

Audio file

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Transcript

00:00:00 Eileen Lamb

Welcome to Adulting on the spectrum.

00:00:03 Eileen Lamb

In this podcast, we want to highlight the real voices of autistic adults, not just inspirational stories, but people like us talking about their day-to-day life.

00:00:12 Eileen Lamb

Basically, we want to give a voice to a variety of autistic people.

00:00:16 Eileen Lamb

I'm Eileen Lamb, an autistic author and photographer, and I Co-host this podcast with Andrew Komarow. Hey, Andrew.

00:00:23 Andrew Komarow

Hey, Eileen, I'm Andrew Komarow, autistic entrepreneur, founder of the neurodiversity index.

00:00:28 Andrew Komarow

Today, our guest is Alex Astrella.

00:00:32 Andrew Komarow

AA Eileen's favorite acronym for short. And then Alex is a special education special educator and filmmaker from Dana Point, CA.

00:00:42 Andrew Komarow

Through his work in both fields, he is passionate about giving back to the community that helped him become the individual he is today.

00:00:49 Andrew Komarow

Outside of his work, Alex enjoys spending time with his family and friends.

00:00:53 Andrew Komarow

He is always striving to learn and grow each and every day.

00:00:56 Andrew Komarow

Welcome, Alex.

00:00:57 Alex Astrella

Thank you for having me.

00:01:00 Andrew Komarow

So we would like to start off our podcast.

00:01:02 Andrew Komarow

We ask each guest how they'd like to be identified, and we don't mean pronouns, although you're welcome to share those as well.

00:01:10 Andrew Komarow

We mean a person with autism on the spectrum.

00:01:16 Andrew Komarow

I don't give a shit is probably our most common answer.

00:01:19 Andrew Komarow

I don't think we've gone from pulled them.

00:01:21 Andrew Komarow

I don't think that's verbatim, but I think it's no preference is probably.

00:01:25 Alex Astrella

I I don't care.

00:01:26 Alex Astrella

Also Is it OK to swear on this podcast or Is it OK?

00:01:29 Andrew Komarow

Yes, it's adulting on this spectrum.

00:01:31 Alex Astrella

Yeah, yeah. I don't give a shit.

00:01:32 Alex Astrella

I don't give a shit when people call me, like, you know, yeah, like whatever people want to call me like, you know, I'm pretty thick skinned and like, you know, we're all human at the end of the day so.

00:01:45 Alex Astrella

I don't really have a preference.

00:01:49 Eileen Lamb

So Alex, we like to also ask our guests when they were diagnosed and you, you know what the process was like.

00:01:56 Eileen Lamb

You were diagnosed very young. You were two, I believe so.

00:02:01 Eileen Lamb

I assume you don't remember much about your assessment, but what do you do?

00:02:06 Eileen Lamb

You know about your, your diagnosis?

00:02:08 Eileen Lamb

And when did you learn about it from your parents and all of that?

00:02:13 Alex Astrella

So I was two years old when I was diagnosed up in LA.

00:02:18 Alex Astrella

I mean, obviously I don't remember this, but my specifically, my mom has kind of relayed like what that process was like and the basically the neurologist who diagnosed me.

00:02:32 Alex Astrella

The time said that, you know, he's high functioning.

00:02:35 Alex Astrella

Alex is high functioning, but he really won't be able to make friends in school and probably won't get past like high school education.

00:02:45 Alex Astrella

And you know that really just kind of threw my mom and both my parents for a whirlwind.

00:02:52 Alex Astrella

So right away from that diagnosis, they enrolled me in ABA services here in Orange County, California.

00:03:00 Alex Astrella

And so from ages two to seven, I had a pretty intense, like ABA therapy.

00:03:09 Alex Astrella

And in hindsight, and at the time, my mom, you know, made me believe I was five years old, four years old. At the time, I just thought it was like babysitters that were, you know, coming over to like, play with me.

00:03:24 Alex Astrella

And because that's what it felt like at the time.

00:03:26 Alex Astrella

But you know, in reality, they were, like, keeping track of data.

