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SPEAKERS

Eileen Lamb, Daniel Block, Andrew Komarow



Eileen Lamb 00:00

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-host this podcast with Andrew Komarow. Hi, Andrew.



Andrew Komarow 00:23

Hey, Eileen. I'm Andrew, an autistic entrepreneur and founder of "The Neurodiversity Index." Today, our guest is Daniel. He's an umpire referee, drummer, bass guitarist. He has been officiating for eight years in multiple sports. He has also been coaching bowling for 12 years. He's the first special needs official in his town. He volunteers his time with Autism Speaks as the Logistics Chair for the Staten Island Walk. He's scheduled to officiate the Special Olympics World Games in Berlin, Germany this year as an athlete official for football. He's also one of two US Soccer officials going. Well, welcome Dan. Thanks for coming. So one thing that we like to ask all of our guests is, how do they identify? And we don't mean the usual pronouns, although you're feel free to share those but we mean, autistic person person with autism on the spectrum, do you have a preference or none at all?



Daniel Block 01:26

You know, the funny thing is, other than the pronoun preference of he/him. I'd go with person with autism.

Eileen Lamb 01:37 Awesome.

Andrew Komarow 01:38

Okay. Thank you. Speaking of autism, and that's why you're here. When were you diagnosed with autism? Were you a child? Do you remember anything about the process?



Ooh. I do indeed, I do indeed. Age 2.5. How I got the diagnosis? Well, it all came through a febrile seizure to weird isn't it?



Eileen Lamb 02:05

How did the seizure lead to an autism diagnosis?



Daniel Block 02:08

Honestly, that I it was, it was a weird call. It was a weird collision. Because I remember riding in the ambulance from my grandmother's house. This was in Brooklyn, New York. At the time, my grandmother lived in Trump Village. And I remember talking about all the ambulance stuff, and I always loved vehicles and transportation. So once the febrile seizure happened, we went to see my doctor, Dr. Meadows At the time, and was diagnosed autistic. Asperger's in this case, the former terminology.



Eileen Lamb 02:55

So when did you hear about it? Because you were very young. So when did your parents or grandparents your key caregivers tell you about your diagnosis? You remember?



Daniel Block 03:07

I would say at age four.



Eileen Lamb 03:09

Wow, did you understand at that time?



Daniel Block 03:13

Well, I kind of knew some of the things that I was doing like the train lineups because I always had a fascination with Thomas and Friends when I was younger, but um I understood it somewhat, but not enough to know. years later, I'm still learning this situate the diagnosis. And it just it just makes me more unique than I thought.



Andrew Komarow 03:49

That's definitely true. And one other thing that I think is unique, although we've had a few is that you you're very into sports. How did you get into sports?



Daniel Block 04:00

So my first sport was actually baseball and soccer. And as to the JCC program, years later, I got into Bowl Week. I still can't hold perfect. I don't I questioned myself on that. Sometimes I still get you to 300 even if I tried. But



Andrew Komarow 04:24 What's your best score with bowling?



A Andrew Komarow 04:29 Three hundreds is a perfect score, right?



Daniel Block 04:31

Perfect score indeed. But my high series out of three games which a normal regulation is in league is tournament play is a three game series is a 709 series. That includes the 279.



Andrew Komarow 04:47

Eileen, do you play bowling? I think you'd be funny to go bowling?



Eileen Lamb 04:52

I feel like I'm happy when I get over 100. So like that seems insane to 279 but I'm really bad at it. So there's that too. Maybe I should,



Daniel Block 05:02

Yeah. Well, you're in luck. You're looking at a you're talking to a bowling coach. I've been togething kide how to how for 12 years. Yeah like I can work an it with you



Eileen Lamb 05:14

Well, how about some tips that you can give people through Zoom? Because, you know,

Daniel Block 05:20

Yeah, that's no problem. So bowling is pretty much shaking hands with someone. You want to sum up. Shaking hands, like you're shaking hands with someone and you're, you're pretty much shaking hands with someone with an arm straight. Yes, bingo. 1,2,3 release, 123, release, get it, get the idea? If you walk in a straight line. But with force, you're walking up to the foul line. Four steps. You could also do a five step approach, if you feel like running it up. But the normal preferred. The normal preferred approach is a four step approach.



