

015_Episode 15 - Jen Slumac

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Welcome to Just breed, the podcast focused on transforming the LGBTQ plus conversation and supporting you on your journey with your LGBTQ. You are not



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welcome to just breathe parenting your LGBTQ teen. My name is Heather Hester and I am excited to be with you to transform the conversation around loving and raising an LGBTQ child. Wherever you are on this journey right now, in this moment in time, you are not alone. Today I have the talented and engaging Jen's Lou Mack on the show. Jen is the author of soul not skin, as well as a mentor, educator, performer, and producer. She is in long term recovery from alcoholism, a coping mechanism she used to survive as a queer woman and a world that told her she didn't belong. Jen is a captivating storyteller, sharing the lessons of her life in a way that not only exudes courage, but inspires it as well. Without further ado, here is Jen slue. Mack. Jen, thank you so much for being with me today. I'm so excited to have you on the show and as a part of this community, and I have some some fun questions for you. And I think we're gonna have a really fun discussion. I want to start with your book, which I just finished this weekend and I absolutely loved. It's called soul matte skin. And it was, it's so beautifully written, and really takes at least it took me to just on this journey that is painful yet exquisit just a beautiful journey of your life. What inspired you to write it?



02:26

Well, Heather, first of all, thanks for having me. Really glad to be here. And I'm grateful to

have found your podcast and the work that you're doing. And I just want to say that it's as as a person who grew up without the support I longed for, I appreciate what you're doing. What inspired me to write it was just that, you know, it's, it's the book that didn't exist. When I needed this book. I needed a story to tell me that I wasn't crazy, I needed a story to tell me that I wasn't bad. I needed a story to tell me that God loved me, I needed a story that sort of validated the many parts of who I was. And, you know, trying to maintain that in a world that says I couldn't be those things. You know, I didn't have folks to add it. I didn't have people to ask questions to about what I was feeling. I was terrified to ask the questions that I had. So I often didn't. So I wanted to, I just I really needed to put the book out the universe so that it's there in case somebody else needs it. Because I did desperately and it didn't exist.



03:34

I think there are a lot of somebody out there who need it. And it is it is written in such a way that it's you feel connected to you and you feel like oh my gosh, I mean, and this isn't. I'm so excited for Connor to read it because I know there are so many pieces of that, that he's just going to be like, Oh, yay, somebody else went through this. And oh, this isn't bad that I feel this way. And they're, you know, there are solutions, and I do have choices. And so thank you for writing it and thank you for really baring your soul because it is there's a lot of vulnerability in there and just a lot of beauty. So thank you for doing that.



04:26

Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you for that. And you know, this was the gentle version.



04:33

I cut a lot I cut a line wondered.



04:37

Yeah, this was the this was kind of the young adult young author you know, young adults version of it, because you know, a lot. A lot of the folks in my life who show up in the book are still alive and our relationships are forever in repair and there's been tremendous progress made in all of those directions, and so, you know, I had to be responsible with what I which parts of the story? I did tell.



05:08

Sure, that makes a ton of sense. I completely appreciate that. Because I, I think about that, you know, as I'm, in the process of writing my book, I've been doing kind of the same thing. As you think about these people you do want to be in relationship with, right. So it can be reparative. Right?



05:34

Well, and the thing is to, I think a lot of times, you know, the older I get, the more I realized that we all are sitting at the same table, but we experience different sides of the table as we grow up. Right. So you know, a lot of the things that I used to think we're awful that that parents did, or or friends did, or teachers did or didn't do. You know, I could look at them entirely different when I was the age that they were eight, right? Like, I mean, a parent, when I felt like I wasn't getting my needs met. They had their own life going on, you know, I was when I was young, I didn't recognize that. But as I get older, I'm like, they weren't being absent. They were literally busy. Like, they literally had things going on in their own life. And I looked fine watching TV. Just so I don't, I don't want to blame. I don't want to blame. But I do want to tell I want to tell the story. And I want to say this is what happened to me, it was a long journey for me to be able to, to share my truth without feeling the need without feeling guilty.



06:51

Right, right. Not saying like you did this to me, you did a really beautiful job of just telling your story. And never once did I feel like you are playing the victim or saying, you know, you did this to me or you did, you know, pointing fingers in any way. In fact, I felt like he almost at every turn. You were taking accountability. And you were he there are a lot of seemingly like aha moments and a lot of reflection and a lot of, Oh, this is what that meant. And so it read just in this beautiful. I know I keep saying that. But it really was so lovely to read something where it was just this expression, it really was like an expression of your soul, and soul experience. So really well done on doing that. Because I know how hard that had to be and how much work that you have probably done to get to that point.



