

Introduction

00:00:05,198 --> 00:00:24,918

Tony Hernandez Pumarejo. Writer and author. Professional and motivational speaker. television presenter, life coach and international ambassador for autism and

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00:00:24,918 --> 00:00:33,078

Mental health. He is proud to invite you to his podcast My Time with Tony Hernández Pumarejo.

Interview

Tony Hernandez Pumarejo

3

00:00:39,246 --> 00:00:46,126

Hello, welcome to a new episode of My Time with Tony Hernández Pumarejo and this is host Toni Hernández Pumarejo.

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00:00:46,326 --> 00:00:57,206

Welcome to the bilingual podcast with purpose in this world and without the show, I invite you to subscribe to my podcast through all platforms,

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00:00:57,406 --> 00:01:07,326

by subscribing to my YouTube channel under Tony Hernández Pumarejo and subscribing to my podcast through all audio platforms

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00:01:09,038 --> 00:01:20,158

Tony Hernandez Pumarejo, Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Amazon, all

platforms. Your support is crucial, it is important for me to be able to not only

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00:01:20,158 --> 00:01:31,718

take and make this podcast, but to be able to expand. We talk about different topics of motivation, community, obviously autism, mental health and

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00:01:31,718 --> 00:01:43,462

among others. And we talk about interesting stories of human beings through from everyone who has a story. all interesting and that could help other people.

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00:01:43,822 --> 00:01:53,942

And today I have the honor of having this person who is a person who has a unique story, a story of perseverance, a story of struggle through different

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00:01:53,942 --> 00:02:05,502

phases of his life. She is an important member, especially in our Autism Community in

Puerto Rico. And I have the honor of being interviewing María del Rocio Arroyo today.

eleven

00:02:05,702 --> 00:02:24,694

María was Miss Puerto Rico. In 1996, she is a writer and author of the book *Traveling on the Autism Train*.

And her connection to autism is that she is the mother of her son who has the condition of autism,

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00:02:24,894 --> 00:02:35,094

who today is developing as a young adult.

And I've seen it on social media, so I'm very proud of him.

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00:02:35,342 --> 00:02:42,022

of you, María, of the parrots that he has had and of the fight that you have done for your son. And we're going to talk about your story on Brazil Day.

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00:02:42,022 --> 00:02:48,102

So, Maria, thank you for accepting my invitation today. This is my podcast, *My Time*, with Toni Hernández Pumarejo.

Maria del Rocio Arroyo

fifteen

00:02:48,102 --> 00:03:03,142

Very honored. Very honest. I also appreciate that you invited me to your podcast and I also invite everyone that they subscribe to your podcast because it is important to hear all these stories.

16

00:03:03,310 --> 00:03:14,710

of different issues that are affecting us in our families directly. In other words, people think that autism is something that, as before,

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00:03:14,710 --> 00:03:23,310

that only hit one in the neighborhood or one in the entire city. No, gentlemen, today we have regarding autism,

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00:03:23,310 --> 00:03:37,366

at least in each family, one member with autism.

And according to CDC statistics, right now it is one in every 36 children who are diagnosed with autism in the United States.

Tony Hernandez Pumarejo

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00:03:37,366 --> 00:03:48,806

The rate increased. That's why education is important.

It is the first step. Autism not only, now, based on the work that I do,

twenty

00:03:48,806 --> 00:04:00,126

We must see not only autism, but with the people diagnosed, but also with the family as well. Autism impacts mothers and fathers in terms of quality of life.

twenty-one

00:04:00,126 --> 00:04:07,838

So... education is important and we are going to be talking about that today, Maria, in our interview. But before getting into what autism is,

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00:04:07,838 --> 00:04:13,718

Let's talk a little more about your beginning, your story. And the first question I'm going to ask you,

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00:04:13,718 --> 00:04:25,638

I do it to all my guests.

I ask you, how would you define your life, the life of María del Rocio Arroyo, in a few words?

Maria del Rocio Arroyo

24

00:04:28,334 --> 00:04:41,934 Definitely, intense and love. Intense and love.

Tony Hernandez Pumarejo

Excellent. And I think they sum it up very well with those two words,

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00:04:42,014 --> 00:04:51,094

because it has been your story. Telling us a little about your roots. Obviously, you know? Puerto Rican, born, raised on the island.

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00:04:51,174 --> 00:04:56,174 Talking a little about yourself, about your beginnings. If you can share a little bit of that, please.

Maria Rocio del Arroyo

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00:04:56,718 --> 00:05:14,118

Of course. Well, I was born on September 9, 75, I am 48 years old, I was born and raised in Puerto Rico, Puerto Rican parents, middle class, where my parents did

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00:05:14,118 --> 00:05:24,358

every effort possible so that my sister and I could have everything we could want and need to study and develop.

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00:05:24,974 --> 00:05:45,974

Always with one goal that my dad said was, study, you are women, you need to study and prepare so that you do not depend on anyone in life. That is, you can have your own partner, right, and everyone can live their life together, but not depend on the system or anyone.

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00:05:45,974 --> 00:05:59,310

So we continued like this, my brother and I studied, I studied communications at the UPI, at Enrio Piedra.

And then I started my first opinions on modeling at 16 years old.

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00:05:59,310 --> 00:06:09,470

because I was very shy, Toni. I didn't speak anything. I was introverted. Me, then my mom was worried because she was getting close to going to school.

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00:06:09,470 --> 00:06:22,030

University. They give me modeling classes at the Rose Pérez Academy, here in Santurce. And modeling brought out everything I had inside of me as an extrovert.

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00:06:22,542 --> 00:06:38,782

And he taught me a lot.

Tony Hernandez Pumarejo

Yes, you were able to go beyond shyness, beyond being shy, that is, in English, with other people. And you mentioned how you got started in terms of modeling,

3. 4

00:06:38,782 --> 00:06:45,542

what led you to the beauty setamens.

What motivated you, inspired you to enter this field?

Maria del Rocio Arroyo

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00:06:45,542 --> 00:06:55,262

Well look, first of all in modeling, it was definitely.

By my way of being. My mom wanted me to have better self-confidence.

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00:06:55,262 --> 00:07:07,982

And one day, a former Miss Puerto Rico who worked with me in a store, we both worked together, invited me to enter the pageant of my Puerto Ricos.

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00:07:07,982 --> 00:07:17,462

because I was looking for a beauty pageant to expose my face and my figure because my intention was to be in modeling.

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00:07:17,550 --> 00:07:30,750

all the time and not be queen. I didn't want to win. I came in looking for an exhibition. And she tells me, enter my Puerto Rico of Ana Santisteban, may she rest in peace,

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00:07:30,750 --> 00:07:43,470

when Ana had it, and I assure you that you are going to win, because it smells to me,

You have everything to your advantage. Well, I went in and I said, well, at least go as far as possible.

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00:07:43,470 --> 00:07:54,038

possible so that my parents who... tried so hard for me to be here, financially, etc.

See that I have done something, at least they reached the semi-finalist.

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00:07:54,758 --> 00:08:06,398

When I became a semi-finalist, I said, I already won, I don't need anything else. When I entered the finalists, I said, sir, thank you, but it's ok, I already won, it's okay.

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00:08:06,718 --> 00:08:14,758

When I got the last one, that's when the nerves kicked in and I said, there's no way this is really going to be for me.

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00:08:15,502 --> 00:08:23,782

And when I won, well my life changed in a second. One second. It changes your life when the entertainer says

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00:08:23,942 --> 00:08:36,822

and the queen is and says your name, your life changes.

I imagine what that moment was like. I mean, how did you feel when they announced

Four. Five

00:08:37,422 --> 00:08:49,774

that you became Miss Puerto Rico. What was that emotion like?

That was like... It was like a... It was like I was, I had fallen like Alice in Wonderland, Alice

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00:08:49,774 --> 00:09:00,974

in Wonderland, like that through a hole and fell to another level, to another place.

So I felt like I was in a bubble. Then, all the press on top of me, taking photos, photos, photos, photos.

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00:09:01,334 --> 00:09:08,334

And I had to smile, but I couldn't at the same time.

I saw my family running away because they get rid of family members quickly.

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00:09:08,782 --> 00:09:22,502

from the theater to avoid any confrontation with other family members who were upset.

For me it was a very complicated moment and they took me by the hand and took me through

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00:09:22,502 --> 00:09:36,822

behind, backstage at the Bellas Artes to handle myself so that they wouldn't see me, in which

everyone put themselves in order. But it's like a run and run, Toni. It's one thing...

fifty

00:09:37,742 --> 00:09:48,142

And the only thing I thought was, I won. I didn't believe it.

