The Think Inclusive Podcast

Season 9, Episode 8

Howard Shane | How Teaching at Belchertown State School Changed My Life

Audio Transcript

Tim Villegas (00:01):

Hey, y'all just a content warning about today's episode depictions of the living conditions of institutions for people with disabilities in the 1960s will be discussed as well as certain attitudes about people with disabilities that work there early in her career. Carol quirk, CEO of MCIE worked in institutions first as a consultant. And then as a psychologist, when she first opened the book Unsilenced: a teacher's year of battles, breakthroughs, and life-changing lessons at Belchertown state school by Howard Shane, memories of her experience began flooding back.

Carol Quirk (00:41):

Drab visually, where you're seeing human beings in states that you would not want your own person relative. Um, the smells of people who are not bathed well enough on top of that, whatever disinfectant might be used, the sounds of people, moaning and groaning and calling out and shrieking and laughing. It it's shocking. It's it's shocking. And then the other part for me is how we warehoused human beings and treating people in ways that we would not do this day. We would not treat animals that way, that would not be acceptable. Um, those are all things that kept coming to me as I was reading his book.

Tim Villegas (01:26):

But if one good thing came out of working at these institutions, it put her on a path to advocate for inclusion, for people with disabilities.

Carol Quirk (01:35):

It had a definite, um, insignificant hole on where I ended up. Um, the first time I was working in an institution, I was working for a state agency. And, um, as part of this agency, we were, I was very young. I can't believe they let me do this. Um, we were consultants, um, around, uh, supporting people with developmental and intellectual disabilities related to problem behavior. And so, um, I was asked to go to Southbury training school, to work with the residential supervisors who each supervised a, what they called cottage because you lived in a building called a cottage, even though there was nothing cottage like related to it. Um, and they were going, supposed to learn behavioral strategies so they could teach their, um, cottage attendance, how to support problem behavior, or teach use teaching strategies. So, um, I was there, I ended up staying on campus.

Carol Quirk (02:41):

They had housing for people who were visiting and, um, taught behavioral strategies. Each person had to take one, um, resident who they were going to apply what they were learning. And then they also had to take one cottage and do something as a group that would improve the lives of the people who lived there. Um, and a psychologist who was there and kind of monitor my monitor, who was monitoring what I was doing. He was, he kept saying, the only reason you can do what you're doing, because they were wildly successful in making change. But let me tell you it wasn't hard. Um, but the only reason you

can do what you're doing is because you're from the outside. And some of the changes were things like, um, in this dining room, when you bring all the residents who lived in the cottage there and they had to have clothes on and they had to have forks as well as spoons.

Carol Quirk (03:43):

And they had to have their whole meal all at once and not bring the roll out, bring the plate out, bring the milk out. And, um, and the third thing was that the attendance couldn't yell. So those were the three interventions fork, as well as spoon meal all at once and nobody else, um, wildly successful. Um, so I, I just couldn't believe that, you know, this guy who was a psychologist there, why couldn't he do what I was doing? And he was older than me, more experienced than me and I, I, I had to believe that you could make change from the inside. So I deliberately sought a position in an institution. Um, and I was qualified as a psychologist. So I got a job in an institution in North Carolina as a psychologist. Um, one of the first people who was under my supervision was a young woman who spent 23 out of 24 hours in a straight jacket.

Carol Quirk (04:43):

Um, and she couldn't really speak, she could speak a few words. Uh, she had severe self-injury and used a wheelchair when she was out of the straight jacket because she couldn't walk because she didn't exercise. Um, within a year and a half, she was walking, using words, dressing herself, feeding herself, and attending the school that was on the, the grounds. But that influence was personal, just like Howard Shane's influence was very personal and didn't change the system. And I was not changing the system. And I saw that I could make change in the lives of a few people, but I was not in any position to tell anybody, certainly all those people above me what to do. So I, I, then I came to the conclusion that the only way to make change was to have that high level of influence or, and, or be from the outside where you could come in and, um, act in a way that gave, uh, responsibility to the people who were there, who had it, but influence them to make the changes to better lives of people with disabilities. And so I knew I had to learn things. I had to learn about systems change. I had to learn about how to run a business. I had to learn about budgeting. I had to learn about, um, what work, what are the strategies that the teaching strategies. So I moved over and took more. Um, I got my doctorate, took coursework in education and business, um, in order to figure out how to do something different, to make a difference.

