Because in the beginning, if I got distracted, and I couldn't focus, I would get excited about something else and go on and do the other thing, but I think with Adderall, it like forced me to stay in my seat. And I stared at my computer screen. But it was just now instead of like going in circles and running around I was just like standing still and I couldn't move forward. So it was became very, very clear to me that I had an issue with like prioritization execution. And it wasn't just a lazy thing or procrastination thing. It was like I didn't know how to proceed because of executive dysfunction thing. So I think it's it hasn't been very consistent with it. It's been like on and off, but I think right now for sure. It makes a huge difference in my ability to just find work less overwhelming. I had a little bit of a hiccup in the beginning because I wasn't managing my bipolar disorder. And I think I was using it as a crutch for when I was depressed. And yeah, that was kind of messing it up. I'm still figuring out what works out best. But I think right now the most important meds from you were the we stabilizers and the antidepressant I take for bipolar disorder and ADHD as like as needed for work.



Nelly Lin 45:17

I think for me, I take Adderall, like the XR, so I can, like, do my work for work. It has helped me a lot in terms of like, not spending, like, like, a lot of hours writing a short email or like, trying to start something and I'm like, Oh, I get a slack message. I'm like, I need to answer that now. And the answer that and I'm like, Oh, my God, what was I doing, and on my computer, or have always, like, five, plus windows open, and each window, I have around like 90 to like 100 something tabs, and hash my computer all the time. So I feel like my working style is really chaotic. But with Adderall, it really helps me like I make a list of the things I have to do and have to cross everything out. I still have struggles with like staying on task. And that's why I realize I need times where I'm blocked off. And I'm like, I can't

answer any emails or slack or anything I need to do like this one piece of work. I think it's still like an ongoing battle of like, trying to see what works and what doesn't work. But I think the main thing is I need to find a task interesting. Or try to make it interesting. So I like actually go and do it, instead of it being this like, painful, dreading feeling that I always feel doing this task that I don't like doing. And I also have like a lot of fidget toys around me. So I can like fidget and like, do other things with my hands. So I can like focus. And I think for my job, I'm always in a lot of meetings. I hate turning on my camera because it distracts me. So I like don't and that's how I can stay focus and listen to the meeting and what's going on. But you're also like, mute myself. So I can play with my fidget toys and not like, make those noises that distracts other people. But I think like in the workplace, I'm really cognizant of like when other people turn their car like camera off, or they're muted. I know that not everyone has the same like normal thing where everyone turns on the camera. It's like you don't know what other people are struggling with or like, what their home life is or what they're distracted by are like the struggles that they have. So I think it's important that I know my struggles that I am really Cognizant. So if other people, like don't want meetings, and they like slack through emails, I'm like, yeah, that works perfectly fine. As long as communication isn't different channels. So I feel like I try to make things more accessible to other people as well, because I know that same struggle that I deal with.



Katy Weber 47:35

So the interview that you had with Gil Chang, I really had never thought about because I'm always questioning Am I an introvert? Am I not an introvert, there's so many ways in which I think I am an introvert, especially this past year, and how like how much gratitude I've had for not having to see people except for my family, like my immediate family. But at the same time, like I love conversation, you know, and I love like this kind of socializing, I don't want to go to a party, but like I love, you know, having deep conversations, and I really like feel energized from them. But I had never really thought about that idea of like how much work is put into kind of managing expectations. You know, like she was talking about just sort of be a way in which you kind of have to like map out almost like talking to the mirror, you know, where you're like you build these scripts when you're an introvert where I don't know, maybe it's not an introvert, maybe it's just everybody. But like, you know, how you have to kind of have you have to anticipate what somebody might say to you. And then you have these like scripts a lot of the time that you have to Does that make sense? Right? A lot. Yeah, like I there's a lot of that kind of anticipating how a conversation is going to go so that you aren't totally flustered and immediately shut down. And so then it's almost like Choose Your Own Adventure like you have to take. So would you say you're an introvert or an extrovert or you don't frickin know.



Nelly Lin 49:01

I would say I'm an extrovert, but for like conversations or like professional networking, I do have to like anticipate what other people are going to ask me and what I will say, because I think there is like that fine line between being like casual and then professional. Because I think like what you said I am I was just blurt everything out. And sometimes it's like, inappropriate like, Oh, this is not the setting to say that thing. So I always have to, like, do this whole like chill. Like, is this appropriate? No, this is not appropriate. Like some people are like really uptight. And they're like, keeping strictly professional. So like, I'm like, okay, don't curse you can't do this. You can't say that. Like you have to like keep on tasks and unfocused. So if they ask you a question, I can't like go on a tangent about something else. That's not relevant, Nelly, like you have to answer the question and then asked another question about this. I think it's really hard for me to predict like, natural flows of a conversation of because I think things that people think are unrelated to me. It's like it's right. Because there's so many thoughts in my head. So it's trying to filter out things that are not relevant and trying to like, I guess not be a weirdo in terms of like, coming off, like, oh, like this person is strange. I don't want to work with them. So I think that's my main concern. But I think in my personal life, I'm so talkative, and I love meeting people and having these conversations, but at work, I am so much more aware and so much more energy consuming because I need to like stay on task.



Katy Weber 50:28

What about you, Jenna, would you say you're an introvert or an extrovert?



