

# PODCAST Episode 453

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generational gap, communication, blind community, technology, volunteering, social media, advocacy, connection, empathy, nonviolent communication, community engagement, youth involvement, older generations, accessibility, social interaction

## SPEAKERS

Ryan Fleury, Albert Ruel, Clement Chou, Rob Mineault, Speaker 1, Russell Leung, Betty Nobel, Steve Barclay

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 Rob Mineault 00:17

Hey and welcome to another episode of AT Banter.

 Ryan Fleury 00:23

No banter, banter, but I guess I just said banter, banter. So surprise!

 Rob Mineault 00:33

Hey, this is, of 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, joining me today, the lovely, the talented, Mr. Ryan Fleury.

 Ryan Fleury 00:54

Hello, everyone. Welcome to the show.

R Rob Mineault 00:57

That's right, and it's just once again, you know, just me and you.

R Ryan Fleury 01:00

together again.

R Ryan Fleury 01:03

Yeah, that's right Yeah, it's crazy. Everybody's out in Costa Rica somewhere. I actually wish that was the case, but I'm sure it's not the case. We'll just make something up. It's far more interesting than the truth, which is we couldn't get our schedules together. Yeah, but that's okay, because we got a big show.

R Ryan Fleury 01:23

We do indeed, on this week's episode, we have with us, starting with ladies first, of course, Miss Betty Nobel. Welcome Betty.

B Betty Nobel 01:33

Thank you. It's great to be here.

R Ryan Fleury 01:36

And also joining us the elder statesman himself, Albert Ruel. Welcome Albert.

A Albert Ruel 01:42

all right, thank you. It's great to be here at this age. It's great to be here again.

R

Ryan Fleury 01:52

And we will lower the generation gap here a little bit and jump over to from Blind Beginnings Limitless Podcast, we have Clement Chou. Welcome, Clement.

C

Clement Chou 02:04

Hey.

R

Ryan Fleury 02:09

And also joining us from Blind beginnings, we have Russell Leung. Russell, welcome to the show.

R

Russell Leung 02:15

Hello. Thank you for having me on.

R

Ryan Fleury 02:17

So glad we could have all of you join us today.

R

Rob Mineault 02:20

Yeah. And you know, it's really interesting too, because Ryan and I will talk often in planning the show and stuff. And, of course, you know, Ryan works for an assistive technology company, and I work for a sort of a youth organization serving the same community. And it's, you know, we often have these discussions where he's in his work, he's sort of working with sort of an older demographic, and in my work, I'm working with a younger demographic. And so we'd be constantly having these conversations and swapping stories and stuff. And so, yeah, it really did come up. It might be an interesting conversation. Just bring these two generations together and just just for a conversation and an exchange of sort of lived experiences, and see if we can, you know, together we can sort of identify some of the commonality about different aspects of what it's like to be in the blind community.

A

Albert Ruel 03:17

Yeah, I just, I wanted to say that, you know, when this call came in. I was in the process of chatting with someone who will do some training for us at the Parksville Community Center. I'm on, I'm on the I'm president of the board at a local community center here in Parksville. And one of the things that we noticed in the community is the communication gap between the generations that be, you know grandparents with their their adult children, or grandparents and their grandchildren. You know teenage grandchildren. And so that's exactly what we're going to do here in Parksville, is put together a communications between the generations workshop from an NVC nonviolent communication perspective, which was a Marshall Rosenberg sort of training system in communication. So really weird when you came up with this idea while I'm trying to put together workshops for our own center right around that whole thing is, how do we communicate with each other, generation to generation? What's different? How do we turn on our ears?

C

Clement Chou 04:23

Right? I think I've already noticed one difference. Ryan used the word pontificate. Pretty sure nobody under 30 is gonna know what that is.

R

Russell Leung 04:32

The only reason why I know what that means is because I read a lot of books.

R

Ryan Fleury 04:38

Sorry, showing my age.

C

Clement Chou 04:40

Think about that for a second. That's a great word. I love it, though. And I think this is something that's really overdue, actually, because I've been part of Blind Beginnings for a long time. But I'm actually, you know, in my early 30s, and it kind of puts me in this weird middle ground where I'm not quite a youth anymore, but I'm also not ...

B

Betty Nobel 05:07

... as old as I am.

C

Clement Chou 05:09

I was looking for the right words to say it. I'm glad you said that. Betty, and I have history, so it's fine, but this is something that I think has been, it's been on my mind for a little last few years, especially post-Covid, because we've been talking, I think that's when a lot of discussion around generation gaps and things really happened. And so I think the more I've thought about it, yeah, like, like Ryan and Rob said, there's this disparity in the blind community where kind of, younger people don't really talk to older people and older people don't really talk to young people, except to kind of point out what each other. There's a lot of sniping in the blind community. And you know, I look around at churches and my Aikido Club, where there is a there is a wonderful relationship dynamic between older people and younger people, which I would like to see in the blind community as well. And I think that's, that's something that's something I've become very passionate about over the past couple years. So I'm really excited for this conversation.

R

Rob Mineault 06:16

Well, you know, let's explore that a little bit. You know, these days, so much of the way that we interact with each other is through technology, is through, you know, either social media or our own little, you know, sort of whatever they call them, ecosystems that we're in. It seems like every, every about 10 years of age, you have a different platform that you're sort of plugged into. For the older generations, it's things like Facebook, but of course, the younger generations, they've moved on from Facebook, and they're using things like Discord and they're using Snapchat and Instagram and all these other formats. So let me ask everybody this like is, do you see that as more of the problem in the sense that, how do you communicate with a different generation when even just finding a platform or finding a quote, unquote room to talk in, is such a problem?