Tim Villegas (06:29):

So, yeah, it really did. It really did, uh, put you on the path you are now. Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Um, so what would you want anyone who's listening to this interview or reading Howard's book? Like what would you want them to learn from this experience from, you know, your descriptions and from Howard's Howard's story?

Carol Quirk (07:02):

Um, I think I would want them to think about the assumptions they make about people with obvious disabilities, especially when they see them in a group. Um, in both institutions, I was in resident residential facilities, you know, the, the units or the cottages and the descriptions that I gave you about people, moaning, groaning, uh, moving, rocking. I saw young people eating threads that they tore off their sheets or off their clothing. Um, I, this is contrast it with several years later after this experience, I went to a conference and it was specifically for autistic people who used augmentative communication or alternative communication or typed. And, um, there were very few non-autistic people other than the, the helpers, you know, whether it was a family member who brought them or a, um, aid or somebody, a service provider. Um, so I'd say nearly 50% of the people in attendance were not only autistic, but were severely impacted in terms of their communication and, and behavior.

Carol Quirk (08:25):

And I stood there and they were all doing the same things that I saw in the institution behaviorally. And these are communicators, maybe alternative ways, but people who express their thoughts and choices and interests, and that hit me like a blow. What had we done as a humanity where we were warehousing these people, making an assumption that they didn't, they didn't understand. They had no cognitive ability and that is not true. How many of them were actually autistic people who couldn't communicate. And so I think the thing I know this is a long way to get to it, but the thing that I would want people to think about in today's world, when we put students with significant cognitive disabilities in a separate classroom for the majority of the day, when you look at what they're doing, you can see children who are not readers, probably who are bear communicators, who, um, are thought not to be able to achieve grade level curriculum.

Carol Quirk (09:38):

And maybe they, maybe they won't ever, but our whole assumption about who they are once they're in a group is to other them and think of them as less, less capable, less knowing, and our expectations drop, and they don't get the exposure to the social opportunities, let alone the academic. I know that Howard said in his interview that we have to think about times it's not all about inclusion. We have to think about times when we can teach the specific things that a person might need, especially if they're not, they need alternate communication. There, there may be other learning needs. And, um, I agree that for many people there may be that intensive time for specific instruction, but inclusion is not just about place as we always talk about it. MCI IE. Yes. You may have those times for very specific unique instruction, but inclusion is really about those relationships and opportunities to experience what the rest of humanity is experiencing.

Tim Villegas (10:48):

My name is Tim Vegas, and you were listening to the think inclusive podcast presented by MCI E. This podcast exists to build bridges between families, educators, and disability rights advocates to create a shared understanding of inclusive education and what inclusion looks like in the real world to find out more about who we are and what we do check us out at think inclusive dot U S four on the socials, Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter. Also take our podcast listener survey. Your responses will help us develop a better podcast experience. Go to B I T dot L Y slash T I podcast survey to submit your responses. We appreciate it today on the podcast, we talked to Howard Shane author of the book and silenced. He is also an associate professor at the Harvard medical school and the director of the autism language program at Boston children's hospital. We talk about what it was like to work at Belchertown state school and institution for people with disabilities in the 1960s. We also highlight some of the stories from his book, including how some of his students used an early form of augmentative and alternative communication. Thanks so much for listening. I'm glad you're here. And now our interview with Howard Shane

Tim Villegas (12:22):

