

AT Banter Podcast Episode 286 - Christie Faye Collins & NOMI...

Tue, 5/24 8:50AM 1:01:15

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, app, disability, community, disabled, person, bumble, dating app, dating apps, disclose, swiping, dating, autistic, tinder, profile, ryan, friendship, feel, christie, accessibility requirements

SPEAKERS

Steve Barclay, Rob Mineault, Lis Malone, Ryan Fleury, Christie Faye Collins

R Ryan Fleury 03:29
Hey, and welcome to a nother episode of AT Banter

S Steve Barclay 03:34
Banter banter.

R Rob Mineault 03:38
That was really creepy. This is of course podcast where we talk with advocates and members of the disability community to educate and inspire better conversation about disability. Hey, my name is Rob Mineault and joining me today, "Mr. Swipe right" himself, Mr. Ryan Fleury.

R Ryan Fleury 04:04
What if I'm dyslexic?

R Rob Mineault 04:06
That's a good that's a very interesting - I don't think anyone's really thought of that. That's interesting. Ah, hey, also joining me to do this little podcast Mr. Steve Barclay.

S Steve Barclay 04:22
That's me

R Rob Mineault 04:24
And bringing up - no wait - Geez I guess I'm using the anchoring anchoring batting, what's the what's the term for when you bat last?

L Lis Malone 04:39
Oh god Mr. Sports there.

R Rob Mineault 04:42
That's that's baseball right? Surely to become our designated hitter. Our designated hitter

R Ryan Fleury 04:51
Or waterboy

L Lis Malone 04:53
Water person

R Rob Mineault 04:54
Our water person, Lis Malone.

L Lis Malone 04:59
What up Party People

R Rob Mineault 05:03
Okay, well, off to a stellar start already. You should never let me use sports analogies. I'm just saying totally wrong. I don't know. I just feel like everybody usually goes to them ...

L Lis Malone 05:19
So, you know, we're you know, we're in the playoffs now for the NHL Stanley Cup. That's right. There, the Hurricanes, they're still in it there. I think we play the Rangers next. But then we got the Panthers and Lightning. Leafs are out. That was sorry, Canada.

R

Rob Mineault 05:43

Well, we still got the battle of Alberta going on. We've got the flames and the Oilers fighting it out in the next round. Hmm. Ooh, fire and oil. Yeah, how explosive. The only plus about this is that it means that there will be a Canadian team in the next round no matter what. All right. Well, listen, I only hope that Vancouver makes it into the playoffs because I need a new TV. And I'm hoping for a riot.

S

Steve Barclay 06:14

Well, you'll have to wait till next season.

L

Lis Malone 06:16

They're gone

R

Ryan Fleury 06:23

Sports Talk.

R

Rob Mineault 06:24

That's all I have to contribute to it.

L

Lis Malone 06:29

Maybe next year.

R

Rob Mineault 06:31

That's right. I mean, that's pretty much you could put that on the Canucks jerseys at this point, I think right? Yes. Although can I blame them? If I was if I was a professional hockey player, I would not be able to wait until we get knocked out. Like it would just be I can hardly wait to go and just have an offseason. So this is why I was never into sports. Okay. Anyways, we've completely digressed and gone off into the weeds. Hey, Ryan.

R

Ryan Fleury 07:02

Yes, Rob?

R Rob Mineault 07:04
What the heck are we doing today?

R Ryan Fleury 07:06
Well, joining us today is Christy Faye Collins, who is a web developer from Victoria, British Columbia, and also the founder of NOMI, which is the app for the disabled and neurodivergent community to make connections with each other. Welcome, Christy.

C Christie Faye Collins 07:24
Hello. It's so nice to be here with you guys.

R Ryan Fleury 07:27
Thanks for joining us.

R Rob Mineault 07:28
Yeah, we have to apologize for that sports talk.

C Christie Faye Collins 07:31
Oh, no, it's okay. It was so hard not to laugh out loud in the middle of that. I don't know. I wasn't introduced yet. Didn't want to intrude?

R Rob Mineault 07:39
Spoilers!

R Ryan Fleury 07:40
You can laugh hard now.

C Christie Faye Collins 07:44
I feel like there'll be a lot of laughter throughout this podcast, so I'll get a chance.

R Rob Mineault 07:51

All right, well, let's get things started properly. Give us a little bit of a snapshot maybe a little bit about you. And a little bit about NOMI.

C Christie Faye Collins 08:02

Yeah. So you mentioned that I'm a web developer. I'm not doing much of the development of this app. I have a tech team. So they're handling that. But yeah, I am originally from Vancouver, lived in Montreal for a few years now. I'm back on the West Coast. And it's so nice to be back. Just moved here again in September. So I'm living in Victoria now with my partner. And we go on hikes every week. And that's so lovely. So yeah, um, that's kind of a little bit about me. I've been working on Nomi for a couple months full time now. It's a dating and friendship app for disabled and neurodivergent folks, we want it to look pretty similar to modern dating apps just 10 times more accessible and curated specifically for the needs of our disabled and neurodivergent communities.

