

Episode 2

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Emilia Bell [EB]: We'd like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the unceded lands this podcast is recorded on, and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

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EB: Hi, and welcome to GLAMR Disability in Dialogue, the podcast that delves into the intersection of disability and neurodiversity in galleries, libraries, archives, museums, and records professions.

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EB: We're all about inclusivity, challenging the norm and creating positive change, impact, and community.

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EB: Today in our second episode, I chat with Bec Muir about her work and research in disability, inclusion in libraries and higher education, we chat about self-advocacy, boundaries, being out as a manager with a disability and how small changes can be powerful changes.

1:03

EB: Hello and welcome back to GLAMR Disability in Dialogue. I'm Emilia Bell, and today I'm joined by my wonderful guest Bec Muir.

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EB: Bec is currently the Coordinator Disability Inclusion at Deakin University.

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EB: Bec's a quote unquote neurospicy practitioner researcher, focused on diversity, hidden disability and inclusion in the library and information sector.

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EB: Her research looks at everything from the job advertisements and hiring practises we use, the symbols we display, the environments we provide and the training we take part in. Bec has industry experience across public and academic libraries in Australia.

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EB: Welcome Bec.

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EB: So Bec we have a very broad overview of your professional bio there, but I would really love to hear what sparked your interest in disability inclusion in the first place.

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Bec Muir [BM]: When I first talk to people about how I kind of got into disability inclusion, it always kind of interests me that people kind of think, ah, well, you must have been diagnosed and all of those things and you've kind of gotten into it from there, but nope, nope, I'm adult diagnosed. My interest in disability inclusion started years and years ago when I was a wee little bubbly, wee little bubbly, my

first professional job I was working in a rehabilitation service for people with disabilities, multiple presenting kind of like concerns such as homelessness, limited access to education, substance abuse, all these different things. And I, all of my clients had disabilities of course and one of my roles was to connect my clients with support services with everything that they needed to kind of survive and thrive in the toxic hellscape that we call society. So with my role, I worked with some really, really amazing people in my cases.

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BM: And there was one in particular, he, they'd had a really bad experiences with life and complex post-Traumatic stress, stress disorder and homelessness. And I just, I felt like the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff and I felt hopeless and I felt like there has to be more that can be done before we get to this stage. And at his age and seeing all of the effects of this on him.

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BM: So my interest in disability inclusion really started there with that moment where I'm just kind of like, I just, I feel too late and I want to be earlier and I want to make a difference earlier.

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BM: So that's kind of how it started. And yeah, it was a difficult experience, but I'm grateful for it.

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EB: Did that lead to you stepping into research in that space or was it something else?

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BM: It did, it kind of contributed to everything, so firstly, that experience was the reason why I kind of transitioned over into libraries and why I'm so passionate about libraries as well. Because like when you're working with people who are experiencing homelessness, substance abuse, limited education, it's when, jail, everything like this, like when there's an incarceration history as well, when you're looking at people who have had all of these experiences and the thing that kept continuously jumping out to me is like things like education, information access, everything like that to see what the absence of that does, like knowing about having access to information on counselling services, having information about homeless services, having information about how to self-manage panic attacks, everything like that.

BM: That sort of information makes such a difference. And I was seeing that huge gap there. So that was kind of like my transition point into public libraries. And then between the experiencing no, not public, I think it was public libraries. Can't quite remember. I was very young, I was a baby, and I'm definitely not a baby now. Definitely not.

5:39

BM: So it's kind of like between that experience with information and the power and the importance of information and the desire to kind of like move earlier in that process, that was really where my interest in research came from. It very much fell into intersection point where I wanted to find out how to address issues, hurdles, barriers before they became these kind of like problems that impacted on people so immensely and so deeply.

BM: So I needed to put those two things into place. So interest in disability, inclusion and that interest in sharing information access and making kind of like making space for everyone to have access to

being included and to be safe doing so as well. So those are the two things that I had to have in place. But then once they were in place, that was definitely where the research interest started.

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EB: And it makes sense that you fell into libraries then?

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BM: Absolutely.

[inaudible]

6:52

EB: It seems like you've carried that through from public libraries into university libraries and now into your role in higher education. Can you tell me a little bit about what that journey's been and about your current role?

7:04

BM: Oh my gosh, it's been like, it's been one of those journeys where there's been an enormous amount of it, that I've been so grateful to have those experiences. They've not necessarily been easy experiences, but I've been really grateful to kind of have those experiences so that I can use those to learn, grow, develop and move on.

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BM: But it's also given me the opportunity to myself, experience things that don't work well and don't go well. And I feel like I'm going to be continuously saying, no, it's the Rule of two, it's the Rule of Equivalent Exchange.

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BM: I had to have again those two things in place, that experience of good things and that experience of maybe not so good things, to be able to then transform into my current role where I can use both those goods and those not so good experiences to see hurdles before they again cause massive problems, opportunities, everything like this as well. So with my current role, it's incredibly exciting because I get to so many bring so of my passion areas into something that really helps me be where I wanted to be all those years ago at the start.

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BM: And I appreciate now from that experience of not having all good experiences, that it won't necessarily solve everything. And I think if I hadn't had that experience myself that I would have come into it very innocent in that respect and would have thought, well, with this role, with all of my experiences, I can change the world. So yeah, again, had to have those two things. But I really love the role, really, really love it. It's amazing.

9:04

EB: It sounds like it's quite a varied role as well, where it is quite different on a day-to-day basis?

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BM: Absolutely, absolutely. Like there'll be days where I'll do nothing, well I feel like I'm doing nothing

aside from being in meeting, meeting, meeting, meeting, meeting. And those meetings are like super important, they're super good, everything like this and they might be consults, so I'll give specialist advice on like policies, procedures, modifications, disability needs, advocacy. So how does someone actually ask for a modification or support, what sort of information might they need around that. So I'll do everything from this, which is incredible, to creating learning resources and toolkits and everything like this, which is another passion point of mine.