Eileen Lamb 06:07

1234 Handshake release. Correct. Well, you want to do it at the same time too. Oh,



Daniel Block 06:09

So 123, on the fourth set, you release the ball.





Eileen Lamb 06:21 That's what I am terriable at. So



Andrew Komarow 06:25 I'm terrible, too.

Daniel Block 06:26

Don't worry about it. We'll work on it.

Eileen Lamb 06:29

That's funny. So what other sports do you like? You said soccer that I'm pretty good at? Or maybe it's just because I really like it. And I practice so much throughout my childhood in France. But are you good at soccer? Do you play in a league or Nice. So that's alot of running, right?

Daniel Block 06:44

So, to answer that, I used to play goalkeeper. I really stood on my head. But I don't play anymore. Standing on your head is like the the goalie is on fire. Making all these really huge saves and everything. It's a hockey term, but it's also can be used on soccer town or football in this case. But I also referee as well. Yes. Yes, it is. I you know, that's the thing I've been, I would soccer. I'm actually going to the Special Olympics World Games in Berlin, Germany. This year.

Eileen Lamb 07:32

That's what we heard. Tell us about that. That's really impressive.

Daniel Block 07:35

So last year, I did the USA games in Disney for softball apart and the Unified Cup in Detroit, Michigan. I got contacted recently in March after I filled out an application as an athlete official, because I also do Special Olympics bowling. And I'll be attending the World Games in Berlin as an athlete official officiating football seven aside. This is my first time going overseas by myself too. So my mom's really nervous for me. But yes, but I travel around the country for officiating soccer. And wanting to say that even though I've done all the ECNL tells the elite club national leagues and Development Academy and the Girls Academy soccer leagues and all that's all those tournaments I've done. The World Games is my biggest assignment yet and I'm not going to let the us down. I'm one of two u us athlete officials representing US soccer going.

Eileen Lamb 08:49

That's incredible. And for the people like me who don't know anything about sports, what's the difference between football and football? Seven aside

Daniel Block 08:59

so that football football is 11 v 11. 11 players on each side. Football seven aside is seven players on each side on the field bench.

Eileen Lamb 09:14

Wow, I had never heard of it.



Andrew Komarow 09:17

Is bowling an Olympic sport?



Daniel Block 09:20

So to answer that question, try to but no one takes it seriously. But it is considered under the US Olympic Committee umbrella.



Andrew Komarow 09:33

Okay,



Daniel Block 09:34

Which in this case with coaching. I'm a registered volunteer, like I mentioned with you, the United States Bowling Congress. And I had to go through safe sport and to get my coaching license. My badge in this case. I'm through the USBC in the US Olympic Committee.



Andrew Komarow 09:56 Okay.



Daniel Block 09:58 So yeah,

A

Andrew Komarow 10:00

So sports has lots of rules and being, you know, a referee, you know, you have to follow lots of rules. And autism is very much related to having lots of roles. Can you do you think it makes your job harder or easier? Being a referee,



Daniel Block 10:22

You know what to be honest with you, it makes it it. I'm gonna say in the middle.

Andrew Komarow 10:30 Okay,

Daniel Block 10:31

I'll tell you, why not. First off, we all know that autism, you can't really tell though. Many people can't really tell the difference. And I, whenever I go up to a coach or player or parent, and say I'm a referee with a disability, in this case, autism did do like, Oh, we don't even notice it. But you're that good. I'm like, thank you. And I'm like, You know what, I get that all the time. And, you know, it's just it, it's not disheartening. But it's positive, to see that people are recognizing it after the fact. Once the event, I tell them, and then I see them again. And I'm like, and then next, you know, if there's like a post, like I had your soccer did a, a post on top soccer Tuesday, based about me, being a referee with a disc with autism. And they're like, Oh, we remember him. He was like that so and so tournament. In this case, it was the US Soccer nationally, Pro in Disney. He's a good referee. And he said, he's a really good role model for those on the spectrum with as an official. I see that comment. It makes the whole job easier than it did from the first place. So like I said, it's in the middle.



