

Shining with ADHD by The Childhood Collective

Episode #230: Your Middle Schooler is More Capable Than You Think

Sean Kane: I think that the most important thing is we very often, and middle school teachers know this, we underestimate our kids ability to do creative design. We underestimate their ability and willingness to collaborate because it usually comes with a lot of emotional pushback, right.

Katie: Hello and welcome back to Shining with ADHD. I'm Katie and I'm actually flying solo today for the first time ever on the podcast. So, Lori and Mallory are putting me with a lot of responsibility. I promise to make them proud. But I'm really excited today because we are actually talking with our guest about a stage of parenting that can feel really like a whole new ball game, the middle school years. And I'm personally navigating this myself. So today we've brought on Sean Kane. And Sean Kane is a former middle school teacher and administrator. He's also a dad to three boys. And he's also online through his account, Growth Mindset Parenting. And Sean is here to help parents better understand what's happening with their kids developmentally during those middle school years and basically just give me a consult as a parent of a middle school daughter. So, Sean, welcome.

Sean Kane: Let's do it, Kaite. Thank you. Thank you for having me. I'm really happy to be here. And, you guys are doing great work and you've been doing it consistently, so I'm glad to, glad to be a part of it.

Katie: Yeah, absolutely. Well, we're just really excited to be here. And, we both kind of, before we hit record, we were saying we're both talkers, so this could go anywhere. I don't know.

Sean Kane: Well, really, it could go long. I think what we're, we could go long, so stick with us families.

Katie: I know it's. It's worth it, right? The journey is part of the process. So, yeah. Well, Sean, let's just start with you a little bit. So, you did start out, you spent years as a middle school teacher, you worked in administration, you're a parent, and you've shared through some of your online resources, you know, there's some ADHD in your home. So maybe just talk us through a little bit of your background. What got you interested in helping parents to better

understand these middle school years and how does your experience with ADHD kind of shape your work?

Sean Kane: Yeah, I think the first thing is middle school teachers have this unique, if you've got a middle school teacher in your life or you've got a veteran middle school teacher and they have, you've probably said something to them to the effect of like, oh, bless you. Oh, my God, that's so hard. You know, like, but the reality is that middle school teachers actually really love this phase in this age and this stage and I am absolutely one of them. I loved middle school. I taught fifth through ninth grade for 14 years, in both Chicago, Illinois, and then, here in Austin, Texas. And the reality is, is middle school is at once, like, absolutely moving incredibly fast. It is changing every single day for parents. It's super, super hard for us to keep up with, especially when we leave this, like, perfect little pocket of, like, fourth grade where everything is just like, oh, you're so smart and fun and elementary school is the best. And then you, bam. Just middle school comes and sideswipes everything. You learn to love it as a teacher, though. We go back to it. We absolutely adore it. And being in this phase now as a parent, I think for me, I've fallen in love with the age and stage all again. Because I left the classroom and working on different projects, and I've completely fallen back in love with middle school because of how quickly our kids change and how quickly they're becoming who they are. I have in my house as far as ADHD, my wife is diagnosed ADHD, and she is probably one of the most talented, hardest working people I know. And two of my three boys are ADHD, completely different. One is the poster boy for the hyperactive, you know, super mover, constant motion. The other is inattentive, like if, you know, Ferdinand the Bull, that story. He just is kind of like drifting spiritually through this universe, getting lost in space and time, which is an extraordinarily beautiful form of ADD. But, like, we are firm believers in our house that this is a superpower. Like, this is, it's 100% a superpower. And living with one, my wife, and seeing the way that she's evolved in it and having other friends and family as adults, right, who now lived through this age and stage where we started to reveal, like, our age, like, as millennials, like, we were the first kids who were ever diagnosed with this stuff.

