

Adulting on the Spectrum: LGBTQ+ health issues, Miss Mermaid and social media

Andrew: Welcome to "Adulting on the Spectrum". I am Andrew Komarow, an autistic certified financial planner. I co-run "Adulting on the Spectrum" with Eileen Lamb. Hey Eileen!

Eileen: Hey Andrew! Hey everyone! I am Eileen Lamb, an autistic author and photographer from France. I have two children on the spectrum and we are running this podcast because we want to highlight the stories of autistic people, adults on the spectrum like you, not just the inspirational stories. And today, our guest is Brigid. Hi, Brigid!

Brigid: Hi!

Andrew: Brigid Sinclair Rankowski

Brigid: Yea, I have multiple names.

Andrew: Multiple names. So, I like that. Is a circus performer based in Portland, Maine. Her background is an international disability advocate, shaped her circus practices

and for years to promote free and low-cost circus programming around the state. She's trained with Cirque du Soleil social circuit program. She does lots of advocacy. She's the education chair of the Autism Society of Maine in 2018, received the "Outstanding Commitment to the Autism Advocacy Award," with the Autism Society of Maine for your work in the state. You are a, they are a published author and a contributor in the award-winning book "What Every Autistic Girl Wishes Her Parents Do," published by the Autistic Women and Non-Binary Network and has recently been published, "Sincerely, Your Autistic Child." Brigid is also Miss Mermaid Maine and in the finals for her title as Miss Mermaid USA.

Brigid: I do a lot like it's one of those things. Like when people are like, What's your bio? And I'm like, OK, what genre? Like,"

Eileen: You know, we start our episodes by asking our guest, how is it like to identify, like as an autistic person or person with autism? And we also ask our guests what their pronoun preference is. And I think with you, we touched on that in the bio. You go by they?

Brigid: I use mixed pronouns, so she, he, they like pretty much anything is fair game with me and I identify as autistic, but in part that's because a person with autism, like, that's a lot of words. Like autistic is short like it's like just a few letters. And I'm snarky enough that I'd say like a person with a cat, like something else that would maybe not be appropriate in some certain circumstances.

Eileen: That's the best explanation I've ever heard for using autistic.

Andrew: And are there any pronouns that you don't want to be called since you said you're pretty much OK with everything?

Brigid: I don't think "it" is a pronoun like on those, like, lists of like I don't know, like grammatically speaking....

Andrew: I think that's what you call a child who hasn't been born yet or like, you know, below two years old, I refer to babies as it.

Brigid: I don't know if that's a real I don't know if "it" is a pronoun, but that's the only one that I'm just like "what?" But like I respond to pretty much anything like even if it's I don't think it's directed at me, which, hey, that's part of being as socially awkward as I am. It's great.

Andrew: Awesome. Can you tell us a little bit more about your autism journey or basically what's called your life? When were you diagnosed either what was it like? And you have a brother who has higher support needs as well, if you want to talk about that as well.

Brigid: Sure. My journey, the time long ago, the ancient gods were petty and cruel. No, my age is like I grew up as a daughter of an artist. And like my mom likes to tell the story of the fact that other parents were like, why can't our kid be like Brigid? Look, she lines up all her toys like, oh, things you don't know are autistic. Yeah, I did get diagnosed until after my brother got diagnosed. Technically, the first one who like was like nose goes, it's her with Stephen Shore, like years and years and years ago because he saw me like playing with, like lobster claws and like doing funny voices. And he's like, yeah, yeah, she's on the spectrum. But my family was part of a groundbreaking case in Maine Boy on the Playground case. And so my mom was like being interviewed for like Fox News and all these places. So she ended up going to the Autism Society of America conference and taking me with her. So I got to meet, like all of like the first-gen people, like my mom was part of, like the GeoCities and like the Yahoo groups, like the OG stuff. And so I kind of grew up around that. I didn't get diagnosed until I was like fifteen or sixteen.

And the therapist I was seeing at the time gave me the label of PDD and NOS because he said that he had never seen a woman on the spectrum and I would not be the first one that he diagnosed. Yeah. Like he was a tool. I know that face. Yeah. He used to be a mime before he was a therapist. So now I have like I just don't like mimes. Like it's one of those things where it's like, no, I don't like you.

