

# PODCAST Episode 434

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Disability advocacy, accessible music, Unsightly Opinions, Tamara Vandendool Cable, Odyssey Music, music braille, assistive technology, content creation, social media, long form content, short form content, music education, accessibility barriers, inclusive teaching, music theory.


## SPEAKERS


Lis Malone, Tamara Vandendool Cable, Steve Barclay, Rob Mineault, Ryan Fleury


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 **Rob Mineault 00:12**  
Hey and welcome to another episode of AT Banter.

 **Rob Mineault 00:18**  
Hey, this is, course, the podcast where we talk with advocates and members of the disability community to educate and inspire better conversation about disability. Hey, my name is Rob Mineault and joining me today is the Ryanest of Flurries, Mr. Ryan Fleury.

 **Rob Mineault 00:40**  
Okay, excellent. And hey, no editing needed there. Ah, hey, look who else it is, who decided to join us today. It's Miss LisMalone.

 **Lis Malone 00:51**  
I'm the Listless of Malones.

 **Rob Mineault 00:53**  
That's right. welcome back.

 **Lis Malone 00:55**  
Yeah, thank you, yeah.

**R** Rob Mineault 00:58  
Where have you been?

**L** Lis Malone 01:00  
I've been working hard for the money.

**R** Rob Mineault 01:03  
Oh, yeah, okay, I can relate. So is, is summer the, uh, a busy month for for publishing?

**L** Lis Malone 01:14  
Yeah. I mean, the nerve of people wanting to actually put out some releases. I'm sorry, just bull crap. Why you got to ruin my summer? Why must my summer be compromised? Because people want to sell books. So there I said it.

**R** Ryan Fleury 01:29  
So you can pay the bills.

**L** Lis Malone 01:31  
Oh, yeah, yeah, there's that. Never mind.

**R** Rob Mineault 01:37  
Yeah. Well, listen, it's, it's good to have you back.

**L** Lis Malone 01:40  
Thank you. Glad to be back. I wasn't sure if the my my meeting link was going to work. I was like, maybe they cut me off. They think they secretly were going to change the password while I was gone, and I'd be like, guys, I can't get in.

**R** Rob Mineault 01:57  
I didn't even think of that. Ryan, take some notes. Take some notes. Well, no, so, so you've, you've just been really busy at work, then?

**L** Lis Malone 02:09

Oh it's just been, yeah, it's just busy or stuff, yeah, yeah, I wish. I wish it were, the Fall because I was fully, you know, engulfed in hockey season. But obviously, it's summer, so it's not that. But, yeah, summer work.

**R** Rob Mineault 02:25

Well, hey, listen, at least it's not a hurricane or tornado, firestorm, whatever the heck else goes on down there, because, because we're getting near that season right down there.

**L** Lis Malone 02:35

It just, it actually started officially. But let's we could revisit this next month. It'll be a completely different conversation. Yeah, so, so far so good. Yeah, excellent, yeah, but it's been hot, but are you guys having weird weather?

**R** Ryan Fleury 02:55

Hot and cool, hot and cool.

**R** Rob Mineault 02:57

Yeah, I mean it actually, we've got off pretty lucky this so far this summer. Here on the Left Coast, it's been, it's been pretty tame. So knock on wood.

**L** Lis Malone 03:11

No, we've been ravaged in different parts of the US with the flash flooding. And, you know, first it was like fires, and now it's flooding, and it's just, it's, it's scary. It's definitely scary. You know, you can't watch the news now without hearing about something natural and scary, disastrous. But yeah, so knock on wood, not today.

**R** Rob Mineault 03:33

So, yeah, that's right. I think you guys gotta get a heat dome, don't you?

**L** Lis Malone 03:37

Yes, yes, yesterday was the first day, not, not in the 90 or today was, I'm sorry, today was the first day not in the 90s and for the last 15 days, which is, and they said it's for where I am, the

hottest July and, like, like, the fourth hottest in like, the last 30 years, or something like that, or something like, yeah, so it's, it's, it's a little uncomfortable.

**R** Rob Mineault 04:01

yeah, no doubt. I mean, we had our own heat dome a few years back, and, man, I'll never forget that that was brutal.

**L** Lis Malone 04:07

Because you guys aren't built for that, right? You don't, you don't have central air and stuff like that, because you, you're not used to that, right?

**R** Rob Mineault 04:13

That's right, yeah, everybody ran out and bought a portable air conditioner after that.

**R** Ryan Fleury 04:17

So, and now life is lovely.

**R** Rob Mineault 04:21

Yeah, until the power goes out, because everyone is using them.

**R** Ryan Fleury 04:25

No, I'm in a basement below ground. We spent three days down here during that heat dome. It was beautiful, nice and cool. Slept down here on the couch.

**R** Rob Mineault 04:37

Head for the hobbit hole. That's right.


**L** Lis Malone 04:41


Ryan's Man Dungeon.


**R** Ryan Fleury 04:43


Really quickly we need to say RIP Gary. Gary Osbourne passed away today.


Really quickly we need to say RIP Ozzy. Ozzy Osbourne passed away today.


 Rob Mineault 04:51  
Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.


 Ryan Fleury 04:54  
Sad day for music.


 Lis Malone 04:57  
Oh, I thought was sad when we found out Malcolm Jamal Warner died.


 Ryan Fleury 05:01  
I just heard about that today, too.

 Rob Mineault 05:03  
Oh really?

 Lis Malone 05:07  
He drowned. Yeah, off the off, on a beach in Costa Rica.

 Rob Mineault 05:12  
Wait. Okay, so someone remind me who Malcolm Jamal Warner was?

 Ryan Fleury 05:15  
Son on Cosby Show.

 Rob Mineault 05:18  
Oh, oh, right.

 Rob Mineault 05:20

Wow. And he drowned?

L

Lis Malone 05:23

He got pulled out by a some sort of, you know, strong current. And, yeah, this is why, this is why I don't like the ocean. I have such a healthy respect for the ocean. I figured if I was meant to be out that far, I would have been born with fins. That's all just me. But you know, very tragic.

R

Rob Mineault 05:45

So wait, so what? What ended up taking Ozzy down?

R

Ryan Fleury 05:48

It doesn't say in the article.

L

Lis Malone 05:51

I mean, he lived such a healthy life. I mean, it's almost shocking.

R

Rob Mineault 05:56

That's right, bats, bats are very nutritious.

