Katie De Leo - July 12 2021

**SPEAKERS**

Molly Joyce, Katie De Leo

**Molly Joyce** 01:28

The first question is, what is resilience for you?

**Katie De Leo** 01:38

For me means that like, even though you keep trying, even if you're struggling, and even if you don't have the support, to keep trying, were some people were like, "Oh, well, you can't do that, it's not good for you to do that." It's so like, I know, I can do this, it's just gonna take me time to do this, I can still do this. And still like pushing forward, knowing that like you yourself, because I feel like when it comes to people that are disabled, they know their body, and they know their mind more than anybody else does. So when other people tell you that you can't do that, it gets really frustrating. You know, you kind of like stick up for yourself. And, and then when you finally get to achieve that goal, is just it's a relief off your back. And like, it's kind of like saying, "See, I told you so" without having to say that because they see that you made the progress, they see that you made your goal, etc, etc. You know. So, in my opinion, that's what resilience is for me.

**Molly Joyce** 02:45

Next one is, what is isolation for you?

**Katie De Leo** 02:50

That's a good question. Um, isolation, for me can mean two different things. Isolation can be chosen, or it can be forced. I know that sometimes people go through periods where they choose to step away from society as a whole, you know, and sometimes it's good for them. And sometimes it's not good for them. So you kind of have to have people in your corner that can kind of help you through that, or recognize when you need that. When I say forced, I mean, like, somebody's making a decision for you. I have friends that I feel like are forced into isolation in ways that they don't want to be. But there's not a lot that I can do besides reach out and say, "Hey, how are you?" And the reason why I feel like I can't do much is because they might have a guardian, they might have somebody else making their decisions for them. And they might need that, but you can see the mental health kind of be affected by the isolation. But I've talked to some people that, you know, we've gone through this COVID. We've gone through this quarantine period, and they've enjoyed, you know, just a time at home. And that's kind of me. I like seeing my friends. I like hanging out my friends. But I love being at home. I love being with my pets. My husband comes home every day afterward, like it just something I enjoyed doing. And then like when I choose to go out, I can go out and I can do what I want. But isolation is definitely like, it's definitely a tricky thing that you kind of have to balance. And I don't like forced isolation, where you can just see where it changes a person. I worry about that sometimes.

**Molly Joyce** 04:48

No, that's great. I feel like when I think about that for why I like forced or chosen. It's really powerful. And then kind of opposite of that, what is connection for you?

**Katie De Leo** 05:00

Connection is, um, so there's different kinds of connection too. I prefer connection, that is person a person. You see the person you reach out to the person, you build these relationships with people that are ongoing. And I can do that with a stranger than just saying hello shoe. And just, you know, that's it, or I can build a relationship with somebody that lasts for years, and a friendship. There's also, you know, with social media, there's different kinds of connections with that, and connections to different resources and trying to advocate for yourself. So there's all these different kinds of connections. But like I said, I prefer even though I prefer, like my isolation, I, when I'm connecting with somebody, when I have this relationship with somebody, like, it's somebody that really cared about I put the priority to try to see them to try to reach out to them and see how they're doing.

**Molly Joyce** 06:11

Definitely. And then last question, what is darkness for you?

**Katie De Leo** 06:22

That's a weird one as well, I feel, um, I feel like darkness can be kind of ignorance in a way. I feel like there's a lot of things that the world doesn't see that people with disabilities have to adapt to whether they're born with a disability, or whether they are, it comes later in their life. And I feel like, it kind of puts a cloud over there, it makes things foggy for them, even though they see clearly, in my opinion, they kind of see things foggy, because they don't see the struggles example, um, I was talking to a friend, and he had visited some kind of university campus. He's like, "Oh, it was really easy. I just like walked in, in like 15 minutes." And I'm just like, "Oh, I wonder if that would have been easy for me." He's like, "Well, what do you mean?" I said, "Well, we can't just walk campus, like, you have to go find the curb cuts, you have to like, you know, follow the sidewalks, you can't just cut to the grass." And there's other things, such as he has another friend, disabled, and he didn't want to invite him to the state fair, because he felt like he couldn't do it. And I said, "Well, that's not really fair." Maybe you should, you know, reach out to him and say, like, "Hey, are you comfortable, you know, going fair with us, even though it's a lot of walking. I mean, we can wait for you" etc., etc., because they've been friends forever. So I'm just like, I was surprised that he had said, we didn't want to invite them because they had a disability, because they assumed that they weren't comfortable with it, and then darkness in the other light, or I shouldn't, that's kind of insane. That's kind of weird. Darkness for me, when I reached dark points. I struggle with being disabled in certain times in my life. Most recently, my husband and I were looking for a different house. And I'm looking for a rambler, because that's how I feel like I can live independently and live how I want you. And I felt like, anytime we found a rambler, somebody would outbid us or they would choose somebody else. So I was getting really frustrated. And I said, "Only if I wasn't disabled, I would, you know, be able to choose all these other houses, I'd be able to have more options, I won't have to worry about this, I won't have to worry about that." And so, there are times where in my life, I feel like there's this cloud over me where I just feel like I'm not good enough. I get stuck in this rut of where like, if only this was different, if only that was different. But then I realized, you know what, it can be a lot worse. It also some people have said to me, no to guys, you weren't disabled later in life. And I look at that as like, why would I want that? You know, like, I've been acting since day one. So I feel like I'm actually pretty lucky when it comes to being disabled. So then that gives me when I'm in those dark spots, I think about that night. It helps me accept more of like, you know what, this is just my life. It is what it is, and I need to figure out how to move forward, it will fall together. However, I make it work. I've made it work since day one. I can make it work now. So that's what darkness is. For me. Like I said, it's, it's multi layered, but there's two different ways that I see it.