

Connor and Me Part 1

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Welcome to Just three parenting your LGBTQ team. 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.



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So today is an exciting day. It's a day I've been teasing to all of you for a few weeks now. We get to have an episode actually we have three upcoming episodes with Connor He has graciously and



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wonderfully agreed to do some episodes with me to really talk about his journey and to really give us an idea from his perspective and his experience, what his journey has looked like. And I will respond as well, but it's really going to flow. Not so much in a question answer format, but with Connor just really sharing with all of you what the past few years have looked like and felt like and Ben like for him. So, without further ado, Connor, my wonderful, wonderful son is back with us today.



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All right, well, thank you so much for having me back. And You know, excited to talk about

this. And you know, we've been trying to figure this out for a minute now. So got it finally worked out. So I guess just, you know, the way the way we segmented it is, you know, first kind of going to go into depth on kind of my initial experience coming out. I mean, I guess you could still consider me in my initial part of coming out, but, like the very, very beginning, so I guess, you know, So to start with, you know, I get it really have. I mean, I guess I kind of had an idea that I was gay, but like, I wasn't really able to accept the fact that I was gay. until probably, I would say like, my, like the beginning of my sophomore year, which was what 123 how many years like four years ago, three years ago, four years ago, four years ago. Goodness, My mouth is Terrible.



03:01

Yeah, so four years ago,



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that's when I kind of, you know, that's when I first came out. And I think it was pretty much up until, like, I came out that I was kind of like on the fence about like, do I do it? Do I not? You know, I think there is a ton of fear around it, given the fact that, you know, the environment I lived in the school that I went to nutria being such a toxic place for any minority. But, you know, the thought of being gay and the thought of like, Oh my god, I could lose all my friends. No one's gonna want to talk to me, no one's gonna want to mess around with me because I'm the gay kid, you know, like, no one wants that. So there was a lot of fear surrounding that, I think, and a lot of just kind of like internalized homophobia as a result kind of up until I came out.



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Then I was just, you know, entirely Yeah, out of fear.



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I think there's a lot of like precipitating factors that led to me coming out, you know, it's a mix of like, kind of just realizing like, okay, I can't really pretend to be straight anymore. This is exhausting. And so mentally taxing. And, you know, just kind of like the internal Oh, my gosh, what's the word dissonance, that, you know, it's kind of experienced, like, it just be, you know, it grew stronger and stronger that like contrast between who I was expressing myself the outside versus how I felt on the inside. And that's kind of a common

theme, but you eventually just kind of reached a point where I had the first person I told was my best friend at the time, Maddie. And so that was like, a huge step for me to be able to, like, admit it to one person. Like, I remember how, you know, I remember that moment that we were parked in front of the middle school that we went to Like, the winter of my sophomore year, and it kind of just told her all the sudden. And, you know, it was probably like, at the time, that was like the scariest thing I'd ever experienced. Because, you know, I knew that she was a great person that, you know, we were really close, but like, there's still that fear of like, well, what if what if she decides that she is, you know, she's homophobic or whatever, you won't be friends with me anymore. So, that was scary. But, you know, she received me received the news very well, as you know, I guess kind of unexpected, but, you know, after that, you know, I kind of I started telling people who are kind of really close to me and like quite considered close friends and you know, it got easier every time. And, you know, I started to become more comfortable with the fact that like, no, this isn't something that's wrong with me. This is just a fact of the matter. I'm gay and that's Like not gonna change and it just like it Furthermore, like I'm not going to change myself in terms of like I'm not going to put a front up because it's exhausting so then eventually you know, I guess the story is kind of convoluted with me convoluted, but like it kind of messy with how I came up to my parents. And you guys all know I'm sure you all know the backstory from my mom about how I came out to them. But I guess just like the similar fear of like fear of rejection fear of like, what if they judge me like obviously it was a different scenario because it's my parents and not just some random homophobic kid. So it was like this, you know, if they don't accept me for whatever reason, that could be major. And I also just like, you know, being a 16 year old, you know, no one really wants to be like sharing their deepest darkest secrets with their parents like at all. So there were a lot of layers and a lot of reasons why I was hesitant saw them. But it was never something like they were outwardly presenting as like homophobic or like, you know, hateful by any means. There was just there was, you know, I think they didn't really have an inkling yet. So I was just kind of like a newbie, something that would, you know, probably blindside them. So when I did you know, it, that's, you know, the story. It's a little messy, but I think it was kind of necessary like it. I don't know, how long after that I would have come out like basically, you know, by being forced to do it, or not forced to do it but by like, you know, kind of just falling out. It works better worked in my favor. Because it kind of got it out the open it was you know, pulling the band aid off. But it was like, you know, it was an incredibly fun horrible place and like an incredibly vulnerable position to be in to try to, like, tell my parents that and like, you know, just kind of hope that like, they'll accept me for who I am and like, you know, and if they you know, took it in stride, you guys like I entirely want to give them credit for that, you know, it was even though it was something that was obviously a shocking It was never a moment of like, well that's not okay or we don't accept that or we don't love you still, like it was you know, made clear from the get go that like that was never something that we had gone through their