BM: To being able to research what the next solutions are, the next problems, everything like that through policy, design and strategy, everything like this. So I feel like I've got a very varied role, very varied role, but very varied role. Sometimes I think that I'm on top of it and then there's other times there are just kind of like, yeah, no, my brains exploded. I'm just explode, exploded.

10:22

EM: I feel like it's really easy as well to kind of reach that point when you are doing something that you're really passionate about and you can see it driving change and creating really positive impact for other people.

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BM: Absolutely, absolutely. And I think that's something that I think sometimes we don't realise the cost that it takes on us as people with disabilities, as neurospices, as Neurodivergents. To be doing that advocacy, to be doing that connection, to be doing that support to be doing that creation of resources, all of these things. And it's important, absolutely, it's important, but you can't pour from an empty cup. And there are times where it is hard, it's hard.

BM: And I think one of the healthiest things and one of the things that I wish I had learned years and years ago is the importance of setting boundaries and the importance of saying, well, this is what I can do. This is within my scope. This is not within my scope. It's really hard, and I absolutely appreciate that. But I do think it's also really important that we show what setting a boundary looks like as well as what advocacy looks like. If we're showing what advocacy looks like to each other, which we do, we should be showing what the converse looks like as well, what it looks like to take a breath.

11:52

EB: Yeah.

BM: So yeah, I wish I had learned that when I was younger, would have been easier.

11:58

EB: I think it's great that there's opportunities to actually have conversations around that. And Nikki and I have talked, it was in our previous podcast about some of the emotional labour that's involved with lived experience in this space and doing that kind of advocacy work. And when you combine it with self-advocacy at the same time and that a lot of people don't actually realise the amount of work that goes into advocacy and that behind-the-scenes kind of work and the conversations that are happening.

BM: Absolutely agree, absolutely agree. I think especially when we're advocating for someone else, for ourselves, I think there's so much that we put into it. Like you say, the invisible work. There's the checking the policies, checking the procedures, it's making sure the way that we're saying something is correct. It's making sure that the words that we're using is correct. We're making sure that we're presenting it in a certain way. How is our body language? How is this? How is that. We're, we're really managing a lot.

13:03

BM: Even before we go in and we sit down and say let's talk about this. And I think that we need to be more mindful of that as well because it is so darn hard. You said the word emotional labour and it is, it's an emotional labour, it's a mental labour, it's cognitive overload as well. Sometimes we have just so much and it is hard. And I think when you're neurospicy as well, maybe just myself, but I feel like a lot of people could empathise that it's really hard to know what our own limits are and we don't necessarily know what those limits are until we feel our brain start to burn. And it's like, like so for anyone that doesn't know my particular neurospiciness is around ADHD, which probably surprises no one considering I've been so quiet and demure during this podcast.

13:57

BM: So my particular spiciness like there's, another spiciness as well in the background, but my main trait is the ADHD and I literally can feel my brain start to burn, when it gets too much and that is the warning sign and that's a little bit late in the piece. So that might be something that really resonates with a few other people here, but it's really hard to know what our limits are.

14:24

EB: Do you find that your lived experience also shapes your perception and positionality in research that you're doing in this space as well then?

BM: I think so. I think so. I do, I do find it really interesting with the research space, particularly around hidden disability, disability more broadly, there's so much awareness of the, you would be familiar with the terms yourselves, nothing about us without us. And there's so little research that comes through that are actually with us and even in the research sector there seems to be this kind of, kind of pushback sometimes against actually researching with people with disabilities because of perceived vulnerabilities and these sorts of things, and I'm absolutely not dismissing the historical literature and evidences around the mistreatment of people with disabilities in research environments. Absolutely not dismissing that.

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BM: I do however, think that there are perhaps legacy protectionists concerns that limit the involvement of people with disabilities in the research space. And for people with disabilities who are researchers, I think that it also has the consequence of limiting our ability to share ourselves in that way because we become so consumed with the idea of being well, for myself, a close researcher, an insider a researcher, my doctoral study was on hidden disability, having disability in the library. I worked in the library at the time, so we get so concerned with justifying our positionality and that we are OK too that sometimes we end up hiding the uniqueness of our lens and our understanding because we're concerned that we might not be able to do a good enough job justifying our existence in this space which is, to me, exceptionally sad when we see quotations like nothing about us without us.

16:45

EB: Do you find the same kind of thing happens with disclosure as well?

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BM: Yeah, it's being interesting, kind of navigating that space and how much I reveal of myself. And I've realised that in this role I've revealed so much more of myself because I keep almost putting it down as that challenge and I suppose there's still that part of me going, well, at some stage someone will say you're too disabled for us, and I don't think so. My manager is absolutely, astoundingly amazing, absolutely amazing, and I know that that would never be something he would do. It's strange how our disclosure experiences have such power and such influence on us.

17:31

EB: And they really reveal, I think, some of the misconceptions around disability and neurodiversity as well.

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BM: Absolutely. Like, one thing that I find really fascinating is there's been so many people that would be like TikTok fads and autism is a TikTok fad, ADHD, it's a TikTok fad and blah blah blah. There's been a recent study by the University of York which suggests that the first pieces of evidence around autism, development of Agricultural Society, predate the Stone Age. We're talking 150,000 years. There's evidence throughout human history that people with disabilities were just part of the community. There's evidence to say there was care provided, support provided, all of these things.

18:23

BM: ADHD has, it was first mentioned in ancient Greece, yet we deride these disabilities as something that's just brought about by TikTok. I do just think it's quite interesting how hidden disabilities are still so dismissed, particularly neurodiversity. So, so dismissed. Or you'll get the oh my God, my hamster's pet goldfish has autism as well. Or oh no, you can't be autistic. You maintain eye contact; after they've literally just made fun of me because of my mug obsession.

19:04

BM: So, it's like were you hear for that conversation? Really?

