

00;00;00;03 - 00;00;43;27

Armani Williams

In the racing world, there's not a lot of African-American drivers, but there's not a whole lot of like drivers with disabilities either, particularly when it comes to autism. So like from there, you know, we had something to wear, you know, like we had something unique that we could grass on that could give us the motivation to, you know, never give up and just keep grinding, keep working, you know, because, like, someday it will be possible to.

00;00;47;21 - 00;01;09;09

Eileen Lamb

Welcome back 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 am Eileen Lamb, an autistic author and photographer, and I co-hosted this podcast with Andrew Komarow

00;01;09;19 - 00;01;46;09

Andrew Komarow

I'm Andrew Komarow , an autistic entrepreneur, co-host of this podcast and world renowned hurdle speed racer like the Ninja Turtles, but faster. Today, our guest is Armani. Williams. Armani is a professional stock car driver. He competes in NASCAR and was diagnosed with autism at age two as his career with NASCAR flourished. He wanted to raise awareness for autism and ensuring that other kids who maybe felt weird or out of place would know that they had a place in this world. So Armani, thank you for joining us.

00;01;50;25 - 00;01;53;03

Armani Williams

Yeah, I appreciate you all having me. Let's have some fun.

00;01;53;26 - 00;01;58;21

Andrew Komarow

Yeah, I'd like that. So have you listen to a podcast before?

00;01;59;27 - 00;02;21;27

Armani Williams

Uh, no. So, like, by the time I met Eileen just a few weeks ago, like, I heard about this podcast that you guys are doing. And when I got word that y'all wanted to find me on here, you know, like, I. I wanted to jump in an opportunity to get to talk with you all. So, you know, now that we're doing it tonight, I'm just so excited to be on.

00;02;22;03 - 00;02;37;06

Armani Williams

You know, it's just. Every day with autism, it's like I could just almost relate and just think back to, you know, how my life spirit, autism, you know, and just be able to have those conversations,

have those connections. You know, So it's always great.

00;02;37;07 - 00;02;59;12

Andrew Komarow

So awesome. Yeah. So we like to start off by asking each guest how they prefer to identify. So you mean autistic Asperger's on the spectrum? I don't care. And we like to just ask also because we have a tally going to see what's the most popular. So do you have a preference? And if so, what is it?

00;03;00;25 - 00;03;12;08

Armani Williams

Well, like I was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, but like I've kind of like the meaning of for autistic, you know, So I kind of like to go with this, so.

00;03;12;28 - 00;03;14;19

Andrew Komarow

Okay, cool. Thank you.

00;03;15;22 - 00;03;30;23

Eileen Lamb

And so speaking of autism, that's why we're here today. Can you tell us about your autism diagnosis journey when you were diagnosed, what you remember of that process, if anything?

00;03;31;20 - 00;04;08;24

Armani Williams

Well, I will say, like, you know, I was diagnosed with autism at two years old. So just even from the start, I'm not going to remember what I was doing in like two or three years. So like I'm 23 right now. But I will say, like, there was this experience I was going to especially to school, you know, like I was always like, you know, this kid that never really talk a lot was kind of like, you know, the shy guy, you know, around the building, you know, just trying to, like, understand my surroundings, what I was dealing with, things of that nature, how I was going to handle it, things of that nature.

00;04;09;14 - 00;04;32;28

Armani Williams

And I think like the most important thing I wanted to get out of it, like, especially going through my school years, was just being able to try and make as many friends as possible because like, you know, it was just it was hard to just live through life being, you know, lonely and all that. Like, you know, I'm I have a great family that's always been supportive and believe in me and whatever.

00;04;32;28 - 00;05;03;19

Speaker 1

I take my journey and but, you know, like, I never had, you know, siblings to start off with when I was growing up until I was like 12 or 13 years. So, you know, so it's just like I was always trying to, you know, make as many connections as possible. And so, like, you know, I started to get this feeling that like, you know, no matter how many kids my age I would talk to, I could just never, like, be able to socialize with them or communicate them in a way that I wanted to.

00;05;03;19 - 00;05;28;23

Armani Williams

And I always kind of figured, you know, why exactly is that? You know, is there something where me is there something that I'm not doing writers and all that and like, believe me, like I'm just a kid. So, like, I have absolutely no recollection that I have autism at this point. I'm thinking I'm just like, you know, this normal kid who's just different in the way, you know, like everybody else is, right.

00;05;28;23 - 00;05;51;01

Armani Williams

But, you know, and more and more, it just became a little bit more stressful for me, you know? And so, like, I needed to know why. And so by the time I got to about like my when I was starting in middle school, you know, that's when, you know, my parents decided that it was time to get up in front of me and, you know, tell me what exactly I'd been dealing with.

