

Let's Talk Learning Disabilities

EPISODE 05

Welcome to Let's talk learning disabilities with Laurie Peterson and Abbey Weinstein. Laurie and Abbey spend their days talking about dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, and ADHD. They talked to parents of struggling students and adults who have had a lifetime of academic challenges. They want to share those stories along with their own insights with you. So let's talk, learning disabilities.

Laurie: Welcome to Let's Talk Learning Disabilities. This is Laurie Peterson, and if you didn't catch our last episode we are in the middle of a two-part interview with ADHD coach, Michael Synder. Last episode, we talked a lot about what it's like to live with ADHD and we started to touch a little bit on exactly what an ADHD coach does. So, I'm excited for you to come back and hear the rest of it today. If you haven't had a chance to listen to the last episode, listen to that first and then come back here and finish up. Here is my second part of the interview with Michael Snyder.

Laurie: So what do you think is the best age or best time to start coaching. Cause honestly, I mean, if you think about it, the things that you do for clients, you know, medication is great. It helps you focus and, and we could talk, we could do three more hours about that, but it isn't going to keep you from procrastinating. It isn't going to keep you organized. It's not going to help your time blindness and make you, you know, be able to manage your time. So, yeah. You know, to me first grade. But is our first grader really ready for a coach?

Michael: Great question. Great question. So it all depends. It all depends. You can only meet someone, you know, where they are, right. No matter what in life, like you had mentioned before about like, Oh, like picking up that ADHD book, right. It took me four and a half years for me to finally meet that book where I was at. Right. Um, and it goes for any age of a client. Right. So, um, I think that it depends on the child, it depends on the family. Depends on the child's needs.

Laurie: Once you, once you get a call from somebody, they say, okay, I want you to help my sixth grader. I mean, that's a very, in the middle age, just in my mind. So how do you approach that and say, Okay, well, this is what I'm going to do to figure out if, if your child's ready for this?

Michael: I'd interviewed the child, you know, I typically won't meet with somebody that young, but you know, I'm always open to it cause you know what, Hey, maybe I, I really liked the kid and you know, I think this might actually be great fit.

Laurie: and they may have a self-awareness at a level that's not typical for a sixth grader.

Michael: Exactly, exactly. Yeah. Um, and yet in the, one of the biggest things is assault. So whether it's. And I think this goes from, let's say, as young as sixth grade up to like, you know, college, you know, college age is, you know, to be the parent reaching out to you. Right. Um, and one of the things I explained to him, it's like, Hey, we'd love to, you know, meet with your kid. Your daughter or son via zoom, whatever, kind of get a sense of, of. You know, like with they're out, if they have goals, like what they're thinking. Um, and of course, you know, I talk with the parent beforehand, be like, Hey, what's going on? And those stories are always very similar. Yeah. Right. Yeah. You know, like lying about this or, you know, you're just not able to focus, you know, hyperactive, whatever. You know, and if I feel like the child has some of their own goals. Cause if the child doesn't see anything wrong, if there's no problem, what's there to fix.

Laurie: Exactly, exactly. Right. So like who the hell is this guy? And it's stupid.

Michael: But those conversations are always very funny. Because I meet with them and it's like, well, did your parents tell you anything? You know, Hey Brian, who, you know, whoever is like, do your parents like tell you who I am, what I do. They're like, well, you know, like I'm just some other dude, right.

Laurie: You're just somebody else that, that one more person that's going to try to help me. Yeah.

Michael: Right. One more person who's gonna try to tell them what to do. Right. And that's one of the very first things I, you know, when I, when I do one of these, like, I would say discovery call with the client is kind of like, or just kind of see what their thinking is that I'm like, Hey, this relationship gonna be totally different than any other, you know, adult relationship like you have in your life. Right? I want to work on what you want to work on. Right? Like I want, like, I want you to. To fulfill whatever dreams or whatever needs or, you know, whatever you want to do in life, or, you know, in life too big. Right. But like in this moment, right.

