

OCALI | Podcast

Connecting The Dots: Siblings Transcript

[MUSIC]

[Jalyn Short with guitar, singing]

🎸 "Guess I'm Moving On!" 🎸

*You tried to dial the number on the wall.
But it rings and rings, there's nothing at all.
So you pace across the floor wondering how I'd escape this place.
Well, it's not as hard as it seems.
Guess she's moving on, they say.
But I smile to myself, guess I'm moving on.
Yes, it's hard to explain, but I don't fit inside this picture frame anymore.
It's a long sense of purpose, you see my assertion belongs elsewhere now.
Yes, it's hard to explain, but I don't fit inside this picture frame anymore.
It's a long sense of purpose, you see my assertion belongs elsewhere now,
honey. Oh, yes it does, yes it does.*

[APPLAUSE]

Simon Buehrer: Hey, thanks for joining us for a special musical edition of Connecting the Dots, the podcast from the Autism Center at OCALI. I'm Simon Buehrer.

Megan Trowbridge: And I'm Megan Trowbridge, and we are excited and delighted to welcome today's guest, Jalyn Short.

[APPLAUSE]

Simon Buehrer: Jalyn!

Megan Trowbridge: She's a talented singer-songwriter. She's a student and just an all-around righteous human being.

[LAUGHTER]

So welcome to Connecting the Dots, Jalyn.

Jalyn Short: Thank you. Thanks for having me, guys.

Megan Trowbridge: We're glad to have you join us. This is our second season of Connecting the Dots podcast series, and we created it with three really primary objectives. One is to educate and empower individuals. Two is to raise awareness, and three is to build that community engagement piece. We're especially interested in addressing these objectives through conversations with families and highlighting their stories and experiences. That's why we're excited to talk to you, Jalyn, because

you're not just a musician or a student, soon to be professional. You're also the younger sister of Carlyn, correct?

Jalyn Short: Yes. I am the younger sister of Carlyn. She's five years older than me.

Simon Buehrer: That's great. We're going to learn more about you and Carlyn and your special relationship. But first, we want to learn a little bit more about you, Jalyn. This is the first time in the Connecting the Dots studios. Tell us a little bit about you in your own words. What energizes you? What excites you? Who's Jalyn Short?

Jalyn Short: [LAUGHTER] As you can tell, I love music, and a lot of art energizes me. I get motivated by all different kinds of art; poetry, music, paintings. I love doing that stuff and learning about all that stuff. So that really motivates me a lot in my free time. I am active on campus at Ohio State. I am a psychology major, so I'm in a lot of clubs, and I have some classwork and it can get busy, but I love pursuing my music up there as well. Honestly, I'm just trying my best, [LAUGHTER] trying to figure out life as a young adult, whatever happens.

Simon Buehrer: How old are you?

Jalyn Short: I'm 20.

Simon Buehrer: Twenty years old?

Jalyn Short: Yes.

Simon Buehrer: It sounds like you already have a really full active schedule, life.

Jalyn Short: Yes, for sure.

Simon Buehrer: Yeah, totally. Well, so Jalyn, when you meet someone for the first time, what do you hope that they take away from your encounter? What do you hope that they remember about you?

Jalyn Short: I just hope that they remember that I try my best to be positive in a lot of situations. I try to bring really good energy to situations, and also some kindness and grace towards a lot of people, and acceptance. Those are my main things.

Megan Trowbridge: Great. We've learned a little bit about you, and you mentioned your sister, Carlyn's five years older than you. So tell us a little bit more about Carlyn.

Jalyn Short: Well, Carlyn's awesome. One thing that's really cool about Carlyn is that she notices a lot of the little things. She really homes in on things that a lot of people don't notice, and I've taken a lot of inspiration from that. I try to do the same thing. Carlyn's super fun. She's always smiling. She's very easygoing. She loves music, just like me, just a music lover, and she's very brave and determined. But my sister, she is non-speaking and on the autism spectrum, and I have never heard my sister speak before. My parents have, but I never had that chance. So I've grown up with her trying to help her communicate, but also trying to communicate

with her. And working through that, and I've watched how a lot of people perceive my sister in my life as well.

Megan Trowbridge: Your sister's older than you. So you never knew her when she was younger. That's your only sibling, correct?

Jalyn Short: Yeah.

Megan Trowbridge: When did you first understand that Carlyn might be a little different than you?