Katie: Yes. And it would most likely be the hyperactive kid that got that label right away. You know, like the third-grade kid. I had one that he wore a hockey jacket. We live in Arizona, it is very hot most of the year. He had this big, huge hockey jacket that he would wear to school, and the teachers let him. We had uniforms. And I remember being like, why

does he get to wear a hockey jacket? You know, but it was, he was totally one of those early boys that was picked up and they were testing out Ritalin and, you know, all the things. Like the girls or the more inattentive kids that took another few decades to catch up to.

Sean Kane: Well, I mean, even my wife, like, she was a lagging diagnosis until she got to, like, late high school, right. It wasn't clear. It was just that she talked too much, and so she had to sit near the teacher, all the time. But, like, we're the first generation who's ever kind of figured out what this is in seeing people work through the story of it, into a successful adult life, into functional adulthood. I think is really, really empowering. Like, you feel really comfortable, we feel a lot more comfortable with our kids now understanding, having more access to research, having more access to, you know, the different, most important things to understand about the condition and how to work with it. And so, you know, it's been a really exciting phase in my story here in my house.

Katie: Personally, I think that the way you're framing it is beautiful. Like, each stage has those good things and things to look forward to. And I think that I've had to really, I'm an emotional person, and so I've had to really talk myself through that and be like, hey, there's good things about the elementary years and the middle school years. And, I think for parents, even with kids that are a tiny bit younger, they can look ahead to that. And your kid is becoming, like you said, who they are. And that's so cool to get to know them. It's like, oh, hey, like, we can sit, my daughter just started sitting in the front seat. And she's three inches taller than me, so it was time. I held on, Sean. I held on long as I could, but now she's right in the front seat, right next to me. I am short, and I mean, she's also tall, honestly. But anyway, so she, she's the DJ, she's got her foot up on the dashboard sometimes please don't report me. But she's definitely like, a person. You know, she has preferences and ideas, and anytime we drive by a Starbucks, she's like, hey, mom, like, did you, like. No. So it's a fun thing, though, to get to know them and see that side of our kids.

Sean Kane: And like, the coolest thing is, is that's where middle school, middle is that. They start to emerge. And if we do it, like my whole thing on, growth mindset parenting. so it's like if we can do it well and we can be by their side, if we can figure out how to support them, teach them, be with them without overreacting to the social emotional difficulty that comes with it then we end up kind of standing laterally next to each other at their teenage years, which is precisely where we want to be in relationship with our children, right. It's not this

kind of hierarchical parent child relationship. When we do it well, when we kind of move ourselves to the side of the child as good, you know, good teachers would say, like, you don't want to be the sage on the stage, you want to be the scribe on the side.

Katie: Okay.

Sean Kane: You move to the side of the child, you become a partner for them to become exactly who they want to be. And middle school is this beautiful, like first kind of stepping stones towards that and that's why I love it. So.

Katie: Yeah. So it sounds like you're really thinking about sort of starting with the end in mind, right. Like you're, I think that's a huge thing that a lot of parents we talk with because a lot of our stuff is really focusing and emphasizing those elementary years and we have a lot of preschool families, but as we, our kids have aged in our, you know, community, their kids have aged. I love that you're saying that because ultimately we have this lifetime ahead with our kids as, you know, first teens, but then adults. And that's a long relationship. Longer than, you know, the middle school years, for example.

Sean Kane: Yeah. Like, there's a really simple, like, there's a couple places where I thought about this, you know, like, what is the goal? Right. And I wrote about this once in my newsletter. But like I saw this kid who was probably just out of college, 22, he's sitting with his mom, in Austin. They're at lunch. I was getting lunch. And they're sitting together and they're not, and I'm eavesdropping because.

Katie: Well, as one does. Yeah.

