

Shining with ADHD by The Childhood Collective

Episode #142: The Key to Executive Functioning: Internal Skills for Kids with ADHD with Mike McLeod

Mike: And we can't continue to look at ADHD as kids who can't sit still, kids who can't focus, kids who can't manage their time, kids who can't organize. It's kids who can't internally self-regulate.

Katie: Hi there. We are the childhood collective, and we have helped thousands of overwhelmed parents find joy and confidence in raising their child with ADHD. I'm Katie, a speech language pathologist.

Lori: And I'm Lori.

Mallory: And I'm Mallory. And we're both child psychologists.

Lori: As busy mamas ourselves, we are on a mission to support ADHD parents on this beautiful and chaotic parenting journey.

Mallory: If you are looking for honest ADHD parenting stories, a dose of empathy with a side of humor and practical tools, you are in the right place.

Katie: Let's help your family shine with ADHD.

One of the hardest parts of parenting a child with ADHD is wondering, “how can I help my child succeed at school when I'm not even there?”

Mallory: We love hearing from families about the amazing outcomes they have experienced after taking our course, Shining at School.

Lori: Yes, like Allison, who said, “I want to thank you for taking the time and resources you poured into the Shining at School course. I've been an educator for ten years and my fourth-grade son has had an IEP since kindergarten. Your course is helping me feel more empowered and has made me feel like I can advocate so much better for my son. Truly the best money I've spent on any school related item.”

Mallory: And Aaron, who told us, “My son's 504 was approved today. It was a fantastic meeting and I'm so happy with the level of support the team agreed on. The principal said, ‘my son shines’, which made me think of your course. Thanks for all you do.”

Katie: We seriously love hearing stories like this. It actually gives me chills.

Lori: If you want your child to shine at school, our, course is here to help you do just that. Head to thechildhoodcollective.com to check out Shining at School and use the exclusive code PODCAST for 10% off. You can also find the link and code in the show notes.

Today, Katie and I are interviewing Mike McLeod, an ADHD and executive functioning specialist.

Katie: Mike is the owner of GrowNOW ADHD, where he provides executive functioning coaching to students as well as parent coaching.

Lori: He's also a keynote speaker providing executive functioning training for schools, parents, and professionals. And today he's here to talk with us about his internal skills model. Mike, thanks so much for being here.

Mike: Thanks for having me. It's a privilege to talk to you, too.

Katie: Yeah, we're so excited to have you.

Lori: We interact so much on Instagram, but don't actually get to talk with you face to face. So it's nice to be able to do this.

Mike: Yeah, I would say all the stuff I post and all the stuff you guys post or everything kind of flows together so beautifully. So we've chatted a lot on Instagram and social media, and now being able to chat with you two. We did a live, like, a year or two ago, right?

Katie: We did!

Lori: Yes, it was so good.

Mike: Yeah and now we get to chat again.

Lori: I know, it's been way too long.

Mike: Yeah. That was, like, one of the most famous lives of all time. That was, like, all shared.

Katie: Oh, yeah.

Mike: That was fun.

Katie: All right.

Mike: Broke the Internet with that one.

Katie: We might have to bring that one back and go viral again here. Whatever it takes. I love it.

Mike: Let's do it! Let's be famous.

Katie: So, before we jump in to the internal skills model, can you just start by telling us a little bit about yourself? What brought you to this place in your career? Why are you so passionate about ADHD and helping kids with executive functioning?

Mike: Sure. Yeah. So, I always wanted to work with youth in some capacity. My mom was a teacher for, like, 45, 50 years and I originally wanted to be a teacher. Went into the school of education, and just a long story short, found my way into speech and language pathology, because I really liked the idea of being able to work with students one-on-one and improve something that really improves quality of life overall. And then during my time as an SLP, I lived in Australia for six months and did a lot of great work with nonprofits and organizations down there. I worked with a group called the Focus Foundation, based out of Annapolis, Maryland, and children's hospital in DC, and worked with amazing doctors and neuropsychs down there. And I just naturally found myself working with ADHD and executive functioning students, working on these quality-of-life skills, something I was always very passionate about. And I really just very naturally and organically found myself working with these students with ADHD. It was something I always, assumed that I had personally. I was not diagnosed until I was an adult, maybe like five, six years ago, but just kind of naturally found myself working with these students. And during my work with the Focus Foundation, I

was able to create this treatment model piece by piece. And a great opportunity fell into my lap to do a research study on it and work with an entire grade level at a special needs school. And everything's kind of, expanded from there. Really taking this model and being able to work on internal skills based on the most up to date research, and it's been great, really, specializing in this small, little niche area of ADHD. It's such a really small field of everyone seems to know everybody, but it's been great learning every day. You learn something new every day from all the great people out there, and it's been a wild ride.

