

**00:00:00:02 - 00:00:21:04**

**Eileen Lamb**

Welcome to Adulting on the Spectrum. In this podcast, we want to highlight the real voices of autistic adults, not just inspirational stories, but people like us talking about their day to day life. Basically, we want to give a voice to a variety of autistic people. I'm Eileen Lamb, an autistic author and photographer, and I co-host this podcast with Andrew Komarow. Hi Andrew!

**00:00:21:08 - 00:00:52:10**

**Andrew Komarow**

Hey, Eileen. Today our guest is Josh Edwards. Josh is originally from Stillwell, Kansas. He was diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome at 13. He pursued education, earning an associates degree at Johnson Community College and a bachelor's degree in social work from Pittsburg State University. After a transformative summer in Florida, Josh found his calling at an elementary school working with a supportive team and mentor passionate about autism advocacy. He eagerly anticipated volunteering at a hospital and starting a YouTube channel to create positive change. Thank you for joining us.

**00:01:01:12 - 00:01:13:19**

**Josh Edwards**

Thank you, Andrew. And I thank you, Eileen I'm very excited to be here. This is my very first podcast. Plus I've ever gotten a radio. It's all very exciting to be here.

**00:01:14:10 - 00:01:25:17**

**Andrew Komarow**

Can you we'd like to start off our podcast asking everyone how they like to be identified. And we don't mean pronouns such as he/him, although you're welcome to share those.

**00:01:25:23 - 00:01:57:17**

**Josh Edwards**

I appreciate that. And if I may, I actually if I may, Andrew, I think I know where this is going because I'm involved with certain social groups for autism advocacy. You you referred to the autistic or with autism, don't you? Well, I well, I'm really how shall I say this neutral. Like, I don't get set off really. You know, I do prefer, what I mean is I would appreciate if you if you could say with autism that just kind of what what flows with me. But like I said, I you know, you say autistic, so I won't fly off the handle. But but I do appreciate that.

**00:02:15:09 - 00:02:23:02**

**Eileen Lamb**

Tell us a bit more about your diagnosis. So you were diagnosed at 13 and at the time it was Asperger's syndrome, right? Because there is a change now.

**00:02:23:02 - 00:02:47:15**

**Josh Edwards**

It's yes, Yes. With the whole yes, with old terminology and the whole. Yeah. DSM, **DSM-5** stuff I think it's called. Yes. Yes, I was I was about one. I remember a whole lot of that. But I yes, I remember I was just before I was 14, My my mother my mother told me we were in the hospital for my sister, I think.

And my mother told me something. She mentioned Asperger's Syndrome, and I didn't understand it. The only closest I came to understanding it was my ADHD. I was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, like I, I'm going to say maybe six or seven, maybe. I can't remember exactly somewhere around then and then none of the ADHD. I mean, the Asperger's Syndrome, the diagnosis at 13.

And as you can imagine, I didn't exactly understand it, let alone there was a lot about my self. I didn't understand. And, you know, I attended interpersonal skills courses and the following year in high school and kind of so so social cues, kind of getting reading, body language, kind of getting a little more in sync with, you know, with people who didn't, as I say, this different perception A shall we say, you know, people without Asperger's or, you know, the general public, if you will, kind of the acquired skills.

**00:04:04:08 - 00:04:32:14**

**Josh Edwards**

And that definitely helped out. And let's see and that I mentioned I attended conferences. I went to a youth leadership conference. My senior year. I even spoke to the Board of Education on regard for my special education in my school district. Pretty, pretty exciting for an 18 year old kid. And so I would say it would be an ongoing pursuit.

So I actually ended up meeting Temple Grandin and I don't know if you all know her,

**00:04:41:03 - 00:04:41:06**

**Eileen Lamb**

We had her on the podcast.

**00:04:42:10 - 00:05:04:20**

**Josh Edwards**

No kidding. Wow, That's amazing. I met her once. I'm like, oh, my gosh, 12 years ago this October, it was my first year out of high school. I was it was a conference. I can't remember what it was, but my mother and I went to see her. I leave the conference just for a moment, use the restroom, and then right when I'm coming out, I'm right behind her.

And before she. Yeah, I'm just walking right behind her. And then I right before she, she goes in or does what she has to, I just say hello and I say what a privilege it is to meet her. And she has if I was like a reporter or something or on account sponsor. No, no, I'm just a college student.

