

Talking about neurodiversity, monotropism & more with Scottish activist Fergus Murray

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Transcribed by Julie-Ann Lee

[Intro music: Jazzy synth pop music]

Anne: Welcome to *Noncompliant: A neurodiversity podcast*. I'm your host Anne Borden King. Today, I'm speaking with Fergus Murray. Fergus is an autistic science teacher, writer, and community organizer; a co-founder and the current chair of AMASE: The Autistic Mutual Aid Society of Edinburgh. Fergus also makes a lot of slow-motion videos of water, and works with giant puppets; and is the creator of [Monotropism.org](https://monotropism.org); and also [Weird Pride Day](#). I am so excited to speak with Fergus Murray.

Welcome to the show!

Fergus: Hi! Good to be here.

Anne: I want to start with an article that you wrote for Tes Magazine and it was entitled "[Autism Tips for Teachers by an Autistic Teacher](#)". That article it illustrates so well why autistic people are the experts on autism. We have a lot of other so-called experts out there getting it wrong, such as the behaviourists. But the work you're doing as a teacher and a writer and an activist and advocate is really part of a whole movement towards this paradigm shift in how autism is represented, where we as autistic people *belong* in the conversation about autism and are actually *leading* the conversation. And you've been doing this work for years now. I'm wondering what kind of changes are you seeing in terms of how autistics are being represented?

Fergus: Yeah, there's a lot of layers to that, right, because we're represented in so many different contexts. Obviously my professional context is education. I work with kids between the ages of about 14 to 18 and a lot of the kids that I work with are neurodivergent and it's been very interesting following how the conversation has been changing slowly over time around neurodiversity at school. So in Scotland, for example, the General Teaching Council of Scotland just a couple years ago put out a professional guide to neurodiversity for teachers which would have been pretty much unimaginable 10, 15 years ago.

It's something that's being talked about a lot in education contexts, that's part of the way that autism is being talked about differently over time. It's not seen as automatically a problem by a lot of professionals now. Teachers have realized that they need to understand a bit about autism and autistic thinking in order to work effectively with kids at all, actually, but especially

autistic kids.

At this point, a large proportion of kids at school have been identified as being neurodivergent and in some kind of neurodevelopmental difference which means that their needs are not being automatically met by default in the classroom. There's a lot of teachers sort of panicking about that a little bit and some of those teachers are going out of their way to learn from neurodivergent adults about the experiences of neurodivergent kids. Some of them are even thinking to ask the kids themselves, which is great.

Anne: That's amazing. That's really a total shift in terms of autistic people really leading. And I see in Scotland that there seems to be almost a mandate that autistic people should be involved in developing educational programs and policy which is... you know, it's really sadly not really the case here in Canada...

Fergus: I mean, I think we've got a long way to come here too.

Anne: Ah.

Fergus: It's worth noting that every country that has signed up for the UNCRPD – The United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities -- officially has an obligation to closely involve disabled people's organizations in any kind of decision-making about disability. So any decisions that affect the lives of disabled people in countries that have signed up for the UNCRPD – I don't know if that includes Canada, I know that it doesn't include the USA, but a lot of countries around the world have an obligation in international law to listen to the representative groups for disabled people. So yeah, that definitely doesn't happen everywhere that it's supposed to, but where it does, it makes such a big difference.

Anne: Absolutely. And Canada's signed on to that as well... to the UNCRPD, but sometimes it's in name only, and you know that's another... that's a big part of the problem, right?

Fergus: Sure. And I find that's the case probably everywhere, so far.

Anne: Now, your mom, **Dr. Dinah Murray**, was an autistic researcher, a support worker, an activist, and writer. She worked with **Wen Lawson** and others to develop the [concept of] monotropism. Of course many of the core components of our liberation movement come out of some of that early work. I was going to ask you, what was it like growing up under the wing of such an influential thinker?

Fergus: I guess the first thing to say is that she wasn't necessarily always so influential. It took a long time for her ideas, particularly about monotropism, to really take hold and get taken seriously by people in the autism industry, which has been happening more and more in the last few years.

So for me growing up, I didn't think of her in those terms. I knew that she was a Support Worker. I remember her getting a PhD in the relationship between language and thinking. And

because she was so involved in the autistic community for such a long time, from a fairly young age I knew a lot of autistic people, a mix of people that she supported as a support worker, who often had quite high support needs, and you know people like **Dr. Damian Milton**, **Wen Lawson**, ahm **Larry Arnold**. All of these, I now realize, very influential figures in the history of autism and neurodiversity movement, particularly in the UK but to some extent internationally as well.

