

Shining with ADHD by The Childhood Collective

Episode #152: Lost Socks and Missing Chargers: Organize Your House in a Way That Works for You

Katie: When we're making a strategy, it's not necessarily about being cute. I love to be cute, but it's really about, like, the actual functionality of how are we going to use this every day?

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.

Katie: I was cleaning out my car the other day, and it was a real treasure trove of goodies. Any guesses on how many of my kids’ water bottles I found in there?

Mallory: Oh, more than five or less than five?

Katie: Okay, it was less than five, so that feels like a win. But it was more than three. Okay. And I don't know why, but water bottles seem so much grosser to me after they've been sitting in the car for an unknown number of days.

Mallory: Oh, especially in Arizona. And I feel like even worse is when a lunchbox gets left in the car.

Katie: So gross. You know what? You're right. That is worse. But the reality is keeping track of all these things is actually really hard, especially for kids and adults with ADHD.

Mallory: Totally. And, you know, when you can't find your shoes, your socks, water bottles, math notebook, lunchboxes, glasses, everyone starts to get just a little bit stressed out. And there's also a financial toll when everyone in your family is consistently losing things. Sometimes, you know, referred to as the ADHD tax.

Katie: Yes. And something that's been a game changer in our house is that we've really been trying to focus on giving everything its own place.

Mallory: I love that. My favorite line, if it doesn't have a home, it'll be anywhere but where it's supposed to be.

Katie: Yes, that's so true. So today, Mallory and I are going to be talking just about some simple steps that you can take to give things a specific home. And a quick couple of disclaimers, okay. So we're not here to judge you, and we're not here promoting a minimalist house or a perfectly organized pantry. It's probably unlike any home organization podcast out there, because we're actually talking about real people. Many of us have ADHD, and we promise that these sort of simple steps can actually make life a lot easier for you and for your family. So let's jump into four strategies for getting your home a little more organized.

Mallory: Let's do it.

Katie: All right, so our first point here is this really needs to come from starting by considering your very specific situation. Okay so, I know when I'm, you know, January 1st rolls around, I'm like, I'm gonna get organized. Or honestly, the start of a school year tends to really do it for me. I'm, Like, my kids are back in school. I am going to have an organized linen closet. And I go on Pinterest, and I find all these cute baskets and they have bows and, like, labels and all the things. Really, that is not the best place to start, okay. So instead of going to Pinterest and seeing what you can do, Pinterest is amazing for ideas I love Pinterest, but really thinking about your actual life and your actual day. Like, what are the things that are getting lost? What are the things that are tripping you up? And it's just causing irritation throughout the day and then thinking about where you actually use those items, right. So one of the acronyms that I love, Sarah Ward, is a speech language pathologist and she studies executive function, she gives families all kinds of tools and she uses this acronym called 'stop'. And so it's s-t-o-p. And she's looking there at the space, the time, the objects and the people. And when you think about it in this term, it makes it a lot easier to figure out what to do. So let's use an example.

Mallory: Love it!

Katie: Yeah, it's great. And it's easy for us to remember when we're tired moms looking for lunch boxes. Okay.

Mallory: Stop having to look for all the things.

Katie: I love that, stop searching. So 'stop'. If we think about like, for example, we use a lot of sunscreen in Arizona, okay. Where even in the winter we use sunscreen. So, where do we

