



S1:E5 "The Glitchy Switch" Transcript

May 20, 2022

Karen Costa:

My name is Karen Costa, and I'll be your host and curator. This podcast is for the ADHDers in the world. People like me. Join me to venture through this gallery of ideas, curiosities, brain science, random hyper focus interests, and reflections on what it's like to live with the gifts and many challenges of ADHD. Fellow dopamine hunters, let's be weird together. Stay connected at theADHDgallery.com. I'm aiming to be increasingly less active on social in the coming months and maybe even years. So my website and email newsletter will be the best way to stay in touch.

Hello, everyone and welcome to episode five of the ADHD gallery. Come on in. My name is Karen Costa, and I am your host and curator. Today's episode is called "The Glitchy Switch.:

So at the end of today's episode, we will be halfway through season one. I have mentioned to you previously that my goal is to record 10 episodes of this podcast for the first season to share with you. I will be honest, I have, every time I record an episode, I think maybe we'll just stop there, because 10 episodes, which originally seemed very reasonable, suddenly seems like a lot. This is a lot of work. It's mostly, the recording is not a lot of work and the sharing of ideas isn't a lot of work. It just feels like the details and the logistics are a lot of work. Shocker. For somebody with ADHD though, those quote unquote small things, the details can often be harder than the big things. I have often said to my husband that I would rather give a keynote speech in front of 1000 people with no preparation or notice than to cook dinner. So this lines up, but I am committed to myself to create 10 episodes to share my period. This is something I want to do for myself. And bonus: I'm hoping to bring some positivity into your worlds as I share these episodes with you.

Another interesting note, I do not have a dog on my lap today and I'm kind of actually a little nervous about it. My husband is home. It's the weekend. And I said, you know what, I think I want to record one of these without a dog on my lap to see how that



works. And I'm now wondering if Rocky has been my lucky charm. And for some reason today's episode will go off the rails but if it does, we will just keep going.

Okay, we're going to get a little sciency today. So I first want to take a minute to share a bit more about my education and experience to give you some context here as you make meaning of this episode and other episodes where I talk about the science of ADHD. I have lived with ADHD probably for most of my life. And I am part of the late diagnosis club. I've mentioned on previous episodes, I was diagnosed at age 40. But again, I can remember ADHD symptoms in my life, way, way back. Since my formal diagnosis, which is one of many paths, I've done massive amounts of research, taking courses on ADHD, read books, attended webinars. I have followed and listened to and learned from the leading doctors, people who also have ADHD, which is really important for me, to learn from people who have ADHD. However, it is also true that I'm not a clinician. I'm not a psychiatrist or psychologist. Those folks have very important information to share with us. They know things that I don't know. And many of them don't have ADHD. So it's also true that I know things, we know things, that they don't know.

Before my diagnosis, to give you a little bit more context, I had already been studying the science of teaching and learning for probably about 20 years. I have a master's degree in education. I have a certificate of advanced graduate studies in educational leadership. I have a certificate in neuroscience, learning, and online instruction. And I also have multiple certifications on trauma and resilience. I just kind of started laughing to myself because this is also very ADHD to continue learning and to accumulate degrees and certificates. Very on point for us, right. Okay, my take, all of that said, my take is that it's really important for me to learn from people who have ADHD. I have spoken to, throughout my life and my learning experiences, so many so called experts who have really fancy clinical titles who say things to me about ADHD that tells me they really have very little understanding of this condition. Perhaps they have expertise in other areas, perhaps, I'm sure they are lovely, important people. However, in many, many of my experiences, they have demonstrated a lack of understanding about the realities of ADHD. That is just true for me. So I want to share my experiences and education with you now as we prepare to get a little sciency so that you can just start thinking about being mindful about who you're learning from and with.



Okay, context, let's start getting sciency. Today we're going to talk about a concept from the book ADHD 2.0. By doctors Hallowell and Ratey. Again, as I have mentioned, these are both medical doctors. They also both have ADHD. That is one of the reasons that I love learning from them. It is so important for me, it's so healing for me to hear people come out into the world and play big and position themselves as experts with important knowledge to share and then to say, oh yeah, you know, I have ADHD too. And this is something I struggle with on a daily basis. That is one of the most healing things for me. I will put details about ADHD 2.0 in the show notes for you all.

