



Episode #77

**Peter Shankman of Faster Than
Normal on the Gifts of ADHD**

October 3, 2017



Debbie: Hey Peter, welcome to the podcast.

Peter: Pleasure to be here Debbie. Thanks for having me.

Debbie: Really excited to have you on this show. I'm a fan of your podcast and I'm sure a lot of the parents in our community are as well. And before we talk about what you're doing with your podcast and your new book, I'd love if you could just tell us a little bit about the highlights of your childhood with ADHD and maybe some of the, the moments along the way that kind of led you to where you are today with this project.

Peter: So when when I was growing up, I grew up in the seventies and eighties and we didn't have ADHD. It wasn't called ADHD. It was called sit down, your disrupting the class disease. And you know, every report card, and a lot of notes from the teacher in between those report cards, were usually a needs to pay attention, needs to focus, needs to stop interrupting the class, things like that. And it was sorta just what it was. And I was fortunate enough that I had some artistic talent, musical talent, and I got into high school of performing arts, the Fame School where everyone was a little weird and a little crazy and so I went there and you know, still was, was definitely socially awkward. I had the social acuity of a, of a, of a hedgehog. But, you know, I learned a little bit more about myself there and it didn't really kick in until probably my late twenties, early thirties when I sort of got over my social awkwardness and realized there were better ways to be a human being.

But throughout all that time, I never thought I had ADHD. I never thought I was different. I just was me, you know, didn't think there was anything different about it. But what I didn't know at the time was I was figuring out ways to be better. Ways to act better, ways to work better, ways to live better and all the things that we're doing. I just thought that they were just me being told I was weird and strange and different and not normal and that it was those kinds of things that led me to eventually realizing when I finally did get diagnosed and my mid-thirties, like, holy crap, I've been self-medicating for 20 plus years, but in a healthy way. I've essentially been, I've been figuring out implementing ways to create the serotonin, dopamine and adrenaline that my body doesn't produce because I have ADHD, naturally, you know, so I wasn't like going on cocaine binge is or anything stupid like that.

I was, you know, I became a licensed skydiver. I'd have over 400 jobs. I've done ironman triathlons. I figured out a way to turn my- I've never had a real job. I had one real job, my life with America Online and I've been on my own for the last 19 years. I could never imagine working for someone else because that's sort of just how I, how I live and how I exist. And in doing that, you have to create sort of these rules and these rituals and regulations for yourself, that you have to follow otherwise you're in trouble. So what I realized that I've been doing all that I've been managing myself, self-managing ADHD, without meds,



not that I'm against meds, just without them, in a way that not only worked for me to be incredibly lucrative and beneficial. I've started and sold three companies, biggest of which being Help A Reporter Out, or HARO, which sort of fundamentally changed how journalists and sources connect.

I've been on countless boards. I'm an angel investor. I've done, I run a mastermind group for 200 entrepreneurs. I have, what will be in October, five books. I mean, you know, I, I find ways to use this sort of faster brain to my advantage. And that of course, at a year and a half ago, I launched the Faster Than Normal podcast, which is currently the number one podcast for ADHD on itunes. That focuses on ADHD as a gift, not a curse. And it's the basic premise from Alice in Wonderland where the yes, have I gone mad? And the answer is, I'm afraid. So you're entirely bonkers, but I'll tell you a secret. All the best people are.

Debbie: That's great. I love that story. I'm excited to play this for my son who just turned 13 and ADHD is one of his diagnoses and we were just talking this morning about, that he is a multi passionate person. He has so many interests and that's probably his biggest frustration right now, is getting distracted on his own and not making the progress he wants to see on all these things he wants to do. But I love hearing your story and how you're living at all and it's going to be so inspiring. It's really awesome.

Peter: Thank you. I mean, I think I'm very fortunate. I'm very lucky. I've had a lot of fun for me. You know, like I said, I've just, every day I wake up, I'm like, I cannot believe that this is my life, that I get to do this, that I get to do everything that I do and that I'm enjoying it and I'm actually making a living out it. It's pretty awesome.

Debbie: It sounds pretty awesome. But before we talk more about your podcast and the book, just in hearing your story and knowing that my audience is comprised of parents who are raising, you know, what I call differently wired kids, a lot of whom have ADHD. I'm curious to know how your parents were with who you were as a kid. I mean, a lot of the parents in my community are getting that feedback from schools. A lot of them ended up pulling their kids out to homeschool them because they just can't find a way for their child to feel good about who they are and the way that they show up in the classroom. You know, how did your parents handle that? At the time?

