

[Narelle] Good morning, Allan. How are you? [Allan] Good morning, Narelle. [Narelle] I'd like to introduce everyone to Allan Parker. Allan Parker is the Uh, I'm not quite the, he's a micro behavioural neuroscientist and linguist. Allan owns a company called Peak Personal Development. And Allan is, uh, a well known, a very well known mediator and communications expert in Australia. And what we're talking about today is communication and accessibility. Because Allan fronts a lot of conferences, a lot of cloud meetings and he's the, what would you call it Allan? The, he runs them. Basically, he's the, I'm trying to think of the word. [Allan and Narelle speak at the same time.] [Narelle] The moderator. [Allan] The moderator, the convenor, facilitator sometimes. [Narelle] Yes, of meetings. And he works with many different large companies, government, private organisations, federal and state and local government and large organisations to mediate disputes, internationally. Allan also does a lot of training in communication worldwide and Allan's actually just got back from Rome, where he was, did some training over there for a quite a large organise, actually a very large organisation. So thanks for coming and spending some time with us Allan. [Allan] Absolute, absolute pleasure and a joy. Thank you. And if I may say, it was the, it was a quite a wonderful experience in many, many ways. And, and it is a lovely example of accessibility. Because, see, I had the pleasure and the privilege of being invited to teach at the Pontifical Gregoriana University in Rome. [Narelle] That is awesome. Allan] And it's, it's actually the, it's the very first Catholic University in the world. It was developed in the 15th century by Pope Gregory. Pope, Pontifical Gregorino. [Narelle] And, if I'm wrong, let me know. But weren't you there just before Pope Benedict died? [Allan] I was. We, we [Narelle] Must have been very sad. [Allan] I left Rome two days before his passing and I was in Saint Peters two days before he passed and there was a a huge amount of people there already. in the, in the Saint Peters Square. Yeah, very sad, very sad passing. [Narelle] Yeah, it is. Allan, the reason I wanted to talk to you is I wanted to get a bit of an idea about how you handle accessibility in your work. Inclusivity, diversity. Allan and I have known each other for two or three years now, Allan? [Allan] I've known of you for I don't know. [Narelle] And that's the scary part. A long time. [Allan] I've known of you for about 15 years, I think. [Narelle] Yeah. [Allan] Through meeting Jude, your sister. And I think we finally, having heard about you on many occasions. I think it was two and a half years ago, probably. Maybe a little more when we, when we last, when we first met. [Narelle] And that's it. I've got a very big interest in communication and my sister and I do a lot of reading about neurolinguistic programming and communication and interaction between people. And we have these long discussions and we, we have a lovely time, my sister and I. And so I've heard of you through that as well. Just Jude saying, you know. What you've taught her. So, Allan. We were, in, in your work, how do you manage accessibility? So on a face to face basis? On a zoom meeting basis, it must be very interesting because you would not necessarily know everyone's communication needs. [Allan] No. Very. It's a big, big question. [Narelle] It is. [Allan] I, I would, I'd tackle it a couple of different ways. How, how do I make Allan accessible to others? [Narelle] Yep. [Allan] So it's what do I do that makes me more accessible to other people? And, what can I do with, and for other people that would allow us to have access to the information that we want to share. [Narelle] Yes. [Allan] If that makes sense. So, so I separate, I separate those two things first. So it's me first and then us second. Excuse me, I'm going to cough. And that slight legacy of long haul travelling. [Narelle] Yes. I um, I then have in my own head, Narelle, the, the basic theory and principle that I can only influence that which I am attentive

to. And aware of. [Narelle] Yes. [Allan] So I've, I've got a whole lot of aids. And I've first of all got to be aware of where's my attention? And if I'm going to be interacting with you, my attention's gotta be out on you. [Narelle] Yes. So, before I interact with you, I actually prepare and think about what does Narelle want. And I've got beside me my notepad, which has got the notes that I've already written beforehand. Where I thought, what, what's Narelle likely to want to be talking about? [Narelle] OK. Yes. [Allan] So I've, I make sure my attention's out, not in So I do the preparation, I get my thoughts out on paper, so that when I come on with you as we've done, my attention's fully out on Narelle. And so I can then pay attention, and listen to your input. Now you'll notice, you introduced me, and I straight away picked up on things you'd already said. [Narelle] Yes. [Allan] So I, I linked to you, I didn't start with my point of view. [Narelle] Yes. that's true. You did too. Yes. [Allan] And, and that to me, is a something