

PODCAST Episode 377







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SPEAKERS

Rob Mineault, Ryan Fleury, Lis Malone, Steve Barclay, Cassandra Mendez, Casey Greer

-  **R** Rob Mineault 00:05
Hey and welcome to another episode of AT Banter.
-  **S** Steve Barclay 00:30
Banter, banter.
-  **R** Rob Mineault 00:31
Hey this is of course, the podcast where we talk with advocates and members of the disability community to educate and inspire better conversation about disability. My name is Rob Mineault, and joining me today - see this sucks because it's Monday at 8am, and I have to do the full round of intros because everybody showed up. Hey, look, it's Ryan Fleury.
-  **R** Ryan Fleury 00:58
I'm here.
-  **R** Rob Mineault 00:59
Lis Malone.
-  **L** Lis Malone 01:02
Yeah, well, I'm here.

R Rob Mineault 01:05
Steve Barclay is in the house.

S Steve Barclay 01:07
I feel pretty.

R Ryan Fleury 01:14
Good god, Steve.

R Rob Mineault 01:20
So yeah, I was just commenting that I don't think this has ever happened in the history of the show. We're all here for an 8am Monday show, which doesn't happen very often, I have to say. I think it's probably only happened a handful of times, usually because we're talking to somebody in the UK or something with where there's been a crazy time difference. So congratulations. I remember back in grade one when everybody showed up, we sang a little song. I don't remember what it was, but I should have looked that up. It was like "the gang's all here" or something. But hey, how is everybody? Great. Okay. Every time. I'm like Charlie Brown with that football. You guys tee it up for me and then you take it away soon as I run up and to kick it.

R Ryan Fleury 02:31
Yeah, you need to work on a new question. Clearly. Yeah.

R Rob Mineault 02:37
Hey, so I have to brag a little bit before we start the show. Steve and Ryan and I were attended a lovely charity fundraiser for AEBC which is what, Ryan?

L Lis Malone 02:37
Shake it up a little.

R Ryan Fleury 02:54
Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians.

R Rob Mineault 02:57
Right. And, yeah, they had a online Trivia afternoon that we went to .. and our team won.

L Lis Malone 03:06
Yay.

S Steve Barclay 03:07
That's because we were awesome.

R Ryan Fleury 03:08
We're back on top.

R Rob Mineault 03:10
Well you guys brought your wives. I felt like they were pretty much the MVPs. I don't think just you, me and Ryan would have done as well at all.

R Ryan Fleury 03:19
Because the theme was Love Is In The Air and it was pretty much all about Valentine's Day.

R Rob Mineault 03:25
Right.

R Ryan Fleury 03:26
Yeah. That's romance and love. Yeah. Yes. And we, I'm sure the organizers completely understand that Valentine's Day does not fall in April. They just they had to push the original date of the of the event. But there's a lot of trivia there that I don't think I don't feel like me, you or Steve would have known anything about. But it was fun. We're number one. We're number one.

R Rob Mineault 04:01
That's right. All right. Well, anything else? Anything else? Well, before we get the show started, I'm very excited about today's show. Incidentally.

R Ryan Fleury 04:12
Let's get this party started.

R Rob Mineault 04:14
Hey, Ryan. What are we doing today?

R Ryan Fleury 04:17
Well, today joining us are the energetic hosts of the Rare With Flair podcast, actress and YouTuber Casey Greer, and Digital Accessibility Specialist, Cassandra Mendez. Ladies, thank you so much for joining us today.

C Casey Greer 04:33
Thank you for having us.

C Cassandra Mendez 04:34
Yeah, we're so happy to be here. Also, congrats on the trivia win, by the way.

R Rob Mineault 04:40
Oh, thank you. Thank you very much. You know, it's interesting. I foolishly put myself in charge of Taylor Swift research since I was fairly convinced that there was going to be a Swift question and there was!

R Ryan Fleury 04:56
And you failed us.

R Rob Mineault 04:57
Well, listen, okay. I have have several things in my defense. Who knew that they she'd been in a movie when she was a teenager? First of all, I don't even know that that's a real movie.

R Ryan Fleury 05:12
Well, let's ask our guests because I think they're Swifties.

C Casey Greer 05:18

I did not know about any film she's ever been in. I'm so surprised. I think I agree that this film probably did not exist.

R Rob Mineault 05:28

Yeah, that's right. Yeah. So the question was like, she was in a movie with Julia Roberts and Ashton Kucher So here I am memorizing her discography and we get that question. So we got burned on that question, but we still won.

R Ryan Fleury 05:52

That's right.

C Casey Greer 05:53

Congrats.

R Rob Mineault 05:54

Thank you. Okay, anyways, let's get started. So I have to say, you guys have been on my radar for quite a while. We wanted to get you guys on the show, because I really do love the podcast. So let's start there. Tell us a little bit about how the podcast started and we'll go from there.