Today on the think inclusive podcast, we have Dr. Howard Shane, who is a associate professor at the Harvard medical school and the director of the autism language program at Boston children's hospital. He has designed more than a dozen computer applications used widely by persons with disabilities and holds two us patents. Howard has received the honors of the association distinction for the American speech and hearing association to which he is a fellow. And in 2019, he was the recipient of the Frank F Kleppner lifetime clinical career award. Dr. Shane has also received the golden CIN award for innovations and technology from the United cerebral palsy association and author numerous papers and chapters on severe speech impairment lectured throughout the world on the topic and produced numerous computer-based innovations, enjoyed by persons with complex communication disorders, Howard Shane, welcome to the think inclusive podcast.

Howard Shane (13:23):

It's a pleasure and an honor to be here.

Tim Villegas (13:25):

Uh, well, I would love it if you would introduce yourself to our audience of educators and families of children with disabilities, where we're going to talk about your book that you, um, that you wrote called on silence. Uh, but uh, maybe people don't know who you are. So would you spend a couple of minutes introducing yourself?

Howard Shane (13:46):

Well, I'm, I'm Howard Shane, as you mentioned. And, um, I've been at the Boston children's hospital for the past 44 years where I've had the opportunity to see, I estimate, um, over 10,000 children in our clinics. My focus ever since I started out as a teacher at the Belchertown state school in 1969, my focus has really been, my professionals focus has really been working with children who are, uh, we would consider minimally verbal, a lot of other terms, sometimes the nonverbal non-speaking and so forth, but, um, children with significant complex communication problems. Could you,

Tim Villegas (14:29):

Um, set the stage a little bit on what actually the living conditions were like in Belchertown when you first arrived?

Howard Shane (14:37):

Well, I think it's important to understand me as a person back then, I had just graduated from college. I had a minor in education. I was going to be a history teacher and at the time, and in the, uh, where I was living, uh, there were no jobs in, uh, you know, in history, teaching history teacher in a high school. And the only job in education that was available was at the Belchertown state school. They, and, um, I was, uh, you know, accepted basically by a phone call. I had no preparation. I did have a minor in education, but I didn't have preparation to work with individuals who, um, had, um, you know, would, would consider it having a disability. So I arrive at, at Belchertown, I meet the director of education. I go to the infirmary building where I was going to be the teacher and I walked in and, um, the moment I walked into the building, my life changed.

Howard Shane (15:39):

It was, um, you know, you were assaulted by the odor, you were assaulted by the noise. And then we did a tour of the building and I saw, you know, young children, uh, living in, in, um, uh, dormitory dormitory style, but you know, 30 people in a room, um, they were in iron beds or cribs, um, the, the women on the first floor men on the second floor, you know, the boy involved ages. And, um, it was just nothing I had ever encountered and I, or, or, um, you know, even imagined existed. I was a pretty naive 22 year old guy.

Tim Villegas (16:21):

So you did have some, um, training to be a teacher. Um, although, you know, like you said, this was the job that was available. Right. Um, so in, you know, in the book you talk about using students' interests to guide them to learn. Was that something that was explicitly taught to you or was that just innate or something that, that youth you thought was a good idea and you went with it?

Howard Shane (16:55):

Well, uh, there was no real curriculum for me, um, that had been designed and I knew that from my own, um, the way I approach life, uh, you know, I, I w when, when it's something of interest, it makes a significant difference to the way you approach it, the way you learn about it. And, um, I just felt that

that was, uh, that would be important in, in my way of teaching at the time I had also just finished reading the book Summerhill, which many people don't aren't aware of, but it was a, it was a philosophy that was started in England by S Neil. And basically he was taking, um, trouble, uh, teenagers. And he created this school called summer hill, and he took their interests and, uh, he was able to design a personalized curriculum based on their, their own interests. Uh, the one person stood out was a troubled youth who was interested in automobiles and mechanics, and his whole curriculum was around that. And it, it, it, it, it was clear to me that I could do the same thing, uh, or at least approach it that way at, at, at Belchertown. And, um, so I, I try to incorporate that kind of thinking. Um, and I, I think that it's, it's a way of approaching education. That's followed me throughout my career.

