

00:00:00:00 - 00:00:20:15

Andy Farmer

During a pandemic. I was like, okay, one of these days I'm going to go skydiving when it's safe. And then the opportunity came shortly after my mom died, and I was like, you know, her and I talked about it where I would go skydiving and she would be waiting for me to come down anxiously. And the opportunity came and I was like, okay, I got to do this for my mom. And did.

00:00:44:07 - 00:01:04:02

Eileen Lamb

Welcome to Adulting on the Spectrum. 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. Basically, we want to give a voice to a variety of autistic people. I'm Eileen Lamb, an autistic author and photographer, and I co-hosted this podcast with Andrew Komarow. Hey Andrew,

00:01:04:06 - 00:01:32:10

Andrew Komarow

Hey Eileen. I'm Andrew. I'm an autistic entrepreneur and I co-host this podcast with Eileen. Today, our guest is Andy. He is an Eagle Scout who earned his bachelor's degree in kinesiology. I don't even know what that is. We'll have to ask him later. From Howard Payne University, where he specialized in sports medicine. In 2021, he publicly disclosed his Asperger's syndrome diagnosis and became an advocate for Autism Speaks.

Currently, he's pursuing voice, acting and striving to enhance community bonds through recreation and wellbeing initiatives. His interests include skydiving, charitable races and a variety of music genres. Thank you for coming on the podcast.

00:01:48:03 - 00:01:51:18

Andy Farmer

Thank you for having me here. It's a it's a great honor.

00:01:52:11 - 00:02:12:10

Andrew Komarow

We're happy to have you here and we like to start off our podcast. We ask each guest how they prefer to identify and we don't mean pronouns such as he her. Although you are welcome to share those as well. We mean autism se on the spectrum. Asperger's. Autistic. Do you have a preference? If so, what is it.

00:02:14:01 - 00:02:33:04

Andy Farmer

When it comes to on a pronoun, I prefer he. When it comes down to identification or hurts my condition or my unique factor is I'm just a normal guy who is also autistic.

00:02:33:18 - 00:02:47:14

Eileen Lamb

Fair enough. That's a good answer. And speaking of you being a normal guy who's also autistic, can you tell us how you found out you were autistic? What's your diagnosis journey?

00:02:47:14 - 00:03:21:15

Andy Farmer

So when I was four years old, they could not probably diagnose me except for developmental delay due to a lack of available research. At age six, I was diagnosed with ADHD and autism. Bipolar. I was normal, just a little different. And then when my mom was informed, she told me she initially was shocked and blamed herself. However, when my parents told both sides of the family, they came together to find ways to help support me and find ways to grow and become independent.

And when I was 14, more research was available and I was officially diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome, which is now Autism Spectrum Disorder. My speech therapist, who stuck with me from the first grade through 10th grade, helped me become more sociable and less shy, diagnostician, teachers, principals and therapists for it. And so I was a joy to have in class and in workplace.

00:03:47:21 - 00:03:55:07

Eileen Lamb

Another interest you have is skydiving. Where is the best place you ever skydive in?

00:03:56:21 - 00:04:28:01

Andy Farmer

Yes, ma'am. I would say it was Space Land Skydive, Dallas. And I've been I've only skydive twice so far, but I would definitely like to start over again when I have the opportunity. In fact, actually, with that experience, they made sure I was paired with somebody who had experience working with people with autism. And we developed a system just case of I get overwhelmed and we use hand signals.

00:04:28:06 - 00:04:34:13

Eileen Lamb

That is really cool. Can you tell us more about that? Like what? Where the hand signals, if you remember, and what did it stand for?

00:04:35:15 - 00:05:08:05

Andy Farmer

And so, for example, let's say when we were when we were falling diving, he would be like he would be like, are you ready? And I would give him a thumbs up and then he would. And he pushed he pushed off. And then when it was time to pull tissue because I had a altimeter on my wrist, I would give a signal, which meant cold shoot.

Of course, since it was my first time, it was also on my birthday. He intentionally took me through a cloud. I wish I could know what it was like to be The Rocketeer from the movie The Rocketeer.

00:05:21:18 - 00:05:25:12

Andrew Komarow

What made you want to skydive? I am so afraid of heights.

00:05:25:23 - 00:05:50:03

Andy Farmer

When I was younger, when I was a teenager, I loved rappelling and rock climbing in. During the pandemic, I was like, okay, one of these days I'm going to go skydiving when it's safe. And then the opportunity came shortly after my mom died and I was like, you know, her and I talked about it where I would go skydiving and she would be waiting for me to come down anxiously.

And the opportunity came and I was like, okay, I got to do this for my mom. Dad and I did it. And it became a became a hobby.

00:06:00:15 - 00:06:16:00

Eileen Lamb.

