Jade Taylor: (Singing)

Hi, everyone. My name is Jade. I'm a 27-year-old woman living Brisbane with Spina Bifida. Today we excited to be recording the second podcast in our new podcast series, hosted by the Women With Disabilities Australia, or WWDA, as we call it. We will be interviewing the wonderful Chloe Hayden. I will start by an acknowledgement of the country, acknowledging that I am calling in from the Kabi Kabi, and that this land was stolen and never ceded. I would also like to acknowledge our elders past and present, and extend that to any indigenous listeners.

Chloe, can we ask you introduce yourself? Who you are, what would you like listeners to know about you?

Chloe Hayden: Absolutely. Hi, uh, my name's Chloe Hayden, my pronouns are she/her/hers. Um, I'm calling from [inaudible 00:01:14] country, uh, I'm fair skinned with brown medium length hair, a fringe and green eyes. Uh, I'm autistic, disabled, and I work as an [inaudible 00:01:22] actor and influencer.

Jade Taylor: Chloe, tell us about what you do.

Chloe Hayden: Um, okay, so, uh, as previously stated, I'm an actor, content creator, advocate, um, and voice for disabilities. I began my journey when I first got my diagnosis, seeing nothing but fear mongering articles created by old men that were catered towards parents and carers of autistic people without giving any regards to the autistic person themselves. Um, the orti-, the articles were always about curing autism and how hard it is on the parents and how hard it is on the carers and how it's the worst thing ever to happen to a family, and I was terrified, so in typical Gen Z style, I took to the internet to pour out my deepest, darkest feelings, uh, to strangers.

Um, I originally did it to give the younger version of myself a voice, to give myself a voice when I didn't have one because I was so terrified. Um, I didn't have anyone to speak to, or to, to speak about what was going on, 'cause I, I didn't know anyone else who was autistic as well.

Um, but after I began to speak up, I began to hear back from the autism community who's voice has been silenced for so long, um, and I learned just how silenced we were, and not because we didn't want to speak out, but because we weren't being allowed to speak out and our voices were being silenced by other people. Um, and I realized that no one was doing anything about it, so that maybe it was my job to do something about it.

Um, I created a blog post first and then a YouTube video after a mom contacted, um, begging me to make a video out of the, out of that blog post so her son could watch it. Um, and then I did, like, talks, and s-, then some groups contacted me and asked me to do talks at their places. Um, and now I get to travel the world. I own a clothing and support company, um, and I'm living my absolute dream. I'm so honored and so privileged to be able to do what I do and call it my work.

Jade Taylor: Yeah. You do really good. And I'm sure that there are so many people out there who really do look up to you.

Chloe Hayden: Thank you.

Jade Taylor: I, for one of them. (laughs)

Chloe Hayden: (laughs) Aw, thank you so much.

Jade Taylor: Is there any specific person or people that inspire you, that look up to you?

Chloe Hayden: Um, I think it's like, uh, so many people. I'm always reading about inspiring humans who defied odds and came to greatness, um, both in spite of and because of their circumstances. Um, off the top of my head, uh, Greta Thunberg, she's autistic and has done amazing things, um, because of being autistic. I've seen so many people talking about her in the past and being like, "Oh, she is like, uh, being contacted by the media and she's like a puppet," and stuff like that, but like, bitch, she's autistic, like, she's not gonna do anything if she doesn't want to. Like, this girl literally traveled the seas on a tiny little boat... No autistic person's gonna do that unless it's something that they are so desperately wanting to do. Um, I love what a powerhouse for advocacy she is, um, and that she just so happens to be autistic as well. I think, I think her greatness has come from the fact that she's autistic, I think.

Um, and hey, maybe I'm tooting my own horn here. Maybe I'm looking at me own disability and going, hey, we're pretty bloody cool. Um, but autistic people are freaking wicked, man, we can do whatever we put our minds to. And yes, we live in a world that isn't created for us, but when we're given the support that we need, we can do the most hecking awesome things. Um, so there's that. I absolutely adore her.

Um, Rosa Parks is another one. Um, Lizzie Velasquez. Uh, I have so many people who I just absolutely adore. Um, and there's so many people that I looked up to as well that aren't necessarily named just because they haven't got a platform. Um, I'm inspired daily by the disabled community, um, specifically the BIPOC disabled community who's voices are still so silenced, um, and I'm so inspired by the people that are around me daily and that I've come to know online.

