Unfiltered Podcast Series Transcript - Episode 5

Clare: Hello and welcome to this latest episode of Unfiltered. I'm Clare. I'm your host for the series and I'm joined today by some of the best advocates I know when it comes to talking about autism in women in particular. I'm joined by the wonderful Jane Ibbotson and Jen Harland who have got pretty strong views about things and have had some really good experiences and challenging experiences as autistic women in our community.

So that's what we're going to be chatting about today. But first, I really want you guys to introduce yourselves to our listeners. So, I might start with you, Jane. Tell us a little bit about yourself and what you do.

Jane: A little bit about myself. I was born in Yorkshire in England, and then I moved to Australia 43 years ago now.

But I've lived with autism all my life, though I didn't know it until five - it would be five years ago now. And then, basically, this wonderful person - my GP said, “Oh, I think you might be autistic.” So, I went and got tested, and sure enough, I've got autism and then my life completely changed because then I got NDIS and basically then I - then this wonderful person walked into my lounge room called, Nadege Anderson, and she just went, “Oh my God, you're so good.”

“Am I really that good?” Because I've been doing artwork all my life I did not believe - I thought, I'm not that good - I did not believe I was that good, and things have just gone from strength to strength since then, and I'm just so grateful that I actually know Clare and I actually know Nadege and basically I've got to know some lovely people through - thanks to the NDIS that I managed to get - yeah, that's basically my story. I had a massive struggle when I was a kid with it. I always thought I was from a different planet. I used to think, “I'm not from this planet. I just don't think the same way as everybody else.” Yeah, it was - it was really - the day I got diagnosed, my mother just went, “Oh my God, it's my fault. All these years you've been doing...” And I went, “That's not your fault.” Because we just really started to talk about it - to really get to know about it - and I've got two lovely support workers now who ask me all the time about it, want to learn about it, and that's really great, because the more you learn about it, then the more people learn about it, the more you realise that if a person's got autism, their brain is just wired a different way and, yeah.

Clare: And as an avid collector of your art, I'm here to tell you that you actually are incredibly talented. Thank you very much. Thanks, Jane. Jen, how about yourself? Do you want to tell us a little bit about yourself?

Jen: Yeah, so I'm a South African Australian. So, I immigrated to Perth in 1997 with my parents and my sisters. In 2011, I was diagnosed as being autistic. The autism diagnosis came when I landed up in a psychiatric ward in a hospital for three and a half months due to severe depression and strong suicidal ideation stemming from a terrible obsession with my ex personal trainer.

It was early on during that hospital stay that I was diagnosed as being autistic. So, some of the things I've done is I've actually have given speeches to various audiences about my life and autism. I've also given feedback to various researchers on their autistic research. Being involved, I participated in various co-design groups specifically for autistic people, and also people with disabilities as well. And at the moment I'm involved in the development of the National Autism Strategy and so I've done – yeah - other things outside of autism, like volunteering at different places and - yeah, so yeah, that's me in a nutshell.

Clare: Yeah, I'm sure there's much more than that, we'll talk about that. So, what I want to do now is, you guys are selling yourselves so short. I know how amazing you both are. So, what I really want to do now is I'm going to throw you guys some questions that we've been asked by community members throughout the year and one of the first ones - and I like this question - because it's a - it's an interesting answer I think so, "What's it actually like being a woman who's autistic?" Who wants to start that one off?

Jen: Yeah. Yeah. I will. So, as I just said that I was late diagnosed and wasn't diagnosed until I was 37 years old. So, when I was growing up, I did not have life challenging behaviours.

Instead, I was a very quiet person when I was at school and at business college. So, throughout all of that, nobody picked that I was being autistic. So, I wish that my teachers and parents picked that I was autistic. It would have made life easier for me. So being autistic, it does have its challenges and its benefits.

Examples of challenges that I have are, so some of my executive functioning is bad, particularly with planning and initiation tasks such as cleaning my house and weeding my garden. I've got some piles of things around my house that have been there for months that need sorting. Some other challenges are, is that sometimes I have been let go from jobs due to me being slow at my work and/or not fitting in and/or people not understanding my speech clearly.

