

# BEN AOTS

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

autism, ben, people, eileen, autistic, day, autism awareness, called, mom, eagles, book, ellen, awareness, find, kid, tapes, assessment, speaking, ideas, puzzle piece

## SPEAKERS

Eileen Lamb, Ben Hartranft, Sandy Hartranft, Andrew M. Komarow

### **Eileen Lamb** 18:40:18

Welcome to "Adulthood 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-host this podcast with Andrew Komarow. Hi Andrew!

### **Andrew M. Komarow** 18:40:42

Hey Eileen! Today, our guest is Ben. Oh, Hart, how do you say that Ben?

### **Ben Hartranft** 18:40:52

It's Hartranft, it's okay.

### **Andrew M. Komarow** 18:40:54

Hartranft. I have a name that nobody else can pronounce too, Eileen does not know what that's like. And that, so Ben was diagnosed with autism at age two, he only knew 20 words then he has gone beyond all expectations. His journey began when he started raising money for The Eagles Autism Challenge. After a few years of fundraising, he was invited to be a guest on The Ellen Show to promote autism awareness and raise funds for research. From that moment on, he knew the dream was to advocate for autism awareness. He's now living that dream, speaking at schools, businesses and organizations, Hi, Ben.

### **Ben Hartranft** 18:41:35

Hello, how are you?

### **Andrew M. Komarow** 18:41:37

Doing all right. So we, we, we like to ask people how they prefer to be identified. And we don't mean pronouns. Although you can do that too. We mean, autism, person with autism, you know, autistic? How do you prefer to be identified?

### **Ben Hartranft** 18:41:57

I like to say I like to be autistic. I have autism.

**Eileen Lamb** 18:42:02

So when we know that you were diagnosed at two, and Sandy, Sandy is your mom. Hi, Sandy, by the way.

**Sandy Hartranft** 18:42:10

Hi

**Eileen Lamb** 18:42:11

You might be able to answer that question better. But we wanted to know about Ben's diagnosis. What was Ben like, as a child? Ben's you know, anything, you probably don't have much memories of your diagnosis since you were a child but what do you know about how you were as a child? And how was this as it changed?

**Sandy Hartranft** 18:42:30

And it's funny when I asked him that question, he's like, well, I don't really remember, much. I'm like, that's good. I can fill that one in. So we have three boys. Ben's the youngest of three. And when he was two years old, he was really late walking, but still within the parameters, and just really late talking. And when I compared what he was saying, to compare to like the baby book of my other children, I'm like, wow, that's just that just not right. And those 20 words that Ben had were all nouns, and they were all food. So you can see what was important to Ben, that's the only thing he ever said was food words. So took him to have his hearing tested. Because, you know, he wasn't listening to us thought maybe that was it. And they're like those hearings fine. But nobody ever said, Hey, you should probably check out like this. Like, they just kind of check the box. And that was the end of that. So finally, we met a speech therapist at work. And I said, "Do you do speech therapy here?" And when she asked why? She said, Oh, no, no, you have to talk to The Intermediate Unit. And I have never heard of that. So that opened a whole world of acronyms and places. So in Pennsylvania, the Intermediate Unit does the early intervention. And that was you know, if you don't need early intervention, why would you even know about that? And they came out and evaluated Ben. And it turns out, he was delayed in everything. So gross motor, fine motor speech, like everything was delayed, but I was so focused on his speech, that I really missed a lot of those other pieces.

**Andrew M. Komarow** 18:43:48

And Ben, how did that how did you overcome some of those challenges?

**Ben Hartranft** 18:43:53

You know, I, when I was a kid, I didn't understand what I was with autism. And, you know, I didn't know like, why I was put in special ed classes all the time, while I was riding a special ed bus. And one day I went up to my mom, I went up to her and I said, "Mom, what is autism?" And she goes, it's a special thing in your brain. I said, I just want to take it out and wash it away because I wanted to be like normal, you know, we went to a good church. I mean, we went to a church that really didn't have a special needs ministry and know growing up was really hard for me to make friends.

**Sandy Hartranft** 18:44:27

So he was also that kind of kid if you didn't know where he was at, that you better find out because there's just a whole lot of safety issues when he was little because he would get a thought in his head and just have to carry it out. So he would just leave the house you know, he was in the refrigerator. He was you know, plugging up sinks and playing in water. He was putting money in our A drive of our computer.

