AT Banter Podcast Episode 233 - Dominique Chabot and Autism ...

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SPEAKERS

Rob Mineault, Steve Barclay, Dominique Chabot, Ryan Fleury

R Rob Mineault 00:44
Hey and welcome to another episode of AT banter

S Steve Barclay 00:48
Banter banter

R Rob Mineault 00:52
Hey my name is Rob Mineault and joining me today, the one, the only Mr Ryan Fleury

R Ryan Fleury 00:58
good morning

R

Rob Mineault 01:00

and look who who else is here mr steve barclay

S

Steve Barclay 01:05

We are legion

R

Rob Mineault 01:07

i'm going to have to i have to start switching that up and start introducing Steve first because i know i noticed he did he did make a little bit of a squawk last week about that. I forgot.

S

Steve Barclay 01:19

it's too early to squawk today so no worries

R

Rob Mineault 01:21

I was gonna actually do that and i forgot. It's just it's you know it's ingrained in you it's like muscle memory, with this whole podcast intro thing

R

Ryan Fleury 01:29

that's fine i don't have to be second

S

Steve Barclay 01:35

Why aren't you doing the intros?

R

Ryan Fleury 01:38

Okay, hey and welcome to a

R

Rob Mineault 01:40

no it's just it sounds wrong. How are you guys doing, what's shakin?

R Ryan Fleury 02:04
it's friday

S Steve Barclay 02:05
i'm good yeah

R Rob Mineault 02:06
Yeah it's friday ... it's not a long weekend but it's we're close

R Ryan Fleury 02:10
we are yep

S Steve Barclay 02:11
yes so so close you guys

R Rob Mineault 02:13
believe it's almost April

S Steve Barclay 02:15
yeah yeah

R Ryan Fleury 02:16
no not really

R Rob Mineault 02:20
People say that all the time, "can you believe it's been two weeks since.." like, well yeah, that's how time works.

R Ryan Fleury 02:27
well i've said before i don't know to you guys but you know my wife and i have talked

about how long we've actually been in this pandemic and i can't believe the year has gone by already.

S Steve Barclay 02:34
that's true

R Ryan Fleury 02:35
yeah i feel i feel the same way yeah but we're coming out of it now maybe they'll say oh vaccine vaccines are here so yeah get back to a little bit of normal normality

R Rob Mineault 02:49
People keep saying that, I feel like i'm already i feel like normal now like this is kind of the thing and the new normal and i think that that's good yeah

R Ryan Fleury 02:57
No it's not the new normal i haven't been to Pizza Hut, i haven't been to Burger King, i haven't been to A&W, i haven't been to a Mall i haven't eaten in a restaurant. No this isn't normal.

S Steve Barclay 03:08
Have you lost any weight though?

R Ryan Fleury 03:11
no

R Rob Mineault 03:12
See, so there you go so there's a whole bullshit about how you had to give up all these great foods to lose weight wrong because you've given --

S Steve Barclay 03:21
No no they don't they don't just say give up the food they say give up the food and

exercise.

R

Ryan Fleury 03:27

I always forget that one the exercise part

S

Steve Barclay 03:30

Yeah that one that one kind of makes a difference

R

Rob Mineault 03:33

Let's see, someone at Hogwarts needs to develop the exercise pill

S

Steve Barclay 03:37

There you go

R

Rob Mineault 03:38

Actually i think they probably have that's called cocaine. "Harry i've discovered cocaine!" Anyways we digress. Hey Ryan? Yes Rob? What are we doing today? Today we are speaking with Dominique Chabot from Autism Canada. Oh yeah, that's right i probably shouldn't have made cocaine references in the Autism show. Well awesome, it's about time we got somebody from one of the autism organizations on to talk intelligently about autism because you know we've wanted to cover it on the show for a long time but we're just dumb asses and we just didn't want to tackle a subject that we know nothing about so this is gonna be great.

S

Steve Barclay 04:31

Yeah there's so much to talk about that you know we could easily turn this into a multiple episode show

R

Rob Mineault 04:39

But we'll see where it goes. We'll get Zack Snyder to direct it, it'll be a four hour Zack Snyder cut of our Autism show.

