

Shining with ADHD by The Childhood Collective

Episode #167: Healing From Trauma While Parenting ADHD with Shannon Payton

Shannon: It gives me a perspective with my children that, like, okay, we're growing together, like, we're learning together, because I have a lot in my brain that needs to be worked out, too. So, like, we're a family that goes to therapy. Like, everyone has their therapist, and I make mental health be a like, it's just normal that we talk about it in our home, and it's not a bad thing. It's just that like, all of our brains are created differently, and this is, this is how ours are.

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.

Katie: Hey, guys, Katie here. In this episode, we talk about some heavy topics with our guest, Shannon Payton. Shannon's story includes topics that may be triggering for some people. Shannon bravely shares her experience with infertility struggles, failed adoption, and leaving a cult. We recognize that not everyone is in a place in their journey to hear about these experiences, so we just want to let you know that listener discretion is advised. That being said, Shannon truly is an inspiration to us on this ADHD parenting journey, and we're really excited for you to hear more about her story. So, let's dive in.

Today, Lori and I are so excited to be talking with Shannon Payton. Affectionately known as Shanny Pants, to her vast online community, she thrives as a dynamic content creator and

podcaster based in Rockland, California. Balancing a successful career in real estate with her passion for humor, Shannon catapulted into the limelight in 2020 when her viral video about being stuck at home with her kids captured the hearts of audiences worldwide, propelling her into a whirlwind of internet stardom. Harnessing the momentum of her online presence, Shannon established her digital footprint across various social media platforms under the handles @therealshannypants and shannypants, inviting followers into her world of laughter, trials, and triumphs. Recognizing the desire for deeper connection, Shannon ventured into the realm of podcasting, birthing The Shanny Pants Show, which is now flourishing in its fourth season.

Lori: Beyond her comedic prowess, Shannon's emergence is a courageous advocate, lending her voice to survivors of spiritual, sexual, and institutional abuse. When quizzed about the wellspring of her creativity, Shannon quips, "I'm married and have kids. Enough said." That's all the inspiration I need for some crazy content. Oh, my gosh. I have never been able to say prowess in a bio when I'm reading the fact that I got to say prowess, I'm very excited. You crack me up. You are so funny.

Shannon: I don't know that I could even say that word, honestly.

Katie: Oh, my goodness.

Lori: If no one is following Shanny on Instagram, or wherever you're at, you have to. And my husband said to me the other day, he goes, I have never seen you laugh harder at any comedian we have ever listened to than when you watch her videos. Oh, my gosh. I remember Mallory, Mallory isn't here she's like, your biggest fan, but there's a video where you're like, your husband is saying, why don't you laugh more often?

Katie: Or smile?

Lori: Why don't you smile more often? And you're going around the house with this horrible, tense, fake smile, doing laundry and then chopping. Oh, my gosh. We could not stop laughing. I mean, your videos are hilarious.

Shannon: Well, thank you. I appreciate that. A lot of fun.

Katie: So, basically, we're just incredibly excited to have you on the show today. So, thank you so much for being here.

Shannon: Oh, you are welcome. I'm so excited to be on this show. You guys are doing amazing, and I love your show. So, this is very exciting.

Katie: Yes. For us, too. And we went on your podcast a while back, and that was one of the earlier podcasts where we got to be invited on as a guest. And I remember being really nervous and realizing, like, I don't have the right headphones and all the things. So, you're just, like, so easy as a guest because you do this day in, day out. You know what to do. So, we appreciate that.

Shannon: Well, it was lovely having you on my podcast, too. That was back in the beginning, too. That was so much fun. So fun.

Katie: I remember we talked all about ADHD at school. So, Shannon, you have a pretty incredible life story. So why don't we just start with, can you tell us a little bit about yourself and why you've become such an advocate for mental health?

Shannon: Oh, my goodness. Yes, I do have a story, which we won't all get into all of it today, we'll focus more on the kiddos and such. But I did grow up kind of in a controlling situation. I was raised in a cult that was based basically loosely around Christianity, but a really high control group. My husband was also raised in the same group, so we were married in the group and then dove, into, you know, wanting to have a family. We went through about three, fourish years of infertility. We were young, very unexpected that we would have any issues having kids. It was just like, oh, we're young and healthy, and this is...

