

# Connor and me - Part two

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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Welcome to Just breathe parenting your LGBTQ teens. 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. So today is part two of my interview my conversation with Connor and we are going to do things a little bit differently than we did in part one. We were trying a little experiment in part one, and we didn't love the way it turned out. So we're going to do things a little bit differently today. And that is Want to ask Connor some questions and he's going to talk from there. And then I will share some of my thoughts at the end and we'll see if we like this better at this time. So, Connor, thank you so much for agreeing to do this and for helping me brainstorm and wanting to reach out and help and share your story and your journey and your experiences and just everything that you've been through and that you've learned in these past few years. So thanks so much for doing this and we are going to start off so where we left off last time was Connor, leaving for California for Newport Academy, which Was er, which is an intensive residential treatment facility that is really for intensive mental health struggles.



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It's very small. It's academic. It's obviously a new Park, California. And Connor was there for about eight weeks. seven weeks ish. Okay, so we're gonna start there, Connors gonna share with us a little bit of what that transition was like and we will, we will go from there. So thanks for being here, Connor, of course.



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Yeah, so I think Newport like, I mean, objectively, I think that's the right word objectively, like it was a very, like, wonderful place a wonderful program. You know, I was definitely not in the headspace to appreciate, you know, in all of its beauty and whatever, like, you know, we were literally we had a house. I mean, it was two houses but the house that I was, you know, say that it was kind of like on top of a hill. And it was like this little like gated area overlooking, like, you know, the valley and it's like we had a pool in the backyard like it was this wonderful, boozy little place. But like I said, I you know, this was like, two days after I tried to, like kill myself. So I wasn't really in the headspace to, you know, appreciate that for, you know, its entirety. But Oops, sorry, my Siri turned on. But you know, it was something where I remember at the time, at the time, my biggest concern was, I have no accent left the beginning of November and I was like, I have to be back by Christmas. You know, all else, you know, if nothing else, I need to Yeah, by Christmas. So that was kind of just like my mindset throughout the entire experience. So I think it was much more like, I saw this experience, like I saw a lot of other things like I saw therapy before, like, it was kind of something where, you know, there's clearly there's a system established for how you're supposed to progress to the program. And, you know, there's certain checkpoints you have to reach. And so that's how I saw like, I saw I was like, this is you know, I can I can I can game the system for for lack of better words and like, just rush through it and I'll be out in no time, it'll be fine. I thought that was working and you know, like, I I was fully doing whatever I could to just like, you know, get the end of the program, but they're, like, reached a point where my therapist, they're kind of caught on and they also have like a counselor. So it was like two separate people. They kind of caught on to that, that I was like, you know, I wasn't I was really just trying to get out, which is understandable, but they kind of you know, there was a certain point Where every week they had like this thing, there was like different stages of the program. And so like with each stage, each progressive stage, you got more like privileges, you know, basically just like you're more likely to be discharged, which is kind of the end goal. And so I had kind of, like, you know, I did all the work that I needed to do to finish it. And so I just needed to have my therapist and my counselor approve it, but they kind of there came a point where they kind of stopped approving it because I was clearly just trying to game the system. And that was like, the first turning point where it was just like, I kind of realized, like, you know, I tried so hard to be in control of the entire situation. And it was something I was entirely powerless over. You know, how I progressed in the program other than like, how I was growing and changing, which is something that I wasn't organically doing. So I think that was like the first kind of smack in the face of like, so I can't you know, like, I can't micromanage everything to my liking. And yeah, so it's kind of long winded and there was a lot to that, but I don't know where you're gonna go from there.



