

00;00;00;23 - 00;00;21;02

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 am Eileen Lamb, an autistic author and photographer and I co-host this podcast with Andrew Komarow.

00;00;21;05 - 00;00;49;06

Andrew Komarow

Hey, I m Andrew Komarow, an autistic entrepreneur, a co-host of this podcast. And today our guest is Ross Voorhies, because he said, I found it super interesting for he's a jolly, jolly good fellow. It was a way to pronounce it from just before the podcast. So I did that right. Anyway, about eight years ago, Ross finally figured out that he was on the spectrum, even after becoming a mental health therapist prior.

He wound up writing a book about what he learned about autism from both perspectives and how that's changed his work with his clients, who are also on the spectrum. Thank you for joining us.

00;01;00;26 - 00;01;03;01

Ross Voorhees

Thank you for having me. I really appreciate it.

00;01;04;05 - 00;01;30;04

Andrew Komarow

So we like to start off each podcast asked, have you listened to our podcast before? Yes. Some. Yeah. So, as you know, we like to start off by asking everyone how they like to be identified and we actually do keep a running total of this for the preference, unscientific as it may be. But how do you prefer to be identified? We don't mean she/her pronouns, but we mean person with autism. Autistic, on the spectrum. Do you have a preference?

00;01;33;01 - 00;02;01;15

Ross Voorhees

It really doesn't bother me. However, people want to say it as long as it's something I'm not profane because, you know, for me, I don't feel the stigma, you know, any kind of stigma attached to it. So it really doesn't bother me how how I'm addressed. I personally use autistic or autism a lot, too, when I'm talking about myself, even with my wife. So.

00;02;03;11 - 00;02;25;29

Eileen Lamb

Right. Well, that's another one because we're starting like keeping track of the answers we're getting. And like the last ten episodes, people are like, I don't care. So it's really interesting to me because, yeah, when you're on social media, you would feel like there is a very, like black and white wrong and right answer to that question, but really most people just like don't care.

00;02;25;29 - 00;02;32;27

Andrew Komarow

And Eileen, you mean to tell me that people with autism have some black and white thinking, Really?

00;02;32;27 - 00;02;35;03

Ross Voorhees

Wow, I've never heard. I should write that down.

00;02;35;11 - 00;02;41;21

Eileen Lamb

Yeah. Can you tell us about your diagnosis journey? Like what led you to a diagnosis? And that was pretty late in life, right?

00;02;42;28 - 00;03;15;01

Ross Voorhees

Yeah. I mean, I guess the best way to describe it is, you know, for the first five decades of my life, I was just kind of I felt often like I was just fumbling about in the dark. I mean, I had a lot of pretty severe episodes of depression and and anxiety and obsessive compulsive disorder behavior. And so, you know, consequently, like a lot of people on the spectrum, you know, I went to therapy for that and I had a variety of therapists.

00;03;15;01 - 00;03;40;07

Ross Voorhees

And little did they know that one day they would become my role models and but that's kind of what happened then. I mean, I couldn't even, you know, go outside of that. We lived in Wichita, Kansas, and for the longest period of time, I mean, just even going outside of the of the city limits was, you know, panic inducing to me.

00;03;41;04 - 00;04;02;01

Ross Voorhees

And I would try to push myself and I would try to get past it. And it just seemed kind of impossible. And and, you know, if someone would have told me that, I would be where I'm at now back then and I would have laughed at them because I just I, I just thought that that's the way it was going to be all my life.

So and then it's funny, but we wound up moving from Wichita to Mesa, Arizona for three years and and it was necessity. My, my wife's job was required and her to move there if she wanted to continue working. And she'd have quite a career already with the company and, and I don't know, just strangely, I kind of found myself when she told me.

00;04;34;14 - 00;05;10;01

Ross Voorhees

I mean, she was like literally crying because she knew how hard it was for me. And she couldn't

imagine that. She just thought it was going to be a big disaster. And I think I was surprised she was when I said, you know what, we'll get through this together. Her And from that day on, I just was able I mean, I'm not saying that everything just went away immediately, of course, but I was able to have a much more kind of wait and see attitude about things and just take them as they come, which I really hadn't had before.

00;05;10;01 - 00;05;48;26

Ross Voorhees

And it was this really kind of, I guess, an adventure. Again, not that it was always easy, not that there wasn't still problems, not that I didn't still face difficulties, but that was I think, really the turning point for me. And then after we were there for a couple of years, I thought about going back to school and I thought that, you know, I was really kind of drawn to being a counselor because during that time I often called upon the things that I'd learned in therapy and, and, you know, remember those things and and actually practice them.