Katie: Yeah, let's do this.

Shannon: Yeah. And that's kind of how we were raised, too, where you get married and you have kids, that was kind of your job. So, it was a really, really stressful time. We were still a part of the cult, and it was just a terrible, terrible season of my life. Very, stressful for anyone that has been through infertility. You know what it's like, and it's like, I would never wish it upon anyone. It takes a toll on you mentally, physically, emotionally, all the things. So, going through that while in a cult was extremely traumatic. Looking back now, of course, now that

I'm doing the cleanup of it, and it was not, it was not good times. And looking back, of course, there's so many different thoughts I have about it, but it was, it was what it was, and we made it through. But we really didn't know, you know, we had no support from how we grew up. We didn't know how to have relationships. Basically, your whole life decisions are made for you, and you live with your parents until you get married to a spouse, so you never really had your own thoughts or decisions. And so even, like, with the infertility stuff, we're like, having to make these decisions on our own, and it was really uncomfortable and just felt kind of wrong. Like, is this even right that we're doing infertility treatments? Like, it was, there was a lot of, lot of trauma around that.

Katie: Absolutely.

Shannon: Yeah, it was. That's, like, one of the most invasive, like, lack your life by that time it's just like, no privacy needed. Like, what do you need to know or see or do? Like, here I am.

Lori: Yeah.

Shannon: So, yeah, but we made it through that and then jumped directly into the adoption world, which, you know, again, looking back, probably could have done a little bit of work healing from the previous trauma, but just jumped right into the next. And, you know, my husband was ready before I was because I was a crazy person when I was on all the hormones.

Katie: Oh, my gosh.

Lori: I can't imagine.

Shannon: And it was such an emotional rollercoaster, you know, you're so excited to hear results. And then, blah, so it was tough. So, he was ready a lot sooner than I was. But again, we were young, had no experience, and back then, there weren't the resources or the information out there like, there is now concerning infertility and adoption, both. So pretty limited.

Lori: People just didn't talk about it, right?

Shannon: No. Yeah. And that's what I love about now. It really, and why we're even doing this podcast, you know. Talking about these things, it's so important. And, yeah, so we kind of we moved into the adoption world. And my plan was going back before infertility was always, I would like a boy first, and then I would like a girl, and that's my life, and it's perfect. And everything is...

Katie: The white picket fence and, like, the dog that comes when you call them. And all the things like, I'm gonna know how to make pie and, yeah, totally.

Shannon: Yes. You've nailed it. Yes. And now we're to the like, we have mac-n-cheese in the cabinet. Forget that homemade pie.

Katie: Left over mac-n-cheese, because I don't actually make myself. Yeah. Oh, man. Yes.

Shannon: Yes. We moved away from that homemade pie. But, yes, you know, it was very idyllic. Like, this is my life. Why couldn't I have this? This is, of course, this is what I'm going to do. So then when we move towards adoption, you know, already a lot of power and choices are taken away from you in infertility, and then you move to adoption, and it's even more extreme. You really have no control over what's going to happen with your life. And I'm a very controlling person, but always it was more of an internal thing because I couldn't outwardly be controlling because of how we were raised. So, this just felt like another hit of that like, oh, just here we're taking more control away. But it's a very scary, very scary process. And again, the first time, we were very young, had no clue what we were getting into. It ended up being a roller coaster of our ride. We did an agency adoption because we felt we would be more protected that way. And we were, but then we actually got connected with an agency adoption, it was more like where a birth mom will pick you. So, you're giving your profile to them. They're sharing profiles with birth mom, and then birth mom is selecting you to adopt her baby once it is born. So, we got connected with a birth mom, and we're very excited. And I'll keep the story shortest, but baby girl was supposed to be born on December 10th, and so we were all excited. I was getting ready to head down to another doctor's appointment with birth mom, and our social worker called. And she's like, hey, sorry, we're having to drop her as a client because, blah, blah, blah. A lot going on.

Katie: So heartbreaking.

