

## Women at Warp Episode 60: Barclay's Psyche

Jarrah: Hi and welcome to Women at Warp, A Roddenberry Star Trek podcast. Join us as our crew of four women Star Trek fans boldly go on our biweekly mission to explore our favorite franchise. My name's Jarrah and thanks for tuning in. Today with us we have crewmembers Andi,

Andi: Hello!

Jarrah: And Sue.

Sue: Hi everybody!

Jarrah: And we also have a very special guest Lucia.

Lucia: Hello!

Jarrah: Do you want to take a second to introduce yourself and tell us a bit about how you became interested in Star Trek?

Lucia: Yeah for sure. So my mom didn't have cable in the early 90s and the only channel that we got was some Seattle channel and all they played was Star Trek, and it was awesome. So that's basically how I got into Star Trek, and it has kind of overtaken my life thus far. But my day job is studying English literature and different types of media and doing a lot of cultural critique with a feminist lens, so anytime I can analyze pop culture especially sci-fi that's where I'm at home, so that's me.

Jarrah: Fabulous! And you and I are both going to be on a super cool panel at Star Trek Las Vegas this summer.

Lucia: We are.

Jarrah: Celebrating 30 years of women in Star Trek: The Next Generation, along with Aliza Pearl who's also been on this podcast and Kayla Iacovino, who's also been on this podcast, and Gates McFadden of course so that's super exciting.

Sue: Who we'd love to have on the podcast.

Jarrah: Yes.

Sue: We're just saying.

Jarrah: Yes. We'll try and make that happen. But before we get into our main topic for today just a quick reminder about the Women at Warp patreon. We are fully supported by listeners to this podcast and you can support our work by visiting [patreon.com/womenatwarp](https://patreon.com/womenatwarp). It helps to cover expenses in our convention reporting and in exchange you get access to hangouts, exclusive bonus content, things like that. Another way that you can support our podcast is by leaving us a review or rating on iTunes, which helps people find us and is just generally a nice thing to do to let us know what you think. So thanks for those who support us in various ways, and the other item of housekeeping was Star Trek Las Vegas which I already mentioned. So yay, that's exciting. Our panel is tentatively scheduled, or I guess it's firmly scheduled for Friday of the convention and we'll also be rolling out some information closer to the convention about possible meet up opportunities and things like that. Grace and I will be for sure present at the convention so I look forward to meeting some listeners. So our main topic for today is Barclay and mental illness or mental health. This is another patreon patron suggestion, one of our perks for patrons of a certain level is to get to suggest a topic and Shawn asked us to talk about "Barclay and the show's depiction of anxiety and mental illness." So we figured that was a pretty great topic and it's also good because talking about just mental health in Star Trek is a massive topic, so it's good to be able to sort of focus on the Barclay episodes as examples. So we're going to mostly be focusing on the TNG episodes I think because that's where he's introduced and then we'll talk a little bit about Voyager near the end, but let's start off with Barclay's first episode "Hollow Pursuits," and I'm wondering if any of you want to start off with what your impressions of that episode were; if you remember the first time you saw it and what your early impressions of Barclay were?

Sue: When I first saw the episode it was when it first aired, so you know I was young, and I took it at face value of oh look isn't this funny look at, you know, these creations of our characters that we know and love that we don't see act this way, let's all make fun of them haha, broccoli is a funny nickname, you know. Face value, I think they probably intended in a lot of ways for the casual viewer, of course that you know as an adult is very different especially when we look at the scene in Ten Forward, but I think we're probably going to be talking about that in more depth later, so I'll pass on first reactions.

Jarrah: Andi, when you were doing First Time Trek do you remember what your first impressions were of Barclay?

Andi: My favorite thing right off the bat about Barclay is that he is one of the first people, if not the first person to be straight up about what 99% of people would do with a holodeck, because let's be real, if I had a holodeck I would absolutely use it for creepy shenanigans, 110%. And I enjoyed that he was at least open about it. I do think it's a pretty creep move to put real people in it, especially coworkers, and I wish that he had not done that as amusing as 'the goddess of empathy' is. But other than that I remember liking Barclay and not liking the other members of the enterprise and how they reacted to him. My immediate reaction to Riker and Geordi's conversation about him was like, these are these are leaders? These are managers of people? Like mocking him and wanting just to get rid of him, it was all very gross.

Jarrah: Yeah. You know that you're not in a supportive work environment when you're being bullied by Wesley Crusher.

Andi: And also Broccoli might be the silliest insult nickname I've ever heard. It's not clever at all. It's also really, really soft like that's not exactly the most devastating nickname I could have come up with let's say that.

Jarrah: Amazing. I do want to get back to the question about recreating your coworkers or your friends on the holodeck, but Lucia do you have any sort of recollections of your first impressions of Barclay?

Lucia: I mean, I know that I saw it when I was quite young and then I think when I was watching it again as a teenager, I mean, I think we all go through the phases of what crewmember are you most like. And I kind of realized that maybe I'm a little bit of a Barclay at heart. And I think what yeah what struck me was just how unprofessional and ridiculous everyone else was acting and that it just was these incremental conversations where people were talking about him but not to him. And thus I got really, really frustrated with the rest of the crew.

