

Shining with ADHD by The Childhood Collective

Episode #177: Getting a Late ADHD Diagnosis with Katie Sterbenz from Wee Talkers

Katie Sterbenz: And just like, silly things like, you know, your kids color days at school. It's like you show up to a sea of red and your kids wearing blue, and you're like, ah. Like, it's just so frustrating to be dropping those balls that matter to your kid, you know? And so, I think that that's when I started realizing, like, I need some support. I need, I need a different way of doing this and as the structure crumbled, so did my executive functioning skills and just my ability to kind of have a handle on life.

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, Mallory and I are so excited to chat with Katie Sterbenz from one of our favorite Instagram accounts Wee Talkers. Wee Talkers teaches parents of babies and toddlers how to support their child's language and communication development.

Mallory: They've helped thousands of families and children of all abilities learn to communicate to their fullest potential. When she's not working, Katie stays busy with her four kids. That's why sharing simple, doable tips that fit easily into busy family life is so important to her.

Katie: But today, Katie is s here to talk with us about her experience as a parent who has been diagnosed with ADHD herself and is also a mom to kids with ADHD. Katie's here to share about the ways she manages ADHD in her own life and how that affects her experience as a mother and a business owner. Katie, welcome. It's so fun to have another Katie on the podcast and you're also a speech language pathologist. This is basically my dream episode, right?

Katie Sterbenz: We're just here to confuse people. I'm so excited to chat with you guys. It's so fun to just hang out and just talk about life. So, thanks for having me.

Katie: Yeah, thank you for being here.

Mallory: Something fun that people may not know is that we actually get to see each other in real life sometimes because we make a lot of friends through Instagram who are across the country in different countries, but we're actually local to each other.

Katie Sterbenz: So fun. It's so fun. I saw Mallory last year at, like, a basketball game for our kids randomly and was like, oh, hey, it's so fun.

Mallory: That was fun. Maybe I'll see you this year, because that same son just started basketball, so maybe I'll see you around.

Katie Sterbenz: See you at the Y.

Mallory: Yep, I love it. So, let's jump in. Why don't we start, with, why don't you tell us a little bit about when you got your own ADHD diagnosis. Kind of what was going on in your life that led you to pursuing that diagnosis.

Katie Sterbenz: Yeah. So, I had to, like, go back to my emails to, like, see, like, when I saw this professional and when I saw that professional to, like, make a timeline. But it's been a little over three years that I've had my diagnosis, and it was shortly after my fourth child that I ended up receiving the diagnosis for ADHD. But to back up a little bit, like, I've been a speech therapist for a long time and worked in children's hospitals and schools, and there was, like, a lot of structure in that. And then when I started my private practice, it was less structured, I was required to make the structure. Also, as a mom, I was required to provide structure for my family. There was just less structure overall in my life. But I had been seeing

a therapist for anxiety for, like, lots of years and she had asked me two years prior to my diagnosis, like, do you think you have ADHD? And I was like, no, no, no.

Katie: I have high functioning anxiety over here. I've had that same conversation with my therapist.

Katie Sterbenz: I was like, have you seen my planners? Have you seen my, like, study guides when I was younger? I was like, no, but my husband does. Like, it's so funny because he's like the classic, like, he was in the hallway all the time as a kid. He was kind of a class clown. He was like, he was the hyperactive, stereotypical, what we would have thought 10 years ago is ADHD. And so, I was like, no, he is, but I'm not. And then I just was like, wow she never really misses the mark, but she, like, missed the mark on that one. Turns out she did not miss the mark. So, like, every, like..

Katie: Spoiler alert.

Katie Sterbenz: Right? So, every couple months she would just ask me again, do you think you have ADHD? And I'd be like, no. And then I started my son, my oldest son, when he was in third grade, like, we knew he had tendencies of ADHD, but, like, it's so hard to parse out when they're really little. Starting in third grade, it was way more obvious that the executive functioning skills just weren't quite up to par with his peers. And so, I started doing a lot of research, listening to podcasts, reading the research, like, reading books. And in doing that, stumbled across a lot of information about girls and what it looks like, to have ADHD in girls and how that looks so different. And I started kind of, like, seeing myself in some of those. And I was like, okay, maybe she has a point. And so actually, my son and I ended up getting a diagnosis, like, together. And we didn't get a coupon or anything.

