**Inclusion In The Workplace with Kelly Johnson**

[00:00:00] **Delphine:** [00:00:00] Welcome back to the access to education podcast, where we talk about everything having to do with learning differences and learning disabilities. We are all different. We all have different gifts, different goals and dreams. As we move through our life experiences, change us and inform us as a teacher and a mother.

My kids teach me, my students teach me daily. Life always has a lesson in store. There's nothing easy about raising a child who is a different thinker. As parents, when our children arrive to us, however, they arrive to us. They don't come with a manual. There are no instructions. We look to our parent friends for advice.

We look to our own family members for support , in how we parent. But sometimes we are presented with children who are outside the box. They require a different way of thinking a different thought process on the show today, I am so excited to be chatting with Kelly Johnson. She is a parent and author of How to Parent Like an Autistic and to [00:01:00] believer in inclusion and accessibility.

Kelly doesn't just lead change through professional knowledge. She leads this change through personal experience through her work as a business consultant and public speaker, she works to create more inclusive environments for those with disabilities Kelly, welcome to the show. I'm pretty psyched to have this conversation today.

**Kelly:** [00:01:21] Thanks. Thanks so much for having me.

**Delphine:** [00:01:23] So let's start at the beginning and I do this with most of my guests. tell us a little bit about yourself and why you're so passionate about inclusion in the workplace.

**Kelly:** [00:01:34] so I have an interesting background in the sense that I didn't get a diagnosis for myself until I was 32. So I went through. All of my schooling and, you know, the beginning of my career, having some, just to not really having any explanation for them, you know, I was, I was told I was, I was a picky eater.

I looked at my old report cards and they had repressed, like they even said I was shy and repressed, that [00:02:00] should have been an indication of something, you know, I had good marks, but, I didn't necessarily have a lot of friends. I was, reluctant to speak kind of thing.

And just very, like they said, shy and repressed. So I think sometimes, you know, when kids are too obedient, it's also a sign that things might not be, the best, so anyway, I didn't get diagnosed with autism until I was 32. Um, and that's only after my son got diagnosed as autistic.

And so that was a revelation for me.

**Delphine:** [00:02:29] Really interesting. I'm finding this and I can't say I'm finding it a lot. But you're not the first person I've spoken to. Who says I didn't realize until one of my children went through the process. So what was that like to go through that as an adult?

**Kelly:** [00:02:47] well, yeah, so I think, I think, you know, it's, it's happened, especially in the autism community. I've met so many people, so many women, so let's be specific here. Women especially have been missed with diagnosis, and then you have another layer. Any [00:03:00] racialized person has been missed for diagnosis and have class issues that have been missed for diagnosis.

So, it's not really a unique thing. And unfortunately, because a lot of the research has been done on white boys and men. they've never extrapolated that to how women present differently. , and there's cultural differences to autism as well. You know, certain things that are accepted in certain cultures that are autistic traits, let's say are, are not accepted in North American culture.

And that leads to all sorts of. Other differences and, and subjectivity, I guess we're. People can have a hard time making a decision, but , I hope that things are changing. I see some change in terms of how their research is being done and how psychologists are being trained. But yeah, this to me, when people talk about, they say the, you know, the autism, kind of pandemic kind of thing, like we're taking over this.

So many of us, I don't think that's the problem. , I think that. If anything, there are going to be more people, but more women and more racialized people coming [00:04:00] forth, , and being able to access diagnosis. Finally, you know, a lot of us have been given the wrong diagnosis growing up. I see very common, especially for women.

I see them get diagnosed with either, bipolar or borderline personality disorder. And , it's so interesting because I just came from another conversation with this, , It's so interesting because I see women who are now diagnosed autistic, they've all been diagnosed, almost always the same issue.

So it's either ADHD, bipolar or borderline. And I'm like, why are they so intent on seeing us with those diagnoses except anything but autism? It's almost like an anything, but like, no, no, no, they can't possibly be autistic. It's just really interesting because it kind of shows you the biases that are out there in the, in the medical world.

Yeah, there's still a, there's still such a stigma, I think, against it. And it's still such a lack of understanding and learning that, they're still seeing it as a white male [00:05:00] thing.

