

Shining with ADHD by The Childhood Collective

Episode #216: ADHD Sensory Issues in Kids: Real Solutions for Mealtime and Getting Dressed

Madeha Ayub: Clothing, you're wearing it all day long. And what's happening with our kids with ADHD, like for us, I mean, who may not have as severe sensory sensitivities, when I wear a shirt, you feel it when you put it on, but after that your brain filters out that sensation. So, I don't feel it. Sometimes I have to look and remind myself what I'm wearing because I don't feel it anymore, right. Same thing with the necklace. If I don't know if I have it on, I just have to literally use my hands. And so, our body learns to filter, our brain learns to filter out that information. For our kids with ADHD, sometimes it's hard filtering out. One day they may filter it out, the next day they may not. So that itchy tag, they are feeling it all day long which makes it so difficult and they're already struggling with transition. So, getting dressed in the morning and now they have to leave the house and it's raining so now they have to wear a raincoat, so it's like all these transitions are so hard. So, I think clothing battles is so common and sometimes it's a lot harder because it's like throughout the day.

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.

Mallory: Lori and I are here today with a special guest, Madeha Ayub. For the past eight years Madeha has worked as a pediatric occupational therapist providing both school based and home health services.

Lori: Madeha advocates for sensory friendly environments. She carries this commitment not only into her professional work but also into her personal life as she supports her own sensory sensitive daughter. So, thank you so much for joining us today. We're just so happy to have you here.

Madeha Ayub: Thank you so much for having me and thank you so much for the lovely introduction. I'm so excited to be here.

Mallory: We have you on today for a super requested topic and before we jumped on, I was just explaining to Madeha that I have a lot of friends who are struggling in this area. Sometimes my own family struggles in this area. So very selfishly I'm so excited to hear from you, and learn from you. But before we jump into our questions about sensory differences and feeding and getting dressed, why don't you tell us a little bit about what led you to the field of pediatric occupational therapy. Like how did you find this passion?

Madeha Ayub: Yeah, so I, this will almost be nine years of me working as a pediatric OT and I feel like I enjoy it more and more each day. As cliché as it sounds, this is one of the most I feel like fulfilling careers, because what I'm essentially working on are things that many of us take for granted. I mean, so many of us can wear a t-shirt and not think twice about the seams. So many of us can go to a restaurant and not be distracted about what someone's having two tables down from us because we're not triggered by their foods, right. And so, a lot of these activities are things that are impacting many of our kids day to day and they're not, many people cannot relate to that because it's something that we take for granted. And so being able to help them navigate those challenges not only builds their self-confidence, but also helps promote functional skills and social skills and really helps the family dynamics. And so, I feel like being in a position where I can support children and their families is just so meaningful.

Lori: Yes, absolutely. I have not experienced sensory sensitivities in my life, but I remember when I got pregnant and was so overwhelmed by smells and just, you know, feeling like I was going to throw up every time I smelled certain things. And it really did give me so much

perspective after going through that of like, wow, this is what the kids that I work with deal with. You know, it is a very real, very real feeling and very overwhelming. So, I do think it's hard to relate sometimes, but it's very challenging for families.

Madeha Ayub: And I feel like it's like multiple things. It's like the smells, but then, those are hyperactive and need to move. And then it's also like they want to bite. And it's just like, I think so many things happening at once, that's like one of the biggest challenges.

Lori: Absolutely.

Mallory: And especially for our younger kids, it's hard to articulate what's going on for them. They can't tell us that it's like the sensory experience that's overwhelming them and that that kind of leads into the first question I have for you is that, so we know a lot of kids with ADHD are, have these sensory differences, these sensory sensitivities. How do parents know if their child does have these different sensory needs or sensitivities? Like how is a parent to know, like, oh, yeah, my kid is, is struggling with that.