Katie: I love that. I think that's something that a lot of us in the helping professions can relate to. It's like an area that's really interesting to you, and you find so many examples of it in everyday life, and then once you're really deep in it, you're like, oh, yeah, that's some stuff that I'm also working on. And so I know that's very similar to my story, and a lot of us have similar experiences, but that's really cool. So I'm so excited to know that. And I didn't know that you were, over in Australia and that kind of thing. That's pretty awesome.

Mike: Yeah, it was great. I was on the gold coast. I did some work with Bond University on the gold coast there. Worked with a lot of different nonprofits and they have a much different educational system and system for therapies and things like that. So learning down there and working with a lot of the doctors and psychologists down there, it's fascinating how different it is here than everywhere else. But, being able to sort of work with different cultures and different people and traveling, that's pretty much what I do now is so much traveling. So being able to be somewhere else and learn from other people, it was a great experience.

Lori: Now, a very important question - Did you have an accent after you had been there? Like did you develop?

Mike: I did not, but I kind of wanted one. I've always been fascinated accents. So, I'm from New York I'm from Long Island originally. So there's some people I meet that are like, man, you have the worst Long Island accent, you have the worst New York accent. And then some people are like, oh, you sound totally normal, you sound regular. I'm so fascinated by what do I sound like? And then I watch my Instagram videos like I watch, like 5 seconds of them and I'm like, oh, my God, I sound like an idiot.

Lori: Oh stop.

Mike: When you hear your own voice, you're like, oh, my God, it's the worst.

Katie: Yes!.

Lori: Well, my husband has this weird ability with accents where he will be like, his family's from southern Ohio, and they all have this very fast paced talk, like, a very particular way that they speak. And he'll get on the phone with his dad and he starts speaking in that accent. Like, we went to London once and he's speaking in an accent. Like he just can't even help it.

Katie: Okay, well, I'm obsessed with listening to books on audible, and I'm currently listening to someone with a British accent and this -

Lori: You'll just develop it.

Katie: Yeah. I started talking to my husband. I'm like, I think I'm going to start using the word case for suitcase because apparently that's what British people do. And I'm taking notes over here. Okay, so I think it might be a speech there. I know your husband's not a speech therapist, but I feel like speech pathologists, we just kind of have the ear for that. It's all those transcribing vowels in grad school.

Mike: Yeah.

Katie: That made it so interesting to us. Or maybe it's the other way around. Right? Yeah, we got into it for that reason.

Lori: So, not to get too off track, but let's go back to talking about your internal skills and how they're usually affected for kids with ADHD.

Mike: Of course. Yeah. So this is really, a new framework based off of the most recent research on ADHD and executive functioning. So one of the great ways to kind of introduce this is we have the worldwide leader on ADHD, Dr. Russell Barkley. He refers to ADHD as the Rodney Dangerfield of neuropsychological disorders. Of course, you guys know why? Why is that?

Lori: I don't know.

Katie: I have no idea.

Mike: Do you Rodney Dangerfield?

Lori: Yeah, a little bit, but not a lot.

Katie: No. You're going to have to tell.

Lori: I should, I'm old enough.

Mike: So he did this whole set, like, his whole stick was, I get no respect. And his whole thing was, my wife has no respect for me. My coworkers have no respect. So his whole thing was no respect. So ADHD gets no respect because it's always, these kids are lazy, these kids are uninterested. These kids have bad parents. These kids just need a coffee and they just need some discipline.

Lori: Oh gosh!

Katie: Same.