Andrew: Does that have anything to do with your circus performing and stuff or is it just completely separate or is there like some mime first fire breather like some internal...

Brigid: I mean if it's versus firebreather I feel like a Firebreather, I kind of win. No, like I mean growing up though, the most terrifying thing, like killer clowns from outer space. I remember seeing that movie when I was like six and like terrified of clowns like I mean, I have friends who are professional clowns, but like still it's a really it's a creepy thing for me. Like, I don't like masks where people like can kind of be like, look, I'm putting on something completely different and I can get away with anything.

And it's like, yeah, no, no, I'm going to go over in the corner and like, not be near you.

Eileen: And we're not talking about that type of mask, but how do you feel wearing a mask as it's been difficult during the pandemic, or do you like it because you like hide? I know I kind of

like it because I don't have to worry about the my facial expressions, because that's something that confuses people so much. Sometimes people think I'm mad when I'm happy and vice versa. So I kind of like it. How do you feel?

Brigid: Oh yeah. I'm very much Team Mask our state actually like today just kind of was like know free-for-all. And I don't like it. Like I'm going to continue wearing masks. I know a lot of people that have been affected by COVID.

I also like masks for the same reason you said. I have pretty much given up on trying to control my face in public. And I'm terrified that, like, if I'm in a situation where, like I'm outdoors and like not wearing a mask, like someone is going to say something that's really, like, bothersome and I'm going to make a face. And people are like, but what's like you need to try to cover your expression. I'm like, oh I forgot, my mouth is not covered. Also, you can look like mouth things like when people are being like rude and stuff in public and you can like say it under your breath in a mask and no one really notices.

And also like some have stylish patterns. I have to do the like ones with the loop around your head because like my ears are too like that. I have the hyper mobility stuff. So like putting stuff around my ears doesn't work. If I have to, like I put it around my ponytail.

Andrew: I don't know if you saw that I had, the pandemic last year I was actually driving to work every day. I was essential. So I got the plague doctor mask from like, I don't know if you saw that on Facebook. So I think I shared it. It was a little. Yeah. Now that that was great. So I was told not to wear that in my office building though, but I did respect that. So although I did enjoy scaring people.

Brigid: I mean, I know enough in the steampunk and goth community that, like a number of my friends already had one of those like plague doctor mask, like way before pandemic times where they're just like "hey, for a costume contest."

Andrew: It's June, therefore it's Pride Month. What can you tell us about your work with the intersection of LGBTQ+ health issues and the autism health disparities, as well as addressing other health care priorities in the autism community?

Brigid: Yeah, so a couple of years ago I was part of a group called ASSET, which is Autistic Adults and Other Stakeholders Engaged Together. I had to write it down because, like, that's a mouthful. ASSET. But yeah. So got a bunch of surveys out to people nationwide trying to figure out, OK, let's have autistics driving the medical research, like, what is it that we want to know more about?

And we've done some other work too, about like here's how people should be compensated. Here's some guides for like health care professionals. And what I've been kind of working on is looking at some of the barriers because we know that, hey, surprise, surprise, there is a large percentage of people on the autism spectrum who identify somewhere basically like nonces like we're like ethereal fae all around and like just five million types of awesome.

And so looking at how can people get health care access? I mean, I have friends that way back in the day, but not really. In the early 2000s, it was hard for them to get gender affirming health

care because they were on the spectrum. So it's an issue that a lot of people face who autistics we sometimes get infantilized by parents, professionals, doctors. And it's like, oh, they can't make a choice for themselves or they don't. They're just confused. They're not really trans. And I think it's something that really needs more attention because just like how if someone is presenting their pain, not taking us seriously, which is why heart disease is the number one killer of women and why people are trained to recognize what was a heart attack symptom based on male presentation and male body presentation of it.

