

Unfiltered Podcast Series Transcript - Episode 3

Clare: Hi, welcome back to Unfiltered, everything you wanted to know about disability and might've been too afraid to ask. My name's Clare. I'm joined again by Charlotte and John and Rita. Back for another chat. Thanks, guys, for coming back. I really appreciate it. It means I didn't do too bad a job first time.

Today, we're going to talk a little bit about some of the myths and some of the questions around advocacy and language and things like that. Just really curious to hear what you think about some of these questions that have been sent through. One of the ones, and it ties into the employment question as well, because I know that a lot of employers are scared of using the wrong language and the question is, do you refer to yourself as disabled or as a person with a disability?

And I know, Rita, you've got some really strong feelings on this one.

Rita: Yeah.

Clare: Over to you.

Rita: yeah. Some people don't like to be labelled as disabled. Some people like to be called. For me, personally, it doesn't matter. Yeah. But some people will take those two words or two meanings to be negative. Based on the person is disabled, and they can't do anything, like they can't get a job, or the other factor is the person with disabilities. So that, who's the person with a disability? There's no identity to it. And so, talking about identity, I guess when I was younger, I always used to say, "Oh, why did this happen to me? Why was I born with disabilities?" Being deaf and blind. But as I got older, I've learned to embrace myself.

I know for a fact that if I hadn't have had disabilities, I wouldn't have achieved what I've achieved today. I went on to do two Masters Law degrees. I've got a PhD in law and, I'm a senior solicitor. I've worked with them on the top end of the government in the UK and here, and I know for a fact that because I've got the disability just made me more determined. More passionate to have a voice in our community for people with disability it's part of my identity. It's who I am, and I'm proud. I'm proud to be who I am, whether I'm a person with disabilities or, I see myself disabled, it doesn't matter. Every person with their disability is unique and they offer unique skills.

Clare: So, I'm going to share another example that might help. So sometimes, like I say, I'm proudly autistic. I'm autistic. Other people like to say I am a person with autism. So, it is really down to your identity and how it makes you feel and how, yeah. Charlotte or John, did you have a thought about that?

John: When I hear the word disabled, that's a kind of a global pejorative term, isn't it really?

Clare: Yeah,

Rita: Yeah.

John: You can easily take it as that but if it's a person with a disability, the emphasis being on the person. A slightly less, less negative term, I think.

Clare: Yeah.

Clare: Yeah.

Rita: I think it's just people perceive. I don't know, it's based on a medical model, it's just, I think everybody's different. Charlotte might see herself as something that I wouldn't see Charlotte as. Or you might not see her, you know.

What do you think Charlotte? Do you think, do you ever, when you say, when you're talking to people, do you say I'm autistic, or I've got a disability, or you don't say anything at all?

John: You can't recall it yet, I don't think you've ever said it out loud, have you Charlotte?

Charlotte: No.

John: Do you, if somebody asks you, would you introduce yourself as Hi I am Charlotte I don't have?

Charlotte: It does sound familiar, but I can't really remember those things.

Clare: No, that's okay. It's an interesting question.

Yeah, it's an interesting topic. I'm going to be asking each of our interviewees throughout the series what they think about that, because you always get a different answer. And sometimes people say that it's actually nothing to do with the individual, it's actually society that disables us because it's an environment that's not built for us and things like that, which leads me to my next question around being an advocate or trying to work to change attitudes in your community.

Charlotte, I'm going to start with you because I know you've done a little bit of advocacy work with your work through the schools and stuff. Do you think that everybody wants to be an advocate as a person with a disability or only some people?

Charlotte: I think from the inspirational and passion of what they want to do, and if they ever want to pursue advocacy in anything, then I think that they should.

Clare: Yeah.

John: If you think about your friends, quite a few of your friends have a disability, don't they?

Charlotte: Yeah, but. Maybe not all of them, but I think, I think might know one or two.

John: Do, have any of your friends go out and talk to schools or give talks about disabilities like you've done?

Clare: Maybe not many.

Charlotte: I don't think many have do with the speech apart. No, but I think they socialise a lot more.

John: Really?

Charlotte: Yeah.

John: But they, they haven't gone out to a school like you haven't given talk or they haven't given regular interviews, but,

Charlotte: but I remember I've gone

John: You've been very willing to do that, haven't you? Yeah. Yeah.