08:07

Thank you for that



08:09

course, Oh, my goodness. Well, it's hard work. It is really hard work. And I I admire that I admired everybody, you have to read this book, because it's amazing. It's really amazing. And you will understand what I'm admiring. So, you as you were growing up, you were really hyper aware of the difference between religion and faith. Really well before you fully understood your awareness of that difference. Can you talk about how you were able to keep your relationship with God protected from all of the other chaos in your life?



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You know, it's funny, I don't feel like I did. I felt like it was just a storm. For decades. There was there was just this this conflicting storm, you know, between what felt true in my heart and what I needed to do to be in compliance with the world. You know, and I think that people in general can understand that, you know, we all have that in some way or another right? It's like the closet, you know, we all have a closet closet of shame. And so I I connected, I was just I was I was joyful as a child as a young girl. I was joyful and I was creative and I was excited and I was happy and I was you know talkative, and I like to dance and I wanted to move around and I was all of these wonderful things and then the world's idea started getting into me and you know, just it I really cherished My joy, and I really wanted to keep it. And I say that in hindsight now with some clarity, but only because now that I'm, you know, looking back, I think that was my biggest fight was holding on to my joy holding on to you know what I think joy and God and love those things can almost be interchangeable. You know, I just felt like, you know, this, this part of me that wanted to dance needed to live. And I know that the world believed what it was saying. I, you know, I knew that my parents believed what they were saying, I knew that people that I loved and admired, believed what they were saying. But I also, I also knew that what my experience was, was also happening. And I didn't grow up in a family, where I had a whole lot of support of saying what I felt or saying what I saw. And so it's been a long journey to get to a place where I can recognize that what I see and what I feel is legitimate, you know, and what I see and what I feel has, there's space for that, you know, there's this whole other set of tools called boundaries that I had to learn now, there's just there's so many levels of, of growing up. But I think that I always knew that God was the key the god idea, I think I knew very young that the god idea was this, like, perfect love, that could exist, that was sort of above the heads of the imperfect people. And imperfect people included, my parents included the adults in my life telling me these things that didn't feel true. Right. And, and I kind of, I knew that there was a truth bigger than what they were telling me, if I could get past them to get it, and then ever find the courage to, to live with it. You know, that that's, that's the torment. And, and, and that's, that's the torment of being. For me, my experience of being a queer person in the closet was, it is a

tremendous conflict with, with what people say is true and right and good. And when you realize in your heart as a gay person, that the people telling you these things, mean, they mean it. And they mean, well, they're telling you that because they love you, and you recognize that you don't want them to have to go through what you're going through. And so you want to hold your secret, because as soon as you release it, then they have to come out of the closet. Right, I come out of the closet to you. And now you have to deal with the Oh my god, you're telling me that this is real. You're right, this can't possibly now you have to look at the conflicts of everything that we've been taught. Right? But you're able to do it without, without an alignment with my truth, you're gonna do it out of love for me. Right. And that a bigger burden, I saw my mother had too many burdens already. You know, I didn't, I didn't want there to be another one and to have it beyond me. Right, that's where a lot of the depression came in for me. And that's where a lot of the sadness came in for me, was, I really wanted to fix the disconnect. I wanted to fix me to align with the world outside of me so that I could spare the people I loved from having to deal with what I knew was true.



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And that's so much for a young person.



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Yeah, and, and little people do it all around the globe, not just not just little gay people, you know, for we we all have some experience with with the otherness. We all know, the experience of not belonging, you know, different experiences of it, though, carry different social weight and social gravity and potential harm and danger. Right.



14:24

Right. You You say that with such extraordinary clarity, which I know has taken you years to come to, there are a lot of I'm sure at the time what seemed like you know, oars, you know, I can do this or do that I have to be this or that. Instead of, you know, and where I I am a queer person and God loves me and my parents love me exactly, you know, For exactly who I am, and the world is not condemning it, you know, and there are positive messages for me know and



15:10

understand to Heather that when I was a little girl, I mean, there wasn't a whole lot of damning of gay people that I was aware of her that I was experiencing, it was just an absolute silence. I just didn't see it. It didn't exist. There was no, there was no, there was no version of life that this duality was going to survive in. There was no version of my family's world where I was going to bring home the girl I couldn't stop thinking about no version of my father being in the pulpit, and giving a sermon on Sunday morning was going to be celebrating his daughter falling in love with another girl. Like I knew that. And it's not because he said it, it's because it never got spoken. There was no version of reality that matched who I knew I was. And that creates the silence. And that creates the compression of, of progression. Right, like,



16:20

right oppression.