Madeha Ayub: That's a great question. And majority of my clientele, it's mainly kids with autism, ADHD, and oftentimes both. And sometimes people are so focused, parents are so focused on the hyperactivity and the movement seeking behaviors, but I always tell parents, like, let's look at all the sensory systems, right. Are they also craving touch? And we know that because kids have a hard time keeping their hands to themselves. Are they also craving oral input? You know, and we know that because they'll put things in their mouth. And I tell parents, I feel like kids are very obvious when it comes to sensory needs because a child who's sensitive to sounds, they'll cover their ears as soon as it gets loud. A child who's sensitive to smells will cover their nose and be like, oh my God, that smells so bad. And so, they're so loud and vocal about it. And so, I feel like the question is, how can I really support them and help them navigate these challenges. And sometimes I think one of the hardest parts is oftentimes kids have a mixed sensory profile where they're seeking a lot. So, they're seeking movement and they're seeking deep pressure and they're seeking touch, but then they'll be sensitive to sounds and they'll be sensitive to smells. And so oftentimes with our children who have this mixed sensory profile, it's really about learning what can I give them more of and what can I remove from the environment to really meet their needs. So, I feel like that's where the question is, not so much, what is it that my children need. Because I feel

like children, which is amazing, are very obvious about, which systems are the ones that need more and which systems are the ones that need less.

Lori: Yes, absolutely. And two of the big areas that we see a lot of sensory differences or challenges are with clothing and dressing and eating. So, let's kind of start with eating because I know that's one we get tons of questions about. So, can you explain what is happening in the brain and body of an ADHDer sensory sensitive eater?

Madeha Ayub: Yes. So, meal time is a whole sensory experience. You're not just eating the food, you're not just tasting it, you have to smell it, you have to feel it, you can often hear it. And so, it's like every single sensory system is like tapped into when we're having a meal. And so, a child who's already really sensitive, it's the brain that's perceiving the sensory experience as too much so they may be over responding. So, for example, if someone taps me on my shoulder, my brain in a matter of like split seconds interpreted that as non-threatening. Someone's getting my attention. I'll just look towards the tap. But a child who's over responding is just like firing with like, you know fight or flight, it's like threatening and so they might just like jump up and just react in a very like over exaggerated way or what we perceive to be over exaggerated. So, it's really how the brain is perceiving that sensory input. And on the flip side we have kids who are under responding so they may not even notice the tap because it wasn't firm enough, it wasn't meaningful enough and so they may not even see. And these are the kids who often drop things or they appear clumsy because they're not perceiving a sensory input unless it's given in like greater doses. And those are more of your sensory seekers who need more. And so, if your child is already so sensitive to textures, if they're already sensitive to smells, then of course meal time, every time to sit down and eat is going to be a challenge. And so, I think oftentimes, you know, the battle there is just really exposing children to foods in ways that are more non-threatening, non-pressuring. So, I always tell parents like, don't wait until mealtime to expose your children to food and textures. Allow them to play with food, like incorporate food items in their arts and crafts and make a necklace out of grapes or things like that and incorporate them in the meal prep. If they're not gonna eat it, at least they can join you in the kitchen and that's a great way to kind of expose them to the smells and textures in a very fun, non-pressuring way. So, I feel like it's all about building comfort around food items. And those children who feel more comfortable will be more inclined to try it on their own when they're ready.

Mallory: Yeah, I think that's so important because as you said like a lot of kids are presented with this challenging sensory experience and their body right away goes to fight or flight, like they're anticipating a really terrible, uncomfortable experience. And I never, you put it into words in a great way, I never really thought about how really all of your senses are involved in eating. And so, if you are one of those more sensory avoidants or under responsive sensory kids that or sorry, over responsive it would be, that's just overwhelming and that's a lot. So, I love that. So, like introducing your child to food at times where there's not even an expectation to eat it, just like you said, making a necklace of grapes or involving them in the meal prep. What could parents do if their kid is already at this point of like they're headed into a meal time and their body just instantly already is going into fight or flight because they're anticipating like a challenging, it's not their favorite meal that you're serving. They're already anticipating something challenging coming. Like, what tips do you have for parents who are already at that place where everyone, the whole family is headed into the meal time, like ready to fight?