Jade Taylor: Yeah. And I guess like you said, it... You guys are growing up ina world that was not designed for you, and...

Chloe Hayden: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jade Taylor: ... it really is so nice to see you all doing stuff that is just breaking out of goals and doing things and being like, "Hey, I'm still here." Like, "I can speak up and listen to me."

Chloe Hayden: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Absolutely.

Jade Taylor: What is the best thing about the advocacy work you do?

Chloe Hayden: Um, I think the best thing is being able to speak up and spark change that is so long overdue to happen. I've got the privilege of having a fairly large platform, and because of that I've had the most amazing experiences and the most amazing opportunities and met the most amazing people, um, and get to call doing what I love work. I love attending live events and hearing first hand from people who got their diagnosis after watching my videos or after seeing my blog posts. Um, or therapists. I've had so many therapists that have done, um, quite bag, derogatory therapy, um, come up to me and say, "Hey, I've quit my job and moved into a whole new lane of work, a whole new career because I've learned from you and because I've decided to listen to the autistic community," rather than these, uh, neuro typical able bodied people that are trying to destroy who we wholeheartedly are.

Um, uh, being able to see that impact is insane and absolutely astounding and something that's such a surreal feeling, but change is beginning to happen, and being able to be just a tiny little drop in that is just absolutely unreal.

Jade Taylor: Exactly. It's so nice to see, to be honest.

Chloe Hayden: (laughs)

Jade Taylor: What do you think, um... What do you think a c-, good quality is of a leader?

Chloe Hayden: Um, I think the best thing... I think the, the best thing you can do to-, as a leader, um, is just have good morals and values and a determination for positive change. I think... I remember when I was younger growing up, I u-... first of all, wh-, obviously never have considered myself to be a leader, 'cause I always considered a leader to be someone who ran a country, who led an army, who was harsh and strict and made rules and usually a, a cisgender old white man. Um, I didn't realize that all of us had the capabilities of becoming a leader. Wh-, all we have to do is, is be passionate and be compassionate and be kind, um, and be ready to create change no matter what that means.

Jade Taylor: Yeah, exactly. We know you talk a lot about the experience of autistic women and girls. Can you tell us why the... why you think this is important?

Chloe Hayden: Do you know how many times I've been told I can't be autistic because I'm a woman? I've l-, had literal doctors tell me that I was misdiagnosed because women can't scientifically be autistic, which, to be frank, is absolute and utter rubbish. Um, autism representation itself, um, it... between the two sexes is, uh, very, very different and presents itself very, very differently, um, and it, its so ingrained into us and to believe one stereotype which is entirely based around media and Hollywood representation and fear mongering representation, um, and it's so ingrained into us that doctors themselves use this stereotype criteria as a part of genuine autism diagnosis, um, when it's not at all and has been proven time and time again that it's not a part of what an autism diagnosis is. Um, so when our doctors and when our psychologists and when the people that are meant to be supporting us are doing the exact opposite, it's hard for us to ever get representation.

Um, plus you look at media, you look at, uh, films and, and television and representation that we have of autism, it's always cisgender white men, it's always people that are neuro typical p-, playing n-, neuro divergent people. Um, it's impossible for us to get any form of understanding because we don't have it. We, we don't see what autism actually is. Um, as I said, autism represents itself very, very differently between, um, men and women, um, and while men are usually kind of more typical representation of what autism is, women very often aren't. Um, and we're also better at camouflaging it. We tend to be more self aware, um, and understands that we're going to become bullied, we're going to become ostracized if we present as typically autistic, so we do everything we can, um, harming ourselves in the process, to present ourselves as typical, meaning that autism diagnoses are often very, very few and far between, um, and we're often instead diagnosed with bipolar disorder or anxiety disorder or depression, um, when it can very well just be autism. Um, but up until recently, we've had absol-, absolutely no representation, that's something that is still so needed and isn't happening yet.

Jade Taylor: Yeah. And going back to the doctors thing, like, um, for me, like, I've lost my walking and regained it...