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No, I think that's really good. I think I think that's really a powerful realization that you realize that just checking the boxes, and that was kind of the superficial, right that you weren't doing the internal work that you needed to do. To know, obviously, your goal was to get out of there, right. But to really work through



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what you were struggling with, you know, and I think two



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part of this was, you know, in this obviously went on from, you know, day one, and you're still, you know, working through it now, but the whole coming out process was part of it. And you so we're, you know, at that point, we're like, I've done it right and done. I came out, check done and didn't really want to talk about it and, and didn't really want to talk about, you know, that the harder stuff and so I think that was a really really that was a really tough place. You know, and as yet, you know, from the parent point of view, so, you know, Steven I kind of our therapists that he was talking about, so he was our family therapist, therapist, and he we had weekly video sessions with Connor and the therapist, and then every other weekend, Steve and I flew out there for family sessions. So I think that we were out there, what, four or five times? Yeah, in the time that you were there, and for these family weekend sessions, and you know, it was a huge week. We're learning so much. Also, you know, not only about mental health and in general, but you know, what you were really struggling with and more, you know, based things that you're struggling with, and then also recognizing, you know, that you're just angry and that you just, you know, you were so focused on that singular goal getting out of there. And I remember, we wanted you home. And you know, or remember thinking that the kids were doing the countdown to Christmas, we were doing the countdown to Christmas and the point that, you know, they came to us and said, Yeah, he's he's not gonna be ready to come home by Christmas. And, and then of course, we also were having, you know, whole other side of issues where, you know, we were struggling with insurance coverage and and all Ultimately being able to financially keep Connor there, which, you know, we loved what they were doing at Newport we loved what you know, we could see some movement, we could see some growth and, and what ended up happening was that we, in a very short period of time learned that we needed we were going to have to pull him from there because of coverage. So that it became the quick Okay, what do we do? They're telling us he can't come home and he's not ready to come home. But we don't have any place. We

don't know what to do. So is this very quick like, here are, you know, places to look at to interview people to consider? We just started looking at therapeutic boarding schools all over the country what you know, we really wanted a place that would work on or could continue to grow academically because that's something that he You know, we knew it would be good for his self esteem. And just for he, you know, he likes that. But we also we wanted somebody who understood the coming out process somebody and it didn't really matter to us whether the person was gay or straight. We just needed somebody who understood and worked with LGBTQ kids. And so that was a big piece of what we look for as well. And so ultimately we ended up deciding on Montfort Montfort Hall, which is in Asheville, North Carolina. So we, we took how many days five days we you know, we the entire family flew out to California we checked Connor out of those on Christmas Day actually. And got him You took them out of Newport, we spent three or four days you So we're now together as a family which everybody warned us against. Everybody said you know, absolutely do not do that take them from point A and put them in point B and Steven are like now this is our kid and we you know, we know him and we all need that time together. All six of us for all different reasons need that time together. It was so lovely. In so many ways. It was so difficult in so many ways. Because there you know, of course, all of us just wanted to be like, forget it, we'll just bring them home. You know, it's we just want them home. We will figure it out.



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And so, we Steven Connor on New Year's Eve day, I think it was maybe or the day before maybe. Anyway, I flew from weave I flew home with the Kids, they flew to Asheville and Connor moved into the next stage. So would you like to talk about manford? From your perspective first?



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Yeah, I mean, yeah. The objectively with again, the description of the whole experience from point A to point B and all that was very nice. Thank you. Again. For my perspective on that. I was just, I remember, you know, you guys had lighters probably Yeah. It's like the last week that I was there, like the second last week I was there that I found out about this and awful awful, right, the family therapy session was like, Yes. So, you know, the assumption was like, Oh, this is like my last time like therapy session. So like, there's a good chance I'm going to find out when I'm leaving. That I was like, wow. Actually, we don't think you're ready for that. So needless to say it wasn't thrilled it was actually quite resentful and stayed quite resentful for a minute I yeah, we had a little Christmas family time which was nice. Also very much like well 72 hours and you know, but anyway get to

