

Podcast: Margarita Ibraheem

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>>Janet Weber: This is Journeys of Learning, where we talk to students that have taken unconventional pathways to reach their educational goals. I'm Janet Weber and I'm your host, and a counselor at De Anza College. And I created this podcast so that students will feel less alone on their own journeys of learning.

>>Janet Weber: Hello, we are with Margarita Ibraheem today, and we have known each other for many years. Maybe eight years, we were talking about that we have known each other. She first came to me at Foothill College as a counselor; she came because she was struggling with her classes. And why don't you take it from there, and tell us a little bit about your background, and how old you are.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: So I am 26, which can maybe come off a little older for community college students at times.

>>Janet Weber: No, I don't think so.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: I was raised by my grandparents in Los Altos. They're both teachers, so for me, academic success was always pretty important in our family. And I also have ADHD, which then made that academic success three times more challenging.

>>Janet Weber: ADHD makes it really hard.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: Yeah, just it's challenging. My college journey was, if anything, not traditional because I went from having ADHD in high school, and having an IEP, and being in special ed classes, to then having to go into a two year college, which to some people, would be like a downer, "Oh, why do I have to do this?" For me, it was probably the most exciting thing for me, just because it was college. And I just remember being so excited that I went to three orientations - the same information, I just thought it'd be really cool to know it all and everything.

>>Janet Weber: I love that. I've noticed that over the years, you get really organized and you prepare, and you get all the information. And you would come and see me a lot, your counselor. And that was one way that you accommodated your ADHD, right?

>> Margarita Ibraheem: Yeah, but it took a while though, I think, to get to that point. It was like, oh, I need to go talk to you to get your advice. I definitely am not someone who like-

>>Janet Weber: You were really good at organizing and preparing, but not as good asking for help.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: Yeah, and then I definitely have that can be based off of ADHD throughout my whole life type thing. How maybe asking for help was always harder, because people would be like, in a weird way, took it as like, "Oh, I can't do it" but I just need a question. But it took me a long time to get to that point where I could understand it like that. So I was very excited, and I was always constantly being prepared for the most part.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: Trying to be a college student with ADHD is pretty hard. They usually say that it's not ideal to have ADHD and to go into college. And it makes sense, it makes a lot of sense. But I think you can definitely overcome it. For me, let's see, I started college in 2014 as what would've been a freshman. Well, I guess they don't go by freshman or sophomore for this. Usually it's based off of your points, I think how many points you achieve. I definitely was like a freshman going to college, and it definitely did not go as planned.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: I think I came in with a 3.4 GPA from high school. Because of the challenges that I had, I ended up getting to a point, like every quarter I would get to a point where I was doing really well at the beginning. And then about mid semester, maybe halfway through the terms, is when I would start to see a decline in my motivation and everything else. And so instead of getting F's, I'd constantly dropped classes, withdrawing from them. I accumulated so many, I think my GPA suffered. And I think I ended up leaving with 03.

>>Janet Weber: 0.03.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: Something like that. It was like a 0.-

>>Janet Weber: At Foothill?

>> Margarita Ibraheem: Yeah, I think that's what it was. It was very low.

>>Janet Weber: And it was from ... I want to say that again, because I think that is also very typical of people with ADHD, is you start off so strong in the

beginning of the quarter. And like you were telling me earlier, you would have your books ahead of time, which was the wisdom of your grandpa. Get your books ahead of time, and start reading them, and get the syllabus and go through it, and your calendar. And even you would find out where your classrooms are and the parking spot, all that. And then halfway through the semester, is when a lot of people, or quarter, a lot of people lose that steam.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: Yeah, and with ADHD, well at least for me, I lost it all. I'm like I-

>>Janet Weber: No.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: ... pulled myself out of that little, like rut, that small rut you gain. I just sort of went with it. And I definitely ended up in a hole.

>>Janet Weber: You would drop the classes or get F's?