00:03:30 Alex Astrella

And working on, you know, goals to strengthen my motor skills, my social skills, basic, you know, quality of life skills and I feel like that has tremendous impact on me.

00:03:43 Alex Astrella

I didn't really realize it until later in life, not even until about, like, you know, early adulthood.

00:03:50 Alex Astrella

Like, as I turned 20 in, you know, I was getting my undergrad that how pivotal you know that ABA experience had on me.

00:03:59 Alex Astrella

And so I'm super grateful for all the therapists who I can't really remember.

00:04:04 Alex Astrella

But you know all the ones who worked with me, and especially my parents for enrolling me in that and you know and and to bring it back full circle, I think it was because of those services that you know I was able to get my undergraduate in two majors at UC Santa Barbara and then I just graduate with my Masters in special education at Vanderbilt in Nashville.

00:04:27 Alex Astrella

So yeah, just and that's kind of like the whole my whole thing is just defying the odds, defying the limits because and overcoming because, you know, I think if you set your mind to it and you have the right supports around you, it's, you know, anything like that is possible.

00:04:44 Andrew Komarow

Now a question for you.

00:04:45 Andrew Komarow

If your parents had never told you that you were autistic, and let's go with it, you never found out, would you always think that you had babysitters, like looking back,

00:04:57 Andrew Komarow

I mean, now that you've gone to school for special education, you know, you're working to be an RBT or BC BA.

00:05:05 Andrew Komarow

Do you like it?

00:05:09 Andrew Komarow

Could you really tell the difference or like?

00:05:13 Andrew Komarow

Like, do you think you were being tortured or do you think they were playing with you and trying to help you.

00:05:18 Alex Astrella

Uh, I feel like there's definitely like a few negative experiences, but they were very like few and far between.

00:05:27 Alex Astrella

I feel like for the most part It was like it was positive and again I it I was so young, so it's hard to recall.

00:05:37 Alex Astrella

UM, what exactly you know, I knew we did a lot of arts and crafts and like, you know, trying new foods and doing stuff out in the community.

00:05:46 Alex Astrella

But in turn, you know it was very I was very young, so it's hard to pinpoint exactly like what I was doing.

00:05:51 Alex Astrella

But I think even if my parents didn't tell me.

00:05:57 Alex Astrella

I would have always I I feel like I've always I'm still really into trains and I was even more so into trains when I was younger and would like, you know, in public kind of like stem like rub my hands and like, jump up and down.

00:06:11 Alex Astrella

So I feel like I probably would have eventually been like, hey, you know, not and nobody else is really doing that.

00:06:17 Alex Astrella

So I probably would have like.

00:06:19 Alex Astrella

Figured it out and I'm sure they would have told me.

00:06:22 Alex Astrella

You know if I asked, but.

00:06:26 Alex Astrella

I always felt, you know, but then that that's the thing, I guess.

00:06:28 Alex Astrella

And that might be another, but it's kind of going somewhere else.

00:06:31 Alex Astrella

But basically it's like, you know, I I when I realized like I was a little off at first, it kind of like bothered me and I kind of like was afraid of that.

00:06:39 Alex Astrella

But now it's like I again.

00:06:41 Alex Astrella

I'm embracing it.

00:06:42 Alex Astrella

Embracing it like I think I said in the interview.

00:06:45 Alex Astrella

It's like there's no such thing and or as normal.

00:06:47 Alex Astrella

And you know, because maybe I'm more into trains or, like, I stem in private.

00:06:52 Alex Astrella

Like isn't make me any lesser of a human.

00:06:54 Alex Astrella

It's just who I makes me, who I am and I'm, you know, proud to have again.

00:06:59 Alex Astrella

I'm proud to identify as being a person with autism.

00:07:02 Alex Astrella

you know, autistic human these days.

00:07:08 Eileen Lamb

When did you come out as being autistic and why?

00:07:12 Alex Astrella

So yeah, I uh very recently like I I would tell like I started telling like close friends, and I mean, my extended family has known since I was a kid.

00:07:25 Alex Astrella

They were, you know, my mom kind of went to them for support when I was first diagnosed.

