

# Let's Talk Learning Disabilities

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## EPISODE 27

Welcome to Let's Talk Learning Disabilities with Laurie Peterson and Abbey Weinstein. Laurie & Abbey spend their days talking about dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, & ADHD they talk 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 through simple conversation. So, *let's talk learning disabilities.*

Laurie: Hey, everybody, this is Laurie from Let's Talk Learning Disabilities and you have landed on episode number 28 today is actually part two of a really fun interview that we did with Tracy Otsuka, who hosts the podcast ADHD for Smart Ass Women.

Laurie: We had so much fun, and the interview ran really long that we thought it would be best if we split it into two sessions. So, if you haven't listened to the first part, go back to episode 27.

Laurie: Listen to that first, then come back here to episode 28 and get the rest of our conversation. You won't regret it. So, sit back and relax. Let's talk learning disabilities.

Laurie: So with you having ADHD, what challenges do you feel like you've faced as an entrepreneur, especially looking back, you know, even before you were diagnosed and didn't know you had ADHD, what are some of those challenges as being cause like you said, I mean, people with ADHD tend to make the best entrepreneurs, but we have to know our, where our limitations are. We have to know how to delegate, how to bring the right people into our lives, along your, along your journey, what have been some of your biggest struggles because of your ADHD?

Tracy: So I, as I mentioned earlier, I'm highly entrepreneurial, but I gotta say, um, and I should let you know that most of my business is now online. I think. Out of all the businesses that I've run, running a business that is primarily online is the hardest thing that I have ever done. I literally was wondering if like the whole, you know, ADHD diagnoses, um, really was prompted by the sense that I was. You know, experiencing early onset dementia, Alzheimer's I like, I didn't know what I was tested for Parkinson's I didn't know what it was. My, um, my brain was just getting worse and worse. And now there's a reason for that, which I discovered, you know, as I learned more and more about ADHD that, um, so the ADHD brain lacks dopamine. Um, I'm just saying this in the most simplistic terms. So, um, with women, men too, but primarily women. When you're, so estrogen influences dopamine. And so when your hormones are bouncing around, say starting in like perimenopause, that affects the amount of dopamine, right? That you have in your brain, which, and dopamine is responsible for motivation, it's responsible for focus, it's responsible for all of those executive functioning things that we were just taught. Well, the executive functions that we were just talking about, so really was like, oh my gosh, but I realize now it wasn't just that, you know, the bouncing around of estrogen and hormones that were affecting my ADHD. And so a lot of women find that. You know, I call it a late onset ADHD, but if you really look back on your childhood, you can tell that there are ADHD signs and symptoms, you know, even when you were a kid, um, but it's all influenced by hormones so, there was that part. But then there was also the part that. Oh, my gosh, the online world changes so much and it changes so fast and that our brains, like, we love things that are new. We're really curious. We're lifelong learners. And so I was constantly finding some new technology that I would then turn around and replace all the old technology with. New applications. I mean, it was, it was insane.

Abbey: And then end up down a lot of different rabbit holes.

Tracy: So to say, It was so hard. And, and I'll tell you, I mean, I'm not a Luddite, but sometimes I feel like I'm close. Technology, I'm good at it now because I've had to become good at it, but it is not, you know, it is not a strength for me. I really had to work hard. So I had all of these, you know, bright, shiny coming at me. And then I was doing something that I'm not naturally good at all the tech to build, you know, an online company. So I think the biggest thing for me was getting to the point where I could actually

hire people that do these things better than I do them so that I could, again, focus on my strengths. You know, I am terrible at the day-to-day marketing, the day-to-day social media. I'm a big picture idea person, and I'm just bored to death with that. Oh my gosh. I've got to post something today.

Laurie: details!

Abbey: little details. Right!

Tracy: It's not even so much the details it's to me, it is the boringness, right? There's nothing more boring. And so what ended up happening is I realized that I am always the bottleneck, you know, even when I had, you know, when I started early in the day and maybe I had one VA, uh, you know, she would send me things and then I would have to review everything. And of course it would just sit there for a week. And so I was the bottleneck to her getting her work done. So we just weren't moving forward. So. Finally, what I did is I just started hiring people. And it's interesting, you know, initially I was like, I can't afford to hire people. What I realized I couldn't afford not to hire people.

Laurie: Exactly.

Tracy: And so today, you know, my VA's, my podcast editor, my podcast producer, they make sure that the podcast is edited and uploaded to all the platforms because my podcast drives everything. Right? They make sure my stories get into my Instagram. They make sure my newsletter goes out on time. If it were up to me, I know those things would never happen. So I have structured my work day and my life so, I literally, I know that everything, my podcast drives everything. The only thing I do is I record the podcast and then I edit my show notes, which are written by my podcast producer to make sure that it's me. It's what I want to say. It sounds like me. I hate to write, but I'm a fantastic editor. And then, um, they take it from there. So what happens is I focus on my strengths and what I'm interested in. And so my biggest advice is freakin' get help. And get help as early as you can. And there are for those, you know, people that are listening are like, I can't afford to get help. You actually can't afford to get help. Um, In the Philippines, there are all kinds of, um, virtual, well, you know, um, assistance, you can hire that, you know, for every dollar here, that's \$10 in

the Philippines. So for very inexpensive, you know, it's very inexpensive to hire someone and, you know, the Filipino culture, the people, they are highly educated, they tend to have very good English skills. Many of them have not only a college degree, but you know, they get masters, they get doctorates and really, really good people to help you build your business. Um, and then, you know, you know, now I have, you know, a VA in the UK who, you know, is a really, really strong writer. You know, I have another, you know, like my marketing person who's, um, on the east coast. And so I've, I've gotten to the point where now I can afford better and better help, but I still like my favorite VA she's, she's in the Philippines. She is absolutely fantastic. What she does, I could never do. And she's so reliable and lovely. So get help. Don't say I can't afford it.

