

Stories from the brainreels podcast transcript

June 3, 2013

Introduction

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CHERYL: Welcome to Blog Talk Radio's "Stories from the brainreels." I'm your host, Cheryl Green, from StoryMinders coming to you live from Portland, Oregon, as I do every first Friday and some third Fridays at 1:00 pm Pacific Time to share stories, news, art, comedy, and discussion on brain injury and disability culture.

[music]

Welcome to the show. Thanks so much for listening. I see that my guest, Brent Pudsey, is already on the line on hold. So Brent, I'll get to you in a few minutes. And I'm very impressed with your timing. You actually beat me by about five minutes. I could not find my phone anywhere. And so I was just running in circles around the house, looking for a phone. And I called in about 20 seconds before the show started. So kudos to you, Brent, for being more organized than I am! And that's sort of the heart of the brainreels comedy. It's just real-life stuff like that.

So, before I bring on Brent, I have some housekeeping, just a few announcements I wanna make. The first announcement is that I need a co-host. Wouldn't you agree? I mean, I can't even find my phone before the show. So if you love talking and taking turns, and you wanna co-host this show with me, just drop me a line at info@storyminders.com. There's a few requirements. #1 you must love the Ouch! talk show. I really feel like that show captures my sense of humor, my politics, views about disability very beautifully. I'm not copying them. I'm not trying to be an Ouch! Lite or something like that. But if you don't love that show, you might not love working with me. And if you do love the show, then we'll have a grand time. The second requirement, you must have a disability or be an experienced disability ally. This isn't reverse discrimination pretty much because I don't believe that exists. This is about putting disability experience front and center. So if you can speak from experience, then contact me. And number three, are you available the first Friday of the month at 1:00 pm Pacific time? Because this show is live. You don't have to be in the same place as me. It's all done by phone and by internet, but it is the first Friday of the month, 1:00 pm Pacific time. And lastly, you gotta love talking about brain injury. Now, you don't have to have a brain injury to be on this show, but that is the main focus of Stories from the brainreels. Because the word "brain" is already in there! As we go on, we'll be branching out to disability in general and talking about different topics around disability, gender, race, other groups and identities where we find people being marginalized or isolated. But brain injury experiences are really gonna stay the main focus. So potential co-hosts, drop me a line if you would like to co-host the show once or many times.

My next announcements is a few hours late. But today, all day, was the National Black Disability Coalition's forum. This forum was set up to discuss the future of incorporating Black Disability Studies within Black Studies. And this is to provide much-needed research on the disabled, African American experience, specifically to move forward public policy initiatives, as how it relates to disabled African Americans and their families. And Black Disability Studies will also provide education of the disabled

African American experience to students who are the future leaders and decision-makers. The knowledge of this group will impact disabled African American life from historical, social, arts, cultural, and theological perspectives. That whole description and all the details about the forum I got from the National Black Disability Coalition's website, which is www.BlackDisability.org. And this is a really neat thing because there's really a lot of overlap between race and disability, especially if you look at things like medical experimentation, violence, prejudice and discrimination, unequal access to housing, schooling, and work opportunities. So the National Black Disability Coalition is getting this conversation going so that Black and Africana Studies would be able to go into the disability experience in their college classes. This is neat stuff! You can check out a short radio interview with the Coalition's Jane Dunhamn. She's talking to Krip-Hop Nation founder Leroy Moore at Blogtalkradio.com. Their show is called [Black, Gifted, and Disabled](#). That was their first episode; they've just gotten started. So definitely have a listen to the conversation with Leroy Moore.

And I have one last announcement before I bring on my very, very patient guest, Brent. Brain-injured visual artist Kris Haas is still going strong on her online fundraiser for her project called 1 YEAR, 10,000 PIECES, 1 ARTIST. I mentioned that fundraiser a few times on last month's show. Right now, matching funds are open. So any donation you make will automatically be doubled. She has 23 days left. Her deadline is June 30th, and she has to meet or go above her minimum goal to get any of the money. All donations that you make are tax-deductible. And also, what's really neat about USA Projects, who are hosting her site, is that they don't charge her to host her fundraiser. Most platforms like Kickstarter do charge the artist to use the site. Now, USA Projects will ask you for a small additional donation to cover expenses. They have consultants who helped her set up her fundraiser and monitor it and set up the matching funds. So they ask for a small donation, and you can make a choice of size. That is also tax-deductible. Kris is very isolated since her brain injury nine years ago. And she's utilizing live-streaming video and real-time documentary to capture and share with you, the viewer, the life of an artist as she creates 10,000 paintings in one year. So please check out USAProjects.org; search for Kris Haas. This is really a major form of self-advocacy, to propose and fundraise for a project like this. It's so innovative and so far-reaching. So again, USAProjects, Kris Haas: K-r-i-s H-a-a-s. And with that last announcement, I would love to bring my guest, Brent Pudsey, on.