minds. But yeah, so I think that was like a big hurdle kind of like initially coming out to everyone coming out to my parents because then when it came out to my parents, it was like, Okay, I have like, you know, at the time, like I have like my core support system, or who I saw as my core support system.



08:54

They all know and it's not something that I necessarily have to like, keep from it. Go on anymore. And I think it was kind of like then, and I started like that spring of sophomore year that I kind of gave up on that whole, like trying to be straight presenting, and kind of just started, like, I guess, exploring the world of homosexuality, for lack of better terminology, basically, the way I went about exploring and discovering was very much, you know, on my own terms, and entirely on my own kind of discovery without going into too much detail. You know, the internet is an amazing thing. And, you know, I think we all know that but like, I'd kind of, even before it came out, like it kind of found these apps and these forums and these websites and whatever, and found, you know, some people and that, I guess had similar interests. I don't know how to say that or properly, but you know, basically, I was able to kind of experiment figure out what I liked and what I didn't like. And it was, but it was like very much I was throwing myself headfirst into this world that like I knew nothing about.



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But, you know, I wanted to



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and like the feeling I got from like, having all this freedom was so like, addicting, and so like empowering to be like, you know what, I'm fully in charge and I get to choose Create this persona of who I was who I saw myself as being a gay man or I guess, gay teenager at the time. Which like, I guess, like, context on that, like, up until I came out, you know, I the way I kind of saw myself and I feel like others kind of saw him he was, you know, old you know, oldest of four. So you know, like mature And, you know, I'm relatively well spoken. And you know, I care a lot about school, and just kind of like this very I don't know, just good kid kind of persona, kind of figure, whatever. And I really didn't like that. And I, you know, I liked doing well in school and I liked, you know, be being able to articulate my thoughts, but like, being seen as that by my peers was not something I wanted. And so once I would kind of come out, or once I'd come out, and I started exploring and started kind of doing all that it kind of gave me the sense of like, it was empowering, you know,

like, I had this freedom now, but like, also I was doing things and having experiences and like taking risks that I know for a fact that no one else in my school no one none of my friends, no one in my grade. No one is doing that. So I felt like it total badass now. And so it's kind of like this like shift in persona from like, good kid to like this total quote unquote badass who kind of did whatever he wanted.



