

Podcast Name: Article 19 – Around the Water Cooler: Language Reflects Culture with Kristen Witucki, Liza Grant, and Sydney Bromfield

Female 1:

Expression is one of the most powerful tools we have. A voice, a pen, a keyboard.

Female 2:

The real change, which must give to people throughout the world, their human rights must come about in the hearts of people. We must want our fellow human beings to have rights and freedoms, which give them dignity.

Female 1:

Article 19 is the voice in the room.

Marty:

Hello Article 19 listeners, my name is Marty Molloy, I am the president and catalyst at Tamman, and I'm coming to you because today's podcast is a little different from our usual interview format. This is what we're calling a water cooler episode. We wanted to record a glimpse into the types of conversations that we actually have at work around issues that intersect with accessibility and inclusivity. This episode is part of an ongoing conversation, so think of yourself walking up to a group of people in the office who were already chatting, and you decide to join in, and we're happy to have you. This topic stems from a colleague, who is blind, pointing out a microaggression that Tamman wrote in a social media post. In that post, we use the phrase, "If one follows this blindly." This saying was used in a common colloquial way to imply someone's lack of understanding or thinking about the subject at hand. It got us thinking, and just as importantly, talking a lot about language and inclusivity. We wrote a long-form article about this, which you can find at our website, [www.Tammaninc.com](http://www.Tammaninc.com), but the conversations about how language matters, and what it means in our culture, and how those conversations have continued, and continued, and continued. We're having this conversation because this is really important. It's important because what we say and what we write really matters. It's important because how we react when we make mistakes really matters. At Tamman, we are not afraid to engage in difficult conversations, but we do respectfully, with kindness and respect towards others, and with awareness building at the forefront of those conversations. At work, in our public events, and on our social media, we work to make sure no one feels shamed or silenced in the pursuit of educating ourselves, and that inclusivity really means everyone, no matter where our lives experiences or our professional development happen to be at the time. So, we hope you enjoy this glimpse into our work culture at Tamman. We had a lot of fun recording it, and we hope you have a lot of fun listening to it. Enjoy. How is everyone feeling today?

Sydney:

Good.

Liza:  
Pretty good.

Sydney:  
It's been a good week.

Marty:  
It has been a good week. It's been a weird week- it's been good, but a weird week. My daughter is taking the pre-ACT today, and last night, she was 100% miserable, which- look, no one is excited about a standardized test, I wasn't expecting her to be dancing around her room being like, yay, I can take it. But you know what, I'm going to start off, and I encourage you to share some if you have it yourself, a point of pride. This morning, she got up early, she had gotten a good night's rest, she ate breakfast- this does not always happen. She had her number two pencil, she got a bottle- she listened to all those 'these are the best things to do before you take a test' kind of thing, and I'm like, hot diggity dog, I was really proud of her. Anyway, it was very exciting, and so I had a good week.

Sydney:  
I think the only time that I've done those things as well is similar to your daughter when I was taking the SAT, ACT, other things alike- they nail into your head the importance of these tests, and that they determine your whole future, very serious.

Marty:  
Does anyone else have points of pride they'd like to share? I'm always curious about this in people's life. Give us a window into your lives.

Sydney:  
I returned from a very, very nice vacation, or trip, last week, and I am still riding out the high of the trip, but also with that, I feel like I came back with a lot of clarity and mindset on- you know what, nothing's actually a big deal, and just roll with the punches, and you'll deal with it when it happens, and who cares, which is not my normal world. I'm very high anxiety and worried pretty often, so I'm just- on the trip, random things happened, and because I was with my friend, and because it was with one of my best friends, and because it's also like- you're like, I just want to have a good time, and it's life, and not work. I was just like, alright, we'll deal with this as it comes, and just kind of rolled in with everything. At one point, nothing was going right, but all was still fine, because we were together, and enjoying the good without harping on the bad stuff, and I think that's something that I brought back with me and I'm trying to include in my life. I also jumped out of a plane.

Marty:  
I was going to say, you're also embracing your crazy Nick who jumped out of a plane-

Sydney:  
Crazy Nate.

Marty:

Crazy Nate, sorry, crazy Nate. Let's talk about crazy [inaudible 00:05:05] down the road. So, Kristen[ph], Liza[ph], anything you guys want to fill us in on in your wonderful lives? Point of pride, something you're excited about, something that happened, you're feeling good about?

Liza:

I did change my hair, it had not been dyed for eight months, so it was just eight inches of blonde with four inches of brown roots at the top, and that's very much a look. I sometimes refer to it as the Kurt Cobain, or the Chad Kroeger, but time had come. I recently aged another year, and I was like, you know, let's keep this mid-life crisis going, and we did. So now, it's kind of a rainbow. I actually sent my stylist something. Totally forgot about it, and I got in there, and I was like, do whatever you want. She's like, "I already mapped it out from the video you sent me." I was like, "OK, great, glad you were paying attention, because I totally forgot." But on the one side, we've got a nice dark blue, purple, there's bright green in the front, but then if I part it on the other side, which I won't, because I'm wearing headphones for this little podcast segment, it's a nice pinky orange-yellow, and still the green. I don't know if y'all have ever had those Italian cookies, I don't know if they're from a specific time of year.

