



The Think Inclusive Podcast

Season 10, Episode 22

Carolyn Kiel | Beyond Six Seconds

Audio Transcript

Tim Villegas

From MCIE. Neurodiversity and podcasting, two of my very favorite topics.

My name is Tim Villegas from the Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education and you are listening to Think Inclusive, a show where with every conversation, we try 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. You can learn more about who we are and what we do at mcie.org On this episode of Think Inclusive I speak with Carolyn Kiel, who is an experienced instructional designer of employee training programs. On her podcast Beyond Six Seconds, she features neurodivergent, and disabled entrepreneurs, creatives, and advocates who shatter misconceptions break stigma and showcase the vibrance and diversity of these communities. Here's what I cover with Carolyn Kiel in this episode, the meaning behind the title of her podcast Beyond Six Seconds, and why she made the leap into podcasting five years ago, what it has been like to be diagnosed with autism later in life, and what she hopes educators learn by listening to neurodivergent people. Before we get into today's interview, I want to tell you about our sponsor Together Letters, are you losing touch with people in your life, but you don't want to be on social media all the time. Together Letters is a tool that can help. It's a group email newsletter that asks its members for updates, and combines them into a single newsletter for everyone. All you need is email. We are using Together Letters. So think inclusive, patrons can keep in touch with each other. And groups of 10 or less, are free. And you can sign up right now at togetherletters.com. Thank you so much for listening. And now my interview with Carolyn Kiel. Carolyn, welcome.

Carolyn Kiel

Hi, Tim, thanks so much for having me happy to be here. Beyond Six Seconds is a podcast that I've been hosting for about five years. Now at this point. I talk with neurodivergent and disabled entrepreneurs, content creators, advocates and more about their lives and identities. And really just try to provide a balanced and full picture of what it's like to be neurodivergent or disabled, the meaning of the name beyond six seconds. I got that from a study by one of those career sites years ago. And it's a statistic that gets kind of tossed around. And I don't know how true it is. But it's a statistic that says that recruiters only look at your resume for about six seconds before they make a judgement on your experience and whether or not you're a fit for a particular role they're looking for. So I took that. And again, not sure how true that is. But I

thought it would be a good basis for a name of a pod test. So I said, we'll go beyond those six seconds because I wanted my platform to provide more time for people to share their stories. So when I originally started five years ago, I was not focusing on neurodiversity, or disability specifically, at that time, I was interviewing some of my friends that I had on social media and some other people who I knew in my personal life, about some of the really interesting projects or jobs or other interests, hobbies that they had, because I wanted to give them a platform for talking about a lot of the cool things that they were doing, because they weren't out like on social media talking about it a lot. So it's that concept of you may pass someone in the hallway or just know someone as an acquaintance, and not realize just how you know what they've achieved in their lives, or even kind of the cool things that they're involved in at that time. So some of the people I interviewed were, you know, some people who were working with drone technology and my friend who went to an orphanage and helped fund and found a music program in India. And another things like that, really, I found were very interesting, and just don't really make it into like, that 32nd Little soundbite that, that we're so often pressured to share when we're when we're talking on social media or presenting to a group so yeah, and I decided to switch about a year ago, it was the beginning of 2022 to focusing on neurodiversity and, and disability after have discovering that I ignored have urgent myself. And I can talk more about that story a little later about how that all came about. You know, since then, for the past year or so I've been focusing mainly on neuro diversity. Because I found that I, as I learned about what neuro diversity was, I realized that I was only really hearing stories about this never from neurodivergent people themselves, it was always other like third party resources, or experts or people writing about it. And the same with disability as well. But I was never really hearing the stories of people who were living with those conditions, or when all the intersections of those conditions intersect with our other identities as well. So that was something I wanted to broaden that, those types of stories and bring them to the forefront and hear from directly from people who were, like, directly impacted by them. So that's why I pivoted the podcast about a year ago.

Tim Villegas

I think that's so important to hear from neurodivergent people themselves. i My history is a as a special education teacher. And when I first started in the field, all I learned about disability was from books, and from other quote unquote, experts. But they, more often than not, did not have a disability. So I like you. When I started to hear the stories from neurodivergent people. I was like, Oh, these are the like, the real experts. You have beyond six seconds, and you're telling other people's stories. But what is the story about you that you want to tell?