Sean Kane: Auditory learner. And they're just talking about life. They're not talking about logistics, they're not talking about the holidays, they're not talking about, well, wait, what classes are you taking? Or, you know, how's your rent? Or, you know, they're not managing each other. They're just talking about what show they've been watching, what book they've been reading, how's grandma doing? All of this stuff they're sharing this moment, right. And you realize like that's where we're going. We're going towards this relationship with two fully formed people who can handle independently manage and handle themselves, right. Which is also like where we go in a healthy marriage, we go in a healthy friendship. Like you have two people who are individually fully formed but have this kind of coexisting relationship. Where

we get into trouble is when we get into codependence, when we get into hierarchy, when we get into, you know, these, this relationship structure that doesn't serve the individual. And that middle school moment is when parents have to start to evolve their thinking about how to be on the side of the kid.

Katie: Yeah, I love that.

Sean Kane: That's really important.

Katie: I think so too. Maybe we could kind of get practical about that. So what does that look like if you're thinking about gaining independence? Because I know for me I'm like, yes, we are not going to be co-managers. Like you're going to manage and I'm going to manage and it's ourselves and I love it. And I'm curious what you would say because I do think those strategies do change as kids get older. What give me maybe like, you know, your elevator pitch of how parents can be looking ahead towards independence.

Sean Kane: I think the first thing is reframe what your role, who you are as a parent. I think that the more we shift towards teacher, this is, and this is the whole reason I started my channel because I was like, there's something that teachers do, good teachers do. There's something that good teachers do that parents can learn from. You shift towards teacher. And a good teacher and a good classroom is going to one facilitate skills. They're going to help their students do stuff and do stuff well. Because self-efficacy, capacity matter intensely. They matter intensely to all children, but they matter intensely to a child who is trying to establish their own independence and autonomy, right. So as a teacher you're going to one facilitate skills. I think that is the first thing that we have to start to recognize is that when the kid wants autonomy, we actually have to be helping them gain these independent skills and learning these skills. And when we start thinking about what people call the soft skills, when we start thinking about, and what I talk about a lot is like the executive functions, when we start thinking about them, not as like, you know, just these things that gotta show up. I need you to be more responsible. I need you to remember this stuff. I need you to be organized. These lists of, like, deficits, and we start thinking them of them as ways that we or things that we can actively teach, things that we can scaffold. We think of them like you teach fractions or you would teach writing an essay or reading complex texts. When you start thinking of them that way and you start thinking of my role as a parent is to help you gain these types of skills, you have this kind of internal shift that says that kind of moves you into a different.

You're not looking at outcomes, you're looking at progress. You're iterating, you're reflecting, you're connecting. You're working towards something together. Not as a demand, as a mandate, as a, you know, as motivation or coercion. You're doing it with the understanding that, like, this is a progress. This is just slowly but surely we are going to gain the ability to be resilient. We're going to gain the ability to be organized. We're going to gain the ability to be, you know, have emotional literacy. We're going to gain these skills over time. And I think shifting towards this idea of a parent or for parents just to shift, be like, okay, I'm more of a teacher now, right. is a really useful first step.

Katie: Yeah. And I kind of hear two things coming up there. So one is this idea of kind of like the iterative process, right. Like, I know we talk about this in my family. Like, my husband and I both grew up with three kids, and it was very important to my parents and his parents that we sat down to eat dinner together a few nights a week, right. Maybe even almost every night. And so we had this idea as parents. Like, we're all going to sit and we're going to eat dinner, and everyone's going to participate, and you're going to eat what's on your plate. And then our kids come along, right and they have sensory things and they don't want to sit, and one foot is up on the table, just like the dashboard thing. And so it's like, really I know that, again, going back to speech therapy, feeding therapy is my background, working with kids that are neurodivergent and saying, okay, what's the first little step? And I think that's hard for parents because a lot of times we see the future picture as like, this is what we ultimately want and it's hard to celebrate something that's like 13% there, you know, but I hear you saying that, and that's a really important part of the process and I think a good reminder. And the other point you kind of made, and I'm curious what this might look like in real, in, you know, real life, is that you're talking about kind of bringing the child along too, or your middle schooler along. Like it's not me the manager, telling you your deficit, here's how you're going to fix it. But what does that look like practically? So I'm thinking about, for example, a kid who is really struggling to get to bed at night, right. Like maybe homework's getting pushed late or they just have a hard time quieting. And as a parent to a five-year-old, that's going to look very different than a parent to a 12, 13-year-old. What would you advise a parent or what kind of scenario would you envision that would be to your point, like baby steps and also that independent piece where they have ownership?