12:10

No, I think that's that's really accurate and good and and important to note too that you were able to do it while keeping the other persona intact,



12:24

right. Yeah, that's a good point. I mean, I think that was Yeah, that was a good big part of first being out was like, you know, because I presented this whatever badass bad kid, whatever persona to my friends and that's how I kind of like saw myself internally. But then on the outside to my parents and to like adults and just jet like, to the general public. Yes, I still kind of presented myself as well. No, I'm still this good. There's nothing wrong here. I guess like that was, that's the best way to put it like, I'm fine. I guess that, you know, that continued to be the case where I was able to kind of, you know, I guess for the next couple months, like I was totally able to keep it who I was internally like this, you know, whatever badass persona keep that separate from who I was externally. And I continue Yeah, like that continued to be the case throughout most of the summer, or like the following month. So I guess, you know, really up until I want to say, you know, like, six or seven months later, that thing kind of started. I guess, just becoming harder. I wasn't able to sneak around as easily. My parents had started kind of getting inklings of, you know, like, just kind of some more suspicious behavior. The online community that I was able to find I mean, I guess, you know, that's the great thing about the internet, there's something out there for everyone and Nish corners of the internet. And, you know, I'm not gonna say the community that I found was necessarily a good influence or a positive influence, but it still kind of like fulfilled the needs that I decided that I had at the time. You know, whether that was for the greatest good, Probably not, but, you know, it served a purpose for that time. the gay community at my high school was very, especially when I was like, sophomore, it was very small. And there was definitely a stigma surrounding it in terms of like, the gay kids, you know, like, they're the, you know, they're very feminine. And you know, they're really only friends with girls. They're probably in theater, like there was this whole like, I guess demographic for how I was kind of like, you know, you fit into this, whatever, I guess I was very self conscious. I think that's the best way to put it. Like I was still very self conscious about how people perceive me and was so obsessed like with

controlling how people perceive me that I never really engaged with that community that I had available to me in person at school because I couldn't really get over the fact that like, then I would be associated with these people. And you know, it just like it was putting myself out there in a way that I didn't feel comfortable yet. However, the internet, having an online community now wouldn't really caught I guess it would be a community, but like, being able to entirely control how people perceived me online. You know, you how you can hide behind a profile, you know, just take like one good picture that I could create exactly how people perceive me and I could be you know, I, in hiding behind the screen, there was a lot more that like I felt comfortable expressing there was a lot less like inhibition surrounding it. I don't know if that's the right word, but like it was much more uninhibited. And I think you know, just on top of that, like, yeah, like just like, the feeling of like, you know, I think most people can relate like when you're online, you feel like you have that sense of like protection and anonymity. To a degree like you just I feel like you're much more prone to just feel like, at least I know, for me, I felt like I was I could do a lot more could get away with a lot more could say a lot more. Like, because I was behind the screen and because no one could like know, oh, that's Connor Hester, you know, from nutria. That wasn't something I had to worry about.



17:00

That makes a ton of sense. Absolutely.



17:04

therapy, as you would says is something that you know, has played an increasingly important role in my journey, if you're gonna call it a journey, but the way that I'd kind of viewed it originally, before I kind of had a really good understanding of what was going on inside my head, for lack of better terms, like, I didn't really see I saw it as kind of like, Okay, my parents are making me go to this, so I'm going to go to it and they don't get mad. And you know, then they're off my back, right? So, at first, it really wasn't much more than that. I was, you know, the first they're the first two therapists today met with there was no like, I didn't really have an appreciation for what therapy could be and what it could do for me. I was much more interested in kind of just having my needs at the time met. So That was, you know, appeasing my parents and trying to seem like I was totally unproblematic, and everything was fine. So with my first therapist, or I'd seen her for what, I think it was probably like four or five months. That's okay. Yeah. And I would say 90% of the time was just making up total lies about what was going on. Are they kind of, you know, paralleling what I was experiencing. If I was really struggling with something, I would kind of create, like a hypothetical like parallel to like, Oh, well, I you know, I met this guy at school. Right?

And, you know, he did this. So like, what do you think I should, like, there was a seed of an ounce of truth in what I was saying, but like, it was still it was very much just like, showing up every week to get to check a box basically. And I mean, so obviously, it really didn't help me much at that point. I don't really remember, like what point we decided to switch? therapists?



19:05

Um, it was after your jaw surgery. Right. Right. So, I would say probably in August.



19:15

Okay.



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September, maybe after you recovered? Right and started your junior year, that's when we switched.