00;05;51;01 - 00;06;16;04

Armani Williams

And, you know, they told me that, hey, you know, you have autism and that, you know, you were diagnosed at a very early age when you were two years. So, you know, and so from that point, I sort of understood what I was dealing with. I understood that some of the experiences that I was going through, through school years and the challenges that I felt that I was dealing with, you know, I understood why now.

00;06;16;17 - 00;06;39;18

Armani Williams

And from that point, I wanted to, you know, research. I wanted to be able to do more research on autism as much as I possibly can to understand the challenges and to understand what kind of help can I get, you know, how can I overcome these obstacles? Um, but even living through autism, you know, like life always goes on.

00;06;39;18 - 00;07;04;20

Armani Williams

And at some point I needed to make something out of myself, you know? And, you know, one way that helped me with that was is that I loved cops. And I always would get like a bunch of these Hot Wheels and matchbox cars and just, you know, play with them at my parents house or my grandparents house. And, you know, that was just a way in which it kept me interested.

00;07;04;20 - 00;07;25;02

Armani Williams

It kept me happy because it's something that I enjoyed. And then I heard about, you know, something called NASCAR. And I felt, you know what? This is even cool. I got to check this out. And so, you know, after watching my first NASCAR race on TV, I was stuck. And from there on, I wanted to watch NASCAR every single week.

00;07;25;21 - 00;07;45;13

Armani Williams

And I love became a passion. It was a way for me to not even think about autism that much and my limitations and understand that like, hey, you know, this racing stuff is not only that, but I'm passionate about like, this is something that I need to solve and this is something that, you know, I want to grow up doing.

00;07;45;27 - 00;07;48;26

Armani Williams

You know? And I think that my dad really like.

00;07;49;23 - 00;08;14;13

Andrew Komarow

No, I mean, that's really awesome. That's a good example of like one of the strengths of autism, right? Is having a special interest, having something you love to do, right. You know, sometimes that's seen as, you know, a negative, sometimes maybe it can be, but for the most part, you know, should be, you know, encouraged. I do have a question that you were mentioning earlier, and that was so when your parents told you about autism.

00;08;14;19 - 00;08;39;16

Andrew Komarow

Right. And that you are autistic, I think that's something. Can you share how they did it? Anything you liked or appreciated or in anything maybe that wish had been done differently? I was diagnosed as an adult. Leeann was diagnosed as adult. We didn't have our parents tell us that we were. But I think that's something where, you know, it's a it's a hard subject.

00;08;39;23 - 00;08;48;10

SAndrew Komarow

I I mean, to bring up or to mention. So do you have any tips for, you know, maybe a parent wanting to tell their kid that they're a little bit different?

00;08;50;04 - 00;09;23;29

Armani Williams

Yeah. I mean, I think the way it was handled for me is that I think my parents, given that I was a kid, wanted to make sure that I was trying to enjoy life as much as possible, and that I think to them, they felt like if they told it to me, like as early as they did to me, you know, that, you know,

I would feel like almost down on myself and like not knowing what to do and all that I think like as I grew up and I became a little bit more mature and I could understand a little bit of things, you know, that's when like my parents felt like it was

00;09;23;29 - 00;09;46;08

Armani Williams

the right time to tell me. And I really appreciated their honesty and transparency with me, you know, that they were watching from afar of like the things I was doing that to me, I didn't realize what I was doing, you know, And that from them telling me from what they saw far, it helped me to kind of understand what exactly I'd been dealing with.

00;09;46;19 - 00;10;27;27

Armani Williams

You know, what what were these challenges that I was going through? And like, you know, it's not something that I got to, you know, let it get in my head and, you know, keep going. I got to find a way to overcome that adversity. Right? So I think with all that I think, like, if I had any advice for any parents, it's just really to me, it's just, you know, whenever that a right time and that right moment comes, you know, whenever you feel like, you know, your child's ready to know exactly what he's been dealing with, you know, just be as honest and transparent to them as possible, you know, and be able to

00;10;27;27 - 00;10;59;16

Armani Williams

explain what exactly they've seen from afar of like the things you're doing so that it you can be able to get help sooner. You can be able to get help like as soon as possible. So that way you don't have to keep doing this, dealing with this the rest of your life. And so like that would be one advice I would give to parents is just, you know, wait for the right time, the right moment to where, you know, they can be able to they can be able to, you know, understand a lot better.

00;10;59;16 - 00;11;02;17

Speaker 1

And that way, you know, they know what kind of help they need.

00;11;03;22 - 00;11;38;11

Eileen Lamb

That's good advice. You know, I have two kids on the spectrum. One of them is nonverbal, like very severe behaviors. But the other one is, say, like us, he's, you know, level one, he has less challenges and, you know, totally able to have conversations. Very, very able to have conversations. And we were wondering, was his dad like, when is the best time to tell him, you know, and we got advice from a psychologist and what she said was like, just tell him, you know, very simply, you know, your brain works a little bit differently and this is why you're good at this.