Peter: My parents are both musicians and music teachers and so they were already in the arts and things like that. They knew that I was a difference when they age. They didn't so much try to rein me in as much as they told people that I was, they he told me that, you know, I was different. And while that's great, it's great to be different. I also need to understand that, you know, being different while it's good, it's not necessarily, it's going to cause you some issues because not everyone accepts that, but if you continue on and you keep surviving and you do everything you could do, it's worth it. You know. And, and I'm very fortunate. My mom, my mom's favorite line about me was he marches to the beat of a different drummer. And um, that really was everything I did was tough. I mean, I



won't lie. A junior high sucked, man. Oh my God. It was terrible. I was, I was mercilessly teased, and abused, beaten up and everything, but the kids and you know, when you're different, especially when you're a kid, when you're in your teenage, early teenage years, when you're different, that's wrong. Right? And so I was certainly not like everyone else in that many friends, but the payoff of that has been over the top. And I, I look at kids and I'm just, it was a hashtag couple years ago for teenagers, it gets better. And just oh my God, It gets so much better.

Debbie: Yeah. I was talking with another mom today of a middle schooler and we were just discussing those years really are just socially, I think the most challenging and for kids who are moving through the world in a different way, that is, you don't want to be different at those particular ages.

Peter: No question about it. You know, it's funny, I look back on it now, the majority of the stuff out there was, that I was worried about as a kid was pretty pointless, but it does suck when you're not like everyone else at that age when your only job is really to be social, right? You're in junior high and your only job is to be social and if you suck at that then you're not going to do too well. And so I was, I was kind of ostracized for that. But again, everyone says, if you had a time machine, what would you change? And not a thing. Because what I learned from that, right? The stuff that I learned in junior high that still sticks with me today, and that's a responsible for a lot of my success.

Debbie: Well, I love that you also, you know, you're obviously a natural problem solver and a very curious person to do what you've done and also took to do this self-managing, which is pretty phenomenal and I know that that's a lot of what you talk and write about, but would you mind sharing with us what some of your most effective strategies would be or maybe when you were younger and then I'm sure they changed as you've gotten older, but especially for those who are choosing not to medicate or looking for alternative ways to manage their ADHD symptoms or at least not have them hold them back. What have been some of the best strategies for you.

Peter: OK, so when I was a kid, I literally was just surviving by the skin of my teeth. I wasn't thriving. I was surviving. And it wasn't until I got older that I realized the things I was doing could actually, if I just tweaked it a little bit, can be beneficial. But the thing I do now, my day has to start with a workout that is not up for debate - seven days a week. It could be a small workout. I don't have to, you know, I don't have to go in and train the hardest I've ever trained for, for the hardest I've ever done every single day. But I have to do something, I have to sweat, I have to get my breath back because that right there is starting off my day by giving me the dopamine, the serotonin and the adrenaline need to be able to focus on these things. If I don't work out, on an overnight flight or something like that. I feel it. I feel the difference. And so, you know, this morning I've been up since 4:00 AM. I was, I took a Peloton class this morning. I have a four year old daughter who's with me half the week and the time that I'm with her, I have a Peloton class in my room, in my apartment. I have a Pelaton bike in my apartment. Times I'm not with her and meet her at the gym lifting or taking



or the cycling in Central Park or occasionally taking live classes. So I had a live class at 6am this morning it was great. They were like 10 people in the class. It's totally empty. We had a blast and played great music. I walked out of there 10 to 7:00, you know, 7:00 showered. I was dressed. I was high as a kite, right. Those endorphins, they're still with me right now. It's still three hours later I'm still lifted into the day, you know. So that's, that's what you want, right? So, so the first thing I'd say is, you know, find the time to exercise whether you're a kid, whether you're in school, whatever it is, even if it's just even just getting to school and literally running around, find the time to do it.

