

1

00:00:00,100 --> 00:00:01,100

Hello, hi and welcome to

2

00:00:01,100 --> 00:00:01,134

Skipping the Small

talk with Empower Autism, a podcast

3

00:00:01,134 --> 00:00:01,167

where we discuss everyday experiences,

Autism-affirming advice and more.

4

00:00:01,167 --> 00:00:01,267

My name is Riley and today I'm joined

by very special guest Michael Coles.

5

00:00:01,267 --> 00:00:01,300

Michael knows what it's

like to live for decades

6

00:00:01,300 --> 00:00:01,367

in a world that wasn't designed
for the way his mind works.

7

00:00:01,367 --> 00:00:01,434

He was diagnosed with Autism at age
three, Asperger's Syndrome at 35,

8

00:00:01,434 --> 00:00:04,403

and then again with Autism spectrum
disorder in

9

00:00:25,551 --> 00:00:27,019

2017.

10

00:00:27,019 --> 00:00:28,820

His journey to understanding himself

11

00:00:28,820 --> 00:00:31,856

and being understood
by others has been anything but linear.

12

00:00:31,889 --> 00:00:34,424

It's this journey

that makes his experience

13

00:00:34,424 --> 00:00:39,128

such a compelling one in the conversations

around neurodiversity, inclusion

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00:00:39,128 --> 00:00:42,663

and the gap between awareness

and understanding.

15

00:00:46,500 --> 00:00:49,168

Welcome, Michael,

and thank you for joining us.

16

00:00:49,168 --> 00:00:51,070

Thank you Riley. Thank you so much

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00:00:52,337 --> 00:00:53,171

for having me here.

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00:00:53,171 --> 00:00:54,672

It's been a long time coming in.

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00:00:54,672 --> 00:00:57,741

I've been really excited by the Skipping
and the Small Talk podcast

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00:00:58,508 --> 00:01:01,077

at the moment,
and I think it's been going really well.

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00:01:01,077 --> 00:01:01,610

So yeah.

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00:01:01,610 --> 00:01:02,278

So it's good.

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00:01:02,278 --> 00:01:06,747

It's it's a good mix of,
you know, the staff here and also sort of

24

00:01:06,814 --> 00:01:09,216

I think the last one, a recent episode

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00:01:09,216 --> 00:01:13,019

you talk about intersectionality,
which is fantastic.

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00:01:13,052 --> 00:01:16,188

I think it's sort of so great to hear
you've got sort

27

00:01:16,188 --> 00:01:19,690

of different perspectives
and stuff like that with Autistic people.

28

00:01:19,690 --> 00:01:21,425

So I think that's fantastic. Thank you.

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00:01:21,425 --> 00:01:25,461

You've been a bit of
a very big supporter of us from the start.

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00:01:25,461 --> 00:01:26,929

I really appreciate that.

31

00:01:26,929 --> 00:01:29,430

You've been very enthusiastic,
and we've been very enthusiastic

32

00:01:29,430 --> 00:01:31,065

about going to get you in here. Yeah.

33

00:01:31,065 --> 00:01:33,700

Because you've got a lot of stories
to tell yourself.

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00:01:33,700 --> 00:01:37,136

Yes, I'm 51 now and I've obviously

35

00:01:37,136 --> 00:01:40,705

been or technical Autistic

since I was three.

36

00:01:40,705 --> 00:01:45,742

I was actually diagnosed

with Pervasive Developmental Disorder

37

00:01:45,775 --> 00:01:49,778

not otherwise specified,

which explains the Expressive Language

38

00:01:49,778 --> 00:01:52,847

and Receptive Language disorders

I've got now at the moment,

39

00:01:52,847 --> 00:01:55,849

which I got diagnosed back in 2024.

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00:01:56,183 --> 00:01:59,118

So I was diagnosed

41

00:01:59,118 --> 00:02:05,490

that at three I go rediagnosed
with Asperger's Syndrome back in 2010,

42

00:02:05,490 --> 00:02:11,294

basically after like a I basically
a separation and all that type of thing.

43

00:02:11,327 --> 00:02:11,861

Yeah.

44

00:02:11,861 --> 00:02:16,531

Because obviously sort of like, you know,
there was a relationship breakdown.

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00:02:16,898 --> 00:02:21,568

And what actually happened
then is I got rediagnosed

46

00:02:21,568 --> 00:02:26,171

with Autism Spectrum Disorder

level one back in 2017.

47

00:02:26,371 --> 00:02:29,607

After a manager basically

48

00:02:30,007 --> 00:02:34,511

stated that basically I couldn't

like "concentrate" because obviously

49

00:02:34,511 --> 00:02:38,013

I sort of approach work just differently

and all that type of thing.

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00:02:38,013 --> 00:02:41,849

So I used to like to sort of like,

you know, was working in different

51

00:02:41,916 --> 00:02:45,919

administration jobs over the years
and all that type of thing and trying to

52

00:02:45,952 --> 00:02:47,220

sort of like, you know, I

53

00:02:49,555 --> 00:02:51,556

usually listen
to music and all that type of thing.

