

The Accessible Stall Podcast

Episode 44: Ashley Harris, Friendship and Wholesomeness

Emily: Hi, I'm Emily Ladau

Kyle: And I'm Kyle Khachadurian

Emily: And you're listening to another episode of *The Accessible Stall*

Kyle: What are we gonna talk about today Emily?

Emily: So there was this article in *The New York Times* and we totally geeked out over it with one of our favorite people.

Kyle: Oh yeah, who's that?

Emily: And she's here today!

Kyle: Oh my God, who is it?

Emily: Oh my God! Introduce yourself, favorite person in the world!

Ashley: Hey y'all! This is Ashley Harris, Emily and Kyle's requisite favorite Southerner in the whole world. And so we're here to talk about this super cool article that we all collectively freaked out about the other day

E: I would like to point out that Ashley is our first and only two time guest.

A: That's true!

E: She was also our first guest. Ashley's literally great.

K: How's it feel to be back?

A: It feels great, I'm excited!

E: And you inspired this podcast anyway with your geeking out over this article, so I guess we should probably tell people what this article is about. How do we even encapsulate the "bigness" of this article? You might say there's so much to unpack here!

K: We tell our listeners to read it!

E: Now, I think we should sum it up...I nominate Ashley!

A: Oh gosh. How'd I know that was coming?

(Emily laughs)

A: So this article, I believe it was, correct me if I'm wrong, it was part of the *New York Times* Disability Series, right?

E: It sure was

A: Yeah. "Explaining Our Bodies, Finding Ourselves" and it was a two part article written by two friends, they each wrote a separate essay uh, Molly McCully Brown and Susannah Nevison. And so I was in class the other day not paying attention to my professor and I read it, and I literally started crying in class. And then I tagged Kyle and Emily in the article post on Facebook, and that's how this all got started. And it's basically just the dynamics of having friends with disabilities, and the intrinsic value that that carries and that you don't have to explain yourself. And then I was like, "Oh my Gosh I love y'all so much!"

K: Yeah it was really cute, she really did do that

E: I have to avoid my inclination to turn on a Southern accent

A: But wait...Can you? That would be fun!

K: Wait no...We should totally, we should hear that Emily. Go for it!

A: Do it!

E: *(faking a Southern accent)* Alright y'all, we're gonna do the rest of this here episode in this awful Southern accent

K: Yeah, no.

E: *(Still with fake accent)* That was terrible. I do apologize

A: *(Chuckling)* Oh... yeah, maybe not!

E: *(Still with fake accent)* I do apologize. I'm from New York. *(laughs)*

K: That's awful

A: That was pretty bad.

E: Okay, you try it Kyle!

K: I can't. I'm not even gonna pretend like I can do it

A: Aw, man.

E: I do have a rant about something though before we actually get into why having disabled friends is great.

K: What happened?

E: I ate at Cracker Barrel, and I don't know what your opinion on Cracker Barrel is, Ashley but...

A: Give me Cracker Barrel or give me death! (*laughs*)

K: I'm the exact same way

E: Okay, so it has the Southerner's stamp of approval, got it! Except that this is gonna be a bad thing about it. So I ordered Chicken and Biscuits, and the biscuits weren't ready when the chicken was ready so they brought me chicken, and then at the end of the meal they brought me biscuits

A: What?

E: So I had chicken and then I had biscuits

K: You had Chicken and *then* Biscuits

E: Yes. There's a big distinction

A: That's unacceptable

K: That's not right

E: This has nothing to do...

A: Can I just say as a...nothing to do with anything that we're talking about...

E: No, not at all

A: But can I just say that part of the reason that I'm really excited for y'all to come visit in May is so that you can just eat all the Southern food in the world?

K: That is the top two reasons why we're coming. That is number two and three. The top one is you. And Lucas of course.

E: Eh, I don't know that's kind of my number one I really love food....But we interrupt this podcast with a very important message which is that Ashley's getting married!

A: *(laughs)* That's true! And Kyle and Emily are coming

K: Yeah, if you couldn't infer that from the conversation we were just having. Yes, we are.

E: You really couldn't, we were talking about food.

K: That's true

E: This is also a very new development from the last podcast.

A: Yeah gosh, that was like a year and a half ago when we did the last one

E: Times they are a changin'

A: They are

E: So now that you know that Cracker Barrel has wronged me, and Ashley's getting married, is there anything that you would like the listeners at home to know Kyle before we talk about the article?

K: Uh...no. Just that I had a wonderful Thanksgiving,

E: Oh! Should we be super cheesy and say that we're super thankful for all our listeners? Cause we really are!

K: We are, and I'm thankful for you and Ashley, Emily.

E: I'm thankful for our three way beautiful friendship.

A: Aw, yes. I'm thankful for yall too!

K: This is so wholesome

(Emily and Ashley laugh)

K: This is the nicest we've ever been to each other on the show.

