

Shining with ADHD by The Childhood Collective

Episode #210: ADHD in the Classroom: Real-Life Strategies from a Teacher Who Gets It

Kristina Manning: Meeting the needs, of the emotional needs of the whole class, you don't just obviously, it's not just one kid who has ADHD who has these big feelings, like if we stop and take brain breaks or if we do class meetings. I used to always do a class meeting every single day for the first few minutes of the day. If anybody had something they wanted to share, to, you know, to meet their emotional needs and just to get things off their chest before we just run into learning.

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.

Lori: Katie and I are so excited to introduce our guest today, Kristina Manning. Kristina is an ADHD parenting coach who got her start in the education sector as both a classroom teacher and a school counselor.

Katie: Kristina is also the founder of Calm Minds Parent Coaching, where she helps parents create peaceful and thriving home environments.

Lori: Kristina's passions lie in empowering parents to embody the principles of peaceful parenting and nurturing healthier relationships within the family unit. Thanks so much for joining us on the podcast today, Kristina.

Kristina Manning: Thank you, guys, so much, Lori and Katie, for having me. You guys were guests on my Summit twice, and I'm just, I'm pumped to be here on your podcast this time.

Lori: Yes. And we were so excited because we were talking on the Summit all about school related things and you were commenting that, and sharing some of your experience as a classroom teacher, so at the end of that, we were like, we have to have you on our podcast. Not that just you have both perspectives, which I think is very unique. You're, you do parenting coaching, but also were a classroom teacher so you have experience from both sides, which is very unique and valuable.

Kristina Manning: Yes, thank you.

Katie: It is. And I am curious about that. So, tell us a little bit about that transition from being an educator and a counselor into coaching. Tell us about your journey.

Kristina Manning: Yeah, so I taught third grade for a really long time. I taught kindergarten for one year, but most of my career was in third grade, so I got to hang out with eight- and nine-year-olds all day, which is never a dull moment.

Katie: Yep. I have a third grader, so I can fully picture it in my mind.

Kristina Manning: Yes. Yeah, there's, it's always fun in third grade. So, yeah, I did that for a long time. And then, you know, the pandemic hit and everybody in the entire world was struggling. Adults, children. And I found that kids, neurodivergent kids, were struggling a little extra. And I was getting a lot of communication from parents saying, Kristina, I don't know what to do. My child with ADHD, and particularly lots of kids with ADHD were really struggling as routines and predictability was just kind of taken away from them so abruptly. There are so many meltdowns, and it's just distance learning was hard. And so it was that time when I said, you know what I want to start, supporting parents privately, because it's definitely a need. And so, I didn't look back and ever since then, I've been, you know, coaching parents of kids with ADHD, and it's just been a great experience.

Katie: That's great. Yeah. I always think of 2020 as just such a pivotal time for a lot of us, and people really reevaluated things, and, you know, is this the path I still want to be on? But I feel like most people, when you talk to them, it's like they have a before and an after of 2020, and the whole pandemic just yeah, it was a game changer. And especially for those of us who had, you know, younger kids at that time, it was just so many pieces to that puzzle. So, yeah, I definitely hear you. So, yeah, well, this is great. And again, we just are really grateful for your expertise, you know, both as a teacher and I know you also were a counselor and that is so valuable. You know, we hear so much on our podcast from parents and their experiences, but it's great to have, you know, another perspective from someone who spent a lot of time in the classroom. And on that note, why don't we jump right into what would you say are some of the biggest challenges teachers face when they are supporting students with ADHD in their classrooms?