So just kind of doing some research, listening to surveys from people, because there's other information that we know as a community, but it's like I was looked at those studies that people publish about like study says that people feel good after eating chocolate and

Andrew: I got a better one for you. My favorite one of all time is I remember this. One point three million dollars that there are rats in New York City subways. And I just went like I would have told you that for thirteen dollars, like one point three million dollars like that, there's rats in New York City subway systems

Brigid: And for a buck fifty for a pizza slice, you could prove it with pizza like we got proof here. A buck fifty. Yeah, like and so it's one of those things where let's get our opinions. What do we know? Like I talked a little bit like I have the I'm hyper-bendy. Hyperextension. I have EDS. There is a huge overlap of EDS in the autism community. We don't talk about that. We don't talk about like what happens on the spectrum when you hit puberty or like post-menopausal pre-menopause or if you're trans and you're taking hormones like what happens during second puberty?

Like there's just a lot of information out there that we don't really know about. And there's other stuff that we kind of know about because we all talk to each other on social media and stuff but like. Yo, let's let's have organizations give us the money to actually do research on improving the quality of life and health care for autistic people.

Andrew: Now, so just on the research topic for a moment, something that I've noticed with research recently, it's a two part question. So one, is that something that I don't think anybody does a good a good enough job speaking about is one of the reasons why research has to be done for something that seems so obvious to us. I still can't understand the rats in New York City, but like, you know, but in general, it's because you can't get funding without research. Right? And so Medicaid is obvious as that might be to everyone.

Right. Is the vast majority of funding the government has. There needs to be research that seems silly and or redundant. And in a lot of ways, spending money on research is one of the best return on investments we can get for more spending on more services. Additionally, I have done some peer reviews and research grants, et cetera, and what I find is a lot of autism research is never meant to be read by people who are not researchers, just the terms that are used.

You know, if they're you know, researchers are using the term for the data, not the terms to be politically correct. And that's just all research. But I think there's so little research out there that we as a community are also just very hyper focused and like to pick apart some of the parts of research that shouldn't be picked apart, basically. Do we attack research too much?

Brigid: We attack a lot of things...

Andrew: I was just focusing on research, but

Brigid: Just focusing on research. Yes, I think we do, because again, to your point of we need and that's one of the things that the articles that I'm working on that the other people have been working on, too, from like our little group is so that we have the background, so that we have the preliminary, like survey self reporting surveys. Do you have like some issues with them. My background, I was a failed bio major, like I was really interested in, like both conservation and hierarchy.

And then I got told that I had to like organic chemistry. And so I'm like, cool, I'm going to go be a psych major instead because I can do that in my sleep. So I understand, like I read scientific journals for the fun of it. I'm weird, but I do agree that, like, we need the plain language, we need some of the basic research about like health care disparities, about life expectancy, domestic violence. We need some of like the like building blocks, like the Fisher-Price, like "My First Autism Research," so that we can build some of the stuff up more and more so that maybe not in our lifetime, but like in the future, depending on like if the world doesn't explode or like we killed the environment too much, we can do some more of the specific in-depth research that our community is asking about.

And so that's why it's excited that we get our group driving what are the health care interests in the autistic sphere? But yeah, we pick apart everything pretty much.

Eileen: Have you ever done any genetic testing for yourself or are you part of any of the big research studies in the US like SPARK?

Brigid: Yeah, actually back in the day, my family is part of the Human Genome Project.

I don't even remember how it got into but like my Voldemort. He worked in medical advertising. So it was probably like like some connection there. But yeah, like they took a lot of blood from us. But we're also part of SPARK and no Kitty.

And like, I'm going eventually try one of those like Ancestry, like human genome, like where you spit in a tube and they tell you how many people you're related to. But like I'm Irish, so like our, my family tree already is very large. Yeah.

Andrew: Yeah, know it's funny, so SPARK, so can you tell us why you're OK with SPARK and SPARK isn't it all about eugenics and trying to eradicate us? Why do you participate in genomic research? That was sarcasm by the way.

Brigid: I know. I know. But cite your sources. No. So I think that, like, it's as I was saying before, like there are some medical conditions that do affect the autism population higher than average. And these are medical conditions that really do impact our quality of life. Like, I'm hypermobile. It's a degenerative disease. Like I was more active when I was younger. Like I got taken down by a 40 degree temperature difference yesterday and like my hip, partially dislocated, I'm thirty two.