19:10

EB: It's almost like pick and choose, which aspects would like to act like exercise.

19:18

BM: Absolutely. Yeah. They're like, yes, no, we, we choose to treat you like you're abnormal because I mean, obviously you're just not quite right. But at the same time, we won't treat you as someone who has a disability, or give you support or assistance because I mean like, you don't have any disability, you've just watched too much TikTok. But also at the same time, can we stop talking about the mugs?

19:47

EB: Have you found ways you can actually dispel any of those misconceptions?

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BM: One of my favourite things, particularly in my role and particularly coming in as I have done, which is very much a this is who I am. One of my favourite things is being able to stand my ground and to push that back. So I've had everything from people question my capacity to be able to provide expert advice in regards to consultation. I've had people dismiss my experiences around the disability space as well. You don't look like XYZ, so you can't have that happen to you. And even those little comments around like, well, my goldfish had depression as well and they ate a cracker and then they went for a swim and they were all fine. Have you just considered upping your vitamins?

20:47

BM: And it's like, yes, strangely that hasn't helped, but I appreciate your support there. But yeah, a lot of the times I've found that the best way to kind of respond to this is kind of just put it back on them and to ask them, oh, OK. So can you tell me a bit more about why you think that?. Or in one particular

case, but I was questioned about my credentials I briefly mentioned about some of the things that I've done and then said Is there a particular area of concern that you have regarding my competency or my capacity to contribute to this conversation?

21:29

BM: Which, no, aside from me effectively having to sit there and watch them stutter for a few minutes and then say in that case let's move on.

21:39

BM: I think almost developing and I call them mental cue cards a lot. So with some of the people who I work with, I'll refer to mental cue cards. When we become stressed or anxious, our brains shut down. They're like a little computer and they just flash up the blue screen, they crash, they just, they need a little bit of a cup of tea and a white moment. And that moment always seems to happen right when we're in the middle of a panic and or when we're just being asked to effectively support our existence as someone who lives in a body that also happens to have a disability. So I've tended to find that having little mental cue cards can be really handy to push back in those sort of situations. Things like, yep, we do exist, autistic women do exist. Is there a reason you brought that up? Is there anything I can help you with? Yep. I do have the skills to be able to contribute to this. Is there anything I can help you with? All of those different things and politely but firmly pushing back on them. Because it's not up to you to justify your existence. It's not up to you to justify your experiences. It's absolutely not up to you.

22:56

BM: It's a matter of feeling that confidence and that courage to be able to say I'm standing this ground, I am OK to stand this ground, I am OK to be in this moment, and that's very hard. But we can do it and mental cue cards that we can just kind of whip through and just spill off the tip of our tongue when our brain is going can be really helpful.

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BM: My cat just snored by the way. So.

23:26

EB: The joy of having cats in the background.

BM: Absolutely. I'm like, oh, I'm sorry, am I keeping you awake?

23:34

EB: I was going to say, it sounds like that stuff that you've like learned over time though and that you have reached the point now where you do feel confident to push back on that and feel like you're in a space and potentially an environment where you can?

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BM: Absolutely. I'm so, so lucky with my manager. I'm exceptionally lucky and I'm exceptionally lucky with my colleagues as well. Like even there's been times where even with all the best coping strategies in the world, it, I've just went into meltdown and it's, I know what to do in those situations everything like that, but I've been so grateful because it's just been normalised. Like there's never, you know how sometimes when something happens and people go almost overboard in the care factor. Oh, are you OK? Oh let me pat your hand, oh are you alright? And you're like, yeah, no, I have panic attacks, it's fine, get off me.

24:30

BM: It's like, I'm so grateful because it's just like there's that care and there's that check in and there's that are you OK? I'm here for you if you need me. And then there's that move on and it's so normal and it's incredible. And I think that's one of the great things as well that we can all kind of be working on when we're standing over and when we're pushing back everything like this. We're not just doing that for us, we're doing that for everyone else around us. And that's how we create an environment where it does become normalised to just see disability as normal, not something that you have to have 62 people run over to pat your hand and check you're OK and everything like that. It's just normal. And that is amazing.

25:19

EB: And normal means appropriate responses as well

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BM: Yes, absolutely, absolutely, appropriate responses. Absolutely.

EB: And you've been in management positions as well while having a hidden disability. And so I imagine you've learned a lot from those experiences in terms of how to respond to others and colleagues and peers in those kind of situations.

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BM: Absolutely. It's kind of like from coming in with managers lens, it's giving me again a really good ability to be able to help out in my role because I can see where management is coming from. I can understand that, but I can also translate that language back and forward, so I can kind of act as an interpreter. And because I have that experience of disability, I can interpret that into the speak that management understands as well, which is really great.

26:08

BM: It's also given me a very, very, very strong, drive to understand and to work with leaders around that importance of being overtly inclusive, like just sharing experiences, building cultures, giving opportunities, communicating, asking what supports work, not what's wrong with you, not, could you tell me about your disability? No what's worked well for you in the past? What could we put in place now? Is there anything that you would like me to know about your disability so that I can best support you? What does support look like? What would work? It's really driven home to me the importance of a manager being able to speak those words.

27:05

EB: I like how so much of that is focused on what can I do to support you to succeed. It's not, like, that is where it should be and where that conversation should be focused.

27:14

BM: Absolutely. Absolutely. And so often it's not, like it's like, oh, how can I support you to exist sort of thing. Like it's a completely different thing. Whereas asking how can I support you so that not only, not only as things go well here and now, but at the next stage and the next stage and the next stage, how can we make sure you're supported that entire way through? What does that look like?

27:42

BM: I've really, really enjoyed being able to work with leaders, especially to be able to help with that. And I have to say as a leader myself and working with leaders as well. One of my observations has

been that people often don't know the language to use in that space. And I feel like that's possibly one of the reasons why these conversations don't happen as often as they should do. So I've learned from that too. And I'm creating learning resources called Speaking Me, Hearing You, which is all about being able to have conversations around disability. Understanding that when we say, oh this is disability accessible, that is a certain level of knowledge that we haven't shared yet.