that I have as a golden rule. As I must not, if somebody speaks before me, I must not jump straight into what Allan wants to say. That I want to honour what you say. And highlight and link to what you've said. Because I'm a, I'm a linguist, once I've honoured your contribution, I'm then thinking about what were the keywords that Narelle just highlighted. And as you were talking, I wrote down two more words. To remind me to stay with Narelle's input, not Allan's. So I then, my first comment is about things that you've said, so that I honour your point of view. [Narelle] OK. Then I notice, as you've just done, you've stopped, you paused and you breathed. And you looked up and your eyes are searching. [Narelle] Yep, thinking. [Allan] And you're, you're pausing and thinking. And, and while I noticed your taking a breath and pausing, I make sure I don't come in until you've actually breathed out. So I don't interrupt your process. But I attune myself to your process. [Narelle] How do you handle, Allan obviously knows I'm blind. So how do you handle communication with someone that's blind versus someone that's sighted, from a moderator's point of view that does negotiation, moderation. What are the differences? [Allan] There's, there's, there's a lot of differences. The one thing I want to do is give you my, what I call, it's part of my universal behaviours. And they are the behaviours that will work with anybody, no matter what their disability or their proclivity is. And that is, that when you speak, and I listen to your point of view and I'm gonna link to your point of view, I always use your nouns or your verbs. And I use your nouns or verbs, because I know that, that, in being a neuroscientist, the back of my brain is the visual cortex and it makes pictures. And it makes pictures of nouns and verbs. So if I emphasise your noun, So Narelle, what you're asking is how do we communicate with somebody who's sighted. And how do we communicate with somebody who is unsighted. Hmm, yeah. And what differences or similarities are there? So I repeat back your question to you. And I put emphasis on the key nouns and verbs. So that that ensures that I've got the similar pictures running in my brain to the pictures that you've got in yours. Which raises the point. Another interesting point, if I can use you and Mark as the example. Mark's been blind since birth. [Narelle] Yes. [Allan] You've, you've become blind. So, your brain has a richer storage of visual memories from your past that you've experienced. Mark has a library of imagined pictures. Cause his brain still makes pictures. He just doesn't have a, a connection between that part of the brain and the eye. Yeah. So it's, it's more important when I speak with Mark, to notice what his nouns and verbs are, then it is with you. [Narelle] OK. [Allan] Yeah. The other, the other, the other thing is that the speed of which we communicate is an indication of which part of the brain is working. So if you would be speaking at that speed, I'd actually speed up and go at that

speed. [Narelle] OK. [Allan] Right now, at this point in time, I've been copying your speed. Now the, the speed of which we speak, tells me which part of the brain is actually gathering information. [Narelle] Oh, wow! [Allan] Yeah. So if I've got, if I'm speaking in my picture brain, I'm going, "I've got. I just wanna talk to you about the fact that I was actually going to go for a ride on the bike with Michael, when we're finished." And now I've got a picture, float, running, of cycling by the river. [Narelle] Yes. [Allan] And the visual brain creates pictures really, really quickly. And is inclined to jump ahead to the part, the future or to the past. [Narelle] Yes. [Allan] Yeah. Whereas you've got a brain that's very vivid in its pictures, in its recall. That just isn't connected to your eye. [Narelle] Yeah, that's it. That's it. Yes. [Allan] So, your visual memory is more strong now than it would have been in the past. [Narelle] And I hadn't thought of that, but when you talked about cycling with Michael along the river, I suddenly had a picture in my mind of you and Michael, on your pushy's, riding along the river. [Allan and Narelle agree] [Allan] Now, the fact that I go, riding, we're going riding along, you know, on our bikes. Riding on our bikes is going to stimulate a strong picture. [Narelle] Yes, it did, straight away. [Allan] Straight away. Now, if I'd have said, we're actually going to go and do some exercise. Which is what's called unspecified language. You'd have no picture at all. You'd have a question. You'd have a question in your mind about, I wonder what form of exercise? [Narelle] Yeah, and that's exactly what I thought. Yeah. [Allan] Yeah, or alternately, you might not be interested in exercise and go, who cares? Now let me tell you what I think. Yeah. So, in the world of, in the world of linguistics, if we can, if we can, tune into the language that somebody's using. Particularly if they're not sighted. It's going to make a substantial difference. Now the other, if I'm just gonna want to make a leap, if I may? [Narelle] Yeah. [Allan] If we were to say