Im with Andrew, I wouldnever dothis, but it shows how of a difference autistic people are. You know, you can't we can't making you like blanket statements and generalizations. I was wondering if maybe it was like the sensory aspect of it, you know?

00:06:17:04 - 00:06:26:11

Andy Farmer

Well, surprisingly not. I didn't experience sensory overload at all during the entire time.

00:06:27:18 - 00:06:37:14

Eileen Lamb

Something else from your bio that's very interesting is what it was. Kinesiology, what is it? And what made you want to earn a degree in it? Can you tell us?

00:06:38:10 - 00:07:16:19

Andy Farmer

Well, kinesiology is the study of motion and study of of the human body on how like the muscles move how and it's kind of a generalized term as well We're like how exercise affects body how movement affects the body, how the proper nutrition makes it makes a body more effective and how it also affects the mind. Like, for example, when I was in college, my dad almost died and I found a way to help me.

Help was to start exercising more. I started running sort of playing basketball and it really helped out with stress in What got me into that field was when I went to college. I went to college, studied sports med , but at the time, Howard University, they didn't had a legitimate sports med major program. So that's where I studied kinesiology, and I'm honored enough physical education because I like, I like coaching a little bit too, and I specialize in sports med.

00:07:57:20 - 00:08:33:05

Elleen Lamb

Well, that's really funny because for years when I was in France, I wanted to be what we call kinni. And it's physically I feel like I see every abbreviation of a kinesiology and I wanted to be a sports kinni. Basically taking care of like soccer players and helping with their muscles after games. And I think that's probably the one thing when I was a teenager that was motivating me the most as far as finding a career, I don't go that direction at all in the end.

But I definitely, definitely understand that interest.

You have been a volunteer with Special Olympics, too. Can you tell us one of your favorite moments from your time volunteering with the Special Olympics?

00:08:52:02 - 00:09:32:10

Andy Farmer

There's so many memories, fond memories, and it's hard to pinpoint one, but I would say it was when I was able to work with the adult athletes who were having trouble applying mechanics, I was teaching them and then I just thought of, you know, a foreign spot, a way to help them retain that knowledge, apply it and help them grow more confident in when it helped and they improved greatly and just kept on improving.

It made me proud as a coach.

00:09:37:02 - 00:10:02:10

Andrew Komarow

So do you have I if we've had some guests in the past, you had some small companies, Mark Fleming helping, especially people with autism and disabilities. You know, get more physically fit. How you mentioned how it helped you. I find, you know, physical activity. I'm told I always I needed more physical activity, but I say that all the time.

But it's a good it's good for everyone, right? We all know we should get more exercise. I don't think there's anyone who says no exercise is bad. Right. But I find, you know, especially that, you know, people with autism or just this were just again, maybe less likely to be involved in some sports or in physical activity. So do you have any tips for, you know, somebody on how to be more physically active who wants to be but isn't?

00:10:33:12 - 00:11:08:23

Andy Farmer

Yeah, well, for me, I've learned that, you know, a perfect balance of cardio health center weight training actually helps out a lot because the whole entire human body's factored in, like, for example, your feet, your legs to work, your legs need your core to work. So what I found what works best for me was running and then doing full body weight training.

And for anybody who's looking for like just small words like find, which cardio activity you enjoy, it could be basketball, it can be soccer, it could be running. It can even be bicycling. And when it comes down to that, then figure out what you like. Do you like do weight training or calisthenics? I like a combination of both.

00:11:43:13 - 00:11:55:20**Eileen Lamb**

And then just, you know, find the best nutritional format that works for you. For me, I just try to keep balance and not try to put too much pressure.

00:11:57:00 - 00:12:14:05**Eileen Lamb**

You mentioned the coping mechanisms for your stress and sensory overload, and I think that would be of interest to all of our listeners. Can you tell us a bit more about some of the of those coping mechanism as you're in an exercise?

00:12:15:03 - 00:12:52:06**Andy Farmer**

What I do is say, for example,, sprinting, sensory overload. I try to listen to music whenever I can. It can be or controlled the smooth class rock, or it could be like music from a movie. Also, I do have a couple of fidget toys that I use as well. Like I have a fidget spinner that if I, you know, I need to focus, but I need something to kind of, you know, find that balance.

I use that also if I have the opportunity, I go out for a walk and I just breathe or I just need to get my brain to break. I do something creative, either building a model or coloring. But also another stress relieving tactic I found that works best for me is I talk it out with somebody who I trust most.

For example, my mentor, they were the one who I felt like I could trust. And whenever I was having a real bad, stressful period of be talking with them.

00:13:37:02 - 00:13:44:09**Andrew Komarow**

You mentioned your Myers-Briggs personality type. Eileen Do you know your type?