Sometimes I have difficulty interacting with people. I have experienced being underemployed, i.e. having two degrees yet not working in those fields. For example, I worked on the checkouts for 15 and a half years. I have also been told that I do not smile much, that I have an expressionless face and that my voice is monotone.

Examples of benefits - I'm a details person. If you give me something to read, I can spot the errors, whether it be spelling errors or typographical errors, etc. And I can also spot things if they are not supposed to be there. I am a diligent and conscientious person. I also like to be punctual. I can also be a determined person, accomplishing many things.

Being autistic, I can and do tell people and groups of people about my autism and life experiences. Therefore, contributing to society in many ways, doing that. And then also the last thing is that I'm a patient person.

Clare: Yeah, you put up with me, so you're very patient, I'll agree with that one! Because I'm - I'm very flighty, like my brain's – my - my doctor tells me it's like watching someone watch ten TV screens at once.

Ha! Jane knows as well, don't you, Jane? Ha! Jane, what about you? Did you want to add anything? You touched on a little bit.

Jane: Yeah. I think that probably what I - what I get when I tell people I've got autism, they go, “Oh, you don't look like you have autism.”

That always gets to me. It always gets to me. I'm - so, “How am I supposed to look?”. Because basically, how are you supposed to look? It's like, “How are you supposed to look?” And the people next to me go, “How are you supposed to look, Jane?” I went, “I don't know.” And also, I also get my mother tells me all the time - my mother tells me all the time that I'm actually too blunt, but I can't help being incredibly honest about stuff. It's - if I'm not honest, it just doesn't sit well with me. I'll be - I've been accused of being blunt. My mother will again say to me, “Jane, just don't say anything,” because basically, but I'm just incredibly blunt. If I think it's, “I go, oh, this is really stupid.” Then, or something else that - then I'll just say it because that's the way I look at it. That's the way I see it. And also, yeah people just - to - to look at - like I said before I think that women and girls tend to hide autism far better than boys, right? And everybody when they think of autism, they think of boys more than they think of girls.

Now it's getting to be more girls as well. But basically this - they've got this set idea of what autism is and it's a boy that's misbehaving or can't do stuff. Yeah, it's, I think it's difficult for women because as my occupational therapist who I go to every week tells me, women hide it much better than boys, than men and boys.

They just hide it. They're just very good at hiding it.

Clare: Yeah, survival mechanism.

Jane: Oh yeah, I know.

Clare: Yeah, survival mechanism. Yeah, great answers guys, great answers. So, then it flows onto the next one, the next question actually, “Why is it so hard for people with autism to communicate?” Is it hard? Or is it just that people are not listening? What do you think?

Jen: Yeah, so for me - so I think that most people do not find it hard to communicate. I don't find it hard to communicate. However, I have intentionally rubbed people the wrong way or have unintentionally offended him. And this is what Jane has - has said as well. So, this is because I, as an autistic person, say things directly.

Or, as Jane says ‘bluntly’. I say what is on my mind without having any filters on. I don't mean to be rude and or disrespectful, but sadly people sometimes take what I say the wrong way. So, all of that has negatively impacted relationships. So unfortunately, it has led to some misunderstandings, and to arguments with my family over time.

And so, with other people, I guess it has led them to misunderstand, misinterpret, and misread me, and also being puzzled by what I have said. So, I think this is also where the double empathy problem also comes into play. So the premise is that on one hand, non-autistic people can communicate well with each other, and on the other hand, autistic people can communicate well with each other.

However, when non-autistic people and autistic people communicate with each other, communication breaks down.

Clare: Yeah, that's really true. That's really true. The three of us never have any issue having a conversation, do we?

Jane: No.

Clare: I think it's getting us to stop talking that's the issue. Jane, what about you? Did you want to add anything to that?

Jane: If I'm trying to explain myself about something and somebody's not autistic and they're looking like, “I don't really get this, you look fine to me, again.” And so, then I tend to go, “What's the point, I'm wasting my time here, you just don't get me.” So, I stop talking and I go quiet because there's no - it's - there's no point trying to - my head because I've done that. I was doing that as a kid. I was all the time as a kid was saying, “I don't get this. I don't like that.” And I just get called difficult or some negative thing. In the end, I decided that the best thing to do was to keep quiet.