Tim Villegas (18:23):

Yeah. Yeah. And, um, and I would say there's, there's a lot of people saying that now. Right. So it, it definitely that idea has, um, has grown, uh, as, as almost a best practice or is a best practice in education. So,

Howard Shane (18:40):

Yeah, and I, I think we're beginning to see that, you know, you know, Howard Gardner's work on multiple intelligences that people are, you know, as simply different. And if we can tap into and better understand where their, uh, interests and strengths are, um, we can, we can build upon that. And, you know, knowing that, that, uh, life experiences, uh, and what you're going to do and enjoy in part is obviously shaped by the things that you are interested in. And everybody's different.

Tim Villegas (19:14):

Let's talk about making change. How long were you at Belchertown?

Howard Shane (19:19):

A

Tim Villegas (19:19):

Year? A year. Okay. So in that year, D do you feel like you were able to make change from the inside the institution, or did you feel like in hindsight when you left, you were able to make more change? I think,

Howard Shane (19:32):

I think that, um, this was the beginning of, um, the deinstitutionalization movement. And, um, I think the impact I had was, um, uh, some communication that I had with the, um, the, the Springfield union and giving them information about what I thought was on, you know, in the injustices of that situation, but clearly leaving the institution and getting myself, uh, you know, more, you know, becoming more educated. Um, I left and, uh, ultimately years later, a few years later, I went to Syracuse and work with Dr. Burton Blatt, um, who was the Dean of education. I don't know if you're familiar with him. Some of our readers might know you to might be. Um, but he had written a book, uh, called Christmas in purgatory, where he went into institutions with a camera and then wrote a beautiful, poetic anthology. And I was part of his Institute, um, um, on, uh, Institute on, um, for, uh, you know, basically or deinstitutionalization. Um, and that plus, um, working with Dr. Ruth Lyndsey own, who was specialized a, was it a specialist in cerebral palsy communication? Um, it was kind of a perfect fit for me and I, you know, I had the, the opportunity to then meet with like-minded people, um, at, at, at Bert black center on human policy. Um, it was a very exciting time because we were right at the, the threshold of, of, of, of change and then Wolf Wolfensberger, uh, joined the faculty. And so it was a very exciting time to be there

Tim Villegas (21:19):

Your time at Belchertown, really set your trajectory right. Towards making change. Um, and then all the skills that you have brought with, um, you know, developing, um, programs for communication and, uh, and for improving the lives of people with disabilities. Um, you know, I mean, do you think you would have gone into this area, if you, like, let's say you didn't get that job at Belchertown and you, and you did get a job as a, as a history teacher. Like where do you, how, how different would your life be?

Howard Shane (22:01):

I think my life would be complete would have been completely different. I probably, I I'm, I'd like to think that I would have been a history teacher and would have liked it, but, you know, maybe I would have become bored. I mean, it's so hard to predict. Um, once I got to Belchertown and once I accepted where w where I was and what I was doing, it, um, it became an obsessive focus. I don't know if I would have been as excited about some, you know, history, not that exciting. Um, I don't know, maybe I would've sold encyclopedias or, you know, sold cars or something. I mean, I just don't know. Um, but that definitely set the trajectory. Um, family, friends will say to me now, um, you're doing the same thing you were doing at Belchertown only the, the, uh, opportunities to different, um, you know, along came technology in the early eighties, uh, you know, that sort of, um, confluence of deinstitutionalization and, and the, the computer revolution, um, gave me and others an opportunity to sort of invent and, and just start to create, um, different types of communication, um, uh, applications and hardware and so forth.

Howard Shane (23:21):

Um, so that was something that, that was, you know, really unique and important to me.

