>> Lauren Appelbaum: We are next going to be going into a panel -- a career strategy conversation that's going to feature both previous Fellows who now actually work at RespectAbility -- Isabella won't be on that one, but Isabella does fall into that category -- as well as some current Fellows to learn a little bit more about our National Leadership Program and how it could help you in your career, as well as advice from -- our panelists on general career strategy conversation. So I am going to now pass the baton back to my colleague Graciano. Graciano Petersen is going to be moderating this next panel. Thank you very much.

>> Graciano Petersen: Thank you Lauren. Such informative information about getting and pursuing a career in the entertainment and news media industries. Thank you so much to all of those panelists and to Lauren for leading that conversation. Next up, we're going to have a conversation with our current -- with a current Fellow and a few former Fellows around -- pursuing this Fellowship and how this has gotten them into positions that they're hoping to get into. I do have to acknowledge right off the bat that this conversation is happening in the wake of the passing of somebody who has had a lot to do with bringing this Fellowship program to where it is right now. And we recently lost our Senior Manager of the National Leadership Program, Ben Spangenberg. He passed away a couple of weeks ago after a short stay in the hospital. And our thoughts are definitely with him and his family at this time. But Ben was responsible for leading the National Leadership Program for the last few years. We have had the pleasure of having alumni of over 300 participants in the program, and almost 200 of those participants were selected under Ben's leadership. So it's definitely a large loss for the community and for our programming, but the people who are on this panel today were selected by Ben. And we wanted to make sure that we are doing this and honoring him and his legacy and remembering him today. So thank you all for joining us in this conversation. Again, I'm Graciano Petersen, I am the Senior Director for Talent, Culture, and Training, and currently leading the programming for our National Leadership Program, also known as our Fellowship. And I am going to be joined in this conversation by some of our current Fellows -- one current Fellow, in Grace Ogden-Parker, and a couple former Fellows who are current Staff members in Rostom Dadian and Jake Stimell. I'd like to invite all of them to turn their cameras on and join us in this conversation today. So again, for those of you who may be newly joining, I am a black man with black curly hair. I'm wearing dark rimmed glasses and a white shirt. I'm going to have each of our panelists introduce themselves and also give their visual descriptions as well, and talk about a little bit about what their current positions are and what that is. So we'll start with Jake.

>> Jake Stimell: Thank you. I'm Jake Stimell. I am the Disability Training and Consulting Bureau Associate at RespectAbility. I am a young adult white man with brown hair, glasses, and a blue and white decorated shirt. I was a Fellow from January to May of 2021. Currently in my role as the Disability Training and Consulting Bureau Associate, I train and consult with organizations -- so you have nonprofits, corporations, educational institutions, government administrations -- on all topics surrounding disability inclusion. Graciano mentors me in that work. And yeah, it's been a really great ride at RespectAbility thus far.

>> Graciano Petersen: Thank you, Jake. Rostom? > Rostom Dadian: Hello everybody, my name is Rostom Dadian. I am the Policy Associate here at RespectAbility. I was a part of the Fall 2021 cohort of the RespectAbility Fellowship. And I am a middle eastern man with short brown hair and a little bit more of a five o'clock shadow. So it's great to be with everybody today.

>> Graciano Petersen: Thank you Rostom. And Grace?

>> Grace Ogden-Parker: Hi, I'm Grace Ogden-Parker. I am one of the current Fellows in the Policy and Civic Engagement department. And I'd like to describe myself real quick. I'm a white female, brown hair, blue glasses, blue headphones, blue shirt --everything blue, as always. And I have the gray RespectAbility 10th anniversary background. I'm in the current cohort, and some of the things that I'm working on is trying to build coalitions in the states, trying to learn how to write policy briefs, and things like that. And I'm just really excited to be here.

>> Graciano Petersen: Thanks so much Grace, it's great to have a theme. I love that your theme is blue today. [chuckles] Alright. So Rostom, tell us why you wanted to pursue RespectAbility's Fellowship program?