Laurie: And it's like, you've gone global, everywhere.

Tracy: Yes. And that was honest to God. That was the reason I started the Facebook group. And then the podcast I have always wanted to have friends all over the world. I'm just so interested in other cultures. And today. There is no country that I could not travel to and send someone a message and say, can we get together for coffee? All over the world. And, and I just love that.

Abbey: That is awesome.

Laurie: It's fascinating. Okay. So, you know, poking around on your website, which we did, um, and this is in the, you and I had never even talked about, so I don't know anything about it and I'm dying for you to just give us a little spiel about it, the coretopgraphy, am I saying that correctly?

Tracy: Yeah!

Laurie: Okay. So tell us, cause it's, it sounds fascinating. And it definitely sounds like it's kind of in line with something for people with ADHD. I just give us a little snippet about what that is and where, how did you, where, where did that come from?

Tracy: So they always say, if you have to explain a name, it is not a good name. So this is basically coretopgraphy is the LLC that drives everything

else. But, um, and, and the whole idea behind it is your core, right? Like core values and who you are as a person, and then cartography, which is mapping. So you're mapping. You know, you're who you are as a person, but again, bad name. If you have to explain it, right?

Laurie: I like it.

Abbey: I like it, once you explain it, it makes sense.

Tracy: You're right! So coretopography is my patented program that answers the, what do I do with my life question. And it's really for everyone. But since I, uh, developed coretopography. I have, have since then taken coretopography and rebuilt it for ADHD women. And, you know, people ask all the time, well is it for men? Is it for women? You know, it's the same process, but I basically, you know, directed it towards women. And so next year, because there there's been so much, uh, so many people have asked about it. I really want to develop, build the same system for teens, um, generally, but also with ADHD and, and of course men, so coretopography is basically, it's a methodical step-by-step system to answer that, what do I do with my life question. And you know, just about everyone needs this, but for those of us with ADHD, it is so important. So why is that? Because the ADHD brain is a brain of interest, right? ADHD is misnamed. It it's, there's no deficit of attention. We have a surplus of attention. We have so many interests. It's all about the right shiny, you know, where we struggle is okay. We have all these interests. Which of our many interests is the one that we should actually pursue, because if we're not really interested, that's when we really struggle with focus, right? Our brains, they just don't make enough dopamine. So we above anyone need to know who we are. What's important to us and what our strengths, passions, and purpose are. And this is the deal, 25% of answering that, what do I do with my life question is discover. The answer to those very questions, right? Who am I what's important to me, you know what my strengths, passions, and purpose are, but the other 75% is becoming more of that 25%. But you can't, you can't do that until, you know what that 25% is right? Because then what you need to do is get into action, working in those areas that are right in that sweet spot of who you are, and what's important to you. So. Well think about it. I mean, who cares if you're on the tallest tree in the forest, if you're in the wrong forest?

Laurie: Exactly. Well, you know what? It's funny because I have a, I have two sons. I have one who's 17 with ADHD, and I probably tell him on a weekly basis, I pray that you figure out what it is you love because your career needs to be. In the field that you love, because when he loves something like any good ADH, ADHD-er, he is all in and he can, he can tell you everything about it. And he absorbs all the information. And so we have lots of conversations. That's one of my questions was, and you've kind of already answered that is, you know, when can I have him do it? This is exactly what I need for him to do. I need him to figure out what it is. He really loves because he's got a lot of things, but what can he make a career out of?

Tracy: Yeah. He can do it at any time, but he has to be the one that wants to do it. Mom forcing him to do it. And he may also look at this and go, well, this is directed towards women. So what I didn't say is so coretography, um, the offshoot from coretography for the ADHD brain is called your ADHD brain is AOK.

Laurie: Oh, I like that.

Tracy: So we call it AOK.

Laurie: Okay. I like that. Okay. Well, I'm going to run that past him. I just think that'd be like that to me. And I think we see a lot of students through here in that, you know, 11th and 12th, even freshmen in college that are feeling very like, um, anxious, because they don't know what they want to do and they have to pick a major. And, um, they're, they feel like they're spinning a little bit to have some way to help them kind of, you know, we can do career surveys and we can, we've got some tools we can use, but they they're a small piece of the puzzle. Like you're talking about answering those questions. I might build to answer one of them, but not all of them.