Mike: Exactly. You got it. So for decades we looked at ADHD as just this attention based, hyperactivity based, inattentive based, and everything was just based on these external systems and external symptoms. So it was kids who can't sit still, kids who can't focus. And it was just based on things that we could see. And it was the same thing with executive functioning. Still to this day, when you mentioned executive functioning to someone, the two things they're going to come back with are time management and organization. And that is literally like less than 1% of the puzzle of what executive functioning truly is. So everything was based on these external symptoms. And 5-10 years ago, when it came to executive function coaching, it's, an unregulated field. There's no licensing required to be a coach. So what you tend to see are these coaches that sit with the kid and organize their backpack and organize their folders and sit with them while they work on their chromebook. So there's not 75 tabs open, and they're not on addictingmathgames.com during homework time. And it was just creating prompt dependence. And nothing was teaching these kids the skills to be successful when they make that huge jump from twelfth- grade to college. So the Harvard Center of the Developing Child, the Stanford Parenting Center, they just did such unbelievable research. Dr. Russell Barkley, Dr. George McCloskey, Sarah Ward, of course, the great SLP, just did so much unbelievable research, really showing that it's the lack of the

internal executive function skills. So still to this day, parents will call me and say, hey, my son was just diagnosed with ADHD, and I also think he has some executive functioning problems, too. And it's so important to remember they're one and the same.

Katie: That's the thing.

Mike: Exactly. ADHD is a disorder of executive functioning. So can you have executive functioning challenges and not have ADHD? Of course, but ADHD is the preeminent disorder of executive functioning. And we can't continue to look at ADHD as kids who can't sit still, kids who can't focus, kids who can't manage their time, kids who can't organize. It's kids who can't internally self-regulate. They can't self-regulate. They don't have cause and effect thinking, they're time blind. They can't self-motivate towards something that's not instantly gratifying. And it all comes back down to the weakness and the disconnect in nonverbal and verbal working memory. So when we really see the lack of the skills internally, we know it's an overall delayed brain maturation. So it's a true lack of internal skills when we can really focus on these skills, just like we do in any therapy, speech, physical, occupational, whatever it may be, if we can really strengthen these internal skills along with parent coaching to make sure there's carryover because of that working memory problem, we can really see an improvement in quality of life.

Katie: I love that. And I think that's such an interesting shift in the mindset. For parents, it's really important because a lot of times, yeah, even, how do we diagnose ADHD? It's going to be symptom based. It's a checklist. So yes, absolutely those are going to be your identifiers, your markers. But then looking to what every parent is asking, like, how do I help my child? We're not addressing it at the level of, I remember in speech, families would come to me, and I remember this one mom, I loved her, but her child had ADHD. Tons of executive functioning going on, executive functioning challenges going on and she's telling me, he can't play t-ball, he can't follow directions at t-ball and I want you to work with him on following directions at t-ball. And what we'd always have to do is zoom out and say, hey, listen, I could spend six weeks teaching your kid the rules of t-ball, but this is really not the goal. And that's actually not really going to help him in the next sport or the art club that you want him to join or chess or anything else. Right. Because exactly what you're saying, it's the executive functions. And I think as parents it is, it's hard because you see your child struggling and it

feels like, if I could just get this one thing. But really, we need to go beneath that iceberg, right? And figure out what are those foundational skills.

Lori: And at what age do you feel like kids are able to start developing that?

Mike: To start developing executive functioning and working memory?

Lori: mmhmm

Mike: I would say that, the youngest where we start really doing the one-on-one is probably around like five years old. So right around five is when we can really work with a kid one on one. Anything below five is just going to be strict parent coaching by itself. I think you really, had a really great point before, is unless that t-ball coach is going to join that session and you're going to coach that t-ball coach, on what to say to the child, what type of language to use, it's going to be so hard for you in a different time and place, probably days before his t-ball game, to get him ready for t-ball. And this is what parents have been taught based on this American version of insurance and medical and therapy and things like that. So whatever the biggest issue is in the parents mind, okay, t-ball is an issue, you're the therapist, work on t-ball, fix him so he's fine. Those sorts of things. Quick fix, that's the problem. But ADHD is so much trickier and this is exactly why the American Academy of Pediatrics came out and said parent coaching is the number one recommendation because of these working memory challenges. And we have to remember, ADHD is a deficit of working memory. So this is exactly why talk therapy and cognitive behavioral therapy and all these different things that are still massive recommendations from really powerful doctors and neuropsychs really are ineffective. So parents have the mindset of, oh, my son is really addicted to Minecraft, really addicted to Fortnite, and he has ADHD. So let me send him to an ADHD therapist, and they can work on his self-motivation, and that therapist can motivate him to do other things. And then the kid leaves therapist office, the second that kid opens the door, gets in the elevator, or turns off that zoom call, they go home and the xbox is right, that's it. You could be getting 5 hours of therapy, five days a week from Dr. Russell Barkley himself, if that kid goes home and the xbox is still there, the cell phone is still there, you didn't work directly with the t-ball coach, those kinds of things, you're not going to see that progress. So there has to be work in the natural environment.

