

Transcript

Education for Autistic Women

March 3rd, 2024

Segment 1

Welcome everyone to Today's Autistic Moment: A Podcast for Autistic Adults by an Autistic Adult. My name is Philip King-Lowe. I am the owner, producer, and host; and I am an Autistic Adult. Thank you so very much for listening.

Today's Autistic Moment is a member of The Autistic Podcasters Network.

Explore, Engage, Empower: Today's Autistic Moment-The Podcast for Intersectional Autistic Adult Communities

This first segment of Today's Autistic Moment is sponsored by The Autism Society of Minnesota, known as AuSM throughout Minnesota's Autism community. As Minnesota's First Autism Resource for more than 50 years, AuSM serves the whole state, the whole spectrum, for the whole life. Visit AuSM online at ausm.org.

Thank you for joining me for *Education for Autistic Women*. Later my guest Karen Timm and I will have an in-depth conversation about this important matter.

Please visit todaysautisticmoment.com where you can listen to the podcast, get transcripts, program updates, and read the guest bios pages. Please visit the Future Shows Page to read the titles, guests, and descriptions of all shows coming up through April. The transcripts are sponsored by [Minnesota Independence College & Community](#). The transcripts can be read and followed from the website. There is a link provided to get access to a document form of the transcript so that you can print it, so it won't use up the ink on your printer. The written document has a font that is accessible for dyslexics. While visiting the website, please consider supporting the work of Today's Autistic Moment with a financial donation or purchase a 16oz drinking cup and/or a lapel pin at the Logo Shop.

Please follow Today's Autistic Moment on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Join Today's Autistic Moment Community Group on Facebook for conversations and updates. Please subscribe to the YouTube channel [@todaysautisticmoment](#) to watch any episode of *Autistic Voices Roundtable Discussions: Celebrating Intersectional Autistic Lives*.

The first *Autistic Voices Roundtable Discussion* about *Respect for Autonomy* on February 21st is one of the episodes that is now available. My five panelists shared their powerful stories of how their autonomy as Autistic individuals was dismissed, invalidated, and disrespected. Go to [@todaysautisticmoment](#) on YouTube and you will be amazed and moved by what you will hear.

Last March, Carole Jean Whittington was my guest for *Our Successes as Autistic Women*. Carole's answer to one of my questions was brilliant. Here is what Carole said.

Well, I think first we have to just start with the conversation across the board, and how do we define success? Because success looks different for each person, how we interpret and define success is very individual thing. We can have a like a collective bar, or a goal that says, Oh, this is what success looks like, based on societal or social norms. But truthfully, when I went inside myself and said, What does success mean to me? Because, you know, comparison is the thief of joy. It truly is. And it's so easy to get caught in the comparison trap of, oh, this is what society says success should look like and be. And if I haven't achieved that, then I failed. I'm not really, I'm not good enough. And that's so often the conversation that I hear when women come to me in late identified life, and it's, I'm failing, I'm not meeting my goals, I'm not successful. You know, I haven't accomplished the things that my peers have accomplished. And a lot of that is just, you know, hey, for a second number one. Did you know your neuro type was different? Are you comparing yourself to everyone else? And have you ever stopped to ask yourself? What does it mean for me to be successful?

One of the important ways for Autistic women or any Autistic person for that matter to determine what success means for them, is having access to inclusive and equitable education. During my last episode we heard Precious Lesley discuss the disparities in education for Black Autistic Adults. Autistic Women also experience disparities with education.

Karen Timm who is my guest for this episode is a late identified Autistic and a school administrator in Canada. Since discovering her Autistic identity, Karen has understood what occurred in her history with education and is available to Autistics of various genders and assists them to get their education needs met. Karen is an Autistic leader who educates the educators in her school to better serve their students.

One more thing. Karen is going to make a reference to [Takiwātanga](#) during segment 3. I have left a link on the word [Takiwātanga](#) so you can watch a YouTube video created by Jolene Stockman from New Zealand who explains the meaning of the word. Click on that link and hear Jolene explain it. Watching it was a huge mental lift for me, and I think you will find it is for you.

Stay with us after this first commercial break to hear Karen Timm and I discuss *Education for Autistic Women*.

Commercial Break I

Podcast Apps

Today's Autistic Moment can be downloaded and heard on most podcast apps including Apple. Google Play. Breaker. Castbox. Overcast. iHeartRadio. Pocket Casts. RadioPublic. Spotify. TuneIn. Pandora. Amazon Music. Audible. Podcast Addict. Podcast Chaser. If you are looking for the transcripts, go to todaysautisticmoment.com, click on the episode you want to listen to and follow the directions to find the transcripts.

Thank you for listening to Today's Autistic Moment

Lisa Morgan Consulting Ad

Segment 2

Philip King-Lowe

Karen Timm, welcome to Today's Autistic Moment. This is our first opportunity to meet you. And I have been very grateful that you've contacted me with interest in being a guest. And so welcome to Today's Autistic Moment.

Karen Timm

Thanks, Philip, great to be here.