Laurie: We're not gonna talk about your career. We're going to talk about like getting through today in sixth grade or whatever, right.

Michael: Yeah, exactly. So like, and I want to hear that they have like, you know what I don't like doing, you know, I don't like when I'm not paying attention, like, and is it, you know. The thing here is that, is this something that their parents are telling that they're doing wrong or that they understand that they're doing wrong and want to change?

Laurie: So if the, if the child were to say, let's say it's a sixth grader and they said, okay, I really want to get into the XYZ private school for high school. That is my goal. And on the path I'm on right now, it isn't going to happen. My grades suck. I don't do my work. I forget to turn my stuff in, but I want to get to this school. Is that a goal you can take and break down or are they, I mean, is that self-awareness enough or I want to be able to keep, to play my sport or it's something that's maybe a consequence, you know, it's not, I want to make A's and I want to get all my work turned in, but, but. Those things have to happen so that I can do this, whatever that thing is, it does that, can you help them make the connection between those things? Does that make sense?

Michael: Yeah. Yeah. No, no. It makes total sense. Yeah. Well, it depends on why they want to get that. Right. So, so for the, for the private school versus like, Playing varsity football or something like that. Right. Or just being able to play like a sport or whatever it might be. Right. So the sport, either way, the conversation comes back to interest and what they really want, right? Like, is this something being like, you know, your parents really want you to play football. Cause you know that, you know, cause your dad played football. Right. And they play college football, like whatever. Right. So is that them pushing this? This is your dream, right? Is this your dream? Right? So like the private school thing. I mean, I don't have kids. Right. I like, I don't. Why is this important? Right? Like, yeah. So like, if it is something like, Hey, I want to do this. Cause I want to be a doctor. Like there's all these beliefs and values in there, which not necessarily theirs.

Laurie: Right. And that's so fascinating because you don't think about that. Right? You don't think about that. A child's goals. Are not always theirs. They've just been what's it's it's what they've been told. Yeah. Yeah, exactly. So to get to the root of that, you've got to have a certain level of maturity sort of stuff just takes time. It just takes time. But then I think back to that sixth grader again, and I

think, well, couldn't the goal be? And couldn't you ask them? What if your goal was just to not get in trouble every day for___. I mean, is that something that you would want, like, I mean, you know, like what if we just worked on not getting grounded and getting your stuff taken away because you forget to do your homework. What if I can help you with that? Right. You know, I feel like they'd be like, Oh, I'm in by like I'm in whatever we got to do. Maybe, you know, for a day or two, I don't know if it would stick.

Michael: Right. I mean, that's the thing too well, and this is, and this is what I tell parents of, of this H one. Also the other options when someone who's younger is, these parents are lost. Right? Like they have this kid. And I think we mentioned about the developmental delay with, you know, it could be right. Yeah. So like with ADHD, someone could be three to five years for six years, like have this development device, like if you're 15 mentally, you might be a Ten-year-old, right? And parents will come to me where they're like, Oh my son's 18. And like, or, or, you know, 20 or 23, like, I'm afraid that when he's stuck in the house for us life, or, Hey, he's going to go off to school. And like, I'm talking to him about like, Oh, becoming a man. Right. Becoming independent. And then he's like, Oh, he's a temper tantrums. You know, like when he's like 18 years old and I'm like, Whoa, were you aware that like there's, there's this developmental delay and it can manifest in different ways that could be very mature and like another way, and just not as mature in one way?

Laurie: The ADHD brain is so fascinating. The immaturity thing is huge!

Michael: It's, it's incredible. The immaturity thing is huge. Yes. Huge. I look back on things, you know, from my life where I'm like, Like Holy shit. Like, I wasn't ready for that. Yeah. Impulsivity and thrill seeking and things like that. Right. Like just looking for like this, this, you know, dopamine rush. Right. Um, and I'm like, well, how he's acting at 18, right. Where you're talking about him being a man. Right. Like, I dunno, I guess, like turn 18. But that was like, are the things that he's doing seem more, somebody like that a 14 or 15 year old that would, you would expect from a 14 or 15 year old. They're like, well, yeah, probably I'm like, well, that's cause mentally that's, you've got to meet him there. Right. You've got to, you've got to lower your expectations a little bit.