use this object? Like what room should I put it in? So, we actually put on sunscreen in our kitchen because that's right by our back door and our garage door. So again, if I'm on, Pinterest and I find like a cute sunscreen basket that's all the way back in the linen closet, that is not helpful to my family because that's not where we use our sunscreen. And then I think about okay, time. Like that's the 't'. When do you use this object? So not necessarily the time of the day, but more like what activities? What's happening around the time that you're using sunscreen? So obviously for sunscreen, we use that outside. I have not yet reached the point in my skincare routine where I wear sunscreen at night, but it could be coming. But we really do it when we're going to go to the pool or outside for a bike ride or whatever. So really for us, the garage door and the back door are our two major exits for the house. And it makes sense to keep it really close to those two places. And then our objects, right, our 'o'. What do we need in order to complete this task? Really this one's simple. It's just the sunscreen. Now, if you're talking about like homework, you might be thinking of a lot more objects that you would need. Or you're thinking about getting dressed or doing your morning routine. The objects list could get longer. But in this case, all we really need is the sunscreen. And then who the people, 'p', who's going to need to access this? And so for us, sunscreen is something that my kids are learning to do on their own. So, I actually keep it in a drawer that even my son, he's seven, he knows where it is and he can find it. And everyone's on the same page about where the sunscreen goes, where do you get it and where do you put it back. And that acronym has just been really helpful for us to think about. You know, just when we're making a strategy, it's not necessarily about being cute. I love to be cute, but it's really about like the actual functionality of how are we going to use this every day?

Mallory: I think that I need to start considering the 'p' more in my home organization, the people piece of it. Now that my boys are older, they're more independent, they want to do a lot of things on their own now as they should be. I'm finding that maybe my old systems are not as functional as they used to be. For example, like our, little snack bowls and water cups are too high for them to reach. So, they are either climbing on the counter or they're having to ask for my help to, you know, get the snack bowl down. Which was fine when they were two, because that's not something I wanted them doing independently. But now that they're older, I need to make those, I need to be considering the people piece and putting it in a place that's more accessible for them so they can grow that independence. And I really, I like the 'stop' acronym because it's a way to really consider how to do it for your family. I feel like, you

know, I'm mindlessly scrolling Instagram and I'm finding all of these Amazon cleaning and organizing products that I never knew I needed.

Katie: Of course.

Mallory: And, well, newsflash, I actually don't need them. Like, it's, like it's making a problem that I don't actually have like special little zip up containers for sheets that are doing just fine in the linen closet.

Katie: There's always something. The one that I recently got focused on is a drying rack that's made out of stone so you can actually like, set the cup upside down, you know, because I don't like to set cups upside down on a towel because then they get like, moisture inside and they don't really dry, it really grosses me out. So I found this. I, it found me, okay. I did not seek this out. I was just mindlessly scrolling social media.

Mallory: The algorithm knows what you need.

Katie: They do. They know me too well. And I see this rack and you can set things upside down and it, you know, I guess I haven't tried it yet, but I really am thinking about it and I feel like the more you click on it, the more than they show it to you. So now I feel like everyone else has a stone drying rack, but it'll dry really quickly when you pick up the cup, it literally disappears the water. I don't even know how it does it, so I might have to report back. But yes, you can constantly find things online for organization, for everything from your Nespresso pods, to organizing your baggies, to all the things.

Mallory: Yeah, but they might not, coming back to our point here, they might not actually be solving a problem that you really have. And in your case, Katie, this is a problem that you have, the moisture in your cups, that's a problem. You might need the stone mat, but really focus on the routines and the things that really do need help. And otherwise you're gonna exhaust yourself, you know, trying to fix all the things at once. Focus on, the areas of need at first. And I think we've, we're kind of getting at the second point here, which is putting practicality and convenience first. So, like I said earlier, if it doesn't have a home, it's going to be anywhere but where it's supposed to be. So, things need homes. There needs to be a designated spot for those things to live. Shoes, backpacks, warm weather gear, which we don't really need here in Arizona. But you, you probably do if you're not in Arizona.

Chargers, keys, wallets, they all need a home. But they need to be put in a place, like I was just alluding to, in a way that is accessible and practical for the people who are going to be using it, right. I would love for my husband to take his keys, his wallet, his fanny pack and put it like, all in his bedside table, out of sight and not, you know, junking up my counters. But the fact of the matter is, like, if it's in a drawer and it's not in the room closest to the door to our garage, he's going to be asking me where it is.

Katie: Yes.

Mallory: So, we have to think through practically and conveniently, where should this item live? Where should this item's home be? And we want everyone to understand where that item's home is. We want them to be able to retrieve it from that home and put it back in that home. And so, while having like twelve matching baskets all on your console table might look really cute, it might be pretty confusing, especially if they don't have labels. Or maybe they have labels, but your kid can't read, so that doesn't really, that doesn't really help a lot. So, pictures of where things belong or, you know, you just get creative and really think about in my house, where is this item needed and where can I give it a home? Everything needs a home.