Mallory: Buy one, get one!

Katie: Two for one girl. Yeah. It is true. That's such a common narrative, though, that parents are starting to do more research and understand for their kids, and then they start to realize, like, oh, wait, hang on a second.

Katie Sterbenz: Well, and it's funny because I kind of have always blamed the genetics on, like, my husband, you know, like, oh, well, yeah, he has ADHD because his dad has ADHD

and then I was like, oh, no he's, like, fully set up for ADHD with both of our, you know, gene makeup. And, so, yeah, it's kind of wild how that happened, but when I look at what was also going on during that time, like, I was forgetting my wallet everywhere. The lovely grandmas that would pay for my groceries at fries, like, way too many times.

Katie: Oh, my gosh. I've actually done that. And it's the worst feeling. You're like, I have a cart full of groceries, and I changed purses or whatever random things.

Katie Sterbenz: It was in the diaper bag. It was always in the diaper bag, and I had my purse and, like, Walli Cases, by the way, have saved my life. You guys should partner with them.

Katie: That's not sponsored, by the way.

Katie Sterbenz: No, but just having, like, your credit card on your phone, it's so much better. I mean, it was, like, pre Apple pay, too, you know, like, when Apple. Yeah. Anyway, I was forgetting my wallet everywhere. I was forgetting appointments a lot. My paper planner was, like, not cutting it. I was, like, doing things, like, not eating and not because of, like, any body issues, but because, like, there were just more pressing things in my mind that needed to be done. And so, I would put myself, like, and my needs, even, like, going to the bathroom. It was just like, I, there was so much to be done. There was so much to, that I just, I put my needs last. And when I would talk to my friends they're like, you didn't eat? Like, they just couldn't even fathom that. I was like, I don't understand how you do eat. Like, it just. And so it's interesting, like, with stimulants and stuff, how they're like, well, one side effect could be that you aren't hungry and you don't eat. I'm like, no, I actually eat much better when I take my medication because...

Katie: Because I remember to eat.

Katie Sterbenz: Just like, silly things, like, you know, your kids color days at school. It's like you show up to a sea of red and your kids wearing blue, and you're like, ah. Like, it's just so frustrating to be dropping those balls that matter to your kid, you know? And so, I think that that's when I started realizing, like, I need some support. I need a different way of doing this. And as the structure crumbled, so did my executive functioning skills and just my ability to kind of have a handle on life. So that's kind of the little summary of what led me to my ADHD diagnosis.

amazing to hear you describe that, and I think that so many people would in that moment just assume, well, motherhood is hard. Of course, it's hard because it's hard. And, you know, I'm struggling because I have four children, which I'm sure is, you know, part of the equation. But to really recognize and be like, no, this is actually harder for me and I shouldn't have to suffer in that way. I think that's really as mom I know, and parents probably in general, we tend to just kind of invalidate our own experience. Like, oh, it's just because I'm so forgetful, or I have mom brain and not realizing, like, no, these are actually symptoms. And not only that, but they can be supported, which is such a game changer when you realize.

Katie Sterbenz: Oh yeah, night and day.

Katie: Yeah. Being diagnosed later in life has really, I've been on a very similar journey, and it's really changed a lot of things for me. I was laughing when you were saying, yeah, we, you know, sort of assumed everything came from my husband's side of the family. That's so similar to me. My husband is very, classic ADHD. He's late, forgets the wallet, forgets the keys. We have, like, little rhymes so that he can remember everything. And I'm compared to him, I'm the organized one. So, I also have my paper planners, and they were very cute. So, I can just really relate to a lot of the pieces that you're describing. But I'm curious as to how getting that diagnosis has changed your perspective, maybe starting with yourself. Like, has it changed how you view yourself?

Katie Sterbenz: Yeah, for sure. I think that I grew up very judgmental and critical of myself. Not others, but just myself. And it has given me a ton of compassion for, like, because I know what it's like to kind of have a functioning brain with medication, I'm like, oh, life wasn't supposed to be that hard. It wasn't supposed to be so hard to remember things, to retain information and, like, soak it in and, like, learn it and not have to, like, reread it 5,000 times because I read the words on the page, and I have no idea what it said, you know? And it's because I just, my mind was elsewhere. And it's also shed a lot of light on, like, anxiety. I, so you guys know this, it's so hard to kind of parse out what it is if it's ADHD or anxiety. And I know that they both affect each other greatly, but, like, I chalked everything up to anxiety. And while I think that anxiety is definitely part of the equation, I think the ADHD made things so chaotic. The anxiety was grasping for just some, like, stillness and peace. So, I feel like it's just been really eye opening and has given me a lot of compassion for myself and just not made me beat myself up so much.

