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[Lawrence] Welcome to TalkLD. Today's podcast is going to focus on the success story of Jay Mandarino. Luckily, I can call Jay a friend, somewhat of a mentor; he may not know that, but, just an amazing guy. So what you've got to know about Jay is you may see him in a business suit, you may see him in a skateboard helmet, and occasionally you may find him with a bowtie that flashes. But I'm going to get to all of that in a couple of minutes.

Jay's got such a broad bio I could spend the next five minutes telling you what he's all done, so let me give you some potted highlights. He's President and CEO of the C.J. Group of companies. He's also responsible for building one of the biggest non-profit skate parks in the world, and we're going to talk about his work there. And that's just his day job.

By night, Jay turns into this unbelievable fundraiser, community activist, you name it, he does it. And that's been recognized, not only by the celebrity list that you can find photos of Jay on his website, Sting, Eva Longoria, the list is never-ending quite honestly; but also resulted in him being awarded both the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal AND the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship. He's a community builder. More importantly than anything else, he's also on my board. So he's partly my boss, and I think, most importantly, has a wonderful story of overcoming a start in life that, for many people, would have seen them derailed to build the life he's built today. So it's my great pleasure to welcome Jay Mandarino. Jay, welcome to the podcast.

[Jay] Wow, thank you Lawrence. And how do you respond to that?

[Laughs]

Well, it's great to be here and...

[Lawrence] Twenty bucks will work fine.

[Laughs]

[Jay] I thought it was ten, but it was ten US, so that's about twenty. But, I want to thank everybody for listening, and there's going to be some great information here and, you know, you can always go back to our website if you've got any questions, and go ahead Lawrence.

[Lawrence] There we go. So before we get started with your story Jay, I should also say, you're the co-founder of our breakfast. So our breakfast, folks, well as you listen to this, will be in March of 2017. It's the tenth annual and we are likely this year, for LDAO alone; so this give you some range of just how much Jay raises; for us alone in those ten years, we will break the one million dollar mark. And I think, last time I looked at his website, and I know the number's old now; fifty million dollars Jay has been involved in raising for charity. It's an amazing story. So Jay, everyone looks at you now and can see the successful entrepreneur you are, the guy with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal, for goodness sake, from Queen Elizabeth herself, but life didn't start that way for you. So let's go back. Why don't you tell us a little about your early childhood.



[Jay] Well, I'm fifty-five now and, you know, I have to say a couple things. First of all, I'm so lucky that I had two amazing parents, no longer with us, but they never gave up, and had a great sense of humour. And, for anybody who's listening out there, you know, if you have an LD, or, I hate the word disability, I'm sorry, I like to say challenge. But if you have a challenge, you know, never give up, and don't listen to the naysayers and always believe in yourself, and you can do anything if you put your mind to it. And thank God I listened to people who said that. I had some amazing teachers. I had a lot of bad teachers as well.

But, when I was growing up, I had a really rough childhood. I would go to school and people would pick on me and I looked a little different and I couldn't really read or write. I remember the time I had to go to the front of the classroom, because I always would sit at the back so I wouldn't get picked, but I eventually got picked to read and I couldn't read. I read a few words and then people started laughing and, as a child, that's just an extremely traumatic experience, and people would pick on me and I mean it just got bad and bad. I would get in fights. I mean, eventually I attempted suicide because I had no self-esteem whatsoever, no friends, couldn't do any sports, and it was a really, really rocky road.

I even ended up being institutionalized for awhile, and of course that didn't work out well. I remember they told my parents it was their fault. I love how people – professionals – tell them it's the parents' fault. Well, it's not the parents' fault. Maybe in some cases they don't add to it, but in my case, certainly that was not the case. They did everything they could and it was tough, very tough, and it was hard.

[Lawrence] So, I want a split a couple of those details out of there Jay. I mean, we hear so much about mental health nowadays; it's a big push. We're all talking about it; we're thankful to Bell and so many people who've helped shine a light on mental health issues. But, how does a, around the suicide attempt you were eightish, I think? Have I got that age right?

[Jay] Yes. Yup. Ran away from home a couple times before. And of course, when you're eight years old, you really don't know anything, so I remember getting to the bus stop and I didn't have money to get on the bus, so that didn't work the first time.