Kristen:

Rainbow cookies?

Liza:

Yes, there's like the red stripe, and the yellow stripe, and the green stripe, and I was like- after, offline, I'll flip my hair for y'all, and you'll be like, oh my gosh, such an Italian cookie. So, yes, that's the main thing. I am proud of it in so much that I didn't really have anything to do with it artistically, but the woman who does my hair has creative juice inside her, and I pay for that juice to be put on to my hair. Moving forward, an actual thing that I am proud of, for me, is a little bit accessibility related, but I have been interested in sign language for a very long time. I have a friend who recently became a professional interpreter who works for the Philadelphia school system. I wanted to start- there's actually a school for the deaf in my state of Delaware, and they offer lessons for you, but during COVID, that has been kind of put on hold. So, I was like, you know, I'm just going to do it, so I had my first class with a tutor last week, and I have my second one right after this week. And while I'm excited to be learning a new language, or at least trying to learn a new language, the main pride point is that I have just been wanting to do this for a long time, and haven't and have put it off for many years-

Marty:

That's awesome.

Liza:

It's not even maybe I can learn another language, it's like maybe I can actually take the first step into trying new things that I think will be good. It's a lot of small step for me, big step for another part of me type of-

Sydney:

Liza, me going skydiving was the same. I've been wanting to go skydiving for years, and that was where I said I jumped out of a plane. I finally went on this trip, and it's been like, oh, I'm going to do it, I'm going to do it, I'm going to do it, I want to do it, and it never actually coming to actualization. Those things when you finally do that, make the moves-

Liza:

Things are possible.

Marty:

So, Kristen, no pressure-

Liza:

Try to top that, Kristen, if you can.

Kristen:

I can't.

Marty:

What self-actualization happened to you this week?

Liza:

Your hair looks like it's the same color as last call, so-

Kristen:

It's the same, yes.

Liza:

How static of you.

Kristen:

I know. I am in a transitional state right now, so I am not actualizing anything. I am trying to grapple with major life decisions, so I'll get back to you next week, or the week after, and let you know more about that. I was trying to think of either how I could top that, or just something I could make up. I'm like, I can't.

Marty:

Just make something up, man. Yeah, you know, I rescued [crosstalk 00:08:31] wild boar, that's awesome.

Sydney:

Kristen, pre-going away, I would have had the same exact response. I would have sat here like, I don't know.

Kristen:

Maybe that's the answer, I need to get on a plane.

Sydney:

You gotta go on a trip.

Marty:

Or, apparently, jump out of one.

Liza:

And then jump out.

Kristen:

Jump out-

Marty:

I will not be doing that, that is not on my self-actualization list.

Kristen:

That's not- yeah but going on a plane is good.

Marty:

Bring it full circle where we started, from unbelievable learning new languages, jumping out of planes, I was just proud of my daughter for getting up and eating breakfast. So, I mean, there's a range, there's a scale to all this, it's all fine.

Liza:

I haven't yet figured out how to eat breakfast every morning, that's pretty hard.

Kristen:

Me either.

Sydney:

Me either.

Liza:

Especially working from home, so good on her.

Marty:

OK, so, first off, this is going to have to be another podcast. It is the most important meal of the day, all three of you must eat your breakfast. This is unacceptable.

Kristen:

It's true.

Liza:

Big lunch, big ol' lunch.

Sydney:

If you would like to deliver breakfast to my bed each day, Marty, or pay someone to deliver breakfast to my bed, I'm more than happy to eat breakfast every day.

Marty:

I will say I do make breakfast for my family every morning.

Sydney:

That's a vibe.

Marty:

I don't think my wife has made breakfast.

Sydney:

So, you're telling me I just need to get married.

Marty:

Get married, and then-

Liza:

To a specific person, though.

Marty:

Make me breakfast. Amy Schumer always talks about how she married a chef, because she's a genius, and I was like, yeah, that's actually really smart. OK, so, none of this is why we're here. I don't even know when we're going to start this actual recording. I just like talking to the three of you. We're talking, though, about language. We're talking about how language reflects culture and how culture reflects language. Certainly touching on, sort of, ableism and ableist type stuff, but also, we talked about maybe bringing in some other words. I think we can look at things in the mental health space specifically. That's something that all of us are really interested in when it comes to language and culture. I don't know if you guys have been reading anything or if you've continued to stay tight on the language front, but Liza, I know you and I were talking earlier about some articles that we've read recently, so why don't you kick us off with something you've read around ableism, and then I'm going to chime in with some thoughts on mental health stuff.

