Tealswan interview

KA: So I've just started recording now um (.) and we'll start off with just like a little bit of an icebreaker

Tealswan: ((overlap)) Yup

KA: ((overlap)) just ((end overlap)) to get you into into the flow of things um. So I just want you to tell me a little bit about yourself ((overlap)) and this can be hobbies

Tealswan: ((overlap)) Oh that's a very open-ended question ((end overlap))

KA: Yeah. Likes dislikes

Tealswan: Um so I mentioned I do my humanities so for me um with the autism that I my big special interest is Soviet history so they ((stutters)) link quite nicely together

KA: That's so cool

Tealswan: So yeah so Soviet history is my- as you can see I'm already getting ((hums)) ((laughs)). But uhh that's my big thing that's my big thing I'm very passionate about. The other one is photography I do photography as like a like a hobby but it is, it is a special interest. Um and linking the two together I have twenty antique cameras so

KA: Ahh

Tealswan: So yeah peo- people look at me and they're like "oh yeah she's pretty normal" and then I'm like "eeehhhh… yeah"

KA: ((laughs))

Tealswan: But yeah so yeah they're my big interests they're my big things sort of about me. About me like in a more general sense I could not tell you ((laughs))

KA: ((laughs))

Tealswan: It's one of those things I feel like when people are like tell me a bit about you and I'm like "I do not know"

KA: Yeah I always it- it's the same as I mean I ((stutters)) always include it in my interviews and then I know how much I hate this ((laughs))

Tealswan: ((overlap)) hate being asked

KA: ((overlap)) ((inaudible)) type questions ((end overlap)) but

Tealswan: It's an old one I always go for the well my special interest is this this and this because I feel like that just gives you more proof of ((laughs))

KA: Yeah yeah. And like the antique cameras you have do they like actually do they work?

Tealswan: Some of them some of them you can get the film off like eBay and stuff but um if they've been kept in like a like a proper a (.) I'm trying to think of the word for it like preserved

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Like so like when you go to a museum how they like keep dust off them and like direct sunlight and stuff they can still work some of them that have just been in people's like attics and just left they don't ((laughs)) which is upsetting because they're some of my favourite ones

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: But yeah some of them work and it's really cool um that I it's something that I ((stutters)) always say this I cannot like something casually I either obsessed over it and I have to have it in every colour and everything and this this this and this or I just don't really care that much

KA: Yeah ((laughs))

Tealswan: So ((laughs)) so I so that I feel like that's my thing like my entire like bedroom is just full of collections of just random stuff

KA: ((laughs))

Tealswan: My boyfriend's like "I don't understand it" I'm like "because if I like it I know I like it" ((laughs))

KA: Yeah yeah. No that's (.) that's. Yeah I think I to a lesser degree kind of have that but definitely when I was a child

Tealswan: Mm

KA: I was it was seals for me

Tealswan: Yeah I had a weird one with like th- on like the animal one I was obsessed with tapirs

KA: Ohh

Tealswan: With their with their weird noses

KA: Great animal to be obsessed by

Tealswan: See yeah. See my mum was like "ohh giraffes" or my sister's like "yeah I love wolves" and I was like "tapirs"

KA: ((laughs))

Tealswan: Which I think should have been a bit of a like warning sign of maybe we should get her tested

KA: ((laughs))

Tealswan: But like ((laughs)) there were a lot of things around like we probably should have known

KA: ((laughs)) no tapirs are a really I think they're a fantastic animal

Tealswan: I just think they're quirky and they're and they're a bit interesting

KA: Yeah I love animals that I would say I would almost describe them as ugly cute

Tealswan: Yes like it's I- I see I get the appeal of like a lion or a wolf where it's like big and cuddly but I'm like no no. Tapir

KA: ((laughs))

Tealswan: Or like I was- what was the other one I was obsessed with? It was like it was like ohh the wart- like the warthogs

KA: ((gasps))

Tealswan: With the tusks

KA: Ohh wow yeah

Tealswan: And I have no idea why I was just like “yes you look like you'd been misunderstood” ((laughs))

KA: ((laughs)) yeah no

Tealswan: You’re my favourite

KA: The little like mis- like sympathy love for misunderstood animals certainly I can relate to that

Tealswan: It's like a “you might not be anyone else's favourite but you are my favourite” ((laughs))

KA: ((laughs)) yeah

Tealswan: And that's what matters (.) But yeah to be fair I'm like that with a lot of things

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: There are a lot of things in my life where I'm like yeah but nobody else likes like ugly teddy bears as well where I'm

KA: Yep

Tealswan: Like nobody else wants you so I'll- I'll baby you

KA: I think that's a great trait to have you clearly have a lot of like ((overlaps)) empathy

Tealswan: ((overlaps)) ((laugh)) yeah ((end overlap))

KA: And yeah

Tealswan: Oh that's one thing I don't like with the whole stereotype surrounding like autistic people is that they have no empathy. I have and it sounds very vain to say this out loud I have like obscene amounts of em- like too much empathy

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Which I’d I it's like ohh I'm trying to think. My first like therapist I ever had said uhm it was like a s- a big old sponge

KA: Aw

Tealswan: So cause I I just can't I if I see someone being upset I'm going to be upset and that's why

KA: Mm

Tealswan: That's why I ((stutters)) really hate that stereotype cause I'm like no to my own detriment ((laughs)) I'm empathetic

KA: My that was why I was really um looking to do a PhD with the supervisor I have now because he wrote a lot of the literature saying well this research about empathy is a load of rubbish

Tealswan: It's all because it's all based around I hate the saying that the autistic brain is like the extreme male brain

KA: Mm

Tealswan: Cause- because that invites the stereotype of us being particularly violent or being having no empathy and it's like even (.) even male autistics aren't at all like that

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: And I do not like it it really puts people in like a little box and I don't think anyone should be put in a little box no matter what. You can see my passion here this is half the reason I wanted to do well like help in this because ((pause)) it's not necessarily misinformation but there's a lot of like misguided information especially for girls with autism because all well not all ninety nine percent of the research around autism is placed on young white boys

KA: Oh yeah

Tealswan: And I do not like that at all like. Eve- and like I'm sure if there was like a black girl like an autistic black girl who came in she'd probably have an entirely different experience but it's like ((pause)) we- it's not like that for us because of the you know I guess the way like society the patriarchy is like built around it but it's entirely not true and I just do not like it ((laughs))

KA: Yeah. No it's (.) it's so interesting. And we've been really mindful to try and get um quite like a (.) a diverse ((overlaps)) sample

Tealswan: ((overlaps)) Yeah ((end overlap))

KA: Because yeah it's (.) so interesting to see how not just each of these things in isolation like you know gender ethnicity race but the interaction ((overlap)) of all of these things

Tealswan: ((overlap)) Yeah absolutely ((end overlap))

KA: Together and yeah (.) and that's why yeah eh I think I mentioned at the start we're kind of not looking for a clear answer that is just like a one size fits all approach because we're not going to find one

Tealswan: I mean you can fit just the the you know straight white male who's autistic even for that it's still a very strong stereotype

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: And it's placed them in little boxes as well. So like it doesn't benefit any of us

KA: No

Tealswan: Like at all

KA: No no. Well it benefits neurotypical researchers

Tealswan: Mm

KA: Who want ((overlap)) a simple answer

Tealswan: ((overlap)) who want a simple answer ((end overlap))

KA: And to get their papers published ((laughs))

Tealswan: Absolutely ((laughs))

KA: Um (.) cool so yeah I would- (.) moving on a little bit

Tealswan: Yes

KA: From just the general stuff um do you want to tell me a little bit about your um experience getting an autism diagnosis?

Tealswan: Mm so I I've mentioned to you via our emails I only got diagnosed this April

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Like early this April (.) We've been trying to get me a diagnosis for ten if not more years. Um I have non epileptic attack disorder

KA: OK

Tealswan: I'm not sure if you've heard of it but um it's basically my brain is constantly stuck between my flight or flight response so when I get too overwhelmed or stressed out or my heart rate gets too high I have the equivalent of an epileptic seizure instead of

KA: ((overlap)) gosh

Tealswan: ((overlap)) you know ((end overlap)) which isn't great ((laughs)) when you're autistic and anxious ((laughs))

KA: Yeah I'm so sorry

Tealswan: Yeah it's not fun but because we went to get that checked out (.) because I kept having these seizures and my mum was like well if it’s epilepsy that affects her entire life

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Yeah and there's like nothing really you can do about it. Obviously you can take medication but you still can't drive and do stuff like that

KA: Mm

Tealswan: But um so we went to go and check it out and we obviously found out it was non-elliptic attack disorder but then it was (.) well there's nothing we can do about this except for like send you to CAHMS (.) Um you'll quickly learn I have a very negative relationship with CAHMS ((laughs))

KA: Unfortunately I (.) I haven't spoken to many people who are particularly fond of CAHMS

Tealswan: ((laugh)) yeah (.) slightly unrelated, I had one therapist with CAHMS who on our final session uh when I was telling her I felt like I was slipping into a depressive episode told me to “just try being happy” word for word that's what she said ((laughs)). So I think that sums up my experience with CAHMS ((laughs))

KA: Oh no

Tealswan: But um so we went through that and we were figuring out that I was obviously incredibly anxious. But a lot of the stuff I was anxious about wasn't like I don't wanna say typical anxiety cause that's obviously not the way you should word it but like being anxious about friends or being anxious about social stuff it was I was anxious cause it was too loud or too bright or there was too many people or people were talking at me at the same time that's was the kind of things I was getting really pent up about