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Right. Right. Right. Yeah. I mean, at that point still like switching, I was kind of like, Okay, great. You know, like, I'll try to give it like a whole, you know, a good college try this time. And it was just kind of like, unfortunate that, you know, is a lovely old woman. She was very nice. But there was nothing about that, that made me want to, like suddenly pour out all my secrets to her like I was very much the same scenario of Yeah, you know, I'm doing fine. I'm a little depressed. She was actually the one though that had told me that like you're used to a little DSM five book Toby the I have severe and chronic depression yes are like kind of just like drops that and then that was that really didn't address that too much other than telling me you know, FYI right yeah which is great and I think you know about a session after that we had our lovely family therapy session with lots of lots of revelations and stuff so that like that's like the most the most significant fair therapy session I had with this woman and I was you know, I say significant just because it's the only one that really sticks in my mind. And I guess a little like, backgrounds on it first, so it was a family therapy session set up by my parents I was notified of this the day of the session so it was kind of like okay red flag but like I'm so mentally like, not there. That point, like,



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and really quickly, I don't mean to, because you're on a good, but I think that it would be really great if you could give a just a bit more background on where you were mentally at this point and why why you were there? Or why you feel like you were there at that time because I think that's a very important part of your your story. Mm hmm.



21:29

Yeah. I mean, I think again, without going into like, gory detail, um, you know, just the freedom that I've been experiencing experimenting with and the the the situations I was getting into the people I was coming into contact with, like, it was still very much like this exciting like, yes, I'm gay. Yes, this is what I can do. My parents have no idea I feel like such a badass like that was still all very much like, what I was telling myself but as the months passed, by I was like late summer, early fall that my parents started catching on. So I was like, there was definitely a ton of stress surrounding that, like, you know, my parents are gonna catch me and I don't know what's gonna happen if they do. But then on top of that, they're, you know, there were some situations that I had gotten myself into, and some specific people that I had gotten involved with that, you know, it would basically like, as a 16 year old, I was in way over my head without, you know, for lack of better wording, like I kind of just, I bit off more than I could show. And I didn't know how to deal with that. And that was kind of, I think, what started playing into the whole mental decline, where before it was the, like, split like the two lives of like, I'm, you know, internally I'm like this, you know, this bad And I'm like, you know, exploring and discovering and being free and doing all that. And the inside and the outside was kind of like, the, the outside was like, you know, I'm fine. I'm doing well in school. I am. Whatever, like, I'm just this innocent kid. But that just like that became harder and harder because now on the inside, I was feeling much more like, what the hell do I do? I don't know. And on top of that, just like, feeling so like, the situation's I got myself into, I had I didn't know who I could go to, because I just I couldn't tell my parents, but like, I also just like, you know, I could tell my friends but what were they going to do? So I got to this this point of like, on the outside, I had to present as like totally fine. You know, I'm just it's my junior year of high school. I could do well at school, but on the inside, I was just totally lost. totally scared, totally freaking out. Just really had no idea Do what to do. But I was still very intent on like, okay, you know, like, I'll figure this out on my own it'll resolve itself. This is brutal This sucks, but it is what it is. So I guess very long winded background but basically that's where I was mentally like I was very distraught already. But you know the one thing that was like okay, at the very least, my parents don't know about this so I'm like not gonna get in trouble for this.