Liza:

Yes, I was looking up a couple of things, and one of them sort of referenced another article by the same person where it was a long running list, they had that was a glossary of ableist terms

and phrases, and they mentioned it because it was one of the most visited blog posts that they had. Everyone was looking at it, and trying to understand it, and it was from [autistichoya.com](http://autistichoya.com) if we're promoting it anywhere, but it's very comprehensive, and it has the different terms sectioned out, sort of, as like- these terms are pretty old and outdated, and even though you might not be hurting someone's feelings, you will sound like someone from- like a prospector from the 1890s or something, and it's just better to sound up on it. Moving down to things that can be used in an ableist, but they also have other meanings, we were talking about mental, I was talking the term barren, where it's like- these words could hurt somebody depending on how you're using it, but it also can mean other things, and when- the situations that are OK for use, and situations that are a little riskier for use. I really liked that. It's not just a list, it's a list, and each one has kind of a definition under it, and then a reason, and the logic behind why it gets under a lot of peoples' skin, or it can cause people to have bad feelings about other people and themselves. They kind of talk about how a lot of internalized ableism that comes with using the words makes it hard for people who are aging. I think it was an [indesign24](http://indesign24.com) talk from last year where someone used the phrase, "If you're abled, you're temporarily abled." If you consider yourself- you die young, or you live long enough to see yourself develop a disability, and so when you have these ideas that the word dumb or the word deaf is something that's negative, then if you lose your hearing, or if you have trouble with aphasia, or something like that growing older, it's not easy to unlearn that for yourself. It's just very interesting. A lot of the good reasoning in there that helps it kind of connect for me.

Marty:

I really like aspects of this article. The thing I like the best is the consider instead, and we've talked a little bit about that among us in terms of how habitual some of these words are in our lexicon. You were just talking about, like dumb I think is a great example where you kind of know it's usually used in the negative frame, and you're like- ah, you know, it's such a habit, I don't really have another one to say, but you can get creative with your language if you just take a look, step back, and think about it. One of the ones that really jumps out at me is, and I think it reflects the microaggression we had in our social media post where it's saying blind to, turn a blind eye to, blinded by ignorance or bigotry and things, referring to blind, low vision, or sight-limited people, using it as a metaphor, and I think most people wouldn't jump to that immediately. I think, for us, it was like, oh no, there's a problem there. Hard to come up with things in the moment of what would be different, and they say consider using instead, willfully ignorant, or deliberately ignoring. That's just a better turn of phrase anyway. Not deliberately ignoring- ignoring is pretty good, I don't know. I would want to run that through the Hemmingway app, because when we talk about inclusion, we're also talking about not using words, especially written words, that are at a very high academic level, but nevertheless, still- feigned ignorance, I love English, I love language, and I love the fact that they give you some really interesting alternatives that are better, and more clear too.

Liza:

It's more descriptive of what you're trying to make. And maybe it's not willfully ignorant, maybe it's something totally different, and it's like- I should specify that, that actually makes it clearer.

Marty:

I want to get your take though, bringing Sydney and Kris on this, because one of the words they use, and these are those, sort of, blind to, and turn a blind eye to, and all that, I'm with you on that. Bonkers- does bonkers really feel like a word that is aggressive or offensive? I'm really curious.

Sydney:

I think it's like saying- bonkers is technically a synonym for crazy, like you're going bonkers. I wouldn't categorize it that way, but it is an interesting one.

Kristen:

I haven't heard it often enough in a negative sense. I feel like it's a little bit unused. It's a little dusty in general.

Sydney:

I agree, it's dusty. I think what comes to my brain is the idea of- because you just mentioned I haven't heard it used in a negative way, and-

Kristen:

No, I haven't much in any way, actually.

Sydney:

In any way, but saying the negative way just brought my brain to- crazy is a term that I use. If I use it, and this is one that I've been working on training my brain not to use, especially with my niece, because I always change it with silly a lot when I'm talking to her, but I'm always saying it in an endearing way where it's like, you're crazy, lovingly, like I love the craziness, but it really is- it's silliness, and it's fun, and crazy still has that connotation even when used in a positive way, and I don't know the right answer there. If you're using it in a positive way, is it OK?

Marty:

Well, that's a great question. I would love to- what do you all think of that? Because I think the context matters. We talked a little bit about how often- I think, Liza, this was your point last time we talked about this, which was, man, when I think about these words I use, it's usually in a negative way, or in a high-emotional state, and usually negative. Crazy kind of doesn't feel like just silly, that's not a synonym for me, it feels like it's all of those things. It's silly, and it's different, and it's wild. It kind of captures a whole number of emotions and feelings, and is usually, at least for me as well, in a positive way. Maybe not, but right now, at least, I've got that going. I'm curious, what do you all think about context with the way a word is used.