Lori: Yeah and I mean, I think that's why we created our course for families, because we, as therapists, would have so many kids coming in, having been through multiple therapists that were doing, they were playing games, essentially, like in an hour session or doing things that just. And the parents are overwhelmed with the behaviors at home, and they're like, I'm not getting any support. And truly, for most kids, whether you're working on anxiety or executive functioning skills or anything, parent coaching has to be a part of it. It just has to.

Mike: Yeah and you totally get it. There's been qualitative studies done that having a child with ADHD is just as distressing to a parent as having a child with ASD, it's incredibly stressful. These parents hit massive burnout, every single day. Dealing with a child with no cause and effect thinking, no concept of time, really getting stimulated by negative attention seeking, emotional manipulation, noise. All of the tactics that really stimulate the ADHD brain drive the parents crazy. So it's natural for them to want to hire a therapist and want to have that quick fix, but that's just not how it works. Parents have to put in the work, and parents kind of have to get over that mindset of, my kid can't be uncomfortable. My kid has to love me at all times. My kid can't be upset with me.

Katie: Oh, my gosh, if only, right? That's not realistic. No matter what you do, let me just say, no matter how gentle you are, it does not matter. Your child will still eventually be upset with you.

Lori: For my kids, the last thing they want to do when they get home from school is homework.

Katie: Totally and the last thing I want to do after a long day of work is deal with the stress of meal planning, grocery shopping, cooking, and cleaning up the kitchen.

Lori: Same here. We tried Hungryroot grocery service to help us eat balanced meals while saving time and money every week. It's been a game changer for our weekly meals and snacks, and I love that you can customize groceries based on your kids or your family's dietary restrictions.

Katie: Yes! My husband eats gluten free and I love that I can customize groceries based on our family's needs. And not only can I get complete meals delivered, but I can also order my

weekly groceries through them. And I'm always amazed at how my kids will try new things just because they came out of our Hungryroot box.

Lori: Yes! It's easy to customize your box each week and you can skip weeks whenever you want. For a limited time, Hungryroot is offering our listeners 40% off your first box, which is amazing. Just be sure to use the code: CHILDHOODCOLLECTIVE40 so you can get the discount.

Katie: We also have the link and the code in the show notes, so you can try Hungryroot today.

Mallory: One thing I hear from my friends is that their kids often think boring tasks like chores or homework are going to take forever, and in the same breath, their kids can play 2 hours of Minecraft and then complain that they just got started.

Katie: Okay, I think that friend you're referring to might actually be me.

Mallory: I'm not naming names. One tool we all love and have in our own homes is Time Timer.

Lori: At this point, I think we all have multiple Time Timers. For kids with ADHD, time can be a very abstract concept and Time Timer helps by making time more concrete. It helps kids visually see the passage of time.

Katie: And it can prevent those inevitable meltdowns when 2 hours of Minecraft just wasn't justification enough to ask your child to complete five minutes of chores.

Mallory: From homework, to chores, to screen time, to daily hygiene, to our own work, we love Time Timer because it is so versatile and their designs are cute too. A staple in our homes.

Lori: If you have a child with ADHD, we know you need a Time Timer and we have a discount code for you to use. So head to [timetimer.com](https://www.timetimer.com) and use the code: TCC to get the discount. You can also find the link and code in the show notes.

To talk a little bit more about social interactions, because this is something we get so many questions on, we hear from a lot of parents who are concerned about their kids making friends, and keeping friends, being able to have those relationships. What role do the internal skills play in those situations?

