

Anxiety in teenagers is everywhere but you can start helping teens with anxiety by finding the right child psychologist.

In this episode, Tracy and Alex discuss their personal experiences with dyslexia, parental guilt, and the importance of therapy because of anxiety in teenagers and young adults. They explore the emotional journey of receiving a dyslexia diagnosis, the differing reactions between parent and child, and the complexities of parental guilt. The conversation discusses anxiety in teenagers and the importance of finding the right child psychologist as a way of helping teens with anxiety.

Welcome everyone to another episode of our podcast, and today we're gonna be talking with Alex, but we have a surprise for you because normally I kind of take the lead with asking some of the questions and with this topic, it just made so much more sense to let Alex take the lead. So with that, I am gonna turn it over to her.

Hi, so glad to be leading this topic. So I think when this topic came out, it was more of this week when we were having a conversation, and so like for some reference, for some context here, I think we need to go back in a time machine and, um, we started talking about the whole diagnosis, the whole process, and you know, something that came out.

Was that you felt a little bit of guilt around this whole subject, and I really thought that was interesting because. At the beginning of the journey, I realized that we were going through the same thing, but we have two completely different reactions and two completely different feelings. So I really wanted to go into more into depth with this and, you know, really understand why we had such different reactions.

And so I also wanted to start with, you know, when I first got diagnosed. How did you feel when you first heard the word dyslexia?

The, well, so I remember vividly that, um, being in the office of the neuropsychologist, I. And what I remember is her spending a lot of time with me rather than you. She's like, yes, I believe Alex is.

I have to still confirm it because it was before she had written up the full report, but she said, um, why don't you commit to the office? We were both seated. And she goes, based on some of the preliminary findings and what I am seeing, um, I believe it is my conclusion that you are dyslexic. And I just remember kind of this numbness coming over me.

Like, what, how is this possible? And you said in the opening how, um, I had experienced guilt and I think that is an understatement. I experienced huge amount. It was like this guilt just settled on my shoulders. And, and, and you're right. Um. There, there a lot of differences to, to receiving that diagnosis. I think, um, because you are the one, uh, with dyslexia and then my

role as a parent in a way came into question and there's a certain amount of not being perfect that that really starts.

Coming into play and is part of the reason I think for all of this guilt, uh, kind of behind it and, and so forth. And I just remember her spending a lot of time with me, even though you were right there in the room. And I was like, so how do you feel about this? Are you okay? And I'm like. Wow. I, I need some time to absorb this.

You know what, that makes me laugh because I remember when, um, she was talking to me and she was like, how are you feeling? And I remember just saying, first of all, relief. I was like, oh, yeah, this makes total sense. But at the same time I was like, but you know, nothing's gonna change now that I have a label, you know, I can like see it.

And you know, I can also say, Hey mom, I was right. I knew it and there was relief. But at the same time I was like, okay, well great. What can I do with that? What's next? And it was sort of just being a kid, being like, cool. Now also I think all something that we always made jokes about that I think plays a role is also your personality and that we always said that you were a tiger, cub, mom, right?

What my sister and I said is that you weren't a hundred percent on the level of tiger mom, so nowhere near perfect, but you were also nowhere close to a helicopter mom. But you know, we sort of conjured this Tiger Cup mom, because as long as the choices weren't going to harm us, you would sort of like let us fail in order to let us learn the lesson.

But do you think that. Part of your personality could have led to any of the parental guilt. Of like not being perfect. Like can you explain more about that?

Absolutely, absolutely. So, you know, we kind of joke, um, in the sense of, and I, I own the fact that I am extremely demanding. And so, like you said, not at the level of a tiger, uh, tiger mom.

And I think that for all of the viewers who don't understand that reference, it is a book that came out many years ago, maybe a decade at this point. Have to go back and, and look at it. And it was kind of the, um, experience of a mom, a high achieving couple, and then the. The experience that she had with her child.

Um, and it was kind of from the perspective of the mother and just great for me, it was a great read. And so that coined this term, this tiger mom, uh, just being very, uh, an individual with extremely high standards, um, to the point of causing anxiety in, in some children and so forth. So yes, I think that.

Part of that did contribute to the guilt that I felt at that moment because the way that we would say is, your job is to be a student, right?

I remember this. My job very well job is,

is to be a parent. I felt at the moment when you received that diagnosis that, you know what? That I failed because I didn't really, number one, it wasn't recognize, it was understand and validate your issues.

In my mind, it was Alex being Alex, and what I perceived perhaps as a little bit lazy,

you know? Yeah, no. I remember that very well. And so, um, sort of now reflecting on a, you've mentioned. Maybe not the exact terms, but parental guilt. But can you better explain what actually is parental guilt? Because like really from my perspective, I just never understood why you felt guilty.