Munford and I have I mean, at this point I have very mixed feelings about Montfort because originally, like, you know, as soon as I had left, and especially while I was in it, but like I was so resentful towards Mumford for just like for a number of reasons. It was like, just a very unenjoyable experience. And it but like, you know, now that I've had time to reflect on it and just think about my time there. It was. There definitely were benefits to it. It nesus wasn't necessarily the design benefits of the program, but benefits that I had gotten nonetheless. But yeah, I mean, it was very much like I remember the whole issue my original issue with it was it was much less the first place Newport was much more therapeutic, you know, therapy centric and mental health. And this place was much more or my purpose much more drugs and substance abuse. So everyone else there was there for some form of substance abuse at this point, you know, I had smoked we did drink alcohol, so I was wasn't you know, I felt kind of out of place almost and was very adamant about No, I'm not an addict. Like I'm just here because of my depression. Again, it's remained like very stubborn that like, I wasn't here and I wasn't going to be here for long and that was the other thing. I was the other Like, original kicker was the you know, so once again, like this whole experience has been, I would say it was like incredibly rushed to get me from like one place to another. And going into the program, you know, I believe you guys were told, you know, like it would be roughly I, under the assumption that I would be able to be in and out there in like six to eight weeks that would all really need to like kind of get me to a point I'd be able to go home. Little did we know that the average day for the program was 10 to 12 months, and that they, you know, kind of expected everyone to adhere to that pretty strongly. So, I think realizing, you know, eight weeks and six, eight weeks in that I wasn't gonna be here for six, eight weeks. I was I remember being incredibly frustrated and you know, didn't talk to you guys for a couple weeks. You know, we had our I had my my 20 minute family call once a week that I could you know, I had the choice to say a couple of weeks. I was so mad. I didn't take it. Did not their native to the letter It was very dramatic, but



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understandable. I mean, under



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as much as we were like, heartbroken, we understood because we were equally frustrated that there had been such a incredible not only an incredible miscommunication on timeframe that that was not made crystal clear. But also on when we would first be able to see you. And, you know, we were going from being able to see you every other weekend and work through this to every other



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two months. Yeah, nine weeks until we saw you eight weeks. Yeah.



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So that was really, really difficult. And then



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I'm just going to say one more thing really quick right now and then I'll let you kind of go back into it. But just thinking, you know, Connors just mentioned how he, you know, was frustrated because he had gone from this place that really was focusing on his mental health and he was really making some good progress as far as working through some things, and then going to a place that was much more substance use focused. And that was something that we found so incredibly frustrating the entire time. He was there, because we have always believed and i i still to this day believe rightfully so that substance use has not been the issue. It's one of the underlying causes. Why is there substance use Why? And there was never that I didn't ever feel like there was that effort to uncover the why So Steve and I felt the whole time, like, we were just beating our head against the wall with, you know, all the different therapists there, too. You know, it was just this total disconnect and



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you know, what we we saw to be the issues. So anyway, go ahead. I'll let you jump back in Sorry about that,



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ya know, for sure. I mean, like, I sure we could talk about Montfort specifically for a very long time, but, you know, because it was five months, so back and forth drama. But I guess just like the big things that stick out to me, so the first was, I remember my therapist that I had there like a being at Newport, like I, you know, my family therapist, I had a personal therapist as well and I remember like, and a counselor so I had a therapist, personal therapist at a concert I connected both with both of them, like pretty well. There was like a good, like, therapeutic dynamic, if that makes sense. Getting to monforte I was paired with therapist, and I hated her like she was maybe not hate Billy, she was the worst. And like, it was just like, he kind of just was like the, you know, the the cherry on top of the

whole experience. He was very much like, weird have it, you know, I was living in a house with like, our nose out, you know, kind of like 10 to 15 other, you know, teenage guys, and the entire time I was there five months or so. I was the only gay person there there were several kids are kind of like, you know, closeted or bi. But I was like the only one that was like very openly gay. And for a lot of kids that was like the first time like encountering a gay person and which is kind of crazy but and then also just like with the kids who were closeted or not, you know But like, you know, questioning whatever we're, like, I kind of became like, I don't know how to put into words. But basically there was a lot of desire for experimentation that I did not hold the same desire. But it was just like, it was a very weird part of the experience with be like, my understanding of my sexuality did grow in a lot of ways there. You know, I had met, probably, you know, one of the, one of the most amazing people across passes, was by therapists there was, I don't even know whose job there was, but like, men, director, mentor, director, person, Daniel, and he was like, kind of like my first like, quote, unquote, gay therapist. And like, it was just a lot of like, I don't know, he was just very wise and very calm and very knowledgeable, wise and knowledgeable is in thing kinda late,



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I've kind of been canceled.