R

Ryan Fleury 04:50

Hey there's a thought why should we do like an AT Banter marathon episode

R

Rob Mineault 04:56

oh my god just go and go and go

R

Ryan Fleury 04:59

We'll invite our listeners needs to come and participate and we'll just go see how long we can go for just go until we're tired. Just go Yeah, just talk about whatever comes up. disabilities just go on game with that, but

R

Rob Mineault 05:11

I feel like that would be an hour and a half show because then we'd be like a we hit the hour and a half mark, we'd all look at each other and be like, okay, I kind of want to go and go watch TV now. I don't know, our New Year's Eve. Virtual pub night went well, I think I went to bed at six in the morning. So we went all night. Wow, really? Yeah, I'm impressed. Man, well done. Steve's like ... "no way".

R

Ryan Fleury 05:37

Want to do that?

S

Steve Barclay 05:38

You guys go. I'll be here.Drinking coco and cookies.

R

Rob Mineault 05:45

Check in periodically. He's been really quiet over the last hour. Just plug some wine into Steve. He'll be into it. He's just not into it right now, because it's the morning

R

Ryan Fleury 06:01

Have to get him some of that extra strength. caffeinated coffee. Yeah, that'll help.

R

Rob Mineault 06:06

Yeah, that and then some I don't know Merlot.

S

Steve Barclay 06:11

Just put some whiskey in the coffee.

R

Rob Mineault 06:14

Yeah, he'll be down.

R

Ryan Fleury 07:01

Joining us now is Dominque Chabot from Autism Canada. Dominque, thank you so much for taking some time to join us today. I am Ryan Fleury. And joining us in the room are Steve Barclay and Rob Mineault.

S

Steve Barclay 07:20

Hello.

R

Rob Mineault 07:21

S

Steve Barclay 07:30

You had her at Kello.

D

Dominique Chabot 07:35

I'm bilingual. So we're good.

R

Rob Mineault 07:40

All completely intentional. No, listen, we are really excited to have you on. You know, we're deep into this podcast thing. We're going into our sixth year. And we've we wanted to talk about autism for a long time. But we just we wanted to save it for when we could actually talk to somebody from an organization such as yours, so that we can talk intelligently about it. So it's been a long time coming. So we're excited to have you.

D

Dominique Chabot 08:11

Thank you for having me here. And Ryan, I apologize for the last missed appointment. But we finally got it figured out. So thank you for that.

S

Steve Barclay 08:21

We blame Ryan.

R

Ryan Fleury 08:22

Yeah, you do.

D

Dominique Chabot 08:26

So I'll give you a little bit of background, I suppose as to why I'm in the position that I'm in today. So I Dominque Chabot and I am the Family Support Manager with autism Canada. And about, oh gosh, 13 years ago, I had to make some phone calls to learn more about autism because my son was diagnosed. And 13 years ago, as opposed to today, there were still barely any resources out there. So I had to do a lot of legwork myself, and the first organization that I called with Autism Canada. And now ironically, I'm in that same position as that person who helped me so long ago. So I'm very passionate about working for this organization and very past passionate about autism. And I'm learning as I go because I'm a parent as well. And, you know, there is so much that just falls under the ASD umbrella that has evolved over the years. And it it's it's ongoing, you're always learning. I'm always learning something new, as a professional and as a parent. So, you know, there's always new information out there. There's new discoveries and you know, it's it's fast. It's honestly quite fast.

R

Ryan Fleury 09:51

It's such a, I think, a deep topic. And so some of the questions I had is how I guess what is autism? Is autism just a generic word that gets slapped on to a bunch of disabilities? Or is, is it a specific disability because we also hear about the autism spectrum. And, you know, I believe that encompasses a whole range of, I guess disabilities a fall under autism. So I can you explain or clarify some of that.

