

## Slow Italian, Fast Learning

Ep.374: 'Be curious': New campaign aims to improve autism understanding

Italian	English
<p>A Michael Theo non piace essere inquadrato in una sola casella.</p> <p>L'attore nativo di Sydney ha sempre saputo di voler intraprendere una carriera nello spettacolo. E non vuole essere limitato a un solo ambito.</p> <p><b>"I have always known that I have always wanted to be an actor since I was a very little kid. Since I was under five years of age. Because I enjoy making people laugh. And I enjoy the craft itself. Because in my eyes, the performing arts is a sacred form of arts and should be regarded as such. And also, acting is part of who I am."</b></p> <p>Quel sogno è stato reso più difficile da una diagnosi all'età di otto anni di quello che oggi è noto come Disturbo dello Spettro Autistico, ma che prima di una riclassificazione del 2013 includeva la Sindrome di Asperger.</p> <p>Il Disturbo dello spettro autistico si riferisce a una serie di condizioni che hanno un impatto sul modo in cui il cervello apprende e sul modo in cui elabora le informazioni sensoriali, come la luce e il rumore.</p> <p>Questa condizione, che dura tutta la vita, colpisce ogni individuo in modo diverso e influisce in misura variabile sulla sua capacità di interagire con le persone e con il mondo.</p> <p>Questo può avere profonde conseguenze sui risultati lavorativi e scolastici.</p>	<p>Michael Theo doesn't like to be put in one box.</p> <p>The Sydney-based actor always knew he wanted to pursue a career in the performing arts. And he doesn't want to be limited to one domain.</p> <p><b>"I have always known that I have always wanted to be an actor since I was a very little kid. Since I was under five years of age. Because I enjoy making people laugh. And I enjoy the craft itself. Because in my eyes, the performing arts is a sacred form of arts and should be regarded as such. And also, acting is part of who I am."</b></p> <p>That dream was made more challenging with a diagnosis at the age of eight of what is now known as Autism Spectrum Disorder, but which before a 2013 reclassification included Asperger's syndrome.</p> <p>Autism Spectrum Disorder refers to a range of conditions impacting the way the brain learns; and also how it processes sensory information – such as light and noise.</p> <p>The lifelong condition affects each individual differently - affecting their ability to interact with people and the world in varying degrees.</p> <p>This can have profound consequences on employment and education outcomes.</p>

### Special Broadcasting Service

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Per Michael, la decisione di organizzare la vita alle sue condizioni è stata presa molto presto.

**"I also decided a long time ago that I would no longer take no for an answer when it comes to my goals. Because I found myself taking no for an answer from others. But no one was hardly taking no for an answer for me. So I thought to myself: why should I do that for them?"**

Nel 2019, all'età di 25 anni, ha ottenuto il suo primo ruolo importante sullo schermo, nella serie di documentari australiana "Love on The Spectrum", che segue i giovani adulti dello spettro autistico mentre affrontano il mondo degli appuntamenti e delle relazioni.

Secondo lui l'incoraggiamento a perseguire le sue passioni è stato molto gratificante.

**"What living with it can be like and how difficult it can be to find love on the spectrum (are autistic). Because people on the spectrum have to work twice as hard to achieve their goals; what they want in life. Because there are some people in this world that aren't willing to give them that chance."**

Lo show non gli ha permesso di trovare un interesse amoroso duraturo, ma lo ha portato alla relazione che ha ora con la sua compagna, Jessica.

Ha portato anche ad altri progetti, tra cui l'ingresso nel mondo del podcasting e l'ultimo lavoro: un libro per bambini.

Secondo Micheal, il fatto di ricevere un sostegno da parte di coloro che lo circondano gli ha permesso di mostrare ciò

For Michael, he made a decision early on define life on his own terms.

**"I also decided a long time ago that I would no longer take no for an answer when it comes to my goals. Because I found myself taking no for an answer from others. But no one was hardly taking no for an answer for me. So I thought to myself: why should I do that for them?"**

In 2019, at the age of 25, he achieved his first major on screen role, on the Australian documentary series 'Love on The Spectrum', which follows young adults on the autism spectrum as they navigate the world of dating and relationships.