>> Rostom Dadian: So the reason why I wanted to pursue the RespectAbility Fellowship is because it fell in between the lived experience I have as a blind and visually impaired person from birth, and my interest in politics. And so that intersection got me into thinking about how I can pursue my interest while also trying to change from an having academic background in finance, and kind of seeing how those skills I learned in my academic background can translate to policy, and so I can work better towards leading -- and leaving a world better -- than I found it.

>> Graciano Petersen: Wow, thanks for that Rostom. Grace, how about you? What led you to pursuing RespectAbility's Fellowship program?

>> Grace Ogden-Parker: Well as many in RespectAbility know, I applied five times. This is -- my fifth time applying. I've been applying for two and a half years, and fifth time's the charm. Everybody says third times the charm, that's the saying, but I'll tell you it's fifth time or seventh time or 20th time. It doesn't matter. If you really want something, keep going. I really wanted it, pretty bad apparently. That's because -- most of my life, I learned what everybody else learned, which was very little about disability. Because I didn't know I was born with a disability, because mine was less apparent to people, and there was a lot less known about its presentation in anyone other than small child males. [laughs] I am autistic, and nowadays we know a lot more about it, although there's still a lot that the general public doesn't know -- and quite a few people who should know don't know. And that's why I've been so interested in advocacy for autistic people. And then that kind of spread out into all disabilities as I became closer and closer with a lot more of the disability community, and learning a lot more about everything that's going on with that. And there's still so much to learn -- nobody can know it all, but I'm going to try. [laughs] And that's part of why I'm here, is so that I can learn as much as I can, and then I'll move on to the next ability to learn as much as I can, until someday I hopefully will know everything before I die.

>> Graciano Petersen: Well Grace, I think your persistence has already demonstrated that if anybody's gonna learn everything, it's going to be you, so we believe in you. Alright. And Jake, how about you? Why did you want to pursue RespectAbility's Fellowship program?

>> Jake Stimell: So I was also persistent, but not as persistent as Grace. I only applied to the Fellowship twice. And then the second time I applied for the Community Outreach and Impact department. And really, when I graduated college, I wanted to expand my knowledge of the disability community beyond past my own experiences, and I just felt like Community Outreach and Impact was a great way to do that -- building partnerships, building coalitions, getting to see what the broader disability community and the broader community at large was really thinking around these issues. And to this day, being able to consult and train with all types of organizations is a really rewarding and also a very educating process. I learn a lot from all of my clients, whether they -- wherever they are on their disability inclusion journey, whether they're at the beginning, whether they are -- whether they think they know more than they know, or whether they're much further along on their journey than some of my other clients. You know, you learn a lot from working with others and from -- others' experiences and others' perspectives. And that was really why I pursued this this Fellowship in the beginning.

>> Graciano Petersen: Alright, thank you all so much for sharing. I'd like to get into maybe how the Fellowship program is going to help you all in your future careers, or how do you imagine that it will? So I'll start with Grace for that one.

>> Grace Ogden-Parker: Of course. Well obviously, I think it's gonna play a big role. [laughs] You know, I think that I tried for so long to just kind of do advocacy on my own, and that is absolutely ridiculous. Because as we know from unions and coalitions and organizations and everything -- we're always better together than we are alone. And I think the union saying is -- "together we fight, alone we beg," or something like that. And it's true -- to a degree, but it's a little more complicated than that. And I think that working together is really where we're going to make a difference, and I think that that's something I'm learning a lot about here, is collaborating and building coalitions and making connections and networking, and growing that community to work together to make some changes.

>> Graciano Petersen: Thank you for that, Grace. Jake, how about you? How do you feel like it's going to help your career?

>> Jake Stimell: Yes, so I feel like partnerships built -- partnership building and advocacy is something that can help me in any field that I choose to go into, whether it be in the nonprofit world, whether it be in the -- corporate world. But -- partnership building and then -- really getting my point across about disability inclusion, even if it's not in a disability space that I'm -- that I'm working in. If I'm trying to get my point across on disability inclusion, I feel like that my experience at RespectAbility has really helped me do that.