Shannon: It was awful. It was awful. Yes, yes. And then we so, you know, and they said, you can keep the relationship with her. We just can't. We can't. We can't use, basically, support her as a client with us. And the reason we went with the agency was to be protected. So, we're like, we're gonna trust your judgment, and whatever you guys are seeing that we're not seeing, we trust. So, we kind of dropped her as well. The following week, we got another call, and she was all over the news, and she was a total scam artist, scamming couples into. Yeah. So really sad. She went to prison and had her baby in prison and, it went into the foster care system. Baby girl. Yeah. So that was really awful and traumatic. And then I'll cut out most of the story, but basically we got our son was delivered to our home by his birth parents on December 10th. So, it was like, full circle. Like, oh, yes, everything happens for a reason. And it was, like, such an amazing moment. By the time we adopted our girls, I felt much better about the process because we did do a different process. We adopted our girls through the foster care system, and so doing that was a completely, you know, a lot some of it's similar. You're still doing all the classes and paperwork and all that kind of stuff, but it's definitely a different process doing it through the foster care system. So that was, you know, we got to do it both ways. And a lot of trauma to me, to the kids, like, everything, everyone involved both ways. It was just, we had some kiddos in our home before we got our girls that didn't work out and so, you know, it's just, it's hard. So hard.

Katie: It is, you know, that is truly an incredible thing, to be able to open your home. And whether that's going to result in adoption or not, you know, even for that period of time, like, those kids, they're going to remember that. And that's, I don't know. I have so much respect, and that is such a process. So, you now have three beautiful children through adoption. Yes. And, now, what ages are your kids?

Shannon: Our son is 16, and then the girls are 10 and 12. So we got, the girls came to us, together as a sibling set. So, they're biologically related, and our son was seven when the girls came home with us. So, they were 14 months old and two and a half years old. And so, I went from a only child who was already a challenge, and then added two more to the pile.

Katie: And those two more could already walk and talk and, like, tell you all the things.

Shannon: Yes, they could.

Lori: So, you've had, I mean, such a journey of, like, lots of trauma, lots of change and such a difficult kind of journey. How do you, I mean, you obviously have these amazingly funny videos. How have you used humor to kind of cope with all of those challenges in life?

Shannon: You know, I've always had a humorous, my mom is kind of a funny or not kind of she's a funny person and always kind of was, but because of, again, the group that we grew up in, her humor was squelched. Mine was squelched. So a lot of, like, our personality traits that I feel like, would have been more prevalent were not. And so getting away out from that, we were, I was 31 when we left the cult. And so, you know, it's been years of kind of dissecting it and figuring out, just deconstructing it and figuring out, kind of, like, what my beliefs are.

Katie: Right.

Shannon: And then, too, as far as, like, raising children. Like, here, again, we don't really know how to make decisions on our own very well at all. So it's, like, starting from scratch to figure out how do we want to raise children. So, there was a lot of that that kind of went into it, but then I found my funny. You know, and it was, it started, like, on Instagram, where I just had a couple of friends, and we would do, like, videos. We had, like, a shared account, and we would have post our silly videos. And then when Covid hit, I opened a separate account and started just posting because the kids were like, let's do TikTok's. And I'm like, what's that? And so we started dancing together and doing all this stuff, and it just turned into a really good outlet for me to kind of connect with the kids, because those early days, I well, all the days of COVID I, you know, not sure how well my connections were happening.

Katie: We were all just trying to get eggs and toilet paper from the grocery store. Okay. Like, things were weird for everyone.

Shannon: Everyone is alive another day. We're good.

Katie: Yes. We crushed it. Made another chalk drawing on the driveway, like, it's yeah, I feel you on that. That was a lot.

Shannon: And that counts as school.

Katie: Yes. Oh, my gosh. I remember that my daughter was five when Covid started, so she was about three quarters of the way through her kindergarten year and I remember, you know, the school was like, what do we do? And they tried to do, like, story time on zoom. And I walk in, my daughter has her foot, like, in the camera. She's like, look, mom, all they can see is my foot. I'm like, can you put your foot down? I don't know.