Liza:

I'll go, I was thinking this, I had some notes about this too, so I'm really glad you brought it up. I, for better or worse, have been entertaining myself by watching some people play video games on twitch.com. Not a sponsor, you don't have to go there, but a lot of them are from a younger



generation, we'll call them gen Z. There's a lot of, just, oh, did you see that move, that was so crazy, you're insane, how good was that, so it's very much like- oh, that was nuts. Very much things where they're saying something good, or they're almost implying that's crazy good, or you're 'insanely cracked at this game', whatever. I feel like they oldest grandmother in the world when they say you're cracked, and I'm like, is that based on someone breaking a bone, or cracking someone's skull- I'm like, is this ableist, I will find out and let everyone in this chat room know.

Marty:

It's very dry skin, it's just positive dry skin, I'm cracked-

Liza:

Right- is this like chafing? That's so irritating and must be really hard to play video games if you're chafing, and so the whole thing you're just like, hold on, is this coming from a place of kindness? I think that too, where- to the cats, my parents will be like, you're being so crazy. And my cats, of course, I'm like, you're so wild, what a silly little billy you're being, because I don't want the cats to internalize anything for themselves, but you do realize where does it- I was referring to a cat as having a limb difference because it was a cat who, I don't remember if it was born with three legs or it had to have one leg removed because of an accident, but I was getting some grief from my parents about calling it a cat with a limb difference, and it's like- it's just good to have it in your head that this is what that's called. If you care about your fellow people, or animals, or just people who deserve care in the world, that's the way you should think about it. The context is important, but it's also like- it's weird. I will say I have obsessive-compulsive disorder, so I will say this is probably something related to that, but I do get a little bit irked when people- there's a word that means something, like crazy, or it has meant something traditionally, and then it means so many other things, where it's like help me out, and also don't associate it with all these other things. I'll tell people I'm a vegetarian, and they're like, oh, do you eat fish? And I'm like, no, that's not a vegetarian- oh, do you eat turkey bacon? I was like, no, why are we using- we're using this term to mean a whole lot of things that we're not necessarily being super specific about it, and so I do worry, even if it's positive, could we try to just keep it to just things that are related not how good you are? I don't know, not an argument against it, but it is something I think about.

Sydney:

No, Liza, what you just mentioned, I've been trying to be more OK with being in the gray, because I tend to be very black and white, and I feel like that's a little bit of what you were saying. I'm like, I want to know, is this a yes, or is this a no? So much of it is a gray area, and I think the word crazy is such a good one to talk about in this sense, because I think a lot of the time it is being used in a positive way, and in an endearing way, and in a loving way, and in an exciting way, and I replace it with silly and wild are my two words that I typically use to replace it in my vocabulary, or amazing when I'm talking about if someone was playing a game, and they did something really crazy, and I put that in quotes for everyone listening, but would that be wild, or would that be amazing, or whatever it is. In my brain, I tend to go black and white, but I do think that there is a big gray area when you're using these terms, and it's not all terms,

but some terms in a positive way. I think it happens more and more with the younger generation using the word crazy, and kind of how we talked about the evolution of the English language in general. Is this another evolution that we're not pulling crazy as mental health stuff because mental health is at the forefront of a conversation in a way that it wasn't for any other young generation? Gen Z is talking about mental health all the time. I think a lot of gen Z views it as, oh, we're not saying anyone's crazy, we're talking about this in a positive way. When we talk about mental health, we're talking in a serious way, and we're having that conversation regularly, whereas, growing up, I didn't have that conversation regularly, I should say.

Marty:

Kristen, I want to bring you into the conversation here a little bit. Specifically because, one thing, when we're talking about context, and history, and evolution of language, and all of this other stuff, I am battling that kind of desire and belief with my newfound awareness of microaggressions, and that it's not about the intention of the person speaking, but how it's received, and it's then empathetic to put yourself into the shoes of the person on the receiving end of that word, or hearing end of that word. So, what are your thoughts here?

Kristen:

This whole discussion about the positive versus the negative is a really important nuance that, maybe, can help a little bit to reconcile some of the disconnect between the intent of the person and how it was received. For instance, the word that started it all, blindly- one of the words that started it all, had a negative connotation to begin with, so it wasn't being used in an endearing- it was meaning a negative characteristic that was besides the disability. I think there's a real difference there that may not have been intended to connect to the disability, but the definition that it was using was problematic. Whoever is in charge of language, you know, I wish I could write to them. Could you please remove definitions two and three from this word? It's never that simple.