28:22

BM: We haven't defined what disability is, we haven't defined what accessible looks like. We haven't defined all of that. There's no one thing called disability accessible. So I've been creating that toolkit and that will be available open, Open Access for anyone and sundry. So hopefully when that one comes through, I might actually even just shoot it through to you. And if anyone wants to have a look at it or if even before then if anyone wants to pass on any feedback or reach out to me and want to give any ideas or any voices as to what you want to have included in there, it's more powerful when we hear more people. So yeah, it might be a small thing, but maybe this is the thing that will help you have that conversation with your manager about supports that you've not had yet because you don't know how to. So maybe it will help.

EB: I feel like it's a small thing but a needed thing. I've been in so many conversations lately where managers have explicitly said yes, some kind of toolkit, something that is even just about back to basics. How to have that conversation, how to provide support or have conversations around support and disability in a way that is inclusive, understanding and doesn't have a lot of miss stepping.

29:39

BM: Absolutely.

EB: I am sometimes surprised and shocked at the language that is used. It sometimes, I think, takes that lived experience to actually recognise why something is not appropriate, why it's not working, but it also just breaks your heart to actually see it happen or to hear about it happening and you just go, I can't believe we are still at that stage, where someone said that to you or where that was the considered an appropriate response or that someone didn't realise the impact that that was going to have on someone with that lived experience. And it just,

BM: Absolutely, absolutely, I could not agree more like some of the things that you hear, it's like even some of the things that I've had said directly to me. I'm in my 30s, I was a manager, all of these sort of things and some of the things and they just, how is that something that we're still saying nowadays? You're absolutely right.

30:38

BM: And one of my pet, I just, oh, I have, for anyone who, of course, you can't see me, it's a podcast. Dah Becky.

30:47

[inaudible]

It's like Bec waves, hands incoherently in background.

30:54

BM: For anyone who can't see me and can't imagine what I'm doing right now. Yes, effectively stinging my little heart out because it really stresses me. One thing that I will ask everyone to do is if you ever come across things where it's like, Oh yes, we need the voices of people with disabilities. Their voices impact our work, mmmm, it's not us and them.

31:20

BM: It's not us and them. The voices of people with disabilities are shaping the way that we all do, blah blah blah. It's not their voices. It's not they said, we did.

31:42

EB: And that makes me think of another misconception as well. Just the idea that if you're in a management or leadership position that you're then the person supporting someone with a disability, but that people in those positions don't necessarily have disabilities themselves. Again, a little bit of that us and them kind of thing.

BM: You're absolutely right.

32:05

BM: When I was a manager and had disclosed even despite everything else, I was held up as one of the few managers, one of two to be precise who was out about having a disability in a university. One of two. And there were other managers other leaders on a group that I was involved in and one of them said I've never shared that I'm disabled, they had mental health, never shared that because it could have ruined my career and that, that's something that we still need to think about.

32:48

EB: I, I'm it's honestly really disheartening. I just kind of it is incredibly disheartening to see those kind of responses and to not be able to see that representation and visibility or to see the impact that someone having that visibility experiences.

33:08

BM: You're absolutely right. You're absolutely right. I think, like they always say, it's two steps forward, one step back, everything like that. And I know that there's an enormous cost with advocacy, with standing up, with standing our ground. There is an enormous cost, and it burns me that people like us have to pay that cost.

33:33

BM: But you're absolutely right. It's by standing up, by showing those parts of ourselves and it's not easy but maybe it will change things if we can see another executive of a board with neurodiversity; wouldn't that be exciting?

33:52

EB: I don't think that it's often recognised where that is lacking. Like we have a lot of conversations about how we're providing accessibility and we're meeting where a lot of it's actually focused around compliance to be honest, which is a great starting point but it is a starting point. Those kind of conversations.

34:11

BM: It's a bare bones starting point. It's like saying I started wearing socks. Yay, that's great. Happy for you. It's bare bones.

34:21

EB: Completely its, I shouldn't be, once again it's one of those things again where I shouldn't be surprised and shocked that that is where we are. But it is, does feel like sometimes we are still right at

that starting point. Even though we've come so far, that risk still exists and a lot of the time I don't think it's a real choice as well that is given with disclosure. There's a lot of shame attached to it. And that's not just, I think even within, something I shared with Nikki recently, even within disability communities, I feel like sometimes there's a lot of shame around if someone has negative impact after they've disclosed, this idea that they should have known better and it's almost reflected right back on them, rather than focusing on the structures and people and the individuals who actually caused such a negative impact around that disclosure and did not present it as a real choice for that person.

35:12

BM: Absolutely. It absolutely. And sometimes, an enforced disclosure happened for myself where I didn't know that I've been disclosed about. There was no conversation about that happening. I think sometimes it's almost as if we're expected to be grateful for that. It's like, oh, I saved you that work.

35:40

BM: No, you didn't. She made me vulnerable in a way that I can't control. You've exposed a core of myself that I don't have any armour for at the moment. With disclosure, I think the vulnerabilities around finding the right person to disclose to can be exceptionally hard. And I think almost having that knowledge that sometimes it works out well can be really reassuring when you're not sure whether to go down this pathway or not. And let's talk about the ones that went well as well as the ones that went not so well. So that others who come up behind us can see that sometimes it does work OK, this is how we did it and this is what happened afterwards. So if I have to read one more piece of research saying that neurodivergent people are amongst some of the least likely to ask for modifications or adjustments in the workplace because they are terrified that they will be discriminated against, fired, have reduced hours or be made redundant because of that request, I will literally yeet my computer out of this window and I do not have enough money to buy another one. So don't do that to me.

37:12

EB: Save Bec's laptop.

BM: Save Bec's laptop hashtag.