Jarrah: Yeah. I just remember as a kid I think, just thinking he was funny but certainly now as an adult the first thing that really stuck out to me was Geordi and Riker just basically saying he's not fit to be on this ship, not inquiring whether there's anything they could really do to support him not really being willing to get to know him, and there's like Andi said, that scene in Ten Forward, I think you're talking about the one with Guinan, right?

Sue: I think that was me.

Jarrah: Oh sorry. Sue, you were talking about the one with Guinan, or do you mean the beginning?

Sue: I was talking about the scene at Ten Forward where Geordi and Barclay are actually sitting down and talking through things.

Jarrah: Right, which is after the thing with Guinan.

Sue: Yes.

Jarrah: Because Guinan basically goes on the talk about, you know, you should try to get to know him and Geordi is saying like Guinan, no one wants to be around him, he's always late and you know, she's like, well maybe if you knew people didn't want to be around you, you might be late and whatever, nervous I think is the other thing and because Guinan always knows what's right, so yes. And then, yeah that scene with Geordi.

Andi: I was really unimpressed with both Riker and Geordi from a manager perspective. If you have a member of your team that's struggling and your first thought is how do I get rid of him. Instead of thinking how do I support him in this environment. That's just really like Manager 101.

Sue: I have been in this position in real life as a manager and it's not easy, and sometimes I think people are, of course afraid to open up as we see Barclay, he's really unsure about sharing what's going on with him with his manager especially when there's this history of Geordi not being supportive. But when you don't know what's going on as a different person and you want to be supportive but you're not being told what's going on, you don't know how to help. Am I making sense? Like I had an employee at one time who was having actually a lot of similar issues with lateness and lack of focus and not communicating well, and you know we did a lot of retraining we asked her what was going on and months and months later she finally felt comfortable, you know, telling us that she was dealing with depression and that affects all parts of your life. So I mean I think there's a lesson on both ends of being ready to help people and support people, but if you need that help sometimes you really do have to ask for it and tell people what is going on with you.

Andi: I think the problem with that is, especially in America and I'm sure Canadians are very jealous of our labor laws that allow you to get fired for just about anything.

Sue: Right. And that's what I mean by people being afraid to disclose those sorts of things, you're afraid of any consequences that might come down on you.

Andi: Yeah. I 110% would not tell my boss that I was suffering from depression because I can get fired for anything, including health problems. But that's more of hey America's grand type situation more than it is. But there's just a stigma about mental health that's still in the workplace now. I would like to think that at this point in time in Star Trek land that that stigma would be gone, but considering how ill prepared they seem to be to handle his anxiety I'm not so sure.

Lucia: Yeah I think what struck me was not just in "Hollow Pursuits" but in the other TNG episodes was that Barclay's job is always at risk. He's being taken off projects or he's being put on medical leave, and so it's not like a, how can we work with you to make this a more supportive environment. The first step seems to be we need to get this person off the job.

Jarrah: Yeah absolutely. There seems to be sort of this repetition of like, it's this idea that he's almost having these relapses of his various issues and therefore let's give you time off to get back to "normal" instead of, I don't know, an actual you know accommodation approach where you said you'd work with someone to figure out how can you make your job work better for you. So yeah, but I mean I think part of the problem is this idea of well you know we've talked about before that some of the TNG writers didn't seem to have the most tremendous respect for mental health issues as serious issues. And also for Troi's role as a mental health professional, apparently actually this episode was actually supposed to be more of a Troi episode where Troi

was playing a more significant role and sort of Barclay was more of a vehicle to show her doing actual mental health with psychoanalysis counseling work and so I think that was mentioned by one of our Facebook readers actually, so thank you for that. And that was kind of interesting, it felt like instead, you know there's a lot of comments about him as sort of like, I'm nervous nerdy fanboy or you know basically the equivalent of a teenager with a holo addiction as if you could kind of separate that from what, at least to me, was very, very clearly a type of anxiety.

Sue: I tried to look more into the creation of this character and I feel like no matter where you look you're not getting the full story. I wouldn't say reports are necessarily conflicting, but I mean according to a source from Wikipedia which came from *Cinema Journal*, one of the writers Sarah Higley created the character with "Hollow Pursuits" and according to Sarah Higley, "Barclay is a satirical depiction of Trekkies and their excessive obsession with imaginary characters." But according to Memory Alpha, the idea for Barclay was Gene Roddenberry's and according to Dwight Schultz in an issue of TV Zone he realized that the type of character was missing from the program and eventually said let's fill that spot.

Jarrah: See that feels weird to me because Gene Roddenberry is so known for wanting really perfect heroic characters and not wanting to accept that we would have any kind of mental health problems in the 24th century, as evidenced by that episode where the kid's mom dies that he really didn't want to have because kids wouldn't grieve, so you know kids aren't going to grieve over dead parents in the 24th century are people are going to have social anxiety.

Andi: Do you remember that episode of TOS in which the kid's parents died and then McCoy was like yay, they're crying, they finally dealt with their grief over their parents. I'm sorry I had to put that in there because I think the funniest thing that McCoy has ever done, in the worst episode whatever that episode was called.

Jarrah: "And the Children Shall Lead"

Lucia: It just like why would the writers create a character that is intentionally there to mock their fans, but also clearly that's some of it, right? Because there is definitely a lot of disrespect going on in "Hollow Pursuits" but also every time that Dwight Schultz talks about the character, he's always talking about it from a positive perspective.