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00:02:51,556 --> 00:02:54,191

And I like to sort of listen to music
while I do my work

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00:02:54,191 --> 00:02:58,628

and all that type of thing, and trying to,
trying to have sort of like,

56

00:02:58,661 --> 00:03:03,131

you know, some stimulation

throughout the day to try and do things

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00:03:03,265 --> 00:03:07,901

then obviously

I had an Autistic burnout episode.

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00:03:07,901 --> 00:03:12,838

I, I didn't realise this until like 2016,

it was Autistic burnout.

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00:03:12,871 --> 00:03:14,606

But because it was

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00:03:14,606 --> 00:03:18,175

actually there was a lot of changes

in the workplace at that particular stage.

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00:03:18,175 --> 00:03:22,645

I actually sort of like, you know,

I got hospitalised for the day.

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00:03:22,879 --> 00:03:28,416

I connected with a disability services
provider and then they got me a job in

63

00:03:28,449 --> 00:03:31,985

sort of like an administration

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00:03:31,985 --> 00:03:34,954

officer
for a self-managed super annuation firm.

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00:03:35,288 --> 00:03:38,823

So that worked really well
for like three years.

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00:03:39,090 --> 00:03:42,826

And then the problem was that basically

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00:03:43,393 --> 00:03:47,096

there was a new manager

and she approached the work differently.

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00:03:47,096 --> 00:03:49,865

So that was also half the problem
with that.

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00:03:49,865 --> 00:03:50,232

Yeah.

70

00:03:50,232 --> 00:03:52,633

Because I was trying
to sort of communicate

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00:03:52,633 --> 00:03:55,269

the fact that “this is the way I work”
and all that type of thing.

72

00:03:55,269 --> 00:03:59,305

I ask a lot of questions
because I want to make sure,

73

00:03:59,371 --> 00:04:03,341

with different clients want to make sure
sort of like things are right and,

74

00:04:03,341 --> 00:04:06,377

and things are done in the correct way
and all the type of thing.

75

00:04:06,810 --> 00:04:11,313

But the problem is also,
I think I masked too much.

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00:04:11,347 --> 00:04:15,483

And I think there was
I think the biggest problem,

77

00:04:15,616 --> 00:04:19,653

because I tried to communicate
and all that type of thing, and I couldn't

78

00:04:19,686 --> 00:04:22,755

sort of like couldn't get through.

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00:04:22,755 --> 00:04:24,890

But I was subjected to

80

00:04:25,957 --> 00:04:28,526

a lot of like, you know,

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00:04:28,526 --> 00:04:31,695

I did things wrong, "you're terrible"
and all that type of thing.

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00:04:31,695 --> 00:04:35,764

And that sort of really hit my confidence
at that particular time.

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00:04:35,764 --> 00:04:39,867

And that also that basically led
to an Autistic burnout

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00:04:39,934 --> 00:04:43,770

back in November 2023,
which basically what actually happened

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00:04:43,770 --> 00:04:48,574

was I basically sort of
I had to go to the hospital.

86

00:04:48,574 --> 00:04:50,909

I basically

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00:04:50,909 --> 00:04:54,378

told my wife at the particular time,
this is back on the second of November

88

00:04:54,378 --> 00:05:00,215

2023, that I told my wife that I couldn't
do the job anymore and stuff like that,

89

00:05:00,249 --> 00:05:04,352

because I was feeling
like I wasn't being listened to.

90

00:05:04,385 --> 00:05:08,088

I wasn't feeling like I was being payed
attention to,

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00:05:08,288 --> 00:05:11,557

you know, how I work
and all that type of thing.

92

00:05:11,557 --> 00:05:14,559

And I tried to present
that to all that type of thing.

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00:05:14,626 --> 00:05:19,095

I think one of the volunteers from Empower
Autism at the time, actually

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00:05:19,129 --> 00:05:20,730

sort of put together

95

00:05:20,730 --> 00:05:24,766

a checklist and stuff like that
to present to my employer at the time.

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00:05:25,233 --> 00:05:28,569

And what they did was
they didn't even pay attention to them.

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00:05:28,602 --> 00:05:31,538

Yeah. They basically just didn't
listen to me at all.

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00:05:31,538 --> 00:05:36,475

So that I think that was half,
but also half the problem was I

99

00:05:37,842 --> 00:05:38,209

basically

100

00:05:38,209 --> 00:05:41,211

said, "this is the way I work,
this is the way I like to work

101

00:05:41,211 --> 00:05:43,713

and this is why I ask a lot questions"

102

00:05:43,713 --> 00:05:47,082

and all that type of thing,
try and sort of be like,

103

00:05:47,516 --> 00:05:50,885

I want to be authentic with who I am
and all that type of thing.

104

00:05:51,085 --> 00:05:57,123

And I needed to disclose
because of obviously all these conditions

105

00:05:57,156 --> 00:06:01,493

I've experienced in my 51 years

of being alive.