Tracy: And then think about most of the tools that are out there. They start from the outside in. Okay. What are the skills that you have that, um, you know, are predominant in X profession or Y profession versus what coretography and AOK does is it starts from the inside out. So who are you? What is important to you? And then, you know, you build, okay, whatever it could be around that. And the one thing I do want to say though is, it's really hard. So what I always say about purpose, because we definitely work on purpose, but

for young people, I always say, we'll get you in the neighborhood of your purpose because a lot of purpose is just testing right. Going out there. And I mean, my son all the time. Oh my God, I love this. And then he goes and tries it and like the real world. And he's like, okay, that sucks. Sounds good.

Laurie: You're right. You're right. You do, you have to get up there and experience it because just reading about it isn't always enough. Right? So with all of your experiments, obviously we can talk for forever, right? Like we could make this into like four episodes, but I'm curious with everything, you know now, right. And of course you still have way more to learn your life is you've got so much more ahead of you, but if you could go back and give your 18 year old self some advice, or even your 15 year old self, some advice, what would it be?

Tracy: Um, I think it would be that we are born knowing who we are, you know, as small children, we're totally clued in on what we want. We know what we love and enjoy, but somewhere along the lines, we start listening to everyone else. And we make them the expert on all of that, whether that's our parents, teachers, friends, you know, the church, the media, we start to become who we think they want us to be. And what I would say is. All of the thousands of women that I've had the privilege of working with, their purpose is rooted in who they were as a child. So I don't believe that you find your purpose. Like we, you know, people talk about that, all that all the time. I believe that we step into it because it was always there. So I wish I would have paid more attention to that child rather than who I thought society wanted me to be. I mean, I thought my choices were doctor, dentist, lawyer, right? And I was always interested in psychology, but because I have a Japanese mother, a father, and a German mother. They're not so much into that psychology stuff. And knowing what I know now, and I was thought, well, I'm not very good at science and I don't like math, but I couldn't make it through, but I know now, that I could make it through because I would have been so interested in the brain and I've always been so interested in why I do what I do and why do other people do what they do?

Laurie: Right.

Tracy: I don't regret becoming a lawyer though, because I swear to you, you can be as dumb as a box of rocks. You as a woman especially, you tell them

you're a lawyer, everybody's on guard. But I've often thought about, well, is it too late to go to medical school? I don't know that I have that in me. I think about it.

Abbey: So yeah, embrace your inner child and whatever your desires and you feel you're drawn to and passionate about.

Tracy: Yeah. And if you're wondering, you know, what is it that I should be doing? What is it that I'm good at? And that I love because we get so far a field from who we are, we don't even know anymore. Right. Think back to when you were a child starting, when you were a child, what were the things that they just sparked joy and then go through, you know, your, your years as you got older and figure out all those times that you were doing something where kind of the world stood still and you, you just felt this joy. And like, I am exactly where I need to be in this moment. And then write them all down and then go back and circle what they all have in common. And then that will usually give you that thread that's been going through your entire life.

Laurie: So cool. It's so true. And it is so I don't think we ever give ourselves, we think great childhood. We didn't know. We didn't know if people think we don't give ourselves any credit for that.

Abbey: Right. Yeah, you think you were clueless, but that's where, that's where you were before you were actually, um, tainted by society. Right? I love that, Tracy.

Laurie: Thank you so much for being here today. I mean, I cannot even thank you enough. This has been awesome. I could, we could talk to you all day and I know you have stuff to do, and unfortunately we've got some stuff we've got to do. But, we appreciate you. So, the best place for people to find you is your podcast, ADHD for Smart Ass Women. It's something everybody should go listen to, it is amazing. Um, your website is a plethora of information as well. Um, and then your, I don't think I know your Instagram. I'm in your Facebook group. I love your Facebook group. There's nothing better than when we have adults with ADHD. One of our recommendations is join a group, go out there, get in a group because you need to have that interaction with other people that are having the same struggles. There's so much value in seeing someone else and like, oh, I do that too. Or I don't do that as bad or seeing what

their solutions to those are and what they're doing to manage it. So your Facebook group is amazing. What is your Instagram handle?

Tracy: I was like, oh my God, what is it? I think it's my name. So, um, you can go to [tracyotsuka.com](http://tracyotsuka.com) or @TracyOtsuka, which I believe is my Instagram.

Laurie: We'll put it in the show notes.

Abbey: Okay. Well, thanks so much, Tracy. It's been such a pleasure listening to you and all of your great experiences. We really appreciate it.

Laurie: You are doing great things for women with ADHD.

Abbey: Absolutely.

Tracy: Well, thank you for doing great things for my son. I just cannot. Thank you enough.

Laurie: He was a pleasure. All right guys, check out the show notes for all the information about today's show. If you have questions or suggestions on episodes, [letstalklearningdisabilities@gmail.com](mailto:letstalklearningdisabilities@gmail.com). Anything else?

Abbey: I don't think so. Thank you all for being here today and listening to us. And so much stay tuned for our next episode, coming soon.

Laurie: Have a great day. Bye.

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 the 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 Learning Disabilities. This podcast is sponsored by E Diagnostic Learning. You can find more information at [www.ediagnosticlearning.com](http://www.ediagnosticlearning.com).

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