Andi: Yeah I think it kind of backfired on them because he plays it with such warmth.

Lucia: But I think there's something missing to this story of the creation of this character that we're just not getting.

Jarrah: Yeah, for sure. Certainly there are people, I would say that the we didn't get any negative feedback about Barclay that I saw on our Facebook page and most of the reading I saw on forums was really positive, but there are some people inclined to resent that feeling that he was a fanboy caricature. Jordan Hoffman from the *Engage* podcast has an article at

startrek.com where he I think doesn't totally correctly use the term "Mary-Sue" but said that he felt like it was a nerdy fanboy "Mary-Sue" and wanted to see more aspirational figures on Star Trek not people who were like him but made him feel like he was being made fun of.

Sue: See I would argue that Barclay is an aspirational figure. You know I mean I have and do struggle with anxiety and being able to see somebody who has those problems being portrayed as brilliant on the flagship of the enterprise solving problems is aspirational.

Andi: Yeah and I also have a tendency to watch episodes and just feel so damn proud of him. I mean we haven't gotten to "Realm of Fear" yet but he really shows a lot of courage in that episode and he really throughout all of his episodes, he does all of these things he's not comfortable with an tackles all of these demons and there's so many times and I just want to cheer for him and just be like, yes I have been there where it's so hard these things that are easy for everybody else are so hard for you, and it's fun to celebrate that. I suffer more from depression and anxiety although I have the lovely two-fer when I manage to go to the grocery store or do laundry things that are extremely hard for me. I go out of my way to be like, yeah you did it because it's that positive reinforcement that is really important and watching him succeed is very- it makes me feel fuzzy. Go Barclay!

Lucia: I ended up looking on the Reddit thread about Barclay and mental illness and it wasn't so much a discussion about Barclay but like, oh this wouldn't happen in the 24th century because, I think and the quote was, having a character in the 24th century with severe mental problems makes as much sense as writing in a character suffering from scurvy on the Big Bang Theory. So then it was just this whole kind of speculative discussion about whether or not mental illness would be eradicated by the 24th century which, on the one hand they were talking about when it pops up in the various shows, but I couldn't help but feel a bit like this is sometimes veering into kind of eugenics territory like, we can't have mentally ill people in the future, Heaven forbid. Because TNG does explore disability with Geordi and the "Masterpiece Society" but not so much in the realm of mental illness.

Andi: Well it doesn't quite fit into Star Trek the way that it's been written in the past. I mean we do have episodes like "Whom Gods Destroy" where they actually put together a pill that fixes all mental illnesses, which obviously makes zero sense but this is an issue where it's already a bit dated a couple decades after it aired. You know, he is clearly not any sort of medication, you know, so it does have an odd kind of, almost anachronistic feel to it but I don't think it's so much that there would be no mental illness or at least I think that we probably won't get rid of it, but it feels like they just don't handle it very well. And I'd like to think that by then they would have some standard operating procedures for how to handle mental illness in the workplace because we're already seeing that now. You know, that's kind of where I feel like that doesn't fit. Kind of feeling comes in, but I do agree that this idea that we're somehow going to get rid of mental illness is a little bit- I side eye that.

Jarrah: Well I think it's unrealistic, partly because we know and I don't think this understanding; this part of the understanding will change by the 24th century that mental health is more than a brain chemical issue. It's partly a brain chemical issue. I take medication for anxiety. It's lovely but I also go to therapy and all of these things are also influenced by my environment, my genetics, you know, and there's know my upbringing things that happened to you in your life. That stuff isn't going to change, we know now that they choose people to send into space. A lot of that is psychological testing because space has a really weird effect on people. So where you grew up in the universe in the 24th century, that's going to have a big impact. But then this idea that we should just be able to medicate it all away in the 24th century is also, I think under valuing the unique perspective that Barclay's sort of characteristics bring to the situation which I think we actually do get to see in "Realm of Fear" that if he wasn't so worried about seeming crazy, he might actually have solved that problem before the very end of the episode. And that happens a few times that because of his history you know even though he's demonstrated that he has exceptional creativity and maybe obsessive tendencies but those tendencies drive him to solve incredible problems that no one else can solve. So I mean I think we can go into more of a general TNG discussion. Oh actually let's some before we move off of "Hollow pursuits" let's talk a bit about the whole this isn't directly related to mental illness, but the whole should you make holograms of your coworkers.

Andi: No! Okay it's super creepy but also who really can deny that they've had a conversation with a coworker and have not gone home and replayed that conversation in your head over and over again. Yeah and I actually think that this opens up a lot of possibilities for therapeutic tools with the holodeck, like a guided thinking and you know, I mean think of all the different meditation techniques and conflict resolution techniques that could be really effectively used in the holodeck. It's just maybe not this way.

Jarrah: Maybe not in personal programs.

Lucia: Well what was so interesting, in the last scene of the episode where he's saying good-bye on the holodeck, it's to the crew on the bridge, not to these imaginary characters. And so part of me was wondering then why didn't he just create the bridge crew hanging out on the bridge and kind of work through those problems rather than this very imaginative swashbuckling situation.

