

**Lauren Clouser:**

Welcome to the LDA podcast, a series by the Learning Disabilities Association of America. Our podcast is dedicated to exploring topics of interest to educators, individuals with learning disabilities, parents, and professionals to work towards our goal of creating a more equitable world.

Hi, everyone. Welcome to the LDA podcast. I'm here today with Laurie Peterson and Dr. Abbey Weinstein, educational diagnosticians who host the Let's Talk Learning Disabilities podcast of eDiagnostic Learning. Welcome both of you. Thank you so much for being here.

**Laurie Peterson:**

We appreciate you having us.

**Lauren Clouser:**

Of course. I can't wait to dive in. So just to start off, could you both share your backgrounds with us?

**Laurie Peterson:**

Sure. Abbey, you wanna go first?

**Abbey Weinstein:**

I was about to say, Laurie, you go first. Okay. So my background is actually, I first started when I graduated undergrad. I was working with students on the autism spectrum, and I was doing ABA therapy or applied behavior analysis therapy, in-home therapy, which I really enjoyed, and it was gratifying. And then after about 2 to 3 years of doing that, it got tough driving all over the metroplex and all over, going to different people's homes, and I wanted to continue working with children with special needs, people you know, kids on the autism spectrum, but I wanted to be in a more educational arena and setting.

So then I went to work for a private school that specializes in students with developmental disorders and emotional and behavioral disorders. And that gave me this desire to help all the students. I wanted to save them all and help them all, and I really wanted to dig further into what makes their brain tick, or why do students that struggle with learning struggle with learning even if they don't have something like an autism spectrum disorder? So I went through a brief period where I was like, well, I'm gonna go work with 'typical children', quote, unquote.

And I very quickly found out that in even a, quote, unquote, 'typical classroom,' there are a lot of students that have learning struggles. They may or may not be diagnosed, but there's no just typical students. And so that drove me to want to get my master's in special education with my educational diagnosis certification. And then working as a diagnostician, I loved it. I've been enjoying it. I worked in the public schools for 14 years and then found eDiagnostic Learning and started out doing part time work with them and just fell in love with the whole business and with Laurie and our other owners and just became full time doing the diagnostic testing. I love

meeting with the families, helping them understand why their child is struggling, and then here's a plan for success moving forward. So and then being here, Laurie and I decided about it two and a half years ago. In January, it'll be 3 years since we started the podcast. Right?

**Laurie Peterson:**

I think so. Yeah.

**Abbey Weinstein:**

Okay. And so we thought just as a little side gig from our business that we would do a podcast that could really reach parents of students that are struggling, individuals that are struggling that suspect they may have a learning disability, adults living with learning disabilities. We never imagined that we would be able to stick with it for this long. We both have ADHD ourselves. And, here we are. I think we're about 94 episodes recorded and almost two and a half years later, and we love it. It is so enjoyable and rewarding, and that's something that we look forward to doing. It's kind of more fun than some of the other things we do in our day to day job duties. So I know you said just a little bit about me, I'm long winded. I apologize for that.

**Lauren Clouser:**

No. That's a-okay. Well and congratulations as well on over 90 episodes. That's fantastic.

**Abbey Weinstein:**

Thank you.

**Lauren Clouser:**

And, Laurie, I'll let you give us your background as well.

**Laurie Peterson:**

Yeah. So my background is in special education. My undergrad is from the University of Arkansas in special education. I started out as a special education teacher, teaching kids in small groups that were just struggling learners. And I think for me, it was always the why. Like, I can help you, but why is this hard for you? Why do you struggle? And, I think I was just so curious to dive in and figure out what got you here. And so that is when I also went back to school and got a master's in special education, with the diagnostician, which is in the state of Texas, and I think there's 7 or 8 other states where educational diagnosticians do all the assessments and diagnosing. And I worked in the school setting, and I loved it, but I felt a little bit restricted in what I could and couldn't do.

