

Craig-Brooks-Autism-Interview

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SPEAKERS

Craig Brooks, Paul Huddleston

Paul Huddleston 00:00

Today we're talking with one of the students at the Flo Valley campus Craig Brooks. I've known you for a number of years. Craig, you are one of the Genshiken anime club students here at Flo Valley.

Craig Brooks 00:10

That is correct. Hello everyone. My name is Craig. I am an intermediate artist and amateur voice actor and a very prominent people pleaser.

Paul Huddleston 00:22

Very prominent people pleaser. Okay. I like that one. I may steal that on occasion. Is that cool?

Craig Brooks 00:27

You have you have my rights.

Paul Huddleston 00:29

Alright, good enough. So Craig is here because we're in the middle of autism acceptance month, which I flubbed previous to yesterday's interview.

Craig Brooks 00:39

About time that we get a little bit of acceptance going around.

Paul Huddleston 00:43

And I like the thought of autism acceptance over autism awareness, because by now everyone's aware of it, right?

Craig Brooks 00:51

At least one in every few households, there's got to be someone that knows that autism is a thing,

Paul Huddleston 00:58

Either someone that lives there, someone knows someone who is on the autism spectrum. I can't picture not being aware of it by now. But I think it's a good time to start moving into acceptance. How long ago were you diagnosed?

Craig Brooks 01:14

Oh, that was I'd say probably before I got into middle school, right before I actually went to a public school, I had a quite a few outbursts within my class, I didn't have the best focus in the world. And my mother decided to try to see what was going on. And as soon as we did get the diagnosis, I was diagnosed with Asperger's. And on the spectrum, apparently, it seemed to be quite high.

Paul Huddleston 01:46

So Asperger's was the diagnosis. So that was back before they started, just its autism spectrum. We're not going to differentiate between this and that.

Craig Brooks 01:58

Yeah. And then once I got into high school, I had to do a reevaluation as far as doing jobs and such, it was a long and arduous process, but I managed.

Paul Huddleston 02:11

So how did you do in school,

Craig Brooks 02:13

school, academically, I was one to not give up. If I did bad during tests, or during homework, I would come back to it again and try even harder and do more studying. Usually, it would pay off, I won't say that it was a 10 out of 10 all the time, but every eight out of 10 times it would help. I will say that I'm more of a hands on learner, because there are some things that people would be able to say that I wouldn't be able to understand without a proper showing.

Paul Huddleston 02:55

Have you always been like a someone who learns by doing or

Craig Brooks 02:59

I'm a bit of both, I have to be able to see what is being done. And once I try figuring it out, if I have some type of feedback, then I can learn from it. And it kind of helps with the process.

Paul Huddleston 03:12

I can I can understand that I, I really can. I'm going to who either has to be doing something with my hands, or actively doing the thing in order to learn. And I don't think that's an unusual thing. However I do. It does seem that there's a lot of people in my experience that I've talked to who are on the autism spectrum who do learn best that way.

Craig Brooks 03:37

It's better to like have a muscle memory for this type of thing, versus having someone discuss and regurgitate that type of speech down to you, you're going to listen. But it's not going to stick around in the mind versus being able to actually fidget with something getting a proper understanding of how it would work. That's why a lot of people are able to do better with Rubik's Cubes, then, oh, if you look at instructions of like how to solve it,

Paul Huddlestone 04:10

right, but actually getting in and doing it tends to be more intuitive feeling. Yes. So did getting the diagnosis that you did change the way you looked at things or the way your instructors or teachers at that point looked at things for you.

Craig Brooks 04:27

Funny enough, it didn't change anything. For me. It did change a few of my teachers aspects as far as my younger years went because a lot of people thought of it oh as a handicap, which I didn't think of it like that. I honestly thought of it as Okay, I just learn a little bit differently than everybody else. A lot of people still didn't see it that way which prompted others to view me in a less than manageable way. But I still managed

Paul Huddlestone 04:59

Now are we talking other teachers? Or are we talking peers at that time,

Craig Brooks 05:04

I would consider both the teachers were a little bit more lenient, and they still managed to show quite a bit of respect. As a matter of fact, I'm still quite friends with a few of my teachers from the past. And we've, we've come to some understandings. But peers was a different story years were definitely a different story. Oh, boy,

Paul Huddlestone 05:28

I'm guessing that there was some bullying involved?

Craig Brooks 05:31

There was definitely some bullying, a lot of people didn't quite understand why I did the things I did. And of course, as a thing that I always stuck with as a kid, even to this day, is that there is a method to everybody's madness, just because someone views things differently or solve something differently. I don't think you should be getting all upset at their actions, as long as they're able to get it done right, or as long as they're able to reflect upon it. But this coming to kids around, I'd say the ages of like 10 and up all the way into high school, they're not going to understand that and they're just going to want to view things in their own way.

Paul Huddlestone 06:13

Well, but that's kind of the way society has always looked at autism. I know attitudes are starting to change now and viewpoints are starting to change now, which is a good thing.

