



Fiona

Hi everyone, and thanks for listening to Visibility. The monthly podcast produced by CID. The Council for Intellectual Disability. Here we will be telling our stories and exploring some of the issues that impact people with intellectual disability. To find out more about our work, visit www.cid.org.au

Adele

In the Spirit of Reconciliation, the Council for Intellectual Disability acknowledges the traditional custodians of country throughout Australia and their connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to the elders past and present, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

Raylene

Hello and welcome. Today we are talking with Ricky and Dina, who both have intellectual disability and are married. They live independently in the community and both work. We are going to talk about how they met, how their relationship developed, and about their life together. Ricky and Dina have plenty of insights into the highs and lows of being a husband and a wife, and how they balance being a couple while also having some personal independence. My name is Raylene Griffiths and I will be your host today. With me is my co-host, Lauren Bennett.

Lauren

Thanks Raylene.

Raylene

Welcome Ricky and Dina and thank you for joining us today.

Ricky and Dina

Thank you.

Raylene

How long have you two been married?

Dina

Five years. We met through our Waverley Independent Living Program with Waverley Council

Raylene

What is Waverley Independent living.

Dina

To teach us how to be independent and put us into it into a house or unit and to teach us how to cook and clean and all the stuff that we need to do in our lives.



Raylene

Were you both living independently when you did that program?

Dina

I was living at home in the beginning and then they found me a place to live with other people.

Ricky

Before I joined, I was living with my parents and then I moved to one place living with one other person. Then me and Dina sort of started dating and stuff. I thought it'd be a good idea to do a trial run to live together.

Raylene

Had you already proposed to Dina at that point or were you just boy and girlfriend?

Ricky

No, we were just boyfriend and girlfriend at that time. Yeah.

Lauren

So the living together must have gone pretty well then?

Ricky

Well, to be fair, the guy I was living with was a was very messy and stuff, so I wasn't, there wasn't something I missed.

Lauren

So was it love at first sight for either of you?

Dina

Sort of for me a little bit I liked him when I first saw him.

Ricky

To me it was more, I liked the personality, I liked hanging out and things.

Lauren

Dina, what were the things you first noticed about Ricky that you liked?

Dina

He was really nice, friendly, he was good looking, kind and personality too, I really liked. And we, we had so much in common. So, it was good.

Lauren

What kind of things do you have in common?



Dina

We both love going to the movies. We love going out for dinner, we love to laugh and joke around and stuff like that.

Raylene

Did you have a boyfriend before, Dina, or a girlfriend before, Ricky?

Ricky

For me, No. Like I went on a few little dates here and there, but it was never like a proper relationship. Sort of got to the point where I wasn't actually, like, looking. People say, you know, it happens when you least expect it. And it did.

Raylene

Dina what about you?

Dina

Yeah, I went on a few dates with this this group called J-Junction where they find you people and then they send it to you, and you can try them out. And none of them really worked because they weren't my type.

Ricky

I was also part of the company that was trying to help Dina find someone and they were saying that the women that are on, on their books are too old for me.

Raylene

And they never put you together?

Dina

No, that's weird. Really weird.

Lauren

So, you think you weren't matched with Ricky because of the age difference?

Dina

Yeah, I think so. But not that much of an age difference. I'm 42 and he's 35.

Raylene

Is it true that here had been some matchmaking in the background?

Ricky

So before I started the Waverly program they talked to me for a bit and and when they found out I was Jewish, they said, oh, you know, there's a, there's a nice Jewish girl in the, in the group. So, I added her on Facebook, started chatting and then she got annoyed. She obviously didn't meet me yet. And then she blocked me.

Dina

He wouldn't leave me alone, kept sending messages all the time, it was getting annoying. Until I really knew who he was properly. And then I got him to unblock me, because I didn't know how to do it.

Lauren

You were persistent, Ricky!

Ricky

Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

Lauren

You were persistent so you could charm her in person.

Ricky

Yeah.

Lauren

Who asked who on the date. And were you nervous about asking them out?

Ricky

Pretty sure Dina asked me.

Dina

He was a bit nervous about it.

Ricky

Yeah.