KA: Yeah so a lot of like sensory-

Tealswan: Yeah (.) and obviously other stuff like uhm routine is a big one for me ((pause)) and it's like and transitions but I'm sure if you've done research into people who are autistic you're very well aware of that

KA: ((laughs))

Tealswan: But so we were doing all of that (.) and we are still having to go through CAHMS which I was not happy about but that's an entirely different story ((laughs)) Um and so it got to a point where we thought it was a functional neurological disorder

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Because a lot of my autistic traits my traits with my anxiety and then the traits from the non-epileptic attack disorder all kind of meshed into that. So we went to go and see a neurologi- it's a very convoluted story

KA: ((laughs))

Tealswan: This was like a year a year and a half ago

KA: OK

Tealswan: So we went to see a neurologist finally which they probably should have done to begin with but ((laughs))

KA: Yep ((laughs))

Tealswan: We won't touch on that. Uh so we went to see this neurologist and we're talking about it and he's just like it's not functional neurological disorder (.) she's autistic. Like I ((stutters)) we spoke to him once and he was like look I can't diagnose her because I'm a neurologist and not like

KA: ((overlaps)) yeah

Tealswan: ((overlaps)) an autism ((end overlap)) specialist cause you have to go through CAHMS for it. We didn't end up going through CAHMS for it we went private because

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: If we'd have gone through CAHMS for my autism diagnosis at the time where we got told we should probably you know approach that I would have aged out of the system by the time I got to the front of the queue

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Which I think is a big issue I know there's not really much that can be done about it cause they have limited resources I mean the whole of the NHS has limited resources at the minute

KA: Mm

Tealswan: But it's definitely problematic for like people like me like 17 year olds who really need this

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: And then cause if you do age out of the system you then have to loop round and get an adult diagnosis which is just as difficult if not worse ((laughs))

KA: Yeah and I imagine it almost feels like it's back to square one ((overlaps)) and yeah

Tealswan: ((overlaps)) Square one ((end overlap)) exactly. So we ended up going private um thank you to my gra- dead Granddad who played for that. I shouldn't make that joke ((laughs))

KA: Make all the jokes you need ((laughs))

Tealswan: But that that's how I like cope with things I'm like e- every now and then you'll get a quip just

KA: ((laughs))

Tealswan: I'm just putting that out there. Um so we went privately for it but um that was done in like a matter of weeks because we did all these th- we did all the uhh like I think it's DSM assessments

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: I can never remember what the actual terminology is but um we did all these assessments and I scored like obscenely high. Oh I think it I scored like 182. Or somewhere around there ((overlaps)) so well over the threshold

KA: ((overlaps)) right ((end overlap)) yeah

Tealswan: ((laughs)) I remember the lady who ran my assessment was like “and none of your teachers picked up on this” and I was like “no because I'm a younger girl”

KA: Yeah ((laughs)) they’re like “autism in- in females?” ((laughs))

Tealswan: I was just seen as being a pleasure to work with ((laughs))

KA: ((laughs))

Tealswan: Mature for my age ((laughs)) it couldn't possibly be autism no. So we got that and I got my diagnosis which was like 40 pages long it was not a fun read. I really did not enjoy getting my autism diagnosis cause it felt like a character analysis and I was like oh this is really dehumanising ((laughs))

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Like I- I know why they're phrased that way because they have to look at it from like a scientific perspective and like it's not meant to be like looking at you like from a human perspective but I was like wow this is incredibly dehumanising they're talking about me like I’m don't exist ((laughs))

KA: Aw

Tealswan: But it was not fun at all I so I've got my diagnosis only recently like I said. But so now it's going through the (.) getting stuff done at school. I was quite lucky because I go to [REMOVED] in [REMOVED]. You can't keep this in but I'll mention it anyway ((laughs))

KA: Oh I just I'll go through and cut anything out yeah ((overlaps)) no stress about that

Tealswan: Yeah I was about to say I probably shouldn't message uh erm message? Mention any very very personal details. But luckily my school and now my college cause this it's (.) it's the same like institution. Um they were always very quite accommodating like even before my diagnosis they put the things in place that I needed uh (.) which was quite lucky but obviously it was going through and making sure I had all like the legal requirements and stuff in place

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: And again incredibly dehumanising cause once again it makes you feel less like a human being with you know struggles and more just like oh now you are an object in the like you know political system

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: It's- it's not fun. You'll (.) you'll hear a lot that I have my own personal thoughts and opinions on how things like that are wrong ((laughs))

KA: I like that

Tealswan: I get very passionate I'm not very good at hiding it

KA: ((laughs))

Tealswan: That's probably an autistic trait ((laughs))

KA: ((laughs))

Tealswan: But um so we- we're doing that but it's not fun. I did not enjoy getting my diagnosis. I thought I would like I thought I'd be like oh finally this is a relief. But I've got it now and now I'm like (.) well there's absolutely nothing I can do to change this

KA: Mm

Tealswan: It's a hard one to describe because on one hand I'm like I'm glad

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Cause at least I've got that now and I know (.) and like on one hand that's much more subjective it's like well I'm no different to how I was before like that does not change me or how I react to things or whatever but on the other hand it's also like yes but now it has a name

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: And cause I think it's because your entire life you're brought up to think of autism as a disability and as something that you're not supposed to (.) I don't wanna say you're not supposed to like (.) like or be supportive of cause that's not true you're obviously. But it's like uh it's Autism Awareness Month and not like uh autism you know acceptance

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: It's that's the bit that it’s like be aware of autism don't accept but be aware of them. It's such a tiny thing

KA: But no

Tealswan: But to me it's like yeah I don't like that (.) but uhm (.) I think it is because you especially as like a girl you were brought up to f- (.) act a certain way?

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: And because obviously (.) I (.) once I got my diagnosis masking again I'm talking to you like you have no idea what any of this means ((laughs))

KA: No no it's ((stutters)) always good to because I'm sure there are gaps in my knowledge ((overlaps)) always but yeah yeah masking

Tealswan: ((overlaps)) Yeah so masking ((end overlap)) as a as a girl I'm sure it's similar for boys (.) autistic boys who are masking but especially as a girl um you are (.) because of the way that you are brought up to act and because of the way that when you act out or you unmask when you're younger you get you know not necessarily punished for but you get told no no that's not right uhh obviously it's like tsk it's like training a dog. It's like if your dog keeps doing something and you keep shouting at it eventually it's just not gonna do it anymore. So it's like for me with eye contact I can make eye contact.

KA: Mm

Tealswan: It's not something I actively want to do or uh I find particularly comfortable but it's something I can do

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Which is why when we took the assessment erm one of the questions was like “can you make eye contact?” and eh this is probably the literal thinking part of autism but I was like well yes I can make eye contact. Do I want to? Not really

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: But like I can

KA: That's what’s so silly about the assessment criteria

Tealswan: Yeah

KA: Is like the interpretation of questions

Tealswan: Exactly ((overlap)) and it does not take this into account

KA: ((overlap)) they don’t take into account ((end overlap))

Tealswan: Yeah

KA: Yeah which is bizarre when you think people are making it for-

Tealswan: Making it for yeah I had the exact same and it's the when they asked you the same question but worded in several ways and I was like “just ask me the question”

KA: ((laughs)) yeah

Tealswan: Uhh but yeah so because you're kind of brought up that way it's probably why I didn't get diagnosed until so late on because instead of just being seen as an autistic girl I was seen as a very well behaved girl a very academically smart girl a pleasure to have in my class or so mature for her age when in reality I had just been like conditioned from a very young age that that is how you're supposed to act.

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: So obviously I get my diagnosis and I (.) I stopped masking a lot around my parents (.) um which in return I started doing at school. I am not having a nice time at school at the moment ((overlap)) but that’s a very difficult story

KA: ((overlap)) Oh no ((end overlap)) I’m sorry

Tealswan: It it's alright I can I can cope with it I'm just it's just not the nicest place to be in you know

KA: Yeah yeah

Tealswan: But um so I start unmasking a bit and then (.) and this is this is my own like anxiety it's like OK so where do I start (.) and like the autism begin? Because then it's also like OK I've been masking my entire life is that actually my personality?

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: It's a weird it's a weird thing being diagnosed with autism cause it's on one hand it's a really good positive thing so it's like OK now I know why that's happening I feel less confused and I feel less afraid. And then on the other hand it's like (.) oh oh so that's what that is

KA: Yeah and just to pick up on I guess a part of that and

Tealswan: Yeah

KA: Um because you said about yeah not knowing where the autism starts and like you begin and

Tealswan: Yeah

KA: Um with regard to anxiety is it kind of the same there where like do you view the anxiety as

Tealswan: Mm

KA: Like (.) hand in hand with the ((overlap)) autism or

Tealswan: ((overlap)) Yeah I ((end overlap)) I only recently this is er this is something I discussed with my therapist yesterday. I only recently realised I am actually an extrovert

KA: Ahh

Tealswan: My entire life I was like “no I'm introverted”. But I wasn't (.) I was just (.) socially awkward because of things like my autism and I was anxious in big situations because of my autism. I enjoy talking to people

KA: ((overlap)) Ahh

Tealswan: ((overlaps)) I really enjoy ((end overlap)) having conversations with people I just don't like (.) it's th- it for me a lot of my big like struggles and like things to leap over are the sensory stuff. So for me a lot of the stuff that I thought was just anxiety completely on its own like was just me being an anxious girl or like I was told was just my anxiety was pretty much just my autism ((laughs))

KA: Yeah yeah

Tealswan: So it and that's the other thing it's trying to distinguish what is anxiety as anxiety and what is anxiety because of autism?