The Interview

CHERYL: Hi, thanks so much for joining me today!

BRENT: My pleasure.

CHERYL: Great. And I wanna let listeners know this is an international phone call. So there's a slight delay. Don't worry too much about that. Brent has a lot of experience with self-advocacy, as well as things related to working, being a person working with a brain injury. Now, folks like Kris Haas, the artist, and I are basically self-employed. So we can manage our own tasks and our own pacing. But Brent has some things to share related to working in a more typical work setting with a brain injury. So Brent, I would love to have you introduce yourself. Maybe tell me a little bit about yourself, where you're located.

BRENT: OK. Well, first off, I live in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. To give you a bit of a framework for that, we're about 300 miles north of Fargo, North Dakota.

CHERYL: Mmhhh. What's the weather like there right now?

BRENT: It's actually quite warm. It's around 70, 71 degrees Fahrenheit.

CHERYL: Yeah! That's nice! That's a good temperature.

BRENT: Yep.

CHERYL: And I wanna ask, are you doing any kind of community service right now related to disability or brain injury?

BRENT: Not at the moment, but I definitely have done so in the past.

CHERYL: Mmhmm. And some of that community service is what I'm going to ask you about in our conversation.

Brain Injury Awareness Month in Canada

CHERYL: But before we get into your past community service and advocacy work, I just wanna say--we talked about this the other day--it is a lovely bit of timing, our conversation, because June is Brain Injury Awareness Month in Canada. So I wonder if you could tell me, just off the top of your head, what Brain Injury Awareness Month means to you, if anything.

BRENT: I guess it's definitely a time to make people aware of what brain injury is and also to highlight some of the different services and groups in the community. Right now, in Manitoba, most of the groups are more of a support group, where you go and share your feelings about what's some of the struggles you've had with the brain injury. And there's also groups that provide support for people who are helping people who have a brain injury.

CHERYL: Definitely, yeah. And I actually was looking at the Brain Injury Association of Manitoba's website, and I looked at the way the different support groups were listed out, support groups and activities there in Winnipeg. And I actually sent it to a couple of Board members of a brain injury group that I'm part of here in Portland, Oregon and said, "Look at what they're doing in Winnipeg! This would be a great structure for us to copy." So I wouldn't have been looking at that site if I hadn't met you. So that's really nice.

BRENT: Yes.

CHERYL: But I wanna say, one thing I noticed on the Brain Injury Association of Manitoba's website is they've got some brain injury awareness statistics on their Homepage. And there are things like skull thickness for women versus men, and there's some numbers around hockey, and some numbers around using helmets. And this is good stuff to be aware of, but to me, it's a little bit limited. And I wonder what you think about that and if you think what else would you want people to become more aware about in Brain Injury Awareness Month.

BRENT: Well, the first thing I would like people to become more aware about is that brain injury isn't always recognizable.

CHERYL: Mmhmm.

BRENT: Yeah, people who have had a brain injury are everyday people who are in the community. So sometimes they have this stereotypical, that if you've had a brain injury that you're slow, that you aren't able to think, and aren't able to function as a normal person. But that's a myth.

CHERYL: Mm, mmhmm.

BRENT: So that's one thing I'd like people to know. A second thing I'd like people to know is that individuals who have had a brain injury are still able to learn new skills and also to learn new information. And that was a big thing for me because I was just finishing my Grade 12 when I had my brain tumor surgery and developed a brain injury.

CHERYL: Yeah, so did you continue on with formal education after that surgery?

BRENT: Yes, I did. I was able to earn a Bachelor of Arts in Theology and focusing on Pastoral Ministry. And then I went on and did some studies toward a Master's degree in Theology.