**Ben Hartranft** 18:44:46

Oh my gosh,

**Sandy Hartranft** 18:44:47

I had to find him and keep an eye on on because he just was so curious and so busy all the time.

**Andrew M. Komarow** 18:44:52

Eileen, I think I put playdough in the VCR when I was five too. (All laugh)

**Sandy Hartranft** 18:44:58

That slot is so inviting.

**Andrew M. Komarow** 18:45:01

I don't know if it was playdough. It was something it was something like playdough though. So

**Sandy Hartranft** 18:45:06

Yeah. So thankful for so many wonderful just skilled therapists because we had intensive speech therapy intensive occupational therapy, intensive physical therapy. Along with all the educational pieces that really helped draw out his speech, and finding the right therapist was also difficult along the way, but just grateful for all the people that have helped him.

**Ben Hartranft** 18:45:29

Yeah.

**Eileen Lamb** 18:45:30

That's great. Did you find any therapy was more useful then the other? Or was it all equal and helpful, you know in their own way?

**Sandy Hartranft** 18:45:45

You have any thoughts about your therapy?

**Ben Hartranft** 18:45:46

Yeah.

**Sandy Hartranft** 18:45:46

What do you remember?

**Ben Hartranft** 18:45:48

I remember speech therapy. I remember Miss Paula taught me how to talk. Shout out to Tara from Children's Hospital, Philadelphia. She's a great role model. And I tell people about her and I tell people about what she does, and people like, I want to meet her. But there's a long wait for speech therapists. And I talked to students too like when I talked to people at colleges, when they're going for speech, I'm like, Well, if you're going to do amazing, like, you're going to help those kids talk. And I say,

**Sandy Hartranft** 18:46:13

Speech therapy is a really interesting story, our primary insurance that we were paying dearly for through my husband's work denied developmental speech. So if he needed restorative speech had lost the ability to learn, they would have paid for speech therapy, but because it was developmental, that wasn't covered. And so thankfully, Pennsylvania has secondary insurance, and they pay for every hour of speech therapy, which changed his life. So speech therapy was really huge, because all the frustration that he was experiencing the tantrums all came from not being able to communicate wants and needs and once we were able to unlock that so much of the behavior, you know, diminished because we were able to communicate,

**Ben Hartranft** 18:46:52

Would you be willing if if, if the insurance dad was on, Pennsylvania did not cover it, would you fight with them?

**Sandy Hartranft** 18:46:59

Oh absolutely, we would have paid but we had to but it would have probably really put us into some huge debt. Because you know, it's a couple \$100 an hour for speech therapy. And you were going two or three times a week. So,

**Ben Hartranft** 18:47:09

And I was missing the morning of school

**Sandy Hartranft** 18:47:10

Sometimes. Yeah.

**Ben Hartranft** 18:47:13

Every Thursday, I remember every Thursday, every Thursday.

**Eileen Lamb** 18:47:17

You do have some memories of it? That's

**Ben Hartranft** 18:47:19

Because I remember we used to be twice a week and then we narrowed it down to one.

**Sandy Hartranft** 18:47:22

Yeah as you got older. Yep.

**Eileen Lamb** 18:47:26

So Ben, you're pretty active on on social media. I know you've been trying to get Mr. Beast attention to? Well, obviously, that's, that's behind us. But you do a lot of advocacy work I've seen on Instagram. What do you like about social media?

**Ben Hartranft** 18:47:46

I just like that I can put ideas out there. Can I tell a couple of my ideas? One of my ideas is to get, build more sensory rooms for people with special needs. There's not a lot of sensory rooms out there. I'm thankful for Kulture City because they put one in the bank. But they need one. They were putting one up in Camp Hill which is at our local camp. But my dream is to put one in Disney, because Disney said if you can believe it, if you can believe it

**Sandy Hartranft** 18:48:20

Dream it, you can achieve it.

**Ben Hartranft** 18:48:21

If you dream it, you can achieve it. If you dream it, if you dream it, you can believe it. So I'm still working on it. But one of the ideas is, I have so many great ideas to have. Because I really want to get that involved in that I love advocating for World Autism Day. And just telling people Hey, having autism is really not a bad thing. It doesn't characterize who we are. Everybody's unique and special, just like a rainbow.