Kristina Manning: Yeah, I think the biggest one is really, ADHD is really misinterpreted. And I think, it's really hard for peers to understand neurodivergence. You know, other students in the classroom may think that kids with ADHD are bad or they're lazy or, you know, cause they tend to have lots of energy and, you know, lots of movement walking around, and it can distract the rest of the class. And so, I think that is a big challenge, is just misunderstanding from peers. But I did always try when I was a teacher to, you know, make sure that we were, you know, it was a safe space in my classroom, and we were appreciating diversity and just getting kids to understand that everybody learns differently. But given that it still was a challenge. Also matching energy levels of kids with ADHD. You know, we know kids with ADHD tend to, you know, be wiggly and move around a lot, and they thrive with, like, new stuff and excitement and novelty. And while I try, you know, or I tried really hard to make, you know, lessons really engaging, you can't always put on a show and make it the most exciting thing every single day. So, you know, just, you know, matching that energy levels or it was definitely something that can be a challenge sometimes. I'd also say that sometimes there are some communication barriers with parents. And, you know, as we know, like, it's very, very important to have open communication with all, you know, students' parents. But especially with a child, when there are divergence and, you know, they have, you know, different needs. I think that could be kind of hard sometimes when I was trying to, you know, just talk to parents and get a hold of them. So, I think communication is really important to establish in the beginning of the year. You know, are we going to have an email that gets sent home every Friday? Are we going to, communicate on an app like Class Dojo?

So just like, you know, trying to figure out how to communicate, the frequency of communication. But, it's important for parents and teachers to be on the same page. So, I found that personally to be kind of a challenge with some of my students. But I think the biggest thing is just matching energy levels and just, you know, when peers are like, why can he get up and walk around? And how come he's allowed to have a standing desk? And so, you know, just honoring everyone's needs at once and balancing it can be sometimes a challenge.

Lori: Yeah, we have a challenge in The Childhood Collective of, like, matching Katie's energy level. Because Mallory and I, a lot of times don't match Katie's energy level.

Katie: I think the one that really is where it becomes really evident is on Monday mornings, we have an 8am. We all jump on our walking pads, and we're on Zoom for a few hours every Monday. That's like our team check in. And I roll in, just no makeup, like, in my workout clothes, and I feel like I've already had four cups of coffee. That's just the energy that my body works at. And so, I am like, okay, let's dive in. I have this funny story. And they're both kind of just like...okay.

Lori: I'm on my second cup of coffee. Katie had none and she's amped up, ready to go.

Katie: Yeah, well, I was gonna say too, you know, thank you, Lori. I appreciate that personal connection that. Yes, I am, in fact, the one that has to, everyone has to match that energy. But I also know for the classroom context with my third grader, as I mentioned, I have a third-grade son and he is really struggling with this with one of his teachers specifically because she's very low energy. Not his classroom teacher, it's a specials teacher. But you know, talking to him, I'm like, buddy, you know, you know, she sent an email, she said, you were talking in class. And she, he's like, mom, this is the most boring thing I've ever done. She tells me to learn words in Spanish, like, it's so boring. And you know, I'm thinking of this poor teacher and she's a relatively new teacher and it's like, how is she going to make that very, very interesting for my 8-year-old every single day? You know, it is, it's a challenge. And then you have some kids who maybe like Lori would want a little more mellow classroom environment, you know, and not that super-fast paced, like, go, go, go out of your seat. So, absolutely. I think that is a huge, huge challenge for teachers. And I know as an ADHD parent, I'm always like, yes, I'm so grateful for the teachers who do try to keep it interesting, but it's a juggling act, I'm sure.

Lori: Yeah, absolutely.

Katie: I'm curious, when you mentioned the communication with parents, do you, did you feel like parents in general were receptive to that communication? Thinking of your ADHD parents, did you feel like they were open to feedback and suggestions and collaboration or... Obviously this is broad strokes, right? But what was your overall experience?

Kristina Manning: Overall, yes, I think that they were open. But you know, when a child is not yet diagnosed and you're kind of bringing that to a table with like maybe a school psychologist and a school counselor and they're hearing that for the first time, they can get a little defensive, you know, that's their baby. And so, we just have to be really sensitive about that. But in terms of general communication, there were just some instances where I had, kind of, you know, communication issues when parents wouldn't call back or wouldn't write an email back. And I, well, I understand it's, you know, they're juggling a lot of things and they're working and they're very busy, it's just super, super important to, to have a working relationship with the parents. Especially kids with neurodivergence, so that we can all be on the same page, have a common language and just you know, have that continuity and support them at home and at school.

Lori: Yeah. And we know that we talk about this all the time that consistency is so important whether that's between two parents or other family members that are taking care of the child or teachers at school. Consistency helps kids learn much more quickly.

Kristina Manning: Yes, absolutely.

