

Gary Lynn

Oct. 8, 2021 • 23:56

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

pandemic, gary, disability, vaccinated, experience, vaccinations, disabled, vaccine, give, person, tele, government, guess, vivre, appointment, gamble, burn, virginie, god, agree

SPEAKERS

Gary Lynn, Priya Ray

Priya Ray 00:00

Today is October 8, 2021. My name is Priya Ray, and I'm going to be talking to Gary Lynn for the COVID Disability Archive. We are recording these oral histories as a way to document the lived experiences of disabled, chronically ill, and neurodivergent individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic. Would you—could you tell me your name, age, and pronouns, and where you live?

Gary Lynn 00:28

Yes. My name is Gary Lynn and I am from Houston, Texas, and I am 29 years old. I use him.

Priya Ray 00:49

Okay, thanks Gary. Um, tell me how you would describe your identity, and it could be anything you know, disabled, a man, whatever, However you identify as a person.

Gary Lynn 01:07

I identify as a disabled caucasian male, in a wheelchair. That's about it.

Priya Ray 01:20

Okay, that's actually, that's a good description. When did you first learn about the pandemic? And what was your experience with it as far as emotions?

Gary Lynn 01:33

I believe well, actually, I was organizing never the you know the way I was much more money money oh and when in March 2020, that's when I started paying attention to the seriousness ... it was right around the first shutdown. I was a little more scared and a little more anxious, and you know, a little more cautious of what I was doing, a little more careful about going out. I started following the CDC recommendations of wearing my mask and social distancing. But I guess my overall feelings were a little scared, and a little anxious, I would say.

Priya Ray 02:49

Okay. Thank you. Um, what were one of the first conversations you had with anyone about the pandemic?

Gary Lynn 03:04

Um, I guess you could say the first conversation must have been with my mom, because she's my primary caretaker and we just talked about, you know, having to limit our daily activities outside the home and where we were going, and trying to be more wary of not gathering around that many people, you know, as before taking COVID precautions. And then I guess after that I had a few conversations with my friends on Facebook who experience... who are also wheelchair users and have the same needs as me. And we were talking about how they were dealing with the pandemic, how they were making do. That sort of conversation.

Priya Ray 04:29

Alright, Thanks, Gary. How has your experience with the pandemic changed over course of the past year?

Gary Lynn 04:47

I think right now we're closer to almost a year and a half, right?

Priya Ray 04:52

Right, right, right, correct.

Gary Lynn 04:55

Well, obviously I'm a little, I'm a little wary about the pandemic obviously since the vaccine has come out and I am fully vaccinated. I still try to be careful, you know, but I'm a little less weary. It's a little less stressful now that I'm managing it. And I mean, I know that being vaccinated doesn't mean you obviously can't get COVID, but hopefully if someone did get COVID and they were fully vaccinated they wouldn't get as sick as if they weren't vaccinated. But I'm still very careful, I still limit where I go and how many people I hang around with on a daily basis. The more I hear about my friends getting vaccinated the more comfortable I am being around them.

Priya Ray 06:33

Okay, yeah, that makes sense. What was your experience with getting vaccinated? How did you... Well, how did it make you feel?

Gary Lynn 06:51

Well I got vaccinated in February, early February. First vaccination, my experience, what I experienced right afterward was, you know, I did get a headache that was very bad and I did experience a fever after the first vaccination—it was about 104, my temperature, you know. I had a really bad headache, a splitting headache. I ended up taking Tylenol, even though you're not really supposed to, but I had to take one because my head hurt so bad. I couldn't even hold up my head, that's how bad my head was hurting. But anyways, I took the Tylenol, and about 20 minutes later, I felt better, my headache went away completely and then my fever did break, which was good. I was basically back to normal after I

took that Tylenol, you know? Basically like my normal itself. Yeah, so, I was lucky, I guess, because I really didn't have any serious side effects. I would say with the vaccine. Not as serious as some other people I know who took the vaccine.

Priya Ray 08:41

Mm hmm. Um, which vaccine did you take?

Gary Lynn 08:44

I took the Moderna.

Priya Ray 08:48

Moderna. Okay, cool. Thank you. What have your relationships with people been like throughout this entire time? Have any of your relationships changed?

Gary Lynn 09:00

Well obviously, I would say my friendships and my relationships have changed. I wouldn't say I lost anybody to the pandemic. I wouldn't say I lost any friendships or relationships to the pandemic. But I would say obviously there has been a little more strain, and maybe become a little more distant with people. Because you're not seeing people in person as much as you would be if the pandemic wasn't going on. I would say my friendships and relationships are a little more distant, and obviously a little more in a virtual setting than in an in-person setting, than they would be if there wasn't a pandemic. And I think that's the case for everybody, not just disabled people or me

Priya Ray 10:14

yeah

Gary Lynn 10:17

yeah because obviously a lot of people are working from home now, and they're not necessarily disabled, and they're still working from home and doing virtual conferences. Even doctors appointments are in a more online, virtual setting.

Priya Ray 10:45

Mm Hmm How do you feel? I mean how do you feel now that, you know, doctors are doing these tele—tele appointments instead of in person? I mean, do you do like that better or? What ... how do you feel about that?

