

# 001\_First Episode

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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Welcome to Just breathe. The podcast focused on transforming the LGBTQ plus conversation and supporting you on your journey with your LGBTQ loved one.



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You are not alone.



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Welcome, my name is Heather Hester and I am so happy that you are here for the very first episode of just breathe parenting your LGBTQ teen, I have to tell you that I really contemplated the word parenting, because there are so many different words that would fit for instance, loving, empowering, understanding, supporting so many words, but ultimately parenting seemed to encompass them all. So I am so excited to be here with you to transform this conversation around loving and raising an LGBTQ child. So you're wondering, I'm sure what is this show gonna be about? Well, the most obvious answer is of course, parenting your LGBTQ child. But I want you to know that this is not meant to be an in your face just coming at you with you need to do this and you need to do that it really is more about conversation and transforming this conversation actually having this conversation that so many either are afraid to have, don't know where they can have theirs. There's there's just so much around this that I'd like to cut through. That is really my point here, my my goal here.



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So



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some of the deeper issues, things that each of these episodes we'll really look into. And this will kind of weave in and out through each of the episodes is really talking about this coming out process. Coming out, we hear a lot with regard to the child adolescent, the teen who is going through it, what does that mean, exactly they're coming out, we're really going to take a look at that, we're also going to look at what the coming out process means for you, because you as a parent have a process to and in addition to supporting and trying to understand your child and be what they need, and get them the support they need. You're having your own experience your own process. And so I really want to talk about that. And why it is important for you to have your process in addition to the importance of your child having their full process. And that kind of moves into the next big topic that we'll weave in and out, which will be really exploring mental health. I am a huge proponent of mental health awareness, and really talking about it normalizing it. And I'm thrilled that it is no longer the ugly stepchild of the medical profession, but it is really getting the research and studies and recognition that it needs and deserves, because truly mental health and physical health go hand in hand. So we'll talk a lot about it with regard to just adolescence in general and what happens developmentally during this time, what we're really seeing right now, in this in our time with what kids are dealing with what the struggles that they're having and how this is affecting their mental health. And then of course we will discuss this very specifically to your LGBTQ child and what's the what some of the different struggles are very specific struggles they have to deal with. So moving into the third thing that I really really want to weave in and out is reframing stigmas and debunking myths. There are so many out there that are frustrating that are hurtful that are flat out. Incorrect. Wrong. absurd. So we're going to talk about the different stigmas that are specific to being a lesbian, being gay, being bisexual, being transgender, questioning all of these different things that are out there, we're going to reframe them, we're going to talk about them, and we're going to debunk them. And, and I'm going to give you some, you know, some tools, some facts, that will really help, hopefully help you with having these conversations outside of listening to this podcast. And that really goes into transforming this conversation. That's, that's how we're going to do it. And we transform things by understanding and embracing and then actually talking about it and practice talking about it. And, you know, we'll do that through talking about I will share a ton of our experiences, my personal experiences, my family's experiences, my son's experiences. And you know, he has given full permission for me to talk about these things. So please do not feel uncomfortable that I am discussing things without his

knowledge, because this, he has given his his blessing on this podcast, and any other writings that I do.



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We will talk about how your kids outside of your child who is LGBTQ, your other children, their experiences, your other family members, experiences, things that you might run into, I'm really just kind of putting this all out on the table and discussing the struggles discussing the victories, because I think that's equally as important to discuss your victories discuss, when you've had a breakthrough, discuss when you just are feeling good, or at peace, or just when wonderful things happen. That's really important to discuss, and really, how to advocate for your child, for yourself, for your family, and to then be an advocate in your community. And then out in the world, wherever we are. How do we do that? I think the obvious who is the show for that it's a little little obvious, and probably silly to say this, but just in case anybody is still wondering. It is for anyone who has an LGBTQ child in their life. Parents, not just for you, for your family members, anyone who you think could really benefit from information and research and just hearing that someone else is going through lots of someone else's, are going through experiences that are similar to yours. There's so much to be said for not feeling alone. So family members, friends, even extended out to teachers, coaches, therapists, other community members, anyone who really wants to be part of this conversation, feel strongly about this conversation. This is who the show is for. So I think it is important that I give you a little background on who I am and why I am talking about this and why I feel so passionately about this topic.



