

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

### **Episode #219: Raising Capable, Confident ADHD Kids: A New Approach to Summer Break**

Mallory: I swear, if he sets his mind to it, he will learn how to do anything. So, one day he decided he wanted to learn how to snap. He's like 5 years old. He taught himself how to snap. He decided he wanted to learn how to whistle. Again, he was probably five or six, he learned how to whistle. He decided he wanted to learn how to make those fart noises in your armpit again, this is the entertainer, he learned how to do that in, you know, 30 minutes. And then, you know, why not try it behind your knee? So now he knows how to do that too. So, he is great at setting these personal goals of how to entertain, you know, that are related to making other people laugh.

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. Hello and welcome back to the Shining with ADHD podcast. We are very excited to be here today. And over in Arizona, we're kind of wrapping up the school year. I know some people go through June, but for us, we're getting to the end. So how you doing, ladies? How's it all going?

Lori: You know, surviving May-cember. It's just complete chaos with, I have birthdays for my kids and, you know, school wrapping up and all the activities. It's like a very chaotic month.

Mallory: Yeah. Yep. I'm looking forward to school being over. For some reason, I always look forward to the break from making school lunches. I don't know, I just get so burnt out of the routine of that every morning and then cleaning the lunch boxes every afternoon. I'm just excited for a break from the lunch rigamarole.

Lori: Yeah, my husband is in charge of lunches, so I can't say I will get a break from that. I actually, a lot of times have to take that on.

Katie: That's hilarious. Yeah, that's actually really offensive to me because I make lunches every day and I've also set the personal goal many times that my kids are going to start packing their own lunches. And it is so tricky. Like, I feel like we run out of time for we don't have the exact ingredient. Oh man. It's a whole thing. So anyway, but I'm very excited to be chatting with you guys today about something that's really been on my mind personally lately, which is how can we build up our kids' confidence over this, you know, impending summer break?

Mallory: Definitely. So, we do get lots of questions about what's best for ADHD families over the summer. So, parents are wondering, should I have my kid work on academic skills? Should I give them complete, you know, a break completely from school and academic tasks? Should we have lots of structure? Should we have no structure? What is like the optimal summer plan? And of course, it really depends on your family and what your family's needs are.

Lori: Yep. But for a lot of us, we find that our kids need a break from some of the academic skills over the summer. And again, that can be very different. Some, some families, like when your kids aren't in school, it is time if your child has dyslexia or needs support, like, sometimes summer breaks are, are good for that. I remember my daughter was struggling with reading kind of early on, so we did spend some time over the summer doing some of those things that we needed to help her feel confident going into the following school year. But for a lot of families, we just want a break from, from school and the academic tasks, and our kids really do too. And it's a great time to kind of work on other areas and building friendships, or starting a hobby or, you know, developing their confidence in different areas. Today we're really going to focus on that last one. How can we help our kids become more confident over the summer?

Katie: Yeah. And this is so near and dear to my heart because confidence can be really tricky for kids with ADHD, right. We know from the research and our own lived experience that kids with ADHD do tend to get a lot more negative feedback, a lot more corrections, a lot more instructions than their peers. And so, we do know that over time, this can start to make them feel like, oh, I'm just not good at this, or I'm not good enough. And confidence can be a lifelong thing that people with ADHD work on. So, it's really important to be thinking about this, but we also don't want to overwhelm all of us with all the things we're doing. And so, what we're going to do today is we're going to talk about three small shifts that you can make to really help your child develop their confidence. And we want to be really clear that we're giving you a lot of ideas because we don't know exactly what will hit or land for you personally, but you do not need to do all of these. You should not do all of these. So maybe try one or two things and, you know, let us know how it goes. And obviously we have to give you our weekly plug that if you are listening to the podcast and enjoying it, if you would please consider leaving us a five-star review and sharing it with someone else who you think might enjoy it, that is just a great way to help us grow and reach more families.

Lori: Absolutely. So, we're going to jump into one of our first things to help grow confidence, which is giving your child a job within the family. This is so hard for families during a busy school year where you're, you know, having to rush the school, you're spending a lot of time on homework in the evening. And many families are like, I can't add another thing. My child can't even get the things done that they're supposed to get done of like getting dressed and getting homework done and all of that. To add another thing that's like a responsibility feels like too much. So sometimes the summer is a great way to kind of start helping them have jobs and contribute to the family. Because maybe you have a little bit more flexibility in the mornings or the afternoons to make sure that they kind of do that thing and follow through on it. And I know it's really hard because for many kids with ADHD, they have a hard time sustaining attention to tasks that aren't fun or interesting. And so, giving them a chore or something like that feels like I'm just going to get pushback and arguing. Trust me, like, we live through, we all live through this, right. In fact, we were having so much of it, and I'll probably talk about this, we were having to kind of address that in our house on a larger scale because it was becoming such a problem. But this is, if we're doing everything for our kids, like we're packing their lunches like we were saying, or...