Lori: Well, I walked in and my daughter didn't have a shirt on. And she's like, I'm like, what are you doing? You're on camera! She was a kindergartner, but still, like, she's like, they can't see. They can only see my head. I got some water on my shirt. And you just decided to take it off?! Like, oh, my gosh.

Katie: Oh, my goodness. So, yeah, so I like that coping strategy. I did not turn to TikTok dancing, but that, that's pretty good.

Shannon: Yes. I mean, I'm not going to say it cured everything, but it was one of the coping mechanisms we used. Yeah. So it kind of turned into a thing. And we had a couple of videos go viral, so that was a lot of fun. And then, you know, I started kind of on my funny social media platforms, I kind of started speaking out, and I don't even remember what the first thing was, but kind of some more personal things. You know, it wasn't just funny. I started, like, sharing a little bit more about my story and people just started reaching out. And whether it was, like, had to do with infertility or hysterectomy or the adoption, I was having all these people reaching out and I'm like, okay, this is, there's a reason this platform, you know, I felt like I was kind of, like, given it for a reason, basically. Like, I didn't do anything to, like, make this. It just happened to be that I was when the video went viral. So, yeah, so I just started getting a little bit more still funny, but also, like, bringing in the vulnerability. Because that was where, like, during COVID really was when I started really my recovery process from all the trauma that I had, because I started realizing, like, oh, oh, that's trauma. Oh, maybe that's what's wrong with me. And realizing I had a lot of trauma that was never dealt with from childhood on. And so I really started kind of digging in and realizing, well into part of it is I was doing a lot of research because of the kiddos with mental health issues. And as I'm researching, I'm realizing, oh, oh, wait, that's not them, that's me. And I was, like, seeing, like, all the similarities of even how, like, my kids would be acting. And I'm like, oh, that's how I acted as a kid. And I believe now that I probably had ADHD my entire life and it was in a more suppressive way, right. Like, how I see a lot of the girls kind of. And so it's

been very interesting, kind of, like, diving through this journey of mental health as an adulthood when I never, ever dealt with it as a child or, you know, ever. We were never allowed to go to therapy or anything like that. And I think it's given me kind of a, I don't know if it's a unique perspective, but it gives me a perspective with my children that, like, okay, we're growing together, like, we're learning together, because I have a lot in my brain that needs to be worked out, too. So, like, we're a family that goes to therapy. Like, everyone has their therapist, and I make mental health be a like, but it's just normal that we talk about it in our home, and it's not a bad thing. It's just that, like, all of our brains are created differently, and this is, this is how ours are. So it's been, interesting, kind of experiencing children that, that need extra assistance in different areas and then myself. I'm like, oh, but I need all the help, too. I can't help you. I need all the help for me.

Katie: No, I get what you're saying, and I think that's such a common experience. And I think of, you know, it's very interesting with you having an adoptive family because so often we talk about biological parents, and, wow, you know, I'm sitting in this intake talking to the psychologist, and I'm like, oh, wait, I did that. And I did that and I did that. And that is a very common experience we hear from moms and dads every day, where it's like, I was diagnosed much later after my child. But it's very interesting for you, being in the situation of, you know, these are not your biological kids, and yet you can still see those similarities and that overlap, and that's really powerful. And I'm curious if you have any kind of thoughts, you know, as you've gone along, if there's any resources or your own kind of reminders that you give yourself that's helped you as a parent with ADHD and raising kids who have different needs, what strategies or what can you share with our community that that's been helpful for you?

Shannon: I think, taking care of myself first has been huge because it's always felt like a very greedy, selfish thing to do. And I've had to learn that nope, it's important. Like, I have to take care of myself if I want to take care of my children properly or how I want to raise them. So I, like, I'm in a season right now that I'm not doing that very well, and it's very noticeable. And I feel like it can, like, spiral out of control very quickly. And so it's like, I have to get myself back on track. And for me, like, I'm a list person. I have a whiteboard, I have an online calendar organize thing that, like, I have to have all my checklist and the thing. I'm visual, so I have to have my visual checklist that I can cross off, and then I erase them after.

Katie: So reinforcing.