106

00:06:01,759 --> 00:06:06,530

It's really important to me
that I can work

107

00:06:07,097 --> 00:06:10,866

the way I need to do and basically sort of

108

00:06:10,933 --> 00:06:14,002

like I needed to sort of like,
you know, communicate the way.

109

00:06:14,035 --> 00:06:18,571

So I'd sort of know how others
sort of perceive.

110

00:06:18,638 --> 00:06:21,907

I think the perception, I think
is the biggest problem in the workplace,

111

00:06:21,907 --> 00:06:23,975

especially with Autistic people.

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00:06:23,975 --> 00:06:27,044

And I think it's also

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00:06:27,411 --> 00:06:32,648

the way that I spoke is just the patterns,
just a little bit different.

114

00:06:32,648 --> 00:06:34,350

It's not necessarily wrong.

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00:06:34,350 --> 00:06:36,451

It's just basically just different.

116

00:06:36,451 --> 00:06:36,785

Yeah.

117

00:06:36,785 --> 00:06:40,254

So I think that's

I think that's half the problem with that.

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00:06:40,254 --> 00:06:44,724

I think sort of like,

you know, non-Autistic people,

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00:06:44,724 --> 00:06:48,026

just either you get it or you don't,

if that makes sense.

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00:06:48,026 --> 00:06:50,895

So I'm trying to sort of like communicate

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00:06:50,895 --> 00:06:55,732

with - basically other people

and all that type of thing

122

00:06:55,765 --> 00:06:59,734

about how I communicate

and how I work and all that type of thing.

123

00:06:59,734 --> 00:07:02,636

And that's why I do the advocacy I do now.

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00:07:02,636 --> 00:07:06,573

And that's also why I do the podcast,
because I can see, like,

125

00:07:06,606 --> 00:07:09,508

I know I'm jumping around a little
and I do apologise for that.

126

00:07:09,508 --> 00:07:10,075

No that's ok.

127

00:07:10,075 --> 00:07:13,177

That's my Expressive
and Receptive Language disorders at play.

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00:07:14,478 --> 00:07:16,513

I think it's because,

129

00:07:16,513 --> 00:07:20,216

like, I

saw people like going back to the podcast,

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00:07:20,216 --> 00:07:25,853

I saw people succeeding,

even though they're Autistic.

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00:07:25,853 --> 00:07:29,956

So I think was a good opportunity

to connect with those people

132

00:07:30,056 --> 00:07:32,091

and really sort of tell their story,

133

00:07:32,091 --> 00:07:35,560

because I think it's so important

to actually tell their stories,

134

00:07:35,927 --> 00:07:39,797

you know, what drives their passion
and what drives their sort of like,

135

00:07:39,830 --> 00:07:41,865

you know, what they do
and all that type of thing.

136

00:07:41,865 --> 00:07:45,634

Well, yeah, I mean, there's
all this work that you can do

137

00:07:45,667 --> 00:07:48,870

when you're in the workplace
to, you know, advocate for your own needs

138

00:07:48,870 --> 00:07:51,372

and try communicating
and get on the same levels of people.

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00:07:51,372 --> 00:07:55,508

But if they're not meeting you
at your level, it's kind of a lot of work

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00:07:55,508 --> 00:07:57,943

for you to put it in. I can see why
that would lead to burn out.

141

00:07:57,943 --> 00:08:02,546

Yeah, especially with burnout,
because I think sort of you try

142

00:08:02,546 --> 00:08:08,017

and try and try and try to basically
sort of like, "you're just

143

00:08:10,419 --> 00:08:12,754

missing
the point." "You just don't get it."

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00:08:12,754 --> 00:08:19,292

I think that's half the problem
with trying to advocate for us

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00:08:19,292 --> 00:08:22,794

because we need more Autistic leadership
in the workplace.

146

00:08:22,794 --> 00:08:26,430

So trying to sort of like, you know,
get the get that to the workplaces.

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00:08:26,430 --> 00:08:29,432

And we need to sort of like, you know,
I want to try and sort of

148

00:08:29,432 --> 00:08:33,502

go into those workplaces
and just see what's actually occurring

149

00:08:33,502 --> 00:08:37,071

and why Autistic people being marginalised
and all that type of thing.

150

00:08:37,204 --> 00:08:38,239

I'll just go back.

151

00:08:38,239 --> 00:08:40,940

I know I'm jumping around a little bit
and I'm rambling.

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00:08:40,940 --> 00:08:41,674

It's all good.

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00:08:41,674 --> 00:08:47,278

But obviously I got diagnosed
with Autism back in 2017, and then sort of

154

00:08:47,345 --> 00:08:51,515

like after the burnout episode
in November 2023,

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00:08:52,015 --> 00:08:55,217

I got a functional capacity assessment
done by my OT.

156

00:08:55,217 --> 00:09:01,222

And basically she said that
I can only do one thing at a time.