>> Graciano Petersen: Thanks for that. Okay, Rostom, how about you?

>> Rostom Dadian: I think that building off of what Jake and Grace already pointed out, I do believe the community aspect is such a big thing, because you're -- everybody has value to bring, and you're going to learn something from everybody. Like Grace said, nobody knows everything but we would all hope that, like, at the end of the day we would know everything. But with that aspect of community, we build that relationship, and we try to see where each of us can fit, and build out solutions to the problems that we see in front of us. So I think having those skills and having that recognition of knowing how to integrate everybody into the conversation is something that I carry with me, and I know no matter, what I do will be a huge tool for me to achieve any of the goals that I seek.

>> Graciano Petersen: Great, thanks for that Rostom. And speaking of community -- we always like to hear from our community as well. So those of you who are participating and have any questions for our -- Fellowship members, please be sure to ask. You know, the Fellowship application is currently open and if you are thinking about pursuing, these are great candidates, right, to ask your questions to, right? We have the persistence that has been demonstrated in getting into this program, and they can give you all the advice you might need in completing your application. So -- let's think about those our former Fellows, current staff members, I'm going to go to you all first to talk about what skills that you gained during your Fellowship have most prepared you for your current role? And let's start with Rostom on that one.

>> Rostom Dadian: So I think a couple of the big skills that I learned that most prepared me for what I'm doing now is learning how to network, learning how to utilize the people around you to achieve the tasks that you have to do. And it's okay to lean on people. Like I said earlier, we're all a community, and if you've never done something it's okay to be, like, hey Graciano I've never done this, can you help me out or can you show me? Because it saves us both time that -- if it's something that Graciano has already done, he can show me and then we could save our time and I can go on and finish that task and move on to the next one. So I think that's a very important skill to have is to utilize the resources around you, no matter what they would be.

>> Graciano Petersen: Yeah absolutely. I think definitely making sure your inter-relational skills are on point, being comfortable asking questions. I love that. Jake, how about you?

>> Jake Stimell: So I have to provide a little background on this question. My supervisor actually left a month and a half into my Fellowship. And I really gained the -- how to -- the ability to deal with change and just balancing different priorities and -- both the administrative side and my actual work. And my -- my time at RespectAbility thus far has been -- there's been plenty of change, nothing short of that. And -- it's really -- it's really a balancing game of balancing the change and also balancing your actual work priorities, so it's really taught me to deal with change and deal -- in a work environment, I would say.

>> Graciano Petersen: Great, thank you so much. Yeah, being adaptable to change is something that's incredibly important, and something that will serve you very well no matter what your next career opportunity may be. Grace, how about you? What are some skills that you're hoping to gain during this Fellowship, or maybe there are some skills that you've already started working on so far?

>> Grace Ogden-Parker: Yes, both. I have both answers. As far as skills that I've already been learning -- this is weird to say as an autistic person, because we're known for being very narrow focused, but I came into this wanting to fix everything, so my focus is pretty broad. And I was struggling with that. And I talked to Rostom -- Rostom is great. He's in the same department I'm in, and he's been a great great mentor. And I also spoke to another person who's been connected to RespectAbility for a long time, Ollie Cantos. And he helped me literally break down how I'm going to narrow my focus. And the funny thing is that he narrowed my focus to a very broad topic, still, but that actually gave me a lot of direction, which is all kind of stuck in my head right now. I'm gonna have to put it all on paper before I can move forward, but that's one area that I really learned a lot. And I've learned a lot about networking as well. But what I'm really learning right now and want to continue to learn a lot more of is -- the ways in which we can engage with our community and our elected officials. And I really want to make systemic change, and so I want to be able to build those connections and influence those connections to make change as well. And so we're doing that. I've been learning quite a lot as far as how to write about what we want to communicate to others, and I can't wait to learn more about it.