00;05;48;26 - 00;06;17;03

Ross Voorhees

And and they were effective for me. And, you know, it's not unusual for a lot of people in the mental health field to have been so profoundly affected by somebody else who's helped them that they feel compelled to do the same thing in return. It's kind of a it would return the favor sort of thing. So I went back to school at 52 and got my master's degree in social work and and here we are.

00;06;17;03 - 00;07;07;21

Ross Voorhees

When I found out about, well, my supervisor at the time and colleague now call one day, I was kind of just, you know, bemoaning the fact that people sometimes got me really wrong. And it and it just really bothered me. And and it was just kind of it was, I guess, kind of a complaint session or something. But, you know, sometimes that really caused me a lot of doubt about what I was doing and whether I should even pursue becoming a therapist and, you know, one day I said, I just don't get why people get so wrong sometimes and maybe even and I don't know if either of you ever experienced this, but, you know,

00;07;09;11 - 00;07;32;14

Ross Voorhees

interpreted as even dangerous or something because people just think you're a stranger or notice your oddness and go to kind of the worst case scenario, I think, which is very common. But that's another story. And I said something to her about that. She just well, I think it's because, you know, you're you're just kind of to move forward with people before they get a chance to know you to sound familiar at all.

00;07;33;21 - 00;07;53;29

Ross Voorhees

Yeah. And I was like, Really? She's like, Yeah. Oh, and I'd always been that way when people

would tell me things, I was, you know, that helped me kind of navigate, you know, social things in society better. I was always grateful for it. I never took it as a negative or took offense to it or anything like that.

00;07;53;29 - 00;08;16;14

Ross Voorhees

And so when she told me, I would just kind of go and and, you know, maybe an hour later, I was thinking about that my office. And I thought, gosh, that sounds a lot like autism, you know? And so I started kind of it that changed my perspective. And I started reflecting on other incidences I'd faced in my life.

00;08;16;14 - 00;08;35;08

Ross Voorhees

And that just for the first time, it just made sense. And it was like somebody turned the light on in a room that I'd been fumbling about in the dark, trying to figure out where things were. So I quit bumping into things and falling over things. And, you know, it really was like a light just turned on for me.

00;08;36;06 - 00;08;57;02

Ross Voorhees

So and then that got me thinking about writing and, and as I learned more about autism and developed a better understanding of it and I mean, it's kind of been staring me in the face all my life. I just didn't recognize it, I guess.

00;08;59;00 - 00;09;06;06

Andrew Komarow

And what was the diagnosis process for you? Like, how did you start and go through that?

00;09;07;02 - 00;09;37;28

Ross Voorhees

Well, I haven't been been diagnosed by a psychologist. You know, I haven't done the testing and stuff. I mean, for me, it's more you know, we use what's called the DSM five, which is the diagnostic manual for mental health disorders and things. And and I think it's kind of in some regards unfortunate that it's in that manual. I don't always see it as a as a as a mental disability at all.

00;09;38;18 - 00;10;09;15

Ross Voorhees

And we can talk more about that later if you want to know more. But that was what I had to refer to and I just was able to, I guess kind of not officially diagnosed myself, but between that and just the way it helped me make sense of my life and and understand aspects of myself in a way that I never could before, that was enough for me.

00;10;10;07 - 00;10;33;00

Ross Voorhees

And I have even mentioned in the book, you know, that I think that the you know, and I don't know how other people feel about this are the people on the spectrum feel about this. But I do think that if it makes sense to people, if it helps them make sense of their life and in a way that's different, I think that in and of itself is the best diagnosis because you can be diagnosed with something and not at all still not identified.

00;10;34;22 - 00;11;04;14**Andrew Komarow**

That's absolutely true. What's interesting is most of we've had a fair amount of autistic clinicians, you know, social workers, you know, therapists, come on. And I think you're the first one to be self-diagnose star only self-diagnose. And because what we've noticed is most clinicians right now, part of their job is diagnosing. So they see the importance in an official diagnosis.

00;11;05;03 - 00;11;18;13**Andrew Komarow**

Is there a reason that you have not gone after one? You just see no need. Most people find, again, even the clinicians who all knew they were sure, right. Not people in sight.

00;11;18;13 - 00;11;46;21**Ross Voorhees**

So no, and I know it's something that I could do. And I've actually, like gone. I know that there's a lot of online testing and there's some some clinical online testing stuff that I that I've actually gone on and and determined and I'm certified as an autism therapist. And again, I guess I guess it just, you know, at a certain point it didn't seem that important to me.

00;11;46;21 - 00;12;08;22**Ross Voorhees**

I didn't I'm sorry. I didn't. That's fair work. No, I just had something pop up on my screen, made a big noise, and I don't know if you heard that or not, but. Yeah, but but for me, it was just, you know, at that it's just kind of. It's like, you know, when I when I got my degree in social work, I knew what I wanted to do.