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: It's a hard thing to distinguish. It's not fun

KA: Yeah and I think that's I mean (.) kind of thinking a bit philosophically

Tealswan: ((laughs))

KA: About this it's hard that we have like these weird diagnostic categories

Tealswan: Yeah

KA: For things that so often in the real world like overlap and feed into each other

Tealswan: Yeah I think it's a uh again it's a weird one with autism because like (.) like you know it's a massive spectrum

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Yeah. And lik- because in society I'm using this the term society a lot

KA: ((overlap)) ((laughs))

Tealswan: ((overlap)) but I'm gonna keep using it it ((end overlap)) cause it makes me sound it makes me

KA: ((overlap)) ((inaudible))

Tealswan: Sound very like professional. Um because we're conditioned to view autism a certain way (.) like even when you're like educated on autism even when I was told I was autistic in my head when yo- someone says ohh yes an autistic person it's still that stereotype

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: And it's (.) I think that's another thing that made me feel like the like internalised kind of like uhm I don't want to say like um negativity cause like if I met an autistic person like before I was diagnosed I wouldn't be rude or horrible or anything to them

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: But it's obviously it's something you're conditioned with

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Like it's the same as like the racism thing where it's like I am not racist I do not care but because of that conditioned stereotype I'm like I feel like any person would think that

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Every now an- like it's (.) it's so it's a weird one. So I think a lot when I've I'm it's not so bad now but when I first got diagnosed with it it was very I was incredibly upset about it because in my head it was that stereotype

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: So I'm not too bad now now that I kind of deconstructed it and got to a point where I'm like well nah it's a very fluid thing and it's like finding people like online who are sharing their side of things or like through studies like yours where people are showing like all the different (.) where it feels more like OK so you can be autistic and also be individual

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Like it's not like a copy paste thing

KA: ((overlap)) Ohh completely

Tealswan: ((overlap) Which feels much ((end overlap)) better because yeah I was not having a nice time when I first got diagnosed where I was like ohh no little tiny box ((laughs))

KA: Yeah well I'm glad that there's stuff that you've found that has

Tealswan: ((overlap))

KA: ((overlap)) that has helped ((end overlap)) with that

Tealswan: Yeah and that's something I'll probably mention a few times is the little tiny boxes that I feel like peop- and not even just people with autism but people with anxiety or other mental health disorders get put in

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: And it's like it's like with the anxiety like moving away from autism pretty much entirely. People with anxiety is another thing that you get this very specific stereotype and you get this very specific character constructed of people with anxiety. And it's not true. Like you can it's like when people say an anxious person you think of someone who I dunno struggles in school or is really introverted very quiet. That's not true. I love talking to people. I can be very loud when I'm in a situation I'm comfortable in but I have anxiety

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: But I feel like it's like that with a lot of things you probably know from your research (.) like (.) where because of the way it's presented through like things like the media and stuff it's a very specific stereotype and that affects things like studies and um everything else and it's not good

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: It should not it should not because I feel like there'd be much more helpful information if pe- more people and this sounds like I'm going to be really kissing up like

KA: ((laughs))

Tealswan: If people did it like how you've done it where it's like OK I'll get a large you know study of different people from different ages and different backgrounds that's how it should be done ((laughs))

KA: ((laughs)) why thank you

Tealswan: ((laughs)) I'm very passionate about this. Can you tell?

KA: No I'm so happy it's so great to see people passionate about like I mean this sounds like I'm being really arrogant but like the

Tealswan: ((laughs)) yeah

KA: The way I think research should be done as well

Tealswan: Uh yeah it's

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: I mean I mentioned it slightly earlier I don't like the narrative that everything is the same and it's so uniform and it's probably half the reason why I'm not big on like science is because I really do not like the fact that everything is it I guess it's human nature to try and want to put everything in very organised little sections but it's just not how the world works

KA: No not at all. Um so moving on a bit

Tealswan: Yup

KA: To focus even more on the anxiety if you were to describe your experiences of anxiety

Tealswan: Ooh

KA: To someone that's like never never felt it before someone some lucky person

Tealswan: Ooh

KA: Who's just never been anxious in their life. What does it kind of feel like for you?

Tealswan: So for me I think I have two very distinctive types of anxiety. Emm like it's there's ones where I'm anxious to a point where nothing makes any logical sense. Like erm my dad is a very logical thinker he's very black and white if I'm in one of these states my dad is the type of person who'd try and talk me through it and like logic me out of it. Even if he was saying the most reasonable 100 percent correct things that does not make sense to me. That is not the way it works and I can't think straight this is the- that's normally the type of anxiety where I go entirely mute

KA: Mm

Tealswan: Which is not good if you can't think straight cause then you can't get your words out either (.) umm I get very tight-chested when this type of anxiety. Umm very restless like I feel like I have to move a lot. And then there's the complete other end of the spectrum which you'll learn is a lot of my sort of things are like that where I go one end to the other where it's in I entirely shut down. I don't mute then as far actually I ((stutters)) go mute pretty much

anytime I'm anxious. I completely shut down to a point where I'm in my mum calls it like a zombie state. Where it's like I can function and I can do things but I do it very slowly. I do it without really thinking or talking to anyone. Umm (.) mum says my eyes go very glossed over

KA: Right yeah

Tealswan: And it's more like a like that's when I'm not really aware of like how tight my chest is or how fast my heart rate's going. It's (.) what's the word? Dissociation

KA: Right

Tealswan: It's that's what it feels like cause it's like ((pause)) I'm not aware that time is moving if that makes sense?

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Like it's like I know things are happening but I am completely somewhere else. So it is two very different ends I'm either super super present where like everything is a million degrees and like uhh my body has to be constantly moving or the like input that I'm being given is just nothing at all. Or I'm completely dissociated I cannot really feel anything. I will not eat anything because I just don't feel hungry. It's yeah it's an odd one. It's two completely different ends of the spectrum and I haven't quite figured out (.) if there's a particular trigger to each one like

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Cause I feel like that's the obvious question then it's like ok

KA: ((overlap)) Yeah I was just about to ask

Tealswan: ((overlap)) OK so what causes that reaction ((end overlap)) and wh- what causes this one?I haven't really figured it out. I know that the more (.) I want to say the more stressful one they're both incredibly stressful.

KA: Mm

Tealswan: I think you get what I mean when I say that

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: The more like heightened reaction (.) that normally happened from over like the sensory input

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: And I've noticed that. But I have no idea what causes the very like dissociative reaction. I don't know at all

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Which part of me thinks maybe that's less to do with you know (.) I don't want to say less to do with the autism cause I feel like ninety nine percept of my things have to do with the autism. But I don't know if that's because that's more of the like anxiety as anxiety

KA: Mm

Tealswan: Whereas that reaction is much more to do with like the sensory inputs and the you know overstimulation. But they are two very very different ends of the spectrum and I think that's something I'm still trying to work out why and how I can like rectify that if that makes sense

KA: Yeah yeah and linking it I guess to interoception

Tealswan: Yeah

KA: Which is ((inaudible)) it seems a bit like you've got the two ends and in one everything feels more intense

Tealswan: Yeah

KA: And then the other everything ((overlap)) is completely different

Tealswan: ((overlap)) Yeah exactly ((end overlap)) yeah that's pretty much exactly how it's like. It's like (.) when I'm feeling (.) when I'm feeling everything I am feeling everything um and I'm I'll use an example because I think that's the best wat

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: To get it across to you. And so I have I have a lot of erm sensory stuff as part of my autism and that's one of the big things for me the when you think of like the spectrum um so (.) I am currently going through therapy for an eating disorder uh mostly due to the autism with the sensory inputs so a lot of the time is I just

KA: Is that ARFID?

Tealswan: Yes I think that's what it's called. He's mentioned it a few times I have no idea ((laughs)) But um (.) a lot of the time it's not that I'm don't want to eat (.) it I'm like I don't I don't really have an issue with eating (.) eating itself isn't an issue it's knowing what to eat. What I want to eat when I want to eat it. I don't feel hungry very often which is probably something that helps with your study

KA: Yes so interesting

Tealswan: It's like (.) it's like it's not like a conscious effort to not eat I just generally because I'm not hungry I just forget that it's something I need to do

KA: Mm

Tealswan: So anyway back on topic ((laughs))

KA: No this is entirely feel free to go off on tangents like that

Tealswan: So um (.) say I'm if I'm like dad's like you need something to eat like I don't care what it can be something really small if it has to be but it needs to be something I cannot handle that choice (.) uhh because that's obviously so many different options and so that will then send me into one of these kind of like panics where it's (.) everything is really big and then the longer that goes on for the more my sensory issues set off so then it's like anything that touches me is too much or um (.) if I breathe too much I start to really feel that um. This is one this is an odd one my hair starts to get itchy like on the back of my neck

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: So my mum my mum's got like a one of the claw clips where she has to hold it up uhh. I it's complete I'm constantly pacing and like shaking my hands. What's it called? Stimming

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: It's because I've only recently got diagnosed some of this terminology and I call it just I get shaky but

KA: ((laughs))

Tealswan: It does actually have names but umm like that I'm constantly moving whereas if I have this more dissociative kind of panic (.) I don't really feel anything and I don't really respond to anything

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Like (.) ehh so say if I've completely disassociated mum can ask me questions I will not respond to the questions but if mum was like OK go upstairs I could go upstairs or if Mum was like OK go load the dishwasher I'd load the dishwasher but I'd do so entirely it's almost like being blacked out

