

[music playing]

[Narelle] Hi.

Welcome to the
Digital Access Show.

Today, I want to focus on an area
that I have a big passion in.

As some of you
have heard in the past,

I do have a son with autism.

And he is high functioning.
He's often living his life.

But he has
communication challenges.

I also have an ADHD
son that's off living his life,

and a lot of social
communication challenges there.

Trust me, it gets interesting.

I love them dearly.

They're my sons.

And to talk about this subject,

I've actually brought
on a specialist

that works with many
people with autism,

and other mental health issues.

Jeb Ryan is from
Heart-Led Support.

Jeb, thank you so

much for coming on.

[Jeb] My pleasure, Narelle.

Thank you so much for having me.

Look forward to
our conversation.

[Narelle] Yeah, I'm
excited about this.

I met you through Joseph Lee,

who was a previous
guest on the show,

where Joseph
talked about dyslexia.

But I really want to pivot away
from that into mental health

and digital communication

and communication,

because it's such an
invisible disability, isn't it?

Mental health, autism.

Can you tell us a bit about what
you do at Heart-Led Support,

and a bit about you?

[Jeb] Yeah.

Absolutely. So, I'm
one of the directors.

And the reason why, I guess,
Heart-Led Support began for me,

was I came through
my own lived experience.

I'm dyslexic myself.

I had trouble learning,

and throughout my life,

I guess I got caught up in the
wrong crowds, the wrong places.

Growing up in a low
socioeconomic area,

it was really hard to,

I guess, find my place.

And in finding my
place, as I was saying,

I ended up in some interesting,

challenging, dark
places throughout my life. And...

through that journey, being
so lost in my internal compass,

and not understanding myself and
not understanding the values,

and I guess, yeah, walking
around like Jack Sparrow.

The compass spinning
around, that was me.

I'm like, where do I go?
Where do I turn? Who am I?

And all the rest and going
through all that as a young boy,

and even a young man.

And through my own challenges
and my own setbacks,

I found men's work
and I found a place...

where I got to discover myself,

to learn about myself,

and to learn about why
I do the things that I do,

to understand my mind,

to understand my
patterns and behaviours.

And I guess that came through
a lot of self-reflection,

which was a really, really
big turning point in my life.

And through that, I became,

I don't really want to
use the word influencer,

but I became someone that
was more of an inspiration.

That's probably
the best word to use.

In the space of mental health,

in the space of addiction,

in the space of just
men doing it tough,

fathers that were
struggling with home life,

juggling all the balls
that we juggle as men,

protecting, serving,

loving our family,

you know,

providing to our family.

And...

It led me down a path

of supporting those men.

And then I had a mentor that

I was working with at the time.

And I'm really big on

having mentors in my space,

and people that I

want to learn from,

or I don't get what

they're talking about,

but I want to understand it,

and putting myself

in places like that.

And yeah, as I was saying,

I was working with a mentor,

and he mentioned the NDIS.

He said, hey man, I've had a...

referral come

through for a client.

I don't think I'm a really

good match for him,

but I think you'd be

really good with him.

I was like, I've always been

interested in the NDIS space.

I just didn't know
how to access it.

And through asking
a lot of questions,

and putting myself
in those places

that I didn't know what
they were talking about,

but wanted to know,

I started to support
people on the NDIS.

And through that,

it was one,
so incredibly rewarding.

I was able to bring...

something that at the time,

well, maybe not at the time,

but something

through my life that...

potentially looked dark and

looked messy and distorted.

I was able to bring all

that into supporting men.

A deep understanding

and a place of...

a lot of empathy and compassion,

because I could

relate to a lot of men.

And...

I started, as I was saying,
supporting a lot of men.

I was by myself.

I was a one-man
band at that stage.

You know, Heart-Led
Support wasn't...

wasn't even a thing.

It was just Jeb Ryan out there,
you know, helping men, and...

getting a really great name for
for the work that I was doing,

because I was changing
a lot of men's lives.