Andi: You did have the Ten Forward one where he has one of my favorite lines of all time. "Riker you're nothing but a pretty mannequin in a uniform." I swear to you the first time I saw I must have spit take. I just remember thinking that was the funniest thing. Plus Troi looks gorgeous.

Sue: He also has a counseling scene or a counseling program.

Jarrah: Right, because he is too into Troi to trust himself with real Troi.

Andi: Yeah that was so hard to watch for me because I was like, part of anxiety is not being able to be honest because you're afraid people will judge you. So it's not being able to be honest with people about your feelings. Can you imagine being in a counseling situation with someone you're so desperately attracted to and her being like let's talk about you and you're trying to not look like a mess, that would that would suck. If you have a mental health professional in your life guys and you're attracted to them, maybe switch professionals. You're never going to be able to be honest with them. I mean he ran out of there like he was on fire and I don't blame him.

Lucia: The other thing about those holodeck simulations that bring to my mind is theater which we see him take part in "Nth degree". But there are a lot of people in the theater community who have these anxiety issues, who have social anxiety, or who have other mental health issues or insecurities, and participating in a theater environment where you're not you but you're this different version of you. It takes a lot of that fear away because if something happens it's, well that wasn't me that was the character I was playing. And there is a lot of arts therapy that deals with that. And I think that is to Andi's point about the therapeutic uses for the holodeck, I think that's a huge part of it.

Jarrah: Yeah I think that- I used to be this is always wrong. And also Geordi is up on his high horse about this can we just say. And Geordi's like, oh this guy doesn't get how to talk to people. Let me go make out with my holographic engineer girlfriend.

Lucia: Poor Leah Brahms.

Andi: But he made her pasta! Okay?!

Jarrah: She owed him.

Andi: He made her delicious al-dente pasta.

Jarrah: But yeah, I mean, I think that this is a question too, it comes up several times in Star Trek but this whole idea about making holograms of real people. But how is that so different from writing fanfiction about real people or writing in your diary about them, or drawing art or just having vivid fantasies. And I mean I guess where I would say that it gets creepier in the holodeck is that we know the computer is drawing based on exact specifications of these crew people, and therefore that's more close to their real identities than just replaying a conversation in your head over and over or making fantastical art about someone. But it's still weird.

Sue: I do just want to talk a little bit more in-depth about that scene with Geordi in Ten Forward that I love so much, and it's the reason that I have a really hard time believing that he was meant to be a farcical mocking character. Right. Because he finally opens up to somebody because Geordi is actually trying to reach out, and he says I'm the guy who writes things down to remember what to say, when I get there I wind up alone in the corner trying to look

comfortable examining a potted plant. Right. And I end up in the kitchen with the cat. You know they talk a little bit more and then Geordi still doesn't get it and he says no you're just shy and Barclay says just shy it sounds like nothing serious. You can't know. That whole scene, it breaks my heart because it is so true.

Jarrah: You just need to get out more. You just need to meet people you just need to whatever.

Sue: Don't worry so much. Just don't worry about it. Well thanks you fixed it! You cured me!

Andi: Yeah. That speech he has there hits really close to home. There has to be a very precise number of people that I'm comfortable around before I can have fun at a party otherwise guaranteed, I'm in the corner with my back to the wall so no one can sneak up to me like miserably sipping on a drink and trying to avoid eye contact of everyone. And I don't think that he is alone there, I think there is a reason why we put a call out for comments on Barclay and we got a lot of people saying that they identified with him because this feeling of inadequacy and this inability to connect with people. I mean I think there are a lot of people that experience that and it's painful.

Sue: So according to the National Institute of Mental Health 18.1% of adults in the U.S. population have anxiety disorder. That's certainly not insignificant. That's almost one in five people.

Jarrah: For sure. I just I think that it's unfortunate that in this thing about, you know, the summaries of the episode and the way that they talk about his problem and this idea sort of that by at the end, by getting out of the holodeck is what he really needs to to solve his problems. I guess it oversimplifies the issue or implies that it's almost like a bad habit like biting your nails instead of an anxiety issue because, yeah. There's actually a really good article on [trekmovie.com](http://trekmovie.com) called "Star Trek's Poor Depiction of Mental Illness in a Hopeful Future" by John Duchak, I'm not sure how you say that but he says "While Reg's own work with Troi can likely be credited for his anxiety subsiding, the fact that his behavior and symptoms were chalked up to holo addiction is deeply troubling. Although the concept of holo addiction is an interesting subject to explore in a future where we can escape from life's problems thanks to technology, the holodeck was a coping mechanism for Reg rather than the cause of his symptoms." And I don't think that that really gets teased apart.

Lucia: No, because I mean I ended up watching "Extreme Risk" from Voyager after "Hollow Pursuits" and thinking about how the holodeck, thinking about how holodecks and mental illness are portrayed where B'Elanna is obviously engaging in self harm on the holodeck and for some reason the very dark scenario that she's put herself in raises eyebrows for people but somehow it doesn't for Barclay? It's a symptom it's not the cause, and yet I don't know how they don't see that.

Andi: I mean when I am super depressed one of the things that I do right away is, I game, it's one of the huge reasons why I spend so much time gaming, is it's a distraction it's a way to put yourself in a different place. Video games don't cause my depression. You know, they're a way for me to escape it. So I feel like sometimes people will confuse you know cause and effect.