Carolyn Kiel

Sure. So I guess I can tell my podcasting related story since we're talking about the podcast. So my story is that I started podcasting in, I would say late 2017. The podcast itself launched in January 2018. But I had been working towards the end of 2017 to get it set up. And the reason I chose podcasting is because I was looking for a creative outlet for myself at that time. So before that, I was a singer. And I'm still a singer, I'm not actively singing in any groups at the moment. But I was in an acapella singing group that was based in New York City. And I would go down and go down there for rehearsals after work. And we did a lot of really great performances

around like the New York, New Jersey, Connecticut area. And at the time, I wound up well, the group kind of sorta like, everyone wound up moving out of the city, basically. So we weren't meeting as often at that time. And around 2017, I started a new job, which was much further away from New York City. So it was harder for me to get in and out to rehearsals. So I kind of was taking a break from the singing group. But I really missed that creativity, and, you know, just the ability to create something new. And I said, you know, I really want to have something that's kind of, quote unquote, my own, that I have creative control and direction over. And I had started listening to podcasts, maybe about a couple of months before that. So I knew a little bit about what they were. And I thought, you know, I've been, I've been in the singing group. So I know a little bit about like microphones, I know a little bit about audio recording. And maybe I can close that gap. Like I'm partially there with the technology. So maybe I could just learn like a little bit more to get myself ramped up. And I could try out doing a podcast and just see what that sounds like. And I said, you know, I'll interview my friends, like some of the people that I was talking about before. And I'll ask them about, like, the things that they're really passionate about, because it's usually pretty easy to get people to talk about things that they're excited and proud of. So yeah, I'm like, I'll try it out. And I'll see what happens. And I'll see if I am, how good of an interviewer I am. Because I was not, I was not an interviewer. At that point. I had never really done that before. And I'm actually a very shy and introverted person. So I'm like, I don't even know if I could do this. But let's try it out like one on one conversations. Let's give it a try. So I recorded a few episodes in towards the end of 2017 got those ready and launched. And from there, I just started getting listeners and a lot of people being interested in being on the show. So it was a lot of either people who had listened to previous episodes or friends of my former guests who were getting referred over. And yeah, for the first four years or so it was just guided by a Do I have an intrinsic interest in the type of story that this person is telling and do I want to bring them on to the platform and talk more about what their stories are? So that's where I was for a couple of years. And then in around 2020, we went to the pandemic, I was already podcasting by then I know a lot of people started around this time, but it's like, well, I'll just keep podcasting. And you know, maybe I'll get different guests now, because everybody's kind of stuck at home. So I actually got some like, quote, unquote, celebrity guests, for me like big dream guests. Because normally, they'd be out like promoting their book or doing live shows, but then they were home. So it's like, a quick, I'll get a couple people there to interview. So that was fun. And then, as things went on, with the pandemic, around the beginning of 2021, I started to feel like a lot of stress, just related to different areas of my life, and just started to feel really, kind of, not myself, but like, really, just like not, I don't know, like kind of losing my steam and enthusiasm. And I'm sure a lot of people can probably relate to that being part of the pandemic. And around that time, I was, I was thinking, like thinking back into how I was trying to cope with things during the pandemic, and how I had coped with things previously in childhood. And around that time, and I don't know, it was probably because I had interviewed a couple of disabled content creators before that for episodes, just because I thought their stories were really interesting. And you know how on social media, particularly Instagram, at that time, the algorithm was pretty good or was at that time before now everything is like sponsored content. But before that, if you're looking at disability content and looking at the hashtags, it just presents more in your feed about like, how about this creator? How about this creator, and I wound up wandering into the hashtag,