C Cassandra Mendez 06:16

Sure. Yeah. So I appreciate the compliments, by the way, thank you. So we've told this story a few times actually, because Casey and I have been friends for 10 years, which feels very monumental. But, so we originally had met because Casey and I both have the same or disease called Hermansky-Pudlak Syndrome. And we met 10 years ago and 2014 at the family conference for Hermansky-Pudlak Syndrome that happens every year, in Long Island, New York. And we ended up on the same shuttle with like, from the airport with each of our Moms. And we just we just really got to talking and immediately the conversation got super deep, and just kind of knew we wanted to be friends with each other because our community of people with Hermansky-Pudlak Syndrome is very small. So it's pretty rare that there's gonna be someone that close to your age. We're about five years apart, but I think ever since then, we had maintained a friendship where we understood each other on kind of a deeper level. And we would talk like, once every, I don't know, once every few months on FaceTime, and these calls would be like, three, four hours long, because we had so much to catch up on and also just, we needed, we needed our like little banter sesh about living lives with disability and low vision and chronic health problems. That's kind of where our relationship started.

C

Casey Greer 08:09

And then yeah, the birth of the pod was kind of in 2020 when everything shut down, and we had no life. You know, a lot of people I think we're making podcasts at that time. But we we kind of, we had had so many of these long Facetimes kind of ranting about disability and things like that, and we thought we could just record this, you know what we're saying right now, and maybe other people would find it relatable so that was kind of the birth of the pod was in 2020 So we're about to be at our four year podversary, which is kind of crazy. But yeah, we we have a lot of passion about advocacy and kind of changing the narrative on what it's like to be disabled and we wanted to show that we're regular people with regular interests which is kind of the birth of the name "Rare with Flair" because the rare part is kind of the disability part or the rare disease part and then the flair part is talking about you know our interests, music and fashion and all that kind of stuff. So that's kind of where we thought of the name and the whole the whole idea of it.

R

Ryan Fleury 09:16

And cartoons.

C

Cassandra Mendez 09:17

Oh yeah, we love cartoons. we also do because we live in different places. So I live in Ohio and Casey lives in Tennessee in the US so um, we don't see each other often we actually just saw each other at the Hermansky-Pudlak Syndrome Conference last week which was really fun and really special. But almost two weeks ago, I time really flew I don't know what time is anymore but in order to keep our kind of long distance friendship alive and to give us something like an activity to do together besides just strictly talking, which we do a lot of anyway, you can listen to us do that on our podcast, but we started watching cartoons together. And it's just been this long running thing because we both love animation. And it's just, it's great. It's Casey, you were like, I think I want to watch cartoons with you until I die.

R

Rob Mineault 10:22

Well, and I think that that, that is something that that resonates with your audience, I mean, is that the podcast itself is a really unique mix of where you talk about, you know, sort of the personal things that are going on in your lives, as well as the lived experience of being being members of a disability community, and then also sort of education about specific aspects of the condition. When you sat down to start the pod was that really a conscious decision to have that mix? Or was that just a natural, organic result of your conversations naturally?

C

Casey Greer 11:02

I think both really. Cassandra and I had both kind of done advocacy separately before the podcast. I was making YouTube videos, which I don't really do much anymore. And she had a blog, and would write, you know, things about disability. And, and like we said, oftentimes, when we would talk, it would trend in that direction, because we were the only ones that could

really understand what the other person was going through. But we also have a lot of just similar interest in general, like we were just talking about, outside of being disabled. And so that was kind of a conscious thing. When we chose the name, we thought we might not have enough content forever to just talk about disability. But we know that we can talk about other things too. And that, you know, in our tagline we kind of talked about showing the beauty and normalcy of disability. And we want to normalize it by talking about other things and showing that we have, it is a big part of our lives. But also we have a life outside of it too. But it also kind of just organically happened. So I think it was a mix of of that just organically happened with our own conversations. But it was also it was a conscious choice to highlight both of those things on our show.

C

Cassandra Mendez 12:16

I think it's also continued to evolve as time goes on. So we had this general thought of, okay, we want to share a lot of aspects of our lives to give a more three dimensional view of people with disabilities. It's not just, you know, it touches every aspect of our lives. But we're humans, too. And so I think, as we've continued to do this, and time has gone on, there just been things that continue to pop up, either throughout our lives, or as we hear other disabled creators on other platforms to talk about topics that we haven't addressed yet, like, oh, we should talk about that, too. And, you know, we should we got into plants while we were recording this podcast, we weren't into it when we started. But you know, we've recorded episode and we created an entire mini episode or we just talked about our houseplants. It's just, it's just been as time evolves. And as we evolve as people, we kind of continue to evolve our show and process.

R

Rob Mineault 13:30

Well, you know, and that's, that's the real, I think, magic of podcasting. I mean, that's why it's such a great platform for people is that you can do that, there are really no rules. You can you can evolve it in any direction that you want. As long as you have one or two people that that are that are out there that are listening and getting some value out of it, It's totally worth it.

C

Cassandra Mendez 13:52

Definitely. I think it helps that we have like a very similar vision for the show in the sense that we just, I feel like we rarely ever disagree. I don't know if we've ever really disagreed about the topics that we've shared on our podcast. It just it feels very right when someone recommends something like, oh, yeah, we can easily do that. And I think we've also been doing it so long that we trust each other to keep that conversation going. So I don't know it's special. And I think because it helps when you're already friends. You can kind of play off of each other's energy as I know you guys do here.

L

Lis Malone 14:36

We all hate each other. When the microphones turn off we say okay, I don't even want to think about you or hear from you...

R

Rob Mineault 14:47

Why am I doing this every week? Okay, well, let's talk about I want to talk a little bit about Hermansky-Pudlak Syndrome and I'm sure I butchered that.

C

Casey Greer 15:00

No you didn't, that was perfect.

