



TURN AUTISM AROUND
WITH DR. MARY BARBERA

Transcript for Podcast Episode: 067

*Global Autism Project: Autism Around
the World with Molly O.*

Hosted by: Dr. Mary Barbera

Dr. Mary Barbera: Hi there, and welcome back to another episode of the Turn Autism Around podcast. I'm your host, Dr. Mary Barbera, and this is episode number 67 with Molly Ola Pinney from the Global Autism Project, and we are talking all about autism around the world.

Dr. Mary Barbera: Before I get to introducing Molly into this interview, which is a great one, I would like to give a listener a shout out to AZSon41, who left a five-star rating of review on Apple podcast. She says, "This is an awesome autism podcast." She talks about how she read my book in 2012 and as reread it and recommended it to other parents and BCBA's for the past seven years. She says, "I was so happy to find you had a podcast and a YouTube channel. The information you provide is so helpful and gives parents like me hope and encouragement to keep on striving towards helping our kids reach their highest potential. And you remind us to find joy and happiness while on the journey. It's not a sprint. It's a long distance run with valleys and hills. Thank you for all of your years of dedication to helping kids with autism."

Dr. Mary Barbera: I love that review because part of my podcast goals are for parents and professionals to be less stressed and lead happier lives, finding joy in their lives, and helping each child reach his or her fullest potential. So thank you so much. Now for the short introduction to Molly Ola Pinney, who is the founder and CEO of the Global Autism Project, which is a nonprofit organization that has helped people from 15 different countries provide better treatment for kids with autism. And we talk in the interview about some of the challenges, especially the new Coronavirus and how that's impacting the Global Autism Project. So it's a great interview. I hope you enjoy it. Let's get to it.

Welcome to the Turner Autism Around podcast for both parents and professionals in the autism world who want to turn things around, be less

stressed, and lead happier lives. And now your host, autism mom, behavior analyst, and bestselling author, Dr. Mary Barbera.

Dr. Mary Barbera: OK, so welcome, Molly. I'm so happy that you can join us today.

Molly Ola Pinney: Thank you so much for having me. It's great to be here.

Dr. Mary Barbera: Yeah. So I have known about your work, I've seen you speak many years ago and have been working with other people who have volunteered for your Global Autism Project and everything. But before we get into all of that, let's start with the first question: describe your fall into the autism world.

Molly Ola Pinney: Well, it can be best described as a fall. So I was babysitting for a little boy with autism in Seattle, Washington, back in 2002. And I thought, oh, this will be a good thing to do for a week or two. He's looking for a new school, and so that'll be that. And then after that, his family asked me to become trained as an ABA therapist. So this was pre-R.B.T. credentials. So I became trained as what we called at the time an ABA therapist. And I remember agreeing to do this and thinking this is actually the most dead-end job ever, because this family is going to Ghana at the end of the year. I'm obviously not going to do anything like that. And then I thought, well, maybe it's a good thing it's a dead-end job because I probably wouldn't do something like this my whole life. It would just be something I'm going to do here at age 22. And so at the end of that job, when the family moved to Ghana, I also moved to Ghana with them. And people started showing up at the house where I was living and the school where I was working, looking for the lady who knew what autism was. And so this dead-end job turning to not only my life's work, but a global movement, a movement that believes that all people with autism, wherever in the world they live, should be able to reach their potential.

Dr. Mary Barbera: Wow. So that was around 2003, so... So I'm sure it was a whole lot harder than just thinking of this and starting with Global Autism Project. So how, when and why did you decide to, like, make it bigger than just giving advice here or there?

Molly Ola Pinney: Right. Because that's exactly how it started. Right. Kind of giving advice here and there, offering to maybe help out with some kids if maybe you could maybe be helpful. You know, I really didn't know what I was doing. And I was really relieved because I met a mom who had started an autism center in Ghana, and I thought this will be really great because I'll be able to get trained more. I've only been doing this for a year. And what ended up happening is I learned that that space was really more of a safe space for kids. I learned that the locally accepted belief is that the kids are possessed or taken by bad spirits, as they say. And I learned that, you know, and in some cases, the children are returned to their ancestors, which is a kind way of saying their lives are ended because of autism.