Philip King-Lowe

Well, we have entered into women's history month on Today's Autistic Moment. And so, I really felt that we needed to enter into some conversations about *Education for Autistic Women*. We know that there continues to be a lot of misinformation regarding women being Autistic. And we could spend all day just talking about those alone. But the thing is, is that we want to talk about education for Autistic women, because it seems that that is an area where there is a lot lacking. There are there are that is placing a lot of Autistic women at a terrible disadvantage, per se.

And so, we want to talk more in depth about that. So let us begin. Where can we begin to explore the complex issues of Education for autistic women? And how this affects our intersectional communities?

Karen Timm

Yeah, talking about a loaded question, right. And I think you know, where you started from that, that mention of that misinformation that's out there. I think that that whole idea of unlearning is where we need to start. And, you know, it's not so much about Autistic women necessarily doing all of the unlearning. I mean, there's a lot that we carry as, as women, as girls growing up or those assigned female at birth, you know, we pick up information about what it is to be Autistic or not Autistic, right as we grow up. But so much of the learning and unlearning has to happen, you know, amongst every buddy in systems in society, in homes, because if we're not learning in community with those who are Autistic and those who are seeking to be allies to the Autistic community, then there becomes this great big divide, right? And I think in terms of like, where we're I enter the conversation, I am a late diagnosed Autistic. We call ourselves AuDHDers, right like, I Autistic, many of us recognize that. And I'm late diagnosed, I when I can, you know, look back and understand my own journey. I can understand that I was always Autistic now. But many of us are coming at this much later in life. And I think, you know, this generation as, as I get older, I'm, it's exciting to see younger people, younger women understanding that they're Autistic early on, you know, but there's so much misinformation out there, that what we're what we've been learning for so long as girls or young women or older women, and there's lots of different challenges at different ages is that there's just so many stereotypes about what it is to be Autistic. And so, we end up believing that we're somebody else, right? Yeah. And there's so many uses to that what I work in a in the school environment. I'm a school administrator. So, I've been an educator for many, many years, over 25 years

and a leader for, I think about 716, or seven, who knows. And I mean, every single day, I experience things myself, but also through my connections with girls and with women who are Autistic, either on my, you know, educational colleagues, but also parents, right, because we're going out on a regular basis with a variety of different stakeholders. And the common thing is that so much of what we've learned as Autistics has been based on that, you know, who created the knowledge? It wasn't Autistics that created this knowledge that we have, right? So, we have to really replace who the knowledge producers are. And there's a lot of great work that's being done by Autistic researchers, many of whom are women. But you also mentioned, and I think Paramount is the intersectionality piece. Because the biggest gap that we have, not just in the Autistic community, but internationally and across all layers of identity is understanding how, you know, with every layer of identity that somebody is, you know, approaching the world is being seen in the world, through every layer that's marginalized compounds, the challenges makes the barriers that much harder, right? So, if somebody's physically disabled, or if somebody is a person of color, or identifies as a member of the global majority, if somebody is transgender person, you know, any of those pieces are already marginalized historically, right? So, when you're Autistic, and you're also 1234, other intersectional identities. Each person has to really, you know, give themselves grace as they enter the conversation. And a lot of people go through life trying to figure out who they are, through one identity or another. And it can be challenging when there are competing messages, competing ideas of, you know, what it means to be human or what it means to be, you know, "normal" right? So, there's, there's, you know, we all faced a lot of these challenges. Yeah, the unlearning. Go ahead, go ahead.

Philip King-Lowe

No, what I was going to ask you to do for me, please, is, when you discovered that you were Autistic, what did that do for you to you, whichever direction you want to come at that from in terms of what that did, when you thought about your history, and also your career with education?

Karen Timm

Mm hmm. Um, you know, it's funny, because when I think back to what was going on in my life at that time, I remember and I keep hearing this from other people, too, who have experienced or similarly, that they like, basically a relief, right? It was kind of like, oh, my gosh, this makes so much sense. And I and I've told this story many times before, but it's it, you know, I was already an educator, I was already a school leader. You know, I was understanding my neurology in terms of other things, you know, like, whether it was a social anxiety kind of thing, or the ADHD piece, or what have you. And I, you know, had had developed lots of great strategies, you know, had done really well in school, but there was also that developing perfectionism, etc. And we put so much pressure on ourselves, right? But understanding and I will say, as a woman, as a woman, or even a young woman, many, you know, many people are going for the diagnosis, let's say, but they've already done the legwork. And so, I was wondering if I was one of those where I had been learning as an educator, supporting families working with our, you know, with a variety of kids and families who weren't getting these diagnosis at a younger age. So, learning and seeing the ways that I was connecting with many of these girls. And we were able to communicate in ways that other people maybe weren't, I was understanding the sensory experiences, I was understanding, you know, the specialization piece I was I was, you know, really feeling and empathizing for them in ways that many other people were not. And it wasn't that I was doing anything better. It was just that my lens, my experience, my neurology, as it turns out, was more aligned with these little people and their understanding of the

