

# 'Disability Culture & Publishing' with Olivia Spring

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, disability, sick, disabled, feel, magazine, olivia, job, thought, world, norwich, illness, england, episode, move, nice, podcast, physical, experience, home

## SPEAKERS

Olivia Spring, Isabelle Gray (Iszy), Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester

### Isabelle Gray (Iszy) 00:00

Welcome to Bite My Tongue, the podcast where we invite our fave people from the creative industry to tell all on the topics we're so used to biting our tongue on.

### Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester 00:08

Today on the podcast, we're joined by Olivia Spring, who is the founder and editor of Sick Magazine, but you're gonna find out a bit more about her in a bit. And yeah, we were talking about disability culture. And, you know, the world of publications and publishing, for chronically ill and disabled people. And this was one of our deeper chats. A bit more serious, but still incredibly enjoyable. And I really appreciated Olivia's patience with us throughout and just yeah her eloquence and articulation with everything.

### Isabelle Gray (Iszy) 00:56

Yeah, definitely. Yeah, it was it was such a great insight for sure. And yeah, like, whilst it was like, a deeper chat, I still felt like this lightness about her, which was like, really great. She was just so nice, do you know what I mean, like, yeah, like, it was just, it was great.

### Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester 01:16

Yeah. I like what we mean by that is like, we talk a lot about how like, angry and pissed off we get. Yeah, but I didn't feel weighed down by that sort of thing. It was like, yeah, fuckin angry. fucking pissed off. But we move. We move sort of thing. Yeah. Because this is saying that me and you aren't as clued up on like, some of the other topics that we've covered in the podcast. We have very much an intimate relationship with, but this was something that was

### Isabelle Gray (Iszy) 01:53

More of a learning situation?

### Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester 01:56

Yeah. And, you know, it was saying that I learned a lot through Olivia's magazine through Sick. And yeah, so it was a sort of no brainer. When it was like, who do we want on the podcast? It was like, really want to chat to Olivia who have started this incredible thing.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy)** 02:19

Yeah, just like as an Editor in general, just really amazing. Yeah, to do your own, like, publication is just crazy.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester** 02:30

Yeah, so like, in the episode we talk about that sort of set up, how those things came about how she approaches things. And I think again, like, it was just very admirable how she does these things. And yeah, just also very sweet, funny, funny person.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy)** 02:51

Right? Exactly. Yeah, with a cute dog. Which doesn't appear it in the podcast, but that's our little backstage privilege.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester** 02:58

I was gonna say, I'm going to say this. And I'm actually deeply disappointed with this episode, because at no point did I actually see the dog. The dog was referenced. I knew it was in the room, but I didn't actually see the dog so. Yeah. You know what, everyone just turn off the episode right now. Because you all now know that there was no dog in the presence of Fozz. So what is the point? What is the point? No. But yeah, we hope that everyone enjoys this episode. And please do check out Sick magazine.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy)** 03:37

Hi, everyone. Welcome back to another episode of Bite My Tongue. This is Izzy and Fozz do you wanna say hello to the peeps.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester** 03:45

Hello to the Peeps. This is Fozz talking. Well, that was a new intro for us. All right.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy)** 03:53

Yeah, you know, mix it up, mix it up. And we have a lovely guest today, as always, Olivia, would you like to introduce yourself?

**Olivia Spring** 04:02

Hello. I'm Olivia. I am the editor of Sick magazine, which is a magazine by chronically ill and disabled people. And I'm a writer, working on my first book currently.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy)** 04:14

That's exciting.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester** 04:16

Are we allowed to hear anything about the book? Or shall I keep my trap shut?

**Olivia Spring** 04:21

I can. Yeah. I mean, it's just I'm just writing it. It's nothing too exciting about it. But I'm happy to talk like about about it.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester** 04:29

Of course.

**Olivia Spring** 04:31

Yeah, so my book is a memoir that I'm currently working on which starts when I get sick when I'm 11 years old. So it kind of focuses on like growing up in New York City. And like the trauma that I went through there and all the medical trauma and then just like go having to go to school through it all. I talk a lot about fatigue, specifically illness like chronic Lyme disease and chronic fatigue and a lot about like guilt and the emotional kind of journey as annoying as that word is that I go through kind of, and then moving to England. So it spans like, I guess, like 12 years of my life, like from 11 years old to kind of present. And I've been working on it for, I guess, over a year now. I did finish the first draft, which was exciting.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy)** 05:23

That's a big step!

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester** 05:23

Congrats.