>> Margarita Ibraheem: Drop them. I think it was mostly dropping. And then I had also learned that what I thought I had known about Foothill and all this stuff to like get me from point A to point B from like orientation. I actually was missing a lot of information. I didn't set up an ed plan, I don't think, until later it was a very messed up ed plan. It didn't really have a destination. I think I was also taking classes I didn't need. And a lot of those F's were from classes I didn't need. And I think I was missing a lot more than I thought I was. And because I didn't like to ask for help, because I was embarrassed too, and I didn't want someone to think I was just failing, because that's usually sort of the mentality I had. And so I think I stopped going to you for a while. I think I did -

>>Janet Weber: Yes.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: I think, because I didn't want to show you that I wasn't doing well, so I was just embarrassed. And I ended up receiving a letter in the mail, I think it was, pretty formal, saying that I am being dismissed from the college. I - I was confused. I didn't know how to handle it. I think that night-

>>Janet Weber: You were upset.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: Yeah, and I think that night when I received it, I ended up immediately applying to Cañada College, which is a neighboring college in the same district, I think it is. And I think that's when I went and told my grandpa, "Oh hey, I'm going to go to Cañada College this fall, because Foothill isn't for me. The teachers, everything." Because usually it's always either been teaching styles, or just the environment as a whole, I usually would need like quieter places. Now that I think about it, those are excuses I think I was telling myself. But I never thought fully what was wrong, so I blamed everything around me, because that's usually what's wrong.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: So I went to Cañada. I think I started in 2017 or '16, I think it was. I went two years or almost two years at Foothill like this, and then I went to Cañada. It was a great place. It's a great school. The teachers are amazing. Everything's really good about that place as well. And then I started also doing sort of well, and then immediately not doing great. And I started to dig that same hole. Okay, something clearly is not right. Something's wrong, like something's really wrong if this is happening again.

>>Janet Weber: You noticed your pattern and decided that it was something that you needed to change, which is great because a lot of people don't notice that.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: I think I was one quarter away of being on probation at Cañada. I think I was actually one quarter close to being to that point. Also, I noticed that at Foothill, I didn't know that I was really close to being put on probation. The only letter I received was the one saying I was dismissed. I didn't know that it showed up on my transcript, oh, where your academic standing is. I didn't know that's where I should be looking. I didn't know that, I guess Canvas offered me some sort of presentational course I'm supposed to take, then to go meet with a counselor. I didn't know what that was, so I ignored it. I didn't really know something was wrong. And there was also the fact that I wasn't meeting with my counselor, so they couldn't have told me.

>>Janet Weber: And I think that's an important point you just made that you didn't know, so you ignored it.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: Yeah, I didn't know what all this meant and that, in a weird way, irritates me a little bit, because I wish even though I maybe had not been going to talk to my counselor, because I was already in a mental place that I wasn't wanting to do this, but I didn't get any solid notifications, or letters saying, "Hey, this is where you're at." I only received the letter on very nice stock card paper, saying - saying "You're on probation" or "Great, everything's green." "Hey, you're now dismissed from this school. You're going to have to and so that's when I was so shocked at where I was-

>>Janet Weber: Yes, and we've changed it since then.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: I have noticed as they've gotten better, that things have changed, so yes-

>>Janet Weber: Yes, and that was why, because we started hearing from students that it was so shocking and disturbing, and-

>> Margarita Ibraheem: It was so aggressive. The letter I received truly made me think-

>>Janet Weber: And just even that word, we're trying to change the word probation, because you feel like you've done something illegal.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: You went to jail, and people think house arrest.

>>Janet Weber: Yes.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: - counselor. There was a lot. I laugh when I hear the word probation now, because I feel like a badass slightly. I'm like, "Yes, I was on probation guys."

>>Janet Weber: Yeah, that's great. You wear it with a badge of honor.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: The same things started happening at Cañada. It was the worst. And I just remember I was in communications at the time, because my major was that, I switched that at the time. And I always remember not vibing with anything. I hadn't gotten my books yet. It had been two weeks in, I had no motivation to get the books, to look at the syllabus. I knew something was wrong. I just remember, I think it

was maybe an hour in or something, I think I stood up, walked out of the class and never looked back.

>>Janet Weber: You were done.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: I don't think I dropped the course, I think I just didn't even look at it again. I think now, if I were to go back, I think I'd have to appeal to the council if I can go back to Cañada.

>>Janet Weber: That's interesting, you just got up during class and you're like, "I'm done."