Jarrah: And there's certain things that are deemed healthy ways of coping and not healthy ways of coping. And sometimes it seems like, you know, maybe there is not as clear of a line.

Andi: Yeah like reading all day is something that's not a big deal but if I game all day I'm a big loser.

Jarrah: Yeah. And no one's ever been like Jarrah, you're gardening addict, go meet people.

Andi: Are you a gardening addict Jarrah?

Jarrah: Ugh! I can't stop pulling weeds.

Andi: Or yeah like exercise, there are a lot of different ways and, you know, maybe some are more preferable, like it's probably better for me to do two hours of yoga than two hours of gaming, but we place value judgments on that, that are probably not helpful.

Jarrah: And a lot of times it is like you need to spend more time with people. And that's based on this understanding that being healthy means being social and that maybe isn't you know 100 percent true. We all need social support systems, but this idea that you know if only you get out more that you're going to feel better, doesn't always work. Yeah so I think we can talk a little bit more generally about Barclay in TNG after "Hollow Pursuits." We get I think the most significant episodes are the "Nth Degree" which is the one where he becomes part of the computer and becomes like a super genius. There is "Realm of Fear" where he's afraid of the transporter but turns out that he's right that he saw something in the transporter and saves all these people he's in also the episode "Ship in a Bottle" but I don't think it's significant. And "Genesis" we find out-

Andi: Genesis?!

Jarrah: We find out that he's a bit of a hypochondriac, so he goes through a whole bunch of other small diagnoses during this time, does anyone have any thoughts on those episodes?

Andi: One thing is that I always find it hilarious that people act like he's irrational for being afraid of teleporting, which is ludicrous!

Jarrah: And even Troi tells them that, Troi is like, no you're totally right to be afraid. That's a legitimately scary thing.

Andi: Yeah totally, she's right. And then you have everybody else sitting there like, it's totally safe! I'm like how many transporter accidents have we had on the Enterprise alone, and then I love that he gets up there is all sweaty and disheveled he's like I can do it. And they transport him and then giant monster things come out of nowhere and bite him. That is just unbelievable to me.

Sue: Well see, I think right there is where a lot of viewers conflate what's going on in this episode. He's not afraid of the transporters because he thinks he sees monsters. He's afraid of the transporters before that even happens. He's afraid he won't materialize again.

Andi: That is completely rational, I'm sorry.

Sue: 100 percent.

Andi: I think it's just so funny that they act like it's a weird thing especially in this universe where there's a million transporter accidents.

Sue: But when he gets up the courage to transport and he does see something, he's afraid to talk about it because he thinks they're going to think that he is seeing things, or he's making it up. But he finally does and when he tells Geordi I think I saw something, the first thing he does is say well let's check it out. And that's awesome. I have a ton of respect for that, and that is, as many times as Star Trek does terrible things like have managers who make fun of their their subordinates by calling them the names of vegetables. Any time somebody is in a situation and says I know this is going to sound completely made up or unreasonable but I think this is going on somebody else always says let's check it out. There is no one ever who's like, no I don't believe you. That's not happening. It's always let's go check it out. They always believe each other.

Andi: I do also want to point out that he does the Web M.D. thing that no one ever should do. Never Google your symptoms, because you're going to convince yourself that you have some really rare a horrible disease. It's just asking for trouble to do that, but it did make me laugh because that is also very relatable. I once convinced myself I had a really rare brain tumor because I had tingling in my feet. Bad habit guys, but very relatable.

Lucia: What gets me is that in the end of the episode obviously, transporter technology is terrifying because crewmembers got trapped in there. So I feel that, if it were me that incident would just make my fear even worse, but at the end it's sort of like, he saved some people and he looks chill but I'm like what happens after?

Andi: I would prefer the shuttle too.

Jarrah: Yeah I really like "Realm of Fear," actually this was my favorite of all the Barclay episodes I re-watched, I was really pleasantly surprised by how much people's attitudes

changed towards him over the previous two episodes. And like you mentioned the thing that Geordi, but also even before that when he can't go on the transporter you know, he goes to see counselor Troi but I didn't feel like they really shamed him, they weren't rolling their eyes like, oh Barclay again he can't do the transporter, they were concerned that, you know, he maybe needs to get some support. So he goes to see counselor Troi, counselor Troi gives him the neck tapping thing, and he's second guessing himself because he thinks people won't believe him but you mentioned when he does bring it forward they do believe him it's only, you know, near the very end where they've tried to prove it multiple ways and they can't that Picard starts to say like, well maybe you've been under a lot of strain, but overall I thought that people were, you know, really supportive of him during that time and it showed, you know, that someone can, you know, just by being a better friend and giving people a bit more space that you can have good outcomes.

Lucia: I was really, like when O'Brien opens up and shares the whole story about the spiders whose legs are like a meter long and talks about having to face that in a work situation. It just felt like a really generous moment of masculine vulnerability. That happens a lot I think in DS9 but in TNG is super rare.

Jarah: Yeah I was like, that's the most open O'Brien's been with anyone other than Bashir.  
Andi: Yeah it was lovely. He was trying to relate to him and make him feel comfortable and he didn't have to be ashamed for being afraid. Which was quite lovely.