00;12;08;22 - 00;12;24;22**Ross Voorhees**

I knew I wanted to work with people. I knew I wanted to be a clinical therapist. Now, as a social worker, there's a lot of stuff you can do. You could be a case manager, you could you can go in, you can work in hospitals. I mean, there's a thousand different things you could do, but I already knew what I would wanted to do.

00;12;24;22 - 00;12;51;10**Ross Voorhees**

And so, you know, instead of getting a Lucy W license, which is licensed clinical social worker, I just went for mental health, you know, as a certified mental health therapist, because we're

licensed mental health therapists, because I already knew what I wanted to do. So I guess just for me, it was always been about that. I guess. I don't know.

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Ross Voorhees

Does that answer your question?

00;12;53;18 - 00;12;56;12

Andrew Komarow

I think so, yeah. Yeah, yeah.

00;12;57;09 - 00;13;17;23

Ross Voorhees

Now you got me curious, and so now I probably will, you know. But yeah, I haven't known a whole lot of you've had the opportunity to meet a lot of people, like you said that, that are art therapists and clinicians that have actually been diagnosed. And I guess I just didn't know that most people did and I'm happy to do it.

00;13;18;09 - 00;13;27;10

Andrew Komarow

No, I mean, that's just been our experience with a limited sample of people on the podcast. It would not hold up to any academic research standards. I'm pretty sure.

00;13;27;16 - 00;13;33;15

Ross Voorhees

You can have me back on again for another episode after I get that. Well, yeah.

00;13;34;08 - 00;14;03;15

Eileen Lamb

Oh yeah. I guess there is, you know, some self bias, right? It's it's difficult to it's kind of like when there is something wrong with you physically and you go to Google and it's going to tell you you have cancer. Right? I mean, and I know you have that added experience being a therapist yourself, but, you know, when you want something, you're going to be you're going to be like seeing those symptoms and traits, characteristics.

00;14;03;15 - 00;14;28;04

Eileen Lamb

And I guess we don't say symptoms in your cell, you know, to confirm what you want to be true. Because like you said, that's there is like the lights turned on and all of that, you know, So having that outside perspective I think is like very valuable. You know, not to say you're not, but just I think that's why people tend to like, seek out an outside perspective on that.

I know when I was diagnosed, it wasn't just my perspective. There was like the psychologists interviewed my husband, my my parents, you know, friends. So she could get like the full

picture. And in the end, some questionnaires. I filled out the same as other people in my family. And the answers were like, very similar. So that was like a confirmation that what I was seeing in myself, those people outside were also seeing in me right.

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Eileen Lamb

But when you're the only person, I think that's when the, you know, doubt can. Yeah.

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Ross Voorhees

And I think there may be something generational to that too. I mean, you know, I'm 62, so I'm a little bit older generation then and it may be that that maybe younger people are or, you know, are younger generations are just that are adults are actually more open to that, I suppose. Yet again, it just didn't seem like something that was personally important to me.

And I understand what you're talking about self bias. Yeah, we see that all the time and I see that all the time. And you know, I have to say it's not a convenient diagnosis. I don't know that it's convenient for anybody other than it helps them understand. Maybe understand themselves or like you said, confirm what they suspect. You know.

00;16;00;11 - 00;16;00;19

Ross Voorhees

Yeah.

00;16;01;19 - 00;16;25;23

Eileen Lamb

Yeah. And, you know, I think you being older than I look, I thing to say, probably you're probably not on social media as much. And you know, there is that growing movement of people self diagnosing and then speaking on the entire community. So I think no, there's like stigma around self diagnosis and, you know, people using it as an as a weapon weapon.

Sure. The diagnosis statistic people and people like my son was a level three autism non-verbal. And they're using that self diagnosis to say that speak on behalf of the entire community. And I think that's why, you know, like self diagnosis, you know, but, you know, in your case, I understand. And that's why, you know, we like having people from different backgrounds on the podcast to hear those perspectives.

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Ross Voorhees

Well, and and, you know, I guess I just wasn't aware of the extent of of how much that is because, you know, I had been very active on social media in the past. But one of the things that I also learned and one of the things that my colleagues trusted me and my supervisor was the kind of the danger of of social media, you know, beyond a certain point.

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Ross Voorhees

In fact, there was just an article that came up, I think it was yesterday that talked about that one of the biggest improvements to mental health is for people who live with themselves to a half an hour of of social media, that just by doing that, it actually vastly increased their their mental health. So which I find really interesting and I think in the book I talk a little bit about social media, too, and and I think like anything, it can be absolutely a force for good, you know?