Molly Ola Pinney: So learning all this about autism, it was one of those things that you can't unsee it. And I think I literally at the time had a bracelet, said be the change you wish to see in the world. And I sort of looked at I was like, oh, look, there's change I'd like to see. And I said, you know, and so my first thought was, oh, let me just have people from US come and provide training. And then I learned that it became very obvious that that wasn't going to be sustainable, that wasn't going to be long lasting. And having people come for two weeks at a time and then leave wasn't really going to help us because then what? You know, what do we do then? I was working with just one kid and I was talking with this consultant every single week on an ongoing basis. And so then I looked online to try to find other folks who, maybe there's something else globally, maybe there's some great stuff happening in another part of the world that I'm not aware of.

Molly Ola Pinney: And what I found instead were people all over the world also looking for people to come and provide training and desperately, you know, families desperate or for anything. At the time, there was a lot of language around a cure. At the time, there was a lot of language around, you know, how do I kind of make this stop? And I saw that as just really knowing that that kind of language, yes, can happen anywhere. But there were... These parents saw no option for these kids. Really, truly no option. And there was very little hope. And, you know, I think that just seeing that this was a global phenomenon, I was just seeing more people around the world who wanted this.

Molly Ola Pinney: It was, you know... when you're twenty-three years old, things seem a lot simpler than they are. I remember literally saying like, we'll start it all over the world. And in my head, it was sort of like, how hard could it be? And people would say, well, how are you going to do that? And I remember just being like,

who cares? I just know that I'm going to do it. I know that that's what we're building here. And I had no evidence, by the way, that this was going to work. I had plenty of people telling me that it couldn't be done. And what I learned is that they didn't know how it could be done and that not knowing how it could be done, they let stop them. Because I also don't know how it could be done, but I knew that it could be done. And I heard a few years ago that the answer to how is yes. And just saying yes and moving forward. And I've learned in my life that actually creates clarity. And so that's what happened.

Molly Ola Pinney: So here we are 17 years later, working in 15 countries worldwide. We have truly created a global movement of people who believe in the acceptance and integration of the autistic population.

Dr. Mary Barbera: So I love that the answer to 'how' is yes; I've never heard that. So I'd love that. So the Global Autism Project, you were the founder, you're the current CEO. What do you... So say we have a country that wants to start. What do you actually provide that country or that city or how does it operate like...?

Molly Ola Pinney: Yeah. Excellent question. So one of the really, really important bits of our work is that we are predicated on the idea that the people in that community are the best people to work with those kids with autism. I also, living in Ghana, saw a lot of efforts of outside NGOs, non-governmental organizations, which, by the way, didn't know what that stood for when I got to Ghana. But I saw the work of outside people really imposing their ideas and imposing their opinions. And so I decided way back in 2003 that our organization was never going to just plop down in a country; that we were only going to work with the countries who reached out to us. And what that has done is has created, you know, a lot of times we talk about buyin. And I think this is relevant for the relationship with parents and professionals as well. Buyin is not enough. Buyin is not what we're going for. I mean, buyin to me is the lowest level. And buyin implies that I'm asking you to agree with something that I'm doing, right?

Molly Ola Pinney: What we go for is ownership. And we knew that we could skip ahead with ownership by working with people who already ran centers, who already own their own centers. We do not own any centers around the world. We provide consultation services. We provide services and clinical training as well as the

administrative practices. Because I really don't care if you are the best clinician in all the land, if you're the best at working with kids with autism; if you don't know how to get your message out there, if you don't know how to market, you don't know how to hire and pay and fire your staff, there's so much that goes into running a center. So we provide that training as well as... Really provide access to a global network of providers.