Lori: So important to have that kind of common language and that you're addressing things in a similar way. It's so helpful.

Kristina Manning: Yeah.

Lori: But you, kinda speaking of kind of matching energy levels and related to that, can you talk a little bit about what strategies that you found to be the most effective in helping students with ADHD stay focused and engaged during lessons at school?

Kristina Manning: Well, I think very at the very first, it's the relationship. It's so, so important to make sure that you have a relationship with all kids and that you're really trying to tie in

their interests and like their, their personal interests and hobbies into the curriculum as much as you can. When you do that, kids are going to listen. They want to hear their name in like a math problem or they want to hear that like, oh wow, my teacher like remembers that I love great, you know, great white sharks and so tying their personal interests I think really can help spark their motivation. Also visuals are going to be the best friend of an ADHDer. It's, it's so important to make learning visual, make time visual. So anywhere we can have not only a visual schedule up on the board, but also for kids with ADHD, maybe a little visual on their desks as they have their own personal, you know, visual to refer to, to be like, okay, I know what's next, I know what my expectations are. So that you know, and also like using different types of modalities, you know, trying to keep kids engaged. So, like sometimes I would like put on, say I was teaching about sharks, I would put on like a, you know, two minute YouTube video to get them engaged and get them interested, right. Trying to do as many hands-on activities as we can in project-based learning. Not where I'm just like standing up like some Bueller, you know, like it's like...

Katie: Anyone? Anyone?

Kristina Mannjng: Right, right. Like you know, lecturing and you know, so just making sure that I'm keeping things interesting. Also, you know, trying to break things up and chunk things into little pieces because as we know with ADHD, multi-step directions can be challenging. So, if I'm having them write or if I was having them write a persuasive letter, you know, break it up, let's talk about, give them the opportunity to talk about their, you know, what they're going to write first and use graphic organizers. And yeah, just, you know, make sure that you're giving them lots of breaks too. Like if you want to keep them engaged, maybe do like 10 minutes of instruction and then do a brain break. And yeah, you can do that, just, you can have, I've seen it two different ways and I've experienced it two different ways. Where we would give the entire class, like, turn on, go noodle, dance for a few minutes and then get back to our work. Or I've also seen it when I've been on the end as a counselor where I've taken that ADHD child out of the classroom and we did like a movement break, like a walk around the building, do some wall pushups. But yeah, just making sure that we're understanding and being developmentally appropriate and knowing that, in order to keep kids engaged, we need to give them, they thrive on move movement. Let them stand if they want to hold something or squeeze something.

Lori: Yeah, and it's one of those, it's interesting because it is one of those things that all those things actually are beneficial to all students.

Kristina Manning: Exactly.

Lori: But they're really essential for an ADHD kid. Like, if you don't have those things, they are not going to be successful in the classroom. But as somebody who has, like, worked in the schools too, and my background is in school psychology, so I've been working in schools for 20 years now. It's so interesting because now when I go into classrooms, brain breaks and like, dance breaks are like a very normal thing that you see in the classrooms in elementary schools, which is so great. And it didn't used to be like that. You know, you would, I would go in and observe for an entire hour in a first-grade classroom and they're expected to sit. So, I love that that's been something that's been incorporated for like all kids in the classroom because you really know, like, they're all going to do better with focusing if they have those movement breaks.

Kristina Manning: Exactly, exactly. You know, a lot of, you know, accommodations that you see on like 504 plans or IEPs are really just teaching best practices. They're going to benefit everybody. Right. And we don't want, you know, the point is we don't want anyone to feel left out or singled out or, you know, they're special or anything, you know, they're getting these special treatments. So like, why not just offer it to everyone in the class? It's, everyone's going to benefit.

Lori: Right. And we have so many families that'll be like, well, we need to find out like how my child learns the best. And really what we know from research is that all kids learn best when you teach things in different ways, when you have hands on activities, when you have a visual representation, when you hear it auditorily. Like if you kind of go at all of these different areas, like all kids benefit from that, that learning style. So, I think that's really helpful too.

