

Sheldon (he/him) (00:01.029)

Welcome back to the latest episode of I Must Be Buggin'. This is your host, Sheldon Gay. I say it every single time. I'm so grateful for this space. I'm so grateful for me to be here listening. Today, I got another great conversation with Dr. Matt. I will introduce him in a couple of seconds. I, know, the vibes have been on point since he and I met.

recently and had a chance to chat. And, when you all get a chance afterwards to dig into, know, his, content, I think you'll understand why this conversation, was, was meant to be and why I'm excited to have it. So, before I get started, let me go ahead and introduce myself in case this is the first time that you're joining us. My name is Sheldon Gay. I am your host. I go by pronouns, he and him. I am a 42 year old black

I have a hair that's faded on the side, curly, little long curly on the top. I have a little tuft of hair that I am calling a goatee, a mustache. I am what they would call light brown skin. And today I'm wearing my in -ear headphones and

red shirt. And so with that, let's get into it. So let me go ahead and introduce our guest today. So Matthew, Dr. Matt Zekreski is a high energy, creative clinical psychologist and professional speaker who utilizes an eclectic approach to meet the specific needs of his neurodivergent clients. He's proud to serve the gifted community as a consultant, a professor,

and author and as a researcher. He has spoken hundreds of times all over the world about supporting neurodivergent kids. Dr. Zekreski is a member of supporting the emotional needs of the gifted SINGH, the National Association for Gifted Children, NAGC for those, are some folks, these are kind of ringing bells for us, right? And the New Jersey Association for Gifted Children, NJAGC.

Sheldon (he/him) (02:28.929)

and the Pennsylvania Association for Gifted Education page. Dr. Zakreski graduated from Widener University's Institute of Graduate Clinical Psychology in 2016. He is the co -founder of the Neurodiversity Collective. so join me in welcoming Dr. Matt to the space.

Dr. Matt (02:50.61)

Well, thank you so much for having me. I mean, yeah, like from the minute we chatted, was like, the vibes were immaculate. And so, you know, so everybody calls me Dr. Matt, my pronouns are he, him. I am a 40 year old white male with short brown hair with a little bit of product in the front, know, six up a little bit. I have a thin

brown beard because I just shaved it I was looking a little bit too much like Jeff Bagwell. And got a blue checked collared shirt on no tie because I'm giving myself permission to live my sensory journey and not have to wear a tie if I don't want to. Right. mean gosh there's only when I'm giving talks which I give a lot of talks so I do have to wear ties but it's like you know what I'm not doing this anymore.

Sheldon (he/him) (03:34.773)

Yes, please.

Dr. Matt (03:46.826)

And I'm sitting in front of a bookcase that has color coded books in the back, color coded books that I can't really see because I'm color blind. So I can thank my wife for the beautiful background.

Sheldon (he/him) (03:58.791)

you

Sheldon (he/him) (04:03.342)

That's hilarious. Right, right, right, right. That's actually a really good segue into our discussion as well. One of the things that I immensely appreciate about my neurodivergent self-discovery journey is all the ways in which our different ways of

Dr. Matt (04:05.899)

I mean just like, might as well own it, right?

Sheldon (he/him) (04:32.299)

kind of bump up against our lives, right? It's like, to be colorblind and yet you've got this magical, colorful thing behind you. It's

how are these things coexisting, right? These things shouldn't necessarily be together, but they are. And that is a part of the wonder of it all, at least for me. And I think that's a big part of the reframing around a lot of this too, because in some spaces that can cause conflicts. It actually reminds me, and we were talking before the call, there was a meme that I saw on Twitter

this person was complaining about not having an HOA. they were like, see, when you don't have an HOA, this is what happens. And you look at the picture, and I looked at the picture, and I'm trying to figure out what's wrong with it. Come to find out, the person, their neighbor painted their house purple. And I'm like, is that the world's breaking down because the house is purple? Right? And... Right?

Dr. Matt (05:42.832)

The problem is there. That's the

Sheldon (he/him) (05:48.689)

Right, right, right. So I'm like, so these are the things, you know, I'm like, okay, this is you've got some control issues to work through there, my friend, because pretty sure that isn't doing actually anything to anyone. But but yeah, so like, go ahead, go ahead.

Dr. Matt (06:10.128)

So I was on a podcast episode I was on dropped yesterday. And I was talking about the difference between being that parent and that parent. And I'm like, and unfortunately, all the parents were advocating for their kids get lumped in the same bucket, but

you know, if you were talking about your kids fundamental right to learn, right? And it's like, he has an IEP, you have to follow the IP, you get thrown in same bucket was like, well, I don't like how the new math teacher hire wears dresses, right? You know, I don't like the color they painted the parking

lot. And I bring that one up because someone jumped in my DMS yesterday being like, how dare you? The color of parking lot is very important. I was like, tell me you're joking.

Sheldon (he/him) (06:33.099)
Mm -hmm.

Sheldon (he/him) (06:42.677)
Yes, yes,

Sheldon (he/him) (06:56.705)
Right. Like, tell me more about that. when which way in and I love this example and I love that we're starting this conversation in this way because this is again, this is the real discussion and about for me, it's important to understand the nuance, right? But what a lot of folks and a lot of systems do is simply portray everything as the same, right? Like a complaint is a complaint.