Mallory: Katie.

Lori: No, I'm just kidding. Or we're always walking the dog and playing with the dog and feeding the dog. That's a big issue on our family. Or we're always doing these responsibilities, our kids aren't having the opportunity to do those things, to learn those skills because we're taking that on. It adds to our mental load if we're having to like, do all the things within the family and then they're missing opportunities to like, learn a new skill and feel confident in that. And I think all of us can say, when our kids have taken on some responsibility, yes, it's hard and they'll argue at first, but when they do that and we praise them and they get positive feedback and they see that the dog is happy and enjoying, like, they start to really develop a sense of confidence and feel good about themselves because they are developing that independence that they want and need to feel successful.

Mallory: And I think an important thing to keep in mind is that you might get some pushback at first, but the more consistent you are with your expectations, the easier it's going to get for them because their brain is going to know what's coming and you're going to get a lot less pushback. And we know also that kids with ADHD struggle with time perception. They often feel like things that are boring or less fun, you know, the first thought, that gut reaction is, that's going to take forever, right. But the more they do these things, they learn like, oh really, it's just five minutes and then I have all of this time to do, you know, X, Y, Z, what I want to do. So again, once you get over that initial hump of maybe it's going to take forever, they start to learn that a lot of these things don't take as long as their brain is anticipating it's going to take. And as Lori said, we're building long term skills by giving them these jobs.

Katie: Yeah, this is something that we address in our house a lot because I definitely, I think my kids maybe were the original ones that came up with that phrase. It's going to take ages. And they will tell me that, you know, even silly things like, hey, can you wipe down the table after dinner with a wet washcloth? And I do think that this is also a sensory issue for my son, but he will get really upset and say it's going to take ages. And it sounds super heartless, but what I say to him is, hey, the more you protest this, the more I realize that we really need you to practice this. Because so many parents, when they get that pushback, they say, oh, you know what, nevermind, I'll just do it myself and it's so much faster. But long term, now we have this kid who won't wipe the table, won't clear the dishes, won't do these things. And now we're realizing, oh my gosh, this is so much harder because they've avoided it and gotten sort of, I guess, away with it and not doing it. So, we're really working on that consistency I know in my own home. And I'm curious because I think people might be wondering, you know,

what kind of jobs should I be giving my kid? That's a tricky thing. So maybe you ladies could just share for a second, what kind of jobs do your kids do in your houses?

Lori: So, my girls are 9 and 11 and we've been working on one actually will load the dishwasher and one will unload the dishwasher and they will swap back and forth between because they always think that the person who has the one job has it easier. So, they have to basically take turns because they will complain either way. We also, they have to play with the dog at night. They have to feed and water the dog. And that's been actually very hard for them to be consistent with, so we are definitely working on that. And just cleaning the bedroom like on a regular basis. So those have been kind of like the big ones that we have been working on in our family. Several months ago, we kind of had lots of defiance and pushback and we decided as a family, like we're doing a reward system so that like when there's no arguing and we kind of just do the thing that we're supposed to do, that they can earn stars and once they fill that up and they're working together towards it, we can do a fun activity as a family. And that has been like honestly such a huge shift for our family because we went from noticing when they weren't doing the things that they were supposed to be doing and getting irritated than them arguing and it just being this negative cycle to being like we're noticing when they follow through and praising and has really been a big shift for our family. We're just not having as many battles and just having more fun as a family. Like that was kind of our goal. So, if you are worried about kids arguing and things like that, we were in it very much so and things have definitely gotten better.

Mallory: I feel like those systems that you're talking about, Lori, sometimes are even more for the parents than they are for the kids.

Lori: Absolutely.

Mallory: Just to put it at the forefront of our minds to catch our kids doing it right. Catch our kids doing exactly what we want them to do. Because you're right, it's so easy to fall into those patterns of just catching them when they're misbehaving or there's a challenge, so I love those systems for that reason.

Lori: Yeah. And when we think about building confidence like, like we're really building their confidence by like catching them when they're doing these things. When they independently start a task or independently put their towel away or something like that, those

little things that maybe I wouldn't have noticed before when I start noticing that, that builds their confidence. You know, versus me just kind of getting irritated when they don't follow through on the things that I've asked them to follow through on.