R

Rob Mineault 15:02

Oh, really? Okay. The key for all the other co-hosts is just say really fast. So actually doing the research for the show I like it made me think like, why are all these syndromes named after the people that discovered them? Like, I would think that as a scientist, to discover this, the last thing you'd want, is to give my last name? Like make take a vote to the for the community to come up with something cool. Hire some digital marketers.

C

Cassandra Mendez 15:32

That's true. Oh, yeah, I will say I feel like it is a slightly like, just a small step above, like, I don't know, chromosome 14 deletion syndrome, like, oh, yeah, that really rolls off the tongue.

R

Rob Mineault 15:49

Yeah, that's right. So anyways, was I say, Oh, yeah. So tell us a little bit about this syndrome, because it is very rare. And it does sound like it's a real, I don't know, it's like a, it's like a Kinder Egg of a syndrome because you really it, it comes with so much. Yeah, it varies so much. And there's a lot packed into it. So can you kind of like, give us a little bit of a snapshot of what it actually is?

C

Casey Greer 16:20

Yes, it is a it is a rare genetic disorder. And it is like a Kinder, right. You know, you just keep on opening new layers just to just constantly. So it causes albinism, which is a lack of pigment in the hair, skin and eyes, in the pigment varies in person to person with HPS. There are 11 types of HPS, actually. And so the albinism causes us to be legally blind and a lot of different issues with our eyes. And that's a whole thing. We could go down farther, but I'll try to make this brief. Our blood platelets are malformed, so we we don't clot very well, and we bleed easily. Also a percentage of people with HPS develop bowel disease, similar to Crohn's disease, and also a percentage of us also develop a lung disease called Pulmonary Fibrosis. There are a few other things here and there. But that's kind of the basic gist. Those are kind of the four main symptoms of it.

C

Cassandra Mendez 17:23

Yeah, and a lot of the last two things that are a bit more autoimmune are a bit more subtype variant. And also just, I don't know, I guess if you're like extra lucky, you get bonus material. The disease's also it's very rare. It's projected somewhere between like one in every 500,000 to a million people worldwide have Hermansky-Pudlak Syndrome. But it is extremely common in Puerto Rican populations, because the island of Puerto Rico is very small. And there is a founders effect on the island where there's a pretty high concentration of people with this disease, especially because it's an island. So there's a big portion of HPS Type One folks that originate from the north west corner of the island. And that's where we're both of my parents are from. So I'm kind of like the textbook, Puerto Rican person with HPS.

R

Rob Mineault 18:36

In sort of the the mandate of the podcast, which is sort of just to spread education about it, you guys are very open when it comes to sharing the personal medical aspects of of dealing with the Syndrome. What's the community around this syndrome like? I know, you guys you met at a conference - are those ongoing every year? Is there a lot of research being poured into it? Is it sort of a newer syndrome that they're sort of working on? Where are we kind of at with it?

C

Cassandra Mendez 19:08

Oh, that's a really good question with multiple parts. So I gotta say, I feel like we're really spoiled in a way with the Hermansky-Pudlak Syndrome network. The network was started over 30 years ago.

C

Casey Greer 19:25
1992.

C

Cassandra Mendez 19:28

Thank you. So yeah, it's been over 30 years. Yeah. So, the conferences have been happening for about 29 years, there was a break for COVID as I assume most for most things. But the conferences they happen annually, always in Long Island, because it's where the founders are from. And it's just this really special community. We take it for granted sometimes, and I've met other people with other rare diseases that don't have this kind of community. So I realized that even within rare diseases and rare disease organizations, it is somewhat rare. But we, we gather together and it's a very special time. And it's such a mixed bag of different things. So feels like a, it does feel like a family reunion, even if you don't know, everybody, everybody's just really like, tight. And even if it's your first time, it's a very warm environment. But like, people go from zero to 100. And it's, it's wild and difficult to describe there is a lot of joy, and laughter. There's also a lot of grief, because me and like Casey mentioned earlier, this disease can cause things like Pulmonary Fibrosis, and that can take people's lives. So there's grief in that. There's grief and just seeing people start to decline in their health. But there's also a lot of celebration, people have babies, people, like, get new jobs and graduate. And so we love to

celebrate every little milestone. There are a lot of patient focus groups at this conference, we do this big, like dance party, kind of like a wedding, but without the wedding part, Saturday Night of the conference, which is really extra fun. And there is a lot of research being done on it, if you want to talk about that Case.

C Casey Greer 21:38

Sure. While our conference is going on which our conference is more of a family support group type of thing. But while our conference is going on, we also have this other meeting called the Meeting of the Minds with, with Doctors and Researchers who have we have our disease being researched at the National Institutes of Health, and some of them come and and we do have a lot of research going on. And then on Sunday of the conference is kind of a science Sunday, where they share all of their findings with us and any new updates on research with us. And like Cassandra said, we're very spoiled. And this is a very rare disease. I mean, most rare diseases don't have anything like this. And we really have the founder of our network of the Hermansky-Pudlak Syndrome network to thank for this, her daughter was born in the 80s. And ever since then she has been, she's a nurse. So she knows a lot about medicine. And she's been fighting for a cure for her daughter. And she started this whole network and it kind of all snowballed from there. But it's very rare to have this kind of community with such a rare disease. So it's pretty amazing all that that our little bitty network has been able to accomplish. And we always say that if we can find a cure for our rare disease, I think we'd be helping other other disorders as well, whether it be bleeding disorders, or you know, pulmonary fibrosis, the lung disease can affect other people too. It's outside of our community. So all the research we're doing can hopefully help other communities as well.