E: So, for realsies, I wanna talk about this article because I can't believe in all the episodes we've done that we haven't talked in depth about having disabled friends. And I imagine this could go two ways because I know there are some people who entirely disassociate themselves from other disabled people, but...

A: Kyle! (*chuckles*)

E: Kyle just pointed at his head like an orangatang

A: You don't disassociate yourself! What are you doing right now?

K: No I, I don't. But it's just that when...I came from a high school with all disabled people, right? So when I got to college they wanted me to join the Disabled Student Union or whatever? And I was just like, "I'm good, like I just got away from you guys!". But no, in my day to day life I don't actually disassociate myself from disabled people.

E: But I think I meant it in a broader....Broader term? Broader way?

K: Scope?

E: Scope? Yes! I meant it in terms of the broader scope, of the fact that some people...Oh my God that was so convoluted! Some people try to disassociate with other disabled people and try to fit into mainstream more.. "Mainstream," meaning people without disabilities. And I used to be that guy, so I guess I just wanted to talk about why it's so important to...embrace friendships with people who have disabilities and not reject that out of hand from your life.

K: Why did you used to be that guy?

E: Well...were either of you that guy? I mean I guess not.

K: No

A: No. I was kind of the opposite. I mean I never really had friends with disabilities. I mean, I could count that number of people on less than one hand. So I think when I found ya'll, that's just kinda why I like stuck to ya'll like a piece of Saran Wrap. I was like, "Yes! Here they are!"

(Emily and Ashley laugh)

E: My people

A: My people! And so yeah that's how we got here. I just kinda weaseled my way in

E: No, we invited you in with open arms and lets be real like, you're stuck here.

A: Thank God!

(Both laugh)

E: So, but I guess I just felt like this sense of shame when I was around other disabled people like it was calling so much attention to me, and I wanted nothing to do with it. And this was probably because I grew up not being surrounded by a whole lot of them, like just my mom. And then one day I realized that other disabled people...they speak my language, Most of them

K: Yeah

A: Yeah, most of em' for sure. Yeah, I mean I was around no one. I mean, the only disabled people that I knew were either people that I met twice a year at Shriner's. And I didn't really know them, I just met them. And then like a couple of people who were adults, like my parents age. But I knew no other disabled kids, period. Not that I remember anyway.

K: Yeah

A: There might have been some at some point in time but that is not, sticking out. And for me like, I kind of craved that like, I wanted somebody who just got it. And so, when I finally figure that out as an adult many, many years later I was really excited.

E: Is it the same for you, Kyle? Like do you feel that the people in your class just got it?

K: Yeah. I mean, not at the time. I've said it on the show before that I kind of collect people with CP like me. So whatever feeling Ashley was feeling. Although I'm sure Ashley was feeling it much, much more because it sounds like we were your first disabled friends, I also felt. Cause CP like me is rare, right? So when I find it I'm like, "Yeah! Here's 20 Questions to see how much like me you are!" And it's not weird

A: Kyle, me and you did that.

K: We still do it, We do it all the time. Just the other week I was like, "Hey, good morning! How do you put on pants?" And it was fine.

(Emily laughs)

A: Yup! Sitting down, for anyone who's curious

K: Yeah, me too

E: I mean, I do it sitting down because I have no choice (laughs). It's not like I can stand up to put pants on!

A: I mean, I can stand but I would likely topple over to the floor. Right?

K: I mean, yeah. You could...

A: I could stand...and then I could fall!

E: How do you put shoes on?

A: It depends on the shoe...

E: I know how Kyle puts shoes on

A: I either sit

K: Yes!

A: Or I kinda do this weird squatted down thing where I cross my leg and put the shoe on. To balance. I kinda look like a flamingo, I call it my "Flamingo Stance" cause I'm kinda squatted down with my leg crossed.

E: I sort of do the flamingo situation too, but like obviously sitting. But I like, fold my leg over my knee, or I rest it on an ottoman or some low surface, and that's how I do it.

K: I just do it sitting. You guys have like fancy flamingo poses.

A: I get real sweaty, like stressed out if I have to think about putting my shoes on standing up. Like in airport security? The last time I flew?

K: Oh my God, it's a nightmare!

A: I made the mistake of wearing boots because I didn't pack, I just packed like one pair of shoes...

E: Can't you just tell them you can't take them off?

A: Well I did, and they were like, "Well if we give you this chair you'll have to be subjected to additional screening," or whatever whatever whatever. So I was just like, "Thanks but no thanks," and I just sat down on the floor and held up the line while I took off my shoes.

E: Oh, cause they always ask me. They're like, "Can you take your shoes off?" And I'm just like, "No! No, you can't make me!"

K: So if any of our listeners are TSA agents...

A: Sorry!

(Emily laughs)

A: Sorry for the hold up but I gotta take off my shoes!