B

Betty Nobel 07:21

Well, I can sort of respond from an older person's perspective, and I think part of it might be that, you know, when you retire, you kind of don't really necessarily keep up with all the new technologies, and maybe, you know, you just don't seem to have the brain power. You know that there's a lot of cool stuff happening, but you just kind of stick with what you know. And so you don't, you're not really motivated to use this, the same platforms maybe that the younger generations are using.

R

Rob Mineault 07:57

I'd echo that. And, you know, and I'm, I'm a Gen X, and, you know, I find this I've kind of the same tolerance level as that is that I don't want to learn a new platform. I don't want to move on to something new. You know, you get home from work or whatever, you just want something that that you know, that you're already familiar with, that works and and that feels comfortable. And so, you know, in order to get these conversations going, though, we do need to find that sort of, that technological common ground, or find a place to come together. And more and more, I'm sort of of the opinion that it's not going to be a digital format. This has got to be something that that's, you know, real world, that you know, whether that's these are community meetups or events or something where you have a mixture of generations are able to sort of come together and talk and interact and work towards things. And you know that even can be, those can be events. But I'm also thinking that those could be things like advocacy organizations.

C

Clement Chou 08:59

You hit on a very good point when you said, there's, there's this reluctance to learn. And I think I've seen this not, this isn't just a blind people thing either. This is something that I see in a lot of the churches I'm involved in, where the older people like, well, I can't just, I just can't keep up with people like, you know. Then it's, you know, and the young kids are like, oh, you know, my, my grand wants me to have Facebook, but I don't have I don't, I don't want Facebook because I don't need it. I don't use it for anything else. And there's, there is a there's a gap in the sense that I think younger people aren't quite willing to revert back to things like Facebook and, you know, heaven forbid, texting and older people are tired and they just want to stick with what's comfortable and what's easy. And I think that doubles when you're blind, because when you're blind or low vision, and you have to worry about how accessible a particular app is, I think that's also part of the problem. But I think the mental problem is a lack of desire, or a lack of energy to learn new things as as they evolve with the accessibility and stuff on top of it.

R

Russell Leung 10:12

I think I can speak from this perspective as well, in terms of, in terms of, like, the lack of the lack of desire to revert, in terms of the reason, one of the reason why a lot of people, a lot of younger people, especially some some people who are, how do you say they have, there's a lot of social standing. That's also a matter of social standing. It matters a lot to them. So, in a way, they when they revert back to something that, let's say no one uses and you're like, and it's like, oh, I have to use this dumb app that no one else uses. Like, I have to use this, this, this clunky app that date, like, 10 years ago. I don't want to, I don't want to use that. It's not cool. It's not like, no one's on there. I can't talk to anybody on there. So it was sort of a, it's almost like, there they are. It's like, it's not cool, it's not in so it's like, I don't want to do it. It's so it's sort of that perspective which is not a good perspective to have, obviously,

A

Albert Ruel 11:09

Rob you had mentioned, you know, is it going to be digital, or do we have to sort of come, come back away from digital and go back to analog? Because, you know, how many times do you sit in a restaurant and there's four people at the table next to you and not a sound comes out of it, because they're all texting each other or, yeah, whatever there there's no conversation anymore. And like our community center, we do, we do every two weeks, we do this pop up Recycling event where we invite the community to bring, you know, a bunch of their recycling stuff to us, and what we've it's mostly seniors. Let's face it, the volunteers are not any of those other generations, right? The seniors are the ones out volunteering here in Parksville. And so here we are, and we've got a bunch of Girl Guides who come and help out because they're raising money for whatever activities they're doing, so they get a bit of a share of the revenues that we generate, and they come out. And what parents are saying that the benefit of their involvement with this is that they're learning to speak with adults, with people who are bringing so I'm thinking, Oh, you have to teach them that how to speak with adults and how to carry a conversation that doesn't have a gadget in the hand. We find it one day, we were sitting around the campfire. There was 10 of us out camping. This was all family and my partner looked around the campfire because it got kind of quiet, and she said, absolutely everybody here has a device in their hand, and they're all focused on it.

B

Betty Nobel 12:51

Yeah, that's really interesting actually, because, and you were talking about the seniors were the only volunteers, but then the Girl Guides were coming because they had a reason to come, because it was doing something for them to raise the money as well. And I think that's, you know, something that people struggle with us, those of us in the Z Generation, I don't know if I like being as said, it sounds pretty terminal, but anyway, those of us in the Z generation don't understand why younger people don't want to volunteer and don't want to get involved in things like, you know, advocacy, or, I don't know, whatever else it might be, because it's not really just about technology yet, I don't think technology plays a huge part in all of this. But it's, I think, a little even little different than that.

C

Clement Chou 13:48

It's more it's more of fundamental if then technology, I think self centered tech, technology, technology is a symptom of a problem.

R

Russell Leung 13:58

If I can put it that way, no, I that's more or less, I'd say. So it's also like, why would we go out and do this thing when we could be at home technology talking to people like, it's kind of like, why like, it doesn't directly benefit us. So why would we do it like that?

R

Ryan Fleury 14:16

But when's the last time you used Braille on an elevator or listen to an audible announcement on a bus, right? That didn't happen from people texting or chatting.

A

Albert Ruel 14:27

That playpark you played in as a child only happened because the Lions Club or the Rotary Club in town found the wherewithal to create it. And those clubs, those organizations, are dying today, not because the services they provided and the good works they've done isn't no longer required. Because, like my two kids, 42 and 39 they don't, they don't volunteer for anything other than what they're particularly interested in like their children or their dog needs. But there's no there's the next generation isn't coming along, and it's really, really changing society.

C

Clement Chou 15:08

So why? Why do you why do you think that is Albert?

A

Albert Ruel 15:12

I don't know. I would love the answer.

C

Clement Chou 15:16

And the reason I ask is I had, I had a theory, but I wanted to see if anyone else had them before I, you know, started shooting it.

