

Shining with ADHD by The Childhood Collective

Episode #218: How ADHD Moms Can Find Their People (Even When It Feels Hard)

Patricia Sung: Spending time with friends who are truly life giving, that are like your kind of people, they will increase your energy. You will leave that feeling filled up. And so that's actually a really great way to increase your energy is spending time with the people that love you and care about you and enjoy you as you are. Like, that's a way to increase your energy. So, if you're spending time with good people, it shouldn't feel like a drain. Yes, there's gonna be times where you're tired or things are crazy in your life, whatever, you know, but like, generally speaking, those people are adding to your life, but not in a bad way. So, as you leave that interaction and you're feeling better, it's like, okay, you know what I can go home and tackle the laundry right now because I feel really good.

Kati: 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. Welcome back to the Shining with ADHD podcast. Today's episode is specifically for us moms who feel overwhelmed or alone in our journeys.

Mallory: We are thrilled today to be chatting with Patricia Sung, an ADHD coach for moms who have ADHD. And even if you don't have a diagnosis yourself, she's going to be talking about finding community, which is something we all need.

Katie: Yes. Patricia supports moms worldwide through her incredible podcast and online coaching. And if that wasn't enough, she also has a brand-new book. She just submitted the final manuscript and that is coming out in 2027. So, thank you so much for being here today, Patricia.

Patricia Sung: I am so excited to be here with you ladies. I can't even, like, I'm like, ha. I love them. I'm so excited. It's going to be a really good conversation together.

Katie: Yeah, I love it. It's so fun to meet people that you've followed online for a long time. It's the same on our side. I'm always, like, watching your stories and I feel like we're friends, so it's really fun to jump on here. So, thank you again for taking the time. We just are really honored to have you.

Mallory: Yeah, let's do it. So, to start off, why don't you just share a little bit about your own journey with ADHD and what kind of led you to the work that you're doing today.

Patricia Sung: Okay, so, of course I've had ADHD my whole life, but I didn't know that. I didn't get diagnosed until I was in college. So, I went my entire childhood not knowing why I was struggling in the ways that I was struggling. But I looked good doing it. Like, I was, I am your, like quintessential oldest daughter. I am the oldest of five. Like, I was a National Honor Society student. Like, I was the like, the thing that people don't think people have ADHD are, right. And then I got to college, and it just fell apart. And I can look back now and be like, oh, that's because all the structure I had built in and all the support I had built in was not there anymore because I went away to school. It's a different schedule. It's like all the supports there were gone. And so, I just nosedived. I almost failed out. I almost lost my scholarship. It was really rough. And thankfully, like, I just thank my lucky stars that the doctor I saw in the student health center recognized it, and she sent me to student services to get, like, full eval. And that's when I found out I had ADHD. So, it was the year 2000, which has been a hot minute, but, you know, way back then, way back then, in the olden days, not that long ago, but there really wasn't the knowledge that we have now. And so, it was pretty much like, hey, here's some Ritalin, take it when you study. Good luck! I really had to look outside to find supports. And, like, there was a law student who was friends with the master's student who did my eval, who was the one who taught me how to study with ADHD. And so it's like, you need that community there to support you. But then I just kind of ignored it for a long time, and I was like, okay, good to go. And it's not until I became a teacher, so I used to teach

middle school and high school that I really realized, like, oh, my gosh, this really does affect, I mean, not just my issues, but, like, what the students are going through. And I was able so much more to help them because I had that experience. And then, like, fast forward to after I had my boys and I was home, again, I was like, oh, there are so many moms out here who need this support. And I had no aspirations whatsoever of doing what I'm doing now. It really just, came to me, like, between, like, my faith and, like, happenstance, and, like, all the things just came together, and it was like, this is what I was built to do, is taking that education background, taking my ADHD experience, and putting it together to be able to support moms, to know, like, you are not alone. You are not the only one going through this. And there is a way to make it all work when you're working with your brain.

Mallory: Yeah. I bet there's so many listeners who can relate to the experience of like finally getting that diagnosis and feeling that relief, but then just being told like, and you can take Ritalin, you could take medicine, like, you could take medication. So, then you're like, that's it, like what else? And like you said, then you kind of just were like, okay, I'll do, you know, and then you didn't do much with it. But there, I think there's parents that are wanting more, they want to do more, they know there's more options now. So, I love that you are offering that to parents because I think there's a huge need for that.