But I have seen and understand the other viewpoint and, you know, the books that have been written about the dangers of social media and things like that. But so I haven't been active on social media, I guess is what I'm trying to say without being a firehose of information that, you know, I haven't been on it that much, but I can see how people would absolutely use that to draw attention to themselves, almost like it's in fashion or it's a fad, you know, And that just kind of is undignified for for all the people who have been officially diagnosed.

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Ross Voorhees

Does that sound right?

00;18;32;22 - 00;18;34;20

Eileen Lamb

Yeah. So yeah, yeah.

00;18;34;28 - 00;18;35;27

Andrew Komarow

Exactly. Yeah.

00;18;36;04 - 00;19;08;22

Eileen Lamb

I mean, there is self-diagnosis and self-diagnosis and, you know, it's hard to. Yeah, see, see the difference sometimes. And so. Yeah, Complicated issue. Complicated answer. But I appreciate you sharing why you did you did that. So do you look back at how you treated any autistic clients before you had a better understanding of yourself and like almost snap yourself in the head because you didn't know at the time you had autism and now you have like a whole new understanding of things.

00;19;08;22 - 00;19;40;03

Ross Voorhees

Yeah, I mean, I believe that well, I absolutely worked with people that I that, that I've encouraged to become diagnosed with, you know, with or confirm a diagnosis of of autism. But again, what I look at more than anything I think is is how that might help them understand themselves and their own mental health and kind of take charge of that.

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Ross Voorhees

I think there's value in understanding the mechanics. And I know, at least for me, that's something that I value very highly, is understanding the mechanics of it, because sometimes we have to draw on our logic to counter our emotional, you know, our tendency towards certain emotions. And and I have often relied on that personally, you know, to kind of give myself some balance.

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Ross Voorhees

But I can't say that everybody that I work with is on the autism spectrum. I suspect a lot of them are. And I do encourage them to to get diagnosed and in fact, a lot of people that I've spoken to kind of wonder and as you said, this could be self bias to this could be something that we see because we're looking for it.

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Ross Voorhees

But, you know, and this would be a wild statement, but I sometimes wonder if if the majority of people who voluntarily come in for mental health therapy are actually people that are on the spectrum, because that seems to be something that we see a lot of. What I also find interesting is, is are you familiar with the like the politic legal theory?

00;20;57;06 - 00;20;58;18

Andrew Komarow

No, I am not. Are you alien?

00;21;00;14 - 00;21;25;27

Ross Voorhees

So the poly legal theory is something that Dr. Steven Burgess PIRG came up with in and basically what he talks about is the way our brain is connected to our our vagal nerve or our vagus nerve in our body. And vagus nerve is something that runs from the base of our brain stem and basically goes through all our internal organs, a lot to our face.

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Ross Voorhees

It communicates information like the state of our body to our brain, and our brain communicates to our body through that primary nerve. And there's two pathways through which that information is passed to our brain and back. One of those is of a lower level pathway that's all about fight or flight response. You know, when that's triggered, we do go into our kind of fight or flight or anxious mode.

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Ross Voorhees

And what he discovered was that in in a lot of his research that individuals who have an atypical

brain don't have as strong of a higher level connection. And that higher level connection is something that we have in common with all mammals and all mammals by nature find comfort in others. And that's kind of the mechanism that we have for finding comfort when we connect with other people.

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Ross Voorhees

And that's part of what drives us. We're connection oriented as individuals and what he discovered was that that that higher level pathway isn't as active in people who have atypical brains. And what he also discovered is that there's more than one way to develop an atypical brain. You can be born with it, but you can also develop it from a significant or or sufficient amount of early childhood trauma.

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Andrew Komarow

And when you may not, a typical brain, again, you just mean people who think differently or you or you saying specifically autism.

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Ross Voorhees

It's hard to say. He believes that that there's more than one way to autism, that there is a absolutes, very, very strong genetic component, which I absolutely believe in myself and but he also feels that that that children who've been sufficiently affected by childhood trauma, they're constantly forced into that fight or flight response because got to remember, children's brains are developing.

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Ross Voorhees

Right. And so what he saw was that people who had significant amount of trauma exhibited the same kinds of of mental processes. He also discovered that people who were born deaf sometimes exhibit those same things. So one of the things that happens when a fight or flight response is triggered is our brain tunes away from our vocal frequencies and turns more towards predatory frequencies, lower level, more guttural kinds of sounds.

So we're literally when we're activated from an anxiety standpoint, our are hearing shifts away from being able to hear vocal frequencies to these more predatory frequencies. And as a result, that might help explain why there's often that delay in development or complete absence of of of speech. And so individuals. So it's really interesting and it's and it's really one of the prevailing theories that that explains a lot of things.