D

Dominique Chabot 10:24

Sure. So I guess the easiest way to be able to explain autism, and, and of course, we can

talk about the spectrum and a little bit, but autism that basically is a and I hate to, you know, we refer to it as a disorder only when you're, you're speaking about it from a medical perspective, we're not doctors, so I don't, I don't refer to it as a disorder. Basically, someone who is on a spectrum, that means that their brains are wired completely differently than ours, they think differently, they process differently. They have heightened senses, they are you know, and I guess when you don't want to, it's hard to compare, because every individual in the spectrum is unique, but they all have a different way of you know, processing, whether it's visual, whether it's you know, stimulants, whether it's hearing, everything is wired differently, and they just, they it's more challenging because the world is built for for a neurotypical person. So they they need to go that extra mile each and every day to try to adapt to our, you know, to our world to society. So there's there's there's nothing that that indicates that it's genetic, there's nothing that indicates that it's caused by vaccine Well, back vaccines. Personally, I have gone through, I have two kids on the spectrum, once 15 months eight, one was vaccinated, he was diagnosed, when wasn't vaccinated, he was diagnosed, so that I needed to do that for myself to try to just wrap my head around it. So there's, there's no actual cause. There's no actual cure. It's just it's a it's it's, it's cognitive, and it's behavioral, and it's a sensory processing.

R

Rob Mineault 12:20

So I think that, you know, for for the general lay person, I think, would look over the past, say 10 to 15 years and say, "wow, there's there's been this huge uptick in autism diagnoses". And so you know, there must be something going on. Like, there's, there's just more people with autism. But really, what what it sounds like, is just we've gotten better at diagnosing the problem. You know, I feel like in the past, in the past 20 years, a lot of people just would have slipped through the cracks, and people would have just gone through life, never being diagnosed on any sort of a spectrum. Ss that sort of the case?

D

Dominique Chabot 13:02

Absolutely. I think, and I'm kind of, I'm gonna take a wild guess here, I'm in my 40s. I want to say that we're all our own that, you know, around that era. And if you look back, and if you think back to when you were in elementary, there was always that one kid. So that one kid in our class that was different that you know, and, and I'm 45 years old, and I remember this one particular student, who was just she was so unique, and she was different, and yes, required extra help. But there was no diagnosis. There was no, there was nothing. And even to this day, 13 years ago, when, you know, I had to figure out what autism was in order to better help my kid. There was barely anything out there. Although this organization has been up and running for 45 years, what we do as an organization is provide resources. And that's what that's all I hide back then, was it? Here's a website, you

can check. Here's, you know, it's gotten much better. Yes, I think that the, the the medical field, have a better understanding of what to look for. Early Intervention, the early signs, you know, families and caregivers are noticing these earlier, which is good, because it helps with early intervention. But, you know, we're still growing, we're still evolving. It's still there's still so much to learn. But yeah, we've gotten better for sure.

S

Steve Barclay 14:35

I think we're we're all in a process of learning more about autism as time goes on. And one of the things that you you sent us in in preparation for this was a language guide. And I was really, really impressed with that language guide. And I'm hoping you can talk a little bit about the language around autism and what you'd like to see change around how it's spoken about.

D

Dominique Chabot 14:58

Right? And I love this guide. And I think that we, you know, we are initial guide was published in two, I want to say 2017. And it was a world standard guide, and it was a collaborative document that was created by a group of our back then it was called the advocacy council or committee, and along with some of the professionals in the organization, and this is 2017. So now we're, you know, 2021, and the language has completely changed and evolved and shifted. So this is something that we need as an organization, you need to stay on top of that society as well, there are so many different ways to address a person, a neurodivergent, who, you know, may or may not necessarily relate to autism, but could relate to, you know, whether it's, you know, a transgender or a non binary or anyone with, you know, with it with a disability, I hate saying that word as well, but anyone you know, who may have, you know, a diagnosis, there are ways to address these people. And in order for them to be able to feel inclusive, and, you know, it's, it's respectful, and it's just, you know, you know, new, it's a new language. And again, in my 40s, it's very, very difficult for me to wrap my head around this, because it's still new, and it's still evolving, and I'm kind of like an old school thinker, but I do my best to try to relate to this guide. And part of this guide, the most recent one, we have a team that we consult with and consult with them very close to many of these members. But it's a team of autism ambassadors, and these are all adults, and in some youth who are on the spectrum, and they consult with them regularly, whether it's to help me with phone calls, or, you know, that I'm struggling with trying to answer and providing the proper resource for the proper questions. They have all gotten together and helped us design this and build this. And because of the different age groups that we have in this team, we were able to address the most recent language and and put that on paper and publish it on your website for everyone to learn. So it's a great guide, it's a great tool, absolutely. But it

will change within, you know, a couple of years that'll evolve as well as everything else.