Clare: Do you mind, and you don't have to answer, but do you mind if I ask you, what is it that makes you want to go and do that?

Why do you like it?

Charlotte: It just helps me to talk more and just try to explore younger people to follow their inspiration and passion what they want to do in the future.

Rita: Yeah,

John: cool. It's helped you to overcome a bit of your shyness too, hasn't it?

Charlotte: Yeah,

Charlotte: Yeah, because I have a social anxiety sort of thing and it helps me to get over it.

Clare: And Dad, I'm going to ask you, having watched Charlotte grow and become more of a powerhouse in that advocacy space, how does it make you feel watching Charlotte in action?

John: I'm very proud and to be honest I'm a bit ashamed to admit I was very surprised at how well she could talk in front of a group of people.

She could talk at home, she's pretty good at that. But she was a very shy girl, a very shy girl. And I didn't think it was possible for her to stand up. But she surprised me, I'm very pleasantly surprised. She's presented at assemblies at my school. She's come to talk about her relationship with Banjo Patterson. She's read to large groups of children in libraries, haven't you Charlotte?

Charlotte: Yeah.

John: She's talked to huge assemblies sometimes. And on the camera as well. It's been a very encouraging development of her abilities to overcome the shyness and develop her speaking skills. Very proud of her.

Clare: Yeah, I've watched you from afar from the last couple of years, and you've done some really amazing things. And I think what's really cool about it is, from my perspective, when you feel comfortable in the advocacy space, you can showcase to other people that you, that they could do it too, that they could run a business, or they could follow their dreams like you've talked about, and I think that's really powerful.

Seeing us do it and us talking about it as people with a disability is much more powerful than someone who doesn't have one telling others that it can be done. You're showing it in action, yeah. And you've done some really great things. I've read your speech that you gave to the school. It was great.

Rita, you do a lot of advocacy work. What is it about? The work or the, the things that you do that make you want to do more or shoot higher, or what does it bring to you?

Rita: I think for me, it's like a preference. My area of work would be disability rights. Yep. But unfortunately, in Western Australia, there's only a small number of minorities that are experiencing disability discrimination. And so, it looks as though I've made a decision to move back to a private practice. And so, I'm doing some new law and different areas of law. But on a personal level, I'm still encouraging the younger generation, Charlotte, to spread the word and to work with the wider community to build themselves up with the skills.

Because what Charlotte is doing, is going to school and encouraging people to build their skills to self-advocate. Because, unfortunately, I know my neighbours that they've been drafted and unable to make an apprentice and they can't advocate for everybody. But if young people like Charlotte get out there and talk about their lived experience and their passion and what they've achieved in their lives. That's awesome and I can, I, when I give up work, I can rest easy and think, you know what, the young people like Charlotte, and other people with disability, _____ people with this who _____ have that better life, but in a meaningful way do. She inspires them. She gets them to think you know what I can do what Charlotte did.

Clare: Absolutely. Absolutely. I personally, couldn't write a book to save myself. I can do other things. No, you're a great advocate. Okay, one last question. If you could say to the world... That there was one thing about people with disability that you wanted them to know, what would it be?

And I know I've just dropped that question on you, but...

John: Look under the hood. Look under the hood. Don't just, that's a bit cliché I suppose, but really, don't just accept what you see. There's lots of hidden talents

Clare: Look under the hood. That's good.

Rita: I think for me, this has probably been heard before. You take the word disability, and then you take out the disability, the word ability, and for every person, they have an ability to achieve their dreams, to reach their goals, and if they don't, everybody's different. They have unique abilities. They just need that support. Like myself, I would never have been a lawyer without people mentoring me along the way and my own self determination and self-advocacy got me where I am today. You've got to look at your abilities. I've never assumed a person who has got disabilities, can't do anything, because they damn well can.

Clare: I like that. Charlotte, did you want to add anything to that?

Charlotte: With my own thing, it's just basically follow your inspiration. Inspirational from a passion of what you want to do in the future. And as for my story, this is from Creatorrrs World, with my own three words to describe what you want to do in the future is...Dream, imagine and create and we'll go through things, you can achieve anything.

Clare: Oh, wow. I think you guys have done this before. I could not have made a better segue. So that was absolutely brilliant. Thank you, guys, they're perfect. they're perfect. Thanks guys. Thanks for listening. We'll see you next time.