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Ross Voorhees

And he actually found a way to tune music to more to the vocal frequencies. And he has treated a lot of children with early autism, a diagnosis with these headphones and in their social ability

actually as a proof for being able to hear these frequencies, these vocal frequencies, it stimulates that those pathways and creates new neuropathy waves in the brain and actually helps improve some of the symptoms.

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Ross Voorhees

I'm sorry, I know that it's a lot, but yeah.

00;25;19;11 - 00;25;49;14

Andrew Komarow

And I'm mean respectfully, I disagree with his opinion. Right. There can be lots of things that activate the flight or flight response through trauma or other things that are not autism. Right. And that's all the more reason to, you know, have an appropriate, you know, therapy, diagnosis, treatment, etc.. All right. So speaking of what are your thoughts on current, you know, autism?

00;25;49;25 - 00;25;58;04

Andrew Komarow

I you know, treatments that exist today? And are there any that are less talked about that you think should be more talked about?

00;25;59;04 - 00;26;24;04

Ross Voorhees

Well, I mean, what kind of words considered, at least from my understanding, is that, you know, dialectical behavior therapy is often used, which is basically you just kind of instructed on what to do and how to act. I think, you know, cognitive behavioral therapy is also utilized quite a lot. I know that medication is often you.

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Andrew Komarow

Explain the difference between DVT and CBT. They sound so similar they must be the same. Can you can you remind me? Sure.

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Ross Voorhees

Yeah. So behavioral therapy is more specific and that it basically says you're in this situation and this is what's actually going on and this is how you respond to it. So it's basically telling people how to respond based upon the situation around cognitive behavioral therapy. It's more about the thought process and how, you know, our chance to, like you said, black and white thinking.

00;26;56;23 - 00;27;41;24

Ross Voorhees

Right. That that's kind of considered a cognitive not error necessarily, but not the most helpful way to approach things. Often it's great for survival. Don't get me wrong, black and white

thinking is is wonderful for survival, because being able to, you know, quickly differentiate between what's safe and what's dangerous is crucial. Right? That's why we tend to think on a black and white, you know, all people, not just people on the spectrum, but all people are very much predisposed to black and white thinking.

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Ross Voorhees

So anyway, so cognitive behavioral therapy is more about that, more general in terms of, you know, looking at something from a slightly different perspective, reframing things, you know? Well, yeah, it could be that this worst case scenario that you're worried about, it could be that that's that's what this means. But could it also mean something less, you know, less dangerous or or less stressful or, you know, possibly even good, you know, so cognitive behavioral therapy is more about how our thoughts affect our actions and our actions can affect our thoughts.

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Andrew Komarow

Thank you for that.

00;28;19;28 - 00;28;50;09

Ross Voorhees

Yeah. Yeah. So what I'm kind of proposing in the book is that, you know, maybe we should look at autism more as a culture, rather than, you know, a diagnosis or just a deficiency or a disorder, you know, and I kind of yeah.

00;28;50;19 - 00;29;13;00

Andrew Komarow

I, I think there's a part where I think it can be both. I don't think it's one or the other. Yeah. And lucky for you, you don't spend a lot of time on social media. Right. And you know, I think I think if you spent more time, you know, you'd see that again. Anything could be taken to extremes.

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Andrew Komarow

Right. But there's, you know, I it's harder to get the black and white thinking. I think there I think there is a part where kind of it can be a culture for some people. But then there's a lot where it isn't right.

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Ross Voorhees

And I don't mean like culture, like a group. I mean, you know, I'm from a perspective and let me explain what I mean. That is that thank you so I think what some things mean for neurotypical people don't mean the same thing for for atypical people, people who are on the autism spectrum. I think a lot of the things that and I'm just going to use we here think about in the way we see things is different.

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Ross Voorhees

In other words, we tend to be very much more practical, right? We're practically oriented. We're literal, We take things literal. You know, our sense of humor is stuff as it is, is different. And one of the things that we're taught, you know, is as in social work and then pretty much any mental health field is, you know, cultural sensitivity that when someone comes in, for example, if I have a client who comes in, who's a member of one of the tribes up here in the Pacific Northwest, I better know something about their culture so that I can recognize when something about them is reflective of their culture or even know to ask them, you know, how how, how significant is your involvement, say, in tribal affairs or something like that? Because that's a factor in how they see things, how they perceive the world. And and for example, back in the early 1900s when police forces were first being established, they have a huge number of American Indians or Native Americans who are being arrested for crimes they didn't commit.

00;31;14;00 - 00;31;45;28

Ross Voorhees

And when they finally looked into why this was happening, what they discovered was is that in the newly newly developing techniques to figure out whether someone was being deceitful and lying or was guilty, they would look at eye contact. And in a lot of individuals, American Indians or Native Americans would make eye contact. And they saw that as being, you know, avoidant or, you know, that they're hiding something.