R

Ryan Fleury 17:30

That's interesting. I'm totally blind. And that's a discussion that's going on right now to or has been for a couple years in the blindness field, you know, people want to be referred to as 'partially sighted or sight impaired or low vision or blind' or, you know, does that doesn't matter to me, I'm totally blind, I don't have partial sight, I'm not low vision. So for me blind is blind. But you know, it's an interesting discussion to have. And it's interesting to see that, you know, you guys are doing the same thing in the autism field as well.

D

Dominique Chabot 18:03

And again, it's, it's, um, there's, it's all about respect, and in kindness, and I, you know, I, there was a time where I used to refer to my children as an autistic as an individual being autistic. But it's, it's not I mean, I, I like to identify them in a way that kind of helps them stand out a little bit. But essentially, the goal is they are a person, like everybody else, you're all people. And that's what matters most. And you are a person with a you know, it's almost like an adjective or criteria tied to it. But essentially, number one is your person. And it's about inclusivity. I think that that's really key in all this.

R

Rob Mineault 18:57

So, stepping back a little bit to sort of just a higher level discussion is, do we do we have any sort of stats on how prevalent autism is?

D

Dominique Chabot 19:07

The CDC has recently released new stats, and I want to say it was probably late last year. We are now at 1 in 54.

R

Rob Mineault 19:19

And now, how big of a mandate is educating the public in terms of of autism? Because it would seem to me that that must be a really crucial component, because there there seems to still be a lot of misconceptions.

D

Dominique Chabot 19:35

Um, yeah. I mean, there's so much to learn, and there are it's evolving every day. And

sometimes, I think we're all human, we make mistakes and we make assumptions and some of us are very stubborn and we'll stick to what we believe in and that's perfectly okay. But I think the idea is that the more we educate and honestly rob i think that the awareness is out there and i know that worldwide some awareness day is coming up i'm confident that the awareness is out there now it's we need to move on to acceptance we need to be able to include them we need to be able to respect them and be kind to one another and and you know while we do that i think it's important that maybe employers you know because you're you're diagnosed as you know you're diagnosed with autism as a child but you also grow up to be an adult on the spectrum and we need employers to start you know including our community and maybe even accommodating some of our you know some of our adults who are on a spectrum in their workplace making some changes you know these are this is where we're at this is where we need to really push you know society to make it a more inclusive environment for our community.

R

Ryan Fleury 21:07

i think maybe there might still be you know a fear of the unknown right unless you're faced with the situation you don't you're not aware of you know potential benefits or shortcomings of a person. You know if i'm applying for a job do i even disclose that i'm blind or do i just wait till i get the interview you know there's a whole discussion there

D

Dominique Chabot 21:33

You're right absolutely right and i am very happy to say that as an organization we've partnered up with quite a few different employers and employment agencies such as there's rand gam there's a specialist sterna there's ernst and young and otter calm these are all organizations that provide a specific process for those in a spectrum because you know icontact is it stress of an interview for neurotypical let alone someone on the spectrum is hard enough so we are seeing more and more of these organizations making special accommodations or offering special you know or a different process in order for when to be recruited for you know whether it's a warehouse whether it's there's a lot of organizations that are starting to open up to that again we need to this is where we need to start pushing there's not enough

R

Ryan Fleury 22:36

So it sounds like there's hope for mankind yet

D

Dominique Chabot 22:38

Yes, yes absolutely, absolutely and you know you make a good point right about whether or not to disclose and this is a question that i get a lot i get a lot of you know as well it's not so much during the pandemic but for those probably you know prior to the pandemic and when do i disclose my disability to potential employer. I am you know they'll let you know they'll tell me they're level one which is you know what used to be known as high function level one autistic who brilliant very smart but struggles with conversations, struggles with some social cues and they just don't want to be perceived as ignorant or rude but it just sometimes they can come across that way if the employer interviewing them isn't aware. It's up to the individual but again like i've mentioned before i think the awareness is out there now it's just a matter of working on the acceptance.