**Olivia Spring** 05:24

Yeah, but I have I'm trying to like, it's gonna be side by side with all my medical notes. So I have like, this huge medical history, like 200 pages of notes from doctors that I have to like sift through, and then like, choose stuff that I want to highlight in it. So that's like, way harder than actually writing. So I've like written my stuff. And now I'm trying to do that. And I just keep not doing it. Because it's quite a lot to go through. And it makes me very angry.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy)** 05:50

I'm sure yeah, that sounds fascinating, though.

**Olivia Spring** 05:54

Yeah, I'm excited.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy)** 05:56

When can we expect to read it?

**Olivia Spring** 05:59

I have no idea. I mean, hopefully someone will want to publish it.

**Charlotte Forrester** 06:03

It sounds amazing. I'm sure that someone would. Yeah. And you said that you moved to England, but you're not in England at the moment. So when did you move to England? And when did you move away from England.

**Olivia Spring** 06:17

So I moved to England to go to university. So I went to Goldsmith's. So I moved right after high school, and studied for three years. And then I moved to Norwich, and I lived there for two years with my ex partner. And then during the pandemic, I kind of found myself back here, closer to family, and it's kind of a weird, weird return. I very much thought I would live in England forever. And that was my goal. I like really did not want to be in the States. But life, you know, some things happen. And then all of a sudden, I'm living in Maine. I live very rurally for the first time in my life, which is very strange, but I love it.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester** 07:07

Would you like to England and you have a dog? We've already got very excited about the dog pre recording.

**Olivia Spring** 07:16

I would I don't know. I can't even think about my future anymore. Because I feel like I used to think I was gonna live in England forever. And now that I'm back here, I like can't even fathom living anywhere other than here like I'm just so here right now. I definitely like feel like my like writing and kind of like career is like British like. Like, I feel like if I if my book is published, I would like to like launch it over there. You know, because it feels like very. I don't know, I guess I felt more at home when I lived in England for sure. So yeah, it's definitely feels very weird, but also with visas and immigration. And that whole stuff is like another reason that I'm back here. And it's such a nightmare. It's ridiculous to navigate. And it's very like dehumanising and just exhausting. And you just feel like your worth is just like tied to work, basically. I just don't want to have to deal with that anymore, really. And it's nice to just be like, I'm a citizen of America, I can just live here without having to like get approval. So that's a big reason. I feel like for my mental health, it's nice to be somewhere I don't have to think about like, deserving to be there.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy)** 08:36

And yeah, if you're enjoying your little rural situation, why not lap it up? I think. Yeah, exactly. We love a nature situation.

**Olivia Spring** 08:45

Yep. That's all I'm trying to do.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy)** 08:49

And earlier, you mentioned Sick magazine. Could you tell us a bit more about that and how it came about?

**Olivia Spring** 08:56

Yeah, so Sick is a magazine by chronically ill and disabled people. I started it in 2019. I guess I first had the idea two years earlier, when I was at Goldsmiths, I was living in Peckham, I was waitressing at like a little pizza place is a very specific moment where I thought of Sick like, I feel like I always tell this exact story of like, being fired from my job and having like a total meltdown of like, how am I ever going to have work? How am I ever going to work? How am I ever going to live right? So when I moved to England, I was very much like, I knew that I would have to get a job that would sponsor me on a visa to stay in England after university. And you know, I was already sick. I knew I was sick. I could hardly go to school, but for some reason, I thought like, oh, that'll be no problem. I'll just get like a job at Vogue or something. And they'll sponsor me. And then I'm at uni and I mean, my health was pretty good at uni. Like I did have some ups and downs, but I was like, for the most part able to like go to uni. So then when I had this part time job where I was only working one to two shifts a week, and I couldn't do that. And I got fired. I was just like, well, what the hell am I even doing? Like, what am I trying to do here in England, like I'm coming here for three years, I'm not gonna be able to stay, I want so desperately to stay. So I'm just like, setting myself up for heartbreak, and gonna have to move back to America. So I was just in a really, really depressed place. And I was in my room just like literally pacing, crying, having a very elaborate meltdown with my boyfriend. And I was just like, I have to do something, I have to do something that focuses on this experience, because like, there's just no way I'm the only one experiencing this. Like, we can't just have all these people who go through this and then just be like, okay, well, I can't fit in to society, or I can't fit into work. And like, that's that, and I'm going to just keep trying anyway, and suffering through it and just feeling horrible and worthless. So originally, I thought, like, I didn't have like some type of like employment company that like focuses on employment, of chronically ill and disabled people, and like how to get us into jobs that are inaccessible. But that really stressed me out and seems just like really big and like, kind of like corporate and like, something that I wasn't interested in. And so then I was just like, well, I have to do a magazine, I can just do a magazine that's just only by us, like that just focuses on us. And I can like pay everyone and it can be like work for these people who struggle to work. And Sick came to me immediately. Because like, I just feel like that's like my name. It's just constantly Oh, I'm sick. I'm sick. Yeah, I'm sick. And so I still have this little notebook that first I started like outlining like little logos with my really bad handwriting. And originally, I thought it was gonna be way more like magaziney than it is more. I feel like now it's more like literary like I thought it would have more like column type things and like, lists, and I think I had interned at Marie Claire. So I think that that was kind of more of that in my mind. But yeah, I was like, Oh, my God, this is a great idea. And I believed in it so much. I was like, it's totally, it's gonna happen, I can see it so clearly. But then I didn't want to do it while I was at uni, because I wanted to get experience. And then still in my head, I was like, oh, well graduate, and like, get a job in journalism. And like, get experience. And I'm like, when I'm actually an editor, and then I'll start my own thing with all my experience. So that was like my plan. And then when I graduated, and moved to Norwich, where there's not very many jobs, and the ones that are in my field were all full time. No accommodation, like, you know, just you have to be there at 9am. At that time in my life, I couldn't do anything before noon. So it was just everything was inaccessible to me. And so I ended up getting a part time waitressing job, which I was like impressed and proud that I was able to do that. It was like perfect hours. I never started earlier than 12. I had like some three hour shifts. And it was definitely like physically really hard. But I was able to manage it. And I was at the pub one day, I was at The Birdcage in Norwich with my friend and I was telling her about this idea. And she was like, when are you going to do it? And I was like, you know what, like, maybe I could just do it now. Like maybe now's the perfect time. Because I'm working you

