

Episode_2_Sio.mp3

James Fisher: [00:00:02] Please be advised. We will be discussing subjects that may not be suitable for all audiences and will include subjects that some will find challenging traumatic or triggering.

Keaton Leikam: [00:00:17] Welcome to youdontfightalone a podcast sharing the stories of those of us successfully living with mental illness and how we got there.

Sio: [00:00:34] My worst moment in my life was definitely August I'm trying to think of the date. August 12th 2013.

Sio: [00:00:51] I was just finished school. I was sorry no it was summer break still. But school was starting the next week. I walked down the stairs lugged my cello down walked out the door and my mom was standing there crying her eyes out and just screaming and she was the only thing she could say was my baby. My baby get in the car my baby.

Sio: [00:01:23] And I was obviously freaked out. You don't want to come out of your cello lesson. To your mom screaming my baby. And then she was on the phone. Now she's getting more and more freaked out. She was talking about the police coming to my house.

Sio: [00:01:43] And I did not know what was going on. I was texting my friend at the time like I don't know what's happening and we get in the car. We go out of the driveway. My mom bless her heart she is she's trying to hold it together just to get us home.

Sio: [00:02:03] But as we're getting out of the parking lot she goes Trever killed himself.

Sio: [00:02:17] So my name is Sio and my diagnosis is a few I have Asperger's PTSD depression a used to be diagnosed with bipolar but I don't think it's there anymore.

Sio: [00:02:36] I think that's oh ADD for sure.

Sio: [00:02:49] Growing up I was the youngest of six. It was a very full household.

Sio: [00:02:56] There is a huge age gap between a lot of us. So it steadily got smaller and smaller as more and more siblings moved back out and moved back in then moved back out again.

Sio: [00:03:10] At one point we had five fridges just in the garage.

Sio: [00:03:16] It's great. We were in this little known little but it was a nice little suburban home nice neighborhood. We didn't know I had Aspergers but looking back I definitely like parallel played with other kids and so I would have friends and I would play with them except I wouldn't play like they are a game I just play near them a completely different thing. But it would look like I'm playing with them and apparently parallel play is something that is pretty tied with Asperger's and everything. Unbeknownst to me at the time.

Sio: [00:04:01] Usually I'd. Come home from school and just play videogames. Typical typical me since I'm transgender very much girl stuff is push on me and I just wouldn't have it ever since I was little I was the biggest tomboy ever.

Sio: [00:04:31] Hated dresses.

Sio: [00:04:34] I'm pretty sure my mom always says on Thanksgiving but she put me in this dress dress with ruffles and I said I wook ridiculous before I could really really talk.

Sio: [00:04:46] Pretty sure that I knew. And then when I was about 10. We were on vacation and hot in Iowa of all places to vacation seeing my Opa.

Sio: [00:05:03] And there is this transgender person on Oprah. And I was like wow. I'm transgender. That sounds like me. So it's like hey mom I'm transgender.

Sio: [00:05:18] I didn't know it was supposed to be like this big coming out thing or anything about that. I was 10 years old. She goes yeah honey OK. You know your sister went through the same phase. You'll get out of it. Sure. I haven't changed my fashion sense in since I was 2. Mind you it's always been shorts and a T-shirt. Very short hair since kindergarten.

Sio: [00:05:43] Anyways I got mistaken for a boy growing up so much a lot better being mistaken for a boy. Anyways hey mom i'm transgender, oh well okay. It's just a phase. But a year passes I'm like hey mom.

Sio: [00:05:57] Still think I'm transgender you let Oprah girl you know

Sio: [00:06:09] High school. Yeah yeah. OK. So that was a rough it was tenth grade not ninth but it was still horrible school. I had a very bad first year and I went from all accelerated plus classes down to special ed reading books that I had read in fifth grade because. But because we didn't know that I had Asperger's. But. They thought. I wasn't turning in any work that I didn't know anything. And it was just me forgetting detement work. And so I got placed in this program that's not like super special ed but it's not normal classes. So I was just doing at the school and my teacher. Miss Uttererback. She's awesome. She goes, have you ever heard of Denver Academy. I said well no she goes Listen if you stay another year here we're sending you to the Manor because you can't continue on at the School because you're in this program. You'll you'll need to either drop out or go to the Manor which is where my brother was sent which got him addicted to drugs he started taking with the wrong crowd. It was like... I did not want to go to the school or drop out. So she's like I live next to Denver Academy. It's this great school. It's specially designed for kids that just need a different way of learning. And the next two weeks thanksgiving break happened when I was enrolled in Denver Academy. In class with school. Making new friends. It was totally but so much better. I went from having a graduating class of twelve hundred to 35 people being in my grade. And it was a godsend because it wasn't big enough for clicks it wasn't big enough for bullying you all had to get along. Or you weren't in the school anymore. It's a private school and it just a godsend. After what had happened and the thing about the school was everyone who went there. Had some sort of problem that meant they could not be in public school. And so you have kids with all walks of life from everywhere. And I got in my class and I'd sat behind this girl and she said hi and from there on out we were like best teas and I had never really had like a single besty it was life changing to have an actual best friend.

Sio: [00:09:16] So I got into this new school.

Sio: [00:09:20] Nothing changed about like my dressing our hair because I had already been dressing as a boy had already had a short haircut. Hey my names Carter I'm going to go by Carter I'm going to try and get the teachers onboard and use he him pronouns even though my voice is like a Disney princess.

Sio: [00:09:42] I don't look anything like a man. It was hard it was hard transitioning from my day to day life and to a guy because once other people started getting on board.

Sio: [00:10:00] You get treated a lot different

Sio: [00:10:15] I've had depression since I was six.

