

00:00:00:04 - 00:00:20:06

Eileen Lamb

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

00:00:20:07 - 00:00:39:09

Andrew Komarow

Today our guest is Olivia. Olivia Hops is a San Diego native diagnosed with autism in 2020 at 24 years old. She's also a former sports journalist, business owner, cookbook author. Olivia now makes YouTube videos and hopes to help bring awareness to what autism looks like in females and adults. Thank you for coming.

00:00:40:02 - 00:00:43:14

Olivia Hops

Oh, thanks so much for having me, guys. I'm very honored to be here.

00:00:44:13 - 00:01:00:12

Andrew Komarow

So we'd like to start our podcast off. We ask each guest how they identify and although we don't mean pronouns such as she/her, you're welcome to share those too. We mean person with autism on the spectrum. Autistic. Do you have a preference? And if so what is it?

00:01:00:12 - 00:01:10:20

Olivia Hops

I do not have a preference. I identify with all of them, I guess. I use them interchangeably. So use whatever you guys feel most comfortable with, because it doesn't matter to me.

00:01:11:15 - 00:01:30:10

Eileen Lamb

You know, I really am amazed because we ask this question because it seems to be like such a controversial topic in the autism community. And I feel like 90% of our guests have said whatever, I don't care. Like, most people don't really have a preference. And we're on episode like 60, I want to say. I mean, that's so many episodes. .

00:01:30:22 - 00:01:51:24

Olivia Hops

Yeah, no, that's amazing, because I have always thought I was in the minority of not caring. To me it's the same. But a lot of times on my YouTube videos people will write kind of rude comments because I will use like something that they disagree with or whatever, and they'll like give me a lecture on it.

00:01:51:24 - 00:02:04:17

Olivia Hops

And I'm just like, I personally don't care. So I'm going to call myself, you know, whatever is just coming out of my mouth. But so that's good. That's good to know, actually, that I'm I'm not just some weird outlier that a lot of people that come on here also.

00:02:05:12 - 00:02:13:16

Eileen Lamb

Well I think, you know, there is a vocal minority there. They're very vocal. So you feel like they're the majority, right?

00:02:14:04 - 00:02:32:07

Olivia Hops

Yes. Yes, absolutely. That's so true. You're so right about that. So, yeah, so and I do usually I'll get like people who then back me up, like on that comment. So I'm like, okay, good. But yeah, it's always the, the really loud ones that, you know, get the most attention and you forget about all the people that are saying nice things or agree with you, you know.

00:02:32:13 - 00:02:40:20

Eileen Lamb

Yep, exactly. It's like those people that write Yelp reviews only when they have a bad experience after going to a restaurant.

00:02:41:12 - 00:02:49:08

Olivia Hops

Oh, my gosh. Yeah, it's. Yeah. Is that. That's the ones you read. You don't look at all the five star reviews. You go and look at the one star reviews. So yeah, I get it.

00:02:50:22 - 00:03:02:19

Eileen Lamb

So why don't you take us back in time. And when you were diagnosed with autism, so you were an adult. Can you tell us what made you seek a diagnosis or did someone notice? What was that journey like?

00:03:04:02 - 00:03:26:01

Olivia Hops

Yeah. So ever since I can remember, I wanted to know why my brain seemed to not work "right". I always said there was something wrong. My brain didn't work correctly. And, and this was like from as long as I can remember since I was a kid and my mom likes to tell a story of how I would use to, I'd have meltdowns.

00:03:26:01 - 00:03:52:15

Olivia Hops

Obviously, we didn't know they were meltdowns at the time. We thought they were some kind of temper tantrum. And after trying many things to, you know, fix a situation which is not fixable, she then learned to just put me in my room and let me work through the meltdown. And unbeknownst to me, she would stand outside my door and I would be I'm a Christian and I would be screaming at God, "why did you make me like this" from as young as like eight years old?

00:03:53:05 - 00:04:16:11

Olivia Hops

And so my whole life, I had this burning question because I knew like, something wasn't quite right. Like, I wasn't like the people around me. And I really wanted to know what that was, that the reasoning behind that. And so I got like many diagnoses growing up, you know, like depression and anxiety, PTSD, all the usual kind of things.

00:04:16:19 - 00:04:34:18

Olivia Hops

And I probably was like the only person ever that like, would get excited when I got a new diagnosis because I thought, Oh, maybe this is my answer that I've been searching for. And, you know, they never quite fit. They fit some of what I went through, but not everything. And so I kind of given up hope of finding my answer.

00:04:34:18 - 00:05:04:08

Olivia Hops

I just kind of thought maybe there wasn't an answer until I was 22 and I was up visiting my best friend from elementary school in Washington State. She was graduating college, and so I went to her graduation and at her graduation dinner afterwards with her family. I was babbling along because I can't tell a short story and I have no boundaries, and I was always babbling along about like all my life problems.

00:05:04:08 - 00:05:20:21

Olivia Hops

I mean, all these things that I've gone through in my life. And her aunt was sitting across from me who I didn't know. I guess I had met her. I was like a kid, but I didn't remember. And I could tell she was very intensely listening to me. And it kind of made me nervous because I noticed.