Chloe Hayden: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jade Taylor: ...probably about four times now, and do you know how many doctors have turned around and said to me, "Oh, no that's impossible, you're just faking it."

Chloe Hayden: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jade Taylor: It's like, pretty sure I'm not doing it for fun.

Chloe Hayden: Absolutely. That's the thing, like, the fact that doctors aren't even listening to us, like, your job is to look after us, dude, and you're not listening to us, what the heck, man.

Jade Taylor: Yeah. (laughs) What is some things outside of your advocacy that you're so passionate about?

Chloe Hayden: Um, I'm an avid competitive horse rider. I was in Texas two years ago competing for Australia at the [inaudible 00:10:00] Cowboys World Finals, um, and have been training and rescuing horses for my entire life. Um, I adore all animals. Uh, I pretty much have Noah's Ark in my bedroom, in just my bedroom alone. We live on a property, um, with many, many, many animals, but in my bedroom alone, I have a frog, an axolotl, um, two fighting fish, um, a disabled cat who is blind, deaf and can't walk and I think has an extra rib sticking out of her, um, and a dog. I... and regularly get more animals. Like, like, came home with a mouse a year ago when I was, um, meant to be getting fish food and I came home with a mouse, and I was like, "You're mine now."

Um... (laughs) So, I adore animals. Um, what else? Um, I adore acting, I absolutely love acting. I'm definitely that crazy annoying theater nerd. Uh, I cry way too much over One Direction still, um, and currently have a hyper-obsession for dinosaurs. I turned 24 two weeks ago and, um, my entire party was just dinosaurs, and I spent the entire day crying because of my absolute love for them. Uh, so (laughs) that's currently what's taking over my life.

Jade Taylor: I can totally understand that. I have a really odd obsession with a-, llamas and alpacas...

Chloe Hayden: (laughs)

Jade Taylor: ... and I was supposed to go on a llama walk, but, you know, lockdown is a thing. So...

Chloe Hayden: [crosstalk 00:11:12] fair, man.

Jade Taylor: [crosstalk 00:11:12] sad.

Chloe Hayden: (laughs)

Jade Taylor: But I absolutely adore them and would own them, but I live in a tiny backyard in the middle of [crosstalk 00:11:20]

Chloe Hayden: (laughs)

Jade Taylor: Um, finally, I want to end our podcast on a positive note for our listeners. Do you have any disability life hacks, advice for young people listening?

Chloe Hayden: Um, I think a-, the biggest life hack that I can say is, understand that who you are is exactly who you're supposed to be, and don't ever let anyone tell you differently, especially yourself. Um, also understand that a lot, a lot of the times, as disabled people, we just make do by just simply barely getting by in life, um, that's not the world that we're supposed to live in. We have accommodations in place for us and we can demand further accommodations in place for us. Um, you don't have to suffer because of who you are. You have the ability to change, um, and it's gonna take a long time, I understand that. Um, but we do have the ability to change the world around us, and you don't have to suffer just because our world wasn't necessarily created for us. Um, speak up for yourself, be an advocate... You don't have to be an advocate with a huge platform, you can be an advocate for yourself and for your friends and for your family and for your immediate group.

Um, find your support group as well and embrace difference. Understand that difference is the most beautiful thing in the world, um, and because of different, not in spite of different, you are absolutely beyond wonderful.

Jade Taylor: And Chloe, where else can people find you? What are your social medias?

Chloe Hayden: Uh, so you can find me on YouTube, Tiktok, Instagram, uh, Facebook. You can also find me on Twitter, but, um, I wouldn't, merely, 'cause the only thing I do on Twitter is cry about One Direction. Um, so if you would like to, r-, uh, hold any [inaudible 00:12:47] don't do that one. Um (laughs) but you can find me at, uh, at Chloe S Hayden on all of my handles, or if you go onto YouTube, you can just talk in Chloe Hayden and find me there.

Jade Taylor: I am totally with you on the One Direction thing though, don't feel bad.

Chloe Hayden: Love that. Great. (laughs)

Jade Taylor: You are not the only person in this world. (laughs)

Chloe Hayden: (laughs)

Jade Taylor: Thank you for your time today, Chloe, we really appreciate it.

Chloe Hayden: No worries. Thank you so much for having me.

Jade Taylor: (singing)