R

Rob Mineault 23:38

Yeah it is very interesting, you know we talk a lot on the show about the idea of of inclusion especially when it comes to employment for for a lot of other disabilities and it really it's it's all the same it's all about you know adapting the work environment to accommodate somebody who may need something whatever it is, whether it's a you know reading machine for somebody who's low vision or a screen reader for somebody who's blind. Is that something that the organization sort of works on is that you know sort of like a guide for potential employers to to help make the workplace a little bit more inclusive in terms of autism?

D

Dominique Chabot 24:22

Oh i love this question, and it it is slowly getting better there are some there's some funding of their for organizations to be able to create a safe space for someone who is on a spectrum and i think that if there's not enough awareness out. There obviously, because it's funding and we are in a situation there you know money is tight across the board, however there are some pockets of funding available to employers in order to be able to you know accommodate someone who is on the spectrum. Whether it's like the styling, whether it's Zoomtext, or, you know, especially equipment, but sometimes it's as easy as, it's as simple as allowing someone who is on the spectrum, to take more frequent breaks, let them walk it off, you know, maybe offer them 15 minutes for every hour, and just let them you know, walk it off and just just just to, you know, de-escalate, if they have some anxieties based on their jobs, or stress. So a lot of the the strategies that can be applied in a work environment don't cost a cent, I think it's more or less, you know, educating the employers and, and, and doing their best to be able to accommodate that individual's needs. But yeah, it could be very, very inexpensive to do.

R

Rob Mineault 25:53

Yeah, and we're always talking about, you know, the there, there is a incredibly strong business case for for inclusive hiring practices right across the board, right. You know, you could very well hire somebody who's going to be incredibly good at whatever their particular job is, and not letting the fact that they they do have some challenges that the workplace needs to adapt around, you know, that's a small price to pay for somebody who's going to be an incredibly loyal and efficient and productive employee. It's just that, you know, employers just need to take that chance.

D

Dominique Chabot 26:31

Exactly. And when you're, when you're talking about, you know, an individual on the spectrum, one of the one of the key things with someone who is autistic, is structure and routine. And if they have that, they will be your best employee, because this is how they work best, this is how they function, this is the need, they need the structure, they need the routine. And if the employer can offer that to the individual, they will be done with it in such a great place. And, again, you know, there used to be a term that we that was used for someone on the spectrum and they were gifted or hyper focused. We all know what that means. Now, we're in a position where we like to say, you know, they have special interests, and it's, they're passionate about their interests, if it's it, if it's graphic design, they will do they will, they will do wonders, they, you know, they are, they're brilliant, a lot of them are and again, it's something that there are there are days where, you know, I need to pick my son's brain, because I can't seem to wrap my head around something that could be so simple. And yet I know how he thinks and how he processes things, and he will see it on it, you know, completely different scale. And I need that I need to be able to tap into that, because it's it's beyond my comprehension. But yeah, it's interesting. ,

R

Rob Mineault 28:01

You know, I love the way that you've described it in the sense that it's just, it's just a brain that's wired a little bit differently. But does that sometimes kind of make it challenging because people have all these misconceptions, they don't like autism doesn't work the same way and everybody, everybody isn't like a savant. We can't categorize it. It's very easy with a lot of other disabilities, where it's just like, this person's partially sighted, this person's blind, that it's very easy to put people into sort of categories. Autism doesn't work like that. Does that is that sort of a challenge when it comes to education?