Mike: So, yeah, that's an excellent question. One of the really great things that this neurodiversity movement over the past 5-10 years has done is really make us start to question these really structured social skills groups, adult directed social skills groups, and these social skills that, again, were focused on the external. So a lot of my trainings on executive functioning, the theme is external to internal, outdated external, today internal. So in the past, it was all these external social skills, eye contact, topic maintenance, circles of communication, topic switching, those kinds of things. And at the end of the day, neurotypicals don't do eye contact. Eye contact, is very cultural based. So forcing someone to make eye contact and increase their anxiety is ridiculous. And then forcing them to talk about certain topics is not helpful. And for certain kids, it makes them very robotic and very kind of odd in social situations. So you'll see a boy that, a young middle school kid who did lots of structured social skills group, and he approaches another boy at the playground, it's like, hi, how are you? What are you doing this weekend? No one talks like that. It's ridiculous. And there's lots of studies that show that if you have a boy or a girl, a child with ADHD, and they get put in a structured social skills group, it actually can make their behaviors much worse and increase their dysregulation in social environments. So we need to make the switch from external social skills to internal social executive functioning, which is really focusing on those internal skills, which is increasing an internal dialogue that you have during social conversations so you can better understand perspective taking skills and the thoughts that you put into other people's heads when you talk about certain topics, when you persevere on certain topics, when you act a certain way socially, are you giving that person good thoughts about you, comfortable thoughts, making them want to be around you? Or are you making them feel kind of cringy? Do you make them kind of not want to be around you? And this is the difference between those social relationships at school and those relationships at home. So the relationships at school with peers and teachers are much more fragile. So we have to understand the thoughts that we put in others heads based on our thoughts, our feelings, our behaviors, our emotions, our outward actions. So there's perspective taking skills and there's also situational awareness. So what we do is we teach kids that as soon as they enter a doorway, the doorway is the trigger, they enter through a doorway and they're in a new

environment, stop, take a breath and scan the room. Take around and take note of what you see so you can learn to read the room, understand situational awareness. So look around, see what's happening and then figure out the next steps based on what you scan and observe. Because ADHD is that inability to kind of stop and think, stop and process. That's why the brain is stimulus response, instant gratification. So when we can teach them to take a breath, take in their environment, perceive their environment, see what's happening, see what everybody else is doing, and then make their choice instead of just impulse choice a, choice a, choice a. We're empowering them in social situations to be much more successful, leading to an improvement of quality of life and social relationships.

Katie: Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. I can definitely picture my own kids walking into a room and just sort of like diving into the middle, not necessarily taking that breath to say, okay, what's going on? What should I be doing? What is this going to look like? So how would you actually teach a parent to do that? What does that look like? Are you stopping outside the doorway and having a conversation? Tell us more about that.

Mike: So for parents, you always want to make your strategies as simple as possible and as realistic as possible. So the best thing for parents to always do is to just externally model what they're naturally doing internally. So one thing as a coach is you want to coach the parents on just how often they're using their executive functioning skills. So I explained to parents, like, hey, when your alarm goes off and you're still laying in bed, you already have your entire morning routine visualized. You know, you're going to get out of bed, you're going to get dressed, you're going to brush your teeth, you're going to drink the coffee, you're going to flip through your phone a little while and then you're going to get in your car, get in your car at eight, get to work by 830. You do that in a couple of milliseconds in your brain. And for your kids that have tough morning routines, they don't do that. They don't stop and visualize and have it. They're moment to moment to moment, getting distracted by every shiny object that passes their way. So for parents, what we want to teach them is to just externalize what they're doing. So let's say you go grocery shopping with your child and as soon as you walk through those doors, you walk through those automatic doors, you're there, stop and kind of say out loud what you see. Like, oh, I see it's not as crowded today, or I see it is really crowded. I see, there's a lot of long lines today, so I think we're just going to have to get what we need and kind of put it in the cart. I think I'm going to really need your help helping me find certain things so if you can keep your phone in your pocket and help me shop

today and load things in the cart, that would be great. And front load them with that information because we have to remember they're not processing and perceiving their environment. ADHD is a disorder of self-awareness. So they're not perceiving their environment and processing their environment and knowing what's coming next. So if I am perceiving this, then I need to do this. They don't have that thought process. So we have to externalize what we see, what we need, what we think, what we feel. If you're driving with your child, make it a rule that there's no phones in the car, you have to talk to each other or look out the window, whatever it is. and have those open conversations about front loading them with information about what's to come and have them make predictions about what the future might look like, what might happen, what they'll need to do. So just have more conversations about things that seem obvious because chances are they're not processing it. They're probably just sitting there thinking about their favorite YouTube video, their favorite meme 24/7 they're not processing real world information in real time.