R

Rob Mineault 06:02

No, that was a - I think that was rumor. Wasn't that debunked? He didn't really eat a bat, did he?

R

Ryan Fleury 06:06

I think he did. Well, he bit the head off a bat.

R

Rob Mineault 06:11

Ok well if that story is true, pretty interesting.

L

Lis Malone 06:16

Listen, whatever helps you sleep better at night. Rob you go on and just, you know, believe

Listen, whatever helps you sleep better at night, Rob you go on and just, you know, believe that.

**R** Rob Mineault 06:22

So there's a bunch of bats somewhere going like, yes, justice!

**L** Lis Malone 06:26

Maybe this is, this is gonna sound obnoxious, but if I were a betting person, I never would have guessed Ozzy Osbourne would have even made it to 2025.

**R** Rob Mineault 06:35

That's true. That's true. I remember that Osborne show, and, you know, he looked pretty dicey then, and that was 20 years ago. Well, way to bring the show down.

**R** Ryan Fleury 06:48

I know. Let's flip the script.

**R** Rob Mineault 06:50

Anybody else die?

**R** Ryan Fleury 06:52

Not this week, not that I'm aware of.

**R** Rob Mineault 06:54

All right, wow. Listen, I think we better get to the meat of the show. Bring, bring the show back up.

**R** Ryan Fleury 07:00

Yeah, let's do it,

**R** Rob Mineault 07:01

Because I'm excited. So, hey, Ryan?

R Ryan Fleury 07:03  
So Rob, what?

R Rob Mineault 07:05  
What are we doing today?

R Ryan Fleury 07:20  
Today we are speaking with an author, a director, a disability advocate, and probably so much more that we're going to find out about today. She is Tamara Vandendool Cable, and if I mispronounce that, my apologies. Tamara, welcome to the show.

T Tamara Vandendool Cable 07:37  
Hi, howdy. Lovely to be here. Happy to be chatting today.

R Ryan Fleury 07:41  
Yay. Somebody's happy.

T Tamara Vandendool Cable 07:42  
I mean, after all that happy news about Ozzy.

R Ryan Fleury 07:47  
I'm sorry.

R Rob Mineault 07:50  
Yeah, well, listen, thank you for taking the time to stop by the madhouse. We do apologize ahead of time, because Lis is back and we're all punchy. But let's get started. Maybe we can start by just giving the audience a little bit of a snapshot of who this Tamara person is and and a little bit about yourself, little bit of background, and maybe what you're up to.

T Tamara Vandendool Cable 08:16  
Oh. okav. Coles Notes version is. I wear a lot of different hats. so sometimes I'm in mv author



hat, sometimes I wear a disability advocacy hat, sometimes I wear a musician hat, sometimes I wear a teacher hat, and sometimes I'm just hanging out on social media, having a great time. So my background is all over the place. It started in academia, then I went into psychology counseling. Then now I've kind of been in the accessibility space full time for quite a few years.

R

Rob Mineault 08:49

Well, let's talk a little bit about Unsightly Opinions. So tell us a little bit about Unsightly Opinions, and what you do there.

T

Tamara Vandendool Cable 08:57

Unsightly Opinions started as a channel where I wanted to share my unfiltered truth about life, living life with multiple disabilities. I wanted it to be a resource for the younger version of myself. I wanted it to be the representation that I wanted to see growing up that I never had. So the tips and tricks, the how tos that you know, big sister, that friend that can kind of help you through the worst of the transition into living life with vision loss or other disabilities. So it's, it's a little of a lot of things, but it's, it's a huge passion project of mine, and it's been going very, very well.

R

Rob Mineault 09:39

Tell me a little bit about the name. What inspired the name, because I do love the name, but I'm just curious.

T

Tamara Vandendool Cable 09:47

So I wanted to play on the fact that I have vision loss so, and I wanted it to be a little bit tongue in cheek, so because it's a bit opinionated, because I share my unfiltered truth. I thought unsightly opinions was an apt moniker.

R

Rob Mineault 10:04

So I'm so I'm always fascinated to talk to about content creators, because it, it seems to me, it's a very tiring job, and it looks a lot easier than it actually is when you, when you get down to the the brass tacks and all the technical parts of it, and, you know, just everything creating, creating a piece of content, is not easy. You don't just throw your camera on and go and then upload it, and then that's it. So going back to the beginning of it, what kind of inspired you to to start going down that path? And was it a bit of a surprise to discover that it was so much work?

T

Tamara Vandendool Cable 10:44

Yes and no, I think I had an inkling that it was not going to be easy. I mean, I think for sighted or able bodied creators, it might be slightly easier than when you're trying to figure out how to

video edit using a screen reader, and there are no tutorials, and there are no you know, I mean, I had it took me a full year to release my first video, so I knew after that I was in for it, but it was something that I very much wanted to do, and it all came from that place of wanting to explore different aspects of vision loss and maybe even have a formal outlet, or maybe a very public video diary for how I'm processing different pieces, or what I wish people would know when they're engaging with somebody with blindness, and it's kind of evolved from there.

R

Ryan Fleury 11:44

And so there's really no shortage of content you can create. So how often do you do you share your content?

T

Tamara Vandendool Cable 11:51

Right now, I'm in a bit of a burnout right now because I've got a lot of things, a lot of balls in the air. So I'm aiming for about one short a week and one long form video a month, but I'm hoping to be able to scale that back up to a couple of shorts and a couple of long forms in a few months here.

R

Ryan Fleury 12:11

And is it just yourself doing the creation from start to finish?

T

Tamara Vandendool Cable 12:15

It is myself. And then occasionally I have somebody come in, my partner's sister comes in and gives me a hand when I need some fancy B roll shots and set up the camera in a new spot, or we're doing mobile filming and action shots. So I do have some help with that, but I'm typically a one man band.

R

Rob Mineault 12:36

Well, okay, so tell me a little bit then about about the the creative process. So when you're when you're doing any sort of content creation, whether that's, you know, writing, or anything on on any of the social media channels, where do you start? Are you starting with kind of, like a personal experience, or you you, do you have, like, a broader message or or does it vary?