Laurie: That's hard for parents though. Isn't it?

Michael: So hard mentioned expectations, right? For, you know, for parents, for kids also, because kids also see. You know, all these other kids around them. Right. And they're like, why is it so easy for these other kids? And so hard for me?

Laurie: Which goes back to why the counseling is so important because they've spent their life wondering why there are three steps behind everybody else.

Michael: Exactly. Exactly. And especially, I think that's even more important as you get diagnosed later in life. Right. Like, cause you know, you've, you've gone through where life's only kind of taught one way. They only do school, you know, one way, except for like, if it's a specialty school or like, right. If you were lucky enough to get something like that, right then at the end, it's like, you're, you know, like even for me, like when I read that ADHD book, like I was like, Oh, I'm not like, you know, my whole life, I felt crazy, lazy, stupid, unmotivated, right. Like all of those things. And I was just like, No, th th there's a reason for, for this, right? Like it wasn't, you know, it wasn't because I didn't care about things. It's like, okay, why didn't you have an interest in some of these things. Right, right, right. And when you're forced to do those things, like you have zero interest in and told to try harder, the harder you try it, the worse it gets.

Laurie: Amen. Yeah. Gosh, that's so fascinating. So what about help for parents who, who have, you know, cause that totally explains then why you wouldn't coach with a first grader. Cause what kind of goals do a first grader have? Nothing Right? They're not ready to set those kinds of goals and understand organization and time management and all those executive functioning skills. So, helping parents then. Manage and structure things, right. Understanding how to manage their expectations, how to, how to set boundaries and structure at home, I would think would be something that maybe you might be able to provide as well, not for the child more for the parent, right?

Michael: Like, yeah, absolutely. Well, you know, cause cause once again, like the parent doesn't really know and it's not their fault. Right? Like they're, they're, you know, it's, this is new to them too great. Right? Like they didn't, you know, like it's. It's not something anybody asks for. Right. And then of course, once again, like, you know, the stigma behind ADHD and just like, Oh, they have ADHD. It's like, okay, now what. Right. And then also like kind of what you guys do and like comes into play, you know, with your businesses, like, Hey, like here are your options. And then, you can educate on options. Right. And it's the same thing with like, if you're working with a parent like that, right. If I was working with, parents like that, it's like, Hey, like, you know, talking through like what's going on in the house. Right.

Laurie: Punishing for, um, behaviors that are clearly ADHD driven behaviors is, is making it worse, not better, right. Like help. And I think that's kind of like helping them instead of punishing. What are your alternatives? Right. You know, how

do you manage this at home to help your child feel better about themselves? What do you feel about, educating the child or the student or the adolescent? About what ADHD is like, how important is that?

Michael: So important somewhere, it goes towards a self-awareness, right? Like I said before, the only thing I understood about ADHD was I took medication, I was hyperactive. I couldn't pay attention. Right. But like, you know, like, There's just so many other things like, like how do you learn, right? Like, like your processing modalities, you know, like, like, cause different for everybody to manifest themselves in different ways and different things that you learn.

Laurie: Right. Can you imagine if you'd have the knowledge you have now when you were 10 or a fraction of what you know now about ADHD, when you were first diagnosed, can you imagine the difference in your ability to manage it?