Molly Ola Pinney: Every single inquiry that we get for services, people read to me as if I've never heard the story of "you don't know what it's like here". Nobody knows this is happening. You don't know. And I know that they're saying that knowing that they feel like this is unique to us. And what is missing from that is this is a global phenomenon. And this phenomenon of not knowing what to do, you know, feeling helpless, of course, with no idea what to do and no models... And, you know, we do know what it's like around the world. And that being said, I don't know what it's like in Rhondda, the way that our partner from Kenya knows what it's like there. I don't know what it's like in, you know, in India, the way our other partner from India knows what it's like there. It's not my lived experience.

Molly Ola Pinney: And so one of the things that we do is provide them access to this global network. We hold an annual conference called the Global Summit, and we bring all of our partners together. And it's just one of the most amazing things. And the way that we provide the training is through what we're probably best known for our still core program. And we recruit for professional and neurodiversity on those teams. So we oftentimes have members of the autistic community working alongside of parents, of kids with autism, working alongside RBTs, working alongside BCBA's to go into these communities and work with... we work with not for, we'll get that, but work with our local partners there to increase their skills.

Dr. Mary Barbera: So you don't really provide funding... you provide this consultation service of bringing like people into Ghana or Kenya or somewhere for like a two week period. You provide a small team of people to go in for more intensive training to work with the established clinic to improve their services. So you're not like funding the clinic or starting the clinic. And I know a few people who've actually volunteered for that... you called it the Skillcorps team? And that they volunteer. They also as a behavior analyst or RBT, they also have to raise money for their trip because I can imagine it's pretty expensive. So your teams are, what, like five people or...

Molly Ola Pinney: It depends. They're usually about six to sometimes 12 depending on the site they're going to. And the money that they raise is not just for their trip; it's also to provide ongoing support to the organization, because just going in for two weeks at a time wouldn't be enough. So we need to have the infrastructure to support our partners on a regular basis. We need to have the infrastructure to recruit more people to travel. We need to have the infrastructure to get people to get, you know, for things like a global summit. We also run some university programs around the world that are capacity building as well. And to be able to offer those at an accessible price point, you know, that's what that funding helps support, too.

Dr. Mary Barbera: Yeah. So what just in general like sending, say, 10 people to Kenya for two weeks... Like what kind of money are you talking about?

Molly Ola Pinney: So they raise 5000 dollars each and depending on the country they're going to, 20 to 25 percent of the money that they raise covers the actual trade costs, and then the rest covers ongoing operations of the organization. So we also on every single trip we send a trained trip leader. So people who have done two or more trips come to our leadership academy and then they're able to lead our trips. And so of course, that increases the cost of providing the trip a bit.

Molly Ola Pinney: But it's worth it to us because, one, we want quality services happening. But also Skillcorps is about so much more than providing training to the partners. It's an incredible opportunity for personal and professional growth. And so the trip leaders that we send out, they're trained in how to facilitate that, how to have those conversations. And it's really, I love this part, there's a lot of very cool different tools on the trip. One of the things that we do is a plus delta at the end of every single day, a team wraps up their day on a scale of 1 to 4. They say something that went really well and they say something that they're going to personally change or the next day; not something that didn't go well. You know, people kind of have this process of thought or this terrible thing is, like, this terrible thing happened. Great, let's let the past be the past. And how are we going to... How can we transform that for tomorrow?

Molly Ola Pinney: And so we're doing that every single day. And that's just one of the tools that our trip leaders are using in country to facilitate those routes for people. A lot of people bring that back into their companies and use that not only in their companies, but also in their personal relationships as well. I want to do this with my husband now. So those sort of tools that they're able to bring for that personal transformation aspect of what we're up to now.

Dr. Mary Barbera: And I know it's very life-changing; my husband is a medical doctor and he's made it in a few medical mission trips to Ethiopia and Haiti. And it does really change you as a professional and as a person when you go and see, you know, the situations in many other countries.

Dr. Mary Barbera: Now is the rate of autism... I get this question a lot and I never really know how to answer it as well as you probably. Is the rate of autism the same around the world? I know in the United States now it's about one in 59. I usually say one in 50-ish. But is that pretty stable or do countries, you know, really don't measure it?