**Delphine:** [00:05:00] And I think we're really in a time in society right now where we're taking a really close look at those biases. And we're trying, we're trying to dig in and find out and make change. But it's true. I never really thought about it. I mean, my entire time in a spec ed class as a child and I started there when I was eight, maybe I was always, or almost always the only girl in the group. And the wall was, was a little bit weird. My house was like, why am I the only one? Like, I can't be the only girl on the face of the planet who happens to be dyslexic. There must be others. And so that was really kind of difficult. So I, yeah, that, that piece about kind of identifying and what it looks like, or, or normalizing it to some extent.

And I loved your example about in certain cultures, certain things are acceptable there, but not here, which then. Begs the question of like, when we're looking at children and we're [00:06:00] diagnosing them, are we diagnosing them because we're putting them in a box based on how we think society should be, or are we putting them in a box because that's actually where they belong.

I think that's a really interesting question.

**Kelly:** [00:06:12] Yeah, that's a loaded question. There's so many layers to that. Like that's. Ooh, I don't know if we're going to come up with an answer for that one today.

**Delphine:** [00:06:21] No, and I've, that's not the purpose of the conversation, but it makes me think about that. Right. When we talk about the cultural differences and the, I mean, I don't want to use the gender card because I feel like there's so many options out there, but, you know, do we really need to box them in and box ourselves in?

I don't know. I mean, yeah, I, it's not the question we're gonna answer today.

**Kelly:** [00:06:44] Yeah. You know, I think, but everything to do with brains kind of turns a lot of ideas on its head, right. That we can't just use gender-based or something like that. And that's not, that's not helpful. It's not useful. Um, and obviously it has been, you know, causing inequities. So it's just [00:07:00] another example of, you know, society in inequities going into the medical field.

**Delphine:** [00:07:06] And whenever we talk about these differences too, I always think like how boring would the world be if we really were all the same? Like if we didn't think a little bit differently, if we didn't do things differently, if we didn't have those of us who think outside the box, who look at problems in a different way.

I think we'd be missing a lot of opportunities in general in life.

**Kelly:** [00:07:25] we would be, but I think I understand the pushback. I understand the pushback from people who want to kind of keep the status quo because that's where they're comfortable. And a lot of the times people feel that different is scary, different is a threat. I'm not saying that's what it is. I'm just saying.

That's what it seems to be the perception out there that different is a threat or it's scary when it's not it's, something in powerful, like empowering,

**Delphine:** [00:07:47] let's talk about, I mean, we're literally on the topic of thinking different, being different, um, the perception that you are different, that that is hard to come around. When we think about [00:08:00] people with. Whether it's physical disabilities, whether it's a learning difference, learning disability, however you choose to label it because I think everybody owns it in a different way.

What are the challenges, the biggest barriers to people in the workplace that you're seeing, or you couldn't talk a little bit about.

**Kelly:** [00:08:17] Where I see some of the biggest, barriers just has to do with the stigma, the stigma that misinformation a lot of the time, I can tell you that when I go, , when I go speak at a conference and I usually start my conference by saying, Hey, I use the words, disabled disability, autistic. I get so much pushback.

Woo. Like that just threatens somebody internalized ableism, like you wouldn't believe. And it's I get this pushback. it, stirs up things, feelings and people for me to proudly identify in a certain way. , And then, you know, because they have the stigma, they have these ideas about what that actually means.

What does it mean to be disabled or what does it mean? , to be neurodivergent, [00:09:00] you know? And so I find workplaces, they're just not there yet. It's a shame because, you know, a lot of, so, okay. A lot of workplaces I think, do know that they have work to do. They do know that they have to be, there's a value to inclusion and diversity and all that.

I think they, they have this concept and a lot of them have dealt with gender parody and they've dealt with gender parody by putting in place white woman. And they're like, okay, we've got white women, we've got gay men. We have done it. We have succeeded. , and they don't realize they've only scratched the surface.

They haven't done the hard work yet. And so then they, then they go to race. So they go, okay, well maybe we can get some black people in here. And they kind of, they try and do some sort of initiative and they go, okay, well, how come not working? , but so disability is so far down in terms of the work that they need to do.