Michael: Well, I'll tell you some, even just the. The impulsive impulsivity piece of it. Oh, something I no idea of. And when I look back and connect the dots, right? So like, it's a very simple thing with impulsivity, right. It's not always easy, but you know, it's a strategy or working with clients is like stopping to take a step back and pause. Like, okay. Why, why am I about to do this? Why am I about to, you know, like, like this kid was making fun of me, I'm going to reel off on a punch in the face. Right. Not the easiest thing to stop, just stop. Right. Cause you impulsively, you just take over, you know, and you're just like, I'm right. Like fight or flight and we're naturally, you know, we're naturally created to fight. Right. Um, you don't think about the consequences, so like, will it still happen? Yeah, it will. Right. But if I can learn, like, here's the trigger. I know when these situations come up, that I lose my temper.

Laurie: Right. Um, you know, uh, um, I mean, if you, would've known that kid making fun of you, like if someone would have able to sit down and talk to you about this and about how that sets an impulse and said, okay, so now the next time someone says something to you instead of, and you know, what's coming, right? Like you're there, walk away. Right. You know, like it just, just something like that. Like, can you imagine that would have saved you from getting in trouble? Probably five more times. Yeah. You know, this is a silly question, but did the punishment help when you got punished for that? No, because you can't, if you didn't, he didn't do it on purpose. Right? If you didn't, it wasn't premeditated. How do you change it? Like you can't like to me, it just it, but I think parents get hung up on that punishment, punishment, punishment for forgetting to turn work in or for, you know, fighting, you know, or for lying. Oh, lying's the big one. And it's so impulsive. It's so

impulsive. Yes. You know, and that they get hung up on that. Well, we'll just start it. And, and parents will, when, when they call us, they'll say we've taken everything away and it's not working. I'm like, right. And it won't. And, but you've almost made it worse now because now you've punished them and told them how bad they are and they want to do better.

Michael: Yeah. They don't know how they don't. It's not a malicious thing. Yeah. Yeah. And you would like to think that with most of the fighting and then like getting into trouble, not only by the school, but then by their parents, there's only ever one side of the story. Like the parents, I hear like, Oh, you know, Johnny, you know, real often is gone to fight whatever, but. What about, they were making fun of me because like, I was made fun. I licked my lips.

Laurie: Right, right. Like nobody, nobody acknowledges that. Right, exactly. Right. Two is when a parent will say, and I, and I'll say, well, when you ask them why they did it, what do they say? I don't know. And I'm like, well, you know what? They don't know. They don't know why they did it. Right. Because it just happened. It wasn't premeditated, you know? Like, why did you hit him? Why didn't you just walk away? I don't know. Yeah. And that just frustrates parents so much. And it frustrates me.

Michael: I mean, yeah. And that's also like with the education piece, so the parents, right. The parents have self-awareness for, you know, for little Johnny, right. You know who really off this kid, like, you're like, okay, He didn't do it on purpose, but like, why did, like, why did he really do it? And if the kid doesn't know through, you know, there's definitely a reason right? Somewhere in there. But once again, they're hearing the, you know, one side from, um, just the end, just the end. Right. And then that's when like, kids, like, I w like people, but it was probably 10, you know, 10 somewhere in that range. Like there were some people's families like that. They're like, no, no, we don't want Michael coming to the birthday party. Right. Like, cause I saw a fight. Right. And you know, like I got one of my, one of my dear friends, oldest friends. Right. I remember her mom was a teacher's aide and you know, God rest her soul. So like she passed a few years back, but like, she's like, Oh no, Michael is coming to the birthday party. Right. Like it's like, she was a person in the corner. And she knew, you know, like, Hey, he's a good kid.

Laurie: So during how long do they usually last, like when you meet with somebody, like, is it an hour, is it 45 minutes? Like what's typical or do you have a set time? Yes. So typically like 50 minutes, um, with someone younger, you know, I say 45 minutes. Right. You're not going to get their attention typically 50 minutes, by the way. It's usually an hour. Right. But for younger kids, like 45 minutes, right? Like