Right? But it's like, well, am I complaining because this system is oppressive or this system is, you know, causing me trauma or the system is unjust or whatever? Or am I complaining simply because I'm not centered or because I just don't like that thing or I don't even understand why I'm upset, but I'm upset. So I'm just going to complain and. Yeah.

Dr. Matt (07:49.052)
Here's the mindset, right? Choices were made. And it's one of those things, like to me, it's a piece of my own journey. I used to keep myself very small because of imposter syndrome. I don't have the educational doctor background or the PhD in educational psychology like a lot of our colleagues do,

Sheldon (he/him) (08:09.971)
Mm -hmm.

Sheldon (he/him) (08:14.539)
Mm Mm -hmm.

Dr. Matt (08:15.658)
And it was actually, you know, I think a person we both know, Joy Lawson Davis, who once looked me in the eye and said, don't stay small. Don't stay small for them. Right. So I, I push those points and I'm a lot blunter and more overt now than I used to be, because I think as a white male with a doctorate, I get, I have, I can do this from an immense place of privilege.

Sheldon (he/him) (08:41.461)
Mm -hmm, mm -hmm, mm -hmm.

Dr. Matt (08:42.482)
Yeah, they're gonna jump in my DMs and they're gonna disagree with my argument. And they might call me some nasty names, but you know what? It's like, hey, I can take it, right? I share a lot of pro LGBTQ content on my various social medias. And every time I do, people jump in the DMs, Like, what does this have to do with giftedness? Well, 38 and 70 % of gifted people are LGBTQ. So you tell

Sheldon (he/him) (08:52.725)

Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm.

Sheldon (he/him) (09:01.729)

Right,

Dr. Matt (09:12.114)

Rex Jones from Toledo, right? mean, like, you know, it's yeah. And like, so if I can be that beachhead and I can drive the conversation, you know, I mean, like, let's do it. I, you know, I, think that a lot of us were, have been shaped to play nice, but the other starlings aren't playing nice. Part of the reason I was so drawn to your content is you were just

Sheldon (he/him) (09:17.501)

Right,

Sheldon (he/him) (09:33.173)

Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm.

Mm -hmm, mm -hmm, mm -hmm.

Dr. Matt (09:41.486)

unabashedly centering yourself in your journey and how it's different in a lot of ways than other people's and like what's your place in this and I was like this is a guy I got to talk to right because when people yeah no I was like because when people look for gifted kids unwittingly they look for me they look for white kids from an upper middle class suburb right especially white males right

Sheldon (he/him) (09:52.949)

Yeah, I, I, sorry, go

Sheldon (he/him) (10:00.703)

Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm.

Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm.

Dr. Matt (10:06.562)

And I'm sitting here being like, well, that's great. And I happen to be gifted, but we know that these kids can come from any town, any zip code, any school district. So what is getting in the way of us finding kids who look like you, Sheldon, because like, damn, that's what we're missing.

Sheldon (he/him) (10:26.389)

Yeah. No, thank you for saying that. Because that's a big part of exactly what I want to do. I mean, there's so many great and maybe some not so great, but there's certainly lots of great gifted related or neurodivergent related podcasts out there. But I know, again, a lot of them aren't from people who look

who sound like me, who have had the experiences that I've had. actually this is reminding me as well, before the conversation, before we started recording, we had a conversation and I was mentioning the group meditation calls that I do. And this morning, that group that I do that with is actually shout out to Our Wild Minds. It's the group

Caitlin Smith has created for Black gifted folks. And it's such a special place. I was actually, you know, I'm not ashamed to say I was moved to tears this morning and not for the first time within the group because we were sharing, like, you know, we, we meditate together and then we kind of like have a little brief discussion. And the things that we were sharing were just so resonant, you know, even though

one of us had our own experience, it's not something that I can get in many of the other groups. I'm in multiple gifted and neurodivergent groups. And again, love all of those things, but in this space is where I see my whole self and I feel my whole self mirrored and why that's so powerful. And that's why it's so powerful, right? And that's what we're all looking for. We're all looking to find that mirroring in our lives. And so I want to make sure that I'm speaking up and saying,

Don't think that there's no one out there like you, you don't think that this message is only, you know, what these 10, you know, podcasts are putting out there. There are those of us who are, again, to go back to Dr. Joy, right, as she, you know, her phrasing, right, who are three, you know, three times exceptional, exceptional, I'm sorry, you know, right, three E because we've

Sheldon (he/him) (12:51.239)

not just the giftedness, not just, you know, other neurodivergence, but we've also got these marginalized experiences that we're bringing into what's going on. And so it's really, really important for me to share that and what, and also to kind of bring it back around to you. This is why having this conversation with you was actually something I was intrigued about because a lot of folks who do look like you, right,

One, aren't necessarily interested in this conversation, but two, aren't versed enough to be able to have a meaningful conversation about what that looks like, right? And so to that point, let me kind of like actually kind of get into some of the prepared questions, like to that point, like, yeah, tell us about yourself and your work and whether or not you identify as neurodivergent and kind of what that means for you.