**Andrew M. Komarow** 18:48:49

What was it like being on The, The Ellen Show? And how did that happen?

**Ben Hartranft** 18:48:55

So one day, I walked into my mom, I said I want to get on Ellen and she's like, I don't think it's gonna happen. One day they called and they said is this Ben is this The Ellen Show, and it was one of the producers. And it took three years for advocating for autism. I did a lot of hard work one day, and they we did a Skype interview. And then three weeks later, they six weeks later they called and they said we want to be out here next week. And they said, Well, you're not going to be on Ellen but you're gonna be on the EllenTube. And they totally surprised me.

**Sandy Hartranft** 18:49:25

So when he told me that he wanted to be on there, I was like, Well, why would that ever happen? It was just it's just seemed like such a far fetched idea. And he's like, I'm gonna make it happen. I'm gonna make it happen. And he just had so many people write in kind of just grassroots, got behind that idea. And then all the advocacy work that he does through our Philadelphia Eagles. They kind of pulled that together. And then they did tell me he wasn't really going to meet her but they would just do like a segment and he might be in the audience. And that's how they got that really classic reaction from him when they finally told her he was going out and seen that video but he screamed like a girl.

**Ben Hartranft** 18:49:58

I didn't know at the time, but I loved it.

**Sandy Hartranft** 18:50:02

Yeah, it was really quite exciting.

**Ben Hartranft** 18:50:04

And I'm good friends with the people who actually so the dad of Chelsea so Chelsea Darnell. Her dad used to be was the head of Ellen and they moved out. So I didn't know at the time, but now they have a center out there called the Ed Asner Family Center. And they help people with special needs, which is very cool. So during the pandemic, I got to join the movie chat group.

**Eileen Lamb** 18:50:34

That's great, Ben. It sounds like Cuba. achieved all of your dreams already. You went on The Price is Right, too?

**Ben Hartranft** 18:50:43

Yeah, yeah, no, it was pretty amazing. A couple weeks before I got into auto accident before I went out to California, and we the car was totaled, and the insurance said we cannot wait. We're going to pay for it. We'll pay for the will give you a check for the old car. So they gave me money for the old car. And when I was on "The Price Is Right," I won 16 grand. And now it's when I decided to use that money to buy a brand new car.

**Eileen Lamb** 18:51:09

Wow, that's great. How was it being on TV like on The Price Is Right?

**Ben Hartranft** 18:51:15

I loved it! I actually wore blue on purpose, because I knew I wanted to represent the autism community.

**Eileen Lamb** 18:51:20

Oh, that's so nice.

**Andrew M. Komarow** 18:51:23

I feel like 16 grand, that's like pretty close to like the higher like, the higher you can win there. Right? That's pretty good. Yeah.

**Sandy Hartranft** 18:51:30

Yeah and it's all cash, you know,

**Andrew M. Komarow** 18:51:32

Was it locked? Did you, is this one of your special interest? Do you Do you know what the price is for things? Or do you get lucky or

**Ben Hartranft** 18:51:39

I just got lucky.

**Sandy Hartranft** 18:51:40

A couple of backstory pieces. My husband loves The Price Is Right. So we've watched it for years and years, kind of as a family. We tape it and we would watch it at night. So Ben's very familiar with the

games. And then he also worked at our local grocery store during the pandemic. So he had some real working knowledge of the items and the game he was so assured of, of his items, he did an amazing job. And so while some there's always some luck involved, but there was some definite knowledge there that worked for in his favor.

**Ben Hartranft** 18:52:12

Because I remember when I won, I got so excited. I got to spin the wheel, I went to the Showcase. But I did lose the Showcase. But I still won the 16 grand.

**Sandy Hartranft** 18:52:21

Yes you did.

**Ben Hartranft** 18:52:24

So what was your reaction?

**Sandy Hartranft** 18:52:25

So the kind of the other part of that was Ben wanted to travel by himself. And growing up, we did a lot of traveling, but he didn't really realize everything that goes into planning a trip, he just got the benefit of going on trips. And so my middle son was really been working with Ben talking about setting a budget, and most people get one trip a year. And so he really helped him plan a trip. And we figured he would pick maybe something in our local area but no he picked the furthest part from where we live. We're in Pennsylvania, he picked California. And so then he really had to look at how am I going to get there? How am I going to get around? How do you find a hotel? How do you find out if it's good hotel, and he did so much prep? There were so many good life skills that he learned about traveling from that from that trip.