Mallory: So, you're approaching yourself with a little more compassion, a little more gentleness. How do you feel like your diagnosis has changed your perspective on your children and their experience?

Katie Sterbenz: Yeah, I mean, I think that although their ADHD looks a lot different than mine, I think that it gives me a lot of compassion for them. I think I'm very thankful that I have a husband who's triggered by different things than I am. Like, I think that when my son is, you know, sitting perched on his seat while he's eating a meal, it's not offensive to me. I'm like, yeah you know, like, it's just hard to sit. Whereas my husband's like, sit down. And then my daughter, like, you know, it was just hyper-verbal and, like, kind of intense and, like, close to you as she's talking and I'm, like, super offended, and he's, like, soaking it in, you know? And I'm so thankful that we have two parents to kind of, I don't know, balance that, because it's like, my kids are wonderful and delightful, and they're all very intense.

Katie: Yeah.

Katie Sterbenz: And, growing up is kind of like a people pleaser and, just wanted to make life easy for everybody, I didn't resonate with that. And so, I feel like knowing what I know about ADHD has just helped me see them with compassion and curiosity and less judgment. And I know that when I listen to friends who, you know, I mean, I'm obviously not diagnosing their kids, but when it's kind of like, oh, they probably need to go see a psychologist or a neuropsych, developmental pediatrician, about ADHD for their kids. They're so frustrated with their kids. Like they're just, why can't they do this? Like I told them 10 times, they're always late. They're never in a hurry. Like they're and they're just so frustrated. And I think all the time, like, I'm so glad I know what I know because they just don't know better. They don't, it's not their fault, like, they just don't know. So that's why the work that you guys are doing is just so incredible and valuable because I think that it offers families kind of a glimpse into it without necessarily taking that step yet. Like, they don't have to go to a doctor's office, which feels big. They can listen to a podcast and then maybe go to a doctor's office. But I think it's a really cool service that you guys give families.

Katie: Thank you. That means so much. And we feel the same about all the work that you do. And I think the key that, what you just said, the key that I heard is the curiosity piece. Because when we can be more curious about our kids, it really is an anecdote to that frustration, right? Like, I'm either gonna be so mad that you keep putting your foot on the

table during dinner, or I'm going to wonder, like, what's going on here? Is this not the right chair for you? Are you scooted too far back? And I'm not an OT. I love OTs for these kinds of things because they're just like, it kind of just flows for them to think of all these ideas. But even just as a regular parent, when I think curiously about how can we make this better, how can we make this easier, it's such a game changer. And I think our kids, they sense that, like they want to work with us and figure it out. Of course, they can be little stinkers at times too. My children, believe it or not, are not perfect. They don't always respond to my curiosity exactly how I want them to, but it is such a different experience when we can be curious. And I totally see that. I think also having ADHD does allow you and kind of in some ways force you to think outside the box. Which as a speech pathologist has been awesome for me throughout private practice, I didn't even know that that was a tool in my toolbox. But when something wasn't working, I was always willing to be like, what else can we try? Where there's a lot of clinicians that I've trained and worked with that if they're completely neurotypical, they're like, no, this is what the literature says we should do. It's like, well, great, that's a good jumping off point, but what else could we try? And so, I do think as a parent that's another kind of amazing part about being able to relate to our kids and just think outside the box.

Katie Sterbenz: Yeah. The creative problem solving is definitely like something I didn't realize I had access to, but I do. And you know, it's like there's so much hard about having ADHD and being a parent, but there's also really cool things like that. I think the other thing that having ADHD myself has made has changed my perspective with my kids is that like my daughter, she is a delight at school. And I mean I went to conference and the teacher like, could she be any more perfect? And I was like, huh? She's a delight at school. If I gave her teacher a rating skill for ADHD, she'd be like, what are you, why are you giving me this? Because she also has anxiety and she wants to achieve and she works really hard during the day to make that happen and then she comes home and is safe and we see other things that their teachers don't see. But knowing that just because she's doing really well at school and like behaviorally and externally it looks great, I know what's happening under the surface and I know the stress that's causing her. And so, I think that it makes me seek supports for her in a way that if I didn't know about ADHD and how it works in girls, I don't know that I would because it doesn't look like a problem. But I know that it's like wreaking havoc on her nervous system.