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That's what depression is. Right?



16:23

It's right.



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The anger turned inward. Yeah, no anger that this, that this doesn't fit. Right, and that I can't fix it.



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And just the absence, I think that that's such an, it's really extraordinary, because I I've obviously, you know, kind of attacked this more in recent times with what our kids coming out now are facing, right, which is quite the opposite. There's a lot coming at them all the time. But thinking about it from where you were, as a little girl, the absence the silence, that there, there wasn't anything that was a whole had to be a whole different kind of like,

 17:10
wow.

 17:12
Just I can't imagine how confusing and hard and I mean, that's not even a good word for it, but just

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it's, it's a challenge, but it's what it's what crafts us, you know, I can say now, having survived a lot of what was very, very difficult for me to survive, but you know, I, I did, and I can say now that I wouldn't trade it. I mean, I don't want kids to need to go through, you know, all of it. But also, my faith says to that, I think I saw I hate to quote, a Facebook meme. But a Toby Mac, I think said I'm probably going to butcher it, but something like be grateful for the wound that draws you to God.

 18:06
Yeah,

 18:07
I don't think that it, it needed to be quite as hard as it was, I would have taken a little bit of a frickin break. But uh, but honestly, you know, that's where alcohol comes in alcohol helped me a lot, I think I would have probably taken my life if I didn't have alcohol to bridge me, from a time when I didn't have the skills to deal with everything I was feeling and a time where I was able to learn those things.

 18:32
That is a big piece of your story. And your coping, and, and like you just said it, it was such a clear statement. It did save you, right, and to a certain extent. And until you were able to gain the skills gained, learn what you needed to learn and get to that next point in your life where you are ready, right? You were ready to shift you were ready to take in the information that would help move you forward and move you out of that. So I think this is something that so many kids who are coming out young, probably just across the board,

deal with substance use substance abuse, alcoholism, whatever, you know, the substance of choices, right. Can you talk about your experience with that and really kind of what you've learned overall?



19:33

Yeah, sure. You know, it's interesting because my experience as a gay woman and my experience as an alcoholic when women are, you know, their own things. You know, they are their own experiences. And I think that alcohol allowed me to survive a time when I didn't have the answers to to satisfy my broken heart, you know, like, I didn't know, unfortunately, when you drink the way that I drank, seeking relief from, you know, heartache, and, you know, just the conflict between me and, and the family wrote the family or the social rules or whatever, just, you know, when you drink the way that I drink, if you have an alcoholic body like I do, that's what makes me alcoholic is the way that I think and the way that my body processes alcohol, you know, somebody could drink the way that I drank and may not have become an alcoholic, you know, they can be a heavy drinker for years. But I became alcoholic because I was already capable of becoming alcoholic. It's probably my greatest gift. Because I feel like there's this feel you might have to bring me back to the alcoholism and to go here on a little tangent for a second. So feel free to pull me back, I will take No, okay. No, I feel like there's this general developmental thing that we human beings experience, right, we're like born is his little ball of light of possibility and everything. It's almost like this God's intention, like God needs each one of us to express God's self right creatively. And like, we come out, and we are this idea ready to become ourselves. And there's this little seed of that in us and with the intention of growing in the family in this in the community and stuff is supposed to be the garden in the soil and to help us grow into that which we were intended to be. Right. Right. But when, who we, who we've been seated as invited environment we grow up in, whether it's the nuclear family or the world at large, however you want to micro or macro Cosme that right? Right. When we come up against the constructs that don't support us, then we get into this battle of either, you know, I'm going to thrive or I'm going to comply. And, and we learn to comply. And that's where we come up with the coping strategies and the whatever's, and a lot of people Heather, in my experience, in my, in my perception of of life is many people spend their entire lives in compliance and never choose themselves. And it's because we can get by, and it's because it's been so normalized, not to thrive, that we aim to be successful in the world's eyes. Rather than sit quietly and ask my little creative self seed, what is it that I'm supposed to do? What is it that I'm good at what you know? And so I say that alcoholism is the greatest gift. Because it robbed a lifetime of bullshitting myself from me. I was no longer able to pretend like I was okay. Right? I was no longer able to look at myself in the face. And stand what I saw. I just couldn't no amount of mascara or eyeliner or lipstick, no, no cool denim jackets. Nothing that I had going on

was going to cover up how I felt about me when I was drinking the way I was drinking and doing the things that resulted from it. And so I had, I literally had to choose if I wanted to shift the way that I was living. Or if I wanted to keep going the way that I was going, and I need to be honest with you. When I was in, when I was in my drinking, I wanted to stop. And we don't all get too many of us don't get we don't write, we want to but we may not be able to Yeah. And I've buried many, many people in my years of recovery in the time that I've been clean and sober. People who really wanted it and who tried and who