R Rob Mineault 08:53

So what sort of things would you change in your app versus you know, say a regular dating app? And keep in mind you're explaining this to a 54 year old guys been married for 28 years so I've never dated online. Oh, you have not lived.

C Christie Faye Collins 09:11

Many people will tell you it's an experience that is fine to not have. So yeah, basically, we would want to change the kind of swiping mechanism, Tinder introduced their swiping mechanism, I think in 2008, I should probably know the specific date but it was over a decade ago at least that they introduced that and it really changed the dating game, but it made it more of a game. It really gamified the process. So you get on Tinder, you start swiping. And eventually you're not even seeing a person on the other end of the screen. Especially since there's they don't tend to have a very long bio. So it's just a photo of dude holding a fish and then you have a couple sentences about him and you need to make some sort of decision on whether Not you want to pursue talking to that person or meet up with them. So we would want to go back to having a bigger snapshot of a person, no more swiping, but still keeping some simpler elements of the swiping interface. So we want to still be able to scroll pretty relatively quickly through profiles. But we do want you to have a chance to actually expand your bio, have more prompts, bring in some of those elements of Hinge and Bumble, where you can have prompts that you can answer, and maybe some audio clips and video. So just having a more well rounded snapshot of a person, and stepping back a little bit from the gaming process of swiping right and swiping left on human beings.

R Rob Mineault 10:53

So what sort of prompted this idea to sort of come about?

C Christie Faye Collins 10:58



Christie Faye Collins 10:58

Good question. So I'll give you the longer answer, since it's a long form podcast. So yeah, I've always had quite a sense of like, a strong sense of justice for both the queer community and the disability community, specifically with neuro divergence. So all throughout my life, I have just not understood how people could discriminate against others. And it just didn't make any sense to me. And especially with the queer community, I was thinking, Oh, I'm a really good ally. And like, I'd go to pride every year. And I would just like, see all the beautiful people expressing themselves, until I realized in my early 20s, that I'm also queer. So that was one thing. And then with the Disability Justice portion of it, I have been going through a discovery of my own over the past couple years that I'm autistic. So that also makes sense. I connected deeply with autism, I was looking up symptoms at like, 12. And I was like, oh, man, that'd be so cool if I was autistic, it would really explain a lot about me, but I'm not so whatever. And then I went through my life and I'm like, oh, no, hold on. I am. So that's been a very positive discovery for me. And right around the time that I was making this discovery, and starting this process, I was watching 'Love on the Spectrum' on Netflix. And in around Episode Two, the counselor was talking to those a counselor, I'll give a bit of a summary on Love on the Spectrum for those who don't know. So it's a kind of Docu series on Netflix that follows the love lives of a few people who are on the autism spectrum. And they follow them on dates, they kind of like they hire a counselor to help them navigate the dating scene and the weird social rules that we have around dating. And at around Episode Two, the counselor was she turned to the camera, and she was talking about how, you know, like, how does somebody disclose that they're autistic do they get on the dating apps, because a lot of autistic folks use dating apps. It's not made to be very accessible. But it's an option that we have when we don't want to be overstimulated in social settings. Or maybe we just have a very small group of friends. So we don't actually have the opportunity to meet a lot of people in like face to face social settings. So it is a very convenient platform for anybody, disabled folks, neurodivergent, folks, and anybody for with any ability. But yeah, she was saying, Do you disclose it in your dating bio? Or do you tell them when you're chatting with them through the app? Or do you even get on the date with them, and then drop it casually into conversation? So I started thinking about it. And I was like, hold on, like, Is there really nothing? There's no dating app specifically for neurodivergent, folks. And sure enough, there is one it was created in 2018. It's called Hiki, and it's quite popular. It's New York based and it's a wonderful resource for autistic folks. So anyone who feels drawn to that, absolutely go for it. That's amazing. So I figured if I could expand to neurodivergent and disabled folks, because there's a lot of overlap, the intersection between disability and neuro divergence is huge. So I would love to accommodate for disability and neuro divergence and see yeah, how many things overlap between disability and neuro divergence in terms of features in a dating app and what people are looking for? And the personal aspects that connection that people are looking for? So yeah, that's that. That's how I kind of came up with the idea. Because yeah, there's the only app that I saw was Hiki. And then there are a few others. But I took a quick look at their interface. And I've gotten more into detail in them now. And it's just not, it doesn't feel accessible to me, it doesn't feel like it's been updated in years and years for websites for disabled people specifically. And I was looking on a forum just the other day that was talking about different apps, different resources for connection for disabled folks. And apparently, dating for disabled is not even screen reader friendly. So that doesn't make any sense. So yeah, that is the long story about how this came about.