I think really it was only when I went to [Autescape](#), an annual conference for autistic people run by autistic people which my mom had been going to, I think right from the start. But I went for the first time in 2016 and that really sort of brought home to me that actually my mom was very influential and a lot of people took her ideas very seriously and not just her ideas but, you know, she invested a lot of time and energy in connecting autistic people together and making connections between autistic people and folk in decision-making roles--people in positions of power.

Anne: What was it like for you the first time, when you first went to Autescape and if you've been since? Can you describe a little bit what Autescape is like?

Fergus: Hmm. Ahm... it's an amazing experience. The first time I went was really quite overwhelming because it's so much happening and so much of it is really interesting and there are so many fascinating people and even though it's set up in such a way that if you're not up to talking to anyone, you can put your interaction badge on 'red', and everyone knows not to initiate conversations with you, or if you're not up to initiating conversations but you're really quite like to be talking to people, you put it on 'green', and people will actively start conversations with you. But, in spite of all the things that are done to make it as accessible as possible to autistic people, it's very easy to sort of dive in there and be like 'Oh, it's all so interesting, I have to do all the things!' I found myself quite burnt out by the end of the first Autescape I was at. But it was a wonderful experience.

Not very long before my first Autescape, I first did a public writing about autism and neurodiversity, which is "Neurodiversity and Mental Health", and it was lovely hearing from people who had read it and appreciated it, which happened quite a lot in that first Autescape. And yet I think I... every year that it had happened since it's been a huge part of my annual calendar and it was really going to Autescape with my partner **Sonny Hallett** that's led us to sort of start working on fostering local autistic community in Edinburgh. Going to Autescape led more or less directly to us setting up AMASE.

[09:58]

Anne: Wow, that's so interesting. I want to talk more about AMASE. I wanted just to take a step back and talk about monotropism and define that for listeners – how the concept of monotropism really pushes back against this flawed concept of the Theory of Mind.

Fergus: Yeah. the idea of monotropism is that some people's minds focus their attention on a small number of things at a time. We tend to intensely focus on a small number of things and to miss things outside of our immediate attention tunnel. Other people are *polytropic*. They tend to have quite a lot of different things going on at once. They don't have so much trouble keeping track of multiple information streams, and so on.

So monotropism is a theory of autism developed by autistic people, my mom was one of them, **Wen Lawson** was another. Wen actually formulated much the same ideas completely independently and then they met in the 1990s and like 'oh, oh, someone else has these ideas' and then they worked together for years and years. You know, traditional accounts of autism have all been deficit-based and formulated by non-autistic people looking at autistic people from outside,...

Anne: Mm hmm.

Fergus: ... trying to draw conclusions from that. usually without really asking us.

Anne: Yeah.

Fergus: Something like the Theory of Mind... there are so many problems there. One is that non-autistic people have just as much difficulty understanding what autistic people are thinking as the other way around. That's the Double Empathy Problem as formulated by Damian Milton. Also autism is not just about minds. Right? That's just one quite small part of the story actually. You know, our sensory experiences are different. The way that we focus our attention is obviously different. We tend to have intense interests and that's been part of the definition from the start. It's difficult for us to change tracks and Theory of Mind just has nothing to say about that.

Monotropism explains basically all of the same things that any of the other big autism theories do...and more and does it more coherently. For example, communication difficulties between autistic and non-autistic people are largely because of differences in our information processing style. So if it's correct that autistic people are usually monotropic and most non-autistic people are not--and I think there's really quite good evidence to say that this is right--then neurotypical communication assumes an ability to listen to someone's words and tone of voice and watch their face and their body language and keep in mind their social relation to you: are they an authority figure or is it meant to be familiar. At the same time, you're supposed to be monitoring all of these things for yourself...

Anne: Yeah.

Fergus: Constantly, simultaneously. It's very difficult for monotropic people to master that style of communication. Oh, I think we can do it by sort of practicing skills enough that it doesn't feel like we're juggling so many things at a time. But, it takes a lot more work.

Anne: Yeah.

Fergus: As well as the social difficulties, you've got things like difficulty changing tracks. Monotropic attention tends to be heavily invested in a small number of things, right? We fire all of our processing resources at one or a small number of things. And then in order to change tracks, we need to sort of like pull them all back out again, ship them over here and push them in that direction instead. It's like stopping a loaded shopping trolley and pushing it in another direction.