Dr. Matt (13:48.614)

Yeah. So yeah, I mean, so I am a gifted and ADHD adult. You know, was identified gifted in second grade, not diagnosed with ADHD till high school, which frankly explained a lot, you know, and even at that moment, nobody ever told me that that twice exceptional was a thing like

Sheldon (he/him) (14:09.944)

Mmm.

Dr. Matt (14:10.936)

identified so much with the with the gifted part. And then like, but it was almost like the ADHD was separate. Right. And the 90s, like, you know, because you are you and I are both children of the 80s.

But like, you know, we came of age in the 90s. Like, it's got that like, we just didn't know the brain science thing. And we do now. And that's cool. Right. So

Sheldon (he/him) (14:17.127)
Mmm.

Sheldon (he/him) (14:23.051)
Mm -hmm. -hmm.

Sheldon (he/him) (14:31.509)
Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm.

Dr. Matt (14:37.52)
You know, mean, my work in this is personal and professional because I want to help. I want to help kids with me. know, like the idea is be the adult you wish you had as a kid, right? A lot of great adults, right? But I know a lot of kids don't and didn't. So let me be a part of their team. Let me support them

Sheldon (he/him) (14:49.727)
Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm.

Sheldon (he/him) (14:56.043)
Mm -hmm.

Dr. Matt (15:01.52)
raise a generation of psychologically healthy neurodivergent kiddos because damn, the world's gonna need us. And if we're burning out and feeling unsupported and falling short, well then let me be there to help pick you up.

Sheldon (he/him) (15:18.037)
Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm. Know

deep breath on that because that's the work, right? Like that's what's so important. I think about, you know, when people ask me like why I'm doing the work now, you know, I'm late identified as it were, right? Like I, no one at least made me aware, right? When the closest that anybody ever made me aware when I was that young was just that, you know, they called me Mr. Peabody, which honestly today, still.

Dr. Matt (15:48.914)
references.

Sheldon (he/him) (15:49.917)
Yeah, right, right, right. Okay. Sorry. Right. For those who are too young to even know what that means, like just look it up. You can look, you can look it up, but like, but exactly. You got Google, right? Exactly. But thank you for actually saying that because I, I forget about the fact that, right.

That's a, I'm dating myself as it were. Right. And so, but that's what, that was the closest that I got. And so, now in this last year,

Dr. Matt (15:57.682)
You got Google.

Sheldon (he/him) (16:19.165)
I've been telling people has been the year of transitions and on a number of different levels for me. And so as I'm doing this self discovery, I'm going back and revisiting that inner child and realizing the adult adults that I needed and wanted at the time. And so now I'm like, okay, I don't have a time machine. I haven't invented that yet. I don't know anyone who has. So I can't go back into the past and fix it. But what I can do

As I said earlier, right, be that advocate, be that voice, be that person to help mirror for young folks so that, you know, and I was going to quote Frederick Douglass, but I'm not going to be able to get it exactly, but if folks are familiar, there's a Frederick Douglass quote where he basically said that it's easier to raise up children instead of fix broken adults.

Right. And so that's very much so at the core of, you know, our work and again, why our vibe was so on point. Tell me a little bit more as well about when you said it was different, you know, sorry, separate, like the ADHD was like a separate thing. Can you give us any examples of how maybe that played out and, you know, maybe at the time or even as you, like I said, reflect back on that

Dr. Matt (17:47.622)
I mean, definitely reflecting back on it as this starting to get some of that messaging in late middle school, early high school, like imagine what you could do if you didn't have ADHD. Right? If you could just focus, if your backpack didn't look like a bomb went off, like imagine what you could do. And you know, I mean,

Sheldon (he/him) (18:08.565)
Hehehehehe

Dr. Matt (18:13.254)
you know, you do that stuff, right? And, you know, those people who like to retcon that, like I was trying to motivate you like, no, you weren't, you know, you were expressing your frustration with me because you feel like I was working with my potential, you know,

Sheldon (he/him) (18:15.819)
Mm -hmm.

Dr. Matt (18:28.846)
And it's like, and like I tell this story all the time and it's, you know, it gets to the heart of a lot of things in your podcast, but it's so a couple of years ago, I supported a kiddo from Chester, Pennsylvania, one of the poorest communities in the United States, you know, lots of black and brown kids in Chester. And this, this kid, you know, through a charter school,

Sheldon (he/him) (18:43.645)
Mm -hmm. -hmm. Mm -hmm.

Mm -hmm, mm -hmm.

Dr. Matt (18:55.59)
They'd asked me to take a look to see if they had any gifted kids. found him, brilliant kid, amazing athlete. We got him accepted into this elite private school in what's called the main line district of Philadelphia. It's where Kobe grew up, right? They got some walking around money. So to get to this school, he had to take a bus to another bus.

Sheldon (he/him) (19:06.955)
Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm.

Right, right, right, right, right, right. Right.

Dr. Matt (19:22.158)
and then he had to walk three quarters of a mile. And even though those buses were late, he was not making it to school on time. And leaving Chester, one of the poorest communities in the United States to this most affluent area, right?