157

00:09:01,288 --> 00:09:01,922

And I think

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00:09:03,123 --> 00:09:08,260

doing one thing at a time
and stuff like that is really sort of open

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00:09:08,260 --> 00:09:12,797

my eyes to the way that I work
and why I operate the way I do.

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00:09:12,797 --> 00:09:16,333

Yeah. It's not wrong, it's just different.

161

00:09:16,333 --> 00:09:21,903

So and obviously I've got sort of like,
the Receptive and Expressive

162

00:09:21,903 --> 00:09:27,874

Language disorders and obviously
I understand things differently.

163

00:09:27,941 --> 00:09:30,209

And also I communicate things differently.

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00:09:30,209 --> 00:09:33,812

So that's why I sort of like I ramble
and all that type of thing.

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00:09:33,812 --> 00:09:37,314

And I finally got my ADHD diagnosis
last year.

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00:09:37,715 --> 00:09:40,517

Main reason I got that

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00:09:40,517 --> 00:09:44,553

because at the weekend,

I was like after a full day,

168

00:09:44,920 --> 00:09:48,322

after a week at work,

I could not function.

169

00:09:48,322 --> 00:09:52,092

And I think sort of like

I was obviously trying to sort of like,

170

00:09:52,125 --> 00:09:56,528

you know, I had two

children, one's 8 and one's

171

00:09:56,528 --> 00:10:00,398

3, which we talk about in another episode.

172

00:10:00,398 --> 00:10:01,665

But, you know,

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00:10:01,665 --> 00:10:06,535

I could not function the end of the day
because I was at 3:00, I was just tired.

174

00:10:06,535 --> 00:10:08,737

Yeah. And I had to sleep.

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00:10:08,737 --> 00:10:11,606

And all that time,

I think ever since I got

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00:10:11,606 --> 00:10:15,475

the ADHD medication,

I haven't not been feeling as tired.

177

00:10:15,475 --> 00:10:16,209

I've been feeling

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00:10:17,476 --> 00:10:20,545

more alert

and active and all that type of thing.

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00:10:20,579 --> 00:10:22,113

I still have.

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00:10:22,113 --> 00:10:25,315

I still have the shutdowns

and the meltdowns

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00:10:25,315 --> 00:10:29,118

if I'm in an environment

that basically overwhelms me.

182

00:10:29,185 --> 00:10:29,585

Yeah.

183

00:10:29,585 --> 00:10:33,555

The problem is basically sort of like
office plain environments are a killer

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00:10:33,555 --> 00:10:37,691

to an Autistic person, and I think
that's also half the problem as well,

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00:10:37,724 --> 00:10:40,360

because I work comfortably at home
and all that type of thing.

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00:10:40,360 --> 00:10:43,996

I sort of like, do little bits
and pieces of self-employment.

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00:10:43,996 --> 00:10:46,764

I do the podcasts
and all that type of thing

188

00:10:46,764 --> 00:10:48,999

and, and just do little bits and pieces.

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00:10:48,999 --> 00:10:53,536

But as a result,

I had to resign from full time work

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00:10:53,569 --> 00:10:56,571

and then sort of like, you know, I work

191

00:10:58,039 --> 00:10:59,273

in a different way.

192

00:10:59,273 --> 00:11:02,442

So I just do little bits and pieces here

and there.

193

00:11:02,709 --> 00:11:05,945

Obviously I am proud to be autistic.

194

00:11:05,945 --> 00:11:06,345

And I

195

00:11:07,579 --> 00:11:11,615

need to make sure that people

196

00:11:11,916 --> 00:11:17,319

are proud to be truly inclusive

and representative of who they are

197

00:11:17,353 --> 00:11:22,356

as an identity, because there's nothing
wrong with being Autistic.

198

00:11:22,390 --> 00:11:26,159

It's just your brain's way of working.

199

00:11:26,193 --> 00:11:28,027

And I think

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00:11:28,027 --> 00:11:32,264

a lot of employees,
are starting to do that.

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00:11:32,264 --> 00:11:34,699

But we've still got a long way to go.
Yeah, yeah.

202

00:11:34,699 --> 00:11:36,733

You shouldn't
have to compromise your identity

203

00:11:36,733 --> 00:11:40,836

or mask your identity
to fit into a workplace.

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00:11:40,870 --> 00:11:44,105

And masking is so damaging is sort of like

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00:11:44,306 --> 00:11:49,843

people have no idea of how masking

sort of affects your executive function.

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00:11:49,843 --> 00:11:55,147

It leads to meltdowns,
it leads to shutdowns.

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00:11:55,213 --> 00:11:56,815

If there's too many things going on

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00:11:56,815 --> 00:11:59,817

at the same time
and all that type of thing, and

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00:12:00,784 --> 00:12:03,786

if there's certain sort of changes
or that type of thing,

210

00:12:03,786 --> 00:12:07,656

and then sort of like,
you get called into meetings or basically

211

00:12:08,623 --> 00:12:12,025

if there's no context, like in an email

basically

212

00:12:12,059 --> 00:12:14,360

saying like “oh

can I have a chat to you?”