And I think that it's if we can get some of the pieces, like it's not like we're going to be able to like, I don't believe that selective abortion will be an issue for autism any time soon. And I do think that there's enough of our peers that have GI issues that have autoimmune issues that if we can just have some type of glimpse. I think it's really important. When I talk about advocacy work, I'm not just talking about me. I'm talking about other people who may be more involved with their autism, that may have more health issues. And I'm saying that as someone who has like a lot of health issues and has to take a lot of medications every day, I think that like finding out a little bit more like that's also the dorky science part of me.

Like also as someone who loves horror movies, like, I know that can go horribly wrong, but like, let's just stay away from the Jurassic Park, like cloning world right now. And like like I mean, trust me, it's more likely that robots are going to take over the place right now. Like, look at the Skynet, a.k.a. like Alexa in Syria, all that stuff.

Eileen: I can relate to so much of what you said. I feel so many of the comorbid conditions that are like we know that autistic people are more likely to have them and we don't really know why. I have celiac disease, which is an autoimmune disease and I just learn I haven't talked about it, that I'm going to need the injection every two weeks for the rest of my life because I am immunocompromised. So that's not a good thing that's been linked to autism.

And I'm also bisexual. So that's something I don't talk about a lot, because first of all, there is so much backlash, backlash. It's seen as just a phase or something you do for attention. And because I'm married to a man, it's like I'm not, you know. I'm not part of the LGBTQ+ community as much like I don't deserve it or, I don't know, bisexual get a lot of. Yeah, backlash online, and I get enough for being autistic and having my own views and being probed and all of that, so those are a lot of things I don't talk about but that are linked to autism, like you said.

And I don't know why. I don't know if I don't know, but I would love to look deeper into these things and find answers. So I'm all for research.

Brigid: Because like I mean, even again, I talked about a fair amount in different spheres, but I am just recovering from a hysterectomy because I had really aggressive endometriosis like ever since I was like ever since I pretty much got my first period, like I had to have surgery every three years to get rid of, like the amount of scarring. And in February, I ended up in the E.R. with like my IUD, like puncturing one wall. And like on the other side I have burst cyst and I'm just like... OK, I'm I'm done. Like, just yank it, just keep the womb.

And like, there is a lot of reproductive health issues, too, for like womb having autistics and like, let's figure out some of this stuff. And yeah, celiac like I am gluten sensitive. I made too many jokes when I was younger about eating gluten that other people cannot eat. And then Karma was like haha poke, well good luck. Now you have to have like the four dollar macaroni and cheese from the store. You won't get any fun shapes anymore.

Eileen: Story my life.

Andrew: Yeah. And I've been KETO for four or five years. It was probably well Brigid you got to watch me at a conference like so I just like took the roast beef like off like three sandwiches or something and just state that so,

Brigid: It had a lot of bacon there too though like that was a plus side, like there was like alot of bacon.

Andrew: Bacon is always a good thing, right? So you can't have too much of that.

Eileen: OK, we got to go there. You are a mermaid. You are Miss Mermaid Maine. And in the finals for the title of Miss Mermaid USA. I mean I think that's so cool. But at the same time, like, I don't really understand what that means. So can you tell us more?

Brigid: Yeah. So like there's actually an international competition, like Miss Mermaid International

and I can't remember how I found out about it and stuff, but like another person who has EDS was posting that like, hey, look, I was Miss Mermaid, whatever state they were, I'm like, oh, let me apply. Oh, like, why not? And it's at least the USA version is very advocacy centered. Like they've made a point of like, hey, we care about people's cause, their platform.

And that's what's really important. And so I'm like, yeah, let's do it. And then they chose the top twenty five and like I was a nervous wreck. I was nervous, like when they were even announcing like what states what because they were announcing them a couple days at a time and they were announcing Maine on my birthday. And I'm like, oh this is nerve racking, what's going on. But yeah I'm in the top twenty-five. I have a tail like working on tops, like you get crown, I have a sash now. I'm a sash person. But yeah, I think the world I like to avoid being too inspirationally, like the world bites, like,

Andrew: are you kidding? This is "Adutling on the Spectrum," so I'm going to ask you to go back and you can't say bites. We are going to bleep over that. OK, go again.

Brigid: All right. I specifically asked Andrew earlier today, like can I curse? Like because, no like the world sucks. Like life can suck like the world. The year that we've all just had together, like no cluster fuck fire dumpster like oh my God. Like and so let's have more magic in our lives. Like let's do things that's like yeah. I'm thirty two years old, I wanna be a mermaid.