I came to see you. I got a look. It was like a Trekkie fan class I ever came in one of those Star

Trek fans. I was. I was speechless. I'm involved with the telehealth program Echo Autism. I'm with Autism Speaks. I'm a self-advocacy team member. And I have been since shortly after college I was with them since 2021.

**00:05:49:21 - 00:06:07:12**

**Andrew Komarow**

What now you're involved with a few organizations, some with well, controversy that I'm aware of. And in some way, how do you feel about the controversy regarding the Asperger's label?

**00:06:08:04 - 00:06:22:00**

**Josh Edwards**

I had forgotten. I've recently heard about this. This, too. I'll admit, at first I didn't get why they took it off. And I but this is because I was not aware of this information. I just,

**00:06:22:06 - 00:06:26:22**

**Eileen Lamb**

I don't think that's even why they took it off. I don't even think that's why it was taken out. It was just that they wanted to lump everything into one.

**00:06:27:11 - 00:07:08:17**

**Josh Edwards**

I said I never even heard this. This one. Suppose I'll say supposed rumor because it could be true. Could be not. I don't know. And the last thing I want is to give people the wrong impression. But. Well, you know. But you know how you say the wrong thing for the right reason. And, you know, people get the wrong impression, but but staying on topic, I have to admit, at first I was sort of, I'll say, annoyed at most or confused really why it was taken off, because that was the word that kind of, I don't know, identified with it.

**00:07:10:06 - 00:07:42:12**

**Josh Edwards**

I don't know about label. Maybe trademark. It was sort of a trademark or sort of an identifier. Felt like it was a word to make sense. My my, my quirks, my characteristic, if you will, my traits. You know, it kind of helped identify or kind of give the name of where they came from or kind of made sense of a situation and, you know, like that and, you know, kind of like, like an ethnicity like, like a second ethnicity, an unofficial ethnicity, if you will.

**00:07:42:12 - 00:08:14:03**

**Josh Edwards**

And I didn't get why they took it off. And just I mean, people take and people add and take names all the time. ADHD becomes A.D.D.. I don't get what's what people. I think there's either TMI or TLI, too little information. And yes, I just came up with it. But honestly, if that is true, I if if that were to be true, I have to admit I can understand people's feelings.

**00:08:14:03 - 00:08:37:20**

**Josh Edwards**

And because I am, I can understand why other people because that's the last thing that we that we want to keep alive in history and need to remind ourselves. And I can understand the negativity that that would bring to people with with Asperger's syndrome or any any developmental any neuro developmental disability.

**00:08:37:22 - 00:08:58:00**

**Eileen Lamb**

So can you tell us about your college experience? When I was in France, I tried going to college for four years in a row, three or four, I don't even remember, and I couldn't do it, so I had to do online classes instead. I would love to know if you went in person, if you had any struggles and any tips maybe?

**00:08:59:19 - 00:09:38:10**

**Josh Edwards**

Oh, well, I don't really know how many. I don't know how many tips I can really offer, but I'll just say what what I can say is what worked for me or made it as pleasant as an experience as it did. And maybe it'll make the difference. Or maybe it'll help people know what what'll make the difference for them. Well what helped with community college was well for one community I felt at least at least in my experience was a loose term.

It was like every man and woman for themselves. Or at least I didn't exactly have an open arms or a place I could feel well, like I was one of the people or a place I could, you know, feel like I was part of it. But when I went straight to Pitt State right away, I don't know what it was.

**00:10:00:18 - 00:10:48:09**

**Josh Edwards**

And I think that I was nervous. My major aside, I didn't know what to expect. I just went in with a I don't know, I went in with little to no expectations or idea what was going to happen. I just kind of was in the moment ish. And when everything started out, it was amazing. It was I tended the student activity, activity events and things and all the different groups all at one our first week and I end of the joining the Student Activity Board. And I was just so welcome with open arms and that was an a feeling I got grown up as a kid and I was n Kansas.