I mean, like I told you, I felt like Alice in a different country,

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00:09:48,222 --> 00:10:02,822

looking at everyone. And I believe that it was not until half a year later that I came to channel

which had been in my Puerto Rico. And less to process, wow, that I am in my Puerto Rico

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00:10:02,902 --> 00:10:16,206

representing my island. And that was... It's just a... What happens is that people have to see

that beauty states bring out people who are ambassadors

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00:10:16,286 --> 00:10:26,806

of that country. I saw it like this, I was the ambassador of my island,

wherever I went. And I had to speak correctly about my island and defend it.

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00:10:26,886 --> 00:10:35,686

And you know, I saw him as a political guy, a politician. You know, and it has to be that way, it should be that way.

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00:10:36,110 --> 00:10:47,150

because they see you with the tape, because she is Puerto Rico.

The tape says Puerto Rico. So I always had that behavior in mind,

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00:10:47,230 --> 00:11:00,630

Not all queens do. Many queens take it as a springboard to become better in modeling.

or be on television, not me. I used it for service to others.

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00:11:00,710 --> 00:11:13,350

I mean, I have always loved serving, Toni, always. And that was my year, serving.

Tony Hernandez Pumarejo

Exercise is excellent and having that love for your homeland, for your island, for your country,

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00:11:13,870 --> 00:11:21,070

being able to make that difference as an ambassador and representing, putting the name of Puerto Rico at the top before the world.

Maria del Rocio Arroyo

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00:11:21,150 --> 00:11:33,190

Exactly. Exact. Imagine, I had to travel to Japan, it was my first trip, two weeks after winning,

and I said, my God, I was on the same plane with my Venezuela and my Argentina.

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00:11:34,030 --> 00:11:44,190

And then they saw me as Puerto Rico and I looked at them the same way. When we arrived in Japan, we were almost 200 women from different parts of the world,

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00:11:44,270 --> 00:11:56,110

different cultures. They talk about politics, of course they talk about politics, even if they say no.

If you go to Miss Ukraine, there is the war situation in Ukraine,

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00:11:56,390 --> 00:12:04,910

Well obviously they are going to talk to Miss Ukraine about that. It becomes something more definitively ambassadorial.

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00:12:05,110 --> 00:12:10,510

Don Pail.

Tony Hernandez Pumarejo

It is very interesting to mention politics,
that is, the political situations of different countries.

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00:12:10,710 --> 00:12:19,190

Also, recognizing the political situation of our country, of our island, that there are some realities, there are some challenges, there are some difficulties

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00:12:19,390 --> 00:12:27,030

that have had an impact, as you know.

And that is why an island as small as ours, but which has brought great

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00:12:27,230 --> 00:12:39,294

achievements throughout the world, that is. I mean, we can go on for hours, hours and hours talking about many leaders, many ambassadors who have named our island,

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00:12:39,494 --> 00:12:50,614

for Puerto Rico it is the highest. And that's what we need to continue to say look,

And I have always said it, that Puerto Rico has great potential.

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00:12:50,814 --> 00:12:59,950

Many times we can underestimate ourselves and reality. That is why now speaking on this topic of Puerto Rico,

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00:12:59,950 --> 00:13:14,230

Well, we have to focus on continuing to work to fulfill that potential.

Maria del Rocio Arroyo

There is a lot that can be done here. There is also a lot of will from the people to do it.

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00:13:14,670 --> 00:13:22,630

What we need is direction, we need resources, direction. And I understand that with those two things you can do wonders.

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00:13:22,630 --> 00:13:36,814

I mean, on the topic of autism, I won't even tell you. and in any health issue, whatever, tourism.

In other words, it is always the will and having the resources to do it.

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00:13:36,894 --> 00:13:49,614

And that's it. But they think long and hard before doing so. And when they think about it a lot, it doesn't happen.

And he becomes very analytical thinking and thinking,

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00:13:49,694 --> 00:14:00,454

and it has also impressed me by thinking about different options and getting stuck.

Tony Hernandez Pumarejo

Exact. Yes. No, and you say it perfectly.

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00:14:00,534 --> 00:14:11,454

And speaking of a specific topic that unites us,

That is, about the issue of autism, that is, you talk about being an ambassador for the island.

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00:14:11,534 --> 00:14:24,534

Your life evolved and you became an ambassador and fighter for your son.

From your son Dani. Danny. And as I ask how this...

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00:14:24,782 --> 00:14:36,782

This thing called autism came into your lives. What was that process like?

Maria del Rocio Arroyo

Incredible. Obviously we know that each family has a process

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00:14:36,862 --> 00:14:44,622

how autism entered your house, right?

Because I say that autism enters people's homes.

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00:14:44,702 --> 00:14:52,782 We don't open the door for him, he comes in.

And in my house, I always, Tony, when it was in Puerto Rico...

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00:14:52,974 --> 00:15:00,894

I focused on children with disabilities, on helping a lot that year. And I didn't know why it gave me that feeling.

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00:15:00,894 --> 00:15:11,934

When I had my son and when Dani fell into autism, and that was one day, I can tell you,

Of course, it was a Saturday, around noon, I had Dani watching television,

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00:15:11,934 --> 00:15:19,534

his favorite dolls, sitting on the floor.

He's talking to me, because he's been saying the same few words for two and a half years.

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00:15:20,398 --> 00:15:33,478

And he told me, mom, and some words. And I tell him, Dani, I'm coming now, I'm going to the terrace of the house

to look for something and return. When Toni returned, autism had taken my son away.

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00:15:34,318 --> 00:15:46,158

at that moment. I mean, Dani was staring at the television,

He didn't listen to me when I called him. Her gaze was completely fixed, she did not blink.

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00:15:47,958 --> 00:15:59,942

He didn't say any words. It was something like telling you a doll sitting there.

I... My whole side went up and down.

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00:16:00,382 --> 00:16:10,982

I say the things that one thinks, because I have been very aware of children's disabilities,

Down syndrome, etc., but when I saw that in my Dani,

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00:16:11,462 --> 00:16:22,318

He told me something, and I think it's God, he told me, take him on your shoulder and I'll run to him,

to such a place... because it needs, that is, I told myself, you have to move forward.

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00:16:22,398 --> 00:16:30,598

That voice told me, you have to move forward with him, you have to move forward, because you're going to lose it. And I told that to my mother, that she was the only one who believed me,

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00:16:30,678 --> 00:16:36,718

because other people told me, but you're crazy, What are you going to tell yourself that? And I, I don't know, but there is someone who is telling me

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00:16:36,798 --> 00:16:48,118

that I have to move forward and I am going to move forward. In other words, I don't care who I have to carry in the middle, But I save my son. I mean, I can't let Dani, who was supposedly born well...

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00:16:49,070 --> 00:17:00,910

It was fine throughout the process and for now, poof! a severe regression. Severe. I mean... That night, I remember that it was Saturday,

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00:17:00,910 --> 00:17:06,870

Well, I had to wait until Monday to go to the doctor with him. I woke up on the laptop looking for information.

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00:17:07,350 --> 00:17:15,430

And quickly, quickly the word autism came to mind. And I said, OK, he's autistic. I already knew it.

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00:17:16,230 --> 00:17:27,982

So, what I needed was... the help of the doctors to evaluate him and tell me the diagnosis in writing, so I can find more help for him. Because if you don't have a written diagnosis, which is what my book says,

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00:17:28,862 --> 00:17:47,382

If you do not accept your child's diagnosis and wait for help to come to your home, it will never happen. You have to accept that denial process. You have to accept that you have autism.

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00:17:48,014 --> 00:17:58,014

and that you are going to get it out as much as you can. Because it doesn't heal, but we can recover it.

I got Dami back. I got it back, but it was...

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00:17:59,054 --> 00:18:05,174

I'm going to tell you right now, but I mean, it's difficult. And that moment when I remember that I lost him,

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00:18:06,094 --> 00:18:14,894

I put it in the book, because it is a moment where many parents talk about that same thing,

from the moment where they know that autism entered.

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00:18:15,694 --> 00:18:28,590 It's

something incredible.

Tony Hernandez Pumarejo

And at what age? Formally, Dani was diagnosed. At what age?

Maria del Rocio Arroyo

He was diagnosed at. Five years.

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00:18:28,790 --> 00:18:40,670

As general autism, imagine, and the six with Asperger syndrome.

Tony Hernandez Pumarejo

Just like me, because I was diagnosed at.

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00:18:40,870 --> 00:18:53,318

Three years old autism, being non-verbal, all four.

So, for years, four years, and at seven or eight years old I was evaluated for Asperger's syndrome.

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00:18:53,518 --> 00:19:06,038

for people who are tuned in, who may not be informed.

