

Physician Gabor Mate Gives His Analysis on ADHD and Anxiety

The Joe Rogan experience I was just watching this very disturbing commercial um yesterday with Children and it was talking about a DH D and it showed a kid that was not paying attention in class and it showed these kids like playing around and doing things they weren't supposed to be doing And then they introduced this medication and then you have the child raising their hand and then you have everyone clapping and you have the child with a big smile on their face and you've medicated your child to be a successful and integrated person in society I shall I sp off about a DH DF please That was my first book on a DH D It's the American scattered or scattered minds depending on which addition you get And that was after I was diagnosed with it myself in my fifties Um What does it mean A DH D Yeah What is it exactly Is it real Oh it's real But what does it mean Like if someone has a DH D it's not like you have herpes right Like you could say oh I got you got a disease What is it Well they that's the whole point is that the medical profession and a lot of the so called experts think about it as a disease Another one of these inherited diseases In fact they say it's the most heritable mental illness there is And I say it's neither an illness nor is it her So the the Hallmark are difficulty paying attention when you're not motivated So kind of tuning out like that kid in the commercial OK Poor impulse control So that you tend to act out whatever emotion arises and sometimes the hyperactivity difficulty sitting still and then to fidget and all that And that described me to A T um And um but as soon as I learned about the diagnosis I knew something This is not a disease and it's not heritable despite the fact that some of my kids were diagnosed with it What is it So tuning out is not a disease So let me ask you a question if I may if I were to stress you right now um create stress emotional difficulty or tension for you right now What would be your options of dealing with that Of dealing with me What would be your options Can you get upset or I could leave Exactly You could fight back flight or fight Yeah But what if you didn't have those options Yeah then you're stuck And now what does the brain do when you're stuck like that and get distracted It gets tunes out Tunes out you want to do other things think about other things In other words it's a coping mechanism It's normal I mean the the idea that your child who is uh you know an 89 year old ball of energy filled with you know hormones and life and thoughts and things they enjoy

and and then you make them sit down all day in this unnatural state in a classroom with fluorescent lights and stare at a teacher that's unmotivated and underpaid and is teaching something in a very boring and non entertaining way And then if this kid doesn't lock in like a zombie we need to medicate them Yeah Well the other part of it is that if you look at my infancy and it sounds like yours we spent our first year or two under very difficult circumstances A lot of stress infants can't help but absorb the stress of their parents They can't help it What does an infant do Could I have escaped or fought back Could you have all we could do is tune out But when is this tuning out happening When our brain is being developed and our brain this is the part that nobody taught me in medical school But it turns out that brain science now teaches us that the human brain develops under the impact of the environment So the the most salient feature of the environment that shapes the circuit of the human brain is actually the relationship with the parents And if the parents are present and emotionally attuned and available child brains develop properly But the parents are stressed the child absorbs the stress What can they do with it They tune out and that tuning out thing is programmed into the brain And then 10 years later or 50 years later we say you got this disease No you don't You got a coping mechanism that's no longer working for you But it did it had a function when it first came along So this whole idea and and and by the way if a family comes to me with the A DH D child I'll say to them what you've got here is a very sensitive child that sensitive child is picking up on all the vibes energies and stresses in your family When I help this child deal with the whole family Look at the parental relationship look at how what stress is there in your life Look at how you react to the child Look at do you understand the child's behavior or or or the emotions that the child is having or you're just trying to control the child's behaviors Look at all that and very often parents will tell me after they've read that book on A DH D is they've totally changed their relationship to their child The child changes What a surprise But you go to most doctors you got this disease Here's the pill and by the way I took those medications and they helped me for a while you know So I'm not anti when you were in your fifties Yeah Yeah I'm not anti Did you take I took Ritalin Um which uh I can tell you the story So you know one of the hallmarks of a DH D is poor impulse control Right So um I found out about a DH D and even before I was diagnosed I took Ritalin and and why did you take it before you were diagnosed Because I'm a doctor and I could hey and you diagnosed yourself what they did and and so you at least assume that you