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: In my head cause it's like I'm aware that I'm doing things, and when I come around I know that I've well I get forgetful but for the most part I know that things have happened from between here and there but it's I'm tryi- it's almost like being in someone else's body if that makes sense

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: It's like having not much control over what's happening (.) It's a very weird one to describe (.) uhh ((smacks teeth)) because it's something that I feel like to someone who doesn't really experience it it sounds very out of the norm and I think that's something I've struggled with getting my autism diagnosis is explaining things to people. It's like me going mute which obviously happens (.) in both of these like scenarios to someone who that doesn't happen to you it's like just speak (.) it's not hard to speak

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Or on the complete other end of the spectrum it's like (.) ohh so they can't speak they can't think (.) or they're not aware and it's like no it's the complete opposite I'm thinking everything I really want to speak it's just not coming out

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: It's that's one thing I struggle with is just explaining it to people and getting it across to people and I'm quite lucky with the people like my best friend and my boyfriend and obviously my family you met my mum (.) very they're very very understanding. But explaining it to those like outside people who aren't really in like my little sphere of like comfort and like my support system (.) very difficult

KA: Yeah um and I kind of that links really nicely ((overlaps)) actually

Tealswan: ((overlaps)) yeah ((laughs)) ((end overlap))

KA: Onto the next set of questions I was gonna ask which I can't remember if I talked about on our intro call. But I also look at something called alexithymia (.) which

Tealswan: You have not mentioned it but I'm happy to think about it

KA: Yeah so alexithymia is something that we tend it overlaps a lot with autism but it is something distinct

Tealswan: Ok

KA: And not again as we've said about autism being a huge spectrum that's so diverse and you know um (.) it might be that alexithymia is something that you can relate to it might not be and that's yo- you know (.) either way it’s

Tealswan: Yeah ((laughs))

KA: ((laughs)) ((inuadible)) But what it is is basically a difficulty to describe your own emotions

Tealswan: Ohh absolutely

KA: Yeah?

Tealswan: That’s I relate to that a lot

KA: Ohh cool and it's yeah I guess interesting fact of it is would for you would you say that you have even within yourself like a difficulty identifying ((overlap)) those emotions?

Tealswan: ((overlap)) Mmhm oh yeah ((end overlap)) So for a lot of my childhood I (.) I would I was aware that I was feeling something I did not know what I was feeling. Uh even to a point where excitement and distress for me was something I found very hard to distinguish which wit- if you think of it from an outside perspective it's like they're two entirely different things (.) like they're completely two different ends of the spectrum but it I found it really difficult as I've grown up it's become easier to put names to things. But sometimes I feel like it's not that simple

KA: No

Tealswan: It's like I don't know if this is an autism experience or it's just an experience in general but for me (.) I don't feel happy and sad. I th- like well I do obviously but (.) in feeling happiness it's very intense like (.) I'm trying to think of how the best way to put it when I was going for a particularly difficult time (.) t wasn't like a like a depressive episode where I was feeling down constantly but I would either feel incredibly high like really happy I was on top of the world you know everything was fantastic (.) incredibly low where I was like everything is going downhill it's never gonna get bet- any better like whatever (.) or absolutely nothing at all like just floating through in the middle and I found that really difficult because you try to explain that to a lot of like mental health providers and it's like well it's not depression because you still have these very intense highs

KA: Mmhm

Tealswan: But it's not like a (.) it it's it was a really hard one to describe (.) and I've thin- I've had that for as long as I can remember like even now when we did my assessment for my autism one of

the questions she asked me was like ohh describe sadness. And I think my answer was well it's just the absence of being happy (.) which got a reaction and I didn't realise why it got a reaction until I got the autism like diagnosis back and it's like it has a very literal thinking of emotions ((laughs))

KA: ((laughs))

Tealswan: Because I mean to me ((pause)) because when you're younger you are taught emotions and you're taught what they are and you're given the little diagrams with like OK excitement has a big wide face and like squinty eyes and happy is a like a smiley face but not super smiley and sad is blue. Like in my head that's how I distinguish emotions. So when I'm feeling complex emotions (.) I cannot place them

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: In which I don't know if that's an autism thing I dunno I can't remember the word you used but it's probably this. But umm (.) it's (.) it's a hard one to describe because to a lot of people well they're like well you're just feeling happy or you're just feeling sad and I'm like well no I'm not just feeling happy

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Cause happy is this very specific thing in my head

KA: It's actually a really really common thing

Tealswan: Yeah

KA: And um (.) yeah so like a big one might be if you've if you know you've got a really exciting surprise coming up

Tealswan: Mm

KA: So your heart beats really fast because you're excited

Tealswan: Yeah

KA: But then in the moment you're like ohh am I scared or am I excited because my heart's beating fast?

Tealswan: Yes! So the little anecdote my boyfriend yesterday he goes ohh I got a surprise for you. I go I don't like surprises. I love surprises I love having people like think about that. I don't like (.) I feel apprehensive. I feel scared. I feel anxious. I feel excited and I feel happy but I cannot distinguish those like five six emotions from each other. It just all feels like I hate surprises in my head you know

KA: Yeah yeah. And when you uh this is quite an abstract question

Tealswan: ((laughs)) yeah?

KA: But when you are trying to differentiate these emotions and maybe then subsequently find you're not able to (.) is it (.) What kind of clues do you look for is it those physical signals that ((overlap)) you look towards?

Tealswan: ((overlap)) For me ((end overlap)) it's very physical because I think because largely of like my stimming I have certain stims in certain situations. So if when I'm very excited or happy or like positive kind of emotions you get the hands and it's very flappy and like a lot of energy. But if I'm feeling really anxious about something it's much more like tight and fidgety. And that's how I have to, like associate these things (.) cause in my head they're all just intense feeling. There's no like (.) it's a hard one to describe. I feel like if I didn't have these physical reactions in my head a lot of the time it would just be like OK so it's an intense feeling (.) full stop that's the end of like the topic

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Cause it- it's very difficult to explain to people ((pause)) cause you you've my mum sometimes would be like OK how are you feeling? And I'll be like I- I don't I don't know ((laughs))

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: I'm just feeling. And it's ((stutters)) a particularly difficult one I've gotten like I said I've gotten better as I've gotten older especially at distinguishing like I can normally distinguish if it's a positive or a negative feeling

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: But I could not tell you where on that spectrum it is or how intense of a negative feeling it is. And also I feel everything quite intensely

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: So like if I'm sad I'm really really sad or if I'm down I- I'm really really down. But if I am happy I'm in really intensely happy and I feel like I feel like from what I can see that's quite a common thing with people with autism where it's like (.) it can be a really positive thing or it can be a really negative thing but it's always very extreme and it's always a lot and I think that's half the reason why I get so overwhelmed in a lot of situations be them positive or negative because in my head it's ten times more like (.) feeling that I think it should be

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Like logically I'm like logically this should not be making me this excited. Like I said I collect antiques so I go to an antique shop and instead of just being like oh this is cool my brain is like this is the best thing that's ever happened to me. Oh my God I never want to leave. And everyone's like it- it's it is just an antique shop and I'm like but it's cool

KA: ((laughs)) One of my other participants used the term um autistic joy that's-

Tealswan: Yeah

KA: And I thought that was so beaut- like that's so nice and

Tealswan: I cause I've uh I mean I again I keep going back to my boyfriend. He's very very supportive

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: But I said to him the other day I'm like I get the same kind of dopamine rush from talking to you that I do when I talk about my special interests

KA: Aww

Tealswan: Ohh and it's and it's not even just with him I mean cause that sounds awfully sappy and romantic. Like my best friend I get the same thing because like talking to her is very ((pause)) it's I it's safe I wanna say

KA: Aww

Tealswan: It's and like I said it sounds incredibly sappy

KA: ((overlap)) no not at all it sounds lovely

Tealswan: ((overlap)) but I think ((end overlap)) when you're autistic you're taught to like mirror people. Like that's how you're supposed to react to people. You have your scripts and you have your mirror and that's kind of how that works. (.) So it's nice (.) and I think that's why I'm lucky with my family (.) and with [REMOVED] my best friend and my boyfriend is because I don't have to mirror them unless I want to obviously

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Like I've (.) and (.) I'm quite lucky because ((laugh)) the first time I met my boyfriend I was in a full like or like I was uh in an antique shop

KA: Ah

Tealswan: So the autism was like the like the autistic joy like you said through the roof I wouldn't shut up everything was like spewing out and I think the reason why I probably associate that with like OK that's a safe person is because he just let me

KA: Aww

Tealswan: It wasn't like shh like why do you keep talking?

KA: ((laughs))

Tealswan: And I feel like that's how I (.) like it's like my best friend (.) is one of the few people who I will go out of my way to spend time with

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Yeah like I have other friends and I have other people I get along with but it's not like a situation where I'd be like yeah let's go meet on Saturday. It's like OK I'll talk to you when I see you

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: That's just how it is ((laughs)) um so and I think from what I can tell that's a very similar thing with a lot of people with autism is that like comforting people?

