

Lee [01:00:01]

Hello and welcome to another episode of your First of Everything. My name is Lee and I have very fortunate today to have Michael with me, who is a student occupational therapist. How we. How are you, Michael?

Michael [01:00:15]

I'm doing great. Thank you for having me.

Lee [01:00:17]

Bro. But thank you so much for giving us your time. So you've come today to share one of your experiences during your time training. Do you want to give us a bit of a background?

Michael [01:00:30]

Yeah. My. Background is in design and communication. I worked in the media for. A couple of decades. That kind of gives you a clue that I'm not 18. So I got into the health care sector. Without knowing much about it. So I did a foundation here to see what it's like to understand the lay of the land. And my intention was to go into mental health nursing, because I have a lived experience in that regard within the family. And after a year I listened to talk about the different pathways, and then OT was mentioned and I was like, my bulbs went boom. I was like, that sounds very interesting. And the reason it was interesting is because there was a link. To design, where I can design solutions and environments and adaptations to make people's lives better. And I wanted the next phase of my life to be where I'm helping people. And that gives me a purpose to do greater things.

Lee [01:01:36]

Oh. That's wonderful. Yeah. So during your time on the OT, course, obviously you've been doing, placements. Was there any particular one that's stood out for you?

Michael [01:01:48]

Yeah. The last one actually was surprisingly enjoyable because I met a, I went into paediatrics in the community, and I was working with an amazing team of ladies who took me under, under their wing and taught me everything. And. But the most interesting part, I was anxious about going to meet the families in their homes, and I

was curious about how they would accept me as a male. Ot because predominantly it's ladies and. One of the experiences was so good. When we got back to the clinic and the family called to say how happy they were with my interaction with their child. And the whole office was like buzzing like, Mike, thank you for being yourself and being able to bring a smile to the family. And for me that was like so rewarding and unexpected. So it just got me thinking. And then I looked at some stats and I was wondering, why are there so few male OTS or, well, men in healthcare? And it would be nice if we could get more to come in and have some impact in the lives of families.

Lee [01:02:59]

Absolutely. Well, as a male children's nurse myself, I fully agree that actually it would be. It would be lovely to see, more males within healthcare. So that sort of scenario we just talked about, was that your first sort of opportunity within the program to support?

Michael [01:03:18]

Yes, it was it was my first. Yes.

Lee [01:03:20]

And what the what was what did you learn from that experience? How did it how did it change your practice in any way? Is it is it.

Michael [01:03:29]

It you see when you're. In college and uni, just learning the theory. And there's all sorts of buzzwords like people centred, holistic care and all that. It's all fury until you actually go into the field and actually practice. And if you do not present yourself authentically and openly, and be willing to learn from those that have been there before you, you could stumble and you could doubt yourself and you could doubt why you're doing it. So for me, that experience and the ones that followed gave me an opportunity to look back and say, can I do this every day? And, I'm human. I'm a man. And you know, I haven't cried for many years and haven't cried yet. But I have a feeling if I go into the into the field, I will be choking some evenings because it can be very, very, very draining as well, but positively because then you, you really see the human side of people.

Lee [01:04:32]

So wonderful. And I suppose it's the same for all professions, isn't it? That's where our sort of self-care models, come into play and are really, really important. Through that experience, though obviously with that being your first experience of working with the family, what does that mean for you as it opened your eyes to maybe other career pathways within the.

Michael [01:04:58]

It has. And yeah, I was very I was not sure what I want to do. And after that placement I was like, this is what I want to do. But I because my original wish was to work with mental health. I get the feeling now because my next placement is in mental health. I might work with children in mental health settings so that I have a best of both worlds, because I really want to work within mental health, so I have a feeling that might be what might happen. Hopefully.

Lee [01:05:27]

So I suppose in a lot of ways it sounds like it was quite a transformative experience in terms of maybe opening a door that maybe you'd not considered that in terms of the support of children and young people.

Michael [01:05:42]

It just was a and this is. I didn't know what to expect, but it's so wide in child paediatrics. It's so wide. There's so much to learn. There's so many different conditions to consider and to to know about. So it's an ever learning curve. And it's and that excites me because every day I went in I was like, wow, learning a new thing about a whole new condition, which I had no clue, as in, no one could have prepared me for that. But it was so exciting.