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First of all, I am the mom of four truly spectacular and extremely different kids. My oldest son is 19. I have a 16 year old daughter, a 14 year old daughter and a 12 year old son. My husband Steve and I have been married for 21 years and really, truly are so blessed. We have been through many highs and lows. And he's still my best friend and I completely adore him. And I know he feels the same way and we just I feel very, very lucky because the strength of our relationship has really helped both of us and our family. Get through some some pretty tough times. So Very, very grateful for that. And of course, it goes without mentioning, my very ill behaved, but lovable golden doodle named tieghan, who of course sits right next to me during each of my recordings. And while I work, so she is my lovely little sidekick. So I'm talking about this, because of our oldest son, Connor, who is 19. Like I mentioned before, he is a freshman at NYU, and is trans, transitioning just beautifully to his freshman year there in Brooklyn. He's in the Tandon School of

Engineering. And we could not be happier or prouder of him, considering especially the journey that he has been on, and what he has been through, and we all have been through over the past few years. So he has, like I said before, he has given complete his complete blessing on talking about this, which is wonderful. But he came out to us as gay in February of 2017, when he was 16. And we happen to actually be on a couple's retreat at Maryville spa and Arizona. And it was something that I had really, really been looking forward to for a very long time because I do not to go away often. And we're just thrilled to go, I was thrilled to just

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I'm sure many of you can relate to that. And the first night that we were there, we got a phone call from my mother that Connor was missing. And over the course of the next few hours, did finally locate him. Not before the police were contacted and people were out searching and many phone calls were made to friends. And of course, you know, my husband and I were just terrified. My parents were worried. You understand? So when I did finally get in touch with with Connor, that evening, he finally did call me back. He was in tears and said, Mom, I have I have to tell you something. And I was like, you know, of course please.

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What? What

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is going on? Are you okay? Are you hurt to somebody? Have you? And he said no, no, I, I need for you to know that, that I'm gay. And I was like, Oh my gosh, thank God, I thought you were dead. Literally, that is that was my reaction. And I at that moment in time. I didn't care and I haven't cared since then. But I was it could not have been framed in a better way is terrifying as it was because truly, it doesn't matter. I was just so happy that he was okay that he was alive. And that, you know, this is something that we can work through, we will figure it out. And that's exactly what I said to him. We will figure this out. It is okay your dad and I love you no matter what. It does not matter what anybody else

around us thinks, what upbringing any of us had, we will figure this out. So there's a learning curve. We we had no idea that he was gay, that he had been struggling with this for three years. And we we knew that he was struggling with depression and anxiety and just attributed it to school attributed it to sports. He was so good at masking what was really causing him. All of this pain that his finally coming out to us was a shock to us, but a huge relief to him,



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which is so important. So we were then able to move into learning and understanding and having him open up and start to really talk about what he had been going through and when he started to realize And the things that he had done to figure it out. And just really begin to learn and to begin to figure out what support he needed, what support we needed, what we needed to learn what we needed to figure out. During this time, as well, of course, being a shock for us something that I've said a million times since then, there was a change, there was a change in our movie real the life that, of course, when you have children, you know, each one of them is born. And you Every moment is so precious and so wonderful. And you look at the way that they're developing and the things that they are passionate about, or the things they love to do. And you start picturing what their future is going to look like, what they're going to be what possibilities lie out there for them. And there is a piece of that, picturing that movie reel as I've caught, caught it called it that changes your movie reel changes to a certain degree. And it is really important, and we will talk about this in later episodes. But I want you to know right now that it is really, really important for you to allow yourself that that time that space



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to



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mourn the change in the movie rail. That doesn't mean that you're not accepting your child, that doesn't mean that you don't love them. That doesn't mean that you won't do anything to help them through their process. And to lead a very healthy happy life, it just means you have to mentally shift. So just throwing that out there right now, because I think that's really, really important. We certainly have had mental health struggles, like I just mentioned, we've also had substance abuse, substance use struggles. And that came a little bit down the road with Connor. But that is something that we will delve into, and in future episodes and really talk about, but I think it's important for you to know, for you to

understand that that is potentially a piece of your journey. And I think when we understand why then we're better prepared, we can make better decisions, and we can be a better support to potentially prevent it. And it or at least help them get through it more successfully. And kind of the final piece of Connors journey, specifically that we will get into more later, is very dangerous, impulsive behavior. So here's where it on one hand, it is fabulous that



