

Thea-Parish-Autism-interview

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SPEAKERS

Thea Parrish, Paul Huddleston

Paul Huddleston 00:00

This is Thea Parrish. We're talking to her because it is autism spectrum disorder, awareness, and Thea, how has autism affected you?

Thea Parrish 00:09

Well, it's really affected my communication skills. And since communication and social skills are very important in life into getting to know people and building relationships, I can honestly say I had trouble making friends when I was younger. And to this day, I still have trouble speaking what's on my mind?

Paul Huddleston 00:27

You were diagnosed later than a lot of young people are, is that correct? Yes, at 14 at 14, did you have any assistance or any adaptations prior to that? Or was this something that that you just kind of muddled through until 14.

Thea Parrish 00:47

Um, so I recently found out my mom suspected I had it for a long time, like, since I was like a baby. So she adopted me, but I've always known that there was something different about me, I had a lot of anger as a child, I was introverted. And I found out when I was actually trying to open and get out of my shell, a lot of people didn't like what I had to say. And I never understood why dealing with it as a kid up until I figured out the reason I was isolated a lot. I just focused on my schoolwork, which I'm proud to say I was very good at I love school love learning. But um, when it came to just interacting and socializing with people, I was either too loud and they didn't like it, or I talk too fast. Or sometimes they couldn't even understand what I was trying to say. Because I would stutter and switch up my sentences midway,

Paul Huddleston 01:29

you mentioned that you had issues with communications, especially with peers? Definitely. Did you have issues with and you said that you did very well in school? Did you have any issues with like, comprehending information? Actually, no. But then again, I was especially school district, I feel like if I

wasn't a regular high school, I've been in a special school district since I was in kindergarten. So I feel like if I wasn't a regular school probably would have been more difficult because they use a lot bigger words. And they use a lot more adjectives than they do and special school districts. Like, instead of saying something was quick, they say something was excessive. Or instead of saying speedy, they'd probably be like it was the thing someone was a beginner, they'd say somebody was just starting out. Does that make sense? Yeah. So they would try and communicate in a way that is a little more specific,

Thea Parrish 02:28

yeah, is more specific. But also I feel like people who had more trouble understanding it as well to being special school district, because it was different. Like if they had come from like a regular school and then went to Special School District, it was a whole lot harder for them to get into the way of things and especially you can, like learn the way they were teaching there than it would be in the regular school. So it was hard. Either way, like if you'd like I remember when I was in high school, they wanted to send me back to my regular school. I didn't even know what that was like I had been investing in schools or special school district since I was 13. I mean, since I was a kid, like since I was in kindergarten, and it got to the point that once they wanted to see me back, Listen, I'm not going back. I'm gonna graduate next year. What's the point?

Paul Huddleston 03:08

I can't say as I blame you on that.

Thea Parrish 03:12

Opportunity. I did not feel like I've made friends and others people there who understood me so it was easier for me to stay there, then people people who are not like me able to just like shun me.

Paul Huddleston 03:21

So did you have issues as far as making friends in that context? Or were you good on that?

Thea Parrish 03:27

I was had a terr... Oh, I had such a hard time making friends. I was in middle school, actually. Yeah, I was in middle school, and I probably made my first lifelong friends who I'm friends with to this day. I'm not gonna say her name, but she is she's very, she's an amazing person. You didn't hear that. She's an amazing person. And geez, I just I love her. So she's an amazing person. And I love her to death like, honestly, it's her birthday today. So

Paul Huddleston 03:58

I hope she has a good birthday you to celebrate with her later. No, no. Oh, this is so if you can tell somebody who maybe is neurotypical, what it's like to live with you said you had Asperger's was what you were diagnosed with, if you could try to explain to somebody who's neurotypical and has no idea the differences between being neurotypical and being neurodivergent. How would you explain that to someone? I don't know what those are. Okay, so neurotypical is finger quotes here normal, whereas neurodivergent is someone who processes things in say, a different manner. So

Thea Parrish 04:42

I would probably explain that to them like so both can understand it. I'll probably say, basically, I have trouble with communication. I have trouble making friends and socializing in an appropriate manner. I might say things that are inconsiderate but actually mean them in a positive way and not be trying to offend you in any way at all. So just keep in mind that if you want to be friends with me, just keep this in mind that I don't want to offend you. But it might come off that way. And I am sorry. And I apologize in advance. I think that's the simplest way to say

Paul Huddleston 05:09

that makes sense. When you're talking about people taking things possibly the wrong way, or thinking you're reacting in a way that you are not, how do you try and get past that with other people? Do you explain to them? Do they figure it out eventually? Or,

Thea Parrish 05:25

honestly, I'll explain it to them. And if they continue to, like, judge or put me down for something, I have no control over. And I've explained it to you, honestly, you're just not my type of person. And I'm just gonna cut you off at that point. But have you had any problem close minded? And you don't, you're not open to the fact that you're basically like judging me before you get to know me?

Paul Huddleston 05:44

Have you had any problems with bullying or anything like that?

