

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Alison, Chris, and Paul on Variation, Disease, and Language

[Link to video.](#)

[Text on Screen]: If you could change something about yourself by changing your genes, would you?

[Alison]: I guess I'm just really profoundly uncertain, you know? I'm really uncertain about what divides a disease from a condition. Really uncertain about, you know, if my daughter's Down Syndrome could be removed magically, would I want that to be done? I'm pretty, I'm pretty sure the answer to that is no. I really like her just as she is.

Now, if more therapies could be developed, if we could give her a pill that would help her attention span, I'd probably be open to that. But, like, all of that "better," "healthy," whatever, it all has scare quotes for me. Which doesn't mean I'm rejecting it; it just means I feel like I'm, I'm navigating really, sort of, treacherous waters.

[Chris]: Yeah. And, and, and just the, I guess I, yeah, even the word, what normal is I teach genetics and you always have wild type and mutant, normal, abnormal. That's how you divide all those things. Which, before, now I teach in front of a class and I'm like, there's just gotta be a better word for that. Because now I'm like, these terms and these categories, I'm like, I don't know.

And I still use, like, a lot of examples from human genetics because it's something students can relate to. And, but now it, it used to be much more abstract, like here's this population that has X, this is how we know about it, this is how we discovered it. But now I'm a little, I'm much more interested in, in that population, you know, who they are, you know, how do they feel about having this, you know, you know, how does medicine interact with them?

Often times these people are just, you know, with the eyes blacked out and these are just in the book.



[Paul]: I, I have known since I was a teenager that I have a mood disorder. I have moderate depression, particularly seasonal depression.

I, you know, I said that I'd be glad to be rid of this. And someone who is not affected by a mood disorder or any other disorder as far as I know said, "Well, you know, do we wanna make everyone in society the same?"

And I've talked to a bunch of people who have depression and I've never heard any of them say I wouldn't be rid of this, it's an important part of my life. There's a popular misconception because there's a lot of tormented artists, that this is an important part of your passage through the world and your human experience and it's the font of your creativity. And I don't think that's true.

And, and I don't think that society would lose anything by having people being rid of all of this, but I don't know that for sure. And, and it is part of the human experience. I think that I would be the person that I am without it.

I think we should accommodate people who have this, and we shouldn't worry too much about what society would lose if 10% of us weren't miserable.