And it's all connected. You know, ableism has its roots in racism and white supremacy. All of these things are connected. So at some point they will have to challenge all [00:10:00] these ideas and the systemic issues at some point. But a lot of them are stopping short of the deeper work and patting themselves on the back a little bit too early.

So I find, you know, disabilities totally at the bottom of the list. And it's, it's cetera. It's not at the forefront at all.

**Delphine:** [00:10:17] and I don't feel like, and I'm thinking of my own job. And I mean, I work in education, so it's maybe a little bit different for me than it would be if I worked in say a corporate position, but as someone with. Learning disability, cause I've always called it a learning disability. I've always identified it as dyslexia.

That has always been I've owned that since I was nine years, but I've never felt it to be like the changes that I need in order to be successful in the job that I do. I don't need like great big changes. There are little tiny things like. I mean before it was a thing, allowing me to have a sort of voice to text or something that would spell check for me.

Cause spelling has always been a stumbling block for me. Or giving me the physical resource instead [00:11:00] of talking to me because that I need to see it to kind of get it right. So those would've been things . I mean, have you ever seen or ever encountered a situation where it's been something massive that the company or the employer has had to change to be able to make their employee feel successful in their job?

**Kelly:** [00:11:19] Usually no, and that's, that's a sad part. So we know from statistics, we have the numbers for this. So if anybody, you know, they say, okay, we don't have numbers to back it up. We actually do. We know that most common accommodations and by most, I mean, almost 70% of accommodations costs less than $500 to implement.

Okay. That's 500 Canadian. So if you're looking at the lifetime of potentially having a fantastic employee, 500 bucks is a drop in the bucket, but it's not, to me. It's not about numbers. We know that most of them will cost maybe 20 bucks. And what I always say, as I said, look, if, if we're already disabled, [00:12:00] we come with our accommodations kind of almost built in, you know, I'm not going to, if I need a wheelchair, I'm not going to go to work and ask the workplace to buy me a wheelchair.

I'm going to come with my wheelchair. I'll come with my guide. I'll come with my, walking stick. I. I'm not going to ask a company to foot the bill for a whole bunch of accomidations. If I have, if I need TextUs feature or speech text, whichever one often it's on my phone already. I have this stuff on my laptop.

I don't need you to, download or buy any expensive software. Most of the time I don't need any special materials. Most people don't. , I can give one example. That was so sad. Mostly because there was a, there was a person who had a specific type of red, blue colorblindness. And for whatever reason, their boss or supervisor was using a kind of a red pen when they were writing, the person could not see it.

Could not [00:13:00] see, like, as struggling with trying to see it and they didn't want to speak up and all it wasn't the end was could you just change the color of your, a pen that you're using when you write me a note by hand? That was it. It's just a pen color difference,

**Delphine:** [00:13:12] And that's so tiny, but that tiny little thing can make a big difference in that person's day-to-day life in the way in which they see themselves, they see themselves valued within the company, right?

**Kelly:** [00:13:26] Just a pen is the cost of a pen, so

**Delphine:** [00:13:30] It's funny when you, when you look at it as that kind of my need of a thing, like even, cause when I was thinking of accommodations, I'm thinking, well, when you gave the example of a wheelchair, it's like, well maybe they need to build a ramp to come in, but even not like, all that does is open the door for other people to be able to access the building more.

So the small, the small change actually supports a wider group of people.

**Kelly:** [00:13:51] All changes, support a wider group of people in general. Pretty much any change that is good for one is going to be beneficial for somebody else as well, whether they have a [00:14:00] diagnosis of something or not. Like you said, having a ramp that helps anybody. So if you want your customers to get in the door, somebody who's pushing a baby stroller, somebody who has a lot of stuff in their hands, they're going to be able to have access.

Um, there's so many ideas, you know, that's, that's the whole thing behind universal design. And I would love for workplaces to structure themselves in such a way that employees don't even have to think to ask for certain accommodations. I think it should be like going to the, the store room, the storage room.