Rob Mineault 16:03

Well, that's so interesting, too, that you talk about disclosing, because I know that I've talked with with people in the disability community, from time to time, specifically about conventional

dating apps, and what it's like to date on those. And that that's actually a really big issue, that, you know, that that idea of when do you disclose, you know, you're, you know, say, say you're blind or partially sighted, and you have a dating profile, you have a picture and all of that, and it's not, you know, immediately obvious that you do have a visual impairment,... when you disclose is really kind of a personal choice that can be really hard to navigate. And so I really see that that's one of the really big advantages of this is that you can really, you don't have to worry about that you can just be straight up front, and you know, that everybody who's participating on this platform is, you know, is going to be fine with that, or, you know, it's not going to be something that you have to necessarily worry about.

C Christie Faye Collins 17:08

Absolutely. Yeah, I think that's a huge benefit of having a platform specifically for the people of your community, because there's already that understanding. And even if some people don't feel necessarily safe disclosing that right away, because that's a huge issue as well, you don't want to put all of your information out there and potentially become a target. But yeah, it's amazing to have something that if you do end up having a conversation about it, it's not going to be a big deal, because somebody is expecting you to have a disability or a neurodivergence.

R Rob Mineault 17:46

But it's also you know, it kind of acts as this sort of-- I don't want to use the term safe space, but kind of a safe space where people can just can disclose at at their comfort.

C Christie Faye Collins 18:00

Yeah, that's what I'm hoping I really do hope that people can feel safe. And we'll do our best on our end to keep it as safe as possible and implement any safety features that we can and stay on top of any reports that come up, so that we can keep it kind of a sanctuary for folks who just want to connect with other people in their communities.

L Lis Malone 18:23

So will the friend components of the app sort of mimic the way Bumble does it where there's like a dating side, and then there's a friend aspect to it.

C Christie Faye Collins 18:36

That's what we're aiming for right now. I think it's nice having a clear delineation between friendship and dating. The way that the app that I referred to earlier he has is they have a tag system. So on your profile, you just have one profile. And you can say, I'm looking for love, I'm looking for friendship, and it just comes up as a cute little icon. So that's another option. But I do appreciate the way that Bumble has it set up. So you can have a completely different profile for friendship. So if you want to show one part of your personality as a friend, like this is my friend persona. And this is what I'm going for in friendship. And then maybe the romantic

profile, or whatever people are looking for the dating profile can be more serious. And like obviously, still trying to keep it light and fun and show your playful side. But it might be more like, Hey, I'm looking for children in the future. And I'm looking for this specific kind of relationship and I'm looking for these genders. And then with friendship, it could possibly just be like a different part of your personality. So that's why I do appreciate the way that Bumble does it. So that is what we're going for right now.

L Lis Malone 19:49

Yeah, and the thing I do like about Bumble's model at least is that even people who are married who just want to meet make new friends in their community. And I know that's also a big thing in the disabled community is that sometimes we like don't know a lot of people in the blind and low vision community where I live, and they're there. And sometimes something like this, regardless of your relationship status, or what you're looking for romantically, or even if you're not looking for anything romantically, it seems like it could be a really great way to connect with people.

C Christie Faye Collins 20:25

Yeah, I hope that people do use it to find community. Hold on, I'm just going to bring up some stats. I conducted a survey a little while ago, I do have a new survey up. But one of the questions that we asked was, "What kind of relationship would you be looking for if you were to use Nomi", and 134 out of 150 respondents said friendship among the other models, they could select as many as they wanted. But that's 89% of people who are craving friendship. And it makes sense coming out of this pandemic, too. But they're really like, there's Reddit, you can connect with people through Reddit, but it's less personal on Reddit, I feel. And if you're on a mainstream dating app, then you're not really among your community, you can find your community there. But it's a little bit harder, especially with the disclosing your disability. So if you're specifically looking for blind or low vision community, then you're not necessarily going to find it as easily being on a mainstream app. So I really do hope that people take advantage of the friendship part of the app and find people that they can connect with and talk about, like relate to.

L Lis Malone 21:44

So am I the only one that has used any of these dating apps?

R Rob Mineault 21:55

No. And in fact, you know what, here's, here's my thing. I have a pitch as it's when once you're done this, could you please create a dating site for cat people? Because I'm tired of running up against dog people. Apologies to almost all of the dog people that are in this room right now, but you're all a bunch of weirdos.

C Christie Faye Collins 22:20

 Christie Faye Collins 22:20
I'm with Rob, I've got three cats.

 Ryan Fleury 22:24
People will see it in your profile.

 Rob Mineault 22:26
You can call it Meow Mix.

 Christie Faye Collins 22:29
I'm sure that would not be a copyright infringement.

 Ryan Fleury 22:33
Meow Mates?

 Steve Barclay 22:40
Puurfect Match or Puurfect?

 Rob Mineault 22:47
Okay, well, we'll talk we'll talk after the podcast because the we're gonna, we'll make this happen. What kind of a challenge is it when you when you sat down to develop this, uh, you know, just even just as a web developer, in terms of the back end stuff? The matchmaking algorithm, all of that stuff. Because I'm assuming that a lot of these other dating sites, they're probably not very transparent in terms of how they structure sort the back end and how the technology works. In order to do this, would did you kind of have to look at this and go, well, we're just starting from scratch, we just have to kind of figure out how to make this work?