Katie: Yeah, absolutely.

Patricia Sung: I'm so glad that things are different now. But that's also like whenever people are like, well, if I had only known. And I was like, yes, but.

Katie: But not really.

Patricia Sung: The supports weren't the same 20, 40, 60 years ago. I mean, because I have clients who are in their 60's and 70's, like it wasn't the same that we didn't know what we know now. And it really is a different world. We have a different level of knowledge and the way that we can support people now is so different than we were doing, you know, 30 years ago.

Katie: And we say that all the time. You know, it goes deeper than just, and I'm putting just in quotes, but just that hyperactivity, inattention, the things you think of with ADHD. So much of it is the emotional regulation like you talked about, but also the strategies and the

organizational pieces and being, you know, that sense of like, I'm overwhelmed all the time. And I think a lot of moms feel that that chronic overwhelm and that is oftentimes that underlying ADHD, but you just don't necessarily realize it. So many of us went through the diagnostic process with our kids and that is what sort of brought us to our own awareness. And so many moms, you know, talk about and feel this sense of isolation and I love how real you are about. And why is it that you think that so many moms do feel alone? Even though I know for myself, like we are surrounded by people all the time, but there's this sense of like you just feel isolated and alone.

Patricia Sung: I think because when we're struggling, we don't always realize the capacity to which we are struggling. And so, I relate back to that, oh man, I should have looked up the name for it. But there's that little happy face scale that when you go to the doctor, they're like, how much does it hurt? And you have the 1 to 10 scale to be, like, the little happy, sad faces, like, give you a, like, clearer information to give to, like, the nurse, the doctor, whoever you're talking to. Because a lot of times when we're like, oh, this is really hard. Like, when you have a newborn, it's hard. It's hard for everybody. Everybody's going to struggle with a newborn because you're not sleeping. Your hormones are a mess. Like, you're still trying to figure out, like, what's going on, and you don't know what you're doing. So everyone's going to struggle with a newborn, but everyone around you might be struggling with, like, a level three or a level four, but when you're struggling at a level eight and you're saying that this is really difficult, the other people are, like, relating it back to their three, and they're like, yeah, it's hard, but, like, well, we're gonna work. You know, we'll get through it. And when you're at an eight, like, the what the people at a three don't, that's not what you need. That's not the same. And so, when we're talking about ADHD, most of the struggle is internal. When you're feeling shame or you're feeling guilt or you're frustrated that, like, you can't get your house together and you're always turning up late to stuff, most of that is living inside of you and you're not talking about it a ton. And when you do, you're probably not saying, like, well, I'm on the pain scale at 9. You're not, like, giving that information because you don't know that that's the difference in between, like, one person struggling versus another. So, when we can clearly recognize, like, oh, my struggle is actually far greater than most everyone else's, then we're actually able to get the support. But at the time, like, when you're asking for advice and people are giving you, like, these, like, mild level three supports, you're like, this isn't doing it. This isn't, man. Like, I'm not. I'm not getting better. And so that, to me, is, like, why we struggle is because we're not aware, or maybe we don't feel safe sharing, like, the level of

discomfort and, like, awfulness going inside of us, especially when everyone else is playing it off like, well, you know, yeah, it's hard. Babies are hard.

Mallory: Yeah, we kind of joke about this advice when it comes to, like, for example, maybe your struggle is getting the kids to school on time, getting everyone awake, getting everyone dressed, packing lunches, getting out the door. And so, your kids are late often, so you're talking to other moms like, how do you guys get your kids to school on time? How do you get out the door on time? They're like, well, just try waking up earlier. And you're like, first of all, I don't want to do that. Second of all, like, no, you're not understanding the deep struggle that mornings are. Like, adding 15 minutes is not gonna get us out the door on time. So, it's you know, maybe you are sharing these concerns, and again, but you're met with people who are three on the pain scale with a simple tip that you're like, I don't think that's enough. I don't think that's going to really do it for my family.