You know, some people are gonna pick up some yellow highlighters. Some people are gonna pick up pink highlighters. Somebody's going to get a pad of paper and then, Hey, Maybe you can also have access to some earplugs. If you want to have, you know, some quiet or some noise canceling headphones, let your employees go and pick the things that they need.

And without having to, you know, make a special report or ask a, you know, your boss for it. , I would love to see that.

**Delphine:** [00:14:57] Well, I think there are some of us with [00:15:00] disabilities. You know, whether it's a neurodivergent disability or physical disability who are good at advocating for themselves, ourselves, we are good at going to people and saying, I need this to be able to do, but there are probably many others who don't wants to be forward, who don't feel comfortable to ask.

I mean, because maybe they have a speech impediment that they don't necessarily want to tell their employer about, because they don't have a job where they need to talk all the time, but to ask for it might be very difficult or they're an anxious person. And being able to ask for that, , increases their anxiety.

It's all of those things. , but you know, on the same token, I'm sure it's hard as an employeer to always think of all of the things unless some of them are asked for, like, I think some of them are. Potentially fairly obvious, like having a ramp to come in the door. I think, I feel like that's a fairly obvious one and one that's relatively easy, but something like a change of a pen might require the ask of the person, but I can see how it would be very difficult to ask for

**Kelly:** [00:15:57] Yeah. And there can be situations though, as well [00:16:00] where people don't always know until they're on the job for a bit. They don't even know what to ask for or that they can ask for these things. I brought up one example, in a talk I was giving where I like to go and have walks when I was working in the corporate world, on my breaks, I didn't go have coffee or anything.

I went and took a walk and my, my boss actually specifically asked me in the interview, she goes, what do you do when you're, when you're kind of stressed out at work? When you're having a hard time? I said, well, I just want to be able to go and take a walk and come back. And when I come back, I'll be able to tackle the problem again.

And she laughed. She kind of laughed at it, but, , at the end, of course, you know, she's not going to tell me not to go take a walk, but somebody else realized it. And they said, you know what? My son likes walking. And that's how he distresses. And I never thought that he could ask for such a thing at a job. And I'm like, yeah, walking meetings are a thing.

Why not? you know, he shouldn't be forced to go in and sit at his break, or go [00:17:00] smoking or something, but that's what everyone else is doing. Let him take a walk.

**Delphine:** [00:17:04] And again, that's, that's a small thing. . And, and I mean, nowadays, Pandemic and all , being able to go outside and take your mask off, to be able to like clear your head and take a breath where you don't have something in front of your face. I mean, not all of those things are, are minor things.

**Kelly:** [00:17:20] And it's free. It's free. It doesn't cost the company. Anything.

**Delphine:** [00:17:23] No, I would imagine it would increase the person's productivity to know that they are supported and valued within the company can only better and increase. The potential of that employee to wants to work hard, to want to spend the time and the energy because they feel valued.

**Kelly:** [00:17:41] Exactly. Yep. And that's, we also, we have the numbers to back that went up to, we know that, people who are valued to have a higher retention rate, so when you allow people to work the way that they work best. And you trust them. That's the other thing, I think that's a two-pronged approach. You trust that people are not making up stories about [00:18:00] whatever is happening in their lives.

And you will allow them then to work in the way that works best for them. That is how you, you know, you increase your, your productivity on your retention rate.

**Delphine:** [00:18:10] So if we've got parents listening, guardians listening today, and they've got a child who's about to enter the workforce and there's a, neurodivergency there, or there's a disability there, or there's, you know, something that's going to make the working world, maybe a little bit more challenging. How do parents kind of start to get their child to get into the workforce in a way that they feel supported?

What advice do you give to those parents?

**Kelly:** [00:18:39] So I think there's a lot of research that can go into this because there are some supportive workplaces. I know for example, certain large grocery chains that are doing a lot of initiatives where they are very open to working with families, to find positions. , and then they hope and expect that that person will stay.

[00:19:00] Long-term that's what they want. They want, you know, they want to develop their employees. , so I don't wanna name names of certain brands, but I do know that in Canada, we have a lot of large grocery chains that are very open to doing this. I think parents have to start young. You've got to start young.