 Christie Faye Collins 23:30
Yeah, pretty much. Right now, we don't have funding, so everyone is volunteering their time. So I'm scrambling to get some funding right now. But the developers are bootstrapping it, which basically means that they're putting together a bunch of free their services that provide some parts of their service for free. And since we don't have any user base right now, they're just bootstrapping all of that together, putting together all of the free services, all of the the database and the messaging and any part of the app that everyone else would have their own custom algorithm for, we can basically take little bits of that from different services. So yeah, that's basically how we're handling the backend right now. Eventually, as we scale up, that will

become more complicated. And as we have more funding, we'll be able to invest in creating our own algorithm. We're trying to find a way to make a simple matching algorithm based on interests, because that's a huge thing, especially in the Autistic community. bonding over interests is so important. So yeah, we want to have some sort of way that people can see oh, you also like these things without us having to develop a whole matching algorithm on our own in the first year.

R

Rob Mineault 25:00

And now is sort of the plan going forward to keep it a completely free? Or are you sort of thinking that down the road, you would build in some sort of a subscription model? Kind of like kind of like the you know, all these current platforms? Right? They have, they certainly have a free tier that, you know, you have certain abilities unlocked. But then there's a, there's a pay tier. Is that, is that something that you guys are looking at, as well or just completely free?

C

Christie Faye Collins 25:31

Yeah, so obviously, we understand that within the disabled community, especially in BC, I think the maximum that you can get on disability is \$1,300 a month. So we really want to make it accessible to as many people as possible. But we also don't want to restrict the use of the app, because like you said, that's how a lot of dating apps work these days, it's called a freemium model, you have the free tier, and that allows you to match with people sometimes allows you to message people. I don't know exactly how, like every single dating app handles that. But generally, if you match with someone, you can communicate with them. And that's the basic level. And then if you want anything more than that, if you want priority in their algorithm, or if you want to see how many people like do without you liking them first, or if you want to change your location as you travel, that's all premium. So those, the premium subscription tends to cost around \$29. That's the average per month if you're just paying per month. So that's not affordable. And so basically, anyone who's on a budget is restricted to what the free tier offers them, which restricts the amount of connection that you could possibly have with people. So what we're looking at right now is a paid subscription per month, but we want it to be pay what you can. So the maximum you could possibly pay is \$29, which is the average per month, like I said for the other apps, but at the very minimum, it will be very, very affordable, just a few dollars per month, or maybe like a 10 to \$12 subscription for a year. And the benefits of that is that you would have access to all of the features that Nomi has to offer. And especially in the safety aspect, it discourages unsafe individuals from easily accessing the app. So if there's just a bit more friction for people, they would be less inclined to get on the app if they're abusers or if they're trying to target people. And that also ensures that we can hire accessibility experts and pay fair wages to our team of disabled and neurodivergent employees.

R

Rob Mineault 28:08

Neurodiversity and disability, I mean, there's so many gradients of it, and you know, it's so it's so huge. Is that kind of a challenge when you guys are looking for, you know, to build something that's going to work for for as many as many of those groups as as possible?



C Christie Faye Collins 28:29

Yeah, yeah, that's, that's a big reason why we're conducting now our second survey, because I want to dig deeper into specifically what everyone's needs are and try to meet as many of those needs as possible. Yeah, because some people, I get so much conflicting feedback, some people actually do really like the swiping mechanism. And then other people would never use an app that requires them to swipe right or swipe left on someone. So we have to choose one. It's one of those decisions that's always going to make somebody mad, or somebody will always feel not necessarily mad, but somebody will feel left out by whatever decision we make. So we're trying to make decisions that cater to the grand majority of people. But trying to accommodate accommodate as many things as many features as what makes sense to the vast majority of people.

R Rob Mineault 29:29

Right.

R Ryan Fleury 29:30

Well you have to start somewhere. Apple evolved over time as well.

C Christie Faye Collins 29:34

Exactly. Yeah, I'm a very like, big picture all or nothing, do it perfectly or don't do it at all kind of person.

R Ryan Fleury 29:42

Yeah, but with that, you may not ever get started.

C Christie Faye Collins 29:46

Exactly. Yeah. It's something that I've personally, this has been a great challenge for me because I have to take it step by step and I can't just do all or nothing with this, because it's so important to me that I want it to succeed. And in order for it to succeed, we have to start at square one. So yeah.

R Ryan Fleury 30:10

Well, the unfortunate part and we've talked about this all the time on our podcast is not everybody that community is going to agree, you know, whether you're talking to me as a blind person or Lis as a partially sighted person, you know, our belief systems, our needs, our wants, our accessibility is going to be very different. So you won't win.

C Christie Faye Collins 30:34

Yeah. And I actually do feel like that's part of why this doesn't exist yet. I think that it's such a challenge, like a lot of people don't even want to address it, they don't even want to go there. They want it, they want it to exist and make sense that it would exist. But you do have to acknowledge the fact that each person has their own accessibility requirements, their own emotional needs. And even though we use the term disability community, neurodivergent community, there are so many sub communities within that. And even within the sub communities, people don't agree on everything.