And I just I remember feeling this. This is a school, this is a community. I love it. I felt I felt at home for the first time since I graduated. And and it was amazing. And I admmit it, it can be be challenging, especially leaving home. And trust me and trust me, you can feel nervous just as something as simple as leaving a leaving a meeting from one building to another and stranded in rain, trying to get to your dorm and caught

**00:11:24:09 - 00:12:00:24**

**Josh Edwards**

it was a very cloudy, stormy night in Boston. And you know, and what the streets in the city and you don't know anyone and and you worry about and when you can feel like you're in 'Beauty and the Beast,' because you were because you can't ever worry like something is going to happen. But that's how I felt. One night I was caught in a storm leaving the Activity Board after a meeting went long and I had to walk all the way in a in a terrible storm with rain up to my legs or at least drenched all the way to this old brick building and like I said, was pretty and like I said, was

**00:12:00:24 - 00:12:41:09****Josh Edwards**

pretty thick. Thick storm is a pretty thick storm and all accommodations help. So definitely go to the accommodation center. Another thing that helped always stay connected to the people or know who you can trust and be open and be not assertive but be upfront with people. When something bothers you, the real threat your real friends will understand when you tell them that you did something that you that you wish they hadn't even like be upfront but be respectful.

Homework makes more of a difference than you think. Well, I especially, know we all want to get rid of it. Trust me, when you only have a class that only gives a test. Thank your lucky stars for the homework because then you'll know what the heck the material is and you'll feel less in limbo.

**00:13:04:08 - 00:13:14:03****Andrew Komarow**

What is your biggest struggle with autism and can you share some strategies for coping with our followers?

**00:13:14:03 - 00:13:35:16****Josh Edwards**

Matter of fact, not only can I, I've thought of, I've, I. Well, I don't know if I was thinking like right here, right now, but I'm so glad because I've been thinking about them lately or I've been trying to work on them. I'm happy to share. I would say my biggest my biggest Achilles Heel would be my anxiety.

I just have that's my Kryptonite or my Achilles Heel. But bottom line, that's my that's my vulnerable point, my anxiety. And and I am that I punished myself of I thought this to myself in the car right on the way home or earlier today I punished myself more than anyone else with my anxiety. And believe you me, it it can be self-destructive if you let it.

**00:14:04:21 - 00:14:35:10****Josh Edwards**

That is, trust me, that is not that is not a light warning. That is not that. Trust me. Trust me. I advise people not to take this warning lightly. I, I can pretend that my struggles for the highest, but I recognize anxiety and it can come at its peak from any from any origin. What I,

**00:14:35:16 - 00:14:59:00**

**Josh Edwards**

What I'm saying is high anxiety can come from anywhere or anything and leaving even the strongest person vulnerable, you know, like, you know, one spark start a fire kind of thing. We'll definitely, and I need to get better at this but I have but I have been doing this in the past. It helps to see a counselor. My advice is don't just go and see a counselor.

**00:14:59:18 - 00:15:29:19**

**Josh Edwards**

What I need to say is if you go to see a counselor and you're not, and that doesn't do it for you, I can say this works for everyone, but at least, at least before ruling it out. I mean, in the process of elimination, I strongly urge the consideration of mental health specialist because I've been seeing a mental health specialist and she's a great counselor, just a friendly open ear.

**00:15:30:05 - 00:15:52:20**

**Josh Edwards**

Last time I saw her, I was a little anxious. She gave me some advice that's been helping and I'm trying to apply that a little more, and it's been helping a great deal. When I do that, however seldom I think about it. She said that whenever I whenever I make a mistake or something, I wish I hadn't done it kind of kind of you myself,

**00:15:52:20 - 00:16:12:07**

**Josh Edwards**

like a television, like a like the television characters you watch, you know, like, you know, their character. And even though they did something wrong, you know that you know, you know their heart and their personality and the intention. I, I mean, it kind of helps to view yourself a little differently and kind of and I'll put yourself on active.

**00:16:12:10 - 00:16:34:03**

**Josh Edwards**

Another thing that helps as you recognize your intentions and you recognize that people, the people that there are people who don't give a dang and then all you trying to do is the right thing and that you have your head on and look at where you are in life and cut yourself some slack.

**00:16:34:13 - 00:16:38:13**

**Andrew Komarow**

What what do you like best about working with children?

**00:16:39:05 - 00:16:59:22**

**Josh Edwards**

I admit there were a few other coping mechanisms I didn't think hadn't brought up yet. But first, what was it? But on the topic at hand, if I'm honest, I don't know, but only because I don't think about it. But I would say a what I love working with elementary children or it's work with them is, I don't know.

I think it's because I don't know. I just have a natural kinship. But it's easier to work with them. I feel like they're easy. I feel like they listen. They listen easier, They show respect. They show respect. They put in the effort. Or at least I've always been fortunate enough to work with with elementary children that that show the effort and they listen to you.