He says the encouragement to pursue his passions has been very rewarding.

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He didn't find a lasting love interest on the show, but it led him to the relationship he is now - with his partner, Jessica.

It has also led to other projects, including entering the world of podcasting and the latest project: a children's book.

He says being given that uplift from those around him has allowed him to showcase



<p>che può offrire e contribuire, e questo ha fatto la differenza.</p> <p>Secondo lui, il compito di raggiungere il proprio potenziale può essere compreso attraverso l'analogia di un seme.</p> <p><b>"How is a peach pit ever supposed to become a tree if you never give it a chance to grow? And the only way that they can grow is to be given the chance to fulfill their potential, unlock their potential, fulfill their goals and become whatever they wish to be."</b></p> <p>È anche per questo che sostiene l'ultima campagna commissionata dal fornitore di servizi per l'autismo <i>Aspect</i> per incoraggiare gli australiani di ogni estrazione sociale a migliorare la loro comprensione di come possono avere un impatto positivo sulla vita delle persone autistiche.</p> <p>Il sondaggio condotto da YouGov nel febbraio 2025 su oltre 1.000 persone ha rilevato che il 45% degli intervistati ha ammesso di avere una comprensione limitata dell'autismo.</p> <p>Un terzo degli intervistati ha dichiarato di non sapere cosa dire se qualcuno rivela di essere autistico.</p> <p>L'amministratrice delegata di <i>Aspect</i>, Jacqui Borland, afferma che la ricerca rivela i progressi compiuti nei 17 anni da quando le Nazioni Unite hanno dichiarato una giornata internazionale per migliorare la consapevolezza e la comprensione dell'autismo..</p> <p><b>"So look I don't think there is ongoing research. Aspect commissioned this piece of research just to find out where we're at. So we have had autism awareness campaigns for a number of years. So we do know that with 1 in 40 people diagnosed on</b></p>	<p>what he can offer and contribute - and it has made all the difference.</p> <p>He says the task of achieving one's full potential can be understood through the analogy of a seed.</p> <p><b>"How is a peach pit ever supposed to become a tree if you never give it a chance to grow? And the only way that they can grow is to be given the chance to fulfill their potential, unlock their potential, fulfill their goals and become whatever they wish to be."</b></p> <p>It is also why he supports the latest campaign commissioned by autism service provider <i>Aspect</i> to encourage Australians from all walks of life to improve their understanding of how they can make a positive impact in the lives of autistic people.</p> <p>The survey of more than 1,000 people was conducted by YouGov in February 2025, finding that 45 per cent of those surveyed admitted to having a limited understanding of autism.</p> <p>A third of respondents said they did not know what to say if someone disclosed they are autistic.</p> <p>The CEO of <i>Aspect</i>, Jacqui Borland, says the research is revealing on the progress made in the 17 years since the United Nations declared an international day to improve awareness and understanding of autism.</p> <p><b>"So look I don't think there is ongoing research. Aspect commissioned this piece of</b></p>
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**the autism spectrum; a lot of Australians do now have a personal connection with autism. So we know that awareness is growing stronger. But the next stage to awareness is understanding. This piece of research was really trying to get past awareness - to just how well people think they understand autism."**

La Giornata mondiale della consapevolezza dell'autismo, che si tiene ogni anno il 2 aprile, promuove la piena realizzazione dei diritti umani e delle libertà fondamentali per le persone autistiche, assicurando loro una partecipazione paritaria alla società.

Per Borland il vero potenziale degli australiani autistici non è ancora stato realizzato, in particolare per quanto riguarda l'occupazione.

**"Autistic people are unemployed or underemployed to a far greater degree than the general population and even to a greater degree to people with other types of disability. So what that tells us is there is this large group of people who do have skills and who do want to work. If we can just understand, make those adjustments to our workplaces; perhaps to our hiring practices in the first place. Then there is a potential to really - for the betterment of our community - include autistic people in the workforce."**

Secondo l'autrice, le modifiche che possono essere apportate sul posto di lavoro possono essere semplici e giovare all'intera forza lavoro.