Asperger syndrome is what level 1 autism is today, which is high-functioning autism.

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00:19:06,238 --> 00:19:13,318

But in your case, you mentioned points, different important points regarding this situation that you were facing with your son.

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00:19:13,518 --> 00:19:29,846

In other words, you... went through different processes, because you were very proactive in being able to look for the answers.
or solutions to help your child in this difficult situation. It is a very important thing

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00:19:29,846 --> 00:19:43,606

that many times many parents do not reason this process or are in denial or because of the stereotypes and stigmas that unfortunately continue today about autism in our community

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00:19:43,606 --> 00:19:56,102

Hispanic especially. Well, they don't take action and that has its consequences, unfortunately.

Maria del Rocio Arroyo

That's right. If you, as a dad, do not accept it and move forward, that is, you have to be

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00:19:56,302 --> 00:20:08,622

proactive, you said the perfect word. If you are not proactive, it will take you longer to recover it.

Tony Hernandez Pumarejo

Exact. And going through this process, let's go a little further in this process, María.

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00:20:08,822 --> 00:20:18,502

Your son was already diagnosed when he was about 5 years old.

Speaking with strong processes, the gestures that he had or that he has to this day,

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00:20:18,502 --> 00:20:27,142

but also tell us about things or if we had any specific hobbies or things that he liked to do.

If not, can you go into more detail please.

Maria del Rocio Arroyo

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00:20:27,142 --> 00:20:42,022

Well look, interesting is that it is true, at two and a half years old when he is diagnosed,

I say, when he leaves, when we already manage to recover little by little,

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00:20:42,542 --> 00:20:51,582

He would go to his room and put all his shoes in a line like a train. And you know that children with autism love trains.

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00:20:52,302 --> 00:21:02,222

For many reasons, but specifically because the train has a fixed schedule and my son loves the schedules as they should be.

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00:21:02,542 --> 00:21:10,102

He would make that steak and I would say, oh, what an organized child I have!

It's great that you pick up his shoes and put them in a row!

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00:21:10,382 --> 00:21:22,166

Because my other son didn't do it. Another thing was the sensory part was very strong. When I washed his hair, he literally felt like knives were falling on his head.

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00:21:22,246 --> 00:21:31,286

And he screamed, screamed, screamed very loudly. And I suffered it with him, because I knew that he was suffering it.

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00:21:31,366 --> 00:21:38,446

I had already oriented myself on the sensory process.

Another thing is that one day, Tony, at four years old,

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00:21:38,526 --> 00:21:50,750

He was in a little school. He's not diagnosed yet, but hey, here we go.

And he used one of the pencils they used to learn to write, fat,

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00:21:51,470 --> 00:21:57,870

and without him realizing it, how he did not feel in a part of his body, as happens to many children with autism, people,

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00:21:58,150 --> 00:22:12,150

They hit each other and don't realize they have them, be careful.

He buried it in his cheek. He didn't feel it, the blood coming down, the teacher went crazy screaming

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00:22:12,510 --> 00:22:20,750

and he didn't cry. And they called me, I took him to the emergency room and he was calm, looking at me and smiling.

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00:22:21,030 --> 00:22:26,150

And I told the doctor, doctor, what a child, how braver I have, and he said no.

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00:22:26,870 --> 00:22:37,390

You don't have a brave son. You have a son with a complicated situation because he does not feel. all over that side of his body.

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00:22:37,470 --> 00:22:48,750

Nothing. In other words, either this is neurological, or this has to do with conditions like autism,

and that was where I ended up opening my eyes, but like that.

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00:22:48,830 --> 00:23:01,750

I said, no, I definitely had a hole there and he wasn't feeling it.

That is, and they sutured him without anesthesia. So Dani had many very interesting things.

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00:23:01,830 --> 00:23:13,566

Another thing was that... He only liked a particular type of clothing, you know, depending on the factory or the type of cloth clothing,

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00:23:14,046 --> 00:23:20,846

It had to be soft, without any type of anything, that is, nothing that was going to harm your skin.

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00:23:21,726 --> 00:23:31,566

And a skin completely as if it were made of rubber, like dolphins, a strange skin. And then, I go to the doctor, the pediatrician,

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00:23:31,646 --> 00:23:42,518

for the first time, like every mother. with all this list of things that are happening. And the doctor is not ready for this. I'm not saying it's all doctors,

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00:23:42,518 --> 00:23:52,958

But in my time and in my case, the children's pediatrician, who was excellent, told me, something bad is happening, but I don't know what it is.

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00:23:52,958 --> 00:24:02,158

And I said, where is the continuing education of all these people? Because something is happening here.

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00:24:02,158 --> 00:24:11,270

And he doesn't know what it is. He doesn't know what my son has or where I'm going. Because autism took him a little back every day.

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00:24:11,390 --> 00:24:20,510

He was going to be hosky, something else, he was going to be broad, like his brother. Hypotonia, which is a type of loss of muscle tone,

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00:24:21,270 --> 00:24:33,710

He made him very skinny, very skinny, that is, and he became as if he were a skeleton.

He only ate three things, which is another typical thing for children with autism.

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00:24:34,190 --> 00:24:43,910

Nuggets, they love it. White rice, they love it.

I mean, I was very specific with the meals and if it wasn't that,

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00:24:45,030 --> 00:24:57,790

mouth. He couldn't bear to drink the bottle. He had to be with a straw because he salivated everything, saliva was coming out of everything. And that is part of the sensory process.

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00:24:57,870 --> 00:25:06,054

Therapy is given. for the entire part of the mouth, so that, truth be told, she could feel it hurt, that they should brush her teeth, she screamed.

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00:25:06,554 --> 00:25:17,794

Well, we can be here, for what I think for years, talking about the symptoms.

Tony Hernandez Pumarejo

Yes, because autism is a long process and, that is,

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00:25:18,434 --> 00:25:25,274

There are more than 70 people in the smoke diagnosed with the condition according to United Nations data.

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00:25:25,334 --> 00:25:35,126

But there are three levels of autism for the public to understand. He is at level 1, high functioning autism, or what was previously Asperger's,

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00:25:35,326 --> 00:25:47,726

level 2, which is the moderate level, moderate autism, and level 3, classic autism, profound severe autism, which is classic autism, level 3.

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00:25:47,926 --> 00:25:56,306

But there are skills. Every person, autistic human being, person with autism, is different.

It has its characteristics, its processes, its abilities.

141

00:25:57,102 --> 00:26:05,382

And that's what I want people to learn about autism. Well, you know very well that many times there are

142

00:26:05,582 --> 00:26:15,918

misinformation and stereotypes that do not help our cause.

Maria del Rocío Arroyo

That's right. There are stereotypes in movies.

143

00:26:17,118 --> 00:26:31,878

And then, a lot happened to me with Daniel, who, like Daniel, looked normal, in quotes, right?

Because he, well, he wasn't severe, but he wasn't completely normal either.

144

00:26:31,958 --> 00:26:40,158

So, many people, including my relatives, told me, he has nothing. It is what has little shame.

145

00:26:40,238 --> 00:27:00,190

That you spoil him a lot. You overprotect him and you are making up in your head that your child has a lot of diseases.

So it was an evaluation of me. Unfair. One going through great pain and meeting people who didn't believe you.

146

00:27:00,990 --> 00:27:11,590

And then you said, where am I going to look?

Well, I said, I'm going to be my own team, Team Dani, even if we are two cats or two people.

147

00:27:11,950 --> 00:27:23,110

And that was my mom, my sister, my dad and me.

That's it. We were Team Dani. No one else from family or friends

148

00:27:23,910 --> 00:27:37,030

because they didn't understand what was happening. Nor did they live with me to see him in action.

Many times I had to record it to be able to teach health professionals

149

00:27:37,030 --> 00:27:47,006

When they were going to evaluate it, who carried out the ACIA.

Typical things for a child with autism. So, they were difficult years, until I was six years old.

150

00:27:48,446 --> 00:27:58,286

And you know that Dani's diagnosis came down and came firmly in the United States, in Tampa. I visited a neurologist there,

151

00:27:58,366 --> 00:28:07,390

because in Puerto Rico they didn't want to diagnose it for me. That is something that needs to be covered separately in another podcast.

152

00:28:07,750 --> 00:28:18,910

Because it happens? What happens on the island? They don't want to diagnose children who are functional from a very young age.

The smaller the better, because our brains are ready.

153

00:28:19,430 --> 00:28:28,590

to shape it with therapies and with help. So... That's what...

Tony Hernandez Pumarejo

Yes, I agree with you, autism in Puerto Rico,

154

00:28:28,670 --> 00:28:34,030

I think it is another episode that must be...

that has to be touched on because there is a lot that needs to be talked about there.