Mallory: It's like, it's that image of the duck like gliding across the pond and you just see this graceful duck going across the pond, but what you don't see is like the flippers under the water, like furiously paddling. We see that a lot in girls and a lot about ADHD is misunderstood in women and girls. And we still need a lot more research to really fully understand and not miss these girls in childhood. And a lot of girls are being missed for that reason that you just described, where parents are seeing a lot of these signs at home and the teacher is reporting zero. And so clinicians, professionals are telling them it can't be ADHD because it has to be across settings. And so since the teacher is saying it's not happening at school, it's not ADHD and that's a really frustrating place for parents to be. And I'm wondering, kind of, as you look back now, knowing what you know and having your diagnosis, do you now see early signs of ADHD in yourself? Like, you had the perfect planner, but, like, what was your little paddles doing underneath the surface of the lake, right?

Katie Sterbenz: No, like, that, image made me feel, like, a little teary because I was like, oh, my gosh, that's like, I've never heard that before and it's brilliant. I feel like that's so indicative of, like, how it feels, as a kid and even as, you know, even now sometimes. And I was laughing because you guys had given me this question before hand, and I wrote it all out and I was like, oh, gosh, there's a lot of things that, looking back, like, that's a lot of bullet points.

Katie: Yeah. How much time do we have? Yeah, let's get into it.

Katie Sterbenz: But I think that, I think that I...So, yes, I had perfectly, you know, curated planners and study guides that were color coded, but that's what it took for me to be interested enough to pay attention. I doodled on all the things, which is really interesting because now, like, I do a lot of computer work. I do a lot of meetings and things, and I don't doodle anymore, really, Like, a little bit, because I'm on a stimulant that helps me focus, but it's like, oh, I would doodle on everything. Reading, we kind of mentioned this before, like, reading a whole page and being like, I have no idea what I just read. But I really did read all the words and I didn't struggle. Like, I was a very fast reader. Like, it wasn't hard for me to read, but it was very hard for me to retain. I would have to, like, read it a lot of times. So I did really well on, like, homework. I did really well on, like, unit tests and quizzes that I would, like, study really hard for. But then when it came to, like, standardized tests, they were, like,

abysmal. And I was, like, in honors and, like, you know, I was an achiever. But my standardized test, like, I don't know how I got into grad school. Like, by the grace of God, I guess. But, like, my grades were good, but my standardized tests were really poor, because when you had to take all that knowledge together, like, it was just there wasn't as much support there, you know? Like, silly things, my dad used to always joke that when I was, like, 16 and 17 and he would, like, clean out my car if I was gone on a weekend or something, he'd be like, I found 32 water bottles. This was like, pre everybody carrying their Stanleys around, right? Like, everyone used plastic water bottles. And he'd be like, what? Why don't you just throw them away? And, like, it was a mess. It was a mess. So, like, kind of just like messy room, messy car, which is still messy. I would kind of, you know, as a kid, I would go through hobbies that I was, like, super into, make my parents, like, buy all the things for, like, candle making, and it would, like, last, like, three months, and then I move on to the next.

Katie: Three months. That's actually pretty good. I feel I bought candle making stuff and I did it once, and then I was like, what am I gonna do with 84 more wicks?

Katie Sterbenz: Yes, I mean, I think that was my generous one. I think that was a longer hobby.

Katie: It was a really good hyper focus.

Katie Sterbenz: Yes. Flying through hobbies like that. And my mom said that when I was a little, like a little toddler, you know, we'd wake up in the morning and be like, where are we going? What are we doing? Like, I just didn't want to ever, like, chill at home. I always wanted to be doing something and, like, on the go and then just, like, even, like, taking naps and stuff like, I never, I mean even when I was pregnant, like, I never napped ever, because I didn't understand how that was restful to people. I didn't understand how they could turn off their brain. Like, my mind was just always going. And then the last thing that I would say that I really kind of look back on and have a ton of compassion for, but I was always, like, kind of tagged as sensitive, like, by, you know, parents, teachers. She's just really sensitive. And I had big feelings, and I just didn't, it wasn't, I didn't know what to do with them. I knew I couldn't express them, so it would usually just come out in tears because it was like, either you're happy or crying, because that's the only we didn't have feelings charts, you know.