T

Tamara Vandendool Cable 12:59

I think it comes from a number of different places. Sometimes it is that I have this burning desire to talk about something that's been eating away at me, or I want to really deal with a piece of trauma from my history and share that, or try and find some meaning in that. Sometimes it comes from seeing someone else's challenge or somebody asking a question, and I have a one of many answers to that, so I share my perception or my tools and tricks to do

something when it comes to the writing piece, a lot of that comes from my experience as a teacher and seeing the roadblocks that my students hit, and what having done it for as long as I have, seeing where they're hitting those roadblocks and knowing the solutions that have worked for many students, I can kind of bring that into my writing and hopefully make it a little bit better for the next generation of students.

R

Rob Mineault 13:59

And you know, and again, this is something that I'm always really curious to know about. How do you balance exposing sort of, you know, your personal life or aspects of your personal life and being vulnerable to a YouTube audience or a Tiktok audience while also educating and advocating? That must be a really tricky balance for you.

T

Tamara Vandendool Cable 14:22

Sometimes it is. I think earlier in my channel, I shared more than I probably would. Now I have a lot firmer boundaries on my private life is my private life, and what I choose to share is what I choose to share. And if somebody asks a question that goes beyond those boundaries, I'm just not going to answer it at this point, because it's my life, and I have the ability to decide what I put out into the world, and some things are just for me, and that's okay, because I definitely was the chronic oversharer in the beginning.

R

Rob Mineault 14:56

So video really seems to be a really big part of of your outreach to to your audience. What do you enjoy about connecting that way versus, say, just something like a blog piece or or writing?

T

Tamara Vandendool Cable 15:13

I think that the video medium gives me a bigger opportunity to reach a broader audience, because people will be more likely to stumble upon my content on something like YouTube or Tiktok when they're swiping through and go, Oh, wait, that's something I've never considered, or I'd like to learn more about that, whereas I'd have to do a lot more marketing and a lot more of the stuff that I don't particularly find interesting or and, and I'm not very good at the whole marketing piece, so being able to just put it out there and see what it does is an easier way for me to do the work that I want to do, as well as, in particular, kind of reach Across from just the blind community into people that have maybe not encountered somebody with a disability before or never seen somebody with vision loss, and start to unpack some of those ideas that they may have about what is or is not possible.

L

Lis Malone 16:16

So taking that approaching doing more of an organic marketing approach and having people find you as opposed to seeking them out. Are you finding that your your your balance of audience share being more able bodied is higher than some of the disability accessibility types

of content creators?

**T** Tamara Vandendool Cable 16:39

I don't know. I think I still have a very, very high prevalence of people with disabilities in my in my core community. But I definitely feel like, based on the comments that I read, sometimes there are people that have never experienced blindness, or have questions that I go, Well, I've answered that 15 times. This is clearly your first time engaging with someone like myself. So I think it's a nice, healthy mix. But always, my core audience is, is the how tos, is trying to stay within in my disability community.

**L** Lis Malone 17:17

I think it's interesting when you look at some of these channels, and I am just thinking this off the top of my head, because, like, I'll I set up a lot of campaigns in, like the in the in the Meta Sphere, you utilizing the Meta products, and then when you when you want to sort of slice and dice your your your market, and pick different targeting preferences. There are certain things that I think they avoid because they think it's uncomfortable, but sometimes it's actually very necessary to reach some of these individuals. So it doesn't mean that you have to ask somebody personal questions, because everything is voluntary. But what about if people want to self disclose and say, yes, I, you know, maybe it's too much to ask about the type of disability, but if you say, you either live with somebody with a disability, or you are exposed, or you're interested in, you know, as opposed to not just disability studies, because to me, like that's more academic, and not necessarily, you know, the lived experience per se. So, yeah I just think that sometimes some of these businesses or entities need to be a little little more, a little braver about how they allow people to identify, but also be able to have people who have this content that is going to speak to, to individuals who would really be looking for it in just a much more, you know, out there way, like it's not a it's not a shameful thing, so, you know, but I feel like it's still considered so taboo, which, for me, is a little frustrating.

**T** Tamara Vandendool Cable 18:56

No, I've definitely felt that there, there are certain tags, there are certain topics. There are certain things that I think we should be talking about in terms of disabled experience, in terms of some of the the legitimate, uh, social, physical emotional barriers in living in a world that is designed for able bodied people that absolutely the algorithms the platforms do not like, and I will see when I've hit one of those topics. But it's not going to stop me from, you know, sharing my unsightly opinions, if you'll forgive the shameless draw.

**L** Lis Malone 19:39

Yeah. But sometimes it seems like the political correctness has over corrected in some areas, just in my in my opinion, and I'm sure I'm going to get some little haters are going to say no, but it. But if it's a voluntary selection, and you want to be able to find this content, you want to be identified. With this content so that people can find you, then I don't see any harm in that, but, but sometimes wiping some of these things off because we might offend somebody. Well,

yeah, I mean, I mean every, every and people can be offended by anything, you know, but I feel like it's, it's a, it's a very real preference or category or categorization that some people do want to choose to self identify. So that's okay. I'm sorry I'm climbing down my very high soap box right now.

R

Ryan Fleury 20:31

Well, it's interesting to say that list, because I'm wondering if that's a trend that is starting to take place. Because that's the second time this week on a quote, unquote disability show, I've heard somebody mentioned, has political correctness gone too far. So I'm wondering if that's a discussion that is now taking place.

L

Lis Malone 20:52

It's tricky, because I understand that if some people don't want to be in an environment, they can choose to. You know, if you don't like something, we have people, consumers have choices. You if you don't like a show, you don't have to watch the show. If you don't like this, personalities, speech, your power is, don't listen. Turn it off. Don't give them your, your, you know, your, your, your attention. But if you are looking for that content to then say, other entities get to define your barriers of how you wish to be identified and located and targeted, because this is content which you really do want. I don't want to always just have everything with I have to find this hashtag, because not everybody uses the same hashtag, right? No. And plus, if I you know, sometimes people just they use the hashtag disability, but then you have other people that don't like that word disability, and they'll use a different hashtag. Well, now I'm not going to find them because they decide to use their own hashtag.

T

Tamara Vandendool Cable 22:02

I mean, I think it's a very complicated issue that we'd need several hours to unpack fully. So I don't know that I want to open that can of worms, but I do feel that sometimes there, there can be censorship in areas that we don't want censorship, and sometimes we can have moments of, you know, where things are said that are not okay, and we need, as a society, not as individuals, to to kind of, at least create some guidelines that most people can agree with, and that can be very difficult, because you get three people in the room, you're gonna have four opinions, right?