[Laughs]

Then I realized I had to get some money, so I went into my Mom's purse and took some money, went down to the train station, and of course, didn't realize I had to buy a train ticket; thought I could get on a train. So, very unsuccessful at running away. So I thought suicide would be a lot easier, and that wasn't that easy either.

[Lawrence] Wow. So, I don't want to focus too much on that, but I'm interested, as a parent of two LD boys, I've been down some of these roads, not to the extent you were; how were your parents coping at that time? Because they must have, I mean, they've got professionals, you said, telling them that it's their fault. They must have felt devastated that in some way they caused you to be where you were.

[Jay] Oh, my Mom, my Mom was in tears. I remember when the guy came in and gave her the result, and this is after being six months institutionalized, and I'm telling you, I had every test you can imagine. I mean they did a bone marrow test. Why they would do that I have no idea. Remember, this was back in



the seventies, well late sixties, sorry, and it was just crazy. I mean, ya, it just, you know, you said something, you know, with mental health being such an issues, you know.

I think, you know, 2016 we're in right now, whether you have a learning challenge, a learning disability, it's just a challenge period. If there's forty, fifty students in a class; there are some great teachers out there. Unfortunately, there's a lot of bad teachers out there, and they're not coped to deal with, let alone fifty, forty regular students, whatever regular means, and anybody who learns differently, it's just pretty hard to get attention and to just try to get through. They just want to get you through the system, which is, you know, we really have to, and you know this more than anybody, we really have to put more emphasis on tools and how to aid, and thank God we have a few organizations like the LDAO. Just to give you a plug here, not because I'm on the board and not because I'm passionate about it, not because I donate and raise money for it, but it was the LDAO that answered my parents' prayers because they didn't know what it was. They didn't know what to do.

They basically, when I walked out of that institution, and you know, were told it was their fault, and the only thing I could do was be a gasoline attendant and, maybe with the right training, I could be an assistant mechanic; that's all they should ever hope for, and I should be in a halfway home with criminals. Well, thank God they didn't listen.

So finally, someone at LDAO referred them to a doctor and he figured out I had ADHD and dyslexia. Not that I knew what any of that was back then, but at least we knew I had something. And I remember when I was part of a, and I'm not generally a proponent of drugs, but in some cases, obviously, it can help, and I mean, you have to do that, but I was on this one drug, and it was just not the right thing at all. It was terrible and we had all these challenges, and, you know, they finally, they told me about a school. And it was called the Gow School, and there was nothing in Canada at the time, and they sold their house to downsize it for me to go to this school and it was the first time where I felt whatever normal feels like because everyone there had the same challenge.

[Lawrence] Right.

[Jay] So all of a sudden I wasn't an outcast.

[Lawrence] So the Gow, I think, Jay, if I'm right, is in New York State?

[Jay] Yes.

[Lawrence] How many students in that school, out of interest?

[Jay] At the time, believe it or not, there was roughly 120, over which half were Canadian.

[Lawrence] Is that right?

[Jay] Ya. But not now.

[Lawrence] Okay.

[Jay] Now I think there's about one hundred and fifty.



[Lawrence] Let's talk about now, Jay, leaving the Gow. So obviously you got some of the help you needed, a school that understood your issues, presumably gave you the tools to start succeeding in the classroom. What was the Jay coming out of the Gow like compared with the Jay going in? What did that do to turn your life around?

[Jay] So that's an excellent question. So, a couple things. First of all, I had no friends really, until then. So I met my first real best friend and he taught me to, believe it or not, to skateboard. And skateboarding, I don't know what it was; well I know now. But I don't know what it was then, that I gravitated towards this amazing piece of wood with these wheels and I could do it for like seven, eight hours, and it was amazing for my self-esteem; I think partly because it wasn't a team sport, it was an individual sport. And, you know, no one's judging you, and it's an amazing community. You've got everybody that you can possibly imagine and everyone seems to help everybody. And I just gravitated and gravitated towards it and basically, my friend went to California and brought me a board back and I was skateboarding every day and I just loved it in the summer, and I actually jumped over a Ferrari. I was the first person in the world to jump over a Ferrari in 1976, in front of the Eaton's Centre. It was pretty cool. And, so, you know, your self-esteem just goes, great, I got a medal, I got a trophy, I was in the papers. Kids will go, hey, we can't find that on YouTube. Well, believe it or not, we didn't have YouTube back then.