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were good people. And I don't think that I'm any more special than they were. But I do I hold my sobriety like a newborn. You know, I mean, it's an 18 year old now. But when I got sober, I thought so it talks back. It's got a little attitude



24:48

to it now.



24:52

But yeah, just needing to protect it. It's a new life. It's a rebirth. It's a new chance, you know, and not everybody gets that and Hold it very dear.



25:02

I love that, that is such a beautiful way to look at it. And in the fact that you're able to look at it with such and so many different ways, you know, as a, as a teaching tool, as a gift, as part of what shaped you to be who you are, to allow you to do what you do and be who you are now in the world, right to give you that kind of extra, that extra, I need to do this, because I've, this is a gift, right? I also love, you know, I'm glad you went off on that tangent, because I think that is you are a lovely storyteller, because that is a great way to think about life. Right? That we all have that we all have that and, and it's whether, you know, all of those pieces are true. You know, I say I, in fact, I was thinking, you're saying that I say this to my kids now. Because I have, you know, in the past several years, had my own, you know, kind of awakening and, and really realized kind of my purpose and my passion, right. And I think I don't want them to wait until they're in their 40s before they go after what they love and what they believe in and what they feel passionately about and what they're good at. Right. So. So what have you get straight A's in science and math?

Do you love science and math? Or do you like to draw? What lights you up? What lights you on fire? That's what you do?



26:46

That's what I try to tell my gun all the time. Right? I try to tell him that all the time. Yeah, he's, he's a good he's a good dude. Yeah, yeah, he's an artist, he's a creative. He's, you know, he's, he stands out, you know, he's, he's one of those. It's just, he's not the normal kid in the in the bunch. He's got his own flair. And he's got his own way of doing things. And, you know, I just encourage him, I say, Man, you know, just do do what you do, you know, always move closer to that, which makes you feel alive. But you know, I think that sometimes it might take till your 40s. Like, what if it takes that long? To figure out what doesn't work? I don't know. Right?



27:32

Right. Yeah. For me, to me. I think. And I say that out of, you know, thinking that there are options. Now, of course, the reason that I have this passion we have, you know, we know what we know and we feel passionately about what we feel passionate about is because of our life experience. Right? Right. So I think you're right there too, that that is kind of the where the balance, but if there's an option there, if we can, you know, these are these things that we wish and want for our kids and those who whom we love is, you know, to, to, to not go through some of the things that we've had to go through, even though, you know, all of these things have, have created us and have molded us into these right? And trust us



28:23

this they're going through things that they're not telling us about, you know, they're going through their own stuff. You know, you know, it's happening. I mean, it just is Yeah, it goes and, and, you know, we got to love, we gotta love, I would love to see us all learn how to care better for ourselves, take care of us cherish ourselves, and learn how to honor other people's journey, just honor it. Just, you know, somebody tells you what they're going through, you know, nevermind, the debate, or the argument or whatever, just Huh, thanks for sharing that with me, you know, like, just just trust somebody else to be on their journey, share our experience with each other, you know, there, there's the right and the wrong and the good and the bad. And all of these things that we've constructed are just so, so damaging, you know, even to the people who are holding them, even to people who are playing them, and they may not even see it, you know, and you may not see it until