Gary Lynn 11:03

Well, there are pros and cons to Virtual doctor's appointment. If you're going for a physical examination or if you're going because you're sick, Obviously it's going to be hard to deal with and to do the review over the computer, you know what I mean? Like, in my opinion they can't really tell what's wrong with you without seeing you in person, that's my opinion. But on the other hand if you just need a medicine refill or if you just want to let your doctor know what's going on with you, then it could be a good thing if you're able. You don't have to drive, you don't have to sit in a doctor's office. If they're like me they need a caregiver to transport them or public transportation, and That's not always accessible for people

with disabilities. So in that case, you might love telehealth with your doctor. I don't dislike telehealth, and I don't love telehealth. It's something in between for me.

Priya Ray 12:57

Yeah, no, I totally understand.

Gary Lynn 12:59

But if you have the flu, or stomach problems, or breathing problems or whatever, you can't tell what's going on with you.

Priya Ray 13:12

Right, exactly. So yeah, there's pros and cons to the tele-visiting, I agree with you on that. Um, so um, your living situation, who do you currently live with? And how's the pandemic affected that? And you know, do you use personal care attendants, and if you do has that been affected by the pandemic?

Gary Lynn 13:38

I currently live with my mom and one of my brothers, we all live together. And like I said earlier, my mom is my primary caregiver and then I have other family members that come in and take care of me. My brother might help out. I don't personally ... at this time, I don't use any outside caregivers besides my family. But I do know—I do have friends that do. And they've told me that they've been affected by this pandemic. They can't always get the care they need, and some of these caregivers are leaving . and if they leave, I've heard from some people that it's hard to find a new one. And you not not to get too political, but that's why I'm hoping the Home and Community Based Services law, if you're familiar with that, passes. I hope that gets passed through because we need caregivers and they deserve to be paid a livable wage, And in my opinion, they deserve health care benefits because it is a full-time job, you know? I hear over and over about the revolving door of caregivers, because they're not getting paid enough, and they don't get health benefits, and so they keep leaving. And it becomes a real mess for people with disabilities, they have to keep finding a caregiver.

Priya Ray 15:59

yeah I completely agree with you Gary. I personally don't think that's political, that's just practical in my opinion but you know

Gary Lynn

Yeah but you know how people turn everything ... I mean, I don't care who you vote for, but to me, Home and Community Based Services should be a nonpartisan issue.

Priya Ray 16:31

Yeah, no, I completely agree with you on that. So do you feel your relationships with different institutions like health care, government, media has changed during this time? And if so, how?

Gary Lynn 16:48

Yes, I would say my healthcare and my relationship to media and government has changed because prior to the pandemic I was very busy going to city council meetings and mayor meetings, and meetings

on disability. I would advocate for stuff like better transportation, improving sidewalks in Houston that are not passable for wheelchair users. And I would say all that is not really going on right now due to the pandemic. So if you want to talk to your government officials, you have to email them. Or you know a lot of these governmental meetings are being done virtually. So obviously that has changed for me. I believe advocacy is most effective if they see you in person, you know?

Priya Ray 18:11

yeah, I do

Gary Lynn 18:13

I mean, that's my personal belief but yeah, I believe that advocacy is less effective when it happens virtually.

Priya Ray 18:28

So what has been the hardest thing about living through this pandemic for you?

Gary Lynn 18:34

I would say the hardest thing for me obviously is worrying about coming down with the virus, because I have — I have lost a couple friends to the virus. So in that situation, you know, it's scary to think that someone like me who needs care possibly on a ventilator and possibly with no one there with me to provide the care that I need.

Priya Ray 19:24

Yeah, I understand that. So have there been any silver linings for you during this time?

Gary Lynn 19:38

Hmm. Yes, one silver lining is that I was able to finish a couple college science courses through a community college and I was inducted into the regents board of honors. I was also voted an outstanding Phi Beta Kappa chapter member at my college.

Priya Ray 20:24

That's great! That's great, Gary.

Gary Lynn 20:26

Oh and also, I had surgery done on my feet with a bone. It was done years ago, but it wasn't done properly. I had contact with the surgeon and luckily he was able to redo and get it done right. So I would say my successful surgery on my feet was another silver lining.

Priya Ray 21:28

Yeah, that's great. That is a great silver lining. okay, I mean, I don't know if you have anything else you'd like to say, that's pretty much all the questions I have, but please feel free to sum up anything anything you want to talk about

21:45

No, I just encourage people to get vaccinated if they can. I don't want to tell everyone to get vaccinated because I know it's not right for everyone, but I encourage people to go to the doctor and ask about the vaccine and do what's right for them. Not to listen to everything on Facebook or Instagram or wherever. I have people telling me, "Well I read this or that on Instagram or Facebook," and I try to tell them they don't need to be reading all that stuff on social media. You need to go to your doctor and find out what's best for you, and then make your decision. That's what I would tell people. Hopefully they will listen to me and take my advice. If not, that's on them. I'm just here to say that I believe COVID is a very serious virus, it's more than the flu and more than the common cold—I have people tell me that and I just can't believe they actually believe these things. I know people who have gone through it, personally, and I would say the outcome wasn't that great. So that's all I would say— go to your doctor and listen to their advice.

Priya Ray 23:42

Yeah, okay. Yeah. I agree with everything. Um, yeah. So thank you very much for doing this again. I really appreciate it and