Craig Brooks 06:23

It's definitely a great thing.

Paul Huddleston 06:24

But autism has traditionally been seen as an awkward social disorder.

Craig Brooks 06:29

Some people view it as a handicap. Yes.

Paul Huddleston 06:33

They may think that people have difficulty with learning, but it's not necessarily learning. It's more processing, correct. That is correct. So have you ever had any experiences where you just like run into? I've heard other people describe it as a sensory overload?

Craig Brooks 06:50

Actually, yes, it does happen with me, when I decided to put on a little bit too much of different things. I am prompt to try to multitask. But there are some times where as an artist myself, and also trying to study for school, it can't those things kind of meld and it, it feels very awkward,

Paul Huddleston 07:12

you just overload yourself, and you get to the point where it's like, I can't do this anymore. Or it gets

Craig Brooks 07:17

to that point where I feel like I need to take a break. And if I take too long of a break, then I kind of have a problem where things do end up getting lost in

Paul Huddleston 07:28

the mind, I can kind of wrap my head around that. So how do you keep yourself on task or on focus, when you know you have something that has to be done? You said you're an art student here. So I'm assuming that there are deadlines for oh, I have to have this project. And on this date, have you had issues keeping yourself focused on things

Craig Brooks 07:48

there have been many of times where I have not been able to keep focus, trying to find someone who can't keep focus is the same as trying to find someone with just one left foot. It's very, it's not it's not rare, but it's, it's there.

Paul Huddleston 08:08

So do you have any tricks that like, Oh, I know if I really need to focus, I can do this or because I know a lot of people tend to know themselves best. And so they will design their own coping mechanisms or their own strategies.

Craig Brooks 08:23

My coping mechanism is, I know this is going to sound very weird, but I usually would tend to put on headphones and just listen to some type of TRANQUIL MUSIC, something with not too heavy on the strings. Or if I do have like, a very close deadline, then the strings do kind of come into the play. I know I said that I have a bit of sensory overload. But when it comes down to those moments where I feel like time is against me, I do need something to more invigorate me. If I have time on my side, and I kind of do need to shut things out, then I can just go at my own pace, follow along with the with the beat of the music that I listened to.

Paul Huddleston 09:10

So you use music as kind of like a motivator or a type of stimulation to get you to do things. If you've got time, you just kind of groove with it. If you know that it's got to be done, you have something that's got like the higher pitch strings and a little bit more of an intensity to it.

Craig Brooks 09:26

That is definitely the case.

Paul Huddleston 09:29

But that makes sense. I mean, most people have that kind of most people will talk like driving music. There's different music for highway and for going through and looking for someone's address. You don't want to mix those up.

Craig Brooks 09:42

Because Because honestly, I'd be very intimidated if someone had just drove into my parking lot. Playing Baby Metal. I mean, I'd be pretty intrigued with it. But I'm always going

Paul Huddleston 09:53

to say I would probably be like I would be intrigued but I need to talk to them about a few things. What are your tastes and me Music,

Craig Brooks 10:00

my tastes and music, I will listen to pretty much anything. Excluding country sometimes I know. I know. But for when it comes down to doing my work, if I have like nothing really much to do, then I'll listen to the smoothest of jazz. Probably some video game soundtracks that are like really subtle, something I can chill while I draw, or something that I can just kind of bop to while I study. Then when it comes down to like, the deadlines that I do have that I feel like I'm not going to be able to reach it, I need something that's going to give me the pumping juices that I need. Sometimes some pop, maybe some rock, as long as it's like, not too very hard on its bass. Because I'll get too invested with the song itself, then rather, the actual work.

Paul Huddleston 10:59

Have you found a difference between what it was like in high school and what it's been like in college for you?

Craig Brooks 11:07

I will say in high school, there weren't as many people that were accepting there were that very few. And those are the lifelong friendships that I can say that I can stick with. It didn't feel superficial, there were those that honestly looked at me like I was the pond scum of the world, which I had to say, hey that's your view on me. It still hurt me. But I was still able to cope and manage because I had some people that were there to look out for me. They looked at me with unbiased eyes and I truly appreciated that. And that was with high school. It was like maybe one out of every 20 students that I could say that were like that

Paul Huddleston 11:55

are actually not bad for most high school class.

Craig Brooks 11:58

That's really not that bad. But I didn't really talk to that many people went to like, maybe my junior or senior year. But as far as when I got into college, that number went from maybe one out of 20 to like one out of five. There were some people that were just very annoyed with me and just kind of pushed me off. But then there were those who had common interests with me, where I could actually find that common ground, hence the clubs that I'm in.

Paul Huddleston 12:27

I was going to ask does becoming involved with the student clubs? Does that help? When I guess in your case, specifically, does that help being on the spectrum to have that involvement with people who already have some interest shared with you? Yes, because

Craig Brooks 12:41

if I didn't go to these clubs, I would probably not talk to as many people as I thought I would.

Paul Huddleston 12:47

Now I know you're involved with a number of clubs here at the flow Valley campus, right?