00:07:30 Alex Astrella

But I started telling, like, my close friends and kind of inner circle, a few well, just within the last couple of years.

00:07:39 Alex Astrella

And then it was just about, I don't know, a little over a month ago that I made an Instagram poster right after I graduated Vanderbilt with my Masters in special Education, I knew I kind of wanted to make it public at some point.

00:07:54 Alex Astrella

And I was like, oh, this feels right.

00:07:56 Alex Astrella

I wanted to post about my graduation.

00:07:58 Alex Astrella

And anyway, so I was like, you know, it just feels like it's kind of comfort circle that I was receiving, you know, ABA services, special Ed Services.

00:08:08 Alex Astrella

Now I'm graduating with a Masters in it, so I feel like what time, what better time to like, you know, share my story than now.

00:08:15 Alex Astrella

And yeah, it was just a really positive reception from didn't really know.

00:08:21 Alex Astrella

I knew I wanted to do it and honestly, like didn't give too much of a shit about what the reaction was.

00:08:26 Alex Astrella

I hope it was positive.

00:08:28 Alex Astrella

It was going to be positive, and it was overwhelmingly positive.

00:08:31 Alex Astrella

So I again, I was like super thankful for.

00:08:34 Alex Astrella

I'm thankful for all my friends and people, even people I don't know that well, who like commented or messaged me individually saying like how you know if they were.

00:08:44 Alex Astrella

So that I like was able to be public about it and yeah, so it's very recent and it's still kind of weird being open about it, not like, but it's just like you know, because I haven't talked about it.

00:08:57 Alex Astrella

So many people for so long have been private about it.

00:09:00 Alex Astrella

So just the kind of topic talking about it openly is still kind of a new concept.

00:09:05 Alex Astrella

But it's nice because I don't feel like I'm holding anything back.

00:09:08 Alex Astrella

You know, it's again, it's part of who I am and I'm proud of it.

00:09:13 Eileen Lamb

Was there any negative comments about you being obviously well, you're not a BCBA yet, but about studying to be a BCBA and being in the ABA field as an autistic person, autistic purpose, you know?

00:09:29 Eileen Lamb

ABA is controversial.

00:09:32 Eileen Lamb

I think you are our first guest who has received a BA and then also decided to go to the field.

00:09:40 Eileen Lamb

What do you think about all the controversy around ABA.

00:09:46 Alex Astrella

Yeah, I mean, I definitely don't think it's for everybody, even though, yeah, I'm studying to become a BCBA and ABA benefited me positively as a child.

00:09:57 Alex Astrella

I don't think it's for everyone.

00:09:59 Alex Astrella

I think you know there's like other option.

00:10:03 Alex Astrella

There's, like, play therapy.

00:10:06 Alex Astrella

There's, you know, the documentary I'm doing.

00:10:08 Alex Astrella

People are finding therapy through acting and being in theater.

00:10:14 Alex Astrella

I think you know I kind of feel like it's kind of similar to you know how do you want to be identified with?

00:10:22 Alex Astrella

As a person with autism is kind of like how, how do you want to go about, you know, therapy as a person with autism?

00:10:30 Alex Astrella

Do you want to do the ABA route?

00:10:32 Alex Astrella

Do you wanna do something more unconventional like play therapy or like sense, you know, music therapy or mindfulness?

00:10:42 Alex Astrella

I think and obviously you know when you're a kid, you can't make that decision if you're like two or three years old.

00:10:47 Alex Astrella

But I think you know, it's cool that like, we're getting to a space where like, parents are having more options about how they wanna proceed.

00:10:55 Alex Astrella

And you know, maybe they try, maybe people will try ABA therapy for a year or less and don't, I know families who have tried ABA and just don't really vibe with it.

00:11:07 Alex Astrella

Don't like the structure and the DTT and stuff.

00:11:10 Alex Astrella

And I think I totally get that.

00:11:12 Alex Astrella

You know, everyone has their own perspective and.