00:05:20:21 - 00:05:35:24

Olivia Hops

So I got like, Oh my gosh, did I say something that, like, offended her or something? And so after I was done babbling, she said, Can I ask you a question? And I don't want you to get offended. And I was like, Oh, yeah, sure. I don't get like, offended at anything. And she said, "Have you ever been tested for autism"?

00:05:37:02 - 00:06:06:06

Olivia Hops

And I was like, No. And at that point I really didn't even know what autism was. The only example of autism that I had in my life was at the time I owned my own business. And I had an autistic young man working for me and helping me. And I knew I was pretty much nothing like him. He had more severe health needs and support needs and but obviously her saying this, my friend's aunt really intrigued me.

00:06:06:11 - 00:06:29:19**Olivia Hops**

And she said, maybe, you know, you want to look up some autism traits infemales because my daughter who was she was like five years younger than me. So I think she was 17 at the time, was just diagnosed. And you sound a lot like her. And so, of course, as soon as I got back to my hotel room that night, I was Googling, you know, traits of autism and girls.

00:06:29:19 - 00:06:49:02**Olivia Hops**

And it was just like the light bulb moment. And suddenly my whole life was making sense. And I got so excited and I got home and I went to see I was seeing a weekly therapist and I brought it up to her and she immediately said like, Oh, there's absolutely no way. There's no way, because you and I can have a conversation.

00:06:49:02 - 00:07:13:05**Olivia Hops**

So there's no way you could be autistic. And I got really embarrassed and I was like, I have to find a new therapist because that was mortifying. And so I kind of like dropped the topic and it took another year and a half, almost two years for me to get finally diagnosed because of that therapist reaction to me because I got so just like, yeah, just embarrassed by her answer.

00:07:14:19 - 00:07:47:15**Olivia Hops**

But finally, after talking with my parents about it and especially my mom, you know, she's like, I think 100% you're autistic. And so I was able to find a doctor who specialized in diagnosing adults, and he, weirdly enough, his his private practice office was in the same building of my therapist office that said there is no way. And so in in January 2020, I had my assesment and he diagnosed me and it was the best day of my life.

00:07:48:01 - 00:08:01:01**Olivia Hops**

Such a weight lifted off my shoulders and like my mom's shoulders and and yeah, so sorry there I am babbling, giving you a 20 minute long answer. But yeah, about that is my diagnosis story.

00:08:01:08 - 00:08:28:17**Eileen Lamb**

You know, it's funny because every time we have a female woman in the podcast sharing their diagnosis story as an adult, I always feel like they're so similar. I mean, my story's very similar to yours, and I like how you mention your mom, because when I was diagnosed, my mom felt relief, too. She was because a lot of the time when she was raising me, she's like, "What am I doing wrong"?

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Eileen Lamb

You know, why can she do this and that? And she felt like it was her parenting. And I think you took some of the guilt off of her shoulders, too. When I was diagnosed, you know, she was doing the best she could in a country. I was raised in France where there was like no resources. She didn't even know I had autism anyway. So what else could she have done? You know? So I realized it's.

00:08:52:24 - 00:09:12:20

Andrew Komarow

I think that's interesting. And I think this is probably just for my mom that, you know.. But my mom felt the opposite of relief. You know, she felt guilt, right, for, oh, my God, all of these signs were so obvious. How didn't I notice? Right. Like, and I had I had a lot of very stereotypical signs, etc..

00:09:12:20 - 00:09:28:12

Andrew Komarow

So I think she was like, oh, that's why he loved just staring at fans. Oh, or like, but like, like in like a good way, I think. Or like, like a character. I like she, like if she had known, she felt like she could have done more, like she she felt guilty.

00:09:29:15 - 00:09:32:08

Eileen Lamb

So it can be both you know.

00:09:32:09 - 00:09:56:07

Olivia Hops

Like, that's interesting. Yeah, well, because, I mean, what you said is, like, almost like, verbatim what my mom said to the doctor who diagnosed me. She's like, and she, you know, started like, crying. And then there I am, like, not knowing what to do because I'm not good with that with stuff. And, you know, she's like, I just I felt like it was my fault and that I had done something wrong, that I parented wrong, you know, that I had done something incorrectly.

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Olivia Hops

And so just that relief and that the guilt feeling being taken off her shoulders, that it was nothing that she did, but then to in turn the whole like, well, I wish like, why didn't I notice that sooner so

that I could've gotten her help? I think that was actually more my feelings. Like I went through like a little period of time of like, not really anger at my parents because my mom always was, I would say, even before I got diagnosed, it's like, Oh, we always knew Olivia was like special.

00:10:24:09 - 00:10:39:04

Olivia Hops

Like Olivia was different. Like, we knew she was different. You know, people were always trying to, you know, or we knew with her she was a square peg trying to fit into a round hole. And so I would always like kind of get upset because I'm like, if you, you know, were so sure that I was different, it's up.

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Olivia Hops

Why didn't you fight more to figure out what it was so they didn't have to go through all this these traumas. And, you know, it's it's like that. I feel guilty for thinking that because obviously, I know that she was trying her hardest and there just wasn't the resources available and nobody noticed. So how was she supposed to know?

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Olivia Hops

Because she's not it's not like she was educated. If doctors didn't know and she wasn't going to know. But so yeah, so I could see I can see both your points with my mom for sure.