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patient. Thank you. Yeah, like it just like very understanding. So it was really great to meet him until I have that relationship there. Because he left around the same time that I did, but that was definitely a great part. And there, you know, I guess I got Yeah, there's just so much that I could talk about, but like, I don't know, if it's necessarily relevant. The parts that I appreciated the most was my ability to kind of like, I was able to develop



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personally



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in my world perspective, and in my sexuality vary individually without you know, kind of external influences like yeah, you know, we're watch 24 seven by adults, but like, there was it was a lot more of just like I was able to kind of like see things and understand them

without any like, you know, bias or influence of others. So like, I feel like a lot of my like core beliefs and worldviews kind of started there. You know, my understanding of my sexuality, my confidence in my own skin. Um, you know, there was like the first like, gay, like youth group that I joined. And so it's like, just all these kids and northcarolina. So it's like, you know, these kids came from, like, miles away to just like, come to this youth group once a week, just like, you'll come to the safe space and, you know, just talk and hang out. And it was just like, it was a very empowering thing, because, you know, I was still, you know, I was just figuring out what, like being gay men, so it's like, I barely had any understanding of like, what gender meant to me and what sexuality meant to be more than just like, you know, I like guys. And these kids like, had such like, deep understanding and like, openness and just like, had like, you know, I felt like they had like, figured it out. And like, it was just such an eye opening experience. And I went to my first gay prom, my only gay, the only gay prom I went to, but like, that was also just like, another little life. Very sweet experience, like, you know, all these cute little gay kids and they're like tuxedos and dresses and whatnot. And it was just Yeah. Like, I'm kind of going in 12 different different directions. But you know, looking back on it, there were equal parts, you know, there was a lot of bad and a lot of counter productivity. But at the same time, there was a lot of like, positive, empowering, improving whatever, like moments. So, yeah,



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yeah, no, I think that's really good. I don't think you were all over the place. I think that I mean, it was there was a lot that happened in those five months. Yeah. And, and there. And I think that over time, you've been able to really appreciate the good things that did come out of it. And I think like you said, one of the things that you know, over time I've been able to appreciate is that you are able to be away and slow down and really just focus on you. And, and figuring yourself out. And you know, and I am so grateful to Daniel and to Doug, as well. And for just in guidance and for being there for you and for being listening, you know, listening, hearing you seeing, you know, there are a number of things that occurred that Steve that I were able to finally say, Okay, this is this is when we're bringing canter home. And essentially you finished your junior year curriculum there. And that was one thing we wanted to make sure that you you know, successfully completed Junior year, both with, you know, to their requirements to nutrient requirements, because that was a huge back and forth and and very clear that you did want to go back to nutria. And so that was part of making sure that that could happen. And



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in a bad But



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well, you know, we live in there and right.



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So Connor was able to come home on June 9 of 2018. And so we're going to kind of move into him coming home and his transition home as well as his transition into a senior year. So we want to share a little bit about that.



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So home



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was Yeah, but like Beginning beginning middle of June, which was great, you know, I was able to come back was like right before all the pride stuff had started to upgrade and all. So I was able to get back to that, which is really nice. I was very excited about that. And I remember you know, great feedback friends and family it was this whole you know, just like nice to be in real life again. Yeah, I mean, I guess like the rest of the summer really, like passed without too much incident. I mean, go into New York for sure. New York City for the first time.



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And they never really like



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I liked the city. I liked Chicago, but like New York was really never on my radar. So anything I was thinking about, like I was thinking colleges because that was something I would just have to start doing. I was thinking like, I was going to go west coast and wanted to go west coast and I was but as it turned out, you know, visiting New York, I loved it. You know, there was so much about it that I loved I've I've really well with that and you know seeing New York University just how beautiful this city was and just like the culture there and just like you know granted this like we did very much the to restore so we got to see all the basics but still it was like very much something that you know I appreciate it and