>> Margarita Ibraheem: It was very dramatic in a way. It's not something I would do. So it was a big step for me, and I just remember being at my end's point. And I think I always wanted the degree, it never went away. It was just, I think I just had burnt out. I officially was burned out, and I just couldn't do it anymore. And it was hard at first because I didn't know how to tell my grandfather, because he was the one who was funding my whole college lifestyle, paying for everything. And I didn't know how to tell him, "Hey, I used up all the money you put in so far, the last so many years." I didn't do anything.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: And I was also afraid because he's a community college professor, would he let me take a break? Would he understand that I'm burnt out? Or would he push, tell me I have to keep going. And so he's also Middle Eastern, so pressure in any cultural family usually to do well in school, is really high. There was a lot of factors, but I just remember him actually being very okay with it. He even told me some of his students are taking like 8 to ... What was it? I think the max is like 12, but you can go over like 15. I think some are taking 18, plus working 40-something



hours or more.

>>Janet Weber: I know.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: And he was always worried about them. He's like-

>>Janet Weber: Yeah, that's a recipe to burn out fast.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: He was teaching chemistry and that requires time and thought, and he's like, "Don't take the class this quarter or this semester, because you're not going to do ..." I already told him, "It's too much." So he had advised that. I didn't know what I was going to get with him. Am I going to get the professor? Or am I going to get grandpa? And I was hoping for dad/grandfather, not professor. And he understood.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: And one of my aunts though, said to me, "Oh your uncle wouldn't be happy if you stopped going to school" or whatever. And he had passed away a few years. I don't think she meant that to come off as it did, but it was like, okay. But I only really had, out of all my cousins, I'm one of seven, I think I only had two support my decision. And it was weird because a lot of them went to prestigious schools, so pressure in general.

>>Janet Weber: And it's interesting, because that was one of the best things you did, was take that break.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: In a weird way, it changed everything for me. When I stopped, because it was 2017, I think I started going on medication as well for my ADHD, which was, I felt like I'm an adult now. I think when you're a kid and you go on that kind of

medication, your parents are in control. But also they're scared because when you hear medication, the stuff is practically drugs. Adderall itself is something you can be addicted to, so there's a lot of stigma and fear around medications, especially if it can be helpful. And so as a kid, I wasn't on any medication, because I think the one time I was, I fell asleep in class, so it really didn't help.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: To be at where I was, I think I was maybe 20 ... Oh what was it, 2017, I think I would've been 20 or 21 I think at the time. But I just remember being on that medication, I was mature enough now at that point, and I actually had an idea about how to properly take my medication. So I didn't take it in a way that could become more addicted to my medication. When I went on medication, I decided to fully start working, which my grandfather was fine with, because to leave school that abruptly, usually instantly everyone thinks that you're dropping out. But that's not the case, or it could be that you need to have something to push you, to want the degree. I wanted the degree, I just needed a break.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: I already had a job, I was already working at the time. And I just was going to continue to work until I felt ready to go back. And that really changed me. My job was a big reason why I stopped going to school, is because I actually felt like I was accomplishing something when I was working. And just my coworkers were constantly motivating me. They would maybe critique me I think. I always say, "It's positive criticism" but I think it's not what it's called. It's called-

>>Janet Weber: Constructive criticism.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: ... constructive criticism, yeah. My managers would do that with me and it changed my-

>>Janet Weber: And it was something that you were good at, because ADHD makes it so hard to be good at school, that you weren't getting all this positive reinforcement.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: And all the ADHD stuff that I have from the constant talking fast, the excitement, all that stuff, sort of actually works well in-

>>Janet Weber: Yes, yes.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: - something to somebody if you have the energy, and the emotions, and the ability to talk to people, that's like the best thing to do-

>>Janet Weber: I always tell my students of ADHD, it's like if you get through school and then when you're out of school, you can get a job that matches all of that energy. And those are positive traits as well.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: Immensely. I do have a different outlook on ADHD too, as far as I've had this since 4th grade. I've had a different outlook as an adult with it, but I just remember it being a big part of my life, was working in retail, because I was able to take my ADHD and apply it to there. I think that my goal was only to work for three months and go back. I ended up working, I think for eight months total and then going back to school. And I remember a big part of the reason, as I said, my whole goal was always to go back, I just needed a break.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: When I got to see my new best

friend of 10 years now, graduate Foothill in June of 2018, and I just remember sitting there bawling my eyes out, because I was just so proud of her, because she was one of the girls that was in high school that, at least for in our group, that I felt struggled with school. And she had some troubles, and it was always like, "Is she going to make it to college? Is she going to not?" It was sort of in the air, and to see that, my other friend and I, who we were really in a different head space in high school, constantly pushing ourselves, to see the role flip, where she's the one graduating and here I am with another friend, is not on that page, it made me realize, if she can do it, then why can't I?