Sheldon (he/him) (19:25.941)
Mmm.

Sheldon (he/him) (19:29.537)
Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm.

Sheldon (he/him) (19:36.363)
Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm.

Dr. Matt (19:37.886)
And they brought, you know, I mean, they didn't have money for gift you kids, but they didn't have money for athletes. So they brought him in as a track athlete and he ran the one hurdles. And I don't know if you ever ran track, but like, but like the one hand, one 10 journals are no joke, right? Like, I will sit on the sidelines and cheer you on, but I want nothing to do with the sprinting and the jumping and the falling. That's a hard pass. I threw, I threw dips. I threw discus. I was like, I'm good at frisbee coach. And he's like, yeah, just do that

Sheldon (he/him) (19:51.339)
Mm -hmm. -hmm. Mm Mm -hmm.

Sheldon (he/him) (19:56.961)
Right right right

Sheldon (he/him) (20:07.679)
Yeah

Dr. Matt (20:08.751)

So like, and this kid, like, I'm gonna forget the exact order, but it was like, basically, his track season went first place, last place, first place, last place, last place, first place, first place, last place, first place. And they went into a meeting, they were like, why does he keep losing the race? I'm like, hold on a second. Winning one time hurdles is hard. How is he winning? Like, let's talk.

Sheldon (he/him) (20:30.817)

Right, right, right, right, right, right, right, right.

Dr. Matt (20:34.354)

I was like, dude, what's the deal? He's like, man, like the days I win the 110, those are the days I got to have breakfast at school. And you want to see a room of white people get real quiet. It's a with privilege like that. And it's

Sheldon (he/him) (20:41.151)

Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm.

Mmm... Mm -hmm, mm -hmm... Mm

Dr. Matt (20:53.356)

it's like that. Like, because he had to get to the bus to the other bus to the walk and right. He didn't have breakfast. And if there was food was in his house, he was making sure his little sister got right. And, you know, so I looked at their athletic director, I was like, you got to fix this. Like,

Sheldon (he/him) (21:04.053)

Mm -hmm, mm -hmm, mm -hmm.

Dr. Matt (21:12.686)

Like, you know, so they pulled aside a hot breakfast for him, right? And we made sure the trainer had boxes of cereal bars and protein bars in his office, little things, right? But just this inherent question of why aren't you doing X versus what's helping you do Y, that one shift.

Sheldon (he/him) (21:22.486)

Mm -hmm.

Sheldon (he/him) (21:29.003)

Mm -hmm.

Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm.

Dr. Matt (21:35.298)

for vulnerable populations is everything, right? And, you know, I've tried to build my career out of asking that question. Like, what's helping you do this thing and how can I turn up the volume on that? Rather than like being another adult who's, you know, piling on and throwing rocks at your face. Because I'm not trying to do that.

Sheldon (he/him) (21:39.498)
Absolutely.

Sheldon (he/him) (21:50.507)
Mm -hmm.

Sheldon (he/him) (21:55.957)

Yeah. Yeah. No, I, I love this story on multiple levels. One as, as a Philly ball, like, you know, and I'm back in Philly now. I'm familiar with Chester. I'm familiar with the main line. I, so just off the bat, like there's a lot of familiarity there. as well, I'm someone who has come from,

a family without means who has been able to then attend these private elite, super, super elite institutions. And, you know, in short, made me reflect on, you know, well, yeah, it made me reflect on going to boarding school. So some people wonder, like my mom moved us to the DC area when I was young. And so I went to a school in

Maryland, my mom was living in DC and people were like, well, you, your mom was in DC, but you went to school. Why'd you board? And you know, I, I, this, this story gives me reflection because now every day at boarding school, I didn't have to worry about, was there going to be breakfast? Was there going to be lunch? Was there going to be dinner? All the different structure I didn't have to worry about, you know, getting, getting on a bus, you know, cause that I lived that

I lived the, know, throw all my books into a backpack, get up, I have to get up at six to make sure that, you know, all the, all the things like I did, I lived that life. And I love again, the, the, you know, the core gem is around the curiosity. Like what's your, what kind of curiosity do you have? Are you asking again, why are you messing up? Or are you asking, you

you're being successful, how do we replicate this? And even if you weren't asking, you wouldn't necessarily have to frame it as why are you messing up? But it's like, we see that you're excelling here. You're having some trouble over here. Tell us about that. be curious about those differences. But as you know, so much of society is framed in the way of like, why are you broken? Why are you messing up? What is

Sheldon (he/him) (24:22.613)

What's the deficit model about how we approach problems as opposed to, I brought this person in and, you know, I think this is a conversation I was even just having last night with a friend about, well, technically we were even talking about a podcast recording that I was on a couple of weeks ago, whatever, but we were talking about how schools bring students in, then watch them fail and then blame the student.

And it's like, you brought the student in. So if you're bringing in students, the assumption is that you're bringing in students you think can do the work. So if you're blaming them, it's like, well, you brought me into the school. I would think that you think that I could do the work. Have you looked at the support services that you have here? And what are you doing to make sure that I have what I need? Because otherwise, that's where, you know, we should really be looking, not just, you

Why, again, why are you broken? Why are you not living up to your potential? All the different things that don't really spark that joy, I'll say, and that motivation to do anything. So don't know if you had anything else to say about that, but I'll stop there.

