

## **Shining with ADHD by The Childhood Collective**

### **Episode #172: Encouragement After an ADHD Diagnosis: Relief, Fear, and Hope**

Mallory: Good parents can have challenging kids. We see so many parents blaming themselves for their child's challenges, and maybe people are telling them that, too, right. If you just parented differently, if you were just stricter, it's something it's putting the blame on parents, which is just absolutely not true.

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. Today we have a little bit of a different, maybe emotional podcast episode. So, you might want to get out a box of Kleenex now just so you're prepared.

Lori: I always have Kleenex stocked in my office for parents, because when I'm doing ADHD evaluations, basically everybody who comes in and does an interview or when I go over results, they're going to cry. That's just a part of the process. So today on the podcast, instead of our usual education and strategies, we're taking a little bit of a step back. And for some of you, it might even be a really big step back. So, we're going back to the time when your child first received their ADHD diagnosis.

Mallory: Yeah. And going through the process of getting an evaluation for ADHD, it's just a huge rollercoaster ride of emotions. And when you're pursuing this evaluation, you probably are looking for answers and you want some clear direction to support your child, but getting

those answers maybe brings out some big emotions and maybe a lot of questions that you weren't expecting. And sometimes what you need is you just need a little encouragement from your friends and family going through riding this roller coaster, right.

Katie: Yes. I mean, I know I've been there, and this can really be so hard. And at the same time, we know that a lot of you maybe didn't receive the encouraging words, support, or a listening ear that you and your child really deserved after getting their ADHD diagnosis.

Lori: So, a while ago, we polled our audience on Instagram, who are all ADHD parents, and we asked them what encouraging words they wish someone had told them during their child's diagnosis. And we had such an overwhelming number of responses from parents with words that we're going to share with you today.

Mallory: Yeah. So even if you didn't receive that encouragement in the past, today we have five encouraging words so you feel supported on this beautiful and sometimes really challenging journey of parenting kids with ADHD. But before we head into our words of encouragement, we wanted to share with you some different families' perspectives and their feelings when they first received their child's diagnosis.

Melissa: My name is Melissa, and I am a mom to two amazing kids with ADHD. When we first received a diagnosis, initially out of the gate, I felt validated while at the same time, I was overwhelmingly thinking I am not equipped for this. And at my core, I feared honestly for their future. Like, what would that look like with their friendships, with their careers, with their education? Would they be able to thrive as I had hoped, when they were little, teeny little ones?

Todd: My name is Todd, and I'm a parent of two kids with ADHD. When we first got the diagnosis, I had a flood of emotions. First, I was hit with sadness. Did I fail or let my children down by not pursuing a diagnosis earlier? What would their future look like? As, someone who personally knows the struggles of ADHD, I felt disappointed to know that my kids may share some of the same experiences, but I also experienced some positive emotions, including relief. We finally had answers and some direction to help them.

Monique: Hi, my name is Monique, and I have ADHD, and I am raising a daughter with ADHD as well. When I first learned about her diagnosis, I initially had a mixed bag of

emotions. There was, some excitement with having answers and knowing a clear direction, but there was also some fear in anticipating what her future would look like.

Katie: Obviously, this diagnosis can bring up so many emotions, and we know that many of you are experiencing them right now. So, our first tip for families that are just recently getting their ADHD diagnosis is to keep in mind that you are the right parenthood for your amazing child. And we say that and we truly mean it, because ADHD parenting can be hard, and there might be days when you feel like, oh, my gosh, I'm just really exhausted. I'm fighting with my child. I'm struggling to connect. And even in those really hard times, we want you to keep at the forefront of your mind that you truly are the right parent for your child.

Lori: Yes, absolutely. The second thing we want to tell you is it's okay to take time to sit with your grief. And I want to qualify this with, obviously, we think ADHD brains are amazing. They're unique, and there's nothing wrong with that. But I also want to take some time to recognize that you are going to grieve, and that's okay, because when we have our kids, even before we give birth to them, we have these expectations and we have these dreams about them and their future and who they'll become. So, when we find out news of a diagnosis, a lot of times this changes. This changes how we look at their future, and it changes our perspective on that. And it's okay to have grief around that.

Katie: I think one of the things that comes up for me is I do find myself worrying about those challenges that they're going to face in the future. And I think, you know, the world is already so challenging and so hard in some ways, it's also beautiful and amazing, but it can be really difficult. And so, I find myself thinking, like, oh, my gosh, I don't want them to have to go through this. And myself being diagnosed, I know how it's affected me. And not knowing about my diagnosis for a long time, I think I was probably didn't always have the right tools in place, and so I worry about my kids and I'm like, what's it going to be like for them?

Lori: Yeah. And I think your perspective is one that we hear from so many families that, again, so many of you parents didn't have the tools and support early on. But that is one amazing and beautiful thing about getting your child diagnosed early is that you can give them that help that you maybe didn't receive early on. Obviously, it's our part as parents to protect our kids, right. And we don't want to see them struggle. We don't want to see them have challenges. But at the same time, I think we can all know and understand that those challenges that we have faced in our lives many times have made us learn, grow, gather

strength and confidence through overcoming those challenges. We know that all kids are going to have strengths and they're all going to have struggles and challenges, and that is what is going to make them who they are, and those challenges are going to help them grow and build confidence. And we know that they have the ability to succeed and overcome those challenges with ADHD. Take heart in that.

Katie: It's so hard, though, because you just want to just protect them from all the hard things. I know it's so hard for me to be like, it's okay. It's okay for them to struggle and grow through it, but as a parent, I will tell parents that all day long and then myself as a parent, it's really hard to keep that in the forefront of my mind.