>> Graciano Petersen: Yeah, thank you so much Grace, that was -- really great insight into what you're currently working on and what you're hoping to additionally focus on. And we all know that that could change too, right, so -- Alright, so let's think about -- as you are currently pursuing your careers and advancing in your careers and in your Fellowship opportunity, how do you seek out additional professional development opportunities, right, whether it be in another Fellowship, or in some other sort of full-time employment, what is the best way to go about doing that? Let's start with Jake.

>> Jake Stimell: Thank you. So I've learned a lot about networking through my experience at RespectAbility, and really just -- leveraging -- I know we've talked -- in the summit a lot about putting your network to work and -- a lot about -- I've learned a lot about how to best utilize LinkedIn through my time here at RespectAbility. Also we have this tendency in the nonprofit world to bring our work home. We all love what we do, and it becomes such a part of who we are. So I would say that -- setting boundaries and creating a work life balance is also a really important thing that I've learned to do. I'm still working on it, still surf LinkedIn when I'm done working, and still continue to engage in that networking, but I think that's something that we all do and, yeah, I think that's a really important way to maintain your mental health and something that Lawon was talking about in the last panel really about setting those boundaries and putting yourself first and -- we can't do the work that we want to do -- if we're not -- mentally right, you know?

>> Graciano Petersen: Yeah no, absolutely. But it's very hard working in a disability inclusion and disability advocacy organization made up of majority of people with disabilities to then say don't take your work home, because [laughs] you are your work, right? So it's very difficult. How about you Rostom?

>> Rostom Dadian: Can you repeat the question because I forgot it? Thank you.

>> Graciano Petersen: Absolutely, yeah. How do you seek out additional professional development opportunities, either other Fellowships or other full-time employment, as you're doing the work that you're doing now?

>> Rostom Dadian: Okay, this is a really great question because -- it's something I've leaned on a lot academically. So -- I'm a planner, so whatever it is I want to do, like, I went from community college with an Associates in business, to getting into finance, so I was like, "how can I supplement my education at the university with something that'll help me understand finance more practically, rather than theoretically?" So I sought out, like, YouTube videos that had people in the professional realm doing PowerPoint presentations about how the industry works. And I also, like, looked at different universities who had, like, open courses online. So that's how I did stuff like that. And with the resources we have here I kind of do the same thing. I plan out my professional development around tasks I'm working on. So if I'm doing -- if we're doing a networking event with the Fellows, I'll read about networking before I talk about it with them, so that I have a better grasp of it, so we can all learn together. It's a planning process. It's a process of knowing what I want the outcomes to be before I start to actually seek the professional development that I'm looking for. So that -- in summary, is, like, how I go about it.

>> Graciano Petersen: Yeah, that's great Rostom. I hear there in that sort of a mindset towards just a space of continuous learning and continuous growth, so I love that. How about for you, Grace? What are you doing right now to think about what's -- what might be next in your professional development, whether it be a Fellowship or a full-time job? How do you pursue that right now as you're completing your Fellowship?