Peter: So the second thing I would say, I'm a big thing for me is what you eat, what you put in your mouth. It's funny, we have, we have kids as young as five years old being diagnosed with ADHD and being put on amphetamines, Adderall, Ritalin. And there's some kids who definitely need that. There's no question about it. I'm not answering that, but I think, I think we're, well, we're well over diagnosing or well over prescribing these medications. You know, maybe the kids running around, you know, because he's, I don't know, five maybe instead of putting him on drugs to get a five year old to behave like a 45 year old maybe instead of feeding him three bowls of frosted sugar bombs every morning you give him eggs, protein, right? some veggies in the morning and then you let him run around for a half hour to instead of sitting him in front of the television. Then having to go to school and see the difference, you know, the amount of things that I've been able to do for myself that have been massively, that massively shifted how my brain works and how I work in how productive I am and how happy I am not like hugely massive things. They are little tiny things like exercising, like eating healthier. I quit drinking, but not that I'm assuming that 12 year olds drinking, but who knows, but I couldn't change it because I understand that I don't have the ability to moderate and looking back on it now in junior high I, I didn't, I, if I had something I wanted to say, I said it, I shared it because it was the most important thing. I have to share it. You know, I joke with my friends, I have, I have two speeds. I have Namaste and I'll cut a ----- and that's basically it.

And so because of that, remember War Games that came out in the eighties where the computer learned to prevent nuclear war the only winning move was not to play? That's my life. There are things I don't do because I know they won't end well. Have I ever had a drinking problem? No. Was I ever going out and getting wasted and drunk driving or you know, or embezzling or of course not, but I don't have one drink. I have six drinks and for me it's just easier not to have one. So that to me was a real sort of wake-up call in terms of how you treat yourself. It's the oxygen mask theory. You can't take care of anyone else until you're taking care of yourself so the best thing you can do. The best way you can focus your time, whether you're 10 years old or whether you're 50, is to make sure you're taking the best care of you before anything else.

Debbie: That's great. I saw that you've had Hal Elrod on your podcast, Asher and I had been doing The Miracle Morning for about a year and a half now. And just implementing that has been so helpful for him, you know, for both of us of



course. But, but for him to really be intentional, which seems like it's a big piece of it.

Peter: How old your son?

Debbie: He just turned 13.

Peter: You should get the, uh, the, the, there's a great big book of affirmations that are written by Hal and a woman named Briana Greenspan and it's a coloring book. I don't know if your son is about colors, but my four year old and I, we take these pages and the affirmations. After we color the affirmation hanging it on a wall and every night we say the affirmation.

Debbie: That's awesome. Thank you for that tip. So. All right, let's talk about your podcast. So, you've talked about a little bit. Tell us how often it comes out and what kind of people you bring on and, and what you're hoping it contributes to the conversation.

Peter: The podcast, Faster Than Normal, is the basic premise that if you look at celebrities and you look at CEOs and you look at people who've been successful, the majority of them have ADHD or some form of it. So the podcast interviews these people, we've had everyone from Tony Robbins to Seth Goden, to Cameron Herold, to the Chief of Staff to the mayor of Boston, Keith Krach who founded Docusign. Dave Neeleman who founded JetBlue. Really phenomenal people of all walks of life, all of whom have done incredible things with their lives and they blame it or, or, or attribute it to their ADHD. And it's basically we listen to them. The interviews, each podcast it's 20 minutes long, well because ADHD and well, and we focus on the things that they do that makes them successful and we hopefully implement that. We've had doctors that we've had those psychologists and people like that, we've had kids on the program as well who tell us about their day. I'm so happy I started it and it's such, it's so great to get emails and notes from people like, Oh my God, and it's changed my life that it's nice and so from that I was contacted by when Random House about a year and a half ago or about a year ago to write a book and so Faster Than Normal, the book, comes out October 3rd. The website for that is actually Faster Than Normal the book. So I'm really psyched about that.

Debbie: Yeah, and listeners, I will make sure that the links for Peter's podcast and the book are all on the show notes page and actually hopefully this is going to be hearing right around the time the book comes out. Awesome. So, and the book is that kind of your inside scoop for how people with ADHD can maximize their potential?

Peter: We don't have it. It's two things. It's the premise of how you can, people with ADHD can maximize their potential, but it's also for regular people. It's for people who might not have ADHD but who just want to get four hours a day in their life back. Right? You know, the tips and tricks that are given there, both from me and from other successful people with ADHD, apply to anyone. You know, there's a reason that President Obama had a total of three suits and he



wore them over and over again. There's a reason Zuckerberg wears his hoodie all the time. I have two sides to my closet, one side, and they're labeled. One side says office slash travel and the other side says speaking slash TV. The office travel side has tee shirts, jeans. The speaking slash TV side has buttoned downs, shirts, jackets, jeans. That's it, right?