And then there's sensory stuff. If this theory is right that our attention tends to be pulled towards a small number of things at times – a small number of channels, and more resources are thrown at those channels, it's no surprise that autistic people seem to have very intense sensory experiences a lot of the time. We're just throwing more cognitive resources at the senses that are most engaged at any time, leaving much less over for anything else, so we're likely to miss sounds or other stimuli that are outside of our attention zone.

Anne: Yeah exactly what you're talking about in terms of monotropism. If you look at a world that was not built for people with a monotropic way of being, how can we adapt, I mean, I guess I'm thinking of you as a teacher. How can some of these spaces be adapted so that it is a space that's workable, or comfortable, or accessible for an autistic student, let's say?

Fergus: There are a lot of things. One thing to think about is the cognitive load, which fortunately quite a lot of teachers are thinking about anyway. It's the idea that there's only so much that someone can take on at any given time. If you keep on trying to tell them new things or expect them to keep track of a whole series of separate tasks at once and take in new information. that doesn't actually work very well for a lot of kids.

Monotropism just really emphasizes that. You know, boil things down and make them meaningful, because the more meaningful something is, the more attention we can invest in it... the more interest it is likely to arouse. Tying things to things that we're already interested in can make a big difference, although there are dangers there where sometimes autistic interests are treated as like rewards.

Anne: Yeah.

Fergus: And it can feel patronizing sometimes when teachers are too reliant on them. Also just cutting out extraneous stimuli, noises in a classroom, busy displays, also breaking things down and making them explicit and not expecting someone to take in a whole string of information by their ears only. It's always good to write down instructions and a lot of this stuff it's not really monotropism specific.

Anne: Mm-hmm.

Fergus: It's just good teaching practice. But understanding a bit about monotropism helps you to understand why this stuff makes such a big difference for some of the students.

Anne: Right, right. it's like when the tide comes in, it lifts all the ships because these are all practices that can help really most or all students as well.

Fergus: Exactly so. I had a lecturer on my teacher training course who was very fond of saying that 'good special needs teaching is just good teaching.' And I think that's almost always true. You know, there are some things that work better for some people than others and it's important to be flexible. But then being flexible, again, works for everybody. So.

Anne: Yeah, and with communication like I wasn't very familiar with Simon Baron-Cohen's work until quite recently and I started looking at it and *wow...* like, I don't like it. I don't think it's scientific, first of all. It's this idea that people can *read each other's minds and intentions* by looking at their bodies and their eyes and I mean...we're in the age of consent, we're really trying to move away from that [misconception].

I mean this idea that neurotypical people somehow are better at reading each other's intentions or desires when in fact they're *constantly* in conflict with each other, and they're *constantly* having dramas and misunderstandings. So it's a myth to begin with that anybody is good at that. You know, the more directly we communicate, the better we can get along.

Fergus: Mm-hmm.

[19:50]

Anne: I was so moved by what you had to say in this tribute video to your mom, and it was from the Beyond Stereotypes Conference in 2021. You can find it on [YouTube](#). You talked about your mom's adoption of this concept of Weird Pride, and celebrating Weird Pride, and I think for the next section I would love it if we could talk a little bit about why she embraced that ideal and what that ideal of Weird Pride means to you.

Fergus: Yeah, so I remember when she made her first Weird Pride badge, must have been about 20-ish years ago, and you know my first reaction was to laugh but also to feel quite validated. You know, I grew up knowing that I was weird. People told me often enough and very fortunately I was raised in a family and an environment that valued that. I realized early on that the most interesting people are all kind of weird. So the idea that people would try to use weird as an insult was just bizarre to me.

Anne: [laughs]

Fergus: I think Weird Pride was always a thing in her life, even before she put a name to it like that. She was raised in a family of eccentric intellectuals, you know she's part of the Huxley dynasty, sort of indirectly, on her mom's side. It was expected that people in the Greenwood family would be fairly odd. It was like, no surprise. So she drew this Weird Pride badge in felt-tip pen and liked to wear it to official events at Parliament and things like that. That actually made a big difference to me growing up before and after, having a name for it like that.

About a year before she died... so Dinah died in 2021, so about a year before that I sort of started to think “this is something that really, we ought to be talking about more.” Because we talk about Autistic Pride, and that’s important and it’s valuable, but a lot of autistic people don’t know they’re autistic...