R

Rob Mineault 22:41

Okay, well, let's, let's talk a little bit about long form, long form versus short form. So for those people in the audience who that that may not mean anything to we're mainly talking about, say, a YouTube video versus something like a tick tock video. So talk to me a little bit about how you approach both of those and sort of some of the the difference and the challenges that that you can have creating content for for either channel.

T

Tamara Vandendool Cable 23:12

Tamara Vandendool Cable 25:11

So when it comes to long form content, the pacing can be a little bit slower. You can get into a lot more detail. You can share a lot more personal anecdotes or have more asides, but I would say they take three to five times longer to put together in post, in terms of editing and B roll and captioning and all of the other things that are essentially prerequisites at this point to post on social media in terms of the short form content, the biggest piece is get to the punch. If you haven't gotten to the punch in the first two and a half seconds, you've lost your audience. So it's how much can you cram into 90 seconds. They let you post up to three minutes, but truly it's how much information on a topic can you cram into 90 seconds. You have to talk fast. You have to show things quickly. You have to really plan out in really minute detail how you're going to demo something, how you're going to get into a topic, and get into enough detail that most people will understand what you're what you're getting at, but it's a lot less personal. So I tend to prefer the comments, I tend to prefer getting into discussions, hearing stories in in the long on the long form videos, because you have more of that opportunity to share your story, and then for people to share their experiences, whereas on the short form content, it's usually very direct, very short questions, somebody's made an assumption that may or may not be correct based on a very limited piece of information that you've been able to give them without the context for the other 40 videos that you've made that contextualize that thing that they're sticking on. So they both have their strengths and weaknesses. Long form content is about reach. Short form content is about reach. Long form content is about building your community. So for me, it's, I love the long form content. It's just at the moment very challenging because of the time commitment involved and the treadmill that social media can be where it requires that regularity and that very consistent upload schedule.

R

Rob Mineault 25:35

So it sounds like it's kind of ironic, because it sounds like it's short, short form content seems to be a little bit more challenging to produce, because you have to be so mindful, and you have to be very strategic on how you even structure it. Because if you need to capture somebody in the first two and a half seconds, I mean, you know that's something. But do you find that, like, have you been surprised by, say, short form content? Because it also seems to me that the algorithm behind short form content, you're kind of a little bit more likely to blow up unexpectedly, whereas long form content seems to be a little bit more of a slow burn.

T

Tamara Vandendool Cable 26:17

Absolutely 110%. I would agree with that I had been making long form content for three or four years prior to starting short form content. It was only when I started doing short form content that I saw real channel growth. So it is very much to me, a catch 22. It's like, well, I have to be doing short form content to reach the audience that I want to reach in order to make the long form content that's going to support financially. The short for reaching a broader audience, it's it's a very circular, complicated mental math and mental gymnastics you have to go through to be able to do what you want to do. You have to play the game, I guess.

R

Rob Mineault 27:00

Have you been surprised - and this is probably a stupid question, because I'm sure all of us have been surprised at stupid questions that you get, or be surprised about how little people

actually know about disability - but have you just been sort of shocked at times to really discover how misinformed or uninformed the general public can be about different disability topics?

T

Tamara Vandendool Cable 27:32

I mean, I worked in public spaces prior to social media, so I would say very little would surprise me. There have been, I mean, in the hundreds or millions of con of comments that I've gotten across my channels. There have maybe been a handful where I've really scratched my head and gone, how did you get from A to B, and what made you think that that was okay to say? Or, you know, how did you come to that conclusion based on what I said? But again, very, very little would shock me, because I've heard most of the comments that I see on YouTube in the real world. So it's going to take a lot to offend or to really cause a reaction.

R

Rob Mineault 28:23

But that's why you know channels like yours, that's why they're so important, because you know you never know who's going to see it, and they're going to have a light bulb moment and sort of realize something that You know is, is really, really, you know, common sense to us, all of us who are involved in the community in different ways, but to just able bodied people who just don't, don't interface with with folks with disabilities all that often, they just don't know any better. And you know, it's, it's shocking to say, but you know, there's still people out there that just don't even realize that blindness is a gradient, that, you know, it's not on it. Sight isn't an on and off thing. And that's a real revelation to some folks out there.

T

Tamara Vandendool Cable 29:14

Right? And, I mean, I've seen equal people equally shocked by the fact that blind people can work, or blind people can live alone, or some blind people don't read Braille, or that some blind people don't use mobility tools like a white cane or a guide dog. And to me, the content creation comes down to if I can reach one person in every piece of content that I create, if I can help somebody understand something a little better, either about themselves or someone they know, or make them think about disability in a different way. That's a win for me.

R

Ryan Fleury 29:50

But don't you get frustrated, like, shouldn't we be in a different place by now? Blindness, disability is not a new concept. It's it's been around. As long as mankind has been around, and yet we're still having the same conversations about educating and educating and educating.

T

Tamara Vandendool Cable 30:09

Yeah, I'm definitely more of the I like action more than talking. I like solution focused kind of discussions more than let's all sit in a circle and decide what word we should use about something or another, and actually kind of attack those systemic barriers that we all, that we

all deal with. But I also recognize that that's where I am in my disability journey. That's where I am having lived in my body for 33 years, and having come to terms with my disability and and, you know, I understand that while this is not a revelation for me, it still is a revelation for so many people. And as much as I can sometimes get a little bit cranky with Yes, I've answered that same question 15 times today. I try to put my hat on that it wasn't the same person asking me that question 15 times today. This is a new person with a new experience. They are not trying to, you know, get under my skin, but it can wear you down. So I do have very firm boundaries about okay, you know what I choose to answer this question in this context. But you know, if you're coming up to me in the grocery store, I'm not going to tell you my life story about my vision loss and how I do A, B and C, that's that's not the right place or time.

L

Lis Malone 31:39

Sure, I am extraordinarily patient. When a hot guy, it's amazing. I'm, you know, I I feel like it's my duty to take my time and explain things thoroughly and, you know, leave them, leave them with a really good impression.

L

Lis Malone 31:58

And your phone number

L

Lis Malone 32:00

And my phone number, always carry a card. That's true. That's right. Ladies, carry a card.

R

Rob Mineault 32:11

Either that, or when somebody asks, well, you just, you just refer them to your YouTube channel. Just be like, Hey, listen, give me, give me some traffic here. This will answer your question and give me some traffic, everybody wins.