E: So I guess this conversation proves the point that I guess we're trying to make, which is that having disabled people in your life means that you can have these conversations, and I don't think I can have them with my non-disabled friends. I mean, maybe a little? Like some of them? But asking anybody without a disability how they put their shoes on is a silly question

K: Yeah

A: Or their pants. Or whatever. I mean, you can try to have these conversations...and I mean, depending on how long you've known said, able-bodied person and how well they know you, then sure, they'll get it. Like, I've known you guys for what...two years?

K: Something like that

A: Any able bodied friend that I've only known two years, I would not have a conversation about how to put my pants on! Now, my best friend that I've known for twenty years, sure she gets it.

K: Right

A: But yeah, it's just different

K: There's like this innate like, understanding. Almost like an intimacy, when you know somebody who goes through what you go through that just overrides the need to explain anything.

A: Yeah. It's like an unspoken understanding that just kind of rests there.

E: I have to admit that's been something I've always liked having in the past, in relationships. You know? I don't actively go looking for somebody with a disability, and I think that on a whole there's just gonna be people who get you and people who don't, disability or not, you know? But..One of my boyfriends was a wheelchair user and I was so against dating a wheelchair user until I actually dated one, which is hypocritical because I'm a wheelchair user, so...but that's a whole other can of worms. And I realized that there was so much less explaining that I had to do about what I cannot do. And now that I'm dating largely non-disabled people just because that's kinda how it's been working out, it's hard for me to sometimes feel like I have to explain certain things that I can and cannot do. Or I'll wanna make a joke and I'm not sure how it'll be taken. Like, a guy that I'm seeing now, I texted him...I saw Ashley's face, we'll talk later girl!

(Ashley laughs)

E: He texted me and said something about how his butt was going numb because he was sitting for too long

Kyle and Ashley chuckle

E: And I didn't know if I should be like, "Bro, I sit all the time!" and like, "Mine too, I can one up your butt story any day!" But I didn't know how it would go over, so I had to think about it.

K: What'd you do?

E: I left it alone. I kind of regret it

K: Ugh

A: Girl, you shoulda went for it

K: Yeah

E: He's cool, he would've taken it. But it's weird because he's into other like silly jokes or whatever, but he still gets a little bit of a horrified look like, "Am I saying something offensive?" if he makes a disability joke or something...

A: Right

E: And it takes awhile to calm people down...Like, when I'm talking to people like you guys I can just say whatever I want and I don't have to preface with, "It's okay to laugh."

A: Yeah or, it's like the end paragraph of that article...the end paragraph I think was my favorite part where she says something to the effect of like, she's talking to her particular disabled friend and she's like, "I can say, 'Legs are the worst! I hate them! And I know she knows I mean it, but I also mean I love them and I'm grateful. And I also mean I'm tired, and I also mean, 'Thank God!'" And that was my favorite part because I really think it like, gets to the heart of the nuance of what we're talking about. Like, we can say one thing but the three of us and like whoever all y'all's other disabled friends are, they get that we're saying like a million other things that no one else will understand. Like the other day when Kyle told me his legs for decoration, I was like, "Yes!"

K: I was just thinking about that! I was just gonna say that yeah!

A: Yeah like I knew exactly what you meant

E: Like you texted me and you were like, "Do you have one of those days where you like, can't stand your body?"

A: Yeah, that was like three days ago!

E: Yeah, and I unfortunately got the next morning which was bad timing

A: No, I feel like I feel asleep immediately after I sent it!

(Both laugh)

E: But like as soon as I read it I was like, "Wow, I really do!" But sometimes you say that to other people and they're like, "No, you're amazing don't beat up on yourself!"

A: "Your body's fine! It's great" And I'm like "No, sometimes y'all it's not fine!" It is, but that doesn't mean it's fine

E: Sometimes it sucks and sometimes it hurts!

A: Yeah! Like for the past two days my right hip has decided it's just like, done being a hip! It's over it. Just straight up over it. And I'm like limping, I'm like dragging my right leg. And I'm just like, "Okay body what's your problem today?" But I feel like if I complain about it people either go into like pity mode like, "Oh no!" or like, panic mode. Like my mom thinks I need to go to the ER and get an MRI. You know? Which maybe I do, we'll see. It just.. I don't know it's different.

E: That is so true! But then like Kyle, you messaged me the other day about your legs being on fire. And I'm just like, "Yeah man, I know that feel."

K: It's funny cause it transcends the individual disability.

A: It does transcend!

K: It's like, you don't have to have CP, you just have to be disabled. Like Emily, I don't know if you do or don't have chronic pain but like, it doesn't matter, you understand me anyway.

E: I've actually been dealing with progressively worse chronic pain lately, and I'm having a hard time coping with it.

A: Me too! What's happening? We're getting old ya'll!

E: Ugh!

K: That's what it is, that's what it is.

