**Defining Disability: Scott Byrne, September 2021**

Harry 0:01

Hello, and welcome to episode three of our four part series promoting the new ability Co Op short film. I'm your host, Harry O'Brien. In this episode, I sit down with Scott. Scott is one of the three students who were featured in the short film, we go behind the scenes to discuss the production of the movie, I will discuss what support he gets from the disability services to help him manage his invisible disability. So a bit of background for those of you that are new here, the Trinity Ability Co Op is a cooperative movement led by students with disabilities to a radical inclusion on campus, this podcast series and short film were made possible with Trinity Equality Fund. The Equality Fund is specially designed to facilitate innovative and creative quality projects by staff and students across the university. Our project theme is inclusive Trinity showing how Trinity fosters an inclusive environment and experience for all members of the Trinity community. So without further ado, here's the interview with Scott.

Scott, what's your role in the film?

Scott 0:57

My role in the film, so I do actually star in the film. So I'm one of the three people the film recruited by the disability service, once I'm working with them for the summer to come in and star in it as well. And how did you actually get involved in it. So there was a call out for people, and we'd had a couple of students come forward, or people who would have been involved in the disability service, but I think they're looking for a bit more of a balance in terms of gender and stuff like that, and just people from different backgrounds. So I come from a STEM background, having studied physics, and the other two people in the film would call from an arts background. So we think that was another thing to try to be reflective of the entire student population and being more reflective of the student population that was how I ended up getting involved.

Harry 1:44

So you, you would have been registered with a disability service and you would have got the email, that they'd sent out to everyone. is that right?

Scott 1:51

Yes. So yeah, I was registered with the Disability Service up until I finished college. I came into my course through the DARE pathway. So part of that means you are registered with a disability service for the entire time. You're in college. Yeah, I would've got the emails and stuff like that and the Facebook ads. And I think they put it on their Twitter accounts as well. I would've see them that way as well.

Harry 2:13

Yeah, I would be registered disability service as well. And there's actually a lot of benefits of being registered with the disability service I find, so you get these emails, which ended up in you being in a movie. But you got your job, didn't you in the disability service?

Scott 2:26

Yes. So I am, I was stuck with nothing to do for this summer. Initially, I knew my job was the job that I'd had had basically, since I finished in college, was going to be finishing up in around May. So I'd had this big gap my summer with no real certainty as to what's going to happen. I just got this email in my inbox from the disability service. About how they were looking for graduate interns, things like that. So I said, I'd chance my arm and see where it went. I do agree in terms of the disability service emails. Like I tell all my friends, I'll check your college emails, because there's so much stuff that is really useful that you just never notice or stuff that's really important to your degree that you never check in on till it's a little bit too late. But the disability service email is obviously really useful in terms of just helping you keep on top of things, but also flagging stuff for you that can be really useful, or at least having it in the back of your head. If you ever do have a problem. I know the supports are there. Or I know this is our this is actually who I contact and this is how I book drop in session and things like that. Now

Harry 3:31

Especially I noticed, there's a couple of scholarships that this new service share as well, which is really handy. What was it like being involved in the movie? What was actually involved was just one day of filming?

Scott 3:43

so there was two days of filming altogether. So the first one was we shot in the Robert Emmet theater in the arts block. So that was a close up kind of interview with the videographer in the lecture hall lights and stuff like that. So they asked me a few questions. I think mine was done fairly quickly, like within half an hour, I think I answered everything. And we were happy with the shots and stuff like that. So I was free to go and work for the rest of the day. And then the second day shoot was just visual. So we went into the School of Physics obviously I'm a physics student. So the inside of the School of Physics is really nice like it's nearly a century old at this point probably older interior like all marble and stone, we went to the lecture theater at the top the Schrodinger Lecture Theater. It's all like wood panels and stuff like that and just got some really nice vehicles there. But it's an impressive place but most people don't really get to see it because you'd never know it was there just walking past the building every day on your way to Pearse street to get your bus or to get your dart

Harry 4:42

Scott, what was the like, because obviously every student with disability is different. What was your journey finding out that you had a disability and then ended up registering with disability service and getting supports your needed