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Ross Voorhees

And that's not what it meant at all from a cultural perspective. They were taught that you show your respect to elders and chiefs and people in authority by not engaging in eye contact with them. So once they understood that they were able to go, wait a minute, this guy is being evasive. He's he's Native American and this is him showing respect to me or at least knew to ask about it.

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Ross Voorhees

So I think that's important. So what what's the purpose of all this? Well, I think that if I'm in Rome, it's kind of unrealistic for me to act like to to think that everyone in Rome should act like an American. I should understand their culture and respect their culture and take that into account when I look at their behavior.

00;32;36;21 - 00;33;05;26

Ross Voorhees

And so that's kind of the case I'm making. You know how you understand the culture of of autism, not from this community like culture as in community, but culture as in what things mean to people on the spectrum. Understand that they are that we are more direct. We see things differently, you know, and take that into account. And instead of that being a diagnostic criteria, it's something to kind of celebrate it, I think.

00;33;05;26 - 00;33;28;18

Eileen Lamb

And so I agree with a lot of what you're saying. Like it was very interesting to hear about the Native American story and, you know, how to them respects not making eye contact and personally like I hate making eye contact like this for myself to do. And I don't think anyone should be forced to, you know, make eye contact.

00;33;28;18 - 00;33;48;10

Eileen Lamb

So I tell you, like relate to a lot of what you're saying, but is about I think there is the unfortunate thing is that there are people on the autism spectrum whose characteristics are a lot more severe and it's not just norms. You know, like my son, for instance, you can.

00;33;48;11 - 00;33;49;05

Ross Voorhees

Absolutely.

00;33;49;09 - 00;34;11;26

Eileen Lamb

Can tell me he's hurts, can't tell me what his favorite color is. You know, he's like swallowing. It's like throw up a coin like last weekend because he doesn't have a sense of danger, is intellectually disabled. And so, you know, I think and maybe it's a separate issue, it's the answer to a different question that you're raising about the culture.

00;34;12;08 - 00;34;32;29

Eileen Lamb

I think people learn about autism and what, you know, the symptoms that are the characteristics that are making autism. It I see what you mean by culture. I'm going to use the word culture because that's what what you're using. You know how just because we're acting differently doesn't mean it's, you know, but saying doesn't mean we're not respecting people.

00;34;33;23 - 00;34;57;09

Eileen Lamb

So and again, that I just want to make sure that, you know, pushing the autism as an identity narrative. We're not talking about those for whom is like such a debilitating and it can never said a word rights condition. You know, the people who have like such intense symptoms and threats of other.

00;34;57;09 - 00;35;18;00

Ross Voorhees

No, I completely understand what you're saying. And and I'll just I'll just read you a little bit of the second paragraph of my book in the introduction. This is first of all, I would like to clarify that when I referred to autism or any of its associated terms within this book, I'm generally referring

to what is termed high functioning autistic individuals.

High functioning individuals with autism used to be diagnosed as having Asperger's syndrome, but the latest diagnostic manual folded this distinction into the broader diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. Or is it's often referred to. The end result is that the term SD applies equally to those least affected by autism, to the most profoundly affected individuals, because autism is, after all, now viewed clinically as a spectrum.

00;35;43;00 - 00;36;09;16

Ross Voorhees

However, I also don't believe that the material in this book excludes anyone with autism, regardless of where they might fall in the spectrum. To say otherwise would mean that I can presume to know who might or might not benefit from this book. And the fact is autism simply doesn't work that way. Every human being is unique with unique abilities and capabilities, whether autistic or not, and that includes the capacity for finding their own measure of peace, meaning and purpose in life.

00;36;10;10 - 00;36;23;07

Ross Voorhees

So I completely I could not agree more with you, and I just wanted you to know that I recognized that and and make that is a crucial, important distinction. So. Yeah.

00;36;23;28 - 00;36;45;00

Eileen Lamb

Well, let me ask you a question then, because I love that paragraph. Thank you for for reading it. So do you agree with the new DSM five as a psychologist, or do you think that it should be rewritten to spread between what used to be called Asperger's and those more profoundly affected by autism?

00;36;45;00 - 00;37;20;14

Ross Voorhees

Well, you know, I think it's like the broader term. Personally, I don't I don't agree with it. I think that there needs to be a distinction. And I know I'm not the only one that disagrees with that. But you know what? As a therapist, to have to work with with what I'm I'm told to work with, you know, that's kind of the reality.

00;37;20;14 - 00;37;28;15

Ross Voorhees

You know, can't diagnose Asperger's anymore. As far as they're concerned. It doesn't exist.