00;11;38;11 - 00;11;56;07

Eileen Lamb

This is why you struggle with that. And, you know, we don't make a big deal out of it, right? It's not anything like the more you make a big deal out of it, the more it's going to make your child feel like, you know, oh, like I'm different and maybe like they're going to start, like, second guessing it.

But really, it's it's simple. So I love the way you you explained that onto our next question for me. So as you know by now, because we've we've met a couple times before, I'm a big F1 fan and I don't know much about NASCAR, I admit, but I'm wondering like how you got into into racing like professionally because, you know, it's a lot of kids dreams like you talked about, but like, how did you make it?

00;12;31;00 - 00;12;39;19

Eileen Lamv

Like, what was the first time like you got in a car and you were like, I want to do this, you know, for a living? And how did you make it?

00;12;41;02 - 00;13;09;15

Armani Williams

Yeah, I mean, like, kind of like what I explained before, but I'll go even further. There were times where, you know, my mom and her dad, we would go to, you know, some amusement park somewhere, you know, just to have some fun and all that. And to me, if I ever saw a go karting attraction that they had over there, that would be the first day I would want to go to, you know, even if I wasn't tall enough to be able to drive it myself.

I just wanted to get that feeling of just being in a car and just like, act like I'm going racing, you know? So, like, it just it was just one of the key things to where, you know, I start to grasp that love and passion for racing and that I wanted to be able to do it someday. And so, like I tell my dad that, like a year.

00;13;31;14 - 00;13;53;25

Armani Williams

So, you know, while we're watching a race that, you know, I wanted to be a professional racecar driver and, you know, we didn't we didn't know exactly how this racing stuff went. I mean, you know, my family never grew up racing anything. I will say, like my great grandfather, he owned an auto body shop in Detroit, you know, and with cars comes mechanics.

00;13;53;25 - 00;14;28;27

Armani Williams

So, like, they knew that kind of part of it, but not actually racing. So it's just like, you know, I think over time, you know, what we had to learn along the way about the racing world and like, you know, how to keep climbing that ladder to get to where we want to be, always try to talk to like a lot of people we can talk to, you know, and just tell them about my story and like what goals I'm

trying to accomplish, you know, and I think being in a unique position that like in the racing world, there's not a lot of African-American drivers, but there's not a whole lot of like drivers with

00;14;28;27 - 00;15;05;25

Armani Williams

disability starter, particularly when it comes to autism. So like from there, you know, we had something to wear, you know, like we had something unique that we could grass on that could give us the motivation to, you know, never give up and just keep grinding and keep working, you know, because like, someday it will be possible, you know, and the fact that, you know, after like, you know, racing for 15, 60 years, you know, I can say that I'm driving in NASCAR and all that everything that I would dream up as a kid, you know, it's just it's just been a dream come true.

00;15;05;25 - 00;15;30;18

Armani Williams

And, you know, it's just, you know, I never would have thought it'd be possible without, like, you know, the support of my parents and, you know, the people that always believed in me, you know, always stuff, thought that I could be successful, you know, And now I'm here. And, you know, right now I'm trying to take every advantage of it whatsoever, you know, because there's a stop that's like, you know, where in racing, you know.

00;15;30;18 - 00;15;35;01

Armani Williams

And so, you know, I want to be able to be as successful at it as possible.

00;15;35;29 - 00;15;58;11

Andrew Komarow

Now, that that was awesome. So I have gone back to NASCAR. So here's what I know. I lean likes F1 and in NASCAR you make left turns. Okay, I got that down. For those who don't know for like me. Can you tell us a little I, I seriously know nothing else other than that. Can you tell us about that?

00;15;58;11 - 00;16;03;12

Andrew Komarow

Like, what's your approach to an F1 NASCAR? I know that might sound like a really dumb question.

00;16;04;25 - 00;16;24;14

Armani Williams

Well, no, no, not really. I mean, I've watched a little bit of F1, you know, like my my one of my favorite drivers from F1 is Lewis Hamilton. You know, my dad always joked that, like, you know, me and Lewis Hamilton almost look alike first. Hey, you know, so, like, ever since that day, I always sat for Lewis Hamilton.

00;16;24;14 - 00;16;45;07

Armani Williams

Every time I watch the F1 race. But I will say the difference between, say, NASCAR and F1 is, you know, like you mentioned, like the tracks that we race on, like in NASCAR, you know, we race on a lot of ovals where you're just making left turn slop after lapped up your lap, you know, and we'll run some road courses that turn left and right.

00;16;45;07 - 00;17;10;18

Armani Williams

But not a ton. Whereas with like F1, you know, there's road courses from all over the world that they raise some, you know, no ovals whatsoever. You know, I will say, you know, like the vehicles that, you know, we as drivers in NASCAR to drive versus like what it is in F1, it's totally different. You know, like with F1, it's the open wheels, you know, and the cars are not necessarily heavy.

