

**Some Stutter, Luh!**  
**Season 5, Episode 2, Kellina Powell**

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Greg O'Grady: Welcome to *Some Stutter, Luh!*, Newfoundland and Labrador's first podcast about living with communication differences. It is a production of the Communication Collaborative and is in solidarity with the Newfoundland and Labrador Stuttering Association. My name is Greg O'Grady. I am a person who stutters and your host. *Some Stutter, Luh!* is a unique opportunity for us to discuss topics, experiences, and perspectives on what it is like to live with communication differences. To live with a disability, but also to uplift and inspire, to rebuild confidence through inclusive language and themes, and to install hope by dismantling myths, stigmas, stereotypes, barriers, surrounding speech, language, and disability challenges. *Some Stutter, Luh!* is a safe space to speak and to own your truth, a safe space to communicate differently without the fear of being judged or feeling ashamed. If you only get one thing from this podcast, we hope it's this. It's really okay to stutter, and it's really okay to communicate differently. It's not how we communicate that's important. It's the message that's important, so let's communicate differently without the need to ask permission or to apologize for being you. For more information about the Communication Collaborative or this podcast, you can find us at [sometutterluh.ca](http://sometutterluh.ca).

Today, *Some Stutter, Luh!* warmly welcomes Kellina Powell. A little about Kellina. Now, I copied this directly from Kellina's website. "It is my honor to be your coach. I am passionate about guiding and supporting people with disabilities to try different tools and strategies to reach their fullest potential, especially within the Deaf community. I have a huge passion for seeing people succeed. My unique experiences living in two different worlds, the hearing and Deaf community, make me a passionate advocate for people with disabilities to be heard and improve their mental health. With a bachelor's degree in Psychology and a postgraduate certificate in Mental Health and Addiction, I have sound knowledge of the brain's functions, which provides further insight and understanding in assessing individuals with their mental health. I am also aware of the many different counseling strategies and techniques used to administer mental health support. My experiences and training have led me to be very open and see outside the box to develop excellent communication and listening skills, making me a competent and suitable coach. As a Deaf Queen Boss, my goal is to teach others how to be inclusive and change how we approach mental health among people with disabilities and within the Deaf community. Growing up, I never had a therapist, teacher, or role model who looked like me and could relate to what it was like to be Deaf, who could help me navigate life with different strategies for a Deaf person in the hearing world. We must use our voices to overcome our issues and support each other. Kellina focuses on depression, anxiety, and phobias, relationship difficulties, life transitions, difficulties with self-esteem, obsessive-compulsive disorder, OCD, post-traumatic stress disorder, career issues, college/graduate school issues, medical and health concerns, pain management, stress management, grief and loss, other issues."

Well, welcome, Kellina, to *Some Stutter, Luh!*

Kellina Powell: Thank you so much for having me.

Greg O'Grady: And also, before I start as well, Kellina is also a published author. So, Kellina has written a book called *EveryDay I Am Just Deaf: Life in a Hearing World with Deaf Queen Boss*. So, Kellina, we'll... I'll ask you to talk about your book in a few minutes. So, Kellina, can you share with our listeners a little about living life as a hearing-impaired individual?

Kellina Powell: I would say that it's very challenging at times. It's not always easy. So, my life within the Deaf community is always fun and rewarding experience just because there's so many ways to communicate with so many different people. But the hearing community is very hard sometimes because not everybody has the same communication style—how to express from everybody. So, it can be difficult. But at the same time, I did learn how to navigate and learn how to communicate that is best for the hearing community and also for myself.

Greg O'Grady: What is your definition of communication?

Kellina Powell: For me, communication is being able to be flexible in terms of hearing the person's voice. I feel like sometimes when we're trying to communicate with one another, we tend to think about ourselves and not what we're trying to accomplish in the end of our conversation. So, that's my definition of communication: being able to communicate with one another without having it to be so difficult. I know a lot of us can learn how to communicate through a cell phone. Especially if there is—for example, if the person speaks two different languages. Right? So, they'll be using a translator on the phone to communicate. So, communicating is such a big thing for me.

Greg O'Grady: Our listeners are interested in knowing, what stimulated you to become a professional coach and advocate specializing in mental health and empowerment for young adults with disabilities?

Kellina Powell: Can you repeat that again? Sorry.

Greg O'Grady: Sure. What stimulated you to become a professional coach and advocate specializing in mental health and empowerment for young adults with disabilities?