Sean Kane: I think that the most important thing is it's like we under, very often and middle school teachers know this, like we underestimate our kids ability to do like creative design.

We underestimate their ability and willingness to collaborate because it usually comes with a lot of emotional pushback, right. The beauty of being a middle school teacher is, is that I have so many hours and reps of being emotional pushback from this age that like, it's just like, like you just get used to it, right. But the reality is that even though the kid says, oh my God, they're groaning and moaning and I don't feel like it, I'm not going to, I'm not tired, I'm not going to bed. The impetus is then it's an invitation to own, create and collaborate, right. To say to the kid, I hear you, you're saying to me, bedtime doesn't work this way. Then you have to decide. You need to tell me how this is going to work and I need a concrete plan that we can both agree on. And I'm going to tell you where the firm boundaries are as we design this. And you're going to tell me what works for you and how we're going to do this well. Because very often their desire for autonomy is going to collide with what we understand as boundaries and priorities. And the way to meet them in the middle is to say, listen, then I'm going to honor your autonomy. We're going to collaborate here and you're going to start to design these things and these systems, but they can't be just willy nilly this is what I feel like. And the reality is when you start to ask kids to do these things, to design healthy boundaries, the why within their decisions, the how they're going to do it, the what, they're actually going to take a greater degree of responsibility than we give them credit for. And for a strong-willed independent kid who wants autonomy, then they have to design it. And if they can design a system that works for the family and design a system that works for the parent, that works for the kid, that functionally meets the agreed upon values. We value our health, we value respecting mom and dad's time and willingness to, we value these things. If they can functionally create plans on their own that value, we're flexing a muscle that they have to be able to use not just when they're like 12 or 13, but when they're like 20, when they're 23. Like how am I going to do this well? How do I actually put myself to bed? How do I actually wind down? How do I learn to take care of my body? What is the actual mechanism and that creative decision making, that collaboration is the first rep of that, but very often we fast forward because we know better and we skip it. And they're like, I don't want you to skip it.

Katie: Yeah, absolutely. And then they're like wait, what? You're just going to tell me what to do out of left field with absolutely no precursors to this? And you're like, no, this, this has been building, don't you worry. But I say that all the time as an SLP, right. Because I'm a speech therapist and I would teach parents of little bitties like two years old, they're not talking yet and you know, the parent is playing and it's quiet. And I would say, hey, you know what we're going to start doing? We're going to start narrating what you're doing with

your kid. And it feels super uncomfortable. But as they get older, the same rules apply because I use an example all the time of like, I'm driving and I see that there's an accident ahead and I just turn left. I know I don't want to deal with that and I'm going to go. But my kids, they don't know why I turned left. And so a way that I can help them build that inner voice and that inner monologue is just to talk it out, you know. And you don't, I don't mind talking all the time. Some people probably do. You don't have to talk all the time. But just talking through that and saying, oh, it looks like there's an accident. I'm going to go around because I don't want to be late for dance, you know, and just talking it out a little bit so that they can kind of exactly what you're saying, hear you using those muscles and that skill. Because I think I know for me the assumption was always until I hit a certain age, it was like the grownups just know what to do, you know, and then the quickly the grownups know nothing and that's a whole another ball of wax. But I think that another thing you hit on and I loved it and I kind of want to circle back for just a second because is the idea of boundaries. And you said we're going to give you the parameters of what sleep for example might look like or the family values that are going to kind of guardrail these, this plan. And I love the idea of it being collaborative and but I do think there's this movement and I think that it's evolving constantly. But the last few years there's been a lot of push against oh, you know, you don't really need to give your kid too many boundaries. You need to be understand what they're feeling and connect to them. And that is so important, right. I feel like every child professional is like, yes, but yeah, so maybe go back to that because I think many parents, including myself, might try to set this up with our child and then be like, oh, they got mad, it didn't work or it's not, that's not what's going to happen. But I think we need to dive back into that because that was really great what you were saying and I want to just pull that out. It's so important.