Dina

We went to a Waverly thing and his dad told him, come on ask her out, go on ask her out. I think he was keen. I was the first one to even talk to his parents. No one else would. Anyway.

Lauren

Was that nerve-wracking Dina? Meeting the parents?

Dina

A little bit. Coz you never know what they're going to be like.

Ricky

The way I met my in-laws was a bit different. So I got invited to a dinner, you know, so I showed up all dressed up and stuff and smart and everything. And there they are sitting with the casual, very casual clothes and things, and I'm sitting there like, Oh, no, like... And then Dina's dad was trying a few...

Dina

Stupid jokes...

Ricky

Yeah, his jokes, you know, of course you have to laugh and even if they not funny.

Raylene

How about we talk about the proposal?

Ricky

Sure. So I proposed to Dina, it was my 30th birthday. We went out to this big Turkish Restaurant. It was 30 odd people, it was a lot of people.

Dina

My immediate family and and his immediate family and some friends.

Ricky

Yeah. So there was a point where I got up and said, Thank you for coming, you know, my mum slipped me the ring. I said, I've got a question for Dina. And then of course I proposed in front of everyone, which was quite nerve wracking. Yeah.

Lauren

You're a brave man, Ricky, you're a brave man.

Ricky

So I was fairly confident she was going to say yes.

Dina

think the parents were too because they were already organizing stuff already.

Ricky

Like even before I was I was going to propose, my mum and her mum got together and already was deciding like where to have it and what to do. And I said to, you know, she could say no.

Raylene

You were already living together before the marriage, but did you feel it was different after you were married?

Dina

Now we're now more of a couple like a marriage couple now. In some ways, but it's important to show that people with disabilities can get married, and that can live together and be together as a couple.

Raylene

Chores. Who does the most work around the house?

Dina

Me!

Ricky

Yeah, she does.

Dina

I do like a lot of the vacuuming, and I pick up his cups and stuff all over the house. We do have a cleaner but I do bits and pieces, and help with the washing and put on the dishwasher and stuff.

Raylene

Ricky, what do you do?

Ricky,

So I'll do some of the shopping. I'll put on some of the dishwasher, take out some of the stuff from the dryer. Yeah, it's like fairly good balance of things.

Raylene

OK it sounds like you are a couple that wouldn't have any fights...

Dina

We do sometimes.

Ricky

Yeah.

Raylene

What do you fight about?

Dina

Oh, a lot of time he doesn't like it that I've got so much clothes. But that's a different story You know what women are like with all their clothes and stuff. So we fight a lot about that mostly.

Lauren

So who gets the most closet space?

Dina

Me.

Ricky

Yeah, sure. Yeah. But we feel really great now that we're now in our own home. We can put things in as you want.

Dina

We knew that when we moved we could get things we want to not have to worry about Oh, real estate's not going to let us do this or not going to let us have this or...

Raylene

Now that you have your own place, are you planning on decorating it?

Dina

Yeah, we are we're going to get a new a new table for the lounge room.

Ricky

I've got a man cave in process.

Lauren

And what do you do in your man cave?

Ricky

So I've got my, my games, I've got ummm.

Dina

He's got to PS5.

Ricky

Yeah, I've got my PS5 which is like our baby basically because we don't have a baby. So...

Dina

Do your work.



Ricky

Yeah, that will be my kind of study room for work.

Raylene

Would you have liked to have children or do you plan to have children?

Dina

I would love to, but it just gets with the expense. We can't afford it at the moment.

Ricky

If we were to have one, there's a good chance that you know it might have a disability. I think we've kind of decided that it will be in the too hard basket. So, in the future, we would love a dog.

Raylene

So tell us about what kind of dogs you'd like.

Dina

He wants something like a French bulldog or a pug or I would like schnauzer. Like a standard schnauzer.

Ricky

Grandpa dogs. You know, having a dog will be like really a really good companion, can always come and take over my, my meetings and put the dog in the seat.

Raylene

Thanks Ricky. We will now take a short break and return to hear more about the choices and decisions in a married life.

Fiona

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Raylene

Welcome back to our interview with Ricky and Dina. So, who does the cooking?

Dina

Mostly me, but he does sometimes, he is a good cook when he wants to cook.