Kellina Powell: It all started by two stories. So, the first story was when I was a young girl. I was working. I was like 17 years old. And I remember my hair was in a ponytail. My hearing aids were showing. And a little boy, who was also Deaf, and he was wearing hearing aids. And he approached me and said, "Miss, look! I am Deaf too!" And I'm like, "Oh my goodness!" And I don't think I ever met a little boy in the hearing [unclear 7:35]. And the mom came to me. Full of joy. She was like, **not crying**, but like she was full of joy. And she said, "It's very rare to see my son," or even for herself, to see a Deaf person interacting in the hearing community because she never met anyone like me. She said, "You're the first person that my son has seen." She said, "Because you did such a small thing like that, you just boost and help my son build his confidence by simply doing that, by having your hair in a ponytail." Imagine if I did not have my hair in a ponytail. The little boy could not approach me or have noticed that I was Deaf. The second story was, I actually had a professor who was actually Deaf too. And him and I had a crazy conversation. He actually—I didn't even knew he was Deaf myself because he actually paused a lecture to change his hearing aid battery. And it was mind-blowing because he had so much confidence by stopping a lecture that looked like a movie theater just to change his hearing aid battery. And it helped me build

my confidence too. And I was like, "Whoa, this is very cool that I can actually have a professor that looks like me." And him and I had a really small conversation. And I said to him, "How do you do this?" And he said, "Well, look at this. You just came to me. I wanted to help other people, other students, actually, just to let them know that no matter what disability you have, what challenges you have, it does not mean that you cannot succeed in your life." And this is what leads me to my coaching business, because I realized that it's very true. Not a lot of us, especially in the Deaf community, our professional numbers are not high for those who are Deaf. It's very low. It's very rare to see that. And that's why I wanted to spread awareness about the Deaf community. And also, especially for those who are young adults like myself, I actually did suffer a lot of mental health illness when I was in high school because high school was a big thing for me, life was changing, and I didn't know, I didn't know who to talk to. I was so terrified because, you know, I didn't think that I could talk to someone because I don't think they would understand where I was coming from. And I feel like—I remember I went to one of them, but she could not understand where I was coming from. And like she kept giving me tips and tips, but it was not working. And it was working, but it wasn't. And I felt like I needed to make a change for the young adults to let them know that it's okay to be different. And that's why I wanted to proceed becoming a life coach for young adults.

Greg O'Grady: Kellina, does hearing impairment run in your family, or what caused your hearing impairment?

Kellina Powell: No, I'm actually the first person in my family that is Deaf, so it's very shocking for my family. I actually became Deaf due to an ear infection, actually. I had an ear infection when I was four years old. I was actually going to daycare at the time, and unfortunately, I was prescribed an eardrop. The [doctor 10:44] did not follow the instructions at all, so when they put the eardrop in my ear, I actually became deaf the same day when I went home.

Greg O'Grady: Okay. Can you share a little about your book, *EveryDay I Am Just Deaf: Life in a Hearing World with Deaf Queen Boss*? Before you—Where did the "Deaf Queen Boss" come from?

Kellina Powell: Oh, my God. Okay. So the Deaf Queen Boss really came from my friends. So my friends said, "Kellina, you have this boss personality. Like, you're just a queen." I'm a boss. They just always gave me those two terms. And I always wondered, "Why do people call me queen or a boss lady?" People always call me that. And I was like, "What do I have in myself?" But they said, "You're just... I don't know what it is with you, Kellina, but you're just a fire. Like you just have it in you." And I just said, "Maybe I can just call myself Deaf Queen Boss." And I was like, "Why not use that term?" And I didn't think [big out of it 11:49]; I just wanted to be called "Deaf Queen Boss." And a lot of my friends were like, "Oh, my God. That suits you. Please, use that term." And I said, "Okay." I was like, "Okay, let me just call myself Deaf Queen Boss because of my personality." I have a very driven personality. Like if you see me doing things, you'll be like, "Oh, yeah, Kellina is a queen. She does what she has to do. She always makes it work. She's always impacting other people." And so I was just like, "You know what? Yes. I will call myself Deaf Queen Boss." And now I'm moved on. So now going back to my book. So my book is a poetry book. It's very, very short. And it's really about me, what it's like to be Deaf in the hearing world, daily basis, what it's like to be dating, what it's like—because then a lot of people ask me, "How is your relationship? How does it work?" Right? So I wanted to give that perspective and let people know what is it like to be dating, mental health, daily basis. Like for example, a lot of people be surprised that I can drive because a lot of people think that a lot of Deaf people cannot drive. And I always tell people, "Well, I'm a driver. I have my own car. I can drive. Deaf people can do anything." And I want people to understand that what it's like to be Deaf. It doesn't mean that we should limit our ability to do things in daily, basic life. And I