Katie: Yeah. I really struggle with this. So, in our family, you know, there's all these different devices, right. My husband and I both have a laptop. He has a work laptop. We have iPads, kindles, all the things. And for me, I have set our chargers in a pretty strategic way. Like, this is where this item charges. And everything is fine until I'm walking out the door, and then I realize, like, oh, my gosh, my phone is low, and I'm taking my husband's car, and we have different chargers. So, I need to pull my charger out of the wall, and I stuff it in a bag, and I, you know, head to a coffee shop, and I work for 6 hours, and I get home, and I swear to you, it's like I have completely lost the plot. Like, where is that charger? And I will accuse every. My husband gives me a hard time. He's like, you literally just accused me of this because I'm like, where did you put my charger? He's like, I did not touch it. Back in the day, he would move it all the time because he had his own charger issues. But now that we have a system, he's really good about it. And I'm the guilty party. I'm moving the chargers all around the house. And so, it really is like, again, I went on Amazon, and I bought another charger for his car that fits my phone because it's just easier to have it at the point of need and not always be like, let me make a new system for this, or let me move this thing around. It can, you'll just

know, like, I have what I need, and it's in the right spot. And for me to spend, like \$6.99 on that charger, it's totally worth it for the mental health of not having to walk around searching for that charger. And I love what you said about the little ones that can't read and I had this in my playroom. You know, I always would have everything so organized and, like, the kids have no idea what's going on there. But really, you know, communicating to the family is a huge piece of this because we cannot be the person who knows where everything goes and then somehow expect to live a healthy and fulfilling life. Like everybody needs to know. And on that same point, we really encourage you to include your family in these decisions. And I always go back to the story of my son when he was really young, and we, I would say, go get your socks and shoes. And we keep our shoes near the sunscreen, near the garage door, and we have a cubby where the kids can keep, like a few pairs of shoes. And it's great. But I would say, go get your socks because he's wearing his, we call them runners so his little running shoes. So, he's going to put on his runners, he doesn't have socks. He goes to his room, which is like down a hallway, take a left, okay. And by that point, he is completely lost the idea that he needs to get his socks. Like he's got dinosaurs. He's, he's a happy man, but he is not getting socks at this point. So, I would get sort of ears with him, you know, bud, we need to get your socks, please. And, and it was like, finally I asked him one day, I was like, what's the issue? Like, how can I help you with this? And he told me, he's like, mom, my socks are too far away from my shoes. And it's so funny because I really think of myself as like an out of the box thinker. You know, I've got this. I know what to do. And it's like this, here's this little four-year-old, like, schooling me about the fact that his socks are yes, you know, down the hallway to the left, that is too far. And so we ended up putting a basket of socks, it's not cute, but we have a basket of socks by the back door, by the shoes, and it's made a huge difference. I mean, that's been there for a couple years now, and it's been so helpful. And again, is it like exactly what I want people to see when they come in through our garage? No, but it's fine. It's helpful and it saves so much stress. And it's been really helpful. So, I think helping him to voice his need has been, has been really great.

Mallory: Mm-hmm, I love that. Getting their input, because oftentimes they're going to be the ones that are like, executing on this plan, right. Especially if we're trying to organize their things, they're going to be the one who's actually finding it and then putting it back when it's time to put it back. So, we need their input about what they think is going to work for them.