Madeha Ayub: No. Yeah, yeah, that's, that's very, it's common and that sounds very challenging. So, I would always say start with your children's safe food. They should always have at least one safe food item at their table and that's like their common place. They know they'll have it and also prep them beforehand. We're going to have, you know, meal dinners in about 30 minutes. Give them a timer so they see how long, they can visually see how long 30 minutes is. And I always say that one way to really reduce a fight or flight is by giving children, as therapists we do this all the time, compression and deep pressure. So, this can be through literally wearing something like compressive, but also giving them like maybe squeezes and firm hugs. But also, they can do it to themselves by engaging in what we call heavy work activities. So, these are activities where children receive deep pressure by carrying something heavy, pushing something heavy, pulling something heavy, and when I say heavy, like around 10% of their weight, and so doing that right before meal time where they like, instead of walking to the dinner table, let's do wheelbarrow walks. And so, they're receiving deep pressure, but it's also actually that pressure, that compression is actually calming to the nervous system and so they won't be as triggered. And when they get to the dinner table, they should definitely have their seafoods there. If you are introducing something new to the table, I would put it away from them, let them know it's going to be there and allow them the autonomy. Like, where do you want to sit? Do you want to move this plate of food? Wherever you like it, you are allowed to move it there and just giving

them that autonomy also. And I think with kids with ADHD yes, mealtime is a sensory experience, but I think just getting through meal time because they have all this energy and they're very movement seeking, I think just mealtime isn't as fun for them. And so, I feel like sustaining their attention to even get through mealtime because they'll take two bites and then just be like, okay, can I get up now? And I think just that's hard too. And so oftentimes I tell parents to add, therabands to the dinner chair legs where they can kind of receive resistance in their legs as they're eating. Sometimes even holding a fidget in a hand. Just receiving that input as they're eating. And now there's like all these like really fun plates and there's really fun spoons where it's like almost like a dinosaur. And so many fun things now you can find. And I feel like make meal time fun because also attention component that they have to sit through mealtime and they're like dreading it. Like I'll have to sit for like 30 minutes to eat. But make mealtime fun. Give them control, give them autonomy, goes a long way.

Lori: Yes. Adding, adding that novelty is so important, I think, for an ADHDer to kind of keep their attention. So, I love that. And now as far as, I, you know, as far as like heavy work, can you give us some examples of what that would look like? Cause I just, as somebody who's not familiar with that, I wouldn't know what to do, I guess.

Madeha Ayub: Yes. Like I said, anything where you are carrying weight. So, for example, I am carrying the dishes to the dinner table. Or you can also be pushing, I'm pushing a laundry basket. I'm pulling the laundry basket. I'm putting all my toys in like a sack and then carrying the sack. So, it's anything that provides resistance in the joints. Even like pushing against the wall, pushing against mom. And oftentimes kids, when they seek out deep pressure, it'll be in the form of crashing. It'll be in the form of like rubbing their body against the wall or rubbing their body, brushing it against someone else. And so that's their, that's the cue that they need more compression, they need more deep pressure. So heavy work, it's a great way. I always tell parents, like, instead of telling a child not to climb, in the house, just redirect it. Like this is, we don't climb on the kitchen counter, but this is where you can climb. So, I always say redirect, don't stop it. Because children who have this old built up of energy, it'll make meal time harder, it'll make eating harder, it'll make sleeping harder. So, give them opportunities to engage in heavy work, to engage in the crashing and proactively throughout the day. If they know, if you know, like coming home from school, they're already a little worked up, start there. Don't wait until right before meal time, five minutes before to be like, hey, let's do some heavy work. You should be doing it, throughout the day. And again, it can be

seamlessly done. It's not something you have to add on. It could just be like, hey, let's just do army crawls to the kitchen or let's do wheelbarrow walks. Or do you mind carrying this to the room? So, giving them opportunities to carry and push and pull I think all great ways. I did create a visual. If you follow me on Instagram @seedsforspecialneeds, I have a heavy work poster. So, it's like examples of different, it's a visual of a heavy work ideas, because I know oftentimes parents are always like, what type of heavy works I typically activities can I do. And all of these are like, do not include any material so you don't have to go buy something.

Lori: Okay. I love that. We'll try and again link your Instagram page in the bio so people can, can seek that out. So, at what point should parents reach out for an OT feeding evaluation? Like, at what point do you, will you say this is significant enough, their sensitivity to food is significant enough to warrant that?