And basically, my mother did say, you were one of the - you were the quietest kid I ever had. I only thought I ever had two kids because you just - because I think I decided at an early age that - that people just didn't get me. And that, I think actually, like I said before, when I was really younger, I thought I was from a different planet.

I really thought that I'd been beamed into this family and I just didn't - I really didn't fit in and I didn't fit in all the way - I'm happy - I think I fit in now because I'm happy with - I'm happy because I've got my own space and I'm happy, right? But stick me in a whole bunch of - a room with a whole bunch of people, and I'll - I really will go, “Oh, I'm not really sure if I fit in here enough to -” So I sit back and just wait and watch and see if I - see if there is some -somebody that I can actually connect to. If not, then I'll just keep quiet, and you won't get very much out of me at all because I - it's very hard to explain to somebody that doesn't have autism if they're not willing to listen either.

If they're not willing to listen, then you're wasting your time because an example was the other day my - my nephew has autism too and my niece knows - must know a bit about autism because she's a physio, right? But - and she works with kids – but I was there with her and my mother's deaf, so my mother needs new hearing aids.

But anyway, she turned her TV up really loud, and I was like, can you please turn that down? And I was about to say, it's a thousand jets in my ears, right? To which my - before I could even say it, my niece said, “No, it's Nana's house she's deaf. Leave it up.” To which I had to actually leave the room because I couldn't stand the noise, right?

And my mother did say afterwards, “Oh my God, I never realised it was really that -” But, that's the sort of things I run into every day, right? With trying to explain to people - trying to explain to people, “No, I really can't do that,” or, “No, I can't.” Yeah, so it is difficult sometimes.

And yeah, with autistic people, it is easy because they get it. It’s - get it. It's not, it's just, they just get it. It's easy.

Clare: Yeah, because we experience it too, right?

Jane: Yeah. Yeah.

Clare: What about the thing around eye contact? “Is it hard for you to make eye contact?” Somebody asked us this question, “And if it is, why?”

I know for me; I've taught myself to make eye contact. And when I'm not close to overwhelmed I can fake it and - but if I've got lots going on and there's lots of noise and lots of overload, forget about it. Or if I'm tired, I can't do it. So, what about you guys?

Jane: I would just say ditto to that, Clare.

Yeah, I've - I've taught myself to look at people because, if people want to be- to be acknowledged- so you look at people, and but you do tend to - in autism - you do tend to want to not make so much eye contact, but the fact of the matter is that I can do it for a while, but then I get exhausted with it, and basically yeah, I find it exhausting.

So, I will just - I'm always glad when there's somebody else there to take over from me so I can just, back off a bit. Yeah.

Clare: I find like I can listen really well and not look at you, or I can look at you and I'm not going to get all of the things that you're saying.

You're not going to get both. How about you, Jen?

Jen: So, for me when I'm the one who's talking I actually don't make any eye contact. However, if I do remember to make eye contact, I will make eye contact. However, I do find that if I do make eye contact when I am speaking, I somehow forget what I am saying a lot of the time. Interestingly, when I don't make eye contact and I'm obviously looking somewhere else, I cannot tell you what I was looking at.

I think this is due to me concentrating talking and it is as if I'm blind. When it is the other way around in the conversation and people are talking to me, then I do make eye contact with them.

Clare: Yeah, I guess it's all about all of the different situations and who it is and things like that. I know that when Jane and I go for a coffee, often we sit beside each other so that we don't have to do that. [Chuckles]

Jen: Oh, wow.

Clare: Yeah. We could just - yeah. And Jane, you touched on it a little bit before, but I - there was a question around, “What does sensory overload feel like for you?”

Jane: Yeah, because I've had to try and explain that to people because they just - they don't - they really don't get it. I'm really sensitive to really - I can't stand really loud music. In fact, I was out - out yesterday with Margaret - I go for a coffee with her every Thursday - and we go to all these different coffee shops and it's good for me to get out, so we go.

