I CAN Network

**How do you build a relationship with an Autistic learner?**

Founder & CEO - Chris Varney and QLD Network Manager – James Cifuentes

Chris

Talk to them like they're people which is a...Sounds silly, but some of them don't ever get that. They don't get taken seriously -

James

Yeah, we have high expectations of themselves.

Chris

Yes, people who are having adjustments made for them, are often treated with kid gloves treated like babies. And treated like that had adjustments made for them because they're deficient. Rather than different.

One session, I had a boy, he got up, what we were talking and he started to move about the back of the room and wave his arms around it and started to stim. And I wasn't annoyed with him at all. But I was I felt like I'd lost him and he wasn't engaged. And then we came back together for a roundtable discussion at the end we were talking about our favourite parts of the session and he chimed in with some really cool insights and I thought ah, he was really engaged but that was just his way of being engaged. It's um, yeah, you constantly learn it.

James

Yeah, definitely, and challenging the way you understand how people concentrate it doesn't necessarily have to be looking at you, we have some staff and some students that need to look away before they you know to listen better.

Chris

I have some that need to scribble, they need to doodle, that may be a slight distraction, but it's far less of a distraction than not doing it so if they're sitting there not doing it all they're thinking about is not doing it. Yes, and they're just not absorbing anything that they choose saying to them.

James

Just lastly our program is about getting young people to feel a sense of artistic pride a sense of belonging, optimism self-confidence and self-acceptance and we do that through a program that is always setting consistent boundaries with people whether they do push themselves to grow, but not to breaking point and they understand in a conscious of what other people need in the same environment.