00;17;10;18 - 00;17;31;00

Armani Williams

They're pretty light. So you can pretty much maneuver around, especially with how fast those cars are going. You know, like they got, you know, 700 or 800 horsepower. But they need to happen, maneuverability to turn left and right, you know, So with a lighter car could do that. Whereas in NASCAR, you know, our cars weigh like 30 £400.

00;17;31;00 - 00;17;54;23

Armani Williams

We can maneuver as easy as a F1 car, you know, So like us drivers, we're always inside a cockpit, even on like a hot day racing out. They're just, you know, muscle in the car as much as we can, you know, because it just the car doesn't maneuver us, you know. So whenever you commit to a line, whenever you commit to the brake in a gas, you know, that's just your one move and that's it.

00;17;55;03 - 00;18;06;19

Armani Williams

And you got to try and figure out how to make it work, you know? So like just as far as like vehicles and the style of racing, you know, it's definitely a a180 difference between the two.

00;18;07;22 - 00;18;26;21

Eileen Lamb

It's making me want to check out NASCAR. I probably shouldn't should now that I live in America like that's you know I feel like NASCAR is like the American thing and like F1. I mean, you know, I grew up in France, in Europe, and like, F1 was so big there and it's only making its way to the US.

I feel like since the Netflix show Drive to Survive. But yeah, I definitely will check out NASCAR. I'm kind of excited now.

00;18;35;06 - 00;18;58;19

Armani Williams

Yeah, definitely. Yeah. You know, and part of what made me want to I should have added is as well like part of me that wanted to watch the F1 a little bit more was my dad told me about this other documentary with Ayrton Senna called A Senna. And you know, it's a credible documentary of like a probably one of the greatest F1 drivers, you know, to ever race a car.

00;18;58;22 - 00;19;15;07

Armani Williams

And, you know, it's just hearing about a story and what F1 was really like at the time. It's just it made me want to watch it a little bit more, you know? So that's kind of how I wanted to see F1 races more, more, more after watching stuff like that.

00;19;16;08 - 00;19;43;20

Eileen Lamb

Yeah, it's a great documentary and I mean, yeah, Senna, I was, I was very young when you passed away, but still, like, I remember. That's a very sad destiny he had and you know, and this like watching those races from like back in the this wasn't even that long ago, all things considered. But the cars are so different now from then, You know, I mean, it's just like even like six, seven years ago, like now, you know, we have the halo for protection. I mean, when I say we, I mean F1 drivers.

00;19;45;22 - 00;19;46;04

Armani Williams

Yeah.

00;19;46;14 - 00;20;07;12

Eileen Lamb

Things like that. You know, things are changing so fast in this sports and it's Yeah, really cool. I was wondering and that's an a question I even I had planned for you. But like, you know when you get into you like, you know, let's say NASCAR because that's what you're in, do you have to learn about like mechanics, like how the car works? Like, do you understand like how the car works from the inside? Like you done makes sense that you have to learn all about the car itself.

00;20;17;00 - 00;20;35;28

Armani Williams

Well, you know, as a racecar driver, you want to learn a little bit about the mechanics. I think you want to learn more about the behavior of the car. You know, it's just how exactly this car goes,

you know, like how does it move things that nature, you know, because every race car is going to be different, you know, no matter what.

00;20;35;28 - 00;20;58;22

Armani Williams

You go in, you know, you get to, you know, lighter, faster cars and then you get to, you know, heavy cars to even faster cars. So they're going to behave like a certain way, I will say, as far as like, you know, learning how to work at STEM well, gas pedal and brakes, like, I kind of already knew that from like my times of going to the go kart or fashion.

00;20;58;22 - 00;21;26;29

Armani Williams

So, like, I kind of knew that part spot on. So like, you know, having to do that in competition wasn't really like a big hurdle for me. Like, I think once I got into, you know, bigger cars to where, you know, I had to shift, you know, basically go through the gears, you know, that that was a interesting learning process that I had to go through because beforehand, you know, like I race go karts and, you know, of science type cars and we never had to shift whatsoever.

00;21;26;29 - 00;21;43;22

Armani Williams

You know, you just press on the gas and go. Whereas, you know, in the real time, you know, like there's a lot of work you have to do in the car, you got to clutch, you know, you got gears and, you know, when you reach a certain RPM, you got to know like when exactly to, you know, get up, get up a gear or get down a gear, you know.

00;21;43;22 - 00;22;12;07

Armani Williams

So it's just those are those are stuff that like I had to try and learn, especially because like before I had to go to dad, you know, my dad decided that I should go to, you know, a, you know, driving school to where they teach to other shift. And so that's kind of how I first started learning how to do it and then to try to apply it to racing, you know, eventually I started figuring out the shifts and like the steps on what to do, you know.