So anyway, I was walking past this guy's barbershop, and he had the music blaring out, and I just turned around - I turned around to Margaret, who didn't even notice. And I just went, “I couldn’t have my hair cut in there.” And she went, “Oh, oh, why?” And I went, “Because it sounds like a thousand - thousand jets in my ears.” And she went, “Oh, so that’s what it sounds like. Oh, I learn something new every day, Jane. Oh okay.”

And yeah, I just had my eyes fixed and basically this time, both my carer and the doctor was so aware. First time I went for one eye, they're all - it was Monday morning - and they were all like, “Oh, what did you do on the weekend?” When you get down to the bit where you wait.

And they're so loud, I'm not joking. They're laughing and joking. And the doctor turned around and said, “Can you lot just go away? Jane's got autism. We need a bit of quiet.” And so, they just disappeared. And it just went quiet as, but before that I was trying to cope with, “Oh my God, I'm here – have - gonna have to have this and basically they're telling me - I don't wanna know what they've done. They're so loud, they're so loud, and it was going through my brain. And then when she just calmed it down, I managed to calm down a bit. And the second time it was just already calm. The second time it was nobody. There was just calmness.

I was like, “Oh, those people don't - so they obviously decided to go to the lunchroom to tell each other what they did on the weekend.” But yeah, it's just overwhelming. And you go, “Oh, too much.” And I tend to remove myself from those situations. I will remove myself because it's just so overwhelming that I just - I can't put it into words.

I will remove myself from it instead.

Clare: Yeah. Autism. Okay. What about you, Jen?

Jen: Yeah, so for me I don't really get some sensory overload, except at my sister's house, where her four or five birds are chirping, and the dog is barking, and it's really constant. So that can be very overwhelming for my brain, so I'd rather be outside than in her house.

So unfortunately, because of that overwhelm, I hardly go to my sister's house. However, we still catch up at cafes and other places.

Clare: You just have to make a plan to avoid it, hey?

Jane: I would imagine that. Yeah. My - my nephew owns a bird, and one – one - it's great - it's - I'm not joking, I'm sure that it’s screech could break a glass, and basically, I don't go any - I don't go anywhere near it, because it just - it's just - it's too much. It's so if she has all those birds, it would be way too much - way too much. And then the dog barking. I'm the only person in the street that they must - they go, “Oh, here you go, Jane’s telling the dog to shut up again.” Ollie barks at everything and I go, “Ollie, shut up.” I'm not telling him to shut up because I'm bothered about the neighbours.

I'm telling him to shut up because it's really annoying me. The neighbours think I'm telling him to shut up because, “Oh no, don't neighbours.” But I'm like, “No, shut up, it's too loud.” And I've actually got an Apple Watch, and now it's set -it's got an ear on it, and Ollie sets it off all the time.

I'll go, “You’re setting off my watch Ollie, shut up.”

[Laughter]

Clare: That was awesome. I don't know about you guys but I always get that, “Oh, you don't look autistic,” one. Do you guys get that?

Jane: That's the most annoying one I get.

Clare: Yeah.

Jane: "Oh, you don't what-," and I go, that is just - I feel like saying "That it's just so annoying," but instead I don't want to be rude. So, I just go, "How am I supposed to look? Can you just give me some idea how," and it's usually, "Oh you're not supposed to be able to, you're not supposed to be able to speak," or "You're not supposed," Or, "You're not supposed to be able to do as much as what you do."

"You're talented," and I go, "Yes I'm actually this talented because I have autism." Because from five years old, I was able to do that, right? So, the fact of the matter is, I've always done it. It's been my place to escape. So, I just do it for that, really. And that's how it started. That's how artwork started for me.

Basically, it was, and it still is to this day, it's, this room is a place that I escape to and basically it always will be because that's the, it's a really great place to be when I can do stuff like that. Yeah. Awesome. Oh yeah.

Clare: What annoying questions do you think people ask you about autism?