Katie: Yeah, I know for me, that was definitely something that it took me a long time, though, to unlearn because you hear things like, well, we all have the same 24 hours in a day, right. Or a lot of my friends have two kids that are the same age and they do work full time, just like me and they also have a house that seems cleaner than my house, right. And so, there is this sense of, like, it feels really hard, like you mentioned, but you don't really know why it feels so hard. And I think there's this kind of false narrative in at least in my own mind sometimes where I'm like, well, it actually it is easier for other people. I guess it's not really a false narrative, but I can sense that it seems easier for them, if that makes sense. Like, I can kind of tell and, like, it's easier for them and it's hard for me, but I don't really know why. And I think that's a huge piece of it is then you feel, like, ashamed or embarrassed, like, well, why is this so much harder for me?

Patricia Sung: Yeah. And I think also, like, when you have ADHD, you have not everybody, but most people have the pattern of noticing all the things that don't go well far more often than what does go well. So, like, we can look at somebody else who does get their kids to school on time all, like, every day and be like, man, they're like, that's easier for them. Why is it so hard for me? But then, like, it may come to, like, making the science project, you know, like for the science fair and you're like, we got this down, ready, we're making a volcano. And that's your, like that's your wheelhouse. That's where you're shining and that's not where

other people are shining. But yet we don't compare that. We're not like, wow, I'm an excellent volcano maker.

Katie: Yes, that's not on the resume. What?

Patricia Sung: No, we're not, we're not like, oh, like, or a lot of times moms with ADHD are so much more empathetic in the way that we approach our kids problems because we understand a lot of the internal struggle that's going on and like other people don't. So, it's not to say that like, like yes, there are things that are more difficult for you, but like are you also noticing the things that you're good at? Because that is really important for our confidence and our self-esteem. So, like whatever amount of time you're spending telling yourself you suck, are you spending an equal amount of time telling yourself you're awesome? Probably not.

Katie: I love that so much. I'm definitely going to start thinking about that because that is just a great motto. I love it.

Mallory: So, you're saying that in some ways just kind of circling back, in some ways, like moms are maybe at an 8 on this scale, but they might not even know that they're at an 8 or understand why. And so, for moms who are feeling overwhelmed, who are feeling exhausted, what are some of those early signs that they can tune into to kind of be the kind of guiding light, like, oh, it's time for me to get some more support. It's time for like, I need more connection, I need more help. What are some of those early signs that they might need more?

Patricia Sung: I mean one of them is just the fact that you've noticed that you're really struggling and like the whatever things you're trying aren't working. Like that right there tells you something's up. And we usually have this like tiny little like you can call it whatever you want, gut instinct, your intuition. Like there's usually something inside that's telling you like, hey, something's not right. But we often don't listen to ourselves. Like in like plain English, we ignore our signals, we ignore what our body is telling us, we ignore what our heart is telling us, we ignore what our head's telling us and keep trying to like muddle through, be like, oh no, well I'll figure it out. And that's that persistence that most people with ADHD have is really beautiful and it also can be to our detriment because we don't ask for help. Because we're like, I'm gonna figure this out. I'm gonna make it happen. And, like, yes, you will, but also, you don't have to do it by yourself. So, I'd say, like, that's the first one is just