00;22;12;07 - 00;22;33;05

Armani Williams

And from there it just became a lot easier, you know? So like as a race car driver, like it's more about learning that behavior in a car, you know, what exactly do you do inside the cockpit then? More so, learning the entire mechanics of the car, You know, that's why you got that. That's why you got teams of engineers that can understand all that stuff.

00;22;33;15 - 00;22;39;07

Armani Williams

But, you know, as a race car driver, you want to learn a little bit more about it. So at least you

know what you're feeling inside the car.

00;22;39;07 - 00;23;01;06

Eileen Lamb

So that makes sense. Yeah. And did you have to overcome, like any stereotype grips with driving anything related to your autism or not? Like, do you have any funny stories or a situation where, like, things didn't go as planned and like how you handle it?

00;23;01;06 - 00;23;27;12

Armani Williams

Well, that's a good question. But I will say with like, you know, autism, because we have this special ability to be laser like focus on things that interest us. I don't think it wasn't really much of a stereotype or much of a challenge because, you know, everything in racing happens so fast. I mean, we're going 180, 190 miles per hour, you know, So like every every day it's moving like, so fast, you know, that you've got to have a high level of concentration.

00;23;27;12 - 00;23;52;09

Armani Williams

So with me having up to something, you know, I had a tremendous advantage there. I will say, I think like at least the challenges, I think if anything, it was just so small. Like, I think it's just had one time where, you know, I made my first stop for NASCAR Craftsman Truck set to start at a track in Saint Louis, Missouri, called Gateway.

00;23;52;09 - 00;24;09;05

Armani Williams

You know, and we were making a pit stop during the race, you know, and it's my very first race. So at the end of the day, like, I had to just make sure, like I was there at the finish, you know, not tear the truck up or anything. So we make a pit stop, you know, And, you know, I got the truck ready to go.

00;24;09;20 - 00;24;26;16

Armani Williams

And then next thing you know, like, you know, I try to take off and I think I'm all good. And then I just I start it, you know, and just like in my own mind, like, I wanted to be so upset with myself because it's like it's such a simple thing. And like, I'm a pro, it's something I should not to things of that nature, you know?

00;24;26;24 - 00;24;58;26

Armani Williams

I'm just glad nobody caught that on TV, though. That would have been even more embarrassing, you know? But I think like in moments like that, I mean, because, like, you have unrealistic expectations in terms of like how you're going to go in the races because like in this in this case, the fact that the whole goal was just to try and finish the race, you know, like I had to just make

sure I stay incredibly calm knowing that, like, I have a team behind me that's going to do whatever they can to help get me out there, you know?

00;24;58;26 - 00;25;16;12

Armani Williams

And eventually we were able to get the truck back out there. And, you know, I finished 21st at night, so I could have gotten the top 20. But, you know, it's just I always think, like, man, if I could have just not stalled a truck, like, we would have definitely been top 20 for sure, especially with how the end of that race goes.

00;25;16;12 - 00;25;33;27

Armani Williams

I mean, there was, you know, drivers getting into one another. They not going because it's like it's go time. They're trying to go for the win. Right. You know, and we have to avoid all that, you know, And we just came one spot short of just my first ever top 20 finish in a my first ever truck race, you know.

00;25;33;27 - 00;25;53;18

Armani Williams

So it was just one of those moments where it's just like, you know. Yeah. I mean, you take what you can in terms of things you did well and things that you didn't do well, you know, and that and think of like, what things can I do to improve that, you know. So those are one of those moments.

00;25;53;18 - 00;26;02;20

Andrew Komarow

He's not our first NASCAR driver. Right. Or we've had at least one or two other professional drivers, right?

00;26;03;08 - 00;26;17;09

Eileen Lamb

Yeah. The other driver who's also on the spectrum like because everyone on our podcast, he's on the spectrum, but he's not he wasn't in NASCAR, it was in the Mazda series. Yeah. Austin Verco is his name. Yeah.

00;26;17;12 - 00;26;18;11

Armani Williams

Yeah, I remember,

00;26;18;12 - 00;26;18;24

Eileen Lamb

You know. Austin.

00;26;19;03 - 00;26;53;18

Armani Williams

Yeah. Meet him. And then there was another one in there as well with Bobby Trunk. He does like the sports cart things in Europe as well. In a UK supposedly. I remember I met him when we were living in the COVID world, you know, over a year 2020 and you know, they invited me to this team that that was a sports car team that where it was full of like, you know, disability, passionate, you know, engineers and drivers.

00;26;53;18 - 00;27;11;14

Armani Williams

They invited me to be part of this virtual 24 hour supplement that we were going to participate in. And, you know, and that's when I met Austin and the rest of the folks. And, you know, just I was glad to know that, like, you know, I'm not the only one in the racing world. We're autism that's going out there to make a difference.