So don't wait to the kid is 22. , you gotta do it the same way that you would with any other kid when they're 13, 14, whatever, start with some small job. , it could be mowing lawns. , it could be as a, you know, bagging groceries or whatever. , but they, I think. A lot of the times parents kind of put our, you know, we put their disabled kids into kind of a bubble kind of a protective bubble.

and so they don't get the same opportunities to have those crappy summer jobs and mess it up. Right. Because that's what you do. That's what teenager time is for. You gotta have a crappy summer job. You're going to mess up. That's the time where you're going to show up late or not show up at all or whatever it is.

That's. And then you can, when you, you know, you finish school, you're better set to start a career. But I find what happens a lot [00:20:00] is, people kind of underestimate their own kids and they don't allow them to have those chances to try and to fail on a repeated basis. , And as much as I know, as much as, you know, trying and failing can also hurt somebody's confidence, you'd be surprised at how much confidence somebody can build just from being given the same chances to have those same opportunities and to even have that chance to fail is actually an opportunity.

And that's missed a lot of the time. Like I see that a lot.

**Delphine:** [00:20:31] Well, because there's, there's learning and failure. So in the classroom, when I'm working with kids, you know, and especially when I've worked in special education for such a long time, and I get so many kids who just don't want to fail, they are a

afraid of failure. And what I say to them is it's not failure.

It's actually learning. If you knew everything. You wouldn't need to be here. I wouldn't need to help you. You could just go on your way and spend your day at home playing and reading and doing [00:21:00] all those fun things. But you're here to learn and to grow into experience. And the awesome thing to your point of like doing the crappy summer job, you still have mum and dad or brother and sister or aunt and uncle or whoever is supporting you to catch you when you fall. There's no. Negative to failure. There's only positive. And if you only look at, well, I did really badly here, so, you know, I'm useless and I can't do anything. You're selling yourself short. What did you learn from that situation? And it is totally the growth mindset kind of idea, right? Of like you learn from failure and you grow and you learn and you try again and you don't give up.

So I think that's a really important thing is that if they can start early, then they can learn how to. Figure out what works for them. . What strategies do they need to have in place to be successful?

I feel like we've talked about the workplace. I mean, are there things in the classroom that teachers really can be doing to be making their classes more inclusive or things that you [00:22:00] would point them towards?

**Kelly:** [00:22:02] Hmm.

**Delphine:** [00:22:04] Yeah, it's a loaded one. Cause I feel like in education we're doing we're. I feel like we're doing a lot. We're probably not doing as much as we should be. And I know that, but like, I don't know if you have any like, experience with that or ideas with that, I guess.

**Kelly:** [00:22:17] I very much respect teachers and the work that they have to do under extremely difficult situation. , and, and that's not even, you know, even before the pandemic, there was a lot of pressure on teachers. , and a lot of, you know, continuing education that they have to, you know, they have to continually work at it.

And to be the, probably the most inclusive thing. What I have seen, you know, some of the most nurturing students, sorry, teachers, , towards my son, , have been teachers that have been very open to. The new, the new approaches or just new ways of thinking about the same kind of students. , I can use one example of, , you know, my son used to, , cry quite a bit when he was frustrated.

He didn't, you know, that [00:23:00] was, that was the closest thing you would have to some sort of meltdown, right? So I find too to, whenever you say you, you know, you say the person's autistic, then they go, Oh, is he violent to see aggressive? No, that's not the problem. No, my son just cries when he's upset, that's it. And then he'll tell you why he's, if you ask him, he'll tell you why he's upset.

And the teacher had written in the IEP, , to have him not cry when he's upset. And I challenged her on that and I said, well, I don't see anything wrong with his crying. How about we work to find things that don't make him cry in the class? Like, why is he trying in the class? You know, it means he's upset.

So let's look at that rather than stuffing him from crying or discouraging him from crying. Cause there's nothing wrong with that. And she's she went home and she thought about it and she goes, yeah, you know, you were right. You know? , that I, I should, I shouldn't just ask him not to cry. I should actually yeah.

Look at what the root cause might be. So, for me, that's. Again, I feel like I'm asking teachers to do more. But it's really just kind of, opening your minds to the way of different ways of [00:24:00] expression, different ways of learning and continually being open to those differences.