[Laughs]

Sort of funny. Everyone just assumes. But, it was amazing, but you know, more importantly, we had a choice to either go to a university college or come back to Canada. Now at that time we had grade thirteen, and I didn't want my parents to pay for university because I knew, even though they offered to, I just knew the commitment they made to, you know, I have three other siblings, for them to pay for me to go to this school, it was just, I don't know what it was inside of me, but I just said, no I'm paying for it. And I couldn't afford to go to university, so I decided to go back and do grade thirteen because it's cheaper.

So I came back to Canada to go to grade thirteen and after that I went to York University and, thank goodness, I was able to be part of a pilot program. What is a pilot program? So it was a program that they started in 1981 and I was one of, I think, two or three at the time, and it allowed us to have extra time on examinations and people to help tutor us, which was amazing. Now, the skills I learned at the Gow, which were everything from phonetics to math. I ended up graduating top of my class in math, and I even had to take a New York State regional exam, which I got 97/100 because I misunderstood the one question. My professor always joked with me after. But, you know, they gave us tools to learn and teach, which was amazing. And you know, even with phonetics, we have these cards, and they call it reconstructive language, which is one of their courses, and one of the cards would say on the front, it would have an OUGH and it would have a number underneath, and that would be the amount of times that those letters together would pronounce something. On the other side would be a sentence: though the tough cough and hiccup plough through, oh, ough, up, ow, oo. So we were learning, which we never learned for most of our life, how these letters went together. Because, let's face it, the English is not logical, right?

[Lawrence] Mmmhmm.



[Jay] You have one duck, you have two ducks. You have one car, you have two cars. You have one goose, you have two geese. What?! No, you should have two geese.

[Laughs]

Like, it doesn't make sense! It's not logical, right?

[Lawrence] There you go.

[Jay] Our brains are logical, right? So, these tools, going back to elementary basics, teaching us, and you know, if I hadn't had these tools, there's no way I would have, you know, gone to university. It'd be impossible.

[Lawrence] So, and it's interesting isn't it, because, just so you know Jay, I've just been at the demonstration school, Sagonaska; we were doing some filming up there this week. SickKids, and you may have come across it, developed this program called Empower, which is to help kids with learning disabilities to read. And often, these kids are seven, eight grades behind their age in terms of their reading ability, and it's interesting that things like this, that you're talking about, are now the core of how we're teaching kids to read. We've gone back to peeling off words, rhyming words, like using those core strategies that you were given at the Gow is now back in vogue because it works, and guess what? When something works you don't need to always change it, which is really interesting.

[Jay] Yup, it's true.

[Lawrence] So, you come out of the Gow, you're at York, you get this pilot program, which obviously, again, was fantastic timing; some may say luck, but hey, don't you make some of your own? So, from York, the transition, Jay, into becoming an entrepreneur and a business owner, because let's be fair, you hear your early story; to some extent, everyone was saying, well you're going to pump gas. And let's be honest, we signpost people early in their lives.

[Jay] Although the price of gas right now? It's maybe not a bad thing, right?

[Laughs]

You could make good money, right?

[Lawrence] That may be true too.

[Laughs]

But often, you know, one of the things I worried about as a parent with my boys is, they're going to get pigeon-holed. Someone's going to tell them, you know what? All you're ever going to do is pour coffee. Go pour coffee, do your thing in life, but don't ever think you can do anything. Well, you know, my boy's now a chef in a high-class restaurant, right? His diagnosis meant he had to do things to get past that in order to achieve that. So where does this boy who was going to the Gow with no friends decide to be an entrepreneur?

[Jay] Wow, that's a lot of questions in one. So much there.



[Lawrence] You can give a long answer.