C

Clement Chou 15:26

Well, let me ask you this. How much do you think perspective factors into things? Because, you know, certainly the the older generation, they can remember back to a day when we didn't have nearly the amount of things like Braille signage or audible walk signals or all of these things that really did have to be advocated and fought for tooth and nail. When you have, you know, the older generation, they remember that, and they know the hard work that needs to go into that, whereas the younger generation, like they may not understand that yet, or maybe they're they have some frustration around, you know, as Clement was saying, you know, there's a little bit more of, it's a little bit more of an immediacy culture, right? Like, if something doesn't work immediately, well, then, you know, forget it.

R Rob Mineault 15:26

Go for it.

C Clement Chou 15:26

But I think, I think part of, I think Russell did hit part of it on the head is that a lot of people we've our culture has become more and more individualistic over the past, let's say 20 years or so, where everything is about self care and self help and helping yourself first, and loving yourself first, and then you can love other people. And I think that's translated into like, like Russell said, whenever you see something or you hear about an opportunity, the first thing is, well, what does that do for me? What does volunteering do for me? And unfortunately, because we've gotten to a point where we want immediate results and immediate gratification. That is what drives a lot of things, and that's why social media and technology plays the role it does. Because you have instant gratitude when you post something, people like it, people will comment on it, people will share it. And that is gratification that happens right away. You don't have to wait for it. Whereas if you volunteer, or you get out and actually make connections, it might take a month, it might take five months, it might take a year. And for a lot of people, especially if you are blind and low vision, I think this is where we need to bring the conversation. Bring the conversation back. It's even worse, because socially, it's really awkward. How do you deal with that? And I think the I think until the generations, find a way to bridge that gap and work through it together, instead of younger people saying, oh, older people just don't understand. And older people go and say, Oh, you need to get off your butts and go do stuff. I think as long as that disparity is there, I think it's going to be hard to change that's that's just kind of my, my two cents.

B Betty Nobel 18:31

Well, I'll, I'll share something. I think it's just because I view volunteering as a way to connect with people, so as a connection point and as a way to be known out, out in the community. And I think when you volunteer, sometimes opportunities can come your way. Not saying it always happens, but often that can happen, and it's just who you're connecting with and what you're doing, and if you can, you know, help somebody else along the way, or, you know, feel really good about a project that worked out that whether it's an audible signal or whatever it is, I don't think those things happen just because we didn't have them. They happened because somebody thought, well, people really need this, like it's going to make your life better if I advocate for this, therefore I would really love for things to be better for the newer generation that I didn't come from. And so, you know, that's what I'm working for. And so I guess it depends on, you know, how young people feel about the people that are coming behind them. And you know, how, how do you blaze a trail for those people? Or do you even care?

A

Albert Ruel 19:54

And Betty, I'll echo that Betty, because, you know, I had a 30 year career after vision loss, because the forest industry didn't want me running around their pulp mill without vision. And every single job I landed in that those 30 years was as a result of volunteerism. I volunteered. I went and spent six weeks doing a practicum at the CNIB, landed a job, did some volunteer work with EATI, boom, landed a job. Every job I've had in that 30 year career in blindness was because I volunteered, because they knew me. I engaged, I was involved, I was learning, and all of a sudden, hey, I'm looking for a job, and look, hey, we're creating one right here. So it has tremendous value both of the community, but selfishly, I agree, I gained a hell of a lot of benefit from having done those volunteer works.

C

Clement Chou 21:01

I would echo that as well. I mean, I got, you know, I got my job working at a Japanese student agency, teaching students. After two years of volunteering, people would tell me that I was being taken advantage of that they were using me because I was there two or three days a week, for a couple hours, you know, at a time. And my response was, well, I like doing it. I didn't think about getting a job. I just genuinely enjoyed doing it while I was also going to school, but I didn't know that two years later it was going to land me a job. And so I agree with both what what Albert and Betty are saying. My question would be or, how do the older folks here think we can show young people that connection is important in that particular way? Because nowadays, young people will push back and say, well, I can, I can just connect on Instagram. I don't even have to leave my house, right? Russell, you're the resident Gen Z on here so you can speak up more to this. Have you felt that way, like, was it there? Was there a point in your life where you were like, I don't have to leave my house because I have my online friends. I can just talk and, you know, there's forums and YouTube comment sections and what, Reddit communities and everything else.

R

Russell Leung 22:15

It's interesting, actually, because this is a sort of a self defeating cycle. Because it's like, okay, you do think like that. You're like, okay, I don't need to leave my house. I have friends online. I can go in, you know, go on Reddit and call and converse with people on there. But then it creates this sort of loop where it's like, I'm not doing anything because I'm talking to people on Reddit. What's it getting me? I don't know, nothing. It's gonna be nothing. So what am I supposed to like, what am I supposed to do? What's, what's, what's, let's try and connect. Go out like, it's, it's sort of like this thing where you do try and do something doesn't work out, so you don't really know what to do. Because these, because a lot of people in my generation tend to be very they don't, there's, there's a lack of desire to, I guess, go out and connect with people, because I'm not sure, I think it's because they're, they're probably just either they're, they're nervous, they don't want to talk, they don't know what to say. Also, perhaps too, because a lot of a lot of it is they're, they're spending so much time with people, of like, online and when you know when someone talks about someone, so when, when someone is talking to them not online, when they're going out, they just don't know what to say. So a lot of them, a lot of it is social ineptness on their part too, which is, it's something that technology has fostered. And also Betty's comment too, back then about like, why the young generation doesn't really, just doesn't really, I guess, care. Why? How to make them care, I guess is, unfortunately, a lot of social media and YouTube stuff has made, made the generation very - I guess the term I want to use is doomposting - in that basically someone will post a video, or someone will make comments about, oh, this is this is collapsing, and this is why, and everyone always kind of, kind of takes the pessimistic side and be like Oh, this is why society is falling. This is why it's collapsing. This is why, this is why we can't do anything about it. But everyone talks about, this is what we need to do. This is what we should do. This is what we need to do. This is why it's falling. But nobody does anything because everyone is waiting for that one guy or someone, some hero, to rise up and do something. And of course, no one's doing that because everyone's waiting for that one hero, and no one does.