E: My mom has this theory...I'm sure somewhere in the lat gazillion episodes we've done, I must've said this, but maybe not. Um, that there's this thing called the Pain Marble when you have a disability and it's like a pinball machine, and it just shoots wherever it wants in your body and you don't really have any control over it. And you can try to control it with things but really it's just gonna go wherever it wants. So one day you'll wake up and your hip will be hurting, and the next day your back will be hurting, and then your elbow will be hurting, sometimes they'll all hurt at once, sometimes they'll stop for no reason. Like, it's exhausting. Chronic pain is exhausting

A: I mean, I could get behind that theory!

K: I don't think you've ever brought it up, but I'm all about that theory!

A: Yup, all about.

E: Because I guess...tell me if I'm being a jerk here! If someone without a disability is like, "Oh my God, my back hurts so bad today, like you don't even know!" And I just want to be like..."Shut up!"

A: Um, yes. So for the folks at home who don't know. So my fiancee is probably the most able-bodied person in the whole world

(Emily laughs)

A: Okay, we'll say that he's the most physically physically superior person. He's almost seven feet tall, he's a giant, like he could pick me up and toss me like a piece of paper like he's super strong, super fit, like his forearms are bigger around than my body...it's fine. Um, so he does this thing that he thinks is really cute and I think it's like equal parts cute, equal parts like, "I wanna chop ya in the throat," where when he has tight muscle, he likes to complain about it. He'll be like, "Ohhhh my hamstrings so tight!" or "My deltoid is so tight!" or pick a muscle. And he does it because he likes that I give him zero sympathy. He's like, "You just do not care!" And I'm like, "No, I really don't care." But he thinks it's hilarious to complain about his stiff muscles...he only does it to aggravate me!

E: *(laughs)* Oh...Well!

K: In that case...

E: Lucas and I will have a talk later.

A: Like he thinks it's funny because I just don't care that he has tight hamstrings. Like, my violin could not be smaller to play my sad song on. I don't know, is that only a Southern thing? Like, "Let me play you a song on my tiny violin?"

E: "World's Smallest Violin?" No.

K: No.

A: For a second there I was getting a blank stare and I was like, "Oh my God I made a reference no one gets!" (laughs)

K: For the folks at home, she rubbed her fingers together to play the world's smallest violin.

A: So anyway, that was a little bit of a tangent, but all that to say yes, I do live with someone who does that all the time!

K: My dad is like getting old, so he's like getting arthritis-ish now and you know part of my chronic pain is that I get arthritis-ish although I don't have it, it's just comparable to that. And whenever I'm in the room, he stops complaining.

E: Really?

A: Aww

K: He feels guilty about it. I'm like, "No, no Dude, it's fine...please!"

A: My dad does that too. He's super arthritic.

K: Yeah

A: And I swear, I think he has it harder. Because he's dealing with a loss of mobility, which I think is a lot different than just what we deal with, which is that the mobility was never there to begin with.

K: Yeah

A: I mean, that's a whole ball of yarn to untangle for another time.

E: But just because the disability has always been there doesn't mean that the pain has always been there, or the understanding...

A: Oh, sure!

E: ...Of it has always been there. And I think that's where having friends who just get it really is such a relief because I'm constantly checking myself about complaining to other people, even though I get really, really annoyed about other people complain about their pain, I also don't wanna complain about my pain or about something that I can't do because I just don't want to call attention to it.

A: I agree with that wholeheartedly, I do the same thing.

K: I'll do it to most people, I don't do it to you Emily, I'll complain about anything.

E: I will literally complain to Kyle about a stray hair, or like a booger I don't know

(Ashley laughs)

K: She's done both of those

E: But...

K: At like two in the morning, when I'm just about to fall asleep. Not just when I'm in bed, she just knows right when I'm about to like, just die for eight hours. And she's like, "I need you please, wake up I need to tell you a story about a piece of paper that fell off a table and I hate everything because I can't reach it.

(Emily and Ashley laugh)

E: Okay but not being able to reach something is a real problem though, if we're gonna go with that.

K: Look, I'm not saying it's not a real problem, I'm just saying you know...time and place!

E: I once fell off my bed while talking to Kyle. And couldn't get myself back up

K: Mhmm. It was really funny! She told me, she was like, "This was the first time this has ever happened!"

E: It was

K: And I was like, "Oh I get to see it?"

E: And then my dad had to come in, grab my arms, and pull me up on the bed like a wheelbarrow.

(Ashley chuckles)

K: Mhmm. And meanwhile I'm here like dying laughing. And if anyone else saw that situation, I would look like a monster, you know? But...

E: I guess I don't care if you guys laugh at stuff like that because what are you gonna do?

A: I'd rather people laugh than the alternative, get all panicky and sad!

K: Me too.

E: I evoke that emotion out of people too, which is why I don't complain.

A: Me too, which is why I don't complain because I don't want the panicky sadness! Or the like, pursing of the lips and like tilted head like, "Oh I'm sorry you're hurt!"

E: I'm literally like, as you're describing that face I'm like making it!

(All laugh)

A: We're all making the face right now!

E: But that's how I look at a dog though

K: You look at a dog like it's in pain and you feel bad for it?