CHERYL: I think it's wonderful what you're saying about breaking down stigma and letting people know, "Hey, we can still accomplish. We can still get a formal education. Or even if it's not a formal education, we can still learn skills. Don't think that we're dumb just because you hear the term 'brain injury' or 'brain tumor' or 'brain surgery'." It sounds like you're really talking about give us the benefit of the doubt because we're just like anybody else.

BRENT: Yes, that's definitely what I was trying to communicate.

CHERYL: Oh, you did. You definitely, yeah. So that's wonderful. And I just really appreciate that because I often find that brain injury awareness month information is just like you said; it's focused on what kinds of support programs people can look for, and then it's focused on statistics. I'll admit, I've never seen the skull thickness statistics before. But usually what I see is the number of adults with a brain injury, the number of people who were injured in a car wreck versus some kinds of sports. And that stuff is very important, but that's so focused on the impairment, and it's so focused on the head and the brain. And what you're saying is we're still people, and we have whole lives, and we do things. And so don't forget to focus on us as people.

BRENT: That's entirely true. It's an important message.

CHERYL: Yeah, yeah.

Independent Living Resource Centre in Winnipeg

CHERYL: So I'm gonna ask you some questions now about some of the advocacy work and things that you've done in the past because I would like other people with brain injuries and people with other types of disabilities to know about the kinds of stuff that you've done and that a lot of us can do. So you have an Independent Living Resource Centre up there. We've got I think 500 here in the U.S. You were on the speakers' bureau at the Independent Living Resource Centre. And I want to just real quick read their mission statement off their website. The ILRC is a consumer-controlled organization that promotes and supports citizens with disabilities to make choice and take responsibility for the development and management of personal and community resources. And they also talk about how everyone is entitled to live as independently as possible. Sorry. I'm having trouble reading out loud. I keep skipping lines. Everyone is entitled to live as independently as possible. And that individuals should be supported to exercise maximum control over their lives. So independent living's not about living alone. It's a mindset with which an individual can control all aspects of his or her life. So that's information from their website. It's sort of technical-sounding. I wonder if you could tell me in your own words, from your own experience, what the Centre does.

BRENT: Well, first and foremost, I would say that the Centre encourages individuals who have challenges or disabilities that their life is not over, and that they are still people, and that they can live as

independently as possible. There's a number of different programs that the Independent Living Resource Centre runs. Some of them have to deal with the attitudes that people of all ages have. They have a program which uses puppets and basically talks about how children might perceive individuals who have different disabilities.

CHERYL: Oh!

BRENT: It's to help educate them to know that everybody is a special and unique person.

CHERYL: Mmhmm.

BRENT: As well, they provide a lot of information on some of the different resources in Winnipeg and how to utilize them. They do some training in conjunction with our Province on how to set up a business for yourself.

CHERYL: Oh, yeah!

BRENT: And they also teach them about some training for people to be--attendants--they call it Personal Attendant Community Education training. And a lot of that has to deal with really respecting the person that you're helping out and allowing them to make as many choices as possible.

CHERYL: It's a wonderful set of services. And when you talked about the educational information for kids to learn about how people with any kind of disability are still, they're still whole, complete people, it was making me wonder if these messages--just in your opinion--if these messages of completeness and independence, if those really are getting out to the larger society. Are they getting out to adults without disabilities so that they will have this opinion of us?

BRENT: Well--

CHERYL: Did my question make sense [chuckles]?

BRENT: Yes, it does. And I would say that progress is being made and that people are beginning to realize more and more that having a disability doesn't change how you feel as and act as a person and that people do deserve to be treated fairly. Although, I do say that probably as a result of impressions, there are some difficulties in society in general. Probably, I would say the two ones that come to mind are the idea of mobility and also employment.

CHERYL: Mmhmm.

Employment advocacy and the BUILT Network

CHERYL: And you've done a lot of work around employment things, right?

BRENT: Yeah.

CHERYL: Well, you were part of the [BUILT Network](#), and also you did some workshops with the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work. Let's start with the BUILT Network. Can you describe a little bit about what you learned there about adapting to the workplace as a person with a disability, or really anything that you'd like to say about the BUILT Network?