that if you and Mark, were my business partners. But you weren't blind. You were hearing impaired. [Narelle] Yes. [Allan] Yeah. You'd be, for those people who get to watch this, as an auditory, as a visual video will notice that I use my hands very deliberately. [Narelle] Oh. [Allan] So, if I were, if I were talking to somebody who was auditory impaired, I've begun, "So what we need to do is get a hold on this idea. And, and we're gonna have to walk through, each step along the way." [Narelle] I, I am presuming you're making movements with your hands are you? [Allan] I, I am. Yes, I am. I'm, I'm actually for the for the person who's sighted but can't hear. My hands are actually matching. Now, I don't. I don't sign. I don't understand. I don't do Auslan. But I'm very deliberate with my gestures. If I go, and we need to, we need to look forward into the future. Now you'll notice, I'm putting my hands into the future to visually demonstrate to them we're going to the future. My hands are making a picture of the future. But you'll notice that my head is still turning facing you, so that you can still lip read me. [Narelle] Oh my gosh. It's simple things. [Allan] And because, because I'm aware that you can't hear. You'll notice how much clearer my diction is and how much more movement there is in my mouth. So that it makes it easier for them to lip read. [Narelle] Allan, these are really simple techniques. [Allan] Unbelievably. It's why, it's why I'm a micro-behavioural scientist. [Narelle] OK, let's throw one more at you. [Allan] It's so little. Now watch that. The, [Narelle] Neurodiverse [Allan] The person who's auditory. When I go, it's so little, but it makes a powerful difference. [Narelle] Yeah. What about someone that's autistic? Neurodiverse. [Allan] Two different terms. Neurodiverse is really big and broad. [Narelle] Yes, and it is. [allan] It's, it's, and in fact, I, I'm not in favour of its use very much. Because we are all neurodiverse. [Narelle] Actually, I agree with you. Yeah. [Allan] There's

this myth that there's a normal and a not normal. And I think, the truth of the matter is, let me do it this way. The truth of the matter is, and I'm going to, I'm going to make with my hands. I'm gonna do an asterisk. So, in, inside the human communication process, or the brain. And my hands are in the middle like a prayer at the minute. But there are some people whose brains love the past, and I've just moved across to the past. And if I want to engage with somebody who's really, you know, a historian, [Narelle] Oh my gosh, yes. [Allan] Historian. He's gonna have a more developed, past oriented brain than the futurist. However, it's important to recognise that the brain's adaptable at a level we haven't even begun to understand. That I, me being a, if I were historian, I would have a large amount of neuron development in my memory systems. Way beyond what the average person will have. And I'll have less development in the future oriented because that's not where I do a lot. So there's what we call a timeline. There's a past, there's a present, there's a future. And all of us have a preference for being in one or the other. Now because I'm a micro behavioural neuroscientist and forensic linguist, I just happened to have a brain that's very present. Yeah. And I, it means I can hold concentration for very long periods of time. It means I'm a very good listener for a very, very long time. So I'm good at moderating meetings. It means that I can, after an hour of a meeting, I can summarise what has been said in the meeting. Yeah. Because I've been so present and so attentive and frequently taken lots of notes. That I, for those people who've gone into the, "Yeah, but what about" and gone back to their past concerns or jump to the future and gone, "Yeah, but how, how will we?" Or what next? If, if I can acknowledge that in any audience. If I'm running a meeting, I've got people with each of those preferences. And I've got to attend to each of them. [Narelle] And that was going to be my question. Because, when you walk into a room with a group of people, obviously, I'm quite obvious. I come with a guide dog or a cane, depending on which tool I'm using. Mark uses a cane. Mark's, my business cofounder, for those that are wondering. And yeah, Mark has been blind since birth. But, you don't necessarily know if someone's wearing hearing aids. You don't necessarily know. I'm the very proud mum of two. Well, I've got three sons and two are autistic. Now you would not know, to look at my sons, that they are autistic. You do not know if you look at someone that they are dyslexic or have dyspraxia or. There is so many different and I really hate the word, abnormal because it's not abnormal. We are all normal. How do you handle that? Because, you've, the, the ability in front of 20 people? Twenty individuals that may have a number of different issues that you cannot know, you might have met them for the first time. And you've got to get that message across. What tools do you use? Now your talking. Now you're talking about the answer to that's a whole degree in education. [Narelle] I am. I actually