actually autistic community at that point, connected with one autistic content creator had him as a guest on my show, in April 2021, and just kept following the community from there, and started to realize how familiar a lot of these experiences felt that, that the autistic content creators, the community was talking about, so I started reading blogs, watching YouTube videos about it. And I was reading a lot of things. But I felt that a lot of things that resonated with me, but at the same time, I'm like, Well, this does explain a lot of my experience, but I'm still not really sure because it's almost like anything that I read could be explained by something else, like, oh, maybe that's just anxiety, or maybe that's just, you're really shy, or maybe you're just like a quiet person, or maybe you're just really sensitive and, but the more I read about how is particularly women or people assigned female at birth, in the late diagnosis tend to identify as autistic and hearing all of the, it's like all of the stops you make, like in the pipeline before you get to autistic, like highly sensitive person. And like all these other things, it's like, oh, well, a lot of times, that person is actually autistic. So I wound up actually pursuing a diagnosis late in 2021. It was just a decision I made the actually autistic community absolutely accept self diagnosis, because there are so many challenges, with a lot of people being able to get diagnosed, but I was lucky and privileged enough to be able to get access to someone who was able to assess adult autistic women for autism, and went through that, and when getting a diagnosis of, of autism, so that was, it was interesting. And that was almost at this point almost a year ago. So I'm still trying to kind of process what that means for me, like, I don't know that it's changed my day to day life so much. Like I guess it's helped me be a little kinder to myself, when I'm frustrated about kind of going into sensory overload or doing a lot of stimming behavior, which is kind of like self sort of, like, you know, it's like, you know, I don't know like right now, you know, you can't see but I have like a little like, a little museum holding up this like orange little like rubber ring that use like a squeeze thing. So right in fidget toys that sort of like be called a stim toy, like the little things that spit in the little fidget spinners and those other things as well. So just using me just exploring more of those. And yeah, so it's been interesting. And so I decided at that point that I wanted to learn more about neurodiversity, not just autism, although, of course, my my podcast tends to lean towards mostly autistic guests at this point, but I'm definitely branching out. And it's in the first year I've talked with people who've learned about like, what dyspraxia is, which I think in the United States is more often known as Developmental Coordination Disorder in the UK gets more called dyspraxia dyslexia of not to people with ADHD and someone in the UK with auditory processing disorder. I just did an interview a couple of weeks ago with someone with Down syndrome like, I'm really just so interested in hearing about people's experiences, because, again, my own views and understanding of what autism was like, when I was in school, it was like the 1980s 1990s. And we like, literally, I'm shocked at how like little we knew, like, it was kind of like we knew what Rain Man was. And that's it. Like there was no other concept of what autism was. And meanwhile, you've got all these people who are like late diagnosed, just kind of like walking around trying to figure their lives out. It's like, Yeah, well, this is autism is like way, much broader than what I ever learned in a textbook. And as you read my bio, I have like two psychology degrees. And the amount of time we spent on autism or ADHD, or any nerve diversion conditions was like, nothing, like almost nothing. So I had to kind of do all the self study. So I'm glad I discovered a lot of the stories of people who are, you know, who have these conditions, and as part of their identity, because otherwise, you just kind of get your, you get

your information from either the loudest person on social media or whoever comes out and brands himself as an expert on XYZ. And yet, that's not always the full picture there. So

Tim Villegas

it's a strange time to live right now you have, like I grew up in the 90s. Pre internet. And so where are you got your information with? The gatekeepers that were pretty, pretty strict. And now anyone can put anything out there. Anyone can have a podcast, and anyone can have a YouTube channel. So in one sense, it's great because you have access to information. On the other hand, it's not so great, because there's so much misinformation, especially about disability and autism. And specifically, I'm reminded of something you said, reminded me of that. Steve Silberman has this great TED talk called the forgotten history of autism. Have you seen that?

Carolyn Kiel

I haven't. No.

Tim Villegas

Are you familiar with Steve Silverman? I am, it's one, it's a video, it's like 12 or 13 minutes long, I show it to a lot of teachers, because part of my job is, is, you know, the podcasts and social media and writing and stuff like that. But sometimes I'm involved with the training of educators. And so I showed that video, and he talked about, he talks a lot about the best, the misdiagnosis, or the the non diagnosed, people who are female or female who assigned at birth. And it's striking, it's very striking. So as a podcaster, I started thinking clueless in 2012. And it was a side gig. So I had my day job. I was teaching, and very fortunate for it to be part of my job now. But that was eight years later. And so I'm wondering with your podcasts, I know you started five years ago. In a nearby you talked about it, you have a day job. Right. So what is your dream for the podcasts? Like, would you would you ever want to like be a podcaster? Like that, that be your job? Or are you satisfied with having it be a side thing, or