213

00:12:14,360 --> 00:12:17,162

And I basically am like,

I need to know what it's about.

214

00:12:17,162 --> 00:12:19,397

What is it about,

and all that type of thing.

215

00:12:19,397 --> 00:12:24,034

Because if I don't have contexts

of that thing and I'm not prepared for it,

216

00:12:24,101 --> 00:12:27,603

then you get in

and then you hit with accusations

217

00:12:28,337 --> 00:12:30,839

and that's also that'll

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00:12:30,839 --> 00:12:34,575

also lead to shutdowns and meltdowns

and distress and stuff like that

219

00:12:34,642 --> 00:12:39,012

with Autistic people,

because even though it's constructive

220

00:12:39,645 --> 00:12:43,581

or you sort of like, you know,

you need to be kind with these, sort of

221

00:12:43,615 --> 00:12:46,450

like the way that basically you presented

and all that type of thing,

222

00:12:46,450 --> 00:12:49,185

or you present in an email

in a factual way.

223

00:12:49,185 --> 00:12:51,654

Then you can sort of

like break down all the steps

224

00:12:51,654 --> 00:12:54,256

and then you can sort of like,

you know, answer all the questions

225

00:12:54,256 --> 00:12:56,557

and all that type of thing

rather than sort of

226

00:12:56,557 --> 00:12:59,493

then there's sort of like the anxiety

obviously comes the fact

227

00:12:59,493 --> 00:13:03,396

that sort of like, “am

I in trouble?” Or basically sort of like,

228

00:13:03,429 --> 00:13:07,599

you know, you're trying to express

who you are and all that type of thing

229

00:13:07,632 --> 00:13:11,635

and basically sort of like,

this is my Autism at play.

230

00:13:11,635 --> 00:13:15,371

And you just obviously it's

sort of like there's

231

00:13:15,371 --> 00:13:18,673

a lot of discrimination with people

with Autism and there still is.

232

00:13:18,707 --> 00:13:20,041

And that's half the problem.

233

00:13:20,041 --> 00:13:20,675

Yeah.

234

00:13:20,675 --> 00:13:24,878

Well, yeah, you came
sort of out the end of your burnout cycle

235

00:13:24,911 --> 00:13:28,147

a little while ago and you've changed
the way you've been working since then.

236

00:13:28,314 --> 00:13:29,114

Yeah. I've had to

237

00:13:30,082 --> 00:13:33,217

work from home
because I'm in a comfortable environment.

238

00:13:33,217 --> 00:13:35,619

I do some ad hoc work
with you guys as well.

239

00:13:35,619 --> 00:13:40,556

Which I've been really proud of, and Aida

240

00:13:40,556 --> 00:13:44,192

and Tamara have been really fantastic
with that work as well.

241

00:13:44,192 --> 00:13:48,328

And also Emma,
who was previously here as well.

242

00:13:48,395 --> 00:13:51,530

She was basically trying to sort of like,
you know, restart

243

00:13:51,530 --> 00:13:54,933

that sort of process off

and now we're at the final

244

00:13:55,967 --> 00:14:01,471

stages of getting this to workplaces

and all that type of thing.

245

00:14:01,471 --> 00:14:05,307

So I'm really passionate

about seeing this come to fruition

246

00:14:05,307 --> 00:14:08,309

and all that type of thing,

because I think, I think it's

247

00:14:08,509 --> 00:14:11,845

so important for workplaces

to actually sort of do this.

248

00:14:11,878 --> 00:14:14,547

And, you know,
basically sort of trying to make sure

249

00:14:15,514 --> 00:14:16,281

that, you know,

250

00:14:16,281 --> 00:14:19,284

people are respected
because I don't want to

251

00:14:19,650 --> 00:14:22,352

see people in the same position
that I am now.

252

00:14:22,352 --> 00:14:23,120

Yeah, yeah.

253

00:14:23,120 --> 00:14:26,656

You're working on your own podcast,
to sort of discuss

254

00:14:26,689 --> 00:14:30,191

these issues of workplace advocacy
and things like that.

255

00:14:30,191 --> 00:14:30,258

Yeah.

256

00:14:30,258 --> 00:14:33,594

And you're also working
on the Empowered Minds program.

257

00:14:33,627 --> 00:14:34,828

Yes. Yeah. That's correct.

258

00:14:34,828 --> 00:14:38,831

Yes. So yeah, we're in the final process
of doing a webinar and stuff like that

259

00:14:38,831 --> 00:14:43,201

for businesses, organisations

at the moment to try and sort of like

260

00:14:43,234 --> 00:14:46,803

break down the stigma of, you know, Autism
and all that type of thing,

261

00:14:46,803 --> 00:14:51,173

and trying to be sort of Autism-affirming
or neuroaffirming that sort of like

262

00:14:51,206 --> 00:14:52,941

both the same term.

