**Camilla**

**Delphine:** [00:00:00] Welcome back to the access to education podcast, where we talk about everything having to do with learning challenges and learning disabilities. Today's show a little different from the usual one today I have with me, a friend Kamilah , and we have met through a Facebook group cause that's what we do these days.

And she has a son who has been diagnosed with ADHD and she and I. Spoke this summer and we've got some things in common. She's got a really great story to share with you. And I thought it would be a fun change on the show to talk to another parent, to get their perspective, to hear their story. Because as you're listening to this, I want you to know that you are not alone.

You are not in this journey on this road by yourself. There are lots of us who have done this already and are still going through it. And we would like to share our story. Camilla, welcome to the show. I'm super excited for you to share your story with us.

**Camilla:** [00:00:49] Thank you so much Delphine for inviting me.

I'm super excited to be here. And really just to share my story, because like you said, it's not just one, two, three of us. It's a ton of us going through this and yeah, it does feel a little lonely sometimes because your child might be the only child in his or her class or even his or her grade let alone if they were the only one in the school, which.

Probably isn't the case,

**Delphine:** [00:01:24] they're the only one in their family or they're the only one that their family knows over. That's been officially diagnosed or, you're a new parent to this whole road and this road is long and ~~it is,~~ it is not a marathon or it is a marathon. Is that what we say?

When the road is really long, it's hard.

**Camilla:** [00:01:38] It's not a sprint, it's a marathon.

**Delphine:** [00:01:40] That's the saying, it's not a sprint, it's a marathon. And there are some very high highs and there can be some really low lows. And I think as parents, when we start the conversation, I think I'm realizing through this podcast that there's lots of us out there.

And we're wanting to talk about it. So I think it's great.

**Camilla:** [00:02:00] Yes. Thanks. Thanks for giving us this opportunity.

**Delphine:** [00:02:04] So let's talk about your son. Let's maybe start at the beginning. How, when what was the catalyst for finding things out? What made you think, Oh, there's maybe something going on.

Did you realize it, did a teacher tell you did a friend? I don't know. What's give us a little background on your story.

**Camilla:** [00:02:24] Yeah I think on some level my husband died. Always knew there was something just a little bit different he didn't actually start speaking until he's about two and we didn't know if that was, if that had to do with anything.

At all,

we actually really had no idea.

**Delphine:** [00:02:42] And he's your eldest, right?

**Camilla:** [00:02:44] He was your first.

**Delphine:** [00:02:45] So you had nothing to compare it to in terms of like, when are they supposed to start?

**Camilla:** [00:02:49] Exactly. Other than what the pediatrician says, but he's you know what, give him time. Every kid's different. So we were alerted to it, but we weren't , we weren't stressed about it.

You were just letting things happen. And , When our daughter came, she was , 18 months after, our eldest son. And she was developing a little bit more quickly than what we had experienced with the first. So we thought, okay, maybe there is something here. And then he started to go to school.

Not just daycare , where, by the way, when he started in daycare, There were already some signs where he was, going from one thing to the next, but very quickly. And they had noticed that and said, do you notice these things at home? And we had said, yeah, he's kinda like me.

He doesn't just stick with one thing. He likes to have a few things on the go at once. And that's just the way I've always been. And as we're going through this journey, I'm realizing that I think this is something that I also have. I have not been diagnosed or whatever it's self-diagnosis, but I think there I'm on the spectrum.

But it allows me to help our son.

Yeah. Because it also gives me a, it also allows me to give him ideas about tools that I use now, and that I have developed over the years. But let me go back to , to kindergarten. So kindergarten was interesting and. The teachers in kindergarten, there was the teacher and then there was the ECE and they, it almost felt like they were ganging up on us at , at the parent teacher interview.

And I know that was not their intent at all, but they were just trying to show us or tell us something that they found to be. Almost an urgent thing for us to, to deal with or to take care of , rather than, Oh, you might, I want to talk to your pediatrician about this. Nothing to be alarmed about. So I think their approach was just a little bit off, but their heart was in the room right place.