A

Albert Ruel 24:44

And no one comes, Russell just to carry that just one step further. I think you're seeing that in the healthcare system as well, instead of people picking up and taking personal responsibility for where they are and doing something about. They want to go get a pill from the doctor and keep eating the the cheeseburgers that created the high cholesterol, right?

S

Speaker 1 25:08

Oh, yeah, that's a great analogy. Albert.

A

Albert Ruel 25:15

Yeah, no, but we're all sitting at home waiting for the other guy to do it instead of going out and engaging. Because the only way that you build community and you build love and positive vibration is through interaction and engagement. And so engagement is not sitting in the RecRoom, Snapchatting with a bunch of friends and so, I think that's what it is. I think, Betty alluded to. And Betty, you remember way back in 1998 I think, I think it was 98 you and I did a computer camp at Bowen for CNIB.

B

Betty Nobel 25:51

I remember that.

A

Albert Ruel 25:52

Yeah, we were, we were asked, because all of the, all of the youth in that camp were visually impaired, but there were two, two young ladies who were totally blind, and so they invited you and I to come in and work as we were volunteers while I was working for the CNIB in those days. So it wasn't really a volunteer, but we were there to help and support and help facilitate their involvement in the thing so they wouldn't be left behind. And up until that day, Betty, I didn't think CNIB should be involved in like, what are we doing in recreation these Bowen camps? And I thought, you know, all we have to do is provide people with rehab, get them to understand how you can live a happy, fulfilled life after vision loss. But I came away from that involvement with a totally different attitude. My thought after that was, my God, CNIB, you need to do way more of this, because all of these youth. In the integrated system are one of that young lady in Fort St James might have been the only blind student in the entire town, not just in her classroom. But when they came into that room, they were one of they weren't one apart. And so I came away from that engagement thinking that's what's missing in the integrated system : nobody feels a part of, everybody feels separate from. And that to me, and I've seen, I've seen a lot of evidence of that in my in my years working in the blindness field, is that it's very when I all those people I work with, the Kim Kilpatrick's of the world and all these kids who grew up in the quote, unquote, residential blind school, I think Betty, you might have been one as well.

B

Betty Nobel 27:46

I was one of them, yes.

A

Albert Ruel 27:47

And independent and very engaged and involved, because they they were, they were allowed to feel a part of the group, the community, the society. So to me, I see that as a real big difference.

B

Betty Nobel 28:05

It is. It's an interesting thing to think about, though, because you know, in your in your real life, you are going to be working alongside and associating with sighted folks, and so it's, it's important to participate and do the things that that they're doing. But what I found when I was teaching in in the system, in the school system, that was towards the end of my career, it felt like it didn't, it didn't feel real to me. Like, sure, there were all kinds of kids who could see going to that school. And then there was blind students, but they didn't really interact that much. And, you know, I went out to a regular school in grade 11, and by that time, I had pretty much, you know, worked on a lot of the social skills that that I needed in order to interact with other people. And so that was kind of seamless for me. I mean, it was scary going from a school that had 100 and some students to one that had 2000 or 3000 or whatever it was, but I had the the skills I needed to deal with that. And, you know, bad things happen sometimes, and you get rejected sometimes. You know, I remember one time I thought everything was going really great, and I was in the ladies room with some other students, and I heard one student say, I have to go to lunch with Betty today, and I really don't want to. And I went, what the heck? And I like, I didn't know. So I think I made some excuse and said I didn't want to, like, because I was within walking distance of the school, kind of thing. I mean, I felt bad about it, but it didn't completely stress me out, because I felt well, you know, okay, that person's being honest. I wish, you know, she'd been honest with me, and then we had a discussion about it afterwards, and, you know, kind of cleared the air and stuff. So I think the fact that we saw the same group of kids, almost like being in the Snapchat with with young people. Even though they're not together, you still have this kind of interaction. And you can talk about stuff that you understand and that matters to you, and that maybe only relates to blindness or having low vision. But then when you, you know, go out into the real world, it's a scary place to be, and if you don't have the stomach for the things that can happen that make it really challenging, and if you don't understand that, you really have to work at things, to make them work, you have to do way more than you know, say, your neighbor down the street who can see just, just to make things work and to make stuff happen. It just takes so much more energy that maybe people just say, to heck with it. I just don't want to do that, because it does take more energy.

S

Steve Barclay 31:25

Do you think there's a willingness on both generations for mentorship, where we can mentor each other, volunteer with each other, work side by side? Or is that ship sailed?

A

Albert Ruel 31:55

I think those opportunities have to be created again. We can't sit back and say, gee, somebody should do that. You point the finger, one finger, oh, you got three fingers pointing back at you. So what, you know, I mean, the only thing I can say is, well, what have I done about that? Yeah, yep, right.

R

Russell Leung 31:55

Unfortunately, there, especially in the blind community, there's, I've noticed that there's a, almost like a reluctance or almost like contempt for the reason in younger generation, which is really sad. I've noticed that I every time I see it, I shake my head. There's this bit of a contempt. I don't want to work with those old people, like it's gonna it's gonna be boring, it's gonna be, I'm gonna be pulling my hair out, like it's really sad actually, because they just don't, they don't think it's worth their time.

A

Albert Ruel 31:55

The gap has widened a lot.

C

Clement Chou 31:55

Yes, it has. I'm gonna, I'm gonna push back and say, I think I see a lot of that from older blind people as well. And that's, that's where the issue is. So older blind people are sitting there - and nobody here, thankfully - but I know people I've encountered people online and in person who do say this, this, oh, you know, blind kids need to try harder. Because when we were, you know that that's the tagline for everybody over 50, right "back in my day", you know, we used to do this, and we used to do that, and that's, that's not disparaging. That's just, I hear it a lot.