BRENT: Well, first off, regarding the BUILT Network, I would like to say that this is a very encouraging and also very positive group that really emphasizes the gifts and talents that each person has.

CHERYL: Mmhmm.

BRENT: They're also affiliated with a group called the National Network for Mental Health. And one of the things that I learned at the BUILT Network was how to advocate for having a disability and how, in particular, how that might relate to work.

CHERYL: Mmhmm.

BRENT: In Manitoba--and Canada in general--we do have laws saying that reasonable accommodations should be provided. And in some cases, in my case, it might be the ability to have a pad of paper to write some notes so I'm following directions, I don't forget a number, or something of that nature.

CHERYL: Mmhmm.

BRENT: And that would be an example of a reasonable accommodation.

CHERYL: So when you talk about advocating, do you mean advocating in terms of, "I'm an employee, and I should go to my boss and ask for reasonable accommodations?"

BRENT: Yes.

CHERYL: And so how do folks know what kind of accommodations are actually reasonable? Or how do folks know where to go to ask for them?

BRENT: Within the laws of Canada, they talk about a reasonable accommodation being something that would not cause undue hardship for the employer, meaning that it would not be considered too expensive and that it would be something that would meet the needs of both parties in the best way possible, ensuring both the interests of the person with the disability and also the employer.

CHERYL: Mmhmm. Do you feel like in general, folks with brain injury even know what reasonable accommodations they can ask for in the workplace?

BRENT: I think this is probably an issue that should be addressed a little bit more.

CHERYL: Mmhmm.

BRENT: In general, I'm not even sure how many people with a disability in general know about reasonable accommodation.

CHERYL: That's a good point, yeah. And I wonder. It's just tough to determine what's actually reasonable. And I know I tried to go back to a regular office-type job too soon after my traumatic brain injury [laughs], and we had so many interesting discussions around reasonable accommodations. I was asking for things like, "I can only work 1 hour a day, and I have to work from home, and I have to be able to take a nap, turn the lights off." I mean, it was just on and on and on. I had no idea that these things were unreasonable. You can't really work an office job from home one hour a day.

BRENT: No.

CHERYL: But we were having a hard time having a conversation around what actually is reasonable. And part of that is because I was so impaired, I just couldn't understand the difference between reasonable and unreasonable. But I do wonder how many people who don't have a cognitive impairment like I have dealt with, I wonder if they know what is reasonable and what they can ask for. And I wonder what employers, how much employers know. Maybe some people are scared to ask for an accommodation because they're afraid they might be fired. So I don't know. Are these the kinds of things that you talked about in the trainings that you did?

BRENT: Yes. The training that I did with both the BUILT Network and also what I learned at my workshops did talk about how to approach people and even thinking about the manner in which you approach an individual and your tone of voice and even some of your gestures and body language.

CHERYL: Mmhmm. That's really valuable stuff. And did those trainings also address the employers' perspective? Like for instance, I know now--I've been told--I struggled a lot with a lot of very rude voice and yelling a lot and hitting people to get their attention instead of saying "excuse me" or tapping them lightly on the shoulder. And it took a while to relearn how to act in a polite way. And so that kind of training would've been really helpful for me. Does anybody ever train the employers in how to say, "Oh, that person has a brain injury, and they're yelling at me. Let me just wait and see if we can all calm down and talk about it again rather than get angry or take it personally?"

BRENT: In general, I'm not as aware of that type of training, although I do know that with individuals who have more severe cognitive problems or behavioral problems, a lot of these individuals might work with a person on the job.

CHERYL: Mmhmm.

BRENT: And the support worker usually acts as a go-between between the supervisor and the employee.

CHERYL: Mm, that's nice. Yeah.

BRENT: So that helps deflect some of that challenge. And there's also a training called Non-violent Crisis Intervention, which talks about how to diffuse situations.

CHERYL: That sounds like a really good resource, and I had never thought of something like that, non-violent intervention. Or, I can't remember the term that you used now, but I know what you're talking about. I hadn't thought of that in terms of disability, but that's really important. Especially in our population, there are some people who, like myself, lose their temper very, very easily. Or also how I used to be was, I wasn't actually mad, but I was yelling at you anyway and using a sort of aggressive voice and aggressive body language. But I really wasn't feeling aggressive. So that's a really neat thing to think about using those non-violent crisis intervention strategies to diffuse a situation and make sure you can figure out exactly what the problem is. That's a great idea. Thanks for putting that idea in my mind. I appreciate that.