37:19

EB: It's great that like I think some of these barriers and challenges are being made a lot more explicit and those conversations happening around them, but we also need some of those successes and positives to go alongside them.

BM: Absolutely, absolutely. It's a damn hard slog if you just hear oh, all everything sucks and everything's miserable and yeah, everything does suck and everything is miserable sometimes. Again, refer previously, toxic hellscape, but it gives us hope that it's somewhat less toxic.

37:54

EB: Did you have experiences as a manager where you did realise that you could have a really positive impact because of your lived experience, or just because of your knowledge in the space?

38:03

BM: I did, I did. And because I'm an absolute epitome of like put together and dignity and everything like that, I cried immensely on them and then snotted. That was a lot. That was a lot. I did I had those experiences by purely, one thing that kind of amazed me is like purely from the fact that I was a manager with a disability, it normalised having a disability and it normalised conversations about

having a disability. And it normalised people saying things like I'm having a low spoon day, just, I've ran out of social battery, everything like this.

38:48

BM: So I think one of the things that I'll take away from that as well is like sometimes the winds aren't big. It's that someone stops saying, well, oh yeah, I was so lucky and you know, and all these sort of things and start saying, yeah, I had an impact on that person because it worked out well for me and I've shared that and they feel happier from it. And I think that's one of the big things that I'll take away from my time as a manager was that I had an impact on raising awareness just by being there.

39:24

BM: That was all that I did. Just by being there.

39:28

EB: Do you consider your visibility and having been more open as part of that impact?

BM: 100 percent, 100 percent. And especially with my new role, I've received people giving me feedback that one of the things that they've loved is that I wear my green, hidden disability, sunflower, lanyard. That I'm passionate about that, that I'm pushing that out, that I'm creating things, that I'm having conversations, that I'm hardly ever at my desk because I'm running around site or sitting in the cafe with my lanyard on so that people just see it. Just that's all it is. They just see it.

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BM: And I've received positive feedback just from existing in that space in such a visible way. So yeah

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EB: I love that.

BM: It's been really, really amazing. And like there's parts of me that's all like, I have to kind of, like, temper my enthusiasm here because I I'm so curious to see what the world looks like next.

40:40

BM: And I'm so curious and so enthusiastic and so excited to see what happens next and next and next.

40:49

BM: And we know that it's not going to be like smooth sailing. It's, I mean look at the gender pay gap. We still have that existing, but at the same time, to be able to look back and even if you've only covered an inch of ground and it's an inch of ground, isn't it?

41:04

BM: And that's so exciting, isn't it? It's so exciting.

41:10

EB: It is, it is. I love, just, I think it's like one thing that keeps me going is just seeing that small changes just even just that small impact. I know it's what's in the one thing that I've enjoyed about being in team lead and manager kind of roles is just realising you just get that opportunity to see that change happening whether it's within an entire team or just individual and the impact that that can have. And it's, you need these little things, even if they're just small, to keep you going and to see how you can

create more belonging and more acceptance in spaces which have historically, perhaps been more exclusionary.

41:51

BM: Absolutely, absolutely agree. Absolutely agree. And I think one thing that I'm so grateful for is that we have amazing leaders like yourself. And it's not, it's not a convincing, if that makes sense. Like it's not someone needing to sit down and convince you of that the value of it, you know the value. You're committed to the value. And it excites me to see leaders like yourself who are passionate about the area, who are working to progress the area and who are creating these environments where safety, inclusion, like it's almost not mentioned because it's just like it's just how we do things around here. It's like it would be like commenting on the white paint on the wall. It's like, yeah, yeah, yeah, we just do that. Like that's just how it is and that is so hecking powerful. You do an incredible, incredible job.

42:51

EB: Thank you. I have to admit, that just made me think of how, like, different it can be though, jumping back and forwards between spaces where you've gone to so much work to actually create an inclusive space and you jump back into another space and you just go, oh my goodness, what happened here, jumping between lots of meetings all day. I'll just like I'll jump from doing something for ANDPA where it's, you know, just going to be as accepting and inclusive and accessible as we possibly can. I'll jump into some kind of community of practise. I'll just feel like I've been bulldozed by inaccessibility. To be honest, I'm on the verge of writing a blog post about the inaccessibility of meetings.

BM: Please, please do. And then let me know so that I can share it with everyone. Because they're oh my God, yes.

43:42

EB: There are just really small things that people could do to facilitate this and to chair this in such a way that it would achieve greater participation, for is there anyone in this meeting? And every time I think about that, all I can think of is the usual response to that would be able If you can't keep up, if you can't do this, if you can't be in the space and contribute, then you don't belong in this meeting. you don't belong at this level. You shouldn't be here anyway. And I was thinking recently about how we should just be flipping that and going actually, if you can't share or facilitate a meeting, or at least learn to and be willing to learn and listen in that space, if you can't do that in such a way that it promotes accessibility and inclusion and participation, then maybe you shouldn't be chairing that meeting.

44:27

BM: Absolutely. I'm actually a big fan of saying that. Like you can say that in such way that you are respectfully pushing back, with respect I am in this meeting because of the knowledge and skills, so I can contribute to this meeting. As the person who is chairing the meeting, your responsibility is to create an environment where all of us can participate and bring all of our knowledge to the fore. I would be happy to sit down with you and talk through what is needed in this space to best support my needs and your needs to get the best out of this meeting. But it is my expectation that as someone who does have knowledge to contribute in this space, I am given the form and the tools to be able to do this. How can I support you to develop those skills? To be able to welcome me into this environment?

45:32

EB: We need you writing scripts Bec.

45:37

BM: Push it back on them. Push it back on them.

EB: You have a career writing self-advocacy scripts for people.

45:43

BM: Hashtag Bec writes scripts.

45:49

EB: I feel like with like self-advocacy, it gets talked about is it, it is challenging to actually do that and it does like it still brings risk with it and different environments and supervisors and the space that you were in and actually even just your energy and capacity in that moment to be able to do it and support you have around it.

