

[Solemn Music]

Kyle: Every day, people with disabilities everywhere try to do things, like go to the grocery store, go outside, and just live their lives. Everyday, able-bodied people come up to them and call them inspiring and tell them how happy they are to see them outside. Hi, I'm Kyle Khachadurian of The Accessible Stall, and I'm here to tell you to leave us the (bleeping sound) alone. Please. It's all we want. We are people too. Why can't you just (bleeping sound) see that?

[Upbeat Music]

Kyle: Hi, I'm Kyle Khachadurian.

Emily: And I'm Emily Ladau.

Kyle: And this is another episode of The Accessible Stall.

Emily: That is not how I do it.

Kyle: But it's how we did it today. That's what we're gonna talk about.

Emily: But you did it wrong! It's supposed to be, and you're listening to another episode of The Accessible Stall.

Kyle: Well, you know this is the first time I did the intro so now it is my honor to tell you, Emily, that we're gonna talk about porn today.

Emily. No! Wait, that's inappropriate!

Kyle: Not that kind of porn.

Emily: What kind of porn?

Kyle: Inspiration porn.

Emily: Oh, no! I don't think I like the sound of that.

Kyle: Why not?

Emily: I don't know, what is it Kyle? Tell me what it is.

Kyle: You don't know what inspiration porn is? What kind of disability advocate are you?

[Emily laughs]

Emily: Okay, clearly I know what inspiration porn is and also, it was kind of my idea to do this episode, and Kyle encouraged me to do it because I came to him because I saw instance number five bajillion six hundred and forty three thousand of inspiration porn whilst scrolling through the internet.

[Party whistle]

[Emily laughs]

Emily: and I basically said that I am so sick of this, and we need to talk about it because it is driving me bonkers.

Kyle: Right. So, for the good folks at home, Emily, how would you define inspiration porn?

Emily: It is anything that uses someone who is disabled to evoke positive emotions in nondisabled people.

Kyle: Anything that uses, that uses disabled people to invoke positive emotion in nondisabled people. That sounds pretty innocuous though, don't you think? Like, when you define it that way.

Emily: Well, I mean I don't have the technical definition over here, that's just what I would describe it as, but-

Kyle: No, I agree with you, but the reason I say that is because it's not a good thing, but the way you describe it it sounds sort of like it's not a big deal, but it is a big deal, and that's why we're gonna talk about it today.

Emily: Well, okay. So I think that it's hard when it's called inspiration porn because it kinda makes people stop in their tracks and be like what?

Kyle: Yeah.

Emily: But that's also the point.

Kyle: Well, the way I've always heard it is sort of like, it's not just disabled people although we like to, you know, it happens to us the most, it's not so much that it's a disabled person that invokes positive emotion in one person like that's not the sinister part. But the sinister part is it uses the disability specifically and ignores the person that does that and then the emotion that it evokes, although positive, is totally like vacuous, so it's like all you're doing is sort of looking at a poster something and feeling good that you're not that guy, which is-

Emily: So better explanation as per my hero, Stella Young, the term describes when people with disabilities are called inspirational solely or in part on the basis of their disability.

Kyle: Ok, yeah. There you go. Much better definition than ours.

Emily: But I think that our particular definition fits what we're talking about, too, it's just that the way that it sounds is fairly like what's the big deal.

Kyle: Well, in and of itself, it doesn't sound like it's a big deal but the reason that it becomes one is because you start to see it everywhere once you know what it is, and you start to wonder why it's okay.

Emily: That's because it is everywhere!

Kyle: Yeah. It's everywhere, and it's just this really weird thing that the entire world has accepted is okay to do, that it's okay to feel like good about yourself that you're not disabled, but that it's also okay to interrupt the life and day of a disabled person to congratulate them on leaving the house today, which is strange to me and Emily as well as disabled people.

Emily: I don't know that it's strange so much, I sort of understand it, but it's bothersome. So I understand inspiration porn, I really do. I get it because society is trained to look at things that are somehow considered inferior or something like that and have a particular emotional response.

Kyle: Right.

Emily: But at the same time, it's kind of paradoxical because aren't you supposed to be inspired by something or get warm, fuzzy feelings from something that is actually a positive thing, and not just like a person going about their daily lives? I guess that would require us to even talk about what examples of inspiration porn are. Cause we're sitting here talking about inspiration porn but we haven't really given examples.

Kyle: I don't know if there are very many audio examples that we can sort of splice into this, but you know, it's sort of-

Emily: Every commercial ever?