00;37;28;15 - 00;38;01;17

Eileen Lamb

You know, when I was diagnosed was like a year or two after the changes in the DSM, and the psychologist told me, you know, if it was a couple of years ago, you would have been diagnosed

with Asperger's syndrome. And I think a lot of professionals are like, can you still like like that term and that distinction and we'll use it, you know, how do you say non what's the word a non official it it's just like right plain better I mean because it seems confusing.

00;38;01;17 - 00;38;29;07

Eileen Lamb

Oh someone like us having this conversation on Zoom you know very we're talking about very important topics can have the same diagnosis as someone who needs help. A 27 you know, going to eating, speaking, you know, it's makes things confusing and I don't think the spectrum quite explain the differences. You know.

00;38;30;11 - 00;38;54;25

Ross Voorhees

And I and I would just say I have a son with Down's syndrome and I have and who is also and a son with autism, who is his verbal and but he's very much affected by his diagnosis. So, you know, and I and, you know, I've had them long before and have to under get to know that and understand that long before you know I was at Reed.

00;38;54;25 - 00;39;16;14

Ross Voorhees

But the idea of being a therapist was something in my head, you know. And I also want to say I very much identify with the not being able to make eye, because I'll often look up and away from my my clients. And sometimes they'll turn their heads to look and see if they can see what it is that I'm looking at, if they think I'm looking at something else.

00;39;16;14 - 00;39;41;09

Ross Voorhees

And so sometimes I just I kind of explain that, you know, that's just what I'm thinking, you know, or something. So, yeah, I completely understand that. And I guess what I should say in terms of, of and I do kind of think that, that, that Dr. Baucus is on to something with it is probably vagal theory that makes a lot of sense to me.

00;39;41;18 - 00;40;10;04

Ross Voorhees

What he's saying there is that and maybe that's the differentiation he's saying in a typically structured brain, and that is people who have a constricted or nonexistent higher level pathway that allows them to find comfort. And so that exists primarily always in anxiety and stress is maybe a better way to explain what it is he's trying to to to say when he says that people there's more than one way to get to an atypical brain.

00;40;10;04 - 00;40;51;18

Ross Voorhees

And I think he does make that distinction. I don't think he ever uses autism specifically in any of his his work. I may be wrong, but she is explaining it purely in kind of neurological or

neurophysiological terms. So so I also wanted to kind of circle back around that and say that by no means do I am I in any way suggesting or diminishing, you know, individuals who are on the autism spectrum and saying, oh, no, you know, people who who suffer no childhood trauma could be there, too.

00;40;51;18 - 00;41;36;23

Ross Voorhees

But I do see a lot of people and that it seems to be something significant that they gone through. And I see do they see a lot of the same ways of thinking and and behaviors, the inability to meet eye contact, a lot of the same kind of things. And unfortunately, another reason why I kind of put forth this whole idea of understanding the culture is so that therapists understand that when therapists who are typical or have a typical brain make a diagnosis, they are making it from their perspective and they're assigning meaning basic based on behaviors that they see in clients, based upon their personal understanding of what those behaviors mean.

And so my point that I try to make in the book is that you have to look differently. You have to understand the culture of autism. You have to understand what that means and make your diagnosis not based upon what it means to you as a neurotypical individual, but what it means to that person. And why is that important?

00;41;58;07 - 00;42;41;19

Ross Voorhees

Well, the highest misdiagnosed group of people in the world are people with autism spectrum disorder. They're often diagnosed. Women are most often diagnosed with borderline personality disorder, and men are most often diagnosed with with either antisocial all or a what's the word, narcissistic personality disorder. And that the treatments and everything are completely different for that. And I've actually had people come in that were diagnosed with borderline and I'm like, wait a minute, this doesn't look like borderline at all to me as I get to know them and understand them.

00;42;42;03 - 00;43;01;26

Ross Voorhees

And and I said, you know, you should be tested for autism. It turns out they're autistic. And suddenly they go from I mean, I have one client that was that living in there in a barn on a farm, you know, to having their own place and going back to school and starting a career and their life just blossomed.

00;43;02;20 - 00;43;21;03

Ross Voorhees

So prior to that, they were going down this path of what they've been diagnosed with. And and it was just grind them into the ground and it just opened up the world for them. And that's a big influence for why I kind of went with what I went with. I guess I hope that.

Andrew Komarow

That that makes sense. Do you have any special interests other than autism? If so, are they okay? You didn't share any of the bio. Okay. What else do you like to do? Who knew? I mean, like what? That where you drive fast. Formula one. There you go. Right?

00;43;39;04 - 00;43;40;12

Eileen Lamb

Yes.

