Podcast Intro and Sponsor Message

Welcome to the Get to The Root podcast where we uncover the real reasons behind everyday health challenges and give you hope for healing. Today, we're starting a special three-part series on ADHD.

In this first episode, Dr. K looks at something most people never connect to attention and behavior, the airway. From mouth breathing and snoring to restless sleep, we explore how breathing at night can shape focus, mood, and learning during the day.

If ADD has ever felt like a puzzle you can't solve, this might be the missing piece you've never considered. This podcast is for education and encouragement.

Please consult your health provider for personalized medical advice. Now a note from Dr. K about our sponsor. At Hope for Healing, we believe knowledge is power, especially when it's in your DNA.

That's why we use the custom SNP panels developed in partnership with Legrand to get to the root of our patients' health concerns. Today we're highlighting the essential vitamins and minerals panel, abnormalities in copper and zinc balance, the need for vitamin C in the manufacture of dopamine, and the fat soluble vitamins for cellular brain and nerve health is so important when we evaluate the potential causes of ADD and ADHD.

We're grateful for our partnership with Bagram and their sponsorship of this podcast, which allows us to personalize care from the inside out. To learn more, check out the link in our show notes.

Dr. Kate, thank you so much for taking the time to have this conversation. I think it's a conversation that people are really interested in because they all, and everybody does, just want to help their children or grandchildren to be able to support them in this way.

Let's just start from the beginning. What exactly is ADHD and how does it get diagnosed? Well, as the name implies, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

What ADHD Is and How Functional Medicine Views It

But you can have inattentiveness without being hyperactive, so there's different labels for that. And the diagnosis is made by completing a questionnaire, but it can also be someone's superpower.

Because most great visionaries have a degree of ADD, ADHD, and their brain goes all over the place, but it's defining what it is and how to help it work for you.

So many of us were made uniquely. So we're just wanting to optimize what their superpower is, right? To be able to use it for their benefit because it can be so hard to see like a child struggling through something where you also see the brilliance.

And I think that's what I hear. I love that you mentioned that. whose kids do, it's like, I see the way that they can lock into something and learn something, but then they cannot always apply those skills to other things that you'd want them to learn.

So I really love that. How does functional medicine look at that diagnosis or that condition a little differently? Yeah, that's a great question because when we think about brain health and how the body shows up, you definitely have to peel the onion there because it's not a Ritalin deficiency or a Concerta or Avivans deficiency.

So when think think the brain, we have look at how everyone's wired. Functional medicine will always look the

systems of the And so since we pull everything in from a genetic focus, we always look at inflammation.

Is the brain inflamed or not? And then we look how is energy being delivered to the brains or to cells? That's autophagy. And then, how does the brain clean itself out?

How does it provide itself with fuel? And how is the body fuel itself overall? Also, genetically, what essential vitamins and minerals do you as a person lack?

the number of receptors to pull it in from your food because people will say, well, I eat a good balanced diet, but maybe you can't extract those nutrients from you diet and those may be missing.

So we look at the genetic symphony of a person's body. Right. We look at modifiable lifestyle factors so every child or adult needs to have their airway evaluated and their mouth and how they can sleep and recover.

Before we get into all the specifics, when we were unpacking this episode, it was very clear that there are so many different ways to look at this. That there's so may different aspects, which I feel like at first I was like, man, that can be really overwhelming.

But what I really concluding is that how hopeful is it? That if you start to hear things and you're like but I'm doing that and I still having struggles, hang tight.

there are going to be something in it for you to able to glean, to unpack, and so we are gonna dive into that. But before we dive in to the brilliance of the airway, because I had no idea how important that was, can you talk a little bit about how ADHD can look different in boys versus girls, or can it look difference?

Yes, girls and boys are very different, and typically little boys, this all goes back to how we learn.

ADHD Differences in Boys and Girls

So we can learn auditorily, we could learn kinesthetically, moving around, visually, or a combination of all of them, typically we're a But if you take a little boy that needs to move his body and you put him into a classroom where he's told he has to be still and sit someplace, he is the first grader that's gonna be pinging off the walls, moving, tapping the pencil or pen, and moving around and getting called out.

And that does a number on who you are if your being corrected all the time. It has no bearing on the potential that that child has to learn. So it can be very demoralizing if you're being told to sit down, you are getting bad behavior ratings, that kind of a thing.

Little girls, on the other hand, tend to not move their bodies as much. and they will be very inattentive and their grades will slip and slip, and it won't be until they're in third or fourth grade and there's a crisis where they are struggling and then the diagnosis is made instead of the little typical first grader peeing off the walls can't-be-stilled little guy versus the compliant little girl sitting at the back of classroom making mediocre grades.

This has nothing to do about intelligence, but it has everything to about what's going on inside their brain with their body, that kind of a thing. Right.

And so when ADHD presents itself in this way, I love that you mentioned that it can frequently be missed until they're older where they could have had the support and they the engagement and the tools that they need to succeed, and that's missed.

And so that is ultimately what we want to ensure through this episode is that people are getting the help that we need as soon as they can get it. What happens when it does get missed?