Thea Parrish 05:47

Yes, I was the only girl in all of my classes throughout high school, wow, things middle school, my friend who was in middle school, he was actually in a different classroom. So that must have been really difficult. It was very difficult. The problem was, I'm not trying to brag, but I was smart. And I usually got all my work done. I A's in all my classes, I was a straight A student throughout my whole life up until I came to college. I'm still a straight A student, but I get B's now, too. So it's like, in

Paul Huddleston 06:17

college, you'll take that route

Thea Parrish 06:19

Right, take that, definitely. But um, it's like, everybody was trying to copy off my work. And I was like, No, I was gonna put some stuff on myself. I didn't take the bullying laying down. So I can help you with your work. But I'm not going to give you the answers and let's you copy off me that led to more bullying, they would call me teacher's pet and stuff, because the teachers really respected me and stuff. There's also like, since I was a special school district, there's also forms of harassment. And a lot of people like a lot of the boys targeted me in some of the girls did too, because the boys were like, had their attention on me. And I'm not like, I don't find myself attractive, like, like, bad, attractive, and all. But at the same time, like, I think I'm average, but at the same time, like, it was annoying and very sad, because like, I had made no friends because of this. And sometimes I wish I was like everybody else. But he got to the point where I was like, I'm gonna be like everybody else. I don't want that. So like if they don't want to

be my friend, and I guess I'm better off by myself. And then it happened in middle school, I met my friend and it got exponentially better.

Paul Huddleston 07:11

That's always a good thing when you find it really, really good friend.

Thea Parrish 07:14

Yeah.

Paul Huddleston 07:15

So how long have you been out of high school?

Thea Parrish 07:17

I've been out of high school since May 15 2019.

Paul Huddleston 07:20

So you've had a couple of years since high school and things been different. Since you've gone to college.

Thea Parrish 07:26

Um, I don't have as many friends no close friends. I can say there's one friend in my history class, who I'm friends with and go to church together sometime her name is....? Oh, I'm not going to say her name. But she's a very spiritual, very enlightening, and she doesn't really judge. She'll tell you what she doesn't like, but she won't judge you for something like if she doesn't like you. She'll ask you not to do it. But she won't judge you just because you like it. So like if I'm willing to listen to rap music in her car, and it's a Sunday, I can't do that. But the same time she was like, Oh, I'll listen to rap music with you tomorrow. And she's like, No, gonna respect God, but at the same time, we could do the stuff. We can still do this stuff, just not certain times not she wants to respect them. So that's okay. That's That's understandable. That's as your beliefs. I myself am Catholic. So, yeah.

Paul Huddleston 08:11

Do you have anything that you do like a routine or anything that kind of helps you when you're feeling overwhelmed, or frustrated?

Thea Parrish 08:21

ART! Yeah. Oh, it's cool. Love to draw. I love to do crafts, I love to paint. I do a lot of that. I used to do origami when I was in middle school. A lot of that that was really in when I was in middle school. And everybody was doing that in elementary and middle school. And I watched TV but not as much as I was as I as as a lot of other people. I usually like to read instead of watching TV, so I'll like get on my phone and read but there's like certain shows. I like to watch every now and then and binge watch a little bit for like a few hours a day and I'll watch those. My favorite shows I can honestly say is Chowder by C.H. Greenblatt though.

Paul Huddleston 09:05

All I have to say to that is (unitelligible noises)

Thea Parrish 09:07

yes. I love that show. And I've been watching it and like whenever I'm gonna turn it on my friends like no, I don't want to watch this. And I'm just like, oh, well is my house.

Paul Huddleston 09:18

If there was anything that you could say to somebody who was maybe just finding out that they have an autism spectrum diagnosis or is wondering if they might have something on the autism spectrum. What would you say to them?

Thea Parrish 09:35

I would tell them that it's okay to be yourself. Like don't try to be like this doesn't make you weird. This isn't making you strange. This doesn't make you anything other than normal. You're a person like everybody else. You just see the world differently. And everybody has their own perspective of like what the world is like some people think it's good. Some people think it's bad. Some people think is black and white, but I'm going to tell you that the world is various shades of grey. So no matter how you see the world, you're Everything is great, you're great. They're gray. Nothing is one color or the other. No one is opposite. No one is equal. It's just there. And you are here. And since you're here, people shouldn't judge you for you shouldn't be judged. You shouldn't judge yourself. You are normal as anybody else.

Paul Huddleston 10:16

That is really, really great, though. I completely support you wholeheartedly on that one. Was there anything else you wanted to bring up? No, no. Okay.

10:25

If you read, there's just one book, um, is by Ethan M. Aldridge is, if you like fantasy is called Estranged. And there's another one. The second book in the series is called, um, I think it's, I forgot, but I have it in my room. But it is by Ethan M. Aldrich, and he is a graphic novel, Illustrator and author. And he draws with watercolor and ink. He drew the books by hand, like no digital needed. Honestly, they talked about like certain people like you could honestly like if they don't talk about autism, but you can tell that certain characters have probably like autism, especially in the second book. There's also LGBTQ themes. If people are interested in reading that it's very like diverse. Ethan Aldrich himself isn't the LGBTQ community with an autism spectrum disorder. A lot of his stories with like, the disorders and stuff he's gone through in his life, putting it and made the characters go through it in certain like more fantastical situation. But of course, they're going through the same things he went through. So if you're ever interested in that, and you feel alone or different, just know that this super successful author has made billions from his books just made this for you. And I will totally go check it out. Especially if you're the kind of person who doesn't like reading chapter books is definitely worth it. The colors will definitely get you caught up in it.

Paul Huddleston 11:46

I think that's cool. I'd like to check that out. I really enjoy graphic novels myself. So we'll have to check that one out.

Thea Parrish 11:52

I don't think it's in libraries yet.

Paul Huddleston 11:53

We'll have to see. Maybe we can talk to somebody over at the libraries here at STL CC and see if they can get them on in. But if people requested they might get it. Yeah, that's true. Thea, thank you so much. It has been wonderful talking to you today. Wonderful talking to you too, Paul. Thank you for having me. All right. Thanks. All right. Have a good day.