[00:00:03]

[MUSIC] You are listening to tell me or a story where we connect to HLS staff on a personal level. [MUSIC] Welcome back to the second half of our conversation with Melissa Minaya.

Melissa, so then you had your experience. We have to get out of this sad moment. [LAUGHTER]. You have to go to a better place.

[00:00:32]

Yes a better place. [LAUGHTER]

[00:00:35]

What happens after college?

[00:00:38]

After college, I started working at Harvard Business School.

[00:00:45]

Business school was the first place.

[00:00:49]

The summer of 2003.

[00:00:51]

As a permanent worker or you just went there for a?

[00:00:54]

I started as a temp, so actually, while I was at the summers during college, I temped at the business school. At the time you could bring in temps to do a few jobs, so I would help faculty members move offices. I was at the Alumni and Development Office of Harvard Business School working with their research team. Again, they were moving files around and be organizing some other alumni file so that's what I worked on while I was there and in June 2003, their staff assistant got promoted and they had this opening. Now they were like oh, are you looking for work, and I was like, yeah, I'll come do this. We will see what happens and never left. [LAUGHTER] Amazing.

[00:01:52]

I started working as a staff assistant with the Research Team in the Development Office. Really a lovely, amazing group of people in my immediate team at the time there was vacillated between four and five people. It was a great point for someone that was coming from something that was a lot going on. It's like college and still trying to figure things out and maybe he'll from some of that to come to this team. That was full of some quirky, amazing, very different [LAUGHTER] group of white people, to be honest. I went from the institution that was mostly white, again, to another institution that was mostly white people working in external relations.

[00:02:52]

I got my degree in white relationships so I'm fine with it. [LAUGHTER]

[00:02:59]

I came into it a little hesitant, but because I knew the immediate team that I was going to be working with, it was really great and healing for me at the time.

[00:03:11]

Was a good experience although, wasn't sure?

[00:03:13]

Yeah.

[00:03:13]

Oh, great.

[00:03:14]

It was a really good experience working there and it fed my introvert's side because on research you are doing a lot of work on a computer and so they were also on the introvert side and so we would all do our work in our respective places and I would leave my space and then talk and communicate to people. I became really friendly with the people in the HR office because we were in the same building over until hall. I had a family member that was working there at the time, so I would go down there and we would have lunch together and the HR team was also very diversed there.

[00:03:56]

Nice.

[00:03:57]

It was a really great experience working at the business school. I didn't interact a lot with students again because we were off campus.

[00:04:07]

You were the nurds.

[00:04:08]

Exactly yes. [LAUGHTER].

[00:04:10]

Sometimes I would go into my office and if I didn't have a meeting or didn't need to or want to talk to anybody I didn't talk to them. [LAUGHTER].

[00:04:19]

I always hear this interesting stories about how much they gathered, the researchers and get so involved with their research that sometimes they forget to eat. I think that is a famous story about Einstein. I think it is if I'm not mistaking, that he spent almost three days in his lab researching and doing his experiments without going anywhere to eat. Then he left to go to the cafeteria and he remembered, oh, I need to eat something. He left on his way. On a hallway I shouldn't stop buying as I talking to him and they were chatting and chatting and then he couldn't remember if he was going to the cafeteria coming back then he asked the student “When I met you, I was going to the cafeteria coming back” and the student said “I think you were coming back” and he went back too. [LAUGHTER] I don't know how much that's true, but I think this facility they were saying that because people get really immersing in their mindset so it is interesting. After that is when you came to Law School after business?

[00:05:23]

Yes. I was actually part of the layoffs that Harvard had in 2009 when the economy tanked.

[00:05:33]

Oh, we had the crush.

[00:05:34]

We had the crush. With the fall 2008 when the economy like mostly tanked.

[00:05:42]

Yes.

[00:05:43]

Then I got married in March 2009 and then got laid off in June. It was a really interesting time. I had no idea what I was going through.

[00:05:58]

Did your husband say hey. I didn't sign up to this. [LAUGHTER]

[00:06:01]

I was like, whats going on.

[00:06:02]

We're both working here.

[00:06:05]

Yes. My husband being very technical, he works in IT so he was very [OVERLAPPING]. He was like, okay, so you need to now find a job where you're not going to get laid off. I'm like, well how does one know that exactly? [LAUGHTER].