Jen: So, for me like people actually have said to me that, "You don't look autistic," or "I haven't thought that you are autistic." However, there hasn't really been anything annoying that people have asked me about autism. However, there has been some annoying and dumb things that have said to me by my mental health professionals about my autistic soul. So firstly, the psychiatrist who diagnosed me as being autistic said, amongst other things to my parents, that I cannot understand jokes. This is incorrect, as I do understand jokes. Everyone's sense of humour is different, whether they are autistic or not.

The psychiatrist also said that I cannot see other people's point of view, and that I always think that I am correct. So, nobody can have an argument with me as they will never win. To that I say, he has incorrectly made a generalization about autistic people to apply to me. I disagree with those comments and other people who know me also disagree with those comments made about me.

Those comments have been very annoying and irritating as those comments have been used against me by my parents.

So secondly, the clinical psychologist who I was referred to by the same psychiatrist told me when I first started seeing her that I'm not fit to become a counsellor as autistic people have difficulty in reading other people's emotions. And also, that even if I am taught to read other people's emotions, I will be tired at the end of each day counselling people.

So, to give you some context at the time - at that time, I was studying my second degree, which was a counselling degree. After the clinical psychologist made those comments, I changed my degree to a ministry degree. I mentioned what the psychologist told me to autistic people and non-autistic people.

And most people have disagreed with what the clinical psychologist said. [Also, I am one of those autistic people who can actually read other people's emotions without any difficulty. And looking back, I was actually doing well in my counselling units.

Clare: Yeah, and I think I don't know I would love to have an autistic counsellor, who I didn't have to try and pretend to be someone else and mask to go to a psychology appointment. Jane, you've got some really good people in your life where you can just be your authentic self. And that's your, that's not easy to find you would have experienced that throughout your life, but I'd love an autistic counselor. And so many of us are actually seeking that now because we don't have to pretend that we don't have to communicate differently.

We can just be ourselves, right?

Jane: Yeah, I've got a - I actually go to, um, Spectrum Clinic in East Fremantle, and I see an occupational therapist saying that's she - all they do there is deal with autism and - and other neurodiverse things, but mostly autism. And basically, every Wednesday I go there and wait ‘til I sit down, and I don't have to - I don't have to try very hard because she's not autistic, but she totally gets it.

It's - and then I'll say something like, “Oh I don't really understand why I do that.” And she'll, then she will actually come back and break it down and basically then I'll understand it a bit more. It's just a way to help me cope, but it's just great, like I said, I've got - I have now got really great support in my life.

So, I've got the, um, I've got Margaret and Sue there. Margaret's, 80, and I don't know how old Sue is, but she's a bit older too, but I find too that basically, people just, if they really want to learn, they will listen, right? But I find that medical people I've honestly been told a ton of times because I've got lupus and other things too, but, and I've actually sat down there and they've gone, “Oh, can you go somewhere else? It's too difficult.” And I've gone, “Oh, okay.” And I've gone, “Where am I supposed to go? You're supposed to be the professional that's supposed to be helping me. And you're telling me to go somewhere else?” Yeah. I find that professional, a lot of professional people that are doctors or nurses or whatever, don't understand or don't want to understand because they're all too busy, right?

And they brush you aside. And it's, you know what? I bet that, say, I don't know, a certain percentage that walk into their rooms have got autism, and basically, they need to start to understand. They need to start to - what are they going to say? “Oh, sorry I’m not seeing an autistic person. As obviously this person that told me to go see somebody else basically couldn't handle it.” But the fact of the matter is, as my occupational therapist said to me, that's on them, that's not on you. Because I would normally blame myself, but instead she went, “No, that's not you, that's them, that's their problem, that's not yours.”

And I've -

Clare: There's nothing wrong with who we are.

Jane: That's right.

Yeah, because they were making out, it was my fault. “Oh, I'm this professional person. It's your fault.” And my OT completely turned it around and went, “Oh no, that's their problem. That's not yours. Don't take that on board.” Cause I will - I'm actually very sensitive to people's - I think that -if they think autistic people can't feel stuff, that's wrong because I'm very sensitive to other people's feelings. I don't want to hurt anybody. In fact, I end up getting hurt the most because I'm going out of my way not to try and hurt people. And basically, yeah. [It's nice to have, and it's nice to have this sounding board, the Light Spectrum Clinic where you can actually now go. And it's only been going probably about four years or five years since I've been going to it. I remember the first day I went, it was the first day they opened. Yeah, they need more places like that. They are chock-a-block, they can't fit one more person in.