>> Grace Ogden-Parker: There's quite a few ways. I'd like to circle back to the networking that Jake was talking about, because that's a huge part of what we're doing here is the networking -- at all our levels, not just at the Fellowship level, but for the Fellowship level it is definitely a personal -- or professional development stage of it -- because we have to learn how to do that within this realm. And the nice thing about it is we have so many amazing mentors here at RespectAbility that are helping us not only reach out to people, but also helping us prepare to have those conversations, helping us kind of make decisions about who to reach out to and how. And so -- that piece is super easy in my opinion right now, but [laughs] -- there's a lot of difficult tasks to it, especially since I'm an autistic person, and for those who know this, autistic people do -- our disability has to do with communication and social cues and things like that. So we do need to learn a lot in order to be able to network effectively in this realm. But fortunately, we're working with a lot of people who are in the disability realm, and so -- they're kind of open to that difference -- and then there's going to be some that aren't, so we're going to have to -- push past those stigmas that are out there. Another area -- I do like to take classes, like Rostom was talking about. And I like to meet with -- my Fellows and brainstorm more things that we can do even outside of the Fellowship. The other two policy Fellows with me -- we talk all the time, and we're all super passionate about things. And so when it's not a project we're doing for work, we're still sharing it with each other and thinking of ways that we can get involved in our personal lives with it. And I want to go back to what Jake said about separating things. I know a lot of people need that boundary, but for me I thrive on this stuff. I thrive on the disability community. I come alive when I interact with other autistic people. And so having that in every area of my life is actually really good for my mental health, as long as I'm not in, like, constant conflict, you know? Like, a lot of my friends at this point are people who are either in the disability community or the autistic community -- I mean aside from my household. And then I have children and I want to raise children who are going to be fighting for the right things and understanding the world the way that it really is. And so there's those pieces as well. I kind of have to bring it into my personal life too, because it's so important to kind of get our next generation on board as well, so -- and there's too many -- false narratives out there, so we got to make sure that they don't hear that and only that. So that's important to me. I like to do speaking engagements -- I am doing a lot of those on the side as well, so it kind of -- it's just kind of expanding in every direction, I think. And with the Fellowship, my biggest thing is learning from these people, because they're some of the best to learn from. I mean we have amazing people here at RespectAbility -- and I've been following you all for, like, way too long already, so it's not like I didn't already learn something from you guys before as well. But you also have a lot of resources on the website for anybody who isn't already in the program. You can learn a lot even before you join. And I think I may have taken up a lot of time just now, but we still have lots of time left, I'm not worried about it.

>> Graciano Petersen: Oh yeah, we have plenty of time, Grace. But no -- and I appreciate that. I think that --

>> Grace Ogden-Parker: This is good, because I like to take up space.

>> Graciano Petersen: [laughs] It's all good. I think that -- I actually wanted to build on something that you were saying before, though. Like, you're -- sort of branching out into all these different areas, you're advancing your professional development in different ways. What does it look like for you when you've -- what are you -- what does your career advancement path look like? What are you trying to get to? What is the end goal, do you think?

>> Grace Ogden-Parker: Well, does everyone want me to info dump about the UN convention on the rights of people with disabilities, because that is my obsession, and it's very likely going to be the path I'm trying to take.

>> Graciano Petersen: Got it.

>> Grace Ogden-Parker: If anybody out there has any connections with that, feel free to reach out to me. I'm on LinkedIn. I will jump on every opportunity to fight for that. I want the U.S. to ratify it, I want the U.S. to embody the elements of it. And I've been researching that even longer than I knew RespectAbility existed. I'm very very very into the the UN CRPD. And so that will probably play the biggest role in where I go next and where I go down the road. And I'm staying in contact with Ollie, because he is an amazing mentor as well -- and also has a lot of connections. And he's just really really amazing. And I know that he worked with a lot of you who are already here, so you know what I'm talking about. He's pretty amazing. And you know, I have a lot more people that I'm going to talk to soon that also worked on this as well. So -- I think that this has been a really good place for me to be to hone this and to learn more about what I need to do to move forward.

>> Graciano Petersen: Fantastic, thanks for sharing Grace. Yeah, and I know that Jake has worked a lot with Ollie on some events for the Disability Training and Consulting Bureau. But Jake -- what do you think is next for you? How are you going to advance your career? What are your end goals?

>> Jake Stimell: That's a great question. What are my like end goals is such a -- far concept. I mean, my end goals will probably change 10 more times at this point. You know, I think I really want to affect change wherever I go, whether it be in the nonprofit world, in the corporate world, in a different type of workplace setting. I think the most important thing is affecting change, and -- affecting change in that workplace but also possibly in -- the greater society. I think that we do that at RespectAbility. Every day we're creating change internally with Graciano's amazing DEIA work that he's spearheading, and then ultimately creating change in society through policy work, through entertainment news media work, through creating great leaders to then move on into the world and into different -- industries, in our inclusive philanthropy work, in our disability training work to try to affect change at many organizations. So I think the most important thing is affecting change no matter where you go and keeping that front of mind.