KA: Yeah (.) yeah. Oh that makes me feel-

Tealswan: Yeah

KA: ((overlap)) warm inside

Tealswan: ((overlap)) it’s very ((end overlap)) (.) it’s very sappy I’m like I said there's like obviously there's a lot of negative things with having autism but there's a lot of positive things and I feel like they're incredibly overlooked

KA: Yeah definitely definitely

Tealswan: It's like my happiness and my joy like you mentioned (.) t's so it's because it's such a big thing and because emotions are such a big thing when I'm excited I'm incredibly excited. Like me receiving gifts (.) I go a hundred and ten like

KA: ((overlap))

Tealswan: ((overlap)) I can ((end overlap)) I cannot just say ohh thank you like that was so lovely cause in my head I'm like (.) they love me they appreciate me this is the best thing in the entire world. So like (.) which I'm sure is probably nice for the person who's like you know giving that or giving that attention because it's (.) validating

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Like and I think that's a that's a good thing with (.) autistic people and I guess being friends with or being in a relationship with an autistic person is ((pause)) we are not very good at hiding our emotions ((laughs))

KA: ((laughs))

Tealswan: Again that sounds like a massive stereotype but for the most part like when we're very happy we're very happy ((laughs)) Because that's my thing and oh I struggle buying presents for other people because in my head I'm like OK ((inaudible) cause I have my interest where it's like this is something so influential to me and so important to me. So when I try and buy gifts for like neurotypical people I'm like well they have interests but they don't react the same to their interests as I do

KA: ((laughs)) yeah

Tealswan: So in my head I'm like so it's obviously not that big a deal. So I'm terrible so I'm one of those people who will just buy you small gifts all the time and just hope for the best ((laughs))

KA: Yeah?

Tealswan: I'll be like they'll ((stutters)) like that it's sparkly

KA: Honestly I feel like if someone sees something and thinks of me

Tealswan: Yeah exactly

KA: Then I am so full of love for them. It doesn’t matter if it’s something that I would like

Tealswan: Yeah

KA: You know (.) is ((stutters)) normally my thing because it (.) it just makes me happy ((overlap)) to think they think of me

Tealswan: ((overlap)) yeah that’s how I that’s how I see it. It's (.) it’s an odd one but (.) I think again it's that autistic joy like you mentioned. I love that phrase I'm going to keep that now

KA: ((laughs)) yeah

Tealswan: Where it’s like ((pause)) for like an outside person who isn't the autistic person I can see why it would be incredibly comforting

KA: Mm

Tealswan: Because if you are comfortable- as an autistic person when I am comfortable with people and when I enjoy your company and when you are someone who I feel like I can be myself around ((pause)) it's (.) it's constant. I'm happy. Like that's where I'm comfortable and because of that autistic joy I'm very vocal about it and I'm very obvious with it and I can see why that would be something comforting because (.) again back on my boyfriend it's I sound like that's all I talk about

KA: No no

Tealswan: It's like he ((stutters)) described me once as you're just a comfortable person

KA: That’s a huge compliment

Tealswan: I was like I don't know what that means but I like it ((laughs)) but um which I mentioned then to my therapist and my therapist was like well yeah it's because you show it (.) like and you're vocal about it and you're obvious about it and (.) I think because even my neurotypical friends like ev- obviously they react and they show happiness and they show affection but it's not like me or like I have one friend who has ADHD

KA: Mm

Tealswan: It's not like us where (.) it's like constant and it's like I'm a very physical person

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Like even with my best friend it's like if she does something that makes me happy it's like I'll give you a hug or like um (.) I really like to when I'm walking I which I can't quite tell if it's the autism or the anxiety but I have to hold onto someone

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: So like I'm I mean with my mum just a second ago when we're waiting for you I have to cling to my mum's arm and I do it with anyone I’m comfortable with like I do it obviously with my boyfriend but also with my best friend (.) it’s like (.) and I've I can see why for some people that would be like a big deal

KA: Yeah. No I ((stutters)) think I'm really similar and I didn't realise I do this until recently but when I'm nervous

Tealswan: Mm

KA: I like to tap people and I was I I've never realised I was doing it and I was holding hands with my boyfriend the other day and then um I noticed he was ((overlap)) tapping me

Tealswan: ((overlap)) tapping you ((end overlap)) yeah

KA: And I was like why uh why do you want my attention? He's like no I thought it was something you liked cause you always ((overlap)) do it

Tealswan: ((overlap)) do it ((end overlap

KA: To me I was like oh I've never realised this but I do

Tealswan: No I it if it makes you feel any better I do a very similar thing uh when I get excited I will (.) I will tap anything I can

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: So if I'm with someone it would be them. But if I'm just on my own it's like the shoulders

KA: Yeah yeah I it's yeah very very similar for me. I think it's it can either be like really nervous energy or happy energy-

Tealswan: This is where after this you go and get tested and you're like ah

KA: Yeah ((laughs)) well this

Tealswan: I relate to a lot of this

KA: My entire PhD has just been the journey of me being like ((overlap)) well?

Tealswan: ((overlap)) maybe I should look into this ((end overlap))

KA: Yeah yeah um

Tealswan: Nah I it’s to be fair I feel like autism is one of those things especially when you're an adult where it's like you can if you want it but you don't really need to get a diagnosis

KA: Yeah. Um cool yeah going back to interoception again

Tealswan: Mmhm

KA: And that being kind of yeah our ability to feel these signals that come from inside our body um and just a few examples that I think I might have given you in the intro call that's like how fast our heart is beating how hungry we are how badly we need the bathroom um (.) even things like our blood sugar levels (.) which are yeah

Tealswan: Mm so for me so for me (.) Um I feel like I'm just gonna go down this list ((laugh))

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Uh for me with the heart rate I feel my heart rate very strongly. That's something I'm (.) almost constantly aware of

KA: Wow

Tealswan: Cause I feel like that’s something people don't really ever mention with autism. It's you're constantly aware of things

KA: Mm

Tealswan: Um and it's the same with like people with like ADHD I think it's just neurodivergency in general. But it's like today we went to like Co-op to get my mum some plasters before we came she had some blisters. I could hear the tills buzzing I could hear the lights. Ohh that's another weird one which I'm not sure if it has anything to do with interoception but (.) I can hear electricity sometimes like I'm that aware of it

KA: Wow wow

Tealswan: It's incredible. So like if you put me (.) every now and then if I'm feeling particularly like sensory overload as I call it I don't know if that's the actual term. But um if I'm feeling incredibly overloaded and I'm sat in my kitchen I can hear the refrigerator

KA: Wow ((overlap)) I bet that's intense

Tealswan: ((overlap)) Um but anyway ((end overlap)) so back on heart rate stuff I am almost constantly aware of my heart rate. Um if I focus I can hear it but I can (.) I can sometimes if I'm like in like a particularly stressful situation I can feel it in my entire body it's like all like you know sometimes when you're lying down and you have your hand up here and you can and suddenly you feel it in like your neck

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: It's like that but my entire body

KA: Oh wow

Tealswan: It's not fun ((laughs))

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Especially when you're like having a panic attack and obviously cause your heart rates going constantly it's like a constant dum dum dum dum it's panicking

KA: Yeah and do you find if you can like feel you start panicking and then ((overlap))

Tealswan: ((overlap)) and it makes (.) yes

KA: Then your heart rate increases and then it makes you panic more

Tealswan: Exactly (.) it's (.) not a nice thing. Um it also that might also be in part to my non epileptic attack disorder

KA: Mm

Tealswan: Uh which is probably something might be worth mentioning for your interoception (.) it's so because it's all about fight or flight

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: It's supposed to be (.) you know that build up of stress (.) I can never tell when they're gonna happen

KA: Right

Tealswan: So there has been times where I've haven't I've been str- like a bit anxious but I haven't been like (.) cra- like I haven't super faint or anything like that or I haven't noticed like my heart rate's gone up or anything and I just drop. And I dunno I dunno if that quite overlaps but I feel like it's worth mentioning

KA: Definitely yeah

Tealswan: It's like (.) it's like I do not notice at all and then I'm gone because it is

KA: Gosh

Tealswan: It's the equivalent of an epileptic seizure my hands will tense up um one time I fell between my bed and my desk and gave myself compression whiplash

KA: Oh gosh no

Tealswan: Yeah so it's (.) so it's definitely something. And it's annoying cause you think OK if you're aware of it you can put things in place you can like move to a safe spot. But a lot of the time I don't even realise they're gonna come on when they happen

KA: Oh no

Tealswan: So it's like I could be doing whatever um I've had a couple in school where I've just been sat doing work and head straight into the desk

KA: ((sharp inhale))

Tealswan: Uh I fell onto um my uh the boy who sat next to me

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: And

KA: Well at least that was probably a more comfortable landing than your desk

Tealswan: I felt terrible when I came to and I realised I was lying on this poor boy's like lap having like full seizure and he's like I can't move cause if I move she's gonna fall

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: And it was like a whole ((laughs)) it was like a whole thing I ((stutters)) had to apologise I was like I'm so sorry

KA: Ohh I'm sure he wasn't you know

Tealswan: Mm

KA: I'm sure he was happy that you know

Tealswan: He saved me

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: But uh he's a lovely guy I think in history now. He has said a few times please please don't have another seizure on me

KA: ((laughs))

Tealswan: I will try my best

KA: Was it a bonding moment?