Eileen Lamb 12:15

Do you get angry when people don't follow the rules?



Daniel Block 12:20

To answer the question, no, because you have to stay professional at all costs as an official.



Eileen Lamb 12:24

Has anyone ever gotten angry at you?

Daniel Block 12:31 Yes.



Eileen Lamb 12:33 How was that?



Daniel Block 12:36

Well, it was one scenario and I was one scenario where I had to, I, I did not lose control of the match. And I know I did not. But this was this one game where I had to dismiss elect the coach



or dismiss, in this case, by the technological the technical terms, by a red card sendoff. Because now FIFA allows referees to issue red cards to coaches, not just players and players and all substitutes. You can also read card, technical area staff, including coaches, head coaches, managers, whatever the case may be, depending on the leak. And I had this one rejection where the coach actually touched me. It led to a red card. He was because what happened was he claimed that it was the ball touch one of his players in the head, which the new rules the new heading rule, protocol in this case, is if it's an unintentional header, it's a drop ball. Well, that's what happened except he was claiming it was an intentional letter. So then he kept getting upset and an upset. I was gonna give him the yell, but as soon as the read as soon as the a few expletives came out, and I'm not going to repeat them because it would look bad. I showed him I pulled up the red card and



Andrew Komarow 14:16

And what is a red card for people.



Daniel Block 14:19

A red card is a you're done. It's last you don't want it. You don't want a red card first off, because you want to stay in the match. A red card means rejection they've done for the game. And if say there's only one coach on the bench, and in this case, this was happening. The match is officially terminated at the time of the stoppage. In this case, it was halftime. So in this case, he locked out on the draw



Eileen Lamb 14:59

Darn. Did you feel scared when the coach started touching you?



Andrew Komarow 15:03 Oh, yeah.

Eileen Lamb 15:05 Was he scary looking? Like really strong?



Daniel Block 15:09

I wouldn't say scary looking. But I'd say more like, I was just, I, I just felt uncomfortable.



Eileen Lamb 15:20

Yeah. you know. I think sometimes it's not even that, like, look scarv. It's more like if they're

angry and not controlling their emotions and feelings. It's like, even scarier than someone who's like very muscular and big and strong.

Daniel Block 15:32 Of course.



Eileen Lamb 15:33 Right?



Daniel Block 15:34

Of course, and you know what that'll happen from time to time, especially when you have a new like, say a 13 year old ref which, by the way, in US Soccer, you're allowed to start refereeing at 13 years old. Yeah, and a newbie ref at 13. And you deal with a situation like that. It's scary for them. That's how bad this, that's how bad the shortage of referees is because of the behavior of coaches, and players and spectators.



Eileen Lamb 16:07

So why do you do what you do?

Daniel Block 16:09

I do it for the kids. I don't do it for the money. I honestly the money's good. No question. But I'd rather be someone than that could keep the kids playing that can have the kids trust me. And be that father like figure. Not yet but but for the kids so they know they're okay in a safe position. You know, I just I've been around kids all my life, some camp counselor, phone coaching course, umpire for baseball and softball. Soccer referee flag football referee. You know, I've been around kids all my life. And you know what, to be honest with you, I would go back to the bowling coach, in this case, I've been volunteering at my local bowling center, Rab Country Lanes for 12 years. I'm like that person that go to person. I want the players on the pitch or on the diamond to feel they have someone to go to when there's a bad situation and I could solve it.

Eileen Lamb 17:28

How are you going to handle your international travel though? Have you thought about it? Do you have the anxiety?

Daniel Block 17:37

Yeah, that's a good question.



Andrew Komarow 17:40

Have you got your passport yet?

Daniel Block 17:42

I did work on my passport. So it's the first time and they haven't planned the airfare yet. But it's working on currently by Special Olympics. And, you know, I travel like I mentioned, I travel all over the country. I can treat this like I'm traveling to another tournament. Easier said than done.



Andrew Komarow 18:07

But that's a good way to look at it. It makes a lot of sense. Very similar.