Sio: [00:10:18] It runs in the family.

Sio: [00:10:22] Been off and on like so many medication for that since I was six. I was just used to it. We're finding stuff that worked. And then that stuff would no longer work.

Sio: [00:10:34] Then we'd go on to the next med, its the cycle.

Sio: [00:10:41] But it was I think I needed a psych evaluation to get into Denver Academy to get an IEP and what not. And. An IEP is basically a thing schools, you can get and you have quote unquote a disability and gives you know one might be for extra time on tests one might be for written notes.

Sio: [00:11:16] So you don't have to take them but you still you know or audio notes something like that that can help a student. Thrive.

Sio: [00:11:31] So I got the diagnosis that I had Asperger's and it was kind of a surprise at first. Wow.

Sio: [00:11:39] It had never even come across in our mind that I could have Asperger's.

Sio: [00:11:57] I think having depression since I was so little definitely impacted me because I had.

Sio: [00:12:06] A very happy life. I was just unhappy for a lot of it for no reason and being ons. The medications for it definitely affected me. There was one where it would make me pee my bed and like. I'm 8 years old I'm potty trained I can I don't have it we figured out it was the medicine.

Sio: [00:12:28] That was like. I couldn't go to sleepovers. I couldn't I couldn't have fun with my friends at night sleepover parties. It was like. We tried many times because again I was so young to get me off of meds and each time.

Sio: [00:12:46] It was hell. I mean all of a sudden we agreed to drop I would be so unhappy I wouldn't want to do anything. I was depressed. In the second we got my meds back on I was fine. I was this happy little kid and so totally I mean I don't think I'd be here today if I wasn't medicated. I was just miserable without the pills. It sounds awful but honestly it's just the just the chemicals in the brain and the pills just put the right chemicals in the right places.

Sio: [00:13:32] After the diagnosis of Asperger's it's like yeah it makes sense. And it also makes sense that I would have a limited options just because I'm not cut out for certain things that you know maybe I wanted to do.

Sio: [00:13:48] I definitely don't want to do that now. But.

Sio: [00:13:53] It was like I wasn't sure if I was going to finish high school graduating high school. I was very very set in my mind that I could not go to college. I was not mentally able to go to college and school was still very hard. It wasn't like school just became super easy. It was still a challenge. And really bad anxiety does being in a classroom. And I tried one semester at a community college ACC and I started out with three classes I was like I cannot do this I cannot do

this. I ended up just dropping the other two finishing this one class because it was really fun. A history nerd. There was crusades role play involved. I was like yes sure I can be King of France. I'm not in I figured you know after this semester I'm not going to college ever again. I can do whatever I want. I'm just going to go to class and I didn't try that hard. I was like okay well what else could I do. So I started looking at my options. Not going to college. That significantly lowers your options. So I was looking into crime scene cleanup. I figured well I don't have a sense of smell I lost that in a concussion. Years and years ago when I was 15 my horse kicked me in the head was Mrs. Snow. It happened. So I figured you know why not crime scene clean up I won't gag at the smell because I can't smell it. I'm okay with like Gore. I clean. Every time a coyote gets hurt one of her chickens I got to clean it up. And can't be that different.

Sio: [00:16:10] There's been little. Things in my life where I've noticed that if my parents are there I won't do anything but if they're gone out clean I'll cook I'll do all this stuff. Every single time they had a night out I cooked me the best dinner ever. I cleaned up after myself because I was paranoid of what would happen if they came back and it was a mess.

Sio: [00:16:31] So I was like Okay sure. I started we finally found this apartment.

Sio: [00:16:38] That would accept me in my bird because my bird is like my life.

Sio: [00:16:44] He's really really helped me like overcome so much because he's just my little buddy. He's a cockatoo.

Sio: [00:16:52] Named Spartacus. He's cool.

Sio: [00:16:57] So we found an apartment that would accept a parrot. You think they're loud they're louder. But we moved into this apartment and I've kept clean.

Sio: [00:17:14] I've been living on my own.

Sio: [00:17:17] I might drive down to my parents house once a week just to say hi or pick up food. When I go to school everyday which is something that I've previously struggled with I almost didn't graduate school because I had just. Faked sickness everyday because I didn't want to go to school. So it was a concern of theirs that I would just not show up. Showed up everyday. I started going to classes. I love zoo keeping. So it's like animals are my life. This is what I want to do. This is how I'm going to do it. I'm living on my own going to college. Didn't think that was even possible. I'm going to have a career and have a degree.

Sio: [00:18:02] I'd call that pretty successful for me for not having a any any faith that I could accomplish half of what I've already done so far

Sio: [00:18:30] So got out from that bottom point of losing my brother to having this totally new experiences of changing schools being actually enjoying class. I plan to be a zookeeper. You know for life. And the first day of Denver Academy. My last my last class of the day was zoology.

Sio: [00:18:57] Say yes that obviously

Sio: [00:19:03] Changed to Denver Academy. It just opened up my life. It's just. Oh my gosh. I mean half the class half of my grade had us pictures. So is like I was just surrounded by people like me that weren't judge mental or had the same social awkward awkwardness as me.

Sio: [00:19:24] So it was more of like embrace it in the school. No one had a disability we all had

learning differences and that's like we all share a difference. Was this great oxymoron to live by. Because it also just yeah I have Asperger's I'm going to be proud of this. That's going to be. As far as the kids very concerned my diagnosis.

Sio: [00:19:52] Because be like hey what's your problem.

Sio: [00:19:56] Be proud of it. You know

[00:20:03] If I have one sentence to say to 8 year old me it would be like be proud of who you are embrace who you are and just go into animals

[00:20:16] For more information please visit youdontfightalone.org.

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