Madeha Ayub: That's a really good question. I always defer back to the pediatrician. I always say, speak to your child's pediatrician if there's any health concerns, any concerns about their weight and then the pediatrician can then refer them out to a feeding specialist. But in general, if your child is having any extreme reactions to food, meaning if they swallow something that they didn't want to swallow and now they're gagging, they're vomiting, any extreme reaction, I would call an OT support for that. Extreme reaction is one. Even if they're eating less than like 10 foods, 15 foods, I mean, if they're having the same thing every day, a lot of my clients do. I have a client who eats chicken nuggets breakfast, lunch and dinner. That's all he has. No, no condiments, nothing. Just a chicken nugget. And to the point where it's like he's not having anything else, it's a health concern. But also, family lifestyle is getting really hard because he only wants chicken nuggets from, Chick-Fil-A. And so, it's not even like we can go to McDonald's. It's very specific. They cannot travel because of this. If they do, they have to be right next to a Chick-Fil-A. We eventually found a brand that makes frozen nuggets that are similar, but it's gotten to the point where it's affecting the child, it's affecting the family. And this same client of mine, he is so triggered by pizza. Like, he just does not like how pizza looks, how it feels. And so, every single birthday party, he usually doesn't attend it because it's always a pizza party. And I think mom eventually did take him to one and he had to sit by himself. He just couldn't watch other kids eating pizza. It's affecting them to the point where they cannot even have meaningful relationships. They feel isolated, and it makes family life really hard. And so, I think that's when you really need to get the support.

Lori: I think that's great. I think that's, in the world of psychology, I always tell parents, look at an evaluation when it's starting to kind of affect your daily life or your child's daily life in some way. Where it's, you're seeing kind of a negative impact, whether that's at school, at home, and their social functioning. I think that's such a great, because that can look very different. Like, the challenges can look very different, but I think most families can look and say, yeah, this is making this hard. We can't live our life in a way that we enjoy our child enjoys because of it.

Madeha Ayub: Exactly.

Mallory: I think it's kind of a testament to the lengths parents will go to for their kids, though, to make them happy, but also to avoid challenges like only choosing a vacation destination, choosing the hotel based on where you know you can access your child's preferred food. And I feel like it's a slippery slope, right. Before you know it, you're in that position where you can only travel to these specific places, and you're kind of like, gosh, okay, yeah, this is affecting our life in a really significant way. But I think it is hard for parents to know when, like, okay, when do I ask for help? When do I seek professional support? But you did give some great ideas that families can start using today when it comes to meal times, like prepping them, doing the heavy work in advance, just what the actual meal looks like, what you're offering, what the expectations are. So, I think those are some great places for families to start if eating is a tricky thing for them.

Madeha Ayub: And I would say start with foods that are very similar to their safe food. So, yes, he only wanted Chick-Fil-A nuggets. And we try, like, McDonald nuggets, right. Like, I know that's not the healthiest thing to introduce, but sometimes it's what is meaningful. If he loves chicken nuggets, I would start with something that's very similar. I wouldn't go from chicken nuggets, now let's try a pear. Like, no, that's very different. But if he's, you know, trying purple grapes, let's try green grapes. You know, like, just make only change one thing and then work it from there.

Mallory: Yeah, baby steps. So, let's switch gears a little bit here and start talking about clothing and getting dressed. Because we know that a lot of kids with ADHD struggle with finding clothes that they like. They're bothered by that itchy tag. The socks are not right. The shirt that they wore yesterday, today, they hate it because it's just doesn't feel good. So, what's

going on for these kids, sensory wise when it comes to these clothing preferences and struggles?

Madeha Ayub: Yes, similar to mealtime, but very different. Because meal time, you're only exposed to those textures and smells at mealtime. Clothing, you're wearing it all day long. And what's happening with our kids with ADHD, like, for us, I mean, who may not have as severe sensory sensitivities. When I wear a shirt, you feel it when you put it on, but after that, your brain filters out that sensation. So, I don't feel it. Sometimes I have to look and remind myself what I'm wearing because I don't feel it anymore, right. Same thing with the necklace. If I don't know if I have it on, I just have to literally use my hands. And so, our body learns to filter, our brain learns to filter out that information. For our kids with ADHD, sometimes it's hard filtering out. One day they may filter it out, the next day they may not. So that itchy tag, they are feeling it all day long which makes it so difficult. And they're already struggling with transition, so getting dressed in the morning and now they have to leave the house and it's raining, so now they have to wear a raincoat. So, it's like all these transitions are so hard. So, I think clothing battles is so common and sometimes it's a lot harder because it's like, throughout the day. And I know many parents have found ways, like, they're like, yeah, I just, just cut all the tags. And they found ways that work like, you know, we just have him wear his shirt inside out. We just don't put socks on. And I'm like, hey, listen, if it's working for your child, if it's working for your family, let it be. I don't change a thing. But it's only when it's like, okay, it's, it's a blizzard outside and he would not wear a sweater, a jacket, wants to go out in a t-shirt, and that's where we're like, okay, we just, we need a little more, we need to do something there.