R Rob Mineault 23:08

Now, given that you guys have the podcast, and it's doing quite well, are you guys kind of like celebrities at these conferences now?

C Casey Greer 23:19

That's funny, we usually do host sessions together. So it kind of feels like we're doing a live podcast. And I don't know about celebrity, but people do know the show, which is funny, because obviously like in everyday life, no one would know us. But at these conferences, yeah, usually people do say that they listen and and that's really great, because that was kind of our goal was to help people feel not so alone.

C Cassandra Mendez 23:49

Actually this year, we had a really special encounter where there was a mom of a girl with Hermansky-Pudlak Syndrome who had come to the conference, when her daughter was really little, like maybe three years old. And it was back in 2014-15. And I, you know, hadn't seen them since then. COVID. And so I was kind of wondering, in the back of my mind, I wonder how that mom and daughter are doing? Well, they came this year, and, and the girl is now 13. And it

was just the sweetest thing because she listens to our show. I had no idea. And her mom was like, I remember meeting you both, like years ago and she had pictures from these conferences, and we were like, wow, you really never know who's gonna find our show.

C Casey Greer 24:42

We have no idea who's listening. I'm sure you all understand that. Who are these people? We don't know. Podcasting is weird. It's kind of like in a void you like, I mean, you there's not a comment section per se. I mean, you can get reviewed, you know, but like we don't we have no idea who's listening. We just kind of put it out into the void. And we're like, well, I'm sure somebody will hear that. I don't know. And so it is kind of cool when some were like, oh, people actually hear it. Wow, great. Because we just, we see the number, but it's so arbitrary. It's like, who are these? We don't know.

R Rob Mineault 25:17

Yeah, no, we can totally relate to that. I mean, for for a lot of the time you just feel like you're screaming into the void. You don't know, whether or not a topic or something has resonated with the audience, necessarily. You know, for us, if we get we get one or two emails a week, you know, we feel we feel pretty lucky.

C Casey Greer 25:36

Definitely.

R Rob Mineault 25:37

Yeah. Because most people just consume podcasts, just they you know, if they enjoy them, that's great. You know, they go on their merry way. It's pretty rare for someone to stop and email, a podcast. I've never done it. I've enjoyed plenty of shows.

C Casey Greer 25:57

That's exactly how I feel. I listened to a lot of shows, and I never reach out. I'm like a silent listener. Yeah. So we agree.

C Cassandra Mendez 26:05

Yeah, even like consuming YouTube. Like, I rarely will like, give a video a thumbs up, even if I really enjoyed it. I just, I just watch it. And I'm like, wow, that was great. And move on. That's right.

C Casey Greer 26:22

 Casey Greer 26:23

Something about that is actually great. Because you feel like you can be more vulnerable on a podcast because you kind of do feel like who's listening? And then I mean, even if people are, it just doesn't feel that they do.

 Rob Mineault 26:35


That's very true. That's very true.

 Casey Greer 26:37

You can be kind of vulnerable without feeling like you're really putting yourself out there. But you are, it just doesn't feel like it.

 Lis Malone 26:42

What did they say dance like nobody's watching? Yeah,

 Cassandra Mendez 26:46

I get that. Podcast like nobody's listening.

 Rob Mineault 26:52

Yes, you're right. Actually, that should be the model for our show. And actually, let me ask you this, because you guys do sort of you guys are very open. And you do really dive into a lot of topics. Has there ever been a time where you've done a show where you're just like, oof, you know, what we might have overshared? Maybe we better step that back. Or if you ever had second thoughts to any sort of topic that you guys have talked about.

 Cassandra Mendez 27:19

We have some episodes that we've recorded that feel particularly vulnerable for us. And we can tell when we are thinking of the topic, and then when we click to stop the recording, we're like, wow, we're, we're excited because it feels good to put things like that out in the open. So some of the episodes like that have been early on. We did one about do we want to cure for our disease, and that has a lot of layers to it, it can be a little bit controversial. We've done episodes where we open up about the realities of feeling burdensome with chronic illness or with like, people that drive, and we don't drive and so like, it just it can feel like we're putting ourselves on the spot. But at the same time, those more often than not been some of our absolute favorite episodes. Because I think, and I don't want to put words in your mouth Casey, but I feel like I feel like we're saying something that maybe should be said that something that maybe if I were listening, and I were 13 that I would want to hear. Just to know that that's like, that's the thing that other people feel, and it isn't so isolating after all.

C

Casey Greer 28:50

Yeah, definitely. Like, I don't know, I feel like we do. We do walk a fine line, though. Because there are a lot of personal things we choose not to share too. And that's kind of like a boundary we have set that kind of that changes as time goes on. Because things come up in your life, and you choose what to share and what not to share. But personally, I've never felt like it went too far. And usually those are the episodes I'm kind of the most proud of because I do feel like, I'm glad to get some of those things out in the open. And I feel like some of those have been the ones that we've gotten more comments on from people. Like sometimes we'll put one out and we don't hear anything about it. And so like you were saying, if you get even a few emails a week, that's like really a good thing. And so we feel a similar way where we recently put out like a chronic illness episode and I ended up getting a few different messages about it and, and I'm like, you know, there are other ones that don't seem to touch people the same way. And so we don't want to be always super vulnerable. Like we like to make it light and funny too. But I do feel like those are the ones that resonate with people the most. Maybe so it's a balance for sure. That's a good question, though.