it's plenty. Like, cause like you want them to get what they want without this like dragging on. Right. So like, let's say we, Oh, so also. With younger clients. Right. And one of the things are to backtrack, I guess now of like how, um, you know, how I'd work with somebody who like, if I'm not sure they're ready for coaching yet. Right. I might tell the parents like, Hey, listen, let's give it a shot. Right. Let's give it for six, you know, whatever eight weeks. And you know, in four weeks we'll, you know, and the parents are always, at that age, the parents are always involved anyway. And they can't hurt anything. You don't wanna say, Hey, we'll you know, we'll give it for six weeks and then we'll see, are they getting what they need? Am I getting personally what I need out of the relationship? Right? Like we want everyone to be happy. It's a collaborative, you know, it's a partnership like, should be beneficial for, for all right. Um, and also have the parents come in for the first five minutes of each session, you know, and then maybe like the last five minutes. Right. Get both perspectives. And then also, like if we put an action plan in place, right. With, you know, maybe specific strategy, probably very, very small strategy, right. Like loop the parent in and yeah. How can they help support? Cause I can't be the main support source. Right. So like what other resources are available to you with when it's a kid it's a, you know, typically it's gonna be the parents. Right, right. Um, so how can those parents, you know, help without. Telling them what to do.

Laurie: Just support them. Yeah. Just support what they know they're supposed to be working on without. No, I think that's awesome. So then, and then for older clients, obviously adults. Yeah. They're on their own, right? So 50, 50 minutes to an hour ish. And then you see clients from anywhere from, I mean, they can be with you for as long as, how long usually? I know you can't set a time.

Michael: And you know, it depends if somebody calls me for like one very specific goal that they like, you know, are struggling with typically like it's going to morph into something else. For adults, you know, I say minimum six months, you know, when I do make my agreements, I'm like, Hey, you know, we'll, we'll do a three-month agreement. That's really, we're just starting to scratch the surface and weed through some of these stories.

Laurie: And I think, you know, what people don't understand with ADHD is that structure and consistency. Is the most important thing. So you, you teach me a strategy. I need lots of time to practice it and make it a habit and become, you know, first find the one that works right. Then do it enough times that it becomes part of my routine because it's so easy. I can't tell you. I remember last January I went through four planners. Okay. Right. Cause I was like, I'm going to use a planner and I'm going to be organized and I'd get one and be like, Nope. Don't like this one.

Nope. Don't like this one. Nope. I finally found one that I liked, but I still didn't use it. Right. Because I couldn't find that consistency and I needed the accountability. Right. Which is basically what you would be for me to say. Did you use your planner and then, but why not? Why aren't you using it? And then yeah. Well then maybe that's not that maybe planners. Isn't what you need. Very hard for me to accept, but I did finally accept that and I've stopped "shoulding" myself that I should have a planner and I should be organized that way. But, but I think that you can't just say, Oh, get this planner and okay, you're good now. Like you need that practice and make sure it's really what's working. And so you don't know how long that's gonna take for anybody.

Michael: Aren't we all guilty of this, you know? Like when it comes to following through with a plan of where I got this new planner, I stuck with it for a month.

Laurie: And then I just, well, I mean, I think we, when I say we I mean ADHD, people are all familiar with that, but I feel like other people are really good at it. And of course your perception of what other people do is very skewed also. But I feel like everyone else is great at using planners. I, on the other hand, turn to my to-do list occasionally, and, but I'm okay with that, but I've learned to accept that. And I think that's the big part too, is that there was a time in my life where I would beat myself up over that and get really upset and depressed and whatever, not just about the planner, but in general. But you, you learn and I think through coaching and through self-awareness you learned to be like, you know what? It's okay. The world will not end if I don't have a perfectly organized planner. Right.

Michael: And it's it's, and that's, that's something I preach, preach with my clients is be kind and be kind to yourself. Cause like the longer we ruminate on things, like we just have to like, you got to live in like your three-foot world, right? Like you can only control what's in that three-foot world. Right. And just be conscious, like it's okay. Right. Like you're going to be okay. You're not alone, like in, you know, in these struggles. Right. And fortunately, there's people like you, and I tell them that and support them, you know, in that, um, That's huge.