Daniel Block 18:12

Of course, and you know, that's thing. If you've done something before, and you're doing something now treat it like you're doing it again.



Andrew Komarow 18:21 Good advice.



Eileen Lamb 18:23

Yeah, not bad. How about music? You say you're a drummer?

Daniel Block 18:28 Yes, indeed.



Eileen Lamb 18:30 You have a lot of talents. I guess.

Daniel Block 18:37

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I played drums. I'm a music student currently. But one of my favorite things to do every year since since the COVID pandemic when I first found out about it. I participate in a Breast Cancer Drum-a-thon.

Eileen Lamb 18:53 What's it?



Daniel Block 18:54

So Drum-a-thon. and shout out to my friend April Samuels, who is the founder of "Breast Cancer Can Stick It," is she's a professional drummer, diagnosed with triple negative breast cancer. A while back and Drum-a-thon is a fundraiser where you raise say the minimum \$250. And then you get to play on the stage and, and do a drum solo in front of everybody on the stage. And also, the best part is they also have some celebrity rock, rock drummers there, every year every year I go to and it's a good time. It's a really good time. And to be honest with you, I love going because I the same way I deal with I've been the kid it's it's a lot of fun. I'm bringing me in this case when I get on the kit.

E

Eileen Lamb 20:05

You know, Autism Speaks every year. Well, not for the past few years because of the pandemic. But we have that big concert in LA called "Light Up the Blues." And this year, it's actually on Saturday. Well, this episode is gonna air after the concert, but Stephen Stills is gonna be there, Willie Nelson. It's gonna be Neil Young, pretty big.



Andrew Komarow 20:36

And you know, you're gonna be there, right? Eileen?



Eileen Lamb 20:39

I'm gonna be there, like my guitar and stuff. No,



Andrew Komarow 20:43 Say guitar, again.

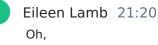


Eileen Lamb 20:48

Guitar, No, but I'm gonna be there. And I'm excited. And yeah, I just wanted to mention that because I think it's awesome. But I know you do some things with Autism Speaks to so.

Daniel Block 21:05

So, I am the Logistics Chair for the Staten Island Autism Walk for Autism Speaks. And one of my main and I'm the only committee member on on the spectrum. For the Staten Island Organizing Committees.





Daniel Block 21:23

I figured I join up, set the example see if others can join us too. I just want to be that outline voice of reason. So many others can find the right ways to get involved.



Eileen Lamb 21:39 So what do you do?



Andrew Komarow 21:40

What advice would you give to others looking to get involved?



Daniel Block 21:44 Just do it. You'll never know you miss



Andrew Komarow 21:47

I think Mikey came up with that one. I don't know.



Daniel Block 21:51

Well, I'm gonna go to Wayne Gretzky reference, you miss 100% of the shots you don't take.



Eileen Lamb 22:00

I love that. It's such a good one. Well, it's so perfect. I know. It's not yours. But it's like great answer. Like, I want to remember that quote, because it's like very inspiring, you know, it makes me want to do things like, Okay, you're scared to do this, but like, do it. You know, what's the worst that can happen?



Daniel Block 22:23

Exactly. No, of course. And you know, that's the thing every time I step onto the field, or step on, step onto the stage, it's like, Alright, do you know how we're gonna get through this? How we're gonna get through this? And next, you know, you get through this. It's just simple. Just do it. If you don't do it, you'll regret.



Andrew Komarow 22:49

Okay. Okay, so where can we find you? I know you mentioned you have an Instagram and the other social media?



Daniel Block 22:58

Well, I do have a Facebook page. And I do have a Facebook page called "Daniel's World," where I post about all my adventures and my podcast interviews that I do, as well. I forgot to mention on the podcast, too, so but but I also have an Instagram called Daniel Umps and Drums, which I will send you the link to send you send you the link to after and I don't have Twitter. I don't know why I shouldn't



Eileen Lamb 23:36

But no, you shouldn't no. Yay, you are good.



Daniel Block 23:45

I'm terrible. I'm terrible. And many words. So in this case, makes more sense not to have Twitter.