263

00:14:52,941 --> 00:14:55,943

Whereas like, you know,
you want to have workplaces

264

00:14:57,211 --> 00:14:59,112

that Autistic people do enjoy.

265

00:14:59,112 --> 00:15:03,715

And I think that there's
some people who are doing it really well.

266

00:15:03,715 --> 00:15:06,684

I know my OT and stuff like that.

267

00:15:06,684 --> 00:15:12,188

She's built a business- and she's
been late identified as AuDHD herself-

268

00:15:12,288 --> 00:15:15,924

who's really built a place
basically with,

269

00:15:15,958 --> 00:15:19,327

neurodivergent people mind,

270

00:15:19,360 --> 00:15:24,897

which I think more workplaces
should be in that sort of space as well.

271

00:15:24,897 --> 00:15:31,402

So I think it's very important
to like, well, for me, I like to

272

00:15:33,270 --> 00:15:34,838

get to the crux

273

00:15:34,838 --> 00:15:37,840

of why we're being discriminated against.

274

00:15:37,840 --> 00:15:43,010

And I think it's sort of comes down
to, well, firstly, training for starters,

275

00:15:43,110 --> 00:15:46,613

there's not a lot of training
especially especially with GP's,

276

00:15:46,613 --> 00:15:49,615

doctors and

277

00:15:49,915 --> 00:15:53,751

people who are just not sort of like
trained in Autism

278

00:15:53,751 --> 00:15:55,119

and all that type of thing.

279

00:15:55,119 --> 00:15:58,388

And they don't get how Autistic
people work.

280

00:15:58,455 --> 00:15:59,189

Yeah.

281

00:15:59,189 --> 00:16:01,857

That's what we're trying
to break down the stigma against.

282

00:16:01,857 --> 00:16:05,126

So that's

it's a really big passion of mine.

283

00:16:05,126 --> 00:16:08,962

I know there's a lot of,

there's some Autistic people

284

00:16:08,962 --> 00:16:11,131

that are actually sort of

doing the same thing.

285

00:16:11,131 --> 00:16:14,600

For example,

Annie Crow with the NeuroAccess program,

286

00:16:15,767 --> 00:16:17,068

she's a human rights layer.

287

00:16:17,068 --> 00:16:19,370

She sort of tries to advocate for,

288

00:16:19,370 --> 00:16:23,473

you know, organisations

and stuff like that to actually sort of

289

00:16:23,539 --> 00:16:28,443

be [coughs] really neuroinclusive

and all that type of thing.

290

00:16:28,443 --> 00:16:31,545

I think we need more

neurodivergent leaders and stuff like that

291

00:16:31,545 --> 00:16:35,014

because, you know,

they can get who we are

292

00:16:35,014 --> 00:16:39,551

and we can sort of like accommodate

the environment to our working styles.

293

00:16:39,584 --> 00:16:40,318

Yeah. Yeah.

294

00:16:40,318 --> 00:16:44,388

There's so many people who've had similar experiences with burnout in workplaces.

295

00:16:45,255 --> 00:16:49,525

I think if we can change the systems or the leaders

296

00:16:49,558 --> 00:16:53,328

or the understanding that these organisations have,

297

00:16:53,361 --> 00:16:57,564

then we can benefit not just you as an individual Autistic person.

298

00:16:57,797 --> 00:16:58,598

Yeah.

But Autistic people as a whole. And as

299

00:16:59,766 --> 00:17:00,933

they say in the classics,

300

00:17:00,933 --> 00:17:03,969

I know Yellow Ladybugs have done this
and stuff like that.

301

00:17:03,969 --> 00:17:05,770

I know a few people have done this

302

00:17:05,770 --> 00:17:08,772

at their conferences,
they've been really sort of

303

00:17:10,240 --> 00:17:12,041

fierce in terms of their Autistic work.

304

00:17:12,041 --> 00:17:17,478

Change the system, not us.

305

00:17:17,512 --> 00:17:17,678

Yeah.

306

00:17:17,678 --> 00:17:22,482

And I think that's the biggest problem
that we've got in our organisations

307

00:17:23,182 --> 00:17:25,784

is that we're trying to change Autistic

308

00:17:25,784 --> 00:17:28,820

people to be,
you know, non-Autistic people.

309

00:17:28,853 --> 00:17:32,989

And that's that involves masking,
that involves sort of like, you know,

310

00:17:32,989 --> 00:17:37,693

just, just there's a lot of breakdowns
in communication,

311

00:17:37,759 --> 00:17:42,897

especially with my obviously sort of
like my communication styles.

312

00:17:43,063 --> 00:17:43,997

It's just different.

313

00:17:43,997 --> 00:17:45,899

It's just not necessarily wrong. Yeah.

314

00:17:45,899 --> 00:17:47,600

None of it's wrong. It's just different.

315

00:17:47,600 --> 00:17:47,933

Yeah.