Molly Ola Pinney: The biggest challenge is the access to diagnosis. You know, in a lot of countries... I remember we asked a doctor about this and this was many years ago, although I'm not sure how much has changed since then, there were 30 pediatricians in a country of 20 million people, and there was one diagnosing autism. And in the countries where I've had conversations with the doctors, there tends to be one or two maybe four diagnosing autism.

Molly Ola Pinney: And the other issue is that a lot of the diagnostic processes are not evidence based. I met a doctor in East Africa who told me that he uses MRIs to diagnose autism. And there has not been any studies showing that you can use an MRI to diagnose autism. So I asked him more about his process and he explained that if the child is misbehaving and the brain does not show any deviance or anything else, that it's autism. The sort of this process of elimination, which is, of course, not how one diagnosis autism. So there's a lot of that kind of thing happening. There are some people who have kind of printed off the, you know, they've gotten their hands on the Adolfs or something that they've never had a training to use it and things like that.

Molly Ola Pinney: So people ask me as well all the time, what are the rates of autism? Sometimes people think... And I think the biggest takeaway is that we might not know the rates, but we know that autism is global. We know that in countries where we work, where governments are paying for services, those countries end up with waiting lists, just like you see here, where costs is not a barrier. So in a lot of the work that we do with our partners is helping them to get out there and market their services and increase awareness; they even exist. And once they really do that, they end up with waiting lists.

Molly Ola Pinney: So I don't know the exact numbers. I remember back in 2003, maybe 04, I knocked on the door of the W.H.O. in Ghana and I asked what the rates were and they said they're probably the same. Okay, good enough for me. So...But that's what I know about the rates. I know that we don't know.

Dr. Mary Barbera: The United States really has taken the lead over the years to do longitudinal studies. And, you know, that's why the rate when Lucas, my son, was diagnosed in 1999 was one in 500. Now it's roughly one in 50 two decades later. Some studies even show a more severe rate, so do some cities. So I'd roughly say one in 500 one, or one in 50.

Dr. Mary Barbera: But the other thing I want to say is I do have, with my online courses, I have parents and professionals from over 80 countries who have taken my courses. And I'm in the process of writing a second book, which will be out April 2021. And that book is really going to be for parents of kids with signs of autism and with autism diagnosing because, you know, there's a lot that parents can do and there's a lot that early intervention professionals can do, whether or not you have any behavioral background or not. And the important thing is not to keep waiting and worrying, but to take action. And my toddler preschooler course is all about taking action. Most... I would say more than half of the participants in my toddler preschooler online course don't have a diagnosis yet. And that's why I really want to get out information to say it doesn't matter if, you know, if you're waiting in line if your child is having symptoms of autism, delayed speech and all kinds of issues. And then to hear that some doctors are trying to diagnosis by MRI, which is crazy because that's not the way you diagnose autism. So really fascinating.

Molly Ola Pinney: I think it also speaks to that doctor wanting to help and wanting to do what's best and trying to figure it out, you know? And I think just because it's easy to look at it and say like, oh, my gosh, what the heck are they doing? What I find time and time again is that people are doing the best they can with what they have. And so I think that we as a community of people who we have identified ways to properly diagnose autism, we have a responsibility to make sure, including the global community. That being said, you know, I've talked with a lot of people around the world who say, oh, well, that diagnostic tool isn't really helpful to us because we don't... We would never want a child at age to make eye contact. That would be a sign of disrespect. So I think we have a bigger challenge ahead of us in terms of, how do we make sure that the diagnostic tools will work in other communities so that they're not labeled, well that doesn't work. So now I'm going to come up with my own thing that absolutely isn't going to work, you know?