R Ryan Fleury 31:12

Exactly. And all you can do is follow the accessibility standards and guidelines. And that's all you can do.

R Rob Mineault 31:18

Well on the other thing that that you're doing right is, is you're consulting with the community that you're trying to serve. And, you know, it seems really intuitive to us. But you'd be surprised that how many, how many app developers or manufacturers of different assistive technology or different apps that we talked to that missed that process. They don't actually consult the community and actually ask the questions of what what, what are your needs? What are your interests? And they just go ahead and they go, they go develop something that nobody actually really wants.

R Ryan Fleury 31:54

Well, it's interesting, because I saw a statistic, I think, on Twitter today, that I think 30% of the apps in the App Store on both iOS or Google Play Store are abandoned. They're no longer being developed. They're just sitting there. They're dead apps. So if people had actually involved the community, in their app development, whatever the app was related to, whether it's gaming, media, whatever, those apps may have had a better chance of success. Right?

C Christie Faye Collins 32:26

That's wild. That's nearly a third. Yeah, well, there's there's that saying, for a reason, 'nothing about us without us'. Because you're never going to actually succeed with anything that is catering to a community without talking to the community, because you're not actually going to know what the community needs.

R Rob Mineault 32:50

So speaking of that, though, so what kind of response have you gotten from the community when you when you sort of reach out and talk to different people?

C Christie Faye Collins 32:58

Yeah, it's been overwhelmingly positive. There are some concerns, obviously, like I mentioned, safety. But if we can address that as elegantly as possible, and as seriously as possible, I think that everyone will have an opportunity to meet their community. So yeah, actually, I've I've talked to a few people, I posted a few things on Reddit just asking for feedback on the website, when I first got the website up and running. And I got a couple of direct messages from people saying, hey, if you need a hand, I would love to help you. This is actually something that I've been wanting to do. Personally, I've been wanting to develop this specific app, connection app for disabled and neurodivergent, folks, so I'm so glad someone's doing it. Because a lot of people like you know, you have your full time job, your time is taken up with a lot of things. It's just a dream that you could create something like this. And so many people are just so relieved that I'm doing it now and that we're doing it. So yeah, everyone has been very, very enthusiastically excited about it, which is so amazing. Like it's so especially through the pandemic, it feels so isolating, just working from home and being alone all the time. And I don't know how people feel until I put myself out there. And when I finally put it out there and received all of that positive feedback. I like a few times I started my work day, and then just started crying because I had received so many wonderful messages and emails from people. And I couldn't start my workday for another hour while I try to calm down. So it's been beautiful.

L Lis Malone 34:51

That's how Ryan feels when he opens up the AT Banter cowbell email account, he gets all warm and fuzzy.

R Ryan Fleury 34:59

It does.

R Rob Mineault 35:01

Really? I thought he just wept openly because just no one's emailing us.

R Ryan Fleury 35:04

They are! It's a very lonely place. Have you looked at it? No.

S Steve Barclay 35:18

You never give me access to it.

R Ryan Fleury 35:20

R Ryan Fleury 35:20
Oh, okay. Maybe I will.

L Lis Malone 35:23
Christie, we go off the rails very easily.

R Ryan Fleury 35:28
And under the bus once in a while, usually each episode.

L Lis Malone 35:34
So my, my, my bad. I'm sorry, I took us off the rails. But Christie, I want to ask you a serious question. Would you be comfortable just sharing a little bit about what the dating challenges might be for the neurodivergent community? Because I think that sometimes for some certain types of disabilities, it might not I'm not speaking for everyone. But there are certain things that might seem that are obvious because of the visible disability aspect to it. But for invisible disabilities, the challenges are very unique.

C Christie Faye Collins 36:07
Yeah, I mean, again, like you said, everyone's experience is very unique. So there's actually so much so many things that people have said, reasons why mainstream dating apps don't work for them. But I guess one specific example would be I was at a party a couple of weeks ago, yay, we can finally start socializing. And the NOMI came up and they asked me why what my personal involvement is why I came up with the idea. So I told them, I'm autistic. And one of them was like, Oh, my God, but like, you can look me in the eye. And I'm like, Yeah, well, I'm just one autistic person. And they're like, Well, yeah, like I was on a date with this person a couple of years ago, and he couldn't look me in the eye. And I asked him, why can't you look me in the eye. And the person told him that he was autistic. And like, first of all, don't ask anybody why they do what they do, unless you're very close to them. But yeah, it was just one thing where I was like, Oh, that, like, that's why I'm doing this, that is a really big reason why I'm doing this because a lot of people who are autistic, they have to stim. So I like to like, flick my hand back and forth. And that helps to release some energy when I'm anxious. And I can look people in the eye, but I'm on the opposite end, where I make very intense eye contact with people, and have to remember that I need to look away sometimes, because that can be overwhelming for people. So there's just like little ways that neurodivergent people socialize. And that might just look a little bit different while they're socializing with other people. So yeah, that's that's one thing where like, a resource where people already kind of understand why you do what you do, they already maybe have a bit of an understanding of your neurodivergence, it might just make it a more comfortable experience for everyone. Because if you can't look somebody in the eye, or don't want to look someone in the eye right away, that can be okay. You can just focus on your meal, you can focus on like the space around someone's head or

look at their mouth or their ear, like whatever things that people do. To avoid eye contact. That's, that would just be okay. And it wouldn't have to be a thing, it wouldn't have to be an issue.