[00:06:22]

That's so funny.

[00:06:23]

Figure that out.

[00:06:24]

Go to a place that only off people Melissa.

[00:06:28]

I'm like, okay. I'm not sure what it just you and the world around us is collapsing.

[00:06:34]

I keep thinking. Siri, give me a list of places that don't lay off. [LAUGHTER] Everything is being laid off.

[00:06:43]

It was very interesting from his like are they not being laid off?

[00:06:49]

Go on sorry, I interrupted you.

[00:06:52]

No. I was part of the Union until Harvard had a really great program for people who got laid off during that time. I was able to participate in classes with TWD.

[00:07:04]

Nice.

[00:07:06]

Hear about positions here at Harvard. I spent that whole summer interviewing and looking at job applications and that's when I realized how much I dislike [LAUGHTER] applying for jobs.

[00:07:22]

Yes.

[00:07:24]

And how tedious of a process that really was. Then in the fall of that year, it's when I saw the position for the Harvard Legal Aid Bureau.

[00:07:33]

Nice.

[00:07:34]

At the time it was a part-time position. I was looking for a full-time position coming from full-time work. Only really knowing people who work full time in life. I didn't really know anyone who worked part-time. But there was something about that job description and I was like, this is what I really want to do.

[00:07:56]

Nice.

[00:07:59]

Involved a little bit of finance so they involved working with a group of people who really seem to love what they were doing. They were helping the community in the legal work that they were doing. I didn't have any interests in doing legal work myself but I liked the community outreach aspects to it. It was also involved being bilingual, which I really was like, oh, I'll be able to use those skills. How amazing would that be. Evolved a little bit of IT stuff aside, some of the technical parts of that being the liaison with IT, being able to up keep with the technology in the office and so I was like, this is something that I could really enjoy. I was like, but this is part-time. What does that mean? I applied. I got an interview and I was like, I could really be in this office with Susana. There were student board members who was a group into which is a little nerve wracking.

[00:09:17]

Yes. Susana was one of the interviewers?

[00:09:20]

Susana was one and then we had the Intake Director and the Executive Director of the student board that they were both there and I believe also either Esme or Dave Grossman.

[00:09:38]

Asman?

[00:09:39]

It was there because they had already started yet. As we had already started at that point were there as part of the interview process. I had that one interview and I did not get the job.

[00:09:55]

You didn't?

[00:09:56]

I did not. They had someone else and had offered the position to that other person and I was like, well, okay, this what it is and I was like, well, it was part-time and I wasn't sure about this part-time status situation. But then a few months later I got another call from HR and they were like, well that position that you interviewed for they have the opening again. It didn't work out with the person that they had originally hired and they were wondering if you were still interested and I was like, yes.

[00:10:31]

You've got that. See, I told you so. [LAUGHTER] I was the one.

[00:10:36]

Yes. By that time this was I think in early December or mid-December. I had to take it up another part-time job working in the Development Office of Brigham and Women's Hospital.

[00:10:48]

A wow.

[00:10:49]

I was like, well, I have this other part-time job and this is a part-time job, maybe if I can make both work, we can put together a full-time. That's what I did and so for the first year and a half or two years.

[00:11:07]

You're working two jobs.

[00:11:08]

I worked two jobs.

[00:11:09]

Wow.

[00:11:09]

I worked here at HLS most mornings and then did another three to four-hour stint.

[00:11:19]

In downtown?

[00:11:20]

In downtown over Huntington, though building where the Development Office is was right across from Prudential. I would use my lunch hour to commute.

[00:11:29]

Could you get the?

[00:11:32]

Because you said that was in the medical area?

[00:11:36]

Yes, it was Brigham and Women's Hospital in a development office.

[00:11:40]

Could you get at a time being part-time? Could you get the oh, my God, the shuttle.

[00:11:46]

The shuttle. But we weren't in the lung world area. We were over by of the Copley area.

[00:11:54]

That of you was green.

[00:11:55]

The green line.

[00:11:56]

Green line.

[00:11:57]

I would take the red line to park street and then get on the green line.

[00:12:01]

Back to.

[00:12:02]

Each train over. I had that these two worlds going on.

[00:12:08]

For year and a half?

[00:12:10]

For like two years.

[00:12:12]

Two years.

[00:12:12]

I think it was 2013 is when then I started full time.