Scott 4:51

I suppose in my case, so I fall under a significant ongoing illness. It's been with me my entire life and I was diagnosed when I was a baby so they've never been a point in my life where it's like, okay, this is where I didn't have a disability. And this is now where I have a disability. But in terms that i've always been quite comfortable with it, well not always been quite comfortable with it. But by the time I reached college, I'd say I was quite comfortable with it and able to manage it. And obviously, the DARE program was really useful, just in terms of giving me some certainty when it came to third level. So I obviously wanted to do well on my Leaving Cert, I did do wel lon my Leaving Cert, but knowing that the support was there for me if I needed it. And then once I did go to college, or start in college, and it was only around the the second year, that I started acknowledging, okay, like I do need to ask for help or ask for support. So what me it would deffer my exams or deffer some of them because my body just can't handle the stress. And we were in the last year of non semesterised exams. So at the end of second year, I do a 10 exams in a two week period. So it just wasn't sustainable for me. And I probably caused myself a lot of sleepless nights and missed grades and unnecessary hassle convinced myself that I didn't need the support that I was entitled to. So I think getting over that mental wall, I think was the most important thing for me.

Harry 6:08

And what are the supports that are available to with disability service.

Scott 6:12

So like I said, mainly with me, it was help with assignments, or help with exams. So if it was a case that okay, I'm going to split my exams between May and August for exams, two in May and two in August, all that sort of stuff was fairly easily dealt with, because I had my lens report and stuff like that. The tutor or whoever or academic Registry, or just go to the physics go fairly quickly and go, Okay, there's just a file here, of, you know, what he's entitled to what the situation is, it's a perfectly reasonable request to make that he gets deffer some of the exams. So I always felt like I tried to manage things as well as I could, but I did always feel like if I did have an issue, I could go to the Disability Centres and be like, Okay, I need to move this timetable around a little bit, because it is not going to work for me in my current situation.

Harry 7:00

And why would your timetable not work for you? Why would you need to shift it around?

Scott 7:05

some of the big things that may be like fatigue, or sometimes you just wake up and you don't feel particularly good. Or if I pick up an illness or something that like it might only be a cold, or something that but I'd be worn down, or if it gets to a very busy part of the college term, at my best, sometimes it feels like you're running at 70% compared to everyone else who is at 100%. So that thing of okay, I could do this but by the end of it, I will be so worn down. So being able to adjust things to better suit, okay, look, I need an extra week to do this, or I need to change this round a little bit, that was always something they just had to deal with. Because if it was the point where things were getting difficult or things are getting really crowded, I could feel it myself that I was starting to run on fumes. And if I run on fumes, then I get sick, stuck in bed at home or end up being hospitalized. And that's a whole other situation.

Harry 7:57

So you decide on the morning, or like the day before that, oh, I can't do this exam tomorrow, I need to postpone this like couple days or a week. is that righ?

Scott 8:04

maybe not the day before. So sometimes like you'd look at the schedule, and you'd go, okay, like I know, if I've got four exams in a week and a half period. I know by the time I get through like the first two, I get to the third exam, I'd just be completely worn out. And you're trying to remember the stuff that you learned already, or trying to revise the stuff you learned already. And then you're seeing people who were asking you for help two weeks earlier, because they didn't know what was going on. And they're coming out on the exam with a better grade than you because you just don't have anything left in the tank to give.

Harry 8:35

So the main support you have really been able to be flexible your timetable so that it suits you and your needs and fatigue.

Scott 8:41

Yeah, right. Yeah, essentially thats it.

Harry 8:42

That so handy! Do you think that made a big difference on your grades?

Scott 8:47

Yeah, you can see in my transcripts, my grades improve feom first to second to third year, it was just getting ridiculous. Whereas I know how to do these exams and get through them. But I'd be like a zombie by the third or fourth one. And even the way Trinity had scheduled some of them, like if we had two exams. And one day, the next two days for me were just like a write off. I did not have anything left to give really

Harry 9:08

students do need to overcome that. What would you even call it out like that kind of like, trying to be great and trying to be powerful and like trying to do everything I do or smash all these exams.

Scott 9:18

I think it's maybe an insecurity or a mental barrier, you feel like you come into college and you have to do everything and be great at everything from the get go. And you have to be like this model idea of a college students that no one else actually lives up to or can do it for in long term. Probably about seeing people in first and second year go in and sign up for everything and do everything or try to do everything. And then by the second semester a year they're completely burnt out and they needed to take a break. So I would say get out of that frame of mind where you... I think it's part of it is. People want to prove to those around them or prove to themselves that they can do it whereas it might not actually be what they want to do but they feel, oh because I'm someone with disability I have to prove I can do better than everyone else around me.

Harry 10:02

So the main kind of symptom of your disability would be fatigue. Is that right?