A

Albert Ruel 31:55

But anyway, Clement, I had to walk uphill both ways to school.

C

Clement Chou 31:55

And that's, that's what I hear. So, no, not, I'm kidding, but I think I do hear that a lot from people who are older and this, oh, you know, at least, at least you guys have this now this, you know, and we didn't have this when we were growing up. And so you guys need. Pull your pants up and do stuff. And so that alienates a lot of young people who may have genuinely wanted mentoring, but then when they get told this kind of stuff, it turns them off, because they'll go, I'm already anxious enough with trying to cope. I don't need someone telling me that I'm not trying hard enough and I just need to get off my butt and do more things.

R

Ryan Fleury 35:30

And it's funny, you say that, Clement, because I'll watch the news and hear some 20 something year old say I can't get a job, nobody will hire me. Then you're not looking hard enough, is my response, because there's work out there, right?

C

Clement Chou 35:42

And in a sense, I understand that because, and I agree fundamentally, but I think timing is the key issue.

B

Betty Nobel 35:51

You know, Ryan, that's something really interesting, and I don't want to send us off on another tangent, but my son, who is 50, has been looking for work since last June, and he's putting in several applications per day like he's trying like crazy.

R

Ryan Fleury 36:11

Crazy. Ageism is real, yeah.

B

Betty Nobel 36:13

And he doesn't know if it's his age. He doesn't know if it's the AI summary that's not summarizing what's online.

R

Ryan Fleury 36:22

It's his age, because I keep hearing that.

B

Betty Nobel 36:27

Anyway, I think it is really challenging. It doesn't matter who you are or how old you are, but the thing is, you just have to keep trying. To me is, I don't have any control, but I'm not going to stop trying, and eventually something's going to happen.

C

Clement Chou 36:44

Fundamentally, I agree with you, and it might my default response is the tougher one, because I've been on both sides of that aisle, and now, yeah, I do think we need to try harder than we do sometimes, but my I've also learned that that messaging is only effective if they're listening to you sure at all. And and the problem with, you know, the generations resonate with different things. And you know, for for Boomers and Gen Xers and older millennials, it's facts and practicality, right? So well, I can't sit here and do nothing because no one else is going to do it. Gen Z and Gen Alpha resonate a lot with feelings and being cared about, and when you understand that, I think that does make a big difference in the conversations that I've seen. it at least in the conversations that I've had with younger people, is they're more willing to tell they're more willing to listen to you tell them to pull their pull up their bootstraps when they know that you care about them, and then you get how hard it is.

R

Ryan Fleury 38:00

So we need Clement to facilitate a workshop between the generation gaps.

A

Albert Ruel 38:05

It speaks to one really important factor Clement is that we've got two ears and one mouth. How many of us use them in that order?

C

Clement Chou 38:15

Yeah, absolutely. And that's so, you know, I there's a, there's a passage in in the Bible, in the book of James, that I really like. He says people should be quick to listen and slow to speak. And I think both generations have a tendency that the human nature is we talk first because we want to be the one to be on top. We want to be the one to have a point. And it takes a lot of time to slow down and actually listen to someone else.

A

Albert Ruel 38:44

And I think that's part of the Marshall Rosenberg teaching is that he makes a statement in his teachings, that he says, I can bring an end to any conflict anywhere in the world within 20 minutes of both parties having heard each other's feelings and needs,

C

Clement Chou 39:05

Yeah, and, and I think there's, there's a lot of truth to that. Now, I don't think feelings are everything that, again, is kind of my more practical side coming out. And I think that there are times when you do have to stomp on your feelings a little bit, but we, there's, it's a it's a delicate balance. I feel like we the tendency is to extremes. Either you get buried in your feelings or you ignore them. Younger people tend to get buried in them. Older generations tend to say, too bad. Suck it up, deal with it and get over it.

B

Betty Nobel 39:35

So I guess it's all about attitude, isn't it? I do think so that's what I'm sort of hearing through this whole conversation. It's how people approach things and how people think about things. So how, how can we make it work? Or can the generations kind of get together and figure out how to communicate more effective?

C

Clement Chou 40:00

Absolutely, yeah. And I think that's, that's kind of where, you know, Ryan was driving at with this podcast, just how, how can we come together? And I'd be really curious to hear everyone's thoughts, because I talk too much, and I need to, speaking of, listening ...

A Albert Ruel 40:13

Well, I mean, that's of course, the million dollar question. I think that that's sort of the key. And I think that certainly conversations like this, I think are incredibly important, because I think the first thing is just understanding where that other generation is at. I mean, I'm sitting back and listening to this, and I'm sort of, you know, thinking back to when I was a teenager and how I viewed adults and how and everything. And in this generation gap is certainly nothing that's exclusive to the blindness community, and it's certainly not exclusive to any of our generations. You know, we did it to our parents. And there's always going to be that, that generation gap. I think that the real danger, though, right now, I think that there's some other factors going on that just have never existed before in terms of this gap. And I think that part of this is, is technological. And, you know, Russell gave some, some great insight, and I jotted some notes down here that that, you know, I think the real danger that we're facing right now, that we haven't ever before, is that, you know this, we have this, this technology that that is very isolating. On its surface, it seems like it would increase your, your ability to create social networks when you can do them digitally, or when you can you know you can contact anybody you want in the world with you with this phone in your pocket. And that seems like a really powerful tool, but when it's creating these silos, and it's creating these ecosystems that young people are completely dialed into like that's their only interaction. What happens is that, like Russell said, is that they lose that ability, or they don't learn to connect with actual people in real life, and when we don't get any balance. When you when you don't feel like you can go and connect with people, when it's not comfortable, you don't. And then you lose that community that we all agree is so important, especially with something like the blindness community you've got, you've got blind kiddos that are coming up that aren't building those bonds with other blind kiddos, or even with, you know, other other peers in general. And they're just, they're just falling back into these, these digital ecosystems that aren't getting them anywhere.