Marty:

You make a couple of really good points that I think we need to banter around. One is, who's in charge, I love that. What's the definitive list on this, and when does it change, and what if you don't know? What if you're- we're all aging much faster than we would like, and language is evolving even faster. My kids, the other day, were using the term bussin, didn't even know that was a thing until the other day. I was like, bussin, is that- we're traveling somewhere? They're like, dad, come on. So, there are all of these things. Who knows if that has- I don't know, someone out there does, if that has some sort of weird negative history attached to it. I don't think it's bussing, I think it's bussin. I don't even know where it comes from, but my son is using it on the regular, probably Twitch, so I think who's in charge, and who writes [inaudible 00:22:46]. I also think it's very interesting, and we should acknowledge this, that more obvious cases for me, from a racial standpoint, there are some words that are OK, but not OK for a white man to use, or a white woman. So, it's like- hmm. You know, there have been movies and jokes about it where it's like, can I- no, you cannot. Oh, OK, but I have friends- no, no, no. With ableism, it's probably very, very similar. With any -ism, any word that could have an offensive connection might change completely when there's a relationship between the person speaking

it and the person hearing it. Even if it's done in a negative tone, the nature of that relationship can change the context, and its usage, and everything else. I think the who's in charge, as well as the relationship aspect, are important details and nuances to consider when we're talking about language.

Liza:

I can jump in really quick.

Marty:

Please, yes.

Liza:

Just with something from the article that I was reading for a few of the terms you'll see. This term is usually used only by people who are part of this group, so this might be a term that people with autism use to talk to each other, to talk about themselves, but you're going to offend someone, or you run the risk of offending somebody if you use it and you aren't part of that group. So, that's another interesting thing, where sometimes when the context is good or bad- where was I seeing it recently? Oh, I was looking at different lists of aesthetics, because when you don't have any children, and you're home during a pandemic, that's what you do. Some things are like cripple-punk or cripple-core, where some terms are empowering and can really describe a whole part of your dimension and how you express yourself, and some of the terminology is used there that maybe you wouldn't use if you weren't a member of that type of a thing. I'll post a link in the chat if I can find it.

Marty:

Super interesting.

Sydney:

Just to add to that, actually, with the word crazy, I personally deal with generalized anxiety disorder on the larger scale, and also major depressive disorder, so on a personal level, when I'm connecting with friends that also deal with similar things, we'll be like- we use the term crazy to describe ourselves in joking with one another in playful, fun, and in an endearing way of talking with one another, and that's OK, but I will say if someone else, because I deal with these things, called me crazy that doesn't deal with these things, I would be offended. I don't know if I would be offended, I'd be hurt is more of what it would be. I do think context is so important, and also just that idea that within group, you do have words that you take back, and you own, and you use them as empowering, versus taking you down. I think there's a lot of power in that.

Kristen:

There's such a worry about discussing anything related to mental health, and it's not fully supported, even in weird logistical context like health insurance, or like some treatment for disorders. You have to show up in person, and that can be a barrier for some people, but also just even acknowledging either the feelings that people have that maybe they are not treating

as something that needs to be addressed in a more productive way, and I wonder- so, people thoughtlessly use words like crazy, and depressed, and things like that, but I also wonder if underneath that either callousness or thoughtlessness is unacknowledged trauma, or need of help, or a connection, or treatment, or whatever. that really hasn't been acknowledged fully in all of the weirdness of our culture.

Marty:

No, again, I think that's a really interesting point, and the underlying trauma that may exist, or the underlying just not dealing with whatever may be there. I also think that it's value signaling a little bit if you're OK with mental health- like, if you put it up there [inaudible 00:26:40], and by the way, I'm looking at Tamman first and foremost on this. We signal that we are a holistic, inclusive work environment, and we talk about mental health, and we put it out there, and we talk about resources, and work-life balance and everything else, because we are value signaling. We are saying these are our values. I'm not using value signaling the sort of driving a Prius way, where you don't recycle, but I do have a Prius. See, now I've just offended every Prius driver.

Liza:

These biases.

Marty:

No, it's like a common trope, right? It's a common trope around that. Anyway, I think we can also make some assumptions. We all do it, don't deny it, you see a pickup truck, and it has certain stickers and flags on it, and you are sure you are going to see that driver that you expect, and I look over, and I'm like, right again. So, sometimes stereotypes fit, I'm just saying. Anyway, if I see a Swarthmore CO-OP sticker on a Prius, I'm sure I'm going to see that Biden-Harris sticker there as well. There's certain things that are true about people. Coexist, exactly.

Kristen:

Now I'm really tempted to find someone who'd love to have their car redecorated and have this really weird mishmash of stickers that you wouldn't expect.