Scott 10:08

Yeah, fatigue in a general sense. And so like it's an autoimmune condition, basically, like my immune system just doesn't work property so I can pick up like infections and stuff like that quite easily. And the problem is, if I pick up something, or even something minor like when I was in primary school, I caught shingles. And then I had to spend the weekend isolation in Crumlin because it just tears through me, I don't have the same durability everyone else has. So making sure that doesn't happen is always been the priority, because you could go and spend a week in isolation and then come out, and it could take you another month to get back to where you were initially learning from those experiences when I was younger, and it taught me No, no grade is worth having to spend a week in a an isolation ward, or are isolation room, which is about the size of a box room and an average house.

Harry 10:56

You are well used to quarantining well before the pandemic.

Scott 10:59

Yeah basically, when people were like, Oh, how are you doing? How are you managing this? I've had I've had it worse, believe it or not.

Harry 11:06

How will that affect your life in choosing your career choice and what job you go into.

Scott 11:11

In terms of career and stuff like that it did give me some perspective in terms of I don't think I was ever going to be the person who could go off and do a job that they hate for a lot of money, because my health was always the priority, as long as I can remember, probably more so than most people would be like most people that say, yeah, they prioritize their health but with me, it's an actual tangible thing every day, there's medications to take there's doctors I see. So I think it put it more in terms of I wanted to do something that made me happy, or something that I felt was rewarding. That's part of the reason why I signed up to work with Disability Services, because I felt it was I could get a sense of purpose or get a sense of reward of like long term, I do want to work in an area, maybe to do with like sustainability or something like that, in terms of physics and science, and something where you're actively trying to make a difference or improve things for people. That's probably been formed by my own experiences, having to deal with all the stuff when I was younger, like getting sick and things like that. And yeah, so that'd probably be the main way it's affected my career perspective.

Harry 12:10

You could almost use that as a silver lining in a way, like, you're not gonna be one of those people that is just gonna wake up every morning and hate their job, it's almost like you can't do that. It just rules that out for you, you have to enjoy your job.

Scott 12:22

Yeah, there's that thing, I think there's a perspective and a greater appreciation for things like some people don't get that till they're older to 30 or there 40 and at that point, they've already been working in an industry for a couple of years, where they're like, I don't actually like this job. Why am I doing this. Some of my friends went straight into doing PhDs, and I was like, I don't want to jump straight into a PhD, that's another four years committed to something, like what if you don't enjoy it? You're putting yourself on a very well defined career path into a certain sector. And so I think it has, it forced me to grow up and mature a bit sooner than most people my age would have had to. And so I generally don't get ruffled by things that much I try to just sort of keep my head and think about, Is this actually what I want? Or is it just what people are telling me I should want?

Harry 13:09

Is there anything you hope people know, before watching the short film?

Scott 13:13

Is there anything to hope people know, there was a lot of effort that went into it, people were very, me included, you know we're quite honest about our experiences, we weren't holding back of things like it's trying to give as honest an appraisal or a view of things as possible. And some of that would be negative, some of that would be positive. And that's not intended to cast a dark cloud over everything. But being honest about your situation as someone with disability can be difficult. I think it's also necessary in terms of actually we can't have a conversation about this stuff. There's all this bad stuff in the corner, and we choose to ignore it because it brings the vibes down, I think honesty was the main thing that went into it. People were genuine about their experiences. I think that... I hope that comes across well on camera.

Harry 13:55

I think honesty always cuts through. And finally this is the last question, what impact you hope the short film is going to have?

Scott 14:03

I hope it informs people there what it's like for someone with disability on campus or just in Trinity in general, people don't know about these things. It's not at the forefront of their mind. We've all got 1,000,001 different things going on, especially at the moment whether that's academically, whether that's in work, or personal life, I think seeing a film like this where people are honest and open and articulating their experiences in a way that's relatable will kind of make people go oh, I now see the world or I know see the campus or I see the college in a different way. And that way highlights a lot of the issues that students disabilities have wether thats accessibility, whether that's inclusion and yeah, that would be my hope for the film is that it's an eye opener for people in a good way.

Harry 14:46

So that's episode three. I hope you enjoyed it. If you did enjoy it, be sure to check out the short film will be released on September 3rd. You can find it on all of the Ability Co Ops social medias, we're Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, you name it. So go follow us wherever you want to see us. Be sure to tune in with our next and final episode of the series where I interview Brian Smith who is the director of the film.