Like no one can tell me I can't be a mermaid. If you say that I can't. Too bad I got the sash. And yeah. So like it's really fun to because as I have become like Miss Mermaid Mane and like I have bright shiny things and a tail and like it's all like pretty girl pageantry. I've also turned into a forty year old guy at the same time because I really enjoy magnet fishing and I have a metal detector. And so like there is a group like in Maine, like in our town and stuff that like every week they go out and like toss a magnet out and like they had no idea, like I love them all, they're so great, but they had no idea what to make of me.

I'm like, I'm a mermaid. I want to come help you all out there. They were like ok? And I show up in like, sparkly mermaid pants, like jewels and stuff. And I'm like, oh yeah. I'm also really strong. So like we were pulling out like an actual like railroad track that's like nine feet long, like

a couple hundred pounds and they're like maybe a couple of guys to help. And I'm like I'm sitting right here and like just helped with like one other guy on the side and one from the bottom pulling it out.

And they're like, oh, oh yeah. And like the other week I got out three shopping carts and a bike and I learned the hard way not to wrap the rope around my arm, but it was cool bruise I got. But yeah, no. So like sparkly awesomeness and also forty year old guy, that's like look, I got 1200 pound magnet and the grappling hook because I'm sorry, what eight year old doesn't want a grappling hook. It's awesome.

Eileen: Sounds awesome. I never thought I needed one until now.

Brigid: So like yeah. During like during the forced isolation even though I'm sorry I was hibernating for it was like state mandated, like I was looking at like magnet fishing on Reddit and stuff. And my people find guns all over the place in Europe like

Andrew: Texas for that matter now.

Brigid: But like I also live like in a beach area and stuff like so it's like, oh do like metal detecting. Like I also live right against the woods. So like I just go out and it starts as magnet like, like detecting. Metal detecting. It really dissolves into me just sitting on the ground like with a shovel, just digging up like dirt in random like holes and piles because I am just a very large eight year old who's like I'm playing in the dirt.

Yeah. I'm just a very large eight-year-old that has a credit card now.

Eileen: And my eight-year-old would love what you're describing, so yeah.

Brigid: Oh, I love it. I love the kids stuff. Like I mean, I think part of who I am is like you want to be like I believe in paradoxes and like the Jeremy Bearimy , like The Good Place time is non-linear and like be the person that you needed when you were a kid because like maybe like through all the time shifting and stuff, maybe you are that person that like you needed when you were a kid. I think like that goes into like kind of my views on trauma and stuff of like you can't change what happened to you, but you can heal from it, like your current self can make your past self better.

Eileen: Are you comfortable telling us a bit more about your trauma and...

Brigid: Oh, yeah, there's like there's like a real like the real trauma I would have, like all of them, Like if there's a trama bingo game, which would be like kind of a sad, scary bingo game, but like bingo. Yeah, like you pretty much name it like any type of trauma. Like I mentioned Voldemort earlier, like I live at a confidential address because I do not use this word lightly. My father is crazy and like not the fun type, but like the, like the popo know where you live, type.

And so in our state, a lot of women, when you went to court and they were with their like ex-husband, the judge would say, hey, you need to say where your physical addresses, when you file court papers, you have to put down where your physical addresses. It wasn't until like the

third or fourth woman who in a courtroom said where they lived and got shot by the guy that like the Governor of Maine actually at the time, called up my mom because, like, the divorce was a big deal.

It was like, hey, so here's this problem and here's this program. And I've been it ever since. But that's one of the things I think is really important, like talking about domestic violence. Like I'm I was a mandatory reporter. Like, I feel like once you like mandatory reporting, it's kind of like the Mafia. Like once you're in, you're always in, like you're always a mandatory reporter. I feel I don't know if that's their official, like slogan, shouldn't it be. But like, I take that stuff really seriously because like for all the horrible stuff to happen to me, people don't believe me.