Mallory: Totally. And so back to your question Katie, about you know, some examples of jobs in our own home. Like right now I feel like a lot of our fams or a lot of our jobs, my boys are seven and nine, are focused on school related things, so I'm going to have to think about how am I going to shift that for the summer. Because right now responsibilities are unpacking the backpack, checking their folders, cleaning them out, asking me to sign off on things and I'm putting more of that school responsibility on them. We do around the house, you know, every night we're supposed to do a five-minute reset. I find that that's a lot more approachable for my kids than telling them they have to clean up. And you guys, you girls know my house. I have a two-story house. I really don't care a ton about what the upstairs looks like.

Katie: Same.

Mallory: Which is so nice.

Lori: I can't escape the mess like, like you guys. Unfortunately, my house is too small. It's just all in the open.

Mallory: Yeah. So just a five-minute reset every night feels a lot more manageable for my boys than like go clean up the whole upstairs. It's just like we're all going to spend five minutes putting things back to their homes and it's over in the blink of an eye. And it, you'd be amazed when you all work together, what can get accomplished in just five minutes versus if I were to do that all by myself, it's like 30 minutes of work. So, that's one of the things that we do. But I like your ideas Lori, about helping with the dog, so maybe that's what I'll shift responsibilities to over the summer. Having the boys more with the puppy who's not so puppy anymore. So again, thinking about how this is going to apply to your family, it's going to depend a lot on the age of your kids, what your daily life looks like. Is it during the school year, is it during the summer? And there's so many different methods and approaches you can use to this. Popsicle sticks, note cards that have jobs on them and every day your child pulls one job and that's what they do. Or they have a list of, you know, three tasks that they need to accomplish before the fun thing that day. Maybe you have days where there are chores, but

then there's some days where there's no chores. So, you really decide what works for your family. There's no one right way to do this. See what works for you.

Katie: Yeah, I love that. We get a lot of questions, too, like, should I pay my kid to do chores? You know, are they an employee, or are they doing it just because that's the expectation? I absolutely grew up in a house where that was just the expectation. You didn't get paid to do chores. And, so that's what we've kind of carried over into our home. But again, it's very personal, and it totally depends on what your situation is. But the main takeaway is that when we have our kids have roles within the home and contribute, it might be hard and a lot of work on the front end, but it really does help build their confidence because they can see I am part of this family. I am the one who flips the pancakes, right. I'm the pancake flipper. I'm the DJ, I'm the laundry gatherer. Whatever that is, it's very important because it's part of their identity that they're someone who's helpful. There's someone who notices. They're someone who jumps in and gets things done. And that's something we're really helping them to build as we do these chores.

Lori: Yep. So, the second thing you can think about to help your child grow confidence over the summer is to help them explore maybe new interest areas. So, if your child, you know, it's summer and your child has maybe been saying all year that they're interested in doing something that you haven't had time to do, this might be a good time to look into that a little bit more.

Katie: Yeah. And my encouragement here is that it doesn't have to be really expensive. Camps in our area are very expensive. Obviously, that's an option for working parents who are like, I need the expensive camp. But it, there's ways to do this and to try new things and let your child learn something new or get a new skill without spending a lot of money or even any money. Last summer, I took my kids to the library every couple of weeks and one of the things that we started implementing, I feel like I heard this on a podcast or something, I can guarantee I did not come up with it, but I started having them check out a nonfiction book. Both of my kids love fiction stories, but I said, hey, just pick one book from the nonfiction section. And my daughter, you know, is the ultimate girly girl, so she, of course, was like, I'm going to get a cookbook, so I know how to make royal icing on cookies and I'm going to make embroidered friendship bracelets and I'm going to give them to my friends, you know, so we got books about that. And then my son, he ended up getting a book about space. We

were able to really learn a lot of history of space exploration and the next thing I knew I was putting stars on his ceiling in the shape of the different constellations that glow in the dark. So you know, be careful, you might end up making constellations, but that part wasn't free I guess, but libraries have a lot of options. You know, scavenger hunts, days where you can read to a service dog. Or ours, has like a petting zoo sometimes with a little horse, I don't know. So those are a great low-cost way for your kids to learn about something new or get new ideas just to see what might interest them that maybe they haven't really heard of before.

Mallory: I love that.

Lori: Yeah, the library is a great thing to kind of encourage reading over the summer because they have like fun reading, things. My kids love doing it. They have rewards like for different levels of how many books they read or how much time they spend reading. So that's also like a fun way to kind of encourage like if reading is hard, my kids don't like it. Neither of them, so to have that helps encourage reading over the summer.

Mallory: I know we've talked about the book it program on a podcast in years past because I remember getting messages from people saying they still do that. Like you still get the free personal pan pizza or whatever. Cracks me up.