Sean Kane: So here's a really useful reframe on boundaries. We would absolutely never want our child to be in a classroom or work with a teacher who had absolutely zero boundaries. And if you've ever been inside of a classroom that doesn't function behaviorally because kids are disorganized, the teacher is boundaryless, there are no clear procedures, there are no clear consequences, there are no systems in place. It is intensely, intensely distressing for your nervous system. And I know because I was a young teacher and any teacher who has had their first year of education knows what that feels like. Boundaries are essential. They are essential safety tools. Boundaries are actually what allow emotional health. Let's be clear about this. This is the foundation for which our kids actually then feel safe and good, cared

for, capable, et cetera. And I don't think, we think of boundaries as like these tripwires. It's like, oh, well, you go past that, you're in trouble. You know, it's like this electric fence analogy. No, boundaries are the foundation. Boundaries are a container. Boundaries are simply the basis on which we do all of the really good other stuff. We build relationships, we build connection, we build capacity, we allow interest we, you know, facilitate friendships. We do everything with boundaries. And if parents aren't willing to create, hold, maintain healthy boundaries that come from their values the child safety is at risk, especially with ADHD boys. Just look at the numbers. The child's safety is at risk. The child is not going to have a healthy understanding of how relationships actually function and they're not going to actually be able to model and create boundaries that create a functional life for themselves. Because ultimately the goal is, is to have a healthy enough understanding of where the boundaries are so that when you are 22 years old and you are in your own apartment, you actually have boundaries enough to say, I'm going to turn off the video games, I'm not going to go out with my friends tonight, I am going to go to work because I need to pay the bills. To have that structure, to have that self-discipline, it starts with the boundaries. It starts with that container, that baseline of safety. And the reality is as a teacher, we get really good at boundaries. Because academic success starts there.

Katie: Yeah. It's out of necessity. You have to

Sean Kane: You have to. If you, it is the, we call it classroom management, right, but what you're actually talking about is systematic procedures, plans, time constraints, focused objectives. You're talking, you're saying planning is management, right. I manage my kids through my academic plan. The reality is, is through those academic plans, what are we doing? We're creating a routine boundaries. You're going to sit here, we're going to work on this. You can ask these questions, I can help you with this. You're going to collaborate with your partners. These systems, these boundaries have a who, they have a when, they have a where, they have a how. And they function because we maintain them, we enforce them, we hold them to it. And sooner or later what we actually start to realize is they become self-enforced, they become routine. Because when a person feels safe, stable, welcome, they will work to maintain that.

Katie: Yeah. I think the biggest thing for parents is like this sense of, well, my kid got upset. Like I said, this is the boundary or this is the value and then they were mad. So did it not

work? Like did I do it wrong? and I think that these, those big emotions actually are just such a huge part of parenting through the middle school years, especially with ADHD. And a lot of our parents have heard us say a million times, but big emotions or emotional dysregulation is not even in the DSM as part of the ADHD criteria, but it's a huge piece. It's like probably one of the biggest things parents experience. So maybe you could say speak to that a little bit. And just when you get that pushback and the negotiation starts, it's just inevitable. What could you share with parents? Like what can they do?