[Jay] You know, for every successful person like myself and your son, there's a hundred that aren't, and it's very sad because people will say, no you can't do this, and a lot of people will believe that. I don't know why I didn't. I honestly don't know why. Something inside of me? I don't know. I know it was my parents' love and support. I saw that, I didn't want to disappoint them; I don't think any kid wants to disappoint their parent, whatever it is. There's that pressure; I don't know where it comes from, maybe from within ourselves? But, you know, people say you've been very successful, you've made money, you own businesses, you know, there's no secret to being successful. I tell people, really, it comes down to a couple of things: it's really, you have to work hard. It's not a nine to five job. I'm in there 6:00, 6:30 in the morning, I'm often the last one out. I work on weekends. I mean, you have to work hard to be successful in this world, and anybody's capable of doing that if they want to. You also have to have a drive. I don't know where you get that drive; maybe it comes out of a passion. I mean, I love what I do. I have an amazing team. I work with great people and great clients, so you know, I always tell people, it's not about the money. You have to do what you love, and if you do what you love, then maybe the money will come after, you know? But, one thing that I've done because of this, and I am successful, is I take every minute I can; I know I'm supposed to give more of it to my wife and I'm trying to do that, but when I'm not doing that, and when she's busy, I'm trying to prevent anybody to go through what I went through. Because, as much as I'm laughing here and we're talking and we're hearing all of these amazing stories, it wasn't easy. It was many tears, feeling like an outcast and crying, hard on my brothers and sisters. It was very difficult. So, whenever I get a chance, I try to go out and speak about bullying, empowering kids. I try to go to a high school every two weeks. I do it for free. I was actually just this morning with a group and, you know, it's amazing because, so I'm told, but I think it is, but I make it fun, because you know, I'll come out with a jacket and a shirt and then I'll get on my skateboard on the stage. So, I'm doing something that's "cool"; they like that. And you're not supposed to ride on the stage, so I've always wanted to do that, so that's cool.

[Laughs]

And then I'm sitting down, just with the kids. I'm getting them to interact. We're talking about whatever and just, you know, empowering them, and just, you know, do what you want to do. Don't let anyone say no. We had 650 students, every seat was filled, and we had about 24 special needs kids and I stayed after and spent time with them, had lunch with them, and these kids were amazing, you know. And we all have challenges, right? And there's not that many people who do that and you know, people say, how can we help? Well, you know, you can give money, but more importantly, give your time; empower people. You never know the difference you have on somebody and when I tell them about bullying and when I tell them the stories, they're shocked. Because I think some people, and no offense, some of the parents, are a little cavalier about it and they don't think it's a big deal. Well, you know, it is a big deal and I think, as you mentioned, companies like Bell and all these corporations starting to take a stance more now to invest in our youth, because they are our future, is you've got to empower these kids and stop it. You know the internet is so powerful in a bad way and in a good way.

[Lawrence] Yup, and you know you only have to look at the youth of today, Jay, and you know, my sons were at the front of that wave, so it wasn't quite as bad. A little different with my daughter, she had a



bit of social media pressure. But, you just look and you hear the bullying on phones and the pictures that do the rounds and it's a changing world, but more and more, you're right. The kids need the support. And that's just general; it's not just our kids that are in...

[Jay] And they don't sound funny like you. Like, you're from England. I know a lot of people probably just think you talk that way but it's the English accent, right?

[Lawrence] Well no.

[Jay] So I'll translate for Lawrence's 'daughter' he means daughter. They're very similar.

[Lawrence] The reality is, the good news is actually, I was told this was a voice for radio, so I'm actually a Canadian. I've just been working on this for years.

[Laughs]

[Jay] It's actually really good because usually that accent comes out and they start saying lorry, and people go, what's a lorry?

[Lawrence] Oh ya, we won't even get into aluminum and aluminium.

[Laughs]

So, Jay, just...

[Jay] And I wanted to touch on one thing because you hit on it earlier. I think the big difference right now, in 2016, is that when we grew up, Lawrence and myself, we generally, in most cases, most of us were from those decades, one of our parents was at home and one was working. Well now, that is certainly not the case.

[Lawrence] Absolutely.

[Jay] Now we not only have two parents that are working, but we might have four sets of parents. I mean, with the rate of divorce and the rate of challenges. And let's face it; I try to talk to parents too. You're working so hard just to stay afloat these days, you know, with the economy and everything else, and all the challenges and then you've got to come home after, I don't know how many hours, and getting to work and getting back, and then you've got to deal with someone that reads slower and try to be positive? I mean, it's hard. It's really hard.

[Lawrence] Absolutely.