24:32

Right? Right. And I think this is actually a quick a good place to I'm just going to jump in really quickly. So this part kind of flows together for all for everyone. So I love that you're getting Connors we're Connor was at this point because where we were was this place of you know, we were in like hyperspeed Learning Mode. And we had been, you know, Just trying to learn trying to, you know, how do we best support him and, and I will tell you he's not kidding when he tells you that he was, you know, presenting one way on the outside and feeling something totally different on the inside. He was masterful at this. We had initially no idea now as the summer went on, and he had jaw surgery and recovering from that. I started getting I just had this sick feeling in my stomach. I knew something was going on. I could not put my finger on it. I knew, you know, he just was not Connor. He was not my Connor. And in August once he had, you know, started recovering really well from surgery. I had caught him sneaking out which was I'd never, you know, done before and I was shocked and I couldn't believe going on and he had a great story which of course, the first time I caught him, I believed. And I was like, Okay, well, you know how many of us snuck out of our houses when we were teenagers? Probably a lot of us right? And sorry, mom, no, kids do crazy things like that is still where Steven I definitely we're, we're, you know, teenagers will be teenagers. And then you know, this I still had this lingering feeling that there's there something else there's something else going on, and caught him twice more in September sneaking out and at that point, we were like, Alright, there's definitely we need to start really putting this together. And it was where Connor is going to jump back here in a moment. The final time that I had caught him sneaking out, I took his phone. You know I had stopped looking at his phone all the time because we tried trusted him. And I remember sitting in my, with my therapist, and I was like, I've got to read this, don't I? I have to look at what's going on. And she was like I said, I think I know what's going on, but I need to confirm it. And she's like, you've got to read it. And I sat down that night and opened up his phone, Guess whose password on the second try? And I got in there and just I remember just sitting in my bathroom like stunned at what I was reading and crying and just being like, I mean, absolutely in shock that, you know, my, my baby boy who just had truly I mean, at that point, like so hit me. The dual lives that he had been living brilliantly and clearly dangerous. Honestly, and and had no idea how dangerous it was. And you know, I'd after kind of semi digesting what I had seen and read I, you know, went downstairs to Steve and I was like, Okay, here's the cliff notes version of what I have found. And we need to we need to talk with Connor. And so this is where Connor will jump back in, but I thought it would be helpful for us to kind of tell you that part together because it's rather significant. And it would be weird if we had split that up. So go right,



28:40

yeah, no, I think that was good context as well. Because, you know, I think you're a lot better at describing what's happened without saying what's happened. And I am so I was good. Um, but yeah, that that is, do you think all right, it's all pretty, pretty on brains, but Basically, you know, got remember that morning you know, I since I knew that they had taken my phone I was like a little like worried about it, but you know, it's like okay probably fine and I had like mentioned it to my mom like did you go through my phone and she was like no. So I was like okay I guess that's fine and I got a text later that day say you know it's like during my lunch period I remember like saying like hey this you know, we have a moment you're sorry dad night and you are having a family therapy session this afternoon so I was like okay, that's like a little weird but whatever. Although you know, of course I was like a red flag but yes, I got there. And you know, like that's just like one of those moments like I remember sitting in her little upstairs office because she you know, held therapy at her house. In her little lake closet of a room. All four of us sitting there and You know, just kind of parents being like, you know, so we went through your phone. And I'd say, you know, the next two to three hours, we're like, at the time, the worst experience that I've ever had in my life. You know, I didn't have a ton of life experience to really wrap compare it to but at the time, this is one of the worst thing that ever happened to me. So I was like, you know, already this like angsty depressed kid who like, deepest, darkest secret has just been, you know, divulged in front of like three adults. And you know, yeah, they're my parents and my subpar therapist, but like, it was just like, so mortifying. And like every meaning of the word. And, you know, not to be dramatic, but I was like, I was very like, at that moment, I was like, Alright, great. So I'm just driving myself off a brace tonight. So that'll be that. But I didn't. So, you know, that was good, I guess. But that I guess that night was, I guess a turning point. Because you know, well things were still going poorly for me before that. Now it was like okay, well this having had my kind of like my secret life uncovered for lack of better words. And I was like that was at the time that was like the one thing that brought me joy. You know, I hated school. I hated social situations. I hate like there was just, I wanted to be out of the North Shore already. I decided like that was that I was moving at 16. So, yeah, that and then suddenly having, you know, my parents discovering that was kind of like the straw that broke the camel's back because I was already you know, everything else was causing a ton of xiety and depression already, but that was kind of just like the cherry on top and really great with my little like figures of speech today. Yeah, like I think if they could just like it sent me spiraling that was like just like timeline that was like, end of September and send for the next like, couple weeks to a month. Like my depression was like I can say it was the worst that it maybe not the worst it's ever been but like it was up there is like so like I was just so miserable all the time. And I just remember that like that. Just that awful feeling that awful weight that like hopelessness, of like, just feeling kind of trapped in every way. Like there was, you know, the one thing that brought me happiness like was now taken away by my parents. My parents knew everything. And I was overall just like, I was not happy with life. But at the