D

Dominique Chabot 28:37

Absolutely. And I think that more and more with, you know, with time we're seeing, you know, from a medical perspective, and it's not that I'm a doctor, but from what I am reading, and what I'm learning is that they're these, there used to be a way of categorizing autism. So you were either autistic and then you you know, we had Asperger's, it was all kind of boxed. And now it's all a combination. Where you have your ASD, which is autism, it's just kind of like, you know, the top box and then all of your co-occurring conditions fall underneath. So a lot of times what happens is you will you will be diagnosed with autism, the chances are, you'll have a dual diagnosis, and sometimes that changes with age as well. You know, they can throw in a few other co-occuring conditions under there, but primarily, autism is just basically and it's just the, you know, the in layman's terms, it's the brain is wired differently. There could be an individual, you know, you can have an individual who does have challenges with social cues and eye contact. But can you know, can For example, my son can remember, he's right now he's at 82 birthdays, I throw my name, and he remembers their birthday. And he doesn't look at it, you know, he's brilliant that way, but he thinks in pictures, and he processes things in a way that I can't even fathom. And it's such an advantage, especially to like employers who, who need, you know, strong thinkers and visual thinkers. And they're, you know, if it's just so incredible. There are days where I'm like, Oh, my God, you know, I, I am. I'm incredibly blessed to know. So what I know about autism, I know, I have so much more to learn. But it's, it's not a bad thing. It's definitely not a bad thing. I, you know, if the world's a better place, because of this, this community,

S

Steve Barclay 30:55

Can we take a step back a little bit? I have some friends who have a son who's who's autistic, he's nonverbal. And it seemed to me like it took an incredibly long time, before they had any kind of diagnosis. And I'm wondering, what what's the state now of early identification and getting intervention in place in education, that is that is suitable and helpful for for people with autism. I know that's a big, big thing.

D

Dominique Chabot 31:30

I have to pick my words, I need to be careful because we have a long way to go. As far as that goes. It is, I think in BC right now, it's four years before getting an actual diagnosis.. And the prices have gone up. If you go privately, not everyone has the health plan or the insurance to be able to cover it, you're looking at, you know, between $3000 and $5,000, for an assessment. By the time you get the diagnosis, the child could be you know, 4, there goes to your early intervention. The idea is to know what the earliest signs are, as a parent, to do your best to know what the early signs are, you've got your milestones, but of course, every child is different. But if they notice that, you know, the common

milestones are not being met, it's important to even apply some of the strategies that a child on a spectrum can benefit from, even if they're they're not diagnosed. That's what early intervention is. And then throughout the process, as far as schools, those schools still have so much to learn, so much to learn. The medical field, still so much to learn, the process itself is is horrible. The wait, there should not be a wait time. We can't we can't afford a wait time. And families cannot afford a wait time. So I'm sure that if your friends have have had a challenging time until the actual diagnosis happened, they probably didn't know what to do. And what's important is that families realize that, okay, there may be a you know, that he may be missing something in this in this milestone, he may be weaker in certain areas, the idea is to try to do your best as a parent to offer that early intervention. And then before the diagnosis, if you want to do speech therapy, if you want to do occupational or physio, if needed, a lot of this stuff is out of pocket, until you've got that diagnosis. When you get that diagnosis, then you get the funding that you need to be able to cover some of these costs, because it's expensive, right. So as as a, you know, as a, as a nation, we need to be, you know, more diligent, we need the medical field needs to be more proactive in finding strategies and finding the support that they need to diagnose earlier. Sorry, you lit a fire in me.

S

Steve Barclay 32:10

Sorry, no, that's, that's very much in line with my my lived experience around my, my daughter, my daughter had difficulty early on in school and was on a waitlist to see a school psychologist. But that waitlist in Burnaby school district was I believe, two years. So we did we did pay to have her assessed privately. And what was what was interesting from that process is that we'd had teachers who were experts, self appointed experts, I might add, who were throwing out diagnoses for her every other day, which all of which were incorrect. And it turns out, she actually had a written output disorder. She just couldn't write as fast as she could think. And it frustrated her so she didn't write a lot. And once once we knew what was going on, you know, we were able to deal with it. But that you know, had we not gone the private route. She would have, she would have struggled with both, you know, her written output problems, but she also would have struggled with the preconceptions that her teachers were putting incorrectly on her. And that that was incredibly frustrating. I can only imagine what it must be like for people with, you know, more complex needs to face that same, you know, that same barrier, it must be incredibly frustrating.