Lauren

Oh is he?

Dina

We've done a chicken and mango thing in the slow cooker and so that's really good. When he wants to cook, he's really good.

Raylene

Are you confident cooks?

Ricky

Reasonably, we might need to like need a little bit of support for just so we can do a variety of things

Lauren

So you guys are really living quite independently then?

Ricky

You know, everything that we do from going shopping to paying bills we've been doing that all.

Raylene

How does that feel?

Ricky

it's great.

Dina

that shows what people with disabilities can do all these things. Because people out there who just think we just can't do anything. And that's and they think we should just all have support workers, but no, we can, we can do lots of things.

Ricky

You know, unfortunately, it's still that kind of stigma of disability where they think, some people just not capable of getting married and getting and doing all these things.

Raylene

What do you do for fun?

Dina

We do yeah we do gig buddies that is it's a program where you they set you up with a buddy like especially with us together 24/7. We want to have a bit of a break so we have someone we can go out with and do stuff together. And people who live on their own have someone that can go out and do things. And the gig buddies also have parties that they organise. And then we do a thing called Friendship Circle with people with disabilities as well that do different activities and stuff. And we meet the people through that as well. We just go out with other friends to dinners and...



Ricky

Yeah. We eat a lot.

Raylene

So it is important to balance the closeness you have as a couple with independent time.

Ricky

Regardless of whether, it's a partner or whether it's a friend, you can't be around them all the time it's just gets a bit...

Dina

On your nerves.

Ricky

Yeah on your nerves sometimes and yeah you've got to make sure people have their space as well.

Dina

And the balance, you need to have a balance as we do, sometimes we fight over nothing. You just need our space some time.

Raylene

Did you get much advice about marriage from your parents?

Ricky

Well, Dina's dad always says, just say yes to everything.

Lauren

Has that been working for you? Ricky

Ricky

Umm it doesn't necessarily work. Because it's a different time and a different, you know, every marriage is unique to each other. And to be an individual thing. It shouldn't be one rule for that will cover all of everyone's marriages.

Raylene

Now, both of you work...

Dina

I work at a school in Croydon called PLC, Presbyterian Ladies College and I work there 5 days a week and a lot of admin stuff, answering phones and doing mail and helping with the children. And I work with the little ones. Sometimes in the classroom rooms and all different bits and pieces.



Lauren

What are your favourite parts of your job, Dina?

Dina

Just being with the kids and the staff that I work with.

Raylene

How long have you worked there?

Dina

Just over 20 years now, I also went to school there as well, so that was really good.

Raylene

And Ricky, what about you?

Ricky

So before I started working at CID, I worked for a place called Ability Links. my role was to link people to different programs that they wanted to join. And it was also to do with people with disabilities as well.

Raylene

And what do you do at CID?

Ricky

At CID I'm a project worker. And the things that I do is I talk at conferences. I run workshops. We do translation of easy read documents and a whole lot more stuff. Yeah. generally, I'm working 12 hours a week.

Lauren

What are the parts you most enjoy, Ricky?

Ricky

I really love the team that I'm with. We get along really well. The work that to do is very productive and it means something. Gives you responsibilities as well. Yeah, we've been very, very successful.

Lauren

Ricky I understand that you studied filmmaking as well.

Ricky

It was me and Dina as well, we went to study at Bus Stop Films. We created a few different films, particularly where I was talking to my mum about how I was growing up and how they discovered that I had a disability.



Dina

And it's also about the way the doctors were treating people and telling them the wrong ways to talk to people with disabilities.

Lauren

I've seen that film. That's absolutely a beautiful film. It makes a huge impact when you watch it.

Ricky

Yeah, and it's actually gone sort of overseas and things like that. And won awards and...

Lauren

Oh that's fantastic.

Ricky

But the night that we showed it at Flicker Fest it was so special because Flicker Fest was shown in Bondi in our local area and everyone could come and watch it you know, it was one of those films that when you hear it, you don't hear anything after they've watched it, like totally stunned. So, yeah, very proud of of doing that film.

Lauren

Having studied film, do either of you have any intention of wanting to work in that area?