[00:12:17]

Then they needed someone full time?

[00:12:18]

Yes. I think having full time was probably always the need, but because of the economy and position and how people were being held positions were restructured at the time especially, I think after the layoffs. It was made part-time. But it was definitely, I think Susana was doing the work of at least two people [LAUGHTER] that was working half time.

[00:12:51]

I remember that well, that one affect our holidays year badly.

[00:12:56]

Yes.

[00:12:56]

No, but now is back again to [OVERLAPPING] we recover from that. Susana doesn't need to be doing two jobs.

[00:13:05]

Exactly two jobs.

[00:13:07]

How was the development from there now, I know that you grew inside of the department was what you expected. What you envision to be in that department? Doing everything they do, what the Legal Aid Bureau does mostly?

[00:13:22]

No. The Harvard Legal Aid Bureau is a really special place. There were so many days working over to that little yellow house on average street that I would like look around, I am really lucky here. I work with clinical instructors and faculty who really care. Not just about their jobs and making sure they have the products.

[00:13:49]

It's not like a 9-5 job.

[00:13:51]

No, they care about the community, they care about the people that they're serving. Not people that are serving them, but people that they're serving. Working with students who again might not the stereotypical Harvard Law School student that you see out there in the world, that is portrayed out. We have students that are really dedicated to social justice, to racial justice, to making sure that the community is served, that the community is respected and appreciated. That is a really special and unique thing. To be able to be with them there for the two years that they're part of H Lab is really such an amazing.

[00:14:44]

I agree.

[00:14:45]

Amazing thing.

[00:14:46]

Then, when I moved to DOS, the students who are part of the Legal Aid Bureau, the passion, the way that they talk about place working there. Those are the things that when I don't know, a few things that we do in my position in equal opportunity with the community. I hope I can bring that feeling as well. Those are the moments that you still have hope for things that you see that's happening around, that scares everyone. When you see that kind of involvement, that kind of engagement from students. Some of them doesn't fit the stereotype of someone that wouldn't be working with the public domain. But they are so passionate, so in love with this. Then you look to see, wow that is hopes.

[00:15:36]

That is exactly. Even our students who have gone on to work in corporate lab.

[00:15:47]

But had an experience there.

[00:15:48]

But had an experience. They gave all above and beyond of themselves to their clients to the work that they need to.

[00:15:59]

I think they bring something with them that is at one moment in their lives, whatever position of a power they hold is going to make a difference. Because I don't think when you go and work in a place like Legal Aid Bureau [inaudible 00:16:16], really contact with the community and see the needs in a different aspect after you leave that and you go for a higher power status.

[00:16:26]

Now that stays with you.

[00:16:27]

I think you are going to bring that and you're going to remember, I can make a difference in a policy or they know something law that is going to be beneficial. Because I have been part of this. I think it is an amazing job.

[00:16:44]

It's something special like the clinical community here is being able to really practice with real people, see how the law is actually impacting others. Is really something that not a lot of students get to see in this way. I think that it's really an amazing opportunity for our students. I wish everyone had the opportunity to spend two years at the clinic. To really engross themselves in that work.

[00:17:23]

To see the real live in what happens there. Other than, a fantasy world that you are going to do one side.

[00:17:29]

Exactly it's not just what you read in a text book, it's what are your experience.

[00:17:32]

[OVERLAPPING] Majority of the country is in a completely different direction. Esme is the one is now, the head of our Legal Aid Bureau, which is another incredible person. There are certain things that I admire in faculty, when you see that they, I don't know how to put this. Doesn't sound that I'm being fair. But she's one of those. They know that I know her value, I know her expertise, I know how important she is. But she's in front of you. Just as a regular human being. There is no faculty Esme Caramello there. One thing that I've talk about the faculty here because they always, some of them, insists Edgar is not professor is the name, and I cannot. That's something I was thinking. I don't know if my mom or my dad are behind me and say, "No that's a professor". You are going to call Professor.

