

# Telling It Our Way

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*Episode 4 Hobbies and Passions*

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Episode Description: Darius shares how his passion for Special Olympics drives him to work toward becoming a coach. Tyler talks about his love of anime, where he can escape to imagine better worlds when he doesn't feel like he fits in. Ally and Becca talk hobbies, productivity, and the art of doing nothing.

**Tyler 00:00**

I would like to have power like that, like true action that maybe I could become something more.

**Becca 00:14**

Welcome to the Telling it Our Way Podcast. I'm Becca

**Ally 00:17**

And I'm Ally In this podcast, we bring you stories by disabled people about disabled people, stories from the everyday lives of self-advocates with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

**Becca 00:27**

These are real people with complicated lives. They don't want your pity and they don't exist to inspire you.

**Ally 00:32**

This is not inspiration porn.

**Ally 00:37**

So, Becca, today we're talking about hobbies and passions. Did you know that according to a survey done by Siteesta, between 2022 and 2023, that had 60,000 respondents that cooking is the most commonly reported American hobby.

**Becca 00:52**

Well, I guess I'm basic, because I also love to cook.

**Ally 00:55**

Yeah, and pets and video games came in three and four as the most common hobbies.

**Becca 01:00**

Well, I also have pets. So again, I guess I'm right on average.

**Ally 01:04**

I also have pets. So, So what is your favorite hobby?

**Becca 01:07**

Well, like I said, I love to cook but I'm the fiber girly. I'm really into knitting and also weaving and crocheting and Macramé and all the things that tie yarn up into knots. Those are my things I do in front of some good reality TV. What about you?

**Ally 01:21**

I, you know, I also like to knit a little bit, but not nice things. I like to think that I could start like an auntie Ally's crappy crafts Etsy store where people could buy things that they, like, pretended like they made themselves and then and, you know, pass it off as that, but I do I love being outside and biking and hiking and making campfires that's like, probably one of my favorite things to do.

**Becca 01:47**

So, like playing lumberjack out in the forest?

**Ally 01:49**

Yes, yeah, absolutely. You know, it's easy. When I was thinking about our stories for today, I wanted to find out, you know, what are some of Americans favorite hobbies? Or what are their passions? What are we learning about people, and it's really easy to find that information, you can just sort of find lots of different statistics. But when you try to find info about hobbies, or passions for folks with intellectual disability, or developmental disabilities, you don't really find anything out there about what folks like to do, what you tend to find is, websites suggesting what hobbies might be nice, particularly in relation to how to develop movement within this population, try walking or swimming, because then you can stay healthy, right? So, all these hobbies are about prevention, or even, they might say something like, video games can be popular, and they're really good for developing X skill. So, there's never sort of any information just purely about what do people like doing? It's always tailored to. And how would this help this person in some way?

**Becca 02:53**

Mm hmm. Yeah. So, I think this is, in some ways, I think this is a sub case of something that we're all subject to. I think a lot of the time people are like, what hobbies can I do that also makes me \$100 a month on Etsy? Or what hobbies can I do that also will let me lose weight, or these kinds of things where we think about the things we do in our leisure time have to have some sort of productive value. But I think you're right that this is experienced slightly differently by people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, which is a point I'm going to come back to later in the episode. But first, I think I'd like to hear a story. So, our first story today is from Darius, who tells us about his hobby, the Special Olympics, and how that has transformed into a passion for him as he pursues his goal to become a leader in his sports community.

**Darius 03:49**

Hi, my name is Darius Cunningham. And one day, I want to be a coach for the Special Olympics. I do Special Olympics a lot. I do track and field and won gold. I'm happy during it. I have good coaches. I took a Special Olympics leadership class. I learn how to do different things, in classes, we pick goals, we learn how to be a better leader. That means to know to speak and listen at the same time, I meet new friends from other cities and counties and classes. I have to take a test to be a coach. My father is a good positive to me and he is my good role model and I have respect to my father. And he said, "make my own decisions." I should do and be happy and nice to and kind to others. I like to talk to him and thank him. And I would want to be like a coach. They make sure we safe. And that's we do such I want to be a good help to others and help serve people.

**Becca 05:45**

Thank you, Darius for that story. And so, I think this is a really good example of ways in which hobbies can lead us into positions of value in our communities that aren't necessarily through paid work, right? I think so often, we think, you know, the way that I become a valuable member of society is by getting a paid job, right, which is, there's so many different ways that we measure value. But we don't often let ourselves do that. And I think this is a really good example, you know, becoming a leader in your community in your hobby, that is a way to become a valuable member of your community.

**Ally 06:22**

I think that perspective too, on hobbies, and how, quote unquote productive they are, varies in relation to your socio-economic class. So, I do think that in working class spaces, people are more likely to not attribute all of their worth to the job that they have, necessarily that they see themselves as more than just what they're doing as a wage earner. And I really thought, you know, back in 2007 2008, with the recession, that we had gotten away from valuing ourselves purely by the jobs that we do our wage-earning jobs, but it seems like we've just sort of landed right back there. And I even thought, oh, maybe the pandemic would, would give us some more opportunities. So that we aren't just, you know, the first thing you ask someone when you meet them is, so what do you do? Right?

**Becca 07:12**

Yeah.