**00:17:22:02 - 00:17:48:10**

**Josh Edwards**

You know, you treat them like young adults and like people. And and they show and they show the work and the progress. And I've I've been very fortunate, especially with with ESE that it's Exceptional Student Education if I'm correct that that would be what you call special education that down here in Florida. Okay. Yes. Now, of course, it varies.

**00:17:49:06 - 00:18:32:18**

**Josh Edwards**

And I would definitely say it helps when, you know, the kids, you know, and something especially that I loved best was this year I got to see something I don't know if I've ever seen. I, I got to watch the children that I met a year ago grow so much and develop, if not for at least quite a few steps forward from when I first met them and I saw the effort and the progress that they put into wanting to come, the people I saw and ready to go into the world one day, if not soon.

**00:18:32:23 - 00:19:06:04**

**Josh Edwards**

And I was so proud that and to know I, I realize it's not about me, but to know that my work at least played a part or had meaning, and to know that those children it to know those children or actually able to to do so much more than ever before, or maybe even anyone thought possible. So it's amazing.

**00:19:08:00 - 00:19:10:17**

**Eileen Lamb**

The STEM subjects. Is it me echoing again?

**00:19:11:09 - 00:19:11:22**

**Andrew Komarow**

Yeah, it is.

**00:19:11:22 - 00:19:14:07**

**Josh Edwards**

I hear no echo.

**00:19:14:19 - 00:19:15:24**

**Eileen Lamb**

No, I heard it.

**00:19:18:00 - 00:19:24:17**

**Josh Edwards**

Echo! Echo! Thought I would lighten the mood. Plus I have Jack Black in my head.

**00:19:24:17 - 00:19:26:04**

**Eileen Lamb**

You've got the jokes, Josh.

**00:19:26:16 - 00:19:55:05**

**Josh Edwards**

Thank you. Believe or not that. Thank you. I actually, if I may, that's that's sort of something I've learned or my mother pointed out is a coping mechanism. One, I'm just I'm just a born Muppet Looney Toon mix. Oh, and Robin Williams. But, but seriously, whenever I do have an example, whenever my boss, the teacher I would work with, I'm a teacher's assistant at elementary school.

**00:19:55:11 - 00:20:20:13**

**Josh Edwards**

And when and when my boss can be at work or the days when, you know, he would end up not showing up. And I didn't know. You can imagine eight or seven between like 6 to 8 children on special for special education and may be the only one who wrote who remotely knows what to do. And I still just barely would know what my boss would do.

**00:20:20:19 - 00:20:50:10**

**Josh Edwards**

You can imagine it can be kind of strenuous to try to figure out everything on the fly. And I would tell this to my mother, but it's the truth. I, I would tell her I feel like Fozzie Bear running The Muppet Show with Kermit the Frog gone. And, and it kind of relieves some of the tension. And I realized the last few times she was gone, what helped was I would joke or I would quote one of the times Fozzie was doing that, Oh, I don't believe that.

**00:20:50:19 - 00:21:13:00**

**Josh Edwards**

Or the show is falling apart. I'd probably blow up the theater. And he starts to leave and the tears can just go off at the same time. All at the same time. Oh, boy. Well, at all. Bear, OScar what else can go wrong? Well, well, the stage meant well. The stage crew's talking about



quitting. Yeah. See that?

**00:21:13:00 - 00:21:46:16**

**Josh Edwards**

That. That my mother realized that was a that was my nerves. I actually. I may have realized that it was my nerves getting out, my that the comedian that was my dealing with my nerves. Something else like like say you're driving in fog or you're trying to find a place, you get lost and you just so anxious and and you know, and the highways can be very demanding and what helps I've been very bad about this lately, but something I learned from my time at my job was what helps something that helps. As you can get colored pencils, you can can try to draw in a page of colored pencils or something. And I don't know how or why, but it's very therapeutic. Coloring page with colored pencils is very therapeutic, especially when you don't have that clear head and you can draw something. Originally. So you see, you don't always have that mindset.

**00:22:13:17 - 00:22:41:10**

**Josh Edwards**

I told I told you Eileen before we were getting started how I have tried to drum and comic book characters, how I was learning that from my friend. Well, what? Well, unfortunately, when you're anxious, you don't. You can always the creative part of your mind is a little fogged up. But when you're tracing things in, you have the physical release and you know, you can just automatically go right there.