know, eighteen hours a week. I feel like I have the time I have the space like Norwich is a great city to do it in. And so then I just quickly decided okay, I'm doing it. I'm gonna do a summer launch. And then I just dove in 100% did so much research. Like this was probably like the least fun part was just like so many times where I was just like, there's no way I can pull this off. Like, this is ridiculous. But then I did and I did. So issue one is just like a what I call like a preview zine. It's like shorter 34 pages. And it was just kind of to be like, I want to make a full issue of this if you like it kind of support us. And that kind of took off more than I was expecting it to. I was expecting it to be much like a Zine. I feel like people received it as more of a magazine and more of like, a full body of work that I kind of saw is not a full issue of Sick. It was just this little like check this out. So then yeah, since then, it's just been growing and receiving so much support and it's been really, really rewarding, really amazing. And I'm just like, really happy that I'm able to do this.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester 14:57**

Of course like it is amazing. Like it's such a massive feat to have launched something like that. I think it's maybe an idea that lots of people have to like create their own publication. But to have had the success that you've had with it is like, yeah, incredible, really. But I was wondering, you sort of speak about like this magazine idea as sort of like having a eureka moment of like, oh, I'll do magazines for thing. But what's like the importance or significance of having a print magazine specifically, to represent the voices of disabled and chronically ill people?

**Olivia Spring 15:38**

Yeah, I mean, it feels really important to me to take up like physical space, and to be something that like people see on shelves and have to physically take in and physically sit with. It also just is personally like, I just have always loved magazines, and don't enjoy reading stuff on my computer. So like, if I was going to create something that involves reading, I was not going to do it in a way that I didn't enjoy. So that's, you know, kind of, I guess, the main reason, but I also think that, I feel that way, because I feel the importance of things more when they are physical. And when it's more than just an article on a web page, it's really an object, it's a work of art, it's a beautiful cover that you can have on display in your home. It's something that you can pass along to people that you can share with people that you can have forever, that's not just a page that you can click out of. So it feels important to me that it's like a, like an archive, you know, that you can collect and that can really last forever. I always kind of pictures like, Where in the world, there's just this little thing of paper could be sitting, you know, and it could really be anywhere and in such odd places. And I think you just can't do that with the internet. I mean, obviously the internet can be everywhere, but it's like, in this other world that you can't touch and print is just there and in your face. And I just think there's a lot of value in like sitting with something physically.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy) 17:17**

Yeah, I agree. There's nothing quite like a print magazine, the weight of it both, like physically like, metaphorically creates a weight because it's like something your home and it's like an accessory to the home almost. Yeah something that you can treasure and like read back on, I feel like you're far less tempted to reread articles that are online, because obviously with a print you can Yeah, I think that's a great way to describe it, definitely.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester 17:44**

And also, it's that idea of like, if you're a person that struggled to like take up space physically to have something that announces itself so much physically, I think can be like a huge feeling of empowerment in that sense. So I'm sure that like the contributors to Sick have really felt that but obviously there's such like a broad spectrum to disability and chronic illness. And I was wondering how you sort of approach that of how to represent that broad spread spectrum of people?