A Albert Ruel 40:13

Same question, just within my CCB group here in Parksville, we're about, you know, anywhere from 22 to 25 people come together once a month. But again, it's all seniors. There's no youth that we know of in this community. And even within our ranks, you've got some who have opted out of technology, and then some who have embraced that wholeheartedly, and then a whole bunch in between, and there's a bunch of struggle to communicate and to get all of the information out to all of the people in all of the ways that they want to receive it. Then you try and introduce some youth to that, and it's like, holy crap. Now where do we go? Yeah, because from the guy who wants no technology at all to the ones who who sleep with it. Oh, crap. That's me. How do we nice that gap other than engagement and involvement and understanding and hearing and listening.

R

### Rob Mineault 41:26

They're something to I noticed something as well when I was, I think I was, I was volunteering for one of the, one of the Blind Beginnings. I think it was Youth Leadership Weekend, and we were doing the SFU. We were doing SFU, like, the whole SFU Scavenger Hunt thing. And I suggested to my group, there's people, there's people that were trying to find something, I can't remember what it was we were trying to find, I think, a landmark or something. And I was, I was telling you my group, I was like, guys, there's people right there. You can ask them if you're right there. And they were like no, I'm gonna use Google Maps. There's people right there. Like, right there, go talk to them right there. And I had to do it. So I was like, it's, it's easy, so, but it's, you know, there isn't. And I could sympathize too, because I was, I also, I have days where I, you know, just spaz out and I don't want to do it. I have days like that too. I sympathize. But like, sometimes you have to just, just, just do it. You gotta, just gotta see, all right, brain, shut up and do it.

R

### Rob Mineault 41:49

Yeah. So, so let's, let's ask the resident Zoomer here, Russell. Let's put it this way, because we're talking about connections and community. I'm curious how and who helped you out of that hole, and how did they do it? Like, what did they do that was effective in helping you to kind of break that cycle of, well, I got to do it, but I don't want to do it, but I feel anxious, so I'm not going to do it, but I got to do it, but I can't do it because I feel anxious, so I'm not going to do it.

R

### Russell Leung 41:49

Part of it, okay, well, a lot of so I, I am kind of the oddball in my generation, because of when I was born. I was kind of born in that weird place when I don't, I know Gen Zers, who grew up entirely like they're in their whole lives. They went on YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, whatever. I was never that person. I didn't discover Twitter. I didn't just discover a computer, like being on the computer until I was like, 13, 14, so I kind of already was kind of not less prone to it. But another thing was, I hung out with, a lot of older people. I tend to, I tend to gravitate towards older people just to get I find them easier to talk to. So these old people would be like, okay, you know, meet us here. Meet us there. You're on your computer, too much. Come on, hang out with us and just have fun. Just don't think about things. Just have fun and just talk. And I'm like, it sounds crazy, but it works. You just talk to people and you just, you build community that. And that's, that's how it works. But also they it's also, yeah, I think common is correct in that Gen Z is also very wrapped up in their own feelings, where you'd be like, okay, you know, I care a lot about you. I care like you're important. You are. You guys are important, even though you don't, it doesn't look like it doesn't seem like it. You are important. You are needed, you are wanted. And sometimes that's that's it, that's it, that's some, some, some people just it. They need to feel that they are needed, or they are they are in people's thoughts, and if you told them that, then they're a lot more willing to be like, Okay, well, you know, if you say so. And if, if you say so, and you can, if you can, you really showing that. So I guess, like I should do it.

A

Albert Ruel 44:53

One of the things, one of the NVC lines, you know, going back to these feelings and needs and that sort of thing. One of the NVC (nonviolent communication) things that I really liked is called OFTENER. So it's observation. You know, somebody walks into the room and they think, Oh, my God, it's so freaking bright. And you get somebody turn the freaking lights down, and then you get 13 people arguing, no, no, I could use a little more light. It's not bright enough for me. So what NVC sort of teaches us to do is to make an observation. You look up at the ceiling and say, look at that. There's 12 fluorescent light fixtures in the room, and they're all turned on. Nobody's arguing, right? It's an observation, not an opinion. And so now you say, to me, this feels really bright, like it just it hurts. I'm gonna have to use sunglasses. It's so bright in here. And then, you know, I then you go to needs, and you say, you know, I in with my particular eye condition, or whatever it is. I need a little more subdued light in order to be able to concentrate on what's going on in the room or whatever is happening, and then the next thing is a request. And a request would be, you know, can we turn these down? But it's only a request if you're not emotionally attached to it. If you have an emotion attached to whether or not that request is granted or denied, that was a demand, not a request. And so going back, and I do try and do that myself and my volunteer work and in my interactions, was that an observation or an opinion I just rendered? Have I checked in with my feelings? How does this feel for me, and what are my needs that are being met or not being met at the time? And did I actually make a request, or am I emotionally attached to it? Which means, oh, shit, that was a demand. So you know, to me, that that's helped me to kind of understand a little bit more and to hear other people differently.

R

Ryan Fleury 49:34

How did you adapt to that mentality? Because that's not natural for our generation. That's not how we were brought up. That's how did you how did you evolve into that thinking?

A

Albert Ruel 49:45

I had to. Brenda said so.

B

Betty Nobel 49:51

Neccessity is the mother of invention.

R

Russell Leung 49:59

Your partner tells you so.

A

Albert Ruel 50:03

Yeah, Brenda and I met through personal development workshops, and then, you know, we went through this whole NVC thing together. So we keep each other a little more honest with it, because we both understand the language from the same perspective, right?

R

Ryan Fleury 50:19

Because it's not something you hear a lot about.