world. And so, when I was, you know, hearing about the dissonance they were experiencing, or, you know, the meltdowns or the shutdowns, or the frustration with having to, you know, do certain tasks multiple times over and over again, when you'd already, like figured out how to do it, you know, five years earlier, things like that I was really resonating with. And so, when I, when I, you know, started to really dig deeper. And, you know, I remember reading an article, and it gave examples of a few different women. And I thought, Okay, this is interesting. And I mean, it was still a medical model language in there. So, I mean, what I know now is very different than how I approached it back then. But, you know, I remember finding a book and looking on the internet and you start doing those searches, there's deep dives, right. But even back then, you know, to do a Google search, let's say like, that's a huge Pandora's box, it's a massive, you know, it's not even a rabbit hole, rabbit hole is not a bad thing. But when you open up that Google search, and then I just, I actually just wrote a literature review recently on and I started my research review on that whole experience. When you Google it, there was like, 670 million hits on the word autism. And I mean, it changes right moment to moment, depending on the time of day and what have you. But everything you see is disorder, symptom struggle with, can you live a normal life with Autism? It's all very much pathology model, right? Yes. It's all very much on the Diagnostic Statistical Manual. It's all very much based on, you know, who made that model? Right? It was it was all based on, you know, heteronormative standards, culturally specific standards, you know, the, the little white boy thing, right? Like, yes. And we don't need to go into the history because that's, you know, it's, it's there, and it exists, but the thing is, a lot of what we have done in our schools, and in our teacher programs, and in, you know, the medical profession, across society in the media is based on that old understanding that Autism look sounds and feels a particular way. Exactly. Right. And so that's where the intersectionality piece is so important, because for one thing, most of that was done in a way that does not reflect the experiences of the diversity within the Autistic community. That's one big piece. But you know, the other

piece is that what we knew a long time ago, was really based on a very biased account, and the research that has been existing and coming up to the surface through Autistic led research through those seeking to be allies, through the lens of, for example, the Neurodiversity the this, you know, I mean, it's been around for, you know, decades now, the idea of Neurodiversity. But how much of Autism knowledge production was based on the inside? Yeah, no, who is in our experiences? So, thank goodness, we're seeing more and more of the Autistic led research coming out, but that Google hit search. So, getting that, right, like if you went into an AI ChatGPT or whatever, you're not getting the qualitative newest up to date stuff you're getting based on the algorithm of how many hits went to this organization or that organization. And unfortunately, many organizations who are, you know, have a lot of hits are not the ones I'm not going to say their names, but they're not the ones that represent our true voices, our true experiences. And not one of us can speak for any of us, right?

Philip King-Lowe

Yeah. There is. Forgive me, there is going to be a show coming up this summer. I'm going to be talking with a guest about what's happening with AI which is a subject all and of itself right now. But I am myself did do a search on ChatGPT about I want to say, Autistic diagnosis versus identification. The information it gave me on both was pretty close. I was I was pleased to see that. I mean, if you type in ASD versus Autistic identity, it'll give you the differences between both and they're not too far off. But like anything else an AI is based on what's put into it. In terms of what comes out.

Karen Timm

Yes. And the good thing is that Autistics are great at responding to AI problems. So really, you know, the more of us that are, because you because you can go in and you can give feedback, right? Like it's based on algorithms, but you can also give feedback.

Philip King-Lowe

No, no, no, no, no, let's get back to our topic of conversation. When you look, when you take a look at what's happening with education for Autistic women, when we're talking about that, what are some trends that you were seeing? What are some things you see going on there?

Karen Timm

Well, in a nutshell, very little. And I say that, because I think a lot of the work that is being done to support Autistic women is being done by Autistic women. Yes. Right. And so, it's not so much that they're, you know, it's not systems that are helping to support. It's the finding community piece that I think is absolutely, right? So, but, but I mean, if you go, if you go searching for, you know, whether it be social workers, or, you know, Autistic therapists, or psychologists, counselors, anything, it's very hard to find these, they're few and far between. And fortunately, fortunately, many people who work in a variety of different, like fields are starting to feel like they can become more open about sharing that they have to they're Autistic or they're coming into, you know, the, their own understanding of their neurology after they have become, you know, joined whatever field they're in, right, because many are still like diagnosed. But what that means is that we're still doing a lot of the legwork to find support for ourselves. Right? And, yeah, and I think that that's the biggest tragedy in all of this. You know, because if you if you go, if you're trying to do the unpacking of your own life, right, we talked