Tealswan: Yes he's lovely I get along really well with him but he's just like please don't cause that was scary. I'm like tell me about it

KA: ((laughs)) yeah

Tealswan: But um (.) so yeah that's something but I'm very aware of my heart rate. But then complete other end of the spectrum I think I mentioned earlier I just do not feel hungry

KA: Yeah yeah

Tealswan: Or I feel incredibly hungry and there's like random example (.) um like this morning my dad offers me breakfast before we leave and I'm like no I'm really not hungry I have no appetite I can't feel anything. We walk just down the street and I don't know if it's cause I could smell it but suddenly I was hungry to a point where I was feeling nauseous because I was so hungry like

KA: Wow

Tealswan: And I'm quite lucky because my parents when I'm hungry my parents feed me. Um but I think that's mostly that's not like a they don't like it that's not like a difficulty thing. I made that sound like we're really hard off ((laughs))

KA: Oh no

Tealswan: It's more like a (.) my parents aren't the type of parents will be like no you'll eat when you eat and that's it. My parents are like look if you're hungry eat

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Like that's how we are in the family and largely due to having it done as like an eating disorder

KA: Mm

Tealswan: Um so my mum and dad were like OK let's find you something. And also I think it was largely my blood sugars as well because I ate it and I had a really bad headache this morning and then I had something to eat and suddenly it was completely fine ((laughs))

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Uh so that's another one. Um I'm less it's less of a thing with like water and keeping hydrated like I'm much better remaining hydrated than I am with eating

KA: Gotcha

Tealswan: Um but yeah with I just rarely feel hungry. Uh it's not something that's like always playing on my mind. And when I do feel hungry I have I'm I don't really experience like (.) you know when people are like oh I really fancy this this or this. I don't really get that

KA: OK

Tealswan: For me it's just like I just need to eat. I know what I don't want to eat a lot of the time. So like my dad will be like "ohh do you want pasta?" I'm like "no." But I do not know what I want to eat ((laughs))

KA: Yeah yeah

Tealswan: Again I don't know if that really relates but it feels like along the like right lines

KA: It hugely does and I actually as well as doing research into anxiety I do a lot of research into eating disorders as well

Tealswan: Mm

KA: And especially yeah what I mentioned before ARFID

Tealswan: I think that's what my therapist mentioned it sounds right

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Like I said I cannot remember for the life of me ((laughs))

KA: Yeah I I'll go on a bit of like a uh tangent

Tealswan: Yeah of course

KA: Cause it's actually worth probably discussing as well on tape. Um (.) but ARFID is like whereas for like anorexia and bulimia the motivations are assumed to be very like aesthetic

Tealswan: Mm

KA: And like oh I want to lose weight um ARFID was actually kind brought to attention (.) mainly after research on um autistic women

Tealswan: Oh OK

KA: Who were like “I’ve been diagnosed with anorexia but I it's-”

Tealswan: Not a body image issue yeah

KA: It’s and a lot of the time it's sensory aspects of food

Tealswan: Yeah that’s exactly how it is for me

KA: Yeah like certain tastes being very aversive or?

Tealswan: Mm yeah it I here’s a weird one I will not touch roast chicken. I do not like it I feel like it's it gets horribly creamy when you like chill it and that's all roast chicken like no matter how it's cooked

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: But I really enjoy um like my dad does BBQ chicken or I like chicken in pasta like so it's not chicken that's the issue

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: It's how it's cooked. And I feel like again that's another one I have a really difficult time explaining to people like my poor boyfriend's mum she's lovely she's very open and accepting of me and she's very aware that there are things that I struggle with and she's totally fine with that which I guess I'm very lucky with because a lot of people are not ((laughs)) But um sometimes she'll be like “OK so what do you eat?” And I'm like I don't know

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Like I cannot tell you. I and Tom's like “you do eat stuff.” I'm like “yeah I eat like plenty of stuff.” And I and this is another thing I brought up with my therapist where he's like “you do have a very diet and you do eat a lot of like unique-” unique? You get what I mean

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Like items of food like I really like spicy food

KA: Ooh

Tealswan: That's something I really enjoy sensory seeking. We've recently found out that's what that one is

KA: Ahh

Tealswan: Because I was like you'd think with cause (.) with a lot of the stuff I've struggled to eat if I douse it in like hot sauce it's not fun but I can do it

KA: That's a useful technique to

Tealswan: Yeah

KA: Unless it comes to a dessert

Tealswan: Then it's like not really. But like it's an odd one cause like I I'm not particularly a fan of like do you know when you got like quesadillas or like tacos where the like chickens shredded and then like doused in like whatever sauce it is and it gets all slimy or like pulled pork?

KA: Mm

Tealswan: Or I don't particularly like that texture but if I douse it in hot sauce so I can distract myself from it and what I can eat it it's not the most pleasurable thing in the entire world but it’s doable you know

KA: Well there you go. You've got your mechanisms there to

Tealswan: I do. We figured it out ((laughs))

KA: Eating was actually probably my biggest sign that maybe my parents should have sought a diagnosis because I would um (.) it wasn't that I was a fussy eater so much as certain things-

Tealswan: I hate the phrase fussy eater I detest it because it makes it seem like it's your fault and it's something you're actively choosing and it's not

KA: Yeah if I would for me it was sweetcorn

Tealswan: Mm

KA: And still actually use an adult I can't

Tealswan: I understand that I couldn't completely understand with sweetcorn cause it's like it almost pops

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: And that's what I don't like about it. Like it's definitely not the worst vegetable in the entire world but it's definitely not my first choice ((laughs)) I can completely relate to this sweetcorn

KA: I think it's my absolute worst and everyone's like but it's so (.) it's so like such an innocent food like there's nothing

Tealswan: I hate when people are like (.) it's like I will not touch steak I can barely even look at it. It makes me feel quite sick. But it's people are like ohh but it tastes amazing I'm like yeah but it looks raw ((laugh))

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Like in my head I cannot get past it it's the same with sushi. I'm like I know it's cured I know it's perfectly safe logically but if I put it in my mouth it is going to feel like it's raw

KA: Yeah yeah

Tealswan: And I can't get past that

KA: But that actually evolutionarily? Evolutionarily like makes sense

Tealswan: Well that's the other thing with uh with autism that I think a lot of people forget is (.) it is an evolutionary thing ((laughs)) it exists for a reason

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: I feel like a lot of people especially with the sensory issue side of autism but a lot of autism just in general is just (.) we haven't devolved

KA: Yeah ((laughs))

Tealswan: We're still at that like and it's the same with my nonepileptic attack disorder although I know it's not the focus of your study (.) t is just I ((stutters)) find it hilarious. My boyfriend says uh I'm just still a caveman ((laughs)) I just I just haven't got past that need for like (.) hunter gatherers like

KA: ((laughs))

Tealswan: I'll keep myself ((laughs))

KA: ((overlaps)) that's so funny

Tealswan: ((overlaps)) but like I feel like ((end overlap)) a lot of people really do forget that a lot of the sensory issues and a lot of the (.) um like struggling when it's loud or struggling when it's really bright it is the way the brain was built to look after itself

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Uh or like (.) the sensory issues stuff (.) the whole texture thing was supposed to be so you didn't eat something that's gonna poison you ((laughs))

KA: Yeah yeah yeah

Tealswan: And I feel like a lot of people forget that and that's half the reason why I don't like the fussy eater like mentality

KA: No?

Tealswan: Cause it's not like I'm just picking and choosing cause I'm like no I don't want that or no that's too green. It's like (.) no I can't eat it

KA: Yeah yeah I (.) very famous moment in my family

Tealswan: ((laughs))

KA: I um I my nan a lovely person

Tealswan: Yeah

KA: But very traditional grew up in the war time so was very like we do

Tealswan: Mm

KA: Not leave food on your plate

Tealswan: You eat what you're been given

KA: And she I believe it was sweet corn actually had tried to (.) but she's like you can't leave the table until

Tealswan: Mm

KA: You finish the plate and

Tealswan: My mum used to do that and then realised maybe we don't do that

KA: Yeah and my mum my mum had by this point been like just let her leave and my nan was like no no no she'll learn

Tealswan: Mm

KA: And I tried to eat some

Tealswan: I hate I hate it

KA: I was sick

Tealswan: Yeah

KA: On the table

Tealswan: No I completely

KA: ((laughs)) And then they were like OK (.) no

Tealswan: Maybe not then. We um (.) when I was little like little little my mum tried that technique. Um I cannot touch fish. I cannot go near it. I hate the smell. I hate the texture. I hate everything about it

KA: Yeah?

Tealswan: And it's all fish it's not like a specific type of fish but um when I was little my mum and dad used to have that mentality where it would if she just sits there eventually she'll eat it cause

she'll get bored of just sitting there um (.) I have my sensory issues I am sat in front of fish and fish stinks

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Like even without the sensory issues and even if you like the smell of fish eventually that's gonna get overbearing. So I'm sat there in what is basically for me a sensory hell cause I am just stood there with nothing to distract myself. Uh my family's obviously arguing cause there's constantly someone being like just eat it and it's done uh and then there's the smell of fish and it's this horrible environment and I had a full breakdown like a meltdown you've done your research

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: I love how I keep describing it to you like you're stupid I'm so sorry

KA: No no I'm not taking it as such at all it's always nice to have like clarity

Tealswan: So um (.) like I had a complete meltdown um (.) and then that got labelled as like a tantrum ((pause)) I always hated that I've always hated the word tantrum even when I was little I hated having been told I was having a tantrum

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Cause in my head it's not a tantrum that's just me reacting to the situation. But uh yeah so they quickly learned and not put me in that situation

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Uh

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: But yeah it's not nice at all

KA: No

Tealswan: I can completely relate er to how you felt

KA: Yeah yeah

Tealswan: So they quickly learned that's not how we deal with that. But I always hated being called a fussy eater because fussy insinuates it's a choice

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: It's like being fussy if I'm fussy with my clothing it means I want to wear the best clothing me being fussy with food does not mean I want the best food cause I'm being offered the best food I just can't eat it