155

00:28:34,230 --> 00:28:44,270

That you have to talk a lot because it is very necessary, you need many things and much more as an adult, since honestly you know everything very well.

156

00:28:44,470 --> 00:28:54,870

It must be said for autistic adults, the well-known adults in Puerto Rico. The services are almost non-existent. I could say it doesn't exist, honestly.

157

00:28:55,070 --> 00:29:04,246

And that's why we're going to go a little further.

In other words, you faced different processes, different battles in seeking better support for Dani.

158

00:29:04,246 --> 00:29:17,446

But were there? You know? But you were able to fight and battle so that it could improve. You know? What were the key things that helped him develop?

159

00:29:17,446 --> 00:29:31,022

to be as independent as possible, functional as possible as an autistic person?

Maria del Rocío Arroyo

Well, look, in my case, in my case, Dani, at six, seven years old, I still didn't read or write.

160

00:29:31,902 --> 00:29:46,142

In Puerto Rico they didn't understand why, they didn't know how to teach him either and neither did I, really.

And I went to live in Tampa for a year. I have family there and I found out that they had good services.

161

00:29:46,422 --> 00:30:01,718

in a particular county for these types of children.

The typical level one child. And being there. was that we were able to give him the full evaluation,

162

00:30:01,958 --> 00:30:17,078

psychological of his IQ test, because in order to give him the diagnosis of level 1 or Asperger's

we needed a high IQ. That is, there are children who have lower IQs, others medium ones,

163

00:30:17,158 --> 00:30:26,398

and these children are usually bright children

regarding his intelligence. And that year Daniel received therapy.

164

00:30:26,830 --> 00:30:36,350

many in school and out of school.

I would pick him up from school and take him to a nearby children's hospital.

165

00:30:36,350 --> 00:30:47,590

where they gave him food and dysphagia therapy and this part of sensitivity in the mouth.

It was very intense because that was the most difficult part of it.

166

00:30:47,590 --> 00:30:57,782

And we gave him a lot of sensory occupational therapy, a lot of speech therapy. And they will say, but see, almost he... He didn't call you mom or at least she spoke something.

167

00:30:57,862 --> 00:31:07,422

Yes, but he spoke, but he did not understand and does not understand concepts of analytics or reading comprehension.

168

00:31:08,302 --> 00:31:20,022

That is, he can read something in Spanish or English, but you have to go explain the analysis of that writing,

169

00:31:20,102 --> 00:31:26,262

because he is not going to understand it or grasp it. So he was given a lot of emphasis on all of that.

170

00:31:26,582 --> 00:31:37,742

He made a change from heaven to earth, he learned to read and write. A teacher that today I adore because he told me, I'm going to teach him.

171

00:31:38,302 --> 00:31:51,342

And do you know how he taught it? He didn't put the letters together to read, like any child. What he did was he panned, let's do it like this, look, the book.

172

00:31:51,758 --> 00:32:03,118

He memorized that page in his mind. And then he would say it, he would recite it. When she got to page five. On page five there are two paragraphs,

173

00:32:03,198 --> 00:32:09,878

ta, ta, ta, that is, his mind was scheming all that, so, so, so, so, and so on because he read. Until today's sun.

174

00:32:10,838 --> 00:32:20,798

One thing you say, how is it possible? Well yes.

That year in Tampa, Daniel advanced and it was the year in which I almost recovered him.

175

00:32:21,774 --> 00:32:34,814

I mean, he was him again. He laughed. He was a boy who didn't laugh. He laughed. He had so many therapies that, as you say,

176

00:32:35,134 --> 00:32:44,774

In Puerto Rico many things are needed. And that's why I had to go there. Thank God for the support of my parents. Otherwise I wouldn't have been able to do it.

177

00:32:45,454 --> 00:32:50,574

Because many people say, of course, she has money, because she was Miss Puerto Rico, she is a millionaire, she left.

178

00:32:50,766 --> 00:33:01,846

No, I'm not a millionaire. She was working like anyone else, in fact, to be able to take him to therapy in Puerto Rico.

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00:33:01,846 --> 00:33:10,766

I took a sales position as a salesperson because it gave me the flexibility to come and go. And my day started at seven in the morning

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00:33:10,766 --> 00:33:20,286

and it ended at ten at night because I left at two in the afternoon to pick him up for therapy.

I waited for him, took him to my mother's and returned to the office to work.

181

00:33:20,654 --> 00:33:35,774

until ten at night and compensate. I mean, it was a very strong fight. But it was... I had a drive. Like that emotion of seeing him one day

182

00:33:36,094 --> 00:33:48,798

stop him in front of me and tell me, mommy, everything is okay.

And today that's what he does. He tells me everything is fine. I'm fine.

183

00:33:48,998 --> 00:34:01,478 And
it was worth it. It was worth it.

Tony Hernandez Pumarejo

Yes, and the results speak for themselves.

Nowadays your son Dani does different things, especially in the area of music.

184

00:34:01,678 --> 00:34:10,158

I've seen the different things he's done in music that are very impressive. I don't know if you can talk a little more about that, if possible, please.

Maria del Rocio Arroyo

185

00:34:10,358 --> 00:34:18,446

Yes. He one day, I didn't know that he liked art.

And I said, well, I don't know where Dani is going to go,

186

00:34:18,446 --> 00:34:31,326

but wherever it is, I'm going to support it. And then he tells me, one day watching the Wizard of Oz movie, the original version, the old one, and he tells me, I'm seeing that those actors,

187

00:34:31,966 --> 00:34:46,214

That is, they dance and act, but they do not sing. I mean, why can't they sing, act and dance?

He told me, put me in singing lessons. And I looked at him and I said, sir, if he didn't talk,

188

00:34:46,214 --> 00:34:53,014

How am I going to put it in singing classes?

How is this? I thought. And he told me, mommy, put me in singing lessons.

189

00:34:53,014 --> 00:35:01,054

And me, it's okay. Well, I said, well, at least some therapy. And she is going to help him in speaking even though she had the little things about her.

190

00:35:01,054 --> 00:35:19,142

And it started at 15 years old. And after a year of being in the classes, the teacher actually got involved

He taught him. writing everything on the living room glass so that he could pan it out, she could learn it.

191

00:35:20,222 --> 00:35:27,542

A year later, one day, he got into musical theater,
He wanted to get into musical theater and had to sing Les Misérables,

192

00:35:28,142 --> 00:35:34,982

the typical song from Les Miserables, the most famous.
And I was like, Oh my God, is he going to sing that? And I was sitting outside like this.

193

00:35:36,142 --> 00:35:47,510

Look, he made a loud voice. She has brought out a voice from inside here and I didn't know it existed.
When that child has done that, since he is so skinny,

194

00:35:48,430 --> 00:36:00,430

Well, Eileen tells him that she is from the academy where he was,
and Eileen comes out and says, who is that? And that Vetalí said, that is Daniel, her son.

195

00:36:00,910 --> 00:36:07,934

And me, is he my son? Yes, but I didn't know he sang like that.
Frank Sinatra type, Elvis Presley type, you already saw it,

196

00:36:08,014 --> 00:36:15,934

So you know it's a baritone voice. He continued four
years in singing classes, fixed, fixed, fixed,

197

00:36:16,694 --> 00:36:24,454

and the dance began. And she said, I want to dance now too.
And I said, oh my God, now what do we do with this boy at the dance?

198

00:36:24,654 --> 00:36:34,414

Because he has low muscle tone, he continues to have hypotonia, that never goes away. And I said, he's going to get hurt at some point, but I put it in.

199

00:36:35,214 --> 00:36:50,014

of the house, look, we return to the same thing, that because he is autistic,
It has the advantage that he learns all the parts of the dance exactly as the teacher
dances it,

200

00:36:50,014 --> 00:36:57,374

identical as if it were the master, a copy. And the
rest of the boys realized that,

201

00:36:57,374 --> 00:37:04,214

because he doesn't say that he is autistic like that when he arrives, that is,
They realized that there was something wrong here, you know.

202

00:37:04,654 --> 00:37:12,654

And today Dani is in a dance company here in Puerto Rico, they want
to take him to London next year.

203

00:37:13,774 --> 00:37:28,278

He's still singing, but he's getting a little more into dancing at the moment. And the
arts have been a great success, that is, whatever her children like, even if it is harsh.

204

00:37:28,918 --> 00:37:39,558

Because even the severe ones show you if they like to paint, if they like whatever. Take them
there. Because something is going to come out of there.

