Mai Thor - Aug 12 2021

**SPEAKERS**

Molly Joyce, Mai Thor

**Molly Joyce** 00:06

The first question is, what is resilience for you?

**Mai Thor** 00:13

Ah, resilience. I should have thought of these before I hopped on here. Um, you know, sometimes when you prepare, it doesn't come out as authentic, I think.

**Molly Joyce** 00:27

So, I usually like them to be more I try not to say the questions beforehand, because I like it to be more like instantaneous.

**Mai Thor** 00:38

You know, I think I guess resilience for me is really, like just realizing, coming to the realization that you are your more than the maybe limitations that people set set for you, or like more than the trauma that you've experienced, you know, or the maybe the, you know, emotional and physical pain that you've experienced. In, you know, and so, yeah, just sort of. And then I think resilience also is, you know, with all those things I just mentioned, like, learning from all that, you know, like, being able to better yourselves yourself from your past trauma, and, you know, the inner the internalized sort of, like, box that you put yourself in and the external limitations that people kind of put upon you. So, yeah, so I think, I think that that would be what I how I see resilience.

**Molly Joyce** 02:12

Thank you. I really like that, especially the part about learning. And the second question is, what is isolation for you?

**Mai Thor** 02:22

Um, you know, for me, isolation is really. Gosh, these are so heavy. I wonder how many people haven't like, cried during these interviews with you? Um, I think, well, in a, in a real broad sense, I think isolation is just something that I've learned to accept in my life, because I don't think it's ever gonna go away. Honestly, and that's not a sad thing. You know, I'm sure lots of folks, especially folks who are able-bodied, probably would think, you know, hearing that, it would be like, "Oh, that's so terrible and awful." And, really, isolation needs to be this thing where, when you're in it, and you're experiencing it, it is a sad thing, right. But again, going back to sort of like what I just mentioned, about resilience, you know, I've learned so much of isolation, you know, now that I'm in my mid 40s, and I've really learned to just accept it, when I'm feeling isolation. And really just sort of like, mindfully working through the that, that process, right, that experience, because I think we all experienced isolation on some some level. It's really and how we choose to deal with it. Some people, you know, I think, do get sad, and they do feel very disconnected and cut off and not supported. And I've definitely felt that during isolation, but at the same time you know, now having dealt with it, you know, feeling isolated for numerous times in my life now. I really see isolation as like, an opportunity to self reflect and sort of like be resourceful and think on like, "Okay, how do I support myself and get myself through difficult times or times when I feel lonely" or when I feel like, you know, I just have nobody right or no nothing. So really like, really, honestly, I feel okay, even when I'm feeling isolated. Because I think, you know, having, having to do so much alone and process so much alone throughout my whole life. And, you know, not not having people around me who are equipped to understand what disability really is and how it impacts how it has impacted my life. I mean, you have to navigate quite a bit by yourself, right, and, you know, perhaps you can identify with that, too. Like, it's just something that is always there, it's just, you know, I don't think it's ever gonna go away. I mean, obviously, over the course of my life, I've had lots of different kinds of supports, and lots of people who make me feel like I belong, and, you know, you know, all of that, all of that good stuff. But I definitely still continue to feel isolation in many ways. But, you know, I don't, you know, I don't let it you know, burden me or make me feel unempowered if that's the word. Or, like, I'm helpless, right? In any way, shape, or form? I actually really, I have, I think I've been able to, you know, isolation for me has evolved into, like I said, opportunities to really self reflect and just think, "okay, so I'm feeling whatever way right now, how do I mentally and emotionally get myself out of this?" You know, what, I mean, if that's going to see a professional, you know, like, therapist or doctor, or whether it's doing some research, or whether it's just taking some time out for myself, and like, you know, really just connecting with myself. I, I feel isolation almost is like, um, it's like a, almost a safer place than what it used to be. It's, it is a safe place, actually, for me. I don't see it as something bad. And I don't, you know, unfortunately, that's not how a lot of people feel about isolation. But for me, it's not a scary place anymore. Like it used to be when I was younger. So, yeah, I do definitely experience it, you know, still, and it's not going to go away, you know, because that's how life is. But it's not the scary thing that it used to be. And I feel like I have a lot of control how I you know, how I am, you know, as far as like, my mindset, and my emotions and things like that when I am feeling isolated. And definitely how I come out of that isolation. You know, is much more, you know, I'm in a much more positive place, I think with it.

**Molly Joyce** 08:12

That makes sense. Yeah, definitely. I was gonna say so much of that, like, really resonates with me. And I feel like it's super interesting are about gaining like distance from it and coming in and out of isolation. I feel like too, and then appreciating it more and as a safe place.

**Mai Thor** 08:27

Right? Yeah.

**Molly Joyce** 08:30

And then kind of the opposite of that. The next question is, what is connection for you?