Katie: I mean I was very motivated by that pizza so I might look into it.

Mallory: For sure. For sure. So, I know at least in Phoenix too, thinking of like more low cost, no cost ways to have your child try out something new, there's free events at like hardware stores or craft shops where you can learn a new skill like gardening or make a birdhouse. So maybe if you have a kid who loves to build things and try new things like that. Gosh, some other ideas of low cost no cost things. The tennis courts at the park if it's not Phoenix in July and it's 119 degrees. I wonder, I'm wondering if kids are going to start wanting to try pickleball now that you know all these grownups are playing pickleball. I wonder if that's going to trickle down to the kids. Learning cooking. Like Katie said her daughter checked out a book and learned how to make icing. So many options on YouTube. Kids yoga, the cooking classes, how to draw. So many free options out there to find a way to help your child explore something new. And I feel like this is touching into a pain point of my own where I feel like there's this pressure that if a child hasn't started a sport or something like hasn't dived in deep to a special interest by the time they're seven, it feels like, oh, there's

no chance for them. And I just want to gently encourage you, tell you kids can pick up sports, activities, interests at a later age and learn to do it very well and shine. And so, it's not too late. I'm just, I'm kind of telling myself this as I'm saying this out loud because both of my kids are kind of still finding their thing, and it is hard starting a new sport or trying a new thing when they're seeing all these other kids are so great at it. And it's like, yeah, because they've been doing it for years, but that doesn't mean you can't get that good. So anyways, I just want to encourage you that it's not too late for your kid to try something new. They can definitely still learn how to do it and do it well.

Lori: Yeah, we're in the midst of that too, because I know I've talked that my girls were ice skating and they both, both kind of quit and one's 11 now and it has been hard because she's like, jumped into gymnastics and she's at the lowest level, you know, and that can, like, I'm the oldest kid there, and so it is a little bit challenging, but she still loves it, you know. And then another thing to think about is volunteering, which is another way to kind of build confidence and help your child also, recognize that there's other people in the world that, like, aren't in the same position that they're in. And sometimes that's hard to get that perspective unless you're really in it, and seeing that, wow, not everyone has all the things that I have in life. I know my kids had gone with their, one of their good friends to a food bank and they had done volunteering and they keep asking, they are begging to go back as a family because they just loved it so much and they enjoyed it so much. And felt just, again, they felt very like, I'm doing something to kind of help my community and help the world. And that gives you a different sense of purpose, you know, in life to have that. So you know, some kids are really interested in animals. Like I have lots of kids that have worked at animal shelters doing volunteer work or we have a butterfly museum here in Phoenix, that I've had some kids who are really interested in that were able to volunteer. So, there's lots of areas that they need kids to kind of help out that you can look into.

Katie: And if you have a younger kid too who maybe isn't able to actually go do like a whole shift or something at the food bank, even something informal like hey, that neighbor across the street, you know, she seems kind of lonely. She's an older woman. Maybe we could bake her some brownies or cookies and take them over and just say hi. Those are the types of things where it is helping our kids to build those skills and it helps them feel confident like they're contributing to the world and making it a better place. And I think that's something that we all want for our kids as they grow. And a huge piece of it is doing it ourselves, you

know, so they can see it and be part of it. I volunteer a lot at my kids' school and I'm on the board for the, you know, parent organization and my daughter, I didn't realize how much she loves that I do that. Because I was thinking about maybe taking a break and she was like, you can't take a break. Like it's really important to me. I love it so much. And I'm sitting there going, well you're not in the meetings. But she goes to all the events, you know, and she does all the things. And I think it's really, it's crazy enough it's part of her identity that her mom volunteers and obviously not everyone has that kind of time. But even the small things that you can do, our kids do see that and they're watching and I think that's a really big part of their sense of self as they watch kind of how do we interact with the world. So, a lot of encouragement there. Volunteering has been my jam in 2026, so I really think doing that can have made a big difference for me.

Mallory: I love that. So, our third and final way that you can build confidence is to help your child set a goal over the summer and the bonus with this one is that it is a great natural way to also grow your child's executive functioning skills. So where do you start? Start by talking to your child. Ask what's on their mind, what do they want to do this summer? What do they want to learn this summer? They might need some suggestions or a little bit of help from you. But choose a goal, something to learn, something to work for. So, gosh, it might be tying shoes, you know, I need to add that to my seven-year old's list. I might decide for him. Learn how to ride a bike. Maybe their goal is to make a new friend. Maybe they want to host some kind of event. I can see Lori's girls would be great at this. Like hosting a movie night for the kids in the neighborhood, learning how to rollerblade, having an art show. There's so many options here. But talk with your child, figure out something maybe they want to learn how to do this summer and set a goal for it.