Tony Hernandez Pumarejo

205

00:37:41,582 --> 00:37:54,702

Exact. And you mentioned it perfectly and you mentioned how severe. That is, the
person who has autism
severe. Unfortunately, many people in this society think that people with

206

00:37:54,702 --> 00:38:09,502

severe autism are incapable of being able to achieve a better quality of life, they are
incapable
to do anything. And I have always said, yes, autism is not just the good doctor,

207

00:38:10,958 --> 00:38:19,758

Or other people they see in movies or including me too. You know, I'm just a story. There are some realities too, but not

208

00:38:19,958 --> 00:38:30,438

It means that if people with level 3 autism cannot achieve a better life, they can. I always say that every human being

209

00:38:30,638 --> 00:38:43,190

autistic, every autistic human being 1, 2 and 3, it doesn't matter, they can achieve a better every life.

Maybe. That level 3 person cannot do the same as a level 1 person, but it does not mean that one is better than the other.

210

00:38:43,190 --> 00:38:54,910

Is different. It is a process, but it is not impossible.

And the results, you know? How your son Dani has been able to develop, the results speak for themselves.

211

00:38:54,910 --> 00:39:03,870

I have seen your videos on social networks that you publish.

And he sings in a spectacular way. And he dances, uff. A spectacular thing.

212

00:39:03,870 --> 00:39:13,910

Your son has big goals, big...

talent, so it's very important. And and and going in that line of telling these stories,

213

00:39:13,990 --> 00:39:22,590

This one was, you know, because after a process you decided to write your own story, tell yourself and this story in a book.

214

00:39:22,790 --> 00:39:32,110

What inspired you to write, to tell your story in a book? Which if I'm not mistaken, is called traveling in T-Autism, you mentioned there

215

00:39:32,310 --> 00:39:44,702

about the Autism train.

Maria del Rocío Arroyo

Well, that year I was living in Tampa,
I saw many immigrant families who did not speak English

216

00:39:44,782 --> 00:39:53,062

and there were many books in English with autism in the United States,
but not in Spanish. In other words, I realized that I was also looking to nourish
myself.

217

00:39:53,142 --> 00:39:57,582

And I said, someday, if I'm going to write
something, I'm going to do it in Spanish, first of all,

218

00:39:57,662 --> 00:40:04,342

for those people in the United States or Latin America who
need to read in Spanish about autism.

219

00:40:05,358 --> 00:40:19,078

And number two, well it was... I kept a diary during those first 11 years that I was
working with Dani. We had about 10, 11 hard years with him.

220

00:40:19,158 --> 00:40:28,398

And then I kept a diary and that diary became the book. Of course,
I had to find an editor who was a friend of mine

221

00:40:28,478 --> 00:40:33,918

and he told me, don't worry, let's edit it,
but we have to... I told him, look, what I want is to do something educational.

222

00:40:34,798 --> 00:40:43,558

Yes, talk about the testimony of what we live,
because it was very strong, but I want to put it as if it were a movie type,

223

00:40:43,638 --> 00:40:53,638

that when people read the book they would get inside and
be inside that movie that I was already watching,

224

00:40:53,718 --> 00:41:01,078

and talk about all kinds of things within everything,
because it was going to be a small book so they could read it easier.

225

00:41:01,158 --> 00:41:09,654

The most important thing I put in that book was...
the treatment I gave to Daniel. And I put it with a caveat.

226

00:41:09,654 --> 00:41:17,094

Not all children will respond the same as Daniel,
as Daniel responded. But here is the list of things that I did to him

227

00:41:17,094 --> 00:41:26,014

of blood tests, list of natural supplements that I gave him, list of
medicines and chemicals that were given for X or Y reason.

228

00:41:26,014 --> 00:41:33,806

Here you have everything I did with it. For free, basically. For
free. You don't even have to talk to me.

229

00:41:33,806 --> 00:41:42,566

You see the book and look for that page and you go to search and
choose what you give to your child. I made a book so that,

230

00:41:42,966 --> 00:41:50,446

to help so many families, but so many, who are in
countries that are worse off than us.

231

00:41:51,926 --> 00:42:03,726

There was one mom in particular who was the first to buy the book. She wrote me
an email from Peru. She tells me, I live in a very remote place in Peru.

232

00:42:04,846 --> 00:42:13,086

I have two children with autism. I don't know what to do with them. There
are no doctors for them here. Nobody wants to serve them.

233

00:42:13,926 --> 00:42:24,686

But I have your book and I'm going to use a friend of mine who lives in Chicago, who comes to visit me to bring me part of everything that you say you bought for your son,

2.3.4

00:42:24,846 --> 00:42:34,382

I bought it for mine. And I told him, remember no, maybe it's not the same, you understand?

His autism, this one, is what Dani had.

235

00:42:34,862 --> 00:42:44,262

This one, but she told me, it doesn't matter, but it's something.

You have written something for us. I mean, and that book was a boom.

236

00:42:44,462 --> 00:42:50,342

And it still is. I mean, people from all over Latin America wrote to me, even England, Spain.

237

00:42:50,582 --> 00:42:59,702

This, wow. It was such a wonderful and beautiful thing. Eh, and then do the train metaphor.

238

00:43:00,686 --> 00:43:06,966

where I had to, then, at the same time, I wanted to help the parents make the decision

239

00:43:07,406 --> 00:43:15,206

to accept their children's diagnosis. So I told him in the book, I tell them, when you are ready, tell me and I will put you on my train.

240

00:43:16,166 --> 00:43:27,526

You're going to get car 2, maybe, but in that car 2 we're going to go to each station to help your son.

And maybe you'll be in car 1, which is the car that will go to the city of autism.

241

00:43:27,526 --> 00:43:44,838

I even mention a city of autism. I believe it and I make them believe it, where it is a gray, withered city, where there is no color.

and where are we going to save our children who are walking around without any kind of...

242

00:43:44,838 --> 00:43:52,838

I created a movie and that's what made everyone when they read it say,

243

00:43:57,166 --> 00:44:10,306

also many men who at that time the parents no no no no well the one here left when

He found out about autism so with that I tell you everything but many male parents wrote to me

244

00:44:10,306 --> 00:44:23,706

I got on the Rocio train, I'm already on it, what's next? I said, it couldn't be that

They really took it, that is, they understand the metaphor, look Rocio, I'm going to get on the train like a wagon.

245

00:44:26,830 --> 00:44:40,710

Like it was, you know, imaginary. And that has been, I understand that, well, the book has so many beautiful things,

but the most important thing has been that, giving them what I gave to Dani

246

00:44:40,790 --> 00:44:49,470

and give them the opportunity to get on the train. No, and you sum it up perfectly in the autism train,

247

00:44:49,550 --> 00:45:00,046

because it's a train, you know? It is a path, it is a long, difficult path, but not impossible.

Tony Hernandez Pumarejo

This is a process and you mention it perfectly.

248

00:45:00,246 --> 00:45:10,286

I know that I believe that the book has had a positive impact on our community. And it's very, you know that even I had in honor

249

00:45:10,486 --> 00:45:20,446

privilege of interviewing you on television to talk about your book.
And this is a very, very important fact to mention because

250

00:45:20,646 --> 00:45:31,182

Like people, the people who are tuning in know that I had a segment on television.

a few years ago. And then, you were the first interview I did on television,

251

00:45:31,182 --> 00:45:40,822

the first person I interviewed on television,
to talk about your book. I ask you, because we made all the introductions,

252

00:45:40,822 --> 00:45:47,342

I introduced myself, I am autistic, I also write a book
about autism from my life, from my perspective,

253

00:45:47,342 --> 00:45:56,838

from my experience as an autistic human being. As...? I mean, I wanted to ask you. When I
interviewed you, what was that process like for you?

254

00:45:56,838 --> 00:46:04,198

How did you feel doing this interview? If you
can't count.

Maria del Rocio Arroyo Well

look, it was an interview.

255

00:46:07,318 --> 00:46:14,638

I felt so proud because it was like Daniel was interviewing
me. I saw you as my son.

256

00:46:14,638 --> 00:46:27,086 So, it was like

Daniel was there,
asking me all those questions. all those unknowns, all those fears, through
questions.

257

00:46:27,086 --> 00:46:39,646

And then that day for me was an April, we return to another crash, another crash again. I said, Toni is a boy the way he has developed,

258

00:46:39,646 --> 00:46:48,406

so brutal, I mean, he is a brilliant boy, he is intelligent, he knows what he wants, he agrees with the cause and going with it.

259

00:46:48,406 --> 00:46:58,502

So I was like, wow. Maybe my son will do something like that too. Then you gave me hope too, because even at that time,

260

00:46:58,502 --> 00:47:07,702

Dani was in his third year of high school. So I didn't know what was going to happen next. I knew she was already into it, but oh well.