And I, you know, I felt like there was more to the job than what I was being allowed to do. So that is when in 2004 I decided I wanted to start doing a little private testing. And over the years, it has just expanded. We have 5 in person offices, and then we have eDiagnostic Learning where we do assessments virtually across the country. And we even have a couple internationals. I think we're getting ready to do a student in Germany. So that has been incredibly rewarding, and it definitely has filled that need to know why. And to be able to then

share that with the parents, like Abbey was saying, it's so rewarding to be able to say that I have an answer. Like, here's why they're struggling.

Or for an adult, here's why school's always been so hard for you. And guess what? There's something you can do about it. You know, there is hope. And helping them sort of devise that plan of: okay, well, now that I have this information, what do I do with it? So helping them sort of take it and move forward and feel that success, it's incredibly rewarding. We've had so many parents and adult clients cry from joy or just relief.

**Abbey Weinstein:**

Tears of joy.

**Laurie Peterson:**

Yeah. And it's been amazing. And the journey has been phenomenal. And the podcast is like the icing on the cake where we just felt like we see so many families that are misinformed or unsure of what's out there, what's available, what does this mean. And Abbey and I really work hard to keep things in a very conversational tone.

We don't try to throw out a lot of the acronyms that are so associated with learning disabilities and special education. We try to keep the jargon out, and we try to really make it very understandable so that a parent who might have a struggling student, or an adult who may have had a lifetime of struggles, can start to see, okay. There is some help out there.

And, again, I think because Abbey and I both have struggled all of our lives with ADHD, we also know what that struggle feels like, and going undiagnosed for so long and having the struggle. So I feel like we have a little bit of experience, and I think that helps us. We're just very compassionate, and have a lot of empathy for our clients. And we love what we do, and it's definitely the best job in the world.

**Abbey Weinstein:**

It is. And I love when those tears come and they say, you're my answer to all of my unanswered questions, or you've given me hope that this is what it is and now this is my plan moving forward that I can get help, that I can get better, that I can, really learn different things that can help me overcome this challenge and this learning disability. So it is very rewarding. And the podcast, you know, we have somebody that occasionally pulls our statistics on the podcast. The podcast listens, where the listeners are coming from, and how many times they're listening to each episode. And it's really, really cool and fascinating how we've spread so far and wide so quickly without even trying, really. Now our podcast, Let's Talk Learning Disabilities, is in the top 15% of all podcasts worldwide. So it's astounding and shocking to us, but very exciting.

And we have listeners all over the world, which is amazing. With us wanting to help our community, we now are helping people all over our nation and all over our world. We get calls, people calling in to schedule appointments that heard us on the podcast. They'll say, is this

Abbey from the podcast? if I answer the phone.

**Laurie Peterson:**

Very surreal.

**Lauren Clouser:**

Just really meeting people where they're at. And like you said, without the jargon, I think that was just a recipe for success because this information isn't as easily consumable or widely available as we'd like it to be. So you guys really fill the need there. I think it's pretty obvious why it went so viral so quickly. So congratulations on that.

**Laurie Peterson:**

Thank you.

**Abbey Weinstein:**

I was just gonna say with Laurie and I's experience, both kind of walking in the shoes of a being a student that struggles, and then also being teachers and diagnosticians, we we have that empathy where we can say we've walked in your shoes, and we have stories to tell that really resonate with parents or adult clients where I think they trust us even more so because we share our personal stories and our personal struggles.

**Lauren Clouser:**

Yeah. You have that lived experience, and then you have the diagnostician side of things as well. So, yeah, that's just a fantastic combo.

**Abbey Weinstein:**

Thank you.

**Lauren Clouser:**

So, could you tell me a little bit more about Let's Talk Learning Disabilities? How did you come up with the idea: we should do a podcast?

**Laurie Peterson:**

You know, I think it was just over different conversations of, like, I wish we could share this information with more people, and just connecting with some people to help us kinda get it started. And it was really a little awkward at first because we're not used to you know, we're not public speakers. You know, we're educators. But once we kinda got rolling and started realizing how much information was out there to share and how much we had that we wanted to share, it was actually pretty easy.

And I think we've done a really good job of having a mix of topics that Abbey and I just talk about and then guests who do a variety of different things. We've had, you know, ADHD coaches and pediatricians and counselors and therapists, and we've just really tried to hit all

aspects of learning disabilities and ADHD. And I think we want people to understand there are several options when it comes to treatment and help and support, and what does that look like? And then having people from the school, what is it like if you go through school, college, university? So we've really tried hard. I think some of our favorite series or favorite episodes have been, we did a whole Living With series where we interviewed different clients who have dyslexia, dysgraphia.