Kyle: Yeah, so if you've ever seen a commercial with somebody with a disability in it, the odds are that it's cool colors, sad piano music in the background, maybe 10 seconds of a sob story, and then the friends come in and it's happy music, and a pat on the back and everyone's happy. That, I mean I'm just making that up but I'm sure-

Emily: You're not making that up, that's the Guinness basketball commercial.

Kyle: Yeah, but I like that.

Emily: I don't.

Kyle: I'll explain why I like that one and we'll put a link in the thing, but that's one of the ones that I don't mind.

Emily: We can also put a link to my scathing critique.

Kyle: Yeah, we should. But things like that are what we would define as inspiration porn, and I think part of the reason we're doing this episode, I imagine that most people who listen to us are or know someone who's disabled, so are probably familiar with the term. But it's very rarely looked at any deeper than oh, this is a bad thing. Or don't do this thing. Or this is a thing you shouldn't participate in if you can help it. But I think that there's more to it than to just look at it and say this is bad.

Emily: I do think it's more nuanced and complex but I'm pretty sure that any time you're using a disabled person for the sake of inspiring others without particular cause or real basis for it, then it's bad.

Kyle: Yeah.

Emily: I would say-

Kyle: I would agree with you.

Emily: So example being all the people who have ever encountered me being like I don't know how you do it. I wouldn't even be able to get out of bed in the morning. I don't even know how you get dressed and good to see you out today, and just being amazed at my general existence and humanity. And that in and of itself is treating me, a person, as inspiration porn, because essentially porn is a form of objectification, right? In many cases.

Kyle: Yeah.

Emily: In many cases, not all.

Kyle: Well, no, but I mean even in its actual definition, adult entertainment. You have people being objects for the exploitation of the viewers, of people watching them. You have, yeah, that's what it means.

Emily: No, not for, you mean like you have people who are being objectified and/or exploited for the entertainment of the viewers. You said for the exploitation of the viewers.

Kyle: I'm sorry, yeah no, for the entertainment of the viewers.

Emily: But anyway, so the word porn makes sense. I feel like that's the part of the conversation that's often left out of inspiration porn, but it comes down to being a form of objectifying people, so when you see me out and about, and I'm shopping and I'm in the grocery store and you say that it's so good to see me out, you're kind of objectifying me. All I'm doing is going about my business and you're inspired by my existence, which I cannot control that you feel that way, but I wish you wouldn't.

Kyle: But I think you're sort of talking about two things that are very intertwined.

Emily: What?

Kyle: Well, because it's twofold. On the one hand, the problem isn't that somebody's inspired by you. The problem, or not even that you invoke inspiration in them. The problem is why? It sounds like from the way that you speak, the way that you're telling the story. It sounds like because there's no reason behind what you're doing, whatever it is, the fact that they find inspiration from your existence rather than your accomplishments or doing something cool or something like that is the issue.

Emily: Well yeah, because going to the grocery store isn't cool. I mean, to be completely honest I happen to love going to the grocery store.

Kyle: I mean, you know-

Emily: But that has nothing to do with anything. And I mean I am the type of person who will get excited going through the aisles of the grocery store and spin my chair around in circles and pull things off the shelves and throw them in the shopping cart.

Kyle: Why?

Emily: I don't know, I really like grocery shopping. That's not the point here.

Kyle: I know. But there's a difference I think between being inspired and being objectified and also being inspiring, and I think that when you read an article about inspiration porn, you only hear about it from the perspective of the disabled person being objectified. And that's completely valid and the worst part of it. But then, you know, what happens if a disabled person does something inspiring? Actually inspiring?

Emily: Oh see I thought you were gonna say why don't we interview the people who are inspired and find out why? And then I was gonna have to reach through the computer and punch you in the face.

Kyle: You know what, I would love to but I wouldn't even know where to find, I mean I do, all we have to do is go out and sit on the street corner for five minutes and one will show up.

Emily: If you ask someone what they're inspired about, it better be substantive. There better be a real reason. If it's that I'm out and about and I overcame my disability enough to be out in public, then on my God.

Kyle: Well it says a lot about the other person, doesn't it, like how boring is your life that seeing another human being is an inspiration to you?

Emily: Sure, but it depends on what that other human being is doing, which is what you were getting at before. Like if the person is being a baller, such as what we talked about in our last episode where the person such as Robin is doing something legitimately cool.

Kyle: Yes, and is a really amazing athlete.

Emily: Then sure, I'm inspired, but I'm not inspired solely because you have a disability.