kind of listening when you feel that little internal thing that's like, something's just not right here. That's the time to ask for help, because there are people out here who have done this before and can help you figure out what the thing is. Granted, you need to find the right person who's experienced with that, but, like, they exist. You don't have to struggle by yourself. But I would say also, like, the just that general, like, feeling, ah, like, fatigue of, like, it's not necessarily just being tired, but, like, I'm so worn out that, like, I can't even think of, like, what I'm like, I can't even fold the laundry because I'm just so tired. Like, that beyond sleepiness of, like, your body's just, like, I don't have any energy left to do the basic things. That's a really good one. Well, not a good one. Like, a good indicator, but not a good thing. And then, like, a lot of times, like, things I hear from my clients are like, I feel constantly behind. I don't know where to start. Even though, like, as moms, like, we know what to do, we know how to fold laundry, we know how to unload dishwasher. But it's like, but I don't know where to start. Like, you look at the chaos and it's, like, too much. I don't know where to start. Let's see, I'm constantly doing but I don't feel like things are getting done, or I don't feel productive or I don't feel, like, effective. So that, like, constant movement isn't translating into, like, some kind of result. Moms who are like, I wish I could just escape. I wish I could just not do this for a day or a weekend or, like, ever when, like, if you start fantasizing about, like, how could I live a different life and just, like, hop on the highway and drive away and never come back. That feeling is, like, a really good indicator of, like, things are too much right now and you need support, you need a break. And then actually, what I just said too much. Anytime you feel too much. Too much whatever, too sensitive, too dramatic, too whatever the thing is you've heard your whole life, when those things start kicking up, that's a really great place to get support too because that's coming from somewhere. But like that's one of the hallmarks of ADHD is being told you're too fill in the blank. So, any of those things there like it ask for help, you have to ask for help. We are not meant to do this alone. And as much as you know, we value the independent spirit and pulling yourself up by your bootstraps of the US society like that's not how we were built as humans. That's not how we were meant to raise our kids. And we don't have to do that alone, but a lot of times we feel like we're supposed to.

Katie: Yeah, I know that you're talking a lot about, okay, you know, you can get help and find that support, find that community. And I'm curious, you know, what that really looks like in real life. So maybe talk us through some strategies or where moms might start to look for that. Because I know that is something we hear all the time and through social media,

especially moms reaching out and just saying, I don't know where to find a friend or someone that gets it. So, what does that look like?

Patricia Sung: This is something I've had to learn because I am an introvert and I spent my whole life growing up, I was very shy, very afraid of strangers, like do not speak to me new person. Like this is a skill that I've had to put in place. And there is an author named Caroline McGuire who wrote the book, *Why Will No One Play with Me?* It's for kids who have ADHD and it helps explain like what friendship is and like the different levels of friendship and like basically how do you teach your kids how to make friends, and like understand social cues and all that stuff. Well, she also coming out with a book for grown-ups soon, so I'm very excited about that. But I've had to learn those things. Like I had to learn how to like how do I reach out, but also like being willing to be vulnerable in order to reach out. Because for us to make a friend, like you have to find a connection point. And when you don't show that like you need somebody, why do they want to like how can they help you if they don't know what you need? So, you reach out and you talk to people. It's like, you have to be vulnerable in order to create that connection. But you're like, but I don't want to be vulnerable with people I don't know. Yes, I know. So, it's like taking those baby steps towards it so that, like, you test the waters first and make sure they're, like, a safe person before you're vulnerable. Which is a really hard skill for us with ADHD, because a lot of times we're the people who, like, you order your coffee and then you tell your barista, like, about your kid's poo problems that day. And you're like, that's not an appropriate. Unless you see them every day. And you would be like, willing to actually, like, go to their house for dinner. Like, they probably don't need to hear about that stuff. So, it's like, how do you know, like, these people? And so, like, first of all, just, like, using proximity, like, who are the people that you normally interact with? Like, if you take a step back and kind of just, like, scan the room, you will start to see your people there. But a lot of times we're so worried about, like, what we're gonna say or how we're coming across that we don't even look at the other people, really. Like, we don't, we're taking in so much more information about what's going on with us than, like, looking at the room. So, it's like, if you take a step back and you're like, okay, who are the people in this room that look like they might be good possibilities? You don't have to be friends with everybody, but, like, if you're the kind of person who's kind of, like, tucked in the corner, like, is there another mom tucked in another corner That would be the kind of person you could start with. Like, don't pick the most, the person most different from you. They might be a great friend, but, like, look for the people who are similar to you. So, you know, when you're on the baseball

fields watching your kids practice, our gut might be like, let me just scroll this phone and pass the time. But instead, like, can you look up and scan the other moms? Like, we have to be we have to look like we're interested in talking for someone to talk to us. And, yes, you may end up, like, saying something, and they might kind of, like, you know, brush you off because they're over there scrolling on their phone.

Katie: They're like, this is my quiet time.