Carolyn Kiel

it's interesting, because recently at my job, and like very recently, I might actually be doing a little bit of podcasting as part of my job, not as my full job. It's something that we literally just started talking about a couple weeks ago. That's exciting. But it's also given me a flavor of like, what it's like to do a podcast that's like, related to a job versus my own podcast, where I can almost do like, anything I want, anytime I want. And I'm fortunate with the job that I'm given, like a lot of creative freedom around that as well. But so at the moment between my podcast beyond six seconds and the work I'm doing during my day job, it's a lot of podcasting. So I'm thinking like, I don't know if I would, I mean, I never say never, but I'm not like 100% sure that I will would want to do podcasting, like purely podcasting as my full time day job. I mean, who knows, I might change my mind in a year or two. But I tend to be a person who likes to do a lot of different things, or have at least some variety in my day job, which I fortunately do right now, which is great. So it's I designed training for a large corporation. So it's different kinds of training, different audiences, different topics. So it's a nice variety of things there. But in terms of a dream, or what I would want for a goal for beyond six seconds, I don't know I'm just trying

too, it's only been a year that I've been focusing on neurodiversity, and there are a lot of really good neuro diversity podcasts out there already. So I'd love to be, at this point, just considered one of the top neurodiversity podcasts. I don't know if that is in terms of downloads and streams, or if it's just being known as for the podcast being known. And it's a little strange, because I'm not looking to be like an influencer around neurodiversity. Like, despite being in my mid 40s, I'm still very new to knowing that I'm autistic. So I don't even feel like an expert on autism at all. Because I know my experience, but I can't really speak to other people's experiences, which is why I have a platform where I'm just interested to learn and share. So I mean, I guess the type of advocacy that I'm doing with the podcast is just trying to share and elevate voices and, you know, kind of break, break stereotypes and just educate people in a welcoming and safe feeling way to learn more about, you know, people who are, you know, neurodivergent, all different types of conditions. I recently applied for an award, I got nominated for it, but I didn't quite win it. But I'm, I think I would like to win something like that, again, just to get more exposure for the podcast. I mean, I don't really need to be like some big popular influencer in this in this area. But I really would love people to discover the podcast, and just either learn about different conditions or feel validated and feel seen. If, if their experience resonates with my guests. Even if they just feel less alone. I've gotten some good feedback from it so far about people who, you know, people who have had their minds changed about certain conditions, which for me, is important. I think that's the best impact that I could have. So if I could just reach more people and change open more people's minds, I think that would be exciting.

Tim Villegas

I absolutely agree with changing people's minds, that I believe that podcasts do change people's minds. And so I'm so happy to support the work that you're doing and beyond six seconds, and other creators, I think when we support each other, we're just growing this growing this industry more and more, you know, it whatever point we're at, in it, you know, whether we're a hobbyist, it's part of our job. If it's, that's all we do every day, all day. So I'm very happy to introduce you to our audience. And so our audience is, in mostly educators, we do have some family members who have children with disabilities. We certainly have disability rights advocates and disabled creators that listen. But our audience is really teachers. So as you think about our audience, and think about your experience in school, you said that you came to diagnosis later in life. So what message would you really want to leave with educators, now that she knows you have their year?

Carolyn Kiel

I mean, kind of harkening back to something that you said earlier about, from people, like people with disabilities, people who are neuro divergent, I would say that if you, as an educator, if you work with neuro divergence, students definitely take some time to listen to neuro divergent voices. And that can be on blogs, on social media. In real life. I think a lot of the frustration that I hear from particularly the Autistic community online, because that's where I tend to spend the most time is that there are a lot of there's unfortunately, often some tension between autistic adults and parents of autistic children, and just not realizing that the two can really benefit from these other each other's experiences. And especially because a lot of people