never thought we would be like going here. This is so interesting. [Allan] Yeah, yeah, it's, it's, it's an interesting. And I, I find it ever intriguing. And it just stimulates my curiosity. I'm constantly going, "Wow, What's the implication of that?" [Narelle] Yeah. [Allan] A couple of quick references back to your questions. [Narelle] Yeah. [Allan] We. If we do start talking about differences, and I won't do Neurodiverse, because I truly believe we all are. [Narelle] Oh. I think so too. [Allan] And I'm, I'm always cautious with autistic, because there are. It's a label that has many different classifications and types. Now, the average punter is not going to watch this video and go, "Allan Parker is extremely dyslexic and on the autistic spectrum. [Narelle] No. [Allan] No. And yet, then, also gonna be surprised when I say and I didn't read until I was 30. And nobody in my family knew that I couldn't read. And no teacher, no teacher I had, knew that I couldn't read. I was a bright kid. I was the 4th of

nine children. If my parents had time to help anybody, it was to help the others, not me. And I helped the others. But I developed big ears and became a very good listener. But couldn't read. [Narelle] And that's adaptability. [Allan] So, well, see, you have a blindness. I had a perceptual blindness. [Narelle] Yes. Because I could only see, [Allan] I could only see two or three letters at a time. Now, that's a very unusual condition. Yeah. But, not as unusual as most people think. [Narelle] Oh, OK. [Allan] So the, I remember, I haven't looked at it for years, but I remember going back 30 years, looking at literature around the number of people who had reading disabilities in the general population. And I think it was something like about 70% had some form of learning, reading disability. [Narelle] OMG, Oh my God. [Allan] Yeah. Now there are a whole host of people who are really fast skimmers. Who can get across stuff, can get across the gist of it. But miss the detail. Yeah. Whereas you get somebody like me, I can, I, I've learnt to speed read. And, and, and that's just because I learnt to stimulate the dormant neurons that were in a, were sitting there waiting to be used. And it, it required might, it acquired, required awareness. [Narelle] Yes. [Allan] Noticing where I put my attention. Yep, and you'll notice attention's important to me. You'll notice, you've given me the problem of neurodiverse and autistic. I've acknowledged it, talked a little bit about it. But instead of talking about the problem, I've given you some solutions that are universal. pro-creating skills. [Narelle] Yes. [Allan] So we've been different. We're looking at needs and options, not getting caught in fixing the problem. [Narelle] Exactly. And that is what communication is about. [Allan] Such an important difference. [Both agree] [Allan] Such an important difference. [Narelle] It's not a barrier. There are not barriers. There are solutions. [Allan] Yeah, we so frequently come in and we stick a label on. Now, I, I have the experience of you as a person for the last two and a half years. And if somebody asked me to describe you, blind wouldn't be in my first five minute description. [Narelle] Well, thank you. [Allan] You know, you're incredibly curious. You're incredibly curious. You're always looking for alternatives and possibilities. And you're incredibly optimistic. You are, you are brave and feistive, feisty and ready to go, "Now, hang on. You can't do that." [Narelle] You've been talking to my sister. It, it [Allan] But there's so much more to you. And we find these labels, that we then get fixated on, instead of going, "How can we, how can we, how can we get Narelle and her friends, who do the park run, to actually find their way into that conversation. And be part of the conversation, just by simple things. And the principle is, we gotta go through the problem, not to the problem. [Narelle] What we're talking about there, is I did a park run a couple of weeks ago and I was talking to some. There was three of us. So there was a group of blind people sitting at a table and there were three older women. We're not elderly. We're old. We have a we're not even old. We're having a darn good time. And, one of us, our aides, went off to get cuppas for us. We actually have aides with us or guides with us. We call them that. They help us do the run so we can always do our PB's. Those type of things. And they're matched to our speeds. They went, they go off and they get us our cuppas and we always buy them a cuppa to say look, thank you, we appreciate this. And there were a group of people sitting down the other end of the table with the gap. And my friend, Cheryl, said, "Being blind is isolating." And we were talking about it because, even though we could hear that conversation, we didn't know who was speaking. And because we have no visual cues, it's very hard to come in on a conversation without appearing rude. [Allan] Yes. [Narelle] Gauche any, awkward. Um. And it's, it's a problem. And a couple of days later I was speaking to a very good friend of mine. And she's losing her hearing. And she's in her mid 70s.