>> Graciano Petersen: Yeah, fantastic. I love that. And I know that Rostom, you are -- working on affecting change through policy and legislation in the current work that you're doing as part of our policy team. Is that the end goal, is that where you're hoping to be, is that where you think you're going to make the most impact in your career?

>> Rostom Dadian: I think that as of right now that looks like where I want to be for the near and medium term. What I would say is a goal of mine isn't necessarily, like, a career path, it's more creating, like, space for everybody to be their genuine selves. And kind of doing that with kindness, because I feel like -- we have a lot of opportunities to just make people realize that the work we do isn't just the work we do, we're working with people. So that's kind of what I want to do, whether if that manifests in politics maybe down the road, like, in a local position or in a state position or maybe even, like, one day running for governor of California. If those opportunities come down the -- line, I would not -- I would take them as quickly as I could -- sorry. But yeah I think -- that's kind of what I try to do and, like, figure out what opportunities are in front of me and which one of them kind of vibes with my morals and vibes with the world that I want to see and leave behind for other people.

>> Graciano Petersen: Yeah absolutely. That's -- really great, Rostom, thank you so much. All right. Just a couple more questions that I'd like to ask each of you to just kind of gauge -- the Fellowship and its impact. But how has the Fellowship impacted your personal growth. Jake, I guess I'll start with you -- on that one.

>> Jake Stimell: So I think it really goes back to networking. Learning from the incredible staff that we have. You know, we have great experts in so many different fields. And as Grace said, when we are this passionate about disability inclusion, it's hard to ever walk away from it, to ever shake it from what we're doing, so I think it has contributed to me personally and professionally -- knowing how to to advocate for myself, knowing how to -- deal with having a bad day at work. Everyone at RespectAbility has done it. And -- learning from them, both as professionals and as people, I think is great -- I mean, I've seen some great people come to RespectAbility, and while I've been here, even seen some great people leave RespectAbility while I've been here. But the entire time, I've been learning from great people: from Staff, from Board, Ollie is a great person to learn from, and I love learning from him all the time. The trainers that I work with all the time are also great people to learn from. So really -- keeping an open mind and learning from as many different sources as possible, I would say.

>> Graciano Petersen: Yeah great. So I think just tapping into the -- educational opportunities that RespectAbility has provided, that's great, thank you so much Jake. Rostom how about you? How did the Fellowship impact your personal growth?

>> Rostom Dadian: I think that one of the ways is, like, opening me up to different people and different experiences that I would not have as the person that I am, and seeing how different cultures interact and how we can, like, work together. Another one of the things that really has affected me personally is I've -- through the Fellowship, I've made so many, like, long lasting friendships, and that means, like, the world to me because -- I still have text chains with people that I try to check up on, and there are people that I haven't talked to that if I pick up the phone it would be just like -- we just spoke yesterday. But being able to call the people that I work with friends -- it means a lot to me, because I really enjoy doing the work. So it doesn't -- some days to me, I know, a lot of people are going -- a lot of people don't have this experience these days, but it kind of feels like I'm not coming to work, I'm coming to do something that's meaningful to me with people that actually mean something to me, so I'm very lucky that personally I can have that experience.

>> Graciano Petersen: Yeah no absolutely. I do think that -- we hear about the bonds that are made in these cohorts. And Grace has already talked a little bit about how she already bonded with some of her other policy Fellows as well. But Grace, what else has impacted your your personal growth in the Fellowship?