I mean, we hit everything. You know? And that was super cool to hear their stories of the challenges and overcoming those challenges. We did a whole series on executive functioning skills because gosh knows that's something we struggle with. That hit home. But, again, I mean, those are skills that everybody needs to be successful in life, not just people that have ADHD or those that have a learning disability. And then we're just about to wrap up a parenting series where we interview parents on their experiences of what were some of those struggles your kids had, what was your evaluation process like through your school wherever you went? And then what's it been like since? Again, I think our goal always is that we just want to let people know there's hope. There is hope. It's not, you know, hopeless.

There's is something you can do, and it's not gonna take a gazillion dollars and a million years. This is something if you just have the right information, you can get the right kind of help.

**Abbey Weinstein:**

Mhmm. I think we're also both very driven... back to the casual conversational and reducing the amount of jargon and acronyms, I think we're both very driven to make sure that we are informing parents and really truly helping them understand all aspects of their child's evaluation report, all aspects of their specific learning disability and challenges because so many parents are confused. They say my child has a learning disability, and they're in special education. And we say, oh, really? What type of learning disability or in which area? And they have no idea. Or their student has an IEP, and I have no idea what for. So, you know, we really feel bad for them. We want them to be really informed about their child, their child's needs, their strengths, and also what the school should be doing for them, what they can and can't do, and what's reasonable and those types of things. So I think that's been helpful too, that is one of our big goals is to fully inform.

**Lauren Clouser:**

Yeah. That's huge. I know a lot of parents can feel like they're sort of dropped into the middle of special education with no training. And like you said, there are a lot of acronyms and jargon, but we often say that parents are their number one advocate for their children because they know their child best.

And if you're able to equip them with these resources and knowledge, they're able to do 100% by their kids and get them the best support that they need. So definitely a great goal to have. So, Laurie, you mentioned a couple of the series that the podcast covered, all of which sound great. I wanted to ask, did either of you have a favorite episode, favorite series, anything that

stuck out that was really memorable in your minds?

**Laurie Peterson:**

Gosh. There's been so many.

**Abbey Weinstein:**

There's been so many.

I mean, I'm not even going back very far. I can go back to some of my favorite episodes in, like, the first 50. There's a couple that stick out. But most recently, I think for me, the one that has been so rewarding and so powerful has been the Parent Series. Listening to these parents' stories and hearing how much they were struggling and dealing with such conflicting information and even doubting themselves and wondering what they did wrong. And they talked about their challenges before their child was ever evaluated or diagnosed. And then we got to hear about how things are now, how are you doing now? How is your child doing now? And every single parent had good stories to tell. They really saw excellent transformations, just feeling more equipped and knowledgeable and ready to fight for their child and be their child's advocate.

So that has been, I think, for me, one of the most rewarding episodes, or series. And then something that really hit home with me a lot and resonated with me, I think, because of my own personal challenges growing up and through early adulthood and even now, there was this episode about procrastination. It was an ADHD coach talking about why we procrastinate, what procrastination looks like, things to do to overcome it, and that was something that I have always, always struggled with. So that was a great informative episode for me that really hit home and sticks with me.

**Laurie Peterson:**

I would say mine was the Living With series, like listening to students and adults talk about their struggles, kind of the same thing. We're big on...we love to see that transformation, so actually getting to hear from the individuals themselves. And I think the one that sticks out to Abbey and I that we'll never ever forget is this gentleman. His name is DJ, and he's a client of ours, and he has dyslexia. And he was an adult, and his workplace was discriminating. And he advocated for himself, they ended up firing him, and he was able to go after them legally, and he won. And with the money that he won from that he's putting himself through law school so that he can be a special education advocate and attorney for others. And that to me is full circle amazing.

What a story. You know? Not only was he an amazing self advocate, he understood his dyslexia. He understood that but he didn't let it limit himself because, obviously, he's finishing law school now. But now he's gonna go on to help others so that they don't experience the same things that he had to experience. And so to me, that was powerful.