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Eileen Lamb

Yeah, exactly. I mean, like, it's not their fault because back then there was just not as much awareness. I feel like nowadays it would be harder. Like I don't think it would be me as a child nowadays. But yeah, 30 years ago it was much different. And you know, when my son was diagnosed, Charlie, my oldest, I told my mom and I started,

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Eileen Lamb

I told my followers at the time, I don't have any like followers. I mean, they're not called followers on your private page. Friends. I told my friends and she was like, You shouldn't tell people, Oh my God, they're going to think he's the R word. You know? She was like, so, like, against me, like, sharing anything about Charlie's diagnosis because she was so afraid of the stigma around it, you know?

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Eileen Lamb

And after a year of me sharing, like she changed her mind and she was like very supportive, she started posting about it on her own page to educate people in France. But there was like so much stigma at first around that, you know, the autism. And it was just like really shocking and

made me wonder like, well, if she were never, I believe, the doctor telling her I was autistic because she felt she would have felt shame.

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Eileen Lamb

And, you know, lots of feelings around the diagnosis.

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Olivia Hops

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. Like my my, my mom's always been very supportive, like, since I started sharing. And it's like, if if, like, you weren't sharing, if I wasn't sure if all these people weren't sharing, then there would be those, like, big stigmas because nobody would know, because everybody would just keep private. And, you know, I still, I still have people that come on my YouTube videos and say, like, you should put yourself in a box and like, you shouldn't have a label and blah, blah, blah.

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Olivia Hops

But it's like, No, I literally searched my whole life for that label. I wanted to know it's my answer, you know? And it's just like, since I got diagnosed, my life has become abundantly easier because I've just been able to now learn about how my brain works, how I work, and keep myself out of situations and scenarios that, you know, are triggering to me.

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Olivia Hops

And obviously it's not perfect. You go through things that you can't predict, but overall, my life spent so much easier to navigate because it's like finally, like I have like a map or like directions.

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Andrew Komarow

Can you tell us the most challenging thing about your autism? And and also, what's your favorite thing?

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Olivia Hops

Okay, most challenging thing, I think would be I struggle with burnout a lot. And so I've never been able to just keep like a normal job or even just a job. And just in general, because I burn out on things so quickly and then I get really, really anxious and really depressed. And so it's like a bad like cycle that I've been in kind of my whole life.

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Olivia Hops

You know, I very typical, like jump into whatever new special interests I have 1,000,000% and I

get burned out on it really quickly. So that's been a struggle. Just work has been such a struggle because of that, because, you know, obviously I realized when I was 19 that I was like, I can't have a boss. I have to be my own boss.

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Olivia Hops

But then even so, with the businesses I created, I get tired of them and want to move on and like I can't even get myself out of bed to do work for my own business. So that's definitely been the hardest thing I think about my autism. And then my favorite thing is probably and it's really funny because I just yesterday I, I made a YouTube video or published a YouTube video about hyperfocus and about how everybody always said it's like like an autism superpower.

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Olivia Hops

And the video is actually kind of like that, saying the opposite, though hyperfocus is still my favorite my autistic trait that I have because I've been able to teach myself so much stuff, you know, on my own and just become like all these cool, well versed or become well versed in all these cool subjects. But I always say that nobody ever talks about the downside of hyperfocus, and maybe not everybody experiences this.

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Olivia Hops

And I wonder if you guys have is I me when I get hyper focused on something, I then like don't take care of myself. I forget to eat, go to the bathroom, like I can't shower, I can't sleep. Being so hyper focused on something. So even though being able to hyper focus has allowed me to do some incredibly cool and like impressive things in my life, it's also made me very sick like physically and stuff in life as well.

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Eileen Lamb

And you you experience that, right? I feel like you.

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Andrew Komarow

Yeah, I know. I mean, from all aspects, from, you know, except, well, a little bit the opposite with the burnout. I just go too far when I'm burned out, I don't stop. I just push myself further, thinking that will fix it and that doesn't fix it. And and with the hyperfocus, you know, especially, you know, I can agree because if you can if you, you know, just to the point where you're neglecting everything else.

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Andrew Komarow

Right. And you're only focused on that. You know, one thing, I don't go through a lot of new

hyperfocus, as I usually have like the same, you know, or special interest, you know, I usually go through it. But now there's days where my wife's like, you do it 6:00. Where were you today? And I was home, right? But like, and I just couldn't get off that train of, you know, being focused on whatever I was on.

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Andrew Komarow

So, yeah, I agree. And I can relate.

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Olivia Hops

Yeah. Yeah. Like, it's interesting that you don't go through, like, nuance because I definitely I do go through new ones and it doesn't have to necessarily be related to like a special interest. It just like whatever I'm working on. So the most recent one is my parents were out of town for two weeks and I was left home alone for the first time, like ever, like, truly like by myself and in this house, cause I'm living with them right now, which was like, amazing, because I love being alone.

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Olivia Hops

But we've been like, in the middle of remodeling our kitchen, like doing it like DIY because my dad, like, refuses to, like, pay somebody like, Oh, I can do it. And so I was like, I'm going to finish the kitchen because I'm tired of having a half ton kitchen. And so I literally finished the whole kitchen while they were gone.

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Olivia Hops

And this two week time period. But and so it's like, that's awesome. But I like, again, I was neglecting things that I needed to do or should have been doing. Obviously, I neglected taking care of myself, so it's like super cool that I got the kitchen done, but it definitely came at a price, which I got to find a balance. So that doesn't happened.