about this thing, like "retro epiphanies." I actually, I actually go Google that, and it is, it's like, being part of the Autistic community, but I use that word, Retro epiphanies, because when you come to realize that you're Autistic, for those of us who are later diagnosed, and when I say later diagnosed, it could be a teenager, it could be 40, 50 could be 90, there are people getting, you know, diagnosed or self-identifying and realizing they're Autistic later in life, right? And so, when you think back and reflect, oh, that's why, you know, I sat and played for, you know, eight hours and asteroids and like, didn't know if I had to eat or go to the bathroom or when our time evaporated. That was specialization that was monotropism. That was, you know, like, you're, you're, you hit these moments, and you realize, and they continue to happen. So, it's many years since I went for a formal diagnosis, which I had the privilege to do, because I, you know, I have privileges that many other Autistics do not right. I predominantly can communicate and mouth words, even though I'm situationally mute, that opens up a lot of doors. White presenting female, two parent household. I grew up with one parent who stayed home so that when I was frustrated having meltdowns, you know, my mom was there to kind of like de-escalate me didn't know that I was Autistic. But, you know, so many of these privileges contribute to me being able to go get a diagnosis, right. So, after getting that diagnosis many years ago, and all these days, you know, you really start to realize that everything that you thought you knew was wrong.

Philip King-Lowe

Or we just didn't have the information totally make sound judgments, I would say.

Karen Timm

Absolutely, yeah. And to be clear, you know, I'm in the educational field, like I said, I, it's not that I blame education, right? The, the, the bottom line is that it wasn't known, but the knowledge production piece, there's so much out there to compete with the new, right? That it is taking time to replace the what like we call schema, right, that understanding and, and that's why it's so important for stories to be told, and, you know, whether it's like podcasts or the books or blogs, or vlogs it's so important for the diversity within the Autistic community come out, because everything we see is, you know, stereotypical representations. It's only within the last, you know, three years that there was like, a TV show featuring an Autistic, you know, main character kind of thing like for, like, really Autistic, right, like the person themselves and the character three to five years, right, in terms of women in terms of women. You know, in so, so there's, there's so much. Yeah, but where do Where do people get education about being Autistic? I think we're still at the very beginning of that journey. It's really about we're creating that right now. Right? Yeah, we're creating it right now. networks and communities.

Philip King-Lowe

Yeah. And I want to say that it also has a lot to do with, I can't speak for Canada, because I don't live there. But I can say for the for the United States, it has to do with the fact that we have not made advances into inclusive education here. And that is part of that part of the real big deal.

Karen Timm

Yeah, yeah. Okay, absolutely.

Philip King-Lowe

Stay with us after this next commercial break when Karen and I will discuss how the layers of intersectionality including the diversity of neurology impacts education for Autistic women.

Commercial Break II

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Segment 3

Philip King-Lowe

Let's move into my second question. And how can we engage the intersectional Autistic Adult communities, to do our part to make education for Autistic women more inclusive? And as you get into this, I wonder, can we also talk if there are any differences or anything we haven't really talked about when we talk about the education that's happens in grade school from kindergarten for us up to age 12. And then let's talk a little bit about what what's happening maybe with Autistic women that may be different or similar to do with seeking higher education, that sort of thing. So, see what

you're gonna do with that. And then let's talk about how we get our intersectional Autistic Adult communities engaged.

Karen Timm

Yeah, cuz that's, there's a lot there.

Philip King-Lowe

Yes.

Karen Timm

That's okay. I speak tangentially. So, I'm going to try and figure out because that was a tangential question. You know, when I think of, like I said, when I think of intersectionality when I think of intersectionality you know, there's so many pieces to that. And like I mentioned before, in terms of layers of privilege. You know, I think one of the biggest piece is that understanding of ableism and I, I like the definition, it's not that I like ableism, obviously, but the definition of ableism that was created by TL's Talila Lewis and community, disabled activist, also a person of color, you know, refers to ableism as impacting, you know, you don't have to be disabled to experience ableism and so, with that in mind, you know, someone who's racialized they're already being seen through the lens of you know, what's, what's better and what's worse and historically, who has been speaking right as the better the most powerful the in terms of facial, you know, who's got the prettier facial features and who's got the best skin color and the most acceptable hair, all of those, you know, horrible things that have been done over history and continue to be done. Right in terms of access and in terms of, you know, I mean, even trying to get haircare products, or you know, right

like so. So, all of these pieces, band aids you name it, all of those pieces that's ableism is its oppression based on what's right and what's not right and what's been seen as historically, you know, better than somebody else. And that applies to all layers of identity, right? In terms of in terms of clothing in terms of, you know, faith in terms of gender identities and who who's got more power in such situations, who's got the higher paying job who lives in certain neighborhoods, and you know, what school you go to? All of these pieces are really about, you know, this constantly complex understanding of what it is to be able, correct, or normal. I talk a lot about reframing normal, like,