D

Dominique Chabot 35:26

Well, and like I said, as I mentioned, that the costs are going up. And for people who need they, they want to be able to get this diagnosis for their child in order to better understand

and how to how to help them. They are waiting three, four years from my understanding in BC, that's the wait time right now. And there goes, there goes all of the early intervention, there goes all of the essential that this is like a crucial, you know, they say that as the child is young, their brains are like sponges, well, that that applies across the board, no matter whether they're neurotypical or not. This is the time the early stages in life with it, those are the most important times to be able to focus on you know, and as a parent, we want what's best for them, we want them to succeed, we want them to do well. So there's that extra passion in there, you need to, you know, be as productive as possible. But this kind of still comes to cost depends on the cost of waiting for support, it comes to the cost of making sure that the schools, you know, that they're in a proper program that the schools can accommodate them. And of course, the schools won't until you get a diagnosis. So there are so many moving parts, and we just need to get our act together as a nation and and, and start, you know, what, we need to be faster, we need to be quicker and we need to be more aware. Again, the fire.

R

Rob Mineault 36:50

Yeah, I work for a nonprofit that that deals specifically in early intervention in terms of blind and partially sighted kids. So I get it. I know, I'm mad now, too. . And we, we talked to so many people on the podcast, have incredibly different lived experiences. But the common thread through all that is that those formative years are so important. And to find that that's, that's the specific timeframe where we're dropping the ball is is frustrating. Um, do we want to talk a little bit about the organization and what you guys do and some of the programs that that you offer?

D

Dominique Chabot 37:33

Sure. So, we are a virtual organization. There are we're a team of nine right now, which is like the largest that we've ever been. And we're nonprofits, and we're kind of spread out all over Canada. I'm personally I'm in Cornwall, somewhere between Ottawa and Montreal. And most of my team is out in the Toronto area, I've got one out in Calgary, and that thought, when East Coast ish, so we're kind of all over and what we do is years, kind of like the broker of resources, so anything and everything autism related, whether it's employers looking for resources, schools, you know. I've provided programs for teachers who are supposed to be, you know, specializing and teaching special needs, I provided them with programming. You know, families looking for preliminary process, you know, what to do what, where to go next, we are that hub. So we get an incredible amount of calls and emails a week, I am that frontline worker, I've recently recruited help. And our calls increased just simply with a pandemic, like 82% last year. So it was when I was looking at 200 250 calls emails per week. And it was incredible. But I have never been

more proud to work for an organization like this one, if we do a lot. As far as programming goes, we offer a school readiness program, we offer an inclusivity program with the schools. We again help different players with resources and programming. And we just do a lot of connecting so we connect, you know, professionals with others, families with professionals and social groups and peer groups and we work with universities and so that we do whatever you got that's autism related. We did.

And with April being World Autism Awareness Month, are there any special events that you guys are putting on?

D

Dominique Chabot 39:46

Kind of hard with a pandemic? And I don't know about you guys, but we're heading back into the red zone.

R

Rob Mineault 39:54

Oh, really?

D

Dominique Chabot 39:55

Monday? Yeah. So we You know, and we have to say that we have such an amazing community that we've got a lot of organizations or even families that are printing their own little fundraisers across the nation. And, you know, some of the proceeds are coming to us or all of the proceeds are coming to us. So, we are, we depend on these little, you know, these little fundraisers in these, you know, whether it's a school or whether it's in a, you know, an employer, there's a lot of little ones going on across the nation, what we try to do is we try to pick up on those and share it on social media to give them that exposure as well. We have a huge following on social, and we make sure that, you know, these, these, whether it's families or individuals or schools or employers, they get that recognition as well. We would typically, especially this being our 45th year, you know, there's there's a lot that we wanted to do. And there's a lot that have, like we wanted to do, we had planned on having a gala in the fall to celebrate, you know, our 45th year and now that kind of, you know, so right now there's no set fundraiser, we have, you know, we're starting a merge page, which we're trying to do little things here and there. But mainly, you know, we are just trying to collaborate with our our followers and our families across the nation and bringing them up a little bit and giving them the exposure they

deserve.

R

Rob Mineault 41:28

Yeah, working for a nonprofit that relies on fundraising. Yeah, I know exactly what you what you mean. Thanks a lot, COVID. We would love to have you on again. Because any any one of those things that we talked about and touched on today, I would love to just talk about more, because I've got like a dozen more questions written down here. But I'm aware of time. So we would love to have you back on. But thank you so so much for taking the time out to talk to us because it's been great to be able to talk about autism. intelligently. We'd like I said, we've been waiting to do this for for six years. That and a live show, but we're not ..