really wanted to—also true for the hearing community, what it's like to be Deaf. I want to spread awareness in the hearing community to let them know that if you meet someone that is Deaf, you should not limit themselves. And I want them to understand what it's like to be in our shoes, daily basis, especially communication. Communication for the Deaf community is super hard, especially COVID. When COVID hit, I felt so isolated because no one was educated about communication. So it was super hard for me to communicate with one another. And so, yeah, so that's really what my book is really about.

Greg O'Grady: Wonderful. When did you publish it?

Kellina Powell: I published my book last year in May.

Greg O'Grady: Oh, congratulations.

Kellina Powell: Thank you.

Greg O'Grady: And what was the response like?

Kellina Powell: It was really amazing. I had a lot of people who could relate to me 50/50. Some people couldn't, but I understand that. It's not for everybody. But overall, I really had really great feedback. I had a lot of people asking me if I'm thinking about doing part two or a second book. So I was like, "Oh, my goodness, really?" And I honestly really didn't think too big of it because it's my first book. So I didn't have a high expectation at all. But, you know, my expectation was not that high for it. The results were amazing. I had a lot of schools reach out to me to ask me to be a speaker and do a poetry night with the students. So I'm really, really excited for the next chapter. So...

Greg O'Grady: Wonderful. Well, being a published author must have helped your confidence a lot.

Kellina Powell: It does. It really does, yes.

Greg O'Grady: Oh, wonderful. You know, talking about a part two, I think with all the questions I've got, I think we may have to invite you back for another part two or part three of *Some Stutter, Luh!* You know, looking at your portfolio, you have a lot of issues that you address, like anxiety, phobias, obsessive-compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder. First of all, I mean, these are heavy, heavy traumatic disorders. Before I ask you a little more question, but how do you self-care for yourself, then? Because that takes a lot.

Kellina Powell: I know. It is a lot. I totally agree. It is a lot. Honestly, what I do is, I always get a break between my clients, so I always get one-hour breaks so I can refresh my mind, so I can prepare for my clients. As well, I'm very good at time management. So my time management is really on fire because I know what I'm going to be working with these clients that has a lot of trauma. So I know that, okay, if I can provide for my client, I need to be able to be mentally prepared. So what I do is, every weekend I'm off. I do self-care. I go get my nails done, go get my hair done, spend time with family. I make sure that these are in place for me so that I can mentally be prepared for my clients, Monday to Friday. So that's how I really do self-care. I'm really, really good at time management, you know, making sure that everything is in place. So yeah.

Greg O'Grady: Wonderful. My God. You know, do you, like—because of your heavy portfolio, do you work in collaboration with other health professionals such as social workers, psychiatrists, and psychologists? And you see, this brings in the other question. Like when do you realize that you've got to be appreciative of your scope of expertise? Do you self-referral to other professionals?

Kellina Powell: Honestly, at the beginning, I didn't want a, like, partnership with people because I knew that some people may not want to expand their services, because I know everybody's different, really. But I did eventually reach out this year, actually. I did reach out to a lot of people to do collaboration. Right now, I'm still waiting on responses, unfortunately. But hopefully, I do get some responses for more collaboration.

Greg O'Grady: You see, as a person who stutters, in the speech pathologist world, there's pros and cons about collaborating, you know what I mean, with a psychologist, because the goals may be different, and how does one communicate with the professional and the client and the speech-language pathologist. So it's a very... How would I phrase it? It's a slippery slope. But I mean, more power to you if you can sort of make this work, you know, because there are some professionals who are very leery about doing that. But good for you. So it's obvious that you're treading new territory.

Kellina Powell: Yes, it really is. Yes. Yes.

Greg O'Grady: Kellina, what is your definition of disability?

Kellina Powell: I would say I don't really have a specific definition for disabilities. I always call it abilities. I always say that you may be different from others. For me, my definition of disability is just, you know, the person is going to be different than any other human being, but it doesn't mean that you can allow yourself to be limited. And that's my definition of disability.