Lee [01:06:12]

It is. It's a it's a fascinating field, and I'm probably biased because like I say, I am a children's nurse, but I think sometimes across the professions, when we view children and young people, we sometimes see them as little adults. And but actually there's so different than, you know, developmentally, emotionally, depending on their stage of development. There can be big autumnal differences depending where they are in their development. So it is a fascinating field for somebody who's maybe not had opportunity yet to to support children and families during a placement and

maybe facing that in a in the next allocation. What would be your top tips or advice for somebody, who may be working with children and young people for the first time?

Michael [01:07:08]

I would suggest. And because I had to learn very quickly, you need to be very alert. And you must also recognise that children are absolutely honest.

Lee [01:07:19]

Yeah. Hundred percent.

Michael [01:07:21]

They won't they won't, they will act up but they are communicating through. The whole time. So you have to be very alert, very observant, and you must have a way to connect with them so they trust you. And as you engage with them you observe everything you need to observe. So you have to be very quick on your feet. So that I had to learn very quickly. So anybody going into this, they just need to be prepared and then remember you you have the you have the child and you have the parent there. And the parent is more concerned than the child. So you have to work through the dynamics of having your people skills in line. And for me that was exciting and scary. But at the end of it I was like I want to do this. This is this is good.

Lee [01:08:07]

It's brilliant. And it's it's it's lovely to hear your passion around it as well. It's really, really good. And you're so you're so right. Children will make their mind up about you within three seconds. And if you're not the one, you're not the one. And they're not scared about telling you, you're not the one. But I suppose within that, then it's coming up with those creative ways to sort of get them engaged. I, I can sing every song in frozen and any Disney song. Yeah. Just in order to engage, with that child.

Michael [01:08:43]

And on some days, it won't work. Yes. On some days the child will just refuse to engage, and. And you just have to accept it and say, we'll give it a go another time. That's what I'm assuming will happen a lot. Hopefully less.

Lee [01:08:57]

Yeah, absolutely. I quite, I quite like the the upfront ness of children. I think that's really it's lovely. The other point I really liked was what you said. It was about those sort of non observing and observing non-verbal communication as well. Obviously as not all children are verbal. Yeah. Different depending on their age stage of development, any sort of additional need. So it's really important that sort of observation skills. Is that sort of something that you've taken away?

Michael [01:09:33]

Yes, I have, and I've been thinking and this is, not very related to what we're talking about, but I'm really trying to figure out how technology will help us, especially with children with the inabilities and the can't communicate posture issues and how we will then be able, as professionals in the field, embed certain tools that will help us know what's really going on, especially if they're non-verbal. And I'm excited about that journey.

Lee [01:10:03]

So just leaping back to something you said earlier, Michael was around, how we need more men, within the healthcare profession. Yeah. What do you think are potentially some of the barriers to men access in the profession or.

Michael [01:10:24]

I thought about that quite a bit in my first year before I decided which direction to take. And I think the biggest problem, the biggest barrier is representation. Or should I say misrepresentation? And I think the media has for years presented the profession has one suited more to the female gender. And in every movie you see. You'll see a lady being the nurse as opposed to a man, and then the man being a doctor or some other career, or someone in mining or a firefighter. So I think there should be a shift in the media to present all these careers as possible for men to do and do well and put them in that light and consistently showcase them, because I think they would do amazingly well. It what helped me was that my mum was a nurse, so I had that connection. I could see, her passion for it and thought, hey, if my mother can do it, I should look at it closely. But not everyone has that opportunity.

Lee [01:11:29]

No, you're absolutely right. And I think you've made a really valid point there around because representation is important, isn't it? And it makes it easier to see yourself in a role when you can see someone you relate to in that role. If that makes if that

makes. Yeah. Makes sense. Now it's really, really interesting point. I just want to say a massive thank you, for joining me today for sharing your opinions and your experiences. It's been really beneficial and it's been lovely to hear of your passion around, what you do. And so thank you very much. Pleasure's all.

Michael [01:12:03]

Mine. Thank you for having me. Thank you for having me.

Lee [01:12:09]

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