Marty:

I want to see a Prius with a MAGA sticker on it, that's what I'm looking for, and I have not found one yet. Anyway, because I think there are still lots of old misconceptions and things that exist, when we talk about language and catching up to- that value signaling is driving culture forward, because it might be 'I'm a man, I don't have to go talk to any head shrinker', and all that other kind of crazy language, but that's real out there, and so I think that I wasn't actually trying to be derogatory with my value signaling, I meant it to drive progression forward in this way. OK, we might cut that whole segment out, go ahead Sydney, you're trying to-

Sydney:

No, you're good. I have a few things that I wanted to just comment on and kind of share on. One thing that, well, just to tag on something you just shared, Marty, it's funny because there is a lot of different people. Different generations have still different comfortabilities with mental

health, and I think the younger generations are doing so much better, and it's because of the work that other generations did before them to kind of get there in the discussion around this, and social media, and all of these other things have brought it to light. But I come from a family that has lost people to suicide, and dealt with- a lot of people in our family have dealt with mental health related things in their lives, as everyone has at some level, and I remember sitting at the kitchen table with my family at one point, and it was shortly after I had started therapy, and I actually had just got on medicine for anxiety, and my aunt had made a comment of, like, I'm not crazy, I don't need- talking about my cousin, she's not crazy, she doesn't need that, after they knew that I had just started therapy, and I had just started medicine, and this stuff, and so hearing that in comparison to me, I remember sitting there and being like- and I did say something, because I don't keep my mouth shut, but I remember sitting there, and being like, I want to jump across the table right now, and punch you. I don't use violently lightly, but I was so hurt and angry just at the connotation that means you're crazy, and that your brain is working in this way that that equals crazy. Just flipping the script, but it kind of all goes in line with this, in the sense of talking about other words, because I think crazy is- we know crazy is bad, but as we talked about, there is this gray area where people are using it in an endearing way, whereas when we talk about people using the term depressed a lot, or bipolar to talk about someone that's switching opinions, or anxious, as everyone can feel anxious, but just different terms like that- a schizo, or things like that, where they're just using them to describe something, and not actually [inaudible 00:30:26] this disease, or this disability, however you want to talk about it really is what brought me- after Kristen had emailed us, or emailed Marty about leading blindly, I really had to check myself and be like- because in my brain, I was like, that's a phrase we use all the time, and I really had to take a step back, and think, and sat with it. One of the big things that I was like, oh, a turn of phrase is also like, oh I'm depressed. That's something that I've heard how many people say. Or, as a kid, I would say you're bipolar, because you're switching decisions, and those are things that people say all the time, and they're just phrases, but they have so much more meaning when you're dealing with these diseases, and there's this negative connotation with it. I just think it carries a lot. It helped knowing that ideal with this side of things helped me really understand where Kristen was coming from when she shared about leading blindly, and it did take me a minute, but I was like, OK, let me dive into every piece of language I use now.

Marty:

Really great point, and I think it speaks to how difficult it is, and how defensive we are about our own language. Even as I'm trying to hold myself accountable to certain things, and I slip up, like I just did, and will again, and do again, I think there's just this sense of- not only empathy, but just also being kind to yourself. So, Liza, you mentioned you are currently learning a new language, you're learning ASL, and you are gonna suck. You're gonna be terrible in the beginning.

Liza:

Yes, I already am, yes.

Marty:

But you're going to stick with it, and you're going to get better.

Liza:

Yes.

Marty:

And that's a normal, natural learning process. If every time you made the A incorrectly, right, uh, A.

Liza:

A, very nice.

Marty:

That's about as far as I go.

Liza:

For the listeners, Marty and Liza make the sign language letter A, and it looks very first week, but that's OK.

Marty:

That's where we are.

Liza:

Exactly.

Marty:

Be patient with yourself as you pursue meeting your own goals. It's so hard to be patient with ourselves because we- I think I'll speak for myself, I get defensive, partly because I'm mad at myself. I should have been better about that, or what the heck, that's just a turn of phrase. I'm with you entirely, and I think it is very, very difficult to get out of these habits of language, whatever they may be, and I hope that speaking any new language, or signing any new language, that as a community, we can be supportive of a person trying to be a little bit better tomorrow than they were today.

Liza:

I was thinking about that, and it's almost like- yeah, with a child. If you're at a family gathering, and a child is like, me want cookie, you're like, oh, would you like a cookie? You just will say the right thing, and it's not like how could you mess that up, it's like, oh, because it's new to you, and we're all kind of learning, because this stuff has been on the margins. Cool, we're getting there, and you're just going to feel comfortable to speak out.

Kristen:

I think all of us supporting each other as we all make mistakes, and reinvent, and reevaluate a language that we've all spoken and written for a very long time is so important, and maybe a

goal can be that as we support each other, we translate that into supporting ourselves to be kinder to ourselves. I thought about that a lot related to other things that have come up during the pandemic, and being hard on myself as a parent, or as a human, and then people being like, it's a normal situation that everybody is screwed up in some way or other, and that in being supportive and empathetic toward each other, we can hopefully teach ourselves to be gentler to ourselves.

Liza:

That is a great point, and it reminded me of something that still happens, not as much, but with myself. Trying to cut out these 55 words that are hurting people, and if I slipped up, I would say like, Liza you idiot, how could you- no, no, no, also no, not that either. When I'm even trying it with others, it's still right at the tip of my brain, ready to come out when I'm talking about myself. It's very hard to use one set of language with other people, and a different one with yourself. It's hard to not sound hateful.