R

Rob Mineault 29:57

Well, let me ask you this. How much of the show itself is sort of therapeutic or cathartic for both of you?

C

Casey Greer 30:07

Oh, my gosh. So much. The thing the show has given me I'm so much more of a better advocate for myself now living my life. Like, I feel like if anyone tries to say something to me, because you know, Cassandra and I are cane and guide dog users, so like, you know, we're putting ourselves out there in public that we, we look blind to the public, because we are. But you know, like, people people see us and so people make comments sometimes and things like that. And I think, pre-podcast, I maybe didn't have the words as well to advocate for myself. And now I feel so confident, because I've talked about it so much on the pod that I'm just like, yeah, this is me unapologetically. And if you have something to say, like I'm ready. You know, I've been like accused of faking blind because I'm not fully blind and all that, you know, which is ridiculous, but but I feel like I have totally the toolkit now to really stand up for myself, or to even ask for help more and not be afraid of that kind of stuff. So for me, I think with my confidence, the podcast has really helped. And, and yeah, it has been therapeutic as well, to kind of get all that out. For sure. Yeah.

C

Cassandra Mendez 31:21

I also think it's helped. It's helped me understand myself better personally. And also 15, I have pretty similar, and we're different people. And you'll, you'll hear this in our show, sometimes we have a lot of the same opinions. And sometimes we diverge. But I think that also talking about it with someone else has kind of revealed more about our own feelings about even using mobility tools. We did a an episode sometime back called like mobility tools, therapy stuff, just

when I was like, no, when you ask the question, but just like that love hate relationship with using a cane or the frustrations of using a guide dog in public, it's just it adds on this layer of complexity, that sometimes is just really frustrating. And to be able to accept that, almost a little paradoxical, except the bad and the good, and how much it helps, has also been a really great way to continue to love and accept ourselves and and become better advocates.

R

Rob Mineault 32:43

Now, you guys, what do you post twice a month? Is that right?

C

Casey Greer 32:48

Yeah, about that. Every other Tuesday.

R

Rob Mineault 32:50

So and how do you how do you find that schedule? Is that is that kind of the sweet spot for you guys in order to produce and plan?

C

Cassandra Mendez 33:01

Yeah, we don't script as much as we used to. A lot of our episodes are more off the cuff. And we will like jot down a pretty brief outline, depending on the episode. If it's more involved, we'll write a little bit more. But just so that we know the talking points, and if there's something that we really want to hit on in the episode. We used to plan more and like a dedicated day. But now, it's kind of as our schedules allow. We kind of change it as like, things come up in life. But the Tuesdays that we aren't releasing are the Tuesdays that we record, since we're both usually free those evenings. And so we've continued that for almost the entirety of the show. And, again, we've moved it around with like vacations and things, but have rarely ever taken any time off. Just because once we really got into the swing of it, it didn't really feel like that much work anymore. Right?

C

Casey Greer 34:09

Yeah, it felt like a lot of work at the very beginning, as I'm sure you all understand, like just getting it off. Like getting it on its feet, it felt like a lot of work. But now it's so regular in our schedule. I like forget we do it. So I'm talking about like, hobbies or things we do. I like forget that it's there. Because it's just such a natural. Yeah, we record on the off Tuesday, and then we upload on the other Tuesday. And that's just kind of how we've been doing it for so long. But yeah, it doesn't really feel it just doesn't really feel like a lot of work anymore. It's just kind of a fun little thing we do. And so yeah, I think we had a very originally, Cass I don't know if you remember this, I think we decided to do monthly uploads at the very least, we quickly decided on we can do it by weekly or you know, every other week. And so that's been working well for

us. A lot of people do once a week, which is great. But we both have a lot of other things, we both work and we have other things going on. And like we think this schedule really does work really well for us in our lives.

R

Rob Mineault 35:14

Well, you know, a weekly podcast is is a lot of work. It's dedication. I mean, we've been insanely doing a weekly podcast for since 2016.

C

Casey Greer 35:25

Yeah, that's amazing. Wow. That's so impressive. Because I don't I don't know, like, yeah, a lot of people might not be able to do something like that. And that's dedication. So that's awesome.

R

Rob Mineault 35:39

Yeah, I think we're this is this will be Episode 377?

C

Cassandra Mendez 35:43

So yeah, I would love to know the origins of your show, actually.

R

Rob Mineault 35:48

Well, you know, it's funny, we -

R

Ryan Fleury 35:53

It's not a very interesting story.