Philip King-Lowe

Well, I want to encourage you and, and my, my audience here. I just had that *Autistic Voices Roundtable Discussions* last month in February, about *Respecting Autistic Autonomy*. And let me tell you in there, there was a lot said by very different people. But when it comes to Autistic Autonomy, and I'm going to speak specifically education, is that for a lot of us, well, I will say, for a lot of us, as soon as they discover that we have some kind of quote, and remember, I hate this word, everybody, "special need," right? I hate that word. But the point is, as soon as they discover that, there is a preconceived idea as to where we will go in our education. Right, right. There is a there is this preconceived idea. Yeah, correct me if I'm wrong, you're allowed to know what women Autistic women will do with their education and what they will do everything. It's all as if it's, and that's where the loss of our respect for our autonomy goes. And if the education systems both, well, we'll call, you know, K through 12, and then our higher education systems are not educated or not trained or not well informed about Autistic women Autistic individuals, then it's going to be difficult for them not to have those preconceived notions. You know, so, as part of empowering, I'm sorry, engaging, we'll get to empowerment in a little bit. But as far as

engaging, I think it becomes being number one aware of that. And number two, doing our parts, if you will, to dismantle those things, yeah. And to and to, to, you know, everybody has a role to play. Everybody has their talents, abilities, things that they can do better or are not so good. But that doesn't mean their quality of life has to be determined as to where their life will go. But unfortunately, because we live in a capitalist society, where we're measured by how much money we make, what our position is, we're measured by how many hours were put into work or production, everything, because it's measured by that. And there are Autistics who may not be able to, to get to all those places, it does affect how we're perceived. So as part of engaging, what I think we need to talk about, engaging also means doing our part, as Autistic individuals to blowing the top off these horrible stereotypes. Mm hmm. So go ahead. Go ahead from there.

Karen Timm

Yeah. Yeah, it's I mean, you touched on a few things there, for sure. That's okay. You know, when it comes to perception, I've already touched on a little bit about, you know, how people are perceived, but I can, I can certainly say that. Like I said, before, every single day, I know, based on my previous experiences with certain colleagues, or, you know, certain people in society or what have you, that once somebody knows that layer of your identity, you are treated differently. 100%.

Philip King-Lowe

Absolutely.

Karen Timm

And, you know, and people can say, well, it's intent impact and somebody was meaning well, but the thing is, like, if we if we really believe that, you know, in the idea of presume competence, right? If we, if we really believe in things like universal design for learning, you know, where there should be a variety of different ways of people to you know, communicate their thinking, and communicate, then Why is it that we still have, you know, systems like education, like the medical field who are supposed to know that right? Then why are we still perpetuating these outdated notions of normal in things like job interview, huge pet peeve of mine, and has and it has absolutely been a barrier for me and for many other people I know. In terms of, you know, the use of mouth words versus, you know, how we communicate in the chat, you know, if somebody is more comfortable communicating in chat or mouth, or, you know, email or what have you, right, like, maybe it's a Google Doc, where you're sharing knowledge and understanding as you're building something, as opposed to live synchronous. Whatever that is. We have to be modeling that in places like education, because we're telling our students and our families, that this is what we're doing, we're making things accessible, but we're not doing that for, you know, colleagues, we're not doing that for teachers are EAS or educational assistants. And that, you know, it's very hard to make sure that those things are put in place by waiting for policies to change by waiting for, you know, systems to change. So, I think it goes back to what we were saying earlier about, like creating, what women are creating things. And it's not just women who are Autistics, but I suggest that, you know, on the ground in classrooms, Autistic and otherwise Neurodivergent educators are really, really having a great impact. Because the way that they understand their Autistic girls, for example, or other Autistic kids, is going to be very different from the way a non-Autistic teacher understands them. And so, right, so trying things that we know intuitively work better for students who are young Autistics, and all the way through, we're really seeing some, some huge changes. And it's hard to get into what that looks like in a podcast setting. But, you know, as an example, you know, when you bring Autistics

together, if we know if we know that little Autistic girls have only learned, you know, that they're supposed to look at and sound and you know, be a certain way, right there, they're the minority. So if they're always only seeing this other version of what they're supposed to be like, because normal is so preconceived, based on a narrow majority, and they have not had opportunities to connect with other little girls or other young women or other post-secondary researchers who are women, then that feeling of isolation, that feeling that you're broken, that feeling that you are, you know, that internalized ableism, or the perfectionism that, that need to mask whether consciously or unconsciously, to try and fit in, all of that is happening, bringing Autistics together and finding community at every age is absolutely pivotal. And I see we we've created on our where I work right now on our campus, you know, two things that we just actually started a second version, but basically, they're, you know, small groups of students and adults who identify as Autistic. I am present in in those spaces because I am openly Autistic, with my students and staff. And, you know, it's amazing to see after even one conversation, one meeting where people are starting to, you know, feel like they can embrace different pieces of their identities and connect related to specializations, or, you know, even the way like I joked about the tangential talking you and I can kind of like, follow along and figure out, you know, where we could go, because there's a way of, of, you know, we communicate in in different ways. And, you know, I think that, that finding community at all of those ages and stages is so, so pivotal, because it's a shared identity that many of us have had to really almost deny, right deny it, or we've been socialized, like things like eye contact. I always knew eye contact felt gross to me, unless it was like, like close family kind of thing. But it was never a natural thing for me. Did I, do it? Sure, I did. Because, you know, I grew up in systems where, you know, look me in the eye, et cetera, et cetera. I was fortunate that I didn't have a family that they required that, so it was never made to feel abnormal in my home, but many families, you know, do that, because that they believe that to be natural to make. Right?