But yeah, we did go and we did go to our pediatrician. We said, Hey, look, this is what. This is what his teachers said. What do you think we should do? We ended up going to another pediatrician that actually specializes in add ADHD and all the other good stuff. So he said, he's still very young.

Let's , do the, Oh, I can't even remember what the test is. It's just like a bunch of questions that you have to answer.

**Delphine:** [00:05:52] Yeah. I can't remember the title of it either, but I've done it.

**Camilla:** [00:05:55] Yep. And , he said, do this hand this in, give it to your, give it to the teachers. This will at least get us starting to document and see if there are any patterns and see if there's something else that we need to do.

So let's skip forward to that was junior kindergarten, senior kindergarten grade one. He was already having some challenges with just the extra noise in the room, extra noise in the classroom. And he asked for headphones.

**Delphine:** [00:06:37] Wow. That's awesome that he knew to ask for that what a great way to start advocating for himself right in the beginning.

That's awesome.

**Camilla:** [00:06:45] Absolutely. Absolutely. And he actually has always been very self-aware , even, Oh, even in a senior kindergarten, he asked to do his work. In the cloak room because it was quieter and his teachers were like, Oh, but honey, there's no work for you to sit or to do anything. And he said, it's okay.

I can do it here. And he was pointing to the bench and he would prefer to be there rather than in the classroom. So he can do his work. And in senior kindergarten, What work do you actually have? It's coloring it's, maybe, drawing your letters, writing your letters. But it was, he was very serious about it and he wanted to, be in a place where he actually could do his work in grade one, grade two.

He actually did have to sit outside in the hallway, he did it willingly and he actually asked for it at times , because it was just all too much.

**Delphine:** [00:07:41] Sensory overload of everything happening around him. And that's part of it too is that. Intake of information.

 We just did a podcast. I don't know if you heard it a couple of weeks ago , with the occupational therapist and talking about kind of that sensory component and how that can play into behaviors and it can play into learning.

**Camilla:** [00:07:59] Yes. And like you said, he, at a very early age, he started advocating for himself.

I need this stuff is what he was saying. So they always gave him those tools every time he asked for it and knowing sort of his background , throughout the school, because he was at that same school for those three years, we moved him to a different school. Not for any reason other than it was just a.

The other school, we just moved them. And , that was grade two. And that's when we really started realizing that, there really is something that we should be helping him with. It was becoming very apparent that school was just hard for him. To concentrate. It was just hard for him to concentrate period, but school was really difficult.

So we did go back to the pediatrician , and he said , , the signs are there. If you really want to do this, there's two ways to do this. You can either go through the school board or you can go privately. And he said, if he goes to the school board, It's paid for, if you go privately, it's a few thousand dollars.

I do have people you can go and talk to and he referred us. So we had to make that decision , and knowing how much it was a big decision. It, but it was also an investment in our child. . We didn't really know what we were going to do because. There being no funds, we're just not around, but we sucked it up.

We bit the bullet and we did talk to the school. We talked to the, to his teacher, we talked to the principal and and the Special Ed teacher as well. And we said, look. This is where we are. This is what the recommendation is from pediatrician. Off the record, completely off the record.

You tell me, what do you think we should be doing? Should we be waiting to get into a program with the board? How long do you think it's going to be? And, or do you recommend us to go privately? And they said, you know what? We can't answer that. It could be a month. It could be six months. It could be two years.

We don't know how long it's going to take, because we don't know what the other kids are like in the board. So if you want something more immediate than you're going to have to go privately. So we said, all right, no problem. Like we totally get it. Like my kid's not the one and only one as much as I'd like to think that, but he's not.

So , we did what we did go and it was, I think it was like three different days of three different kinds of tests and, he actually really enjoyed it which was great. But I'll tell you that. That report that came back. Yeah. Blew my mind,

It's

**Delphine:** [00:11:22] a really interesting thing.

So I'll just say we're just redoing our son's psychoeducational assessment. And , I remember ~~the ,~~ the debrief, because that's literally what it is. It's a debrief afterwards was two hours. And I remember before we went in with my husband, I was like. What are we going to talk about for two hours? Like how in you get in there and they start going through and it's good to have someone come with you because there's a lot of information coming at you.