Craig Brooks 12:51

That is correct. I am involved with GAA, the Graphic Arts Association. I am involved with Genshiken our anime in eastern cultured club. And I have thought about it, but I might try to be a part of the Art Association club.

Paul Huddleston 13:12

As it stands now you also work over in the Access Office on campus?

Craig Brooks 13:17

That is correct.

Paul Huddleston 13:18

Was that something that you intended to work at? Or was that just oh, I need a job. And I can work here.

Craig Brooks 13:24

Okay, don't laugh, but it was both. At first I was job searching was really hard.

Paul Huddleston 13:33

job searching has been really hard for quite a few years,

Craig Brooks 13:37

it was very hard, especially with the fact that most places they did not want to accommodate for my school schedule, knowing the fact that yes, I have classes I need to go to, and that I also have a life outside of work. I mean, honestly, the amount of factories I had worked at, or the amount of other businesses that I have worked at, where they said, Oh, yes, we can accommodate for you. But then give me a complete slap on the wrist saying like, yeah, we lied. You read the handbook. Right? That that that was all wrong. We decided to put white out in there.

Paul Huddleston 14:16

You do work with the access office. Do you find that? You do well, in that setting? Because you are assisting your fellow peers?

Craig Brooks 14:28

Oh, absolutely. Yeah. I don't really have that many mentees as what we like to call them. Yes, I am a mentor. But it's nice to actually see students actually come in who need help. They don't know what to do, but we kind of do. Because most of us have either been in the situation or we know a person who has been through this situation and of course, school is already stressful and how aren't as it is that overthinking about stuff, it's, it's going to make it even more stressful.

Paul Huddleston 15:07

So you are actually able to give back to the people who are coming after you sort of like the people who were there before you helped you when you came in? How does that make you feel?

Craig Brooks 15:23

It gives me a tingly feeling on the inside.

Paul Huddleston 15:27

Is there anything else you really wanted to bring up or talk about as far as autism acceptance as far as your own personal experiences with it?

Craig Brooks 15:34

I would like to probably talk about as far as the careers I wanted to go into as far as being on the spectrum.

Paul Huddleston 15:43

Well, you've talked about you're wanting to you're you're taking art classes. Now what all are you wanting to do with that?

Craig Brooks 15:48

The original goal was to have my own animated studios where I can work on animations of my own choosing, build upon stories, and bring life to characters that most people have either heard slight, little things about or don't know anything of at all.

Paul Huddleston 16:08

Do you design many of your own characters? Are you pulling from characters that are like folklore and whatnot,

Craig Brooks 16:14

I tried to do both creating my own characters, even though I will say that I am an intermediate artists, I'm not the best when it comes to character design. I'm still working on that, because anatomy is just very hard. But as far as building upon a lore, finding lore for characters, I can honestly just look to the peers that I do have. And some of them do give me some very valid advice and others. It's it's advice. I'll say that at the very least.

Paul Huddleston 16:52

So you talked about doing an animation studio, you mentioned something about voice acting, too.

Craig Brooks 16:56

Yes, I've been wanting to do voice acting for quite a long time. Because as a kid, I this kind of also goes along with me being on the spectrum. I never really had the time to focus much on a lot of things. But anything that did caught my eye, it allowed me to start looking back on it and starting to copy it. My grandmother used to call me her little DRONGO, which is a bird in Africa that has the ability of copying anything that they hear. And I'd say mimicry is probably the biggest thing of flattery that you can give.

Paul Huddleston 17:38

And so you you enjoy hearing like a cartoon character or sound and trying to figure out how to create that yourself. Yes. It's pretty cool. Do you have a favorite one?

Craig Brooks 17:48

Um, there are a lot but probably I want to say one of my favorite types of voices are the more impressionable father figure roles where they have the stern voice, but you can hear that type of just worry and pride that they have for their own sons or daughters, or whoever their next of kin is.

Paul Huddleston 18:14

So you like doing that maybe not necessarily copied voices, but you have types of voices that you're good at getting that emotion across.

Craig Brooks 18:24

Yes. A lot of my friends that either said to me when it came to voice acting that I am either going to be a really good side character, or I'm going to be a decent enough villain.

Paul Huddleston 18:40

Hopefully it doesn't carry over into real life. Be a villain, Craig, you're really nice. Oh, we'll see. So Craig, thanks so much for coming in and talking to us today. It has been wonderful talking to you.

Craig Brooks 18:51

No problem. I'm always here. Except for Saturdays and Sundays.

Paul Huddleston 18:56

So I know you're here for Genshiken, though

Craig Brooks 18:58

I am here for that. And also for class, and sometimes for work.

Paul Huddleston 19:02

Fantastic. And if you need to talk to somebody about being on the autism spectrum, and from a student's perspective, what the access Office can offer. You'd be a good one to talk to. Right.

Craig Brooks 19:15

I'm I would say that I'm the easiest person to talk to.

Paul Huddleston 19:21

Greg, it's been wonderful, man. Thanks a lot.

Craig Brooks 19:23

No problem.