Sean Kane: I think that there's a couple of things. One is, is you just have to understand the child development. You've got to give yourself that advantage. Because when you actually understand the child development, you're going to say okay, this is normal. One in middle school, their emotional reward systems accelerate, right. And impulse control drops. We know this because that is what is going to facilitate a kid going out and seeking independence. Just developmentally think about it this way from a human, right, the way that they get away from the tribe, the way that they get away from the family is by taking risks, by doing things and they have to have a greater reward sensitivity to do that. They have to be willing to go out and take risks to try and do these things, right. And they have to have lower impulse control in order to do that. That is literally human brain development design. This is the way we're built. Adolescents are built to take more risks and do more stupid stuff so that they can get further away from home base more safely figure out how the boundaries of their own abilities and that's so that are literally so humans can procreate and evolve. That's just what the way that we're built like. So first of all understand that just the brain development side of it and then you add the ADHD in there, you throw that ball. Okay, let's put that into the blender. You know full well that impulse control is going to lag in a child with ADHD. It doesn't mean it's impossible. It just means that it is going to be slightly more difficult. It's a lagging skill, right. And emotional sensitivity is going to be higher. So in a kid who is completely neurotypical, super mature in a stable situation, they're going to hear a boundary and go, wah, wah. It's going to take them four or five minutes to turn that around. They're going to be like, this is disappointing. Okay, whatever, I'll move on. And with the different profile, middle school and ADHD, that's going to take 45 minutes. And the steadiness of how we respond within that 45 minutes is going to allow it to go from 45 minutes to 40 minutes to 35 to 30 to 25 to 15 to 5, over time.

Katie: Over a lot of time.

Sean Kane: A lot of time and a lot of reps. Because what they slowly but surely realize is that the boundaries are not designed for me to be, you know, controlled. The boundaries are not designed to limit. The boundaries actually are going to facilitate more connection. The boundaries are going to facilitate more safety. There's a very good why within my parents boundaries. And, right, sometimes the things that I want, I can learn to advocate for them in a really healthy way, right. And that's part of it. They have to in that process, in that 45 minute cooldown, wind down they have to learn to advocate. They're allowed to say what they want. We're allowed to listen. Can they do that in a relationally safe, healthy way for both parent and child? And that's the thing that I think one of the things that parents get wrong, right. Is it's like you have, this sounds weird, like you have rights, you have emotional rights as a parent. You do not need to take all of this stuff. That yes, they are unskilled, yes, they have feelings, yes, we love them. That does not mean that we don't try to have them learn how to relate in healthy, socially appropriate ways. And your willingness to maintain healthy, socially appropriate ways to inside those boundary conversations is absolutely the way they're going to learn. Is absolutely going to inform the way that they go out into the marriage, their marriage, their relationships, their working relationships. And it's super, super important for us to do that for our kids.

Katie: Yeah, yeah. I think a lot about moms because I know obviously me being a mom, our team is all moms. And it's like you think moms in general are more likely to get into that negotiation back and forth. Like if I say one more thing that I could get you to understand, then we have this battle, right. That's like my instinct as a parent, as a human, and that relational piece is so, so, so important, especially from that mothering perspective. And so it's almost like there is this, I don't know if it's fear or hesitation to let your child be frustrated. And then I think, to your point, I know in my family I feel like I have to intentionally step out of that role and be like, I am not here for you to shout at me. Like, I'm not, I'm not going to stand here and listen to this. And it's really hard to do. I think that's something that is just, it goes against your instinct for a lot of us. Do you have any strategies for parents who where they're in that moment? Like, do you recommend, you know, acknowledging it once and then moving on or what would that kind of look like in real life?

Sean Kane: I think the first thing is, is acknowledge one, that it feels like rupture, but it's not. It's not rupture. Let's be clear. Rupture happens if we establish a boundary that isn't rooted in values and it becomes arbitrary. It becomes too attached to consequence or punishment that

has no conversation, resolution or repair. So you know, you tell a kid, no more video games, anything, they explode. You have this terrible moment and then you have no intention to have a conversation an hour later. That's like, let's talk about why this is happening. Let's make sure we understand each other and where the boundaries and the values are coming from. What's important to us as a family? What's important to me? What's important to you? Rupture happens when those things go unresolved, when that, when the maturity lags and it just feels like arbitrary punishment, right. A kid reacting to you emotionally in the moment that they hear that the Xbox has been taken away, that isn't rupture until, until it turns into that, right. It's, it's not, it's not disconnection because you still care. The boundaries are actually a signal that you really do care, that you have values, that you, their health is important to you, that they are significant, right. That these things that you want for them are valuable and important and you as their parents are providing the safety and the structure for them to get to these things. So the first thing is, is like, don't jump to we're disconnected, they hate me, it's over, they're never going to want to talk to me again.