Kyle: Yeah, but I kind of am, and I say that as someone else with CP. It's not that she's inspiring to me only because she has CP, she's inspiring to me because she can do something I can't and has CP. And that's where I think that there's a huge difference because I think it's, I don't think that taking a person's disability in with the accomplishments that they have or that they have done, and then using that to feel inspiring is inherently wrong, I don't think that. I think that when you take only the disability and conflate it with something ordinary, it's wrong.

Emily: So I'm sort of contemplating this now. So are you saying that if someone disabled does something legitimately awesome, then yes, you are factoring in the disability, but it's also sort of the same as if you were someone who really looked up to, let's say, guitarists in a band, and so you look up to that guitarist and if they have some kind of unique story about how they got to where they were that would further impact how you looked up to them?

Kyle: Absolutely, yes. But also if what they do is impacted directly by their disability. For example, there's nothing about your disability that inhibits you from going to the grocery store except if the grocery store is inaccessible pretty much, and maybe a high shelf, but if somebody can do something extraordinarily well that their disability directly impacts their ability to do, then yeah, they're that much more inspiring to me than if they weren't disabled. But I don't think that that's a bad thing, I don't. And I'm not just saying that in a way that suggests, oh I'm disabled too, I can say that, I genuinely mean that.

Emily: So I guess there are disabled people that I look up to because they are disabled and also awesome, but for some reason, the reasons that I'm inspired still feel different to me than some of the reasons that other people profess to be inspired.

Kyle: But they are, and they're real, but their disability is still part of it. Now, I don't think, I wouldn't say that it makes you hypocritical because you have reasons and so do the people that are inspired by your existence at the grocery store. But the difference there at least hearing it from you, and interpreting it for me, is that there's a difference between, you know, being disabled and accomplishing a lot and also, you know, X Y Z, in a world that already doesn't like us, and oh, Emily went to the grocery store today. One is vapid and one is not.

Emily: You know what I think that's making me think about?

Kyle: What?

Emily: I wonder if anyone who's ever said that it's good to see me out has someone in their life that has a disability and that person is not quite as active. And so maybe they're responding based on the fact, or you know what, I change my mind because I think that's giving them way too much benefit of the doubt.

Kyle: They might, you don't know.

Emily: I don't know, but I think more to the point is they probably have seen someone on TV with a disability looking super pathetic, or they just have this overarching notion of disability is pathetic, and so when we as visibly disabled people are not fitting into that image in their head, then it's surprising for them.

Kyle: You know, I think that's the heart of the issue. We can argue back and forth as to being inspiring because of disability is bad and being inspired because of someone who is disabled is bad, but that's no big deal, in comparison, I think, to the reason why that is, which is that on a whole, in general, society thinks that disability is a bad thing. I think that if that wasn't the case, then it wouldn't matter. Or at least it would be a footnote instead of the entire reason of your being inspiring.

Emily: I just wish that people would say that they find me inspiring after knowing things about me, and even then, I still get frustrated, so I'm not a hundred percent sure that I'm sticking by what I just said because as much as I at least appreciate if someone knows why they're inspired by me and it's more than just my general existence. You know, so for example, I travel a lot independently, and people are just always so impressed by that, and they always say "oh my God, good for you. I could never do that, I don't know how you do that." And for some reason, and maybe this is just me, I always feel like they're saying it out of complete and utter shock and surprise that I, a very visibly disabled woman, travel independently and have a very hectic travel schedule. And for me, if somebody told me that they traveled all the time, when I would say I don't know how you do it, I would literally mean, I don't know how you, a human being, regardless of ability or disability, do it.

Kyle: Well, if you interpret it that way, how do you know that's not what, I mean I get it.

Emily: Because no, usually the comments are-

Kyle: I'm just playing devil's advocate.

Emily: I know.

Kyle: The thing, see that bothers me though. That would bother me too. Because what they're saying is I couldn't live your life. And okay, that's probably true, but nor can you. You don't know what it's like, you know what I mean? That's why it's almost like it means absolutely nothing, it's so meaningless, all it does is makes the person that said it feel better.

Emily: No one can live anyone's life.

Kyle: Well yeah, and it makes you feel worse, but that's okay, because they're totally ignorant to that fact even if you tell them they don't know.

Emily: But at the same time, sometimes I do feel kinda good about myself because I think, yeah, I am disabled and I do travel independently all the time, and it is kind of a raging pain in the ass to navigate things on my own with my wheelchair and my luggage and whatever, but I do it, and I guess I just don't want a cookie for that. You know, just because it is, for me I acknowledge that, but I don't need praise for that. That's not why I do what I do. And I think that's where I have trouble with all of it, it's not that I don't think that someone disabled dealing with things that are already kind of a pain for nondisabled people isn't like sort of an accomplishment, but it's just that I wish that we could get to the point in society where doing these sorts of things wasn't recognized as more of an accomplishment because you're disabled, because a lot of that points to the fact that the world still makes things so difficult for us.