**Olivia Spring 18:24**

Yeah, that's something I think about a lot when I'm working on each issue I do work like through an open submission period so like it is very much dependent on what I read an editor I try to have a balance of things I do have a lot of sometimes we'll get a lot of submissions that are you know about like a swan illness or something and I want to make sure the issue isn't full of just work about one illness but it we do have you know, a lot of work on like chronic fatigue, I feel like MECFS is mentioned a lot and I think that just honestly comes from like living in a filter bubble with the internet and that like I identify with MECFS chronic Lyme disease like these kind of like energy limiting limiting illnesses. And so when I started sick and from like my personal account and Sick account like the people I follow the people that I read a lot of the people that I've ended up engaging with, like reflect that experience too. I mean majority obviously but not, obviously I read outside of my own experience, but I do think the filter bubble and like social media like pushes people that are very similar to you into your feed and that that kind of has ended up with contributors being Yeah, more from this like an energy limiting illness side of disability. But it is, you know, very important to get like a range of experiences and to highlight, you know, the wide range of disability. So it is something I'm very conscious of and trying to do, trying to do better at constantly improve. And I would say also, just like the term Sick, not a lot of not all disabled people are going to identify with not all disabled people may identify with my magazine. And so I think, you know, it's not something that is supposed to represent everyone's experience or all disabilities. But it is something that it's like a space for all disabled people. I think also, because I don't like reach out to people to submit to the magazine, like, if I did that, it would probably be a lot more diverse. So I try to get, you know, when I open for submissions to get that in front of people, a diverse range of people, but like, like I said, with social media being mostly the way that operates, it's hard to, to do that. So it really is just kind of what I receive and trying to spread the magazine to more people so that more people are aware of it and want to submit.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy) 21:16**

Yeah, definitely. I think it's so true, what you said a bit earlier about social media, how you kind of in this echo chamber, so like, literally every time the UK has an election, and you think, oh, everyone on my Twitter's like wants the same people to get out of government and you're like, oh, this is gonna be great. And then the votes come in, and you're like, oh, yeah, this isn't a whole population as a whole other group of people. And it's always depressing reality to remember that. Definitely. Yeah. Yeah. It's interesting to hear what you what you say about how that kind of like, works with the internet. And how do you think the Internet has kind of changed disability culture in recent years?

**Olivia Spring 22:01**

Yeah, I mean, it's changed so much. I remember when I first got sick. This was before Instagram. I mean, I think before Twitter, I don't even know when that came out. But I had a Tumblr, and I would

search, you know, like Lyme disease in tags, and maybe find like one person who would be blogging about Lyme disease, but it was not at all what it is now where you can just search things and find, you know, so many other people dealing with the same thing. So I really, when I was younger, like I genuinely thought I was the only one on the planet earth that was experiencing what I was experiencing. And it was very alienating. I thought I was like, the freakiest freak who ever lived like no one could comprehend my existence. I was almost like obsessed with that like feeling and almost just like, How can I be this weird? Like, there's something so wrong with me. And then getting an Instagram and even since I had Instagram, I still didn't really like engage in this disability culture until really like around when Sick came out. And obviously, there's been stuff going on before then that I just didn't engage with didn't know about, because I didn't even identify as disabled until I applied for university, I realised I could check the disability box. And then I was like, okay, I'm disabled, but like, I'm not really disabled. And then after doing more reading, and, you know, research and okay, I am disabled and embracing that. And only that is when I really started to engage in that online and it's really changed my life. I mean, so many so much acceptance for my illness has come from the internet and disability culture. So I think it's, even in the past, like a year or two years, I feel like I've witnessed so much more of a conversation going on. And like Instagram accounts, just posting like infographic kind of things that are just really easy to digest, and really easy to make, I think, talk about illness and disability be more accessible, more like mainstream, and not something that you have to like, study to learn about, you could just see something on someone's story, and actually gain genuine knowledge and be like, okay, like, that's, that's how I'll act next time I see someone using a wheelchair, you know, like that, you can understand that so quickly, instead of I feel like before, I felt like I'd have to get a degree in it or something to really understand. So I think there's probably a lot of people who can speak much more in depth on this and I just feel kind of like a little visitor in this world of internet. disability in the sense of disability. I think also because like, Sick is not really internet based thing. But I use obviously social media and stuff. But it's changed so much. And even with COVID, things being more accessible, like events being virtual, has been really amazing and includes so many people who have access to so many things now that they wouldn't before, even non disabled people, just people who are in a different country, and they can't go to the event. Now the events virtual, it's like, why have we not been doing this? This whole time? Like, it just seems so obvious? But yeah, I think it's just gonna keep the internet it's just a really, really, really influential, important place for the disability community. And I think it's just gonna keep growing really?