Anne: Yeah.

Fergus: ...and a lot of us are bullied for being weird long before we have a neuro-cognitive explanation for our weirdness. And at school I was bullied for not being sufficiently gender-conforming. For, you know, things which made kids read me as gay or just generally not living up to societal norms with gender norms being very prominent in the mix. I think that’s quite a common experience, even for, you know, straight cis autistic people actually, they’re quite often subject to harmful bullying. There’s this whole thing of artists and creative types and scientists notoriously being weird, right? Like, it’s kind of expected.

Anne: Right.

Fergus: But at the same time, it’s heavily stigmatized. It’s...we know that society needs weirdos.

Anne: Yeah, yeah.

Fergus: It’s widely understood, but we also bully them mercilessly. ...I started to think that really, there ought to be a Weird Pride Day. And sometime in early in 2021, we found out that my Mom had cancer and doctors gave her like up to about six months to live. I thought I ought to get on with it in terms of making Weird Pride Day happen, so I set a date soon enough that I was pretty sure that she’d still be alive to see it- which she was... which was March the 4th. Largely I chose it because it amused me vaguely that North Americans in particular would pronounce it as ‘March Forth’ and I liked the idea of ‘marching forth’ weirdly...

Anne: Yeah, yeah (laughing)

Fergus: And yeah, it’s the internet age now, so if you just declare that something is a day and you tell enough people about it, then it becomes true.

Anne: Ah.

Fergus: Weird Pride has been going ever since. The third one was this year, which had more and more people involved every year. Largely autistic people, but not exclusively. And largely queer people, because again the fact that “queer” literally means weird is significant. The Gay Liberation movement would not have got very far if it was only interested in liberation for people who are not weird.

Anne: Yeah.

Fergus: Like there is a lot of gender non-conforming, a lot of generally non-conforming and actually it’s still true that the biggest wins that the Gay Liberation Movement have made have

been quite sort of, heteronormative or heteronormative friendly. it's great that gay people can get married now, but that's not that useful for queer weirdos in polyamorous relationships.

Anne: Right.

Fergus: There's a lot more to it that I think most liberation movements, weirdness... Acceptance of weirdness has to be part of what they are pushing for. Because if you're only pushing for liberation for people who conform to neurotypical, abled, white, cis, patriarchal society, then what are you even doing, right?

Anne: Yeah. Absolutely. I've always thought like non-autistic queer people are sort of like, I feel like they're like *cousins*, you know? Like, my cousins in a way, like we're not exactly the same but there's something there where there's a real kind of kinship, right? And I love that March 4th is bringing that. Is it mostly online at this point? Or are there in-real-life...

Fergus: Yeah, so far it's all been online. You know the first two years we were in the middle of a pandemic. (I mean, we're still in the middle of a pandemic only now we're in denial about it.) Which sort of, I did think of organizing something in person this year. But I didn't go for it in the end. But I'm looking forward to in-person events and it's late enough in the year that at least in some parts of the world the ice has started thawing out for those events and not totally unreasonable to think about.

Anne: Right.

Fergus: Yeah, so I look forward to that.

Anne: I want to talk a bit about the contrast to this concept...this very positive concept of Weird Pride, and that's another kind of pride but it's more of an *aggrieved* pride that you wrote about recently in *Thinking Person's Guide to Autism* when you wrote an article entitled "[We need to talk about Aspie Supremacists.](#)"

So just before we get into talking about the article, let's just quickly define for the listeners what Asperger's is, and where it came from. I think that it was kind of borrowed from Hans Asperger who was working with autistic kids during the Second World War. The diagnosis of Asperger's was kind of built around this false binary between autistic people who are "high functioning" and autistic people who are "low functioning". And of course, we know that these functioning labels aren't useful and in fact even within the US and Canada and other places the term Asperger's is no longer used and the idea of functioning labels is no longer used because it was such a false binary. Yet, people cling to it. Some autistic people cling to the idea.

Now some people just have that diagnosis and it's a part of their identity. I'm not giving anyone a hard time who has that diagnosis and uses it. But, you're speaking very specifically in a different way has kind of morphed into this sense of Aspie supremacy, and I'm hoping you can talk a bit about that.

Fergus: Yeah. it's interesting. The actual distinction clinically between Asperger's and other flavours of autism was really just delay in language development. This is part of the reason why the diagnosis ended up getting collapsed because that turned out to just not be a very useful distinction. You know, someone can have delayed language development and end up "high functioning". Or they can have absolutely no language delay and be very disabled in later life.