46:11

BM: Yes, 100 percent, 100 percent. And I honestly, I can't underscore enough the importance of having people like yourself who are actively working at that level to create inclusion as effectively part of the wallpaper just as something that is built in and again almost not thought about because it's so normalised like that is an amazing, amazing thing to do. And appreciating of course inclusion isn't an endpoint, it's a journey. It's something that I think if we take these little steps and build our cue cards, build our mental maps, so that we can reply to these things.

46:56

BM: I think it's also important to understand there will be times where we're not able to reply at that moment, not able to advocate. There have been times, even in my role, there's been a few times where I've caught out of meetings, and I've been honest. At the moment, my social battery is depleted or my cognitive, I'm just mentally and cognitively drained.

47:18

BM: Your time is important to me and I want to make sure that when we meet, I'm able to be with you fully. Let's reschedule. I'll reach out to you tomorrow and we'll reschedule a time. I really appreciate the opportunity to meet up with you at that stage so that we can work brilliantly together. And again, being honest, this is not something that you're asking for because you're in any way deficient. You're not. It's you're asking because you appreciate and respect that person so much that when you meet with them, you want to be there 100% in that moment with them, cognitively, mentally, emotionally, everything. You want to be there with them and you are respecting them. And if they push back and say no, we must have this meeting right now. I understand this meeting is important. As I've said, I want to make sure that when I'm spending this time with you, I'm here with you, that I'm respecting your time. That's not something I can do at this moment. So we will be rescheduling I'll reach out to you tomorrow. You're not asking for permission. You're not asking. Is it OK that I respect you?

48:40

EB: It comes back to the boundaries that you were talking about earlier as well.

48:46

BM: Absolutely. And it comes down to the importance again of people like yourself who are those leaders who are coming through and you're just like, yeah, no, of course. And I think as a leader as well, it's absolutely the case that you hold yourself to a different account because you think, no, I have to, I have to show that good thing. I have to show that good thing. And one thing I've been reiterating a lot with my colleagues is thank you for setting a boundary and showing us how to uphold and respect ourselves.

49:19

BM: Thank you. You setting a boundary and holding yourself to the same account and all of our listeners. This is for everyone. Set a boundary. It is healthy. It is good. And when you set that boundary and you set it with respect and you have those cue cards, everything like that, you show other people how to set respectful boundaries.

49:42

EB: I love it. I hope you're including this new toolkit Bec.

BM: I actually am going to include a few different scripts in there including on breathing as well during meetings because I know especially in stressful meetings, I'm like I said ADHD dominant anyway. So I tend to hyperventilate a little bit. So there'll be breathing in there so that you can learn about your breathing. And there's body language, those sort of things as well. So there will be a non verbal as well as verbal stuff.

50:16

EB: I love that your hands are just flying everywhere as we're talking as well.

50:20

BM: They are loosely attached to my wrist at this moment.

50:24

EB: No one else can see it, but I can see it. I am grinning.

50:29

EB: It's something, you can just see your enthusiasm just coming through the screen.

50:35

BM: I have to say though this is you, you've created such a safe space that I feel that I can do this. And it's kind of like, like normally I'll clasp my hands so that I keep myself quite still, particularly when I'm doing presentations. I'll normally, if I'm standing up, I'll roll my hands underneath the table to keep myself calm and slow down.

50:58

BM: I feel so safe with you that I'm relaxed. My hands are literally flying every, like they're loosely attached to my wrist at this stage. Like, it's mostly just gristle holding them on. It's kind of like, like I feel safe with you and look, even that look at what you were creating.

51:19

BM: Yourself and Nikki to create those environments. I, I think one of the things that we often forget as well, sometimes the staff member isn't, having been a manager before, I think sometimes if we're staff members, we forget the importance of creating that safe space with our manager as well. And it's

kind of like it kind of goes both ways too. And it's kind of like, I hope that that's something that you have with your team too.

51:48

EB: I know exactly what you mean. And I feel like a lot of the time, I can't even remember where I heard this. But sometimes, like, I feel like people at all levels, regardless of what level, what your role title are, you still need those safe spaces. You need encouragement,

BM: Yes!

52:05

EB: And you need someone to tell you that you're doing a good job,

52:08

BM: Yes, exactly yes!

EB: Sometimes we miss encouraging people who are actually in management leadership positions as well when they are doing a good job. So like I personally, I've done it a few times. I've actually felt a little bit awkward about it, but I've gone, actually, this person's done an amazing job. Yes, they might be a higher level than me or have a completely different and perhaps slightly intimidating role title, but I,

BM: Yes

EB: Can see that they have done a good job there. I'm going to tell them that because everyone needs encouragement regardless. Regardless of that.

52:36

BM: Absolutely, absolutely. Like whoever came up with the idea that praise only goes down. It's just like, what? No. No. Praise needs to go up, sideways, downwards, right up like literally like if the VC does something that is amazing and you love send their like EA a message because I can guarantee you they are not normally receiving I love this thing.

53:02

EB: That's my exact thinking around it is that I don't think a lot of people do always encourage up and I've just gone sometimes you need to hear that you've done thing well and especially if it's in space like I think disability, where it feels a little bit, it shouldn't but it does feel sometimes a little bit rare to have those positive responses or it can still feel really surprising and shocking when you do and again you feel like you, you do end up feeling like did I get lucky this time? Is it going to be that kind of situation next time?

53:33

BM: Absolutely.

EB: I feel like that shouldn't be a special case, but I know that I personally go, actually when I see someone doing a really good job in that space, especially if they don't have lived experience, I tell them.

53:44

BM: Yes.