E: No just like, "You're too good for this world and my heart breaks that you're here."

(Ashley chuckles)

K: Oh, sure yeah.

E: I don't know guys, I really want a dog! (laughs)

K: She's the only one who doesn't have at least one. You can have one of mine Emily!

E: Okay, I take Lola!

K: You can't have Lola

A: Isn't that the hairless one? Don't you have a hairless dog?

K: It sure is! I do.

A: Yes! *(chuckles)*

K: She's...She's the best/worst

E: Isn't she the breed of dog that regularly wins "The World's Ugliest Dog Competition?"

K: For like the last decade in a row!

(Emily and Ashley laugh)

E: I love ugly things!

K: That's another thing too, oh my God! We're here talking about pain. Ugly dogs totally made me think of this...um, self-esteem?

A: Uh, where you going with that?

E: C'mon, can't you see the connection? Like, we can commiserate about pain issues, but we can also I guess we sort of touched on this earlier, like we can also commiserate on self-esteem issues. Like, if our bodies are just...we're not feeling them that day, and it has to do with disability for whatever reason?

A: Which it almost always does!

E: ...We can also talk about that!

K: Yes

A: I mean, 99.999% of the time when I'm not feeling mine, that's what it has to do with!

K: Yeah, absolutely.

E: I have a bunch of scars on my body from like, surgery or I just don't like the way my "whatever" is shaped because of how I was born...

(Ashley laughs)

E: I don't know, like I don't know!

K: I don't know man, I can't relate to that one, my "whatevers" are shaped fine!

(All laugh)

E: My thumbs are weird

A: I think you have good thumbs! I like em.

K: Your thumbs would be excellent at like pressing video game controller buttons!

E: they're called spatula thumbs! They're rounded

A: Are they good texting thumbs?

E: Somehow I've figured out how to make it work. They're pretty clunky for most things though, like I can't button a button to save my life.

A: Oh

K: Yea she's pretty bad at it, like if I'm better at buttoning a button than someone then they suck!

(Ashley chuckles)

E: How's your dexterity guys?

K: Sorry, we're talking about self-esteem and I just shot you down, I apologize

E: See, Kyle's the real jerk here

A: But I think realism is important

K: Thank you

E: I acknowledge that I suck at buttons, thank you for affirming that

A: Do you say how's our dexterity?

E: Yeah

A: Mmm... Well I'm a 25 year old woman who can't paint her own fingernails so..

E: Oh, I can paint my nails

A: I cannot

K: I'm a 26 year old man I can't do that either

(Emily laughs)

A: Okay Kyle, do you sometimes feel like your hand is not attached? I sometimes feel like my hand is like a foreign body, it is not attached to me. Like, I feel a serious disconnect with my left hand!

K: Oh! Um....

A: The right one does just fine

E: I've never heard of this before, that's interesting

K: That is, no that's common in CP.

E: Huh!

K: Um, very rarely... almost never. But like one day a year, that will happen to me like I'll wake up, and it's also my left side, and I'll walk into the bathroom and I'll look into the mirror and be like, "What the f*ck is that?" It's very rare, but it does happen.

A: Or like, I guess I should say sometimes I forget I have a left hand. Like I'm forever trying to do two handed tasks with only one hand.

K: Me too

A: It's kinda like, a little bit useless

K: When I was a kid my parents would like, hammer it into my head to use my left hand for things

A: Oh yeah, mine too. Mine would pick my hand up and move it to whatever I was doing so that I would use it.

K: Oh yeah

E: Do either of you have to use one of your body parts to help out with another body part?

K: Yes

E: Like sometimes...

K: What are you talking about? That's like the most CP thing ever!

A: Picking up my legs like it's my job!

E: (laughing) Yes!

K: (laughing) Yeah! I have to pick up my legs to put on my socks and shoes every day.

E: I have to like help my left hand with things sometimes.

A: Oh yeah! Y'all this is terrible and I probably shouldn't admit this to the whole entire world, but whatever...Uh, sometimes when I drive, my leg gets really tired and I have to pick it up and move it. That's probably really bad. Don't come take my license State of North Carolina!

E: No, I know what you mean because I drive with my hands and sometimes my left arm gets so tired of pushing the brake and the gas that I just like need to move my hand!

K: You know, I'm okay with Ashley saying that because I haven't been in a car with her yet but Emily what you just said scared me.

E: I drive just fine now!

A: What gets me is like stop and go traffic. When that happens I'm just like, "Oh Jesus, my leg's gonna give out, I gotta pick it up and move it!" I should not have admitted that!

E: Yeah sometimes my body just...No it's fine!

(Ashley laughs)

E: Also I'm flattered that you think the whole entire world listens to our podcast *(laughs)*

K: But they do

A: They do! Surely!

E: I mean, a couple people. It's fine.

K: A couple people on all continents, we're technically worldwide

A: Antartica?

K: What?

E: Antarctica

K: Well there's no people there, except for like...

A: Yeah they're are!