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Eileen Lamb

I don't know if it's due to the same thing, but I have that thing where when I have an idea in my head and my therapist thinks it's due to the OCD that I will, I dream about it. I will wake up in the night thinking about it until it's done. So like, if I want like a wall painted in the house, I'm going to, like, think about it day and night and it's going to, like, prevent me from doing anything until that thing is done and out of the way, you know? And that can be something like a wall painted or like if I remember, that's like there's a shoe that's not like in the right spot downstairs that I didn't get a chance to, you know, put in the right spot. But so it's great in a way, because it forces me to to do things like I don't procrastinate, but I, you know, I get things done.

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Eileen Lamb

But yeah, the downside is that gets like so obsessive and it prevents me from doing other things. And it also I notice the heck out of people around me because I can't stop talking about it until it's done. And sometimes it doesn't. And it's just like.

00:18:36:13 - 00:18:57:00

Olivia Hops

So it's interesting that your doctor or your therapist thinks it's OCD because I've never been diagnosed with OCD, but I definitely feel like I have OCD tendencies in certain things. But that that you describe perfectly. It's like I couldn't go to sleep because I was like, there's things in the kitchen that aren't done. So like, why am I sleeping when I could be up doing that?

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Olivia Hops

Well, that's what I always say. I always say like, it's not that I don't have, you know, anxiety and depression and PTSD and stuff, but it's under the umbrella of autism.

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Eileen Lamb

I mean, it's like, where is the line, you know, where does autism starts and where does another condition come in? You know, it's like sometimes I, like, read things about like ADHD. And I'm like, well, my diagnosis. Is it ADHD? Because, you know, there's some overlap, too. But I asked my therapist and she was like, No, it's.

00:19:25:14 - 00:19:41:18

Andrew Komarow

Eileen, did I send you the picture? When I was getting my eye tracking study, they put all the gel on me. I did that again. I'm still autistic, by the way. And after I do clinical trials at Yale and they need people. And that's a good way to get a diagnosis. If there is a clinical trial by you. I always say that because they have to test you and they have to retest me like every like couple of years because they need to for the clinical trials. So like, yeah, still am.

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Eileen Lamb

Well, how do they test you?

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Andrew Komarow

I do this. They didn't have to do as much. It was only like a couple of hours because they had like, like, like they, they didn't need to do any, like, intelligence testing. Like, apparently that was still good enough. So it was a lot shorter than the first time because they had already done that. They have to like redo certain tests for the trials.

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Eileen Lamb

You your intelligence testing. You don't get that.

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Andrew Komarow

Well, I got that before. I didn't have to do it again, so. But yeah.

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Eileen Lamb

Good to know. Yeah, I don't think we have around Austin but maybe.

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Andrew Komarow

I mean and I recommend it to people because like the first time you go, they do like a really good assessment and you know, I mean for me I'm in Connecticut, so it's Yale. So it's like Yale does an assessment and got the report. So, I mean, that was definitely very helpful and validating. And it's actually it's not only free, you get paid if you get in the trial.

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Eileen Lamb

So sweet.

00:20:48:15 - 00:20:49:00

Andrew Komarow

Yeah.

00:20:49:18 - 00:21:01:04

Eileen Lamb

So, Olivia, can you tell us a bit more about your your bakery and everything like credited to cooking you this you so you had a bakery and then you sold so what's the story?

00:21:01:04 - 00:21:32:05

Olivia Hops

Yes, yes. So, so I have to back up a little more. So growing up, my special interest was football and journalism. I wanted to be a sports journalist. And so and this comes back to my hyperfocus because I was able to hyper focus and teach myself stuff and be so diligent and like internships that I was getting. I was able to get what I thought was my dream job at the NFL Network at 18 years old without ever having to go to college.

And it turned out that I hated it because I didn't like working a 9 to 5. And so ended up quitting

after like my first season because they hire you like per season, not full time. And I would have normally moved. So I had to move to L.A. from San Diego and I normally would have just moved home.

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Olivia Hops

But I had done the like typical I met a boy scenario who he's now my fiancée, and we're getting married in September. But so I didn't want to move home. So I needed to start making money somehow because my savings are dwindling very quickly and I'd always loved baking and stuff. And I so I first I thought, oh, well, I try to do like it at home, like little bakery, make cookies, cakes, stuff like that.

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Olivia Hops

And it just didn't work. There's too many other people doing it. And then somebody brought to my attention edible cookie dough. And I've always been a huge cookie dough fan. I would always eat it out the ball, you know, while baking cookies. And so I thought, well, that would be a super cool idea if I could, like, start something where it was all customizable, kind of like Cold Stone, if you guys know what that is.

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Olivia Hops

But with cookie dough. So you go in and you pick your base cookie dough flavor and instead of ice cream, and then your toppings get mixed in. And so of course my mom was like, Well, you can't do like you can't open a bakery in Los Angeles. She's like, So try to do it from home first to see if it works.

00:22:56:10 - 00:23:16:21

Olivia Hops

And so I was able to license like my home kitchen at first when I started off small and this was in 2015, and then I just was like able to continue to grow and grow the business and then I had to like, get a real commercial kitchen. And I was online and I got a cookbook deal out of it, which was really amazing.