T

Tamara Vandendool Cable 32:22

Yeah and that's oftentimes how I'm addressing some of those very basic questions that I'm getting 15, 20 times a day. I'll just drop a video link, and I said, like, I don't have the spoons, the energy to deal with this right now. So here's a link you can learn for yourself.

R

Rob Mineault 32:37

You know, we talk about that on the show occasionally, too. You know where, you know, just being a member of the disability community, you're kind of by default, you're just, you have to be an advocate in a lot of ways. It's not fair, right? Not everybody else, everybody else doesn't have to, you know, be a representative of an entire community just by going to the grocery store and facing with people, they get to go from point A to point B and just live their life. But



right when you're in the community, well, then you've got all of these other things. You have to self advocate, you have to all these other worries. So it really does kind of amaze me, you know, you folks, you you content creators out there, because you know you're dealing with that, and then you go home, and now you now you're creating a video being more, you know, more in the advocacy space. So kudos to you for, for, really, you know, doing all of this work, because, yeah, you're a little bit of an unsung hero.

**T** Tamara Vandendool Cable 33:31

Oh, well, thank you so much. That's I'm touched,

**L** Lis Malone 33:36

What about me?

**R** Rob Mineault 33:37

Yes. Well, you okay, you're, you're also my unsung hero. Lis, you did great. Hitting on hockey players at the grocery store. Self advocating.

**L** Lis Malone 33:50

Hey, I'm always thinking of the show.

**R** Rob Mineault 33:55

I know. I know.

**S** Steve Barclay 34:00

Hey, podcast listeners. Steve, president and owner of Canadian assistive technology here again, while we love connecting with you online and over the phone, sometimes there's no substitute for seeing things in person. That's why we're so excited about our storefront at unit 106 828, West Eighth Avenue in Vancouver. Coming to our showroom is a great way to explore many of the assistive technology solutions we offer. We're proud to say it's the largest assistive technology showroom in Western Canada. You can get a first hand look at our extensive product line and speak directly with our team. We're happy to answer your questions and help direct you to the right solution. We always want to ensure the device you choose is the right fit for you. So if you're in the Vancouver area or planning a visit, we encourage you to drop by our storefront. It's a fantastic opportunity to see how Canadian Assistive Technology can help you meet your needs. We look forward to seeing you there again. The address is unit 106 828 West Eighth Avenue in Vancouver, and now, back to the show.

R

Rob Mineault 35:03

Okay, let's switch gears. I want to talk a little bit about music now. Music is obviously a big part of your life. Were you a music kid growing up?

T

Tamara Vandendool Cable 35:15

So I would say I come by music honestly. I have several generations of music on both sides of my family. My grandmother wrote theory books for many, many years and was a concert pianist. My mom was a concert pianist and did consulting for the government, so music was her side gig by the time she was in the workforce, but music was always a huge part of her life. My dad was gigging since he was nine. My grandfather was in the symphony. My grandmother played accordion. So music was everything to everyone in my family, and I probably would have been disowned if I hadn't picked up one or more instruments along the way.

R

Rob Mineault 35:57

So tell us a little bit about where you're at now with music and what you do, and because you teach Correct?

T

Tamara Vandendool Cable 36:05

I do. Yeah. So I do a little bit of everything. You know, it's part of that. I like variety in my life. I like to wear many hats. So I do some session work where I'm in the studio recording a line or a piece that somebody's going to mix into something else, or I'm doing. Sometimes I do concerts and play with a symphony or do that kind of thing. Sometimes it's weddings and funerals and parties. Sometimes it's playing with a band. Sometimes it's just me playing for fun, and the rest of the time it's taking on students to teach them, and I have specialized my teaching practice over the last 15 years, where I now take and read this with giant air quotes, impossible or very big air quotes, unteachable students, in particular Those that have significant disabilities, be they physical, sensory or intellectual.

R

Rob Mineault 37:05

So could you, could you kind of walk us through some of the barriers that that some of these kiddo are facing when they're when they're learning music.

T

Tamara Vandendool Cable 37:15

I think the biggest barrier I've encountered is the social barrier, where parents will look for a teacher, the teacher will hear that child has a diagnosis or B diagnosis, and say, I don't know what to do with that, throw their hands in the air and say, I can't, I can't teach this kid. Or they're unteachable just because they just don't know how to work with kids, right? Like, if you are a sighted teacher and you're used to working out of song books, and that's what you've

been doing for the last 20 years, and then all of a sudden you have a blind student who can't read sheet music. The learning curve to go from what you're used to to what's going to work for that student is huge. So that's part of what I try to break down. For a lot of the music teachers that I come across and work with and and lecture to, is, you know, baby steps to kind of understanding different disabilities and understanding different learning styles and visual or auditory or tactile techniques that they can bring into their practice to to make that a less scary experience.

R

Rob Mineault 38:25

So can you kind of step us through some of the the accessible tools, or the the the adaptive techniques?

T

Tamara Vandendool Cable 38:32

I mean, it's going to depend on the student. I like to tell teachers that you and your student should be a team. You are the guide, and they are the expert in their own experience. Because you can't live in their body. They live in their body, and they're going to be able to tell you what works and what doesn't, even if they can't communicate that in words. If you're seeing success, keep doing that. If you're seeing frustration or no progress, try something else, get creative, because it ultimately comes down to learning. Is not a cookie cutter. It's not a one size fits all. It should be individualized to the students. So sometimes that means bringing large print into the classroom, or color coding notes for low vision students, so that they don't have a horrifying time trying to figure out where is that. on what line. Or sometimes it's putting colors between every second line, kind of like you see in tables or charts, to help create a visual differentiation. Sometimes it's just color coding the notes. Sometimes it's using audio tools like Garage Band or Muse score, and having audio tracks that you can speed up or slow down, or have different tracks where the teacher's giving you instructions as you're playing, like what finger to use or what octave you're in. Sometimes it's bringing in Braille. Sometimes it's you know. So I could go on forever. So sometimes it's tactile boards, it's just, it's what the student needs in that moment. And then you evolve together to figure out what's going to work as as they develop their their musical skills.

R

Rob Mineault 40:13

So are a lot of these solutions sort of homegrown, like what's sort of the state of accessible music these days and has technology improved over the past 20 years?