[00:18:34]

Where exactly? [OVERLAPPING]

[00:18:38]

I tell Professor Sitkoff is one that's Edgar. He's Sitkoff, not professor. I said, I'm so sorry, I can’t just go, Hi, Sitkoff. [LAUGHTER] Like, Hey, buddy is not. Maybe even for him would be okay. But the inner child's just say no, that's a professor you're going to call Professor. I'm saying Esme with all respect, [LAUGHTER] I guess my will. [LAUGHTER] But she is that kind of, Professor Sheila Heen is someone, Professor Cohen, Professor Chen that I have a chance and admire so much and I, do you know those are folks that I feel when contacts that I had in DOS that I feel it's just amazing that I am in front of these individuals that I know that are experts in their areas. They are so lovely and so. She is in the right place to deal with the department that cares so much about everything?

[00:19:44]

She really is. It's amazing to watch her and I click on structures work and to really buy into this student rather than.

[00:19:55]

[OVERLAPPING] Finding solutions.

[00:19:57]

Finding solutions even as hard as the times get and as challenging as it might be maintaining.

[00:20:07]

Because you have also a number that you have, you cannot invite to admit everybody that comes asking for help. You have a number that you have to fulfill and some you have to say, I'm sorry.

[00:20:18]

I'm sorry. I can't help you.

[00:20:20]

I can't.

[00:20:20]

Yeah.

[00:20:21]

I'm sure that if there was a space and if I don't know, but they would take even more, but that is a limit because there is a number that they have chose to portray, but he's incredible. Overall, Happy. How is life?

[00:20:36]

Life is good?

[00:20:37]

Yeah.

[00:20:38]

I have an eight-year-old and five-year-old, both boys. They keep me on my toes.

[00:20:46]

Yeah.

[00:20:46]

[LAUGHTER] Always and forever.

[00:20:48]

Motherhood was a good experience, Melissa?

[00:20:51]

Yes, it has been really challenging moments. My oldest is autistic, and so learning and navigating that aspect of realizing like, Oh my, some of these tantrums that are happening maybe are out of his control. Maybe some of them isn't just me and what do I need to do as a parent to get him help where he needs it. What do I need to unlearn, that I learned?

[00:21:23]

Yes.

[00:21:23]

That's what parenthood was supposed to be or how you're supposed to be as a parent, especially as like, you're coming from America. If my mom told me something that [OVERLAPPING] was it and that's what I did and we didn't deviate from that.

[00:21:38]

I was going to touch that as well. How difficult can be for a Latino background. I'm putting a Latino or the Central South America altogether. The way that you were raised, things that this is not a thing. You are going to swallow this and you are going on. [LAUGHTER] Because that's how generations have been. In many aspects works. But you weren't dealing with new things that you didn't let me rephrase, maybe not new things. We're learning that they are new for us like you're just trying.

[00:22:16]

[OVERLAPPING] How to deal with them, how to deal with it.

[00:22:19]

I bring back when you mentioned autism, that's now thank God's there has been more awareness. People are talking more about this. But recently, depression.

[00:22:28]

Yes.

[00:22:29]

I heard quite a few times in my family that depression is not a thing.

[00:22:35]

You don't [inaudible 00:22:36] depress you don't have hard days.

[00:22:38]

[OVERLAPPING] This is just nothing, you need to get something to do. You are not busy enough. That's why you are depressed. That's the mentality. Now finally, as well as being more and more, so many things that you were. That's another sign of evolution, I think in our society now as human beings, because of things that were hidden, now are becoming more, still stigmatized, but I think is already coming out and being recognized as part of our lives. Why are you just saying to watch your child with autism and say, oh, maybe it's not, that's not just a tantrum.

[00:23:21]

Maybe it's not just bad behavior. It's not just that he's spoil that as even like our pediatrician's office was like, well, to set boundaries and be firm and it's like, how that? I'm trying those things. He's still screaming for 30 minutes away, what is this coming from?

[00:23:38]

Because there is a communication that's not [OVERLAPPING] happening there because that is something.