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kids



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are coming out and feeling calmer, more and more comfortable coming out at a younger age. It's also more difficult. Because their brains are not fully developed. Their brains actually don't fully develop until they're at least 25. And it's that frontal lobe that controls impulse and decision making. And even pieces of personality. That is not that is still developing. So you know, it's it's the reason why one moment you look at your kid and you think oh my gosh, are the smartest thing I've ever known. I cannot believe this and literally the next minute they're doing the stupidest thing that you've ever seen. And you stand there just kind of puzzled because it is quite extraordinary to witness. Well, that's why their frontal lobe is not developed. So Connors frontal lobe not being fully developed, definitely lead has led to some very dangerous, very impulsive behavior that we have had to deal with and to help him through really one of the biggest reasons that this this idea of this podcast and a lot of my other writing came into being is because when Connor first came out, we felt really alone, we felt really, really isolated. We didn't know anybody else whose child was gay, we don't have any family members who are gay, we didn't, we really didn't know who to turn to, who to talk to, where to get support, and living in a community where a lot of things. And I know a lot of communities are like this. So it's not specific to my community. But living in it, I guess I should say, a time where there are certain things that people just don't talk about. And so you, you don't know where to turn, I was lucky enough to have. And to still have an extraordinary therapist who has been a lifesaver is the best way I can say it. Because I mean, not only is she been fabulous for me, but as far as helping us find these resources that we needed. She has been wonderful, and just supporting my family in general. But finding that professional support was huge. But we still have had a really hard time finding community, finding other peers and parents and people who are really on a similar journey. So that is a huge, huge reason why I've started this podcast is because we need community. And I don't want anyone out there to feel alone, you're not alone, you. There are people who do not know you who are rooting for

you who are supporting you who are there for you. And I really, really want to not only start this conversation, but continue it and spread it. That is that's really the most important thing to me. So coming, coming up, what to expect in the next few weeks. A few topics that I'd really like to cover, of course, the big one coming out. Now what now what do we do? So many things to talk about, and interesting and exciting kind of and you know, now that I'm in a very different spot, I can look at this in such a different way in a way that I want to share information with all of you, and really support you. And in this incredible journey, we will talk about spiritual concerns. I know that is a big one for a lot of people, myself included, and we will talk about it, we will dive deep into it. That in fact, was one of the very first things that I did was really research and really find answers. And I will tell you, they are out there, and they will give you peace. And they will really, really help you support you. And



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just not only you, but your family and all all who are around you. So I'm really excited to share those things with you, as well. And then we will talk about finding support finding the support that's right for you. You know, some people don't want to talk to a professional, another person, they'd rather figure things out on their own. And there are a ton of resources out there that are wonderful books, websites, blogs, I will share with you what I have found over the years and, and just talk about all the different kinds of support for you, for your child, for other family members. And I think that's, that'll be really, really fun to talk about. Before we wrap up today, I would like to just share my tip my tool and mental shift for the day, which I think is rather appropriate. And something very basic that we all need to do a couple of times a day at least. And that is to just stop to pause yourself and to just breathe and I'm not talking Like, like the amount, little shallow breath, I'm talking about, really stopping yourself. And taking that deep belly breath where you can really feel it all the way down. And then let it out. And really, just allow, be present in that moment. And those moments it will bring you. Even if it's just a moment of peace, it will bring you peace, I promise. Remember, you are on a journey. This is not a sprint. This is not even a marathon. This is a journey. This is a life long journey. It's with your child, it is with yourself. It is with your family. There will be emotions, unforeseen situations that will come about that will occur with no warning. There will be incredible victories and really tough struggles. And all of these moments, I just want you to allow yourself a moment to pause. And to breathe. I actually have this quote on the door of my office that says and i i apologize to whoever said this because I don't know who said it, but I love it so much. interrupt anxiety with gratitude. You really can use that in so many different ways. I get it, you know, I this actually I adapted it to interrupt stress with a breath. You can insert your emotion of the moment interrupt anger with a breath, interrupt frustration with gratitude. However you want to use that. It is so helpful. I just love it. So I'm giving that to you. That is

your tip for today. And this is where I'm going to leave you for today. Thank you so so much for joining me in this inaugural episode. This was really, really fun. And I hope that you will subscribe to just breathe and share it with anyone who needs comfort, a sense of community and hope. Thank you so much and I look forward to seeing you next time.