**Abbey Weinstein:**

And he was also very determined. He had been through several different universities because of

his challenges and struggles. I think he moved around and tried different universities, and sometimes he got accommodations, and sometimes he didn't really request accommodations. For whatever the reasons were. He tried it without and was unsuccessful. So then he gets into being an adult, and he's successful in his job and in the workplace and goes on to request accommodations and then ends up getting fired. So it is a very exciting story and very rewarding to listen to. We're so excited to watch him and to hear more about what he does to move on and help others.

But it's a great episode, and it's in that Living With series. His name is DJ. So if you find that episode, Living With, and we interview DJ.

**Laurie Peterson:**

It's pretty amazing.

**Lauren Clouser:**

Absolutely. We'll be sure to include that in the show notes. So what do each of you hope that listeners will take away from Let's Talk Learning Disabilities?

**Laurie Peterson:**

Hope. I mean, I think that's why we started it. We just wanted people to have hope and to feel like they've got knowledge and are informed.

**Abbey Weinstein:**

Exactly. Knowledge is power. It's very, very powerful. You know? We want to give hope and to inform. So I think we've been pretty successful at doing that so far from stories we've heard from others and testimonials. So our goal is to keep on keeping on.

**Lauren Clouser:**

That's awesome. Well and I know you had talked about the podcast really spreading and you've gotten a lot of great feedback. What has been some of the overall response? Is there anything that sticks out to you or maybe people that have talked to you about the podcast? I know you've been recognized in public and things. So what's something that stuck out to you about the response to the podcast?

**Laurie Peterson:**

You know, I think just hearing from people. I mean, again, we sound like a broken record, but hearing from people that it gave them hope. It gave them the knowledge. They were able to use what they learned from one of our episodes to make a change, whether it's for their child or for themselves. And I think then we've done what we set out to do, and that is exciting. So we don't we don't have any lofty goals of becoming, like, the number 1 podcast, and we just wanna keep doing what we're doing and helping people. And however that turns out is okay with us, as long as people are appreciating it and using it and feeling like it's valuable.

**Abbey Weinstein:**

Exactly. And I think we've also given a lot of people not just the hope, but that drive and that fire within them to really self advocate for either themselves or for their child, to go seek out that evaluation, to request it through their public schools, or if they're not in public school, you know, to seek out private evaluations or get a second opinion if you're not agreeing with what you've seen from where you've been evaluated or what you've gotten so far. And so I think that that is something that we're excited about too is that I think we're hearing that we're giving them not just hope, but sparking that little fire and drive.

**Lauren Clouser:**

Absolutely. That's huge. Well, and if you're a listener of the LDA podcast, you will love Let's Talk Learning Disabilities, so make sure to tune in. Laurie and Abbey, where can people tune in, and where can they find more information about the podcast?

**Laurie Peterson:**

So we are on Apple Podcasts and Spotify. And then Abby knows the whole spiel about where to find us. She does this on our episodes. I'll let her go.

**Abbey Weinstein:**

So we do actually have a podcast website, and it's [www.ltldpodcast.com](http://www.ltldpodcast.com). And on that site, you can see all of our episodes we've released so far in chronological order. But, also, what's really cool is you can have square boxes of different categories, and you can choose a category. And every episode that falls into that category somehow will come up in sequence. So it's very user friendly, and it's easily accessible, and it's a great resource.

**Lauren Clouser:**

Absolutely. Well, before we wrap up, did you have anything, any last notes?

**Abbey Weinstein:**

We're also on Facebook. We have a group, Let's Talk Learning Disability Facebook group. So that's another way to access us on social media.

**Lauren Clouser:**

That's fantastic. Well, Laurie and Abbey, thank you so much for being on the podcast, and for being on the other side for once. And it was just a pleasure to get to talk with you about another podcast.

**Laurie Peterson:**

Thank you for having us.

**Abbey Weinstein:**

Yes. Thank you for having us. It was fun to be on the other side.



**Lauren Clouser:**

Thank you for listening to the LDA podcast. To learn more about LDA and to get valuable resources and support, visit [Idaamerica.org](http://Idaamerica.org).