Patricia Sung: Yes. And that's okay. Like, sometimes we need that. But like the best place to find friends is like where you already are. Because as moms we don't have a ton of free time. We don't have like, oh sure, let's meet for dinner multiple times a week like we did when we were, you know, young, single and like, you know, in your teens and like 20s, you just didn't have that. So like finding the people that already exist in your proximity, keeping your like antennas up for like, who looks like they might be possible candidates. And then knowing like, you're gonna have to kiss a lot of frogs before you find your prince, like, you're gonna have to like meet a lot of moms before you find someone you connect with. And so, it's like taking these little steps of like revealing a little bit about yourself to like test the waters. And so, you know, if you're the mom who's always running behind, maybe you're like, I don't know that I wanna be friends with super organized team mom who always has everything all together. Like, if that's gonna make you feel like a subpar mom, don't hang out with her. Where's the other mom coming in on two wheels who forgets practice half the time? Go, go talk to her. And it's, we have to be vulnerable. We have to be willing to take the first step. So, like, you know, within your comfort zone or like just outside your comfort zone, give a little bit of who you are. But like, if the mom came in on two wheels and running late, you could start the conversation there and be like, oh man, it's so hard for us to get out of the house. And she's probably like, tell me about it. And so, like finding that common point together and like, even if it turns out that they're not at all a friend candidate, you practice. It's kind of like when you go on practice job interviews before you like really need a job because you want the practice. Like you're practicing making friends and it's going to be awkward, it's going to be uncomfortable, but we have to be a little bit vulnerable in order to make those connections.

Mallory: Yeah. And to kind of use your analogy of like interviewing for a job, looking for a job. If you're really, if you really need a job, you're probably not just submitting one

application, right. You're probably submitting a lot of applications and you're going on a lot of interviews. So, like you said, you know, the first, the first person you talk to might not be your prince, but talking to lots of moms, you're going to increase your chance of finding someone who, like you said, looks at you as like, I know it's so hard to get out the door on time, right, let's talk about it. So you, it is hard though to put yourself out there and meet new people and be the one to start the conversation and it's not easy.

Patricia Sung: And it's really hard as a grown up to make friends.

Mallory: Yeah. And I think you kind of already answered this a little bit with your advice on scanning the room and be the first person to put yourself out there and find people who are already in the things that you're already doing. But I know that there's a lot of moms that are listening right now and thinking like, I can't do one more thing. I don't have the energy. I don't have the time to like add one more thing to my plate. I can't make friends right now. But we know that that social support, we know that finding that community is so important. And especially for moms who have ADHD, who have kids with ADHD, it can feel like a huge load. It could feel like you're already pushed to the max. So, what tiny doable steps would you suggest moms can do to kind of find that connection without burning out or feeling like they have one more big thing added to their plate?

Patricia Sung: So that's where proximity helps is because you're already going to be there. Like if you're already going to be, you know, sitting on the field sidelines or you're already going to be sitting in the dance room, like the parents area. I don't have girls, obviously. I don't know what I'm talking about. The like dance room area where the parents wait, like wherever you already are, like there are already moms there. You are in a place with children, their moms exist. So, using proximity really helps because they're already there. When you are spending time with friends who are truly life giving, that are like your kind of people, they will increase your energy. You will leave that feeling filled up. And so that's actually a really great way to increase your energy is spending time with the people that, that love you and care about you and enjoy you as you are. Like that's a way to increase your energy. So, if you're spending time with good people, it shouldn't feel like a drain. Yes, there's going to be times where you're tired or things crazy in your life, whatever, you know, but like, generally speaking, those people are adding to your life, but not in a bad way. So, as you leave that interaction and you're feeling better, it's like, okay, you know what, I can go home and tackle

the laundry right now because I feel really good because I spend time with somebody who really sees me. So those people shouldn't be a drain on your resources. They should be like either neutral or adding to your energy when you leave there. And yes, as moms, we never have this like, plethora of free time that we're like, wow, what am I going to do with my day? That rarely ever happens, if at all. So how are you going to put these things in where you already exist? It shouldn't be this like you have to make time for this person. You have to, have to, should, should, should. No, it's meant to add to your life. So how can you work that in and use your creative problem-solving brain that can always think of 37 problems, why you know, I bet that brain could also come with at least, you know, one or two solutions of how you could make this work. And they might be terrible when you start brainstorming, but that's how you practice the skill. Is you do it. It was bad. Okay. You keep going and eventually you're good at it. So, there are ways to infuse that into what you're doing and it shouldn't be like, oh my gosh, now I have to like attend to another person. Because if it is, then that's not really a great friend for this season.

