* The talk started with Bill Wong introducing himself
1. Occupational Therapist in California
2. Politely asked to not interrupt him and write any questions in the chat box
3. Teaching in 2 different campuses (last year OT students and OT assistances)
4. AOTA member
5. He has done two TedTalks, which he proudly told us about
6. He is quite well known on social media (Twitter and Instagram)
7. Born in Hong Kong but moved to the USA in his late childhood, can speak and write a lot of languages (English, Mandarin etc.)
8. He said that getting to write Chinese and learn so many other languages helped in the development of his brain which helped him later on in his life
9. He is really good at math and has won a trophy in a contest/ competition
10. It took him 3 years to catch up on English when he moved in the USA (by 9th grade he had catch up)
11. Even though his mother was suspicious about him being “slower” and went with him to the doctors, none diagnosed him with Autism since he was too smart
12. He did have a speech delay and had some difficulties communicating and being with his other peers, plus he couldn’t keep eye contact for long
13. He was born left-handed, his teachers made him use his right hand as his predominant hand (he joked about being the last generation which was made to change from being left-handed to being right-handed, since his sister wasn’t made to change after 3 years when she got in school)
14. His coordination skills were quite poor and he only learned how to tie his shoelace by the time he was 10-11 years old and he still hasn’t learned to ride a bike
15. He doesn’t wear a tie till this day
16. He stated that his parents are quite supportive
17. At first he studied paramedics and graduated from the university of California
18. He had some difficulties with studying and his grades were always low but sufficient enough for him to pass his exams, he has even left a sheet exam 80% blank
19. He tried to concern himself with business, but he wasn’t keen on it
20. He had been unemployed for one and a half years
21. His mom learned about OT at her job (in a school) and introduced it to him and that’s how he got into it
22. He went at an orientation at the University of South California by bus with his mom but he was an hour late and he believes that missing out on what they had to present actually made him like OT more through other encounters and he thinks that this is the reason he actually got involved with OT and was interested in it, because he missed the orientation
23. He said that his studies weren’t that competitive and he got accepted even though he had a low GPA (1.4) (50% rate of acceptance) for which he was really happy
24. He was shocked to find out that his classroom was consistent of 90% women cause he was not expecting that nor was he used to it
25. He was also shocked to realize that his studies and knowledge about paramedics wouldn’t be of any use to him ever again
26. Many of his peers advised him to study something math-based and were always ready to ask him about what to study to pass the exams
27. He admitted to have low grades in the first semester
28. It took him 6 months to like OT since he took him more time to understand it
29. He had 2 practice placements. During the first one (which was a pediatric one) he was told he had poor time management and lacked self-directedness. During the second one he was told the same things and he noticed it wasn’t a good fit for him, socially, since his social skills weren’t on the required level. He had to make a deal with his university where in order to pass his placement he had to succeed in 3 learning contracts. He knew he would fail his second clinical practice so he dropped out.
30. Only 2 months later (10 years ago) he was diagnosed with Autism. He had a difficult time processing the fact that he was diagnosed with a disorder and had fail his practice at the same time. Fortunately he had a really supportive classmate.
31. He got back on track with his studies but he knew he was already 6 months behind his peers and he had to study both the subjects he had missed on as well as the subjects that were currently running.
* Bill was asked “how did your university and professors react?”
1. They were both accepting and kind of shocked since this hadn’t occurred before, for an OT student to have Autism
* He continued narrating his life after he got the degree
1. He said that he would have enjoyed the program more if it was a more flexible one
2. He then started working 20hrs/week until he got used to the placement and adjusted, then after a year he worked there full time.
3. He practiced manual handling with his parents since it was required for his work.
4. In 2019 he started teaching
5. He said after he came out and shared with other professionals and/or tutors his story and diagnosis, a lot of them got in contact with him to advise them about other students who were also diagnosed with Autism and he consulted them
* He was also asked if he had any problems when interacting with his clients and he said the following:
1. He said he had problems since he has poor social skills
2. But he makes sure to clarify every instruction and usually he repeats himself often because of that
* Another question was about group projects and how he handled them
1. He said at first working in groups seemed difficult but with the passing of time it became easier
* Clarified that it is better to call someone with Autism a person with Autism and not Autistic and as a person with Autism he says that building trust takes more time and they should be provided with it
* He was asked if the quality of his OT services were affected by his condition
1. He said that it doesn’t affect them at all and that it’s all about how he approaches his clients and pointed out that he is quite direct when communicating with them