Greg O'Grady: Wonderful. Now, what would be some of the challenges you have experienced and are currently experiencing as a private entrepreneur? That's a hard word for me to pronounce.

Kellina Powell: Not a problem. Same here with me. I have a hard time pronouncing that word too. Entrepreneur. Entrepreneur. Entrepreneur. Same thing. Don't worry.

Greg O'Grady: Entrepreneur, yeah. So in terms of marketing yourself, financial challenges. Now, first of all, is this your full-time occupation now, career?

Kellina Powell: It's not my full-time, actually. It's my part-time. So I do this after—because I do also have my own nine-to-five. So once I finish my nine-to-five, I do all my business on the side as well.

Greg O'Grady: Oh, my God. So, you know, so time is really precious. So I'm beginning to wonder, you really have to be the queen of time management.

Kellina Powell: [laughs] So that's where I get it from. So people are like, "My God, this woman is a queen. She's doing it all." [laughs]

Greg O'Grady: My God. So what would be some of the challenges that you're finding now?

Kellina Powell: There's a lot of challenges when I first started just because of COVID. And I started my journey during COVID.

The first thing I noticed was the closed caption. I remember when I used to go on podcasts, I needed closed captions. On Zoom, Zoom did not have closed captions during COVID, and it was very difficult for me to have a formal conversation through Zoom because I needed closed captions. And that was my biggest challenge, was not able to get access to accessibility, especially technology-wise. It was not very accessible.

Number two was definitely interacting a lot with the hearing community, because not a lot of entrepreneurs are in the Deaf community, so it was really hard for me to really—not get myself out there, but kind of like really collaborate in a way with other people. And so sometimes it makes me nervous because I'm like, "Oh, no." I'm like, "Is this going to work? Is this not going to work?" And just because I'm a Deaf person, I don't want people to think I'm [small 21:04] of me because I am Deaf. So that was my challenge, and I did get a little bit challenged because I was like, "Oh, my God." I was nervous. You know, I didn't know if this was going to work, and I really wanted it to work because I really wanted the Deaf community to see that if I can do it, you can do it as well. It doesn't matter what you have, right? So that was a little bit of a challenge I did have in the beginning [of my 21:27] entrepreneur was really getting myself out there in terms of collaborating more... basically. Ugh, let's try. Mostly. So that was a little bit of a challenge. It's more—I would personally say it was a lot more accessibility in terms of closed caption and just really trying to connect with people through Zoom or any other app like Instagram or anything like that. It's because I love making content, and it's very difficult to market myself because Instagram was very slow on closed caption until TikTok came along. And TikTok had closed caption off the bat, unlike Instagram. So just recently, Instagram Stories just had closed caption. So it was hard for a lot of us, especially myself, to market myself, especially if I wanted to drive other disability areas. But yeah. So that was definitely my challenge when I started.

Greg O'Grady: Now, I'm wondering, how large is your caseload at the moment?

Kellina Powell: Can you repeat that again? Sorry.

Greg O'Grady: How large is your caseload? How many clients do you have? How many clients?

Kellina Powell: So in the beginning, I had like four clients, which was very flexible for me because, once again, I was working my 9-to-5, so that's all I could take for now. But right now, it's summertime, so I do not have any clients at the moment because I do want to kind of recreate my new packages, my coaching packages, because I am finally getting my financial advisor license now. So I wanted to add that toward my packaging, package, so that way I can do that. So yeah, so right now, there's no client because it's summertime, so I do want to take a little step back from the company and just really recreate my coaching package.

Greg O'Grady: Okay. Now, if any of our listeners wanted to connect with you, how would they connect with you

Kellina Powell: Everybody can find me on my website, which is [kellinaempowerment.com](http://kellinaempowerment.com), or you guys can find me on my Instagram, @deafqueenboss, or if you have Facebook, you can find me underneath Kellina Powell.

Greg O'Grady: Okay. Now, I'm wondering now, based on your lived experiences as a hearing-impaired individual, as a professional coach and advocate, now, through a different lens, Kellina, perspective, do you feel that being hearing-impaired is a blessing?