Kyle: You know what's funny? That's a very good point. When somebody says to you, "oh, Emily," they don't know your name, "oh, wheelchair woman, I don't know how you do it," what they're saying, unbeknownst to them, is that they recognize how inaccessible the world is.

Emily: Pretty much.

Kyle: And they know. And I mean I'm not gonna say they don't do anything about it because why should they, they're able bodied, it doesn't affect them at all and I get that and it doesn't make it right, but I totally understand why somebody would feel that way. But when you say that to someone, that's what you're doing, you're acknowledging the fact of how inaccessible the world is, and I don't even know what they're trying to say, like oh man, oh geez, but you did it! But when we hear that, or I don't want to say we because I don't hear it as much as Emily does, but I feel like when somebody hears that, that's all you're saying is good for you! This world sucks for you and I know it and you know it, and you did it anyway! Yay! Like, it's dumb.

Emily: (laughs). Yeah, I think that's actually the subtext of all inspiration porn. I really do think so.

Kyle: Wait, I said a lot of things. Which one are you talking about?

Emily: I think there's an overarching message to what you said, which was that people are essentially acknowledging that the world is not built for disabled people to navigate, and so they're basically saying you did it! The world sucks, but you did it. They obviously don't say it like that, because it's kind of the underlying meaning, because otherwise there would be no reason to say it in the first place.

Kyle: Absolutely. But, but, see, now that's strange to me because, eh, the world doesn't such as much for them and they can see that it does for us and they know it, and they know it, 'cause we tell them too. We say, oh, it's different for us when we do things like this podcast, write, or whatever. So I'm not gonna say that therefore that that feeds into it, but I wonder if, you know, I don't know about this podcast but you do public speaking. Do you often wonder if what you say, I'm not gonna say falls on deaf ears, but sort of like, you can see or feel people get the wrong message from what you're saying?

Emily: Oh my God, yes! Yes.

Kyle: And it's so, 'cause I've only spoken maybe like twice in my life, but it's such a weird thing, it's like, 'cause I don't know about you but I can totally, oh my God, you're the worst. I can watch you get inspired with more, everything that I'm saying, and it's the exact opposite of what I'm trying to tell you.

Emily: That's the most hilariously insightful and relevant thing you've ever said because I was just thinking as you were saying that, so earlier today I was talking to somebody and they were just sort of going on and on about being inspired by disabled people, and what I do, and blah blah blah, and they want to incorporate the importance and inspiration of disabled people into what they're doing, and I was just so rubbed the wrong way, but I didn't even know how, in a short conversation, I could dismantle this person's entire perception of me.

Kyle: That's a big deal, I don't blame you for not knowing how to do that. It's a hard thing to do.

Emily: You know what? It's honestly one of those things, I picked my battles, and I know I talk about this a lot on the podcast, but in this case, I really did pick my battles. So, the person said wheelchair-bound, and I decided let's start here. And then the person asked me, you know, my opinions on disability, and the terminology I prefer, and started going on and on about how empowering "differently abled" is.

Kyle: Was she disabled too?

Emily: No!

Kyle: That's funny.

Emily: No!

Kyle: Not that that matters.

Emily: And I just-

Kyle: I'm gonna say that too.

Emily: Of course not. There are plenty of people who totally get it, and I just, it gives you pause because you realize that a lot of people in the world really think they're doing the right thing by calling you differently abled or handicapable or patting you on the back. Like they honestly think that you're so down that you need that.

Kyle: You know what though? And this isn't us, but there might be some who do. And that's why, and I hate to say it, and I really do, but, you know, this is one of those moments where I'm like, we're not representative of all disabled people, and although I think what we say is the most correct, that there's more than just the vocal minority that we live in, you know? And I wonder often if there are people, 'cause I don't know any, who, when they're out and about, shopping for groceries, really do appreciate that. I don't, and you don't, and I don't think anyone we know does, but it really wouldn't surprise me if there wasn't someone out there who did.

Emily: It's all in the framing and the phrasing for me, I mean, there are times when I kind of do want someone to be like, hey, you put a lot of effort into things! I commend you for that! But again that all goes back to the recognition that this is a difficult place to live in, this world, if you are disabled. And so, I don't want that recognition just for the sake of making the other person feel good. That's what it all comes down to.

Kyle: Well that too, yeah.

Emily: My difficulties don't exist to make you feel better about yourself. And that's where the other problem lies with inspiration porn, and the same thing for pity porn, which I don't think is as widely used a term, but nevertheless is a thing.