R

Rob Mineault 38:44

Really, what it's doing, is it's giving people an even playing field in terms of, of dating.

C

Christie Faye Collins 38:51

Yeah, exactly. And in terms of, you know, like people's accessibility requirements, it would maybe be a little bit strange for a non disabled person or neurotypical person if on your mainstream dating app profile, you said, Oh, I have a service dog with me. Or like, oh, I can't access some restaurants or have these accessibility requirements like that would be a little bit like, oh, that person might be a bit too much work, quote, unquote. Absolutely not too much work. Everyone has accessibility requirements. But like, it might just be a little bit of like, oh, that person has accessibility requirements. So with this app, it would just be normal. It would be a regular question that is asked on everyone's profile, and they can answer it if they like that, yes, I have a service dog with me. And that would be like cool, we'll like make sure that it's accessible for a dog or we'll make sure that it's wheelchair accessible wherever we're going. And it's less of a hurdle to get over and less anxious for the person who was writing the profile to add that on their profile, if that's normalized. So yeah, like you said, it's just more of an even playing field for everybody.

R

Rob Mineault 40:09

Wow. And that, you know, it's so interesting that you mentioned anxiety, because you're absolutely right, the more anxiety that you can remove from online dating and the online dating experience is a plus, because it's anxiety ridden already, just by the fact that it's online dating.

C

Christie Faye Collins 40:27

It is. Yeah. Yeah, it's a weird thing. Like, it feels a little bit superficial, it's definitely becoming more normalized, and there's less stigma around it than there was even a few years ago. But it's still like, there's that hurdle that you need to get over that anxiety that you need to work through in order to even make a profile, let alone add all this information about you.

R

Rob Mineault 40:56

Well, and that, yeah, and you bring up an interesting point, too, that this, this platform is even more needed. Because for a lot of people, the, quote, conventional way of say, going out and meeting people isn't necessarily a great option. Like, you know, going out to bars, going into

pubs, for some people, you know, those those types of situations are just overwhelming. And so, you know, when, when you when you can't do a lot of those things. meeting somebody online is really kind of a one of the best ways to do it.

C Christie Faye Collins 41:33

It is yeah, it just makes sense. Like, you can have a full relationship with somebody. Somebody on my team said that one of their friends who's disabled, at the very beginning of the pandemic met somebody online. And both of them are keeping their identities undisclosed, they're just chatting through, I think, mostly email text. I don't even know if they exchange photos, but they talk every single day. And they're in a relationship, like they're together, they're each other's people. And they just choose to keep their identities more private. So that works great for them. And that's such a wonderful story. And it's a bit of an extreme example of online dating, but I think it is an example of like, you can find whatever you need, through the internet.

R Rob Mineault 42:27

You know, when the more that we talking about this, the more that I'm stunned that there's so little out there, because there seems to be a huge need and a huge benefit to to build a platform like this.

C Christie Faye Collins 42:42

There is just under a quarter of Canada's population identifies as disabled, and over a quarter of the States' population, because the States' health care system is super messed up, identify as as disabled. So it's, there's so many people, and it doesn't make sense that there wouldn't be a mainstream go to dating app for people with disabilities.

L Lis Malone 43:09

Have you received any pushback for potentially sending the message that disabled people can only to date other disabled people? Has that ever come up in any of the any of the critiques of of what you're doing?

C Christie Faye Collins 43:25

A little bit. Yeah. I feel like it's gonna come up more and more, but already, I sent you, Ryan, the CBC article.

R Ryan Fleury 43:34

Yeah. Saw some of the comments.

C Christie Faye Collins 43:37

So one of the comments there said, This feels really gross as the target demographic for this, it doesn't make sense that I should only socialize with other neurodivergent or disabled people. And I do absolutely see where they're coming from. But first of all, they don't have to use it, if they don't feel like it. It's not for them. But second of all, like, I think that it's wonderful to have direct access to your community. And if you don't want to socialize with other, like, if you're autistic, and you don't want to socialize with other autistic people, that's okay. But so many people do. And so many people find value in connecting directly with their community. So I don't feel like as that progresses, and as that might amp up, I don't feel like I will be personally affected by that. Because I do believe that so many people will benefit from having direct access to their own community.

L Lis Malone 44:36

As Ryan said, we can't we can't agree on anything. So..

R Ryan Fleury 44:41

Well, that's just it, and everybody has their own story, right? So you know, you can choose where you want to go. If you want to go to the mainstream apps, there's 25 of them, pick one. If you're somebody with a disability who wants to build connections, there's none. So you know, you don't have 25 apps to pick and choose from you're looking for community you Looking for friendship, you're looking for whatever it might be. And there is nowhere to go currently. So, you know, this, this has to happen.