T

Tamara Vandendool Cable 40:24

I would like to say that it has. But I think in in many respects, we are still in 1995 when it comes to the accessibility of music. I personally, and I'm, probably here's here's my unsightly hot take for the day. I find music braille to be almost impossible to learn at a basic level for beginner students, I find it to be very cumbersome and confusing, especially if students are trying to learn literary Braille at the same time, I find a lot of the accessible tools that exist to translate things into music Braille are just so unbelievably expensive and unattainable for most students

that it creates this barrier that we can't get past to kind of get them to The point where they can be fully independent. And so I try as much as possible using low cost, low barrier to entry tools as much as possible. So it's things that are built in applications. It's things that are going to work with screen reader, it's tools that a student can learn in a lesson or two, and then and then take on for the rest of their life.

R

Rob Mineault 41:47

Yeah, that's interesting. I mean, Ryan and I work sort of in the in the assistive technology space, and I know that from from our experience, and correct me if I'm wrong, Ryan, but I mean, there's really not a heck of a lot of assistive technology out there for you, specifically for music students. I know that there's, there's a there's a few systems out there for, I think, low vision, a low vision system. But, I mean, it's incredibly expensive. What's the name of that system?

R

Ryan Fleury 42:16

Yeah, there's Limelight or Lime Aloud, and FeelGood. The whole package it's like \$4,700 Canadian.

T

Tamara Vandendool Cable 42:22

I think it's even more than that, but it's just, it's so unaffordable for my students.

R

Ryan Fleury 42:29

Yeah, and that's the standalone all in one computer that has the model out software on it. And of course, you can connect a Braille display, so you're getting Braille output. And, yeah, it gets pricey.

T

Tamara Vandendool Cable 42:39

But evenso, like I've found through my use with with the Lime software, the music translation is not 100% accurate, and it makes a lot of mistakes. Whereas, if I was to put it through something like a muse score or something else that is maybe a little more recently developed, it has better optical character recognition for for notes, for music, for for things. So not that I want to have a challenge with any piece of software that is at focus, that is music based, but I'm hoping that there are some other developers that are willing to take on that challenge and and create more accessible music tools.

R

Ryan Fleury 43:21

Well, that's the problem with Dorico or Muse score. Is when you go into my I play guitar, I play bass, and I started learning piano, and I've gone through a few teachers, and a lot of them are

using Muse score. Looking at Dorico, I think is the name of the other one, and you get a lot of unlabeled buttons, right? So you're sending the file, and you're trying to tab around with your screen reader, and you're trying this, trying that, and it's like, after your 30 or 45 minute lesson, your your practice time through the week, you get frustrated trying to find these buttons to play back or slow 100% and you get frustrated, right?

T

Tamara Vandendool Cable 43:57

So yeah, and that's oftentimes, for me, why I've turned to things like Garage Band. Because they are, they're like, I mean, I am not an Apple fan girl. I think they do a lot of things wrong, but at least in the music space, they do a lot of things right when it comes to accessibility. So, you know, I can give my student a tool where I know all the buttons are labeled, and I can teach them how to move from A to B and how to speed it up and how to slow it down, and how to make a music track 400% larger. And maybe it's not perfect, maybe it's not you know exactly what I'd want, but at least it's included in a piece of software that they probably have a friend with a MAC, they don't have to go buy something.

R

Rob Mineault 44:42

So it sounds like it really is this high demand for some sort of an affordable, accessible music system that just hasn't, hasn't formulated yet. So, you know, hopefully this is, this is something that you know. Again, we we talk about AI all the time on the show, and just being like, you know, it hopefully, if it doesn't kill us all first, it will be the great equalizer, you know, it can really help drive forward and supercharge the development of cheaper and more affordable assistive technology.

R

Ryan Fleury 44:42

And even the entry point to a Mac though, a MAC Mini, you can get for \$600. Cheaper than Limelight, Logic, and you'll get Garage Band. You know, there's your all in one music device.

T

Tamara Vandendool Cable 45:37

Absolutely. And I mean, that's, I hope, to be a part of that revolution, that development. I mean, I'm currently working on some some tech to try and make that braille translation, that music braille system, just a free app that anybody can go in with an XML file and away you go. That's, that's what I'm working on. It's been a passion project for a few years, and we're probably still a few years out, but hopefully we'll get there.

R

Ryan Fleury 46:06

Let's talk about Odyssey Music, because Odyssey Music is a whole different approach to the whole music teaching, music learning methodology than many of us have looked at, gone through, tried, you know, using different colors. You've got some short audio clips there. So tell us what Odyssey music is.

T

Tamara Vandendool Cable 46:26

Odyssey music is what I hope to be a one stop shop for accessible Music Learning. And when I say accessible, I mean accessible to kids with and without disabilities, I've brought a lot of my learnings from early childhood education psychology, working with students with various disabilities, and tried to create a system that incorporates fun and colors and excitement and activities into the process of music theory and learning music, which oftentimes, in my humble opinion, has been boring and dull and repetitive. And kids hate it exactly. They want none of that. So, you know, let's, let's have it, okay, let's color in this picture. Let's, let's, you know, let's make it so that as much as possible. We're playing games, we're doing activities, we're doing things that that feel fun, that don't feel like work, but we're learning those concepts at the same time. And what was fundamental to me when I started this series is it had to be accessible, and the accessible versions had to cost the same as every other version. So if a student needs an audio version, that is the same price as the printed version. If a student needs a braille version, it is not \$270 I am selling it for 1995 the same as the printed version. And am I taking a loss on that book? You better believe I am. But that is, I refuse to let finances be a barrier to accessibility. That's That's fundamentally opposed to who I am as a person and what I had to deal with growing up. So we have many different versions, and if somebody comes across something that isn't working for them, we'll work with them to create something that will.

R

Ryan Fleury 48:33

Have you thought about making the Odyssey music program into an app?

T

Tamara Vandendool Cable 48:40

I have considered it. I am still trying to put out the last couple of printed books. We have found that with many students and and other people in the music theory space, apps are not as effective at teaching these concepts as physically putting pen to paper or braille to paper. So right now, we're focused on physical media, but it's definitely on the plan for the future to have more options.

R

Ryan Fleury 49:17


I don't mean the website or content, but kind of an add on, you know, like when I was looking at Odyssey Music today, you know, having to tab to a link, hit enter, bring up the YouTube player, click play, click pause, go back a page, click the link, blah, blah, blah, you know, back and forth.