And Gwen said the same thing. And her problem is face masks. [Allan] Yes. [Narelle] So there's two problems Gwen has. There's face masks. And when she's out to dinner with people, she's not got that ability to work out who's speaking because, the noise is all. It's, it's too much noise at once. So the clarity of voice is not there. [Allan] Sorry. Each of those examples, Narelle. The, the park run situation and your friend hearing impaired. [Narelle] Yeah. [Allan] And both of them are examples of where there's a really important opportunity available at that moment, is, in those situations, I can either affirm the problem. And when I affirm it, I sit with the problem, and in it. [Narelle] Yes. [Allan] Or, I can acknowledge the problem. And explore and adapt. Cause sometimes, we sit around waiting for the other party to fix the problem. [Narelle] Yes. [Allan] Yeah. And that is, we talk about them not to them or with them. [Narelle] Yes. [Allan] And if, If I as a, um, If I go back to my childhood not being able to read. I adapted a technique as a kid in the playground during morning tea and lunch breaks, that I'd scout around the playground and I'd find the kids who were talking about what we'd just done in class. [Narelle] OK. [Allan] I didn't find the kids who were talking about what they did in the weekend or what television they saw last night. Yes, and I knew who talked about what was in the class. And I found them and went, and I'd park myself near them. And listen. And I'd get a recap on what was covered in the class. Now, they'd also, they were the, the studious kids, so they'd also done some reading. And there was new stuff that they came up with that I couldn't get from the book that I got from them. And those conversations. It's, it really is a place where no matter who we are or what it is, if we're not getting our needs met, we, we got to acknowledge it. Not complain about it, but provide feedback or be adaptive to it. And can I adapt small things to interrupt the pattern that I'm involved in, to create a new pattern. [Narelle] Allan, I've just seen the time. We could sit and talk and talk and talk and I hope you don't mind, but can we please have another conversation another day? Because I think this is just the most fascinating information and discussion that we're having. Communication is the basis of our, any relationship. [Allan] Pretty much. [Narelle] And, if communication needs are not being met. Then there's no relationship, or there's a very bad relationship. [Allan] Narelle, One of my favourite sayings, you've just said half of, "If what you're doing isn't working. And I forget how you finished it. But I'd go, "If what do, didn't. What do you're doing isn't working do anything else? [Narelle] Yes. [Allan] But I would, I would love to pick up. And I feel like we've just scratched the surface. [Narelle] I think we have too. And I'll give you one of my favourite sayings. "Be not afraid. I go before you always." There's always help there. [Allan] Yeah. [Narelle] It's a person being not afraid and just saying, you know what? I don't know how to do this, but darn, there is someone out there that will know. Let's find a solution. [Allan] Beautiful. Whoo. [Narelle] Thanks, Allan. [Allan] It's been a joy. [Narelle] It's been great. So I'll talk to you next time. [Allan] I look forward to it. Yeah. [A sign with www.peakpd.com]