>> Grace Ogden-Parker: Oh I was going to say, yes, my friendships for sure, so far. I mean, I don't want to get their heads too big because they're in the audience right now, but Abe and Kaitlin are two of my closest friends right now. They are just amazing people and -- we reach out to each other, not just for work stuff, but we can chat too. And it's really really great to have like-minded people who you get along with. I want to say that Rostom is one of the best mentors I've ever had so -- and what you were saying about -- a little bit ago about making it people-centered, I think that you already do that 100%. I work with you on such a regular basis, and you are 100% focused on our individual needs, what is best for us, what we're going to be doing for other people, like, you are the most person-centered person I've ever met. And so I think that you're amazing at that. But -- I think it really is -- the connections, I think that that's what's really affected my life personally the most is the connections. I think everybody here is great. I'm super lucky I get to have Ariel, our CEO, as my other mentor, and they are amazing -- super amazing. They have so much good advice and really really smart, and we just -- we have a good -- good connection there too. So I think that there's so much. I mean, I'm a little bit sad because Ben is gone, but -- and he was a really important part of all this, and he was so amazing, and -- I don't want to talk about him too much, because I might cry on camera and that would be ridiculous right now. But -- well maybe not ridiculous, but not what I'm looking to do right this moment. But -- he was such a kind and good person and a really really really good mentor and -- even in a short amount of time that I worked with him, I learned a lot, and I gained a lot from his personality as well. So I think -- I think I'll carry that on too in my life, as well as in my professional development. What else can I jibber jabber about? I think I'm gonna stop there, even though I probably could share a lot more [crosstalk] just remember folks -- just remember folks, five time's the charm, the saying is wrong, five times.

>> Graciano Petersen: Five times is the charm, absolutely. Yes -- no, and I appreciate it Grace, and thank you so much for sharing. I definitely think that it is a lot about the connections and how people-centered we try to make this experience. And so -- my final question for you all as we're think -- as we are -- we now have reopened the Fellowship applications, and it's something that we want people to apply and think about applying to this program: what is it -- what makes a great Fellowship candidate in your opinion? I wanna hear from each of you. What do you think that the the best Fellowship candidate is? What is that person -- what does that person look like? Describe them to me. I'll start with Rostom.

>> Rostom Dadian: So I think that if we want to look at what the the greatest attributes of the Fellowship candidate would be is are you passionate and willing to do the work for other people while being able to learn and share your thoughts. The best advice I would give would be just, like, just apply. You never know, right? If you don't apply, you won't get in. If you do apply, you might get in, or it might take five times for you to get in. So it -- just anyone who feels like they want to do it should do it, no matter what it is that they're doing. Just apply, because you'll learn something from the process even if you don't get it. It's just all a great learning experience.

>> Graciano Petersen: Yeah, no. It's definitely a great learning experience. You'll get to work with some incredibly passionate people, some quirky people, some would even say, as well. So there's that. Jake, what about you, what would you add?

>> Jake Stimell: Yes, so we want people who are really going to push the envelope, ask questions, push our thinking to new limits. I always kind of say that most of the staff members here think pretty similarly, so our Fellows that we bring in twice a year really push us to think differently, and that's a real strength. We also want someone who's going to take advantage of the network. You know, we -- take advantage of the network in terms of the Staff, Board, each other -- we are all great sources of information, and we really want to impart that knowledge and wisdom upon others. So we want someone who's going to ask, who's going to set up one-on ones with us, who's going to -- really be persistent about setting up meetings. You might not get a response the first time, but really, just keep pushing for that meeting. As Grace was the most persistent in applying for the Fellowship -- you have to be -- you have to keep being persistent, and that's really how you succeed in life is -- by following up and by making sure you get that meeting, or you get that person to review your application, or things like that, you know?

>> Graciano Petersen: Yes. Today's panel was brought to you by the letter P for persistence, absolutely. [laughs] Grace, what else would you add?

>> Grace Ogden-Parker: You keep taking my answers out of my mouth before I speak.

>> Graciano Petersen: [laughing] I'm so sorry!

>> Grace Ogden-Parker: Is it because I repeat myself a lot? I think it is because I repeat myself a lot. That's persistence too.