that definitely put like New York University on my radar for applying But yeah, I mean other than that summer passed too much into the incidence started senior year I remember that being pretty hard You know, I'd kind of forgotten how just brutal it is this social such like this social, whatever dynamic there is and being gone for seven months and having a lot of people know where I was for seven or Yeah, for seven months. was like not great. You know, not like anyone really openly said much about it like other than my close friends, but like it was still kind of like this weird energy I guess. And then also like something that I could talk about ad infinitum is the fact that a Nutri Are you being gay being anything that's not straight white Christian male You know, you're tolerated you're not accepted. It's really like that was really difficult to come that realization that like, you know, a lot of people that I was like, friendly with before when I before it came out, had like really distanced themselves from me and from my friends and like just like it was like very clear that like, who I was and who like you know, like just like that kind of whatever like was not something they wanted to associate with which you know, is on them but it's, it was still very, off putting. Yeah, I mean, I feel like I kind of like for that first semester, it was, again past that too much incidence



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just was, you know,



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realizing like, God, I need to get out of here. Whatever happens I need to get out of here I need to do well. But yeah,



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you had a very strong first semester. I mean, you you know, that was getting being on the habitat board was huge, right. Yeah. And, you know, really first semester of senior year is all about applying to colleges, writing your essays. All of that knew, you know, you would basically decided that NYU was your was your top choice, that's what you wanted. And, and, thankfully, you got in with early decision and, you know, you you got to win which you you, you know, so badly needed. You know, some And just work and that dead and you know, so very grateful for that because you really, really needed that and and you earned it. But you also needed it. So I think that was super, super important because you were working very, very hard once again, to manage everything that was coming at you and everything that you were still, you know, working through. And a lot of that was not wanting to deal with what you are working through, right. As you look back and you

reflect on how you were feeling then it's so easy to understand why you had you know, the feelings of the social isolation and you've talked about and a lot of this, I know comms stuff More in your second semester but feeling hopeless.



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These are all so understandable. And



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you know, please You know, if you want to add on to that, please do this would be you know, great place to jump back in if you'd like.



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I definitely I definitely like that was probably the most significant thing at the time was getting accepted Oh decision to NYU. It's like, you know, like it's a huge win that I definitely needed. I really don't know if I didn't, what would have happened but God It was great. kind of started to feel you know, definitely was feeling the social, the social isolation, old mental health stuff going back really just like you know, depression. And just like that, you know, and rolling into second semester really just like that winter. It's such, you know, So a couple times, like it's the environment of high school on its own, but then just like nutria like is so just It weighs down on your conscious so much. And just like everything is so everything just became so unenjoyable. by senior year, is by by second semester, like, I kind of felt like, okay, you know, everything they've done to be true was just to get me into a good college, which, you know, I've done so I'm done. And, you know, well, I was like, I never really said that explicitly. I think I kind of gave myself that permission to check out. And second semester, I was kind of like, just checked out, you know, I gave a little effort towards the beginning, but school really just, like stopped mattering. Like it just became a place where I was just miserable all the time. Like, you know, I had my friends but like, they weren't, you know, large and number of And you know, out of school like that where it is so massive It was like just I felt very cut off and very just like was mentally ready to graduate at the beginning of the year. So just like I kind of just felt burned out and I was kind of burned out second semester I started I'd gotten closer with one guy and not at school but like just you know, who I was hanging out with a lot. And that like kind of provided a nice like sense of consistency. And at least something that like I kind of could look forward to like on a day to day basis and like everyday life so it just made like everything a little more palatable. And you know, that was that was nice for a couple months. Yeah, so I mean, I saw I had broken up, we're not

broken up but like I kind of like separated or whatever. We kind of like went our separate ways with the guys I was kind of more involved with and, you know, that wasn't great. And I think, you know, I'd kind of like I just been getting to this like, really just checked out board done just like with with my, with life at that point like it was just everything was so boring and nutria was such a life suck that like, there was just there was just nothing that was like really giving me like happiness and