261

00:47:07,702 --> 00:47:16,222

So that day for me was beautiful, it was very good. I say that God put him to guide me on the path.

262

00:47:16,222 --> 00:47:27,086

We got on the train that day, Toni. Yes you and me.

You don't mention it perfectly. I also had the pleasure of meeting you and learning more about your story as well.

Tony Hernandez Pumarejo

263

00:47:27,286 --> 00:47:38,446

It was a very important step. Talk because the knowledge talking about autism on television,

which unfortunately does not give us many minutes of autism on television.

264

00:47:38,646 --> 00:47:46,926

But to have that opportunity to tell about this cause on television, which not only impacts a small community,

265

00:47:50,222 --> 00:47:56,222

millions of human beings diagnosed with the condition. And we are not only talking about 70 million people,

266

00:47:56,222 --> 00:48:07,822

If not we are talking about the 70 million people, their families, their parents, their siblings, also their caregivers, their teachers.

267

00:48:08,142 --> 00:48:22,134

It is a community, it is a world. And it is very important for people to know about autism. Very important. And going into those battles, Maria,

268

00:48:22,334 --> 00:48:34,854

You've talked about the battle you faced in autism, fighting for your son. But the battles did not end there for both you and your son.

269

00:48:35,054 --> 00:48:42,454

I know I understand that later, in recent years, Well, you have faced different battles in terms of illness.

270

00:48:42,654 --> 00:48:52,214

I know and remember that your son faced a process of illness and now you are also facing a process.

271

00:48:52,774 --> 00:49:04,454

Is it possible to give us this... explain to us and tell us a little more about these battles that you have had?

so that then our audience is listening to us

272

00:49:04,534 --> 00:49:18,470 can I

know more about this story?

Maria del Rocío Arroyo

Likewise, they are battles, they are battles that come and that can last a long time. and leave as they can stay a while longer.

273

00:49:18,470 --> 00:49:31,030

In Dani's case, we had to resort to taking him to Boston Children Hospital. And this is something very important for parents with autism of children with level 3.

274

00:49:31,030 --> 00:49:44,550

It happens a lot and Harvard is already clear about it in a study it was doing at that time, it already finished it,
than children who are level 3 more functional

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00:49:44,910 --> 00:49:52,590

He suffers a lot from gastritis and gastrointestinal problems.
So, Dani had vomited a lot since he was little,

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00:49:52,910 --> 00:50:05,630

a lot of diarrhea, a lot of constipations, I had a lot of candida fungus in that intestine.
In fact, in my book is what is given to help that.

277

00:50:06,790 --> 00:50:17,918

And what happened? Did you have a gastroenterologist here in Puerto Rico?
And after 10 years caring for him. because Dani had an emergency.

278

00:50:18,318 --> 00:50:31,238

Although you will believe that autism is only neurological
and that it only causes convulsions, no. Dani's autism attacked his gut
severely.

279

00:50:31,878 --> 00:50:42,278

There was an excitement at four years old where the small intestine entered the large
intestine.

There was a tourniquet, it was formed like a tourniquet or a little bow like that.

280

00:50:43,118 --> 00:50:54,798

And if I didn't let go, my son would die within an hour I had to let go.
So I didn't know what was happening.

281

00:50:54,878 --> 00:51:03,638

I mean, we come back, I was in the same mess of autism. And after
that they managed to save him, because yes, they managed, right?

282

00:51:03,958 --> 00:51:12,078

But my son exceeded so that people know what the rapid symptoms are. If your
child vomits a green or purple color.

283

00:51:12,910 --> 00:51:18,790

So. There is something very wrong, it is being poisoned. You have to run to the emergency room.

284

00:51:18,790 --> 00:51:25,190

OKAY? And ask for a quick CT scan. That's the key, what the gastroenterologist told me.

285

00:51:25,190 --> 00:51:34,030

A CT. After 10 years, and he continues to treat him for ulcers, They bullied the school and every time they bullied the school,

286

00:51:34,030 --> 00:51:45,542

because he ended up with his stomach destroyed, with ulcers that bled. that we could be talking for many years about bulgidism and autism in another podcast,

287

00:51:48,182 --> 00:51:57,222

Well, the doctor told me, I can't do anything else for him.

In Puerto Rico there is nothing more for Dani. And I told him, but my son is not going to experience the pain.

288

00:51:57,222 --> 00:52:01,702

My son experienced abdominal pain all the time. Dani couldn't even go to school.

289

00:52:02,862 --> 00:52:12,318

And then that's where he says, well look, you can go to Boston or California. They take care of where the best people who work with children with autism are.

290

00:52:13,038 --> 00:52:22,918

And in Boston there is a doctor, Dr. Timothy View, who is definitely an expert on children with autism, even if they don't speak.

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00:52:23,598 --> 00:52:30,718

Be careful, parents, if you have gastrointestinal problems,

At Boston Children's Hospital there is that doctor, that gastro.

292

00:52:31,398 --> 00:52:44,830

We went there, he met Dani, he put him in the operating room to check him out. with a surgeon, just in case. And thank God he found everything okay.

293

00:52:45,390 --> 00:52:55,590

It was a miracle that I found everything okay because everything I sent from Dani was all blood, all bleeding, all inflamed. It was a disaster.

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00:52:56,270 --> 00:53:05,830

And he told me, look, when you have a lot of constipation, the large intestine lengthens too much, it's the only thing you have.

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00:53:06,446 --> 00:53:17,886

But your son is stable right now. The only thing is that I have to give him a pill to calm his stomach, the stomach nerves were unactive, as if they had ADD.

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00:53:19,046 --> 00:53:28,686

And that was what was causing Dani's problems, the abdominal pain. Then he told me, let's give him some medicine to lower that

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00:53:29,126 --> 00:53:39,374

that movement of the nerves and the pain will go away. And now, indeed, Toni. He started taking the medication and the problem went away.

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00:53:39,574 --> 00:53:53,134

Dani is healthy today. Thanks to that medicine he does have to take it, but he is dancing, he is singing, He is making his life. No, it was a process.

299

00:53:53,334 --> 00:54:05,814

That was a process, don't believe it. We've been to Boston like five times now, but well, apart from everything, That was one of our big battles. with his health, part of everything I told you he had.

300

00:54:05,814 --> 00:54:14,214

In other words, people think that because it works there is nothing to it. No. It can have many health things too.

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00:54:14,814 --> 00:54:22,774

Ok, so let's be empathetic with these families. You don't know what is happening in that house, even if you see the child

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00:54:22,774 --> 00:54:30,734

like nothing is happening, you don't know.
So let's be empathetic. And today I don't know if it is.

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00:54:31,598 --> 00:54:38,478

Well, I know that is true. So much stress.
Because you know what they say that parents of children with autism

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00:54:38,718 --> 00:54:48,958

They go through the stress of soldiers who come from war.
The same type of stress. And autoimmune conditions develop,

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00:54:49,158 --> 00:55:00,978

like lupus, like cancer, like different conditions, because the body is tired of so much stress
and acts and reflects that way. Well...

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00:55:01,614 --> 00:55:15,094

On December 8, 2023 I was diagnosed with thyroid cancer.
For me it was a surprise. Because I have always been healthy, in quotes,

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00:55:15,334 --> 00:55:21,654

and behind the boys, obviously, my children. But that day was like a bucket of cold water,

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00:55:21,654 --> 00:55:35,918

because I said, cancer. Then there was a person who told me, and that's something that people...

Now here's me... taking on this new job of talking about thyroid cancer, Tony,

309

00:55:35,918 --> 00:55:41,878

because people think that that is the good cancer.

That's what they call him. Oh, guys, if you were saved, you got the good cancer!

310

00:55:43,198 --> 00:55:52,198

Which cancer is good, Tony? None. I think none. So I said, really. Ah, well ok.

311

00:55:52,198 --> 00:56:08,102

When I had surgery, on February 14 of this year, they put me in the room.

because they had to remove the thyroid. all. I had tumors, I had nine tumors throughout my thyroid. And I said, well, but

312

00:56:08,102 --> 00:56:23,182

This is the good cancer. When they opened, they found out that I have two types of cancer,

no one. And one simpler than the other, the other is more aggressive. And what do I have to take, well

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00:56:23,182 --> 00:56:31,614

obviously some treatments that they will tell me, I have an appointment in the next few weeks. I'm going through that battle now with cancer.

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00:56:31,694 --> 00:56:43,534

I'm learning about it. Yes, I had heard about cancer, obviously.

But that thing about thyroid cancer is... You have to educate too much, people don't understand.

Tony Hernandez Pumarejo

315

00:56:44,054 --> 00:56:51,814

People don't understand and go through a lot. Yeah.