316

00:17:47,933 --> 00:17:49,902

And once organisations can understand
that,

317

00:17:49,902 --> 00:17:50,135

you know,

318

00:17:50,135 --> 00:17:53,537

we can work together to find some sort
of middle ground that works for everyone.

319

00:17:53,738 --> 00:17:54,338

Yeah.

320

00:17:54,338 --> 00:17:57,440

And I think sort of like these stories
do need to be told.

321

00:17:57,507 --> 00:18:03,078

And I think it's so important because,

you know, Autistic people need to be.

322

00:18:04,245 --> 00:18:05,880

How do I describe it.

323

00:18:05,880 --> 00:18:08,782

They need to be living their best life.

324

00:18:08,782 --> 00:18:13,252

Like it's sort of like if they unmask
and if they feel like

325

00:18:13,585 --> 00:18:18,589

they can unmask and stuff like that,
and they can be their full selves

326

00:18:19,289 --> 00:18:22,291

without having to

327

00:18:24,093 --> 00:18:27,095

conform to the neuro-norms.

328

00:18:27,228 --> 00:18:30,197

I think we can have

329

00:18:30,798 --> 00:18:35,401

more acceptance with people with Autism.

330

00:18:35,401 --> 00:18:37,969

I think they need to be more accepting
rather than not.

331

00:18:37,969 --> 00:18:38,403

Yeah.

332

00:18:38,403 --> 00:18:42,239

And with April being World
Autism Month, we've been talking

333

00:18:42,239 --> 00:18:45,341

about “Autism Understanding” as a concept.

334

00:18:45,542 --> 00:18:45,975

Yeah, yeah.

335

00:18:45,975 --> 00:18:49,811

Well acceptance, understanding
and also sort of like, you know,

336

00:18:49,845 --> 00:18:55,182

Autism wellbeing month as well

337

00:18:55,215 --> 00:18:58,284

because, you know,
people with Autism and stuff like that

338

00:18:58,284 --> 00:19:00,352

are so stigmatized
and all that type of thing.

339

00:19:00,352 --> 00:19:01,453

Yeah. And that's why

340

00:19:02,921 --> 00:19:04,255

when I was originally

341

00:19:04,255 --> 00:19:08,658

diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome,
I didn't want to get

342

00:19:13,261 --> 00:19:16,264

therapy and stuff like that because I felt

343

00:19:19,499 --> 00:19:21,801

like I was okay, but I really wasn't.

344

00:19:21,801 --> 00:19:24,369

Yeah,

I think that was half the problem. Yeah.

345

00:19:24,369 --> 00:19:26,771

A lot of it's just breaking down the stigma

Yeah, yeah.

346

00:19:26,771 --> 00:19:29,740

For organisations,

for people in the community, for Autistic

347

00:19:29,740 --> 00:19:31,441

people themselves

to feel comfortable. Exactly.

348

00:19:31,441 --> 00:19:35,611

And I know since you rebadged as Empower

Autism, I'm not too sure

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00:19:35,611 --> 00:19:38,780

when I think because it was Asperger's

Services Australia.

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00:19:38,780 --> 00:19:43,316

But then obviously when I first attended
the meetings, obviously, you know,

351

00:19:43,383 --> 00:19:47,119

obviously I tried to sort of like present
my case and all that type of thing.

352

00:19:47,419 --> 00:19:49,921

And they basically said they tried that.

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00:19:49,921 --> 00:19:54,891

And now obviously with the rebrand,
what you guys have been doing

354

00:19:54,891 --> 00:19:58,227

has been life
changing for Autistic people.

355

00:19:58,260 --> 00:19:59,561

Thank you, well- So yeah.

356

00:19:59,561 --> 00:20:02,697

So I'm really proud of what Empower Autism

357

00:20:04,165 --> 00:20:05,966

has done over the last couple of years.

358

00:20:05,966 --> 00:20:09,368

And now we're sort of at the stage where

359

00:20:09,935 --> 00:20:12,637

there's been really great breakthroughs,

360

00:20:12,637 --> 00:20:15,640

especially in terms of accessibility
as well.

361

00:20:16,040 --> 00:20:20,476

Basically, I've obviously got
the National Assistance Card.

362

00:20:20,543 --> 00:20:24,613

We've got an episode on the Deep

Dive podcast about talking

363

00:20:24,646 --> 00:20:26,614

to the CEO of the National Assistant Card.

364

00:20:26,614 --> 00:20:30,417

So, yeah, so

this is my National Asssistance Card, I'm

365

00:20:30,584 --> 00:20:34,587

wearing it with the Hidden

Sunflower lanyard as well,

366

00:20:34,653 --> 00:20:38,723

because I know

sort of airports, shopping centers

367

00:20:38,723 --> 00:20:42,492

and all that type of thing can be
very overwhelming and all that stuff.

368

00:20:42,492 --> 00:20:46,262

Themeparks especially,
which I basically had a thing on Tuesday,

369

00:20:46,262 --> 00:20:50,665

I'll tell you more about that
in one of the of other episodes,

370

00:20:50,665 --> 00:20:54,000

but this is a really good card
to sort of have as well.