>> Margarita Ibraheem: And so seeing her was what got me to go back, seeing her success, and going to San Jose State, her getting a degree there, that was what I needed. To see that, to push me, so I do owe a lot of where I am now to my friend. When I came back though, I had to jump through a few hoops. I had to appeal to the academic council, which is where when I came back, I immediately found you. And I think I caught you up on everything. And I think I met with just a general counselor, I think, who she helped me write up everything. And then once I think I got back in, I think is when I came to you.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: I had to appeal to them. I wrote a letter, and they asked me, "What are you going to do differently? How do you plan on doing all these things? What did you do when you were away? Why should we bring you back?" I told them what happened, what I learned, the experiences I learned, and the way that I could apply what I've learned to coming back. And I would only take one to two classes. And I was scared. The way I thought about whether I was going to get back in or

not, I think that was the first time I really prayed to God too, I remember, because I was just like, if they say no to me, I'm going to take this as, okay God's telling me that it's not time. It's not time.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: Maybe I need a little bit more time to brush up on motivating myself and finding things, before I can come back. But if God let's it and they say yes, then I am prepared, then I'm ready, and I'm not going to let them or myself down. And I got in. I got to come back, and it was the best day.

>>Janet Weber: And I like how you said that you got to the point where you don't want to let yourself down. And it wasn't your friend, or even your grandpa, it was you.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: Yeah, the second I stopped going to school, I knew, okay, I'm doing this because of me, because I always had-

>>Janet Weber: Yes, I think that's what the break did for you, is that you figured out that you really wanted it.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: And if you think about it, many students, many people from high school go into college, because their parents are telling them to. There's pressure. "College gets you money" all these - you're not necessarily doing it for yourself. And so when I saw how either, at that point I knew was at my breaking point, it wasn't healthy, I was like, okay, I need to stop. I was in a very different mental state at that time too. So that could happen to myself, especially when I'm not telling anybody. I didn't tell my parents, "Hey, I'm not doing good." They're going to most likely get mad or tell me I have to do it more, so I had to do

it for me.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: And I had to take the risk of what others were going to say about it. I had to think about my boyfriend's parents. All these relationships I had built, and the way people saw me could change, because I decided - so, I was fine with it. And to come back, it was for me. And since then it has been for me.

>>Janet Weber: So then during the pandemic, you decided to go back and just do it this time, get through it.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: Yeah, because I think it was 2018 when my first quarter back was. And then, I only took one class which was Ethics. The best class I ever took, I got an A in it. It was the best way to introduce myself back into it.

>>Janet Weber: Oh great.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: I - if I can get an A, then I can do it. And it was an A coming right back-

>>Janet Weber: See, I like that strategy too, of coming back and doing one class at a time.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: Which I recommend to anybody, is to take it small first, and then you can add on from there. As long as you have a solid start with A's and B, or A, and the first class was great. Second quarter, I think I got an A. I think I got either two A's, or one A and a B+. And then from there, I haven't had any C's coming back. I think maybe I've only had one C, and that was in Statistics. But that was two quarters ago. But, other than that, I've had all A's and ranged-

>>Janet Weber: Really?

>> Margarita Ibraheem: Yeah.

>>Janet Weber: That's so great.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: And being on probation though, you're starting wherever you came in from, you're back at. So if I was at like 0.03 or something, I had to start from there and build it up first. So I did that, and the process is long because once you reach that GPA, you also have to reach the amount of classes points. There's a certain point number.

>>Janet Weber: You have to get to a 2.0 GPA.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: 2.0 GPA, but you also have to have a certain number of units.

>>Janet Weber: Yeah.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: I didn't know that. I just thought it was GPA.

>>Janet Weber: Yes, that's called progress probation.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: Yeah, I was really bummed out. When I reached the GPA, I was like, "Yes, 2.0! I made it 2.02." But then it was, "Oh, but hey, you don't get to go off probation until you-"

>>Janet Weber: Yeah, oh no.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: And just knowing that, I think ... I don't remember, I think I did email you about that.

>>Janet Weber: I do remember getting that email.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: And then, so I knew that the journey wasn't over until I reached that point. And then luckily, I think, then you went off onto sabbatical. And then I think that July of 2020, was when I got off probation.

>>Janet Weber: And I remember that email too.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: Yeah, because I got you up to date on everything-

>>Janet Weber: Yes, I love that. "I'm off probation."