Dr. Matt (25:40.656)

I mean, some people refer to it as the Finding Nemo effect. Right? Finding Nemo came out, all these people bought clownfish. Now clownfish are notoriously difficult to raise, right? They need very specific shit. I'm not, I don't know, I'm not the customist.

Sheldon (he/him) (25:45.045)

Mm.

Sheldon (he/him) (25:48.895)

in me.

Sheldon (he/him) (25:54.421)

Hmm. Well, it's already out there. No, don't go. I'll have to flag this episode. I'm sure you're right, right, right

Dr. Matt (26:09.348)

And people will be like, well, these fish are stupid. These fish are dying. And it's like, you bought the fish. Like, did you not Google it? Did you not look this up? And, you know, and as I do a lot of child psychology, I'll do a lot of family therapy. And I always say,

Sheldon (he/him) (26:12.373)

Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm. Right.

Sheldon (he/him) (26:21.418)

Mm -hmm.

Dr. Matt (26:31.216)

your kid owns this problem, this problem is your kid's problem. But if you think for a second that you're not part of that problem, you're missing the point, right? I mean, we all bear responsibility, right? They say the village should raise a child. That means the village is responsible for that child, right? It cuts the directions.

Sheldon (he/him) (26:41.587)

Mm -hmm, mm -hmm, mm -hmm,

Sheldon (he/him) (26:47.841)

Mm -hmm.

Sheldon (he/him) (26:53.941)

Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm.

Dr. Matt (26:56.682)

And, you know, I mean, I used to work at a prep school for gifted kids and we brought in a kid. was, you know, he was black from West Philly. And the first thing he said to me was, are the other kids? Where are the other black kids, Dr. Matt? And I was like, we are going to fail this child. Right. Great kid. And he didn't last. Right. We had to counsel him out. And like,

Sheldon (he/him) (27:11.541)

Mmm.

Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm. Mm

Dr. Matt (27:20.422)

Does he bear responsibility there? Absolutely, right? Like, this kid who had a lot of off -ramps and kept choosing not to take them. But also, there were four men who worked in the entire building. One of which actually, who was Black? was a science, he was an awesome guy. But I mean, he had no one to look to, right? And like, I know DEI has become incredibly politicized by people who choose to weaponize, know, passion. But

Sheldon (he/him) (27:23.093)

Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm.

Sheldon (he/him) (27:27.733)

Mm -hmm.

Sheldon (he/him) (27:40.011)

Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm.

Sheldon (he/him) (27:47.527)

in in in say that again right

Dr. Matt (27:50.502)

This is what DEI has been weaponized by people who want to vilify compassion. Sound clip. That'll be my new ringtone, right? But this is why DEI work matters because it isn't enough to buy a clownfish. God have

Sheldon (he/him) (27:56.991)

Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm. Right. Right.

Sheldon (he/him) (28:15.349)

Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm.

Dr. Matt (28:17.406)

and the light and the heating and salinity and the food to that fish alive because otherwise you were putting that fish in the toilet and wondering what the hell was wrong with that fish?

Sheldon (he/him) (28:19.989)

Yes.

Sheldon (he/him) (28:27.349)

That's, I love this analogy. have not heard about that before, but I love it because yeah, that's exactly what happens in so many scenarios is that people are like, well, what's, you know, what's wrong with you? you know, you couldn't do this, that, and the third. it's like, nobody took the time to consider that there's this unique being that I need to account for.

to be curious about and understand, wait, like, you know, even if I've had a hundred goldfish, this isn't a goldfish, right? And so I can't just do the same exact thing. And I also love this part about accountability because this is a big part of my message that sometimes I feel like ruffles people a little bit wrong because I think where some conversations in the

space

How do I wanna say this? I think there's a lot of, I have a lot of compassion for people who are speaking to their traumas around not being understood and wanting to speak to exactly this, right? They're feeling like the clownfish and they're like, why didn't you take care of me? But I think there's also this part where we have to say to ourselves, okay, well, again, what part can I do? How can I really

self -empowered to address my concerns. And maybe the system itself, like maybe the school or the office or the whatever isn't the right place for me, right? Because they are not willing to make certain accommodations, but at the same time, like what can I do to advocate for myself or what can I do to, know, whatever it is that, again, make sure

Sheldon (he/him) (30:28.811)

there's a shared responsibility because it is about nobody, shouldn't be looking, and this is my, you know, my opinion, it's my podcast, I so, you know, it is what it is, but it's like, I don't think we should be looking to set up a scenario where people don't have any stake in how their life is playing out. Like, I don't think that really serves any of us.

Dr. Matt (30:38.885)

Ha ha ha!

Sheldon (he/him) (30:58.975)

You know, again, to be clear, it's not me saying that, it's absolutely not me saying that our conditions, the systems of oppression and all those things have no effect, but it is saying that there are opportunities for us to make the most out of our situation and being as aware of those as possible, you know, is really, really critical.