T

Tamara Vandendool Cable 49:31

Yes, I haven't optimized things as much as I would like, but yes, I'm the one who's built the website. I don't have the budget. But it works, but it's not pretty, and it could be better, absolutely.


- R** Ryan Fleury 49:47  
Moving that content over to another or, you know, another option, right? Because, as you said, people learn differently. Have different physical modalities. You know, they wouldn't have to have a computer. Or every kid has a tablet...
- T** Tamara Vandendool Cable 50:02  
Right? That's the truth.
- R** Ryan Fleury 50:04  
So, yeah, thinking future wise.
- T** Tamara Vandendool Cable 50:07  
No, that's a great suggestion, and I'll definitely be working towards that.
- R** Rob Mineault 50:13  
Leave her alone, Ryan, she's busy enough.
- R** Ryan Fleury 50:17  
No, she isn't. Come on.
- T** Tamara Vandendool Cable 50:21  
More things. I want more things.
- R** Ryan Fleury 50:22  
All right, watch the list today. I'll share it with you later.
- T** Tamara Vandendool Cable 50:25  
Perfect.
- L** Lis Malone 50:27


 Lisa Johnson 50:17  
Ryan showing off his big brain.


 Rob Mineault 50:29  
Yeah, really, what's going on?

 Ryan Fleury 50:31  
It's music. I love music. Guitar, learning piano, cowbell. Love it.

 Rob Mineault 50:39  
Yeah, yeah, yeah, more cowbell, but, but honestly, I mean, and that was another, you know, thing that really why we wanted to really have you on the show. When we saw that, that accessible music is, is such a, such a underserved niche. So, you know, when we saw that, was like, oh, we have to have her on because this is amazing that she's doing this, and so I really, really hope that, you know, you can sort of create a blueprint for for other music teachers out there to start adapting this stuff. Because this stuff should be, this shouldn't be a special bolt on solution. This should be available by default to any music teacher, right?

 Tamara Vandendool Cable 51:23  
Absolutely. And that is my goal. Is if people start copying what I'm doing, if people start stealing the techniques that I'm using, I am overjoyed. I'm not like your typical Oh, well, no, this is proprietary nonsense. No, go steal. Use do if it's going to help a student learn and grow and do something that they otherwise couldn't. Yes, always Yes, and that's again, that's part of why in Odyssey, I want the default print book to have accessibility built in. It's in large print, 18 point Helvetica font. We are using colors, we are using audio. We are using multi sensory learning so that we give as many students as possible the opportunity to learn without needing something else.

 Rob Mineault 52:11  
Well, you're gonna have to come back on, because we didn't get to talk about your consulting work, the stuff that you're doing over, over there at Easy Surf. In the meantime, though, where the heck can can people find you online? Where can they find Unsightly Opinions? Where can they find Odyssey Music?

 Tamara Vandendool Cable 52:38  
Right, on social media, you can find me at Unsightly Opinions within X on YouTube, Tiktok, Instagram. I don't use X that much, but I'm on there too, and anywhere online, [odysseymusic.ca](http://odysseymusic.ca) is where you can find all the stuff about the Odyssey music series and all the



stuff I'm up to. And I'd love to hear constructive feedback. So if anybody's got any ideas, we're always taking them on board.

R

Rob Mineault 53:26

Listen, Tamara, it's been an absolute delight talking with you. Thank you so much for coming on. Best of luck with everything. Keep up the great work, and please come back anytime.

T

Tamara Vandendool Cable 53:38

Thank you so much. I'd be glad to come back anytime you got me back, I really appreciate you having me.

R

Rob Mineault 53:43

All right. Tamara, have a great night, and we'll talk to you again soon.

T

Tamara Vandendool Cable 53:47

You as well. Thank you. Nice to meet you. You too. Bye, now. Bye,

R

Rob Mineault 53:52

There you go. Wow. You go. You know these members of the community that are just there, so multi talented and overachievers. We do one thing. We do it bad, but that's cool. I love, I love this. The accessible music thing, I think, is just, it's so incredibly important. And just really we need, we need some work in this field.

R

Ryan Fleury 54:15

Well, yeah, it's interesting that, you know, other than Dancing Dots, there really is nobody else doing anything in relation to music, and that's just basically for those who are blind or partially sighted.

R

Rob Mineault 54:31

Yeah, that's right

R

Ryan Fleury 54:33

So it's a huge vacuum that somebody could come in and fill.

- R** Rob Mineault 54:37  
Absolutely and one and even sounds like even the Braille, the Braille, the music. Braille system sounds, it's, sounds like it's pretty unwieldy.
- R** Ryan Fleury 54:46  
Yeah, we'll have to bring somebody on from maybe Braille Literacy Canada, and they can talk about music. Yeah,
- R** Rob Mineault 54:51  
I would be interested to hear because clearly it's not working.
- R** Ryan Fleury 54:59  
20% of the blind, or whatever the numbers are, 10 to 20% know Braille. I bet you it's like 2% for Music braille.
- R** Rob Mineault 55:06  
Yeah, that's interesting. So I wonder why that is, I mean, or some, you know, there that's an interesting conversation too. Like I'd be, I'd be really curious to know how a lot of blind and partially sighted folks learn music in the first place, because there are a lot of musicians out there.
- R** Ryan Fleury 55:26  
And maybe we can get Matthew Whitaker on, because he's a jazz pianist.
- L** Lis Malone 55:30  
You know what? Though with but with jazz, there is so much improv.
- R** Ryan Fleury 55:33  
There is, but there's still style and technique and theory.
- L** Lis Malone 55:40  
So I mean, I went, I went to Berkeley College of Music for a summer, so I have a little inside

So, I mean, I went, I went to Berkeley College of Music for a summer, so I have a little inside track, okay, but a lot of it is, well, I mean, I don't know how he Where's original training came from, but when you're able, once you're able, to play, when you, when you go to Berkeley, there's very there was very little, at least when I went there for a summer program, sheet music was almost not even a thing, right? went there to learn improv. It is not an organized system. It is much more about learning to do a lot of free form improv, learning to improve within, you know, they basically say we're playing in the key of C, and this is what you're, you know, you should already. If you're a decent enough musician, you already know what your note construct is going to be, right? Yeah, in that key. So that's so that doesn't that doesn't surprise me. One of my instructors gave me a tape and said, You need to learn this. You need to learn it by ear, right? So, and that's what a lot of, lot of musicians, a lot of musicians do. I ended up flunking out of music because I couldn't sight read anymore. I wasn't able to read, you know, when you, when you when you play in an orchestra, when you're looking at sheet music, you have to read the music. And I couldn't, and that was when I was when I was starting to lose my vision. I was like, I can't read that music. I'm like, well, then I can't play in an orchestra.