Lori: Yes, absolutely. So, we know parents really are looking for those practical tips. So, what are some of your go-to strategies for reducing clothing battles in the morning?

Madeha Ayub: Yes. So again, I'm gonna talk about the compression again because I know deep pressure is a great way to really calm the nervous system. So, you can literally wear compression undergarments under the clothes. I think just giving them some gentle squeezes in the morning is really helpful. And oftentimes I think it's easier if your someone that takes the bath in the morning versus at night. Sometimes it's easier wearing something different right after a bath when their child is already kind of calm, already undressed, I think that makes it a little easier. And then also I think making it into a game. I think I love to associate,

just like we did playing with food to associate food textures with joy. We can make turning dressing up a game as well. So sometimes it's like, okay, let's do some frog jumps between the pants and the shirt. Or, let's put a timer on, let's see if mom or you can get put on their sweater the fastest, let's see. Will mom win today or will you win today? So just turning it into a game, you can even do like when, and of course in the morning I know sometimes, you don't always have the time. And I always tell parents like, don't do this when you, when you're feeling rushed. So, on the weekends if you have the time, I would do like dress up games like a fashion show. And so, things like that I think just really associating clothing textures with joy and just letting them know. I think there's a lot of social stories out there and I know I'll talk about my books in a way, but in a bit, but I think just having them, just talking to them about the importance of why we wear certain clothing for certain weathers and things like that I think is really important.

Mallory: I think you make a really great point that a lot of times when we're getting dressed, it's usually when there's some kind of time crunch, like we're trying to get out the door to go to school in the morning, Or it's bedtime and you're just really ready for your child to go to bed. And so, like, parents were already approaching this situation, like, the clock is ticking, let's get this done, let's get out the door, let's make this happen. So, there's already this added pressure of trying to make this happen fast. And then that's like, that's bleeding into our interactions with our kids who are then resisting even harder. So, you make that great point of we have to practice wearing these clothes at other times where you're not in a time crunch, you're not stressed about getting out the door. It's not 8:30pm and your kid should have been asleep an hour ago and they won't put their pajamas on. Like, you have to practice outside at other time, not outside, like outdoors, but outside that point of need, wearing these clothes. So, I think that's a huge point that we often don't, like, pause to think about as parents. Like, how can we, how can I make this go a little smoother?

Madeha Ayub: Yeah. And just giving them more control and choices too. Like, you can have two sets of pajamas out. Okay, which one are you gonna wear today? Let me see if I can guess it right. You know, just giving them control and choices. Like, I know everyone, like, kind of does the online shopping, but I always say, like, go in the store, let them try it on, let them see it. You know, let them find their favorite characters on these clothing items. So, the more control and the more autonomy you give your child, I think the easier this process will be.

Lori: Yeah. And as far as, I know some parents are going to be wondering, like, how do I balance, you know, kind of getting them clothing that, you know, do I buy the socks without the seams? Do I cut out all the tags? Like, what is your recommendation about kind of eliminating some of those sensory challenges versus kind of working towards getting them exposed to different types of clothing or things like that to help them kind of get used to some of that? Like, how do you balance that as a parent?

Madeha Ayub: That's a great question. I always say opt for things that are, I mean, your child's comfort is priority. So, yes, if you can find socks without seams, if you can find shirts without a tag. And I think nowadays, like, it's so much easier to find things to wear. So, I don't think that there's a problem if you get. Many parents are like, I know exactly what my child wears, we stock up on it. And I'm like, make it work. Your child's comfort is priority. And I only intervene if it's like a child who really wants to play soccer and now it's the soccer uniform that's bothering, they don't want to wear the shin guards. And now we're like, okay, well let's talk about why do we need to wear it. So, I only intervene when it's safety. Safety's at risk here. It's a health concern, meaning like there's a blizzard outside, they're not even wearing like they're wearing like open toe sandals, things like that. So, in general, like your child's comfort is priority and I will only add that little discomfort part only because it's a safety reason.