[00:23:42]

That is a rewiring. There's a difference in learning and experiencing. He has taught me so much about myself, about how to interact, about how to teach, about how to learn. I'm really thankful that we've had some really great people as part of his preschool and in daycare that really supported me and my husband Bruce, as parents would like. This is what we're seeing here. Have you noticed some of that? We were like, maybe we noticed some of it but we didn't know it was happening everywhere. Having the director of his preschool when he was three at Pine Village Preschools is Spanish immersion program that we had placed them in. You might want to think about doing an evaluation. Evaluation about what? Well, these are some of the things that we're seeing, some of these unregulated behavior as he can calm himself down. I was like, Oh, no, I'm thinking back to when I see other kids, at least I always heard people say like, Oh, her parents don't discipline him enough or he just trying to get his way. Unlearning some of that black. What is it that he needs that he's not able to communicate or how do we help him get those communication tools? Doing speech classes, doing OT outside of the school setting. We enrolled him in for autism therapies. There's this thing called ABA, applied behavioral analysis, and so they have a set of data points that they look at to try to help teach the child whatever things that in areas they may be lacking. He did ABA from the age of four-and-a-half up until the spring. When he was seven and his growth in progress, his ability now to realize he's like getting really upset about something but not completely explode. You can see his little brain, this is where do I need to do to calm down? Is really.

[00:26:26]

Does he does that, talk to himself down or he just feel like.

[00:26:30]

[OVERLAPPING] Sometimes you can see him start to get really upset, and then you can see like the retreat back to being like, I'm going to [NOISE] breathe.

[00:26:45]

I'm going to say that I'm frustrated.

[00:26:49]

He can say now.

[00:26:50]

He can say. Now was like, I'm feeling really frustrated, and it's like, okay.

[00:26:56]

This is beautiful.

[00:26:57]

Yes. If we could all find this level of communication and to speak.

[00:27:02]

Yes. But I warned them, Melissa. How wired is the exploration for themselves to find a translation from what brain is telling them, feeling or identifying emotions or whatnot emotions, and trying to explain that for someone as this coming like a volcano. How can I process these or explain these? I think it's just an incredible thing. I'm so happy that you are saying that they are finding ways to get them already and give a little bit more of a guidance in terms of it.

[00:27:42]

Yes. This is areas where he might need a little bit more help. How do we get him that help? More importantly, even at the young age of four and five, how do we teach him to get these tools within himself so that he can let others know when he's getting to a place where he's overwhelmed, or find a way to let other people know that the word social-emotional regulation, that is, again a newer term, has been really fascinating and amazing to see that play out in real life and right before my eyes. Again, has also helped Bruce and I incorporate some of that into how we carry and how we communicate with other people. I was like, well, right now I'm getting really frustrated. I need to pull myself away and give myself space from this situation.

[00:28:54]

Yes. Instead of blowing up and say everything that he wants to say and regret right after.

[00:29:00]

Exactly. I was like, these are tools that everyone should be learning.

[00:29:04]

Yes.

[00:29:04]

But to be able to experience that as a parent has definitely had its challenges and moments where the both of us have sat there and cried together from frustration. Frustration of me not knowing what he needs, him not being able to explain to me, or maybe not understand to me and what I need or needed him to do in the moment. That breakdown also as a parent, I've definitely had those moments where we were both struggling and now getting to a point where it's like, oh, I can see that you're getting a little frustrated and be like, yeah, I'm getting frustrated. How do we talk about this? What do you need to feel a little better? Is it a hug? Is it space? Learning also that these little people are humans too, and so they have needs. They're not like how I grew up, and was like my mom would tell me, go sit there in the couch and I went and sat there, and so she told me to get up. Alerting and understanding that it's not easy and there's definitely moments where I'm like [NOISE].

[00:30:23]

Yeah. Because that's the shock of our generations, and how you learned, what process that you learned, and what you now learn to know with a different process.

[00:30:34]

Process, yeah.

[00:30:35]

These kid's coming, they are coming with a level of awareness. I don't know where is the [inaudible 00:30:41], but the process mentality is so much faster.

[00:30:45]

Yes. I see it even in my five-year-old who is "more neurotypical." You can see his thought process and the way he's experiencing things is just different. Sometimes I joke and I'm like, I don't know what's in the water for these kids that were born from 2005 up. They have a different level of understanding, and experiencing, and expectations that me and when I was growing up, we didn't even think about or follow them. Sometimes my kids will tell me, mummy we don't always have to be perfect, when I'm trying to get things ready, and I'm like, okay, you're right, we don't always have, I'm not trying to be perfect.

[00:31:43]

Whatever they call normal, but what is normal, right?

[00:31:47]

Yeah.