Like my father, he looked nice, but like behind closed doors and stuff like was violent and like verbally abusive. Like one of the biggest things that he always used to say, which carried so much weight when I was younger, was like, why can't you just be normal? And like now I can laugh about it and be like I'm Miss Mermaid Maine, sucker. But like as a kid who doesn't know that they're queer, doesn't know they're autistic, doesn't know why they view the world differently, like that was painful where it's like, I don't know, why can't I be normal? And then it's like now I'm thirty two and I see other people were like their idea of like normal means having a pizza on Friday night and maybe renting a Redbox and like I'm like, oh that's not no I don't want to be normal.

No thanks but yeah. Like I think it trauma, really difficult and stuff on the spectrum because autism is a communication disorder. So there's so much self blame of like did I do something wrong? Have I did I see something that warranted being treated this way and stuff? And especially because there's always those people that are like there's two sides to every story. And like I have so many people who say that, oh, well, like Brigid did this and like she's a bad person, like I had like I have like campaigned the people against me and stuff and like, cool story. Like, let's look at your actions and your behaviors, like let's look at mine.

And it's hard because you also like I feel like autistics. We gaslight ourselves. I know that's like the word of the day is gaslighting, where everyone has like the articles and stuff about it. Like it's like there's got to be like five articles on BuzzFeed right now about gaslighting.

But it's a thing that autistic people do to themselves. And when you add in abusive situations where people isolate you, where they make you question a reality, where they're like, no, you just misunderstood that or I didn't say that, or you're being too sensitive. It's like those people are like. Like evil shit lords, it's like I hate them because as someone who, like, lived through all that, like, the point is I live through it like I almost didn't multiple times, like and I think that ties into, like, some of the mental health stuff.

Like because. When you're autistic, you're different. Like when you have depression, anxiety, like I feel like being autistic is its own, like experience, like there's I can't remember who said it and I know they'll probably get on my case because I know I'm friends with them. But like the other world, like Martians are like, hey, look, other wrong planet syndrome or something like that. Do you know what I'm talking about? Andrew? It's one of the OG autistic.

Andrew: Like, yeah. Like wrong planet. What is it. What's his name?

Brigid: Is it Alex?

Andrew: Oh yeah. Alex. Is it not Skank. It's not Alex Skank.

But I know who you're talking about. Yes, it's him. And he had the blog and the like, "Living on a Different Planet." Yes.

Brigid: Yep. Yeah I know Alex. That's why I'm like. I know, I know it's one of my friends but it is, it's like let's look at how we experience the world, like both communication wise but also sensory wise, like our sensory systems are completely all over the map and like trying to talk about normal. It's like none of us experience the world in a normal way, which can be fun, but also weird. Like I feel like it's good in a way of like I mean, I go to festivals and perform as a performer, like I don't do drugs because I've learned that people take drugs to experience how I view the world on a daily basis where they're like, there's glitter in the air. I'm like, yeah, there is. Oh, you're on drugs.

Andrew: I was thinking we've had this conversation before about how neither of us should do acid.

Brigid: No. Like, I've accidentally, like, been a trip sitter and stuff because I'm like sitting down talking with someone like about like the mysteries of the universe or like if snails have personality, like all this stuff and then someone comes along, they're like, thank you so much for finding them and keeping them calm. Like we were just hanging out, chatting. I didn't realize that they were like on drugs, on a lot of drugs. Well, I'm glad you found your friend. I'm going to continue sitting here wondering if snails have personalities and looking at the glitter in the air. Yeah, I don't do drugs.

Andrew: I love politics. And I think that's mostly because I like arguing. But in all seriousness, you advocate with many state legislators. You're in Maine probably like my second favorite state for politics because of rank choice voting. Right. You know, in the way you guys do the Electoral College, you are amazing only after New Hampshire. Right. But in all seriousness, you've done a lot of work on the state, local, national, federal level.

Can you tell us about your experience past and present and advice to other people looking to enact real change from a legislative point of view?

Brigid: Oh, yeah,

I think I've been a part of like a bunch of different grassroots effort and like the Autism Society of America is one of the largest and oldest grassroots organizations.

And there's lots of like both local and national chapters of it that help kind of.