Mallory: Yeah. And I think that's important to realize that even as grown-ups like we gravitate toward the clothes that feel comfortable for us. Like I know personally, if I find a clothing item that I like, I go in and buy it in every color because I love it, it feels great. So, so why not extend to, you know, extend that consideration to our kids as well. And just thinking too, especially you know, for school days, sending our kids to school, if we're trying to push them outside their comfort zone, which maybe there's a time and a place for that, if that's what's occupying their brain the whole day at school, they're probably not, you know, doing their best learning if all they can think about is how itchy the tag is. So being wise and you know, when we choose, you know, pick your battles wisely, right.

Lori: Yes.

Madeha Ayub: And unfortunately for my kids, like they go to a private school, so they have uniforms. So, I really don't have a lot of say in what they wear. But sometimes I'll tell my daughter like you can pick your favorite t-shirt to wear underneath the collared shirt. So, she

picks her favorite shirt and sometimes it's pink and it's cotton and so she'll wear that.

Sometimes we do the compression undergarment. So, I feel like tips like that do help. And so it's really helpful for parents to know what to do when you don't have a say or you don't have a choice.

Mallory: Yeah. And so, one of your recommendations was wearing compression clothing underneath the outer layer of clothing. Is that more for kids that are sensory seeking? What about for kids who they don't want to have anything on? Like they come home, they strip right away the clothes that they will wear, like they want it loose, it's almost falling off their body. I know some kids like this. Do you have any tips for those kind of kids, who they don't want the compression or maybe you're going to tell me that actually would be good for them. I don't know. What do you, what do you do for those kids?

Madeha Ayub: Oftentimes compression does help both our sensory seekers and sensory sensitive children because it's just, what it's doing is just calming the nervous system. So oftentimes even our kids who want to be shirtless, they may like it. But again, loose fitting clothing is really important and I think anything that you do buy, like even like my child's uniform, like you can buy it in looser fit. And I think that is something that's definitely doable and I understand like a lot of them even like their clothes getting wet, as soon as it starts to cling, they're like, they don't like it. So, I think the loose fit it, it's helpful. And I always say like, if you can buy something in a looser fit, go for it. Buy it in large.

Mallory: Yeah. And I could see, I could see how two kids could kind of have or sorry, one kid could have kind of these two profiles. Just thinking from personal experience with my own children, like I definitely have one kid who walks in the door at home and strips, doesn't want clothes on. But he's also a very sensory seeker in other ways with the crashing and the cuddling and he loves his sensory sock. He loves a good weighted blanket. And so, you know, on one hand it seems like he's really avoiding, but then super seeking in other ways.

Madeha Ayub: Yeah. And it could be the weight, right. The weight of the compression blanket, the weight of when you're like wrapped up in a blanket like a burrito. And it could be that it's the compression and not so much the texture that they like. And I always say like, listen, if they want to be shirtless, give them opportunities to do that. Like, listen, like we have to wear clothes during the day in school, but when you come home from this, from now until so, you know, give them a timing like you can take your shirt off, it's fine. Give them

opportunities to kind of do that as well. I mean they don't need to have it on all day, like, meet them in the middle. But, but again, it's all about just meeting them where they're at and giving them opportunities to kind of do what makes their body feel good.

Lori: These tips are so helpful. And I know many families struggling with sensitive eaters and sensitive clothing, they're going to have lots of things that they can kind of take from this episode and use. So, thank you so much. Can you tell us a little bit about your books that you've written? So, the Sensory Support series and the inspiration behind it?