And so I'm just glad that you brought that into the space because that definitely for me is something I feel strongly about.

so we've talked about so many different things. Let's, let's take about, take a, take a turn back a little bit because I want to make sure in this space, we do talk about giftedness in, in, in, detail, or at least

specifically like, tell me what giftedness means for you. You you said that you kind of identified a lot, you know, with that, from a young age. So like, what does

mean to you and how do you and your clients, how would you describe how you all experience

Dr. Matt (32:12.732)

To me, it's about...

Dr. Matt (32:18.534)

You know what the best description of it is? Have you ever seen the movie The Incredibles?

Sheldon (he/him) (32:25.003)

Mm -hmm.

Dr. Matt (32:26.374)

Right, so at the end of the movie, right, when like the family's powers are out and they're watching Dash at the track meet and he's going too fast. He's like, don't do it, don't do don't it, don't don't don't do don't do it, don't do don't don't don't don't don't it, don't it, don't it, don't do it,

Sheldon (he/him) (32:45.323)

Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm.

Dr. Matt (32:52.784)

I was more one of those like if the ball rolls downhill, you can't stop it, right? Like, I played fullback on football, right? I was just like, get in the hole, like I can do that, but that's the thing. I mean, and then people would yell at you to not go too fast. You try to do what everybody else did. Well, like, but don't do that either. Like, where the hell do you want me to go?

Sheldon (he/him) (32:56.43)

Alright, he's back.

Sheldon (he/him) (33:12.021)

Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm.

Dr. Matt (33:18.01)

Right? And it wasn't until I went to the Center for Talented Youth Camp, CTY, that I called my mom on the second day and I was like, I don't have to pretend to be dumb here.

Sheldon (he/him) (33:18.185)

Easy,

Dr. Matt (33:32.322)

I can be as smart as I actually am because really it felt like a secret shame. It felt like, you know, to use a well -worn metaphor, right? It felt like you had to be Clark Kent all the time. You didn't get to be Superman. You didn't get to jump into that closet and change into the costume and save the day, right? And Clark Kent is so aware of the fact that he's Superman, right?

Sheldon (he/him) (33:54.773)

Mm -hmm, mm -hmm.

Sheldon (he/him) (33:59.062)

Mm -hmm.

Dr. Matt (34:00.118)

But if he doesn't get to scratch that itch, then it has negative impacts on him. So it's about helping people to understand that they have different brains that can do different things in environments where they can run as fast as they can get into that to make their brains happy.

Sheldon (he/him) (34:05.322)

Absolutely.

Sheldon (he/him) (34:15.093)

Mm -hmm, mm -hmm.

Yeah, I really love that description. You know, I've said before and in multiple spaces that life feels, I mean, even today, but certainly before I've really had this awareness, it just felt like I was always stuck in traffic. Right. And there were many places for many different reasons where, you know, me showing up at someone who, you know,

was able to run faster to kind of stick with the analogy or whatever, that was problematic. so I definitely, my frustration as I went through this self -discovery journey, a big part of it was like, this is why you felt so frustrated. Where people were like, you've, there's some people who said, you have an anger issue. And it's like, no, I'm super chill most of the time.

These things keep coming up and I'm getting really angry, but now I'm realizing, I was angry because I felt like I was in a catch -22 situation. It's like, if I run as fast as I can, people don't like it. If I don't do that, people are like, why are you shrinking or why are you not doing, why are you not even, people want us to perform for them, right? And particularly there are some people who I know some gifted folks have this experience of being like these, trotted out like

And so if you're not being the trophy for somebody, they're like, well, what are you doing? Right. And so, you know, again, I, again, this is why I really like this, this, this, you know, example, because that's the part that people don't really get to see. They only get to see, you know, how giftedness is portrayed in a, you know, a TV show where again, it's like, you're just so smart and you know, all the things and you never have to do.

Sheldon (he/him) (36:12.437)

you know, any kind of work to, and it's like, first of all, that's not necessarily everybody's experience and that's not necessarily even an accurate representation, but more specifically, it leaves out the humanity part of it. Because if you were someone from a very young age, cause it's not like some people's superpowers, right? Let's kind of get to that, right? Like it's not like a, I just came from watching Deadpool and Wolverine yesterday.

I suggest that for those for whom that may be of interest, I've really enjoyed it. But it's not as if there's, you know, you know, and a lot of X-Men lore, right? People's powers come in there like teenagers or something like that. And it's like, I've got powers. I need to go see Professor X. It's like, no, I've been like this since I was really little. imagine not having the words for, you know, describing those experiences where you may be able

out navigate an adult. So anyway, I just appreciate that example. I don't know if you had anything else you wanted to share about that,

Dr. Matt (37:29.172)

Man, we're letting the conversation flow the way it does, you know?

Sheldon (he/him) (37:32.927)

Yeah.

Dr. Matt (37:35.96)

And I think what it really is, is that this is such personal stuff. Like this is something that it is very difficult to be academically removed about. Like we are talking about people's brains and we're talking about people's lives and feeling fundamentally like you don't fit in the world. mean, if that's not a cause to take up, then I don't like, I don't know how to help you. Right. And

Sheldon (he/him) (37:56.289)

Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm.