**Camilla:** [00:11:50] Yes. And , just between my husband and I we're like , I don't understand this is crazy, but it was line by line and it helped us to understand and what the biggest takeaways. For us, was that number one, he's an auditory learner, not a visual learner. And for someone with ADHD to be an auditory learner is Oh my.

I don't know. It's really difficult. But, was one of those things that made us go, okay. He might not be looking at us right now, but he's listening to what we're saying. So all those times that I said, are you looking at, you're not even looking at me, you're not even listening. I had to, I have to stop myself from saying that because he is listening.

It's just, if he watches me, he's going to get distracted. Distracted by my facial expressions, by the way, my mouth moves by my hand gestures because I'm a hand talker. So I have to remember that, although he's sitting in front of me and he's looking on the other direction that he's actually still listening to me and he's actually really absorbing it.

So that was big for me. And that was one thing that we always, we are able to tell all of his teachers going forwards. Heads up he may not be looking at ya and he might be walking around in the back of the room, but dude, he's picking it all up.

**Delphine:** [00:13:31] And that comes back to that idea of kids who learn differently.

 You go back to the old days where old days, cause unfortunately. We're recording this in pandemic, but we're all sitting in rows. The kids are all sitting in desks in rows and they can't move around, but there was a time where kids really were, you have to sit in a row. You have to look at the teacher, you have to pay attention.

And we're now learning because of all of these amazing kids, no matter what, just because they're not sitting and they're not staring straight at the chalkboard or the teacher or the whiteboard or whatever it is. They're still taking it in. They're still listening and it's so great to hear. I love that you used the example of walking around the back of the room to know that's an option for him.

That he can get up and pace the space because he's still listening, still taking it in, but he's just not doing it like others. And it doesn't mean he's not doing it. ~~Right.~~ And it doesn't mean he can't be included. And it doesn't, none of that really matters at the end of the day, what works for him to learn.

And if that's what works then. Go with it.

**Camilla:** [00:14:29] Exactly. And the thing is that was something that one of his teachers said to me one day was, and we were just talking and she was saying, I know he's listening. I know he's taking this stuff in because he's.

Doing his quizzes and he's doing his tests just fine. I don't care that he's walking in the back of the room cause he does frequent. I keep work and she said, yeah, he walks through the room and touches stuff and plays with things, but then he'll raise his hand and he'll say, but mess. And he'll ask a really awesome question.

I'm like, that's my kid. Oh my gosh. I never knew. And that was very shortly after we actually had him diagnosed.

**Delphine:** [00:15:22] So when did you get the diagnosis? He would have been in grade. Two or three?

**Camilla:** [00:15:25] He was in grade three by the time it actually took place.

**Delphine:** [00:15:29] So he's what eight, if I'm doing my math, thereabouts give or take your six in grade, one seven in grade two, eight ish.

In grade three.

**Camilla:** [00:15:38] He was ,

Almost eight. Okay. And then, so then you get them diagnosed. What, if anything changes once he gets the diagnosis, does he change? Do you change does his view of himself change? Like I'm curious kind of what it meant for him once he had , the label. Cause that's what it is.

**Delphine:** [00:15:58] I hate to put it that way, but it is a label. It's a diagnosis. It's a, it's something he gets to own in his own way, because I think everybody needs to own their exceptionality in their own way. And it comes with its own superpowers does he feel about his own ADHD?

**Camilla:** [00:16:15] Let me tell you, when you said he gets to own it.He totally does. That's awesome. He does own it. He doesn't go out and say, Oh, I've got ADHD, so I'm special. So you gotta cheat you this, but I don't know. That's not the way he does that. He takes it. He knows what his limitations are, but he also knows how, and he's seen himself do this. And this is why I think it's so amazing.