You know, participants that...

hadn't really left their
home for 15 years,

was one participant.

[Narelle] Yeah.

[Jeb] And by the time,

you know, I really
got the ball turning,

and with the snowball
effect that was happening,

he was out living his
best life, you know?

He had a dream to go to the
Bathurst 1000 for his 30th,

and I made that dream
come true with him.

You know, and I got everyone in.

I actually snuck around
the Bathurst 1000 crowd

and I got everyone to...

know a little bit
about who he was.

I wanted to get everyone
to sing happy birthday,

and I snuck a cake in.

And the crowd in the local, or
the area that we were sitting,

I was like one, two, three, and

we sang happy birthday to him.

We all had a birthday cake.

Just doing like really great
things like that to really...

create a good life for people.

Helping men obviously
with mental health,

acquired brain injuries,
you know, ASD,

all those sorts of spaces.

But it's been phenomenal.

Now we have Heart-Led
Support, which is...

yeah, right across

Southeast Queensland.

We're in Melbourne.

And we're just doing
really, really great work

with a lot of
psychosocial disabilities.

A lot of people, you know,
with intellectual disabilities,

And, yeah, it's been fantastic.

That's a bit about
Heart-Led, a bit about me.

[Narelle] That's exciting,
particularly the Bathurst,

because I am a Bathurst fan.

I'm massive. I'm a hoon.

When I was driving,

I was a bit of a hoon,

Massive hoon, actually.

After I handed my licence in,

I then told mum how

many speeding tickets I had.

There were a few but, you know,

you've got to test a car out.

That was my theory.

[Jeb] Yeah, I'm a Harley

man and a hot rod, and...

I love all that

sort of stuff. Yeah.

[Narelle] Yeah, no.

I was never allowed to
drive a V8 for some reason.

But anyway,

what I wanted to
talk about with it is,

and from my
knowledge with my sons,

there's a huge problem
in that it is an invisible...

disability, number one.

And number two,

digital communication is really
a problem for them, isn't it?

I know for my sons,

if they find a page

with a lot of words on it,

it's too much.

Or particularly, my

ASD son does not read.

At all.

He uses audio books now.

He flogs audio books,

but he does not read

and he has never read.

And at school, it was a

massive problem, because again,

they were presenting

him with information...

in a way that he
couldn't handle.

What's your experience?

[Jeb] Yeah, I think,

yeah, just coming back to
mental health and being such a...

thing, we can't see it, right?

So, and I think even more,
even more in men,

cause they want to hide it,

because there's been a stereotype
throughout society of like,

don't cry, you know,

don't be seen as weak as a man,
and all those sorts of things.

So men hide,

I guess, mental
health struggles a lot,

a lot more...

through my experience,

and obviously
supporting a lot of men.

And I'm sure, you know,

women and people out in
the community also struggle

to those degrees
and those levels.

But I'll speak on the men,

because that's what I'm
really passionate about.

And yeah, it's definitely,
even through my own experience,

I didn't want to talk about the
struggles that I was having...

until I found safety.

And safety was a
really big piece for me.

And that was
safety in other men,

and relatability,

because I saw other men

going through similar things,

and I was like, oh,

wow, I'm not alone in this.

And also, I feel really safe to
share what's going on for me,

which was a big turning point.

And also, again,

coming back to when there's
too many words and all that,

or if someone puts
a paper in front of me,

and it seems like it's thick,

I instantly, even in school,

I struggled in school so much

because I'm a hands-on learner.

I can turn a spinner.

I can rebuild an engine.

I can pull the wheels
off a motorbike.

I can create a
phenomenal business

that's serving in
a powerful way.

But if you were to put a...

like a policies and it's
like 10, 20 pages long,

I'm just like, oh my God,
that's so overwhelming.

And I personally
love audio books.

I personally love...

[Narelle] Yeah.

-That's better.

-[Jeb] You got me back?

[Narelle] Yeah. So you started
to talk about audio books.

[Jeb] Yeah. And for me,
audio books has been...

has been so great,
you know, because...