R

Rob Mineault 36:03

We all worked together at the time, we all worked together at an Assistive Technology company. And we the originally the idea came up in the lunchroom, it was kind of like a marketing idea. We knew that, that you know, assistive technology a lot of people, even people who need assistive technology, don't necessarily know what's out there, what's available. So why don't we start a podcast and just we can talk about different types of assistive technology. And we started and that's that's where the name AT Banter came from. And I think we realized quite early on, probably maybe about six episodes in, that that was incredibly boring to just talk about assistive technology. Let's expand the topic. So let's go and talk to people in the community, let's get some human interest stories. And, and we started doing that. And then eventually, we evolved in this let's talk to different organizations, let's try to spread the word

about the work that that advocates are doing in the community. And so really quickly, we sort of increased the scope of it, and really changed the reason why. I kind of laugh, the original name AT Banter it's a little bit of an albatross around our neck, because we were like, what do we rebrand, but we don't want to rebrand because we already have like, we have an audience and everything. And people know the name, people know the podcast. So we're kind of stuck with this, you know, AT Banter name, but really, the core of the show isn't necessarily about assistive technology. I mean, occasionally we will talk assistive technology, but you know, we find it more interesting to talk about disability, talk with people in the community, or talk to people who don't necessarily, you know, normally get a platform to get their stories out. So the show has really evolved. You know, it started with just me, Ryan, and Steve. And then a few years ago, we we wanted to sort of inject a little bit of, of life into the show. So, you know, we added Lis as a co-host as well. And, yeah we just kind of fly by the seat of our pants as well. You know, it's funny, we can really relate to you, I feel like your show is a little bit of a kindred spirit. Because, you know, at the outset, we wanted to have this mix of, you know, "infotainment". Almost feels like we want to keep the show casual and light and kind of entertaining, but also have that educational component, have that time where we were talking about serious topics, but we also wanted to make it fun. And talk about our own lives and idiosyncrasies and tease each other and all of that. So and that can be a hard balance sometimes for sure.

C Casey Greer 39:06

Yeah, congratulations on having a show for so long, a successful show since 2016, that's amazing. And I like the name a lot. And I do think that's, that's pretty common with a podcast name as the show evolves, like it evolves, but I like it.

R Rob Mineault 39:21

Well, thank you.

C Cassandra Mendez 39:22

I actually think you could sub and call it like at instead of "assistive technology" be like "advocates and trailblazers", you know.

R Ryan Fleury 39:34

Write that down Rob.

R Rob Mineault 39:38

I'm writing that down. Stealing all these ideas.

R Ryan Fleury 39:41

 Ryan Healy 39:41


We've been talking about names for nine years.

 Rob Mineault 39:46

But it's so I find it so funny too, that you guys have stuck to the schedule where you publish on the same day because that's what we've been doing for whatever reason. Really, in the podcast sphere is very silly. Like, we're not we're not a network show or anything. It's not like yeah, everybody's tuning in a Tuesday or Wednesday mornings at 9am to see a new AT Banter podcast episode. But you do you get into that mindset, and when it comes to scheduling, it just becomes easier because you can record on the same day. You're you're aiming to edit and and get it out there on the same day, it just kind of fits into your own personal schedule a little bit better.

 Casey Greer 40:28

Absolutely. Yeah. We don't have to like talk about when it's coming out. You know, I feel like if it was on a different day, every time we'd be like, when are we releasing it? So it's just kind of easy to know.

 Cassandra Mendez 40:37

And that's also like a great remnant from like Casey's YouTube days where, especially on that platform, it was like really, really critical to publish around the same times each week, if you can help it. Because people know when to expect more content and might write back more often for it. So that was something that like Casey was talking about, like really early on and to the consumption of this show. Even when we were thinking about doing it monthly, we're like, okay, we're gonna do like the second Tuesday of the month or something like that, just so that people knew when they could come back for more and it wouldn't be like a total surprise, like, oh, look, another episode.

 Rob Mineault 41:16

And is the show edited? Do you guys edit it? Or do you just like let it roll and and it comes out how it comes out? The

 Casey Greer 41:23

That's a good question. Because at the beginning, it was it was way more edited, because we were not as good at at podcasting. More lols in the conversation more more like "ums" and awkward. Like I edit it, but I really don't do much. I kind of just listen to it and I edit out any weird moment. But really, yeah, we really don't, there's not much editing anymore. Just because we're so used to when each other, we know each other, I'm sure you have the same

thing where you know each other so well, you kind of know when the other person is done talking and like, when there's a pause, you kind of pick up where it takes a while to learn the other person when it comes to that the conversation.

C

Cassandra Mendez 42:07

The first episode that you edited Casey, because you were also learning the tool that we were using. I think it took you like what, like over eight hours? Yeah, it was a really long time. And like, I don't think it doesn't take that long now, right?

R

Rob Mineault 42:23

Yeah. Well, I mean, listen, we've you know, we're still terrible at it. I mean, the dreaded lulls. I tell you. So tell me a little bit about your audience. I mean, you did mention before that you're kind of like us, but I mean the audience that you have talked to, you know, what do you find that really kind of resonates with them in terms of the the body of the show?

C

Casey Greer 42:51

What's interesting is our audience is mostly disabled people, which is great, because it gives them something to really relate to and feel seen and all of that. But I as an advocate, I always wanted to reach the general public, that was always my goal. Like, that's what I want more than anything, and I don't even want it for me, I want it for any any, like, whenever I see any content creator reaching that I get excited because the disability community desperately needs, like we does really need better representation than we have now. And so like, I feel like our show, we do have a really like dedicated audience, but they are mostly in our community, which makes sense. You know, what, anything else to add Cass?

C

Cassandra Mendez 43:35

Yeah, I was just gonna say that when it comes to the actual content of our show. Occasionally, like, every few months, we remember that our show has analytics, like always check those. So usually, the episodes where we do talk about disability tend to do the best, potentially, because it is geared to our own community. But also because I think it's just a perspective that people want to hear, of course. I'm sure, it's a ton of podcasts that are talking about, like the latest trends or, you know, just home decor and things like that, but they don't necessarily need to hear it from us. But even in the episodes where we aren't talking about specific disability topics, it like, like we said, it touches everything. And so even like, some of the choices of what we've done with our homes and how we've chosen to, like, put lighting in different rooms are a lot of times still tied to our disabilities. But you can still get that but maybe from the title alone, it's not as not as appealing to some just because there are others out there.