00:11:15 Alex Astrella

And preferences and needs so it may be something for the, you know, music therapy might will be, might be more beneficial for a kiddo than traditional ABA and a clinic, that's totally fine.

00:11:29 Alex Astrella

Again, for me, ABA was really positive and OT, you know, also received OT services as well, and that's what I'm trained in and I know how to do well.

00:11:40 Alex Astrella

And I'm gonna, you know, bring that passion into my work and stuff.

00:11:45 Alex Astrella

But I know it's not for everybody and you know, through some of my classes at Vanderbilt, we talked about, you know, obviously we're all trying to, you know, training to become BCBAs. So we have a biased perspective, but you know, trying to keep an open mind like, hey, it's not for everybody.

00:12:00 Alex Astrella

And if people don't vibe with it, then that's totally fine.

00:12:03 Alex Astrella

There are other options out there as well that are hopefully you know just as beneficial to their child.

00:12:09 Alex Astrella

So yeah, that's my perspective on it.

00:12:13 Eileen Lamb

Well, and also I think not only there are other options, but you can also speak up.

00:12:18 Eileen Lamb

So for context my two sons are on the spectrum.

00:12:22 Eileen Lamb

Both have had ABA therapy.

00:12:24 Eileen Lamb

One of them is high functioning and the other is very severe, like nonverbal.

00:12:30 Eileen Lamb

He's 10 years old, you know self-injurious behaviors.

00:12:36 Eileen Lamb

I mean all of it and it's been in ABA for eight years now since he was two, and I don't know what I would have done without it. Yeah, it's it was.

00:12:49 Eileen Lamb

You know, he's still like uh behind, obviously his autism is severe, but they've told him so much, you know, like arc is really the main thing, self-care skills.

00:13:03 Eileen Lamb

But there were a couple of times when I didn't like what they were doing, like they prevented Charlie, his name, from lining up his food before eating it.

00:13:11 Eileen Lamb

And you know, he's a picky eater.

00:13:12 Eileen Lamb

And I was like you know what? As long as he eats just let him.

00:13:19 Eileen Lamb

And I said something and they didn't prevent that anymore.

00:13:22 Eileen Lamb

So I also think that, you know, it's not just that parents can find something else like you can speak up and change ABA to what you like, you know.

00:13:34 Eileen Lamb

Sometimes it's just a small change, and yeah, maybe for some people the entire therapy is not the right fit, but I think that often little adjustment to the therapy would be enough to make your parents comfortable with ABA.

00:13:50 Alex Astrella

Yeah, I totally agree.

00:13:52 Alex Astrella

And I think that's something we learned through my education at Vanderbilt is, you know, as traditional ABA, kind of like more was more structuring, like oh, you can't line stuff up or you have to make eye contact or you have to use manners like please and thank you.

00:14:07 Alex Astrella

And then we're like, you know, as the fields getting more advanced and you know wider and we're learning more.

00:14:13 Alex Astrella

It's like, you know, the pick your battles like, is that really, you know what it's like where are you gonna focus on something like eye contact, whereas you could focus on like finding an alternative behavior to like, you know, like ASIB or something.

00:14:28 Alex Astrella

Yeah, I just think in general you know parents would probably prefer that too.

00:14:33 Alex Astrella

It's like there is, you know you.

00:14:36 Alex Astrella

You just gotta pick your battles, I think.

00:14:38 Alex Astrella

And we're learning as you know the field.

00:14:41 Alex Astrella

Again as the field gets more advanced that there's really, you know, eye contact and manners will just kind of come.

00:14:47 Alex Astrella

And if they don't, that's fine.

00:14:48 Alex Astrella

It's not, you know, really detrimental like lining stuff up.

00:14:56 Alex Astrella

That's not like a behavior that's like gonna be a long lasting like detrimental, have a long lasting detrimental impact.

00:15:05 Alex Astrella

I think it's cool that you know, it's like we're like, OK, let's focus on like the real, you know, the what really matters instead of, like this kind of.

00:15:14 Alex Astrella

You know, bullshit like eye contact or manners or, yeah, holding the door open, whatnot.