EB: And sometimes they don't even know if they realise that what they did had a really positive impact. And it can be such a small, a small thing. I know that personally I've seen it with even just

pronouns, to be honest, not disability. But where I've seen someone just pay attention to something and in a really, really small way and I sent them, I think I said little, little message or thank you afterwards because I've noticed that switch and that perception and I just went such a small thing just made my day in that moment just that someone paid attention to that.

BM: Absolutely.

54:19

EB: We want more of that, we want more of that, to create inclusive space safe spaces.

54:26

BM: Absolutely. And could I just note like, we noted that executive manages everything like that, that we don't often have executive managers who are out about having a disability. I mean like why would they be if they never hear that we appreciate that you did this thing. Like we're talking about disclosure being a huge risk for us. And like I said that executive literally her words were it would ruin her career. If we're asking something of someone, should we not be willing to give back as well?

55:04

EB: Absolutely. I, I agree. I feel like it's, it's a really challenging conversation to be honest to have, because I know that I've mentioned a few times that I do wish that there were more people who were visible while also understanding so much of the risk around it. Understanding why I've chosen not to disclose in or have disclosed in certain situations. And it feels like sometimes it is such a fine line to walk because you understand the risk, but you also understand the importance and also just personal choice, but you understand that importance of having visibility, having more conversations about this, having representation having people, and yeah, like, I know personally, half, like it's been other people being visible that has prompted me to start conversations about this.

BM: Absolutely, absolutely. And you're right, it's a fine line to like tread because like we don't want to set ourselves on fire and we don't like want to empty ourselves out completely. But by doing that and by having that courage, it's that step forward and like women, gained the vote by our fore mothers stepping forward.

56:13

BM: It's that exact same thing. And I personally like, I will say, until the cows come home, which I hope they do, because I love cows. But like, really think cows are quite cute. They're just big dogs

EB: They are, they are.

BM: OK dolphining. OK, back onto topic. Dolphining. Dolphining.

56:32

BM: I was about to say we're about to derail this entire podcast.

56:36

BM: Hashtag cows. But back to like with yourself, with Nikki, with having people who have voice and who are willing to speak even when your voice trembles, speak. I mean like, that is just so hecking powerful. So hecking powerful.

57:04

BM: like I don't think it, has your experience been, it gets easier the more you talk? It's like I think it's a difficult question isn't it?

57:16

EB: It is a difficult question. I think on the whole yes, because I've, I think I have actually grown in confidence in terms of having these conversations and being more open and self advocating. And you kind of also reach a point where it's, it's easier just found it so much easier to actually overtime have conversations about it to do things like found ANDPA with Nikki like that's not something I ever saw myself doing. I did not expect in the first five years of my career, someone who was planning to hide disability for their entire career. Like I started in libraries going hide, I know what I'm meant to do and what I meant to do and what I've been told that I meant to do is hide disability, you know, within two to three years in that went out the window.

58:00

EB: I just, it was, it was and impact thing, honestly realising, just little bits chipping away going, oh, this could have a positive impact on this person. Well, this person shared with me and I, we can actually continue that conversation by me, you know, sharing my experience as well. And then of course it just gets a bit bigger. The more you do that, the more instances where you can disclose or you can open up that conversation happen and it's challenging like, like you were saying there is I think there's fear around it. You know you mentioned voices trembling. I remember the first time I shared a survey for ANDPA. I, no one could see the sheer panic.

BM: Absolutely

58:46

EB: There was sheer panic the moment I hit send over just that survey and, but overtime that's gotten so much easier and the more that I've done it, the more excited I've been the more impact I've seen come from it. I've just gone, Oh my goodness. Yes, I'm still terrified in so many instances, instances. But how could I not? How could I not be doing this that I can actually see the positive impact? See, communities actually starting to form, people feeling supported, Even if it's not perfect, even if it's maybe not perfect in workplaces that there is just this space where we can do our, do, do our best and do what we can,

BM: Absolutely

EB: To create inclusive, safe, spaces.

BM: Absolutely and we all benefit. And this is the thing. Like every piece of work you've done, it hasn't been easy. Like it 100% hasn't been easy. And like you said, like the amount of stress that goes into like even writing an email. Have I worded it precisely? Have I been clear but not demanding? Have I communicated but not bullied? Have I done this, have I done that? Everything like this and all of that work that goes into it and everyone benefits from it. It doesn't make it any easier in respect to that, like stress going through it, but it does make it easier as in we learn those skills, so I guess like not being put off at those first stages when it is scary. I think that's probably one of the things, isn't it?

1:00:22

EB: Yeah and it's definitely something that I've personally just had to push through to be honest. And it's only been because of the fact that there's been that little bit of change, a little bit of visibility from other people. And then seeing that small impact that I've been like this is worthwhile pushing through and taking a risk that I didn't expect to take. Like it is like we're talking about just these really small, small changes, small positive kind of marks and difference that's made that makes it worthwhile.

1:00:51

BM: Small, positive changes are the ones that create change. Like people are often think like oh we have to do like cultural change, we have to do this big change. Cultural change is great, but if you just

change your culture and then that champion like literally in my doctorate it's like that champions there, they take a leading role and then they go, the cultures changed, yeah, but there's not been any stabilisation of that culture. It just falls over the second that person's out the door because it's not embedded into anything. The small things are actually the most powerful things because that's how you get buy in into this, so that when one person goes that culture doesn't stop being inclusion, like inclusive suddenly. So what you're doing like those small changes, they are so powerful, they are so powerful and that's how cultural change happens.

1:01:46

EB: And I'm not sure if it's the case for you but I feel like a lot of time that does start with just sharing and conversations it's just it seems like such a small thing. But for me, it's where I've seen some of the biggest impact because then it kind of snowballs a little bit into other things, and more conversations and more energy around things or even just even if it just stays at that conversation stage. There is just, just the fact that you can be having those conversations and there is that openness and that willingness to share experiences and to learn from others as well. That is just it. It brings me a little joy.