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you know, I felt



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totally just like isolated and cut off from everyone. You know, I had like, you know, a couple friends to talk to but like no one that I could really talk to about all this stuff that I was feeling. As the school year progressed at that point, I kind of started looking to other places and places that kind of like gone in the past for connection and community and which subsequently kind of led back to like using apps and websites and stuff to, you know, find people and to, you know, kind of engage and it just, it kind of became like a replacement. The the connection and the hoody, I found in there became a replacement for or fulfilled the need that I had, you know, from the void of school and life at that point. Unfortunately, you know, the communities that I had kind of became engaged with, were fairly very heavily connected to substance use and hard substance use. And stack, you know, like, a lot of people think you know, when you mess it, that kind of stuff, like you can do it once and then you'll be fine and never again, I think I was naive to think the same thing and it's Except I guess very, very, very quickly found that that was not the case. And that was something that I probably shouldn't have done, started engaged with these people started using started doing all this. And things spiraled out of control very quickly. You know, without going into like, too much detail, just the situation's I was putting myself in, like, the risks I was taking. And the, just the, the stuff I was subjecting my body to, just was so awful and toxic and whatever, but like, it gave me this rush, and it gave me this excitement. And it gave me stories to tell. And I knew for a fact that like, you know, once again, no one else in my school is doing this, you know, this was this was far more, you know, badass than anything I could be doing with these kids in my school. And, you know, I felt far more desire than I've ever felt, you know, at school and like in any social circle, so it gave me you know, Even though it was toxic and destroying me from the inside out, it was it still gave me a sense of community and belonging in a twisted way. So fulfill that need. And I think I wouldn't say I was able to keep it in check while I was still in school, but it was, there is I still feel like there was still a level of like, control that I had over it because

I was kind of just crawling towards the finish line at nutria. And every meaning of the word. So yeah, I mean, like, once I finally you know, graduated, which I think at that point, everyone is kind of just like, thank God.



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myself included,



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not very accurate.



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You know, it was such a nightmare and so was leaving new trir kind of just allowed me to spiral even for



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my observation. I've obviously had a million options. observations of, you know, what we were feeling at the time. And, you know, and now in retrospect, what we know, listening to you kind of say it, it is interesting that you really were kind of back in the same place, right? So, all the work that you had done, Newport and Munford kind of was put on hold. And this is this was how you knew how to survive in this environment, the environment of nutria, right, and how to cope and this was, you know, kind of all went back to those like basic, really basic coping mechanisms. Where were you mentally in that at that time, right. It was very, very similar places, right? Even those a year or two later, Steve and I were, once again trying to figure out you know, because He had transitioned home so well, because first semester had gone so well. Because we were, you know, definitely, you know, looking to the future of, you know, him going away to NYU, all of a sudden, we had this space of time, that was four or five months where he was really struggling again, and really back in that just low place, right? And trying to figure out, Okay, how do we, how do we help this kid? How do we, you know, pull them out of here, right? And how do we help him? You know, give him the tools so he can pull himself out of here because, you know, that was the other huge fear for us was he's going he's moving to, he's not just going away to college. She's moving to New York City, you know, one of the biggest cities in the world and, you know, three or four months, and so how do we know that he's going to be okay? They're, and be able to survive there. And so, this these are all of the, you know, kind of

feelings from a parent's standpoint that we were going through at the time. of, you know, what do we, what do we do? How do we help this kid and, um, you know, and all along, he, you know, had been seeing a therapist at one point he was seeing two different therapists. And, you know, I'll let you talk about that.



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too, as far as like kind of how that played, played in all of this.



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It was scary in a very different way than it had been scary before you went away to Newport. I think more because at this point, we were trying to figure out how to prepare you You were actually going to be prepared to go away to college. And so this was and this was about a year ago. Right? And it's crazy like thinking about that right now because you know where you are right now. And where you are then are two vastly different places. Which is why we're able to talk about this so calmly just FYI everybody who's listening I know we probably both sound super calm. And and it is only because we've, we have walked through this as you know, I've walked through this as Connors mom Connor has actually walked through all of this. And and



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and faced



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not only these experiences but has then gone back and faced a lot of this and in therapy and talking about it. So he can get to a place where he's, you know where he is right now. So, I will stop and let Connor jump back in and talk about just a couple more things, which really, I think he wanted, you know, we really wanted to talk about the experience of, you know, how you got to the place of being like, okay, you know, where we are all like, you can do this, you can go to NYU, and it's gonna be awesome. And I know you also really wanted to talk about or touch on the role that therapy played for you at at this, you know, kind of in this 12 month period of time. So,



42:46

yeah, I think I'll touch on that. I'm sorry, I totally just forgot. No, but, um, I think I'll touch on that first and then kind of like, you know, ending on where it was right before I left.