Kristina Manning: Yeah. And I just wanted to add one last thing. And we know that with neurodivergence, like neurodivergent kids, they like thrive on autonomy, right. They want to be able to make their own choices. So, I just wanted to add in, providing choices for kids I think can also keep them engaged too. You know, would you like to do this first or that, or

would you like to write your answer on this mini whiteboard with a dry erase marker or tell me your answer verbally? So, choices are super helpful as well.

Katie: Yeah, I love that. And I think that is such a, you know, in some ways it's counterintuitive, right. Because you might see a child who's struggling in the classroom and it's like, okay, no, I want to just be really directive with this kid. And for any of us who have a child with ADHD in our home or know a child with ADHD, or even ourselves, if we have ADHD, we know that's just not going to work, the way that you want it to work. And you kind of touched on this, but I did want to see if you had any other thoughts just in terms of, yes, there's definitely those interventions and supports at the individual level, which you've talked about some. And then you also were naming some that can be helpful for the whole classroom that are just like you mentioned, best practices. Maybe that's teaching all the kids to use their planner and every, the teacher checks everyone's planner at dismissal or whatever that might be. And I'm just curious if you had any other suggestions that you wanted to throw out for parents who are thinking like, what could I suggest to the teacher where it would be more classroom wide and not necessarily child specific.

Kristina Manning: Yeah, absolutely. So, I think a big part of it is just making sure that like routines are set into place like in the beginning of the year. And so, classrooms tend to run more smoothly when they have systems in place like for the entire class. So, you know, when I was a teacher and kids would come into my classroom, you know, the first week was we were just literally, like, doing practicing routines, practicing, like, what are you supposed to do when you come in the room? You need to come in, you need to put your name tag under the question of the day. You need to put your stuff away. And then I would always have, like, a morning, like, something for them to do, like, projected on the whiteboard. And so, I think, like, predictable classroom routines are really important. I, think also, you know, we meeting the needs of, the emotional needs of the whole class. You don't just, obviously, it's not just one kid who has ADHD who has these big feelings. Like, if we stop and take brain breaks or if we do class meetings. I used to always do a class meeting, like, every single day for the first few minutes of the day if anybody had something they wanted to share, you know, to meet their emotional needs and just to get things off their chest before we just run into learning. I used to also have, like, a little, like, it was like a I guess you call it a feelings thermometer that I would, like, have. It was just a resource that I gave to everybody, not just kids that were, you know, had the big feelings, so they knew, like, that they could monitor

themselves throughout the day. How are they feeling? Okay, I'm feeling like, red, you know, the red zone. I think I need to go to the calm down corner, which I encourage every teacher to have, a designated area in the room where kids can just go. And, you know, there might be some sensory, tools there for kids to calm down and, you know, vocabulary for them to access and be able to identify how they're feeling. So just those are some of the routines that I used to use as a teacher that really benefited, benefited like, everyone in the class.

Katie: I love that. I think your classroom sounds great. I mean, I know you've moved on, but you have a calling. That's very incredible. Yeah, I think that's what we all want for our kids, you know, to have a place where they can not only learn the school piece, but also the emotional piece is so important. And social, you know, just learning how to socialize and empathize and have compassion and integrity. There's such a long list of things that you learn at school besides just the math and the reading and all of that. So, I love all of those suggestions.

Kristina Manning: Yeah, Actually, one more thing I just remembered, too, that I had in my classroom was I had a mailbox. It was literally just a shoebox. And it was. It was called the communication box. And so, a lot of times third graders just want to impulsively tell you that they got a cat on Saturday. That's great and I really want to hear about your cat, but you know what, let's just put it in the communication box, you know, and so kids can get things off their chest if maybe there's something happening in the classroom that's bothering them. And I made a point to check that every single day at the end of the day. So that could be something else. If a parent, you know, has a child that might be struggling with impulsivity and, you know, calling out.

Lori: Yeah, I love that because. Yeah, I think for a lot of the kids who call out a lot and they want that attention, it still gives them the opportunity to do a bit in a more kind of socially appropriate way.

Kristina Manning: Right. Exacly.