K: Yeah but they don't live there, they're doing science sh*t

E: Doing science sh*t while listening to podcasts!

K: You're right. So if you're in Antarctica right now, write us an email and we'll give you a prize.

E: (laughs) Don't promise that, now we're gonna get like a bunch of emails.

K: We're gonna give them an official *Accessible Stall* tee shirt.

E: Which we need to get printed up! (laughs)

K: Yes, which we need to make more of!

E: But you know what, self-esteem does go with that because sometimes I get really embarrassed that I can't do things like other people do them.

A: Oh yeah

E: Like I put on my coat weird

K: What do you mean?

E: I put one arm in it and flip it over my head

K: I put both arms in mine and then flip it over my head!

A: I have never seen this

K: Oh, it's a circus.

A: I have never seen Emily put on a coat! But now I really want to.

K: How do you put on a coat?

A: How do I put on a coat?

E: Are you sure because we've definitely been together in the ass-freezing cold...

A: The coldest day of my life!

E: All across New York City.

K: Okay I still feel bad about that a year later, you don't have to rub it in, Emily!

E: Oh yes I do!

A: That was the coldest day of my life, but a super fun day, so it evened itself out. But no, I don't remember that at all, you'll have to show me. How do I put a coat on?

E: Yeah

A: With my arms

K: Well look at you!

A: I think that may be the only thing that I can put on normally. Even though I hate the word "normally"

E: But do you like put one arm in and then drape it around your back and then put the other arm in? Like how does that work?

A: Uh, usually I kind of like hold it up, stick the right arm in and kind of like, chicken wing the left arm around to the back and stick the left arm in.

E: Yeah, I can't do that. And also, okay now we're getting a little risqué here...but you know how in the movies when there's a sex scene and the girl and the guy just rip their shirts off and it's all sexy?

A; Yes?

K: I can do that

E: I can't do that because of the contractures in my elbows and so I've always been really embarrassed...I don't know, I feel like I just look dumb in the heat of the moment.

K: It's okay, you're about to be naked, no one's gonna care

E: Meanwhile while I wrangle my shirt off

A: The only thing that that other person cares about is the fact that you're about to have no clothes on. I guarantee you they don't care about how they come off.

K: Yeah seriously you don't have to worry about that.

E: But these are the things I think about! So there must be things that you guys do that you feel like are

A: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

E: Maybe not taking your clothes off...

A: Me taking off my pants is probably the least sexy thing in the world!

(All laugh)

K: Seriously

A: Me taking off my pants is horrendous. It is the worst.

K: There's no good way to do it. There is absolutely no good way to do it.

A: Yeah it's like, turn away please don't watch!

E: If we're talking about this for real, like getting dressed afterwards too! Like please don't watch me while I struggle to figure out which hole to put my foot in! *(laughs)*

A: I'm over that. I don't care about that.

K: That's fine, yeah. I don't care about that either.

E: Well I guess I'm in the phase right now where I need to keep the illusion alive!

A: That's fair, that's fair.

E: *(Laughs)* Now everybody knows my business

A: *(Whispers)* It's alright! No worries!

E: It's okay

K: It's alright, we're just friends

E: *(Whispers)* Don't tell anyone! *(laughs)*

K: So what can't I do? I'm trying to think of something I do really stupidly...

A: I know I'm racking my brain...

E: (to Kyle) Well you do everything really stupidly so...

K: Yeah I was gonna say like I'm a pretty like, clumsy guy, so I do everything pretty clumsily.

A: I feel like I probably do everything awkwardly, but I'm so used to doing everything awkwardly that nothing really stands out at this point.

K: Seriously, yeah! You know what I really struggle with? And to the point where I just don't do it? I cannot use an umbrella! Can't do it.

A: Really? Why?

K: Yup. Can't do it. I mean like, I can hold it

(Ashley and Emily laugh)

A: I'm trying to picture the problem with it!

K: The problem is, even if it's like the least bit windy, my balance that's already complete sh*t, is even worse. Plus...

A: Oh! Magnified by the fact that you're holding an umbrella.

K: Yeah, and plus I have to like focus on holding it. I don't know why, my brain won't let me just hold it.

A: I understand that a million times. Like I can't walk and do anything else besides walk!

K: Yeah! Exactly!

A: Like, that's it! That maxes out all the capacity I've got,

(Emily laughs)

K: If you're holding a coffee that you made, like that doesn't have a lid on it, do you walk like an old lady from the coffee machine to the table? Because I do.

A: Anytime I'm holding any kind of liquid that doesn't have a lid on it, I am walking with the *utmost* care. And I'm still spilling it all over the floor! Even with my best effort!

K: Welp, there you go! That's it

(Ashley laughs)

E: Well you kinda hack that though, Kyle. Like at Starbucks or whatever.

K: Why? Oh my God, yeah! I asked for a medium and large cup, sorry a grande and a venti cup as the kids say...