42:59

Yes, I guess



43:01

On a more of a lighter subject, with therapy, you know, I'd said like, remember the first, you know, session we did of this and said I'd really had, I didn't really have a relationship with therapy, I didn't see it as a legitimate, like, you know, way to deal with my issues. But I think that quickly, quickly changed. Especially a new port, you know, getting like basically like a team of therapists and like, therapists that like, I mean, clearly, they're much more well equipped to deal with someone like me, and like with the nice that I had at that time, so it kind of made me realize like, okay, like there is mean a, there's a ton of work that I need to do, but be it's very, very possible to do this work with these people. So yeah, I mean, there was great a new port to kind of like realistic Okay, this is actually like a BI tool and guess that was further reinforced at monforte, but more so reinforce the fact that like, I will, you know, I was I basically I respond much better to be able to talk to, like, you know, having like a gay male therapist, being a gay male. It was very, very helpful just because, you know, they could understand, you know, what I was going through what I was dealing with, in a unique way that others couldn't necessarily. And that was really helpful and that kind of like realized, like, okay, like, you know, I can be realist, my therapist, you know, and they will most likely get it. So that was like, a good place to be and leaving Mumford was kind of like one of the agreements that like it would be very heavy therapy, which was like, I was fine with that, because that was kind of life for the past seven months. Like I had, or sorry, we're gonna say,



44:56

No, I was just gonna say I'm gonna jump in really quick because that was such a great thing, a great realization and it was such a like, for us like, Oh my goodness, I didn't realize this before moment, that of course, having, you know, a gay male therapist for him would be, you know, would be so beneficial. And so, you know, prior to to Connor coming home, I think I interviewed I don't even know, maybe five different therapists myself and narrowed it down to I think three that when Connor came home, I wanted him to interview them to figure out because we, you know, we wanted it to be a good fit and a strong fit for him. And somebody he felt like he could connect to it which was super, super, you know, super

important. If you're going to be you know, vulnerable and work through some some tough stuff. So that that is that is what we did. And I just giggled, like thinking back to that. And



46:11

that was a process.



46:13

But yeah, so sorry, I just wanted to throw that in there really quick.



46:17

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, yeah, like you said it was it was definitely a process. But what I ended up with, you know, it's kind of like between two therapists Jamie and Josh. And again, another Jamie. Just kind of random anyway. Um, yeah, it's there. They're both gay. And, you know, so that was, you know, that was one of the big selling points, but that I'd also kind of chosen because they both. I mean, it turned out that like they both had very different approaches to therapy, just in the way that they conducted sessions and one was definitely much more gentle kind of like You are on pace like hi just like us they're kind of just like helped me process what I wanted to process in the moment. Like it was much more like oh let's go like what was what what happened this week and that was like that definitely like provide like a certain center comfort but then the other therapist was much more helpful know what the right word would be but he was it was a very strange dynamic it worked for a couple months it was very much more like he was kind of like he would kind of tell me what to do or like what needed to be done to work through these issues it was just much more like he was much more blunt that's what it was. And like there was just like a very weird like just the the dynamic was very strange, but also mind blowing I started using and I was like pretty transparent about it with him. His you know his responses. Maybe Don't use, it's like, okay, that's really helpful except for the fact that, you know, that's not that easy. It's much, you know, it's a lot different than just bought using. So we kind of split paths around that point parted ways. And so I was just seeing, don't you just see the one therapist, I ended up seeing him through the rest of the summer. Because even though I was like, I really, I could tell him everything that was going on. And it was very, like, gentle and like, you know, kind of what I needed at that point. It Like, it wasn't like I was, you know, making a bunch of big life discoveries or changes. So it was kind of just him being, you know, me just going in and talking for an hour about how my life was falling apart and him kind of being like, it's okay, you know, like, they're there. You know, please just don't die before the next session. Which like, you know, to what extent was