00:13:45:16 - 00:13:46:13**Eileen Lamb**

INFP.

00:13:47:09 - 00:13:54:07

Andrew Komarow

Ah, INFP. I'm ITJ. I mean, INTJ so

00:13:54:23 - 00:13:57:04

Eileen Lamb

Oh my God, you look so much like an E.

00:13:57:05 - 00:14:19:10

Andrew Komarow

You're so I don't know why you think I'm an extrovert. I just like I. But I'm talking about something I enjoy. I you know, it's different, right? So even I notice that ete roll. Come on, Eileen. Okay. Anyway, so now you know the types Eileen and myself are. Can you tell us about your Myers-Briggs personality type and why you think it's spot on?

00:14:20:12 - 00:14:24:15

Andy Farmer

Okay. Well, apparently all three of us are introverts.

00:14:25:22 - 00:14:26:20

Andrew Komarow

Big shocker there.

00:14:27:07 - 00:14:36:16

Andy Farmer

With my personality type ISFJ also known as the defender sector. I think that's.

Andrew Komarow

The and the rarest of all the types I know because my wife is ISFJ

Oh, sorry. My bad. You're not. You're not cool. You're not the rarest. So my, my apologies.

00:14:55:22 - 00:14:58:12

Andy Farmer

Well, I'm the second of where I'm second to rarest.

00:14:58:19 - 00:15:03:13

Andrew Komarow

Is it? I thought I A.J. was. Yeah. Oh, well, anyway, I continue.

00:15:04:22 - 00:15:39:05

For me, it's definitely spot on. Cause, like, that is my dream career. Endeavor is a position where I could even behind the scenes were I care about the team, where I could even, like, I could still be a representative, but more of a liaison behind the scenes. But like Andrew, like you. When I'm talking about something I'm passionate about it, it tends to, you know, it tends to feel like some people won't necessarily think I'm an introvert.

I'm kind of more of an extrovert. Like, want to talk about historical figures from past and present or great leaders. I get really into it and I get really excited about it. Like, for example, Keanu Reeves. G What makes him a great leader is not his acting ability, but it's how he cares about people. I doesn't want to he doesn't want to bring it to his head.

00:16:06:15 - 00:16:14:18

Andrew Komarow

So a good motto to live by is What would Keanu Reeves do before you do something? Just think about that.

00:16:15:14 - 00:16:23:12

Andrew Komarow

Speaking of acting, you're into voice acting now. Can you tell us about that interest? Like, how did that happen?

00:16:23:18 - 00:16:34:19

Andy Farmer

If you guys want me to do a couple impersonations, I can. Yeah. Let me see your. I can do Bugs Bunny real quick. Hey, what's up? I mean, what's up and good.

00:16:36:11 - 00:16:44:09

Andrew Komarow

That's really good. I don't know why I'm surprised. I mean, but, like, you could do another.

00:16:44:09 - 00:16:49:22

Andy Farmer

Yeah. Eileen, are you familiar with the TV show Hogan's Heroes?

00:16:50:22 - 00:16:54:11

Eileen Lamb

Nope. Sorry.

00:16:54:11 - 00:16:57:04

Andy Farmer

What else? What other characters kind of do you.

00:16:57:04 - 00:17:00:09

Eileen Lamb

Can do it. I'm sure it's got some cool, even if I don't know it, you know?

00:17:00:19 - 00:17:21:15

Andy Farmer

Okay. Okay. Like one of my favorite characters from the show is Schultz. Sergeant Schultz. He's so. I see nothing. I hear nothing. I didn't even get up this morning.

00:17:22:16 - 00:17:24:19

Andrew Komarow

I don't know that one, but it seemed good.

00:17:25:04 - 00:17:27:18

Eileen Lamb

Sounds good. Like it?

00:17:27:18 - 00:17:33:12

Andy Farmer

Yeah. Yeah, I can also. Do you do. I do. Hold it. It's goofy and Mickey Mouse, so.

00:17:33:23 - 00:17:34:13

Eileen Lamb

I know that one.

00:17:35:10 - 00:17:41:18

Andy Farmer

Yep. I'm in.

00:17:41:18 - 00:17:42:19

Andrew Komarow

Wait, do you Mickey Mouse again?

00:17:44:04 - 00:17:45:08

Eileen Lamb

Nothing came out of your mouth.

00:17:45:08 - 00:17:47:01

Andrew Komarow

Yeah, nothing came out okay.

00:17:48:11 - 00:17:53:13

Andy Farmer

Oh, Eileen. Hello, Andrew.

00:17:53:13 - 00:17:54:09

Eileen Lamb

That's pretty good, huh?

00:17:54:13 - 00:17:55:22

Andrew Komarow

Yeah, that's pretty cool.