I mean, for me, I was almost, you know, thankful that I never got a diagnosis at a younger age. Because knowing my personality, I definitely would've used that as a crutch, and I would not be as persevering as I am today.

Right. And I think part of it also is related to the severity of your dyslexia. Um, had it you be, if you were extremely or severely dyslexic, because again, it's on a continuum of a bell-shaped curve.

Then perhaps, um. You would've, you wouldn't have been able to hide it as well, let's say. Right. But going back to your question about parental guilt, of course I looked it up because I sat there knowing that we were gonna talk about this, and I'm like, so why did I feel guilty? You know, self-analysis is really big in my book.

So I said, well, let me find out a definition and, and kind of what it means and maybe that will help me be able to verbalize. What I was feeling. And it's a reaction to doing an imperfect job with our children. Right? And it's tied to loving our children, which of that, there is no doubt, right? But it's, it's the feeling that we've let our children down.

And here's the key point. It's my issue. Much more than it's your issue. And that really is the key point with parental guilt, that it's accepting that we are not perfect. We as parents, as individuals, are not perfect. Kids don't come with a manual. The way that our family structure is nowadays, we don't have multiple generations, um, helping us to say, well, you know, like, here's what you need to do.

Hint, hint, hint. And a lot of, if. When you were really young or, um, then there, there were so many calls to, uh, my sister. It was like, okay, they're doing this. What do I do? Because she had kids and they were 10 years older than you. We were at different phases and she really became kind of my go-to as far as what is normal and, and, and everything else.

Then there was also the research and it's like, well, there's gotta be a book on this that I can read. You know, to really understand what's going on and, and so forth, right? But that takes

time and that can take a lot of self, um, analysis, shall we say, for that. Um, yeah, I think it really comes down to the acceptance that we are not perfect and many times we will give grace.

To other people before we will give grace to ourselves. And that's something that I've really had to learn. That's sometimes good enough, you know, that 95% is really good enough, um, for that. And, um, so does that. Explain it a little bit.

No, I think it definitely helps explain it because I, until now, we've never really talked about why you felt guilty, and I just never understood it being like, well.

Uh, it's not your job, you know, to look in the crystal ball and see the future. I mean, there are things that we can always miss. You know, just be kid. A kid falls down doesn't mean it was your fault for not watching them, that they fell. Kids are kids, you know? And I think I'm a hundred percent to blame in a certain extent that I was so focused on hiding my struggles that I wouldn't let anyone in because I didn't want people to know that I was struggling.

That I also hit it from you and I did a really good job at it. Yay. Excellent. Yeah, you know, um, you already gave quite a few suggestions to other parents, um, but you know, someone, a parent going through this journey right now to and feeling a little bit guilty, do you have any suggestions for them? That they can do to maybe feel a little bit less guilty?

Uh, yeah, be kind to you. Number one, be kind to yourself. I think there are a couple of things that, um, it obviously could help to talk to someone. So whether that is a professional or even a best friend, someone that is nonjudgmental and is just going to. Let you share your feelings that a lot of time expressing the way that you're feeling.

At the same time, being willing to dig, and this is hard work. This is not easy because number one, you're gonna be revealing all the skeletons, you know that, that you manage to, you know, you know, just. Put them back and, and, and bury deep, deep within you. Um, and, and to recognize are there things in my own childhood that are causing the guilt, that are causing this reaction?

Um, or that maybe is even stronger than someone who. Doesn't have the same experience. So what is triggering to one person may not be triggering at all to another person. And really honestly, as we're talking right now, um, you know, kind of what comes to mind is the, as a child, I really tried to be perfect in.

That, um, my parents were divorced and the, I was the oldest, um, nana was in medical school when I was, you know, like tween to teenage years and, and everything else. And so the less I could, I didn't wanna cause anything, uh, problems, right. To, to nana because of, she just, I felt as a kid that she had enough on her, on her plate, so to speak about.

So what I was just saying is I'm sure that contributed to that need to be perfect then as a parent wanting to. Be perfect, you know? Yeah. No longer in need. We went to want mm-hmm. To

eventually 10 years-ish later. Recognizing that is impossible. And, and forgiving myself. So talking to someone, perhaps seeking professional advice, journaling, uh, it can really help just to express feelings.

Nonjudgmental, I, you know. Writing it exactly the way you're feeling, just to get it out, uh, can be helpful and researching, you know, my big thing. Find books on it. Um, that may help you understand why, what's causing these triggers, because that's really what it comes down to. It's my triggers are different from yours.

Yeah,

absolutely. And I'm so glad you mentioned this next topic of getting some professional help and talking to someone, because that leads me to the next topic I wanted to discuss with you.

Mm-hmm.

Um, I remember, you know, out of this whole guilt and especially towards, you know, the middle, towards the end with the whole battle with the school and everything.