00;27;11;14 - 00;27;19;13

Armani Williams

You know, there's guys like Austin out there, you know, who said, you know, get in a dance track, you know? So it was great to be involved with those guys.

00;27;19;28 - 00;27;43;18

Andrew Komarow

Yeah, that's awesome. Yeah. No, I was just thinking, like, do you think that there's, you know, any correlation or just that there's, you know, hey, if 2% of the world has autism that, you know, hey, it's bad and that, you know, there's probably some NASCAR drivers who do right? So or some drivers right. So probably everywhere we look just some are more public facing that others right.

00;27;45;01 - 00;28;05;12

Armani Williams

Yeah, absolutely. You know and it's great That's great to see when there's other people relate to you that's going out there and trying to be able to accomplish something, be successful as something as you are, you know, even if it's in like a different form of racing yet, you know, like they're you know, they're living their dreams and, you know, having fun doing it.

00;28;05;12 - 00;28;18;14

Armani Williams

And that's what it's all about. You know, it's just find something that you're passionate about and have fun doing it, you know, because if not like, you know, why do in the first place. So it's nice to see guys like Austin, you know, out there hitting on the track.

00;28;20;06 - 00;28;42;26

Eileen Lamb

Awesome. Yeah. No, I'm glad to see you guys. As someone who loves racing, it's it's good to see the next generation being so passionate about advocacy. Speaking of, I know you were very passionate about being an autism advocate and helping other kids. And, you know, honestly, maybe adults who want to, like, fulfill their dream. And I love that.

00;28;43;15 - 00;28;58;29

Eileen Lamb

And I'm wondering if you've had any experience with divided the autism community can be online. Did you face any criticism? Have you seen any of the like, controversies? And if so, how do you feel about it?

00;29;00;24 - 00;29;44;01

Armani Williams

I don't think there was much criticism or much division in terms of like, you know, what what people would say about me. Like, I think it was more heart warming. People found it like inspiring and something unique, intriguing, you know. And, you know, I get a lot of fans that were supportive of that, you know, like particularly to social media, you know, like I got many followers who, you know, really every parent that follows me that have some connection with autism, like, you know, their son or daughter, you know, has autism or like they know a friend or, you know, like another family member of theirs that has autism, you know, and be able to

00;29;44;01 - 00;30;18;09

Armani Williams

tell me all these stories and things that they're going through. Yeah. I think in in this one particular case, you know, there was this parent that reached out to me, you know, that was telling me about, you know, her kid per se, and like how, you know, every year they try to throw a birthday party for him. And yet the problem was that nobody would show up to his birthday, you know, And so, like, it made me feel bad for the kid, you know, because you want to have people out there that, you know, support you in big moments like this, especially a birthday.

00;30;18;09 - 00;30;40;09

Armani Williams

Right. And, you know, she had asked me to possibly write a letter to, you know, her son to give them some encouragement. But then, like, you know, she also followed up with, you know, asking me if I wanted to be able to call called a kid like face time. I'm just so like, you know, I can chat with him, you know, and just have some fun with him, you know?

00;30;40;09 - 00;31;08;25

Armani Williams

And so I took it upon myself to make sure that I made her son's state, especially on her birthday, you know? And I did. And I mean, you know, it's just he was probably eight or nine year old at a time and just hearing what he had to go to. And it's just like I just wanted to make that kid happy, You know, someone who's related with Reddit related to me with autism, You know, it was

important that, like, you know, I gave that kid hope.

00;31;08;27 - 00;31;40;27

Armani Williams

You know, I gave them some positive encouragement, you know, to continue moving forward, you know, and let them and remind him that, like, these moments are moments that you should enjoy, you know, that you should remember for a long time, you know, And so like I always try to, you know, be able to connect with those folks and just to help them understand that there's always a DNA tunnel, you know, and that we can all share this world just like everybody else and be able to make a positive impact on society.

00;31;40;27 - 00;32;13;24

Armani Williams

You know, it doesn't matter, you know, if we have autism and no matter how different we are, you know, that we can be successful at anything that we try to set our mind to. You know, And it's just a matter of like finding what exactly that is and just, you know, push to achieve your trick. So, you know, it's just it's just something that like, you know, I feel like it's my responsibility to remind people that all the time to just never give up and just, you know, live our lives life to the fullest.

00;32;13;24 - 00;32;17;05

Armani Williams

But autism, you know, understand that it's a strength, not a weakness.

Eileen Lamb

That's so kind of you. I love that you did that for that kid. I'm sure it meant the world to him. So. And that's really good. You said that autism is a strength for use. What's your favorite part of the of being a NASCAR driver? Do you think your autism is helping you in any way?