Philip King-Lowe

Let's, let's move on, you know, now that we have explored education for Autistic women, and talked about how we can get Autistic Adults engaged, how can we empower them to become proactive to changing what's happening? We've already talked about the importance of having Autistic educators, administrators and, and that sort of thing. And yet, we know that I'm the ones that often have forgiven the stereotype, have the hardest time with job retention, and also, you know, social interactions and that sort of thing. Are those who can hold a job, they can actually, you know, bring home a paycheck or something like that, we know that those things are actually happening. So, in light of that, how can we really empower us to really change what's happening in these systems?

Karen Timm

Yeah, another tough question. Because, again, so much of it is, you know, it's like, what's within our sphere of influence? What's within our control? Right? I, I don't ever want an Autistic person to feel like they are the one that has to solve this big problem, right? Because the problem is bigger than any one of us. Which is why it's something that I will always say is like ripples become waves, every conversation matters. You know, every single time, there's an opportunity to shift thinking or challenge thinking, in, you know, in community, working together with people who are really seeking to understand, right, there's certain hills, you're gonna climb, and certain hills that you're not so, you know, bringing allies into the conversation is very important. But, you know, I think a lot of the time, empowering starts with all always thinking about your own journey, and what you can manage at any given time. So many of us are constantly feeling this need this sense of urgency to fixing to change the world to, you know, social justice, like, it's

more than it's, I mean, there's a lot of us that are very much into social justice and righting wrongs. You know, and our friend, Jorn Bettin and talks about, you know, Autistic being, you know, the cultural immune system. And, you know, there's, we know that we're here for a reason. And that diversity of human thinking is very important, right. And so, Autistics are the ones that are going to say, you know, there's something's not right here, and something not right here. But we really have to, I think, give ourselves permission to honor our journey. Because many of us will really internalize the ableism in systems and we learn, you know, to try to be something else to try to fit into this, that or the other. Because that's what we've grown up thinking we were supposed to do, right? And if we do that, what we end up doing is putting more of ourselves on the backburner more and more, right? You know, the, it's the little girls or the you know, I see this in my educators all the time. There's trying to do more, they're trying to do more I know, I know, I'm guilty of it still constantly, like I'm, you know, I'm over 50. And I'm still trying to find a good balance in terms of, you know, how much time or how much energy I can put into this, that or the other, you know, juggling the demands of the house and family and, and, and, you know, my work day, right. But honoring your journey and really recognizing that your timeline is your timeline, right. I love that Opai, really, you know, talking about [Takiwātanga](#) "in your own way, in your own time," right. And it's true for young Autistics, but I think it needs to really be true. For any Autistic and really, you know, I think it resonates with many within the Neurodivergent community who are not just Autistic, right? If we don't think about our own self-care, as understanding like things like Spoon Theory, right, like, we talk about, you know, I don't know, do I don't have enough spoons, and when we start to share common language and understand that it's okay to take breaks. It's all okay to not push yourself beyond your means at any time. Right? It's don't say that everybody's going to have the same experience. Because, you know, my spoons on one day could be very different than on another day. But, you know, what, replenish what's replenishes us what, you know, what are some proactive preventative things that we can do to, you

know, prevent us from getting burnout for Brenna's from sensory overwhelm? Are we doing things that we don't need to be doing? Right? Like, it's interesting, because the pandemic, not many people, the benefits of things like online grocery orders, like if, if, if going to the grocery store takes up a lot of spoons, you know, but you still want to eat healthy, and you know, you have the means to do so. You know, the online piece is great, right? Get your groceries delivered or what have you. It's not it's not accessible for everybody. But I mean, there are things that people can do for themselves that I think we often don't give ourselves permission to do.

Philip King-Lowe

You know? Yeah, yeah. Well, up to the point for myself that I was not yet identified. You know, I did a lot of, you know, what's happening to me, just in and out of jobs and relationships, and just trying to figure life out. And then suddenly, someone said, Are you sure you not Autistic? And so, I finally got that information. And then all of a sudden, many things that had happened to me, including things that had happened in school, it all finally made sense. Now, I know for a lot of us, Autistics, whatever our gender happens to be, it can take a while, or you need to spend your own time trying to figure out how these things all fit together for you. But for example, I was somebody who had a lot of difficulties with daydreaming and I, people just assumed it was because I wasn't. I was just being, you know, disrespectful. It was something that could just be changed if I only behaved differently, or tried harder, or gave more time to something that I owe, you know, that sort of thing. Right. And even in college, I had well if you would just do this and right. And then and then when, when my identification happened, and even since then, I mean, even every day, excuse me, everybody, even now, I remember certain things. And I'm like, that's why I did. You know, yeah. And, you know, you mentioned being in your 50s. I'm in mine. And the thing is, is we know that at the time that these things occurred for us, we didn't have

the information that we do now. No. Absolutely, yeah. And that's where we do need to, you know, give ourselves a little grace to understand that. It wasn't anything that we did wrong, and in some cases, it wasn't anything they did wrong. That doesn't excuse it, but you know, me Yes. I think a lot of us did have abuses that occurred, but a lot of it was because of the information we have now. We didn't have back then. Hmm. You know, in some cases, I probably would say in most cases, if somebody had even the slightest bit of thinking that I might be Autistic back in 1979, they would have recommended that I be institutionalized. Right. Because that's all what that was considered is available to us.