You call it a super power and that's what we call it as well. And we remind him when he gets frustrated, we remind him. Hey this thing that's making your brain have a ton of things happening all at once. And it's really noisy. I get it. But once you understand where it's coming from and how to channel this, you've seen yourself, you fly through your math, like it's nobody's business.

And he, when he realizes that he's like, Oh, you're right. You're right. And then you can see that there's certain times where he's right now , he's on medication. and he takes it first thing in the morning. So by the time he gets home, it's worn off.

Yeah. So he's like all over the place, but it's okay because he's home,. If he's going to be, if he, if his home is where he should be himself. Absolutely. So he will most times come home with homework, especially the math and when he's on it, he's on it. And this kid can I dunno, he just blows me away.

He really does because he takes it and he harnesses it and he, it becomes his super power. It really does.

**Delphine:** [00:18:09] It seems like he has a lot of like internal drive to want to do well, but internal drive in understanding himself, which is probably really helpful for him. Here's what I'm curious about though.

So he's doing really great. He's it seems to me like he's handled this in stride. But let's talk about mom and dad, when we're parents, those of us who are lucky enough to be parents and we get handed that wee one. Yes. And they're there they're the eight pounds or the 10 pounds or the five pounds they're over to they're tiny.

 You look at them and you think, Oh my God, like, how did this, how did I create this? Or how did somebody just hand me this baby and say, okay, off to the races you go. We all have we, I'm generalizing, but by and large, most of us parents,, we have dreams when our babies are infants and we think of all the amazing things they're going to do and all the stuff that happens.

And then we get these roadblocks and they're not major roadblocks because some are bigger than others, but some are smaller than others, but there are these roadblocks that come up. And I know for me as a mom, when we started down the road for my son, It was a lot of guilt. It was a lot of, I did this, I caused this is my fault.

And then no disagreements, shall I call them with my husband? About what path do we go down? What do we do? How do we find resources? What are we going to talk to the teachers about? What do we tell our families? What did that do to your relationship? With his dad and your partner, the person that you're walking through life with, and you're meant to figure these out together, but did it, was it hard for you guys as a team to be on the same page was one kind of on one side of it, one on the other, or were you together or how did that all kind of work out for you guys?

**Camilla:** [00:19:59] Yes. , it's really actually very interesting. And it's a great question because out of the gate, as soon as we got out of that , that debrief with a two hour report , we both. We sat and we went, looked at each other and we're like, Oh, we did this to him from both like this. And we kinda laughed knowing that, we didn't do this to him.

This is just, that's his makeup. But we also realize that because we were both, we both saw the things that were similar for us as individuals growing up as well. We said, you know what? Let's not have him lead us too much in the way of, this is how I need to, this is how I need to study.

This is how we need to do school, but let's give him a little bit more of a say as to do you want a quiet room to do your homework? Would you prefer to be in the living room to do your homework? Do you want music in the background? Do you want white noise? Do you want dead silence? What do you want?

What is going to help you get through your stuff? So what it did for us is it actually brought us closer because we then started to tell each other stories about what we did as children and. My husband didn't I guess he, he always knew he was, on the spectrum as well, because , he always needed some of that extra stuff in the back to, to help him.

It helps him , if he's blocking out that noise, then he's actually able to focus more on what his task is. And that was the same way. That's the same way for our son. But when he was growing up, he wasn't given that opportunity. He was told no quiet room, one light your desk, read your book.

Yep. Done. Door closed. You're not coming out for an hour when you're forced to do that. Okay. And that's not the way you learn, then you tend to give up. And that's what he said that he did. And since, as a child, we didn't want that for our son. Obviously we wanted , to , give him the environment that he needed.

So it did allow us to see things a little bit differently and to stop looking so traditionally at how our children, not just the one child, but our other two children as well, need to learn. I need to study and need to do whatever it is that they need to do to be successful.

**Delphine:** [00:22:51] So let's talk about the other two, because there are two other kids in the family and sometimes.