Per esempio, istruzioni scritte in anticipo, la creazione di una stanza tranquilla per la meditazione o la fornitura di cuffie a

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Held annually on April 2, the global day World Autism Awareness Day promotes the full realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms for autistic individuals, ensuring their equal participation in society.

Ms Borland says the true potential of autistic Australians has yet to be realised, particularly when it comes to employment.

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She says adjustments that can be made in the workplace can be simple and benefit the whole workforce.



cancellazione di rumore per ridurre il livello sonoro negli uffici.

**"Just being flexible in terms of how you might communicate. The sort of environment you might expect an autistic person to be in. How busy that environment is. How noisy that environment is. But very much being led by the autistic person and what they tell you supports them. Because first and foremost, we know that every autistic person is different. The best thing we can do is to ask them individually how we can support them."**

Per Ainslie Robinson, madre di due bambini, ricevere una diagnosi di autismo da adulta è stato un punto di svolta.

**"So I was raised in the '80s; and not much was known about autism back then. So there was the searching for answers back then. But there just wasn't the information to be had. So my diagnosis did come after my son's. I self-identified with my son, which was when I was 33 and he was just on 3 years old and I then sought official diagnosis shortly thereafter. It gave me permission to be kinder to myself because before that period of my life I thought that the way I interacted with people - and the way that I did everything was essentially wrong. And that takes a toll on a person and their mental health - a significant one. Once I had the diagnosis, it allowed me to be a lot more compassionate with myself."**

Ricercatrice e funzionaria di *Aspect*, dedica molto tempo a colmare il divario per superare le incomprensioni che influenzano l'atteggiamento verso le persone affette da autismo.

Things like written instructions ahead of time, setting up a quiet room for meditation, or the provision of noise-cancelling headphones to reduce the sound level in offices.

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For mother-of-two, Ainslie Robinson receiving a diagnosis for autism as an adult was a turning point.

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A researcher and working-in-partnership officer at *Aspect*, she now spends a lot of time bridging the gap to overcome



<p>Secondo lei, l'approccio migliore è essere curiosi e conoscere le persone come esseri umani.</p> <p><b>"I think that is the greatest way to open that conversation in a really neutral way. And over time learning how interactions might be different with that person. Just seek clarity, instead of getting upset with the person. I would just like to see when I'm out and about and I happen to mention that I - or one of us - in our ragtag band of misfits is autistic. That random people that I encounter can say: oh, I know this about autism. Or demonstrate a level of understanding and empathy. I think that would be pretty cool."</b></p> <p>Michael Theo si dice d'accordo e che le piccole azioni possono avere un grande impatto.</p> <p><b>"In terms of responding to someone who discloses that they're autistic. One of the best things that you can ask them: is there anything I can do to accommodate you. In my case, I would say something like: generally, you don't need to do much. I don't want or need special treatment. Sometimes when noise gets to be too much, I just need a quiet space, so I can recharge. Our energy levels are like batteries and they always need recharging. Everyone has a way to recharge. If noise becomes too much for me, I would just need a quiet space."</b></p>	<p>misunderstandings that impact attitudes towards those with autism.</p> <p>She says the best approach is to be curious - and get to know people as humans.</p> <p><b>"I think that is the greatest way to open that conversation in a really neutral way. And over time learning how interactions might be different with that person. Just seek clarity, instead of getting upset with the person. I would just like to see when I'm out and about and I happen to mention that I - or one of us - in our ragtag band of misfits is autistic. That random people that I encounter can say: oh, I know this about autism. Or demonstrate a level of understanding and empathy. I think that would be pretty cool."</b></p> <p>Michael Theo says he echoes that - and says small actions can have a big impact.</p> <p><b>"In terms of responding to someone who discloses that they're autistic. One of the best things that you can ask them: is there anything I can do to accommodate you. In my case, I would say something like: generally, you don't need to do much. I don't want or need special treatment. Sometimes when noise gets to be too much, I just need a quiet space, so I can recharge. Our energy levels are like batteries and they always need recharging. Everyone has a way to recharge. If noise becomes too much for me, I would just need a quiet space."</b></p>
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