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Busy Philipps Says It's Time Women With ADHD Feel More Represented: 'We All Deserve That'

Her new campaign has this exact goal.



Photo: Lea Winkler

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Multi-hyphenate Busy Philipps truly lives up to her name: She leads a *busy* life. Since her start on 90s classics like *Dawson's Creek* and *Freaks and Geeks*, she's grown her brand to include a lifestyle podcast, *Busy Philipps Is Doing Her Best*, her new show, *Busy This Week*, on QVC+, and hosting a number of star-studded galas and events. But when she's not working, she's being a mom, staying on top of her well-being, and navigating something she semi-recently discovered about herself: She has ADHD.

ADHD, or attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, is a developmental disorder that affects patterns in thinking, focus and attention, and emotion regulation. While it's most commonly diagnosed in childhood, adults can be diagnosed, too—about 8.7 million U.S. adults were in 2021 alone.[1] But the majority of them are often men because, to *no one's* surprise, women are sorely misrepresented.

"Boys are two times as likely to get diagnosed with ADHD than girls, and that's for myriad reasons, but one of them is that ADHD presents a little differently [in women]," says Philipps. "This can lead to years of feeling behind and not knowing what's going on; personally, I was diagnosed later in life, which is very common for a lot of women."

Even though Philipps has been talking about her ADHD online for years, she's kicking her advocacy up a notch by partnering with Supernus Pharmaceuticals to launch "Ms. Represented"—a campaign to help women with ADHD feel seen and understood. She's also an ambassador of the campaign's focus, a non-stimulant medication called Qelbree, which she takes herself.

Well+Good chatted with Philipps to learn more about the campaign, how sharing details of her life with ADHD helps her (and fans) feel less alone, and the self-care habits that put her mind at ease.

For Philipps, ADHD awareness comes naturally

Even though Philipps was diagnosed with ADHD years ago, she feels really lucky that she can continue using her story to raise awareness. The "Ms. Represented" campaign is no exception: "I'm thrilled to work with them and talk about these things and destigmatize the idea of seeking help, for feeling overwhelmed, like you have too many tasks and don't quite know if you're ever nailing anything," she says.

Philipps's diagnosis story is not unusual for most women, either. Her daughter was being evaluated by a healthcare provider for some learning differences at school when she realized *her own* daily habits were *very* similar to the checklist they used. "My husband and I looked at each other like, 'Are you kidding me?'" She goes on: "This was me—every single thing."

Thanks to TikTok, Philipps even learned that certain quirks were likely also a result of ADHD, like hyperfixating on the same meal—a turkey sandwich—for lunch every day for two years straight. (Yes, that happened!) "It's kind of a silly thing, but that's something that had never been

explained to me, and I never knew, had to do with my ADHD," she adds.

Now, with an official diagnosis from both her therapist and a specialist, Philipps can look back on her younger self with "so much more compassion," and it's all been very freeing.

"I felt like there was something wrong with me for so long," Philipps says. "None of us should be out here feeling riddled with guilt about the things that we are not accomplishing, but I think when you have ADHD, and you struggle with it, it gets very overwhelming, especially being a mom on top of it, it can be a lot."

While taking Qelbree has helped Philipps manage her ADHD, she knows it can take lots of trial and error to find the right treatment, whether it's medication, therapy, or both. "I think that's a very personal journey that you have to take," she adds.

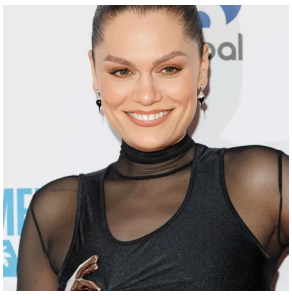
And so does opening up on her podcast

It's not just Philipps who reaps the benefits of speaking her truth: Her fans do, too. Every time she talks about parts of her life with ADHD (like whether she's had an overstimulating or understimulating type of day, for example), she gets a slew of support and comments from women who can relate.