Jarrah: Yeah. And he didn't belittle it at all. He said it was the hardest thing I ever had to do. So he knows, he's like I know this is going to be really hard for you but you'll find it isn't as bad as you expect. I really liked that. I also just to contrast again I forgot to mention that also in "Hollow Pursuits" he gets "kidsplained" by Wesley as well as bullied by him, like he's in that meeting. And Wesley is engineering explaining to him in a really condescending way and then he has to go into that thing where he's like, oh man and I shut him down. Oh yeah Wesley.

Andi: Way to go Wesley.

Lucia: And then Data was the voice of reason and he was barely there during the whole episode but he's like why are you making fun of him? Why are you doing all these things and of all the characters who might actually understand social interaction being complicated. You would think or I would think anyway that Data would be a logical choice. Again that would depend on the plot being actually nice to Barclay rather than belittling him the whole time.

Jarrah: Although in the "Nth Degree" Data is like he's a terrible actor. I thought the "Nth Degree" was a bit like it was a bit mixed in terms of how it talked about Barclay, I mean it wasn't even so much about mental health although it's, you know, he basically discovers confidence and super genius and becomes immediately a better actor and engineer, but there was definitely, I think the senior staff still felt like they were on a different level from him by the way that they talk about you know is he going to be dangerous and, you know, well he did make a pass at me.

And then that little Troi thing is just a whole weird angle or a weird dimension to the thing the whole way through. The fact that he looks like attracted to her for a really long time and she's his therapist.

Andi: Yeah. But I will take a good one any day, especially the look that Riker gives her is priceless. Speaking of priceless looks we forgot to mention that Picard when he messes up and calls Barclay, broccoli his face is one of the best faces. Oh so funny.

Jarrah: That's so true.

Lucia: I love that Data jumps in again, Data is like this is what happens when you reverse the syllables and it's going to be all right. Picard is just like I can't right now. I'm so mortified.

Sue: I think "Nth Degree" is interesting because when they see changes in Barclay that's exactly what they say. Right. They're saying something is different. Not, oh he's finally better but something that has changed about him and he's not himself anymore. So I think even from the time between "Hollow Pursuits" and "Nth Degree" we see some attitudes from the senior staff change about Barclay, and it's gone from that guy is weird to like, oh that's just how he is. You know?

Jarrah: One thing that has come up in some of the discussions and some of the forums I was reading was a discussion of, in addition to anxiety or hypochondria, does Barclay have autism or Asperger's, a form of autism. And I would say that I am not remotely capable of diagnosing that on a TV character, but I did read a lot of forums and people who are on the spectrum were divided on it, but there's a good blog called the Asperger's and Me blog where one of the bloggers said she actually didn't think he had Asperger's but said "I like the open admission that the blame cannot fall entirely on the person who is anxious, that it is only good and right to meet people halfway and that even "perfect" people can have prejudices they need to overcome."

Andi: For sure and I mean I don't think any of us would be as presumptuous as to attempt to diagnose him as such, but there are definitely a lot of blog posts and a lot of forum threads where people who do have autism or Asperger's are saying that they identify with him and have learned things from that character. So whether or not you want to claim that the character has those things I don't think it matters as long as there is something that you look to that you can identify with, I think that's what's important.

Jarrah: Yeah. I think for me it would be, I have anxiety and this is what I identify with with him.

Andi: Yeah for sure.

Jarrah: Does anyone else have anything they want to add on Barclay in TNG?

Andi: Just that he was adorable in *First Contact*.

Jarrah: All right. Let's talk about *First Contact* briefly where he scares the pants off of Zefram Cochrane, while wearing the world's ugliest vest.

Sue: Uhh, I feel like it's not the ugliest that we even see on Star Trek. But but he is adorable wearing an ugly vest.

Jarrah: It looks like it has giant plastic clips at the front and so it looks sort of like a life jacket crossed with an olive green quilt. But yeah he basically is just like, oh Dr. Cochrane I'm so impressed, excited to meet you and it's such an honor and starts talking about the big statue or actually, La Forge tells him about the statue. Right. And then they're like why did you have to tell him about the statue but. Yeah. It's I don't know. It's pretty cute. It was nice that he got to have a cameo in that. All right. Well Andi's going to duck out because we're going to talk about Voyager. So do you want to before you go tell people where they can find you on the Internet.

Andi: Absolutely. You can find me on Twitter @FirstTimeTrek where I'm live tweeting my way through Star Trek. I'm also second time trekking some stuff, I second time trekked some Barclay episodes today. So yeah it's the easiest place to find me.

Jarrah: Awesome.

Andi: Alright, see you all!

All: Bye!

Jarrah: All right. So you know when Sue and I were working on the outline for this episode. We were very surprised to realize that Barclay's actually in more Voyager episodes than he is TNG episodes. Although I would say that there are really only a few of them that are significant in terms of his mental health. But I guess we want to ask the question did Voyager do better than TNG in treating Barclay as a, I guess more fully formed character who is you know not always just played for laughs.

Sue: I think for sure.

Lucia: Yeah I mean he still is treated with suspicion like he's always, if he's doing better he's treated with suspicion if he's not showing up to work, he's sort of treated with suspicion and obviously the premise of what he's doing in Voyager about wanting to contact them and figure that out is, you know, to Starfleet kind of ludicrous. Understandably so. But he's not treated as completely irrational or unreasonable.