**Andrew M. Komarow** 18:53:11

So any tips for anybody else who's autistic and traveling alone who is not going to be on "The Price is Right"?

**Ben Hartranft** 18:53:19

So one of my ideas, one of the things is I'm thankful for TSA Cares. They are an organization that helps people with special needs. They help you go through the security security process. So if you're having trouble, you just emailed them 24 hours and say, Hey, I'm coming to your airport, and they come up and they help you and make sure you are okay.

**Eileen Lamb** 18:53:40

That's great. Is it in all airports? Or how does it work? Everywhere?

**Ben Hartranft** 18:53:45

Yeah, I think I think I think yeah, I think Autism Speaks should share that. Yeah, if you want more information, visit TSACares.com. We should put that on our website, too. They are a great resource out there because they have a bunch of different stuff. It's great for families who need that, especially today with the TSA by getting upset with some people. But am I have this Oh, my son has autism. They go Oh, okay.

**Sandy Hartranft** 18:54:13

And so tell me about your stickers?

**Ben Hartranft** 18:54:14

And then I have a sticker that says, "Please be patient with me. I have autism". I've worn it at sports games, theme parks. I've worn in the airport. I've worked in different other places, concerts, and I've had open conversations with people, they go oh, I have autism or wait, I work as a special ed teacher, I've even got speaking gigs because of my sticker.

**Sandy Hartranft** 18:54:35

So when he was real little, we had a little button and said "I'm not naughty. I have autism." Because people always look at you like a bad parent when your child's having an issue because of the autism. And so as soon as they saw that, they gave us an extra measure of grace. And now as an adult, he wears one that just says please be patient with me. And it has really opened up a lot of dialogue with other people and other people like where did you get those? How do you make them and you know, it's not that you're trying to label

**Ben Hartranft** 18:54:59

I've gotten speaking gigs because of it too.

**Sandy Hartranft** 18:55:02

It really just helps people understand. Like I said, Just give them that extra an extra minute to process.

**Ben Hartranft** 18:55:07

Even though and when I went to Six Flags one time, they said Oh, I'd love to bring you into our school and she told me that.

**Eileen Lamb** 18:55:13

So Ben why, so there were a lot of controversies, you might be aware or not, I don't know if you guys know about in the autism world, you know, it seems like everything has become controversial. And some people don't even like saying autism awareness anymore. They want acceptance. So do you have any thought on that you're raising money for autism awareness.

**Ben Hartranft** 18:55:40

I think awareness is much better. I mean, I like both to say, but in my opinion, I feel like we should be accepted in more ways. But awareness, we need to draw people to bring aware of how we can bring awareness to autism by taking awareness to action. And I think that's what we need, right? People don't understand. We want to be accepted. We want to be aware, we want to we want to share awareness.

**Sandy Hartranft** 18:56:05

I get frustrated with the fight. Because I feel like we're all looking for the same outcome. Yeah, it just seems so divisive to be fighting about infinity ribbons or puzzle pieces, like, like, many people have puzzle tattoos, like what are those people are supposed to do? Like, it means something to them, and



it's okay. And so our goal is really just the end point. We don't really feel like that, you know, there should be that much divisiveness in between.

**Ben Hartranft** 18:56:30

That's my dream. My dream is to meet the President and talk to him about autism awareness and tell him, hey, the country needs to know that the puzzle piece we should all be aware, we shall be accepted. No matter what's going on. We should stop this fight and continue what we need to do. Right. That's it. I just want to say that yeah.

**Eileen Lamb** 18:56:50

Yeah. And your message is out there now. And I totally agree with your mom. And with you, Ben. I mean, I think we should focus on what's important, rather than those fights about terminology and symbols. And so I love that. And I love the puzzle piece, too, by the way, I have a puzzle piece tattoo.

**Ben Hartranft** 18:57:10

Yeah.

**Sandy Hartranft** 18:57:13

You shouldn't be judged for what you care about. You know, like I said, I feel like the endpoint is what's most important.