BRENT: You're very welcome.

Workshops through Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work

CHERYL: What about, you developed and led some workshops related to youth with disabilities through the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work. Can you talk a little bit about that?

BRENT: This was an interesting project that was actually done across Canada. How it began was there was a group of individuals with disabilities, and they were hired to do some research on the whole process of how individuals, and particularly youth, with disabilities were involved in the skilled trades occupations.

CHERYL: Mmhmm.

BRENT: And then a second group of individuals developed a workshop manual. So what I was involved in doing was going through this manual and then preparing a workshop that looked at first, a bit about the types of work in the trades area and also a bit about the types of skills needed in this workplace. And then, the second half of it dealt first with some of the different laws that we had in the first federally in Canada, and then provincially in Manitoba, in regards to persons with disabilities and work. And following that, the idea of accommodation in the workplace was addressed.

CHERYL: Mm.

BRENT: And the workshop I did also had some role play activities and also a game that kind of looked at the skilled trades.

Getting into disability advocacy

CHERYL: So I'm wondering how you, a person who studied Theology, ended up developing and leading these different workshops and trainings with these different organizations all related to disability. How did you go about becoming that person?

BRENT: Well, a lot of it at the time, when I studied Theology, my goal was to work as a Chaplain in a hospital setting.

CHERYL: Mm.

BRENT: And in Canada, this is quite involved. You need a Master's degree, and you need to do these work experience courses and then to work for a year and write some papers to become accredited.

CHERYL: Mmhmm.

BRENT: So I had some challenges with the work experience training part. And I was actually in one particular situation. You have to apply to get into these courses, which are called Clinical Pastoral Education. And when I couldn't get into a hospital facility, I was referred to our provincial jail in Winnipeg, called Headingley. And that turned out to be a bit of a challenge for me. One of the challenges that I've had with the brain injury that I had is that my sense of direction was affected.

CHERYL: Mmhmm!

BRENT: And prisons are not a great spot to be in if you have direction problems.

CHERYL: [laughs]

BRENT: Basically, it didn't work out, and then I was at school trying to figure out what to do next. And I heard about the BUILT Network. And then, with the skills I learned at the BUILT Network, I was able to receive, find some other employment, and through some of the other jobs, I kind of got more involved with advocacy. And I also was first introduced to the Independent Living Resource Centre.

CHERYL: OK, that's really interesting. So it sort of came out of the challenges in the workplace.

BRENT: Yeah.

CHERYL: And I guess there wasn't a reasonable accommodation to help you through getting lost in the jail setting all the time.

BRENT: No.

Trainings at Independent Living Resource Centre

CHERYL: Yeah, so from that set of challenges in the workplace, you ended up going to these trainings, and then you became a trainer. And you were on the speakers bureau at the Independent Living Resource Centre, right?

BRENT: Yes.

CHERYL: What kind of things--were those formal trainings as well, or was that more personal stories?

BRENT: There was formal material that they put into the training sessions. And they offer a number of different sessions. One of them being what it's like and some of the issues facing a person with a disability in an educational setting, in going through school. There's another one that deals with the employment issues. They also have one that dealt with how to work with the disability population in an emergency setting, such as a flood.

CHERYL: Mm, mmhmm.

BRENT: And then, the final one was sort of everyday living skills that a person with a disability has to cope with. And that one focused more on persons who didn't have a disability kind of learning to empathize with people with disabilities.

CHERYL: Mm, mmhmm. They sound like really valuable trainings. And when you were mentioning how to work with people in an emergency situation, I know that we have schools here where there may not be an elevator, and there is a student--Well now wait. How did she get on the second floor if there's no elevator. No. See, here's my memory. I recently read about a student who was--at least one student--they were left inside the school during a fire drill because they had no way....The story is not making sense in my head as I'm trying to tell it. I shouldn't go off my script. But there was something about--and I don't think it's an isolated incident--where people in wheelchairs are left in the building because there's no quick, easy route to get them out. And so they get left. And I almost wish I hadn't started bringing up the story because I can't tell it right. So I'll just leave it at that. And maybe at some point I will remember what it is that I'm actually trying to say to you. But they do sound like wonderful trainings. And I'm curious if there were other people involved who have some type of brain injury? Or were you sort of the only one in these different groups?