Jarrah: Yeah. I think "Pathfinder" is the first episode where he appears where it starts out with him sort of summoning Troi to San Francisco, he's been kicked off this project to discover Voyager because they think that he's addicted to a hologram projection of Voyager. He's having

the doctor give him massages and he's playing Velocity with Harry Kim and all this kind of stuff, in addition to having conversations with the Voyager crew, who are all basically adoring of him in order to try to find a way to communicate with them.

Sue: And we get a lot of his post TNG backstory and this we find out that he's been in this apartment for two years and hasn't unpacked. We find out that his commanding officer on his project says he's been giving him a lot of leeway so maybe that means he's had a more supportive work environment than when he first got to the enterprise. But we also hear him say that when he left the Enterprise he felt like he was leaving his family and, you know, we saw the attitudes towards him change over the years on the enterprise. So that makes a whole lot of sense to have to start over when you have such severe anxiety. So for his character what we know of him it kind of makes sense that he would create this program where he feels more comfortable because he has lost all of his social interaction leaving the Enterprise.

Jarrah: He did get a kitty named Neelix, it's very floofy. It apparently isn't working for him though. Maybe he's using cats wrong. I guess I appreciate in this episode that we get to see, you know, the way that, and actually this episode and also the other episodes where he's a hologram or where he's interacting with Voyager as a hologram. We get to see how he wants to see himself and that he wants to be this confident joke cracking person. He just really I guess doesn't trust other people to validate him, seems to be one of the key issues he has. I guess I had a bit of a hard time with the ending with "Pathfinder" where he gets kicked off the project and he busts into Admiral Paris's office and apparently freaks out his secretary and makes him look at his stuff and Paris says he'll look at it, but because he's paranoid he doesn't trust that. And so then he breaks into the lab, evades security, does all this stuff that's clearly not very cool by Starfleet regulations and then at the end they all forgive him because he's right.

Sue: I mean it's a very TOS ending.

Jarrah: It was. They were all like I guess you're going to be on the project forever now. Which I mean it's nice that it is good to see repeatedly that he doubts himself and other people doubt him but he turns out to be right. It reinforces this whole you're actually not that crazy, you are someone who has these amazing creative ideas and if people listen to you a bit more then maybe you would get a bit further. But in this case he really is going against everyone's advice including Troi's, he's crossing a lot of lines and just being right doesn't mean you don't have accountability for those actions. And it wasn't like earlier on he had made attempts to, you know, seek accommodations or to seek support from his employers in other ways if anything, they were trying to support him and he wasn't really taking them up on those offers so it's hard to say that they really had more responsibility than what they did.

Lucia: Yeah it reminded me a little bit of the "Nth Degree" and I remember when I was re-watching it just recently that it ends up in the end not being Barclay's fault that he becomes aggressive and shuts out the crew and is doing everything on his own agenda and that kind of stuff. But then with "Pathfinder" It's almost like he's repeating those same behaviors like erecting

force fields so people can't get in and defying orders. But he does have agency. He can't just be like all these aliens just, you know, they just brought, they wanted me to bring you here so you could study them.

Jarrah: Yeah and Paris even comes in Admiral Paris and it's like we're going to go with your idea and they're like oh it's too late. He already went for it. Now he's running from security.

Sue: He is so consumed with this idea of contacting Voyager which really it's not just like I have this idea I want to prove I'm right. It's he's thinking about the people who are stranded out there and he identifies with them. And so he is so consumed with this idea of contacting them that literally nothing else is more important to him.

Jarrah: Yep. Yep that's very true. And then in "Lifeline" he brings the doctor over and hang out with Lewis Zimmerman and he's got, I guess he also brings Troi over but for once he's not really the one with the mental health challenge. So that was kind of cool just to see him as a bit of a friend to Zimmerman and Haley and the doctor and Troi and just kind of more a character was making that happen. Well I guess also say at the end of the end of "Pathfinder" they have this Voyager toast to Barclay whoever he is kind of thing that is kind of nice, I guess it's cool that he gets credit for this amazing thing he did even though they were going to do it anyway legally.

Lucia: Yeah that toast kind of to like whoever he is. It's like well you know you could you could look him up.

Jarrah: Oh and that was actually the weird thing that I was going to mention, is they started out being like the doctors looked him up. Here's all of his medical conditions. That was weird. I was like would you just be, I wouldn't be like flattered if someone looked me up in a database and started out by listing all the times I'd visited the doctor. And then one time she thought she had a toenail fungus but it turned out it wasn't. And then everyone would be like wow, well if she can get us home who cares what her toes look like right? Apologies listeners.

Sue: Although I know it's a really short role but I think we need to talk about the beginning of the "End Game" a little bit because we see a future for Barclay where he has become a professor at Starfleet Academy and is comfortable making a toast at a party and it feels like he's been adopted by the Voyager crew. But in the way that it's played. He's not that confident holodeck persona, he's still the character that we know and love he's just made all of this progress. I think that's really nice. I know that's a cheesy thing to say but it's just heartwarming almost to see that he's still there and he has found somewhere that he's comfortable.