Differences within our children can be good things. Sometimes they can cause more friction. Sometimes they can cause us to compare a little too much. We're all human, we all have our tendencies. What, if anything good, bad indifferent kind of in terms of relationships with each other and understanding of each other has a, been a good thing, a bad thing, a kind of, they're all kind of indifferent. They roll with it.

**Camilla:** [00:23:27] You know what , the other two, our daughter and our youngest son, they really don't. They don't really pay any attention to it. They just know that their brother is a little crazy sometimes. And they like it, not all the time. Sometimes they're like just still up already, but for the most part, they're very supportive of him.

And they don't, they don't point anything out. It's just, it is what it is. And , but they do actually help him try and remember to take his meds in the morning. Love it. Get mad.

**Delphine:** [00:24:07] You hide sometimes behind a wall and listened to them, have that conversation. Cause I totally would be

I do it all the time.

I love it. You know what it is, it's because I don't often get to catch those moments. And so ~~when I,~~ when I hear it, I stop myself from interrupting it. Yes, which is hard to do, but I do try very, what about family? What about friends as you were going through this? Were there family members saying to you? I it's nothing.

He's just a boy and he'll grow out of it or friends who were

**Camilla:** [00:24:37] just like, meh,

**Delphine:** [00:24:38] , I don't think it's a big deal or you're not you're stressing about nothing. Were there ever any kind of tensions like that?

**Camilla:** [00:24:44] No tensions, but , for the most part, everybody was very supportive and still is.

So I've got two little stories here for you. So the first one is with my parents, so they just couldn't get their head around, so it's a brain thing. Yeah. Okay. Because that was just how they were trying to understand it. But they were still in, and my dad , is a product of two teachers. and there you go. You're laughing because you know what, I'm what I'm about to say. So I sure do. Yeah. And , he's what in his seventies now.

So when he was younger two teachers, how were you supposed to be studying one room door, closed one light, one desk, one chair, blank walls, and go. Yeah, exactly. No colors, no nothing. So he said, he kept asking , but what if you just, put him in a quiet room, so he's done, I get distracted and I'm like , you know what?

Sometimes it does work, but most times it doesn't because it's too quiet. There's nothing to help him , to focus. And he couldn't get that because just, he just.

**Delphine:** [00:25:55] It's a weird way of thinking, that you need the noise to focus, but in fact, without the noise, you start thinking about everything else. That isn't what you're supposed to be thinking about because it's, I used to study with the TV on and my mom was like, what is wrong with you? Turn off the TV. And I'm like, no, ~~I~~ I'm actually not watching it. I'm not really paying attention, but it's my white noise. It's white noise,

**Camilla:** [00:26:16] so that was actually interesting that, that conversation, it was actually very entertaining for me, , to watch my parents try and grab the grab hold of it and then understand it, and just try and wrap that around. Their grandson. Now we also do have another , member of our extended family who also is he's the same age as our eldest they're six months apart.

And they are the best of friends, these cousins, because they're exactly the same child. One is blonde and one is not, that's all, that's the only difference. but he has not been officially diagnosed and we've actually noticed a difference in the two children, because with our son, we're able to, we're able to.

Take that information from the report and help him find other ways, give him other tools, show him a different way. Whereas his cousin does,

I don't even know. Because they don't have those tools. They're just doing it.

**Delphine:** [00:27:31] They're doing the best they can. , But they're doing the best they can with the information that they have, because you have a more fulsome picture. It allows you as a parent to guide the directions.

I would imagine. Yes. A little more directed. Yes.

 And when I say

**Camilla:** [00:27:49] haphazard in it's not even, it's not. In a derogatory way at all. Not at all. It's more, they just don't know what to try when,

**Delphine:** [00:28:01] So they try everything, they throw spaghetti at the wall, you throw spaghetti at the wall until something sticks, and then it works until the spaghetti dries and falls off the shelf.

And then you've got to find the next thing.

**Camilla:** [00:28:11] That's right. And , it just, I'm just like , Oh, but. What if, and I thought, Oh , can they maybe read our report? And I'm like the best I'm going to help them. Cause it's not the same kid, not the same kid, but it's , but it's interesting because they also ask us every so often.