Clare: I know, I've tried.

Jane: Because the demand is there, right? So clearly there's a demand for it.

Clare: Yeah, because we want to go to safe spaces. We don't want to go to places where we have to prove that what we're saying is real. We want to go to places where like when we hang out with other autistic people, right? We want to go places where it's safe and we can just communicate the way we communicate.

Nobody cares if I'm not looking at you. Nobody cares if I'm sitting beside you rather than in front of you because it's not about that, right? We just got to get to be our authentic selves. But that's a really great segue into the next question that we got, which was, "Why do you like having autism?"

Jen: So, for me yeah, quite frankly, like when I was diagnosed or formally identified, I wished that I was not autistic and that I did not have autism as that was the thing that made my life from an early age quite difficult.

I actually no longer think that way. I have presented speeches to various audiences on my life story. Been involved and participated with various co-design groups. And I have also been involved with Autism self study in various ways and have made friends from that.

By being involved with the autistic and autism communities, I have learned a lot about autism and autistic people. I feel accepted and valued. I have found my tribe and I now really embrace being autistic.

Clare: That's awesome. Yeah, how about you, Jane?

Jane: Yeah that's really nice, Jenny. That's lovely because yeah, like I said before, I just completely thought I was from another planet when I was in my twenties, my dad kept telling me to go out and get a job and I couldn't because I just couldn't, I didn't fit in, and I couldn't get a job.

So, then I just thought, okay make my own job. So, I was a courier which you didn't have to have much to do with people. All you did was just deliver things, drop them off and then get back in your car and drive. So, I didn't have to do much there. And then basically, when I stopped doing that, I actually didn't - I didn't - I honestly didn't make any friends.

So when, like I said, four years - four years ago - or five years ago when Nadege walked into my lounge room, that was the start of, almost like the start of a new life, because up to that point I didn't have much of a life. I didn't go anywhere or do anything. I did - I just drew most of the time - just did my artwork and basically didn't really - I went to see my mum and did see stuff like that, but basically I didn't do much.

And it's only since I, got my microenterprise up and running. Now I've got to markets - as far as I was concerned, yeah, my life started the day Nadege walked into my house and my life started because this wonderful lady in the middle started Micro Enterprise.

And basically, I'll never forget because I was - I went down - the first time I ever met Clare was when I went down to, I was like, “I don't go to these things.” It was an exhibition because Tia was doing her stage up and down as well. And I was like, “I don't go to,” and there was lots of people there.

Lots. I walked through the door and went, “Oh my God, there's lots of people here. And it's loud.” And I thought, “I don't go to these things.” Anyway, Nadege is so lovely. Nadege said to me, “Oh, look, your artwork's on the stage.” I walked down there and I'm walking back and I turned to Clare and I said, “Oh, I've got autism.”

And Clare went, “Yeah, I have too.” And it made me feel so, so much better. I was like, “Oh, I'm not alone in this room,” and actually did stay for the entire night. It was amazing. And basically um, I've been, and I just feel I've been friends with, I've been, I feel like Clare is my, that's a really good friend.

I've been friends with Clare for four years now. And Nadege is another one who just, you know, these are genuine people that want to help. And my life started when Nadege walked into my lounge room. And you don't - I honestly didn't realize how I didn't have a life until I - because I thought the life I had was the only one that I was going to get.

I actually thought that I was going to be one of those people that ended up dying in their house and then nobody ever came. Nobody ever came anywhere near. Now, no. Because I've got that many people that I do know. I know so, I feel like I know so many people now, for me.

It's just unbelievable. And I know they’re really genuine

Clare: I'm very grateful to have met you. But what I love about autistic, like all of my autistic friends, right? And you guys are included in this as well. It's like we won't talk ages. It doesn't mean we don't like each other. It just means that we go off in our own little things that we're obsessing with or hyper focus or whatever it is.

