

Belonging Matters' Podcast

Transcript

Episode 8: Living My Own Life

Alex Snedden

This podcast is an edited version taken from:

Snedden, A. (2014). Living my own life. In Thinking About how to foster a life enriched by community. Issue 18, pp 12-15. Belonging Matters: Melbourne

Welcome to Belonging Matters podcast series. Now available on Apple podcasts, Google podcasts, Spotify, and www.belongingmatters.org. You can email Belonging Matters on info@belongingmatters.org. Episode Eight, 'Living My Own Life'. Alex Snedden is from Auckland. Since leaving school in 2007, Alex has developed an employment portfolio, strong friendships, a home of his own, a place in community and independence from his family. He is a committed Catholic and a very loyal employee. In his spare time, he enjoys karate going to the gym and is an avid wrestling and rugby fan. In 2010, he won the Youth Attitude Award and he unfolds his story in this podcast.

I feel I have a very good life. I am busy doing the things I want to do and I am in charge of my own life. I organise what needs to

happen so things run smoothly for me. Having good people around me helps too. My parents trust and believe in me and that's important.

Being a Catholic is very important part of who I am. I enjoy going to church and being a Communion Minister and Alter Server. My goal is to maybe be a Deacon - who knows what might happen for me. I went to Sacred Heart College like all the men in my family.

I am a role model for disabled people. I like being a public speaker so people can learn not to be afraid of people like me. I like to travel, do karate, I really like working, spending time with my friends, watching videos and talking on Skype. I have my freedom, my family and friends who love and care about me.

I have some very important roles in my life because I am a son, a brother, a cousin and a grandson. I am a hard worker, a volunteer in the Foodbank and a role model. I am a flatmate, a karate club member, a Godfather to Pearl, a public speaker and a good friend. These are all of the things that make me feel good. I have always wanted to be independent just like my brother and sister. My plan was to leave home before I was 25 and it was mums plan too!

In March 2012 my life changed and I went flatting. It is fantastic. I live in my own house and I am the landlord! Dad helps me of course. Saying goodbye to Mum and Dad was hard but I was very excited too. Mum cried of course!

My Personal Assistant, helped me find my flatmates who don't have a disability. There are four of us in the flat and we get on very well. I do my washing and some shopping. We all share the cost of the flat. It is my flat and that means I don't have to leave and I can choose who will live with me. I never want caregivers in my life but I know I need help with some things so my

flatmates help me. I pay Life Maid Easy to clean the house now and we all like that!

Living in my own place is great and I have good neighbours who will help me if I need it. I go to Mum and Dads for family dinner every Sunday. Sometimes I have to tell mum I am an adult now when she tries to tell me what to do just like my brother and sister!

For me to be happy I need help from good friends. So I have a Circle of Support and they are called the Young Champs.

I had another circle of support and they are the Old Champs. The Young Champs are a group of very special people who are there for me. I wrote them a letter asking them if they could help me with my goals. I wanted people who were funny, helpful, friendly, honest, supportive and smart. I organise the meetings about every month. We meet at my house and we talk about me. I am very blessed to have good people in my life. They are all there for me and it feels good.

My Champs make sure that I am in charge of my life and are there to help me. My Champs and my family are all behind me so that makes me feel very strong. They all really listen to me.

I have four different jobs because it was hard to get the same job every day. I am very loyal to my boss. I do my best and I like to earn money. On a Monday I work for my dad where I answer the phones and do filing. Then Wednesday I volunteer in the foodbank because I feel it is important to help people who need it. On Thursday I work for the Catholic Diocese where the Bishop is and this is my best job - I work in the admin team. Tuesday and Friday I work at Drake Medox where I do data entry and filing. I have some great workmates and I try to always work hard but I like to have fun too. It is a busy week and I enjoy everything I do. I also go to church, karate and the gym

and I spend time with my friends, my family and just hanging out at my flat. I was very proud when in 2010 I won the Youth Attitude Award. With the prize money I decided to spend it on one of my dreams which was to see the Pope in the Vatican. My big Overseas Experience was in Europe when I went on tour of France, Spain and Italy for a month with my PA and without parents. The tour was for a group of Catholic Youth and we went to the World Youth Day in Spain. I saw the Pope in the Vatican. That was the best part of my trip. It was a great experience and best of all my parents didn't come!

In 2011 I flew to New York on my own to see my friend Eric. Mum and Dad were VERY worried but they knew I could do it on my own. It has been exciting to travel on my own as I get to meet new people. I know that my parents trust and believe in me. Travelling on my own has helped me become more independent too.

So that I can always have a great life I need to have dreams for my future, real friends, a good plan, my family, my champions and my church. I will need money, a job, a nice home, my computer so I can keep in touch with my friends on Facebook and Skype. I have my phone so I can talk to people when I want to.

Most of all I need people to listen to me. With help I will have a great life.

You've been listening to the Belonging Matters podcast series. For copies of this and other Belonging Matters programs, please go to belongingmatters.org. The Belonging Matters website features free podcasts, videos, and many other resources to assist people with disabilities and their families to

lead ordinary lives in their communities. To contact Belonging Matters, please email info@belongingmatters.org