Katie: Well, parents didn't have the lot of those same tools, right, to like label the feeling. What does it feel like in your body? And noticing this, I mean, it's just...My mom and dad honestly kind of tease me as a parent because they're like, because my kids, you know, they'll be like, well, that just made me feel disappointed. And my parents are like, what is this? I mean, they're not, they're not like, not impressed, but they're a little just befuddled, I think. Like, what are you doing? You're validating all these feelings. And but what's interesting is when you have someone to say to you, like, yeah, that's okay, buddy. that was so disappointing it's like the feeling kind of just ebbs and flows and it's, it's kind of goes away and you're safe again. And my parents are like, wow. Because just like you said, we were kind of taught, like, you need to be happy, like, things are good, you have such a good life. And kind of just that I did, I did have a very good life. But I think that's such a different place to approach it. And when you're a little and you don't understand big feelings, it can be really scary because you don't really know, is this normal? Is something wrong with me?

Katie Sterbenz: Super overwhelming. I think all the time that my kids like the fact that they know that feelings go up and feelings go down. I'm just like, what a relief. Like, because it was just a big feeling for a long time that was just you were kind of on your own to let it pass, you know, and, and so, I mean, I'm so thankful that we live in a world where it's just more commonly known what is helpful to kids when it comes to emotions. So yeah, there was, there was quite a lot. And my dad, like, my dad will still say you don't have ADHD. Have they seen your study guides?

Katie: Those study guides.

Katie Sterbenz: That's what it took for me to be super interested and pay attention.

Katie: Well, I know you said you're shocked you got into grad school, but what that tells me about you as a child is that little Katie was really smart to figure that out, right? To know, like, this is what I need in order to be successful. And I think that's when you get those, we call them compensatory strategies. But once you get those compensatory strategies, it's easy for people to kind of overlook it and be like, oh, but you're doing fine. Yeah. It's really like how Mal said, how hard are you working?

Katie Sterbenz: Yeah.

Katie: So, on that same note, we get a ton of questions from parents who are really looking for more specific and actionable strategies for supporting themselves as an ADHD parent, right. Like, not, how do I help my kid with their foot at the dinner table, which we're still working through. But how can I, myself, cope better and manage the chaos of everyday life better? So, what are some tips that you might share with us, you know, helping manage your household and your diagnosis? Tell us all the things. I'm going to take some notes.

Katie Sterbenz: Yeah, I mean, I'm only a few years into it, right, so I definitely don't have it all together. I'm working on things all the time, and I just want to validate for families that, like, parenting with an ADHD brain for neurodivergent kids with a neurodivergent spouse is hard. It's really hard. And I think having compassion for yourself that, like, it's not going to look like your neighbor's house. You know, it's not, your life and your, the way that your family, like, culture is and the way that your house looks like, it's just gonna be different. And I think accepting that is really helpful. Not that you can't, you know, put systems in place and have these, like, super helpful tools, you definitely can. But I think that accepting, like, it's not going to be, like, a better Homes and Gardens situation. One room might be, but I think.. Do you guys ever listen to the Lazy Genius?

Katie: Ok, I just downloaded her podcast yesterday, but I haven't actually listened. I started, and then it glitched, and I was like, no, my attention span is lost.

Katie Sterbenz: Yeah. She is amazing, and I feel like that is, she is so full of practical tips, but has so much grace and compassion and is very real. And I have loved, she has a book, the Lazy Genius and then she's coming out with another book called the Plan that I'm really excited to read. But she talks about some principles that kind of, like, make life easier. And one of them is like, what can I do now to make life easier later? And I think about that all the time when like, even just, you know, if we're going to go to gymnastics and we are going to come home and have to make dinner really fast, can I put water in the pan or in the pot to put on the oven to boil, like not to turn it on to boil, but like can I just place it so that when I get home all I have to do is turn on the knob? Little tiny things like that. Can I put the kids shoes by the door or can the kids put the shoes by the door? Like what can I do now to make life just tinch easier later? That question is great and kind of gold. And sometimes that like what can I do now to make life easier later is like I'm gonna sit and not do anything for five minutes and give myself a chance to recharge, you know.