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy) 25:43**

And yeah, where do you kind of see it going in the next 10 years, the internet's kind of effect on disability culture, and what do you hope to see as well.

**Olivia Spring 25:53**

I hope to just see more awareness but also like normalisation of disability, and I that's what I'm trying to do with Sick and what so many other magazines and companies and podcasts and, you know, magazines like Able, which is about and by disabled people, I think it's not enough to just have a few magazines about disability, it doesn't need to all be about disability, I think once we realise like, we can have hundreds of magazines, just like there's hundreds of like, you know, marketed women's magazines that people might say are similar, but they all have their own identity, really, I think, is really cool to happen. I don't, it's hard for me to think like 10 years, like, that just seems like pretty wild. And I

feel like it's hard for me to comprehend anything beyond today. But yeah, I think I really just hope that everything will be more like normalised, disability isn't such a taboo topic. And I have seen that happening, which is really, really nice.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester 27:03**

And also like the whole thing of like, a decade seeming so long. I mean, when you talked about late Tumblr earlier, I was like, ah, I remember the days of Tumblr, but when I actually think about it, I was probably on Tumblr, like five years ago, but it feels like a lifetime ago. So I mean, just in like the next year, we don't know what sort of platform is going to pop up. I mean, like, look at how like TikTok's exploded. Yeah, and I know a couple of like, disabled creators who have gained so much like popularity on TikTok making like, very fun and joyful videos rather than I think like Tumblr was a lot of very, like sudden teams blogging. So yeah, that was definitely me. Yeah, it was like, you know, just with like, the dingy blue aesthetic, like it just was defined by that. But yeah, I hope I hope that like the internet creates like those more like joyful expressions, like we've seen with TicTok sort of thing. And I mean, what were you were touching on earlier as well with the pandemic of like, we've been shown of like, when people's like, in the general sense of the word accessibility has been like, restricted, how like the world can change. And do you think that these measures that have been introduced through the pandemic will stick around, and especially to help people who, you know, are do have like, accessibility issues with how the world is, like designed for them or not designed for them?

**Olivia Spring 28:45**

Yeah, unfortunately, I'm not very optimistic when it comes to that. There is an article in issue three that will be discussing that which is a really great and important article. But since I mean, when it first started, and people were working from home, I remember like immediately thinking like, this is such an opportunity, that's just not going to be like taken advantage of like, this is not going to move forward. But I'm just I'm such a pessimist. I mean, if I could not be a pessimist for a second, I would say that, like, it's amazing that there is this opportunity to really, I think, events wise, I do think a lot a lot of people will do virtual have virtual as well as in person because I feel like if they've seen how much the bigger audience they can reach, like, why wouldn't they continue to do that? So I think in some ways, yes. But I've also witnessed and heard, you know, way too many people being forced to go back into the office or having to quit their job or being denied accommodations that were okay two months ago. And so I really wish people would kind of sit with this experience more and ask themselves why they're, they're pushing for in person or why that they think that that's so valuable, and who they're hurting in that process. I mean, the people that they're choosing to not hire that are being left out, or who were included for, you know, a year and now being dropped again, like, are those people not a value to you? And like, what are you saying, when you say that you can't accommodate someone's needs. The article and issue three will articulate that much better than I have. But it's been very, very frustrating to witness and very disheartening, and really does just feel like a slap in the face, like the whole process. Like when people first started working from home, like, I was very, very upset. Obviously, they should be working from home during the pandemic, but it was just like, the amount of times I wanted to work from home, or the amount of jobs that I seen, like the same jobs are from the same company that are now saying, like, hopefully flexible, you can live anywhere, and like I wanted to apply to it before and couldn't. And I just wish they would be flexible forever. And not just when they have to be you know, so I do hope it's not a conversation that is just kind of stopped. And it's like, we must return to normal.

Because the title of this article is 'Whose normal are we getting back to?' And I think that's a really important question we should all ask when we refer to normal and what is normal? And whose normal is it? And who are we excluding? Why are you excluding them? And like, why are you choosing to continue with them?

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy) 31:43**

Yeah, it's such a frustrating thing. I just finished uni. And I'm applying for jobs at the moment. And it's just so funny to see already the change of like, for all these remote jobs being available, and now it's suddenly back to like London, London, London. And like, I'm very lucky that I already live in London with my family. But you know, lots of my course mates had to move home and you know, don't have the opportunity to live in London. Obviously, that's like a whole other issue. But it's just like, so annoying. Like, it will literally worked like, a week ago. So why is it suddenly like not possible to carry on being remote when it helps out so many people for so many different reasons, it just doesn't make any sense to me.