I have tons of gorgeous suits like fine pieces made in Italy and I wear those for Jewish high holidays, all that on my daughter's closet along with sweaters and vests and all that because if I go in every morning, OK, what should I wear? Oh my God, that sweater I remember. That sweater, Laura gave me that sweater. I wonder how long it's been. I should look it up. Three hours later. I'm naked in the living room on Facebook. I haven't left the house right? So I eliminate choice. The ability to eliminate choice in your life is the greatest thing in the world and right there literally will save you an hour a day. I had stupid things like I corporate, keynote speak all around the world and my contract is very simple. I'll speak. You'll pay me and pay my expenses is literally, that's my contract. Except in Las Vegas, in Las Vegas. I have a rider in my contract that says client will only do at 12:30 PM keynote and I will not have to be on the ground in Las Vegas from wheels down to wheels up for more than eight hours.

So I fly in on a 6:00 AM flight out of New York. I get it at 10:00 AM, I do 1230 keynote, I'm going to 4:00 PM flight home. Why? Because if I had to go do a morning or night, I'd have to spend the night in Vegas, nothing good's going to come out of my spending the night unsupervised Vegas. Am I going to go blow my child's college fund? No, probably not. But why give myself that opportunity? Right? I, I've said this before publicly, I believe that in any given day myself, people like me, myself, I can't speak for others, are about three bad decisions in a row away from being a junkie in the street. Now, am I going to leave here and go and buy heroin? No, of course not. I have absolutely zero desire to do that. I can't imagine doing that. But living the life that you lead with a faster brain requires you to simply be aware, be aware of yourself, and be aware that that first decision which might seem incredibly benign could lead you down a road.

You know, it's the question of, oh well, you know, again, the drinking again, I'm smart enough to know that I don't have one drink, one drink might lead to six drinks now when I used to drink it, fortunately nothing ever came of that. I'd have six drinks. I'd go home, I'd feel like crap, but even feeling like crap and wake up the next morning I wouldn't work out because I felt like crap. I wouldn't, didn't work out well, you know, or even more God, I feel like grabbed. Let me order some bacon, egg and cheese sandwiches to get rid of my hangover, you know, get rid of my -- OK, well I did that and now it's lunch. Oh, I might as well order a pizza. I'm not gonna go to the gym, screw it. Let's have a drink. I all of a sudden this is a two week cheat day.

That's not OK. Right? With these faster brains, you do everything and it just becomes there are great aspects to it. Hey, I want to start a company. Great. And now an hour later I started the company. The downside of that is that that same speed can be used negatively, so you just need to be aware and you know, one of the things I think that parents need to sort of make sure that kids understand, I



mean every kid, but those with kids who have ADHD is that because we're so fast, we do things that could mess us up a lot quicker than regular people. I know people who go out have several drinks, have a great time, go home and they go to bed. Like the way I can give you the best example, I work in a shared office spaces, rented. I have a small office where can close the door and just focus. My next door neighbor does something in fashion. I don't know what she does, but every Friday she has just two employees and every Friday she orders a pizza for her, the two employees. And they always have leftovers for like a month she comes in, Peter, we have leftover pizza. Would you like some leftover pizza? And I finally looked at her. I said, Desiree., Thank you so much. You keep saying the word leftover, I don't understand what that is. Leftover pizza is not a real thing. When I order a pizza, I eat the pizza. There's no, but that's not up for debate, that's like leftover wine, right? And so, and she laughed but you know, that's how my brain works and so I have to understand that I have to be aware of that and I have to avoid, you know, I don't keep their apps where you can order food and have food delivered and once you do it you just click one button and the same order appears. Right. I don't, I don't keep that app on my phone like I can make this healthy chicken or just click pizza. No, I see. You have to understand yourself and I think that it is incumbent upon parents who knows whether they have it or where the kids have it. Hey, you're brains are a little different and you need to be aware of this because there are certain things you can't do like everyone else.

Debbie: Yeah, absolutely. I love that. I mean, that's a big message that we share here and that certainly I drum into my trial. Then personally, it's important to me too, self knowledge. I really think it is, is everything, and especially when you can acquire that as a young person, you know, I feel like Asher knows himself better than most of the adults in my life, which is pretty cool. I wanted to ask you about stigma for a second. That is something that we're also trying to bust here. You know, my kind of big picture vision is to just change the way difference is perceived in discussed in the world and a lot of parents are shy about their child's diagnosis or being open about what's going on. That's not how we play at all here, but for some reason ADHD seems to be one of those diagnoses that is more maligned than other neurodifferences and I'm just wondering what your thoughts are. I mean, you're obviously very open and proud of who you are. Such a great role model for so many people. Was that something you had to kind of come to terms with and was that a conscious choice?