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Olivia Hops

And it was it was a great job for me because it allowed me to work at my own pace and take take breaks because it was kind of seasonal. I couldn't make the dough in the summer and ship it because it would be too hot, it would melt. So I would always get the summer months off. So it was like a great way for my brain to like, reset and get ready for the next, like season of dough making.

00:23:44:06 - 00:24:08:22

Olivia Hops

And but again, as I was saying, I was just getting very tired out of it and burnt out on it and I wanted to do something new and different. So I decided to see if I could sell it. And so last May, so May 2022, I put it for sale. And these are this really nice family bought it for me, who also their child is autistic.

00:24:08:22 - 00:24:22:20**Olivia Hops**

So it stayed in an autism family, which was really cool. And yeah, so I sold it and now I'm I'm retired at the moment just cooking YouTube videos and doing cool stuff like this.

00:24:24:15 - 00:24:30:03**Eileen Lamb**

So you like a lot of careers already in your in your short light? I was going to say.

00:24:31:01 - 00:24:48:19**Olivia Hops**

I have I've had so many careers in my short life. Yeah, I can't keep going. I get bored and I'm like, Oh, I need to do I need to do something else. So but I, I have to say, I was very impressed and kind of proud of myself because I stuck that one out for seven years, which is vastly longer than I've ever stuck out.

00:24:48:19 - 00:24:50:07**Olivia Hops**

Another thing, another career.

00:24:51:09 - 00:24:59:09**Andrew Komarow**

And what made you want to sell it? Was it all the reasons that you gave previously? Was there more to it

00:24:59:14 - 00:25:33:19**Olivia Hops**

So yeah, I just I like it was becoming harder and harder for me to get up and do my work without feeling like so much dread and so much anxiety. And I was bored and like, I guess this is probably gonna sound bad. Not that I thought it was a sinking ship, but it was like, Yeah, cookie dough was such a fad, you know, just like, you know what point like at least when I was growing up, you know, like frozen yogurt shops were a fad and they were like, frozen yogurt shop on, like, every corner.

00:25:34:00 - 00:25:53:04**Olivia Hops**

And it was like cupcake bakeries. Cupcake-ies, you know. And so I felt like cookie dough had

kind of like, run its course. And I had kind of I had done everything I could for the business. And I didn't know how to take it to the next level to where, like, I can grow it like, bigger, like where I needed, you know, like a whole team of people or something.

00:25:53:04 - 00:26:15:11

Olivia Hops

And so I kind of just thought it had run its course in my life and there was nothing else that I could do for the business. And so I was like, I think somebody else who is more passionate about it can, I'm sure, take it and grow it more. But I've kind of grown it to all can be, you know, it had like steadily grown like or, you know, quickly grown the whole like the first like five, six years.

00:26:15:11 - 00:26:34:21

Olivia Hops

And then it had like just steadied and plateaued. And so I just yeah, so, so anyway, so for those reasons I was like, I think it's run its course in my life and hopefully somebody else can take it because I didn't want to see it die or else I just would have closed it. But I thought, you know, I'll try to sell it first, and if nobody wants it, then I'll close.

00:26:34:21 - 00:26:49:11

Olivia Hops

But it was just it was a fun company. And, you know, I had a lot of regular customers that, you know, I didn't want to let down. So, you know, it was it was great that somebody wanted to continue on, you know, this idea that I had. So it was very special.

00:26:50:15 - 00:27:07:17

Andrew Komarow

And did you when you started, you know, looking for somebody to purchase it, did they purchase it because they knew that you were obviously, too and you know, they were or was that just like a weird coincidence or was that part of something you're looking for?

00:27:08:08 - 00:27:29:19

Olivia Hops

It was kind of a weird coincidence, but also kind of not. So what happened was, is I put it for sale. But also kind of not? You mean like I tried like word of mouth, too, and like, I post it on my Instagram. But then there was there's like websites online that you like sell businesses on. And it's kind of like, you know, it's like eBay for like businesses because people can like bid on your business.

00:27:31:02 - 00:27:48:11

Olivia Hops

And so I put it on there and, and it was getting like, like views and asking questions about it. But nobody had like made, you know, an offer or anything. And then or a couple of people had it.

They were pretty like they're a lot lower than when I was asking. So I said, you know, not yet, but, you know, we'll see.

00:27:48:18 - 00:28:12:03

Olivia Hops

And then I was somebody reached out to me because I had started to a online edible cookie dough business course for like aimed at autistic adults to be able to start. And it didn't need to be specifically a cookie dough business online but just how to start their own business online. And so I made this like whole, you know, online course that people could purchase anybody.

00:28:12:03 - 00:28:34:14

Olivia Hops

But again, it was specifically your towards autistic adults to try to help them be able to become self-sufficient and not also have to rely on like getting a like a real 9 to 5 job because so many of us struggle with that. And so this woman, she had bought the course for her son who was autistic. And then she asked, she's like, oh, is your cookie dough company going to going to reopen?

00:28:34:14 - 00:28:53:05

Olivia Hops

Because it was closed for like the summer months? And they said, I don't know. I'm trying to sell it. If I can't sell it, then probably not. And she's like, well, I'd be interested in buying it. And so that's and then we got to talking and then she ultimately made me an offer and, and bought it. So yeah.

00:28:53:05 - 00:28:57:04

Olivia Hops

So I guess like kind of coincidence but like also not sort of a mix.