R

Ryan Fleury 42:15

We're doing it!

S

Steve Barclay 42:18

We've actually, we've actually done it, it just wasn't suitable for primetime.

D

Dominique Chabot 42:27

The late Friday afternoon is that what happened?

S

Steve Barclay 42:30

Yeah, let's just say maybe, maybe tequila shouldn't have been involved

R

Rob Mineault 42:36

We could have released it but it would just been a big long bleep.

R

Ryan Fleury 42:45

Tequila makes everything better. Right. Next time we do it we'll invite you, Dominique

D

Dominique Chabot 42:53

Because I understand that it's quite early for you right now. But it is Friday.

R

Rob Mineault 42:58

But yeah, still, that's still too early on a Friday, even for us. Well, before we let you go, where can people find more information about Autism Canada?

D

Dominique Chabot 43:07

Well, they can go online and find us at autismcanada.org they can contact us. My gosh, what is the number? I don't call the organization! Number. We have a 1-800 number which is a toll free. Our website has all that information. And then I can be reached directly at info@autismCanada.org so they can email me as well. I am the info person.

R

Rob Mineault 43:38

Perfect. Wonderful. Dominique, thank you again so much. It's been a delight. And let's chat again.

D

Dominique Chabot 43:46

Absolutely. Thank you guys. Have a great day.

R

Ryan Fleury 43:48

You too.

D

Dominique Chabot 43:49

Okay. Okay. Take care.

S

Steve Barclay 43:54

I can turn my video off. You guys don't need to see me.

R

Rob Mineault 43:56

Yeah, no. I noticed whenever there's a cute blonde Steve's camera can magically comes on.

S

Steve Barclay 44:03

I want them to be sure they know what I look like when you see me. That's right. Oh, there's that attractive guy from the podcast?

R

Rob Mineault 44:09

Yeah, that's right. No, that was awesome. That was so good. I'm so glad that we finally are able to talk about this. I and literally, I did like I have like 10 other questions that I wanted to talk about. But we'll just have her on again. I think it'd be a great, some great follow up shows there. Absolutely. Yeah.

S

Steve Barclay 44:32

Because Yeah, I mean, autism is such a broad, you know, collection of, of different conditions. You know, you could, if you were to drill down through the autism spectrum, you would hit so many different conditions that are very fascinating. There's there's some really, really interesting you know, differences in the way that people process and think and, you know, we could we could spend days on this topic.

R

Rob Mineault 45:08

Yeah, we really could and but i love it i love the simplicity of her description where it's just like, it's just somebody whose brain is wired a bit differently, and they just they process things differently. And I think that that's such a such a great way to think about it. But you know, that it's the early intervention thing is just maddening. Like, yeah, four year waitlist, year, waitlist. And, and a lot of money like that, you know, people don't necessarily have that type of money. And early into something like early intervention is so crucial and so important. Not only not only for, say, the child that that has it, but for the family, because, you know, we see that all the time, at blind beginnings, where there's a component of being diagnosed. That that involves the whole family, there's a there's a process that parents and siblings and everybody, the entire family has to go through. And until that diagnosis happens, it must be incredibly hard to sort of deal with. So yeah, we need to get our shit together and make those diagnoses happen a lot sooner than they are. I'm looking at you government. I don't know who's to blame, but I would just blame the government. Hey, Ryan.

R

Ryan Fleury 46:30

Rob?

R

Rob Mineault 46:31

Where can people find us?

R

Ryan Fleury 46:34

They can find us online at atbanter.com

R

Rob Mineault 46:38

Hey, they can also drop us an email if they so desire to tell us how cool we are and how Steve's the good looking one. Looking at you Shan. cowbell@atbanter.com.

S

Steve Barclay 46:51

And if email isn't your thing, and you are sucked into social media the way many many people do. You can find us on Facebook. And you can also find us on Twitter. And if you're very, very patient occasionally you'll find us on Instagram.

R

Rob Mineault 47:07

Yeah. You never know. All right, well, hey, then that is going to do it for us this week. Thank you, everybody for listening. Big thanks to Dominique for joining us, of course, and we will see everybody next week.

R

Ryan Fleury 47:29

Bye.