Like if it gets missed, is there still something that can be done? Is what were about to be learning still going to helpful for those people who have maybe teenagers?

Absolutely. As something that we try to instill, there's always hope to help the body function properly. But when you develop these ingrained habits, a lot of times you have to unlearn them.

You have unlearning ways of interacting. And so many people have found little ways to help themselves, such as buying a timer and doing one thing, setting it for five minutes.

Okay, during this five-minutes, I have to do this. Or having lists.

Why the Airway Matters for Attention and Behavior

You know, think of parents as they work with children. Make your life as stressless as possible by taking a list. And if it's a pre-reading child, then make it pictures that you put together with your child.

It's like, okay, the night before, and especially if you have ADD yourself, you fly by the seat of your pants. You don't plan ahead. The world comes to a halting screech and you realize, oh my gosh, I forgot the lunch, blah, make a plan, keep it simple, one thing at a time.

And if you instill in your children, there's an intelligence sequence. I lay my clothes out at night. This is my my shoes, my socks, backpack. You have this nice little simplistic list.

But when you have older children or you're an adult and you've gone through the job roulette, You just keep going from one job to the next. Yes, you can learn.

yes, You can change, but it's multifaceted and we're going to break it down. Absolutely. I love it. Okay. So now I really do want to get into like the lifestyle and what this looks like.

And so you mentioned it already and I'd really love you to dive into it, the airway. Like what does that have anything to do with ADHD and ADD? So if you cannot allow your brain to detoxify itself, clean itself out, and have good, healthy, restorative sleep at night, well, then by golly, you're not going to be able to pay attention either if your yawning all day.

So let's think about our children. When you look at your child, How can you tell if they have airway problems? So when you look at them from the side, do they has a slightly receded chin?

Okay, that's number one. Okay. Number two, if you at the distance or the space between the bottom of their nose to their top upper lip. First of all, does your child breathe with an open mouth a lot of the time?

If they're at rest, do they breathe their mouth open? That's clue number one. Clue number two, Do they have dark circles under their eyes? We call those allergic shiners.

are those present? Number three, the philtrum, which is that thin little indentation below your nose and to your top lip, is very elongated and narrow, okay?

And does your child's face look very oval? Also, do they have a thin upper lip? If those things are present, their airway may be compromised. And also, do they smack when they eat?

Are you like, close your mouth when you chew? Is it hard for your child to chew without leaving their mouth open to get air? If that's the case, then their may being impinged upon.

Now, that's the outside looking in. And then your observations, my kid sounds like a little piggy. They're like smack, smack. Well, they may not be able to breathe well.

Second is, do you hear them snoring softly at night? Okay. So we've looked at the external appearance. Now let's think about their sleep quality. Do you hear them snoring?

Do they wake up with drool on a pillow? Are they starfish? are they moving all over their bed at night? do they snort and move in their sleep? So those are clues to like if if you find stains of droel or your kids even if they're continuing to snore and then um prolonged bedwetting That can be a sign that their airway is obstructed.

And then also really bad breath. Do they have bad breathe all the time? That could be sign of infection in their tonsils or their adenoid. So now, when you look in the mouth, In order to determine if your child has an airway problem that's causing the symptoms of ADD, ADHD, have them stick out their tongue.

And if you see their Tongue and it looks like it has scalloped edges, like a scallop shell, just kind of like these little circled lines, that means that they're pushing their tongues into their teeth at night to make an Airway.

So, when they go to sleep, if they push their tongue forward into their teeth, now also, do your kids grind their tooth? That's another clue that their sleep could be interrupted leading to their ADD, ADHD, because we're going to tie all of this to inattentiveness or behavior that is less than optimal.

Ping, ping, Ping. Roger Rabbit. Okay, now when you look in your child's mouth, this is your actual inspection. When you have your children open their mouth have them say ah and stick their tongue out.

If the roof of their mouths is very high arched, that may mean that their airway could be potentially narrow.

Signs of Airway Problems in Children

The other thing is if they stick their tongue out and the end of their tone looks like a heart, okay, a little heart-shaped tongue, then they have a tongue tie.

And then lastly, have them lift their upper lip up. Do you see some webbing? some gum tissue come down right between the middle teeth, or is there a gap between top two teeth?

So all of that speaks to airway constriction. Now, there's other types of tongue ties, buckle ties on the sides, but that's where a pediatric dentist that has done airways training comes in.

if they start to see some of these things going on and they see either a few of them or several of then, what would be their first step? What would they do to either start supporting their child or who do they need to go see?

I would have them ask their dentist, hey, have you had specialized training in pediatric airway medicine? It is now becoming very, very common for pediatric dentists to have done airways training.

And if not, they need to search and try to find one, okay? Second, if their child is obviously snoring with respiratory pauses in the middle of the night or wetting their bed, especially after the age of six.

They could ask their doctor to refer them to a pediatric ear, nose, and throat doctor. And the ENT can order a sleep study or a pediatrics sleep doctor, like we'll go ahead and give a referral to pediatric sleep doctors, but also the pediatric dentist.