Jalyn Short: Definitely early on. In early childhood, I started getting curious about my sister. Big kicker was that she just could not speak, and I couldn't figure that out. So I would ask my mom a lot about that, ask her, why can't my sister talk, and push her on that. She did a really great job at reframing that. I remember she used to tell me, even though she can't do this, she can do these things. Really big fan of my mom. Anyway.

[LAUGHTER]

I also noticed that my sister, she had some repetitive patterns, and started rocking back and forth and things like that, which at the time, I didn't recognize as stimming or things like that, but I knew that something was maybe different. So even at a young age, I was curious about that. I would get to go to my sister's therapies as a young child. So that was kinda cool. But at the time, I was concerned as to why I was there as well and why my sister was there and why it was needed. So there was just a lot of questions and a lot of curiosity that came with that.

Megan Trowbridge: And you felt open to asking those questions of your family?

Jalyn Short: Yes, very ... very ... open environment, I guess, for that.

Megan Trowbridge: They were probably trying to figure out at the same time you were, too.

Jalyn Short: Yes.

Simon Buehrer: All right, Jalyn. You've told us a little bit about Carlyn. How would you describe your relationship? Like, if you had to pick three words to describe your relationship with your sister?

Jalyn Short: Three words. I would choose patient, genuine, and authentic.

Simon Buehrer: Those are three great words. Then growing up with her, are there moments that stick out to you that were especially significant or difficult or challenging or memorable?

Jalyn Short: Yeah. A lot of meaningful, good memories. In childhood, we would play together in the yard. I was involved in a lot of sports growing up. So we would pass the volleyball or the softball, and I would try to include her in that. We would jump on the trampoline together and play on the swing sets. Carlyn loved swing sets, and

she still does. Also, sometimes on family vacations, there were some great memories. We had a pool at a beach house, and we would play in the pool together and just be involved in all of that. It was really awesome.

My mom and dad were fantastic. They did such a great job at balancing time between us and letting us both have our moments to shine, which is really awesome. A lot of attention did go to my sister growing up, though. So that was somewhat challenging, and it brought on some resentful feelings sometimes, which is tough. But as a child, I would sort of get jealous at the attention that was brought on my sister sometimes and also get slightly jealous by my friends who had siblings who could talk and communicate with them.

It was also easy to walk away sometimes with my sister. If she couldn't do the thing that I wanted her to do, could be frustrating. Some things also, I remember going to sensory friendly movies when I was younger, because my family hosted a lot of that stuff, and I remember just being confused as to why I had to go to that and why I couldn't just go to the regular movie, and it being just a different experience for me.

Megan Trowbridge: When I was thinking about this podcast series, I was thinking of three questions myself—patience, advocacy, and empathy. You've mentioned patience, so I'm just wondering what you've learned about those three things.

Jalyn Short: From my sister and from a lot of other people, I've learned that being my main mantra is different, not less. My family really spoke that throughout my life, and that's been something that I've reflected on as well. But I think it's also been great to know everyone is different, and many different challenges, many different people in the world, and I think that's helped me become more patient and understanding of that and standing up for those that need to be stood for. So being an advocate.

Megan Trowbridge: Yes, absolutely. I think about sibling relationships. I have a sister myself, and our dynamic has changed throughout the years. I'm just wondering how your dynamic has changed with your sister as you've gotten older.

Jalyn Short: Honestly, I think we've grown closer with time. I've become a lot more patient with Carlyn and also with myself, she's helped a lot with that. Definitely become more educated about autism spectrum disorder and much more interested in studying that more into my professional life and becoming a psychology major with a specialization in developmental disabilities. So that's been awesome. I think I've just seen over time how music honestly has helped Carlyn a lot. It's a form of therapy for her. I've noticed that she turns on her radio or she turns on a song, and it changes her mood a lot, and I think that's really powerful, and that's something that we share. So that's nice. Then, I've also learned to be more inclusive of my sister and found a personal way to connect with her and address how she feels at times.

Megan Trowbridge: Can I ask a follow up that's not in here? And feel free not to answer if you don't want to. With you going away to college, how was that as a family dynamic?

Jalyn Short: Well, I will hit on that some with the song, because that's kind of where that stemmed from. But it was interesting, and it's definitely a lot different for my sister, and I think she has had to adjust to that for sure, and it's been difficult being away. But I think that they found a rhythm at home, and then I've found a rhythm at college, and where I still get to interact with Carlyn and get to know her, how she's doing, even if it's through FaceTime sometimes.