>> Margarita Ibraheem: It was an amazing feeling to feel like, oh my God, I did it. And I could relax that summer and just be like, oh my God, I'm not there, but-

>>Janet Weber: That's when I transferred to De Anza, and then that's when the pandemic happened. And then that's when you decided, okay, I'm going to leave the retail world for right now, go back to school full-time.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: It was interesting when we got a break, I did start focusing on school, and I was doing well. And so when I had to come back to retail, I had to now balance both again, it wouldn't have made sense for me at the time. And I - had that prioritized. And I had saved up money. I also used a lot of unemployment at the time, was still going, so I could focus on both of them. If it had gone differently, I don't know. But the pandemic pushed me a lot. I took all the time to focus on school, and so November of 2021 was time to start transfer applications and stuff to pick out your colleges that you want to transfer to if that was the route. I ended up applying to a few Sonoma, San Jose,



East Bay, San Francisco.

>>Janet Weber: And then where did you get in?

>> Margarita Ibraheem: I got into all of them, except for Sacramento.

>>Janet Weber: Isn't that amazing? Can we just stop there for a minute? You got into almost all of the colleges you applied to.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: Yeah, I think I applied to five total. I think that's five, and I didn't get into one of them.

>>Janet Weber: How did you feel when you got that first acceptance?

>> Margarita Ibraheem: Oh gosh, I'm always delayed when it comes to how I feel about things. But I just remember being like, wow. It was exciting as a whole. But I was like, wow, I'm at this point. I did it, I'm getting closer to graduating.

>>Janet Weber: Yes, and then when you started hearing back from the other colleges, were you getting more and more excited?

>> Margarita Ibraheem: Yeah, because I had already crossed off Sonoma as a no. Because at first, I was only going to apply to San Jose State, because that was my original goal. I think my grandfather was telling me, "Don't put all your eggs in one basket. What happens if you don't?" Because it should be noted though, that if you're transferring from a two year college, you're automatically geared into a four year if you're a transfer student. It may not be your first

choice one, but State school has to accept you. One of them does. In a way, that's a good motivator to push too, is that's a good thing.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: I was like, "You know what? What if San Jose isn't the one? What if they actually do say no? I don't have anything else." So I ended up applying to all the others, just as safety nets mostly. When I picked San Jose, it wasn't because I wanted ... Not because I wanted. It wasn't like, oh this is my dream school. My dream school is Davis to be honest. That was always my dream, but because of - a lot of stuff, it just made more a realistic dream was San Jose.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: And I like San Jose, I just wasn't 100% sold on it, just because also I don't really ... I'm not a city person. But San Jose was always the goal. So Sonoma was fine until I nixed it, but then I think I was now geared towards Sacramento, because the environment, the school trees, just the environmental whole seemed nice. And so I was really sold on that. But then it was very far, and I was thinking commuting. And that's I'd have to move for it.

>>Janet Weber: So how did you feel when you did hear from San Jose State?

>> Margarita Ibraheem: Wow, I was really excited, because I definitely was scared that I wasn't going to get into San Jose. Then after a while, I realized that's why I had applied to all those other schools, was because I was scared I wasn't going to get in. Especially because of their acceptance rate. It's an impacted school, like out of the CSU system.

>>Janet Weber: Yes, it's hard to get in.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: I'm surprised that I even got in. I was just like, wow. I really had thought I wasn't going to, but-

>>Janet Weber: In Communications?

>> Margarita Ibraheem: Yeah, in Communications. And I was just really happy and I'm still celebrating it to this day.

>>Janet Weber: And Communications is hard to get into in San Jose State.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: It's one of the top, I think, three-

>>Janet Weber: And your grandpa is proud?

>> Margarita Ibraheem: Yeah, because he kept wanting me to go to San Jose State. He told me, "I'll cover it if you go there. But if you chose to go anywhere else, I'm not going to cover it." And really, that wasn't what was the big reason of why I was going to go, but it was just sort of fun to make him happy, because he taught at San Jose State at one time. And so I know how much he likes that campus. And it was fun, it was a great moment. And I recently went on a tour, I took him with me. They're having this embedded tour thing, and-

>>Janet Weber: Oh, that must've been nice.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: ... I thought it would be fun for him to go through this with me, because I'm like - you know, in the aspect?