Sydney: I was just going to say that brings me back to the little voice in your head, and retraining it too, and I've been really working on how would I- you brought up kids, Liza, and how would you say that to a kid? If my niece did this, or if another kid that I care about, or just a kid in general, because kids are innocent, did this, what would my reaction be? Or, if someone else I loved, my mom, my sister, a friend, what would my reaction be to them, and why is it so different internally? But I think all of what we just said comes back to something Marty said in the beginning, and that so much of this is built around relationships, so much of language is built around relationships, and us being willing to call people on it, but also in a kind and respectful way, and in a way of- hey, we're all learning. [inaudible 00:35:16] I got an email with a term that I think is not very nice, and she was not saying it in-

Marty:

What was the term? You gotta tell us, just because of the conversation.

Sydney:

We were talking about an event, and she referred to herself as the food Nazi. She did not mean it in the way that Nazi term is-

Marty:

I've used that, absolutely. The soup Nazi from Seinfeld, of course.

Sydney:

Exactly. She was just saying I know I've been a lot to deal with on this, but- honestly, this conversation just prompted me. I refrained from commenting on it, and I am going to email her privately and kind of make mention of it, because I do think that all of this comes back to relationships, and if we're not willing to call people that we do care about, and that we don't see as someone that said it in a mean way, but you don't know what you don't know. I would have never known saying leading blindly is a bad thing to say if Kristen hadn't let you know, and then, in turn, I knew. I just think there's so much power in that relationship, and in us speaking up to ourselves, but also to those around us when they use it.

Marty:

I want to end where we sort of began with this article, that we'll post in the show notes, and I think we should share widely. As I was going through it, again, one of the great things that this article does is it gives examples of words you can use instead. So, not only does it have it, but consider using these, and consider this. Some of them, honestly, I think are difficult. I don't think that this is a bible or gospel in terms of, oh, you can never say narcissistic when you're talking about a particular former president, but you can- I went there, Liza, I saw your face.

Liza:

Definitely egotistical. Not a doctor, yet.

Marty:

He may not have actually met the clinical definition. Anyway, I started looking through- they have this whole section of non-ableist language, and instead of an ableist word or phrase, perhaps you accidentally meant to say- and these are amazing words. So, if anyone is just listening to this, I want to go down, and if there's one that jumps out to you, anyone else who might be looking at this list, Liza, or Sydney, and hear something, let me know. But asinine, bizarre, buckwild, hell yeah buckwild, I'm all about it, that is coming into my lexicon 100%, contemptible-

Kristen:

Until the deer protests.

Liza:

And they'll come.

Marty:

And then we'll come.

Liza:

[inaudible 00:37:31] is good.

Marty:

Oh, I find you contemptible. Crappy, super easy that one, pissant, nefarious, love that one, ignoramus, I love- there are so many good words. Jerk, super simple, that should be- let's bring jerk back. They might want to check that one, I'm not sure.

Liza:

I did, no, I'll tell you, I checked it, because it was from a while ago, and I'm like, can I still say jerk? They seem to say it's coming from soda jerk, where it's just a type of person who worked- someone based on their job, and not because they have a type of movement with their body or anything that they don't have control over.



Kristen:

I don't know about that one.

Marty:

Yeah, we might have to go back and check that one.

Liza:

We'll have to look it up. I would say, also, sometimes ignorant. Some websites will also say be careful with ignorant, just for the same reason, where it's usually you're saying someone doesn't have the same level of education as something else, or they didn't have access to the same level of whatever. On this website, it proposes that, but also, you may find other websites where they do tell you to stay away from ignorant and things like that.

Marty:

Add it to the ongoing debate. There are so many great words in here. Rage-inducing-

Liza:

There are good ones that are- yeah, they give you alternatives for when you're trying to say something you're actually being negative about, and then if you go down a little bit more, it'll say here, if you're actually talking about people with disabilities, a certain disability type, here's the various ways that you can say it, and sound like you're from this century, and that you've got an eye towards caring and not staring, whatever other cliches you're going with. But yeah, it's good, because if you're feeling hot under the collar, and you want to call someone petulant, definitely do that, because that's the way they're acting.

Kristen:

Hot under the collar needs to come back.

Marty:

Hot under the collar is a good one.

Liza:

I hope that's not related to shingles or something.

Marty:

No, I think it- well, actually I thought it was more of like a she's making me feel a little hot under the collar.

Sydney:

My favorite section of this page is possible replacement insults using swears and profanity. They even let you know what swears and profanity are OK, so this is a great article.

Liza: It's accessible design, right? They said here's the profanity, and then there's a long line of just placeholder symbols, so that if you don't want to have that, and maybe you're at work, you

don't want them to come up on your screen, you can get to it before it gets to face and other things.