Tim Villegas (23:27):

Uh, a story in the book that I really love is how you describe, um, the communication system that you, that you made it, it was a clock, right? It was a, it was a clock. And so, well, I don't know. I, uh, maybe you could describe it for our listeners because, um, it, it reminded me of, of, you know, I mean, it was obviously early technology and it was, I think it was the first technology right. Of, of, uh, of how a person could select something and then, then visually scanning. So why don't you explain it? Cause I'm not going to be able to explain it, but the way that you could,

Howard Shane (24:08):

Well, it was, um, it appeared, it, it occurred to me that I, in looking at a second hand on a watch where the second hand was pointing to numbers, that why couldn't you point to letters of point to pictures and so forth. And, um, with that in mind, I just put a template on an old clock and we took off the hour and minute hand and just had the second hand going around. And then from there, I worked with some university students and, uh, and a professor at, uh, at the engineering school at UMass. And we began to build something that allowed this type of what later became known as scanning, uh, and controlling and using, um, mercury switch attached to the wrist by turning your wrist that completed the circuit. And it would start or stop, um, this light going around the circumference of a circle.

Howard Shane (25:02):

So it was, it, it's also kind of a, a historical look at the beginning of AAC. Now, I don't want to claim them the first person that ever thought about, you know, something like that. There was work going on in other places, but, you know, we, we just weren't in touch with each other, but eventually it became, what's now known as augmentative and alternative communication. And, you know, then we, you know, I was part of the formation of the name of I get to walk men and have an alternative communication and got to know other people. And then it became a small industry of, of mom and pop stores. And now, you know, we take an iPad, you know, developed by apple and we can create, you know, incredible opportunities or using an apple watch. Um, so, you know, by just kind of staying in

touch with consumer products and watching the development of technology, you know, all of this, just a group,

Tim Villegas (25:56):

Let's talk about the, you know, the few the future, because you saw this technology and you said, I could use this. I, you know, I can use this to help students communicate, tell me what they want, make choices, stuff like that. Okay. So, you know, as we've, as we've grown in technology and, and our, uh, capability, like what do you see as our future, right? Like what are, what are some things that we could look forward to as, um, expanding on this, um, communication capability for, for people with disabilities?

Howard Shane (26:36):

Well, I know that, you know, this, this, uh, wonderful podcast that you're, um, that you've created is about inclusion. And if I just take that theme, and I think about technology, this technology of the, of the future, and, um, you know, some of the futures here, but I think we'll have a gift can have a real bearing on inclusion. So, for example, I mean, right now we just finished, uh, some studies using the apple watch as a way of delivering cues to children on the autism spectrum. So we compared the ability to read an apple watch when you receive a cue to looking at that cue being delivered by an iPad. And we found that it was, they were comparable. And then we did a small study to get children, to be able to, uh, deal with the sensation of wearing an apple watch. And then we did a study on usability where they could interpret the haptic, an auditory cue with the watch and be able to receive, um, the, the cue, um, itself, um, being able to do that, uh, gives an opportunity for things such as what I would call social pragmatic mentoring.

Howard Shane (27:49):

So a child has some behaviors that, that the teacher or a family would like to, um, um, reduce in the, in the community. Well, how about just sending them a cue rather than saying, Hey, Johnny, you know, stop flapping your hands, or you're standing too close. So you're chewing with your mouth open. Why not just send them a very subtle cue? Well, we're working on those skills, but let's, let's give them the reminders, but let's not call attention to them. Um, so little things like that, um, smaller, more wearables, AAC, technology, better voices, more childlike voices, you know, more natural voices. Um, I'm picturing, um, artificial intelligence. We, you know, our behaviorists are getting better at being able to analyze behavior and trying to improve it, but we missed the mark sometimes. Well, what if we were just monitoring, you know, the heart rate or, uh, or galvanic skin response is because a child is getting anxious and we can, we see that.