[LAUGHTER]

Megan Trowbridge: Great that we have technology like that now.

Simon Buehrer: Well, and I'm interested, Jalyn, a lot of times siblings have a way of communicating with each other because of growing up together, and it's a special kind of communication system, whether it's like, I think about my relationship with my own family, we communicate a lot in silly quotes from movies or song lyrics or for no reason at all, my brother started calling me Sue a few years ago.

[LAUGHTER]

These are just things that siblings do, and I'm just curious, how does that work with you and Carlyn? Because I'm assuming it's the same, even though there's maybe a different way of communicating, but there's still that connection.

Jalyn Short: Yeah. We have our own little personal one-to-one understanding of each other, for sure. For Carlyn, because she's non-speaking, we often communicate by touch a lot, and she will touch me on my arm or pull on me and roughhouse and play with me sometimes, which is really fun.

We'll just play fight each other sometimes, or she'll let me know in a certain way, if the touch is a certain feeling, I guess, compared to happiness, or "oh, I want to play," or if it's like, "oh, I'm not feeling too great" or "I'm struggling." So we have that connection, which is cool.

Simon Buehrer: You know what those touches mean.

Jalyn Short: Yes.

Simon Buehrer: That's super cool.

Megan Trowbridge: I've seen a lot of photos of you and your family and she's touching your face and your arm. She seems to be very much a touchy person.

Jalyn Short: Yes.

Simon Buehrer: That's really cool. Well, you talked about your family a little bit, but I'm also interested in what that dynamic is. So it's you and your sister, mother, father. Growing up, what did they do to help both of you grow and thrive?

Jalyn Short: Not just my parents, but my whole family has been really supportive of my sister and allowing us to share time with them in the ways that we need to both thrive. But I would say my parents specifically are a super cool example because both of them changed their career path entirely for my sister and for others just like her, which is really awesome, and they became much more educated about autism and various different challenges that people face, and they've been a great support system for so many families and so many people for that. Because of that, I've grown up learning about it and becoming familiar with it in my own way. A funny example is that, like, when I was in elementary school, I would come home from school sometimes and I would talk to my mom and tell her, I think this person might be on the spectrum.

[LAUGHTER]

I was, like, in fifth grade. She would just shake her head. She's like, you know what? Probably.

[LAUGHTER]

So we had that open space to do things like that and get familiar with it.

Simon Buehrer: All right. Let's switch gears. Let's talk about music. Tell us the story behind your song, No Single Word.

Jalyn Short: Yeah, so No Single Word is about my sister. I wrote the song a few years ago whenever I was graduating from high school, and the original intention was that I would be moving on, as we talked about before, to another phase of my life, and it would be without being around my sister as much and just reflecting on that. But I ended up just making, honestly, a tribute to my sister in the song. Even though that was the original intent, a lot of it was just about what I want the world to know about my sister, and I felt that it really needed shared. It's challenging to describe Carlyn and also our relationship in just one song. But I felt that the mood of the chords that I had created and the more folky-like storytelling vibe of the song was perfect to express that.

Megan Trowbridge: Was there a specific moment or feeling that sparked the song? I know you said high school, but was there anything else?

Jalyn Short: Yeah. Not really a specific moment, but a feeling of pride. I feel like I just felt proud of me and my sister, especially proud of Carlyn, and I felt the need to share that at that particular moment whenever I was moving on to the next step. But we've accomplished a lot together, and I think it's important to share that, but also there's always so much more to accomplish still.

Megan Trowbridge: Can I ask, like how long did it take for you to write that? Did you just sit down and write it all at once, or did you go back and forth?

Jalyn Short: I've got to think.

[LAUGHTER]

Megan Trowbridge: Again, not on the script.

[LAUGHTER]

But just curious.

Jalyn Short: I think that it was in one sitting, because I like to write a lot of my songs in one sitting. If I'm starting it, I'm going to finish it. It's just the way I work, which sometimes can be a lot.

[LAUGHTER]

But this song, I think I would say I wrote this song probably in 30 minutes.

Megan Trowbridge: So you just had the idea?

Jalyn Short: Had the idea, knew about my sister well enough to just execute to the best of my ability.

Megan Trowbridge: That's amazing.