Kyle: I think it's more of a thing. It's a shame that it's not widely as used a term because I think that is much more accepted than inspiration porn is, because at least with inspiration porn, you can sort of see that maybe their heart was in the right place, but with pity porn, all it is is making themselves feel better for nothing.

Emily: Yeah, so perfect example, and the whole thing that sparked this particular podcast is a picture, and I guarantee you've probably seen this at some point, a photo of someone with a visible disability asking you to click like or share on social media.

Kyle: Or whatever, for like prayers or dollars, or whatever, or whatever.

Emily: Or to say that you think they're beautiful.

Kyle: I just said "or whatever, or whatever." That's like the dumbest thing I've ever said in my life.

Emily: No, it's not, Kyle, I assure you.

Kyle: Well, that's oddly comforting.

[Emily laughs]

Kyle: God, you're inspiring me so much right now.

Emily: But I think that everyone's probably, if not, okay, if everyone has not encountered the whole click like if you think this visibly disabled person is beautiful thing, then you have at least seen a photo of a disabled person doing something like athletic or whatever, and then it says "what's your excuse" as the caption.

Kyle: Or "the only disability in life is a bad attitude." Oh my God, and you know, that's a thing, that's a thing.

Emily: Dammit, Scott Hamilton. That's who said that.

Kyle: I said this on an episode that we lost, is I as a certified, card-carrying disabled guy person, know exactly what he meant. And it's a shame, because the message, what he meant, I don't think is entirely terrible, but I do think that the way that he chose to say it is probably, if you had to pick a worst way, have it scientifically researched and did focus groups and all that crap, I think he nailed it, you know?

Emily: Yeah, it's terribly put, but at the same time, the intention was all there but leave it to every nondisabled person to misconstrue it.

Kyle: But that's the, and again-

Emily: Or maybe we're wrong, I don't know. Maybe he meant it like that, maybe he did mean that the only disability in life is a bad attitude and that if you have a bad attitude, then that's what will make you suffer because you're disabled or something.

Kyle: Well, okay. If that's what he meant-

Emily: And keep in mind, Scott Hamilton was dealing with cancer, so not specifically a disability that he was born with or anything like that.

Kyle: Acquired, I don't know, that's a whole different world. One that I will not speak on because that's just far beyond what I'm capable of understanding. But you know, while we're on the subject of attitude, I think that if you're disabled, it pays to be, you know, if you're gonna look at the world in a negative way when you already have physical disadvantages, you're gonna have a worse time than if you just try to-

Emily: Oh, that was the most Pollyanna thing you have ever said.

Kyle: Polly what?

Emily: You don't know what Pollyanna is?

Kyle: You're gonna have to explain it to me.

Emily: It's like a reference to some very overly cheerful old character. Like, you're such a Pollyanna.

Kyle: Well I don't mean, you don't have to be cheery, if you are God bless you, but you don't have to be. But I'm just saying, having a physical disability puts you at an immediate physical disadvantage for the world because it's not built for us. Yes, okay, I'll give you that it's more society's fault than whatever diagnosis you have, of course it is, but I think that if that makes you, if that turns into a cycle of woe is me, that you're just not gonna have a good time.

Emily: But you're also illustrating this constant, vicious cycle that a lot of disabled people live in, which is that, on the one hand, if we're down and out about how difficult it is to exist in this world, then we are the bitter cripple. And if we're overly cheerful, then we're like the disabled person who will never let anything get them down, and we're just so happy to be alive and look at us out there inspiring everyone. So you can't win. You can't just be a person.

Kyle: That's a very good point, and I can't stand it! I just, I've seen that. I can't stand it. It's true, you're either just a bitter, disabled person or you know, you're a walking ray of sunshine that you, as the walking ray of sunshine in the scenario, might not even wanna be. You might just, that's a lot of pressure.

Emily: I don't wanna be either of those things.

Kyle: No, that's what I'm saying. Me neither.

Emily: And sometimes-

Kyle: Sometimes we do!

Emily: Yeah, sometimes I am really bitter, and sometimes I am that ray of sunshine.

Kyle: You are never, yes you are. I was gonna say-

Emily: You were gonna say I'm not, but you know that I can be.

Kyle: Yeah, if I put like a small dog in your face.

Emily: Oh, God I love dogs.

Kyle: See?

Emily: But for real though, I guess I go back and forth. As does everybody, but for some reason it's more noticeable when disabled people do it.