B

Betty Nobel 50:21

I remember when, when I was getting marriage counseling, one of the things that was was told to us was never say never and never say always. You always do that. You never do that. You don't say never and you don't say always.

A

Albert Ruel 50:48

The other one, you know we're talking about hearing, are two ears and one mouth, like the Bible said and and so does Marshall Rosenberg. But one of the exercises we had to do one time is two of us sat facing each other with their knees nearly touching, and one person was to have a discussion about an issue they were struggling with, an issue they're having trouble with. The other person had to listen. Couldn't say a word, wasn't allowed to make a comment, just just just be attentive, nod and show that you're listening, but shut up and just listen. And the amazing thing was, in every instance when the person was just allowed to explore and they were being heard, and they felt like they were being heard, when they just had to explore their issue, they always came to a resolution at the end.

B

Betty Nobel 51:43

But we're blind. We can't do that. We talk too much!

A

Albert Ruel 51:50

And we offer too many solutions to people, right? We as soon as we hear our problem halfway through the sentence where I'm interrupting and offering you a solution, right? I need to shut up and listen.

C

Clement Chou 52:03

I think you hit on something else that I've found too is I feel like sometimes as older people, and I can, I can say that now, because a lot, most of my friends are under 25 they are a lot happier. And now I've led table discussions of people around this age group as well. They feel a lot better when an older person tells them I don't know, I don't have a fix. Because I think as as older people, our tendency when we hear something is to say, well, what have you done about it? Or have you tried this? Have you tried this? Have you tried this? Have you tried this? And when we're teenagers, that was the worst thing you could tell us if you were older. But for some reason, we turn right around and we do it back to everyone else. So I think that's that's really shaped the way I communicate it with younger people as well. One two things is, one, I listen and ask a lot more questions. Two I'm much more comfortable now than I used to be with saying, look, I don't know. I don't have, I don't have a silver bullet fix to this.

A

Albert Ruel 53:13

I think my 42 year old son one time said - we were sitting around the campfire, and he he said he made an interesting observation. He says, you know, conversations are so different today, because we don't just muse about an issue. We don't just wonder about it, think about it, work our way through it. Somebody pulls out a phone and Google's it, and then comes up with an answer, boom, okay, well, that's the end of that discussion. Okay, that's

C

Clement Chou 53:59

And that comes back to that comes back to again, that talk of immediacy in our culture today. Yeah, right. We have to have a solution now, you know, it's kind of like Veruca Salt, you know, I'm aging myself here too, but like, you know, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. She's like, I want it daddy. I want it now!

A

Albert Ruel 54:16

And it's absolutely correct, because Google said, so, yeah, yeah, it couldn't possibly be wrong. We're misguided.

R

Ryan Fleury 54:27

So what you're saying, Clement, is, your generation doesn't want to work for anything. It's just at your fingertips with Google.

C

Clement Chou 54:36

Well, you know what it's trending towards, I do. I do think it's trending that way, and especially bringing it back to blind kids, especially congenitally blind kids, kids who are born blind. I think we we struggle with a lot, and we're also told that things take a lot more effort, and at some point it just gets exhausting. Sure it's true, like earlier, Betty was saying that, we do have to take things, take more energy, and we have to put in more effort. And I agree with that to a large extent. But I think when we tell younger, blind kids that too much, which I think we do. Or maybe it's, maybe it's not that we tell them, maybe it's our delivery. I don't know what that I don't know what the answer to that is. It could be both. But I think when we tell them that, the more we say it, the more it does become an idea, this kind of thought pattern, oh my gosh, then why would I even why bother then, right? Because I can now just open ChatGPT and I have a friend who will listen to me, and I don't have to worry about, you know, saying the wrong thing, or I don't have to worry about being judged for my disability, and I don't have I can put in as much effort as my sighted friends or as much perceived effort. And we forget that it takes energy to socialize for sighted people as well, but we spend so much because we send we spend so much time talking about how it takes more energy. Yeah, it takes more energy, but that doesn't mean that it's easy for sighted people to socialize, right? And I think that's what the younger generation needs to hear, is that everybody struggles socially. It may be amped up when you're disabled, the challenges may be there may be more, but the fundamental issue of socializing and fitting in is common to everybody.

B

Betty Nobel 56:39

Yeah, you know what I have trouble with. I tend to interrupt people because I think they've stopped speaking or I think, and I don't know if that has anything to do with, you know, like eye contact or what, but I find it super challenging,

R

Ryan Fleury 56:57

Especially over zoom meetings, because happens to me too.

A

Albert Ruel 57:04

I think that's a human condition.

R

Rob Mineault 57:06

Probably, you know, just listening to this conversation, I think that there's a lot of commonality. A lot of these things are just, it's about being human and being of different generations. You know, certainly some some specifics that is specific to the blindness community, but in general, what we're talking about at the end of the day, I think is connection? Is this, is this idea of connection, and how to connect. Like, you guys said that's the the million dollar question right now, and I don't know that we've solved that problem yet tonight, and I don't think we will, since we only have a few minutes left, but I think, I think this is a great start. It's been a fascinating conversation, and really interesting to hear everybody talk and interact. And I think that's really the the lynchpin of the solution, I think, or at least the beginning of it, is to just start these conversations and to just to get people interacting and talking. So I would love to do this again. I mean, certainly we with this pane;. We'll have a part two, certainly, maybe part three. And so, you know, before we start to wrap up, yeah, just anybody. Have any, any sort of final, final thoughts, anything to add before we start to wrap up?

A

Albert Ruel 58:53

I do, yeah. You know, I listened to a podcast last night. Dr Sherry Tenpenny was interviewing a doctor, an addictions doctor, Dr Steven, and I can't remember his last name, and one of the things that he said there really struck me. He said there is nothing more important to the rehabilitation and addictions process than connection, hope, involvement, engagement, all those things, because we are humans who are part of a tribe of a group. We're not created to be solo. And so he said, those are the most we have to have hope. So programs need to provide hope and engagement and involvement and, yeah, interaction, critical stuff.