>>Janet Weber: Yeah.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: He already has three grown children, but I'm the granddaughter/daughter so he got to go through it again. Maybe it's a different perspective or something.

>>Janet Weber: Yes, I bet.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: He was having fun on the tour. Our tour guide was great. But my grandfather whispered to me, "Oh this is where this is." Or he'd explain something - so, it was really fun. And I don't know, it was just a fun experience to be able to experience this with-

>>Janet Weber: I love that.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: I went to another admitted day with my boyfriend, because I wanted him to-

>>Janet Weber: Yeah, so you're repeating the-

>> Margarita Ibraheem: Oh yeah, yes I am coming back.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: So I was saying, I thought it would be great. And it's been fun. I still think I'm still adjusting to the fact that it's real.

>>Janet Weber: And this summer you're going to Egypt with your grandpa.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: My grandfather and were taking one of my cousins with me.

>>Janet Weber: Oh fun. And then you'll come back and start at San Jose State.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: Yeah, I told grandpa, "I need

two weeks, or three weeks, before school starts, so I can prepare." That was my one demand, was, "Okay, it has to be end of July."

>>Janet Weber: To do your preps.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: Yeah, and then I think I have orientation in June.

>>Janet Weber: Congratulations Margarita, I'm so happy you made it there. Now I want you to tell the listeners about what was helpful for you in getting over the barriers that you had in accomplishing your goal of transferring.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: Well one, realizing that I need to do this for myself. There was a lot of pressure, like with cousins. I'm one of the middle cousins, and in a way we're very close. To me, they're like siblings, so the pressure when they get to go directly into college and do all stuff, even my younger cousins, they're done with college, so I'm the only one. And so there's pressure, a lot of pressure.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: And to be that, and I also had to push out the stuff, that stuff like, "Oh God, I'm the last one." I'm older, but then it also doesn't matter what age you are anymore. But a big thing that was helpful was constantly thinking about me, and what I want to do. I started to want the degree for me. That's how-

>>Janet Weber: Yes, in our field we call it intrinsic motivation. Motivation from inside rather than external.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: And it's hard, because the

pressure can be really hard. And it can really affect me, but to actually feel like I could do it-

>>Janet Weber: But it doesn't really work when it's coming from the outside, right?

>> Margarita Ibraheem: You definitely, when you want it for you, it feels a lot different. And it makes everything more exciting. And so that was big, and another thing with ADHD I know will never go away, so I just had to find things that were going to be helpful for me to work with my ADHD, and apply. And just like, that's the one thing, I have to put school around my ADHD. I realized my ADHD in a weird way, comes first. It is first, I feel like-

>>Janet Weber: That's interesting, you have to address the ADHD before anything else.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: It's a part of who I am. And it took me a long time to have an understanding of my ADHD, and be comfortable, like it's okay. "I may not be great at this, but I'm really good at this. My ADHD prevents me from doing this." Because in a weird way, it does feel like I have another version of me that I'm fighting with half the time, because it's like I have to accommodate certain things.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: But I would say that once I had an understanding my ADHD, and I learned to work around, like work with it, and apply it to things, it definitely helped me. Also, I think what was helpful, was finding a good counselor, like when I had you. That helped in a big way, especially - specified for the DRC or the Disability Resource Center. Finding someone like that really helped, versus other counselors.

>>Janet Weber: Yes, because it's hard to navigate a whole college system, right?

>> Margarita Ibraheem: It is. It's not designed for us. That's the thing. It isn't even designed for people with learning disabilities. And ADHD, I think, is very, very common.

>>Janet Weber: It is so common.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: So it's like-

>>Janet Weber: And it's not ... I don't even know if it's designed for anyone.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: The pressure is up there, like the bar is set very high for everybody. But I just know that having it though, I feel very accomplished. The fact that I am a student with ADHD, and I was able to make it this far, well, I think that's in a weird way, it's like I'm breaking the stigmas or something. And I have actually helped a few students at Foothill. In one of my Communication classes, I-

>>Janet Weber: Oh really?

>> Margarita Ibraheem: The topic was ... I forgot what it was, but I was talking about my ADHD and my journey. And two students I had met responded to it saying that one girl says she actually now will go to the DRC, because she-

>>Janet Weber: Really?

>> Margarita Ibraheem: And then another student said-

>>Janet Weber: That's so great.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: Another student said, now she can go talk to her parents. She had never-

>>Janet Weber: Ooh, I love hearing that.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: ... ignore her and tell her stuff, and now she feels like she can go tell them confidently.