Ricky

I definitely do. I've done a few like internships with Fremantle Media, which is a production company.

Lauren

And how about you Dina after studying at bus stop, do you have any desire to work in film?

Dina

Not the biggest, but I do like filming and I like being on film and a few different things with him. We did one with Waverly Council called Short Change, then we did another one where we really have been in bed...

Ricky

So this was a film about consent.

Dina

Consent, that we did.

Lauren

And what was it like acting together?

Ricky

You know, sometimes when you're acting with anyone, I guess sometimes it's a little bit of awkwardness, particularly with that consent video. But I think, from what people have seen, they were very happy with that and impressed.

Lauren

Well done, guys.

Raylene

Do you guys go travelling together?

Dina

We've gone in a few cruises together and, we went on 3 together. 1 to new Zealand and then we went to, what was the other one?

Ricky

Pacific Islands.

Dina

Pacific Islands for a few weeks. Yeah, it was good. We want to do more when we go overseas together.

Ricky

What about America?

Dina

We went to America. That's right.

Ricky

For our honeymoon.

Dina

Because I won the trip to America. Best actor in Australia with a disability.

Ricky

Was part of the Focus on Ability Film Festival. And yeah, and so Dina won a trip to America.

Dina

Having a honeymoon.

Ricky

Yeah.

Dina
My mother came. went to L.A. San Francisco, and...

Ricky
San Diego.

Dina
San Diego.

Lauren
Oh it's good timing that you won the award just in time for your honeymoon as well.

Ricky
Yeah.

Lauren
Do you have any plans for the future?

Dina
We want to travel again, we want to go on another cruise. We also want to, we've got some friends we want to go away with as well.

Ricky
We were thinking of going with some friends to.

Dina
Club Med.

Ricky
Club Med in Thailand or, um, one of those places. And it would be kind of our first trip with another couple.

Raylene
Would you be confident to travel internationally on your own?

Ricky
Well, I think, yeah, I think we can. I've travelled on my own before. I've travelled to New Zealand and I've travelled to Israel. Being the Google Maps guy, I'm quite sort of street smart. I can work out how to get to places and things like that. And yeah, I think it'd be nice to travel internationally again.

Lauren
Ricky, tell us what you love about Dina.

Ricky

I think that she's very kind, very happy person. She loves going out like I do. Our birthdays are 2 days apart, helps with birthday parties. and just very friendly. We get a lot of warmth from everyone else as well.

Lauren

And Dina, what do you love about Ricky?

Dina

That he's caring, he's funny, but also that he, he compromises a lot and they were there for me when I need him and stuff.

Raylene

And what is your advice to people before getting into a serious relationship?

Ricky

If you're going to do it, you can just do what you want to, all the time. Sometimes you actually have to do stuff that the other person has to do, even though you know, might not be your favourite thing in the world.

Dina

I think not to rush into it. If you rush into it, you might not be happy. You also do have to have interests, same interests if you have nothing in common.

Ricky

It's true.

Dina

I think the relationship is going to be a little bit boring. You do have to compromise and you do have to the things that the other person wants as well, not just what you want.

Raylene

Dina, do you have any final thoughts about your relationship?

Dina

Nice thing sometimes, it's like getting home and you can say, Oh, Ricky, I've had a bad day at work today and talk to him about it and if I'm not with a partner, sometimes got to come home, maybe to myself. And be sort of like who am I going to talk to I'm having a bad day. And I need someone to talk to. Or when someone's sick, someone there to be able to comfort you. Can't rely on your parents for every little thing. Sometimes to have someone like Ricky to go to is nice.

Ricky

I've got a bad right eye and Dina's got a bad left eye. She's seeing for me on one side and I'm seeing her on the other side. We're literally looking out for each other that's the, the big slogan there.

Lauren

Ha, love it! That's so good!

Ricky

Yeah.

Lauren

You guys are awesome. That was so lovely.

Ricky.

Yeah.

Dina

Thank you for having us.

Raylene

Thank you for being so willing to share.

Ricky

Absolutely.

Raylene

And for all our listeners today, thank you for joining us. Next time we will have yet another fascinating story for you. We will hear about the unique choices and decisions of a very different personal journey.

Fiona

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