[29:55]

Fergus: Lorna Wing around 1981 introduced the idea of the Autistic Spectrum and introduced Hans Asperger's writing to a wider audience. And that's really where the idea of Asperger's Syndrome enters English at least. For a long time, autistic people who were perhaps more capable of communicating than some happily owned the label. When I was first identified as autistic, I think a lot of people called themselves Aspies and there was no suggestion that there was any kind of problem with this.

But, there's always been a tendency among some autistic people to believe that they are not just *not disordered*, but actually *better* than the population at large... certainly better than some other autistic people, and that I think is very problematic. This is the idea of Aspie supremacy that the types of autistic people who have historically attracted a diagnosis of Asperger's sometimes believe that Asperger's is the next step in human evolution or that Aspies are inherently superior to other people.

I think we don't talk about that enough. I used to hear a lot more about Aspie supremacy when I was first getting involved in autistic advocacy, maybe 8-ish years ago, and I think with the death of Asperger's as a label that people are actually still getting when they're assessed, people have used the term less, but the idea is still there.

Anne: Mm-hmm.

Fergus: I worry about it. I think it's difficult because superficially there's quite a significant overlap between neurodiversity and Aspie supremacy in the sense that neurodiversity involves looking at strengths. You know, it's about saying these differences are not inherently bad and part of that has always been like, often they come with strengths. But it's also about saying actually everybody is human, and what is human is human and people should be valued as people, not just for their skills or you know what they find easy in life. Whereas the Aspie supremacy approach is to sort of say 'some people are really, really amazing with just fantastic genius skills and they really ought to be looked after and elevated to positions of power and a big part of what's gone wrong with society is that people aren't listening enough to the really, really clever people, *like us*', if that makes sense.

Anne: Yeah, it does. I mean I didn't have a term for it exactly because Asperger's is kind of falling out of favour but I think of it as kind of like "Spelling Bee Champ Syndrome." That's what I call it, because it's like you get knocked down so much in school and... but--and I'm saying this as a former Spelling Bee Champ winner--but at least you won the Spelling Bee. You were good

at filling out the dots and you did good on your college entrance exam because you know how to do standardized tests. At least I have that, right?!

It's really kind of a faint victory in a way. And I think you mention that in your article that it collapses pretty quickly in terms of how much success something like that can really bring, especially if you're relying on those kind of achievements for your entire sense of self-esteem.

Fergus: Yeah.

Anne: You know, there's a personal mental health aspect to it. And then there's the broader social mental health, social aspect to it which you brought up in your essay which is that if we divide autistic people... dividing and conquering our community into high functioning and low functioning people, then you're really going along those same eugenics lines of Asperger's time and Asperger's field into sort of what you called "useful" autistic people versus you know the quote "burdensome" autistic people. And we can see that being lived out, that Aspie supremacist idea...in projects like Spectrum 10k for example.

Fergus: Yeah. I find it interesting that *eugenics* as a term, as something that people identify with really has very much gone out of fashion. Nobody says, 'yes, eugenics is good, we should definitely be improving the gene pool of the human race by any means necessary', which you know they were saying in the 1940s and it didn't immediately go out with the Nazis, actually. People were still talking like that after the Second World War. But Hitler really did deal a pretty fatal blow to *open* eugenics. Once you see people being sent to death camps or euthanized at so called Children's Hospitals because they don't have the right genes, it's *off-putting*. It makes people self-conscious about advocating for the removal of anybody from the gene pool.

But actually, the idea has never really gone away. People still often take it as really that society will be better if certain kinds of people were never born.

Anne: Mm-hmm.

Fergus: And if you look at places where there's been pre-natal screening for Down's Syndrome for the last I don't know how many years, there are now very few kids being born now with Down's Syndrome.

Anne: It's really complicated because especially given the way that autism is seen, it's obvious that if they were to license a genetic test for autism (and of course it would be incredibly flawed. Like, I don't even want to get into that. Like the whole concept is absurd) but let's say that they developed one that *they said* worked or whatever, it would have the same function as the Down's Syndrome test which would mean a lot of people terminating a lot of healthy pregnancies and changing what humanity looks like beyond just the damage that it does to individuals.

What's really upsetting about it is that it's so supported and pitched as though that's *not* what they're doing when they've put that data, the kids' DNA [into an open database]. They collected

10,000 autistic kids' DNA in the US and Canada--by the way by misleading some of those parents into giving the DNA. Putting it into this very open but anonymized database that almost any researcher can access for any purpose.