R

Rob Mineault 57:25

But I wonder, I wonder if, part of that, though, is that by the time you get to Berkeley, you're pretty much supposed to know all you know, you know, all the music theory. You're not learning sheet music, right? So it's probably more at the at that beginning stage, like the kiddos and stuff who are just starting music, that that's, I probably more, more where it's really needed, I guess. But it's hard and if you're a kiddo and you can't, you can't actually learn how to read music to begin with, because there's no music system out there and there's Braille, then I guess all that really leaves is you're just learning by ear. What is it like the Suzuki method, or whatever.

L

Lis Malone 58:04

Well, people didn't like the Suzuki method because kids were not learning the notes, they were learning numbers and positions, and so then anyone who learned on the Suzuki that then had to relearn things.


R

Ryan Fleury 58:11


We have a neighbor who has a daughter, and they're Korean, and she spent 10 years became a classical pianist, and the daughter is like 22 so she started really young, and she cannot play at piano unless sheet music is in front of her. If there's no score, she can't play right? And so there's a there's a gap there, right? There's a difference between, like you said, sitting down and improvising and making stuff up on the spot, and having a piece that you've repeated over and over and over, right? You've got that muscle memory that comes back to you. And looking at the staff and the notes, both are good, but I think there's definitely a lot more flexibility when you're able to improvise put things together. You sure you have to have a foundation. But like I said, she, she can't play unless she's got music in front of her.

R

Rob Mineault 58:26

 **Rob Mineault** 59:30

I mean, I'll push back on that a little bit, because I think that ways work. I think it really just depends on what you want to do with it, right? Because if you flip that around, and somebody who's excellent and improvising, you put a sheet of music in front of them, because they're playing with an orchestra, they're playing with an ensemble, and they can't read that music, well, they're they're equally as screwed as sure to you know, so I guess it kind of depends. And in a way, it's kind of neat that there are different avenues for people, just depending on on what, what their strengths are. Because, you know, I've met people in both spheres as well, and it is really interesting. But probably the best case scenario is that, you know, you you're kind of have your feet in both worlds, where you can read music, but you can also do improv and stuff.

 **Ryan Fleury** 1:00:20

Don't get me wrong, she's never gonna, you know, go to a lounge club, sit down and, you know, jam with a band, right? That's just not her upbringing, and that's not why she was trained.

 **Rob Mineault** 1:00:31


I mean, at the end of the day, what we really need is an entry point for for people to be able to enter into the into music, if they so desire, and at least have a route where they can have some accessible materials available to them. So that's why what Tamara is up to is, is very important. So sorry, I have an update. Yeah, so apparently, I guess Ozzy had had Parkinson's.

 **Ryan Fleury** 1:01:04

Oh, he's had that for years. Is that what killed him?

 **Rob Mineault** 1:01:07

Well, I guess so. I guess he's had it since 2020, but apparently he had each had a big like farewell concert he did a couple weeks ago.

 **Lis Malone** 1:01:31

And how, how old?

 **Ryan Fleury** 1:01:33

76

 **Rob Mineault** 1:01:34

Yeah, 76 oh, Lived a good life. So that's the way to go out, right? Like, go with a bang, you know, have a big concert.

**L** Lis Malone 1:01:43  
I didn't think he ever thought he'd make it to 76

**R** Rob Mineault 1:02:12  
Okay, let's get out of here. See Lis? See what you do, we always run long when you come back.

**L** Lis Malone 1:05:54  
I'm sorry. Too much fun.

**R** Rob Mineault 1:05:56  
Okay. Anyways, Hey, Ryan.

**R** Ryan Fleury 1:05:59  
Yeah Rob?


**R** Ryan Fleury 1:06:01  
Where can people find us?

**R** Ryan Fleury 1:06:07  
They can find us at the limitless podcast, at [www.blindbeginnings.ca](http://www.blindbeginnings.ca)


**R** Ryan Fleury 1:06:16  
They can find us [www.atbanter.com](http://www.atbanter.com)


**R** Ryan Fleury 1:06:21  
What, where, what, what? Who?


—


 Rob Mineault 1:06:29  
All aboard! I forget how the rest goes. That's all I know. Did you ever see that YouTube video with both those kids playing xylophones and they played Crazy Train?


 Ryan Fleury 1:06:47  
No.


 Rob Mineault 1:06:47  
Oh yeah, I'll send it to you. I'll put it in the show notes.


 Lis Malone 1:06:54  
I used to play that on the violin. Fastest way to piss off an orchestra teacher play Crazy Train.


 Rob Mineault 1:07:14  
Probably what got her booted out of Berkeley.

 Ryan Fleury 1:07:17  
Maybe

 Lis Malone 1:07:17  
it's shocking that they didn't want me in the orchestra. Yeah.

 Rob Mineault 1:07:22  
They can also drop us an email if they so desire, at [cowbell@atbanter.com](mailto:cowbell@atbanter.com)

 Ryan Fleury 1:07:37  
Where else can they find us Lis?

 Lis Malone 1:07:39  
Yeah, I don't freaking know anymore. Facebook, Mastodon, Instagram...



Ryan Fleury 1:08:21

That's right, that's right.



Rob Mineault 1:08:24

That's all we need tonight. We don't even need these social media things we're we're so far beyond social media it's not even funny, but still, go visit us and follow us and like, subscribe, like and subscribe and all that crap. Tell your friends. All right, well, I think that is going to do it for this week. Big thanks, of course, to Tamara for joining us, and we will see everybody next week.



Steve Barclay 1:08:53

This podcast has been brought to you by Canadian Assistive Technology providing Low vision and Blindness solutions, as well as Physical Access Solutions and Augmentative Communication Aids across Canada. Find us online@[www.canasstech.com](http://www.canasstech.com) or if you're in the Vancouver Lower Mainland, visit our storefront at # 106-828 West Eighth Avenue in Vancouver. That's one block off Broadway at Willow you can reach us by phone, toll free at 1-844-795-8324, or by email at [sales@canasstech.com](mailto:sales@canasstech.com),



1:09:28

you.