

S1Ep1 In A Nutshell(y) Transcript

Shelly (00:25)

Hello and welcome to the Uncomfortably Speaking podcast. I'm your host, Shelly Rohe. I use she/her pronouns. I'm a disabled white woman in my mid-50s. I have longish strawberry blonde hair and blue eyes. I have a black shirt on and I'm wearing glasses. This is my first episode. It's really just a teaser. I want to introduce myself.

Tell you a little about my backstory and talk to you about why I'm here in the first place. I'm disabled. I was diagnosed with benign brain tumors over 20 years ago. I was in my 30s, in the prime of my life, or so I had heard. I've also been a disability activist, advocate, and ally since high school, so longer than I can remember.

But because I'm only an expert on myself, I can't speak for anyone else. So I will tell you a lot about who I am. And I do this not because I think I owe an explanation of myself or my disabilities, but because I want to dig deep and really dissect internalized ableism.

I planned to do this deep dive myself, in private, but it would mean talking to everyone, like friends and family, to experts in fields like trauma and implicit bias. But my memory is not as good as it used to be. So I would need to record the conversations to refer back to them myself.

And that got me thinking, I wonder if other people would find this helpful as well. A friend of mine had asked me to do a podcast together, but in the end I realized this is the one I needed to do.

So, hold on tight, here we go! If there's one thing you should know about me right away, it's that I believe; D, all of the above is typically the right answer. I mean, why settle on one thing when you try everything, right? And this belief has gotten me into some interesting situations over the years. Some of them have been wonderful, some pretty ridiculous, and some life-changing. And that's what has brought me here to Uncomfortably Speaking.

I am a small town girl. I was raised in the Midwest. I have a BA in psychology from Hamline University and a lifelong passion for advocating for disabled people. For a while, I even worked in the entertainment industry in Hollywood before returning to Minnesota.

It was while I was in Hollywood that I found out in 2006 that I have benign brain tumors-cerebral cavernous malformations or CCMs. Basically, they're small clusters of blood vessels in my brain that can break open and bleed.

I returned to Minnesota in 2011 after getting married. And then in 2013, I acquired multiple disabilities after the brainstem brain tumor I had ruptured and needed to be removed. Brainstem brain surgery is elegant and complex. The neurosurgeon saved my life, but I was left thinking, Now what?

I continuously deal with the effects of internalized ableism, the trauma, the oppression. And you may be wondering what exactly that is. We'll talk about that a lot. It's the main focus of this podcast.

But a lot has happened since 2013. And I'm sure I'll tell you all kinds of stories. In high school, I volunteered with disabled kids. In college and beyond, I worked in social services in group homes, supporting disabled people. I have worked with many disability-centric organizations such as ABILITY Magazine and Disability:IN, Minnesota. I co-authored a book titled, 'Beloved As We Are: Building a Congregational Culture of Disability Inclusion', published by Skinner House Books.

Currently, I volunteer with many disability related organizations. I also have lived experience with multiple disabilities. I have seen and experienced disability from many angles. I've also spent an enormous amount of time thinking about recovery, and I keep asking myself one question: Should I spend what little energy I have each day reaching for more recovery?

Or should I spend it living the best life I can as I am? That's why this podcast exists. Not because I have all the answers. I have a lot of questions, a lot of stories, and honestly a lot to say that I don't say out loud enough. I also realized that most of the important things we need to talk about are uncomfortable too, and I promise to do my best to honestly talk about them.

In the next episode, we'll dive deeper into the definition of internalized ableism, and I'll talk about my specific speech disabilities and their impact on starting this podcast.

If you would like more details about my backstory or the full transcript from today's episode, please visit uncomfortablyspeaking.com. You'll also find the transcript for the disclaimer video that's about to play.

This is Uncomfortably Speaking.

Thank you so much for joining me today, and I'll see you in the next episode.