**Olivia Spring 32:20**

And also being like this job is remote, but you have to be willing to come to London as soon as we say you have to. So it's like, it could be remote for a whole year and someone in Leeds could do the job for a year, but they won't give it to them because they want you to on call to come in. And it's just like, chill out, you know, it's not that serious.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester 32:43**

I think that is the thing like it is just to chill out, we have all like, with the whole, like, work from home idea, which I think is a phrase that I hate. But it is just thing that like it's able to be done. Let's keep doing it sort of thing.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy) 33:03**

I think it just should be up to the person, they want to be at home or want to go in the office.

**Olivia Spring 33:10**

Like options. That's another thing. It's like, not everyone is going to work in the same way. And that's, you know, very something that I've learned a lot through disability. It's like, why do we have this one structure? One idea. It's something I think a lot about in school, like I've been thinking if I had, if I could have done school remotely, like that was never even a thing that would have been considered for me, it was like, I have to force my body up really early on the subway, like making myself more sick than I had to be to conform to this idea of normal of what must be done. And it's like, really, why are we acting like every human is like exactly the same and has the same preferences and needs like, we should try to have options for as many things as we can really just benefit everyone.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy) 33:54**

Yeah, I agree.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester 33:57**

And also that question of like willingness, you know, if you're not able to physically get to a place that somehow correlates with, like, your passion for what you're doing sort of thing. And that's, it's not a straight correlation. It doesn't work like that at all.

**Olivia Spring** 34:16

Yeah, like if you want to work, you should be willing to like run a marathon to get to our office because you're so passionate about being here and like that's, we only want people who will run marathons to our office.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester** 34:28

Ridiculous. But yeah, so I completely understand what you were saying of like, you'd like to be an optimist about it. But it's it's a big struggle to actually be an optimist about it when we've already seen the backtracking of measures that were put in place. So yeah, it's a very much a fingers crossed situation, but it shouldn't be a fingers crossed situation. Yeah. But what you were saying of like, earlier of like, your personal entry into disability culture, and also like that initial hesitation, and yeah, the multitudes of it all. And I was wondering, you've talked before about living with physical and mental illness. And I was wondering how those two things overlap for you.

**Olivia Spring** 35:29

I mean, I kind of, I'm trying to see them all as, like one nowadays, because I feel like, something I work a lot on therapy on is like, it doesn't matter if it's physical or mental, because I have to address it and treat it and or not treated medically, but treat it with my, myself, you know, it's, it's a struggle, it's a symptom, no matter what's causing it. So I think that was a big thing for me to deal with because I was told, you know, when I got sick for years, all I was told was that it's all in my head, that I'm just depressed, I need to suck it up and go back to school. So I was constantly fighting to prove that it wasn't mental, that being mentally ill was, you know, I had to prove that it was physical, and that if it was physical, I would get taken more seriously, I would get treatment, I would get help, I would be seen as someone you know, as a sick person, and not just a dramatic person, which is horrible. Because if you know, everything I was going through is all mental that should be taken just as seriously as if it was all physical. I mean it wasn't taken seriously at all, regardless. But it's, you know, a real real problem in the medical world. So also, I developed mental illness because of my physical illness because I was completely lost my life when I was a child. And every doctor I went to said that I was just being dramatic. So how am I supposed to like not develop some type of anxiety from that some depression of like, losing my body, you know, and then once I do get depressed, it's like, oh, now they can just write it all off as all depression. But I see it as physical and mental that are completely, completely entwined with one another. And I kind of, I guess, try to just see it all as sickness and not as I guess something. When I'm, if I have a day where I wake up, and I'm feeling really bad, I used to think, okay, am I just depressed and don't want to get up or am I like, really fatigued and is this Lyme. And that just wasn't helpful to frame it that way. Because regardless of what it was, that was how I was feeling. And the idea that, oh, if it was mental, I should just like push through. And if it's physical, I could rest just wasn't helpful or true, or something I agree with. So now I'm just like, this is how I feel. And this is how I should take care of myself. And this is what I need. And to almost just not even bother explaining what exactly it is. I just want to be like, I'm sick. I'm unwell. I can't do this today. And so allowing myself to kind of, I want to not explain myself, a lot of the time I felt my whole life that I have to justify and explain or I try to