you find yourself, you know, falling out of the matrix, basically, right when you're working for the matrix. And when you see, it's like, wow, it's all great. It's all smoke and mirrors and garbage. Like it's, you know, all we have is each other. All we have is each other and our only job is to take care of each other and to become you know, to, to love, you know, to do to do what God did, to do you know what we've been shown and to love each other and to love God because God is his The perfect example of no matter what you do child, I adore you. So, so know that if you do some of these things, it's going to be really hard, but I'm here if you want to talk, and if you do other things, it's going to work out a little bit better. And I'm, and I'm here to talk like, like turning to God and learning to have that relationship with, with whatever that is for us, for each individual to find that to be able to find that. And then, and then live among the mess that is humanity, you know, with a little bit of grace, because that we're adored by, by the power that doesn't, you know, it's, it's everything. So it doesn't have to, like, you know, one up me or criticize me, like, it doesn't have to do those things. It's just, you know, steady at a door in me all the time. And I learned when I learned that I have access to that when I learned that the church wasn't right and that the picket signs weren't right. And that, you know, Matthew shepherds, killers weren't right when I when I learned that these things are fear that have spoken. And that's it. Then I realized that I actually do just as I am have access to this love that is unquenchable. Right, and I have a right, right to access it and to be in relationship with it. And I and I need to write a plant needs the sun to grow, I need, I need spirit I need I need that love that, that God that that God idea, right, I need that thing. That is the north in order to grow, right? Otherwise we get stuck in the mess.



31:55

Absolutely. We have a love, right? Just that that unconditional love and being able to recognize that. Well, first of all, recognize that all you know, these other things are fear. And I think when you let when we're able to let go of that fear, and to recognize it, and then to let go of it. But also just to embrace the messiness and be okay with it. And and just know that it's all part of this, this lovely, talking about embracing the messiness, and not even of the process, but just the messiness of life. And and knowing that you were loved unconditionally, no matter what. And so all of the fear, the rules, the stepping a toe out of line and your dad for Yeah, doesn't apply. Yeah, that's a really,



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really beautiful thing. And so long time, I mean, when when we believe what we've been taught, then you can tell me you love me as many times as you want to, but if I can't believe you, right, this is why this is why we have to do the work on the inside. This is why

we have to, we have to unlearn each of us, each of us has got to be responsible for unlearning that which does not serve our growth and that which does not serve loving each other. I mean, that's just it and simple. simple it is. I



33:44

mean, that's perfect. That's absolutely I mean, that's exactly it, we and and i think that that's a big a big point here that it is work. And it is work that you have to be very aware of that you're doing kind of intentional work, not just something that's going to kind of happen. It is intentional, and it is and being gentle with yourself and giving yourself that time to work through and undo because it does take time. This isn't something that happens overnight or in a week.



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Yeah, and it's not always sexy, right.



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Sometimes it is not cute. Okay. Oh,



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say for the most part, it's not cute. But yeah.



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I think they're like, what what is it that motivates people to go to that level of work? Right? It's something has got to fall apart in order for us to be willing to unlearn that which has been getting us along just fine. Right And that's, that's that's the thing, right is that when the world falls apart, this is a gift Embrace it. feel the pain, feel the floor follow up beneath you look in your child's face, the child that you bore the child that you've loved the child that you've watched grow the child that you trust the child that you've held the child who dances and makes your heart flutter, look them in the face, and know that they're telling you the truth. The only truth that they know how to tell you. Right, and whether it is or is not going to be the same truth in 10 years. Our job is just to love and guide. It is right. My father said to me, I don't know, I don't understand. He said I don't I don't understand. And he said, You know, I'm concerned about this, because it's gonna make your life hard. He

said, but I don't love you any less. You know, my mom, my mom loved me anyway, my mom didn't kick me out. Many kids get kicked out. Right?



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They do. And it's not, it's not our job necessarily to understand is it our job, as the parent is to love,



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it becomes a problem a lot of times when and this is what are saying before is, you know, when I come out of the closet, now my parents have to deal with this the thing that I've been dealing with, right, so the reason I'm acting out, or the reason that I'm on hold away in my room, or the reason that I'm not okay is because I don't fit your plan for me, your ideas of me, I'm still playing the I'm still acting as if I do. But I'm wondering if this is my life, if this is the you know, and we all become actors in our world, at different times, you know, we play the wife, when we want to be free, we play the teacher, because of the retirement when we want to go and sing in a band like, these are not quite the same thing. But I mean, we all can access that experience, whether it was a heavy one, or you know, a mediocre one, like we know that experience of not knowing if all of me is ever going to fit here. And when we don't want to hand that off to our parent, because now our parent has to look at themselves. And I think a lot of times when the church or when when families or whatever cast out, it's because they're trying to protect themselves from falling apart.



37:45

Right, right. The pain?



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Well, and the whole structure of the ideas. What do we have, if we don't have the church? What do we have? If we don't have right and wrong? What do we have? If we don't have good and bad? What do we have? If we don't have male and female? What do we have? If we don't have what we understand the things that we've all agreed on? What then well, some of us have to answer those questions to survive. And and then we burden others with them when we decide to survive and come out. And then it has to become a larger discussion. And that's the courageous work that you're doing. And that Susan and Rob Cottrell are doing at [fried hearts.org](https://friedhearts.org) I mean, that's the courageous work. Right, right.