Mallory: Yeah. So, it's before school pickup.

Katie: Yes.

Katie Sterbenz: It's not always about being productive. Another thing that has been really helpful is that I am a paper and pen girl through and through. But paper and pen is not doing the job for kids and owning my own business and like it's just, it wasn't doing enough. So, I do a combo of I have on our fridge, this has been really helpful, it's a four month snapshot of like our family's life. We don't put everything in it by any means but it's really nice to be able to see the next month. Because I don't know about you guys but there's so much like school stuff and like so that, that has been nice especially for the kids when they ask like how many more weeks till fall break and I can like physically show them that's really helpful. Especially when it's you know, August and they're asking about fall break, it's on the same calendar. Like that's great. So that's been really, really great. And then I use Google Calendar to put in all the time sensitive stuff that happens during the day. I use a combination of paper, and then the Google Calendar, but the thing that is life changing for me, do you guys use Google Tasks?

Katie: We haven't.

Katie Sterbenz: So, Google Tasks is in your Google Calendar, you can have it as an app too, but I just put it in my calendar and basically anything that pops into my brain is something to do that isn't going to make it to the to do list that's like not next to me, I put it in the Google Calendar and you can just slide tasks. So, if you didn't do something one day, I mean I'm always sliding 10 tasks to the next day, but they're still there and they like it's so nice because it doesn't have to have a time in your calendar. Like I don't have to be like, oh, at 6pm I'm going to do this thing. It's just like sometime today I need to pick up a prescription and it has like a little checkbox, like when you're done, it crosses it out, which is still a little helpful for some dopamine.

Mallory: Yup, little reinforcing.

Katie Sterbenz: Yeah. So Google Tasks is really, really, really helpful for me. And then in the Google Calendar, sharing it with my husband and sending him. I started like sending him emails sometimes like at the end of the day that was like, can you do this, this and this? And

I'll send it to his work email because it's what he's on during the day and like his Google Calendars up and he can just like kind of slide it in and so instead of waiting like oh, when he gets home I need to ask him to do that because I just won't remember to ask him. So, technology I feel like has been really helpful similarly, like just opening a draft and writing the thought to the person that I need to send it to, but not having the time to write the email, but just keeping the draft there is like when I open my computer I'm like, oh yeah, I needed to send that email. So kind of just like starting things without, I mean I feel like that's so the opposite of what they would recommend to start things and don't finish them, but it at least is a reminder that you do need to finish it. So a lot of technology tools. And then I was texting with Katie the other day and I was using voice message. Carly, my business partner and I, we use voice message all the time and she was like, what? I've never used this. And I was like, oh, this is life changing for me too because sometimes it's hard when you have kids around to text a longer text. And so, we use voice memos all the time to send each other. It just feels like a little bit more natural. I don't feel like I have to be as edited. It just gets done as opposed to not getting done.

Katie: I love that.

Mallory: Done is always better than not done.

Katie: I'm going to start sending Lori and Mallory voice to text. I was telling Mal about it before we got on today and I was like, it's great because you know, in a text I feel limited. I feel like I can only say so many things before it gets weird. In a voice memo I talked for like, 42 seconds, nobody stopped me, I didn't self-edit. I loved it. It was great. I feel like they would not be amused to get my super long voice to text memos. But, you know, hey, everyone can be their own person.

Katie Sterbenz: Well, and they can see how long it's gonna be. They can choose to listen or not. You know, like, oh that one's four minutes, I'll get to that later.

Katie: Okay. I promise I won't send you a four minute voice memo. But, you know, I loved it. And I do think it is hard a lot of times for people with ADHD because again, like you said, there's the editing piece and then there's like, almost overthinking it. Like, how do I want to say it? What do I want to say? And, fortunately, honestly, I really don't overthink text messages, but I do see my husband struggle with that. Like, he'll start to write a text and then

he'll like, put it down because he's like, no, I don't, I don't really know exactly how to say it. And then I'll just be like, just send it. Like, we're just trying to schedule a tree trimmer or whatever. We just need to get it done. So, I do think so much of your tips are around that. Just like, when you think of it, acknowledge the thought and do something to remind yourself later. Because that happens to me too, where I'm like, oh, I need to remember to get this thing, and then it's like, really and truly, the scene changes and I've totally lost that plot.