and I, especially with autism, and in a way with ADHD, and maybe other learning disabilities as well, there's a concept of, well, you, it's like only children haven't. And for some reason people think that once you turn 18 or 21, like it goes away and like all the adults disappear, but it's definitely not that at all. It really is a lifelong condition. And now I get to hear from the adults who like talk about what it was like for them in school, like decades ago and how great it was when they had the right support and how incredibly challenging it was when they were misunderstood and didn't have the supports they needed or weren't listened to. So I think that educators really have an incredible opportunity to be able to support the Students and a lot of times a lot of those clues come in from listening to autistic or other neurodivergent adults who have lived through that experience and can say like, this is what it's really, this is what it feels like. Because a lot of times, there's so much going on inside that a lot of times, autism and other neuro divergences are judged by behaviors or what it looks like, as opposed to like, really what it feels like for the students. And it's a lot of times behavior. Like, for example, different behaviors might be seen as being stubborn or being disobedient, when it's really like a sensory overload or the person, they want to listen, but they just can't, or whatever it is. So I feel like autistic adults can provide a lot of that information. And another challenge is a lot of kids. And certainly many adults don't even know that their neuro divergence, like I didn't know, I was just kind of coping the best that that I can. And there's so many other people like me. So you may also have students who don't have a diagnosis yet, or you kind of realize that there's something and they're trying to get a diagnosis, or there might be some other issues. So I would just say, definitely learn as much as you can and pick some great autistic or neurodivergent content creators to, to listen to some blogs to subscribe to maybe some YouTube channels or other podcasts and, you know, just sort of learn from people's experiences, like, everybody has their own unique experience with it. But even just hearing a few kind of, like, give you some, like a broader understanding of what it's really like for kids to be, you know, to be living as neurodivergent. So, yeah.

Tim Villegas

Looking back on your school experience, did you feel like you were supported?

Carolyn Kiel

So my school experience was interesting, because I went to a public school, it was a pretty small public school, like my graduating class in high school was like 85 students, so it was pretty small. And we're mostly together with the same kids for the most part, like K through 12. So it was kind of a new, unique experience with there. And I was actually I spent most of my time in what then was called The Gifted and Talented program, I don't know what it's called. Now, I think things have probably shifted since then, I'm sure there's some sort of gifted program, but I don't know. But that's what they call the gifted and talented. So I tended to be I was trapped, you know, I was on the track from like, fourth grade through like, all the way through graduating high school with the same sort of small group of like, 20 or so kids in like all the advanced classes, or I was like the year ahead, taking it as a junior taking stuff with the seniors, things like that. Because I was also at the same time, a gifted student, and there was no concept of like a to e or twice exceptional student at that time, that just didn't exist. So, you know, you're either you're either in like, the gifted program, you're in, like the general

education or like you're in special education. And that's kind of like all the options that we had, where I was at that time. And so I didn't, I got along just fine with all the students that I was, you know, in the class with, but you know, never really had like deep connections or friendships with any of them. I did have a small group of friends who were not in my immediate classes that we spent time with. And I was also a competitive musician at the same time. So I think I was very lucky, in that sense to find like another group that was school related, but related to a deep interest that I had. I mentioned, I was a singer. I also used to play saxophone for many years through school. So a lot of my extracurricular activities were very much focused on music, so that I felt pretty supported. Like I had found my communities and I think I was very lucky to be able to do that. And but you know, but still, I was like, even in groups, like I had a very, like, tight group of friends. But, you know, once like, I actually looking back and you know, no, no one ever like really called me on it very much. But I spoke very little. If I'm one on one, like, now, I'm like talking up a storm. But if, if you add a third person to this conversation, I'll be quiet because I literally don't know how, like, when is it my turn to talk and apparently, this is an autistic trait that's somewhat common. Because it's hard to find like that space in the conversation without either interrupting or, in my case, like just never joining like just sitting there and listening. So which is I didn't even think that is too unusual, because no one really called me on it so much. I was always very shy, always very quiet. There's, you know, I guess some shy kids, it's like, well, once you come out of your shell, then they're like talkative. It's like, I never really came out of my shell very often. It's like I was just kind of in there. So that was, I guess, one clue. But again, not anything that like impact Did my education too much like I could do presentations, most of the grading was on like writing and individual projects. So again, I was lucky to not be putting a lot of things like group projects or lots of presentations at that time. And physical education was like a disaster for me or gym class at that point, which again, is another artistic thing is just very uncoordinated. No matter what kind of practice I did. That just extends even beyond gym class just in general. But so that was my school experience there. I had some struggles in high school where I kind of had a period of what I call like a deep depression that took a while it kind of colored my experiences and my social relationships through a good part of high school and into the very beginning of college. But then college, school and college were actually I really, I liked the structure, and I liked being able to learn new things. So I was kind of fortunate in that way to find a good college like Vassar is great. It's just a whole variety of people there and great academics and just really great communities there. So I was lucky to wind up in the places where I did. So yeah, so my schooling experience, I feel like is kind of unusual, maybe for an autistic student, because I was in the gifted program at the same time. And I know sometimes people considered giftedness is a neurodiversity in itself, I think it's time to, because some, sometimes I also read on Twitter that a lot of autistic and ADHD students wind up in the gifted program, because they're, well, they're also very, they're very smart. And a lot of times they'll be supported in that way, but not in other ways. And sometimes, once you get out of school, that's when some of the challenges related to autism and ADHD might arise. Yeah, so the school wasn't as much of a struggle as it has been for some of my guests that I've talked to about it. So yeah, but it was kind of a unique experience for me.