Katie: Yeah, I love this and I'm such a goal directed person that this, I'm like already getting excited. So, yeah, and this is a huge way to build executive functioning, right. So, once they set that goal and they say, this is what I want to do, you can sit down with them and you know, you can, can help them draw the future picture. What's it going to look like when you've met that goal? Maybe it's riding your bike. What's it going to look like? What's it going to feel like when you can ride your bike down to the park, you know, without those training wheels? And in our online course, Creating Calm, we also have a whole section on how to do this with older kids. It might be a vision board, you know, what do you want your summer to look like? And they can maybe cut pictures out of a magazine or I guess now the

new generation is like in Canva making, you know, really cool graphics. That's what my daughter, she had her in Christmas list in Canva I was like, I don't even know what to say. But what we're doing here is we're helping them with their executive functioning skills and breaking down the task. Okay, so you want to do an art show. So, what's that going to take? What's it going to look like? And then we can think through, okay, you need to make some art and you need to set a date for the art show and think about how are you going to display it and let people know and you know, maybe do we want to serve snacks or have a lemonade stand something connected to the art show? And all of these things are great ways to help our kids learn how to break down a task. And they're doing it for something that's fun and motivating and then they apply that skill when it's not that interesting. Like when they have to do, you know, a project for the science fair. Well, maybe some kids are really into that, my kids, not so much. But these are skills to be able to say, here's where I'm going, now how do I get there?

Lori: Yeah, my kids worked with their neighbor friends last summer to do, they did multiple bake sales, lemonade stands, and they were trying to like, raise money and earn money, and it was really hot out. But they did everything, I mean, again, this, was not something like I set a goal with them or anything. This is just kids playing and having fun. But it is amazing how when they do something like that, how much planning is involved or how much little thought and planning goes into it that you have to kind of help them. Well, hey, like, if we're gonna do this, we can't do it right now because we haven't gone to the store to get this, this and this. So, like, it is such a great way when they one, they're super motivated by it, and two, they're just like, they're not really thinking through all those pieces and it's a great way to help teach those skills in a way that's very natural and very fun for them.

Mallory: One of my boys, just thinking about, I don't know if this, this might be his goal, but I could totally see this being his goal is it's my son that, is the entertainer who wants to make people laugh and smile. And I swear, if he sets his mind to it, he will learn how to do anything. So, one day he decided he wanted to learn how to snap. He's like 5 years old. He taught himself how to snap. He decided he wanted to learn how to whistle. Again, he was probably five or six. He learned how to whistle. He decided he wanted to learn how to make those fart noises in your armpit. Again, this is, this is the entertainer, he learned how to do that in, you know, 30 minutes. And then, you know, why not try it behind, behind your knee? So now he knows how to do that too. So, he is great at setting these personal goals of how to

entertain, you know, that are related to making other people laugh and helping people feel entertained. So, I could see, he's been wanting to learn how to spin the basketball on his finger and so I could see him wanting like, that being his summer goal is like he wants to master spinning the basketball on his finger again because he wants to entertain. I love that for him.

Katie: Knowing him, he'll spin the basketball in the first hour and then he'll be like, okay, I got three more months. What am I gonna do next?

Mallory: Yeah. Yeah.

Katie: He's a quick learner. And maybe he could teach me how to whistle. I still can't figure it out. My kids are really unimpressed.

Lori: I know. I can't do it either. He needs to show me.

Mallory: Really?

Katie: Yes. I don't know what the issue is, but I really legitimately don't know.

Lori: I don't either, Katie. So, setting a goal and working towards it is such a great way to build confidence because it helps our kids feel capable, shows them that they can do something when they set their mind to it and it also gives them that little dopamine hit as they celebrate their wins.

Katie: It's the best. So, as we're wrapping up today, just a really quick reminder, please share this episode and make sure to leave us a five-star review if you haven't already.

Mallory: So, our key takeaway for today is that kids with ADHD are incredibly capable. As parents, we can grow their confidence and sense of self-worth by giving them opportunities to help around the house, learn new things, help other people, and set personal goals. And as you think about how you can try these in your everyday life, we are here to support.

Katie: Thanks for listening to Shining with ADHD by your hosts, Lori, Katie, and Mallory of The Childhood Collective.

Mallory: If you enjoyed this episode, please leave us a review and hit subscribe so you can be the first to know when a new episode airs.

Lori: If you are looking for links and resources mentioned in this episode, you can always find those in the show notes. See you next time!