Kellina Powell: I would say it is a blessing because it would not have gotten me this far in life. I feel like it motivates me to inspire other people, to let people know how much they are capable of. I feel like a lot of us don't think that we are more than enough. And without my disability, I don't think I would be having a coaching business. I don't think I would be on podcasts talking to everybody about my personal experience, letting people know that you're 1% super close to your disability, becoming a disability. For me, for example, when I became Deaf at the age of 4, was I prepared? No. You never know what tomorrow comes. And that's why my message at the beginning was to let people know that you're not that far from being a disabled person. You never know. You just never know. And that's the one thing I do want people to look at me and say, "You know, Kellina had an accident, but she chose to embrace her deafness and inspire other people."

Greg O'Grady: Do you consider yourself disabled?

Kellina Powell: Disabled, disability, I don't really have a specific term, but it's okay for me, disabled, disability. So, yes, I do go with that. I do consider myself, yes.

Greg O'Grady: Okay. Okay. Okay. Now, you have expressed an interest in collaborating with *Some Stutter, Luh!* As a professional coach and advocate who specializes in mental health and empowerment, can you share some ideas of how *Some Stutter, Luh!* could benefit from your expertise in mental health and self-acceptance in the context of communication differences?

Kellina Powell: For sure, definitely. Of course, I see myself collaborating overall. For me, first, if I had a client, for example, who went through a lot of stuttering, and, you know, because I know a lot of us sometimes tend to feel left out, right? We don't like to pick up the phone. I'm the type of person who do not like picking up the phone. Believe me on that.

Greg O'Grady: Same here. I hate telephones.

Kellina Powell: [laughs] I really, truly don't. Unless you FaceTime me, I will pick up the phone, right? But if you're calling, I will never pick up. So that's something I would do with my client, which is work on how can we improve a little bit of phone call answers. Just a little bit. Maybe one day call, two day call. Just a little bit, just to work on that. So what I do with my client, we do a practice. So it's called role-play acting. So we will pretend to act if it were to happen, so that way, the client will be prepared what will happen after the call. And second, we will go through monthly goals. So we will go through goals. Like, what is the goal that the client wants to achieve? I will talk with client, give them examples, tips, how they can do that. I know everybody's different, but I would definitely do a lot of acting role-play with clients just to let them know what it's like to be on the cell phone and just practice and practice and practice until they feel comfortable to go on four calls a day, for example, instead of one call a day, answering one call. So I would definitely do baby steps by working with them through that.

Greg O'Grady: And if you were working with a client that stutters, would you also work closely with this person's speech-language pathologist? If...

Kellina Powell: Yes. Yeah.

Greg O'Grady: Okay. Now, Kellina, this is a \$64 question.

Kellina Powell: Okay.

Greg O'Grady: Okay. Like, stuttering can have a significant impact on self-esteem, mental health, employment opportunities, social and emotional well-being, and overall quality of life. Within the people who stutter community, the analogy of the iceberg is regularly used. The stutter iceberg analogy was developed by Dr. Joseph Sheehan. And the tip of the iceberg, Kellina, is the 10% of the stutter, which is the primary and secondary characteristics. Like, that's the actual stutter. Like my name is the repetitions, prolongation, and the secondary characteristics would be eye-blinking, pointing, just to [start our 28:35] words. But below the surface of the waterline of the iceberg is the emotional component. And with me, and I feel with my lived experiences, this is where the crux of the issues are, the emotional component is sadly lacking within the counseling field. This is where, like, when someone's having trouble articulating their words, the listeners do not see the feelings of denial, shame, humiliation, embarrassment. So there's a lot below the surface. There's a lot of mental health issues.

Kellina Powell: Exactly.

Greg O'Grady: Now, unfortunately, stuttering can lead to, as we know, stigma, stereotyping, being bullied and harassed, employment discrimination. But it can also lead to a lot of avoidance of telephone, introducing oneself, not pursuing careers because of the communication challenges. But there's other disorders as well associated with stuttering, and this is like autism, intellectual disability, attention deficit. So when you include all this in stuttering, I mean, so now—I mean, so there's a lot of layers there. There's a lot of layers. And then when you also include other significant challenges that can easily impact mental health of people who stutter, like, nationality, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation, religion, and economic status, and, you know, so there's a lot of layers and layers and layers. Now, as a coach specialized in mental health, how would you begin to address something like this? For example, like a person who stutters comes to you for support, but it goes beyond, you know, once you start to work with this person, the physical aspect of stuttering, and then you see there's layers and layers and layers of the emotional component, and, you know, somebody, a person may be a member of the LGBT community. And I'm thinking about yourself, Kellina, being a person of color and Deaf. So there's a lot of layers there. So how would you address something like this?