Tim Villegas

It sounds like you really experienced the longing in, in, you know, in various forms that wherever you were, so you had a community in each of those steps, right? High School, and in college.

Carolyn Kiel

Yeah. That's true. Yeah. And I think the one time where I was having a big struggle with presson was a time that I was not experiencing belonging. So that's kind of interesting. But yeah, it's, it was reasonable to have a place where I was in a community. So maybe I wasn't like, I wouldn't necessarily make like, go into a have a community and make like super tight best friends or good friends. It was just sort of, you know, you're friendly with people when you're there. And then when you know, when the play is, oh, you know, the school play is over or whatever, you know, the community comes to like a natural end, then, like, I guess some people stay in touch, but I wouldn't stay in touch necessarily with too many other people from there. So yeah, so I tend to have right now, like a few really close good friends. But you know, not a huge, not a huge group of really tight friends. But, but I don't know, that's just how my social situations wound up. And I'm still really grateful to have a couple of really good friends.

Tim Villegas

Is inclusion, something that you cover in any topics with your guests? Or is that something that you spend a lot of time thinking about? I'm just wondering if that's if that's something that you consider. I'm not even sure how you would define that.

Carolyn Kiel

Yeah, I was thinking about this. Because, yeah, I don't know if it's something I've done like a deep dive into in any my episodes, even before I started talking about neurodiversity, but it is something I think about, and what would it mean? I mean, there's that popular phrase that often gets used to describe the difference between diversity and inclusion is diversity is being invited to the party and inclusion is being asked to dance. And I'm trying to dig into that and like, well, is that how I would describe it? And for me, and I guess I've learned this a lot from just having a podcast where I get to hear a lot of people's stories. For me, I think, inclusion really starts with, like, listening to people like really listening to people's experiences, and believing people's lived experiences. And, you know, I've been thinking a lot more lately about the concept of accommodations. So there's like, the legal sense of like, what the law says, accommodations have to be provided. I think about it in a corporate setting, because that's where I work. But beyond that, it's like in terms of being, you know, accommodating and including to people. It's, you know, just not making assumptions about people's lived experiences and kind of seeking out and having the right people in the conversation, whether you're talking about like, developing a new product, or even just having an accessible, you know, whether it's accessible classroom or an accessible workplace, I think a lot of people still, even with the best of intentions, and I tend to talk more about in the corporate world, because that's where I, I see it and I live most often, you know, will really want to be accommodating and will think about, like, well, what can I do for this person. And it doesn't always occur to them to ask the person like what they need. And I think that a lot of times is the first step. And I've talked to people in the workplace who have asked to as basic things like, I

really need to wear, like noise cancelling headphones, or I need to be in a quiet place for part of the day so that I can function and work and focus. And, but that's not always, when people aren't always open to that. And it just seems like kind of simple things to provide for people. But again, that wouldn't help everybody. And it's different for every job. So I feel like inclusion is, it really starts with just listening and asking, genuinely asking for that feedback and input input from a variety of different people. And then really giving people the opportunity to provide that freely, like, without retribution without feeling like they're going to suffer as a result of sharing something or bringing something up. Yeah, for me, it's like about hearing a lot of people's voices and not but not just hearing them, like literally integrating what people are the input that people are providing, to make, whether you're developing a stronger product, or just making a better place for people to live and learn and work.