>> Jake Stimell: I'll say -- I'll say it's because great minds think alike.

>> Grace Ogden-Parker: Oh, oh, okay, I'm sure it's just because I keep saying it. But I actually have two things: one is persistence, which I could say 60 times in a row if you want. But I do want to let you know that it's not just because I'm persistent, but it's also because of the mindset I had when being persistent. My mindset was this is a competitive application process, and there are a lot of amazing people getting in, and it doesn't mean that you weren't amazing when you don't get in. It means you're going to be amazing next time or the next time or the next time. And you'll get in at some point if you really really want it, that's -- that's why I was persistent. It wasn't that I sat there saying, oh man, I wasn't good enough. I sat there and I said -- and I say that a lot in my life, everybody -- everybody does from time to time, unless -- unless you don't feel that way, but a lot of people do. But I sat there and I said you know what, they have so many amazing candidates, they're going to have a great cohort now, and I'm going to be in a great cohort later. And so I just kept trying. And besides that, I said to myself -- it's not going to hurt me to try. I mean, it's not really going to hurt me to try, and if I keep trying and I don't get it, it's the same as if I didn't try. But I actually need to try in order to get it. You can't win the lottery without playing, right? [laughs] My other advice -- I think I may have lost that thought while talking about persistence. [laughs]

>> Rostom Dadian: Keep trying, Grace, you'll get it.

>> Grace Ogden-Parker: I will, I will, I'll just keep talking. I think -- something that's really important is -- the desire to really make a difference. You know? The persistence is great, the passion is great, but what are you passionate about? Like, are you passionate about learning, or are you passionate about learning so that you can do something with it? Are you passionate about moving forward, not just as yourself, but with a purpose -- with a movement, with something that's going to affect others in a real way. That's maybe where -- oh! I came up with it. I thought of it. See, I knew if I kept talking I would come up with the other one. The other one is when you're doing the application -- and this is what I did on my fifth one and not on the previous four -- is spend extra time organizing your thoughts on your goals, because that played a role in my application process. Now mind you, I got four interviews out of those five times I applied, so I don't think it was my application that was really the problem. But I don't think I was really a problem in the first place. [laughs] But I think that I was -- I'm really happy that I got this cohort, because I think that it's a good fit for me. And I think that we need more people like our current cohort and our past cohort. We need -- more people doing this, so anyone who wants to join, do it, because it's worth it. And now I'm done.

>> Graciano Petersen: Absolutely. Grace has definitely hit the nail on the head here, it is -- there is so much work to be done in disability inclusion and disability advocacy. We need more worriers in this fight. We want to make sure that we're bringing more people in so that opportunity is always going to be available. And the reality is that we want to make sure that we're giving people the opportunity to lead in this space outside of us. We love bringing people into the Fellowship. We also love holding on to them and making them employees, as you can see from Rostom and Jake, Isabella -- we have other team members as well who were part of the Fellowship and are now full-time employees. And you know, even Ben was a part of the Fellowship before he became our Fellowship director and leader as well. So we -- we do this work to make sure that we are bringing up these leaders to stay with us, but also to go on and do great and amazing things. And so with that, we hope that you will apply for the Fellowship. I hope that you've learned a lot from speaking to our current and former Fellows. Thank you all so much for being a part of this panel. Thank you Grace, Rostom, and Jake. And we really hope that you all have enjoyed RespectAbility program -- programming regarding NDEAM. And -- we hope to bring this to you next year, but also throughout the year, make sure that we are talking about the importance of employment for people with disabilities. Our Leadership and Workforce Development department is working hard to make sure that we're bringing further awareness to the need for competitive integrated employment for people with disabilities. We are doing the work that needs to happen to make that a reality, and we want you to also join in that fight as well. So thank you for joining us, and until next year, when we'll bring you more NDEAM programming. Thank you all, have a good one!

>> Grace Ogden-Parker: Thank you.