>>Janet Weber: I bet that made you feel really good?

>> Margarita Ibraheem: That made me feel like, okay, I guess people feel comfort from that or something.

>>Janet Weber: Yes, and that's why I'm interviewing you today. So along that note, the last question I wanted to ask you, which I know has some overlap from the last question. But what advice would you give other students that are feeling a little bit lost in this whole educational system?

>> Margarita Ibraheem: In a weird way it is, do what you think is best for you. I know, I feel like that's a common thing that people say. But I think especially if you feel like your mental health is suffering, or you really feel like you're in this place where, "This isn't working for me" you can take a break. I think that's what I would say is, "You can take a break." Even if there are people pressuring you not to, you've got to do it if you know that you're in a place that, like what's best for you.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: And I think that over time, people would understand. It's just, you need to focus on you, especially since this journey, this college journey is supposed to be for you. Because I know our



parents want us to do so well, and want to see us succeed, and be all these different things. But the thing that was like, well what, is that like, do you want to see yourself succeed? Is this what you want? And so I think a big part is that -

>> Margarita Ibraheem: And then also if you do take a break, make sure you find something to do. I think the idea of being a dropout comes in, is because you don't have anything already lined up. If you do want to take that break, make sure you have something lined up beforehand, or a plan, so that you can make sure that when you do tell whoever, your parents, you're like, "Okay, but I already am doing this" or, "This is what I'm going to do with my time." And I guess that's it. And then also I guess-

>>Janet Weber: Find a good counselor.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: Find a good counselor, yes. Also, anyone else who has ADHD and is in college, I think a big one would be getting the help.

>>Janet Weber: Anyone who has ADHD, meds or getting to know your mind-

>> Margarita Ibraheem: Oh yeah, and then for any other students who have ADHD, I would suggest either doing your research. Learn about you, learn about-

>>Janet Weber: Yes, learn about how your mind works.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: Yeah, because this is going to be with you forever. But things do get easier as you get older. You'll start to like - I would suggest definitely learn about who you are, and the things you struggle with, because then maybe there are things that

you're really good at. For me, it is hyper-fixating on certain things, because I can really get something done if I -. Then three hours later, maybe I don't want to do it. Then I'm done at the end of my day.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: But finding what's best for you, and also talking to a counselor that specifies with the Disability Resource Centers, or in any, you know, that thing, they're usually really helpful for that kind of stuff.

>>Janet Weber: There's so many helpful people on college campuses.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: Yeah, and it's just trying to-

>>Janet Weber: You just have to find them.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: Yeah, so I guess-

>>Janet Weber: I love that advice. Do you have a website?

>> Margarita Ibraheem: I'm blogging, it's called ADHD and Disorganized. It's not-

>>Janet Weber: Really? I didn't know that.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: But I did it for a class, and I think it was Interpersonal Communication. And I had to design something, and so I designed an ADHD website. It's still in the works.

>>Janet Weber: Oh nice.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: I bought the domain, it should be up soon hopefully --

>>Janet Weber: Oh nice. ADHD and Disorganized.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: I'm organized on the outside, but it's all disorganized on the inside.

>>Janet Weber: Margarita, thank you so much for talking to me today. It's been such a pleasure to be along for the ride, and to watch you grow. All of the stages you talk about, I remember all of them. I remember you struggling in school, and I remember you in retail, and you were just blossoming and growing as a person. And then coming back and wanting to finally do this, and you did it. And I loved getting your emails, "Guess what? I got into all these colleges and universities." And now you're going to one of your dream colleges in a major that you're really excited about.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: And I think a big thing is, I want to try to get it done in two years, but knowing based off of what I've done in the past, I think for me is safe. So I've also learned that I, based off of how to-

>>Janet Weber: Not to push yourself too much.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: I've also paid attention when I'm starting to notice that I'm either slipping into a direction of what I used to be like, sort of pulling myself from that.

>>Janet Weber: Maybe your last piece of advice was, know yourself?

>> Margarita Ibraheem: Yes, that's the perfect way of saying it actually.

>>Janet Weber: Yes, I like that. I think that's a good note to end on, know yourself. And know how your mind works, know how you work, how your motivation works, and work with yourself rather than against yourself.

>> Margarita Ibraheem: Exactly.

>>Janet Weber: Yeah, all right, thank you Margarita.