R

Rob Mineault 44:50

But yeah, I mean, that's interesting. I mean, when we first started even you know, we felt the same way, we're like you know, there there are, you know, at specific podcasts out there that do

same way we're like you know, there there are, you know at specific podcasts out there that do a much better job a much deeper dive into, say the sort of the nuts and bolts of a specific topic like say assistive technology. We weren't really interested in doing that. So, you know, it's, it's interesting how each podcast you kind of find your niche, you kind of find where, what you're really good at in terms of producing that specific type of content. And that's going to just resonate with the audience that you have, and feel they can, they can go in, they can listen to those, say podcasts if that's exactly what they're interested in. But it's just interesting how each podcast really builds builds that audience and resonates with certain people.

C Casey Greer 45:47

Yeah, and I think people do really come back for our friendship, I think, you know, our format is kind of conversational and, and we hope that I mean, we are best friends. And we hope that that like, shines through, we kind of wanted it to and feel like you're just catching up and getting coffee with a friend. Like, that's kind of how I wanted the show to feel. And we feel like that's something we have to offer. That's, like you said, every podcast brings something different to the table. And, and just like all of you like your fun banter with each other. I know, you said you hate each other. But that shines through to the listeners. And that's special, you know.

R Rob Mineault 46:26

I think that you're you hit on the real special part of the podcast. Because I've listened to, I don't know, 10/12 episodes, I think. And it does feel like that you once you you start to dial into to the podcast, you really do feel like you're listening, not only you're listening to a couple of friends, but you actually begin to like really kind of feel like you guys are the audience's friends. It does feel very special and I think that really comes through in this, this chemistry that you guys have with each other.

C Casey Greer 46:58

Oh, thank you. That's definitely our goal. We appreciate it.

C Cassandra Mendez 47:02

So my brother got married a couple of years ago, and my sister in law has listened to our show on and off. And she and my brother came to the homeschool conference last week. And it was funny because my sister in law was like, I'm so excited to meet Casey. I feel like we have this parasocial relationship, or I'm friends with her. But she's not friends with me, because we're all friends.

R Rob Mineault 47:31

Yeah, no, it's absolutely true. And you know, and I have to say, for you guys, like what really impresses me is how the bulk of all your episodes is just the two of you. It's just the two of you talking. Like for us, the strength of the show is really us getting guests. We're good at talking to

other people about other stuff. But you know if we just were to turn on the mics and just be like, okay, let's just talk. I mean, there'd be a lot of lulls.

R

Ryan Fleury 48:06

And a lot of abuse, which is really bizarre, which is really strange, because when you think about it, Rob, Steve and I have worked together for like 23 years, right? So we know each other pretty well yet have nothing to talk about.

C

Casey Greer 48:22

I think that's the cool thing about podcasting is just all the different formats you're gonna find. There's really a show for everybody and I'm excited to see all the other creators out there doing advocacy stuff about disability, and there's so many, there's so many good ones, and everyone kind of has their own their own. I was gonna say their own flair to add, but then that sounds like I'm throwing in our name. But yeah, that's really that's really cool.

C

Cassandra Mendez 48:47

I think also, we've joked though, that like we could we could talk for forever, we could talk nonstop about any given topic. We did a session together at HPS conference last week about independent living with low vision. It kind of touched on topics we've talked about in other episodes of our show, but was just more concentrated for the audience in the room. And it was like, I feel like they could give us any topic and we could just invent stuff to say about it.

C

Casey Greer 49:24

Well, with you specifically, because I feel like if it were like a new person that they paired me up with to talk when what didn't flow as well. But since we do that, the pod it's kinda like it just this this flow, you know, huh?

R

Rob Mineault 49:39

Exactly. And that really does come out in the show. I think that between that, and you know, the fact that you do really, like lean into talking about that lived experience, I think is just really invaluable. So, yeah, I love the show and I recommend everybody in our audience, all three of you that are listening. Boy, let me tell you as you guys are gonna see a big spike in your analytics. So on that note, here's where we get to plug. Where can people find the show?

C

Casey Greer 50:20

Yeah, www.rarewithflair.com is our site. We're on Instagram and Facebook. And then just wherever you find your podcast, Spotify, Apple, all of those wherever you listen to your podcasts.

R Ryan Fleury 50:35
All right. So the hard hitting question of the week. I understand Casey has a special talent. And I'm going to ask will you do that?

C Casey Greer 50:47
Oh, no. Oh my gosh, can we explain the origin? I talked to my dog in an obnoxious voice. It's very obnoxious. And way back at the beginning, see you you've really done your research. And we kind of have this joke of like, Cassandra wanted me to do the dog voice on the pod and we kind of gave the audience an incentive of like, what was it 100 reviews.

C Cassandra Mendez 51:21
We ended up we realizing how like insane of an ask that was.

C Casey Greer 51:26
That was. So we ended up I think adding up the reviews on all platforms. Anyway, yeah. So yeah, I can try it. Let me look at him because that helps.

C Cassandra Mendez 51:39
You gotta get inspired.