00:15:21 Andrew Komarow

So when you're going to school or studying to be a BCBA, if you could talk a bit like do they teach that you know what do they teach and but also like if you could talk a little bit more about, I mean it's not that easy to get a license to start torturing little kids, right?

00:15:41 Andrew Komarow

You have to sarcasm.

00:15:43 Andrew Komarow

Uh, sorry, but no, no, no.

00:15:46 Andrew Komarow

Here's it's a lot of work, and it's a hard exam.

00:15:49 Andrew Komarow

You need lots of experience, hours and training.

00:15:52 Andrew Komarow

It's not something that is done, you know, just lightly or easily, right?

00:15:58 Andrew Komarow

Well, something like, I assume, like other, you know, I think I really would say like non science-based therapies can be done by anyone, right?

00:16:07 Andrew Komarow

You know this is done by somebody who has many hours of experience learning under somebody and Masters degree.

00:16:14 Andrew Komarow

Although I think the Masters degree can be in anything now.

00:16:17 Andrew Komarow

I think they changed that as long as you can pass the test, so maybe I'll become one.

00:16:23 Andrew Komarow

I'll go take my BCBA test with the my Masters in finance, but anyway.

00:16:29 Andrew Komarow

So yeah, if you could tell us just a little bit more about like the process of becoming an RBT like what you're studying, like what you're learning and just like more, I mean maybe there's others who want to help, but I I don't think we've really had someone really talk about that before, have we, Eileen?

00:16:43 Eileen Lamb

I don't think so.

00:16:46 Alex Astrella

Yeah. So. Being an RBT. So just to give a little context, like when I graduated from my undergrad at UC Santa Barbara, I was initially going to go into film.

00:16:59 Alex Astrella

But you know, prices and Los Angeles were really expensive.

00:17:03 Alex Astrella

And so I moved back home.

00:17:04 Alex Astrella

And my mom, I was looking for a job.

00:17:06 Alex Astrella

And my mom was like, you know, since you're becoming more comfortable.

00:17:10 Alex Astrella

In your own skin, being, you know an adult with autism, why don't you try to find, and you know, a job is like a behavior technician.

00:17:18 Alex Astrella

And so I gave it a shot, got the job, and I did that for two years prior to starting my masters at Vanderbilt.

00:17:26 Alex Astrella

And I just loved it.

00:17:27 Alex Astrella

I mean, I think an important thing that I learned in the field and then we also emphasized in my classrooms at Vanderbilt.

00:17:37 Alex Astrella

Excuse me, is, you know, just building a rapport not only with the child, but also with the family.

00:17:42 Alex Astrella

Because if they're, you know, if there's not that level of trust, then it's really hard to.

00:17:49 Alex Astrella

You know, carry out goals to get the participation of not only the child but the family, because you think about it, you know, as a behavior technician or BC BA, you're only at the clinic you're or at the home for two or three hours with the kid.

00:18:09 Alex Astrella

And you know afterwards, they're spending a majority of their time, like at school or mostly, you know, majority of the time with their parents at home.

00:18:17 Alex Astrella

So if you don't have that like you know what we call buy in from like the parents or the guardians.

00:18:22 Alex Astrella

Then a lot of those goals just kind of go to waste. They go by the wayside, right? It's like they're not. If you don't have that trust, they're gonna be like I'll fuck that shit. I'm not gonna, you know, like they can work on that while they're here. But I'm not gonna do it on my own time, you know.

00:18:36 Alex Astrella

But when you do have that buy in and you do have that trust, which again, I think establishing a rapport finding those commonalities if there's, like, if you're dealing with different cultures or different, you know, religions, whatnot, you know, kind of like being mindful of that.

00:18:53 Alex Astrella

And catering to those needs that can go a really long way in them being willing and attempting to implement some of those, you know, ABA strategies on their own time, you know, while we're not there with them, while they have a bulk of the time with their child and I I think those that's what I really tried to emphasize myself, when I was a behavior technician.

00:19:16 Alex Astrella

Well, again, when I go back into the field because I think, you know those leads the best outcomes and it leads to a more just overall leads to a more positive environment.