Simon Buehrer: That is amazing.

Megan Trowbridge: Well, you said you enjoy poetry, so it's like writing a poem for you and your sister.

Jalyn Short: Yes, exactly.

Megan Trowbridge: That's amazing. Will you do us the honors and play us the song?

[Jalyn Short with guitar, singing]

🎸 "No Single Word" 🎸

*Always on the run, she's the closest thing to sun
Warmth in her eyes, smile so wide,
For I couldn't be that kind.
Rocking chairs at sea let us feel the breeze.
Distance and time won't change her mind.
She's proud to be next to me.*

*No single word, oh nothing is heard,
Yet we know, deep within our soul
Love that we share isn't one to compare,
it's a real good heart of gold, and a real good name to be told.*

*Nights on the deck, I sure looked like a wreck,
But she touches my hair. How does she care?
Well I know she's always there.*

*No single word, oh nothing is heard,
Yet we know, deep within our soul
Love that we share isn't one to compare,
it's a real fond heart to hold, and a real good name to be told.*

*So why is it so hard for everyone to see how similar she is to me?
We're friends to the end, very best friends,
And I'll miss her the day that I leave.
Hand out the sunroof today, like to picture it always this way.
A gesture of hope, to the world that we know,
She's gonna make it out okay.*

*No single word, oh nothing is heard,
Yet we know, deep within our soul
Love that we share isn't one to compare,
it's a real good heart that's old, and a real good name to be told.*

[APPLAUSE]

Jalyn Short: Thanks, thanks.

Simon Buehrer: Amazing. What do you hope your sister feels when she hears that song?

Jalyn Short: Honestly, I hope that she feels proud of us as well, as I said, with the intention of the pride of our relationship and stuff and just ... honoring that. I hope she feels that as well, and I hope she reflects on our past and is excited about the future.

Simon Buehrer: What would you say about that future? What's on the horizon for you and Carlyn? Where do you see your relationship going from here?

Jalyn Short: I hope to continue to bond with her, be there for her, and support her, encourage independence, then say, you can do it, Carlyn. Although no one will ever be fully independent, I think. Everyone depends on somebody, I think. But I think it's important to encourage that for her. Also helping Carlyn to have access to opportunities in her life. That's a huge one for me. I'm going to try to be that support and someone that can help promote access for my sister, but then also for other people and have her do the things that she wants to do. Try to be the voice for her and be her advocate, and support her in that.

Simon Buehrer: Well, speaking of other people, do you have advice, guidance, words of wisdom for other siblings?

Jalyn Short: Yeah. My best advice, a few things. One, just try to educate yourself and understand. Your siblings see that behavior isn't always purposeful, that there's a lot of underlying things there that you may not realize, and sometimes it's really hard to see that when things get frustrating or things get hard. But just try to

educate yourself on that. A huge one for me is to take time for yourself, take breaks, offer ways to stay grounded for yourself. Sometimes you've done all that you can do, and it's good to take time to be with other people and do the things that you love. You can express how you feel to other people if you're having a hard time as well. I've found that helpful. But if you can't express it out loud or maybe in a conversation, there's many different mediums you can do that. I love writing. I love, obviously, writing songs. It's my favorite thing ever.

[LAUGHTER]

I also enjoy yoga and taking time to just reflect on that, that way.

Simon Buehrer: Is that how you stay grounded?

Jalyn Short: I love yoga. Yeah, art. Yes. That's a good point. That is exactly how.

Megan Trowbridge: Jalyn, thank you so much for sharing your story, your vulnerability and your music with us today. This has been amazing, and we really want to say thank you for helping us connect the dots for siblings and families.

Jalyn Short: Thank you, guys. Thank you so much. This has been really sweet and really awesome. I'm very happy that I got to do that.

Megan Trowbridge: You've been listening to Connecting the Dots from the Autism Center at OCALI, and you can find us at ocali.org/podcasts where we'll have links to Jalyn's website and social media, as well as some great supports for families. This includes our new Family Resource Hub from the Family and Community Outreach Center here at OCALI. Again, you'll find us at ocali.org/podcasts.

Simon Buehrer: Indeed. Thank you to our special guest Jalyn Short for joining us today. Thank you for listening. I'm Simon Buehrer.

Megan Trowbridge: And I'm Megan Trowbridge. We'll see you soon.

[Jalyn playing guitar]