Dr. Matt (38:05.166)

And it's one of those things where like that whole show pony thing is so real, right? Dance for me, know, right? Right. Come downstairs. And I know there's all these adults here that you don't know, but play the piano. it's like, do you know the term contingent worthiness?

Sheldon (he/him) (38:10.699)

Mm -hmm, mm -hmm, mm -hmm. Yes. Yeah, right,

Sheldon (he/him) (38:29.586)

No, I'm not familiar

Dr. Matt (38:31.228)

So yeah, it's a very psych textbook term, right? Like that's, but it's one of the few I use in my clinical practice because it codifies this idea that I only have value if I succeed. I only have value if I can do the thing, right? And, you know, bringing me downstairs to play the piano for the parents' friends, right? Or like, bring out some of your art. Like, I don't want to do that.

Sheldon (he/him) (38:43.509)

Mm -hmm. -hmm. Mm -hmm.

Sheldon (he/him) (38:52.213)

Mm -hmm.

Sheldon (he/him) (38:58.752)

Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm.

Dr. Matt (38:59.134)

you don't make my brother who's the basketball player like go shoot hoops in the driveway, right? No, it's, it's, it's like they don't really know what to do with us. And, you know, I mean, listen, most, when I think about how the world treats neurodivergent people often think of Hamlin's razor. Hamlin's razor says that most human behavior is better explained by ignorance rather than malice. Right?

Sheldon (he/him) (39:03.423)

right right

Sheldon (he/him) (39:27.381)

Mm -hmm, -hmm, mm mm -hmm, mm -hmm.

Dr. Matt (39:29.022)

I don't think most people are out to get us. genuinely believe this. you know, necessary privilege check here. I say this as a white man, right? Like you make, right? You know, I gotta own that, right? But the, but like the ignorant, but ignorance can wound just as well. I may not hit you with my car. It doesn't mean I didn't hit you with my car, right?

Sheldon (he/him) (39:32.662)

Mm -hmm.

Sheldon (he/him) (39:38.507)

Fair enough, fair enough. And thank you for saying that. ahead.

Sheldon (he/him) (39:55.817)

Mm -hmm, mm -hmm, mm -hmm, mm -hmm, mm -hmm.

Dr. Matt (39:58.098)

So I think that's the stuff that so much of the work we do being on podcasts, speaking at conferences, writing books, you know, just living this visibly, openly. It's really, about education. It's about telling people in your heart, like if I

help you know more about this thing, then you might change your behavior in a positive direction and change your behavior in a positive direction, then more good stuff is going to happen.

Sheldon (he/him) (40:30.891)

Yeah. Yeah. I, there was something you said initially that I wanted to tap into, but I know that even just stick, sticking here with the ignorance versus malice, think this for me is even making a connection back to the accountability part. Because for me, one of the greatest things that self-awareness has meant for me is it's allowed me to understand, like, let's forget about, I

necessarily know everybody's mind directly. Like there's no possible way. Like we can vibe as much as we want, but I cannot know your experience directly. But what I can say is the times when people have thought that I was, you know, out to get them or hurt them or, even when I acknowledge again, back to the accountability piece where I fell short, was that because I literally was plotting on

this outcome or was it because I didn't understand what was going on or I misunderstood or whatever, like this ignorance piece and ignorance going back to, and shout out to the prep school, right, where they taught us Latin, right, and ignorance literally meaning not knowing, right? You know, or was it this piece where I was like, now that I see this from a different angle,

You know, I can walk this path, you know, much, much differently. And, you know, understanding that, okay, if that's happening in my mind, it's probably happening in a lot of folks' mind around me. And so my reactions to people and how I even propose solutions can come from, at least initially from a place of, hey, look, let's talk about this. Let's, you know, let me understand what's happening in your mind.

As we both know, that doesn't determine that someone's going to change, right? That doesn't determine that people will see it your way or any of that stuff, right? But what I can be accountable is for my part and say, okay, well, I understood, I listened to you, I did my part. And that's a really key and important piece. And particularly when we're dealing with folks whose minds...

Sheldon (he/him) (42:58.773)

do work in a way that diverges from what is normalized. And I like to say it that way very specifically because I don't think, or I question whether a normal actually exists, right? Like, you know, if a typical thing actually exists or whether or not, again, we just sort of, that's a story that we tell ourselves, right? And so,

what ends up being normalized if we're dealing with a population that has a large contingent of LGBTQ folks who, again, not only in a broader sense think differently, but certainly as it relates to a core piece of identity think different than what is, again, normalized,

We've this is it's really critical for us to be mindful of this kind of stuff.

Dr. Matt (44:01.272)

and that mindfulness, people want solutions.

They want like, how do I fix it? Man, I can't fix 300 years of systemic racism. I cannot change the fact that school district funding is tied to medium income. I would love to change that stuff. We have to work in the system we have until we get a better system. And I think by working within that system, we show its shortcomings and its pitfalls and its dark corners.

Sheldon (he/him) (44:13.419)

Mm -hmm, mm -hmm, mm -hmm.