**Mai Thor** 08:37

Connection? Um, oh, that's a great question, too. Um, one, I suppose. There are so many levels, right. Um, and I think true connection is like, you know, like, the ultimate level of connection for me is really about really, feeling like you're safe and seen and heard, and that you can just be your, like, complete full self. Right? And you know, you can feel like, you know, even even if some somebody or some thing, maybe not, you know, like, there are lots of differences, maybe even more than similarities. You can still like you know, still feel real safe, right, and identify with different things. And so, yeah, I think that what that that really is what connects She knows for me is like when I, when I feel like I can be my full self, and it's okay. You know, you're not gonna feel judged. And then like, you know, and I've heard a lot of people say this before, kind of corny, but I think it's also true for me, like, you know, when you really connect with something or someone mean, like, you just have sort of like, something happen right? inside of you like a spark or something or like a light or something that just goes up. Right. And that's only happened to me a few times in my life. You know, like, maybe I'll see a painting or something, and a spark goes off. And it's like, I still am connected with this painting, because I don't know why. But like, something just happened, right? When I looked at it, and it made me feel really like, you know, something, you know, something will will mainly familiar or safe about it? Or, you know, maybe it was just like, an emotion that you've carried all your life? And it's like, oh, yeah, this pain just totally brought that out. Same thing with people, right? I mean, you meet so many people in your lifetime. And they come and go. But there are very, I think, few moments where you meet somebody, and that same connection, that same spark happens. And it's like, I need this person in my life, like, forever, you know, because whatever it was, that just happened is true connection. So, yeah, and though in those moments of true connection, it's like, no, that's like, like I said, that's like the ultimate, I think level of connection is when you really want you really feel just like how you truly, and authentically are as a person, when you're really seen and heard and safe. And you can just you know, you don't have to put up any walls whatsoever. Yeah.

**Molly Joyce** 12:12

Definitely, I agree. So much of that. And you feel like you also know when it's not there. And yeah, like when you I think, get a sense of that with someone, and then you can feel the absence of it as well. Yeah. Great. And then the last question is, what is darkness for you?

**Mai Thor** 12:44

Let me think about that for just a second here. Um, well, I think darkness manifests itself in so many ways, right? And sometimes you don't even recognize it until after maybe it happens. And you're already in a dark place. Yeah, you know? Well, I guess I'm picking up a couple things. One is, you know, like, ableism, to me is darkness. You know, ableism is like, it just, it can do really terrible things to you, you know, psychologically and physically and all that. And it, it's definitely, I think, really manifested itself in my life in so many ways. And usually, like, you know, when it's real overt, it like, you know, I tried to sort of, like, brush it off, and like, you know, just continue to do what I was doing. But there are some days when it does stop me in my tracks in my tracks, and like, I just can't get over it, you know, and there are, there are times when, you know, like, I'll just sort of reflect and be like, you know, that really was like, very difficult. That was like, real tough, you know, what just happened to me. And that's a dark place for me, you know, when something like that really sort of makes me realize, or makes me feel like I'm like, you know, just sort of second guessing myself or internally internalizing it to where it it sort of emotionally impacts me negatively. Those are dark places for me. And then I start thinking, Well, what if this? What if that blah blah, right? So but you know, normal, I mean, I'm, you know, I'm so used to that kind of ableism that, like I said, normally, it doesn't faze me too much, but it's still ableism is still darkness no matter what you, you know, no matter how it kind of how you experience it, right? It's just, yeah, I think it, you really have to emotionally be strong to sort of, like, block that out. It does take a lot of emotional effort, sometimes I think, to sort of deal with that darkness and not let it eat you up inside. So ableism, I would say is definitely, totally darkness for me. Because it can really make you feel small, and weak, and not smart. And all those sorts of things, you know, like, you're just not human sometimes. And so that's, those are dark things that really can make you very unhappy, you know. And then, you know, I guess, the other way I would describe darkness is, you know, because I have two kids, and I'm always, you know, as a parent, I'm always sort of, I don't know, you can identify it with your kids. But most parents would probably say this, that, you know, there's so many challenges that comes with parenthood. And I think, as a parent with a disability of children without disabilities, of able-bodied children, there's also lots of, you can, you can allow your mind to go into a dark place, too, when you're trying to raise children to be good people. Because of all the crazy stuff in the world, right. And, you know, you know, some of it also, I think, you know, ableism impacts that, you know, how I parent, you know, also, but a lot of it is just, you know, I want what's best for them, obviously, I want them to be healthy and happy and to just have everything that I did it, you know, when I was a kid, and as a parent, I think you can you can go to a dark place, you know, when you're trying to raise your children. And, you know, I think it also impacts you in the same way that ableism has impacted me, which is, you know, like, my doing enough for them? Am I supporting them enough? Am I encouraging them on my showing them enough that, you know, that they're loved and that they're cared for? Is that their state? You know? And, you know, and then, you know, of course, you beat yourself up all the time to about like, maybe I shouldn't have yelled at him, or maybe blah, blah, or whatever, whatever, you know. So you know, and it's really interesting, because I think, you know, as a parent, is there is there are lots of dark moments in that experience. But there's also like, lots of light in that experience. And so, you know, it's, it's just a continuous cycle. I think, you know, as a parent, you always, obviously, you always want to gravitate towards the light, the lighter, you know, spectrum of that, of the whole experience, right. And because the more you do that, the more I think it's going to benefit your kids. So but, you know, there are many, there are many dark moments when it comes to parenthood. So I think those would be the two big things for me when it comes to darkness is ableism and some of those aspects of parenthood that are really challenging.