I personally ended up feeling really anxious, which led you to take me to go see a therapist in order to talk about how I was feeling and everything, um, because definitely. Later in the process, I had some pent up emotions and while I despised you in the moment for making me do it now, reflecting on it, I was like, wow, you know, I definitely understand where you were coming from.

And um, I wanted to ask you, what were some of the things that made you decide that I needed help? What were some of the red flags that you saw? Because I think it's really important for other parents to understand.

Right. The, um, you were having a lot of meltdowns and so what exactly, um, part of it was you were in a very rigorous ac academically rigorous program, right?

So there was a lot of stress, um, on you for that. You. Came back, you had spent a year abroad, so you had been speaking Italian, so your English, you know, it took a little bit to kind of get back in sync with the English and, um, probably for the first couple of months that might've been contributing to, um, some of the issues or what you were feeling for that.

The, I wanted to make sure that. What I was seeing, well, BA basically if you were experiencing, I wanted to get you help, and I felt that it was really important that it not come from me. It needed to come from a third party, partly because I felt that any advice that I could provide would be rejected. As a parent, you wouldn't see it.

Absolutely. I mean, at the time I was struggling with defiant daughter syndrome, DDS, so anything you said, I was like, absolutely not. You said red, no blue. Mm-hmm. Mom down. Are

you kidding me? What? You seem purple looks good on me black. Right. You know, that was really just like what I was going through at the time.

Yes. Which I think every teenage girl definitely goes through that. But I think I definitely did it in a little bit more of an extreme manner, especially since everything that I was going through,

right. There was a reason that you were good in the musicals, you're very fial. Um, and so I felt that, um, you know, and, and in the 5 0 4 they said, well, we are seeing signs of anxiety and so I wanted to make sure.

Given the fact that I had missed all of the red flags for dyslexia, that I wasn't missing red flags for serious anxiety. So I just said, that's it. You know, we're gonna find someone and then let's go up and kind of see. So those were the reasons behind, because I felt like, look. If there's nothing there, okay, we're done.

But if there is something there, I don't wanna be in a position where I miss those signs to and to me, the consequences, um, could be significant. For that. And so I, it just, I wasn't willing to take that risk. So we said, come on, we're gonna go find someone. So I don't remember how I found the person. It was through a recommendation or something.

Right.

And that leads me to the next part of this is because while your intentions were there, something that I do want to highlight and mention and everyone to really advocate this is that, um. Something really important is that when you're looking for a therapist, like. Fit. It's called fit, yes. So why don't you talk about fit?

So, you know, fit is something so, so, so important. And first of all, I just wanna mention that there's nothing wrong about going to therapy. It can be such a good emotional outlet, and I'm really glad that today going to therapy is considered. Or it's not considered, you know, weird anymore as it was, you know, with the connotations maybe 10 years ago.

It definitely had, especially when you were a teenager, and maybe even nowadays there still is a little bit of this, that you're a teenager. You only go to therapy if you have problems. But like that's not the case at all. But that also brings it to the. Finding the right therapist is really, really, really important because with my experience, I definitely did not have the right therapist, and I just remember, you know, I.

Sitting on this couch with this older lady, and, uh, she would just be asking me questions and I'd be answering it. And we, we really did not relate at all, in any sense, any kind of manner. And, um, she would ask me, oh, well, how's it going? And I would explain, well, I'm feeling a little bit anxious, but you know, I'm trying to work through it.

And then she'd be like, why are you feeling anxious? Well, I just explained to you why like it was just not a good fit and because of that I ended up despising therapy even more when it could have been such a good outlet for myself. Right. And, um, reflecting on it, I definitely think that as I got older was something that I learned that, you know.

Not every therapist is right for you. You know, you gotta pick and choose. I like to think of it almost as like dating. It takes a moment to find the right person or you know, and uh, it's just something though. It's really important is that making sure that your child or your kid is really. Bonding with the therapist that, that, in my opinion, is really, really important.

Because if they don't, then they won't speak. They won't actually say what's on their mind and they will just shut down. Because I remember shutting down and throwing tantrums and saying, I don't wanna do this. And I wanna go home. And I don't see the point. And you know, I think the fact that, 'cause I also was really good at faking it.

Faking it till I make it. And I don't think the therapist like saw that I was faking it at all. Because at a certain point she said, well I think you're perfectly fine. Why are you even here? And I was like, well, I agree with you. Thank you ma'am. Bye. And I, I think that was like definitely I. Ding, ding, ding.

Horrible. So that was something that I learned throughout the whole process,

and I think that. That's critical because honestly, I didn't know any of that. Um, you know, because otherwise we would've gotten to a couple had consultations to, in order to try to find a better fit. Um, maybe it was someone closer to your age, um, that could relate to your experience.