[Laughs]

I mean I've told them my story before Jay, but my biggest regret as a parent, particularly with my youngest boy, before I really knew why, I remember the tears and the crying over homework and I remember how harsh I was towards him because I didn't realize why. You know, and he'd sit there for fifteen, twenty minutes, I'd come back, there'd be like three words on the page. I'm like, Jake, what's going on? That's lived with me ever since. One of the reasons I do what I do now is because I felt so



much guilt at not being able to respond to his needs, right, because it's so easy to judge someone by a preconceived standard, and yet, they can be working so hard for very little result.

[Jay] Yup.

[Lawrence] Right, and that becomes the dichotomy, I think, with those that are having learning issues that, we go, well there's the benchmark and you're not making it. But actually, they can be working three times as hard as some of the people that are skirting those benchmarks.

[Jay] Oh ya, No, it's so true. Your boys are lucky. You're a good man Lawrence.

[Lawrence] I've become a good man. I don't know if I always was. And it's still a work in progress.

[Laughs]

[Jay] But you know, a lot of that comes from parents, and we don't know; there's no books on this. We're just, like I mean, it's funny. You mentioned earlier, I have one of the largest indoor skateboard parks in the world, and it's one of the most fun things about my job, and I'm teaching there every Saturday and during the week a couple times. But I mean, you know, we've got these kids that are from every kind of background you can imagine and they're just all happy, and it's empowering them. And it's just amazing to give back and watch them, and we do programs with autistic kids and there's a doctor out there, Ph.D., a psychiatrist, and I have a quote from him, and he says, you know, if you look up learning challenges, or whatever, in the dictionary, you're not going to see Jay Mandarino after that definition. But, I mean, we are changing these kids. We are empowering them and changing their lives forever, and our mentoring programs, our volunteer programs...it's unbelievable.

[Lawrence] Well, and see, much of it Jay, again, my youngest boy in particular was lucky. He struggled the most with his learning. He was a great, I'm going to say footballer, you would want to say soccer, but that's okay.

[Laughs]

I try not to use the 's' word too much. The reality was he was a rep soccer player. So you know what; he had that success and he could use that to help some of the other things not drag his self-esteem down so much. I'm really interested, when you talked about skateboarding as a solo sport, as a golfer, one of the things I love about golf is, it's always me against the course.

[Jay] But you can have a lot of heart attacks in that sport.

[Lawrence] I'm sure you can.

[Jay] Statistics are really high.

[Lawrence] I think the beer and cigars on the course may have something to do with that for a lot of guys.

[Jay] Not that we're encouraging that at home.

[Laughs]



But, you know, one thing that we know is a fact is that the brain in an adolescent child, from six to sixteen, develops with physical activity as well. You NEED physical activity. So if you don't have self-confidence in school and class, you're less likely to do a sport. So, these individual sports, I mean, golf, sure, skateboarding, scooter riding. Scooter; anybody can scooter! You can be overweight. You can be completely uncoordinated. Anybody can get on a scooter and do basic things. Inline rollerblading. All of these sports are showing huge increases because kids need to get empowered and they need to have physical activity, right? It's just the way our endorphins, and that was great in the younger school when I got into this private school system, the Gow. Because it was a smaller school, everybody was on a team. So everybody had to play.

[Laughs]

You didn't have to compete against someone and hope that, you know, when I was younger I think, I remember I came home from school, I think it was grade three, and I was so proud to tell my Dad and Mom that I was a batboy, and they said, what's that? And I said, well I get to carry all the equipment for the team and they were happy for me, but they were also sad because, you know, they wanted me to do more than that. Not that there's anything wrong with being a batboy. They just figured that, you know, I could do more.

[Lawrence] But that's part of what our, you know, that's the social exclusion bit that hits so many of our kids as well, right? And let's be fair Jay, it kind of exists for all kids. Because who hasn't been in that playground lineup when people are picking teams and you're the guy picked last, right?

[Jay] Absolutely.

[Lawrence] And so it just gets essential. And what worries me a lot as well is, particularly with this age of technology, these kids retreat behind screens.

[Jay] The Millenials.

[Lawrence] So what happens is they're in their basement with their xBox or their Playstation and they're more and more isolated. They get home from school, they isolate themselves. They may in theory, you know, connect with some people online but what you're doing is getting these kids out and active, and more importantly I think, giving them that first taste in some ways of success. Whether it be the first time they ride a ramp or the first time they even stand on a skateboard, or a scooter or a bike, or even just mixing with a group of people and not feeling, I'm the odd one out, because everyone there is in the same boat.