**Ben Hartranft** 18:57:18

A couple of things on Twitter. I know like people like oh, I rather, I just say I'm autistic. And I'm like, It's fine. I don't care. But no, it's fine. We're not gonna fight about that. Oh, no, no, no, no, we're open to anything. Like, I'm fine with that. But I just, I would rather bring awareness and acceptance. I like using both terms. Because that helps people. Yep.

**Andrew M. Komarow** 18:57:43

So you raise money for research? What and why is research important to you?

**Ben Hartranft** 18:57:49

Um, I think we need more more stuff that's going on in our world, I think the Eagles do a great job with their with Eagles, Autism Foundation, Ryan Hammond and Kiki do a great job. And Jeff Lurie, of course, the CEO of the Philadelphia Eagles has a great vision of what autism is. And he has an autistic brother. And he wants to take that awareness to action. And he pays the overhead cut for the Eagles Autism. So pretty cool.

**Sandy Hartranft** 18:58:22

When Ben that was first diagnosed, I was pretty much just out of nursing school and getting, you know, my career started and everything. And my old textbook still had the theory that it was the mom's fault, that whole refrigerator mom theory, which is just horrible. So you know, there's all these feelings of guilt and what did I do? And then I realized I was wasting so much energy on that I'm like, Alright, let's do something different. So we tried to pay it forward by doing research. So Ben's done 10 or 11 research studies through our Children's Hospital, whatever, you know, kind of fit the bill, just hoping that we can

make a difference to find something that's going on that can make a difference for somebody behind us.

**Andrew M. Komarow** 18:58:57

Eileen, have you ever done any of the clinical trials? They Yale is near me in Connecticut. So I do. I do a bunch of them. Some of them are really fun. Some of them are not fun at all. Ya know, like we like yeah, there's some words like wait, what are you sticking with all day?

**Ben Hartranft** 18:59:21

I could do fun studies all day. I'm just kidding.

**Sandy Hartranft** 18:59:23

Has Eileen done any?

**Eileen Lamb** 18:59:24

I haven't. But you know, my. So I was diagnosed as an adult. And I did not have enough money to pay for an assessment because it's really expensive. But the psychologist cut me a deal. And she was like, well, if you agree to have the assessment, recorded, and she don't know yet, if I was going to be on the spectrum or not. I'll give you a price. So all of the tapes like she has like dozens and dozens of hours of like tapes of my assessment. And she actually uses that now to teach her students about signs of autism in adults. So I've never seen,

**Andrew M. Komarow** 19:00:00

Can I get a copy of those tapes. Give me your contact information. I want to see them to embarrass you, Eileen.

**Eileen Lamb** 19:00:07

Oh, funny for me to think about that. Some people are just like seeing tapes of me during my autism assessment probably doing anyway,

**Andrew M. Komarow** 19:00:15

I want to see that. We can talk later but yeah, but also for I do recommend to to other people to get a sometimes you can you can get a free assessment, if you suspect you are cause you're going to participate in a clinical trial. So

**Eileen Lamb** 19:00:33

Good tip, Andrew.

**Ben Hartranft** 19:00:34

Yeah. And I tell parents that too, like, if I see somebody, I'm like, Oh, does your son have autism? And they go, no. And I go, have you tested him? They go, yeah, we've tested them. But I'm like, I just just keep fighting for him. Because you never know throughout the throughout the life, they might be autistic, but some people may not understand.

**Eileen Lamb** 19:00:52

So Ben what are you going to do for world autism month?

**Ben Hartranft** 19:00:55

So I do have a couple of ideas. One is I would like I'm doing a mock I'm doing so our county does not do any autism events. For many years. Montgomery Township has not done anything for a long time. And one day, I woke up and I said, I really think we need to do something like this. So I've been talking with Beth Dob for many, many years. And I said, Beth, we need to make this happen. And she said, why don't we just do it at the mall. So we're doing a World Autism Day at Montgomery Mall, we're gonna have different vendors come out, maybe you could send some Autism Speaks resources to that we can put out on our table to have people look at. It's like a resource fair. But basically, it's like different vendors are coming out of the pool. The police are coming that day, they're going to we are in their uniforms, and they're going to be talking about what to do with autism and police interaction. There's gonna be no, it's it's very exciting. Our county needs something like this. And I'm the one who spearheaded the idea.