**00:22:42:00 - 00:23:06:02**

**Josh Edwards**

You can control where you you can be, you can be aware, you can not watch videos, you cannot do anything else. You can just either have ten or 15 minutes, calm, quiet place, like long, long couch or or pen or pencil in pictures. And it makes a great deal. It makes a very big difference.

**00:23:06:17 - 00:23:17:09**

**Eileen Lamb**

I'm going to ask you some quick questions, but before this, I want you to tell people where they can find you. And by that, I don't mean your couch. I mean on social media.

**00:23:17:20 - 00:23:48:03**

**Josh Edwards**

All well, you can find me on, I'm hoping a few other places. What I mean by that is I'm hoping maybe I'm still I'm still early development on this Facebook and I don't know about Twitter, but I'd like them maybe soon. But right now you can only find me on YouTube through the United Region and you can find me look for the picture.

**00:23:48:03 - 00:24:34:20**

**Josh Edwards**

With big kind of brain shaped blue ball. What the green U and R. See the blue represents the world as a as brain see and the green and the are the continents see the you and are they represent united region sort of like America as one as one people but I also represents the region of the brain. See represents people living as living as one region when people and well not one mind but but you know people with autism and people with cerebral palsy, people without developmental disability, all of America living together, regardless of the challenges or what we look like and and where we come from.

**00:24:35:01 - 00:24:40:14**

**Josh Edwards**

I'm hoping this YouTube channel and a few other projects can, can help us see that.

**00:24:40:17 - 00:24:51:00**

**Eileen Lamb**

I hope it works out for you, too. I'm going to ask you the quickfire questions now. It's very simple. You just tell me the first answer that comes to your mind.

**00:24:51:22 - 00:24:52:11**

**Josh Edwards**

All right.

**00:24:53:06 - 00:24:54:12**

**Eileenn Lamb**

Who's your favorite singer?

**00:24:55:12 - 00:25:07:07**

**Josh Edwards**

My favorite singer. Unfortunately, I have thought a lot about this, but the one on top of my head and I would have to say I'm tied between Kelly Clarkson or Katy Perry.

**00:25:07:07 - 00:25:09:00**

**Eileen Lamb**

Favorite TV show or movie?

**00:25:09:20 - 00:25:23:01**

**Josh Edwards**

Ooh, favorite TV show or movie. I have again, first in my head, but I'll definitely say, Oh, I definitely got say, Big Bang Theory, or at least it's definitely high up there.

**00:25:23:01 - 00:25:24:18**

**Eileen Lamb**

Do you have a favorite sports?

**00:25:24:18 - 00:25:48:17**

**Josh Edwards**

Favorite sport? I have to admit I would put N/A for that not applicable, although I'm I'm just not the I'm just not a sports fanatic. But I will, you know, I have no I don't have anything against people. I love sports. And, you know, when I was in Kansas, you take me a Royals game. I wouldn't say no. I think could be that could be very fun. All the different different music they play and the fireworks and. Oh, oh, man, no, it's ugly. Very fun. Royals games.

**00:26:02:09 - 00:26:07:07**

**Eileen Lamb**

You have a favorite type of food? Chinese? American? Italian?

**00:26:08:08 - 00:26:29:02**

**Josh Edwards**

Oh, you killing me? You're really waking up the rumbly in my tummy. But I have to admit I'm I've always been a burger boy, but I have to admit I've definitely gotten a craving or I've, I have a very high passion for fried chicken. I've actually learned to make fried chicken.

**00:26:29:12 - 00:26:30:00**

**Eileen Lamb**

Oh.

**00:26:30:14 - 00:26:34:16**

**Josh Edwards**

Yeah? Yeah. I'm learning to cook in my in my recently in my recent days.

**00:26:35:07 - 00:26:36:16**

**Eileen Lamb**

Do you have a favorite color?

**00:26:38:01 - 00:26:39:09**

**Josh Edwards**

Definitely orange.

**00:26:40:02 - 00:26:41:07**

**Andrew Komarow**

Orange. Okay.

**00:26:41:20 - 00:26:52:24**

**Eileen Lamb**

Well, thank you so much for joining us today, Josh, I will let you know when the episode is live,, but we enjoyed learning about you and I hope you have a wonderful rest of your night.

**00:26:53:24 - 00:27:00:23**

**Josh Edwards**

Much obliged, Eileen. And same to you and Andrew. Very nice to meet you. Bye bye. Bye. By Andrew.