

About Us



What we do

Speaking Insights is an Autism advocacy partnership delivering presentations about our family's Autism journey. Our flagship presentation, **From Diagnosis to O.A.M. – A Personal Autism Journey plus A Siblings Perspective** delivers our lived experience giving insight from three perspectives: Daniel as an Autistic person, Daryl as a parent and Leash as a sibling with further insight from her career as an educator.

Together, we aim to bring our story far and wide. In doing so we aim to provide our audiences with:

- A better insight of the mind of an Autistic individual.
- Some ideas for strategies to achieve best outcomes at home, in the community, education and workplace settings.
- A message of hope to the parents and families of Autistic children.

Our presentation is a must for neurodivergent individuals, parents, educators and allied health professionals.

Daniel Giles OAM



Daniel is proudly Autistic and works tirelessly as an advocate for Autistic individuals and others with diverse needs. He was diagnosed with Autism at the age of 2.5 years. Throughout his childhood, Daniel experienced delays in verbal communication and needed assistance with navigating the world around him, especially from a social and sensory perspective.

Daniel commenced his education at a special school. With support from his family, teachers and many others, Daniel transitioned from special education to mainstream schooling, initially through dual enrollment. From Grade 5 onwards, he attended mainstream school full-time and successfully completed his VCE. He then went on to complete a Bachelor of Graphic Design (Hons) at La Trobe University, Bendigo.

As an adult, Daniel works part-time as a graphic designer and does a range of volunteer work. Daniel currently volunteers for Different Journeys Autism and Bendigo Foodshare, but has also volunteered for Vinnies in the past.

Since adolescence, Daniel has been a keen advocate for social justice and promoting the understanding of Autism. This was recognised in 2008 when Daniel, at the age of 18, received the City of Greater Bendigo's Young Citizen of the Year award.

Daniel has been a member of myriad disability committees, including the Victorian Disability Advisory Council (Department of Health and Human Services), the Victorian Government's Accessible Transport Advisory Committee, the V/Line Accessibility Reference Group and the Victorian Government's Autism State Plan Stakeholder Advisory Group. Daniel is passionate about educating the community about being Autistic and mentoring other Autistic people. In recognition of his extensive work in this area, Daniel was awarded the Order of Australia Medal (OAM) in 2017 for his "Service to Disability and the Community".

Daniel has lived independently since the age of 20 years. He initially lived in student accommodation, before renting a unit for 9 years following graduation from University. In 2021, Daniel was very proud to build his own home and he continues to develop his independent living skills, especially in the area of cooking. Daniel readily accesses public transport to travel locally, domestically and (with some sensory support) internationally. His knowledge and ability to access all types of public transport systems is extraordinary and he is well-known by family members as the 'go-to person' for any assistance in this area.

Daniel has been speaking at professional development events, to health care workers, educators and families since the age of 13 and has a unique ability to give a clear insight of life as an Autistic person. His talks include strategies that have helped him to enhance his quality of life and enable him to achieve great things. Daniel has presented at the International Conference on Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disorders in Bhutan (2017); the Asia Pacific Autism Conference in Singapore (2019); and the ABC Early Learning Centre for Autism in Malaysia (2019), as well as countless presentations throughout Australia. Since 2017, Daniel, Daryl and Leash have been delivering their 'From Diagnosis to OAM' seminars together in the hope that their story can make a difference to the lives of families with Autistic individuals.

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Daryl Giles - #danielsdad



Daryl is proudly Daniel's dad and is inspired by Daniel's self-advocacy work. Daryl is in awe of all that Daniel has achieved despite the daily challenges his Autism presents to him.

Daryl brings to the discussion insights into the emotional process of coming to terms with your child's diagnosis, as well as his perspective on strategies surrounding a number of subjects, including: early intervention, inclusion, education, independent living, employment and a parenting approach that supports and extends your child to achieve their best outcomes.

Daryl has always been a calm and focused, hands-on parent, who is willing to do what is needed to achieve the best for his children. Knowing that the research tells us that children have more positive educational outcomes if their parent is involved with their school, he has been a member of several school boards at his children's schools, including terms as chairperson and deputy chairperson.

Daryl's passion to share his knowledge and understanding of Autism to others is driven by the interactions with families and others that tell him how the Speaking Insights' journey gives them hope for the future of their loved ones.

Through his Speaking Insights advocacy work, Daryl has connected to many Autistic individuals and their families. He fondly refers to these as his 'Autism Family'. He has also sat on several Q&A panels at Autism events and seminars, further sharing his knowledge through these platforms.