**Delphine:** [00:24:04] it's so important. For parents and teachers, to be able to have that open line of communication. When you're working with a student who is not neuro-typical. Yes. You as an educator, understand a child and how they learn or what they need to learn, but you aren't an expert in that child. You haven't, you haven't been in the trenches with them when they're having their meltdown, their physical outbursts they're crying session.

You haven't been there to pick up the pieces because you're not. Mum or dad, you were the teacher. And so it's so important to have those open lines of communication between home and school. And I try to foster that as best as I can, when I work with clients, I try to really get them to build that relationship with the teachers.

So that, that your exact example of like having the strength to go to the teacher, cause it takes strength as a parent to do that. Right. You can't, you don't. You never want to walk into someone's job and tell them how to do their job. That's [00:25:00] not what you were doing. What you were doing was giving the teacher a perfect example of, I know my kid, this is how they react in a situation and it's their way of communicating to you.

That something isn't okay. And it's not throwing chairs across the room. Thank goodness, because nobody likes that, but that is another form of communication. Behavior is communication. So. It's such a beautiful example of how it can work nicely when teachers are open, when parents are open and when you both can be open together, but respectful of each other's space, you, you create a beautiful thing for the student who is in front of you.

I think it's great. So let's talk a little bit, cause I know you've written a book and I talked about it a little bit in the intro of how to parent like an autistic. So can you tell me a little bit about the book and what it came from?

**Kelly:** [00:25:49] So, I especially picked that title, , because I wanted it to be a little bit provocative. Like I said, when I say that I'm autistic, it evokes some feelings and people, a lot of the times where they're kind of [00:26:00] like, Ooh, I don't want wanna associate with that. , and so, you know, just the concept of parenting, like an autistic, I wanted people to be curious a little, why would I want to apparently can autistic or autistic people are parents, you know, , And so I took it from, the approach that we, , because I've spoken, I've spoken to a lot of autistic parents and I started to find a lot of commonalities.

And I do feel that we have an approach that is different. It still has some similarities and I I'm hoping, I would love to see long-term studies. I'm hoping that this leads to a more accepted, more happy, well adjusted autistic adults eventually. , so I conducted a survey. I surveyed a whole group of parents and, , I left the questions really open.

Like I just had free texts, pretty much. I'd ask a question and I gave them free texts, but I didn't really want to put my own ideas into it. I wanted to see if things came up and so I start to see commonalities when I asked, you know, what do you think your strengths are? A lot of them said, you know, we have really close, open communication.

We talk [00:27:00] about everything nothing's taboo. , I want to ask, , what's your major challenge, almost universally. Everybody said, you know, conflicting sensory needs. Like I might be very, hyposensitive and my, my son is, , usually it's the opposite. One's very quiet. And the son is like the, the child is very sensory seeking, let's say, and the other person's very sensory adverse.

, so I try to address all those issues in the book, , with the idea that. Perhaps a neuro-typical parents might want to read or have some insight into our methods and our way of thinking, and how we solve these challenges and how we look at artistic kids. , yeah, so I just feel that. The way that we relate to our children is almost on a, I'm not going to say like an adult level, but just, we give them a lot of autonomy and a lot of respect, I think a lot more than a lot of, , neuro-typical people give their own children.

**Delphine:** [00:27:57] I love that. And you're right. The title is provocative. When I [00:28:00] read it the first time, I was like, Oh, I don't know how I feel about that title, but I sat with it and I thought about it for a bit. And I thought, no, it does make sense. , I think we can all agree that. Those with autism. Those with any neurological difference are going to think different are going to act different, are going to be different because we just see the world in a different way.

We just, we problem solve in a way that makes sense to us. It's not going to make sense to every other person. Um, but I think it's so great that you were able to put something together that wasn't just your, your ideas and your way of doing it. But you actually like reached out to. And said, Hey, how do you, to parents who are raising autistic children saying, how do you do it?

What is, what is the takeaway? What can we give to other people? Like, I just think it's so lovely to be able to provide that because there's listen, there isn't a parenting book for anyone on any children. It's like I said, in the beginning, they don't come with manuals. They don't come with instructions.