Katie: Absolutely. I used to coach families on this all the time in therapy, like in one-on-one. And I think again, it's one of those things that when you start to explain it, it's easier to explain than it is to do. It feels weird, it feels really uncomfortable to come up on a car accident and out loud be like, oh man, this road is blocked. I'm going to make a left so I can go around, but we need to be doing that. And it starts to feel less awkward as you go, right? And I think part of it too is you're not necessarily having it as a dialogue. It's not like a situation where you're going to say, wow, it's really busy and then look at your child expectantly and wait for them to be like, yes, I do see the long lines. Right? You're just saying, wow, it's really busy we probably just need to hit the produce section and then get on our way. It's more of like, we call it in technical jargon, we call it declarative language, but it's the idea of like I'm just making a statement. I'm not, prompting you, I'm not requiring you to respond or give me feedback. And again, that is a very different style. I think we, a lot of times as parents tend to ask our kids a ton of questions, we tend to expect a response. So when it's different, it feels strange and kind of uncomfortable. So think of it as like a new muscle when you're problem solving out loud, like, oh, I forgot to take the chicken out of the freezer. Okay, we're having pancakes because I know that's fast, but I'm going to make sure to pull out the butter because it's also in the freezer. I have, a freezer problem if you didn't know (laughing). I need to talk about that, Mike, can we dialogue about that? (laughing) It is actually really hard for me to think ahead at 6:30 in the morning what we're having for dinner and have it ready. But bringing your kids into that and recognizing that it's not even

something that they have to do, it's something that you are going to do. I love that. I think that's really cool. So now I'm trying to think of a good example for parents that would take that. I love your grocery store example. Let's find another example that's going to tie in the social aspect. So let's say you're walking into, I don't know, a birthday party, or something like that. Talk us through what that looks like. I love the term front loading. I love all of this. I just want to make sure parents have like a really tactical example of how they would use it in real life.

Mike: Yeah, I think you did a great job mentioning declarative language. So that's one of the most powerful things that we can do as coaches to coach parents to make this switch from directive language to declarative language. Because I think all of us, once we hit like 25, we're instantly super old, you know what I mean? We forget what it's like to be a kid and we expect kids to be mini adults and kids are not mini adults. They literally have, the brain is not fully developed till 30 years old, it takes time. And these kids have, they're still learning so much about the world every single day. So, many times we expect them to know what to do and if your kids have ADHD, then their hindsight and their ability to learn from past experiences and gain competence and confidence from past experiences is really hindered. So every day is like Groundhog Day. Every day is the first day of school, and we all know how anxiety producing the first day of school is, so it's super hard, and we have to remember that. But in terms of these experiences, like, for example, they could have been to ten birthday parties already. But you continue to see the same external, hyperactive, make kids uncomfortable behaviors at birthday parties because they're not learning from the past. So what you can do is, on the way to the birthday party, remind them about what you observed at previous birthday parties, help them remember what happened last time, what you observed, and ask a lot of questions. Instead of just telling them, hey, you were really running around like crazy. You were making a lot of silly jokes. You made all those people feel very uncomfortable. Ask questions, hey, when you did this, how do you think that made that person feel? So when you go today, what can you tell your brain coach? What can you be more aware of in terms of making sure that everyone is happy that you're there and everyone wants to be around you? And how can we make the birthday boy or girl feel very special when we go there? what can we do to build that cause and effect? So, teaching kids about cause and effect at a young age can be very powerful. So if you do this at the birthday party, then this might happen. So, when we teach kids that there is a direct cause and effect between the words that they say, and the actions that they do, and then this might happen because you

did this. That is a really powerful thing to teach kids. And, another really important thing is not just front loading, also backloading. So, on the way home from the birthday party, review with them, what happened, because remember it's that working memory deficit. So I noticed you were running around, or I noticed you stopped yourself from making that same joke again, or whatever it may be. Or I noticed you talking about something that's not a preferred topic. I noticed you interacting with people you don't usually interact with. Or I noticed you kind of isolating yourself on your phone in the corner, whatever it was. So instead, of just front loading, you also want to review with them at the end the choices they made, why they made those choices, how they were feeling, what they were thinking, and what they can do next time.