Kyle: Well that's because, that's because quote unquote society says that we can only live in one of two extremes, which is nonsense, you know? I don't, and it's true for a lot of things, with people with disabilities and the way that society perceives us, right? We have a lot of like, on or off binary options for how the world sees us.

Emily: We're so binary. We're not, but we're perceived in sets of binaries.

Kyle: Which isn't, there are some things that are, but a lot of things with disability are not. In fact, most things with disability are not. You know, asexual versus fetishized, or happy-go-lucky or bitter, or-

Emily: Inspirational or pity.

Kyle: Or inspirational or pity, or inspirational or ungrateful.

Emily: Or then, also like victim or criminal.

Kyle: Yes.

Emily: Good guy or bad guy.

Kyle: Can't be both.

Emily: Yeah, it's-

Kyle: It's so weird because for me, specifically, I toe the line more than Emily does.

Emily: What do you mean?

Kyle: People don't see me as disabled immediately, they learn that, and you can always, always see the little glimmer of whatever in their eyes go away when they learn, and it's my favorite thing about meeting people because it's like you're about to treat me differently forever. You can't go back to five seconds ago ever again. And for the most part, when you know good people, I don't mind getting treated differently, because there are times when boy, I need to be, it matters. And those good people only ever do it when it does matter. But I'm not talking about those people. I'm talking about the ones that, once they find out, their perception of you is just forever different and there's no going back, and just the world's over, and that's it. Now, instead of just Kyle, I'm some guy who's in a hard world and, I'm suddenly an adversary and blah blah, it's just stupid, it's like, it was fine five minutes ago. What happened? So I have a neurological thing that you don't and won't ever, and I'll tell you all about it but, I get that you're gonna think differently of me for five minutes, to wrap your head around it, or maybe even a week, but like-

Emily: But why should you have to?

Kyle: No, we should, I'll give them that though, I'll give them that because it's different. I'll give them the different thing.

Emily: Yeah, but everybody is different, I mean if that's the case, then wouldn't I have the same reaction upon meeting someone and them telling me something about themselves, and then I have to sit there and wrap my head around it, you know?

Kyle: If that something, infected, infected? Affected every single aspect of their life, yeah. Yeah, it's like when you're in your first sociology 101 class and you realize that racism is a lot bigger of a problem than TV ever taught you when you were growing up watching Family Matters or something.

Emily: Do you know what I remember most about my sociology 101 class?

Kyle: What?

Emily: It was in high school, and we watched a documentary on Jeffrey Dahmer, and I didn't sleep for a week.

Kyle: Well, there you go.

Emily: So, ask me if sociology 101 was productive.

Kyle: I'm gonna say yes.

Emily: No.

Kyle: Well, my point is, when you as a person learn anything about another person that can fundamentally color every aspect of how that person sees the world, I'm not gonna blame you for treating them differently to a point.

Emily: No, I blame them.

Kyle: It's something that you as the person observing it don't know.

Emily: No, take it into consideration but don't treat me differently. That's where you lose me.

Kyle: See, I disagree because I, well, I agree with you to people that always treat you differently, people I was describing before, most people I say are good people, I think, maybe I'm just a little too optimistic. The people who only treat you differently when it matters, when they do take into consideration, and whatever situation makes it matter, I'm not gonna fault that.

Emily: What kinda differently are you talking about? Are you talking about the differently where it's like they respect your needs and understand the circumstances may be different for you so you may have to do something differently, so they plan something differently, or approach something differently? Or are we talking about the kind of treat you differently where they handle you with kid gloves because they know that you have a disability? I mean, I assume you're talking about the first one.

Kyle: I am talking about the first one. If you're gonna do the special voice and talk down to me after say, after learning that I'm disabled, you're the exact kinda person I was describing that I hate just a few minutes ago. I give you the benefit of the doubt to a point and that's where my point stops. It's one thing when you treat me differently when it matters like when it comes to really stupid niche access needs that I need, like I get that. I am different. But if you're gonna treat me like, if you're gonna patronize me or talk down to me or do stuff like that, or see me as an inspiration for leaving the house, then I just don't like you. That's all there is to it. I don't care. You're gonna be ignorant forever and it's not gonna be my problem because I hate you anyway.

Emily: No! See I don't think these people need to be ignorant forever, I just really think that these people need a good talking to.

Kyle: I don't think they need to be, and I do think they need a good talking to, but if you're gonna be that way to me, I'm not gonna be the one to do it.

Emily: Mr. I love teachable moments?

Kyle: I do, but there's a point where it's like I'm okay with some level of ignorance. I can't imagine, I can't expect everyone to know how to act in every situation about something that they don't know, I cannot accept willful ignorance and that's what that is.