Dr. Mary Barbera: Yeah, that cultural sensitivity and cultural differences... I know I worked with a family that, you know, co-sleeping with a child up to age 8 or 10 was typical. And so all of my efforts to try to you know, normally I would go in and, you know, the goal would be that the child would sleep in their own bed through the night, you know. And so we have to be aware, even if we're just working the United States, that culturally people have different practices and ways that they want to parent.

Molly Ola Pinney: And we see this a lot of feeding, right? In a lot of cultures, it's very respectful to feed other people. You know, I've gone to places where grown women are putting food into my mouth, you know, and it's a sign of respect. And it doesn't mean that I don't know how to eat independently. And so it's really an interesting challenge. And that's why, you know, as I said, our goal is really to make sure that people are given the tools to do this within their own communities, that we're not going in and saying here are the goals. Here's what's important. Especially something like autism that's so socially informed, you know. So, yeah, I mean, are you going to show up in another country and teach eye contact, a country where eye contact is disrespectful? I don't know how that's going to help the stigma. You know, or teach someone not to stay in a country where everyone stares and staring isn't rude, you know? So it's really interesting to kind of see what it is that our partners focus on with that kids in different communities.

Molly Ola Pinney: And I remember years ago we were teaching a kid how to clean up. You know, they'd made a mess and we were like, okay, let's clean it up. It's just cleaning up, you know, and the parents walked in and we're like, oh, my gosh, like, we have help. They would never do that, they would never clean up after themselves. Please don't. Oh, my gosh. Like, if they're cleaning up, they're going to think they're the social status of our help. That would be terrible.

Molly Ola Pinney: So there's so many of these kind of little instances. I think when the Skillcorps members see these in other countries, they tend to be really mindful and really sensitive to those needs. And that's what they're able to bring back to their practice here. And I think, you know, just how we view autism, how we interact with autism is changing a lot also. And so I think we really have a gift where we're going into other cultures and saying, now, wait a minute, does this make sense? You know, just kind of taking that pause and considering that maybe as professionals we don't know best? Maybe as professionals, we're going to get much better outcomes if we have a conversation with the parents and find out what their priorities are. And I would say maybe, probably.

Dr. Mary Barbera: So, yeah. So let's kind of talk about something that's new, that is affecting your company a lot. And that is the recent Coronavirus. And I also know that before the Coronavirus, you were affected quite frequently by security threats, you know, or things that they were supposed to go to X, Y, Z country, but now all of a sudden there's issues. And of course, I'm sure if you're sending, you know, 10 people over to a country, you want them to be safe. And now with the Coronavirus, you know, I'm sure that the travel is just so messed up. So how are you handling this?

Molly Ola Pinney: Yeah. So, you know, it's an interesting question. And I saw this podcast on my schedule and part of me said, oh, my gosh, I can't even do a podcast now because I don't even know what the next steps are. But we were talking a little bit before the show and I said, you know, I think there's something really valuable in bringing people into the messiness while it's messy. Coronavirus has affected us in huge ways.

Molly Ola Pinney: So first of all, we had as you know, we first started hearing about it in China in late December and throughout the month of January, it increased quite a bit; in the last week of January we went from two hundred to ten thousand cases. So this is huge growth. And the first week of February, we had 75 people headed to our office to go to 15 different countries. And so I had to make the call before any other company had made the call to change our travel. And so I had to go, on a Saturday, I reached out to our staff first. I reached out to our community leaders. And I worked closely with our travel agent and had a message to all 75 travelers that we were canceling the trips. And because the rest of the world wasn't quite paying attention to what was happening just yet, this is probably going to be shocking to your donors, but I'm looking at the progression of this and I'm looking at the places where you're going, and I'm in consultation with the CDC and the W.H.O, and I'm making this decision based on keeping you safe.

Molly Ola Pinney: And I will say as an organization, we tend to air on the side of caution anyway. There are probably some trips that we cancel that in hindsight might have been okay. This was not one of those. And I was very confident in that. I had to make the call because they were showing up in two days. And I knew when I made the call that a week later other people were going to be making this call. And in fact, a week later, Amazon made a call to cancel the Digital World Summit or whatever they had, and a lot of companies did. And I'm part of a group of women C-level executives. And that we, you know, I let them know we had to make this possible. I'm so sorry it impacts your work. And two weeks later, every single one of them, these are all Fortune 100 companies, all of their companies were impacted by this.