Katie: I love that. I think it's interesting because I know talking with a lot of parents, there is a hesitation to have those conversations. It's almost like, I don't want to point this out to my child. I don't want to hurt their self-esteem. I don't want them to feel bad about themselves. Like, my kids have a thing about cake. I swear, I give my kids cake and cupcakes. It's not weird, it's not locked up. But every time we walk into a birthday, it's a thing. Every time my daughter walks in and she's like, I wonder what the cake is. Like, she will ask her friends before the party.

Mike: My daughter is literally, she's two and a half, obsessed. The girl across the street just had a birthday party, and she dipped her finger in every single ice cream icing at the table. Obsessed with cake.

Katie: Yes. I have been there. I have for sure been there. I talk about it on another episode. I'm like, I don't know what it is with my kids in cake, but a lot of people might have the fear, and I want to really reassure parents. And I know, Mike, you've had a lot experience with this, too, where you might be like, I'm going to point this out. I'm going to call this out, and it's going to make my child feel bad. But the reality is that if you don't talk with your child, if you don't give them the tools to manage the cake or the jump house or whatever it is, they are going to have struggles, and those struggles are going to affect their self-esteem. If you don't support them and teach them what to do. It's not a willful, like, I just want to destroy this friend's birthday cake. Right? They're going to make a mistake and they're going to feel bad. Kids, with ADHD can sense a lot of times when they're being ostracized or there's, like, changes in people's behavior towards them. And so it's really hard because, again, we want to

preserve our kids confidence and their self-esteem, but really, we're doing them a favor. We're helping build that confidence by helping them be successful and have a positive interaction with the cupcakes because it's really hard.

Mike: Yeah. And there's probably you as the parent that unconditional love relationship, you're probably the best person to have that conversation. And it's probably the parent's natural instinct to, kind of like the t-ball thing, to just tell therapist about it. Like, hey, this happened, can you have this hard conversation with my child? But you as the parent, you really should be doing it. And we have to remember, no growth comes from being comfortable. All growth comes when we're uncomfortable. And we have to be able to have these hard conversations with our kids when they're young and teach them that they can learn from their mistakes and they can have that growth mindset. And there's been great studies done by the creator of the growth mindset, Dr. Carol Dweck, on having these hard conversations with kids, teaching them about the growth mindset and them internalizing it and being able to improve. This is the feedback that coaches give in sports or teachers are going to give poor grades and poor feedback, and eventually they're going to get a job where they're going to get poor feedback. It happens to everybody. you may fail your driver's test a couple of times. Different things happen. So we can't shield our kids from discomfort forever. There's no better person for them to learn how to manage their emotions with and hear hard things than a loving parent.

Katie: Yes, absolutely. And as we model our own struggles and our own growth, it can be really helpful, too. So, talking about, wow, I'm really working on remembering to take the food out of the freezer and helping them understand, like, hey, mom's not perfect. I still have a great life. I run a business. I can manage myself most days. But that we're all working on things and that we all have areas that are of growth. And I think that's something that's, a powerful gift for our kids to see that.

Mike: Yeah, a lot of kids have that mindset that parents never make mistakes and teachers never make mistakes. Like, kids literally think that teachers just magically appear when school starts and then disappear when school ends.

Katie: Well, they must sleep there somewhere, right?