00:28:57:21 - 00:29:00:18

Andrew Komarow

Oh, that's awesome. That sounds pretty perfect.

00:29:00:18 - 00:29:11:05

Eileen Lamb

Yeah. Lucky. And what happened to your journalism career? Like, what was the breaking point there?

00:29:11:05 - 00:29:37:06

Olivia Hops

Yeah, so the breaking point and again, it was just like I was getting bored of it. And again, just like this vicious cycle that happens to me, everything that I do. But it was really honestly, the NFL, that network that root ruined it for me. I mean, I was already kind of tired of it. And then I

got that job and I was like, so re-energized.

00:29:37:13 - 00:30:00:21

Olivia Hops

And then it just was not a good work environment. And the last straw was actually I, unbeknownst to me, I was going through major burnout and so I was no longer coming into the office with my like usual, like smiley face, which was my mask again, unbeknownst to me. And so and I was just very depressed and anxious.

00:30:00:21 - 00:30:25:05

Olivia Hops

And my boss called me into his office one day and like, reprimanded me and like, accused me that my work had started not being up to par. And I would have like gone to war to prove that my work had not faltered. But basically he was like upset that I wasn't coming in and like being interactive with my coworkers and being all cheery.

00:30:25:05 - 00:30:41:13

Olivia Hops

I was just going in and doing my work and leaving and so I told them again and I didn't know I was autistic, but I said I was like, I'm sorry. I'm just like, I'm going through a rough time. I'm really depressed and I have this and that. And he said, Well, everybody gets sad sometimes, like just suck it up.

00:30:42:03 - 00:31:10:16

Olivia Hops

And I quit the next day. I quit the next day. That was the push I needed to quit. And and so, yeah, so that kind of spoiled it for me. But I'm kind of getting the itch back, you know, it's been it's been like nine years almost. I'm hanging in the back, but it but it's interesting because so my special interest was football and specifically like the San Diego Chargers and they moved I don't know how long ago now years and years ago now to Los Angeles.

00:31:10:16 - 00:31:33:24

Olivia Hops

And that crushed my soul. So not no longer a fan of them. And I kind of had like this morning of this special interest because football no longer interests me for I think between the NFL like about like NFL Network, about experiments that are like chargers sleeping and like all my favorite players retiring just because obviously they bring their course and they're too old to play now.

00:31:33:24 - 00:31:53:01

Olivia Hops

And so I've kind of been boring the special interest of mine that was so important to me. It was everything to me. And now, like I can't even watch a football game without like going, I don't

want to watch this, but so I've become a big fan. So I knew like special interest right now, within the last few years has been the San Diego Padres baseball, which I like.

00:31:53:01 - 00:32:12:18

Olivia Hops

If you had told me ten years ago I was a baseball fan, I would have laughed because I used to hate baseball. I thought it was so boring. But I'm really into it and I'm enjoying, you know, getting to root for a team in my hometown again. And so, yeah, so now it's like, oh, maybe, maybe I could try to, you know, become a sports journalist again and focus on baseball.

00:32:12:18 - 00:32:36:15

Olivia Hops

But I haven't because of all these contacts. And so because I work for the paper in San Diego and I interned for this guy by the name of Kevin Casey, who's like, like the San Diego sports guy, and he's it's it was a great time interning for him. And I learned a lot. But so, yeah, maybe one day I'll reach out and be like, oh, maybe I can resurface my journalism career.

00:32:36:15 - 00:32:44:03

Olivia Hops

But now focus on baseball or any other sport, but just haven't done it yet. But I definitely am getting the itch back recently. So we'll see.

00:32:44:10 - 00:33:06:14

Andrew Komarow

I, sports you know NFL football American soccer for Eileen, you know seems to be just so male dominated. Did you experience any adversary when you were pursuing your sports career or anything of that nature that you want to comment on?

00:33:07:11 - 00:33:27:24

Olivia Hops

Yeah. You know, at one point I thought, you know, I was put on this earth to, like, break the the gender ceiling in the world of football. And I think I did in many ways. I played football, my high school football team, which is a hilarious many stories. And I was like the first girls who are points for my high school.

00:33:27:24 - 00:33:46:08

Olivia Hops

And so, you know, that was a blast. And then, you know, during doing journalism, I have to say, because, you know, people, you know, we're always we're always kind of like insinuate like, oh, have you had problems with you're a girl? But I didn't. People were pretty good about it. The thing I had, the like that I got discriminated against was age because I was so young.

00:33:47:13 - 00:34:09:11

Olivia Hops

And so that was really like my biggest barrier. It was the age thing rather than the gender thing because, you know, people, you know, when I went to the NFL, I like was afraid to tell people my age to the point where I didn't talk about it because I knew if people knew how young I was, then their follow up question would be like, Well then how did you go to college and get this job?

00:34:10:06 - 00:34:30:03**Olivia Hops**

I and I didn't want people knowing that I didn't go to college because I didn't want them thinking like that, like I didn't know what I was doing or I couldn't keep up with them. I shouldn't have gotten the job. So and yeah, that's something I'm a big advocate for is like, you can go about getting your education in a different way other than just traditional schooling.

00:34:30:03 - 00:34:52:14**Olivia Hops**

Obviously, if you want to do the just the traditional college route, amazing. But for me that was just never an option because I hated school so much and brought so many things I'd, you know, and I like to to prove are like to think that I proved a lot of people wrong who when I said in I think I was 16 and I, I made the decision that there was no way I was going to get through college like I bear.