B

Betty Nobel 59:49

Well, I'll follow up a little bit to what Albert said, because I think it is really important to have hope. It's also really important to not get discouraged. So, you know, if you fall off a horse and you're afraid to get back on again, but you get back on anyway, and, you know, you just try again. And I guess that's, that's the one thing that I would say, because we all face major challenges, and yet we get through it. And you know, good things can happen if we decide that we really want that to be the case. And I know that probably sounds a bit crazy, but I think it is really true.

C

Clement Chou 1:00:39

Absolutely I would agree with that. I think the biggest thing that I've learned over the past 15 years or so of being actively involved with young people is it's not it's not a solution, like Rob said, I don't think we've solved it quite yet, but I think a start is for both generations to really step into each other's worlds and be intentional about it, and the best way to do that is to ask each other questions. I think we don't ask and I think we like to opinionate and pontificate a lot more than we like to ask questions and learn. And I think if both generations could do that with each other, I think there could be a lot of headway in that connection, because there's nothing without I believe connection is the start to everything, and you can't connect if you don't communicate, and you can't communicate if you don't ask each other questions.

R

Russell Leung 1:01:36

I think there needs to be a lot more understanding and empathy and listening involved. Because, you know, everyone is so quick to do offer solutions, like, like I mentioned earlier, everyone's so quick to be like, Oh, why didn't you try this? Or everyone's so quick to snipe each other out when everyone is just asking, asking for you to listen. You don't have to, you don't have to say anything. Sometimes, listening, people just want to be heard, and that's it.

A

Albert Ruel 1:02:07

Yeah, good lesson to learn. Yeah, I think Chinese. I think it's a Chinese proverb that says, if you tell me, I will likely forget. If you show me, I may remember, but if you involve me, I will understand.

R

Ryan Fleury 1:02:19

It took us 10 years to get to a great show.

C

Clement Chou 1:02:29

Just shoot down every other guest.

R

Ryan Fleury 1:02:31

No, this was a great conversation.

R Rob Mineault 1:02:37

Yeah, it was, it was, I want to thank everybody for making some time for this. I really enjoyed it. And, yeah, let's do it again, right?

C Clement Chou 1:02:47

Ryan, you and I can happily pontificate.

R Ryan Fleury 1:02:51

I didn't want to cut you off, though.

R Rob Mineault 1:02:59

Before, before I let everybody go. Does anybody have anything they want to they want to plug to the audience, any, any way, websites, any organizations that you volunteer with that you'd like to give out the website? Anything at all?

B Betty Nobel 1:03:14

Well, I would just like to say that I don't know how many folks go on Ami+, but they have a lot of really great programming. It's the quality is really improved substantially. And they have a YouTube channel that they're just starting to develop as well, that I think is going to be really, really good. And it's sort of, you know, hoping to be a voice for people with disabilities, not just blindness and low vision anymore, just anybody with a disability. And there really is some great programming.

R Rob Mineault 1:03:50

Yeah, love it. AMI good friends of the show, we love our AMI+.

A

Albert Ruel 1:03:55

My only blindness involvement these days is with the Canadian Council of the Blind. I coordinate the local chapter and and I know that here in the BC Yukon division, they've got a really strong presence and great support and good people with, you know, the the really, you know, we're doing some good work in I think we've got four chapters here, just in the in the mid Island area, five chapters, Thanks again, everybody for doing this.

R

Ryan Fleury 1:04:25

Bye, buddy.

C

Clement Chou 1:04:28

All right. Thanks guys.

C

Clement Chou 1:04:31

thank you. Thanks Ryan.

R

Ryan Fleury 1:04:33

Thank you.

R

Russell Leung 1:04:34

Thanks guys!

R

Rob Mineault 1:04:34

lot. Well, there you go. That was fun.

R

Ryan Fleury 1:04:40

Yeah, yeah, it was a really great conversation that I haven't heard a lot of other organizations talking about. There's a lot of nonprofits that are struggling with how to communicate between the different generations. They're struggling to find younger members, newer members, because. Is the average demographic is 65, 70, plus in a lot of these organizations, and without new, younger people joining these organizations, are going to struggle and eventually die. And it's interesting to hear from Clement and Russell about how, you know, they don't want to be told, they want to be heard. And yet, at the same time, our generation and the Alberts and Bettys, I think we are a little bit selfish in some ways, because we have the lived experience. We know better because we've been through that already, right? So we try to get our opinion across and sometimes forcefully, without taking the time to step back and maybe empathize and listen. So yeah, I thought was, it was a good conversation.

R

Rob Mineault 1:05:51

Yeah, it was really good. And I'm looking forward to more. So stay tuned, everybody. We will definitely be doing some some more of this particular format, and you'll probably hear some of those voices again, I suspect. So, yeah, so thanks, Ryan, that was a, was a great idea that you came up with. We'll do it again. But for now, let's get the heck out of here.

R

Ryan Fleury 1:06:18

All right. So, Rob, yeah, where can people find us?

R

Ryan Fleury 1:06:22

People can find us at [www.atbanter.com](http://www.atbanter.com).

R

Rob Mineault 1:06:41

They can also send us an email to [cowbell@atbanter.com](mailto:cowbell@atbanter.com)

R

Rob Mineault 1:06:51

They can also find us on some social medias, if they so desire, like Facebook probably is the best, or Instagram a little bit, but mainly Facebook. And hey, if you're in the market for some cool assistive technology, don't forget to check out Canadian Assistive Technology. Their website, of course, is [www.canasstech.com](http://www.canasstech.com). All right, well, that I believe, is going to go do it for us this week. Big Thanks, of course, to Russell, Betty Albert and Clement for joining us, and we will see everybody next time.

S

Steve Barclay 1:07:39

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