**Sandy Hartranft** 19:01:57

That it was really cool because Ben kind of woke up. He's always the dreamer. Always, always thinking the next thing the next event, he really wanted to do it. And so he ran with it and really set up the meetings with the people at the mall and found the vendors and they've been great. So that's what we're doing on World Autism Day.

**Eileen Lamb** 19:02:14

That's great. You know what, I haven't figured out what I'm going to do yet.

**Andrew M. Komarow** 19:02:18

Probably work for Autism Speaks. I think you'll probably be pretty busy. Yeah.

**Eileen Lamb** 19:02:24

Yeah. April.

**Andrew M. Komarow** 19:02:28

Yeah, April and even speaking engagements. Everyone wants me to speak speaking engagements, you know, in April. It's also tax time for the first half of the month. So that was always like a double whammy, if that's why there's not more autistic accountants. But anyway. So speaking of so, Ben, you mentioned that you do speaking engagements, but what do you do for work and do do you do speaking engagements? Do you get compensated for that? Or

**Sandy Hartranft** 19:03:01

Tell him about our power business guests?

**Ben Hartranft** 19:03:03

So our company got started after being on The Ellen Show school reached out and they say, can you come share our story? I said, Sure. So we did it at free at the time and we did a donation for the Eagles Autism. But my mom and dad were like, you need to work for full time work. I said, I already have a full time job. It's you're given an I don't know how to say it. But one day I said, we really want to do this full

time and my mom and dad and brother were pretending you're America's Got Talent judges and they all said yes. And we've been we did like 90 schools and it's just been incredible. Teachers has come up and they said they really loved it. Parents have come up and I've done it's companies like Chick Fil A. I've done corporations like Novo Nordisk, I am looking for more of those companies. I'd love to speak at Ford and Wendy's. If you're hearing me, Wendy's and Ford, I would love to come. But those are I love speaking to different companies like that, to bring awareness and to bring action into their employee resource groups, their ERG, and actually Chick Fil A started their ERG because that's pretty cool. So

**Sandy Hartranft** 19:04:01

So Ben has two older brothers and whatever they wanted to do, he kind of wanted to follow in their footsteps. So since they worked at 16, he's like, Well, I should have a job. So he started working at Olive Garden. That was his first venture into the working world. And that was a wonderful first job. And then we found that everybody wanted him part time. But nobody after high school wanted to give him a full time job. That was really that really difficult. One year he had six W2s at the end of the year, that's how many part time jobs he had. So you're kind of really frustrated with that. And then like I said, after Ellen people were asking him to come speak, and he said, I really, this is what I really want to do. And he's really good at it. He's really good at it. So we started our own company BenEgery1 presentations, and that's what he does for work. So we all do some of the back work on the secretary. My husband does the financial piece, my middle son does all of the contacts, but Ben is the cold call or and he's the networker, and he's out there finding opportunities,

**Eileen Lamb** 19:04:54

I've seen

**Sandy Hartranft** 19:04:54

And great, great feedback.

**Ben Hartranft** 19:04:56

Yeah, so I've gotten speaking gigs, like I've been to sports games, and they're like, Hey, you come speak. I'm at that's how I met the woman from the IU because she bought me in and then that's Mark because it was coming down the hallway.

**Eileen Lamb** 19:05:12

Oh, Ben I've seen you sing the national anthem at the basketball game or something that was awesome.

**Ben Hartranft** 19:05:18

Yeah, it was pretty amazing. It's pretty amazing to do that. I really love singing. Maybe I'll sing on World Autism Day.

**Sandy Hartranft** 19:05:25

At the mall?

**Ben Hartranft** 19:05:27

Maybe, maybe I'll ask if I can sing the national anthem. Awesome. That's a great idea. I do have a question about World Autism Day. I would love to help in any way. What can I do to help? What can I do to tell people about it? Like, what can I do to like spread awareness into action?

**Andrew M. Komarow** 19:05:43

Promote our podcast.

**Eileen Lamb** 19:05:48

That's one thing. But you know, Ben, I think sharing your personal story is always great, because people need to hear more stories of you know, how different autism is for everybody. You know, that saying, if you've met one person with autism,

**Ben Hartranft** 19:06:03

you've met one person?

**Eileen Lamb** 19:06:04

Yeah.

**Ben Hartranft** 19:06:05

Dr. Stephen Shore.