I've read one book
in my whole time of,

you know, the past 36 years.

I maybe read books as a kid,

but I guess one educational
book, you know, and...

I read that, it was
a gift from a friend,

and it was talking about the
black dog and about depression.

I was like, you know,
this is a great book.

And I read that,

and it was a sense
of achievement

for me to get to
the end of that book.

But the amount of audio
books that I have in my...

Spotify and Audible is greater
than my book collection at home,

because I'd rather, for me,
listen to an audio book.

I'm kind of like a multi-type.

I can listen to an audio book,

and I can do a bit
of work on the side,

or I can drive the
car or whatever,

whatever I'm doing.

So yeah, again, just
making it really simple,

I think is really important.

If we have simple information
that's easy to digest,

yeah.

What would be the change?

[Narelle] What
would be the change

if suddenly all the agreements
that you've got to sign,

all the PDFs, everything,

were able to be
accessed audibly?

What would be
the change for you?

[Jeb] For me,

I wouldn't just put it aside

and just trust in what
someone else has told me.

For example, we discussed
briefly about service agreements,

you know, before
we jumped on the call.

If I had for myself a service
agreement that was audible,

then the likelihood
of me listening to that...

is far greater than
the likelihood of...

myself actually reading through
that 20, 30, even up to 40 pages.

It depends what they have
in their service agreements.

Ours are very easily
digestible, I believe,

and no doubt there's more
work that we can do on that,

because there's always
room for improvement.

And having this conversation,

for me, is a really great
reminder to re-look at that,

and look at how we can
improve that service for people.

But yeah, audible
would be amazing.

[Narelle] Yeah.

And it is possible.

I don't think people realise you
can make the service agreements,

you can make all of
those things audible.

Just people don't
know how to do it.

And that's really what digital
accessibility is all about.

Another issue
that I used to have...

with my son is...

distractions on a web page,

whether it's action

suddenly happening,

which triggered him.

Or a colour that

he couldn't stand.

Or...

How do you deal with

that with your clients?

What do you do?

[Jeb] I think,

I think for us,

it's a matter of...

supporting them in that moment

and asking them what they need.

But you know, if...

we look at like things...

about TikTok, for example,

or Instagram,

or Facebook, and all those

social media platforms,

you know, reels are

so quickly like within the,

I think it's within

the first 15 seconds,

is the engagement piece.

So what we're actually

doing by having,

you know, TikTok, by having like
Instagram reels and those things,

which I'm an advocate for.

I get on Instagram and
share things about Heart-Led,

or I share things about
my own personal journey...

for engagement to
support other people,

and not for any social
fame or anything like that.

It's more about
creating awareness.

But what we are actually
doing is we're making...

our minds, I guess,

become less...

engaged in things that aren't...

quick and easy and just

bang, like, bang, bang,

It's bang, right

there in front of us,

and flashing in front

of our face kind of thing.

I see the potential for

things to only get worse

before they might

get better as well.

[Narelle] I hadn't

thought of it that way,

that it will get worse,

yeah, because...

Yeah, because you think

of that teen doing grade 12.

Yeah!

[Jeb] Look at young

kids these days too.

Like I go to the

cafe with my partner,

and I look around and

there's kids in prams with...

with phones or iPads

in front of their face.

And I'm just like...

you're, yeah, in such
an early stage in their life,

you know, between the ages
of one to six is like the most...

important time
in a child's life.

And they're already on,

they're already on, you
know, watching reels,

or they're watching,

I don't know, different shows
on ABC and stuff like that.

But it's creating...

a neurological,

potentially creating,

I wouldn't say, I'm not a
scientist or anything like that,

but yeah, it's potentially
creating a more...

a bigger problem for the future.

So, yeah. It's...

It's challenging
to, I guess, face,

but we've got to face it,

and we've got to find
solutions to these problems.

And the solution,
I believe, begins,

I guess, in that space,
it begins with the parents.