371

00:20:54,000 --> 00:20:58,337

And that's sort of like, you know,
if you're sort of in a bit of distress,

372

00:20:58,337 --> 00:21:00,539

I think it's a really important tool

to have.

373

00:21:00,539 --> 00:21:01,372

Yeah.

374

00:21:01,372 --> 00:21:03,374

Well yeah, thank you for joining us
on this episode as well.

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00:21:03,374 --> 00:21:05,542

It's been lovely to talk to you and hear
about all the things that you've-

376

00:21:05,542 --> 00:21:07,944

That's all right. Not a problem.
Absolutely, not a problem at all.

377

00:21:07,944 --> 00:21:11,947

I really appreciate the fact
that you invited me on in the first place.

378

00:21:11,947 --> 00:21:16,050

And congratulations on the successful run
with the podcast as well.

379

00:21:16,050 --> 00:21:20,486

And I'm looking forward
to how this podcast will evolve

380

00:21:20,486 --> 00:21:21,620

and all that type of thing.

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00:21:21,620 --> 00:21:26,490

Because and exploring the Autistic of
identity is really, really important.

382

00:21:26,724 --> 00:21:28,859

Yeah, well, we're really excited as well.

383

00:21:28,859 --> 00:21:29,926

Yeah.

384

00:21:29,926 --> 00:21:34,129

It's there any closing words that you want
to- Well, try.

385

00:21:34,396 --> 00:21:37,498

Well, Autistic people
are still stigmatized at the moment.

386

00:21:37,498 --> 00:21:41,268

I think you need to more understand
how the Autistic brain works

387

00:21:41,268 --> 00:21:46,438

and also how people's like brain works
and stuff like that.

388

00:21:46,505 --> 00:21:49,173

It may be different.
It's not necessarily wrong.

389

00:21:49,173 --> 00:21:51,375

Yeah, I've done some public
speaking as well.

390

00:21:51,375 --> 00:21:55,511

I did some, I did some talks on
Autistic burnout and how that works

391

00:21:55,511 --> 00:22:00,015

for a person at the Brisbane
and Gold Coast Disability Expos.

392

00:22:00,081 --> 00:22:02,616

I'm going to be presenting the same thing

393

00:22:02,616 --> 00:22:06,586

at the Neurodiversity
Affirming Therapy Conference.

394

00:22:06,586 --> 00:22:10,756

I'm doing a pre-record
for the Melbourne conference

395

00:22:10,822 --> 00:22:13,791

in July and I've

396

00:22:15,392 --> 00:22:18,995

got another sort of announcement
which I can't discuss yet

397

00:22:19,028 --> 00:22:22,597

because it'll be sort of,
but we've got sort of like some public

398

00:22:22,597 --> 00:22:28,468

speaking at the well at the Neurodivergent
Wellbeing Conference,

399

00:22:28,468 --> 00:22:31,938

which has been held on the Gold Coast
at the end of September,

400

00:22:31,938 --> 00:22:34,373

because I went there last year
with the Deep Dive podcast.

401

00:22:34,373 --> 00:22:37,475

I did a post presentation

402

00:22:37,475 --> 00:22:40,944

on the same thing with Autistic Burnout
and How to Work for Autistic Persons.

403

00:22:40,944 --> 00:22:43,512

So I worked it out
as a poster presentation.

404

00:22:43,512 --> 00:22:44,813

That worked really well.

405

00:22:44,813 --> 00:22:47,782

And obviously I presented
in the Neurodivergent Minds

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00:22:47,782 --> 00:22:49,350

Conference in October after that.

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00:22:49,350 --> 00:22:53,553

So yeah, so trying to sort of
get some more public speaking gigs

408

00:22:53,553 --> 00:22:57,422

and trying to sort of tell
my story will be really important.

409

00:22:57,589 --> 00:23:00,358

And please feel free to contact me
if you want to.

410

00:23:00,358 --> 00:23:01,992

Yeah, I want to have a public speaker

411

00:23:01,992 --> 00:23:06,062

and just talk about things

in the workplace because I think our story

412

00:23:06,095 --> 00:23:07,263

needs to be told.

413

00:23:07,263 --> 00:23:07,997

Yeah.

414

00:23:07,997 --> 00:23:11,733

And thank you for listening

to this podcast episode as well.

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00:23:11,900 --> 00:23:16,269

Michael will be joining us in

another episode coming up soon, hopefully.

416

00:23:17,137 --> 00:23:18,538

Okay. Sounds good.

417

00:23:18,538 --> 00:23:20,739

We'll see you in that one.

All right. Thanks, Riley.

418

00:23:20,739 --> 00:23:25,042

Thank you for having me on the Skipping
the Small Talk podcast.

419

00:23:25,242 --> 00:23:27,978

Yeah.

Thank you for coming Cheers. Bye. Bye.