

Amelia and Poppy Prountzos

Full Interview Transcript – Module 5

Understanding Autism: Rapid Prompt Method

1 Amelia and Poppy - What it was like before you could spell out your words?

Amelia

I have always told my family that I am smart, with my eyes and body language. Learning to spell with Soma and my mum when I was young helped give proof to what my family knew, that I was smart. The start was hard, I had to compete with my impulsive body due to my Autism, Apraxia and Dyspraxia. But without endurance, life would be so much harder.

Poppy

It was hard to be treated like I understood before I could spell. My family always believed in my intellect, but it was harder for people to see my quiet intellect before I could show them with RPM, because my spoken words are so unreliable.

2 Amelia - How has RPM changed that?

RPM has helped me control my impulsive body because of the rapid prompts. Since I have been spelling for many years, my impulses and my spelling fluency have become much better. RPM is the only method that has actually worked for me because it can keep up with my impulses. The more I spell, the easier it gets.

3 Poppy - Why not use an iPad, sign language, typing etc?

Devices are quite a trigger for me, it is too easy to just click out and go onto YouTube. Although I have more control over my body than others, I still need lots of prompts. My desire to stim is too strong for me to communicate on my own yet. I do see typing in my future soon, once I learn to control my impulses.

4 Amelia - What is the main thing you'd like people to know about being a non-speaking Autistic person?

That I understand at an age appropriate level. I am just like a regular 15 year old. I like romantic novels, grunge music and funny podcasts. I love to gossip and have my hair braided. I am autistic, I don't need to be treated differently just to be noticed and not pitied. Come and talk to me, behind my messy body is a best friend.

5 Poppy - What is the main thing you'd like people to know about your spoken language as an Autistic person?

My spoken words are centered around impulses and stims. Just how my sister stims with her hands, I stim with my voice and random words. This is called scripting. RPM helps me spell my thoughts, these are my real words.



The Autism & Neurodiversity Masterclass

6 Amelia - Can you explain how regulation impacts your ability to communicate?

I am in a very messy body that I need to constantly compete with. My mind is often trying to tell my body to calm down and focus on a task but my body gets carried away with loud emotions that often aren't fitting with the social dynamic I am in. For example, I will cry when I am very excited and it is regularly assumed that I am upset or aren't excited about something. Regulation helps me connect to my body. Making my spelling so much easier.

7 Poppy – Can you explain what is happening when you use impulsive speech?

It is like a storm cloud in my head. My mouth explodes words of nonsense, it is so frustrating because it is never what I want to say. It makes me loud and upset because it is childish so people take it as my true voice. I get a short temper because those words are not what I am thinking.

8 Amelia – Can you explain how your 'brain-body' feels disconnected sometimes?

Imagine having your mouth taped and your body waving around like a fish out of water. Then imagine a soft, gentle girl with no way to speak. This is what brain and body disconnect feels like. My body is controlled by impulses and it feels like it is doing the opposite of what I want it to do. My mind is delicate and quiet and it's always trying to find a way to be heard. RPM is my connecting bridge.

9 Poppy – How has spelling words on the letterboard changed the way you use verbal speech?

It helps me ignore my impulses. It helps me redirect my verbal stims into purposeful words. Reading what I spelt out helps me to speak with purpose. When I am reminded to slow down as each letter is said back to me when I spell, I can start to encourage myself to speak with purpose.