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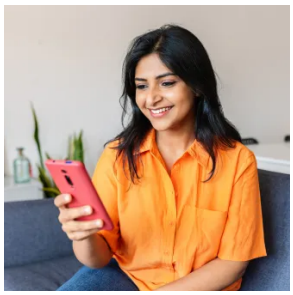
"This is where I feel like, 'Okay, this feels good to me that I'm able to help in this regard and help women like myself,'" Philipps says. "Because I know how I felt—it was very isolating and lonely." Podcast listeners have even written in about getting their own ADHD diagnosis and treatment after listening to particularly vulnerable and real episodes.

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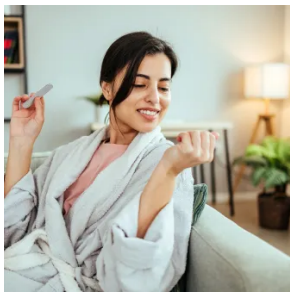
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Since ADHD presents differently for so many women, it can be tricky to pick up on the signs, but hearing from others in the same boat does help. For example, instead of presenting mainly with hyperactivity and inattention, some women may experience more anxiety and depressive symptoms, low self-esteem, chronic stress, or difficulty with socialization and relationships as a result of their ADHD. Even fluctuating hormones during menstrual cycles can lead to flare-ups of symptoms.

"Some of [these symptoms] were things that my doctor and I never spoke about," says Philipps. But this is likely because traditional medicine has historically focused ADHD studies on men.[2]

To take care of her mind, she practices these 5 self-care habits

Advocacy is so important, but it can also be draining. That's why Philipps takes self-care seriously, for both her body and her mind. When she's not booked with jobs or spending time with family and friends, she's dedicating bits of her routine to relaxation and fun. Here are the self-care habits she can't get enough of.

1. She takes baths

"I love a good warm bath," says Philipps. They're a great way to regulate your body temperature before hitting the hay.[3] Adding relaxing bath soaks like this magnesium-based one from Flewd ($9) or Dr. Teal's Foaming Bath ($7) can really up the relaxing vibes.

2. She sticks to a nighttime routine

"It's so funny, but I sort of treat myself like a baby," Philipps says. "I have my bedtime routine—I take a nice bath, and I like to sit, meditate, and calm down before I go to sleep." For her, this routine has made all the difference in her mental clarity and stress.

3. She's investing in an alarm clock

"My friend just bought an alarm clock and I was like 'Actually, that's genius,'" Philipps says. "So, I'm going to do that, too." A plain old digital alarm, or even a techy sunrise clock like the Hatch Restore 3 ($170), can replace the buzzing phone on your nightstand.

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4. She keeps her notebook nearby

"I have this small notebook that fits in my purse, and I always have it with me because I do put things in my calendar on my phone, and I use the Notes app, but I do sometimes prefer to write things down," says Philipps. "Things that need to be accomplished, or things that I feel like 'Oh, I don't want to forget that idea,'" they're all jotted down, she says. The Maison de Sabré Leather Notebook ($69) and The Therapy Journal ($38) are similar snags to the personalized one Philipps graciously showed off (during this interview!).

5. She gets in touch with her artsy side

"I do a lot of art projects: I like painting, I like doing watercolor, and I do pottery," Philipps says. "And to be honest with you, this past year, I haven't had enough time to do pottery and I've been bummed about it; hopefully I'll be able to do more in the future." Consider this your PSA to

start up those dream hobbies—they are great ways to fill up on the feel-good hormone dopamine (which some people with ADHD are lacking) and relieve stress.[4]

Ultimately, representation matters in women's health

"I think [the campaign] shows in so many different ways how a lot of women feel and have been feeling," says Philipps. The same goes for women's mental and physical health in general—both are largely misrepresented, underresearched, and stigmatized by society. "But you can seek out a diagnosis, and you can find the right treatment for yourself; it's just important, you know?"

So, the next time you're questioning whether to go to a professional about any health concern, whether physical or mental, just remember: when it comes to good support, "you deserve that—we all deserve that," Philipps says.

For more information on Philipps' "Ms. Represented" campaign for Qelbree, click here. And catch her show, Busy This Week, Wednesday nights at 10 p.m. ET on QVC+.

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