Me, that cancer is good, cancer is cancer.

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00:56:51,894 --> 00:57:04,534

No cancer is good. And cancer is unfortunately taking lives...

of many, thousands and thousands of people a year and that continues to increase every year.

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00:57:04,734 --> 00:57:17,294

The type of cancer does not matter. And it is terrible in Puerto Rico. Not to mention. The hundred numbers of cancer cases and how

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00:57:17,494 --> 00:57:28,750

destroyed lives and taken lives and destroyed families.

It is something that cannot be judged. It is something that is a battle and is difficult.

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00:57:28,750 --> 00:57:39,110

I know that you have been and are in this battle right now.

I ask you if you can share with us how your son has dealt with this battle that you

320

00:57:39,110 --> 00:57:54,230

you are facing.

Maria del Rocío Arroyo

Look, I asked myself the same question when I was diagnosed and I talked about it with my children. And I spoke it well, calmly, I looked for an ideal moment.

321

00:57:54,990 --> 00:58:00,470

But I said, not Diego, the big one, since he doesn't have autism, he expresses his feelings to me very quickly.

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00:58:01,430 --> 00:58:09,190

But Dani doesn't express her feelings, she doesn't know how to get them out. He has them stored here as part of his autism.

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00:58:09,830 --> 00:58:19,230

And I said, how do I deal with it? Dani, do you want to go to a psychologist? He told me, no, I continue dancing because he goes to dance every day.

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00:58:19,750 --> 00:58:27,702

And they are also putting together a piece. to take it to New York, so it's pretty busy.

So he focused. I saw that she focused on that,

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00:58:27,702 --> 00:58:39,262

but he didn't ask me anything about cancer. And one day I came here and I felt very bad. I couldn't walk from my front door to my bed.

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00:58:39,262 --> 00:58:51,062

And he was the only one here. And I weigh, obviously.

He is thin. And he said, Dani, help me. He came quickly, he grabbed me and he has great strength.

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00:58:51,214 --> 00:58:58,734

in the trunk of his body, thanks to the dance,

He helped him with cipotonia, he grabbed me and took me straight to bed,

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00:58:58,734 --> 00:59:07,854

He put me in bed and I told him... And he says to me, mommy, what's wrong with you? And I took advantage of that, I told him, well, as part of the fact that I don't have a thyroid,

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00:59:07,854 --> 00:59:14,334

What my body gets used to, right? Well, this happens to me.

And he says to me, can I tell you something?

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00:59:14,334 --> 00:59:23,982

And I said, glory to God, the time will come when he is going to speak. And he told me, I feel sad. I feel strange.

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00:59:25,022 --> 00:59:38,702

I don't know what is going to happen, but I have faith, I use the word faith and I was shocked. I have faith that you will come out on the other side.

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00:59:39,702 --> 00:59:46,022

That was the phrase he used, like the kids.

You know, like the boys. I have faith that you will come out on the other side.

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00:59:46,502 --> 00:59:55,902

And I said, I'll stay like this. And I was like...

I said, Lord, thank you because that has been the greatest blessing that you have given me in this process.

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00:59:56,382 --> 01:00:07,582

That my son, who can't express his feelings normally, opened up and told me that.

Faith and the other side. That's the only thing I remember.

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01:00:09,462 --> 01:00:17,542

And apart from that, since they see me a lot..

How it is focused and with everything well squared, because I am good at planning.

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01:00:17,782 --> 01:00:23,646

I plan all my trips and everything for the... because

I am being treated at the Moffitt Center,

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01:00:23,646 --> 01:00:31,726

the Moffitt Cancer Center in Tampa. Because in Puerto Rico, I had some situations and they couldn't help me.

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01:00:31,726 --> 01:00:39,686

In other words, the medical appointments were eight months away, six months away. And if I have an aggressive cancer, well, maybe, right?

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01:00:39,686 --> 01:00:50,406

I wasn't going to be attending any longer, so I had to go to the United States, unfortunately.

Did you see? The idea is that my two children, specifically Dani, the one who has autism,

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01:00:50,406 --> 01:00:58,766

Well, he took it that way and it was only at that moment when he saw me falter that he opened his heart and told me what he felt.

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01:01:01,550 --> 01:01:13,710

That's shocking. TRUE? Yes. That is, of faith.

Yes. That's what he said, that's very nice and I'm telling you from here.

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01:01:13,910 --> 01:01:25,790

In other words, because he felt that something was happening and despite the difficulties of

express himself, exactly, he expressed it perfectly.

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01:01:25,990 --> 01:01:32,878

I was like, yes, no, no, I said incredible. I mean, I did have it in a Christian school.

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01:01:34,118 --> 01:01:43,358

But it was because at that school there was also almost no bullying. It was a very quiet school. And he liked it because everything was quiet.

3.4.5

01:01:43,358 --> 01:01:54,278

Dani Spaz. Dani Spaz and love. In other words, don't start yelling at home, don't argue at home and fight, like many families do,

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01:01:54,278 --> 01:02:03,982

Because he's not going to stand it. He says it. They can't sit down and talk. And I, oh my God, this child teaches me a lot.

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01:02:04,062 --> 01:02:13,822

God, thank you for sending it to me. I thank God every day for sending it to you,

to the Earth, to you and him and everyone else.

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01:02:13,902 --> 01:02:26,182

Because we need to change the people who live on this Earth. He passes it for a purpose. He goes through it for a purpose and...

Tony Hernandez Pumarejo

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01:02:26,958 --> 01:02:35,918

This process that I know is not easy, not at all easy, which is a battle you are currently fighting, everything is happening for purpose.

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01:02:36,118 --> 01:02:47,278

The most important thing is faith, our creator's faith in God, First of all, I know that you have fought and I have seen it in your social media posts.

351

01:02:47,478 --> 01:02:53,518

I have also seen the interviews they did with you on television, which also included an interview with Dani.

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01:02:53,718 --> 01:03:09,782

Yeah. about this process and that process perfectly in the interview, in support. And it's the most important thing, you know? I may, you know, seeing your story and apologies, I say it publicly that I don't

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01:03:09,982 --> 01:03:22,542

We have done this before. You know that I have many, many things at the moment. But the important thing is that you had to interview yourself, not only to do an interview, but

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01:03:22,742 --> 01:03:33,446

this is for support.

No, one of the others in our community, especially in our community, in autism, because there are stories in autism that I wouldn't say are the

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01:03:33,646 --> 01:03:41,406

dark stories, but stories that are not talked about much, you know, because there are varieties. I have helped families whose fathers and mothers have different,

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01:03:41,406 --> 01:03:51,846

They are living with different diseases, including cancer. And they have to look for and at the same time care for their loved ones with autism, often including severe cases.

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01:03:52,046 --> 01:04:04,622

Who knows. adult, that is, I have seen everything. And these are the stories that unfortunately are not talked about much. when it comes to autism. I have that responsibility,

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01:04:04,702 --> 01:04:13,382

and you also have that responsibility, to speak and not only speak about these stories to speak, but to a call for action in our society

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01:04:13,462 --> 01:04:24,846

to do something, you know? To do what we have to do, resources and support. to be able to help families. Autism does not go away, autism is the condition of life.

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01:04:24,846 --> 01:04:32,766

It is a life term condition. And again, not only the people diagnosed, but also the people, the families also experience it.

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01:04:32,766 --> 01:04:42,366

And it is very important and I thank you very much for sharing your story with us, especially because I know that it was not easy for you to be in this process.

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01:04:42,366 --> 01:04:53,430

to talk about what you're facing right now.

But I know that with God's favor, God's will be done, which is the most important thing,

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01:04:53,510 --> 01:05:03,350

and may God guide and may they fight in that battle, which is the most important thing.

Maria del Rocío Arroyo Amen,

amen, so it will be, and so it is.

364

01:05:03,430 --> 01:05:10,630

And I understand that, as you say, it is a purpose, I use myself with autism, as I use you with autism,

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01:05:10,710 --> 01:05:16,310

and he is using me now with cancer for many families who do not understand what thyroid cancer is.

366

01:05:16,390 --> 01:05:23,838

So I'm very focused on those two causes now.

Tony Hernandez Pumarejo

And I have the condition of hyperthyroidism, myself.

367

01:05:23,918 --> 01:05:29,998

Okay. That's why the cancer thing also caught my attention. I didn't know about thyroid cancer, honestly.

Maria del Rocio Arroyo

368

01:05:30,078 --> 01:05:38,998

There are different types of cancer, but I didn't know about thyroid.

Not much is known, exactly. And you know the most important thing to do, and so do you,

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01:05:39,078 --> 01:05:45,638

is to have a thyroid sonogram once a year. This is how you notice and see if the nodules you have,

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01:05:45,718 --> 01:05:56,718

because almost everyone has nodules. Well, they are benign, if they are benign they are perfect and if they do not grow.