BRENT: It isn't overly common, although I have met other people who have had brain injuries who are utilizing the services of the Independent Living Resource Centre.

CHERYL: Mmhmm.

BRENT: And one thing about a disability is that quite often, there's different aspects of your challenge or disability that can relate to another person who has a different disability.

CHERYL: Mm, mmhmm. That's a really good point.

Brain injury community advocacy seems separate from disability advocacy

CHERYL: And I was asking about that because I find that where I am, the brain injury community seems mostly really separate from the rest of the disability community. So when I am putting on events or working with other people to put on events like showing movies and other arts events, I tend to be the only person with a brain injury--at least on the organizing committee. And there just seems to be very few people who are leading workshops or doing those kinds of trainings you talked about or who are doing lots of advocacy work in the disability community who have a brain injury. There's a lot of people with brain injury very active in the brain injury community, but they don't seem to mix very much. Do you feel like that's happening where you are?

BRENT: Yes, to a certain degree I would agree with you there. I think another challenge is depending on the severity of the brain injury, sometimes individuals with a brain injury don't really have as much independence or voice, depending how much help or assistance they need with day to day life.

CHERYL: Mmhmm. Yeah, it's an interesting point. And I know that a lot of people, if you had a brain injury, and your communication was severely impaired, well then, possibly it would be hard to lead a workshop [chuckles]. But I still keep wondering why there's so much, why there's not a good bridge between the two groups. I mean, do you have--this is just opinion--do you have an opinion about why folks with brain injury tend to be in their own group--or our own group--and other disabilities seem to be in this other group, all lumped together?

BRENT: Well, that's interesting. What's interesting in a Canadian context is that certain disability groups have more resources than others, and some are lumped together.

CHERYL: Mmhmm. So do you think that the main divide is about resources?

BRENT: I think resources, and I think it's also awareness of disability and the fact that it is a disability.

CHERYL: Mm, mmhmm.

BRENT: Sometimes, I think it's easy for people to look down on other people and not realize that they do have challenges to work on.

CHERYL: Mm, right. Sort of like, if you see someone in a wheelchair, you might expect, well that person probably is not gonna be able to walk up these stairs here. But if you see a person with a brain injury, you don't know if they're dealing with their own kind of stairs at the moment. And I think in terms of resources, things around brain injury advocacy and even diagnosing and treating brain injuries, that's only really starting to get a lot of energy behind it. Whereas, other different kinds of disabilities or different kinds of health conditions have had a lot more research and have a lot more resources behind them for a lot longer. So that does make a difference. That's a good point. I hadn't thought about that point before. Yeah.

Disclosing your disability

CHERYL: I have another question for you. It's sort of out of order. It's a little bit off what we were just talking about. My question is about disclosure. And you were talking about well, you can't necessarily see the person with a brain injury is having some challenges. I know that it's not required that you disclose that you have a disability when you go for a job interview or when you first get hired. And I

know that your supervisor or boss is not allowed to ask you at the interview, "Aw well, nice to meet you. Do you have a disability?" Do you have any recommendations for people with different kinds of brain injuries around how to disclose or when to disclose that they might need some accommodations?

BRENT: I think firstly, I think it's important to emphasize to the employer that you are capable of doing the job, and just remind them that this is something that will help you do it a bit more efficiently.

CHERYL: That's a great way to put it! Oh, sorry. Go ahead.

BRENT: Yeah, I think as an example, going back to school for me, with the brain injury I had, some of my manipulative skills were affected a little bit. So my handwriting was affected. It got a little worse than it was before. So when I went to university, one of the things I had to advocate for at that time was the ability to be able to use a computer to type up an exam.

CHERYL: Mmhmm.

BRENT: Yes, I was successful, and it definitely made things easier.