I love learning about the neuroscience of ADHD. That's an important context for you. You might not love it and that's okay. I'm the sort of person who likes to understand, who needs to understand the root of things, or who tries to understand the root of things. I don't always get there. I like to run the science through my life experiences. And when those two things don't line up, I get curious about that. I sit with that. I wonder about people's motivations and who's benefiting from different things. I think deeply about that when those two things don't line up. When they do line up, it's a really good feeling for me, and it contributes to my well being. So the glitchy switch, which is the science of ADHD that we are going to talk about today, the glitchy switch lines up for me. The science aligns with my life experiences. That might not be true for you. As always take what you need and leave the rest.

Okay, defining the DMN and the TPN. In order to understand the glitchy switch, we have to walk through the DMN and the TPN. Okay, the DMN stands for default mode network. And this is the network in the brain where we see reflection, daydreaming. A really interesting word. We could we could write books about this word, rumination. All of these things can go in positive or neutral or negative directions. The DMN is again reflection, daydreaming and rumination. The TPN stands for task positive network. And I always mess this up. I always want to call it the task processing network. I feel like we maybe want to rename it. Does anyone want to petition to rename it because that's what I call it all the time? So if I call that today, just roll with it. But officially, whatever that means, TPN stands for task positive network. And this is the network in the brain that supports us when we are doing active focus and work. Okay. In theory, it is the part of my brain that is active in this moment because I am actively recording a podcast for all of you. Typically when, another interesting word, typically, when the task positive network activates the default mode network deactivates. So I want to say that again in a different way. When the TPN activates the DMN deactivates. I'm going to say that in the



third way: when the part of our brain that is focused and working on a task, when that part of our brain activates, the part of our brain that is in reflection, daydreaming, and rumination mode deactivates. That is typically what happens. So these are complementary systems. When the TPN goes on, DMN goes off. So picture me: I'm daydreaming and reflecting and ruminating. And now it's time for me to go to class or go to work. And I switch out of the DMN, the default mode network, and I switch into the TPN the task positive network. Generally speaking, I remain there as long as that TPN serves me, and then I switch back to DMN or reflection mode when the task is done. And this is happening all throughout the day.

That's not what happens for me, but imagine that is what typically happens for the typical person. It's important for me to say that neither of these modes is better or worse than the other. They both have value. If you have noticed just now as I was describing both of them that you were getting a thought or a feeling that there was a hierarchy there. Perhaps you notice a feeling oh, the TPN is where we want to be, the TPN is better. The task positive network is better than the DMN. Just so you know that you're, late stage capitalism, talking mainstream society values, the work that happens in the TPN. However, there are also spaces in our world that deeply value what happens when we're in DMN mode. My take, they're both important parts of our existence and there's a time to every purpose under heaven, right. So both of these networks in our brain have value. And if we are noticing feelings, that one is better than the other, that is something worth noticing.

All right, let's talk about the glitchy switch. Some studies are starting to point to the possibility that one of the ways that ADHD challenges us is that instead of switching easily back and forth between the DMN and the TPN when appropriate, the ADHD brain works differently. Oh boy. Yes, it does. So there's some research pointing to the idea that the DMN, the default mode network, remains active when the TPN activates. Let me say that again. There's a lot here. The DMN remains active when the TPN activates in the ADHD brain. In other words, the ADHD brain remains in a state of rumination while trying to complete tasks. Whoa. The first time I read about this, eah, remember when I just talked previously about when the science lines up with my experiences? I mean, that statement right there just was a huge aha moment for me: the ADHD brain remains in a state of rumination while trying to complete tasks. Oh. So an example of this would be you're having a conversation with a family member or friend. And meanwhile, when you're, you know, focused on that conversation, you're also



ruminating very, quite actively, in the DMN over some previous conversation you've had with them. Or maybe you're having a daydream and you're imagining yourself eating an ice cream cone or whatever, traveling to the grocery store. Watching your favorite Netflix show. You're both in that task positive network and in the DMN ruminating at the same time.