Peter: I've had some success in my life, right. I'm not a trillionaire or anything like that, but I've done OK. I've sold a couple companies, I've done alright. And so I've just always been of the belief that if you have any modicum of success, you have a responsibility to send the elevator back down, and so for me, this is the best way I know how to do it, to explain to kids and other people, Hey, I'm not and you're not broken, and the things that everyone has been telling you are bad things are actually tremendous gifts and I want you to understand that and embrace that.

Debbie: I love that. Not broken. Not deficits in need of fixing. This is just different. And who we are. Do you have a lot of kids and teens who listened to your podcast?



- Peter: Yeah we do. A lot of parents tell their kids, hey, listen to this. And um, that just thrills me. We've had a couple of kids, a couple of teenagers on the show as well as guests. It was a great one with Emma Havighorst who, I think the title of that one is, Do Not Disturb is My Best Friend. We've had some, some they'd give a really, really good at advice.
- Debbie: That's awesome. Well, let me ask you one last question before we head off. And that is for the parents who are listening, do you have advice for those parents on how they can best support who their kids are, especially when they're in the elementary and middle school years and you know, they might be getting the message a lot that they're wrong or they're doing it?
- Peter: Just know that they're not broken. They're not broken, there's nothing wrong with them. They have a different brain and it works differently, but differently is not bad. A very good friend of mine is a, currently a PhD at Stanford, like studying stuff on, on. She's, she's doing her PhD on skin and basically I'm smart enough to know that it's the skin. Right. There's a lot more than that, but I'm not smart enough to understand she's doing stuff on the skin. OK. She's massively ADHD and this is a girl who was like, she was the head cheerleader at Notre Dame. She's at Harvard studying immunology. That's what it is, studying immunology for her PhD. She's freaking brilliant and she owns this because she uses her ADHD for, for to her benefit. So that to me, you know it. You're not broken and if you think you are call me, I'll talk some sense into you.
- Debbie: Awesome. Awesome. Well before we go, would you mind again just sharing your where people can reach you the best places on social or that people can connect with you.
- Peter: So the podcast is fasterthannormal.com. My name is Peter Shankman. I am @Petershankman on all of the socials: facebook, twitter, instagram. Faster Than Normal is the podcast. You can find them on itunes, stitcher, Google play, and then my website shankman.com. My email is Peter@Shankman.com. I answer all my email personally.
- Debbie: Wow. Awesome. Well thank you so much and best of luck with the book. I cannot wait to get our copy. I'm sure that my son will devour it and I'm sure it's going to be so useful to this community and thanks for just putting it out into the world.
- Peter: Pleasure was mine. Thank you so much for having me.
- Debbie: You've been listening to the TiLT Parenting podcast for the show notes for this episode, including links to Peter's podcast and his new book Faster Than Normal visit www.tiltparenting.com/sessions77 and a quick invitation to try or free Differently Wired Seven Day Challenge. If you haven't done it yet, when you sign up, I'll email you a short inspirational video every day for one week with a tip you can incorporate into your life right away to shift your experience in a positive way. You'll also be invited to join a private facebook group for people



who've gone through or are currently doing the challenge. More than 700 people have gone through the challenge so far. It's free, it's ongoing, and it's designed to help you find your peace and confidence in your parenting journey today. To join, visit www.tiltparenting.com/sevenday. Lastly, if you'd like what you heard on today's episode, please consider subscribing or leaving a review on itunes. Both things help our podcast get noticed in the crowded podcast space. Thanks again for listening. For more information on tilt parenting, visit www.tiltparenting.com



RESOURCES MENTIONED:

- [Peter Shankman's website](#)
- [Faster Than Normal Podcast](#)
- [*Faster Than Normal: Turbocharge Your Focus, Productivity, and Success With the Secrets of the ADHD Brain*](#) by Peter Shankman
- [*The Miracle Morning: The Noe-So-Obvious Secret Guaranteed to Transform Your Life \(Before 8am\)*](#) by Hal Elrod
- [The ADHD Miracle Morning with Hal Elrod](#) (podcast episode)
- [A Conversation with Asher About His Game-Changing Morning Routine](#) (podcast episode)
- [The Miracle Morning Art of Affirmations: A Positive Coloring Book for Adults and Kids](#) by Hal Elrod
- [My Best Friend is "Do Not Disturb." with Emma Havighorst](#) (podcast episode)