Howard Shane (28:50):

And, um, we noticed in advance. So rather than letting that behavior escalate, we, we get that reading and we throw them in the ball pit and let them relax. So I think that the future is going to allow that to happen. Artificial intelligence is going to, um, be able to capture the human mind, just can't, can't deal with so many variables to sometimes be able to predict what's going to happen. But just imagine that, you know, I had Wheaties for breakfast, well, maybe there's gluten there. And then there's, there's, uh, all these other little things that happen that all gets captured. And then, then the, the AI is kind of contemplating all of this and maybe we can begin to get better understanding of why that behavior is what it is. So I'm, and I'm just looking at, you know, those kinds of opportunities. So, um, you know, th the future is, you know, I, I, I, and, and they're going to be compute it's consumer based.

Howard Shane (29:46):

It's not, they're not going to be, you know, specialized equipment. They're going to be really consumer-based, uh, materials in my clinical office. I had, uh, uh, two posters, one was, um, uh, Jefferson airplane,

and one was Jefferson Starship. Um, and folks would often ask me about those and, you know, you a great, you know, Jefferson airplane fan. I said, well, they were, they had good music, but it was a constant reminder to me that you have to evolve from being an airplane, you know, to being the star ship. And that's, that's what it's been for me for 40 52 years, I guess, is just moving from, uh, from an airplane to a star ship. And it, it just continues. And it, it, it, it believe me, it's, it's just my ability to just see what's available and just kind to, and my, my obsessive nature looking at how do I, how can I turn this into something that's going to help a child who isn't can't speak or has a behavior problem, or, um, you know, just trying to change behavior.

Tim Villegas (30:50):

Yeah. So you, you really see the, the consumer market for, you know, computers, watches, you know, whatever smart technology AI, um, as we're going to be using technology that's available for everyone. Um, but certain people can use aspects of that technology to make it more, to make life more accessible. Is that what I'm hearing?

Howard Shane (31:18):

Absolutely. And you know, this work going on, we have a project going on now with augmented reality, where we're trying to teach language concepts. And I, I use augmented reality to take a, a farm scene, and I want to teach the concept of pushing. So I have the farmer, you know, pushing the wagon, but I build that little sentence. And then that scene becomes alive as I'm looking through my iPad screen. I mean, there's just, there's just so much in the way of excitement and, and, and children with disabilities, children in general are drawn to the screen. So why don't we use that as a medium to teach? And, you know, not that I don't, I don't want to make it sound like I'm the only person the world is filled with people who are doing exciting work. Right. Um, you know, I, I just, I just am so enamored with it all.

Tim Villegas (32:06):

Let's talk a little bit more about our educational system as it stands right now. Um, and I'm wondering if you see, if you see the, um, system as two separate systems, right. We special education, general education, and, um, I'd love to know your thoughts about how we can improve that. Like whether is it just a matter of like, well, we just got to improve special education services, they're more inclusive and they have more technology and stuff like that. Or is it really, we need another system, I guess that's my question.

Howard Shane (32:46):

I think we need a different philosophical orientation. I mean, I think we started with language. I mean, you know, just, just calling a special education and then maybe even the word inclusion. I mean, I just think that, I think that what we, what we need to be, um, looking at is, uh, is, is, is, is an educational approach where, you know, every child is, you know, obviously you want to have, you know, ma they want to be with, with other children to the maximum degree possible. But if we, if we call them substantially separate, uh, our segregated classrooms, I mean, it's that kind of language, which I think is just, which is just all wrong. I think that we, that we want to, we want children to be together. But part of it is, is, is a philosophy where, um, children are just seen as children and maybe it's a utopian dream, but, you know, I'm reminded of, um, a book I read a number of years ago by Nora gross.