Kellina Powell: For me, I would say just two ways of thinking of it. For me as a coach, and for me as a person, I would talk about that. For a professional way, if I did have a client that came to me with this issue, first thing is I would look at their background, their history, see what's causing them, right? Sometimes you need to have an understanding of the background. Where did the stuttering start? When did it start? Some people stutter different times in their life. And second, I would look at their mental health in the past. Have they ever been diagnosed or is it something that's new? Because I know a lot of people are diagnosing themselves through TikTok. And I'm like, "What?" So I'm like, "Are you sure?" So, you know, I wanted to make sure that my clients do get a professional diagnosis before even coming to me sometimes. But I would tell them, "I am a coach. I am there to help you achieve your goals. But I'm not a therapist, right? I'm a coach." And the first thing I would do was talk to my client. "What is your goal? What do you want to achieve within yourself?" And third thing I would ask, like, have they ever had a self-care before, self-help before? Have they had any experiences, whether positive or negative? I feel like if you don't understand if they have a negative experience, you won't be able to help them, and if they have a positive, you have a better idea, "Okay, well, if they really did experience a positive

experience, how can I give them the 10 times more boost within their self-care and their self-help? How can I boost it even more?" If they have a negative experience, I would have to work with them, baby step, to achieve their goal. Because what happens is if you don't work on those two, you're not going to be able to help your client. And the first thing I would do is go through—I would call it, like, a CBT activities, where we work through activities together in terms of looking into more of the—how are they progressing things, right? What are they doing that's going to get them triggered? What are they going to need to work on? Because the CBT worksheet definitely break it down for me so I know, for my client, what do they need to work on. So, for example, if my client says, you know, "Kellina, I stutter, but I'm having a hard time not having a communication, conversation with a co-worker. It's very hard." So I would do a practice with them, or second, I would ask them, "Okay, well, you have to see what is it that you need to work on with your client, I mean, your co-worker." Because sometimes co-workers are not always the nicest. Or I always ask them, "Okay, what can your work provide for you in terms of accommodating for you?" Because I know some workplaces do accommodate, but some others do not. And that's what I would do with my client. But as a personal experience for me, for example, if a friend came to me, I actually do have a friend who also stutters too. And he just recently called me complaining about his school. His school was not accommodating him because they thought, because of his stutter, and they were being disrespectful to him, and they said, "Oh, you can't use accommodation." And I said, "No, you have accommodation. You need to go back there." And he didn't, "No, I don't want to go back." And he was nervous because he was tired of talking. He said, "I'm tired." And I said, "There's no such thing as being tired. You cannot give up on yourself. What you're allowing them is to walk all over you. It's going to be tiring, but you can't give up." And that's something I had to push him to do. So I said to him, "If you want, I can be outside of the school for you so that if you need me to talk for you, I can do that, but you can't give up on yourself." Because what happens is a lot of times, not just someone who stutters, but also for anybody who has a disability, we are tired. And it will get tired. But it doesn't mean we have to give up and let other people walk over us. There are other ways to accommodate ourselves. There's going to be something there to support us.

Greg O'Grady: You know, the stuttering community is always looking for allies, so you're more than welcome to become one of our allies.

Kellina Powell: Yes. [laughs]

Greg O'Grady: Now, on a personal note now, like being a person of color and with a disability, have you or do you experience even more stigma, stereotyping?

Kellina Powell: There is a lot of stereotypes. I'm more organized than anybody, especially as a woman of color. I know that sometimes there's not the right support system out there for us. There's very little, not as big as it used to be, unfortunately. And I feel like there's not a lot of research on women of color along mental health. There's very few, especially in the medical field. Right? There's not a lot of research, especially for those who give birth, post, post—I cannot pronounce that word, [postpartum 36:32]. That's another example. A lot of women of color who go through that experience, they do not have the right support system in the medical field. I had no idea about this until I started doing it in my field. When I started becoming a coach myself, I found that out. And I realized that a lot of women of color are not having the right support system, resources, or even someone that can be an ally for them. You know, sometimes people just feel like they're supporting them, but they're not fully being a full, 100% ally for them. So it's very hard, unfortunately. It is. It's really sad. But there need to be more supportive, more allies for women of color in mental health.