look look sicker than I am because people think I look so healthy and good. That I'll try to you know, oh, I need to look tired to make them think I'm tired, which is so fucked up. I mean, what the hell, and I still catch myself doing that. And I'm just like, this is ridiculous, like, so now I try to look as good as I can. And be like, I feel like I'm dying. Now just like trying to prove a point. But it really is something that every disabled person deals with, I think there's a huge, huge mental mental toll with being, you know, disabled by society. And the range of experiences and like guilt is something I deal with a lot and disbelief like I'm still I don't think I'll ever get over the trauma of being disbelieved and having to constantly constantly feel every second of every day that I have to prove that I'm actually sick. So that's just like an ongoing mental thing. But that's just, you know, part of my illness. That's just part of my disability now. And also, I guess, recently, I've like not been identifying with the diagnosis as much. So I was diagnosed with chronic Lyme. Before that I was diagnosed with CFS/ME, I was diagnosed with fibromyalgia like it's for me personally, this is very much only my experiences. I see those all as one thing and it's just like an unexplained energy limiting illness. That I see I know so many people who have we all have it in different you know. Whatever, it's basically all the same symptoms on a different scale. And it's all just these illnesses that doctors don't care about don't research, don't believe, swept under the rug, completely ignored. And there's just millions of us like suffering. So I don't know if I really have Lyme disease. I don't know if I really have ME because no one actually can figure out how to diagnosis us, like with actual tests, when we probably could, with everything being like a clinical diagnosis. It's just like, yeah, I have Lyme. Yeah, I have ME. But I'm just sick. And there's, it's a lot more than just like, a name for something. I used to really identify with an diagnosis, because it was so validating. It was like, okay, I'm not this total weirdo. Like, there's a name for it, other people have it. But now I'm just like, who knows, man, it doesn't even matter. I have my symptoms, this is my life, I have to deal with it. Regardless of what it's called, I don't even see a doctor, I don't get any treatment. Like, just got to learn to live with it. And that's what I'm doing. And that's like, largely what I feel like Sick is about too.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy) 41:21**

I think that's such an interesting point about what you were saying about not trying to identify if it's like, the mental and physical because ultimately, like, you're still feeling how you're feeling. And I just think in general, it's just such a sad reality of the gaslighting that happens in the medical world. That as you say, like, when you have that title associated with it, it's like, yes, like I told you, so like I wasn't, you know, making it all up, there you go! But, but ultimately, you're still living with it, and you're still facing this, like, continuous forever having to, like, prove how you're feeling? And oh, yeah, it's just it's so frustrating. And something that I see, like, so widespread that I feel I feel like, I don't know, anyone that has had, like, a good experience with trying to, yeah, get through to doctors and stuff. Yeah.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester 42:17**

And I think what you were saying with that, like, parallel with like, Sick magazine, and also the idea of, like, you know, creating physical space with the magazine can be empowering just as, like labels with like, a diagnosis can be very validating. But it comes to a point of when it's like, you know, you want to expand further with like, you know, disabled and chronically ill people, and what they write about and what they're creating, and also, you want to go beyond this necessity for labels and diagnosis and how they can be, you know, affirming, because at the end of day, it's like, yeah, yeah, I'm just sick sort of thing. So, yeah, I think what you've touched on, it just has, like, so many facets to it.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy) 43:16**

Yeah, definitely. Um, so we are coming to the end of our episode very shortly. Which is sad. But it's been a wonderful time, and so enlightening, for sure. And we do have a couple questions though before we go, and so just kind of as a as a kind of summary situation. I just wanted to ask what your proudest moment during Sick's existence has been so far?

**Olivia Spring 43:45**

I think it's got to be just receiving really meaningful messages from readers, especially the ones where people say that it's like, genuinely helps them accept themselves and their illness, and to embrace the idea of being disabled rather than feeling ashamed or embarrassed or like they're not deserving of being called disabled. So that's really, really, it makes me so proud that what I've made was able to genuinely help someone to touch someone's life. I'd say also, seeing it in stores is like, very, very surreal to me. And just fills me with so much so much pride and joy, like I just can't believe that stores were like, yes, this looks good, we want to sell it! And then people go to the store and buy it and it just makes it such a real thing that's out in the world. And it's so hard like just wild to see something that I made in a bedroom, be sold in stores around the world. So that definitely makes me really proud especially stores that like, the Tate Modern's magazine selection was a place that I was always like, I'm gonna have my magazine here like, this is my spot. And it was always, you know, one of those things just like I thought, oh, I'll definitely get a job of Vogue when I graduate. And then so to actually see it happen, like I went to the Tate, I think a couple of years ago, I saw someone pick up Sick, flick through it and then go by it. And I was just like, like, the whole time, it was just really, really awesome.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy) 45:31**

Yeah, so special. I can't imagine. Yeah, what that must feel like. Do you remember when you first ever saw it in a shop?