00:19:27 Alex Astrella

You know, when you're when they're happy to see you and you're happy to see them and you know, like with the kiddos as well.

00:19:36 Alex Astrella

I think it makes just like the world of a difference and and I find in those instances as well when you have that buy in from the family and the child that you know it makes those breakthrough moments like as I like to call them when it's like.

00:19:48 Alex Astrella

They're able when you're working on a painting sequence and they're able to like brush their teeth for the first time independently, or they're able to tie their shoes independently for the first time.

00:19:57 Alex Astrella

Like and makes those breakthrough moments so much more like rewarding because it's not just like, oh, cool, it's like, whoa, Oh my God.

00:20:04 Alex Astrella

You know, we've been working on this for so long and the family's stoked, and I'm stoked and the kid is stoked. And that's just, yeah, it's just such a rewarding I think it's so important to establish that rapport and establish that trust because it makes the jobs more fulfilling. It makes like reaching those goals more fulfilling and you know it.

00:20:25 Alex Astrella

I think one of the most important things for me is by being passionate about it and passionate about each kid I work with and tailoring, you know, uh, their individual to their individual strengths and needs.

00:20:38 Alex Astrella

It just takes me out of my own head. It takes me out of my own day-to-day issues or, you know, depressions or whatnot. It makes me focus on the here and now.

00:20:49 S Alex Astrella

And what I can do to better improve the life of this child that I'm working with so.

00:20:57 Eileen Lamb

So what would you do if, uh, you were not an RBT?

00:21:00 Eileen Lamb

You mentioned that you are into uh filmmaking, is that correct?

00:21:06 Alex Astrella

Right, right.

00:21:08 Alex Astrella

Yeah, I if I wasn't an RBT, I don't know. I mean, it's hard to say like I'm kind of in the mindset that everything happens for a reason.

00:21:18 Alex Astrella

I think it was like meant to be that I didn't go to LA, that I didn't go straight from graduating at UC Santa Barbara and going into film and having this job.

00:21:28 Alex Astrella

Because yeah, it changed my life, like it's taught me about patience.

00:21:33 Alex Astrella

It's taught me how to, like, want to act in service to the community that you know helped me out when I was a child.

00:21:41 Alex Astrella

It's hard to say. It's really hard to say.

00:21:43 Alex Astrella

I don't know if it you know what it would have looked like, but I I'm just grateful.

00:21:48 Alex Astrella

I know what did happen and I know I'm super grateful for it.

00:21:53 Alex Astrella

And yeah, I don't think I would have the same level of comfort.

00:21:56 Alex Astrella

I wouldn't be here talking about it as openly as I am now I think if I hadn't of taking that position as an RBT and met the kids and met the families I did who, you know, even though I haven't worked with them for over 2 years, have had, like a profound impact in my life.

00:22:12 Alex Astrella

And I'm very grateful for that.

00:22:16 Andrew Komarow

To pick one, are they both? Let's say, special interests.

00:22:22 Andrew Komarow

Do you have like is one because you never think you'll be able to make a living in film, so it's kind of like you need a real job or, you know is or they both, you know, equally passionate for you.

00:22:36 Andrew Komarow

And could you tell us more about Blue Star Productions?

00:22:39 Alex Astrella

Yeah, so, so they actually are like equally as passionate for me, Blue Star Productions, my production company I started a little under a year ago.

00:22:50 Alex Astrella

The goal is to empower film makers with disabilities and whether that be their, you know, documentary film makers, Or, you know, narrative film makers or music video creators.

00:23:05 Alex Astrella

We just want to create a safe space where they're able to collaborate with each other, where they're able to feel safe and not like they're being taken advantage of and they're developing their skills.

00:23:17 Alex Astrella

And right now we're just kind of promoting through social media and outreach programs, but eventually we'd love to like finance the films of these, like disabled creators.

00:23:30 Alex Astrella

But that's and that's kind of, I guess, uh, the answer, the other part of question like why I'm passionate about both is because you know, I want to on one hand like act in service to the community, you know the disability community, which I'm doing right now through ABA. But this would be kind of career, the dream is kind of a huge goal for me is to have this production company take off so I can kind of like carve out my own niche.