You know, you monitor them. But if you don't get that sonogram,

371

01:05:56,718 --> 01:06:01,518

Like it happened to me, I didn't have it done because the truth is that they never asked me to do it,

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01:06:01,518 --> 01:06:13,718

They only did my blood, they gave me my Synthroid pill and they told me ah, your levels are very good. I didn't know this was getting complicated here.

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01:06:13,718 --> 01:06:26,462

Thyroid sonogram, people, it needs to be done.

Tony Hernandez Pumarejo

Exact. And Maria, do you know that there are going to be people here who are going to be watching and listening

374

01:06:26,462 --> 01:06:41,062

this interview from my podcast, this interview that has been shocking about this story, speaking

of realities? You as a mother creating your being that is your autistic child, these battles that

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01:06:41,062 --> 01:06:48,782

are facing, the battle that your child faced and is facing different areas of their life as well, the battle that you are also facing.

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01:06:49,294 --> 01:07:02,094

people that you are not seeing or hearing, not only in Puerto Rico, but also outside of Puerto Rico. How can they contact you if they are interested in helping?

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01:07:02,094 --> 01:07:13,974

in any way to you in terms of donations for treatment? What can they do to help? How can they do it?

Maria del Rocio Arroyo

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01:07:19,278 --> 01:07:26,838

so that people feel comfortable doing it. I have my email, which is the PayPal address,

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01:07:26,838 --> 01:07:43,158

which they can use to send it via PayPal if you are in United States, which is mari mari If you notice, it's my name, so people can be

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01:07:43,158 --> 01:07:52,742

peaceful. And if you are in Puerto Rico, what is fashionable is Well, then it would be my phone number, my cell phone.

381

01:07:52,742 --> 01:08:05,942

787-470-2121, 470-2121. You can write to me, you can call me, there are people who tell me

Look, I don't have money but I'm going to pray for you.

382

01:08:05,942 --> 01:08:13,842

You allow me and I'm clear, let's go.

And you can donate from one dollar up, you don't have to be

383

01:08:13,842 --> 01:08:20,950

Oh yeah, I don't even have 10 dollars, no, one dollar gets us there. With one dollar I can pay for treatment.

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01:08:20,950 --> 01:08:31,790

It makes a difference. So thank you to everyone who has already donated and we still need more because it seems that I got a little lost in

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01:08:31,790 --> 01:08:40,110

neck cancer. When they opened and during the operation they realized and it seems that I am going to have to take not a single treatment,

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01:08:40,110 --> 01:08:49,582

but three or four. So let's see what happens. I will keep you informed.

Tony Hernandez Pumarejo

And then I'm going to put all that information from your networks,

387

01:08:49,582 --> 01:08:57,382

not only from your social networks, so that people can communicate with you too, because I think you have a Facebook and Instagram, if I'm not mistaken.

Maria del Rocio Arroyo

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01:08:57,582 --> 01:09:07,902

I have, yes, I have Facebook, Instagram, TikTok.

Oh, TikTok too, ok. So that then I'm going to put, I'm going to put all that organized,

389

01:09:08,102 --> 01:09:13,778

not only from your social networks, but also the information that if there is a person who wants to make a donation.

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01:09:14,158 --> 01:09:21,198

because they can hire you if they are outside of the United States, if they are outside of Puerto Rico, that is, in the United States, other parts of the world, because people from other countries can also hire you.

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01:09:21,198 --> 01:09:30,238

parts of the world listen to the podcast, well they can do it through PayPal, if it is Puerto Rico,

because they do it for A TH Mobile. To TH Mobile.

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01:09:30,438 --> 01:09:37,558

To TH Mobile.

Tony Hernandez Pumarejo

I'm going to put all that information.

My goal is to publish this episode as soon as possible so that people can

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01:09:37,758 --> 01:09:47,198

This can in some way supporting and donating, even important, the power of letting go of prayer cannot be underestimated.

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01:09:47,398 --> 01:09:53,878

It's the most important thing. It's the first thing to do.

Put it in the hands of God so that then this God considers the

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01:09:54,078 --> 01:10:00,078

will of God, so I can move forward from this.

One of these is not the only first battle you have faced.

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01:10:00,278 --> 01:10:12,078

No. And I don't believe. And she won't be the last. So I know that with God's favor it will be.

Amen. It's going to be forward. So María, your story from this interview has really been very shocking.

397

01:10:12,206 --> 01:10:23,226

in all areas of seeing it and I thank you for your time for participating in this interview. Before concluding this interview, I am going to give you the space to

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01:10:23,226 --> 01:10:34,526

you to share, to see if you want to share a message for our society, be it autism, be it what you are facing, some

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01:10:34,526 --> 01:10:47,462 last words you want to say.

Maria del Rocio Arroyo

I have to say as a message to our society because we have to make a stop. We have to be empathetic.

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01:10:47,542 --> 01:10:57,342

And to be empathetic is to respect and love your neighbor, the one who is next to you. Even though I'm doing what I'm doing, you say,

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01:10:57,422 --> 01:11:07,862

this is crazy. Yes, many ugly things are happening, many crazy things, but it is up to us to do our part, to do our part.

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01:11:08,398 --> 01:11:18,758

and being empathetic is empathy, the magic word here. Empathy leads to love. So if we have empathy for children with autism,

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01:11:18,838 --> 01:11:27,358

for people with cancer, for people with Down syndrome, There are so many conditions out there. We can ensure that all these communities

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01:11:27,438 --> 01:11:38,118

contribute to society as well. They need it, they have to contribute to society and they are ready to do it. Even if you think not because you don't speak.

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01:11:39,150 --> 01:11:51,614

They know and hear empathy, people. Empathy and love. That's my message.

Tony Hernandez Pumarejo

And I agree with that one thousand percent.

406

01:11:52,774 --> 01:12:00,894

Today today today more and we need that today more than ever. And that's why we have this space like this, like my podcast,

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01:12:01,654 --> 01:12:11,574

to get away from all that negative, pessimism, gossip that exists and the loss of time outside to run this space, to reflect,

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01:12:11,974 --> 01:12:24,326

to see the potential, talk about these stories, especially what autism is. And I really thank you very much, María, for having participated in this interview.

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01:12:24,326 --> 01:12:37,566

You are always welcome in this house. I know that there are other topics that need to be talked about, especially autism, that you are happy to come. And especially since autism month is approaching, which is in the month of April.

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01:12:37,566 --> 01:12:46,526

And nothing, we will be praying for you. May everything turn out well, God's favor. and that you can move forward, be supporting your son

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01:12:46,606 --> 01:12:52,126

and that you can move forward with God's favor. And I thank you very much, many blessings to you, Maria,

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01:12:52,206 --> 01:13:03,486

and I thank you very much for participating in my podcast My Time with Tony Hernandez Pumarejo. Excellent, excellent opportunity to express ourselves through your podcast.

Maria del Rocío Arroyo

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01:13:03,566 --> 01:13:09,286

Thank you for opening this space for us. And here at your command, whatever you need from me,

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01:13:09,366 --> 01:13:17,550

The times you want to have me here, I'll come happy and talk to you for a while. Thanks thanks.

Tony Hernandez Pumarejo

And thank you, María, for having participated in our interview

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01:13:17,750 --> 01:13:24,390

on my MyTime podcast. And if you haven't, please subscribe to my podcast MyTime across all platforms, my channel

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01:13:24,590 --> 01:13:33,950

YouTube, Tony Hernandez Pumarejo and also on Spotify, Apple, Google Podcasts, under MyTime with Tony Hernandez Pumarejo. And this has been this new episode,

417

01:13:33,950 --> 01:13:39,670

this episode of MyTime with Toni Nandez Pumarejo and this is Toni. So everyone, have a nice day and a blessed day.

Outro

418

01:13:39,870 --> 01:13:54,522

Many blessings. Good. Well, this is the end of another episode of Mi Tiempo with Tony Hernández Pumarejo.

Tony hopes you liked it. If you would like to learn more about the work Tony does,

419

01:13:54,522 --> 01:14:07,322

Subscribe to your social networks. Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, which is now X, and its link page.

You can also follow Tony on his website at tony

420

01:14:07,470 --> 01:14:17,110

Also, if you are interested in getting a copy of his book, An autistic life without a booklet, you can purchase it on Amazon or any book sales platform.

421

01:14:17,110 --> 01:14:23,790

Or you can get a copy through their website. So, until the next time you meet us.

422

01:14:23,790 --> 01:14:27,750

Thank you and have a wonderful day. Blessings.