Karen Timm

That's Right. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Well, and it's, it's interesting, because it reminds me of something I said, I said to you earlier, it's like every day, right, there's something and today, I have a little human say to me. Well, I don't I don't act Autistic, you know, has died has a diagnosis, all that. And my response was, we're all different. Every single Autistic is different. And there's no right, there's no way, you know, I mean, Autistics may find it easier to see other Autistic, I do believe that. It always feels much easier to see the patterns, right. There's pieces that I think we read, resonate with, and want to get to know somebody. But that's after many years of understanding, right? But if you go through life thinking that you're, you know, your big brother's version of autism is what autism is, or, you know, the good doctor is is what it means to be Autistic, or Rain Man, for goodness's sake, right? Like, my, my doctor, I won't say, Well, I can say, I guess, because I mean, the likelihood of them watching this or listening to this is, is maybe, you know, I'm not concerned. But, you know, few years ago, when I was going through this process, it was around the same time that my son was getting diagnosed. And the doctor, pediatrician, not, not the doctor, their diagnosis was diagnosing him, you know, said to me, oh, no, no, you're

not, you're not. You don't, quote, have Autism, and I'm doing air quotes for listeners. You don't have Autism. Because you know, you have you have a career and you know, you're having a conversation with me, like, I beg to differ, because, like, I've been doing the research, and I've been looking through and, you know, it was me really digging deeper to say, Ooh, this matches, and this matches this matches. And it was, it was very surreal to experience it that way. Because I thought, if I'm somebody who's, you know, looking at this, understanding this, and the doctors themselves are not getting it, that was a real wake up call for me. Right? Because the degree to which, you know, many people are not understanding their own neurology, because they're masking because they don't know they're Autistic. It's, it's just, it's so heartbreaking. And it's not to say somebody needs a label per se, but it's about understanding your neurology, and exactly when you were talking about like the try hard, or what have you, the first thing that came to my mind is, how many kids or people training in coaching sessions for people, you know, I remember participating in, like preparation sessions for interviews. And, you know, we do it at different stages and ages in our life. And they were never based on how our brains worked. It was always based on how non-Autistic brains work. It was always, you know, if you practice this, or do this, or use this method, no, that does not work. Because if you are combating, you know, the experience of being in a classroom and not being able to use mouth words, because you're situationally mute, and you're with 30 people there that are making noise, and, you know, you're experiencing every single experience you've had with each of those people right then and there. You might not in real time, be able to communicate your learning to the best that you can, right? It's gonna look very different. And two days later, you might be able to do it. But there are different situations where you're going to present very differently and you know, I think the biggest thing that we can do as Autistics, but you know, we're talking about Autistic women, is to really understand your neurology, not by going to the organizations who say they speak for us, but by learning from other Autistics, and I'm not saying just like run of the mill go out and find it

autistic. There are many Autistics who are doing a lot of work to really understand and dig deeper into a variety of different ways of experiencing the world as Autistics right so those guys, right like if we, if we know that monotropism is a way of understanding Autistic motivation And then like, let's read about that. I went to a workshop the other day, and there was an "expert" doing a workshop on Autistic motivation. And I, you know, tried to be nice about it, but you know, you get that. And I put in the chat, which they blocked because I was in the workshop, I think but anyway, and I asked if they were going to be covering monotropism, and the person did not even know they had never heard that term. And this was a professional who was a doctor who was presented as an Autism expert, being presented by an organization that, again, it's one of the ones that in our area people go to as soon as somebody gets diagnosed, right? So, and that's despite years of feedback from many people saying like, listen to Autistics. So, I think the more that we find those important Autistic, you know, the new knowledge that's being created, right? The monotropism double empathy, problem understanding, you know, things about our sensory systems. And it's not just about, you know, hearing things, you know, heightened it's that changing up and down of what we're hearing what we're seeing what we're feeling, our internal our, you know, way we experience and sense the world, and how that can continue to change depending on the circumstances, right. And my, my dog is feeling me heightened right now. So that understanding your neurology, and, you know, I think Autistics are well equipped to be the experts. Because we have this monotropic capability, right. And many, I think many of us are really doing deep dives into the research. There's great work being done on you know, Autistic menopause. There's great work being done on, you know, like, I, like I mentioned that literature review I did. There's great work being done on Autistic educators and their experiences. There's great work being done on the parallels. And in terms of mental health. We know there's been studies on, you know, the heightened, like, the higher the highest suicide rates are amongst not those with low with high support needs, but rather with high support needs, or

sorry, low support needs. So, the women who are seen to be the most, you know, capable, successful, who people will say, Oh, no, you couldn't be Autistic. Yeah, that's the group that has the higher rates, I think it's like seven times, right. Like, then the than the, then the general public interest analogy.