KA: Exactly exactly

Tealswan: I ((stutters)) mean you can see I've I just I don't like anything that kind of ((pause)) dehumanising is not the right word like (.) make anything that like makes you seem like a child

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Anything that puts you cause I think that's another stereotype that's often put on autistic people is that autistic people are just adult babies and I hate it

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: I really hate it even for autistic people who have those extra needs and really do need that extra support they're still human beings and they're still adults and they still have their own thoughts and their own feelings and like I'm quite reliant on my parents. I'm quite lucky because there are a lot of things I can do but if I was put in a situation where I had to be on my own I don't think I'd cope very well

KA: Mm

Tealswan: But even for me (.) I don't like that because it makes me feel it makes me feel childish and I I don't like that stereotype and I feel like words like tantrum or uh fussy

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: They do just make it feel like you're a child who's lashing out and I don't like that at all

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Especially when it's something you can't control like fair enough if it was something I was putting on to just get a reaction or to change the outcome like

KA: Mm

Tealswan: It's not nice but I can see why that label will be put on it but because it's something I genuine I genuinely can't do it would be like telling me to OK now jump off a cliff. I'm not going to jump off a cliff

KA: Of course yeah

Tealswan: Because that's not that's not safe that's not something I want to do. And then when I go no I don't want to do that being told no you're throwing a tantrum it’s that (.) that’s what I don’t like. It gets me. I'm I mean it's pretty clear. I'm being quite calm and collected but in my head I'm like ohh

KA: No it makes me really angry too I just think it's yeah it as you say it like (.) makes you feel like childish

Tealswan: Exactly

KA: I think

Tealswan: Yeah it's I feel like a lot of stuff like that (.) even with the diagnosis system for autism it's so geared towards children. It's like one of the uh tests they make you do for autism I don't know how aware you are off the autism diagnosis tests but one of the forms that they made me do was they showed me pictures on like a slideshow and they're like OK write a story. I'm like what? Why do I have to write a story? And so I look it up and it's like pictures of like flying frogs. So I'm obviously describing these pictures because that's what it is and every now and then I throw in a little bit of like I said throw in a little bit of spice

KA: ((laughs)) yeah

Tealswan: Um just to make it seem more like a narrative but (.) and I look it up afterwards and it's like they do this because one of the diagnostic criteria is for people with autism is a lack of creativity (.) and I'm like the autistic people I know are some of the most creative people in the world

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Because especially within like their special interests and stuff it's like (.) I enjoy writing that's something I really like to do uh and I enjoy surrealist writing

KA: Ohh

Tealswan: So for me it's like saying you're not creative it's just it's just wrong full point blank period it's wrong

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: And it's uh it's the outdated like stereotypes that are being used to diagnose these things

KA: ((overlaps)) yeah like empathy

Tealswan: ((overlaps)) it's like yeah no wonder ((end overlap)) exactly. It's no wonder people are being misdiagnosed left right and centre or young girls are being told they have like bipolar disorder instead of autism

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Like no wonder because your diagnostic criteria is just wrong. There is no like (.) maybes it's it ((stutters)) just is. Like there are neurotypical people who aren't creative there are neurotypical people who lack empathy

KA: Yep

Tealswan: It's not (.) it's not something you can make a diagnosis surrounding

KA: Of course yeah

Tealswan: It's like it's not like um diagnosing someone with a medical condition where it's like do you have this symptom do you have this symptom do you have this symptom? (.) It's (.) I get I get very annoyed about it

KA: No no

Tealswan: Because it really does seem like the viewpoint on autistic people is that they are childish and insensitive and uncreative and then and that is that is the autistic person and it's like that is no autistic person like no autistic person in the world is going to tick all those boxes even (.) even if they aren't very creative and they lack a lot of empathy they're still going to you know I don't know be able to look someone in the eye or they can they could you know be super creative but they might not be very empathetic. And I don't like the criteria for that and the checkbox for that is those characteristics that have just been filled off of like stereotypes I'm going off on a tangent but it's like (.) a lot of the autistic diagnosis was created by a Nazi

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Um

KA: Yeah yeah yeah

Tealswan: Um I mean that's why I mean that's half the reason why you don't use Asperger's as a diag- or the all or saying like high functioning or low functioning autistic anymore is because they were created by a Nazi and not only were they just created by a Nazi they were created by a Nazi in order to determine who could and couldn't stay alive in Nazi Germany and who had to be sent off for like mass genocide and it's like why are we still sticking to those rules. It's like of course the Nazi is gonna be like oh the person with creativity off they pop

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: So like of course that's the way they're stereotyped because historical context obviously. But we know that's wrong like and we we're taught that that's wrong and we're taught that Nazi ideology is something that nobody should agree with and yet we're still basing our decisions and

KA: It's wild isn't it

Tealswan: I get it really upsets me. It's something I get quite (.) I mean evidently I'm slowly getting more and more loud and like shaky but it's something where it's like (.) nobody is going to be in a better situation be it autistic people or neurotypical people until (.) well people start listening to each other to put it very simply

KA: Mm

Tealswan: And also if people if the people who are doing the research and the people who are doing the diagnosis systems and (.) all of that are always neurotypical people (.) or neurotypical people who are basing their research in stereotypes that's never gonna change

KA: No yeah

Tealswan: And (.) and then also sick people are never gonna get the advantages that (.) they obviously need which then perpetuates the cycle. And I mean obviously like I said I'm not particularly into like the sciences but I feel like if more autistic people were going into those fields and if they weren't going into those fields in that really stereotypical like Sheldon Cooper typed like er stereotype things would probably be a lot different and a lot more accepting and it's like what I mentioned earlier with autism awareness instead of autism acceptance

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: It's like you don't need to be aware of autistic people like (.) there are things like sensory issues you can be neurotypical and have sensory issues or you can be neurotypical and get overstimulated (.) it's just not to the same extent you know?

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: It's like we share a lot of we share a lot of things with each other (.) like neurotypical people and neurodivergent people but because neurodivergent people are put in these tiny boxes it's like yeah and then we just shelve them away. And then they're separate and I don't like that because it's like well there are a lot of things that I'm entirely not separate with

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: And I yeah it's something I'm very very passionate about and I've gone off on a massive tangent

KA: No no

Tealswan: But it does very much seem like a it's like with your interoception and everyone experiences it to some extent

KA: Mm

Tealswan: Like everyone there's no ifs ands or buts about that. Like I'm there is there are gonna be neurotypical people who struggle to feel hungry that's gonna be a thing

KA: OK

Tealswan: Or there'll be neurotypical people who are probably like me and get are really aware of how the heart rates being but ((pause)) and obviously that's completely fine but because they associate those things with autistic people they're not even looking at it for themselves so it's not benefiting them

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: And it's not benefiting the autistic people and it's like so who is this benefitting? ((laughs))

KA: Yeah it harm although I feel like you know these structures they ((pause)) I dunno having these stereotypes

Tealswan: Mm

KA: It disadvantages autistic people more than neurotypicals

Tealswan: Yeah of course

KA: But it's still ((overlaps)) disadvantaging to neurotypical people

Tealswan: ((overlap)) it still disadvantages people ((end overlap))

KA: There's no benefit to like

Tealswan: Ohh and it's and it's the Sheldon Cooper stereotype I call it the Sheldon Cooper stereotype but I think it's any autistic character who's portrayed in the media it's the same character

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: It's like what's that show that's got I've never watched it but it's like really sort of viral on TikTok ohh the doctor one(.) I can't remember what it's called but the main character of that is an autistic doctor (.) and there's a scene

KA: Ah

Tealswan: There's a scene where he's having a meltdown and he's reciting himself like he is a doctor he is a surgeon and it's the taking like taking it as like the butt of a joke that I don't like

KA: Ah yeah

Tealswan: It's like if it was presented in a way that's like (.) this is an autistic character and this is their struggle and but also this is the positive things about them that's good representation that's fine. But when it's played as a joke and that's why I don't like The Big Bang theory Because not only do they portray autism as like a joke but they also are very misogynistic but that's an entirely different topic

KA: It's so in these interviews the number of times that specifically Big Bang Theory

Tealswan: Mm

KA: Has come up as something that people hate the like it that that show ((overlaps)) has so much to answer for

Tealswan: ((overlaps)) It's so bad ((end overlap)) like it's and to be fair media in general I study media

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Uh for my A-Levels um (.) we watched this show uh it's a Swedish show called The Bridge and the main character is autistic and it is the (.) probably the only show I've seen with autistic representation where I can say yeah

KA: Ahh

Tealswan: That's quite good. It has its pitfalls like the character's portrayed as quite emotionless really like mask -she's a girl um really emotionless. But she's also portrayed as like hypermasculine and obviously (.) that is a stereotype but I feel like (.) you can have elements of stereotype without you being a stereotype

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: And I think people forget that a lot. But it was weird I did not enjoy that lesson because as much as I was like that character is fantastic the way she was described by my media teacher was not um (.) like referring to her as having Asperger's (.) and being a high functioning autistic and I was like you can't you can't use that term

KA: Educators should know better

Tealswan: It's

KA: They do yearly training on this like you know

Tealswan: Exactly. But um yeah and it's just (.) and because it's presented so poorly in the media and because the media is the way that people are actively consuming these stereotypes ((pause)) the because autistic characters are being played as the butt of a joke in all of these different cases (.) that's what autistic people are seen like in general. So we did an assembly in school on autism um (.) which (.) the sssembly itself completely fine and really informative and I was like yes OK cause this was I think it was the week after I got diagnosed I think it was a little targeted cause I'm the only person in my year with autism or the only one (.) diagnosed ((overlaps)) with autism