And of course, some of the people that are accessing it are accessing it because they want to build a prenatal test for autism because that's a cash cow for them, without thinking about the ethical implications of it. And then when our community says that this is happening we kind of get gaslight about it, I think by people like Baron-Cohen, you know, he claims to care about our community.

You cited a comment by him which I think is really telling because he endorses the Spectrum 10k which is also gathering genetic data to try to find an autism gene. And he said, "What would be lost in reducing the number of children born with autism? Would we also reduce the number of future great mathematicians, for example?" And you can see right there he's identifying kind of like an exploitable characteristic that's good for the economy. That's "worth keeping". *That* kind of autism is worth keeping but that's also the side of it that you don't hear which is that in some minds there's a side of autism that we shouldn't keep and there are a kind of autistic people that shouldn't be part of our world.

And that's the really, to me the really disturbing part about it is that it's not even honest in the way that the eugenics movements used to be honest.

[39:34]

Fergus: Yeah, yeah. And there's a degree of at least superficial plausibility here, right? Like we don't want to reduce the number of children who become great mathematicians, right? I really don't. I really don't want to reduce the number of great artists and scientists, but it's this thing of focussing on the *great men* (and you know overwhelmingly the people who talk like this are talking about men.) Which just devalues the rest of us, and it can't help but do that.

Anne: Yeah, I was glad that you brought up Elon Musk, and you talked about him in your essay too. You described him one of your essays--you've written a couple--you describe him as a "valuable *anti-role model*." What do you mean by that?

Fergus: I think Elon Musk can teach autistic people about how *not* to be. You know, a lot of us, like Elon Musk, were bullied at school. A lot of us found some solace in, you know, our splinter skills. The few things that we were really good at. In some cases, loads of things that we were really good at.

But, that is fragile and it's dangerous. Putting all of your self-worth on your skills means not appreciating all of the other good things that ah.... It means not appreciating all of the good things about you as a person. It means undervaluing your empathy probably and how much you care about people.

I think you know most autistic people are not anything like Elon Musk. I want to say that quite clearly. But, I have met more than I'm comfortable with who are a little bit like that, who have responded to being devalued by putting themselves on a pedestal; by convincing themselves that they are better than everyone, that they are smarter than everyone else and like if only people like them would be put in charge of everything then everything would be so much better. And you know you can see from the way that Elon Musk has handled Twitter since buying it... that actually like...

Anne: [suppressed laugh]

Fergus: he's *really bad at a lot of things*.

Anne: [laughing]

Fergus: [laughing] Like, disastrously bad.

Anne: Yeah.

Fergus: And that's...you know that's all of us, you know everyone has things that they're bad at. When I see autistic people who are convinced that like "people in general are idiots" and they're definitely not, I find that a major red flag. You know, there's also a lot of stuff in there about how he views other people--minorities, women, and so on which I think is often tied up with that kind of Great Man arrogance...

Anne: Right....And it really goes back to what we value as a culture or, what our culture values. (I don't want to say "we" because I don't.) For example, let's say that if you could go back in time and give whatever test to the theoretical mathematicians and you go, 'okay they really think a lot like autistic people. I mean, maybe they were autistic.' Maybe we needed...maybe we brought theoretical math into the world, right?

But, we've also brought more than that into the world. Something more, right? Something very much bigger than that kind of achievement focused... and I'm not getting down on theoretical math, it's obviously amazing, but what about all of the *soft things* that people bring into the world that have sensory sensitivities... that have different ways of communicating, different ways of moving. That's all of us. That's not just the Spelling Bee champs. That's everybody. That's our whole community.

Fergus: Yeah. The existence of people who perceive the world very differently, who experience and process the world very differently, makes the world a much richer place independently of any particular skills that they might have. It's the difference that's truly valuable.

Anne: Thank you. It was so great speaking with you today. That was Fergus Murray, who spoke to us from Edinburgh. I'll put some links as well on the website so that you can learn more about their work. Thank you again.

Fergus: Thanks for talking to me.

[Outro music: Jazzy synth pop music]

Anne: You're listening to Noncompliant, a neurodiversity podcast. Noncompliant is recorded at MCS Studios. This episode was engineered by Lucien Lozon. Noncompliant is transcribed by Julie-Ann Lee. Thanks to our team and thanks for listening.