same time, I was still not really willing to get any more help than what I was already getting. And what I was getting was subpar. subpar, subpar. But I didn't think I needed help. I thought that my parents just need to get off my back. So, you know, you guys I know like I'm kind of speaking for you so I don't know if you like Well, yeah. Well yeah, I mean, I guess like it just basically had reached a point, my depression and all that like I kind of just had built up to this point where I remember one day



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yeah I decided, you know, I wanted to commit suicide and it was very much like you know I couldn't there was so many just like my emotions that I really didn't understand I didn't really know what to label I didn't know like I was so just inexperienced in life. And Lakeside kind of decided like that was that and you know, nothing came of that obviously But other than the fact that, you know, it was like it just kind of solidified the fact that I was just like, in this awful, awful depressed place that I didn't know how to get out of. So, and then it'll pass it off to you



34:18

why that's all. That is all very much how I remember it, and how I've expressed it many times and, and when I've talked about it and written about it, you did spiral very, very quickly. from that meeting, that that fateful meeting from the time that I first read your phone, you know, we we realized then just you know, watching you and talking to that, and understanding, you know, from your parents point of view and an adult's point of view, truly how dangerous the situation is. war that you had gotten yourself into. And that you, you there was no way that you could understand how truly dangerous that was and how life threatening some of those situations were. No and speaking to several different professionals really came to the conclusion that you needed much more intensive help, then we could get you on, you know, anywhere on the North Shore, and we looked and we talked to people and we, you know, weighed a ton of different options. And before we even came to you and said, Okay, here's, here's what the options are that we have found. And, and I remember, you know, initially you were very much like, No, and I thankfully at the time knew enough. Yeah, I guess felt in my gut enough to know that if you weren't buying into it, if you weren't on board. It didn't matter what we did it would it was not going to work that you needed to really be on. You know, realizing that yes, in fact, I need something more. And I don't know, you know, what kind of flipped for you where you finally were like, I think that I need to do this. I think I need to go away. And, you know, if you happen to know you could, you know, feel free to share.



36:28

Yeah, yeah, I mean, it can touch on that really quick. But I think, you know, I sort of touched on it, but like that whole that whole eating of like, Okay, I guess I'm gonna kill myself now. And like, you're taking a bunch of pills. It was literally Tylenol, so it was like, okay, what's really good, you know, but in my head, I was like, Okay, this is it. And so like, obviously was like incredibly sad or whatever. Like, I remember that night of like, you know, I had thought I would like I thought I'd take in and off and I was like, you know, and I, but like, by the way, I was nowhere near taken enough to do any sort of damage, but I got it was the thought that like, Okay, this is it. And like I remember that night like, you know, saying goodnight to my mom and dad and being like all sad but like, not really you know, like just kind of be like, Oh, you know like this, this is this is it and then make it shockingly waking up the next morning and be like, Okay, well maybe it's time for me to go because it's a little it's a little problematic. So yeah, I had finally decided that was like a necessity was at the very least, to get out. And to be fair also, I mean, I never been to California and I really wanted to go to California. Yeah, so, you know, a little like trip to like, California was like, not the worst thing in the world and I was missing school, which I? Oh, quite frankly, I mean, I don't know if any of your listeners are new to your students I figure they are. But like, I can say, passionately The worst part of my life was that school was that place. And I know it's not very encouraging, but like, literally, whatever you do path after that, it gets better, it's going to be better. Like, I'd like to think that that is that school was the lowest point I will ever read. And I've read some really low points, but yeah, so anyway.