Dr. Matt (44:38.182)

You know, but it's like, listen, the only way out is together. And the only way out is with sweat equity. Like we have to work hard. But I think more importantly is we have to work smart, right? Because it's going to take a better audience. It's going to take a better argument. It's going to take.

you know, concerted effort to change something that we are fighting history here. And, you know, and this is going to be the most white guy sentence I've ever said, other than like, can I have some ranch dressing? Right. Like, but like, you know, I want to be on the right side of history here. Like I want to be able to look back at my life and say, we fought for more people to get what they need because this is, you know, fundamentally

Sheldon (he/him) (45:05.281)

Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm.

Dr. Matt (45:28.86)

like it's about equity. It's about everybody gets what they need. And you you kept saying the word be curious, be curious, be curious, right? One of my go -to sentences in therapy is be curious, not furious. Right? When you get out of my head, dude, like, because it is so easy to be angry at the things we don't know because anger and fear are so connected.

Sheldon (he/him) (45:37.524)

Mm Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm.

Sheldon (he/him) (45:44.747)

Mmm. Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm.

Mmm.

Sheldon (he/him) (45:57.567)

Mm -hmm, mm -hmm.

Dr. Matt (45:58.256)

Right? But like, stop, wait, think, what is happening here? What don't I know? And we live in a world where ignorance is celebrated. Right? And humility and curiosity aren't. And so I say this to you, like, you know, not you, Sheldon, because I know you know, but like, the people who are listening, like,

Sheldon (he/him) (46:12.981)

Mm

Sheldon (he/him) (46:21.217)

for.

Dr. Matt (46:23.802)

curious, like there are things we don't know. And in that lack of knowledge is the key that unlocks the door that solves the problem, right? It's, it's hard for neurodivergent people to think that there are things they don't know or don't know well enough to be expert at. But whatever meaningful change we can affect in the world is the intersection of what you know and what I know.

Sheldon (he/him) (46:50.379)
Mm -hmm, mm -hmm, mm -hmm.

Dr. Matt (46:51.504)
That's the alchemy, right? That's what changes it. And, you know, I'm going to keep banging that drum until they make me stop talking.

Sheldon (he/him) (46:58.849)
Well, please, please do keep banging that drum. And I'm looking at the time. This has been such a great conversation, but I want to make sure that I honor your time. let's, let's, let's, let me ask you this. Will you come back for a second? Let's continue this conversation in another episode. But as we kind of wrap this one up,

It sounds like you kind of gave folks a takeaway and if you had another one, feel free to share it. But otherwise, tell us about any projects that you're working on, how people can work with you, and how folks can connect with

Dr. Matt (47:41.628)
So, all right, so I am very online, chronically online. I have two basic jobs. They're full -time psychologists, right? So that's the Neurodiversity Collective. That's the name of our practice. We see people all over the country. It's very helpful.

Sheldon (he/him) (47:52.437)
Mm -hmm. Mm.

Dr. Matt (47:58.77)
And then speaking, consulting, engagements, flying all over to speak at different conferences and events, that's drmattsochresky .com. And my book comes out this fall, so that's fun. Right? Yeah, I keep saying it because it still doesn't feel real, any minute now. But honestly, if there's a takeaway from this,

Sheldon (he/him) (48:12.234)
Okay, all right. Get ready for that,

Dr. Matt (48:29.348)
It's that the world may not be friendly to neurodivergent people and the world is significantly less friendly to thrice exceptional people, right?

Sheldon (he/him) (48:38.815)
Mm -hmm, mm -hmm, mm -hmm.

Dr. Matt (48:42.45)
but there are ways to find community. mean, you and I never met properly until we had our Zoom call getting ready for this, but I feel like I've known you, right? Because like, this is a space you've carved

out that is so neurodivergent affirming, is so vulnerable. I mean, you were saying earlier, I cried today and I'm like, two 40 year old men sitting in a Zoom room.

Sheldon (he/him) (48:52.865)

Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm.

Sheldon (he/him) (49:06.913)

Right?

Dr. Matt (49:12.651)

That's the thing. It's like, if you can't get the thing you want, get as close to it as you possibly can in as many ways as you can. Right. You may not live near your buddies from college, but if you can jump on a zoom with them or play Call of Duty with them, like then that's

Sheldon (he/him) (49:23.434)

Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm.

Mm -hmm.

Dr. Matt (49:31.728)

Right. And, know, I just think like how much better I feel for having this shared experience with you and what that must mean for all your listeners. So, you know, it's the sort of thing like, S keep listening to this amazing podcast with my amazing friend here, but like take this feeling that you have from listening to it and go find another parts of your life because that's what's going to fill your tank and allow you to be the best version of you, whatever that's going to be.

Sheldon (he/him) (50:01.599)

Yes, I love that. Thank you personally, but also thank you for sharing that with the listeners, because I think that's a perfect way to, you know, leave folks. So thank you, Dr. Matt, we definitely schedule a time to circle back. And yeah, thank you all for joining us and see you all in the next episode.

Dr. Matt (50:23.004)

Thanks so much for having me. I'll definitely be

Sheldon (he/him) (50:24.479)

Yeah. Okay, great.