 What do you do about this? And. We tell them what we do. We handle it. But then now his cousin is in a different school. Now he's in a more specialized school that actually does specialize with ADHD, and actually a whole bunch of other learning disabilities as well.

So he's actually in a really great spot.

**Delphine:** [00:28:54] So here's my question for you as we come to the end of this interview. So we've got people probably listening who are wondering how to start, where to go, what do they do? If you put yourself at the beginning of this journey again, what would your advice to that person be now?

Like what would your one kind of. Nugget be if you could leave a good piece of advice,

**Camilla:** [00:29:25] What it would be to be completely transparent with your pediatrician, with child's school, and be open to hearing whatever it is that you might not want to hear. Yeah, I did take some stuff to offense because I'm like, this is my kids were talking about dude, but then I realized, yeah, this is my kid that he's talking about, but he's talking about it to help us help him.

 And then once it was all said and done.

The schools are really doing their very best to make sure that he's getting educated in the way that he is able to learn, not the way everybody else is able to learn, but the way he's able to learn. So you got to take it in stride, but be transparent and talk about it. Talk about it too, to the people who know how to help, our biggest thing was to we trust our pediatrician very much ~~so~~ and we were very lucky, very blessed to have him in our life to help us guide our eldest through this.

 Find a really great pediatrician.

**Delphine:** [00:30:41] And I think just to tack on to the pediatrician or the doctor, because if it's not a pediatrician, it's your family, doctor. It's whoever, whatever your medical professional is, whether it's a pediatrician or a doctor, but also to remember that those conversations about the struggle at school, do not need to be a separate appointment. You don't have to call them and say, I want to book an appointment to talk about school. It can be when you go in to get vaccines, when you do your yearly visit, it can be, Hey. And by the way the teachers are saying, or, and by the way, we're noticing like, , it doesn't have to be this big formal, scary.

**Camilla:** [00:31:13] Yeah, no. And that's exactly how we did it, actually. That's how we did it. We , had to go in for a flu shot. I think it was. And we said, Oh, Hey, by the way. And then we had the conversation and that's when he said , , let me refer you to. Yeah. That's how we actually really started.

**Delphine:** [00:31:29] And you have to start from somewhere, right? You have to have a starting point. And in my opinion, the best starting point is your family doctor is your pediatrician because potential is that they've known your wee one since they were we those background records and the developmental records and all that stuff. So it's so important.

**Camilla:** [00:31:49] There is definitely a chain. There are a chain of events that you don't know as a parent because you're in it, . You're in it. So when you're in the fire, you don't see what else is happening around you. So to have those people that you trust in your circle or in your corner is very , helpful.

Yeah. And if you don't know where to find those people, or you don't think you have those people reach out to other parents, because I guarantee you somewhere out there is a parent who has been down, not the identical path, because none of our kids' paths are going to be. A hundred percent the same, but they're going to be pieces of them that are similar and Oh, for sure.

**Delphine:** [00:32:33] And find the Facebook groups, find the Instagram, people find the whatever online, however, you're going to find them, but Camilla and I can both promise you. You are not the only parent out there. There are others who are going down the road and have lots of little nuggets that are really useful.

**Camilla:** [00:32:50] Yes,

**Delphine:** [00:32:51] Camilla, thank you so much for this conversation tonight.

It was really great and I hope that it has helped someone else see that they are not alone, that they too are going to make it through this road. And , hopefully it will inspire them to ask a question and see where it leads them.

**Camilla:** [00:33:07] Yeah. Thank you again for this opportunity to share our story and hopefully help more than just , if we help even just one person, just one just needs to be one.

**Delphine:** [00:33:19] I'm good with just one. I'd love it to be more, but I will take just one family. Yes, exactly.

**Camilla:** [00:33:25] Thank you so much for your work Delphine.

**Delphine:** [00:33:27] You're welcome, Camilla.

Thanks again. Bye.