Howard Shane (33:51):

Uh, it was called up everybody here, uh, speaks, uh, spoke sign language. And it's about, um, the deaf community on Martha's vineyard that, uh, and before it became what Martha's vineyard is now is a vacation land. It was a lot of people from a particular region in England came to Martha's vineyard, and they had a, um, a dominant the gene that led to a lot of deafness. So a vast majority of people on Martha's vineyard signed and in the book, they're talking this interviewers, talking to this woman who

experienced that, and she asked about some person, you know, Jack Jones, what about Jack Jones said, oh, he was this tall guy with red hair and freckles. And he was very strong. And then the interviewer Nora said, well, wasn't he deaf? And she said, oh yeah, yeah, yeah. He was deaf that's that's when we're going to clearly have, um, you know, in, in an inclusive philosophy.

Howard Shane (34:54):

So, you know, how do we go about that? Uh, you know, I don't know the answer to that, but I think that, uh, we start with, with, uh, children being in classrooms. And just as you get called out, you're going to go to band, are you going to go to, um, some program? So you go off and you do some specialized reading and it just letting children be together as much as possible. But at the same time, you know, we have to be realistic that there are, uh, learning differences and you can't just throw children who have significant learning difficulties or who are minimally verbal, is just putting them into a class and expect them to be learning. But there, there are ways of, of, of, of maximizing their, their interactions, um, bringing them into situations with their learning and then letting them experience that.

Howard Shane (35:45):

But at the same time, you know, it sort of starts with how do we get the whole schools to kind of understand that I work with a school in upstate New York, uh, as, uh, a research project and, and in their, their school. Um, then this is, can I mention the school itself? And it's from me, it's the Fayetteville manliest school in upstate New York. And I'm in their elementary school, one of their elementary schools where we have our, um, a program, um, there are children who are in a sort of substantially separate situation, but every classroom in the school is it, so it's O'Neil is the last teacher of the teacher, the next name of the teacher it's O'Neill's ocean. And another teacher could be Jones. Jones is Jupiter, but, you know, that's a general ed classroom. It's not this separate classroom. So I think it comes with language. It comes with all the technology opportunities that comes with the philosophy of, you know, maximum exposure. I mean, that's, that's the way I see it. And, uh, you know, there's this, I think there's much to be done, you know, a great deal of work in my little utopian dream, but that's how I think it should be approached.

Tim Villegas (36:56):

I think a lot of people share that dream. I hope

Howard Shane (36:59):

So. Again, I, this is just the way I think, and I know that there are a lot of, much smarter people than me, and if, really think about these.

Tim Villegas (37:07):

Right, right. Um, yeah. But, um, that's, I, I think that's why I am excited for our listeners to hear your story and your thoughts, um, because, you know, we, we do need to, we need to share each other's dreams. We need to share our dreams with each other is when I'm trying to say. Um, and, and I, I, I love the way that you're kind of framing technology as a, as a, as a way that our society can be more inclusive. Um, because I, I, I do think that that's, I think that is our future, you know? Um, so thank you for your thoughts about that. So, as you were writing the book, was there a particular memory, as you were writing that gained a new significance as you wrote it? Um, anything that just was like, oh, now I remembering something different or something, you know, um, more significant about it.

Howard Shane (38:07):

I think that when I was writing the book, uh, as I was capturing moments and, uh, situations, uh, and, and it was, it was about the, the students, uh, for one in, in, in a, in a mentor that, who came to my class and, uh, really was, uh, became, uh, uh, a major force in my thinking as a mentor. And I think every, you

know, he was the mentor of every 22 year old needs in order to sort of who they are and where they're going. But as I wrote about the students, it, it just made me, um, all the more fond of them and what they, what they did for me. Um, it, in one of, uh, one, um, student who became a lifelong friend, um, he had cerebral palsy, Ron, um, and, um, we'd meet regularly, uh, you know, long after Belchertown. I was the best man in his wedding.