Like boiled down, like here, some of the details of this upcoming like the CARES Act or here's something that's really important and I think for like large change happens at a local level. And I know one of the big things that we've been pushing in our state, too, is getting in-home support workers paid more because we're having a shortage. But you're also being paid less than if you were working at Subway and having talked to, like the politicians and stuff lately,

bringing home the important messages, like from our real life, being autistic, disabled, chronic illness for years, like showing, writing down, calling up whatever medium works best for you, trying to contact your local representatives who again, they work for us, but just being like, hey, here's my experience. And this is why you should pass this bill like that. Some of the perspectives that they don't get, like, again, they need to hear from people like us so that they have. Like a way to be informed on the different issues and yeah, I, I remember talking to Senator Angus King, like when I went to D.C. a couple of years ago, and like he's coming out and this guy didn't recognize who the politician was.

He's like, oh, yeah. Like something about book that Angus was writing. And Angus was like, oh, don't with that. Yeah. I'm like, yeah man, hold your tweets. And apparently that was Senator Booker who was also running for the presidential nomination.

So I told a presidential nom to hold his tweets, man. But the thing is, politicians are just like us. I lived in Iowa in college and it was a caucus state. So everyone came through like I had meet Obama a bunch, like I was going in college in the time, were like MTV was really like, get out the vote. And like, I think it's important to inform yourself on the local and state issues because like, again, it it can be fun to argue, but it's also fun to actually get change happening sometimes, too.

And I know I don't see eye to eye with like all the representatives in charge. I mean, my Democratic Party nominee who did not get on the ballot, Bre Kidman like Fox News was trying to make fun of them because non-binary, they're like, oh, look, a queer mermaid is trying to run for the Democratic seat. And Bre was like, oh, FOX News just wrote my campaign like slogan, yeah, queer mermaids for campaign seats, which was awesome. But like, I personally don't want to run for an office. Like, I feel like I'd be limited in what I could say and do. I prefer to be a little bit more I don't want have to say radical, but like, you know, being able to curse in interviews, like I feel like he can do that too much if you're a politician.

Andrew: So I curse right now with your favorite curse word.

Brigid: Oh, man. I didn't have that list prepared.

Andrew: A whole list?

Brigid: Yeah, no. What's the what's his face played God in Dogma. Oh. Like the seven words that you can't say. And then he expanded them into like the fifty words you can't say. Yes, yeah. No. George Carlin legend.

Andrew: Definitely.

Brigid: I don't know if that answered your question at all.

Andrew: Not at all, but I still enjoyed it. So thank you. Which is probably about like, you know, the majority of my conversations that I enjoy.

Eileen: I think that was a compliment.

Andrew: If it was so or, you know,

Eileen: How do you get pass all the social media controversy and drama? Does it affect you? Do you see a lot of it?

Brigid: There's so much on social media and just media in general, like I've had a lot of friends that end up being highlighted. Wall Street Journal, my friends have been on Netflix shows. I was a finalist in the Running for MTV: "My True Life, I'm Autistic", which one of my friends was actually on. I was going to be I'm taking my service cat to college, which I'm glad that, like, I got to spend my twenties in, like, anonymous oblivion, but not really like doing behind the scenes advocacy work.

I think in my 30s now, like, I can have more in the front, like do podcasts, do TV shows, interviews, all that stuff. Because I listen to the cardinal rule of never read the comment section. But yes, social media like I like Instagram, I try I get like people hooked on Instagram because it's like, you can just like follow a bunch of zoos and then you open an app and look like, here's Fiona the hippo. Like you don't actually have to interact with people like my Instagram full of

like mermaids and circus performers. It's great. But yeah, like real people sometimes like I can't do Twitter, like know like I've seen way too many of my friends, like those who can harness the power of Twitter, like more power to them. But it moves too quickly for me. And I think something that's really valid that enough people don't do is respect the fact that it's OK to say, like, excuse me, I am uninformed about a topic or excuse me, I'm feeling worked up right now.

I need to go away from my keyboard like that should be normal. Like it's one of those things where if it's real, like face to face interaction, like if someone was like crying and like non-speaking, you wouldn't keep yelling at them. But like we do that online and like it's also really, really classless and ableist like, when people are like, you spell the word wrong and like so like not everyone has the same educational background.

Yeah. Social media can be good. It can be evil. Like I remind my friends who I have a bunch of friends who don't use social media at all. And I'm like, that's valid. It's a tool if you don't want to use it like or it takes too much time, energy, whatever, like don't use it. It's fine. You're not missing like too too much.