**Sandy Hartranft** 19:06:06

Sure

**Eileen Lamb** 19:06:06

Yeah. You got it. Yeah. He's on the board, actually at Autim Speaks. And I love that quote, because, you know, all the stories are so different and so unique. And so by sharing your story, you know, you're helping other people who may relate, you may give hope to other people. And that's always like, amazing. And I also love what you guys talked about earlier about, you know, how we shouldn't spend so much time fighting on symbols and terminology, because we all want the same thing. And I think this is also an important message, but uh, you know, interact with other people on the spectrum, share your story, all of that is great. And I love that you want to get involved. And I'll reach out to you, you know, with a great opportunity. In the next few days, I'm still chashing out details. So stay tuned. Yeah. No, I mean, I'm gonna try and get celebrities to do it to wear blue. I've been I got the governor to wear blue one year, can I tell that story? So I had this idea. And I'm like, I really want it. Pennsylvania has never done anything like this. And I'm like, You know what, I'm gonna push really hard. So I called the governor's office every day said, You need to get Tom Wolf to where we are on April 2, you need to, and I've got Todd Stevens to push it. I got everybody to push it. And he said, You got it. I'll do it. And he did.

**Sandy Hartranft** 19:07:23

And he tweeted it out.

**Eileen Lamb** 19:07:27

So you're on Twitter, Ben? You're brave.

**Ben Hartranft** 19:07:30

Big on Twitter. Yeah. But last year, I did get the NFL to do My Cleats, My Cause because I called. And there was an autistic kid, Zach Smith, who works at the NFL. And I pushed them and they were like, Okay, we'll do that. So you don't, if you don't ask, you never know what you gotta get in life always push, you can push through a door, but you can't push through a wall.

**Andrew M. Komarow** 19:07:52

I like that.

**Ben Hartranft** 19:07:54

Dad taught me that.

**Eileen Lamb** 19:07:56

So do you guys want to talk? Ben, do you want to talk about your mom's book? What is it about?

**Ben Hartranft** 19:08:01

My mom wrote a book about autism, you can only get it on our website Benergyone.com Ben ERG y Banerjee one. And that's where you can find out about my schools and companies and businesses if you ever want me to come speak at your organization. But we now forgot to mention Benergyone.com. When I was three, I was stimming on the lights of the chandelier. And my mom said, oh boy, if I write a book, that's the name of my title, and we just self published it. And it's a great holiday book. It's great Christmas gifts. It's a great Easter basket. It's a great summer read. And it's also a great bargain because it's only \$20. And you could read it in the Bahamas in December. You can even read it in Florida. And you can even read it on the airplane or on the train or in a cruise ship.

**Sandy Hartranft** 19:08:47

Did I mentioned, he's my PR guy?

**Ben Hartranft** 19:08:49

It's the best book you have ever read. And she's on Goodreads. So check it out. You have to buy it. It is the best book you've ever read.

**Sandy Hartranft** 19:08:55

So what was really cool is when he was first diagnosed, my sister in law gave me a journal and she said like just journal and I'm not a faithful daily journal er, but it was really good for me years later to look back and say, Man, I didn't think I was gonna live through that. And look, you know, we made it or, you know, this was a funny story that I forgot, like one funny story. You were saying your kid didn't want to go to school. Then one day was like, I don't want to go to school. I don't want to go to school. And finally I just said, Ben, it's illegal, like you have to go to school. And at that very moment, we looked out the window and his bus pulled up and there was a police car right behind it. I have no real reason why. And Ben's eyes got real big and he like hopped out the door and ran right to the bus, like thank you God. So like, I would have never remembered that story if I hadn't journaled it. And so that's kind of what the book turned into. And each chapter starts with I wonder if so it starts with I wonder if there's a problem with that. I wonder if it's a hearing issue. I wonder if I'll ever make friends like all those different

pieces. And then when I said I want to write a book, Ben was like, well, I want to write a book. So in the back, Ben actually wrote the last section and it's all his life in his own words and pictures. So there's like two books in one which is cool to be able to do that together.

**Eileen Lamb** 19:10:06

That's awesome. Do you want to tell one more time what it's called?