L Lis Malone 45:08

And it's just like with the regular dating apps, like none of them that exists, ever seem to fit the bill because I most people, when you ask a single people, they're like, oh, yeah, I'm on Tinder. I'm on Bumble, I'm on Hinge. I'm on Facebook, whatever they do. And then, you know, so I would imagine that this would just be or could be another community to join. You increase your odds?

R Rob Mineault 45:35

Yeah, no, exactly. I mean, it's not like you can only join one. And for a lot of people, a lot of these a lot of the different dating apps have different angles that appeal to one demographic or the other. Bumble's a lot more sort of, friendly towards women.

L Lis Malone 45:56

It's woman owned. Yeah.

R

Rob Mineault 45:58

They are the first ones that have to message. So, you know, whereas Tinder, it's just, you know, it's it's sort of the Wild West, and then Plenty of Fish. Well, that's, I don't even know what what's after the Wild West, I don't know, Sodom, Gomorrah, I don't know, like, I don't know, one of the two. So people pick and choose which one is sort of right for them. And often, you're absolutely right, they'll join multiple. So and I think the benefit of a platform like this is that what it could maybe do also is that it would help build confidence for somebody with a disability that, that that might spill out to some of these other mainstream apps. They might not feel so self conscious about being open and honest, and when to disclose on say, you know, Bumble, if, if they're sort of used to it on this platform. So I think that it really it has a lot of potential benefits for sure.

C

Christie Faye Collins 47:02

Yeah, I like that a lot. I never actually thought that the benefits of this could spill out onto other mainstream dating apps. But I think you're right. Yeah, I feel like if you were if again, if you got over the anxiety and the hurdle of disclosing a little bit more about yourself a little bit more vulnerability that might actually help you and other dating apps? And maybe because of NOMI even if you don't make a direct connection through NOMI, you would make a connection through Bumble, because of that vulnerability.

R

Rob Mineault 47:34

Yeah, that's right. And you know, it helps people learn how to sort of talk about their own disability on a platform like this. So I yeah, I love it. So let me ask you this. Where are you guys in the process? Because I know that you know, this is really sort of fairly new. Have you been able to sort of look downstream and have an idea of the release schedule? Or are you really sort of in these early days of of just research and development.

C

Christie Faye Collins 48:08

More on the early days end of things, but we do have code now, which is very exciting. One of my developers just showed me a part of the front end that he had developed last week. So that was wonderful to see, because I've only made actual, like, not real prototype mock ups, but just kind of design of the app. So he took those designs and turned it into code. So we have that now. And I am in the middle of creating a pitch for investors, we're looking mostly for independent investor money. And that is much more of an involved process than I thought it would be. So that's taking a lot of time. And yeah, so we are quite close, I would say we're a few weeks out from having a good amount of money to start hiring people and developing this more seriously. But yeah, I would say we're kind of like, just past the early, no prototype, phase and more into the Okay, we know that this is an idea that will work. We know that this team is capable of making this work. And now the next step is just having money so that we can sustain ourselves while we create this. So right now the estimated timeline is hopefully we will have our user testing done before 2023. And then we'll be able to release it to British Columbia, or at least most of British Columbia, in early 2023. And then from there we're going to release it

to larger cities so that by the city, you can make connections that you can actually where you can actually meet up with a person if you want to. Because that's a big issue with social apps where if it's not, if you don't have enough users in your area, you're less inclined to actually continue using the app, even if you would potentially find value in it. So yeah, hopefully, throughout 2023, we're able to release it to all of Canada and then go global from there.

 Rob Mineault 50:34

So if people are interested in just contacting you, maybe they they want to give their two cents about what they might like to see. Or who knows that investor out there? Or somebody who's interested in joining the team? Where can people reach out and contact you?

 Christie Faye Collins 50:54

Yeah, so first off, I'll plug the website. It's nomicconnect.net. And you can contact me through the contact page, you can take our survey through the Contact page, it's just listed on the page. Otherwise, if you want to email me directly, it's christiefaye@nomicconnect.net. And I would love to just hear about your experience as a disabled or neurodivergent person your experience on dating apps. Or if you just wanted to answer those questions on the survey, that would be wonderful. I'm open to setting up a zoom call if you'd like more personal one on one session. So I'm just open to any and all feedback, even if you just want to say hey, this is a great idea, because that brightens my day. I love to hear that. So yeah, that's where you can reach me.

 Rob Mineault 51:58

I would just encourage all our listeners, try not to make Christie cry at work. That's all we ask.

 Christie Faye Collins 52:08

Yeah, I'll be just so unproductive if you make me cry every day.

 Rob Mineault 52:15

Thanks so much for coming on. It's been an absolute delight. Best of luck with the app and listen, please come back and talk to us maybe a little bit later this year and give us an update on how it's doing. I would love that.

 Christie Faye Collins 52:28

Thank you so much for having me on today.