00;43;40;12 - 00;43;51;08

Ross Voorhees

I love the typical nerd stuff. You know, there I go using a stereotypical Lego again. I love I mean, I love.

00;43;52;03 - 00;43;54;02

Andrew Komarow

What kind of science fiction.

00;43;54;11 - 00;44;12;22

Ross Voorhees

Oh, all kinds. I, I mean, I everything from Guardians of the Galaxy to Interstellar. I mean, it could be really deep or it can be very surface level, but I really like right now, I love foundation on asking.

00;44;13;05 - 00;44;18;12

Andrew Komarow

Oh, yes, I love that. So we're like the only two people who watch it, I think.

00;44;18;12 - 00;44;22;25

Ross Voorhees

Yeah, Yeah. Well, I've made my wife watch You have.

00;44;23;06 - 00;44;38;22

Andrew Komarow

Mine too. Yeah, yeah. But it's impressive that that's a very hard book to make into a movie for people who don't know the place over a thousand years. That's okay.

00;44;40;07 - 00;45;09;05

Ross Voorhees

A communicator from the original Star Trek, the original series. So it that I love. I love making models. I love making. You know, I'll spent months doing a model and just trying to make it as realistic looking as I possibly can. And I didn't used to be that way. Used to be as fast as I could, but I eventually learned how to slow down and and stick with something for the long haul.

00;45;09;05 - 00;45;32;17

Ross Voorhees

I love music, all kinds of music. My wife played in Symphony and I got the pleasure and honor of going to see a lot of people in the symphony and developed an appreciation for that. I love classic rock. I love Grande's rock. I love jazz, all kinds of stuff.

00;45;33;02 - 00;45;41;01

Eileen Lamb

Okay. I have a few more questions for you. And these are quickfire questions. So if you've listened to me before, you know what they're like.

00;45;41;17 - 00;45;41;28

Ross Voorhees

Yes.

00;45;41;29 - 00;45;54;12

Eileen Lamb

So first question, what is your favorite animal

Ross Voorhees

Cats

Eileen Lamb

Star Wars or Star Trek?

00;45;54;12 - 00;45;55;02

Ross Voorhees

Star Trek.

00;45;56;26 - 00;46;07;21

Eileen Lamb

What would your currently rating or the last one you read

Ross Voorhees

Hyperion.

Eileen Lamb

What is your favorite food?

00;46;07;21 - 00;46;09;06

Ross Voorhees

Vegetarian pasta dish.

00;46;10;27 - 00;46;14;04

Eileen Lamb

Okay. Favorite color.

00;46;16;07 - 00;46;16;24

Ross Voorhees

Purple.

00;46;18;08 - 00;46;27;21

Eileen Lamb

Are you on social media at all? I know you have YouTube. Do you want to share where people can find you on social media? Do you want to share about your book and self-promotion? Anything goes right now.

00;46;28;03 - 00;46;53;23

Ross Voorhees

If you if you type my name in in an ad on Amazon, the book will come up. That's the best way to find it. I have started doing some stuff. You asked if I had special interest. Well, I used to be an amateur radio and I figured out how to make an antenna for HD televisions. And so I put that video up and it went viral.

00;46;53;23 - 00;47;01;11

Ross Voorhees

Then it's had over 3 million views now. But that was that was like, you know, 15 years ago. So let's.

00;47;01;12 - 00;47;02;29

Eileen Lamb

See. It's I want to. Yeah.

00;47;04;10 - 00;47;29;24

Ross Voorhees

So unfortunately I didn't really make money off of what it is great. But yeah, so that's still up there. And then I actually went back to the channel and changed the channel name to an autistic therapist and I'm trying to put some stuff up there that just addresses issues that I discovered after learning or coming to believe that I was.

00;47;29;24 - 00;47;47;12

Ross Voorhees

So let me correct myself coming to believe that I was autistic and I am going to selfishly diagnose, by the way, and things that I encountered after learning about that and things that I had to navigate and and find out about that I hope will be helpful to people.

00;47;48;10 - 00;48;03;14

Eileen Lamb

So, yeah, well, thank you for joining us today. Honestly, I don't agree on everything, but I enjoyed learning from your perspective. And I think it's it's interesting to have these conversations when we don't ever think that's that's okay.

00;48;03;24 - 00;48;17;15

Ross Voorhees

And I don't hold out any of my answers with the right answer because I know better than that. That's not just that's just not the way it works. These are my answers, and I just hope that my answers might be helpful for somebody. That's all.

00;48;18;02 - 00;48;20;11

I like. That's a great way of looking at it. Thank you.

00;48;21;15 - 00;48;24;22

Ross Voorhees

Yes, thank you. Bye bye bye.

00;48;25;05 - 00;48;25;15

Andrew Komarow

Right.