**Ben Hartranft** 19:10:11

"Swinging from the Chandelier," go ahead

**Sandy Hartranft** 19:10:12

"Swinging from the Chandelier: Finding Joy in the Journey through Autism," and he literally was on my dining room table stimming on the lights flying back and forth. And so that's where the title came from.

**Eileen Lamb** 19:10:24

Oh, my god. Love it. I can just picture it would be a great

**Ben Hartranft** 19:10:28

"I'm going to swing, " I'm just kidding. Okay.

**Eileen Lamb** 19:10:32

Great TikTok. Yeah, that would do well. So Ben, I'm going to ask you some quickfire questions. So what they are, is that they're just like, it's not like an answer where you just like, think about it and you talk about it for a long time. It's really like first thing that comes to your mind. They're very quick questions. Okay. Okay, so, do you have a favorite quote? And if so, what is it?

**Ben Hartranft** 19:11:00

My favorite quote is "If you want to change the world, go home and love your family," says Mother Teresa.

**Eileen Lamb** 19:11:06

Easy. Favrotie autism representation in a movie or a TV show? In a book?

**Ben Hartranft** 19:11:13

Um, probably A Boy Called Poe or Right Before Your Eyes written by David

**Eileen Lamb** 19:11:21

Favorite animal?

**Ben Hartranft** 19:11:24

Animals probably an eagle. Because we're all soaring like eagles.

**Eileen Lamb** 19:11:28

I could have guessed that one. What's your favorite movie?

**Ben Hartranft** 19:11:34

Probably Star Wars.

**Andrew M. Komarow** 19:11:36

Which one? Eileen, never seen any of the Star Wars.

**Ben Hartranft** 19:11:39

What? I like Episode One. I mean, I don't know. I mean, I like all of them. But honestly, I hope they continue the series one day.

**Eileen Lamb** 19:11:47

Andrew, I thought about you yesterday, we were organizing Legos with Jude and he found the Yoda head.

**Andrew M. Komarow** 19:11:54

Yeah,

**Eileen Lamb** 19:11:55

He goes mom, I found ET.

**Andrew M. Komarow** 19:12:00

Eileen, Eileen. That's it. We're calling Child Protective Services on you. That's the final straw.

**Sandy Hartranft** 19:12:08

I was that kind of mom that said you know we're not gonna have guns in the house. And then when I had three boys, you know, like six or seven years into it one day I said oh, I think it's in the weapon box. When did we get a weapon box? But you know, many lightsabers later we were well protected

**Ben Hartranft** 19:12:24

When we were kids were not allowed to see Harry Potter. Years later, my and dad watched during the pandemic. I honestly my favorite my favorite characters. Hold them by Harry Potter and Dobby Dobby don't want you to go to Hogwarts. I think Dobby has autism.

**Eileen Lamb** 19:12:42

Let's diagnosis Dolby. Lets do it. So Ben, I have one last question for you. And it's kind of a tricky one. Is glow in the dark a color. We ask all our guests. We don't agree Andrew and I so that's why

**Sandy Hartranft** 19:13:02

Is glow in the dark a color?

**Ben Hartranft** 19:13:04

I think I disagree. Hell no. It

**Sandy Hartranft** 19:13:06

Yes or no?



**Ben Hartranft** 19:13:07

My brain is telling me yes. Because when I was at camp this weekend, they had a grown a dark nine square and it looks very bright.

**Sandy Hartranft** 19:13:15

I say it's a color. All right. We're going with color. Who agrees?

**Eileen Lamb** 19:13:21

Andrew.

**Andrew M. Komarow** 19:13:22

All the right people. Yeah.

**Eileen Lamb** 19:13:23

So Ben, do you want to tell people where they can find you on social media?

**Ben Hartranft** 19:13:30

Yes. Benrct1 on Instagram. GoBeTheOne on Tik Tok as G O go be the one. Go be the one. Yeah. And then at benenergyac. at Twitter. That's Twitter. That's my Twitter and then Ben Hartranft on Facebook. And everything is on our website at benenergy1.com.

**Eileen Lamb** 19:13:54

Well, thank you so much, Ben and Sandy for joining us today. I love the talking. Yeah, you guys. You're a great duet duo. It was great.

**Sandy Hartranft** 19:14:04

Thank you. It's a pleasure.

**Ben Hartranft** 19:14:05

Thank you.

**Andrew M. Komarow** 19:14:06

Thank you