Katie Sterbenz: So totally. And I know a lot of the advice from like, ADHD coaches is like, when you think of something, just do it. And I'm like, it's just not feasible a lot of times. Like, I'm in the car, at pickup with four kids like, I can't finish that task, right. But I can start it and I can remind myself of it later this way because it's just not feasible to drop everything to do the thing you remembered anymore, right. Like, it probably was at one point in my life, but it's not anymore. So, a lot of, like, technology tweaks have been really helpful. Cooking, I don't know about you guys, but, like, cooking for me at the end of the day when kids are super stressed and like unwinding, I'm stressed and I've met my max. And then I have to like, read a recipe and I, like, can't I'm like, wait, what am I supposed to put it in the oven or the stove? What I don't understand. And it's like really frustrating. So, I definitely like lower the bar on dinner and I kind of we do like tacos every Tuesday. I usually will do spaghetti one time like the week. We always do a breakfast for dinner. We, and I just, if I have the bandwidth to do like a really great breakfast or you know, like I packed a really nutritious muffin in their lunch, like I'll feel good about that. And dinner is just like not going to be my jam this season. We're going to just like give them food and try our best, but we're not gonna like feel like we need to cook through the cookbooks, I guess.

Mallory: I can relate to that a lot. It's the simpler the dinner the better. Especially when I find that when I'm doing the complicated recipes, the cookbook recipes, then that's, those are the least likely to actually be eaten by my kids. So, then you're frustrated that you followed the recipe, your kid didn't eat it so I'm all about those dinners, too.

Katie Sterbenz: I mean cereal and smoothie nights when you need one is just like, like no one's upset about a cereal and smoothie. The only one who's judging me is like my high school self.

Katie: You're like, what thought we were going to cook with tarragon and other fancy spices?

Katie Sterbenz: That was then, this is now. Yeah. So, I think just like simplifying and having, you know, I think that when you have a strength that like my daughter's birthday for example, is this weekend. And like I am super creative and like I love crafty stuff and like that's going to be way more complicated than my dinner. But like that's what I care about and that's like what I'm going to pour into because I love that and that helps her feel loved. And I kind of think just like leaning into those strengths of like, when you can put more into it, go for it, you know, it's just simplifying the things that are hard.

Mallory: Love it. So, we probably have a lot of listeners who are in the position maybe that you were five years ago, four years ago, before your diagnosis, where maybe the thought has crossed their mind or someone has brought the idea up to them that maybe they have ADHD. What advice do you have for parents who are contemplating getting an ADHD evaluation for themselves?

Katie Sterbenz: Well, I think the first thing would be that if you're thinking about it, you should try to get on a waitlist, because the waitlists are really long. And so, if you don't need it, then you can totally cancel the appointment. But I think that just getting yourself on a waitlist is a really big step and can feel overwhelming, so I think just considering that the waitlists are long is helpful. And I think that the other thing is that you might be surrounded by friends who are also overwhelmed, who say things like, don't you think it's just, like, a mom thing? Like, the mental load so much, and you have so many kids, and of course things are falling through the cracks. But I would encourage you to look back on, like, your childhood and your teen years and see if there's anything that kind of resonates with, like, yeah, just, like, how hard you had to try compared to what was typical. And if there was anything that kind of points to, maybe there's something more. And I think an evaluation is only helpful because no one's going, I mean, not nobody, but most professionals are not going to diagnose you with ADHD if that's not what it is. And if it's something different, they might have some, you know, insight into what else that could be. But I think that getting a diagnosis just helps you have compassion towards yourself. It helps make things more clear. It kind of points you to research and strategies that say these things can be helpful for you. I just know for me, like, I've never known what, like, peace and rest in my body has felt like until these past couple years. Like, I didn't know that that was, I didn't know I was experiencing unrest. I didn't know I was experiencing so much unsettling because that was

my baseline my whole life. And so, I just would encourage you that if you're feeling kind of tugged towards this, like, to just kind of follow that curiosity and see where it leads.

Katie: Thank you so much. That is so helpful. And I know that there's going to be people who are listening, who want to learn more about you and follow you guys for some of those resources, so we'll make sure to link all of your resources and parenting tools in the show notes. But, Katie, thank you so much for sharing your experience today. It means a lot to us.

Katie Sterbenz: Thanks so much for having me, you guys.

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!