Katie: Yeah, that's, I love what you're saying. It's really interesting to me because this past year I feel like I've made a lot more effort to make friends. So, I do have a daughter and we're at dance all the time basically. And I kind of, this is not to be offensive to any dance moms that are out there, but I kind of had this like mental image of what that would look like to go hang out with dance moms. And I was like, well, that's not going to be a good fit, right?

Mallory: Well, there is a show called Dance Moms that will give you that feeling.

Patricia Sung: Yeah, right.

Katie: Yeah, so. So I had no idea what it was going to be like, but I definitely this year have done a lot more just like exactly what you described, like sitting on the bench and kind of let it be awkward. Like it feels a little weird. I'd rather go sit in my car, to be honest. And I am actually an extrovert, but I feel like if I make a joke or laugh about, or even just watching the girls dance and then something funny happens and I'll make, you know, an offhanded comment. And what I notice is that mom that was sitting next to me, maybe scrolling her phone or doing her own thing, as soon as I kind of reach out, I feel like so many of us are really in search of that kind of connection. So maybe realizing, you know, we're all the star of our own movie, I guess. When I'm kind of open or just even turning my body a little bit more towards them and making a funny joke. Again, people with ADHD, I think we're pretty funny

generally. We can kind of be that witty banter in the moment a lot of times and that's really where I thrive. And so, I do find that my willingness to feel awkward for a second has been overall, like, a really good, positive thing. So, the chances that you're going to talk to someone and then they're going to give you the brush off is very low. I mean, yes, it could happen, absolutely. But my experience with the dance moms, I also have lacrosse moms, I have theater kids that I'm at the theater painting sets. Last night I painted a set for Little Mermaid. But it's, you know, just talking and trying to kind of reach out. And when I first got there, everyone was really quiet. And then I just kind of ask someone a question next to me and we started talking. And the next thing, everyone is jumping in. And so, I feel like it is something that none of us are that good at and, like, kind of just letting yourself know that this might be hard and a little scary and that that's also that's okay.

Patricia Sung: I think leaning on our extrovert friends is important. Like, the people who are willing to feel like, to jump in, like, as an introvert, I'm like, please let there be an extrovert who will start a conversation. But if not, like, that really awkward point is, like, it's okay. Like, I, that's one of my pieces of advice is, like, you come up with a really awkward statement to start with, and it can just be like, hey, it's our first time at dance, and I feel really awkward. Can I talk to you for a minute so I don't feel like the odd man out? Like, it's okay to start off like that. And you can have a rehearsed, like, intro thing and then you can also have a like, a rehearsed exit thing where you're like, okay, well, this is not going well. This is where I'm gonna be like, I'm gonna go find the restroom and leave. Like, but giving yourself, like, a pre-scripted entrance and exit allows you to feel more confident that, like, if it turns out you're trying this person, you're like, wow, this is not going to be my next friend. Like, it's okay to just be like, all right, I'm going to go. Like, it's it's okay.

Mallory: And I know that so many of us moms, like, we want that community. We want to make these connections, we want to find our people, but there are times where feelings of guilt or shame, is kind of bubbling up and getting in the way of actually doing these things that you've been saying. So how do you help moms shift into more compassion for themselves rather than comparison to other people that might be this guilt and shame, like, might be getting in the way of actually doing this, finding their community?