Sometimes I wish they would, because it would make [00:29:00] things easier. I might've been able to. Anticipate what was coming, but you can't. And I think it's so great that the book is so relatable to the people, to whom you were talking to. So I, I love that about the book and the way it's put together.

**Kelly:** [00:29:14] I actually. Now that I look back at it, I feel like it was one of my biggest pieces of advocacy so far. Like, you know, I've been a big vocal advocate. , but that to be is, is protecting kids, especially is like really my, , again, like, I feel like it's just one of the biggest, things I've accomplished, you know, in the last year.

And, , like I said, I really do, I would like to expand it. I would like to be able to have the opportunity to have more research done. , And we'll see, I have another idea as well, coming down the pipeline. So

**Delphine:** [00:29:45] Aside from your book, are there any other books that you feel like. Could be of use to parents or educators or guardians or people who want to understand more about inclusion. Are there some good books that people can kind of look at? [00:30:00]

**Kelly:** [00:30:00] I think it's really important to read, stories that are , firsthand, , accounts like personal experiences from people who have actually, experienced the thing. . , find something that is.

That grabs you and that grabs your attention. Like, I don't really want to just recommend one book. It's kind of like, you know, I'm also getting very into restorative justice. So read something that, that, you know, something that you would normally pick up by an author from a demographic that you wouldn't normally pick up.

And to me, this is going to be, you know, the best way to have a journey into real inclusion. Um, the other part, like when it comes to just being a good ally, I think there's a, there's a few parts to that. One is to really listen and to listen with empathy and that you don't have to. I think it's really important that you don't have to relate exactly to what the person has gone through, because I find a lot of the times people try to make [00:31:00] equivalencies between different forms of oppression.

And it's, it's not, we can't, it's not the oppression Olympics and we, we can't compare different people's experiences. , cause a lot of times like a woman will be like, well I have experienced sexism. So that must be what racism is like we'll extrapolate and it's not. They're not the same. , so try to listen in a sense that you don't need to compare and you don't need to completely understand the other person's experience to have empathy for it.

And the second thing is to believe, to believe when the person says a particular thing or action or word has hurt them. , so once you have those two, the believing without questioning, just believe it. And listen, that to me is the best path. To becoming an amazing ally. And from there you can, you know, like I said, keep reading, keep finding different firsthand accounts from different groups that you've, you've never paid much attention to before find authors that you've, you know, you've never read.

, and to me that's the, really the path to becoming a, an amazing ally.

**Delphine:** [00:31:59] I think [00:32:00] I love that the listening part, especially, , I think speaks to me a lot. Just listen , in, in any situation, you know, sometimes it. It's sometimes hard to sit quiet, but sometimes that's what you need to do. You need to sit quiet, let the other person talk and hear them, but really hear them. .

Where can people find out more about you and your book and all of the good stuff that you're up to?

Okay.

**Kelly:** [00:32:25] So I am very active on LinkedIn. That's probably the most, , the easiest place to find me. I'm very vocal. I post almost daily, all sorts of things. So that's yeah, I don't hide. I don't hide any internet. , I am on Instagram as well. , I made a, a site that is specifically that was, , for clubhouse cause I was on clubhouse and that's actually where we met.

, and so that's K Brian, john.club. , and I put up a lot of different resources. I put a lot of free resources there. , people can find the book there as well. , I kind of just want to be a repository of [00:33:00] information to help empower people. That's that's really what I'm doing. ,

you can feel free to reach out to me on Instagram or

**Delphine:** [00:33:06] I will put all the links to all of your social stuff in the description and the transcripts for the, so people can come back and find it. And I follow you very closely on LinkedIn. I see all of the things that are posted and they are always thoughtful thought provoking and informative. So yeah, people should definitely go check that out.

Kelly, thank you so much for today's conversation. It really was great. I feel like we could go on and talk about various aspects of inclusion, you know, of any of these things, ableism, all of that, but I think we're good for now. I hope maybe we'll talk again. When you get the next book done, I would love to meet back and hear what that's all about.

**Kelly:** [00:33:49] Excellent. Yeah, we'll see you. Thank you.