C Casey Greer 51:43
I'm so excited to be on this podcast today. Thank you for having us as a guests.

C Cassandra Mendez 51:54
It's amazing because you since we talk like all the time, even outside of the show. It's become so often that I get to hear this but I start using this like intonation in my daily life where I don't even like fully realize that it's happening until like, recently. I was in an elevator and they asked me what floor I wanted to get off on. I was like "six please".. Yeah, we actually use the voice all the time.

R Rob Mineault 52:33
We can really relate. You know, we've got a - I don't even I don't know if you've guys even noticed - yeah, good for you for not even asking us, why are the hell there's a cowbell in the

show?

C Casey Greer 52:43

I loved it though.

R Rob Mineault 52:47

It was such a that was see that's the big evolution of the show is like one day, Steve showed up to recordings like hey, I got the show something. We're like, what new mics? Like new shotgun mics? And no, he's he pulls out a cowbell. And he's just like, the show needs a cowbell.

C Casey Greer 53:03

It's such a good part of your show to like I do love it.

R Rob Mineault 53:07

We do really consider it the fifth host.

C Cassandra Mendez 53:11

it makes me feel like I'm listening to like a like a audiobook or a radio show from like, years past.

C Casey Greer 53:21

Yeah, it somehow adds another layer. Like it feels it feels like almost more official.

R Rob Mineault 53:30

Well, listen, maybe if we make the 10 year mark, we'll bring in kazoos.

C Cassandra Mendez 53:50

I'm bringing in a whole band.

R Rob Mineault 53:55

Thank you so much for coming on chatting with us. It has been an absolute delight. Please, please come back.

please come back.

C Casey Greer 54:02

Yes, thank you. And we'll definitely be promoting your show on to our audience too. And let them know about not only about your show, but about the episode coming out too. And share, share the love.

R Rob Mineault 54:13

Thank you so much. Yeah, and listen, anything we can do to help and yeah, please come back. We'd be happy to have you guys back when schedules allow.

C Casey Greer 54:23

Absolutely.

C Cassandra Mendez 54:24

Yeah. Thank you so much. Thank you for working to coordinate the schedules. This has been so much fun. And you guys are a real treat. So thank you.

L Lis Malone 54:33

We really love the early morning. Just putting it out there. Steve especially. Pillow marks and all. Listen

R Rob Mineault 54:44

Yeah, that's right. It's just like, again, I can't I can't overstate this enough. All four of us showed up for an 8am on Monday show.

L Lis Malone 54:58

That's right this is a first right.

C Cassandra Mendez 55:01

So we feel so the biggest compliment of all.

L Lis Malone 55:06

L LIS MAIONE 55:06

You brought us all together.

C Cassandra Mendez 55:31

Really quick, Ryan. I don't know if anyone has ever told you but your voice sounds just like the voice actor who does Bob on Bob's Burgers and I can't.

C Casey Greer 55:43

Cartoon knowledge coming into play here.

C Cassandra Mendez 55:47

Appreciate that. They got a real celebrity cameo here.

R Rob Mineault 55:55

Ryan's been moonlighting on us

R Ryan Fleury 55:58

I'm not saying anything. Wonderful.

R Rob Mineault 56:09

That was great. It was so much fun.

L Lis Malone 56:11

Yeah, they're great. They love their energy.

R Rob Mineault 56:12

The show is so great. Like I really do. recommend everybody going and checking it out. It's it is really breath of fresh air. And a really fun fun time listening.

R Ryan Fleury 56:27

Yeah. So www.rarewithflair.com

- L** Lis Malone 56:34
You know, I was just enjoying watching coffee number three do its magic. I was like, He's gonna crash. He's gonna crash at some point. Good job. Rob. Thank you. Very impressed with your morning performance.
- R** Rob Mineault 56:51
Well, thank you. It's not the first time I've heard that but ..
- L** Lis Malone 56:57
I'm thinking it was okay.
- R** Ryan Fleury 56:59
Well go with you're gonna go with you that morning performance. Well done, sir. Well done. Perfect.
- R** Rob Mineault 57:08
Well, yes, yes. Well, well worth you showing up for this damn episode.
- L** Lis Malone 57:24
A litany of insults before the workday starts, right?
- R** Rob Mineault 57:27
Yeah, that's true. All right. Hey, let's we're gonna wrap this up because the show's going long. Hey Lis.
- L** Lis Malone 57:36
Hey, morning glory.
- R** Rob Mineault 57:41
Where can people find us?

L Lis Malone 57:43
We can be found at www.atbanter.com

R Rob Mineault 57:46
They can also drop us an email if they so desire at cowbell@atbanter.com

S Steve Barclay 57:58
Yeah, remember, we also have that we have social media.

R Ryan Fleury 58:02
We do. Facebook, Instagram, X. Mastodon. Look for us. We're out there everywhere. Everywhere. They're everywhere. They're everywhere.

R Rob Mineault 58:11
Wow. Three coffees.

L Lis Malone 58:16
A lot of energy there.

R Rob Mineault 58:19
Just think of the productive employee he's going to be for the rest of the day, Steve.

S Steve Barclay 58:31
Like normal.

R Rob Mineault 58:37
All right. Well, I think that's gonna about do it for us this week. Big thanks, of course to Casey and Cassandra for joining us, and we will see everybody next week.



S

Steve Barclay 58:51

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