[00:31:47]

The social construct for everything is so in a box that has to be this or this, that way. We got to be used to it as being for generations with some progress in between. If you has to be this way, and then when someone comes with a completely different vision of things, you have to adjust and feel like, oh, yeah, it doesn't necessarily need to be this way. Why or why has? Did I express myself right? I think I'm not sure anymore. I just catch myself when I said that children with autism instead of autistic children. Because I know that the wrong term to use, and I totally agree with that, is children who have autism. Because that feels like a designate as they have a disease or a problem that makes them different. I don't know if with autism is still in that same spectrum or not, or you shouldn't go straight to autistic too then.

[00:32:50]

Yeah. I think as a parent, learning this realm for the first time you're having some friends whose children either have been diagnosed with Asperger's or autism also hearing some of their stories. The language has evolved even in the short four or five years that we've been, I would say, part of this community that I now have to catch myself and be like, I just don't have a son who has been diagnosed with autism, I now see it as he is autistic, because his is how he learns, this is how he experiences the world. Same way I experienced the world in one way as someone who was shy, which is part of my personality growing up. He experiences the world and maybe somewhat different ways than a neurotypical as I use quotations with that would, but it's part of who he is, not something that might change.

[00:34:06]

That's what I think of when you talk about language and some people can have strong feelings against, I think we should consider that in a better life in terms of where it is, because then you are going to be including everyone. Because there is a huge difference when you say someone has autism like someone has cancer. That is a diminishing way to say that. Could I say I am a gay person? Should I say I have gayness? [LAUGHTER] I'm gay, that's what it is.

[00:34:39]

It's part of who you are and the impacts.

[00:34:41]

Not something that I caught or that separate me from the group that I am part of because of that.

[00:34:50]

If it's not something that affects me or impacts me personally, it's not my rights to have a very strong opinion for what someone else is telling me is their experience. I can't say one way or the other what pronouns you should use, it's you tell me. [LAUGHTER]

[00:35:15]

Yes.

[00:35:18]

I can't tell you, you must have this as your favorite color must be purple because my favorite color is purple and I think purple is the best and that's how everyone should see it. Because how could they miss it? It's not that binary, it's not that black and white.

[00:35:36]

People don't see how when you say the social construct plays a huge part on this is when you fight for something that you are not even realizing how you're set to be instead of freeing yourself to get better, and include everybody. In one of our interviews, and Rhea, who works at the registrar's office, told me about Alok and sent me the link from another podcast called Men Enough. I watched, it was in a YouTube video so they go on to explain non-binary what the gender impression is a social construct and everything it is an amazing explanation. That made me think about, yes, there is a lot of things that we're not forced in quotation to accept. But if you evaluate a little bit, listen what is this thing that was so patriotical from the beginning. Women had to fight so hard to get the rights that they had until now and then to realize that the binary system that we have all over can generate so much discussion and when you first in do we need it? I don't know, [OVERLAPPING] it was just an a and then we are going on in terms of what language and how to refer and how to respect and how to include just made me think about because I was reading something about my niece. She noticed that her child Davi his name since he was young son, I don't know. I think I need to bring him to have some evaluations to see because that is something that, mothers feel like they always sense something.

[00:37:46]

Something going on there.

[00:37:48]

I visit first time, I couldn't notice anything. I think it was just a kid and sometimes he didn't want to be with the others but she's with him 24 hours. Then she went and they have all the test that they have to do and he's autistic. But she is one in a community that is none so entire family has to adjust to the fact that you never had one [OVERLAPPING] in our family that was so learning. She said, I became such a fighter now because every phone call is a fight, every school is a fight. Before I used to go to teacher's meetings to talk about how my child, you know, now I have to fight because mine is not being treated the way [OVERLAPPING] so it is a whole different approach to life that's amazing and another.

[00:38:45]

Much learning that I think we have to do as a society and what it means because it's, so, I think a lot of the information that's out there about being autistic is so outdated. We've learned there's been so much science and now so much research about what exactly it means. It doesn't mean this one thing, it's a spectrum is a true spectrum and so I've had people say, mentioned to me like, oh, Andres, is autistic really like, I know he's not I'm like yeah he is.

[00:39:22]

That's also the right lab or the spectrum from.

[00:39:27]

He communicates I was like and now he communicates so much better because he's had like four or five years of speech under his belt so he's able to, he's learned a lot. But there's moments where he struggles and I think as someone whose child is, and as I again quote unquote, obviously autistic because he may not have a lot of the outward.