I mean, the, the whole series of reasons why, uh, behind it and whether it. Let's just say, you know, if, if anxiety is on a spectrum, right? That validating what you are feeling is. Beyond normal, like you are in a situation where you feel a little out of control. Okay? And so the fact that you are feeling outta control, whether that's full blown on anxiety or not, I can't say that's not my area of expertise or anything else, but the fact that you are feeling out of control means that you need.

You need to learn some tactics, some strategies. How can you address it? Because life is life and we are going to feel out of control many times. This is not something that just goes away. We need to learn to manage it in a way that's works for us, and each person is different. So what are some of the questions?

All right, let me turn it around for you. What are some of the questions that you think would be helpful to ask? In interviewing a therapist or trying to find someone, um, for therapy?

Oh, well, I, I mean, I don't think there's like an actual interview process. I think you just need to go through it and like sit down and do a therapy session and just see how you vibe and how you understand.

And I think if your kid is saying, or you know. If your kid is saying, I, I, I don't like this. Maybe it's because it's the wrong person, not because they don't need the help. And I think it's important to listen and you know, especially if your kid listening, speak out. If you don't like your therapist for some reason, speak out.

Say it, mom, dad, I'm not vibing with this person because it is so important that you know. You do relate that you can feel comfortable to have the conversations on why you're feeling anxiety and that you are, you know, that they're able to give you the help that you need in order to deal with anxiety or whatever you're dealing with in the moment or whatever crisis.

So let me ask this. I'm waving the magic wand, creating the perfect, let's say therapist for you, right? Like what would that person have looked like for you? I'm curious.

Oh, wow. I didn't expect this one. I didn't expect this one. Um, well, I definitely think someone a bit younger. Okay. Fair. Um. Someone that shares some of the same characteristics as myself, I think.

In what sense? Because they usually

Outgoing or outgoing

that, that they make me feel comfortable making me, like I can say whatever I want to and just feel like there's no judgment. It's total comfort, you know? Um, honestly. Someone like my gynecologist, they're so comfortable and easy and I found an amazing one I feel so I can talk about it.

So I don't know, something like that.

Okay. All right. There you go. So I definitely the, well, I think with the age. It's really valid. And it's not a physical age, it's a mindset age because, you know, I, uh, being able to relate and being, being a teenager today is very different from being a teenager 20 years ago.

And beyond when I was a teenager. So, so yes. I can see with the, the age isn't so much a physical age, but more of a mindset. Mm-hmm. And, and also the fact that, um, you, what you're experiencing related to the academics, you know, I think also. Played, played a role with it. Mm-hmm.

Too, in

someone that can un go on.

No, I think something that's really important now, reflecting on it, is that when I said someone who was like me, I think in the sense that someone who valued academics to the certain level, that I valued it, or at least understood my position. And maybe would've been able to like, you know, introduce the idea of that just because you didn't do that well on exam isn't the end of the world.

You know, like I had a vision in my mind and that's why I was like experiencing so much anxiety, but like, I think that's what I really needed. Or that's the therapist that would've, someone in that sense sharing common, not even characteristics, but values.

Right, right. And you know what? It, it's hard to say because whether that individual, I believe they had it, but at the same time, you shut down so you were never able to develop to get to the point, because there's a lot of schooling involved in, in that level.

So you would never, you wouldn't achieve it if you didn't value it. But I understand completely. Um. To help see a larger picture in that you are, um, it's part of a larger race, you know, and it's just one small milestone and how it's important to keep your eye on the goal so that you get there rather than fixate on, oh, well I stubbed my toe at mile marker 100 or something like that.

Yes. Yep. For that. Excellent. Well, I think that this is fabulous. I think that I appreciate the therapy session for the parental guilt because even now it, it revealed a lot. And, and I definitely will say that with the perspective of hindsight, um, I've been able to come to terms with the. Some of the parental guilt, is it completely gone away?

No, but I definitely feel lighter and part of that is because now taking distance from the situation and seeing how it worked out for you. Right. And then also how it opened up a new path for me. Then it all worked out in the end, and there's something that is so magical in seeing. That, that I find that when I am teaching a student, a struggling reader, and they become proficient and that magical moment when it clicks, you know, that never would've happened if all of this hadn't happened.

And, and that has allowed me, I think, to lighten my load for that, you know, and a lot of self-analysis. Absolutely. And, and. Reflection upon that I'm not perfect. And acceptance of that.

I'm glad to hear.

Thank you. And I am sure the listeners do appreciate the advice that you have for what to look for, um, for a therapist.

And, you know, therapy is not 10 years, this could be six months just to be able to talk to someone. And I think if you look at it in that sense, then it doesn't feel overwhelming. For that, and I'm sure the listeners will appreciate that. So with that, I'm going to thank everyone and I want to thank you for co-hosting this particular episode.

And so until we see each other again, a dear
bye, mom.