00:17:56:21 - 00:18:36:02

Andy Farmer

Yeah. For me, what really helped me get into it was like my days of Harvard University. I was also known as, you know, like, the genuinely good person who can do impersonations. So my sophomore year, a friend of mine convinced me to do an impersonation skit on stage. I did the audition. They thought it was hilarious. And then my friend, he managed to get his frat pledge class for that year to earn it, to be in the skit for me.

And then after the show, after that weekend, the whole entire campus was talking about it for years. In fact, even one of my classmates who I saw recently, after 13 years, they referred to me as Andy the legend and let's get me the school newspaper and also even the school yearbook that year. And then a couple of years later, I expanded my repertoire and did it on stage for a competition.

00:19:16:07 - 00:19:41:17

Andy Farmer

And public theater art majors were classmates. Mine who was performing in the show. They were like, Have you consider voice acting as a possible career? About a year ago, I had the courage to apply for voice acting lessons. I got accepted and my coach said, I have real talent and and I had to take a break a little bit.

00:19:42:02 - 00:19:51:05

Andy Farmer

But it's something I definitely want to pursue, especially in my retirement years.

00:19:51:05 - 00:19:51:18

Eileen Lamb

Are you ready?

00:19:52:11 - 00:19:53:00

Andy Farmer

Yes, ma'am.

00:19:54:02 - 00:19:56:21

Eileen Lamb

Favorite animal.

00:19:56:21 - 00:20:01:11

Andy Farmer

Every animal, I would say is an eagle.

00:20:02:08 - 00:20:07:13

Eileen Lamb

Love it. How about favorite food?

00:20:07:13 - 00:20:13:18

Andy Farmer

Favorite food. I got a question. Breakfast, lunch or dinner?

00:20:13:18 - 00:20:14:12

Andrew Komarow

Breakfast.

00:20:15:11 - 00:20:23:16

Andy Farmer

I would say a bacon egg cheese on croissant sandwich.

00:20:23:16 - 00:20:26:16

Eileen Lamb

Like it's Good answer. Favorite singer.

00:20:27:04 - 00:20:28:07

Andy Farmer

I got to go Bon Jovi.

00:20:29:16 - 00:20:32:21

Eileen Lamb

Favorite Robin Williams movie. I hope that specific enough.

00:20:34:20 - 00:20:42:15

Andy Farmer

Ever Robin Williams movie going to be too and I can give a little bit of an explanation so.

00:20:42:20 - 00:20:44:04

Andrew Komarow

That's why that.

00:20:46:01 - 00:21:15:21

Andy Farmer

The bicentennial man because it kind of reminds me of like what what it's like to be autistic, you know, like, you just, you know, like he wanted to be accepted as what he endeavored to be, which was he wanted to become more human. He want to be accepted for his efforts. And people with autism. That's what a lot of us want.

Like, you know, we just want to be accepted. We you know, we want to be accepted by society. We're you know, we should be seen that we can that we can contribute. It's either, you know, behind the scenes or out in public. And and, of course, comedy. I got to go with Mrs. Doubtfire.

00:21:40:09 - 00:21:42:00

Eileen Lamb

Yeah, I know that one. I love it.

00:21:42:16 - 00:21:50:23

Andy Farmer

It's a shame what happened. But he was just one of those genuinely caring guys, like he cared more about people than himself.

00:21:51:21 - 00:21:56:18

Andrew Komarow

And I loved what you said about the Bicentennial Man. I wasn't expecting that. So that was great. Thank you.

00:21:57:22 - 00:21:58:11

Andy Farmer

My pleasure.

00:21:59:03 - 00:22:08:12

Eileen Lamb

Thank you so much for joining us today. And before we go, do you want to share with people where they can find you on social media or anywhere?

00:22:08:15 - 00:22:43:03

Andy Farmer

You know, definitely so. On social media, on Facebook, I saw a group post called Driven by Faith. It's kind of more like motivational, you know, like, how can we say whenever you have a thought provoking question? And then also no limits with disabilities because like autism speaks, if like the the community, they need a voice and it can be vocally behind the scenes.

00:22:44:00 - 00:22:52:01

Eileen Lamb

But thank you so much for sharing and for joining us today. I mean, I know you were a little nervous, but you did amazing. And I think people are going to enjoy this episode. So thank you.

00:22:52:15 - 00:23:17:19

Andy Farmer

Thanks, Eileen. Big Eileen. Thank you, Andrew. It's been a pleasure. Definitely would definitely help. This video. This podcast helps people who are like us, you know, feel more comfortable about themselves and yeah, like not be afraid to be open to those who they trust the most.

00:23:18:18 - 00:23:24:05

Andrew Komarow

We appreciate you helping spread that message.