We talk a lot about ADHDers and the challenges of external distractions. Here's an example though of how our brains are distracting themselves. So we are also plagued by these internal distractions. It is really hard. This is such a huge understatement. It is really hard to complete tasks when your daydream mode is also active. It is really hard to complete tasks. When you have relentless internal distractions, just constant internal distractions. It is really really hard.

Alright, I want to talk about my experiences with what I perceive to be this glitchy switch. Again, this lines up for me - might not line up for you or maybe it'll line up in a different way. This is on point for me. I have many memories from my childhood of being called on by coaches or teachers. Maybe I'm at swim practice, or I'm in school, and I would sort of like wake up. I wasn't sleeping. But I would sort of like come to awareness. And I would look around and like multiple people, including the teacher, coach, would be looking at me. And sometimes they would say things like, I was screaming your name or I was calling your name. Why weren't you responding to me? You know, I'm sure from their perspective, i was weird. I'm sitting right in front of them. My eyes are open. I was, in those moments, lost in thought. I was lost in the DMN.

Doctors Hallowell and Ratey talk about the concept of what they call VAST: variable attention stimulus trait. This is a term that some of us are starting to use in place of or beside the term ADHD. And they talk about VAST in their book ADHD 2.0, and the idea here is that ADHD is not a deficit of attention. But it is a difficulty with managing the direction of our attention. So it's not that exactly, I'm not paying attention to you. It's that I'm paying attention to something else. I'm paying attention to my very, very busy DMN, my very, very busy default mode network. I am paying attention to my thoughts and rumination. I have an abundance of attention. It's just not directed at you. It's directed internally.

That's not always a bad thing. So I mentioned before I use the word that you know we're plagued by this and that is an aspect of the glitchy switch. But it's a both/and. It's not



always a bad thing. I think this you know, busy DMN of mine, of ours, is part of why I have a gazillion ideas. ADHDers are so creative, innovative and imaginative. By the way, I think those are traits that we need to help save humanity and our world. I would argue that those traits are born in the default mode network. They are born in the DMN. This is a gift in my mind. And it is a huge challenge. Every time you try to focus on something, there is this rumination party in your brain. And you're kind of thinking can you all please just be quiet for one minute while I get this done? But it doesn't work like that?

Naming and noticing - so powerful. I've talked about this on a previous episode. The difference between labeling and naming. To recap, labeling makes me feel small. But naming makes me feel like I am opening up to the possibilities of care and community. Naming the glitchy switch has been very helpful for me. I can call it what it is, and then I can do my best to manage it. It helps to reduce my shame around my difficulty with getting focused and staying in a state of concentration. I can say to myself, that's my glitchy switch. It's just how my brain works.

Doctors Hallowell and Ratey talk a lot in ADHD 2.0, about how we can try to sort of snap ourselves out of that default mode network when it's time to get going in the TPN. And they do offer specific strategies that I encourage folks to check out. However, for me, the biggest thing that I come back to when I think about the glitchy switch is another quote from ADHD 2.0. The authors say "shame is the most disabling learning disability." I'm gonna say that again. Shame is the most disabling learning disability, so what's been helpful for me is that through naming what's happening in my brain, I have seen a huge reduction in my sense of shame for not being able to focus. When I am beating myself up for not being able to do something the way that neurotypical is do, my ADHD gets worse. It messes with my already challenged neurotransmitters. And if there is some small amount of dopamine floating around in my dopamine challenged brain, when I feel shamed because of my ADHD, any dopamine that my brain is able to cling to vanishes, right, and that makes it harder for me to focus. However, when my shame is reduced, my brain works better. I'm able to focus better when I honor and accept myself just as I am.

I definitely want to encourage folks to check out some of those specific strategies that the good doctors mentioned in their book, but also for me and maybe for you, just start with naming and noticing what might be happening in your brain. Just start with naming



and noticing the glitchy switch. In my experience, sometimes naming and noticing and accepting is all that it takes to start creating some positive shifts.

Okay, everyone, that is a wrap for Episode Five. We are halfway through season one. Thank you so much for making the time to listen today. I know that you have a lot of choices about what to give your attention to and it's an honor that you chose me and the ADHD gallery. Your support means the world to me. Please rate the podcast share with your friends and colleagues. And of course, make sure to sign up for my email list. By visiting theADHDgallery.com. Thank you friends.