Juno Lee 50:31

According to test and stuff? I'm an extrovert. Definitely, a lot of times I feel like, like an introvert. I think it's confusing to me, because I have varying levels of like, energy, and my mood, I guess, depending on my point in life. But I definitely think that I do better in like one on one situations and group situations sometimes, because it's like you mentioned, it's easier to like, predict what's going to happen next. And I feel like one thing that's difficult for me is either I'm, like, completely absorbed in my own head, and I'm daydreaming and I can't hear the other person. Or I'm completely absorbed in just them. And I ask a bunch of questions, and I want to understand them. But I don't talk about myself at all. Or I'm, like, really absorbed in my head. And I'm talking about it. And I'm not hearing what they're saying. So I feel like it's very difficult for me to like, manage everything very carefully and be very conscious about like, two people being present in the room and having a conversation. So it is a little bit draining if I do that for too long. But yeah, I would say I am I do need like socializing and extra. It's either like, I need to be one on one or like a really

big group of people. We can like jump around. Yeah. Okay, if you have a short attention span, you can jump here and then have an uncommon to jump here. And it's totally normal. And you're allowed to disappear every seconds.



Katy Weber 51:42

Well, and I think I also like when there's more than one person there that you have a tendency to kind of deflect, because you have too much to say, with every credit, you know, so if someone's like, how are you? And you're like, how am I do you have three hours to listen to how I am? Then the other option is like good you, like, deflect, and then like you're so quiet, I get told that my whole life, you're so quiet, I'm like, No, I'm not. I really just don't like you. So, yeah, another thing. Another thing I love about your podcast, which I hope this comes out the wrong way, or the right way, which is I love that you guys don't have the kind of podcasts which we see a lot of with ADHD, which is like, here's five ways that you can master your calendar, right, where you're basically just like, let's talk about how crazy this is. But it's also not just like, this is a disorder, you know, like, I feel like you really have that balance really well between like, the kind of toxic positivity side of like, this is a superpower and everybody who was ever smart, and genius has ADHD, and you do too. And then the thing, which is like, you know, I'm sorry about your terminal illness, or, like, you know, really like talking about the struggle a lot. So I feel like, I really love that you balanced that. And I feel like it's very real, and it's very relatable as a result. So thank you for that. But I do want to know, you know, I do like to ask like, what do you love about your ADHD really quick



Juno Lee 53:15

before that, you're mentioning that you really love that we are not necessarily focusing on like, just ADHD or like tacos or whatever. I think that's part of the reason why we were more comfortable exposing ourselves and letting our co workers or friends see this because I think when I was first looking at why someone would do a podcast, I came across like, Oh, it's a chance to be. It's like the most authentic mode of communication or whatever. And I was like, oh, wow, that's really cool. And I think we're normalizing ADHD not by necessarily like showing how many people have ADHD or whatever, but just showing that we're real people. And we talk about other experiences in life. Other issues, we have mental health related or not. And I think, unlike even a lot of neurotypicals in our audience have reached out saying that they related to a lot of our struggles, and experiences, which is really nice, because then people see like, Oh, yeah, we're just people and we have different degrees of struggle with certain things. But yeah, I think people just are encouraged to see us opening up and being vulnerable about our issues, and they are encouraged to same. So that is where I guess what I love about my ADHD. I think one

thing is that sometimes because of our lack of dopamine, or whatever we have, we find boredom so unbearable, or structure so so unbearable that we're like forced to find something more interesting. That was definitely the case with my college dropout story. A lot of people think it's like, oh, wow, tech dropout, like so ambitious, just you want to do is out of necessity. I think like when I was doing a meetup in Denver, and I was struggling with my job. I had to start a meetup and be involved in another meetup because I needed something else to do. And even for a podcast and like what we're doing now it's like we know he can't survive in a regular nine to five forever. So we have to do something more interesting. So I definitely like that part of ADHD.



Katy Weber 55:10

What do you love Nelly?



Nelly Lin 55:12

I think for me I love most about my ADHD is like my curiosity and passion. I think what the hyper focus and being super curious about learning and the love to learn, I think I can once I'm like really interested in something, I will find all of the information out on like Google and the internet. And I will study it, I think so when I first got interested like in learning more about ADC, all I could think about was learning about. So I watched like, everything on YouTube. And I went on PubMed and like, googled everything, and I read it. And I think for everything else, like if I am interested, I become like, the go to expert within like a week or like two weeks. And then I'm like, Okay, another thing that I am interested in, so I will always have like a pocket full of fun facts that I can whip out. And if someone's like, Oh, I'm interested, like something like philosophy, I'm like, Oh, I read something about that. And then they'll ask me for more question. I'm like, oh, sorry, I don't know anymore, because then I got interested in something else. And I would also say, like being able to have so many different interests and passions, you can connect a lot of the things and patterns that other people might not be able to see because they're only studying that one specific field or industry. But because I'm interested in so many things, I see the patterns across like various different fields and interests and being able to connect the dots and being able to think outside of the box. I think being neurodiverse allows you not to think in such a linear fashion, but being able to kind of expand laterally. And I also think like my ADHD kind of ties into my personality. And I would like to say that I see myself really charismatic and entertaining, and kind of down to earth. So I've always had friends tell me like, Oh, you're so easy to talk to. And like, like, amusing and I'm like, Oh, great, thank you. I do think it's because like, like all of my quirks where I like see something and I'm like, okay, every time I'm in like a grocery store, I'm like, oh, chocolate, I like walk there.

So I feel like it might be kind of like a childlike sense of like, fascination with the world is still kept in. So like my favorite book is the Little Prince. And I really love seeing things with like a fresh, like, view set and fresh eyes. And I feel like I can still keep sort of some of that like within me because of like ADHD and how my brain works.



Katy Weber 57:27

So yeah, I mean, I guess I it's not obvious. I love your podcast. And I'm so I'm so glad you guys are doing this. And I look forward to so many more episodes and Yeah, all right. Well, thank you so much, guys for taking the time to talk with me and tell me your story. I really liked chatting with you. Thank you. Thank you so much for having us. It was really nice meeting you.