38:38

Well, I don't think it is important for so many reasons. But I, I think, the courage that it takes for, you know, the courage that it took for you to come out to your parents, to be a your brothers, to people you love. And I think, you know, when I think about Connor and the courage that it took for him to come out to us, that is so huge. That is so you know, extraordinary, that it is the least I could do to figure my own stuff out. Right? I'm his mom. You know, I love him unconditionally. Without You know, there are not words, each of my cats and goodness and I think that's you know, one of my bigger and to not be afraid of that. Yeah, it's scary. It's it's, it's a it's a scary place, but that's doesn't mean it's bad.



39:44

It's messy. Yeah. It's just life getting.



39:50

Yeah. And sometimes that's just really fun, too. I mean, there's some fun stuff that happens and all that messiness, right?



39:59

can be Yeah.



40:00

So, I mean, who knew that I'd ever go get my ear pierced with my son? Nobody, nobody could have ever called that. One of the most fun things I've ever done. I mean, you know,



40:19

that's awesome.



40:21

I wanted to ask you about your podcast. But before we go there, I just want to kind of back up a little bit, because you've, you've touched on this. And I think this is a really important thing that you talked about in your book. And you we've talked about it a little

bit today, and I've talked about it a little bit in past podcasts, that being gay causes you to be depressed, or to be anxious, or to have a substance abuse problem, or to be more likely to, you know, be have suicidal ideation or suicidal tendencies. And, you know, and we, as we were talking about, yes, there are statistics that support that they're all higher among queer people, right. But I think that that's like such a people look at that. And they're like, Oh, yeah, well, they're, they're more likely to all of these things. What they're missing is the why. And that's kind of what I was working my way toward is, that's where we, I, we want to have this conversation, which is where I want to have the conversation and other parents want to have the conversation. You want to have a conversation?



41:38

Well, and here's the thing, right? So when, when there's a moat, around the life that I want, right? When everything that is working in life seems to be in the castle, right, and I don't get to go. For whatever reason, whether I'm gay, whether I'm a different race, whether I'm a different gender, whether I like for whatever otherness doesn't fit. And I see all of the happiness at the castle. I need something to medicate the pain of not belonging. That's just human. I want to belong that's in my code. Every one of us, right, so when I don't feel like I belong, I am more likely to turn outside of myself to self medicate. It might be with food. It might be with promiscuity, it might be with and that's another thing, right? It's so just on the promiscuity thing. promiscuity and homosexuality are not synonymous. promiscuity is a difficult, promiscuity is sometimes a choice by adults. And that's their business. And I don't it's not up to me to judge that. But it's also one of the things that we can reach for I certainly did. One of the things that we can reach for when we feel so painfully disconnected from other human beings, that we just want to be tangled in somebody's arms. Right? We want to feel right, something promiscuity is not the same thing as homosexuality. And they often get perceived as people people say, well, homosexual behavior is in the in the clubs or in the bathhouses or in the No, that's promiscuity. Right, there's



43:51

right there's,



43:53

that's when I'm, that's when I'm in pain. And I just and I need to use something to survive today. Or that's maybe I'm not in pain. Maybe I'm just an adult who wants to have multiple partners, and I get to decide that for myself. Either way, not somebody else's

business. Does that make sense? I don't even think I made my point.

 44:15

Well, no, it does. I mean, your your point is,

 44:20

because then the Church says Oh, sexuality is perverted and is wrong and is going to ruin the the marriage. But what's ruining marriage is promiscuity.

 44:31

Right? Not homosexuality, they are not synonymous.

 44:35

Right? It's right. It's the inability to commit to another human being.

 44:41

Right. That is what promiscuity is,

 44:44

right?

 44:45

Is that what you're saying?

 44:47

Well, we might have to and that makes a ton. I'm not sure. If I've said what I meant to say.



44:55

I'll listen to it again. Okay, make sure you but I think he did. I think That you've got there. And then it was, it was good. I mean, I understand what you're saying, but we want everybody to understand. I have the gift of been able to get facial, you know, facial cues, body language cues to from your I understand that too. But anyway, so then No, that does make sense. And I think that that's just a really powerful both of those, both saying that promiscuity and homosexuality are not synonymous and making the making that clarification of why promiscuity occurs with anybody. It's not just yeah, and with homosexuals, heterosexuals do it plenty. It's everywhere. And then with substance use and substance abuse, why does that, I think you were very clear on both of those point, again,



45:54

it's a



45:57

it's a way to fit in substance use can be a way to fit in. Right, if you find a group of people who are also in pain, and they're using substances I want to belong. So if I can't belong, where I'd like to belong, then I'm going to belong, where I can belong.