Philip King-Lowe

We will thank Karen Timm for this brilliant conversation followed by Today's Autistic Community Bulletin Board after this final commercial break.

Commercial Break III

Looking Forward Life Coaching Ad

Future Shows

On March 17th, Michelle Markman returns to Today's Autistic Moment for *Autistic Pioneers: Unearthing the Female Architects of Discovery*. The history of Autism is blurred due to the lack of recognition of the many Autistic women who are part of the Autism story. Michelle Markman will name and talk about many Autistic women and their contributions to where we are now.

Autism Acceptance Month will begin on April 7th with a show about *Autistic Culture & Language* with Rachel Cullin. Autistics are discovering that we are part of a unique culture with our own language while we strive for acceptance that opens up possibilities that are not limited by the ableism of DSM criteria. Rachel Cullen is an Autistic, independent consultant and advocate in Brighton, England who has been researching their Autistic Language Hypothesis. Together with our intersectional communities, we will challenge stereotypes, promote acceptance, and ensure that Autistic voices are heard.

The second show in Autism Acceptance Month on April 21st will be *An Autistic College Student's Story*. I am happy to say that a student who is going to graduate from Minnesota Independence College & Community in May named Holt Mills will be my special guest. Holt will tell us about his chosen subject of study and what being educated in a college community that accepts him as an Autistic has prepared him for the career and challenges of his life going forward. Holt will also tell us what graduation means for him.

Check out the [Future Shows](#) page on todaysautisticmoment.com for all upcoming shows and guests.

If you would like to offer to be a guest, go to the [Be My Guest](#) page on todaysautisticmoment.com to fill out the Guest Intake Form.

If you have any topic suggestions, please go to the [Contact Us](#) page and submit your ideas.

Thank you for listening to Today's Autistic Moment.

Segment 3

Philip King-Lowe

Well, Karen Timm, this has been a superb conversation. And as always, I find with a lot of the guests, you give us so much great information, that it becomes difficult for me to decide. And that's why, for my audience, my shows are a little longer this year. That's not a bad thing. It's just that the information that my guests are giving me is so outstanding. I don't want to deprive my audience of the information they give, but that's, that's just FYI. But Karen Timm please send me the links to those resources you mentioned. Email them to me and yes, of course, they will be on my Adult Autism Resources Links page on todaysautisticmoment.com. Will do. Karen Timm thank you so much for being here today. And my you know, and I look forward to interacting with you in the future and having other shows where you know where you're a part of the conversation, so thanks for being here.

Karen Timm

Absolutely. My pleasure. Thanks Philip.

Today's Autistic Community Bulletin Board

All of these events with their links can be found at
todaysautisticmoment.com/bulletinboard.

Join The Autism Society of Minnesota for their *Adult Coffee Club*. The next Coffee Clubs will be on Tuesday nights from 5pm to 7pm at Dogwood Coffee in St. Paul on March 5th, April 2nd, May 7th, and June 4th. Please RSVP at ausm.org.

Understanding Autism virtual classes will be offered by The Autism Society of Minnesota. These classes are perfect for Autistic individuals, caregivers, those who want to understand the basics of Autism and support Autistic people. The next class will be on April 8th from 10am to 12pm. Classes are free of charge, but you must register to attend.

Join The Autism Society of Minnesota and MNeurodivergent at the Lionsgate Academy located at 599 Cardigan Road in Shoreview Minnesota on March 19th beginning at 7-8:30pm to have some fun with *Speed Friending* for Teens.

Register today and attend the *Minnesota Autism Conference* to be held on April 17th through the 19th at the Hilton Doubletree Hotel located at 2020 American Blvd. E. in Bloomington, Minnesota. Keynote speakers this year will be Dr. Paula Kluth, Dr. Devon Price, and Joyner Emerick.

Go to ausm.org to get more information about these and other social and educational events, including your opportunity to enter the lottery for AuSM's Summer Camps by March 22nd at The Autism Society of Minnesota.

MNeurodivergent is a social club rooted in a vision of bringing Neurodivergent Minnesotans together to build meaningful connections. Its core principle is to foster an environment where all are treated with dignity and respect regardless of ability or preferences. Go to the bulletin board at todaysautisticmoment.com and click on the Meet Up link to become a member and attend their events.

Today's Autistic Moment is here because of the generosity of supporters and sponsors. Please join the supporters by clicking on Support Today's Autistic Moment on todaysautisticmoment.com.

If you work for a company and/or organization that supports Autistic Adults and the movement for Neurodiversity, I would love to have you sponsor ads on the show.

If you would like to sponsor an ad and/or have questions about Today's Autistic Moment, please send an email to todaysautisticmoment@gmail.com.

Thank you for listening to Today's Autistic Moment: A Podcast for Autistic Adults by An Autistic Adult.

May you have an Autistically Amazing day.