Molly Ola Pinney: So it has impacted our work in canceling those trips and canceling those trips that cost us a third of our annual revenue. Our revenue is made up of Skillcorps. You know, we talked about that earlier. Part of the money they raise supports the work. And so it cut of third of our revenue because the people traveling in February have now been offered places in July, October. So those people would they would be fundraising spots and other filled spots. It costs each of them money because they had to make changes to their plane tickets before everybody else had to make changes. But I knew that they were going to be out for two more weeks. And in the time that they would have been out, they started quarantining people coming back. We had another outbreak in Italy. A lot of people travel with us and then they take another week and go somewhere else. And so I knew that, too. I also knew that we were all going to be here paying attention to every single... Every fever was going to go to the hospital,

every, you know, and with fevers some countries would have ended up in isolation wards.

Molly Ola Pinney: And so we made the right choice. It is a difficult choice, and it's a choice that not's difficult at all when you think about people's safety and we think of that first; difficult when you think of the longer implications for this. So we lost a third of our revenue. The travelers lost money canceling their plane tickets. We also do a lot of work in China. We run a university program in China. China has, of course, been drastically affected. It's one thing, I think, to hear about people in quarantine. It's quite another thing to see them on zoom screen in separate places because they cannot be together when typically they're in the same room translating for each other.

Molly Ola Pinney: So it's you know, it's just... And, you know, again, this is sort of we're in it right now. We're really in it. We had to lay off some of our team. We have, which is, you know, for those of you who run businesses, I've done this 17 years. And I think there's nothing more devastating than calling your incredible staff and letting them know that they can't work with you anymore and do nothing that they did. And that has been the hardest part for me, I think, because a lot of our team or Skillcorps volunteers we've been with each other for years.

Molly Ola Pinney: But I also know that one should never let a good crisis go to waste. And I know that there's an opportunity in this. And I have told my entire team that I grew up in New Hampshire and the power would go out in the winter. And what you always knew is that the power would eventually come back and you didn't know when. And in a lot of ways, it feels like the power went out in the world, in our organization. And when I told them is that when the power would go out in New Hampshire, you would have a flashlight and we'd all go in the same room together. And I don't really know why, but I think partially it was because if one person's flashlight went out, everyone else was there with their flashlights. So our whole team has flashlights right now and we're keeping the flashlights going.

Molly Ola Pinney: But we're, you know, I think in a few years, I can't wait to look back on this period and think oh my gosh, that was crazy. You know, I mean, I haven't lost sleep over this organization the way I have in many, many years. I haven't had that sort of pit in my stomach when it comes time to run payroll and, you know

all that in many years in the way that I have lately. And I've been really prioritizing, keeping our team in the same room with the flashlights on. We've really been thinking about finding opportunities in this. And one of the opportunities that we found is in our Skillcorps trips, one of the best things that we do is the leadership training. That's one of the best things we do. You used to get access to that by going on two trips and becoming a trip leader. So now we've opened up our leadership training to the entire behavioral health company. I'm sorry... Now we've opened up our leadership training to the entire behavioral health field. We know that this turnover rate in the field can be addressed through some of the training that we offer.

Molly Ola Pinney: So that's just one example of a kind of this newer direction we're going in. We are launching a podcast of World Autism Awareness Day. We are participating in World Autism Awareness Day events in a bigger way than we ever have. So we're able to sort of shift and come up with some new projects. We've been making some great connections. We, you know, we have a couple of news stations that we're in communication with potentially want to run the story of how this is affected. You know, I know there's an opportunity in this. I know that the organization is going to come out in a much better place than we could have ever imagined. But that does not make the present moment easier, always.

