

Breaking Sound Barriers: Seven Minutes with Jason Bodle

Tom: In 2021 RTRFM in conjunction with CarersWA launched the Breaking Sound Barriers project, aimed at delivering training for people with lived experience of disability in producing and creating not only podcasting content but also getting involved with radio. That was a project that I was personally involved with developing and delivering, and I'm extremely grateful for the support of both CarersWA and RTR for supporting the project. We've got three pieces to play for you; these were audio pieces put together by the folks who are going into the radio training part of the project. They are very entertaining, very interesting pieces. The one that we will hear today is by a young man from Bunbury called Jason. Jason does a monologue about his lived experience about being a person with Autism. We've also got another piece on a helicopter simulator, a very dryly humorous piece on helicopter flight simulator; and also a really fascinating interview about what life is like once you leave professional sports. As I said, a real delight to have worked on this project and to have assisted with developing these people's talents and skills and I'm very excited to share these with you over the coming weeks. As I mentioned today we're going to play the piece put together by Jason. There's no name to it, I think he does a pretty great job of introducing it himself. Have a listen, stick around, we'll catch up with you on the other side this.

Jason: Hello listener! Welcome to RTRFM 92.1, the station that is breaking barriers throughout the community. This is your host Jason Bodle on *Seven Minutes With* where we talk to people from all walks of life, sharing their stories and experiences. Today I will be introducing myself. I thought that perhaps before I start talking to others it may be prudent that you know a little bit about me and my story.

When I was nine years old, I was diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorder, ADHD, Obsessive Compulsive disorder and generalised anxiety disorder. Now for these four conditions that almost everyone has heard about, you'd think most people would have a pretty good understanding of what it's like to be me. Well, if people really did understand me that well, I wouldn't have made it my life's ambition to education people on what it's really like to walk a mile in my shoes. We all hear about these conditions from time to time, but have you ever taken a few minutes to listen to the people afflicted

by them? If not, then you may be interested by what I have to say. Today, I'm gonna start with Autism, or in my case ASD. Observing from an outside perspective is one thing, but to really understand autism you will have to know what it means for people like me. The best way I can describe it is this: imagine a world where every person was issued an instruction manual at birth that told them everything they need to know about how to conduct themselves in life; how to understand others' actions, how to cope with external stimuli, how to interact with other, et cetera. Now imagine being the only one without that instruction manual. Now, I know these are things everyone has to learn, but the key difference is neurotypical people generally pick up these behaviours over time, whereas Autistic individuals are more inclined to understand things differently. We are forced to make a more conscious effort to conduct ourselves in a way that is deemed acceptable by the rest of society.

Autism seems to be quite the topic of interest nowadays. Everyone seems to know someone who has it, but few people seem to actually understand it. Think about the general perception about an Autistic person: if it's not some super genius scientist or doctor, it's most likely a little boy playing with trains in the corner. From personal experience a lot of people do believe in these two main stereotypes of autism, either being of low IQ or super genius savant. In reality the spectrum is more than just the two polar opposites, and no two people with autism are the same. Just because you know someone with autism, doesn't mean you know autism. In fact, it may come as a surprise to you that you've most likely had numerous interactions with autistic people without even knowing it. In fact, most people I meet are surprised to learn I'm on the Autistic spectrum, as I don't present with immediate recognisable traits. Now this is because over time, I have developed the trait known as social masking. Effectively, this composes of acting "normally" so as not to draw attention to myself in a social environment. This however comes at a price: by suppressing my true self, my emotions and autistic behaviours build up like a pressure cooker. This then results in what is referred to as a meltdown. Meltdowns can be summarised as a complete system failure. I will become depressed, irritable, overly sensitive to stimuli, lethargic and anxious. So, for periods of time, it may lead to me becoming partially verbal, or sometimes even non-verbal. Meltdowns also severely impact my memory and problem-solving

capacity temporarily. One of the ways I can delay and later recover from meltdowns is by 'stimming'. Stimming is any sort of movement, action and behaviour that allows autistic individuals to vent their anxious energy. Each individual has their own way of stimming; some pace back and forth, make sounds, flap their hands or arms, some rock back and forth, some bounce their knees, et cetera. I'm also prone to over-stimulation, so I try to avoid things that trigger me. Common triggers for autistic people include loud noises, bright lights, pronounced smells, being touched, attempting to process large amounts of information, emotional drama and excessive physical exertion. I usually try to avoid these triggers but that's not always possible, so I find myself planning my day with recovery time in mind. This would be to spend time in a quiet place away from any noise or interaction, so that I may recuperate and recover. This can last anywhere from two hours to two days. One of my coping mechanisms has been music. Whether it's a guitar solo, instrumental piece, drum track or lyric, I use music as both an escape and a way of processing my emotions. It has a way of speaking to me in a way that nothing else seems to capture. Since I was young I took to expressing myself through the creative arts. I have many years' experience in acting on stage for theatre, in a movie, I've filmed documentaries and interviewed several people. I've also scripted edited and exported several projects to my two YouTube channels. But most significantly, I've been getting into public speaking, educating the public on what life is like for me, being on the spectrum.

If there's one thing I would like people to take away from this segment, it would be to change the way you perceive autism. It's not something to pity, it's not something to look down upon. Yes, life can be difficult for autistic individuals, but we have just as much potential to live a happy and fulfilling life as anyone else. We need to stop thinking of autism as something that needs to be cured and avoided, and start thinking about how we can make the world a more accepting and liveable place for autistic people. There's a long road ahead of us, but with education, a bit of patience, a lot of listening, I believe we will eventually come to a point where autism is no longer viewed as a problem both by those with autism and those without.

Well, that ends today's segment. I hope you have enjoyed our time together and perhaps taken away something of interest. I would like to thank RTRFM for giving people with disabilities a voice. I'm Jason Bodle for RTRFM 92.1, see you next time on *Seven Minutes With*.

Tom: And that was Jason Bodle with his contribution from the Breaking Sound Barriers project. We'll be playing two more of those over the coming weeks and very pleased to let you know that Jason will continue to be heard on RTRFM through our podcasts: rtrfm.com.au/podcasts. Keep an eye out for that.