what he would say. So, you know, Pretty, pretty low standards for life at that point, and a lot of ways, but basically, with therapy at that, like I had come to realize, I realized pretty quickly but like, and come to appreciate how, you know, it really was what I was going to make of it. It's, you know, it's a time where I can be entirely vulnerable. And, you know, I shouldn't be you know, I, you know, technically shouldn't be judged for whatever I'm going to say. And you know that that was something that was like really important. It was like it was a safe space, you know, for lack of better word, right. You know, and, and I could talk about this stuff like when it did start to become heavier, like it was like, Okay, this is the only place where I can really air this stuff out with like someone who could partially understand, which was helpful. So then I guess Yes, then you know, Kind of transitioning to around, you know, late July, early August of 2019.



50:09

Kind of being I don't want to say it was a state of me being ready to leave because, I mean, I wasn't, but I was not gonna, you know, I wasn't gonna let that stop me and I wasn't gonna let you know that come get in the way of me getting to New York. You know, I'd kind of made a feeble attempt, you know, convincing myself that, oh, you know, like, once once I get to New York, you know, I'll stop this, like, this is, you know, this is just, you know, because the environment I'm in is so toxic, you know, I'll stop using, you know, I'll be able to be clean. When I get to New York. That I guess that mindset was enough. And I think we were all we I want to say we I mean, my parents and me and my therapist were so like, I feel like just like so wanting for it to be okay and like so wanting things to like to feel Have any sort of like reassurance that like, yes, things can keep moving forward? I think we all kind of just like, yeah, yeah, once once he gets to New York, it'll be fine. Like, you know, the it's part of the environment here, you know, like, it's not going to be an issue there. And even though we all we maybe not would maybe did not believe that there was kind of like enough to ease ease our minds, I guess. Yeah, that was kind of the point we were at.



51:32

Yeah, I think that's, I mean, that's really that's really accurate. And I think part of it too, like from, from my perspective, and I think from Steve would say the same thing is that, you know, we knew from, you know, talking to our therapists and talking to other parents whose kids had gone away to college that, you know, kids do all kinds of crazy things before they leave. And part of that is like this whole separate ration and, and that's how they, you know, they separate from you and this is all developmentally appropriate and this is, you know, whatever XYZ you name it. And so I think we were all of this mind of this is what's supposed to happen. He is ready. He, he can do this. He's got this and you know

as as scary as it is to send your child off to college no matter where they go. We knew it was important that he did go so i think that's that's definitely you know, that's where we're gonna leave it today is leaving for NYU unless you want to add anything else, Connor?



52:51

Oh, I think that's another great cliffhanger.



52:54

I think we've done a good job with that right? Yes, good. We're good. hangars a good thing.



53:01

Yeah, it's a good thing you know, it's a great it's a sufficient plot arc and we will reach a conclusion. Knock on wood, but we will



53:09

we will, I promise you, you all are gonna have to wait another month. So hang in there that this this is this is a lot and I give Connor so much credit for walking through all of this again and being able to be really vulnerable and really



53:32

honest.



53:34

You know, for all of you so countered, thank you for doing that because I know that even for me some of these these things that we've we've walked back through and as we've talked and planned have been really difficult to do. Just thank you. Thank you for sharing,



53:54

of course of



53:54

yourself with all of us and know that you are touched people's lives and that people do appreciate this. So thank you. So this is this is where we are going to leave you for today. And I just want to thank all of you for joining us and for listening. Just remember to, to breathe to take that deep, deep calming breath that you know it's going to center you and then it's going to give you strength and it's going to give you clarity. You all know that I have been breathing through all of this. And so it is incredibly helpful. Just a reminder to please subscribe to and review. Just breathe on whatever platform you're listening to this podcast on. Please subscribe to my website to stay informed chrysalis mama calm. You can also sign up for my monthly newsletter there as well as access tons and tons of resources that I have available. If you are in need of a place to just chat with other parents and allies, check out my private just breathe Facebook community. There are a few questions to ask to get in there is it is private and as a safe space and as always, please share with anyone who needs to know that they are not alone. Until next time