Patricia Sung: Yeah. So, the guilt and the shame is actually one of the things that we work on most in coaching. When you step into this situation that's new and vulnerable, immediately

your brain's like, remember that one time you totally screwed up and everybody hates you and it prevents us from moving forward. So, like, when you're going through therapy or you're going through coaching, that's part of what we're working on is, like, letting this go tangibly, not just, like, saying it, but when you sit down and look at like, okay, what is the thing that's like, where is this coming from? And being able to identify, like, normally when you're like, oh, I don't want to put myself out there, your brain pops up with this, like, horrible thing that happened in sixth grade that you, you know, that, like, started this pattern. But, like, that's not, if you ask somebody why they don't want to talk to somebody, that's not what you say. You're not like, well, let me tell you the story in sixth grade. It's just like this immediate, like more of like a, like a body reaction of like, oh, no, I am not doing that. And when we're working in coaching, like, we're looking for, like, what's that feeling that you have? What is the, like, what's that reaction happening? And if it's all of a sudden, like, your chest starts tightening and, like, you can't really breathe and like, you that, like, physical symptom happens. We're identifying that and being like, hey, that's your, like, alarm system letting you know that you are like, this is not a safe situation. And then we work with that to be like, okay, well what do you want instead? Like, what do you want when you're approaching someone else? Because in that moment when you have that fear response or the stress response, like, your body is reacting in like a split second. That's how, like, if somebody throws something at your head, you're gonna duck even though you didn't have time to process, like, oh, look, there is an object flying at my face, perhaps I should move. No, like, your body reacts right away. And when you've trained that reaction for, like, possibly decades, you may not even realize, like, all that stuff's going on. So, in coaching, we sit there and go, okay, what do you want? Like, in that moment when you feel your chest tightening, like, what do you actually want that to feel like? And when you work through, like, you kind of think through which, like, it sounds kind of like, weird because you're thinking about your thoughts, but it's like, okay, well, you know what, when I want to step out and make a friend, like, I recognize logically now that I'm not in the moment it's like that person might also feel really, like, uncomfortable and afraid to be vulnerable. And I want to be that like, you know, depending on your personality, like, this would be a different answer for everyone, but it's like, I actually want to be like, that person who reaches out to the new person. I want people to feel welcome. And when you start working through, like, what do you want that to feel like you can actually shift that wiring in your brain to be the thing that you want because you've worked through it to be like, oh, that tightening my chest is letting me know, like, that's a safety mechanism. Thank you, brain. Thank you so much for taking

care of me. And that's not what I want here. I'm now a grownup who knows that, like, if this person turns out to be a big jerk, I'm not going to talk to them anymore. It's not like you're stuck in six grade English with them for the rest of the year. Like, you just, you figure out how to avoid them as much as possible. And eventually, like, sometimes you're stuck with them, maybe for the baseball season, but like, you as a grownup have the power to change things. And you can say, you know what, that's not going to happen here, because I am, confident. I am a grown-up, I can do what I want. And instead I want to be the one who reaches out to the new teammate on the baseball team that's had the exact same kids for the last four years and here this poor one, kids new. And like, I want to help them, I want to welcome them. And it's changing that perspective to be like, oh, it's not, it doesn't have to be a dangerous situation. It had been in the past, but now I get to choose what I want to do in this situation. And when you rewire that part of your brain to say, hey, this is safe for me, like, sure, that person might say, I don't want to be friends with you, but you are also able to be like, cool, I don't want to be friends with somebody who doesn't want to be friends with me either. And, and like, let me try the next person. And like, as a grownup, you're able to be like, oh, okay, this, this is a different path that I want to take. And it's not to say that kids can't do that, but it's like if you're already like, I'm talking to the moms right now, not the kids. Like, you've already had this pattern for years and it's established, so it happens so fast that you don't think about it. So, when we can rewire that and you can choose a different thing and then you practice it. Like you practice when you see the new person. Okay, I know that when I see a new person, I want to be friendly. I want to ask how they're doing. Even if it's just, I just want to say hi and smile at them. Like, what's that gonna be when I walk in? I don't have to feel afraid. I don't have to feel like I can't breathe. I can just smile and wave to the new person, give them, you know, the, the head nod, and then move on. Even if it's a tiny step. Like, you don't have to be the most bubbly person in the room, but you could just recognize that a new person has entered the vicinity. Like just knowing that that's gonna be your next step and like, being able to work through your feelings of like, okay, I don't have to freak out, like, I can do this. And then you get to practice it. And then all of a sudden, like, you do this three or four times and you are now a person who like waves and nods at each new person who shows up in the group and then you get to show your brain, like, oh, hey brain, look, it didn't have to be terrible. Yes, there might be a terrible occurrence here and there, but like, that doesn't have to be the standard. The standard can be, I am a friendly person who waves and says hi when a new person shows up. So, this like, all these patterns that are in your brain that have been sitting there for years, like, we don't question them a lot