Jarrah: Yeah. I mean in between also there's "Inside Man" where he is also obsessed because his hologram has gone missing. So we get to see the confident hologram hanging out on Voyager again although it's been co-opted by the Ferengi but then back on earth he is freaking out about possibly that the board might have stolen his hologram or and he gets relieved of duty again and, or at least told that he doesn't actually get relieved of duty, he gets told to take a

vacation and then he stalks Troi to a beach and she's like do you realize how inappropriate this is to follow your therapist on vacation he's basically like, I just need you and she's like OK. So that's weird but I guess we just suffer from the lack of counselors on the Enterprise.

Sue: Why doesn't he have a new therapist?

Jarrah: Literally. He calls her in "Lifeline" and she's like the Enterprise is on a mission, and he's like is it important?

Lucia: Oh no, hold on.

Jarrah: And she basically does get from Picard to come and sort out the doctor and Lewis Zimmerman's issues. So that relationship is a little weird but I mean it is cool to see him you know continuing to seek help from a therapist even if it isn't really realistic that he would always be with the same therapist despite those past issues as well.

Lucia: Yeah I kind of am thinking about Voyager and even Troi as the caricature in the first couple of seasons and then how she finally is not just the 'goddess of empathy.' She's a real person with, you know, an interest in command and by the time Voyager is in the timeline she's not this sort of a mockery of what psychotherapy is and some of that makes me wonder in TNG how much of it is that Barclay was maybe sort of characterized, but also that Troi was such a poor at least initially written, is such a poor reflection of what the mental health profession is. Especially because a lot of the times where Troi is useful, they're like well you know she's an empath, I'm like she also has a degree in psychology, like it's not that she doesn't have training to be able to deal with these things. And so the incompetence that she has especially in dealing with Barclay seem just so problematic, but I think by Voyager they're both more fully fleshed out characters.

Jarrah: Yeah absolutely. It did strike me though at the end of I think "Inside Man" so Barclay basically gets duped by this Dabo girl who's working for the Ferengi, and basically Barclay thinks she's his girlfriend and she's a teacher and she just sits there and lets him talk about his work all day and she is essentially spying, and they let him off the hook for that and Troi gets him to realize that he had sensed, he had been a bit suspicious of her but then at the end Troi asks him to come on a double date with her and Riker. And it's this whole again, you just need to get out. You need to meet new people. And it occurred to me that there is, I think partly just the limitations of an episodic television series but there's not really an attempt to say to Barclay like what are your goals. It's like these are what your goals should be and your goal should be to have a successful heterosexual relationship. No one's asking him you know what what's your priority. No, instead it's the best thing to just keep forcing you out after you've just had a pretty negative breakup. But overall I do think it was an improvement. Sue, do you want to read a comment from a Facebook listener to end us out here?

Sue: Absolutely. So we've got some really interesting comments. I think my favorite is from C: who wrote "I'd always felt like Barclay was written with sympathy, even while he had to suffer some mistreatment along the way."

Jarrah: Yeah. And maybe we'll just go around and do some final thoughts. So Lucia do you have any final thoughts about Barclay?

Lucia: I think for me just thinking about the recent reboot where there are so many really super heroic characters and how someone with the nuance of Barclay is something that I miss in the franchise and I hope that a character with that kind of just humanity, I guess that complexity comes along again and I think what I do appreciate most was that he still is awkward and nervous, but he's a functional member of Starfleet. Yeah. Which is really inspiring for me and I think for the franchise generally.

Jarrah: Absolutely. How about you Sue,, final thoughts?

Sue: I agree completely. I think that Barclay is one of the most real characters on Star Trek and I think that is evident from the fact that he is in just a handful of Next Generation episodes and fans loved him so much that they brought him into the movies and into Voyager. I think he's incredibly relatable. So props writers and props Dwight Schultz for that portrayal.

Jarrah: Yeah I'd agree and I think that also even though I was just saying the thing about episodic TV, almost at the end of every episode he has a victory. But it's good to see that they don't just write away the problems that he faces. And you know we do see him evolve but he doesn't just become that confident holodeck persona the next episode because he was right once or because you know he swallowed his fear and got in a transporter. So it's important to see that these are things that people face and continue to struggle with and can get help and support for, but you know it's unrealistic to expect them to just disappear.

Sue: Absolutely.

Lucia: Definitely.

Jarrah: All right. So thank you everyone for joining us today. Sue where can people find you elsewhere on the internet?

Sue: You can find me on Twitter @spaltor.

Jarrah: And thanks again to our guest for joining us. Lucia where can people find you or is there anything else you want to tell people about what you're working on?

Lucia: Yes that people can find me on Twitter @empathywarrior. And I realized yesterday that my handle is like half betazoid half klingon which made me excited. Yes you can find me at Star

Trek Las Vegas, I will be there and yeah hopefully we'll be writing a lot about Star Trek with Discovery coming out. So that's exciting.

Jarrah: That's awesome. And I'm Jarrah and you can find me on tumblr at [trekkiefeminist.tumblr.com](http://trekkiefeminist.tumblr.com). You can also contact our show at [crew@womenatwarp.com](mailto:crew@womenatwarp.com). You can visit our Web site [womenatwarp.com](http://womenatwarp.com), on Facebook at Women at Warp or Twitter [@womenatwarp](https://twitter.com/womenatwarp). And I think that's all the things. So thank you all so much for listening, and we will talk to you next time.