Shannon: Yes. So, like, I have to, like and some of the things seem so silly, but I really have to do the silly things. And, like, I have someone right now helping me like, she printed out, literally, a plain calendar on a piece of paper with just the days, and I'm struggling right now with some health issues, and I'm not getting outside, so I've been getting really depressed. And so it's like, I get to cross off a box if I, like, go sit in the sun for two minutes. And so it seems so silly. And, like, my adult, like, side of my brain, I'm trying to be, like, it wants to tell me, this is stupid, get your butt up and go for a walk. But there's this other side of me that's fighting it, and so I have to understand, okay sitting in the two minutes in the sun was awesome today. Like, I did that. That was amazing.

Katie: I feel like that is also something that we do, is, like, we kind of underplay our own needs, but then we're like, oh, this isn't going to make any difference. Like, this little, small two minutes. But it is. It's those baby steps, you know, and doing them consistently and building upon it, and that's really, really hard, especially when you're second guessing yourself, like you said, and being like, is this really gonna matter? Or could I just sit inside and scroll, you know, for two extra minutes, which is gonna turn into, like, 30 minutes, let's be honest.

Shannon: Right. Yes. Same. Yeah. And it's, yeah, and it's a challenge. Like, we talked about with having kids that are needing this extra care, too, but, like, where I've been in that kind of a bad place lately, and it just makes me, I think, that much more aware of how it affects everyone around me.

Katie: Yeah.

Shannon: And so, like, I'm glad that I'm just still aware of that and I want to do better, you know? And, like, this has been a season of a lot of apologies for me, and which is something that I'm huge with my kids about, is I don't think I was ever apologized to as a kid. And so I love to apologize. I mean, I don't love that I have to, but, like..

Katie: I love to apologize

Shannon: I love to apologize to my kids just to show them, like, hey, I screw up all the time. Like, I am not perfect. I don't have things down. I make mistakes, and so do you, you know. And apology, apologizing is huge for me, for them to see that I can do that and humble myself, because I was definitely not raised that way. It was just, like, I wasn't a mom. I'm right, even if I'm wrong.

Katie: Especially listen to me if I'm wrong right now.

Lori: It's funny, I probably grew up the same where you just don't apologize. I think a lot of that just wasn't a thing back then. And, it is something that we talk about a lot, is we're going to make mistakes, we're going to yell. We all do things and say things we shouldn't when we're emotional, that's never going to change. We're always going to do that, and we can repair and make things better by apologizing. Last night, my daughter, like, got really upset and was super angry at me and had a meltdown, and she came back and she goes, I'm sorry, mom. And at seven years old, it was the first time she's ever done that. And I thought, oh, my gosh. All these years of apologizing to her and modeling that paid off.

Shannon: Yay. That's very exciting.

Katie: And when you're in the trenches, it doesn't always feel that way that this is making a difference, but it is.

Shannon: That's awesome. That is very cool.

Lori: For you know, a lot of people who are listening, who are maybe thinking about adopting and maybe have been on a similar fertility journey, or they just want to adopt or maybe they have kids that they have adopted that have ADHD. Were there any, like, resources or groups or books or anything that really just helped you in that journey? What would, what tips would you give people?

Shannon: I mean, there's so many resources now that are different than when I first started, but I will say there's one class that I've taken multiple times and I hope I get it right. TBRI training. Anyways, fabulous. Like, that training, to me is, like, not just adoptive families, every parent should take this class. It is very good about explaining the brain, and it was the, it was the kind of thing that made me truly understand okay, my child's brain is different, and

that's okay, but it's different, and we have to handle things differently. That was a really hard thing. And from our background, too, we, were very, very strict. And so it was really up in the air. Like, how do we parent? We don't know what to do. We don't want to be like, that was. But what do we do? And it was, it helped us kind of dissolve what we thought parenthood would look like and realize, like, okay, this is real. This isn't just a brat, because they want to scream and yell at you and, like, there is real things that matter. So, I would say, like, that class was amazing. I'm sure there's...

Lori: I just googled it. Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI). And actually, yeah. my friends who have adopted from foster care also said it was extremely helpful for them.