Madeha Ayub: Yes, absolutely. Absolutely. So, my book series was inspired by the same client who eats the chicken nuggets from Chick-Fil-A and does not like pizza. And so he, at that time, he was about 7 years old. And usually with my younger clients, I love finding books that really resonates with them. They feel seen, they feel understood. And I kid you not, there's so many books out there about picky eating. But all the books that I came across was focused on, like, taking a bite, taking a bite, taking a bite. And it almost felt like forced. And for me, it's really not about the bite itself. It's not about, most often any, any client that I worked with and I introduced a food to them, they usually don't end up liking and that's totally okay. It's really about growing comfort around the food. Like, hey, I can actually sit with someone eating pizza and I feel safe. My body is not threatened, like, I'm okay. That's where I wanted to get with him. And so, I couldn't find a book that talked about, like, just being comfortable around foods. It's all like, take a bite and then the character, like, loves it. And I'm like, they never love it at the end. And so, I was inspired to start the Sensory Support book series. And my first book was *Before the Brave Bite*, because it was all the steps leading up to the bite that were more, that were important, if not more so. Even tolerating new food on the table, that's bravery. Being able to pull that food closer to you, that's bravery. Being able to just scoop a little bit, again, this is a child doing it, being able to scoop just one little spoon from that new plate and bring it, bringing it next to your safe foods, that is huge bravery. And then we go into, like, mixing the food just a little bit, playing with the food. When they're ready, they can get to they can kiss it, they can just take a lick. It's really all the steps that lead up to the bite that are, like, more important, that really builds that comfort. And children who are comfortable around food will try it on their own when they're ready. Trust me, they will. And so, I really wanted a book where children feel empowered. The steps are all child led, meaning the adults are not doing it for the child. Of course, you do need an adult to really help them, but the child, it's all child led. It's empowering, and it really gives

parents also direction. Like, where do I start? And, you know, and I tell them that you start with foods that are very similar. Let them place it on the table, let them pull the plate closer. And in the book we talk about like a little finish line. It's like different levels and it's like a racetrack. And so, I really wanted to empower parents and empower children. And so, I started with this book. It's called *Before the Brave Bite: Empowering Your Sensory Sensitive Child to Explore New Foods*. And just this year, just this month actually, I launched the second book to my series, which is all about clothing battles. And it's called, *When Things Feel Icky: Empowering Your Sensory Sensitive Child to Feel Safe in What They Wear*. And we talk all about the compression, we talk about the heavy work activities, we talk about adaptive wear, and I even talk about helping your child be an advocate for themselves. There's so many times where if you just voice your concerns, like, hey, this is not making my body feel okay. Like, there are adults who will work with you, you know, whether it's your coach, whether it's the teacher. And so, helping children also feel empowered to use their voice is what I really want to showcase in my book series.

Lori: Yeah, that's so wonderful. And, it's so powerful too, because we think of treating anxiety and there is so much anxiety related to underlying many of these sensory challenges. A bite is like a 10 out of 10 for most kids. So, it's like you would never start exposing a child to like a 10 out of 10 thing that they're anxious about. You know, you have to start like, very, very small with very small steps to eventually work up to that. And for so many kids, yeah, jumping into a bite is, is not, is not something they can even do, especially when they're so sensitive.

Madeha Ayub: And if anything, I feel like it's the reverse outcome. They'll be even more, like, aversive. They'll vomit and then they'll associate that food with, like, illness and like, I'm going to get sick, I don't even want to look at it, right.

Lori: Yep. It backfires.

Madeha Ayub: Yeah, exactly. Yeah.

Mallory: So, we'll be sure to link your sensory support series in the show notes for today. Where can our listeners connect with you, continue to learn from you?

Madeha Ayub: Yeah, so you can find me on Instagram. My handle is @seedsforspecialneeds. Again, this is for all children because I feel like every single child has a very unique, and very, very unique and special needs. So, I feel like all children need to be supported, supported in their unique ways and it's for all parents. But of course, I do talk a lot about sensory strategies because you don't need to have sensory issues to benefit from a sensory strategy. So, I talk about sensory tips, I talk about my books. Again, you can also find my books on Amazon, and you can find me Seeds for Special Needs. And I do have a website, seedsforspecialneeds.com where I do write blog posts more in depth on what I talk about, on social media. Not as frequently as I would like, but I do try to get a blog post out here and there.

Lori: Same with us. We're the same way.

Mallory: Well, thank you so much, Medeha for sharing your expertise and your knowledge and your real-life experience with our listeners. I know that you're going to help a lot of our families.

Madeha Ayub: I hope so. Thank you so much for having me.

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!