Greg O'Grady: Now, do you connect with any of, I guess, Black Life Matters, for example? There are people there who are spokespersons. Do you try to connect with them to make changes? Because listening to you now, it's obvious that there's a lot of work that still needs to be done.

Kellina Powell: Oh, yeah. There's a lot of work that needs to be done, a lot more than we expected. But it's so sad that, I don't know if you noticed, but a lot of people go on social media to spread their awareness. It's like, why are we going on social media to spread awareness where the professional people should be bringing that towards us where we individuals go on social media, if you think about it. And it's really sad. And I don't like that because it's like, why does the person's voice need to be heard through social media instead of going to a professional field or a professional? And it's really, really sad.

Greg O'Grady: You see, and as a person who stutters, I mean, there's still more advocacy work that needs to be done for creating awareness about stuttering, but not only stuttering, but also, as I mentioned, mental health of stuttering, which is another neglected field. But you know, do you feel that there's a role for government in advocating, establishing new policies, procedures, new programs? What are your thoughts about that?

Kellina Powell: Oh, yeah. There's not a lot of programs that is supported, especially for those who have a disability with mental health. For example, the disability income that we get from the government sometimes, I know not everybody's qualified for it, but it's sad that not everybody can be qualified for that. And I also had a friend of mine who got rejected for his application to receive income support from the disability support program, and he got rejected. And I said, "Disability should be for those who have a disability, no matter if it's short-term or long-term." And I don't like the fact that the government is defining what disability should be and should not be. And I noticed that a lot, and I was like, "But why?" Like, they should not be telling us what our disabilities are. So it's a lot of work that needs to be improved, especially the income support for people who are relying heavily on the government for money. They should increase the income because our market is going up. A lot of people can't afford groceries now. Right? People are struggling to afford groceries, especially for us, with disabilities. It's very hard for us to afford certain things. And it's very unfortunate that people, especially us, we have to just come out of our comfort zone. But like, what's the point of you supporting us if you're my government? You're supposed to care for your people. So I do have ups and downs dealing with the government support system, but it's not been the greatest. Everything just went skyrocketing since COVID.

Greg O'Grady: Mm-hmm. And, you know, when we are trying to advocate, there's so many obstacles, layers and layers of government trying to, I guess, connect with the right people. Do you find that in Toronto as well, Kellina?

Kellina Powell: I haven't got in front of them before, so... [laughs]

Greg O'Grady: No, no, no, no. Well, you know, what keeps the passion going in your ability to advocate? What keeps the passion going?

Kellina Powell: What keeps me going is really just—I work in my social media. I have a lot of people that are always coming to me saying, you know, "Keep going, keep going," and I didn't think a lot of people were watching me so much. And so I'm like, "Oh, my God, okay, yeah, I'm going to keep going, no problem." And I feel like—and I have fun with it, you know. When you have fun with what you love, you want to keep going, you know? And that's what it is for me. I love what I'm doing. I love going on podcasts. I love speaking to people. I love speaking to people about my personal experience, what it's

like to be Deaf, because I have fun. And that's what keeps me moving forward because I actually really enjoy this.

Greg O'Grady: Wonderful, wonderful. And, you know, that's good words of wisdom because, I mean, we, you know, like we as people who stutter struggle daily with, you know, communication issues, answering the telephone, meetings, things like that, introducing ourselves. But it's important to maintain our, like, perspective and just to try and have fun. You know what I mean? It's hard, you know?

Kellina Powell: It is hard. It is hard. I always tell people, "If it was easy, everybody else could have done it. If it was easy to be a doctor, everybody could be a doctor."

Greg O'Grady: Okay. Well, listen, before we close now, do you have any last words for our listeners?

Kellina Powell: Yeah, my last word is, I just want to say that no matter how hard life gets, you have to keep going, because I will tell you this. Tomorrow is not a promise. You never know, knock on wood, God will call you home to heaven. You never know. Live your life to the fullest. Have fun. Do not think, overthink, don't think too much. I just want you to live your life to the fullest and have fun.

Greg O'Grady: And try and let go of all the negativity. You know what I mean?

Kellina Powell: Exactly.

Greg O'Grady: Because if one always holds on to one's negativity, you're really sort of not helping yourself any, you know?

Kellina Powell: Exactly.

Greg O'Grady: Okay, Kellina. Thanks a lot for being part of this conversation today, and I applaud you for all your great advocacy work. So thanks a lot for being a strong advocate.

Kellina Powell: Thank you. Thank you.

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