Mike: Like, when kids see their teachers outside of school, it's like the most magical thing of all time. That's a great point. As parents, you make mistakes every day. I know I make a million mistakes every day. When we can talk to our kids about our mistakes and how we feel okay about them and how we'll just learn from them for next time. That's an incredibly powerful thing. That's part of open communication. That's part of authoritative parenting. That's another misunderstood thing, is people think authoritative parenting is yelling and screaming and strict rules. Authoritative parenting is democratic open communication, really relationship based, reciprocal parenting, 50/50. So talk to your kids openly about the mistakes that you made, the choices you made that you regret, times when you made someone feel uncomfortable, different choices you've made that you could have done something differently. Have those conversations openly with your child so that they can start to build that internal system of checks and balances in their own mind where they can recognize that mistakes are okay. All I have to do is remember them for next time.

Katie: Yeah. So basically, you're just saying, we need to talk even more, which is perfect for me. So I'm all set.

Mike: That's right.

Lori: I'm sitting here thinking, I have not talked at all, and I would have a problem. My kids get in the car and I'm so drained by my own day that I've been talking to people all day and listening to people all day that I just zone.

Mike: Your kids are the golfers, right?

Katie: No, my kids are the golfers.

Mike: Your kids are the golfers.

Katie: My husband works in golf, so anytime you see the videos, that's my kids. Yeah.

Lori: Well, Mallory's kids golf, too. They, take golf lessons.

Mike: I always see them on the Instagram Stories.

Katie: Yeah, Lori's are ice skaters. She has two girls that are very into ice skating.

Lori: They just picked up the most expensive sport possible.

Mike: Ice skating in Arizona?

Katie: I think it's revenge because weren't you, like, a thoroughbred horse jumper or something when you were in high school? So I feel like this is just karma, getting you back for having a really awesome hobby.

Lori: Yeah, my parents are like, actually, your horseback riding was the most expensive sport. Just to let you know.

Mike: I'm also incredibly obsessed with golf and play as often as I can, and I always try to coach parents. What I find with ADHD kids is most of them do tend to be very video-game based and video-based and sports are scary and hard. But when they do get involved in those single sports, like golf or tennis or swimming or wrestling, a lot of them really thrive and do really well. So I found kids like kids being out in nature and walking 18 holes and learning how to play golf, which everybody sucks at, it's so incredibly hard, I love that kind of stuff. So when I see youth getting involved in those one-on-one sports, I love it.

Lori: I golf for a long time with one of my friends, and I would get so angry. Like I would literally throw clubs

Mike: Oh, my God.

Katie: So you're saying it's really a good opportunity to work on emotion regulation.

Lori: I'm a very low-key person for the most part and you get me playing golf and I get very angry.

Mike: Yep.

Katie: That's so funny. Mike, thank you so much for coming on. I think this has been so helpful and I just love all the expertise that you're sharing with our community. So I think our listeners are definitely going to want to stay connected with you. Can you tell us a little bit about how they can find you and stay connected?

Mike: Sure. So my website is grownowadhd.com. You can find me on Instagram GrowNOW @grownowadhd. So pretty much everything's GrowNOW ADHD on Facebook, on Instagram, on YouTube. Send, me a message. Send me a DM. I'll reply to you directly. So I always love when people connect, my email is on my website. My personal cell phone's on my website. So you can reach, like, people call me the number on my website and I answer the phone, they're like, whoa, this is actually Mike. There's no admin? And I'm like, yeah, that's me. That's my number. So please, if you listened and you liked what you heard, just reach out. I love to chat with people, that hear this information and it triggers something for them.

Katie: I love that. And we're going to go ahead and link all of that in the show notes so it'll be really easy for people to find.

Mike: Yeah and thank you guys. The entire Childhood Collective team, the work that you guys do, this podcast, everything you guys do on social media, the three of you, you guys are amazing. So all the work and, all the packages and the way you guys, the reels you guys do with everything, you guys are amazing actors, and incredible work. So thank you guys for having me. And keep doing what you're doing because people are really benefiting and learning a lot from you guys.

Katie: Thank you. The feeling is so mutual. So thanks again and we'll talk soon.

Mike: Of course. Thank you so much.

Katie: Thanks for listening to Shining with ADHD by your hosts, Lori, Katie, and Mallory of The Childhood Collective.

Mallory: If you enjoyed this episode, please leave us a review and hit subscribe so you can be the first to know when a new episode airs.

Lori: If you are looking for links and resources mentioned in this episode, you can always find those in the show notes. See you next time!