Katie: And it's the downside of the ADHD is, I know I need to tell you this because I'm going to forget it. So, it's not, I'm not just doing it because I'm impulsive, I have a reason which is it's fleeting. I love the idea of, you know, for those kids that can write and having them draw, write or draw that and put that in. I thought you were gonn say, honestly, this is my mind, I

thought you were going to say that it was like a suggestion box where people could give feedback. That's just, I'm like, oh, I have a mailbox where people can make suggestions. But no, this is better. I like yours. This is good. Yours is great. We don't need a suggestion box. That's okay.

Lori: No.

Katie: Well, on that same note, then, how do you recommend for teachers, you know, how can you balance the needs, like you were saying, of a whole class? And then, you know, let's say you have one, two, maybe three kids in the class who do have ADHD. What are some things you keep in the forefront of your mind with balancing all of that?

Kristina Manning: Yeah. So, again, the most important part is just to establish those routines and their predictability in the beginning of the year. That's really important so that, like, you know, a child knows exactly what they're supposed to do. Whether they make that choice to do what they're supposed to do is their choice. But they know what the expectations are. There's visuals everywhere. I would say proximity is another really great tool to use to, you know, support kids without distracting the rest of the class. You know, some kids thrive when they're, you know, a lot closer to the teacher because they can, you know, we can repeat directions, we're right in front of them. Eye contact and maybe just using like subtle cues, like little like signals you might use to, to redirect them without calling, you know, calling out and putting the spotlight on them I think is a really good tool. And I think another big thing, this is huge with, with kids with ADHD is giving them a job to do in the classroom. Yeah. Like I, you know, feed the classroom pet or if they're again a kid that really thrives with movement, have them be the person that takes the attendance to the office every single day so that they can expel some of that energy. And you know, because it's really important with kids with ADHD they tend, and you guys know this, what is the statistics, they, what is it like 20,000, more negative comments they receive by age 12 than a typical peer. And so..

Katie: It's astronomical.

Kristina Manning: Right. So, when we can really make them feel like a sense of belonging and they're valued and you know, give them a job, I see that that works, that has done wonders in the classroom. And then also, you know, a lot of times with groups you'll have like the above, the above level reading group and then the on-grade level and the you know,

below grade level. But we can also do flexible grouping, right. Which can really help with energy levels and you know, you know, helping kids and supporting different needs. And I do want to point out though, I, with the grouping with ADHD, it has nothing to do with intelligence as we know, right. So, I'm not saying that the child with ADHD is in the lower group or anything. I'm talking more energy levels, right. Like having like the shy kid and the kid that always has something to say together. And but yeah, I think you know, using those really subtle tools like, like signals and eye contact and you know, proximity and having them, you know, maybe preferential seating can make, you know, a world of difference and help balance the needs of everyone.

Lori: Yeah. And those are all I think, kind of easy, simple strategies that don't take a lot of effort on the part of the teacher.

Kristina Manning: Right.

Lori: And it is so true that if I worked in the schools, there were times when you'd match a kiddo with a teacher and they just had problems all year because the expectations just weren't really communicated. There wasn't a good behavior, just classroom wide management of behaviors. Whereas the next year you'd pair them with a teacher that was very experienced, had really solid classroom management and you never heard anything because when you have all of those like routines and clear expectations and the behavior management is really in place, like they thrive and they do really well and you don't have to do as much individualization of instruction. So, I think that's a great, that's a great point. But let's talk a little bit about how parents can collaborate with teachers to provide that consistency between home and school. What helped you, I guess as a teacher and I know communication we've already kind of talked about.

Katie: Respond to the email. That's step one.

Lori: Yeah. But like even starting from the beginning of the school year, coming from the perspective of a teacher, what would have helped you in those situations?

Kristina Manning: Absolutely. So, in the beginning of every school year, I would always send home like a little questionnaire for all students, right. And for the parents to complete. And on it included questions like, what works at home? What strategies? How does your kid

thrive at home? You know, that I could, you know, bring into the classroom environment. What doesn't work? Does he, what are his sensory needs? Does he get overstimulated? Stuff like that. And his interest? Then parents would complete that and that would give me the data to know how to support their kids. So, I would do that. And you know, I always tried to have, I always turned into like a mini parent teacher conference at back-to-school night. But I would always encourage parents to reach out. I had an open-door policy, you know, you can call me. For me, my preferred mode of communication was email. And so I had some students where I would send an email home every Friday talking about how the week was or I've also sent like little communication logs home, just like writing, maybe not necessarily, a behavior log, but really just like talking about like, you know, what went well, what do we need to work on? and I think another big part of this is celebrating wins together. Like being knowing, like creating a relationship with parents that we're on the same team, right. We all want our, the child, the student to succeed. So, keeping encouragement consistent and just emphasizing to parents how important it is to celebrate and to you know, give positive reinforcement to kiddos and ask them like what does that look like at home? And maybe I can adapt that and it can look, you know, look like the same or similar in the classroom.