had that I knew I had it and and but not only that also because I had poor impulse control I never practiced medicine that way I mean if you came to me for any problem my first impulse would never be to write you a prescription unless it was obvious that you needed it for an infection or something I'd sit down with you and talk to you about what's going on here But but not me p poor and post regulation So I went to a colleague of mine a medical colleague I said hey bev I think I got the HD Can you some can you give me some Ritalin So she writes me a prescription then I took it in a higher than recommended initial dose And uh because I mean if a little bit is good then more must be even better And again it's not how I practice medicine but I came to myself that's a totally different ball game So I felt immediately present and calm and grounded and and it's a stimulant and I went well it calms the A DH D brain Then I go home and my wife says you look stoned because you're calm Yeah Well because I got this glassy eyed expression and within a couple of days the dep the Ritalin made me very depressed That's one of its potential side effects So I did see a psychiatrist I was formally diagnosed and they gave me Dexedrine and I took that for a while That's an amphetamine It's amphetamine it's another stimulant Um And it did help me I became a much more efficient workaholic and I could do even more It didn't change any of my emotional issues but it made me more focused and so on It helped me write my first book but I I haven't taken them for decades But because also I know that the brain can change if you treat it right So this is the reliance on medications that we have is is a real poverty of the spirit a real poverty of imagination a poverty of medical education The average doctor never learns this stuff The average physician never gets a single lecture on brain development or the brain develops in interaction with the environment So when you're seeing and and let alone do they hear about trauma They don't hardly at all So when they see an adult with ADHD or depression or addiction or or or or bipolar conditions or or uh or for that matter autoimmune illness or anything else they don't think of trauma They just think of this disease and they think that the diagnosis explains everything but the diagnosis don't explain anything because think about it let's say go or or Joe goes to a doctor and uh they they're diagnosed with a DH D Well WW why is what are the harms of a DH D Well tuning out poor impulse regulation maybe hyperactivity Why does Gabor have poor impulse control uh hyperactivity and uh tuning out because he's got a DH D How do we know if he's got a DH D cause he's got pull impulse control and tunes out and he's hyperactive Why is he hyperactive tunes out Have poor

input control He's got a DH D How do we know if he's got a DH D be You know it doesn't it's circular it doesn't it doesn't explain anything Diagnoses describe things and they can be helpful that way But they don't explain Yeah One of the things that people get so they get they get treated for and they get diagnosed with is anxiety and that one drives me nuts It drives me nuts because people pretend that anxiety is a disease and I'm like my God the world should make you anxious if you're a sensitive introspective person if you just like looking at the world itself and you you don't put it in perspective like the world's it's filled with anxiety The anxiety is it's future problem solving You're you're thinking about all the things that can go wrong You're thinking about your life in a you know potentially devastating way and that's not a disease That's just the way you look at the world and people getting diagnosed with it Well I won't quite agree with you on that one In what way I felt anxious at times the world the world every day is the same The world is the same but the way you look at it is not the same That's what I'm saying the world is giving you anxiety is not giving you right You're giving yourself anxiety by looking at the world and by how I look at the world because I I can look at the same world one day and feel grounded and connected And I mean I have all kinds of concerns about what's happening in the world but my nervous system won't be on edge My abdomen wounds are flowing I won't be anxious That's my point is that it's not a disease it isn't a disease So remember I talked about those brain circuits of lust and care and rage and uh and and and and seeking and so on one of the brain circuits that we have is described by a very prominent late neuroscientist yak banks is for panic and grief panic and grief are the normal responses of the young human being or the young animal when care isn't available So when the parents are stressed distracted economically or politically or because of their own unresolved trauma or whatever is going on in their lives and they don't respond to the child's distress They don't pick up the child when they're crying they make the child be alone When the child is upset the child's panic circuits get activated as they should be Because when the child's panic circuits get activated they cry for help That's so it's necessary for survival A young animal should feel panic when the adult is unavailable in a rational world In a sane world that child would be responded to But when Children as in our society are not responded to in their distress the panic becomes built into their nervous system And now you have a lot of anxious people and that's why more and more kids are being diagnosed You're right It's not a disease It's a response to the environment and the

thought process of like leaving a child alone when the child's crying is that to toughen the kid up is the thought process that you don't want to encourage this sort of behavior because then they'll do it all the time and then you'll develop an indulgent child Like what is the thought process The thought process is that the child's behavior is the problem And so we have to fix the behavior by controlling it Now actually the opposite is true because if you pick up the child when the child ne has distress physical or emotional distress you're teaching the child that the world is safe and they don't have to be they don't have to be anxious about it and they can just ask for help and it doesn't entrench kind of crying manipulative behavior how how it works Doctor Daniel Siegel who's a psychiatrist at UCL A and a very prolific author and mind researcher He says in his book The Developing Mind that the child uses the mature circuits of the adult brain to regulate his own immature unregulated circuits So when the adults show up in a calm loving way that the child downloads that into his own nervous system and then he he grows up he he doesn't he's not gonna be an infant forever At some point he's gonna be a mature adult who knows how to take care of themselves That's a natural process We don't have to teach kids to be independent independent is nature's agenda because the parents are gonna die At some point the mother bear is gonna disappear That bear cub has to be able to look after themselves in a mature confident way That's nature's natural agenda What the mother what the mother bear needs to do is to meet the needs of that infant bear So the infant banker mature So if we meet the child's needs they're gonna mature out of that helpless state with a sense of self regulation and calm confidence in their own capacity But when you don't pick kids up what you teach them is that the world is not available that they're alone and that they're helpless Talk about a formula for anxiety