00;32;42;16 - 00;33;08;14

Armani Williams

Yeah, I believe so. I think the one day I wrote about racing is that I get to go fast. You know, like I always felt like as a kid, I wanted to be good and fast at something. And, you know, racing was just one way of like, helping me achieve that. I mean, again, it's just like, you know, while while normal people can be interested in so many things with autism, it's just different.

00;33;08;14 - 00;33;31;18

Armani Williams

It's like whatever catches our eye, you know, it stays there. We stay locked in whatever interest it, whatever that we get interested in, and that we want to learn more about it, you know, and to be a part of it, right? You know. And so with me, with with me having autism, you know, I just found racing is something that could just keep my interest up.

00;33;32;06 - 00;33;53;00

Armani Williams

And then especially when I'm in the race car, you know, I just I never think of anything else. I'm just laser focused on, you know, making sure I go out there and get the job done, understand what exactly I need to do, you know, understand what I'm going to make out during races from start to finish, you know, So it's just having that kind of ability that, you know, autism pass.

00;33;53;00 - 00;33;59;15

Armani Williams

So it really does help me with racing.

00;33;59;15 - 00;34;23;18

Andrew Komarow

So one of the things that I'm familiar with, too, is that there are lots of people with autism who don't drive, who maybe it's harder to drive for you. It's you know, what you're good at, what you excel at. So do you have any thoughts on maybe why, you know, so many individuals? Autism either don't drive, it's harder to drive.

00;34;23;18 - 00;34;27;20

Speaker 3Andrew Komarow

They drive later and maybe there are some things they can do to help overcome that.

00;34;29;19 - 00;34;58;23

Armani Williams

Yeah, that's an interesting question. I mean, to me because like, I started driving at a young age, you know, it was just a smooth, easy transition for me, you know? So I kind of knew, you know, how exactly to drive. It was just a matter of just like staying in control. And I think with like when it comes to driving cars, you know, it's just one of those things that, yeah, you know, it's something you see in everyday life, but, you know, it's just it's one that, you know, really you can't mess around.

00;34;58;23 - 00;35;26;04

Armani Williams

You know, it's like there's a risk for, you know, things to happen, like somebody could get hurt in a crash. You know, some things could happen to car things that nature, you know, I, I think like for people with autism, I think it's just I think mainly what they need to just learn about driving. It's just been being able to try to stay sane within your control and just to relax for a little bit.

00;35;26;15 - 00;35;48;18

Armani Williams

You know, like I think with with driving, it can be something that like it may scare some people or make things stressful because it's like, you know, you want to make sure you're doing everything right. You know, you want to make sure you're protecting yourself and others, you

know. So I would say the main thing is just to make sure you stay in control and just relax.

00;35;49;00 - 00;36;19;16

Armani Williams

You know, like go to the driving school and just make sure you, you know, listen to every word the instructor tells you to do, you know, and just like, practice it, like, all the time, every day, you know, as many hours as possible so that eventually that whatever is uncomfortable to you about driving becomes comfortable, you know, and then you can be able to relax and, you know, be able to go where you want to go without having that level of stress or scared that something might happen.

00;36;19;20 - 00;36;40;29

Armani Williams

You know, that you believe that, you know, hey, I can drive. I can drive a car. You know, I can believe I can, you know, try this car, you know, at a level in which everybody else does on the road, you know. So it's just it's just that repetition, that practice and just making sure you stay controlling yourself and just relax.

00;36;40;29 - 00;36;52;19

Armani Williams

And, you know, from there it should be able to help. You know, most people with autism that, you know, struggle with trying to learn how to drive is the advice I would give you.

00;36;52;24 - 00;37;14;29

Eileen Lamb

It's so hard to relax. I mean, I remember when I was younger and I was trying to get my license in France, Everyone had their license. And there's something I struggle with so much. In France, we have a lot of Germans. Oh, you say like those birds. And I would stop the car to let them cross the street because I was so scared I was going to run over them.

00;37;14;29 - 00;37;33;13

Eileen Lamb

Right. And the driving instructor, like sitting next to me would always like go crazy was like, they're going to fly away. You can just stop the car because that's so dangerous with the people like behind you, you know, And I not like even here in the US, it's not so much birds, but like cross, they're like everywhere around.

00;37;33;13 - 00;37;36;00

Armani Williams

Oh yeah. We get a lot of squirrels around.

00;37;36;00 - 00;37;36;12

Eileen Lamb

All.

00;37;36;23 - 00;37;37;18

Armani Williams

The time. Yeah.

00;37;38;05 - 00;37;55;29

Eileen Lamb

It's so hard to like, just, like, slam on the brakes. But I know it's dangerous. But to me, like, that was one of the hardest thing. Like to just learn, like, it's okay. The birds are going to fly away. Just like, relax. It's going to happen. Don't like, break unexpectedly. You know, I don't do that anymore. But it's it's hard.