(Ashley laughs)

K: And the cashier was like, "Why?" And I was like, "Cause I asked for it!"

A: Yeah like, "Do you need to know?"

E: You don't need to know my business!

K: If you must know lady, it's because I spill everything on myself thank you very much!

A: I used to work in a plant. I mean, I didn't work as a production worker in a plant but I worked in administration at the plant. And we had like a drink machine at the back of the building, and I would have to go back there every time and get a drink and the safety manager whenever I would go back there, he would find like little drink droplets all the way up the hallway to my desk, to where I carried my drink up to my desk. And he finally told me that I either had to put a lid on the drink or I had to come get him out of his office to carry my drink to my desk because I was causing a safety hazard because I was spilling water on the floor.

(Emily chuckles)

A: I am not kidding! And then one day I slipped and fell in my own water spill and I was like, "Touche, I see what you're saying!"

E: *(Laughing)* Oh God!

A:As I lay here in the hallway slipped in the water that I spilled out of my drink cup!

E: I'm imagining these little like, *Hansel and Gretel* trail droplets

K: Me too!

A: Oh yeah, pretty much! They're like, "Oh Ashley's been to the drink machine, there's Coke on the floor, there's water on the floor!" Struggling.

E: I leave tire tracks

A: Tire tracks...Oh yeah I guess that makes sense!

E: Yeah, if I have dirt on my wheels I leave tire tracks, which is obnoxious.

A: I'm trying to think of other things I do really absurdly, I'm sure there's a whole laundry list.

E: Well, I don't think I always realize how absurdly I did things until I started catching myself in mirrors while I was doing things.

K: Oh my God, yeah. It's like, "Who's that? What the hell is he doing?"

A: I feel that way when I watch myself on camera. (*unintelligible*) Am I always this awkward? Am I always this spastic? Yeah, I am. Literally spastic all the time.

K: Mhmm

E: I realized we were talking about self-esteem and this just turned into like, "Let's pick ourselves apart!" session.

A: Ah, it's alright. Oh I just thought of something funny, that's super obvious that I do things differently. So all of the classrooms at school have roly chairs. And it's not just like a stationary table and a roly chair, it's a roly chair with a desk attached to it.

E: Oh my God, I hate those!

A: There's no stability whatsoever. And so, I refuse to sit anywhere but the back of the room so I can push the chair up against the wall before I sit down in it, or else it rolls out from under me and I end up on my butt on the floor.

K: Yup. I have roly chairs at work and what I do is

A: It's heinous!

K: Yeah. I like, I push my entire weight up, I put one arm on the chair and one arm on the desk and I do like a pushup into the chair, no I'm serious! Because if I try to sit in it, it'll just roll off and roll out from under me.

A: Yeah I have to like, scotch myself against the wall and then out one arm on the wall and I think everybody thinks I'm crazy. And I refuse to not sit in the back of the room because I did it one day during a test and I fell in the middle of a test. I was like, "This is mortifying, can we get some desks in this joint?"

E: I'm sure you can ask for a regular desk, but that would just call attention to it, and then ugh...

A: Yeah, it's a fine line! A fine line.

E: It's so frustrating. Yeah I know that feeling about having attention called to things because when I took Chemistry, the way the classroom was set up, it was really hard for me to get to the back where the lab tables were. So they got me my own rolling lab table that they put at the front of the room. And I mean like, great they accommodated me but it was also a giant, embarrassing accommodation that was so obvious!

A: And you're like in your best Chandler Bing voice, "Could this *be* anymore ostentatious?"

(Emily laughs)

A: No, it couldn't

E: So yeah but..

A: Yeah, calling attention to myself is my least favorite thing!

E: We should make sure that we fit some positives in here *(laughs)*

K: Well, is it though? Because when Emily and I are out, we are a circus. Like, I'm on the back of her and she's rolling along and it looks weird because it is weird.

A: It's super funny. I mean when me and Lucas are out we're a circus! Cause he's seven feet tall and I walk ridiculously. *(laughs)* So we're also a circus

E: You know Kyle, my dad...we were up visiting relatives for Thanksgiving and they have the world's longest, most ridiculous driveway, so about halfway through my dad got tired of walking up the driveway and he's like, "Can you just stop for a second because I'm gonna pull a Kyle right now!" I kid you not, direct quote. And then he got on the back of my wheelchair and made me take him up the rest of the driveway!

A: That's awesome! You started a trend.

E: So yeah, so it is a circus, it is a circus. You know, maybe here's my positive note...If the circus doesn't get to you because you're too busy having a good time with the person that you are with, then that's when you know that they get you.

A: Oh for sure! Amen, 100%

K: Yeah

E: Does that count as my final takeaway?

K: Sure does!

E: Yeah! Yeah I'm winning, getting right to it. Okay so, other final takeaways? Do we have final takeaways? Other than like, "Read the article so that you know why we're all gushing over each other"

A: Oh yeah, obviously read this article. I don't know about y'all...This is not my final takeaway, this is more a side note.