00:34:52:15 - 00:35:16:02**Olivia Hops**

I didn't think I was going to go through high school. And, you know, everybody, friends, family, even people like my friends my own age were like, if you don't go to college, you're going to like end up having a miserable life and being a hobo or something. And I was like, And I'm very competitive. So I just, I think, pushed me to work even harder to to prove that there are other options or other ways.

00:35:17:15 - 00:35:41:23**Olivia Hops**

But again, in doing so, because I was so young, it it I got I was met with some adversity there but for the gender thing, surprise and really not as much as people would think. And even I myself would have thought people were always very, very nice. I think it helped also in the fact that I was young because people were like, Oh, like she's so cute and like, I want to help her, you know?

00:35:42:20 - 00:36:01:16**Olivia Hops**

So. So it got, I guess both ways with the age people either like thought it was great or they thought it was terrible, so there was no really middle ground. But yeah, so I have to say, like thankfully everybody I worked with in the football NFL world, at least to my face, didn't care about my gender.

00:36:02:00 - 00:36:02:14

Andrew Komarow

That's awesome.

00:36:03:05 - 00:36:04:16

Olivia Hops

Yeah. Yeah, it was.

00:36:04:24 - 00:36:13:24

Eileen Lamb

So how about your personal life? You mentioned earlier that you were getting married in September.

00:36:14:18 - 00:36:15:17

Olivia Hops

September

00:36:15:17 - 00:36:19:23

Eileen Lamb

Are you guys going to live together? Are you nervous about that? Like, what's.

00:36:20:01 - 00:36:51:15

Olivia Hops

So so no, I'm not nervous about that because we do live together already. And he I know the one because he's the only person besides like my immediate family that I've never, like, gotten annoyed with. But I can spend all day long every day with him and not like, get tired of him because other people like socially as a kid, like sleepovers are torturous for me because I would like, wake up and like literally like, sneak into my parents room because I couldn't stand to be around my friend for like another second.

00:36:52:16 - 00:37:27:24

Olivia Hops

But with Alex, my fiance's name, that's never happened. So that's all I say. How I knew he was the one. But yeah, I've dated him since I met him at the NFL Network, and so I've been dating him for almost nine years. And, you know, things things are good, but it definitely, you know, is adjustment for me. When we first started dating, I never actually, hes my first boyfriend I've ever had and I kind of never thought I would get married because for the reason I kind of said is that like I could never stand people for very long and I really need my alone time to like, function.

00:37:28:18 - 00:37:35:01

Olivia Hops

I very much don't like being touched. So I always just thought that I probably was never going

to get married. So it was a shock to find somebody that like that and like I was okay with him. But so, you know, it's it's you know, we're in the, like, mundane, kind of thing because we're both living with my parents right now. We moved in during COVID to, like, save money. We hadn't moved back out yet. But, you know, it's it's hard in the sense of when I met Alex, he was a very physical, touchy feely person and I wasn't.

00:38:03:15 - 00:38:27:12

Olivia Hops

So I feel bad because he's had to compromise more than I have on that aspect. I have become very, very much more of a being okay with being touched. Like I didn't even like being hugged and now, like I'm okay with hugs and stuff and I can, you know, kind of cuddle with him at times. But, you know, he's had to make quite the adjustment because I'm not comfortable with that.

00:38:28:08 - 00:38:56:01

Olivia Hops

So, you know, just it's that's been probably like the the hardest part of the relationship is the physical stuff. Not that he's ever like been in like he's been so understanding about it and and so good about understanding how my brain works. And you know, he's the only person that can calm me down and he really, truly like, gets me and he, you know, really takes care of me when I can't take care of myself.

00:38:57:05 - 00:39:18:09

Olivia Hops

And so, you know, I'm just I feel really blessed to have him because I'm difficult to deal with and put up with. And he does it. And he does it with a smile on his face. But I'm very excited to to finally marry him and do something I never thought I would do. We're getting married in Italy, which is really exciting.

00:39:18:09 - 00:39:51:17

Olivia Hops

So I partially grew up in Italy. My dad spent my dad owned his own business and it was partially located there. So it's a very special place for me. And it's, you know, it's my second home. And so I'm excited to, you know, get to I mean, he's been twice now, but just to get to show him where I grew up partially and of our family, they're not really our family, but we think there are people going over there and just yeah, just share all those memories with him growing up because Italy has always been like my, my happy place.

00:39:52:01 - 00:40:12:06

Olivia Hops

It's when I was over there, I felt and obviously growing up, I didn't know I was autistic, but I always felt so much calmer there and less anxious. And it's like my autism, like traits like obviously they didn't go away, but like, they like, diminished a little bit. They, like, weren't as prevalent when I was over there. And I just remember always being happier and less stressed

over there.

00:40:12:13 - 00:40:20:10

Olivia Hops

So, you know, still to this day, it's my my happy place. So I'm really excited to get married there and just like, make another really cool memory over there.

00:40:20:16 - 00:40:26:12

Eileen Lamb

Pretty exciting. Italy is it's such a great place. But the marriage part too. But.

00:40:28:04 - 00:40:31:22

Olivia Hops

But Italy, Yeah.