00:23:58 Alex Astrella

I guess you could say and you know, meld my or excuse me match, my passion for film and you know the disability, disability community together to create an environment that's like both, you know, where people can carry out their passions and in film, and then also, you know, hopefully it's therapeutic for them as well. And again, it might not be the traditional like ABA approach.

00:24:25 Alex Astrella

But if it's able to, you know they're able to learn from it and grow from it, much like I'm trying to do myself through every day, you know, every day-to-day stuff.

00:24:37 Alex Astrella

I think that would be an accomplishment and I I think I know, I know we're going to get there. I'll get there.

00:24:42 Alex Astrella

It just might be taking some time but yeah I'm very passionate about both of them.

00:24:51 Eileen Lamb

And did you mention you were working on a documentary earlier?

00:24:55 Alex Astrella

Yeah, So I'm actually right now working on a documentary about a theater in Carlsbad, CA that employees or employees, neurodivergent actors who have performed in a theatrical adaptation of the children's book Stella Luna, and they actually went on tour to attend different schools around the San Diego area and performed in front of different elementary school children and it was an amazing thing to witness and you know where is probably like 50 years ago, a lot of these actors would have been in, like, institution or just confined to like, a day program.

00:25:43 Alex Astrella

They're getting paid. They're finding purpose, they're finding belonging, mingling with each other.

00:25:49 Alex Astrella

I mean it kind of. You know, is representative of like what I want, you know, to do with my Blue Star Productions is like create a safe space where all these creators who are, you know, passionate about the same thing or, you know, just want to come together and just be human, you know, like and find a purpose and that's what these actors did through their theatrical performances, they found a purpose they found belonging. They, you know, found a sense of independence.

00:26:18 Alex Astrella

And it was so cool to see, just like the, you know, expressions of joy that were on their face as they're performing.

00:26:27 Alex Astrella

And even aside from like being behind the camera.

00:26:30 Alex Astrella

Just like getting to know them, getting to build a rapport with them. And realizing that you know, much like the big theme of the film is like that we're not all that different, you know, and these actors just have their own set of needs and preferences that might be a little different or might be a little, you know, more than you know, the rest neurotypical people.

00:26:55 Alex Astrella

Well, but that doesn't make them any lesser human beings, and they're very they're some of the most loyal people that have come to know and are very so passionate about acting and about being on stage and they were and they were still that we had the cameras there documenting it and we're just so open to sharing their experiences.

00:27:17 Alex Astrella

Super grateful. I mean, it brings me just a smile to talk about it cause I'm so excited for it to be completed and to, you know, get these actors, the recognition they deserve.

00:27:28 Eileen Lamb

That is such a cool project. I love that.

00:27:30 Alex Astrella

Thank you.

00:27:31 Eileen Lamb

I hope it's comes to life for you that your dream comes true.

00:27:38 Eileen Lamb

You should listen to one of the guests we had a few weeks ago. His name is Scott and he's a filmmaker in Hollywood who has autism. Scott Steindorff is his name.

00:27:53 Eileen Lamb

I think he would really like him.

00:27:58 Eileen Lamb

Where can people find you online?

00:28:00 Eileen Lamb

I know you mentioned earlier that you are on social media, but is that private or do you have like an advocate, a page where you talk about autism?

00:28:10 Eileen Lamb

Just tell people where they can find you or not.

00:28:14 Alex Astrella

Yeah. No, I so I have my film account is at Blue Star Productions on Instagram and we have our our website same spelling, Blue star productions.com.

00:28:31 Alex Astrella

Or if you just want to chat with me individually outside of filmmaking about ABA or about, you know, anything in general, just shoot the shit.

00:28:39 Alex Astrella

I have my own Instagram Alex dot Astrella, and yeah, again it's I don't have a like what you mentioned.

00:28:50 Alex Astrella

I don't really have a podcast where I talk about I would love to start my own podcast at some point soon about like talking to other creators who are neurodivergent or, you know, other into any individuals who are neurodivergent. But since I'm so I again, it's been like a little over a month that I've been like, you know, public about it.