CHERYL: I really like your approach of, if you're going to disclose that you need accommodations, to start with, "I can do this job" or "I can take this test. I am capable of that, and this accommodation is gonna help me be more efficient." That's a great attitude to have and a great suggestion for people when they are reaching the point where they want to or need to disclose, to really start with that. And it's not just about being happy and positive just to be positive but to reassure people that a reasonable accommodation, that you're still going to do the job, and you're gonna work just as hard as anyone else might work, and the accommodation is not a burden. It's that tool that you use to get your job done. I tend to have such a sour attitude. I wouldn't remember to say, "By the way, I'm capable of doing the job. I'd just like an accommodation." I would just come in and say, "I can't do that unless you help me!" That's not a very effective attitude, is it?

BRENT: Not always.

CHERYL: [laughs] No. But that's one of the reasons that I work for myself, is I don't always have a very effective attitude. But it sounds like you have really thought through and worked through so many of these things and how to advocate for yourself and how to have a really effective attitude about it. I really appreciate that. I'm always looking for more people who can teach me how to not be so--I don't know, I can't even think of the word but--sour. Not to have such a sour attitude. I think that's wonderful.

Thank you

CHERYL: This has been a really wonderful conversation and very enlightening for me. And it's just wonderful to get to hear about the different things that you've been doing and the way you went from sort of that gosh, I can't get through this job because of this challenge and this impairment, to becoming a self-advocate. Well, it sounds like you were doing quite a bit of advocacy when you went back to school, but to focus so much energy on these different trainings and workshops and presentations, that's wonderful. And I appreciate that. Are you working a job right now?

BRENT: At the moment, I'm looking for work.

CHERYL: Mmhmm. Like many people.

BRENT: Yes.

CHERYL: It is a tough time to get a job, but it sounds like you have a lot of tools under your belt for, once you do find something and head off to the interview, you know how to take care of yourself in terms of disclosing and asking for accommodations if you think you might need them. So that's wonderful, and I'm looking forward to sharing some of these different ideas you talked about with folks here about disclosing and about advocating for yourself and doing that in an effective way. I really appreciate that. And I wish you a lovely rest of your Brain Injury Awareness Month there in Canada.

BRENT: All right. Thank you.

CHERYL: Yes, absolutely. Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me, and I look forward to being in touch in the future.

BRENT: All right. Thank you so much.

CHERYL: Thank you.

Wrap up

CHERYL: So I'm really happy that I got to speak to Brent today. Brent and I actually met through a group on LinkedIn, and I don't remember which group it was [laughs]. Certainly, it was related to disability, but I just really can't remember. Again, that's the heart of the comedy that is my life. I really had a great time talking about advocacy and talking about different things related to work, with Brent, especially as I have navigated different ideas around going back to work or continuing to do self-employed work that I do around making films and around disability education and disability advocacy. At this point, I can't stay awake for eight hours in a row. So it would be very hard to work a standard type of job. So with that, I would like to thank you for listening. On that up note, I'd like to thank you for listening today and taking the time to get to know a little bit about Brent and to hear his perspective and his experiences in things around advocacy.

Just a wrap-up reminder of Kris Haas's fundraiser for 1 YEAR, 10,000 PIECES, 1 ARTIST. You can go to USAProjects.org. Search for Kris Haas.

And if you are in the Portland area, and you want to come to a live show and actually meet Kris and look at her art, you can do that this Sunday, June 9th from 1:00 to 4:00 pm. We'll be at the Brain Injury Help Organization offices, which are at 1220 SW Morrison, Suite 433. There's gonna be an artist reception for Kris Sunday, 1:00-4:00 pm. You can take a look at her art, you can purchase her art, you can make a tax-deductible donation to her fundraiser. And another reception again, June 22nd, same location, same time: 1:00-4:00 pm. All those details are written down on my Facebook page. It's the [StoryMinders Facebook page](#). You can also go to facebook.com/WhoAmItoStopIt. That is the Facebook page for my documentary film on artists with brain injuries. Both pages are public. You can find out details about Kris Haas's fundraiser and that event on those pages. And thanks so much for listening. I will be back the first Friday of July, the 5th of July. I can't remember who my guest is to that show, either. So I can't close this show by letting you know. But please do come back and listen. And I will be reporting on those Facebook pages who that mystery guest will be. Thank you again.

Join us the first and third Friday of the month at 1:00 pm and find us online at blogtalkradio.com/brainreels. This has been Cheryl Green of StoryMinders. Email me at info@storyminders.com if you've got topics you'd like to hear on an upcoming show.

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