**Olivia Spring 45:38**

Yeah, the first shop, I saw it and was in Norwich, which was just like down the road from me. And it was like, I always looked and looked at the magazines there. And then it's just so yeah, it's strange. I think it's because you see a magazine and you just picture like, an office and like all these people that are a part of it, and the money and then to have something that was just made so DIY, like next to it just seems like so weird. But then I'm also like, okay, maybe not every magazine is what I thought it was. Maybe a lot of the world is really just DIY, and we're all just like, what's going on? About everything.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy) 46:15**

Yeah, I think that's definitely true. For sure. Yeah, I think, yeah, it's nice. It'd be must be in a nice experience to kind of get that reality of it. Makes the other ones a bit... What's the word? Doesn't matter.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester 46:33**

Can I also ask when we can expect an issue three? Or is that still hush hush?

**Olivia Spring 46:40**

Yeah, so not quite decided. It's not hush hush. It's just like I cannot like I have like, I can't plan things more than like a week or two ahead of me. And everything's just so like dependent on people's capacity and making the magazine. But it's no secret or anything. So like, today, I've been working today on finalising the last bits of issue three. Design is pretty much done. And I'm thinking I'm not sure when this is going to come out, this podcast is going to come out, but I'm thinking next week, I'm gonna drop the cover. And then open pre orders. And the next couple of weeks, it'll all be happening. And then it's going to be printed in August. So yeah.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy)** 47:27

Very exciting. Nice.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester** 47:31

Can't wait. Yeah, we do have a final question for you.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy)** 47:37

We do. And so yeah, in line with our podcast name, Bite My Tongue. Is there a time where you've regretted biting your tongue in the past? What would you like to bite your tongue less on in the future?

**Olivia Spring** 47:52

I think this just still comes back to like disability for me. And just feeling like, I'm not allowed to speak about my experience, or that it's awkward or shameful. Or not wanting just being like, someone will ask me a question. And the answer will involve, as it usually does, somehow, me being disabled and just kind of feeling like I almost say, and then I'll be like, and then just say something else. And I think obviously with Sick I'm not doing that anymore. And I'm proud of that. And I think if people you know, know, not that saying everyone who's disabled should go screaming about it, if that's not what they want to do. But I think there is something powerful and in embracing who you are, and just owning it. And it's not always easy. But that is what what I'm I guess trying to do now, I also think like, just in journalism in general, like, not sending pitches because I'm embarrassed or not sending a question to an editor because I think it's stupid. And just being like, it doesn't matter. Just send the email, just just try and the worst that could happen is a no and just keep going.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy)** 49:09

Absolutely. I agree. For sure. Yeah. And that's, I think something I have to work on as well to just bite the bullet. And it's okay to ask for help, advice and stuff. Yeah. Well, it's been lovely to have you. .

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester** 49:33

I've really enjoyed this chat. And really appreciate you taking the time to talk to us as well.

**Olivia Spring** 49:40

Yeah, thank you so much for having me. It's been really great.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy)** 49:44

I'm glad! Nice. So that was our episode with Olivia. And wow. Well, great ep. I really enjoyed talking to Olivia and I feel like I need to go have a lie down and think you know, it's really like, it's one that's got me thinking.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester 50:04**

Yeah. Like this, I think this episode was really indicative of something that I've really enjoyed about the series as a whole, have like, really been given the time, you know, like, sort of roughly an hour sort of thing to really think about these bigger topics. Yeah, I'm really just like, get into them. And I think, yeah, chatting with Olivia. That was saying huge of talking about like, the past or and then the societal, the institutional. Also, I think it really went through the layers of everything. And yeah, I really, yeah, I was really just, I think, moved and inspired by the conversation.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy) 50:54**

Yeah, definitely. And, yeah, just shout out to Olivia for giving up her time to talk to us because she sounds busy, like writing the book doing the magazine. Like the new issues have to come out. Like, just yeah, that's, that was really? Yeah, I was really grateful to be able to organise that time to chat with her and hopefully, yeah, I'm hoping the listeners also like, felt as rewarded by the conversation as we did.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester 51:25**

And also will, yeah, support publications like Sick magazine, cuz it's like Sick magazine is sick. Like, honestly, some of the best writing that I've come across from young creatives, so.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy) 51:40**

Well, yeah, that's the only plug you could ever need. So go check it out. And yeah, give it some support. And yeah, please come back for our next episode.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester 51:53**

Pretty please? Yeah, you can subscribe to us. And also leave a review if you'd like to. Saying that, you know, me and Iszy should shut up, more. We need the feedback. Yeah our annoying voices will be back next week. So see you all then.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy) 52:13**

See ya.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester**

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