Daryl now also works part time for an Autism not-for-profit, 'Different Journeys', as a Carer Peer Support Officer. In this role, Daryl considers himself "in the place I'm meant to be".

Leash Purcell



Leash is Daniel's younger sister and came on board to provide the much needed, yet often forgotten siblings' perspective in a family's journey with Autism.

Like many siblings of people with disabilities, Leash has taken on a career in the service industry as a teacher. Her experiences growing up with Daniel have inspired her to be a strong advocate for inclusion needs within schools. Leash has worked in a variety of school contexts, both as a classroom teacher and in school leadership. She draws on her lived experience with Autism to support and empathise with ALL students and families with extra challenges, such as those with inclusion needs or from disadvantaged backgrounds.

In 2021, Leash was honoured to receive a 'National Excellence in Teaching Award' and was also the youngest person ever to receive the 'Terry O'Connell Regional and Remote Teachers Award' (awarded to someone who goes the extra mile - literally - for their students in remote and regional areas of Australia) for her work on the Tiwi Islands. Leash attributes much of her passion for wanting to help others to the lessons she has learnt from Daniel.

Leash often finds herself in the unique position of truly understanding both the daily challenges that can be very significant for families of a child with inclusion needs, and the pressures and realities that are true for teachers and schools in supporting these families. She aims to provide insight and strategies for both parties in navigating life and education for children and families with additional needs. Leash's perspective is unapologetically raw and real. This is because whilst growing up with someone on the spectrum is incredibly rewarding, it can also come with very real, and often silent challenges.

Leash is passionate about making sure that siblings are not forgotten along the Autism journey, and aims to help parents, caregivers and educators to understand the realities that can be true of siblings in their care.



ABN: 11 945 440 100

PO Box 5062
Sandhurst East VIC 3550

e: admin@speakinginsights.com.au

w: speakinginsights.com.au



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Testimonials

I wanted to say thank you so very much for sharing your journey. You were both so inspiring and I was so moved by what you both had to say. Your presentation was the best I have attended in my 20 plus years of teaching. You have helped me both professionally as a preschool teacher and as a Mum of a 7 year old boy who has autism. I have passed on your information to many others. Thank you so very much. **JM**

We came to your Geelong talk last night and you were both nothing short of inspirational. My 13 year old was diagnosed with Aspergers, ADHD and Anxiety at around 8 years old. For him to listen to someone who shared and more importantly over came many similar has was wonderful and gave him so much confidence. He kept jabbing me with his elbow and saying "that is like me Dad" and we talked all the way home about Daniel's achievements and it gave my boy real belief that things would work out for him (sadly this is not always the case). One of the main things we took away from the talk was how much positive effect the extra curricular activities and camps seem to have on Daniel's confidence and social skills. My boy has never had the confidence to get involved in these kind of things but listening to both of you talk about these experiences has given him renewed determination to give such things a go, as well as a real understanding of the benefits of these kinds of activities. In this sense we can see that listening to your story could be the catalyst for some real improvement in our situation and we cannot thank you enough for that. We talked on the way home about Chris Varney, Temple Grandin and Daniel. We will spend more time on the weekend reading about and listening to other inspirational people with Autism. It is wonderful for my boy to see that he shares so much with such inspirational people. Thank you again for sharing your story and we would love to come and see your next talk. **CV**

We were at your Shepparton presentation and I was moved to tears by the strength and courage you both have. We have a 5 year old high functioning autistic boy W****, and although we are doing all we can to help him grow to a fine adult, as the parents of an autistic child you always seem to doubt yourself.....but tonight you showed us how far love, support and confidence can take our special ones. I cannot thank you enough for sharing your story and giving us hope, Daniel is a fine young man, if W**** becomes half the man Daniel is I will be soooooo proud. Daryl you have done an incredible job, your an inspiration to all of us with a loved one on the spectrum. **JS**

My son and I attended your presentation last night and we'd like to thank you for sharing your story and journey with us. Both Daniel and Daryl are amazing people and have such terrific advice and knowledge to share. We would recommend all professionals, parents, children and the wider community to attend Daniel's presentation. We hope we can meet with you again one day and all the best for the future. **NC**

What an amazing journey Daniel has been on! EVERYONE should get the opportunity to listen to this inspiring story about overcoming challenges, building resilience, having high expectations and achieving what you want in life. **KS**

I just heard the inspiring talk by Daniel Giles and his dad, Daryl, on the autism journey, in Bendigo. I would recommend attending for parents and for those on the spectrum who would like to hear more about autism as a lived experience. **AR**

Web: www.speakinginsights.com.au | **Email:** admin@speakinginsights.com.au

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ABN: 11 945 440 100