Lori: Yeah, that's great. Yeah. And I think that's an important piece where you as a teacher and that's something parents can really ask up front at the beginning of the year, like what is the best way to communicate with you? And a lot of teachers do. I know with my kids teachers, a lot of times they communicate that to everyone. But I think if you know like your child has a diagnosis of ADHD, you've shared that identifying like what, asking the teacher what's the best way to communicate with you? What, what is the frequency that is helpful? Like all those are good questions to kind of ask as a parent.

Kristina Manning: Yeah. And it's a two-way street. What works best for parents too? You know, like, I've had, I've communicated with parents on apps like Class Dojo before and that worked well for them. Some parents prefer a phone call. So yeah, just be collaborative and you know, talk to each other and just be on the same page.

Katie: Yeah, I love that. And you'd kind of touched on this a little bit with celebrating those wins. I think that's so huge. And I'm curious if you have other strategies that you use to help students with ADHD to build confidence and to really be more strengths focused, right. Because as we know some parts of school are really a challenge they really can struggle with

whether it's executive functioning or learning or socialization, there's going to be challenges. So, what can you do as a teacher? What can parents, you know, be collaborative about to really help our kids to build up the parts that they are good at?

Kristina Manning: Yeah, absolutely. I'm going to say relationship again is paramount, right. Like no learning can take place anywhere in a classroom or at home without a relationship. So I always made it a point to have lunch bunches with kids, you know, everybody just get to know them really to you know, help build their confidence and again bringing their interest into the curriculum, giving them leadership roles. As I was saying before, like giving them a job, and really trying to celebrate progress over perfection and like, you know what I mean? Let's celebrate your effort. Not just, you know, the you got an A, like you tried, right? That's really important because as we know, dopamine levels with kids with ADHD, you know, tend to be lower. And so, when we celebrate them, we are, you know, giving them a dopamine boost and we are training their brains like wow, I did that well so I'm gonna do that again, right? So just giving like growth-oriented feedback and really trying to play up and build on their strengths, like pointing out their strengths and again, you know, bringing that in like, wow, you really are a leader and you like to talk a lot, so maybe you are going to be the person in the group that is the presenter, right. So just, like, building on their strengths and building and bringing in creativity and humor and yeah, I just, I always come back to the relationship.

Lori: Yeah. It's funny because my daughter started school a little while ago and her art teacher sent an email that was, sometimes you, like, heart drops a little. Like when you get an email from a teacher, like, oh, no. And it was just like, all these positive things that she pointed out, and shared. And it is something that, like, doesn't happen very often with teachers and a lot of times you only get, like, the problems. But I make sure to, like, tell those teachers, like thanks because they're really taking time out of their day to, like, do that, you know, and that takes a lot of time to share that with all, you know, various students or all their students. But, man, does it make a difference. And I remember telling my daughter, like, what the teacher had said about her, and she lit up like a Christmas tree. She was so proud. So, I just think those positive emails or positive calls just, they make parents feel, I know, just so good. Because, yeah, sometimes you don't hear, like, those positive things. So even just one comment can make a world of a difference for both kids and parents.

Kristina Manning: 100%. Yeah, that. I definitely, I would always make positive phone calls home, too. Because I don't, I know parents get a lot of negative. Like, a lot of times when you pick up the phone, it's like, oh, gosh, I'm dreading. What are they going to say. So, yeah, we had at my school positive office referrals too, which was really, really a good, a big confidence booster for kiddos. So, you know, parents weren't always receiving all that negative feedback. It was great.

Katie: What would a positive office referral be? Like, they get to go see the principal or the counselor or something for a good thing.