E: Oh hey!

A: I literally do not know that I have identified more with a piece of writing about the disability experience as I did the first of those two essays.

E: Oh, absolutely

A: Like my own experience has never been encapsulated so well in writing

E: It's funny because I think that...Yeah you're right, Final Takeaways be damned...Um, I can't figure out the words to explain how I feel about certain things, and this Disability Op-Ed Series especially has been putting words that I haven't been able to figure out. And this really put into words like how I've felt with this love/hate relationship with my body and how other people play into that. I really agree with you.

A: Amen! I feel the same way.

K: What the article taught me was like, I never knew what it was like to not have disabled friends. Like I've heard it, like Ashley you said that to me once, and I heard it when my friend who I lived with in DC told me that I was her first disabled friend. But reading that made me realize like, how much I have taken that for granted my whole life. And I don't know... I think I would feel exactly like they did, if they didn't have that. So yeah it was super..like it brought me down back to Earth a little bit.

E: So is your final takeaway to read the article Ashley? And Kyle?

K: Oh yeah, my final takeaway is disabled friends are cool if they're you guys!

A: I'll take that!

E: I mean, that was offensive to everybody else but I'll take it.

A: I mean my final takeaway is...I mean, I know I said I feel like a circus earlier but I also feel like I need to make it clear that 9.5 out of 10 days, I really dig being a circus. I've said this before, I really think it would be like soul-crushingly boring to be like a neurotypical, able-bodied person. So I really like being a circus, I feel like I need to make that clear. (*chuckles*)

E: You know, I really feel that too.

A: Yeah

E: For all the times that I hate it, I love it.

A: But also final takeaway is like, I love y'all and sometimes I tear up when I think about how I love y'all so much!

E: Oh stop it!

K: We do too!

A: No but really I mean it, your friendships are invaluable to me! And I think that this article just said all the things that I wish I could have said.

E: Well now we're saying...

K: Now you can

A: True, true. This is even better!

E: You know why I love you guys? Because there's no pretenses. And I know we already said that in some form or another, but just there's no pretenses!

A: But it's so important! That's the crux of the whole thing, is the pretense is gone

K: Yeah

A: And it's just damn refreshing

E: It is!

K: And it's funny because you instantly achieve a level of friendship that you have to work for with other people

E: Yes

A: It's like, I've not known y'all that long and I swear like...Y'all are coming to my wedding! Like we are on that level....

E: Yeah we are!

K: Yeah, exactly!

A: ...After a year and a half to two years of friendship. And I think that speaks to exactly what we're talking about.

E: You know I was just thinking how much we've all grown in some way or another since the first time that you were on the podcast.

A: *(laughs)* yeah!

E: Even then I felt like, what was it Disability and Fashion and?

K: Beauty Standards

A: Beauty Standards I think is what we called it.

E: Which is an important conversation but I feel like there was just something so different about this conversation over a year later.

A: I agree!

E: And that just goes to show why our friendship is so important

K: It's the best

E: I hope everyone at home listening also feels warm and fuzzy and not like, "Oh my God you guys are so annoying!" *(laughs)* You know what I wish for everybody? I wish that everybody listening, disability or not, I just hope you have somebody who understands you like this.

K: Yes

A: Absolutely. That's it right there. Everybody deserves that kind of understanding.

K: That's absolutely true.

E: Should we wrap it up on that note?

K: Yeah I think that was just the most wholsomest we've ever ended an episode.

(Ashley laughs)

E: Aww, that was beautiful you guys!

A: Aw, well y'all thanks for letting me come back and chat, it was super fun! I loved it.

E: Thanks for coming back!

K: Anytime!

A: I mean, I'll come back anytime.

E: Oh yeah.

K: Definitely! I'm serious, anytime. Definitely

E: You know you're gonna be a repeat guest again. That's like a thing now.

A: Please! Oh good, I've always wanted to be a thing!

E: There's always room for you in *The Accessible Stall*

(all laugh)

K: There you go! Would you like a shirt?

A: Would I like a shirt? Of course!

E: Let's get the girl a shirt!

K: We gotta get you a shirt, okay.

E: That might be your wedding present...No I'm just kidding! I'm just kidding!

A: Please?

K: No we're gonna get you a much better wedding present!

A: Y'all are my...y'all's presence is my present!

E: Aww!

K: Oh man, that was really nice. I was not expecting that

E: Can I grab a Kleenex now!

A: Oh my gosh

E: Just blot the eyes? I'm like actually grabbing a Kleenex...*(laughs)* Um, okay so on that wholesome, pure note which proves there is still good.

A: Y'all go read that article!

E: Yes

K: Yes! We're gonna put it in the show notes before anything else!

E: You know, everything is bad in the world, but everything is good right now.

A: At this moment

K: Right now, at this second.

E: And this has been another episode of *The Accessible Stall!*

K: Goodnight everybody!

A: Bye y'all!

E: Bye!