00;37;57;04 - 00;38;04;15

Eileen Lamb

So. Yeah, don't worry, people. If you're listening, the birds will fly away, hopefully. And the squirrels, too. Well, then I got a flight.

00;38;04;19 - 00;38;13;21

Armani Williams

But although I've heard squirrels fly before, and yet I still don't believe that theory because I haven't seen it yet.

00;38;14;02 - 00;38;41;16

Eileen Lamb

So I never like wings. I like birds. Yeah, I've heard of those. I'm going to ask you some quickfire questions. Now. You guys can just tell me the first answer that comes to your mind. But, Fred, before I want you to tell people where they can find you on social media and if there's anything you want to promote or like it's too early for self-promotion right now.

00;38;42;26 - 00;39;22;15

Armani Williams

Yeah. So for people who want to follow me, you can follow me on all social media platforms. You know, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Skoda, or Monte Williams or Team Amani Racing there. Or if you want to know a little more about me, about my racing and what I do for autism, go to WW W dot team or money racing dot com and you'll find more bio about me as well as like you know the things we do to help give back to the autism community with like my foundation with race for autism you know and just things that we do in a community to, you know, help create awareness, inclusion, you know, and hope for autism,

00;39;22;15 - 00;39;28;20

Armani Williams

you know, So be able please be able to check out all those things out super.

00;39;28;20 - 00;39;38;29

Eileen Lamb

Well, thank you for sharing. I'm sure you'll get some some followers from this. Okay. Before we go, I want to ask you this quickfire questions. Is the first answer that comes to your mind.

00;39;39;19 - 00;39;40;00

Armani Williams

Okay.

00;39;40;12 - 00;39;40;27

Eileen Lamb

They ready?

00;39;41;11 - 00;39;41;21

Armani Williams

Yes.

00;39;41;24 - 00;39;52;17

Eileen Lamb

Would you drive a French car? Is your life depended on it?

00;39;52;17 - 00;40;05;01

Armani Williams

I mean, hey, if I. If I. If I was trying to get out of somewhere and I was looking for a car. But it has to be a French car, I'll take it. Even if I'm not familiar with it. I'll be able to figure out how to make it work.

00;40;05;01 - 00;40;11;25

Andrew Komarow

So I may add some of these questions before I leave and has a chance to look at them.

00;40;12;01 - 00;40;18;21

Armani Williams

Yeah, like I've seen like the Alpha Romeos. Ferrari.

00;40;18;23 - 00;40;22;23

Andrew Komarow

Hey, that's an Italian car. Don't you know, do not mix those two.

00;40;23;09 - 00;40;24;17

Eileen Lamb

You know, and know.

00;40;24;17 - 00;40;27;15

Andrew Komarow

That I'm an alpha male fan. You can't do that to them.

00;40;27;15 - 00;40;28;18

Armani Williams

I might. That might.

00;40;29;08 - 00;40;29;23

Andrew Komarow

Take care.

00;40;36;23 - 00;40;41;24

Eileen Lab

Solid dancer spirit music to punctuate before race.

00;40;43;03 - 00;40;45;26

Armani Williams

Rock music.

00;40;45;26 - 00;40;47;14

Eileen Lamb

Favorite band or singer.

00;40;48;19 - 00;41;14;18

Armani Williams

Oh boy. I've listened to a lot. I will say the one band that will pop me up the most is a band called Breaking Benjamin. Yeah, I mean, they had some good songs from back in the day when I was a child, you know, And I always loved listening to them, like, because they would always create a lot of great songs back then.

00;41;15;07 - 00;41;22;19

Eileen Lamb

So I would listen to those that band sometimes just to get me fired up in some way.

00;41;22;19 - 00;41;27;16

Speaker 2

And your favorite Fast and Furious movie, if you've seen them?

00;41;29;04 - 00;41;55;28

Armani Williams

Oh yeah, I've seen a ton. Um, I can't remember which fast inferior it was, but it's there's this

scene that happens in the end where it's like, you know, Vin Diesel is going to go out for a drive. And I think, you know, a car pulls up next to him and it's rowdy. I know his name, but I can't figure out Chris something.

00;41;55;28 - 00;42;15;02

Armani Williams

Right. And I because I think like a year before he passed away due to a car accident, you know, and they show that scene with him, with him driving his car next to him. You know, I think it was like Fast and Furious seven or a, you know, light. So that right somewhere around there, that's my favorite Fast Furious movie.

00;42;15;26 - 00;42;18;12

Armani Williams

I love that movie.

00;42;18;12 - 00;42;22;29

Eileen Lamb

Well, already. Thank you so much for joining us today. It was so great speaking with you.

00;42;24;06 - 00;42;28;08

Armani Williams

Yeah, for sure. You know, I appreciate you having me on. This was fun. I enjoyed it.