[Jay] You know, you're exactly right. It's not even, I mean, you're absolutely right, but what we're also doing is we're taking it to another level. So now they've learned that, they're dropping in or they're doing a trip or whatever it is they've learned. But with our volunteer programs, we get them to volunteer and we have days for kids with cancer that are totally free for any kids and their families affected by cancer that come out. We do this morning, we have volunteers come and help. They don't have to do anything. All they have to do is show up with a smile and running shoes, and you watch. And our autistic programs; we work with autistic kids. You watch some of these volunteers. We never had this opportunity when we were younger, and maybe you did, I didn't. But I think very few of us have an



opportunity to empower another individual. And we say, what does that mean: empower an individual? But we're able to watch a young person help someone else do skateboarding, or whatever it is, put an autistic child on a skateboard and they're pushing and they can see the difference in that child right then. And you know, I look at some of these kids and I remember we've had a lot of interviews and television's been down and shot it and you know, people say, what's the most rewarding thing? I say, I think sometimes the most rewarding thing is for me, to watch these young ambassadors that I've worked with and you know, who came in the door and weren't sure whether they were going to do anything. And now they're skateboarding, but they're helping these other kids. It's just an amazing feeling and I feel we're creating some of these incredible ambassadors and whatever they'll do, they're going to be completely successful.

[Lawrence] Mmhm. Well, and that's, isn't it interesting to see that cycle where someone that's come to take originally is now giving back?

[Jay] Yup.

[Lawrence] And that community continues, right? And again, you know, one of the things I do some work with is, because my boy's a leukemia survivor, Help a Child Smile is actually, at Mac, it's their kind of internal charity, and we kept giving back. And now he gives back also to the university studies. He goes back every so often to let them measure his bone density, Jay, and other things because he goes, Dad, I benefitted from other people that I didn't have that when I was going through treatment, because, guess what, they'd learned from other people, so I want to give back. So, it's amazing. So Jay, I don't want to miss the chance here for a plug. So if someone wanted to get involved and volunteer, the address on the website to come and see you at the C.J. Skate Park, is it cj skatepark.com?

[Jay] So we just changed the name. It was C.J. Skateboard Park and School.

[Lawrence] Okay.

[Jay] But I don't really think, it wasn't cool enough, so now it's C.J's, so cjsskatepark...S-k-a-t-e-p-a-r-k.com. So, www.cjsskatepark. And it's in Etobicoke.

[Lawrence] Good. So if anyone wants to volunteer in these programs, please go to there and I'm sure Jay will welcome you with open arms because he's always looking to build and I know, this is a man who, he can never have enough capacity. If he gets more volunteers, he'll find another hundred kids, I guarantee it.

[Jay] Absolutely. And you mentioned earlier about auctioneering, you know, like, people say, well how did you get into auctioneering? I was on this committee...

[Lawrence] You just got my next question! Did you see that?

[Jay] Oh, no I didn't. No I'm sorry.

[Laughs]

[Lawrence] That's okay, but keep going. Jay, how did you get into auctioneering?



[Laughs]

[Jay] You know, that's a really good question Lawrence, and you know, a lot of people ask me that sometimes. So, I was on this committee with ten wonderful women about twenty-seven years ago. I was the only guy and the auctioneer didn't show up and they said, okay, you're doing the auction. I said, really? Okay. So, I never did an auction, but I'd been to a lot of auctions, so anyway, to make a long story short, I loved it, became very successful at it, made all the papers and I do about sixty to seventy a year now. It's crazy. All over the world. Like, it's amazing. And sometimes they pay me. I don't do it for money. If it's a corporation I charge them, but actually, I don't take the money. I have them write it to our foundation. But it's pretty cool. I get to meet some amazing celebrities and some not-so-amazing celebrities.

[Laughs]

[Lawrence] Oh, sorry folks, that list will not be public. However, for enough payment to LDAO as a donation, I may be able to publish it.

[Jay] But I had a great story once and LDAO arranged this and the Gow. And it was a radio interview show and it was about twenty years ago and there was a gentleman by the name of Stephen J. Cannell, a famous Hollywood producer, *Bridget's Diary*, *The A-Team*, and many other shows. So he's in a studio in California and I'm in a studio at CBC. Uh-oh, can I say that? Sorry.