1:02:23

BM: Absolutely agree. Absolutely agree. Like you go into a football stadium and you hear all of those voices, all of those voices. It's pretty damn hard to ignore them, right? And it's the same in this space. Like you go somewhere and you hear all of these voices. It's pretty damn hard to ignore inclusion when everyone around you is actively talking about, thinking about working towards, having small moments, having a conversation at the water cooler that no of course that rescheduling that meeting is fine, you go outside, you go for a walk, you do something that brings you joy, we will catch up tomorrow. All of those little things, and it's really, really hard to ignore all that.

1:03:10

BM: Yeah. I have learned through long practise that people always feel the most comfortable when they have some form of drink in their hand. So literally one of my favourite places to work on campus, any campus on that, is the cafeteria. I hecking love working at the cafeteria. People are there and they're just like it's the same around the water cooler. It's the absolute reason we love those sort of conversations because they have that sense of being at ease. I mean like picture of the last time when you sat down with your mom or grandmother or grandfather or grandpa or anyone that you love. and just think about that time when you sat down and chances are you sat down, you had a cup of tea or a cup of coffee and you were talking together. It's that sense of meeting on shared ground and absolutely like you're saying going around having those little conversations, those five minute peek ins, those little chats just scatter, scatter little inclusive include, include, inclusivity bubbles inclusivity inclusivity. inclusivity's everywhere and that just builds some momentum.

EB: I'm watching your hands just scatter inclusivity everywhere, that we need to be doing.

1:04:31

BM: (sings) Rain drops keep falling on my head.

1:04:33

EB: That's what we need to be doing though. Actually. Like, I feel like scattering is a really nice way of describing it.

BM: Absolutely

1:04:41

EB: It's what ends up happening. And you have one person, you know, you have people go away from those conversations and it gets scattered more.

1:04:48

BM: Exactly it. Exactly it. They go out and they like, well, put that water on the field and then you don't know what's going to grow, but it's going to be amazing. But you have to be part of that. You have to be happening that it's kind of like I'm really reflecting now especially with yourself as manager as a supervisor as a leader in this space and that importance of scattering upwards as well. It's like giving you some love, giving you some water, giving you like that appreciation too and making sure those like making sure that everyone's kind of, like, included in that, that we don't miss the people who are part of that.

1:05:29

BM: And it's just, yeah, I really love it. I'm just like, like I'm just like picturing the little watering kind now, I must admit. So, I'm going to take that into work. I'm doing like this inclusion kind of like, so one of the things that I'm really conscious of is I'm really wanting to erase some of those bad languages that we have around ourselves. I'm so sorry for rescheduling that meeting. No. Thank you for meeting with me at this rescheduled time. Thank you for X and Y. I thank you for da da da not I'm sorry for. I'm sorry that I, no. so, I'm trying to erase that sort of bad language. so I've got like these displays that Burwoods and at Geelong and they've got badges and stickers and squishies and fidgets and those sort of things. Those like, because one of the things that really craps me off is everyone's always like don't eat my food. So everybody is always like oh yeah, so if you have depression just go and exercise well, so I have like the tiniest little dumbbells that ever existed. They're like 1 centimetre and they're so, so tiny that I deliberately got them so that when everyone's like go exercise more, you can put it on your finger and you're like 1, 2, 3, 4. And it's just kind of like those little things as well. And it's just kind of like, like when we're talking about being a leader of space as well and kind of like knowing how to negotiate and navigate in that space so that you can be there and be open. But at the same time, understanding that, that is a vulnerability and that is scary, things like wearing the lanyard, everything like that. And just thinking of other ways to kind of do that. And sometimes it can be as a manager, supervisor having a bunch of stickers there about, well, I'm low on spoons today, what's spoon theory? Let's talk about that. And starting conversations that way as well. Can be maybe a little bit,

1:07:29

BM: a little bit of a different way of doing it, but still effective. So a little bit of a long winded way to get there, but I got there eventually. It was the scenic route, scenic route.

1:07:41

EB: I love that. But we're, as we're coming to a close then what would you like to see happen to create a more inclusive and supportive environment in this space for disability?

1:07:51

BM: Go forth and scatter. I think that would be the main thing that we can all do. I think understand that it's not always easy that you've got people around you.

1:08:05

BM: Appreciate, share, learn from each other. Learn from, learn from yourself as well. Be proud of what you're learning. Be proud of how far you've came to and give thanks. I know that the idea of a

gratitude journal is like so 2000s right now, anyway, but it's kind of like give gratitude, say thank you, and yeah, we can do it.

EB: Do you have any advice for allies in this space?

1:08:35

BM: For allies? I think much the same. So share, give gratitude. Ask, how can I support you? Not tell me what's wrong with you. What's worked well for you before, not well we're going to do.

1:08:49

BM: For managers and supervisors. If someone comes to you and discloses, it is not an opportunity to interrogate and it's not an opportunity to tell them that they can't do their job.

1:09:05

BM: With disclosure, it is an opportunity to come together and it's an opportunity to work together. And it is an obligation on managers and supervisors to understand that and to make room at that table. Remember all of us, anyone with a disability, we still have a seat at the table. We don't owe anyone that seat at the table and we do not need to be on our knees walking through the desert repenting, but taking that seat at the table.

1:09:43

BM: So, yeah, there's something for all of us to do, but it all starts from, well going forward and being willing to start.

1:09:55

EB: Love it. Thank you so much for joining me today Bec.

1:09:59

BM: Thank you so much for having me. This has just been amazing. And once more, thank you for the work that you're doing in this space. Thank you for having me here today. And thank you for being the courageous leader that you are in creating rooms for all of us to be able to thrive and be our best selves.

1:10:19

EB: And the same to you, Bec.

1:10:22

BM: I think my cat disagrees with me, but anyway.

1:10:29

EB: And thank you to all of our listeners who have joined us. You can keep up to date with our podcasts and other events or the Association of Neurodivergent and Disabled GLAMR Professionals Australia on our website. Thank you and until next time.