[00:40:01]

Could then comes the stereotypes.

[00:40:02]

Stereotypes that [OVERLAPPING] he didn't have a lot of like very visible stemming. But there's things that we've noticed over the years that change that arc I'm like, oh, that's what the biting of the lip or playing with the fingers. There's so many other subtle aspects of being autistic that were probably overlooked in other individuals over time that now as adults they are finding out like, oh, this is what made me feel so different. It breaks my heart for kids that I saw growing up or that are labeled still today as being linked by children. Or like, oh, they just don't miss it and it's like, well, were they not listening or you're not listening to what they need. The adults around children not really paying attention or are able to pay attention to the subtle behaviors that are being shown that we really should need to be addressed is their trauma in the home or they're not able to self-regulate in the way that maybe some other children are, that they need tools to help them and teach them how to do that. Definitely it has made me more mindful, not only of my own kid, but like when I hear my mother if I hear a friend being like, oh yeah, that kid is just bad and it's like, well, I see really or is there something else [LAUGHTER] going on.

[00:41:46]

Exactly. Awareness you bring us to questions, things that sometimes could be obvious with a quick judgment that you would have and now just the idea of the spectrum and how quick as well people sent out this has to be this.

[00:42:05]

Because we like our boxes than we need too. [LAUGHTER]

[00:42:07]

If it doesn't exactly.

[00:42:09]

It doesn't belong in this box [OVERLAPPING] and also knowing as coworkers, what do you do with someone that is might be going through this. I'm so much of my time with my free brain space was like, okay, what do I need to do to help him or even before we got the diagnosis. I know my evenings are going to be full of like screaming and fighting back. [LAUGHTER]

[00:42:44]

Or I like his daycare provider not knowing what's wrong with him having to come in because he's been crying for two-and-a-half hours. How do we manage that? With also working with also having to function and not having a lot of people at the time. I don't have anyone in my family at least that I know of.

[00:43:08]

Yeah, that had the same experience.

[00:43:11]

Same experience.

[00:43:12]

That you can go and talk to.

[00:43:14]

That I can go and talk to.

[00:43:14]

Exactly. It's not like I'm pregnant, I'm going to have a baby. I know 50 women around me that had a baby. Maybe I can have some information that is going to be SU individual experience, but at least.

[00:43:29]

At least you can have you ever been, like gained some language around it.

[00:43:35]

Then you want on your own, like your immediate community doesn't even know what it is.

[00:43:41]

Exactly.

[00:43:42]

Which is amazing as well.

[00:43:44]

I also suffered with infertility and trying to get pregnant with Andre. Again, I did IVF did IUIs.

[00:43:53]

You did IVF.

[00:43:57]

Again, huge family and lots of cousins in my family. None of my aunts ever talked about any struggles with getting pregnant. When I had the struggle was like, what's wrong with me?

[00:44:09]

Yes. Because of course you are the problem.

[00:44:11]

I was like I have to be the problem because no one else has this problem, something is going on here. Navigating that. It took me long time like years to be able to even tell anyone that I went through IVF to get pregnant with Andre.

[00:44:31]

Because arise a stigma.

[00:44:32]

Because it was yeah, it was the stigma. I remember we were going through all of this and I didn't even tell my mom and sister.

[00:44:39]

Just the two of you?

[00:44:40]

Just the two of us. We didn't tell anyone. Our pastor was the only other person that knew, but we didn't tell even our siblings or our parents until I had to do IVF, I did not tell my mom what was going on and this was like it'd be taught two years until the process.

[00:44:59]

With the second child, did you need to go through IVF as well or not?

[00:45:02]

No. We were preparing We had an appointment set up to go back to the fertility clinic and start that process. I found out I was pregnant two weeks before that appointment. Again, I was in complete shock.

[00:45:20]

Amazing, right?

[00:45:21]

I told him I was like, I think I need to take a pregnancy test and it was like but for what? It was like no, I think maybe I might bring in. We did the pregnancy tests at home and I was like, this says that it's positive. He's like, No, it's not like that. I remember that week like calling the fertility clinic and be like, I took a pregnancy test and it was positive. What do I do now? What does this mean?

[00:45:52]

Wait, nine months, but I get what you are saying.

[00:45:56]

You can come in for a blood test and we can confirm. Then we can go from there. I was like, but really I might be pregnant. How is that possible? Being really shocked and stunned, but other anxiety that comes from.

