

Let's Talk Learning Disabilities

EPISODE 31

In this Episode, Laurie and Abbey interview Emily Peterson, a ninth grade student who shares her perspective and experience in dealing with ADHD. Laurie also shares some parental insight, as Emily is her step-daughter as well. Emily talks through elementary years, getting diagnosed, and learning how to make the best of her diagnosis to achieve her goals.

In and Out of the Zone (4 min)

Emily was diagnosed with ADHD in third grade and has come a long way in coping with her diagnosis throughout the years. When asked what activities are affected by her ADHD the most, she says it is definitely focusing. Staying on task for a prolonged amount of time, or listening to a teacher give a lecture for example, can be hard to follow because it is monotonous and unclear when it will end. Zoning out is something lots of others with ADHD experience. They can “come to” after a period of time and realize there was a chunk of time or information they’ve missed while they were zoned out. Emily says this is something she still experiences even after learning how to better cope with her ADHD and having been on medication to aid her as well. Referring to notes that the teacher gives out, or asking friends what she may have missed are resources she uses to stay caught up.

Before Being Diagnosed with ADHD (7 min)

Laurie asks Emily if she could remember what life was like before being diagnosed with ADHD, which would be her young childhood age to 2nd grade. Emily recalls that she talked a lot, fidgeted constantly and was frequently disruptive in class to the point of getting in trouble and being sent to the principal’s office. Although she was not overtly being disrespectful or intending to be disruptive, she frequently talked out of turn, and later felt embarrassed when she realized that she had unintentionally caused a problem in class. She also remembers being very unorganized and messy even, having papers crumpled in her desk or shoved in her backpack with no organization.

Coping Mechanisms (9 min)

After discussing her troubles with staying organized before learning she had ADHD, Emily mentions that medication seems to help with fidgeting, talking out of turn and focusing, along with a few other practical tips and tools. She has a filing system for her papers now that creates a space to keep papers for each class, and then the whole file goes in her backpack, instead of them being shoved in without any organization. Emily also has discovered a chrome extension that stays open in every window she's working in that keeps a running list of tasks, along with a timer tool to keep track of how long each task has taken her. She has also become very open and honest with those around her regularly about her struggles with ADHD. This has allowed her friends to step in and remind her of homework, or tap her and let her know she's not focused or on task. Having a support system around her of others who are aware of her ADHD has been helpful to her success. Another thing that has helped her to block out background noise distractions, is listening to music while she's needing to focus on a task or assignment. She says it's not necessarily the noise that is bothersome, but unexpected noises that distract her. Music helps to overpower any of those unexpected background noises so she can stay zoned in.

504 & Accommodations (14 min)

Emily has a 504 plan and receives accommodations now for all of her classes. At first, she was only receiving extra time on tests & quizzes in math, and began to see that she was struggling with tests & quizzes in all of her classes except math, at which point she asked to increase her accommodations to the other classes as well. These accommodations have allowed her to accel, finishing her freshman semester with over a 3.0 even while taking some advanced courses as well.

ADHD Medication, Sleep & Appetite (23 min)

Many people hear the common side effect of losing weight or having trouble sleeping while taking ADHD medication. Emily says she can still eat and maintain a healthy weight while on the medicine, as long as she creates time

or a reminder to eat. The trouble is not so much that she can't eat, but that her brain isn't telling her that she needs to eat like it does when she's not on the medicine. She also sometimes takes melatonin to fall asleep, but has noticed that she doesn't need it as much as she used to when she first started her medicine.

Future Thinking (30 min)

Emily shares a couple of concerns on her mind for the future as she goes through high school and eventually goes to college. She says time management and procrastination are two of her biggest concerns for those moments when she doesn't have as many people around her to verify that all of her work is done. She is already very proactive though in finding technological tools that can help her in those places where she naturally falls short. Check out the show notes for those tools she's mentioned in her interview.

Resources:

Focus To-Do Google Chrome Extension:

<https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/focus-to-do-pomodoro-time/ngceodoilcgpmkijopinlkmohnfifjfb?hl=en>

Contact info for the podcast: letstalklearningdisabilities@gmail.com

E-Diagnostic Learning Website: <https://ediagnosticlearning.com>

Social:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/eDiaglearning/>

Twitter: @diaglearning

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/diagnostic-learning-services/>

Instagram: @diaglearning

Length of episode 33:08