Shannon: Yes.

Katie: So we'll link that in the show notes for anyone that's looking for that.

Shannon: I loved it, and I know it's offered, like, locally, so I don't know, wherever you're at, but I'm sure you google it and you could figure it out. Yeah. that, to me, I really, really and I took a ton of classes, and that was my favorite by far. Like, it just really broke it down. Anyway, that was huge. And I think now there's just so many resources. I would say the most important thing, and that I valued a lot for the second adoption because we were out of the cult, so we had different kinds of relationships, and I felt much more supported. But like, allow people to support you. I, you know, the first time around, I didn't have that, so I didn't even have that option. But I think most people that have a decent support group around them, the people want to support you, so, like, let them. Let them help you when things get stressful. Like, we had the couple of years where I didn't know if we were gonna make it. Like, things were so chaotic and, like, unmanageable in our home. And I have a wonderful neighbor who's kind of like my kid's second or third grandma, and she for, like, two years took my girls to school so I could get my son to school. And, like, I never would have allowed that. Never. But it was just, like, so desperate, and she's like, I'm retired. Please let me do this. Like, I need stuff to do.

Katie: I love that.

Shannon: So I think, like, yeah like being open to accepting the help that people are putting out there. I tend to be very closed off, and, like, I got it. I got it. I'm fine. I'm fine. And the

more I learn about myself and my children, the more accepting I am of all the help. Like, what can you help me with?

Katie: That's so interesting. You're really speaking to my personality, too. Like, I've got it. Like, I could have my hands full. I'm dropping stuff on the ground, and I've got, like, two kids that I'm trying to wrangle, and someone says, can I open that door? And I'm like, no I got it.

Shannon: Yeah.

Katie: Like, what? I clearly so do not have it. Why do we have this need to be like, I've got this. I don't know where that comes from, but I very much can relate, and I'm sure a lot of people listening can, too, because we just feel like we have to do it all. And, I love leaning into that community.

Shannon: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Well, and it's, it's those deep, meaningful relationships, you know. And so you could have, I could have one deep, meaningful relationship, and that's more supportive than a group of 100 people that I see all week long, and I don't, we talk about the weather, you know? So, yeah I definitely am so thankful for, like, my friends now, and, you know, and we've been able to, like, support other families because we've been through the trenches, and, I mean, we're still in the trenches, but we've been able to support other families that have kind of dealt with some similar situations that our children deal with. And so it's like, oh, cool like, we can help someone else, too. Like, I'll take help from someone, and then I'll help someone else and, you know, be a part of that community, too.

Katie: I love it. I think I need to figure out where to get a retired grandma that can help me drive my kids.

Shannon: I give it five stars.

Katie: I'll be googling that later. If I find any links, I'll put them in the show notes. No, I'm just kidding.

Shannon: Maybe we should create, like, a website. This could be a thing.

Katie: This could be a thing.

Shannon: Stand in grandmas.

Katie: Yeah, exactly. We all need that, I know. So, Shannon, we have just loved having you on the show, and your story is so unique. And I feel like there's going to be a lot of people who are listening, who are like, I need to know more, and I need to see what she's up to on a daily basis. So, can you let our listeners know what's the best way to find you? How can they find your show? How can they stay in touch with you?

Shannon: Yes. So, I'm most active, I would say, on Instagram, and that's @therealshannypants. I hang out also and do lives on YouTube, which is Shanny Pants Show.

Katie: Okay.

Shannon: Everything is at shannypantsshow.com, so that's easy. Everything's there. I'm kind of everywhere. I also have a podcast as well that you guys were on. We talked about that a little bit. And that's The Shanny Pants Show. So I've that's like, my baby. I love it. It's so much fun. I mean, so much work for a hobby. But I love it.

Katie: We can personally attest.

Shannon: Yes, you can! It's like, why did I start this? Ah, but I love it. I love it so much. And, so, yeah, you can kind of find me in all those places.

Katie: I love it. And we'll go ahead and link all those as well. But I think that's going to be really helpful. So thank you so much for being here. We appreciate you.

Shannon: Of course. Thank you, guys. That was so much fun.

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!