46:12

And I think that it's also, as I've watched, Connor, it's a way to numb pain, shame, self medication, offloading, yeah, total self medication, and just to make all of that less intense, until they're able to know until he was able to really start peeling back the layers, and, and working through some things. certainly understandable. Thank you for talking about that. Because I know that



46:41

and I, again, I've really needed the help of other people with similar experience of going from addiction to recovery, I've needed a lot of help from other people. You know, this isn't something that I sort of, like turned around on my own, you know, I was a I was a mess, and I caused a lot of pain. And I put my mother through hell. And, and it wasn't it, it was, it was ugly for a while. And then I and then I found a group of people who, you know, had a path to recovery. And I, I jumped on board, and, you know, and I'm just I'm forever grateful to those people, and they're all still in my life today, you know, but I need that community

for recovery. salutely I can't do it by myself. No, I just can't because, you know, I need to be with the I need to belong, and the world doesn't. The world hasn't had to face themselves the way that I've had to face myself. And so it's difficult to have conversations with people in the world that go as, as rich and as rare as as raw as I need them to go to feel like I'm having a real conversation. Right? That's in recovery, you in order to survive, you have to peel away the crap.



48:03

Mm hmm.



48:04

You walk naked into the world every day. And it's difficult. But it's, it's amazing. And so if you have other people who are doing that, too, then you do always belong somewhere.



48:18

Right? Well, no, that also gives you strength to write just that support, and that knowing that you are not the only one who's going through this, and that you have people who are, you know, truly in your corner. And that's huge. Really, verse,



48:41

there's groups, to support family members who love folks who are dealing with substance abuse, people can go to Al anon, that's for family and friends of people who abuse substances, you know, just to find similar support just, you know, somebody else who's going through their son or their daughter not stopping but coming home every night. And like, what is that? Like? You can't go and talk to people at work about that. So where do you go family members have places to go to? There's a lot of resources, you can find some of them at my website under Resources. I put together a whole big thing that I think you do, too. You've got to Yeah, yes,



49:21

yes. I will definitely, just for everybody's reference. I will be linking Jen's website and gems book, and all these different things in the show notes so you can see what she's put together as well. Because I think that's really valuable. would have to might have to share

some resources here. It's always you got it on. Oh my gosh, I'm like the biggest resource nerd I can get off on a trail of you know, finding what I'm something and then I just



49:55

actually brain plant.



49:56

Oh my goodness. And you're like, oh, wow, look at that. Oh, and it And then two hours has gone by. And I'm like, well, this isn't even where I started. But right? Why am I?



50:06

Yeah, totally? Why am I looking at high tops? What? Right?



50:13

Oh, my goodness, yes, it's so true. Oh, my gosh, well, I want to kind of wrap up today by talking about your podcast, because I just started your own podcast called just say it.



50:30

I tell you what I have been wanting to start one. And I have started one several times over the last many years. I mean, I used to do I used to, I was a vocal producer on a radio show in Los Angeles for a while. And I just love radio, and I wanted to do it. But it was harder to come by the jobs or jobs that at least paid. So I took the podcasting when I first learned about it, but I haven't successfully done one yet. I think I'm at a place now. Where I'm, that's why I called it just say it. Because, you know, I'm finding, I'm finding the voice that I've always, I'm just going to use my voice, I'm just going to say the things that might offend that might whatever, because I always want to take care of others. I don't want to offend. And I'm tired. So I want to have the conversations. I want to have conversations with people who are, you know, maybe you know, folks in the LGBTQ community who are pastors who are ministers who are family members, I want to talk to people who are formerly incarcerated, and I want to, I want to talk to people who are on the margins, and frequently misunderstood and whose humanity gets lost behind the labels. And I want to bring them to the forefront through story and through introductions, you know, I've got, I've got a lot of friends that are amazing, amazing, amazing people who have just come

from the ashes and, and resin, again, are doing incredible work in the world. And I just want to I just want to interview them. Like you're interviewing me, and I just want to bring them just talk about that's what I love. I just love Todd. Yeah. Well, you're good at it.



52:11

You're very good at it. You're good to talk to so.