I don't necessarily recommend ear nose and throat to be the person who does the airway modifications. Why is that? Well, ear, nose, and, throat doctors understand and are outstanding at looking at that air way, but A pediatric dentist knows where and when and how much movement the tongue should make.

A child should be able to take their tongue and sweep at the back of their mouth to hit their back teeth. And an ENT may not be thinking of that, you know, they may be to able take out the tonsils and the adenoid, but you really want that pediatric dentists, airway specialist to be the one that does the laser procedures if necessary.

But they'll also determine if you need to go see someone who does what's called oral myofascial therapy, which is exercises to strengthen and stretch connective tissue before you do anything to release tissues that are impinging on the airway, causing the signs and symptoms of ADD and ADHD.

So as you can see, airway function is paramount to how you pay attention. So how is it paramount though? So what does that mean? Like, what do those symptoms look like?

If my airway or if my child's air way. And if you are part of all the people who, whenever she did the tongue swishing and all of the things you should do and you did it, I'm with you.

As she's talking, like, can I do this? But you learn. So what exactly does that? So we went a lot into what to look for, but why do we look those things?

Why is it so important for my child's airway to be working functionally? Yeah. When your child goes to sleep and if they have tissues in their mouth that are too tight and they're clenching their teeth or they are grinding and pushing their tongue forward to try to make an air way, If your sleep is so interrupted over and over again all night long, then you're not able to clean your brain out of debris.

And you'll wake up fatigued and you won't be able to pay attention. And so that will show up like ADD. So sleep in general is super important because ultimately you're talking about what is happening, but what does that mean?

Getting Help: Dentists, ENTs, and Sleep Support

Clear out their brain. What does it mean to clear out there brain? Yeah. That is the only time that the pacmen of the brain, called microglia, go in and they clean up the accumulated debris that has accumulated all day long.

So when you sleep, a couple of principles are this. You have the head of your child's bed. Instead of it being flat, go to Home Depot or Lowe's or someplace like that where you can buy those little quarter inch high little furniture moving devices and put them at the head of the bed, head up your child's bed.

Or you could even do this with a crib so that you elevate the height of your bed by about a quarter of an inch. Why is that? When you do fall asleep, the ability to clean the brain out needs gravity.

So you've all heard of the lymphatic system. You've got a sore throat and you got these swollen little lymph nodes under your neck here or under you tonsils.

Do you can feel those? Or let's say you get a bug bite next to your groin and get enlarged lymph node. The lymph system cleans out the rest of the body, but we discovered in 2014 by special imaging of brain that there's something called the glymphatic system of your brain.

So when we sleep, if you have the head of bed elevated, the GlymPhatic System is draining by gravity all the debris and the leftover garbage from all of the processes in your brain overnight.

So give it a little bit of help with gravity, okay? That's number one. Then, for sleep, just think about it. When you haven't slept well, you're yawning the next day.

It's so hard. And I'm going to yawn just thinking about. Oh my gosh. That if you have haven't recovered from the day before, you just don't have any juice in your brain to keep going and you're going to be sleepy.

So think about if your child has an airway where they finally fall asleep, they're still in pull-ups at seven years old because they are wetting the bed or they aren't, but they almost waking themselves up all night long because They obstruct their airway and then they move.

They don't have adequate recovery overnight. And then their little brain, I couldn't pay attention if I was waking up all night either. Then you're expected to go and comply and follow instructions.

So sleep is so important. That's the why. When we sleep, we clean the debris out of our brain. I've given you that tip to elevate the head of the bed.

There's what we call a liposomal melatonin, so if it's hard for your kid to fall asleep, will tack on that lipisomelatonine and that means it is absorbed very rapidly.

through the fatty layer of the gut, the mouth, and it just gets in there rapidly and helps them sleep.

Sleep, Brain Detox, and Closing Thoughts

But that sleep is so important because if you don't sleep, you can't pay attention. You're tired and all those signs and symptoms of ADD, ADHD show up.

And just by addressing the airway, You may not have ADDD, ADHD. You may not, but it's really amazing. Okay, so I love everything you said there and really, and like in conclusion, you're really saying that they can see these things visually.

and then they can get to a pediatric dentist that is trained in being able to support them. And then if all else fails, like just actually getting sleep.

So maybe the airway isn't that, but they're just not getting optimal sleep too, right? And so the drainage isn' happening and so getting your child the sleep that he needs, getting you the asleep that you need to be able function as a parent too.

is just so incredibly important. So I really love that we dove into the complexities of sleep. That's it for part one of our ADHD series. We've seen how something as simple yet powerful as breathing can influence the brain.

In our next episode, we'll dive deeper into what's happening inside the body, inflammation, genetics, and nutrient deficiencies and how they all can impact ADHD symptoms.

Be sure to follow the show so you don't miss out on the next piece of the puzzle. If any of this sparked an interest, make sure you share it with your friends.

And as always, check out the links in the shownotes. Until next time, remember, there's always hope for healing.