Eileen Lamb 23:51

Yeah. Oh, good. Don't Don't go for it. I mean, I guess you miss 100% of the shots. You don't want to exclude Twitter from that quote. Okay.

Daniel Block 24:01 Got it.

Eileen Lamb 24:03

Anyway, I'm gonna ask you some quickfire questions. So what is who is your favorite baseball player?



Daniel Block 24:14

You know, the funny thing you mentioned about that, and I didn't know if Andrew saw the video. I did get to meet David Wright in the Zoom video a while back in 2020. I, that was sponsored but that was brought put together by Wilson Sporting Goods and Autism Speaks in New York and Autism Speaks. So David Wright I am a huge Mets fan so



Andrew Komarow 24:41

My apologies.



Daniel Block 24:43

I know. Hey, you know what the Yankees are junk calls sent just hit the DL I think the,



Andrew Komarow 24:50

I like the Jets that's that's just as bad if not worse.



Daniel Block 24:57

I'm a Giants fan. So but there is something I do want to tell you this, Andrew, I did work in Special Olympics SNOWBOWL in MetLife Stadium. So I have gotten to touch MetLife Stadium turf.



Andrew Komarow 25:10 Very cool



Daniel Block 25:12

It's a flag football tournament every year.



Andrew Komarow 25:15 Very, very cool.

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Eileen Lamb 25:17

Okay, next question. Who is your favorite autism representation in a movie? Like your favorite character in a movie or TV show or book even?



I'll give you a good one actually. In fact, it it has the word good in it. The Good Doctor.



Eileen Lamb 25:35

You like that one?



Daniel Block 25:37

It my parents watch it. I watch it sometimes. You know, it's like, when I get a chance to because I work busy, busy, busy, but I do get I do get to watch it from time to time.



Andrew Komarow 25:52

Eileen, do you watch it?



Eileen Lamb 25:53

I watch a couple of epsiodes. And I was like, Okay, it's a little bit like autism as a superpower type of thing. And, you know, it's just, it's hard for me because, you know, my oldest son is like, nonverbal like is he has very high needs. And I feel like all the movies and TV shows like they show the people who have like a gift. And just, it's not that it's a bad TV show. I just I would love to see, like more representation of, you know, the other side of the spectrum. If I can say,

Daniel Block 26:26 Oh, of course,



Andrew Komarow 26:26

Let's sign Charlie up for Hollywood. But not so I, my wife, Jessica tells me that what "The Good Doctor," that like their relationship is very relatable. And I'm like, wait, what part and she's just like all of it. And I think and I think when we watch it, I think she's just like, ah, that's something my husband would do.

Daniel Rlock 26.10

So I gotcha.Totally understandable.

E Eileen Lamb 26:53 What's your favorite animal?



Andrew Komarow 27:00 What kind of dog?



Daniel Block 27:02

Oh, good one. Well, currently, I'm an English Springer Spaniel. That acts very stinky a lot because silly behavior. That's besides the point. Yeah, English Springer Spaniel. But I need to tell a certain stinky doggy to stop being so stinky with behavior. As he's a little bit silly.



Eileen Lamb 27:26 What's his name?



Daniel Block 27:29 Hamilton.



Eileen Lamb 27:30 Oh, do you like Formula One?

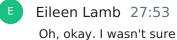


Daniel Block 27:34

So to be it to give you a little feedback on historical feedback on how we got the name Hamilton. My sister named him that because my sister is a huge Hamilton freak.



Eileen Lamb 27:49 Like the Formula One driver? Daniel Block 27:51 The musical.





Daniel Block 27:55

Hamilton the musical. You know, based on US history, it's a musical. Created by Lin Manuel Miranda.

A

Andrew Komarow 28:06 Have you seen it?



Daniel Block 28:08 No, but I do have a friend of mine had some drums on it once.



Andrew Komarow 28:13 Very cool. Eileen, have you seen it?



Eileen Lamb 28:15 Nope.



Andrew Komarow 28:17 You haven't seen anything? So sorry.



Eileen Lamb 28:23

So what's your favorite historical moment in sports and like it can be any sport like something that just like, you know, made you cry?