Emily: But I think that the root of all of this here, since we started out by talking about inspiration porn and pity porn, is that these sorts of things give people license to treat someone differently from the comfort of their chair, or the comfort of their own home, do you know what I'm saying?

Kyle: Yes. You don't even have to find a real one.

Emily: Yeah, forget objectifying me or making comments in person, you know, the fact that disabled people are the subject of memes and gifs or jifs or peanut butter, whatever.

Kyle: It's gifs.

Emily: I don't know.

Kyle: If you say jif, I don't like you.

Emily: Somebody said it was jif!

Kyle: Yeah, the creator says jif, the creator invented it, okay, I'm the creator I can say whatever I want, but you know what you didn't invent, though? The way letters are pronounced, and it's pronounced gif, so shut up, guy who made gif.

Emily: Is it really?

Kyle: Yes.

Emily: Choosy moms choose Jif. Anyway, hey peanut butter, wanna sponsor us?

Kyle: No.

Emily: I love peanut butter.

Kyle: Me too, it's the best, but I don't like Jif.

Emily: Anyway, I don't like the idea that we seem to be one of the only populations of people that can just be so easily objectified by the click of a button.

Kyle: For no reason, either.

Emily: And I think it's-

Kyle: It's literally for nothing.

Emily: Yeah but as soon as I said that, it's entirely not fair because I think about the hungry, starving children.

Kyle: No, I think that that's the same, they're in, that's the same type of thing.

Emily: Yeah, so-

Kyle: You're not helping the starving children by pressing like on Facebook.

Emily: You're also not helping a disabled person by making their life more accessible.

Kyle: What?

Emily: In the same way, see we're both getting excited by this now because we're talking over each other but in the same way that you're not helping a hungry person or actually feeding them a meal by hitting like, you're literally just sharing this because it makes you look like a good person because you felt sad for a minute, and you want other people to know that you were emotionally bothered by this image of a starving, hungry, Ethiopian child, and then like, it's the same thing. If it's the disabled person, it is the same thing. You share it because you want other people to see what a kind, good-hearted person you are, that you care so much to take five seconds to hit share.

Kyle: Right. And in reality, not only does it do nothing, but the person in the picture doesn't know you did it, doesn't care you did it.

Emily: Or does care, because I've seen people who have had their pictures stolen.

Kyle: Oh, well, I've never, I mean, if that's ever happened to you, that's a terrible thing.

Emily: I know somebody who had their picture stolen.

Kyle: Well that's awful. Don't steal other people's pictures or likenesses or work, I mean, the internet's a big, dumb place for that but that's a terrible, terrible thing to do. But yeah, like you said, it's the exact same thing, you know? You're not doing anything but making yourself feel good for a minute because look how much of a decent-hearted person you are.

Emily: And that makes me mad.

Kyle: Me too.

Emily: Because I'm not gonna look at you, share a picture of you, and think that I'm a good, kind-hearted person for doing it. I'm just not.

Kyle: I just think it's stupid. It's just dumb. It's just dumb. If you're one of those people, you're dumb. Don't do it. Just don't do it.

Emily: Again, somehow I just keep feeling like the people who don't do this are the ones who listen to us.

Kyle: If you are someone that does do it, here's what you can do in the two seconds that it takes to, you know, click share. You can go to Google, right, and you can find our podcast or go to Wikipedia, or type in the word "disability," or do anything else and it's probably more productive. In fact, you don't even have to do anything related to disability. You can scroll right past and get up and fill up a water bottle and drink it, 'cause, you know, you probably didn't drink enough water today. That's still more productive, I'm so serious though.

Emily: Oh, well here's a good one. So all the people who share disabled people doing various sports-like things, so a little amputee kid running-

Kyle: Sports-like things?

Emily: Yeah, I hate sports. A little amputee kid running to the finish line or whatever, which seems to be one of the more popular "what's your excuse" memes, how about instead of sharing that, how about you get off your lazy behind, away from Facebook, and go exercise? If you're asking what your excuse is-

Kyle: If you're so inspired, why don't you put your money where your mouth is and go do it? Actually that's a good point.

Emily: Are we being mean?