And then we get together and it's like we talked yesterday. Nobody gets mad if you don't talk to each other for six months. And then you can just come together and it's cool and everyone can be themselves and then you might wander off for another six months. I love that about our community.

For me, I actually do like having autism - a little bit like yourselves - I always felt really different and I felt like I didn't fit in. And I knew there was something, but I didn't have a label for it until my son got much older. But I really like the way my brain works and I like that I can think and see things really differently.

And I guess I've also been really lucky to work with people who value that as well, they see that as a strength. And I know not everybody has that experience. For sure, otherwise we wouldn't need the National Autism Strategy, Jen? But I actually do. I like the way my brain works and the more I learn about it, the more I like it.

Yeah.

Jane: I would say I wouldn't be able to do that. I wouldn't be - I really do feel I would not be able to - I've never had a lesson. So, I would - I really do feel wouldn't be able to do art as well as I do art. If I hadn't been for my autism, because basically I just took it up and just did it.

Picked up pencil and was able to do it I go to markets now and people go, I know this artwork. I've seen this artwork. This is really unusual artwork. I know this artwork. And Sue who goes with me is lovely, and she'll go, “Yes Jane's an award-winning artist.”

Clare: Yeah. And I love the way that you're - I love your artwork - it's no secret. I got more pieces than I've got rooms to put them in. That's - that was the secret motivation as to why we did earrings because I was running out of wall space. [Laughs] But - and like Jen - like I know you're quite a -you're - I love the way your brain works where you can look at something and you can pull out the bits that aren't right, and you're very detail oriented and that's - that's hugely valuable. We've just got to bridge the gap around employers seeing that value in you. I think we've got something to be proud about when it comes to our brains. Yeah, I personally I'm cool with it. I actually have a t-shirt now that says autistic and proud.

Yeah, and so, a friend of mine in Sydney - this is really cool - maybe something we want to talk about is he's actually did an autistic pride day event last year and he's doing another one next year. So yeah, so lots of really good things are happening and we're starting to feel better about ourselves.

I think – well for some of us anyway.

Jane: More and more you get it out there, the more and more you get it out there, it's like anything, the more you get it out there, the more people will understand.

Clare: That's it, right? Exactly. All conversations that we have like this, where people realize that we don't look a certain way, and we're not all like Rain Man, we're humans, and we're diverse, and we have different things, right?

Jane: That's so true. Yeah, I think I do think they all think we should look like Rain Man. That's what I think they think we should look like.

Clare: So weird. And it's really funny even just the three of us are so diverse in the way we think. You guys are organised. I am the worst with organising.

I don't, and I don't look at any of the detail in the way that you guys see the world with - through your art and through the work that you do, Jen. I didn't see that detail. I'm a big sky thinker and I need people like you to bring down into the detail because otherwise I'm off to the next shiny thing.

So, it's really - and that's cool - I like that about our community. But I do have one last question before we finish up today's episode. And it was an opportunity to leave a message. What's the one thing that you want to say to the world about people with autism?

Jen: Yeah so, just like everyone else, autistic people are unique individuals.

Please do not put autistic people in a box and make generalisations about autistic people. If you have met one person with autism, you have indeed only met one person with autism. And that's, yeah, what I would say.

Clare: Yeah, good point. Jane, what about you? What's the one thing?

Jane: They call it the spectrum because it is a spectrum. As Jan's just pointed out, because you've just met one autistic person, not - everybody is different on that spectrum, right? Basically, please stop saying you don't look like you have autism because basically, we all don't look like Rain Man, and we - and actually um, the autistic people that I actually know and meet are actually extremely intelligent, extremely brainy.

Clare: We're so different, we're so diverse. Maybe stop putting us, I like that, stop putting us in the little boxes.

Jane: Yeah, for sure.

Clare: Awesome. Thank you, guys. It's actually been an amazing conversation. And that is it for this week's episode of ‘Unfiltered’. Thank you so much to Jen and to Jane.

And if you check in the comments, you will be able to see where to find Jane's artwork. And I thoroughly recommend that you do before I buy it all. So, thanks everyone for listening and we will see you next time.