of the times. Like that's just, we're just like, well, I'm just a person who's not friendly. I'm just a person who doesn't whatever. And it doesn't have to be that way. You get to choose the kind of person that you want to be. And not to say that you have to be a different person, but you get to choose. And I think we're just so, we're just in chains over the things that have been said to us over decades and we don't have to do that anymore. Like, that is the beautiful part of being a grown up is like, you get to be whoever you want and, and it can be different. And a lot of times we're just stuck on what was in the past. And we don't have to be like, I don't want to sound like too like toxic positivity, but it's like you can make changes in the way that you approach things when you have like, good guidance, when you have like practical steps and we're not just like hoping things will be different, but you are able to take those steps forward to do something in a different way so that it's not, the automatic reaction isn't fear, it isn't shame, it isn't guilt. Instead it's like, okay, thank you, brain. That was part of the past, I get it. And I want to be the person who says hi, or I want to be the person who welcomes the new person. Like, you can change that.

Katie: Yeah. There was someone, I don't know which influencer it was, but it was someone that I follow on social media and she was talking about this in a much less serious context. Like, what you're saying is amazing, but she was saying it about washing her face and she's like, I've never had a skincare routine. And my strategy for the last few months has been to tell myself every single day I am the kind of person who washes their face every single night. I'm the kind of person who takes care of my skin. And she was talking about this and how there's this big mindset shift of for a very long time, she would say, I'm just not the kind of person that, you know, takes care of my skin or washes my face. And by just redefining that, which, crazy enough, I think so many of us don't realize we have the option to do that at any time. Like, I'm the kind of person who goes to the gym. I'm the kind of person who paints a Little Mermaid set. Didn't know that, but now I am. And that we all have that power, I think that is so incredibly powerful. And I just, I love, love what you're sharing here. This has been really, really helpful. So, I do think we're going to start to wrap up, but I know that there's going to be people who want to continue to learn from you and just hear your story. So where can our listeners go if they want to learn more about you or continue to work with you?

Patricia Sung: So, my podcast is called Motherhood and ADHD, which you can find on any podcast platform. So, wherever you're listening to this right now, yeah, when the episode's over, you can go add that one to your queue. And then my website's just my name,

patriciasung.com. And for any mom who's sitting there going like, oh, my gosh, this is starting to sound really familiar, I do have a checklist of symptoms for what it looks like in women, like, as an adult who has maybe more of the inattentive type of ADHD. And it's a, like, a giant checklist of all the different ways that the DSM-5 shows up. So the DSM-5 is how doctors will, or, like, psychiatrists, and everyone who's able to diagnose, that's their, like, their little guideline. But a lot of times it doesn't feel like real people language. And so, I've put, like, real people examples in there. Like, as a mom, what does it look like to be, you know, inattentive? What does it look like to be disorganized? So that way you can start to identify, like, this is how it's showing up in my life and then being able to, like, take notes and add in there what you see in your life. So that way, if you do decide you want to get a diagnosis, or, you know, you feel like it doesn't quite feel real, this check sheet gives you, like, concrete examples of what that is so that you do feel confident talking to your doctor or talking to your spouse about it that it doesn't feel, like, so overwhelming and vague that you can really be like, okay, I understand now what this means in my life and be able to do something about it. So, yes, I would love. I'm, like, anyone who's listening. I'm like, come find the podcast. I offer coaching. Like, I really want moms who have ADHD to know that you can be successful, that you are not broken, you're not alone. And it doesn't have to be this hard, but it's about building your life to fit you and your family and your brain. And then it all starts to come together because it's made just for you. But you can be successful with ADHD. but it's not going to be, you know, just write it down in a planner and just wake up 15 minutes earlier. It's really advice that actually works.

Mallory: Yeah. Well, thank you so much, Patricia, for coming on. I think you've inspired a lot of our listeners to step out their comfort zone, find that community, grow, tell themselves that they're the type of people who do that. So, thank you again. We really appreciate your time.

Patricia Sung: Thanks so much for having me, ladies.

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!