[Lawrence] They're on Sirius here.

[Jay] I'm in a studio in Toronto, Canada and we can't hear each other, right, because we're in separate studios. And the moderator is in Washington, and then we have Dr. Sally Shaywitz, who is from one of the Ivy League schools, I can't remember which one it is, and she has come up with some magnetic resonating testing for, you know, if someone is dyslexic or not with x-rays of the brain. Anyways, she asked us, you know, if we saw this as a disability, and we both answered, without hearing each other's answers, that no, we actually look at it as a gift, because it makes you look at things differently. And I told this example; I don't know if it's a myth, or if it's true, or whatever, but I love this story because I think it gets to the point. There's this truck. It's twelve feet tall with the wheels. Big tractor trailer. It goes under a bridge. The bridge was 12'2" so it got stuck there. So now it's stuck in the middle of traffic and they have a couple options. What are they going to do? They either take the truck apart, do they take the bridge apart? Whatever they have to do, traffic's going to be backed up for hours and it's going to be quite expensive. So there's this little, I like to say, learning disabled child, or dyslexic boy; he's about eight years old, and he's sitting facing the tire, because he's a little kid. And he looks at the tire and he says, well why don't we take some of the air out and then we could, like, push it under? Now, what a simple solution, right? It's only two inches. So that's what they ended up doing.

But the point of the story isn't how he figured it out or whatever. The point is, we all look at things differently and there's no right or wrong answer. And I like to think I think outside of the box and I think that's why I've been successful and some other things. Because one and one equals two but one and a half and a half equals two and a quarter and three quarters equal two. There's many ways to get there,



not just one way. And our brain, I think we're taught, there's only one way. Well there's not just one way. Sometimes there is one way, but in some cases, there's other ways.

[Lawrence] Now, and it's actually, when you look at it as well Jay, I'm always amazed, obviously, being in the field, I'm always looking for role models for kids. It's amazing how many of the success stories, the first thing you see is the success of the person and then you see they've got some type of learning challenge. So Jamie Oliver's dyslexic, and John Lennon. You can go on and on and on, and whoever your favourite names are...

[Jay] Donald Trump.

[Lawrence] Donald Trump. You sure?

[Laughs]

Anyway, so here's the question for you to finish off today, and I think this really important for people that are listening and maybe have just been diagnosed, parents that are feeling very down that their kid maybe is going to learn differently than their peers. Is it fair to say, Jay, that along with the challenges, you have harnessed the strengths to produce the success in your life that you have today?

[Jay] I couldn't say that any better.

[Laughs]

And if you go to www.jaymandarino.com; that's my personal website, I will respond to you if you do email there, and there's some neat stories there for you to look at and you know, you talked about the medals and it's sort of funny. When I got the one from, the Diamond Jubilee, I never wore it, because I thought, how am I going to wear one medal? It's sort of weird, right?

[Laughs]

So I never wore it. I put it in the drawer. It was amazing and two year later I get this amazing, which I think is no offence against the Queen, but only twelve people they pick out of Ontario each year to have this award, and I had no idea how a big deal it was and listening to these other people speak I thought, like, why am I here? And I remember going; it was the Lieutenant Governor, it was her first ceremony she had to do and, you know, they're talking about the skateboarding and everything. She's going, skateboarding? I said, yes. Elizabeth, we're going to get you on a skateboard too and she laughed and says, no, no, you're not going to get me on a skateboard.

[Laughs]

I mean, she's got a great sense of humour, her Honour, and it's just amazing. So now I wear the two medals because I go, oh well, I've got two now, so it's pretty cool. So I'm looking for a third one to really balance it out.

[Lawrence] So I saw as well, you say it wasn't a medal, but I saw you got some Hero in Sport Award recently.



[Jay] Oh, that's right, ya.

[Lawrence] So, to be fair, this guy can't move folks without someone recognizing what he does, and that's why Jay's here to kick off our success stories. Jay, thank you for being so open and candid with us. I know you know other way, so that was why I chose you as well. You've been listening to TalkLD and until next time, this is Lawrence Barns saying goodbye.

[Music]