Eileen: Yeah. And I agree with you, Twitter is the worst. It's funny because I have a lot of followers on Instagram, but that's the social media platform where I experienced the least backlash. But Twitter, I only have like three thousand followers. But every time I post something, I mean, it is and it's negative, but not just negative. It's nasty. You know, Twitter is it's something else that I don't even know why I'm there and I keep trying with that social media because all I get is just like. Bad, bad, bad comments. It's pretty intense. And I feel like each social media I mean, you know, Instagram, TikTok is a different vibe for all of them. And you just got to find what fits your vibe. And sounds like you found your vibe is Instagram. And it's so that's cool.

Brigid: I'm like that. Yeah. Like, I don't understand TikTok. Like I feel like I don't like that's another platform. I'm like, no, I'm sorry, I am too old. I'm not going to learn this other one.

Andrew: Ok boomer.

Brigid: I understand that there's like a large disability thing going on there which is awesome. Like my friend is like make up videos and stuff on there. The biggest videos I've seen from there honestly have been like my friend who's going through a divorce, just posting like videos of shirtless guys dancing and stuff, so like I'm kind of skewed where I'm like, is that all that Twitter is TikTok like Tumblr now where like we just moved like the porn from one platform to another,

Eileen: No, TikTok is great. You got to give it another try. I was the same as you I was like, OK, yeah, I'm too old for that. And then everyone around me was just making fun of me once I got into it. And now everyone is hooked. Once you start watching videos and the platform knows what you're interacting with, they're going to start showing you what you like and you're going to be like, OK, this is great.

Brigid: See, I was just like this SkyNet thing. Like we have much bigger fears, like in the horror dystopian we currently live in, like. Also, I just learned how to use an Air Fryer like which I have been avoiding for like months. So like maybe at the end of like the TikTok craze, maybe I'll be like, yeah, now I'm on it. Stuff like eventually like I'm, I'm like third wave of some of this stuff where it's like, oh, like maybe I should check out Harry Potter or like

Eileen: Oh man. You should.

Brigid: Yes I know about but like oh Divergent. That whole series I just got into it. I'm like and like podcasts and stuff. I'm so bummed. A podcast I love ended but actually ended in 2017. I just finished it.

Yeah. I'm behind the Times and I'm OK with that because I'm, I mean I'm happy watching "The Office," for the five millionth time.

Andrew: So my turn for the quickfire questions. So just go with whatever comes off the top of your head, OK. What is the best piece of advice you have ever been given?

Brigid: You can be the sweetest peach in the world and someone still going to hate peaches.

Andrew: What do you like to do to relax?

Brigid: Play with my cats. Because I taught them how to play fetch.

Andrew: Nice! What is your favorite food?

Brigid: Sushi or mac and cheese.

Andrew: Love it, Miss Mac and Cheese. What is your favorite film and or TV show or your favorite at the moment? I know you have quite a list.

Brigid: Oh, probably "The Office," eternally, just like my comfort zone. I'll go with that.

Andrew: So what would you like to ask our next guest? You know, they're artistic and, you know, they're agreeing to come on the podcast.

Brigid: If you could be any mythical character or mythical creature, what would you be and why?

Eileen: Yes. Thank you so much for joining us today. If you want to tell people where they can find you online, now is a good time.

Brigid: Yeah, you find me Brigid Sinclair on Facebook, Instagram or Brigid Rankowski on Facebook. "A Road to Me," is my website, which I really need to update. But yeah, you can find me in the virtual sphere, Miss Mermaid, Maine.

Andrew: Maybe USA or...

Brigid: Maybe USA. I mean, like there is some like intense competition stuff for like the national. I'm just my goal is to make it to top 10, like I'll be happy with that way.

Eileen: Wait, how do they decide?

Brigid: There's creative competition like photo shoot and stuff. There's underwater posing with one breath and some of these other people can hold their breath for like a couple of minutes. How long you can swim on one breath and of course, evening gown.

Eileen: Wow, that sounds awesome. I would totally watch that.

Brigid: Right.

Eileen: Well, thank you again and bye bye, everyone.

Andrew: Bye, thank you.