Marty:

We're an adult podcast, we can say them, because I think it's fun. Asshat, that needs to be a part of everyone's lexicon, because, you know what, we know plenty of people that are acting like an asshat. I just think that's so fantastic.

Liza:

Underneath all of that, it goes into how a lot of swear words are rooted in genders, and it's something I've thought about before, but I haven't tried to remove them from my language, so I think that that's really cool.

Marty:

I will throw one in there that a colleague of mine here at Tamman used, and I was like, I don't think I've heard that since 1952, and it is going to come back into my language. He was talking about a time, something that had happened, and he felt totally foolish, completely borderline ashamed, and he said I felt like a smacked ass. Greatest thing I'd heard all week, I was like, that's incredible. I don't know how I'm going to continue to use this, but I have to find these ways.

Sydney:

My mom says that pretty often.

Marty:

I think that's a generational one.

Liza:

Yes, but it's a relatable feeling.

Marty:

It is.

Liza:

And almost everyone has had their ass smacked at some time, so you're just like, yeah, no, it's not good.

Marty:

Names go in and out of fashion. I think more of these words should. I listened to a Teddy Roosevelt biography the other month, and bully- why did that ever- bully for you, oh my golly, that's a fantastic word. I love bringing back that sort of old-timey language.

Sydney:

What word?

Marty:  
Bully.

Kristen:  
Bully as a-

Marty:  
As a bully- way to go, bully for you, that's a very Teddy Roosevelt thing.

Kristen:  
It's like Tom Sawyer-ish.

Sydney:  
I'm just thinking bully, like a bully at school.

Marty:  
It's spelled the same.

Sydney:  
That like shoves you in a locker.

Kristen:  
Yeah, now that's all it means.

Marty:  
Or swell is another one. If we could bring swell back, I think that's awesome.

Liza:  
Swell is good. I've been saying crimine a lot, and I will tell you, I haven't looked it up to see  
[crosstalk 00:41:30]

Kristen:  
Hunky dory.

Marty:  
Hunky dory is fantastic. As far as racial language goes, there is a great- you can YouTube it wherever you go, but I think- I'll have to find it, but it's something around the word honky for a white person. Love it, have no- I think it's a fantastic- as a white man, I just want to say anyone can call me a honky, I think it's hilarious. But again, that's context and relationships, as all the things we were talking about. That was hunky dory, not honky dory, I know, but I had the honky.

Kristen:

[crosstalk 00:41:56] recording out.

Marty:

No, I think this is how we talk. These are the kinds of conversations that we're having around the quote-unquote virtual water cooler that I want to bring out to the rest of the world to be a part of, and have people disagree and correct us. I would love someone to come and say, actually, jerk should be off, and here's why. Again, that's language, that's awareness, have a relationship with Article 19. Have a relationship with all of us and let us know if there's something that we missed, whether it's funny, or not, or serious, because there are other articles that I want to talk about in future episodes. Specifically, I want to get into some of the stuff that John McWaters[ph] brought into, because, as languages involving culture- and I think we're sort of an echo chamber of each other, I think we've agreed a lot, I want to get into the rage-inducing machine that is social media, and why shaming and silencing have become a norm whenever anyone makes a language misstep. I want to get into that next time we talk.

Sydney:

Or a misstep in general. Cancel culture is alive and well in social media.

Marty:

Yeah, we should talk about the rage machine there, and how we bring- maybe some real- I mean, I think people can recognize, just like this article did, how can we bring some new ways of thinking and doing to social media in more meaningful ways, so that folks can realize that this is about love and empathy, and let's take that approach. Miss Liza, I appreciate you. Thank you for being a part, and thank you for sharing this article, and helping to shape our conversation today. Miss Sydney, I think you are fantastic, and wonderful, I appreciate working with you. And Miss Kristen, you are a delight, and a joy, and all of the content that you're producing is making a huge difference for Tamman and those that read our thought leadership, so I just very much appreciate the three of you. Thank you so much for doing this with us, and being on Article 19, and we will do this again, let's do it again, let's keep doing it.

Kristen:

Thanks for being a catalyst for change.

Marty:

I hope you enjoyed this water cooler episode. Hopefully, we'll do more in the future. For now, though, we're hard at work planning and recording season two of Article 19 where we'll be taking a deep dive into the Americans with disabilities act, how we got to where we are now, and where we might be headed. In the meantime, we have a few more bonus episodes that will be coming out, so keep checking the podcast feed. If you liked what you heard today, and you want to explore more about digital accessibility, inclusivity, or to schedule a time to talk with us, you can find the whole Tamman team at tammaninc.com. That's T-A-M-M-A-N-I-N-C-.com, or follow us on social media. @Tammaninc on LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, or Facebook. We'll talk to you again next time.