00:29:13 Alex Astrella

So I'm still I it's very exciting, but I'm still kind of figuring out like what I want to use my voice for and, but it it's an exciting opportunity for me.

00:29:24 Eileen Lamb

Well, for what it's worth, as someone who's I guess an influencer is a big platform on social media, I think your story is really incredible. And you know you have it all. I mean you were diagnosed as a child.

00:29:40 Eileen Lamb

So you had that entire experience of, you know, going through therapy, which you know, a lot of us who were diagnosed as adults we don't have.

00:29:49 Eileen Lamb

And now you're in ABA as an adult. And then you have that side project with the, you know, filmmaking and hiring neurodivergent people, which I think is also great.

00:30:02 Eileen Lamb

So I mean, if I can tell you anything is go for it and I think, yeah. You know, you'd be surprised by the response.

00:30:12 Alex Astrella

Thank you. Thank you.

00:30:14 Alex Astrella

Yeah, I know. It's just a determination. I just wake up every day super fortunate for where I'm at and you know, I'm just trying to.

00:30:24 Alex Astrella

I know it's cliché. Nowadays it just manifests that energy towards like achieving my goals and always climbing the mountain and I think you know, hopefully I'll get there soon enough, but thank you.

00:30:36 Eileen Lamb

Yeah, of course. So to wrap this up, we like to ask our guests some quick fire questions.

00:30:43 Alex Astrella

Yeah, that's good.

00:30:44 Eileen Lamb

So you just tell me the first thing that comes to your mind.

00:30:47 Andrew Komarow

Do you want me to do it, Eileen, or you got it.

00:30:50 Eileen Lamb

I got it.

00:30:52 Andrew Komarow

She's like, she's like, why do you change things on me? Is it the same forever?

00:30:56 Eileen Lamb

So who's your favorite filmmaker?

00:31:01 Alex Astrella

Ohh favorite filmmaker. Probably all time Francis Ford Coppola the Godfather is my favorite film. I love Apocalypse now.

00:31:11 Alex Astrella

He's yeah, I think he's kind of in a league of his own.

00:31:15 Eileen Lamb

Who's your favorite autism representation in a TV show or in a movie?

00:31:23 Alex Astrella

Favorite autism. Uh, that's interesting. I don't know if I know it, I mean, I don't honestly can't think of one that comes to mind about autism representation.

00:31:35 Alex Astrella

Like, I know there's a good doctor and I've watched that and I'm not really a big fan of that.

00:31:40 Alex Astrella

But I will say, you know that I Breaking Bad is one of my favorite shows and it's not autism, but I believe Walter Son has CP and I think that was a really cool representation of, you know, an actor with a disability getting being an amazing actor and having the opportunity to be in that role so would be my answer for that.

00:32:05 Eileen Lamb

Who's your favorite actor?

00:32:08 Alex Astrella

Ohh favorite actor. Probably I I mean, I've not so much a fan of his stuff in real life as a person.

00:32:18 Alex Astrella

I as a person, I don't know if I would like get along with him, but I think Daniel Day Lewis every time he's in our role, just like I'm just blown away in in Lincoln and in Phantom thread among other films like he just the stellar actor and really just immerses you in every role he's in, so yeah.

00:32:39 Eileen Lamb

FAvorite ood.

00:32:41 Alex Astrella

Oh, Italian for sure. I'm my family's from Sicily. I could eat pasta every day of the week.

00:32:47 Eileen Lamb

I'm with you.

00:32:50 Eileen lamb

Favorite color?

00:32:52 Alex Astrella

Uh Green, green is my favorite color for a while.

00:32:56 Eileen Lamb

And that was it for us. Well, thank you so much for joining us today. I was blessed talking with you.

00:33:02 Alex Astrella

No, I'm grateful again. Fortunate to have the opportunity. Thank you, Eileen and Andrew really enjoyed coming on and talking with you guys.

00:33:12 Andrew Komarow

No, thank you for coming on. Really enjoyed having you.