Katie: Yeah. And something else along those same lines, when you're doing these types of things where you're talking to your kid and you're problem solving, it's so important to bring them into that 'why'? And I know I tend to tell my kids, like, oh, good job, you know, you put your shoes away, or, oh, good job, you hung up your backpack. But what we want to be doing here is connecting it to the happy and positive outcome for them. So instead of saying, like, nice job, you put away your shoes. I might say something like, wow, you put your shoes away. Did you see how fast you found them in the morning? And really connecting it to that outcome, like, oh, you put your toothbrush back in that drawer, so now, because we brush teeth so, so quickly, you have time for your, you know, pre bedtime wrestling match. So, it can be so helpful to them to understand the benefit that they're actually getting. Again, I don't, I don't think a lot of, like, seven, eight, nine-year-olds are thinking, like, I just want to be clean and organized, you know. But when they can see the time saving and the fact that they're not having to be stressed and it's just so much easier, that's really helping them to understand what the goal is and to build that future picture, which is a huge executive functioning skill for, especially for kids with ADHD.

Mallory: Yeah. So important for our kids with ADHD. And I, and I try to along those lines, kind of just, I try to verbalize my own internal monologue when I am putting things back where they belong, or I am helping my boys unpack things. Oh, okay, I'm going to take your little Bento Box that was in your lunchbox, I'm going to put it by the sink so I don't forget to wash it tonight.

Katie: Right.

Mallory: Even though I'm the one doing it, I'm kind of verbalizing that so my child can benefit from kind of my forethought of, like, I'm going to do this right now because that's going to help me in the future. Because like you said, like, our ADHD kids, they really live in the moment and they're not thinking like, oh, if I do this now, future me is going to be really happy that I did that right now. So the more we can kind of speak that out loud and make those connections, we're helping grow their executive function.

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.

Mallory: And our fourth and final point here is that practice makes progress. And when you're putting new systems into place, you're finding things homes, you're changing the way you've always done things. Just anticipate that it's going to take some practice before everyone is really fluent in putting those things away and finding them again. So it's going to take some time. It's going to take some practice. Whenever you can, of course building in some fun. Maybe make it a game. So, something that we like to do is, playing a game called what's in the wrong place? So, look around the room and figure out what is not in its home, and how quickly can we get everything that's out of place back to its home? So rather than, like lecturing my kids, ugh, look at this room, which is honestly what I really want to do, look at this room! Why can't you put things where they belong?

Katie: Is this literally not bothering you? That's what I want to say. Like, do you not see the toothpaste that you spit in the sink? Does that not gross you out?

Mallory: Yeah! But instead, you know, making it playful. Let's take five minutes. Can we do it in five minutes? Anything that's in the wrong place, let's help it get back to its home. And again, you know, pretty much everything in my home has its own home, but still, there's plenty of things in my home that are out of place. Of course, there's no, like, perfect system, and we have to give ourselves some grace. But turning it into a game to avoid the lecture and just expecting that it's going to take some time for our kids to get used to these systems. You might find that a system that you put into place actually isn't super functional, and you actually need to find a new home for it. Maybe the fact that it never makes its way to its home is a sign to you, that its home is really not the most convenient or functional for whatever reason. So, problem solving. And of course, always working with your kids to do that.

Katie: Yeah, I think that's huge. And I feel like it can be so hard for parents, right. Because we might find a home for these, the ten things that they use in their after-school routine and know where everything is. And it can still feel really slow. Like, it can feel like, gosh, we've been doing this for so long. And that's the thing, is you're building lifelong skills like executive functioning. There is not a quick fix. There's not a button that we can push and now my kid knows where to put all of his homework and how to do it and remembers it every day. This is just, it takes a lot of time. And so if you're listening and you're like, oh, my gosh, one more thing on my list, right. Yes, it is. It's an investment of time upfront, and it's an investment of time as you teach. And, you know, we recommend using some rewards to really remind your kids. Like, oh, you did such a great job. I love natural rewards. So, wow because you did that so quickly, now we have more time for this really fun thing that you wanted to do already. But understanding this is a lifelong and long-term process, and that is true for kids that do not have ADHD, and it is especially true for kids who do have ADHD. So, all of these tips that we're giving you are so helpful and they can make a huge difference, but recognize that it's not going to be immediate.

Mallory: Absolutely. So, our key takeaway today is when you're organizing your home, the most important piece is that it's personalized to you. It does not have to be Pinterest perfect. Our homes are not Pinterest perfect I promise you. You just want a system that allows you to find your items and save you some time. And as always, we're here to support.

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!