It begins with the people that
are looking after those children,

and their responsibility...

that they need to uphold
to make sure their kids are...

digesting or, sorry, ingesting
the correct information,

and the right things that
support their development.

For us, we loved our
little bub to play with.

Like toys and engaging toys that
are created to help the mind.

[Narelle] I actually
agree with you.

I know for me, when
my kids were young,

it was books and lots of books,

and lots of puzzles
and things like that.

My kids were heavily
into the puzzles and things.

And to be honest, you
know, the big puzzles,

I go, yeah, yawn, but
they would get into it.

But my kids are also runners
and they needed to run.

And I always used to find
if my kids went and ran,

when they got home,

then they sit down
and do their homework.

It's like letting
off that energy

that gives them the
ability to concentrate.

But again, the problems then
came in of heaps of words,

forms,

you know, homework that was
really squashed together and,

you know, it didn't work well.

Or they'd have to
go on the internet

and research too many words.

[Jeb] Yeah, yeah.

So I think,

part of answering your previous
question is like really creating...

easy to digest information,

providing support,

asking lots of questions,

you know, when working
with someone that has...

psychosocial challenges or
neurological challenges to...

ask them what they need,

and they might not
be able to answer that.

So just creating space,

or going to someone that they
feel safe with including them,

or asking them what they need,

and then providing that,

and thinking outside
the box too, really.

It's really important.

[Narelle] Yeah. Jeb,

you've just given me three best,

I was going to ask what's
some advice you can give people,

and you've just done it.

Jeb, how can people
keep in contact with you

to find out more
about what you do,

and you know, maybe come
along if they need to help,

they need some help.

What can they do to contact you?

[Jeb] Yeah. Thanks for asking.

Connect on LinkedIn,

if you want to connect
with me personally.

We're obviously on Instagram,
Facebook, and Google.

If you search Heart-Led Support,

we've got a local
hub in North lakes,

which is a very
community engaging hub.

You know, there's...

any time, you can come on down.

We're open Monday to Friday,

and there's a pool

table, a ping pong table.

There's a gym area for
guys to move their bodies.

There's a sauna there.

There's an ice bath.

So, we get into those holistic
ways of supporting people.

There's a chill out area
that's a bit more slow,

a bit more calm for
people that might be,

you know,
getting too stimulated.

-[Narelle] Yeah.

-[Jeb] Yeah.

[Jeb] Feel free
to just reach out.

There's so many different
ways to connect with us.

I think coming
through the website,

or jumping on our socials
and sending us a message.

Or jumping on
LinkedIn and adding me.

Yeah. I'm more than
happy to have a chat,

connect and see how I
can support other people.

Yeah. So that's some ways.

And for other

providers out there,

other allied health services

or support coordinators,

people like that,

I run free breath work

and burnout workshops.

So if your team needs any support

around understanding burnout,

understanding what

breath work is,

and how to regulate

the nervous system,

and how to support themselves,

I'm more than happy to come

and run that, and it's free.

So, yeah,

it's something, part
of my mission is to...

help people understand more
about their nervous system,

understand the vagus nerve,

understand what breath work is
and how to support themselves,

and just create more
awareness around burnout,

because it's a challenging
industry at times.

Yeah, it's part of
what I love to do.

[Narelle] Thanks, Jeb.

I'll actually put the
website at the end of the...

at the end of the podcast,

God, I had a brain,
my brain snapped there.

-[Narelle] Jeb, thank you.

-[Jeb] It's okay.

[Narelle] You've explained things
to me that I hadn't thought of,

particularly about the
babies, cause obviously,

having a severe vision
impairment, I don't realise it.

You know, babies
and the young ones...

are already on the
tablets and the phones.

I should have thought about it.

But it's the other points as
well that you've talked about,

particularly in regards to,

you know, asking the questions.

I think that's
just the best way.

Yeah. So look,

thank you again for coming on.

If you like what we do,

like, subscribe, review.

[Jeb] My pleasure.

[Narelle] We will see you next
time on the Digital Access Show.

[music playing]