Molly Ola Pinney: But what I have noticed is that I also have evidence of things going really, really well right now. And one of the things I just told the team the other day is we're going to put a big Post-it note up. We're just going to write down everything that's going well right now, every single thing that's showing up. I took the team out for a very cheap celebratory dinner last week. And I said this is a pre-celebratory dinner, guys. And the point of this pre-celebratory dinner is that we have something to celebrate. Ooh, what? I have no idea, but I know we have something to celebrate.

Molly Ola Pinney: The next day we learned that we were in the final top five for a grant for \$25,000. We received a gift from \$10,000 with a phone called sharing what's going on. We all kinds of good things happen. We got the news stations reaching out to us. We found more of our people who have traveled with us in the past or volunteering to do to fill in some of the work for people. You know, I mean, it's just things just kept happening. So I think, you know, we're very much in the middle of it right now. But what we're doing to mitigate it and to transform it really is we're focusing on the really positive things. We're celebrating all of the

wins, which are just part of our values anyway, but has become even more. And we had actually, literally had this guy walk in off the streets yesterday. His name's Cochran and he's a famous autistic artist from Japan. And he just saw the logo and walked in off the street. So I feel like in this midst of whatever we're going through, we're also having very cool things happen that, you know, we're just sort of looking for evidence of those things. So that's where we're at.

Dr. Mary Barbera: Wow. Yeah. I think it's affecting, you know, your company and other companies big time. We're recording this and it's just early March. So, you know, by the time as errors in mid-April, like we'll see how, you know... That the other thing. It's like these people are scheduled for the trips in July and October, and you really have no evidence that it's going to be any better with the Coronavirus or there might be new security threats. It's just a very tough time to run a in-person business of any kind.

Molly Ola Pinney: Yeah. Yeah.

Dr. Mary Barbera: So, you know, I'm really, you know, I'm glad that you're on the show and we can kind of all put our heads together. And I, you know, I'm going to show you the back end of my systems. You know, there's going to be some synergy there, too.

Molly Ola Pinney: I think, you know, at the moment, because we do have July travelers in October and who knows when this airs... But at the moment, we are planning to run those trips, you know, and in conversations with the CDC, what it sort of looks like is that at that point... Its funny this is going to air after I'm saying this, so I don't know what's going to happen, but, you know, if it becomes so widespread that you can't go anywhere to not be impacted by it, then stopping travel isn't going to help. You know, I wish the whole world would just go in quarantine right now for three weeks. Just everybody, if we could all agree, all of us, we could eliminate a lot of communicable diseases. I'm also optimistic. You know, I live in New York City and I was in the subway last night, like what is going on? What are all these people doing here? And they were, strangely enough, cleaning the subway with bleach. I mean, subways are sparkling right now. Everyone has hand sanitizer. People are washing their hands. You know, all the things they tell us to do during a regular flu season we're actually doing. So I'm really curious. Maybe, just maybe we're going to have, you know, this is this is going to stop flu season

in its tracks. So we'll see. I have to stay optimistic right now. You know, and as I said, our hope in this moment is, is that we'll be able to not only run our July trips, but run our global summit in Bali summer as well.

Dr. Mary Barbera: So that global summit, that is for who? Who should think about coming to that?

Molly Ola Pinney: Well, it's in Bali so everyone should think about it. If you've never been to Bali then you should think about it. So it's interesting because it's not about autism, but autism is what connects all of us. And so we have our partners from around the world. We have 88 businessowners hear from the US coming, folks who their staff traveled with the Global Autism Project. We have autism influencers coming. I didn't realize that that was that's a thing; Instagram autism influencers. We have some of them who are here joining us. We have autistic self-advocates who are joining us. It's really autism is what connects us. And it's really an opportunity for personal development. It is a conference... I hate to call it a conference. It is an event. It is an experience unlike anything else. Last year, we brought in an improv teacher who's a Broadway freestyle love supreme actor who did some really cool exercises with people. We do a lot of leadership exercises. That's what we really love to do. We did a lot of mindset work. We had a yoga class. We, you know, so it's really a unique experience. And there's opportunity just to casually interact with each other, which we don't always get at conferences. So.