Kyle: No, I don't care. These are mean people. They're being mean. They think they're being mean because it makes them-

Emily: No, they're being nice-

Kyle: They think they're being nice because it makes them feel good, but it's a mean thing to do. It is, but actually what you said before is a very good point. So, there was a bodybuilder with cerebral palsy recently, I think it was Mr. Universe or whatever, some big deal contest, and I don't think he won, but I think he got far enough where it's like still good, and he, something like Now This or one of those stupid things on social media, they got ahold of it and it's like, oh, he's inspirational, blah blah blah. And that was probably the one instance where I felt genuinely

conflicted because of everything I just said. On the one hand, it's dumb, and you know, he shouldn't be called inspiring because he has CP. But on the other hand, bodybuilding's hard for anyone and it's not easy when you have the kind of CP he had, which caused him to shake all the time. So-

Emily: When was the last time you saw a video of a regular old bodybuilder calling him inspiring?

Kyle: No-

Emily: Ok, here's my thing. There is such a, it's like a niche thing, so basically, if you have liked every sports and health page ever on Facebook, then chances are you've probably seen videos of regular old bodybuilders who don't have disabilities, and they're still called inspiring.

Kyle: Yeah, but I would though. I would. And I called Steve, I think his name was, inspiring, too. But the reason that I called him inspiring probably isn't the reason that Joe Schmoie called him.

Emily: No, no, no, but I'm saying, I'm saying that, you know, an aspiring bodybuilder might be inspired by other bodybuilders regardless of disability, but the thing about somebody like Steve the Wheelchair-Using Bodybuilder is that-

Kyle: He wasn't a wheelchair user, but whatever.

Emily: Whatever. Steve the Bodybuilder with Cerebral Palsy is that he's shared by kajillions of people who don't give two craps about bodybuilding, but find him inspiring because he's disabled.

Kyle: You're right. And that's, but again, that's why I was so conflicted because I knew why I found him inspiring, and I thought the reason that I found him inspiring was the correct reason to find him inspiring but then I was like, wait, is there really a correct reason to find anything inspiring? And then I was like, of course there is because otherwise it's objectification, and that's sort of what, and it goes around and around, and it's just, but most things are pretty cut and dry, but every once in awhile, I run into something like that where it's just like, whatever. But you know, I found that in that particular instance that my bigger problem was Buzzfeed or Now This or whoever was the one that made that stupid five second clip in the first place.

Emily: Because it's clearly all about sensationalizing it.

Kyle: Of course.

Emily: Even though you in particular interpreted it as being inspiring to you because you have the same disability and you can't do that, but you think it's cool that he can do that.

Kyle: Like, I'm pretty lazy, I probably could bodybuild if I tried.

Emily: I've literally seen you pull yourself up by the subway handle.

Kyle: See there, that's my point, see? I can, I'm just lazy, but I mean that doesn't make it any less inspiring. But you know what I'm saying. Whatever, Steve's cool, man.

Emily: Shout out to Steve.

Kyle: Yep. I don't know him at all but-

Emily: I think that's our takeaway for this episode. Steve is really cool.

Kyle: Well, okay, if I have to do a takeaway for this episode, it would just be, you know, if you're somebody who is out and about and you see a disabled person and you wanna call them inspiring, think about why, and if you can't come up with something other than "look at him," don't say it.

Emily: I would say that's the exact same logic for should you hit that share button on that post.

Kyle: The answer's always no. Don't do it. Because that's even worse.

Emily: I have a better idea. Any time you have the urge to share something that you think is inspiring or someone that you feel bad for who has a disability, go find a picture of a cute animal and share that instead, because we can all collectively ooh and aah over it and there's nothing wrong with that.

Kyle: Here's a good rule of thumb: if somebody tells you to share something, don't.

Emily: Eh? It depends on the source, I don't know if that's a good rule of thumb because that really does depend on the source.

Kyle: Anyway, well it's very easy to see which things are bad. And that's why it really bothers me, and I'm not just saying that as a disabled person who knows, I don't think that it's really that hard because if you replaced the disabled person with a person of a different race or a woman instead of a man or something, everyone would think that you're stupid for saying that they're inspirational because they're a woman. So what? Lots of people are women. You see how dumb that sounds? It's the exact same thing.

Emily: Go find a cute puppy picture instead, is how I feel about this. Also, if you wanna feel inspired or get your warm fuzzies, go get yourself a video of a dog or a cat or a turtle or a pig using a little wheelchair made of legos or something.

Kyle: Or just listen to our podcast because we're inspiring, but not because we're disabled, 'cause we're cool.

Emily: I feel more inspired already.

Kyle: Anyway, did you have any final things? We kinda did a simultaneous one there.

Emily: Uh, yeah, I'm just gonna go with what I already said.

Kyle: Alright, cool.

[Emily laughs]

Kyle: And on that note I guess, that is another episode of The Accessible Stall in the books there.

Emily: Yeah, thanks for listening.

Kyle: Really appreciate it.

Emily: Bye!

Kyle: Bye bye.