Katie: And we're going to be disconnected for eternity. Like I think that's, and especially if you have ADHD yourself, it is hard to think past this immediate moment and be like, yeah, it is going to be okay in the future. Yeah.

Sean Kane: Oh, I am a big, big feeler. Like, I am like, oh my God, we are disconnected. This so bad. I need you to like me. I'm like, I straight up like people pleaser, big feeler. Like, it is so, it is hard. I get it. The complexity there is that you begin to understand the harm that happens when you don't do it and you have this moment of contrast. And the thing that I will always say, parents hold the line, but drop the timeline. Because the reality is the connection can be durable. The follow up can happen 24 hours later. The conversation, the regulation skills that are required to be an intentional relationship are often born out of silence and less stimulus. If you are willing to allow silence and you're not overanalyzing it in the wrong way, if you're saying we're not talking about this period, full stop. And you allow it with the understanding that like, silence is actually deeply regulating. It's the opposite of stimulus. I'm reducing demand on all both of our nervous systems. And I'm still going to follow up. I'm still going to have the relationally healthy conversation after this. You're doing great work. You're doing great work. And, so like, it's so funny, Katie, so often what I end up, I write all of my own material and when I think about some of these like big explosive moments when it

happens in our house, like, I feel like I'm constantly advocating for parents to just like be quiet.

Katie: Yes. It is.

Sean Kane: Just, just stop talking.

Katie: I know we literally have an episode that's called say less. Seriously. Say less words. But it is hard and I feel like I'm seriously the blind leading the blind because it is absolutely hard for me personally. And that's why I know how effective it can be because I've seen the other way that I've just wanted to talk it out in the moment. And I am curious thinking about the situation you're talking about, like where you say, hey, we're going to have some silence. It's regulating. We're going to come back to this. Is that a conversation that you have had kind of more ongoing with your kids? Like, hey, when we get upset, it's okay to be quiet. I could see my own family in that moment where there is frustration and me being like, silence is going to regulate us. I don't know how that would go. And so I'm curious if you've set that up with your kids in advance, because I've not done that and I think that could be really powerful.

Sean Kane: I've done it, man, it's every, every kid is completely different, every moment is completely different. But like, I think that you always have to be willing as a parent, I think you always have to be willing to say, I'm steering us to safety. I'm steering us to safety. I'm steering us to safety. And here's the tool that I'm going to use. If the conversation, the processing conversation, if the argument, the negotiation, the debate, the yelling turning into yelling, you're not going towards safety, you have to steer back towards safety. And if silence is going to lead us to regulation, which is going to lead us to safety, then you're steering towards safety, right. That is always going to be the goal. How do you get there is going to vary a million different ways, but I think in the profile that we're talking about a reactive, impulsive, you know, ADHD middle school kid, it makes sense that less stimulus is going to get us to safety faster.

Katie: So, I mean yeah, is it gonna work for every kid? No. But is it gonna work for a very, very, you know, argumentative, hyperactive, high intensity, big feeler? That's a really, really useful tool. I think that it's is it something I set up? Maybe I set it up before. Maybe I just ask the question afterwards when we finally get to quiet and it's 9:30 and we're both sitting kind

of in the dark and he's like, and I'm like, and you know what, I'm not going to keep talking when we're yelling at each other because silence is actually really good for us, right. And then we're going to sit in silence and feel how freaking good it feels to be understimulated. and how settling it is for the nervous system to actually like, you know, do that. I can explain it before, sure, I can explain it afterwards too, right. You know, it, we feel like all the time, this urgency to like parent perfectly in the moment.