**Ally 07:13**

And I, if someone asked me that, I always like to respond with maybe something a little bit unexpected, like, oh, I go for bike rides. And, you know, it always causes people to pause, because they're looking for what do I do for work? Right, that's what that question asks.

**Becca 07:28**

Yeah, and I think, you know, as I mentioned, I think there's an extra layer here, with people with intellectual disabilities and hobbies as modes of gaining jobs skills or getting into health standards that are expected or something like that. And I think that comes from the fact that many of these programs are funded through federal programs with the explicit goal of leading people into employment, or leading people into healthier outcomes as measured by a medical doctor. And so often, you know, hobbies that people should just be able to pursue, because they enjoy them are filtered through this

lens of what kind of productive value do they have. And if they don't have this productive value, the government is going to stop funding them. And this thing that I enjoy goes away.

**Ally 08:16**

You know, we mentioned video games earlier. And there was a research review article that I read by Martha Rodriguez Jimenez and her team, and they focused on trying to figure out what kind of research is being done with video games and people with intellectual disability. And they found that it's great, it's great because it helps improve cognitive skills for people with intellectual disability. So therefore, the assumption is, we should continue to allow access to this. And it's like, well, what if playing video games is just fun? What if it's actually not valuable at all? What if we all just embrace this this movement? You know, the art of doing nothing?

**Becca 08:56**

Yeah, I mean, and who gets to decide what's valuable? And how do you determine what that metric is that you're measuring? If a video games fun, that is valuable, it doesn't matter if there are other outcomes that are related to it. But I actually think this is a really good spot to pivot into our next story. So, our next story comes from Tyler. And Tyler is going to tell us a little bit about his love of watching anime, and how that genre has become a kind of creative outlet for him. So, let's listen.

**Tyler 09:32**

Tyler's story. I started watching Anime in my younger days, Animes are about when you become something beyond human, I would like to have power like that, like true action that maybe I could become something more. I like the characters that aren't human like from monsters and demons. I like to learn science and myths and folklore. Life in Anime is like a game you can get skills, powers, you can choose to become a god, or demon, human or not human. There is good and evil. I would like to do that one day.

I don't really fit into this society, I don't feel like I belong. They always want to take control and make sure I do things their way, I don't like that. I'm like a sponge, I absorb everyone's negativities. I want to be free from all the human baggage. I don't feel like I have power in my life. Humans are not gifted in that way. We're limited. There are some people who can make a difference. But for me, I have a hard time reading. But I know how to express my true feelings. But people don't really like that. I just have to play along and put on a mask, not to show my true feelings.

I think I didn't have a good hand to start out with. I do have a wonderful family. But I feel like my real goals, I think I'm too ambitious for my own good. I have been patient my whole life. Nothing really happened or change. I want to do more. But I have to wait for everyone else. It's tiresome to wait. That long, I tried to boost people's confidence. So, they can reach their true potential. But for me, I don't see opportunities for me. I used to work full time at a store. I try my best. But it wasn't enough. I had to quit there. It was kinda hard for me. Now I have a part time job. I clean rails at a solar company. It's okay. I try to talk to people. But I always get interrupted and make me feel I feel like I'm being ignored. I'm more of an idea, person. But I don't think there's a job for that. I would like someone to give me a chance to be a part of something bigger. I would like to make the new world with better science, better technology, better medication, less violence. I want to belong somewhere. But I don't think there is a

place like that. I just want to be heard. I am optimistic person and if I had power, I would like to make everyone happy. But I could also make things worse. Either way, it will be more fun.

**Becca 13:14**

Thank you, Tyler, for that story. You know, I'm so touched by this story from Tyler, I'm really affected by it listening to it. And I think it is really beautiful the way in which Tyler uses anime as a way to imagine new kinds of worlds that are more inclusive and accepting or worlds where people's value is calculated in different ways. And I just think that's really a powerful message.

**Ally 13:43**

And I think what's great about Tyler's story too is that he reflects about how boring work opportunities are, and how it leaves him with so much need for creativity and for immersing himself in a different world. And I think that's very relatable to so many of us when you get stuck in a rut in your workplace. And you spend eight hours a day in this very much complete boredom. Right? I think many of us have had jobs like that in the past. And I love that he's able to counter that with his passion for anime. But I'm also wondering, how can we get word out there that people like Tyler have a lot to offer through this imaginative landscape that they can develop and immerse themselves in?

**Becca 14:30**

Right, the creativity is a skill and a valuable one too. Yeah, I mean, I think that we let people tell their stories, the way that we have the opportunity to do here.

**Ally 14:40**

We are really looking forward to a second season already. We're not even through the first season but we would love to hear from any of our listeners with intellectual or developmental disabilities. What are your hobbies? What are you passionate about? Feel free to get in touch with us via our website. We're really looking to find some folks who can tell more of their perspectives and stories.

**Becca 14:58**

And before we end I just want to thank our contributors Darius and Tyler, our Associate Producer Conor Smenner. And our Telling it Our Way advisory board members JoRita Fox, Quinn, Thomas and Gavin Dailey

**Ally 15:10**

and a special thanks to WGTE and our producer Chris Peiffer.

**Becca 15:14**

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**Ally 15:20**

I'm Ally Day,

**Becca 15:21**

and I'm Becca Monteleone, and you've been listening to Telling it Our Way.

15:28

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