[00:46:15]

All the treatment and the process.

[00:46:17]

All the treatment and the process and in keeping that all to yourself, how it affects your mental health and your health in general.

[00:46:27]

Even the way that you connect with your community, with your close family and friends.

[00:46:33]

Was a really stressful time. Again, I'm so glad and blessed that I could when the time came, I could confine them to sign. It was like, wait, this is what's going on. I may have to take some time off, you're the only other person I've talked to now from this. Being able to have colleagues that you can trust with your personal life is important to me. My hope is to be that for other colleagues, my hope is to make sure that other colleagues feel they have someone to come to. Hope that my friends also are in a work community where they have at least one person that they can go to because I know we sometimes live in this era where it's like I keep things to myself. It's none of my coworkers business, what's going on with me. But as a society, it should be all of our business what's going on with each other, and being able to find ways to find that common experience when someone else is important.

[00:47:52]

Now you're saying like I wouldn't be available if I'm inside of our conditions in everything else because I said, what I heard from Sasha and Caroline. Caroline I witnessed because I was with her in DOS. Then same thing. All the treatment, having their first child out of nowhere, second one pops up. That says that I have my two kids during the pandemic. I did the show was not expecting the second one was going, and probably the only mindset I don't need to worry about this.

[00:48:25]

Yeah, you don't wait and you hear when you're going through it and struggling through it, you hear people say like, I had another like spontaneous pregnancy and it wasn't supposed to happen, but it happened. I think when you're going through that, you're like, that's never going to be me because I was struggling so much for this one time.

[00:48:49]

You deal with all the mental part of this, the judgment and judging yourself for not being able to sudden you have to reverse it. What happened?

[00:49:01]

Exactly.

[00:49:01]

What you're doing to me because I was not supposed to.

[00:49:04]

I had to go through IVF again and now I am.

[00:49:07]

It's a level of guilt too, I know now women because I'm now part of this infertility community that are struggling and I know I had this second pregnancy that I didn't have to struggle with.

[00:49:20]

That you didn't have to do anything. Even when I was in Brazil not knowing much about IVF, anything but knowing about women that could not get pregnant and would adopt and six month after it would get pregnant, look like I don't know if it's the brain or the body. That the fact that there is another child.

[00:49:42]

Would be there's like some type of way.

[00:49:43]

Something changes inside.

[00:49:45]

A chemical change that happens here.

[00:49:47]

Right. Which would be again, your brain chemical changes that happen that fired up something that was being held back? I don't know. It's fascinating story that makes me anyways. I think we talked a bit, not much. We're supposed to be here for 40 minutes, I think are here. We pass two hours right now, That's right. You figure out how you do this whole thing out. I will dream what I can do.

Melissa, you know how much I like you and I know you from quite a while since I wasn't Facilities when he started at Legal Aid Bureau. There are certain people that you will feel a bit that you have to, maybe I should wait a bit here. There are people we feel like good and you'll be okay. You are one of those.

[00:50:41]

Thank you.

[00:50:41]

For everything that you have been here as co-workers for accepting to participate in this one because I know like me, I don't know if I would have fired had said yes or no. That's not my thing. Thank you very much for participating for telling your story. I loved everything. I hope you have a chance to participate in other things that bring more awareness because you gave them some ideas by talking. Thank you very much.

[00:51:14]

Thank you so much. I hope was not that painful.

[00:51:16]

No, it was absolutely not. Thank you for being who you are and being part of who you are in this community, I think is so special.

[00:51:26]

Thank you.

[00:51:28]

It shows the openness I think, of HLS can be a really special place and I know it can also be a really hard place.

[00:51:37]

Yes.

[00:51:37]

But you bring out what that special place me.

[00:51:42]

Thank you.

[00:51:42]

And who you are and making people feel welcome and able to be open. I think as much as you may have seen that you can be opened with me, it is because of the energy that you also give.

[00:51:54]

Thank you. That's really nice.

[00:51:56]

I appreciate it.

[00:51:57]

I hope we can bring our community more like this that you can feel comfortable talking to each other and feeling that you will have a sense of a community in all aspects and not to this side or that side. That's really great. I love our conversations was wonderful, and for everybody out there listening to us, until our next time. I'll see you then. Bye bye.