Kristina Manning: Yeah. So they would, yeah, they would go to the office and they would sit down with the principal. And usually it's scary when you go to the principal's office, right, because you're in trouble. And yeah, sometimes kids won, like, lunch with the principal. And there was a wall in our school where it was, it had like, all of the positive office referrals. It had like, the kid's name and what they did, like, oh, you helped out a friend, you know, and so then they would get to go celebrate with the principal. And it was just like, such a big deal for them, but also for their parents. It was great.

Lori: Yeah, we, all through grad school, I trained schools and how to do school wide positive behavior supports and really retraining kind of schools in that mindset of like, when it comes to behavioral issues, we have suspensions and these types of punishments that really don't change behaviors. And really taking kind of all the stuff that we teach at home on a school wide level because all kids really benefit from clear expectations and lots of rewards and reinforcement for those expectations. And getting the school to kind of rethink about like their traditional practices. Are these really helping to support behaviors? And it just, just does make such a huge difference.

Kristina Manning: Yeah, it really does. It really does. Yeah, there's, there's lots of, updates and a lot of outdated, you know, strategies that you see in schools. But yeah, I love to see that, that coming more and more on like the positive side.

Lori: What advice would you give to new teachers who are just kind of starting out with students with ADHD? I know there are so many that are like, we get, we get messages from them all the time and I think it's so amazing that they're just really searching for any tools and

support because they really want to do well by students, but they have no training. What would you recommend to them?

Kristina Manning: And I know I've said this a million times, but prioritize the relationship. You know, make sure that you, you know, make connection because again, these kids are really used to a lot of negative, feedback. So, make sure you're connecting them before you're correcting them. Get to know them. Get to know their strengths and build on their strengths and really make sure that you're creating, you're very intentional about creating structure and consistency because that creates safety, for the ADHD kids. And also be flexible, right. Like kids with ADHD, like, they thrive on autonomy and they like to make their own choices. So just, you know, go into it with an open mind and, know that all behavior is communication. You know, ADHD is just a part of their, you know, this child. It's not who they are. And you know, just know, you know, in my experience, I have kids who I worked with years ago that are now, that had ADHD, that are now engineers and entrepreneurs. And I, know a lot of teachers and parents can be like, oh, gosh, like this kid is going to end up under a bridge with a grocery cart. No, they're not. With the right supports, like, they can thrive and do really, really great things. So, you know, just try your best just to stay positive and connect with them. Avoid power struggles, right. Sometimes we can, like, take the bait because the kids are trying to get, like, a dopamine hit by making noises or, you know, maybe doing things that might be considered annoying. You don't have to take the bait. Just be, I think a big thing is just lead with curiosity, right? And try to decide, okay, what does this behavior need? What is this behavior telling me? Is it there a sensory need? Does he or she need some movement right now? And just use those as clues. But the biggest thing is connecting and showing that kid that, this is a safe space and I care about you.

Katie: I love all of that. And I think that's what, as parents, you know, that's definitely what we want our teachers to know. So that is beautiful. And thank you so much, Kristina, for sharing all of your expertise with us. This is amazing. So, I know there's going to be people who want to continue to connect with you and learn from you and, you know, utilize your resources. So, can you share a little bit with us? I know you have a free guide that you're offering to our listeners, and can you talk with them a little bit about what that looks like?

Kristina Manning: Yeah, absolutely. So, I have a guide that I created for parents of kids with ADHD. And it's just a simple guide with a few tools that just will help, you know, when you

first get that diagnosis, it can be kind of overwhelming. And so, there's just a couple tools, you know, that I've talked about in here, like, connection and making sure you're celebrating kids and, you know, using lots of positive reinforcement. So, you know, the guide is just to a little resource that I created that I think will help parents, once they get that diagnosis, to help support their ADHD kiddo in the best ways.

Katie: I love that.

Lori: Wonderful.

Katie: We'll go ahead and link that in the show notes so you can easily find it and stay connected with Kristina. But again, thank you so much for coming on and sharing with us your beautiful heart for teaching and supporting kids with ADHD. We just really appreciate it.

Kristina Manning: Yes. Thank you, guys, so much for being here. It's such a privilege to be on your podcast and continue to collaborate with 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!