Howard Shane (39:06):

Um, uh, we went to red Sox games when he finally got out and was living in the community. He was, um, he was just this good guy. He couldn't speak, but he had, you know, and so I just happened to have this, this, um, clinic at Boston children's hospital where he'd come and get, you know, the latest technologies, but, you know, he was a popular person out in Western, Massachusetts, and, you know, he, uh, he went to Foxwoods and he'd go drinking and he loved the red Sox. And, um, he didn't, he wouldn't have had that opportunity if we still had, um, institutions, but, uh, you know, I, I, it made me all the more realize, you know, who these people were and that, and I tried to make that, you know, part of the book is it's not just about the bleakness of the institution, but it's about what life was like for them, how the out of the setting affected them. And, uh, um, so I guess the highlight is just, uh, how it, it, it, it, it brought to life what my, what, what, what, what it was like for me there and what they were like. And so I guess that's, that's, that's, that's how it just kind of came down.

Tim Villegas (40:14):

Uh, well, we appreciate you, uh, being on the podcast and talking about your book. Um, it's fantastic. Make sure you go ahead and, uh, get a copy of on silenced, uh, by Dr. Howard Shane, um, uh, Dr. Shane, is there anything that else that you wanted to, you know, plug, um, you know, is there, like if someone wanted to get a hold of you and ask you questions, you know, maybe they read the book and they, you know, they really are interested in something, they read it. How can people get ahold of you?

Howard Shane (40:46):

Um, they can get ahold of me. I'm at Boston, children's Howard DuChene at children's dot harvard.edu. Uh, and I, you know, I'm always interested in comments, um, good in bed. Uh, so that's, uh, they certainly can do that. Um, plugging, I want to plug a project that I'm doing right now. Um, I'm writing, um, uh, a children's book. Uh, it's a series of different stories about, uh, children I've seen in my clinic, and it's not about them per se, but it's about their skillset. And, uh, it's, it's, it's, it's in the title. It's a about excellent, uh, my excellent superpowers. So I take children with on autism spectrum who have, um, uh, unusual talents, uh, extraordinary Lego skills, uh, and are, um, extraordinary memory for, for dates and calendar events and so forth. And then write stories it's sort of fictionalized fiction so that others are the children in the class or in their environment in their, in their neighborhoods can come to understand the extraordinary skills that they have.

Howard Shane (42:01):

And that started it. It goes back to what I was saying earlier that, you know, you, if you, if you look at everybody who that kind of the talents they have and, and, and, and reinforce those talents and, and expand upon them. So these stories, these five stories are about individuals who have unique talents and how they use those talents, um, uh, productively and how it affects other people. So, uh, that's, that's a project I'm doing now, and that hopefully will be out in six months to eight months. It's being published by the American speech and hearing association, their publishing house. Um, so get on the lookout and get absolutely need to buy that. And, um, and of course get, get, um, on your bookshelf, uh, on silenced.

Tim Villegas (42:47):

Well, Dr. Howard, Shane, thank you so much for being on the think inclusive podcast. We appreciate your time.

Howard Shane (42:53):

Thank you for having me

Tim Villegas (42:57):

That will do it for this episode of the think inclusive podcast. Subscribe to the think inclusive podcast via apple podcast, the anchor app, Spotify, or wherever you listen to podcasts, have a question or comment, email us your feedback at podcast@thinkinclusive.us. We love to know that you're listening. Thank you to patrons, Veronica E Sonya, a Pamela P mark C Kathy B and Kathleen T for their continued support of the podcast. When you become a patron, your contribution helps us with the cost of audio production, transcription, and promotion of the think inclusive podcast. And you could even get a shout out like the five people we just mentioned go to patrion.com/think inclusive podcast to become a patron today and get access to all our unedited interviews, including our conversations with Howard Shane. Thank you for helping us equip more people to promote and sustain inclusive education. This podcast is a production of MCIE, where we envisioned the society where neighborhood schools welcome all learners and create the foundation for inclusive communities. Learn more at [inaudible] dot work. We will be back in a couple of weeks with our interview with Anthony. I am author of the book centered autism basketball, and one athlete streams. Thank you for your time and attention. And until next time, remember inclusion always works.

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