Andrew Komarow 28:32

Big open ended question for you.

Daniel Block 28:34

Oh, I love good, big open ended questions.You know, you're hitting me in a good spot here. To be honest with you, actually. There's one good moment and it was actually I got two. Actually. I got two. It's Mets related, which was the Andy Chavez catch on that turned into a double play back in 2006. In the playoffs against the St. Louis Cardinals game seven and then the other one 2008. Jose Reyes. So solo home run that led to a team cycle of homeruns back in 2008. Against the Phillies and get a get this Andrew, the broadcasters is for the game. One of the analysts decided to pay pay the SNY from the Comcast sports Philly, or in this case now NBC Sports Philadelphia decided to pay a visit to the Mets SNY booth and Keith Hernandez went over to the Phillies booth to talk a little baseball here and there and I got to see Jose Reyes homer while they were talking about it



Andrew Komarow 29:55 That's really cool.



Daniel Block 29:59

You know in all seriousness I don't think it to be honest, I, I kind of watch a lot of broadcasts a lot, because I try to get better at the rules every day. And I love listening to announcers eat to the people in the broadcast booth. Try to try to talk with each other. You know, I mean, everybody Major League Baseball, our broadcasts are really good friends. So that the last time a broadcast swap happened was back in 2008.



Eileen Lamb 30:38

Andrew is going to ask you the last question now.



Andrew Komarow 30:42

So is glow in the dark, a color? A property? Both or neither?



Daniel Block 30:51

Ooh, glow in the dark so I just think about this. Wow. Good one, good one. I'm gonna say it's a little bit of both. Glow in the Dark could be a color. But it also could be a property because the color can be what's the word I'm looking for? If we're talking property financial wise in a color coloring term, Crayola can mark it on that easily. If you think about it.



Andrew Komarow 31:35

It's good reasoning. We like it. We just have a little debate. So we like to ask the show.



Eileen Lamb 31:40

I mean, his reason is really good. I got I mean, give that to a Andrew. That was pretty impressive.



Daniel Block 31:47

I've seen the glow in the dark color by Crayola. And to be honest with you. I'm surprised they haven't marked. They haven't trademarked it yet. So



Eileen Lamb 32:01

Thye will now that you said that? Because I'm sure they're listening to us right now. So



Daniel Block 32:07

I hope so.



Andrew Komarow 32:08

I hope the I well Steamboat Mickey becomes public domain very soon. And that's why they were able to make the horror movie Winnie the Pooh because it's been 75 years so I like there's like there's like a Blood and Honey or Winnie the Pooh that's out and it's allowed to be out because it's been I like trademark law a lot. So



Eileen Lamb 32:29

Is this real, or is this a joke, there is like a Winnie the Pooh horror movie?



Andrew Komarow 32:33

Blood and Honey. Yeah. And it's a lot to come out because the public because the copyright on Winnie the Pooh conspired, yeah. So nobody's gonna confuse that horror slash or Winnie the Pooh with the other Winie the Pooh so so it was able to come out. So Steamboat Mickey, like the original Mickey Mouse, like that specific Mickey Mouse is going to be next. So maybe we'll have like a horror slash or Mickey Mouse film.

Daniel Block 33:02

Maybe or Disney can re-invent the wheel.So if you think aboutit, Disney could also what Disney could turn that into a horror movie either way too.



Andrew Komarow 33:16

I don't think this is gonna do that.



Daniel Block 33:18

But it's worth a shot.



Eileen Lamb 33:23

All right. Well, thank you so much for chatting with us today was great. It was a bit different from what we usually talk about. So that was a that was awesome. I feel like next time I go bowling, I'll have to report back to tell you if the handshake is working out. It probably won't. But you know, practice makes.



Daniel Block 33:45

It doesn't. It doesn't hurt to practice because in all seriousness, there's always a chance. I mean, you can always go for lessons too if necessary. It's worth it.



Eileen Lamb 33:57 Yeah,



Andrew Komarow 33:58

Yeah. You got plenty of free time Eileen, I think you should go for it.