Tim Villegas

On like how you put that with the listening, but also listening without judgment, because it just occurred to me, I'm not sure if this word fits, but I think part of the inclusion is trust. And it's not even about like trying to create a safe space. If I disclose something to you, if you if we're coworkers, or even my boss, and I say, I really need this, I really need this accommodation, how you respond to me, is going to either develop our trust, and help me feel like I can really be who I am, or not the way that you respond, or the way that we respond to our co workers. So I didn't really put it together. Like, I like how you put that because it's really easy, especially in this virtual world. And when we're working remotely, to, to misread other people.

Carolyn Kiel

And as I think about accommodations, and people like me, who, you know, are late diagnosed, a lot of people may want or need accommodations. And they don't, I will say they don't really know why. Like, they don't know that they're disabled, they don't know that they're neurodivergent. But it should still the accompany isn't like legally obligated to provide it. But like, why wouldn't you? Like if it's something simple? Like why do you necessarily need to have like a medical diagnosis of something to get a simple accommodation? Like it really should be open to anyone? I think that's my opinion. But uh, yeah,

Tim Villegas

yeah. Is there anything that we didn't talk about that you wanted to make sure that we covered?

Carolyn Kiel

I think the only other thing that I wanted to mention, just I guess, going back to what advice would I give educators. And this, again, doesn't come from my own personal experience growing up, but from other people who I've interviewed on the show, is I've had the, I've had the privilege to interview one of my guests, Noah C back who is a nonspeaking, autistic self advocate. And he's, he's young, he's in his like, I think he's in his mid 20s, at this point. So he talks, he talked, he didn't learn how to communicate for a variety of reasons. He spells on a letter board, that's how he communicates. But he is nonspeaking. So he went through much of his education, being treated like essentially being treated like a first grader, like just people

assuming that because he couldn't reliably because he couldn't talk and he couldn't reliably communicate at that time. They just assumed that he was intellectually basically incompetent as he would describe it. And it was frustrating because if you talk to him now, it's an Amazing, he's like, it's like, I don't even know how he learned all that being taught like, over and over again, just like the same, like, first grade material, like, it's quite amazing and, and just the depth of thought and the way that he writes and the way that he advocates and mentors, other non speakers. So my point is that and that was eye opening for me, because I had never had a conversation with a non speaking person before. And a lot of the experiences that he shared, and other non speaking autistic people that I've learned about and heard from on social media is that it's so important to presume competence, no matter who you are, certainly as an educator, you know, as parents as just family members, and just people in general, to not judge someone who kind of no one would say that sometimes he doesn't look like he's all there, because he also has apraxia, which means he doesn't have reliable like control over his body movements, which makes it really challenging for him to communicate in that way, as well. But the important part was all non speaking, Autistics who are advocating in the social media section will always say, to presume competence, like, just assume that, don't just assume that just because somebody can't communicate that it means that intellectually, they're inferior, or not capable that just, if you assume competence, then you will continue to teach people and find and look for other ways for them to communicate. And that's what happened with Noah. The letter board was like one of the last things that they tried when he was a teenager, and he took to it and that was the method that worked. So just to keep going and and that extends, I guess, to all students is to presume competence, that even if a student doesn't seem to be learning or succeeding in a certain environment, or with a certain type of lesson to not just automatically assume that, that they're not smart, I guess, for lack of a better term. There's always different ways to learn. So that was the last thing I wanted to bring up. That was a big learning. That was a big learning point for me this year as I learn more from the non speaking autistic community.

Tim Villegas

Carolyn Kiel, thank you so much for being on the think inclusive podcast. We appreciate your time.

Carolyn Kiel

Thanks, Tim.

Tim Villegas

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