Mallory: Absolutely. The next message that we want you to hear is that there's nothing wrong with you, and that good parents can have challenging kids. We see so many parents blaming themselves for their child's challenges, and maybe people are telling them that, too, right. If you just parented differently, if you were just stricter, it's something, it's putting the blame on parents, which is just absolutely not true.

Katie: Yeah. So unacceptable.

Mallory: Please know that you did not cause your child's ADHD. And we hear from a lot of parents the feeling of guilt, if they have ADHD, and yes, ADHD is strongly heritable. There is a chance that genetically, your child got that from you, but that does not mean that you caused your child's ADHD or you caused their challenges. Again, as Lori said, all of our children are going to have strengths and challenges in life. And there's something so beautiful about when you have ADHD and your child has ADHD, too, that you can just intimately understand your child's challenges and be an amazing advocate for their needs early on in life. So, you have the opportunity to support them and understand them in a way that maybe you weren't understood or supported as a child.

Katie: And for the families who are listening and the parents that are like, but I actually do not have ADHD that came from the other side of the family, which we totally understand that. You know, just keeping in mind, too, that if you don't have ADHD, you can still be an amazing advocate and you actually might have more success in setting up the kind of systems and strategies and routines. You know, it is easier, I'm just going to be honest, for neurotypical brains to set up routines and hold those boundaries and do all these things. And

so, you know, regardless of where you're standing, whether you're like, yes, I intimately know the challenges of ADHD because I myself have them, which gives you such an awesome way to relate to your child and understand them. Or you're like, nope, I am super organized. Great. Because your child needs that and they need you. And so really recognizing that wherever you are in this journey, you know, again, going back to my first point, you really are the best person to support your child, and you have tools that are unique to you to help you through it.

Lori: Absolutely. And our fourth kind of word, of encouragement for you is that nobody's journey is the same, and we want you to just focus on your child's journey. And this, again, is really, really hard. Again, if your, community is so important and you can be hanging out with your friends and doing a playdate, and your friends talking about how their kiddos reading chapter books and your child is still working on learning their letters and learning their sounds, and it feels like there's this huge gap in their development, it can feel like you're doing something wrong or I need to be doing more whatever. Again, just remember that your child's journey is going to be different than other people's. They might be working on just following one-step direction. And your friends' kids, you're watching them do three things all at once when they're parent, and do it immediately when their parent says to do it right, and you're thinking, oh, my goodness, like, we're never gonna get there. Just remember to focus on those small successes that you have with your child. Every child develops on their own unique path, and no child is gonna be the same. And some kids are going to be reading an advanced level, whereas your child might be this super athletic one who is really advanced in all the sports. But sometimes we place values on academics over athletics or whatever. So just focus on those wins, those successes that your child has, those small steps that they're making, because those are so important. And those small steps, are just as important as those bigger ones.

Mallory: Absolutely. And our final word of encouragement for you is that you don't have to figure it all out right now all at the same time, do all of the things all at once. And we know that when families get the diagnosis of ADHD, they feel launched into this list of shoulds. Like, I should be doing this, we need to do this. I should be talking to the school, and it feels really overwhelming. And we just want to kind of say, pause for a second. You don't have to do it all right now, take your time. Take your time at first just to sit with the diagnosis and process it, and then take it step-by-step. You don't have to change all the things at once. You

don't have to start all the therapies at once. You're not benefiting your child if you're exhausting yourself trying to do all the things. So, take it step-by-step, take it slow. You don't have to have all the answers right away. Chances are you're learning right alongside your child about the diagnosis and how to support your child. So just take your time in that and know that you are doing enough. We know that you are doing everything you can, and sometimes doing everything you can does that's not the same as doing all of the things, right.

Katie: I need to put that on a t-shirt.

Mallory: So just know, we know you're doing everything you can and it doesn't have to be all the things.

Lori: Yeah. And I know I get done with evaluations, ADHD evaluations, and I'm going through a report, and the reports are lengthy, and the recommendations are lengthy. And I always tell parents, I don't want you to be overwhelmed because we a lot of times give recommendations for three years worth, because we don't do these very often, these comprehensive evaluations. And by the end, I really try and sit with parents and say what are like the top one, two at most three things that you're going to address or do. And sometimes it's really just education, educating yourself about the diagnosis and getting some understanding around that. And that might be the first thing that you're doing and not launching yourself into a million therapies for your child and that's okay.

Katie: Absolutely. And so, if you are actually going through that evaluation process right now and you know that you might need some encouraging words in the near future, just make sure to bookmark this podcast so that you can come back later. I think, you know, we've all been there and you're definitely gonna want this. If you're new to the ADHD parenting journey, or you just need more help with ADHD parenting, make sure to check out our free ADHD parenting guide. That's a linked in the show notes.

Lori: But before we leave you today, we want to hear from some families who are also going to offer you one piece of advice or encouragement.

Melissa: If you're a parent or caregiver and you just got a diagnosis, feels heavy or scary, the thing that I would say to you is just take a breath. And I know that sounds like that feels really hard, but your brain wants to go into protection and survival mode and the best thing to

calm you down is to stay connected with your child. So maybe table it for the evening and just really engage with the little face in front of you and remember that they are the same kid they were a year ago, two years ago, and they will still be that same amazing child.

Todd: Advice for a parent whose kid just got diagnosed with ADHD, man, don't put off the help they need out of fear or insecurities. I try to remind myself that as a parent, I'm making a forever impact. It goes beyond them being a child and making it through school, but into adulthood and potentially becoming parents themselves. Even when you don't know what to say or do, just showing up means everything to them.

Monique: For a parent whose child just got diagnosed, I think the first step is take a deep breath. It's going to be okay. Knowledge is power, and making sure that you educate yourself is the best thing that you can do for your kid.

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!