 Rob Mineault 52:33

 LIS MAIONE 52:32

Thank you.

 Christie Faye Collins 52:35

All right. I'll talk to you guys later.

 Rob Mineault 52:37

Yeah, for sure. And we will this will be posted up next week. Probably next Wednesday. So what was happy to send you a link feel free to do whatever you would like with it.

 Christie Faye Collins 52:48

Cool. Thank you.

 Rob Mineault 52:50

All right, well, best of luck Christie and thanks again.

 Christie Faye Collins 52:58

Thank you so much.

 Rob Mineault 53:00

Listen, I'm waiting for Meow Mix to launch. I thought it was Puufect Match. Oh Puurfect Match. Oh is that we've renamed rebranded already okay. Well, copyright issues. I checked the domain names available. Oh, really? Okay.

 Ryan Fleury 53:17

It's probably better if it was Puurfect Partner.

 Steve Barclay 53:29

Yeah, that one's available too.

 Rob Mineault 54:44

Well you know what? I forgot to ask her about the name where the name NOMI came from

well you know what. I forgot to ask her about the name, where the name Nomi came from.

L Lis Malone 54:55
It was named after a favorite character from Sense 8

R Rob Mineault 55:01
Oh, stop doing your research you guys. You guys are no fun.

R Ryan Fleury 55:06
We talked about this earlier today.

L Lis Malone 55:08
Yes, you did. He forgot.

R Rob Mineault 55:12
That's what happens when you guys encourage me to drink on the podcast. I lose track of everything.

R Ryan Fleury 55:18
I blame Christie.

R Rob Mineault 55:20
Yeah, well, listen. I'm glad to finally have a guest that encourages us to drink all right. Hey, Ryan. Yes, Rob? How you doing?

R Ryan Fleury 55:34
I'm doing well. Thank you.

R Rob Mineault 55:36
I don't know why I went to you and we're supposed to go to Lis.

R Ryan Fleury 55:38
I know, but you you've been drinking again.

R Rob Mineault 55:41
Exactly. This is what happens. 200 episodes with you and just do it all at once. Just scream out on social media, hit the cowbell and let's just get out of here. Hey, Lis?

L Lis Malone 55:58
Hey, Rob.

R Rob Mineault 55:59
Hey, where can people find us?

L Lis Malone 56:03
People can find us at www.atbanter.com

R Rob Mineault 56:10
Hey, they can also drop me an email in our email that gets completely flooded every week apparently makes Ryan cry. So if you would like to make Ryan cry, you can just email cowbell@atbanter.com. Steve, where else? Where else can people find us?

S Steve Barclay 57:10
Well, people can find us on Facebook Twitter, and Instagram.

R Ryan Fleury 57:20
And we haven't changed the name of the podcast that I told you at the beginning of the show. I'm going to be working on a song for Liz all about beaten circus bears, black is slimming. And oh glitter and spangles.

L Lis Malone 57:43
It's a song of Lis-isms.

R Rob Mineault 57:44
Yeah, I totally missed that. Yeah, I came in in the middle of that you were talking about Spankz.

L Lis Malone 57:50
He was just ignoring us.

R Ryan Fleury 57:52
Alright, as usual. Yeah.

R Rob Mineault 57:54
Yeah. Well, excellent. I look forward to it. I look forward to video.

L Lis Malone 58:10
We'll get you some B roll video.

R Ryan Fleury 58:11
Steve you're the creative writer. Yeah. Oh, this is gonna be fun.

R Rob Mineault 58:16
"A middle aged a portly middle aged man wearing spandex waves of fish at the camera"

S Steve Barclay 58:27
And gets hip checked by some weirdo with a cat.

L Lis Malone 58:31
"Is is Vancouver still playing in the in the Stanley Cup playoffs? I'm rooting for Vancouver."

R Ryan Fleury 58:40
Go sports

R Rob Mineault 58:41
Sports is my favorite. This is why we don't do a canned cowbell. If I just edited in the sound of a cowbell all of that would have been missed.

R Ryan Fleury 59:16
Yes indeed.

R Rob Mineault 59:17
This is why Svetlana listens every week

R Ryan Fleury 59:21
AT banter live and uncensored.

R Rob Mineault 59:24
Yeah. Hi Svetlana.

R Ryan Fleury 59:28
Yes. Hello, Svetlana.

R Rob Mineault 59:37
No one else on the planet knows what we're talking about. But we do have a listener in Russia, which is saying not to brag, but we do. So suck that Joe Rogan. I think we're all hungry and kinda drunk. Haven't eaten anything yet today. That's why.

R Ryan Fleury 1:00:02
oh I see

R Rob Mineault 1:00:04
That white claw went right to my head.



L Lis Malone 1:00:06

Okay, now you need to jump on Tinder and start swiping. Yeah, there you go. This is the time to do it.

R Rob Mineault 1:00:12

No, clearly I need to get a fish. All right. That is going to about do it for us this week. Big thanks, of course to Christie for joining us. And we will see everybody next week.