KA: ((overlaps)) Diagnosed yeah ((end overlap))

Tealswan: I think it was targeted cause it was the week after I got my diagnosis and my head of year had been very in the loop about my diagnosis so I do think it was a bit targeted but that's OK I

don't mind because the assembly itself was alright. But it was after the assembly where there was all the micro like I don't want to use micro aggressions cause I know that's a term that's almost exclusively used in in talks about ethnicity but it's the only one I can really think of

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Where it's like it's not actively you know ableist

KA: Mm

Tealswan: And it's not actively against autistic people but it's like making autistic people the butt of the joke or like I said um this scene where this doctor's having like a meltdown and people just repeating it and it's like you're not seeing that as a person with autism you're seeing that as a character with this very one sided like portray where they're hyper geniuses but they're so socially awkward and they can't talk to anyone and

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: And I don't like it

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: And I think I've (.) again like I said earlier I think that's why I appreciate you having a wide like net with your study because at least then (.) you get that you could probably get that view where you meet someone who's super intelligent and like a prodigy because they're special interest is something they like put themselves in which is another thing it's like they're not- well they are prodigies but it's not like it's not like it's portrayed on TV where it's like they're just born geniuses no

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: We're not born geniuses like I am highest in my class in media and history

KA: Ooh

Tealswan: I know look at me ((laughs)) but um (.) er it's not because I'm just born naturally good at it I put a lot of effort into it. I just put more effort into it because that's something I'm passionate about

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: And but I hate how in the media it's presented as they're just born geniuses. When an autistic person is presented for the media as being a genius and being the best in their field like this like a like a world class surgeon or a um biologist or whatever Sheldon Cooper was I can never remember physicist or like whatever. And it's always science as well

KA: Mm

Tealswan: You never see an autistic person presented as like the best in their field in like a humanities or er (.) psychology, or like anything like that, it's always biology physics engineering doc- being a doctor. It's never it’s never anything open-ended and because it's either presented like that where they're hyper geniuses who (.) you know their pitfalls are kind of made-up for by the fact that they provide this. But then you have the other end of the spectrum where I'm trying to think of an example but nothing's coming to me where autistic people are played off

as the butt of the joke and they're useless and they can't do anything and uh they just constantly need support and the world ohh

KA: Mm

Tealswan: And they're just using all the resources. It's one end or the other

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: It's like we will only accept and support autistic people when autistic people are (.) giving us something in return

KA: Yes

Tealswan: And I don't think like it should be like that for anyone like and not just autistic people like there's so many demographics like it. It's like back on the topic of black people it sounds weird comparing racism and ableism but it's just an example but um (.) they're presented like black people are presented as so good when they're winning races in the Olympics for us but the minute it's something happening in like a in like a low-income neighbourhood black people are the problem

KA: Oh yeah

Tealswan: It's and it's the same with any minority group same with like LGBT people

KA: Yeah?

Tealswan: Like LGBT people are so celebrated when they're like incredible singers or fashion designers but the minute they’re (.) drag queens or

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Pride parades it's like no they're disrupting the peace they're they're influencing the kids. It's any minority it's any deviation from like straight white man. It's not the way the world should work. Because everyone has their positives

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Even uh even autistic people who are very reliant on like (.) aid and like help from other people. They're some of the crea- most creative people in the world. It's like there was a documentary we watched (.) um me and my mum who there was this uh autistic boy he um was he still lived with his parents he was very reliant on like uh welfare systems and stuff like that. But he was this amazing poet

KA: Aww

Tealswan: Because ee because obviously he struggled to get out a lot and do all these things that I'm sure like a normal person normal person that sounds horrible but you get what I mean

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Like someone not in his situation would take for granted because he couldn't do all of that (.) he spent a lot of time in his own imagination. And I think a lot of people forget that ev- (.) and it sounds like a very sappy thing to say but everyone can do something

KA: Yeah yeah

Tealswan: There I don't think I've ever met anyone in my life who is entirely useless

KA: ((laughs))

Tealswan: Like there are people who I think (.) hmm you're not the smartest you know sharpest tool in the shed but there there's always something they're good at. It's like the people in school who you're like you're not very good like at academics they're some of the best like people in social situations

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Like and it's a weird one. And I really don't like the mentality that just because someone's autistic that can't do anything

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: It's not a good mentality at all

KA: No not at all

Tealswan: Sorry my phone just buzzed just checking what it was

KA: Yeah no problem. Um just yeah we should probably sort of begin wrapping up soon

Tealswan: Yeah I was gonna say yeah I was going on a massive tangent.

KA: No but it's so interesting to hear and it's like my some of my favourite topics to talk about. Um but just going back to interoception briefly

Tealswan: Yes

KA: Um these signals that we were speaking about and I know you said that you feel very like hyper aware of some of them very not aware of others when you do tend to feel these signals do they feel especially positive or negative to you or are they just neutral?

Tealswan: I have I'm pretty negative towards things like this um

KA: Yeah?

Tealswan: To pretty much all of them. It's cause for me I get very overstimulated very easily and (.) to me I can't see a positive of feeling every time my heart beats to me all that's doing is making me more stressed out and more over stimulated cause like I could be having a really nice quiet walk which to a lot of people would be super peaceful but because I'm hyper aware of how my heart's beating or how fast I'm breathing or you know every tiny bit of movement I get incredibly overstimulated

KA: Mm

Tealswan: Uh it's like they do simulations of like having autism which is a bit problematic but that's again-

KA: I've heard of those

Tealswan: But and I a lot of people are like they can't it can't be like this they can't be hearing all of this this loud because it's not that loud and I'm like yes it is it's like a lot of a lot of things I've heard people say about it like online and stuff is if a if a TV is set at a certain volume it's set at that volume and it's not gonna feel it's not gonna sound louder to anyone else. And my response to that is like OK but what if they were hard of hearing?

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Then it's gonna sound quieter and it's the same thing in my head where it's like I can hear it louder because that's the way my brain is wired the same way they hear it quieter because that's the way their ears are wired. It's a it's a hard one to explain it's like a very real thing and it's that's another thing where I'm like it's really difficult to describe to people because people who don't experience things like that you can't imagine it. It's like trying to explain a colour to someone they've never seen

KA: Yeah yeah someone's used that exact metaphor before

Tealswan: Yeah it's like it's like of course if you've never experienced something you're gonna have nothing to compare it to

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: And that's something I've really struggled with because (.) especially with like my parents and stuff cause they're supportive they're super supportive and I couldn't ask for better but they've never experienced it

KA: Of course yeah

Tealswan: And they have nothing to base their opinions on and (.) so of course they're not going to understand it the same way I understand it and I don't hold them against that and I don't hold anyone against that because of course they're not. But it doesn't make it any easier

KA: No no

Tealswan: It's a it's a very hard one to explain it. It's I do like the metaphor where it's like it's trying to explain to someone the colour they've never seen

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Because it's like (.) it's like how do you describe to someone the colour green if they've never seen the grass before?

KA: Exactly it is just impossible right?

Tealswan: Yeah (.) So it's ((stutters)) an odd one. And so it's very negative for me it's incredibly negative for me because ((pause)) not only is it something that's making my life more difficult cause I can't really think of any positive to the interoception half of it like (.) with some parts of my autism I can see where there would be a positive like application for it (.) like my special interest

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: I can see how that could benefit me I can see how that's not in like obviously it has negative things but it's not solely negative. Whereas with this it's like it is not providing me anything

KA: Mm

Tealswan: It's like with the sensory issues it's like sure (.) a million years ago when we were still eating dead birds then it would have been useful. But right now when my food is clean and my food is safe and it tastes nice cause I know it tastes nice cause when I eat it I'm like I like the flavour like roast chicken we're back on this one

KA: ((laughs))

Tealswan: It's I use the same example every time and it makes it seem like it's the only thing it's really not it's just the easiest example. It's like I really like the flavour of roast chicken. I think it tastes really nice. I just can't deal with the texture of it and that's really annoying. And it's hard to explain to people especially like when I'm at people's houses where it's like "it's not your cooking your cooking is great your cooking is fantastic and it tastes fantastic. I but I just can't I can't force myself to eat it because my brai- it's like a hard block in my brain. It's the same with the meeting someone where it's like I want to speak to you I really really want to speak to you

KA: Mm

Tealswan: But it's just it's like it's like walking into a wall but it's (.) it's like in a video game where like you go to the boundaries and you can see things on the other side of the boundaries but it just won't let you push through it

KA: Getting past yeah

Tealswan: It's like that. And so I can't see a positive to it

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: And I'd be surprised if someone could. But obviously that's just my experience with it

KA: Yeah yeah. Well OK that is the end

Tealswan: Yes

KA: Of all the questions I have for you. Was there just anything final that you wanted to make me aware of?

Tealswan: Um I don't think so. I just wanna say again sounds very sappy thank you for doing this

KA: Oh no problem at all thank you

Tealswan: I mean this is it's why I wanted to do it because it's (.) it's something people don't pay much mind to

KA: Yeah

Tealswan: Or at least in my experience don't pay much mind to (.) and I appreciate that (.) not only are you researching it because people research autism all the time uh like I'm aware that that happens but people don't do it in the right way

KA: Aw

Tealswan: So I appreciate cause from what I can tell you are and I ((stutters)) do appreciate that

KA: Ohh thank you so much that genuinely makes me so happy