Laurie: And I agree. That's grace. Grace is always my word. Like, just give them grace, give yourself grace, cut yourself some slack.

Michael: Someone sitting there ruminating on, on something or like beat themselves up over, it happens all the time with my clients. And I'm like, how. How does this serve you? Right? Right. Like when you do this, right, you have a full day of work ahead of you, whatever it might be, right. Or school or whatnot. Right. And you forgot to do

one assignment. Right. If you sit there and beat yourself up over that, do you get anything else done?

Laurie: Like that sucks, but let's move on. Let's try it. And let's try it out and how not to have it happen again. Exactly. Like, so how are we going to fix it next time? And then let's get on to get the rest of our day done. No, I totally agree with you. Yeah. I think that's huge. So, um, tell me a little bit about how people find you and how do you get new clients and, and are you working with new clients?

Michael: Yeah. I am currently taking on new clients yet. You can find me through my website: www.MichaelSnyderCoaching.com. And then on the contact page, you can contact me through there. I believe my phone numbers on there as well. So yeah, super easy to find me. And pretty much, you know, Facebook, Instagram, whatever, Mike Snyder coaching.

Laurie: Do you see most of your clients via zoom or some online conferencing kind of thing?

Michael: Yeah, you know, right before COVID I had started to see a couple of people in person and then it was kind of a blessing cause I was like, you know what? It's hard. Yeah. And because then I have to transition from. But, you know, home office to an actual office and then back traveling. And it's too much. And I get emails from parents, you know, a lot and just, um, but of course now videoconferencing is okay. But people ask me like, Hey, is it just as effective? Somebody reached out to me the other day with a 16 year old and actually, they might be based in Dallas and they were like, Hey will it be a hundred percent effective? I think it was one of my favorites. Oh yeah. Like, is it a hundred percent effective? Right. And, um, I was like, yeah. I was like, absolutely. I was like, you know, it's, it's less about the zoom. Bright conference, like yeah. As long as they can see me, whatever, and like, Hey, I get on calls with kids and I see them and I'm like, dude, what are you doing? They're clicking the mouse. I'm like, I know you're not taking notes. Right And I'm like, Hey, we got, we got 40-45 minutes. Let's put that down. And let's, let's focus first.

Laurie: And they're going to be respectful of that. I mean, okay. Well, that was awesome. Well, thank you. I appreciate this so much. I think what you do is, so very important. I think that. People with ADHD struggle so much with some of these things and knowing that there's someone out there that can give them the strategies to help them find that success and just, and the confidence, you know, to move forward and

learn to live with their ADHD. Right. Learn to accept it, learn to take advantage of it too. Cause there's a lot of great things about being ADHD.

Michael: so many great things. And honestly, like a big thing is like, Hey, you're not alone. Like we're all gonna, we'll get through this together. We're going to be fine. You're going to live very happy and fulfilled life. Like yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. You have a truck. Right.

Laurie: Well, thank you so much. You guys thank you so much, for being here today. If you have any questions, you have all of our contact information. You can reach out to Michael. Um, our email is letstalklearningdisabilities@gmail.com. We are grateful that you were here today. Everyone have a great day and we'll talk to you next time. Thank you. Bye bye.

Laurie: That was a great interview! It was so fun getting to talk with Michael over the past couple of episodes. I hope you were able to learn some new and helpful information and can walk away with a better understanding of what exactly an ADHD coach does. If you have any more questions, you know where to find us. Our website is diagnostic-learning.com. All of Michael's information is going to be in the show notes. Let's talk learning disabilities! Have a great day.

Thank you so much for joining us today. In our show notes. You can find information about today's talk as well as links to resources and other episodes. If you have questions about today's talk, have ideas for future episodes, or just want to stay connected, you can contact us through diagnostic learning services on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram. So let's keep talking to learning disabilities. This podcast is sponsored by E diagnostic learning. You can find more information at www.ediagnosticlearning.com.

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