38:45

Okay, everybody, take a really deep breath right now because I know even for me and I, I know the story. I loved this story and I have to breathe through it every single time. We talk about it, otherwise, I will still burst into tears. So everybody can just take a moment. And because that's a lot and Connor is able to say it. Like you're able



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to say your warning on it, but



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Yeah, I think so. That's okay. No, because you're able to articulate really, where you were at that point. And I think that's really, really so valuable



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for, for people to understand just how



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hopeless you felt, and how sad you felt and how lost you are. And I think sometimes we you know, we forget when in our kids, especially our teenagers are coming out that they're also Dealing with, you know, being teenagers and, and not, you know, their brains are not fully developed so they aren't able to make good decisions. And, you know, they don't have impulse control and that's because they just aren't there yet. And so, you know, you pile all these things together and it's no wonder that it can become a hot mess, right? And so



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you just you it's super valuable information and I am grateful every single day that it was Tylenol



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and that



40:45

we were able to, you know, find a place like Newport for you to go to and really, you know, start healing and kind of Start like the next part of your journey. Just really, really grateful, really grateful in so many ways. And that's actually where, you know, Connor Connor is going to stop for today with this part one of his journey, I guess we could say. I don't know if there's anything else that you really want to add Connor I'm going to respond to a few things, but that you'd like to add



41:27

coming out as you know, coming out at any time is incredibly hard. But I think, you know, the time that I came out with like so many other things, you know, so many other things in my brain changing and like developing and whatever, you know, made it that much more difficult but like, I don't know, I guess it just like that made it much more of a learning

experience. And yeah,



41:55

no, that's



41:56

good. No, I think that was a that was a good thing to do. To end for you to end on. And I just wanted to touch on just a couple of things that you said just to kind of circle back to them that I remember at the time being so frustrated with because I didn't understand what you meant. So just so all of you know, when we when, when Connor first came out, his big theme was always I just want freedom. And he always use it, I want I want independence, I need independence. I want freedom. And, and that was such a huge, like, over arching theme. And, you know, of course, at the time, Steve and I were like, well, you're 16 like, you know, we can give you what's appropriate to give a 16 year old, right? And we were very much going by the you know, the rules are the same for you, as they would be for you know, if you were straight, the rules are the same gay or straight. Right. So, it we were on such a learning curve and And, and I didn't understand at the time, what he actually meant by, you know, the freedom, the independence. And of course now looking back in retrospect and knowing his story, I understand what he was saying. And it was so much deeper than, like, actual independence and actual freedom. I mean, in like the tangible sense of, I want to be able to do what I want to do. What he really wanted was to, to be who he



43:35

is, and, and be



43:39

his authentic self. And he couldn't articulate that at the time, which I mean, there's no way that he could have there's no way any of us could have. But now looking back, I think we both realize like that's what he was reaching for. That's what he was trying to get to was just to have that feeling. of this is who I am, I love who I am and just be being that person to the world. So I really wanted to touch on that because i i think that's you know been one of the many many valuable lessons on this this journey the other I just wanted to therapy we've been I've talked about many times and I think it'll be an interesting as we

go through these different episodes together to really follow you know, Connors journey with therapy and and to where he is today and really valuing it. But I think it's very helpful for us to have an understanding, you know, kind of how teenagers approach it and how they see it and also underscores the importance of finding the right therapist. For anyone, not just not just teenagers but for for all of us, so



45:08

unless you have anything else you'd like to add, I think this is where we will wrap up part one.



45:16

Connor cutter leaving for California and departure



45:21

cliffhanger



45:22

cliff hanger. So Connor will be back for



45:25

two more episodes, which is very exciting. And this is where we're gonna leave. So thanks so much for joining us today. And a reminder from both of us to just breathe to take that daily



45:46

breath to just focus and calm yourself and center yourself. And to please subscribe to and review just breathe subscribe To my website to stay informed. Join the just breathe Facebook community if you are looking to just have support and community with other like minded people and share this with anyone who needs to know that they are not alone until next time