Dr. Mary Barbera: And when is that? What is that? What were the days?

Molly Ola Pinney: August 11th through 14th, 2020.

Dr. Mary Barbera: Okay. And we're going to link your website in the show notes. And that is... What is your website?

Molly Ola Pinney: It is GlobalAutismProject.org.

Dr. Mary Barbera: GlobalAutismProject.org. Great. So it looks like we're coming up to the end. But I do want to mention a couple of things. First of all, you do have a TedX talk called Doing Things For Others Doesn't Help, which we are going to link in the show notes. It's a short TED talk. I watched it last night. And one of the things that you say, is you basically can't go in there and just feed the fish. You actually have to go in and work with the people, teach them how to fish, and get them... Which we covered with, you don't go in and start a clinic and impose your values. So I think it's kind of what we've been talking about. So I don't have time to go into it too much.

Dr. Mary Barbera: But one of the things that you said that rather resonated really, really nicely with my messages is you... it doesn't matter what country or if you're in the United States or other countries, you want each child to be as happy as possible and as independent as possible, which is kind of my three things as safe as possible, independent as possible, and happy as possible. So I when I watch that TedX talk, I thought like, Molly and I are really honest with what we believe in. We talked a lot about safety, obviously. So we're going to link that in the show notes, too, that will be at MaryBarbara.com/67.

Dr. Mary Barbera: And so to end, you know, to kind of wrap this up, part of my podcast goals is not just to help the kids, but help the parents and professionals who are listening be less stressed and lead happier lives. So do you have any stress reduction tips or self-care tips or things that make you less stressed and happier?

Molly Ola Pinney: Yeah. Well, I was talking with mom recently actually about kind of what we're going through as an organization. And I said, you know, I'm living in this space of totally unknown wondering if I'm doing the right thing, knowing that, you know, it's going to be okay, I'm sure. But I have no idea what that's going to look like. And, you know, you have a son who is a little bit older than my baby, the Global Autism Projects, and I really feel like for the first time in my life, I can identify with that, that just absolute uncertainty, worry and up in the middle of night. And I would say that what I said earlier is you look for the good, you look for evidence of the good. You look for evidence that things are working out. And I think that that's just that's a practice that is so incredibly useful because we're going to create reasons in our brain; that's what our brain is going to do. It's

going to create reasons. And why not create the reasons that this is going to all work out? And I think that's probably my biggest thing.

Molly Ola Pinney: I've also committed throughout this process to making sure that I'm spending time outside and working out, even if it's for 10 minutes a day, just something that's not reading about the Coronavirus or, you know, figuring out what we're going to do next. You know...

Dr. Mary Barbera: Watching the news.

Molly Ola Pinney: Exactly. My biggest self-care tip is to throw out your TV. There's something different about reading the news on your own versus watching it. And then the last thing I have to say is that, as you said, we talked about the Chinese proverb, you give a man a fish, eats for a day, teach a man to fish and he eats for a lifetime. What I add to that is, before you teach anyone anything, ask if they're hungry and ask them they like to eat. And I think that if you think about that and all of your interactions to professionals, to parents, it really makes a difference.

Dr. Mary Barbera: So I love that. I'm going to take these quotes and hang them on my wall. I love that. All right. Well, thank you so much. I think this was a great interview. I'm so happy to have finally connected.

Molly Ola Pinney: And it was perfect.

Dr. Mary Barbera: And I feel like the listeners of this podcast are really going to get a lot out of this show. And I look forward to connecting with you more and more in the future to see what we can do together to really get kids as safe as possible, as independent as possible, as happy as possible; and the parents and the professionals who work with these kids to also lead really happy lives. So looking forward to seeing where this all turns out in the end. But thank you so much for your time today.

Molly Ola Pinney: Thank you so much. It's great to be here.

*Thanks for listening to the Turn Autism Around podcast with Dr. Mary Barbera.
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