52:19

Awesome. Just looks like



52:22

we're just this love fest here. So much fun. And I will put that on my list and everybody out there has to listen to and



52:34

I can't wait to hear who you bring on. And yeah, I probably got ahead of myself posting it already. Because I have got to produce quite a few this weekend to catch up with myself because, yeah, it'll be good. It'll be good.



52:48

Good. You've got it. Yeah, hopefully, it's just just hunker down. That's what I always you know, I record a couple of nights in the recording parts. Super fun. And then the editing part is, you know, you just kind of like shut yourself in a room for a couple of hours and go right.



53:08

For some time, you've gotta you've got to have him reach out to me after you read the book.



53:13

I will I love the dat with them.



53:15

How old is he?



53:17

He's 19. He'll be 20 and in July, so he's very excited about officially not being a teenager anymore. Right on. Well, hey, listen.



53:29

Let him know that he's welcome anytime to reach out to me.



53:34

I will thank you. Really blind. Yeah. Thank you. Thank you so much. Yeah, he is.



53:43

Just



53:45

he is a cool kid. If you ever have to hear he did a show with me a few months ago.



53:53

I listened. Did you listen to that? And check it out? Yeah. All right.



53:57

I mean, it's it's one of my favorites because that one was particularly fun to to edit. Because you I sat there before and I was like, okay, you can't swear on this. Because otherwise I have to read it differently on Apple. Yeah, I



54:11

swore I dropped something while we were talking. You're gonna have to pull that out.



54:16

I thought I think I said it. I think that it'll be okay. I was just really worried. You know, he's an 18 year old boy. So I knew what what could possibly fly out of his mouth. And so I was giggling as I was editing. So I was like, Oh, there it is. And there's a rant and there's it was just, I loved it. It was fun. That's great. Oh, yes, I will definitely let him know. And you know, he, he loves this. They're all super cute about, you know, my podcast. I told them they all had to be very quiet while we're doing this today. So this is sheltering in place and having everybody at home makes it a little more challenging. For sure. Hello, anyway, oh my goodness, well, is there anything else that you'd like to share that I can just put out in the world for you? No, I



55:09

think you're doing great. I appreciate you. having me on, I appreciate the work you're doing. Thanks for plugging my book, I'm going to be doing a series of virtual online talking circles with Susan katrell, from fried hearts.org, we're going to be holding space online. for LGBTQ folks, something that I used to do in the jails and prisons when I worked, I worked in the jails and prisons, and we used to hold healing circles with the men and women who are incarcerated, and it won't be quite, you know, it's a, it'll be a simpler version of that, which I did inside but, but they're powerful, and they, they just create a wonderful space, I've never done one virtually. So it's gonna, you know, the shelter in place is forcing us to take what we are going to do and retreat weekends for her beloved. And we're going to be doing it online. So it's, we'll see what happens, but we've got people signed up, and we're looking forward to it. So cross your fingers and hope that that goes well and more of them, and eventually live. So it's, it's exciting. It's exciting, that we're at a time when we can talk about it. And we can create space for people to have their experience. And I'm just glad that I, you know, and well, and I'm just grateful, you know, and that I can hopefully be somebody for people like Connor or people like me when I was younger to look to and be like, wow, maybe I can grow up and be happy and be healthy. Maybe I can be and love God, maybe I can be gay and be married. Maybe I can be all of the things that I was that I was, you know, gifted to be? Maybe I can. That's what I want to be. It's just that hope, you know,



57:01

I love that. Well, you are the hope dealer. Right? Yeah. Oh, I love that. I love that. That's and it's perfect. And I you know, I couldn't have said that better. So you you do embody all of those things. And you are such a great mentor and person. You're so easy to connect with that. That all of these everyone who meets you and just doing what you do is perfect. And I'm so I'm so excited for you. And I definitely will put some information out there about the the virtual what you're doing with Susan. And the beloved weekend's coming up after check off to check the virtual ones out as well. Because that would be so much fun. So thank you. Thank you.



57:58

Thanks for your time. I really appreciate it. Thank you.



58:00

You are welcome. Thanks so much for joining Jen and me today. Remember to just breathe. taking a few minutes each day to focus on your breath, and calm and center yourself. It will give you strength and clarity, especially right now. Check out the show notes on my website for the links I mentioned for Jen's book, website, podcast and soul circles with Susan Cottrell. And please help me continue to reach more people who need support and love by subscribing to and reviewing. Just breathe and share this with anyone who needs to know they are not alone. Until next time,