Katie: Yes.

Sean Kane: No, we're all allowed to revise our decisions. We're all allowed to revise and hash out or chop up our behavior and our choices and like try to make sense of them. That is relationally healthy. That is the act of repair. That is the act of revision. Don't feel the urgency to try to parent perfectly in the moment. Give yourself the grace and the space to say I don't know what I'm going to do, but I'm not going to keep doing this. We'll talk about it in an hour, right. And that allows regain, figure out where you're going, regain your composure, figure out where you're steering and get your kid, your kid will give themselves I think the same space.

Katie: Yeah, I love that analogy of just it's our job to kind of lead us back to safety. And I think that that is, you're kind of hitting the nail on the head where it is going to look a little bit different for each kid. And so that's where a lot of times you get these scripts or these rules and it's like, well that didn't work or that's not. And I think it's more guiding principles, right. Like we're, we're focused on more the big picture. My dad always used to say like it's like the stock market, you know, if you watch it every single day you're going to have an anxiety issue. But if you just look at trends over like 50 years and I think similarly to parenting, you know, like big picture, this is where I'm headed. And as I, as a parent maybe I can confidently think through that and establish that and grow and practice that, then yeah, the individual nitty gritty for each child, for each day of the week and the timing, it's gonna maybe look a little bit different. And I think that's a huge thing for parents to realize because I do think there's this tendency to think like oh, other people just know what to do and that could not be further from the truth.

Sean Kane: And like the other thing that, that does, Katie, quietly what your dad is saying by saying like, watch the trends. Watch the trend. It's all, all gonna, it's going to, you're baking in this gentle forgiveness of understanding that we're all kind of imperfect. But we're all trying

our best. Like that gradual timeline that like we're gonna figure this out is the exact disposition that allows a kid to say like I'm okay, I am gonna figure this out. This today was hard, tomorrow will be better. And like that you are also allowed as a parent to have that kind of gentle, easy self-compassion.

Katie: Yeah, I love that. I think that's absolutely such a great message and I think that's actually a good place for us to kind of land because I think that's something that we want every parent to hear. And I just want to say, first and foremost, I think we crushed it. I want Lori and Mallory to come back. Like, I really hope they do.

Sean Kane: You know, but maybe this is just Sean and Katie, you know, maybe this is now a Sean Katie Pop. Who knows?

Katie: Yeah, I feel like it might. It has lots of potential, but I just, I'm very grateful that you've been an amazing guest and so fun to talk with, honestly. And I'm curious what, if you could direct our listeners. I know they're going to want to keep learning from you and get to know you, so what's the best place for them to find you?

Sean Kane: So, I mean, the best place is all the TikTok, Instagram. I content every single day. @Growth.mindset.parenting you can find me. I'm the guy who looks like a stereotypical English teacher. Like, oh, that is who I am. Anyway, but growthmindsetparenting.com as well. I have a ton of freebies and resources. I, have, you know, my newsletter there. I send out a Saturday newsletter that is just super practical, relatable stories driven by the experience of middle school kids. And so they can keep an eye on that. You know, I have some courses and cohorts upcoming. I have an executive function course that I'm launching this fall. So if you're like, I have no idea what the executive functions are, what are we doing with this? How do we actually create a functional prefrontal cortex? I want to get into it. I want to nerd out on it. And, so parents can find that stuff too.

Katie: Oh, that's fantastic. That's such a needed resource. And we do have a lot of listeners that will ask us, you know, what about, you know, the 14, 15, 16-year-olds? And we are always looking for good resources because that's really not been our specialty historically. So that is fantastic. And I just want to say personally, thank you for coming on today and talking with me and, you know, testing this out. Just a single host, like a regular peasant podcast. But I just appreciate your time. So thank you so much.

Sean Kane: Absolutely. I totally enjoyed it. Thank you, guys.

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

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

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