So it's awful. Yeah.

00:40:31:22 - 00:40:43:01

Eileen Lamb

Europe is nice to to visit, not really to live. Not so much. Sorry foreigners are there but to visit. It's just so nice.

00:40:43:05 - 00:40:45:00

Olivia Hops

That's the best for me. Yeah.

00:40:45:12 - 00:40:46:23

Eileen Lamb

And the landscapes? Yeah.

00:40:47:01 - 00:40:49:05

Olivia Hops

Oh, yes. Oh, it's so gorgeous. Oh, yeah.

00:40:49:12 - 00:40:53:00

Eileen Lamb

You can take some nice pictures for social media. Yes. I mean.

00:40:53:00 - 00:40:55:14

Olivia Hops

To show off. Yes. Oh.

00:40:55:23 - 00:40:58:20

Eileen Lamb

Do you want to tell people where they can find you on social media?

00:40:59:19 - 00:41:24:00

Olivia Hops

Yeah. So you can follow me on Instagram at Olivia Hopps. Just my name though. I don't I don't like posts like autism content really on there occasionally. I don't do a lot of posting on there. Just more for personal life stuff. If you want to follow along on my personal journey to follow me there. If not, feel free to subscribe to our YouTube channel, which is if you just go to YouTube and type again. My name Olivia Hopps or YouTube.com slash Olivia Hopps, my general pop up. And that's where I do all my autism content and stuff on there. So yeah, I would super appreciate a subscribe.

00:41:36:15 - 00:41:45:06

Eileen Lamb

They're awesome. And to wrap it up, we always ask our guest some quickfire questions. So you just tell me the first thing that comes to your mind.

00:41:45:23 - 00:41:46:17

Olivia Hops

Okay, cool.

00:41:47:13 - 00:41:50:16

Eileen Lamb

Who is your favorite cook?

00:41:50:16 - 00:41:55:18

Olivia Hops

Oh, cook. Gordon Ramsay. Probably. I like how he's so blunt.

00:41:56:16 - 00:42:03:15

Eileen Lamb

Favorite autism representation in, like, a movie book, TV show.

00:42:04:17 - 00:42:27:22

Olivia Hops

Oh, my favorite book. Because it really helped me when I was first diagnosed is Asperger's. I love that book. I got it. It was an easy read because I hate reading. And what I did actually is I went and I as I was reading it, I highlighted things that really spoke to me. And then I and then the book got passed around my family so they could understand me better.

00:42:27:22 - 00:42:28:19

Olivia Hops

So it was really cool.

00:42:30:01 - 00:42:32:07

Eileen Lamb

I was just going to ask, what's your favorite book?

00:42:33:21 - 00:42:38:15

Olivia Hops

Yes, I am. So I read what I got first.

00:42:39:21 - 00:42:44:03

Eileen Lamb

Your favorite autism advocates.

00:42:44:03 - 00:43:02:01

Speaker 3

Probably Kerry just because. Kerry Magro because he's he's been so nice and like kind of taking me under his wing and has been so helpful. And because, you know, I don't even know how you found me, but, you know, he's just been so nice and so lovely and always asked me to be part of these panels, like how we how we met.

00:43:02:01 - 00:43:09:18

Olivia Hops

And he just been very supportive. And so I just love his message and he's so, so sweet and so kind. And, yeah, he's definitely my favorite.

00:43:10:16 - 00:43:14:06

Eileen Lamb

Well, to make sure he is just a little shout out.

00:43:14:19 - 00:43:16:07

Olivia Hops

Yes. Nice plug.

00:43:17:24 - 00:43:19:23

Eileen Lamb

And finally, what's your favorite color?

00:43:21:08 - 00:43:34:09

Olivia Hops

Blue. Blue, light blue. Specifically blue. I have a dog named Blue. My whole room is blue. You can't quite see. But like this wall over here is blue. My first word was blue. So, yes, I'm a I'm a blue girl.

00:43:34:22 - 00:43:40:20

Eileen Lamb

But blue isn't interesting. That's a hard word. Blue like I as a baby blue.

00:43:41:06 - 00:43:48:04

Olivia Hops.

Yeah, that was my first word. Yeah, I swear that was my. And I didn't talk til I was like almost three. But when I did, that was my first argument.

00:43:48:24 - 00:43:58:23

Eileen Lamb

Well, thank you so much for coming on our podcast today. I love learning about your story and all the similarities between us girls on the spectrum. And was you too, Andrew

00:43:59:00 - 00:44:00:16

Andrew Komarow

Yeah, it's okay. No offense to.

00:44:02:02 - 00:44:08:22

Olivia Hops

Well, thank you both so much for having me. I've had a blast and thanks for having me on and letting me babble about. I'm sorry.

00:44:09:12 - 00:44:11:21

Eileen Lamb

Yeah, of course. Yeah. We'll let you know when it's like.

00:44:12:19 - 00:44:17:19

Olivia Lamb

Okay, awesome. I can't wait. Thanks so much, guys. It's been so fun talking to you and learning about you guys, too.

00:44:18:10 - 00:44:18:18

Andrew Komarow

Yeah.

00:44:19:02 - 00:44:21:04

Eileen Lamb

Thank you so much. Bye bye.

00:44:21:04 - 00:44:22:22

Olivia Hops

Bye. Bye bye, guys.