

Episode 025 - Interview with Susan Buss

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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. So before we start today I just want to have a let you know a quick caveat I am still recovering and my voice will probably come and go during this episode so please do not be alarmed if I begin to sound either like Mickey Mouse or Kathleen Turner. Either either one could happen. But I want to introduce you to our guest today. I'm so so excited to have Susan bus with us today. Susan is the president of her private practice Big Sky consulting Inc, where she sees adults and adolescents. She has her BSW from Valparaiso. You enter



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from the University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration. She has 35 years of experience in social work, where she has worked in community agencies and taught at the Masters level. In addition to psychotherapy, Susan offers Reiki and pet therapy and facilitates workshops and working with transgender folk, dating and porting. She is an LGBTQ plus activist and proud mom of a transgender child. She is located in Forest Park, Illinois, and I am just so thrilled to have Susan with us today. And go ahead and get started. Just curious what led you to work with LGBTQ plus community, specifically with

parents of transgender kids?



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Mm hmm. Well, thank you for having me, Heather, I'm so glad that you're providing the service



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to the community are welcome.



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So I myself came out as bisexual about 30 years ago, I was in a marriage to a woman for 18 years, and we had a child with a gay man. So I'm part of a queer family. And very cool. Yeah. So as a therapist, then I started seeing more LGBTQ clients, whether partly that was purposeful, partly that just happened. Sure. And then eventually, our son came out first as bisexual than non binary and then as transgender. And so I began becoming more familiar with working with transgender children and adults, first, first with adults. And then just things expanded from there.



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Wow, that's really incredible.



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So how old was your son? When he so is your son is female to male?



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Yes. Okay. So the see this,



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there's so much I'm in a space of learning. And I'm just, I'm curious, I know, my, my audience really wants to learn and understand. So please do forgive me if I asked

elementary questions or if I don't use the right terminology yet.



03:45

Well, let me just speak to that Heather, which Yes, for me, this is a non judgement zone. If you you know, if I have a different term, like one, what you said was perfectly fine. We also would sometimes say assigned female at birth, okay, parents will use the, like initials afab. For that, so people can, okay, where their child is, but he was 12, when he first came out as bisexual, and within a few months, non binary. And so basically, for him, it was a continual unfolding process for us as well. Sure that then he, he was during his eighth grade year, basically out to his class, both as bisexual and non binary and the school was very good at working with that. Good, which, and then, and then the next change was to change his name to a male name first, just socially within friends and family and school, and then more legally, and then began taking hormones at 13. And then before his freshman year head,



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part of his reassignment surgery, top surgery.



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Wow. Mm hmm. That's amazing. So how old is he now? He is 1717. Okay.



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Okay. And so, where How is he doing? Where is he kind of with, with the process both physically, but also kind of mentally and emotionally? How is this bend for him? Mm hmm.



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Well, I think he's been pretty lucky and pretty blessed. I think he's living his best life. Right now. He was this when he went to the high school. He presented completely as male with a male name. And that's the only way that they knew him. And so people, I think the boys accepted Him, the girls accepted Him. And it took him a little while to maybe figure out which we're going to hang out with. or so but he congregated, I guess Actually, he kind of created to a group of the boys and girls hung out together.



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Awesome. And that does seem to be more and more what it's what it's like, you know, which is is very cool. I mean, across across the board, I like that.



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I'm so happy to hear that.



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He hasn't had any issues with



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bullying or, you know, kids questioning or, you know, question, not, the questioning in itself is bad, because I think that's very good. But I mean, in a way that's unkind.



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Well, he has had a little bit I would say, and maybe he would say, maybe there's more that I don't know about. But in terms of what I do know about? Sure. He had a few problems at the school, I would say more maybe his sophomore year, there was a point where one of the boys that he eventually became very good friends with one of the boys maybe started a rumor about what his dead name was. And the case you don't know the term the detonator means the name they were assigned. Sure,



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at birth. Right? Right.



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That he changed. And none of those kids had seen any old pictures of him, they didn't know his old name. And so, you know, he was not comfortable sharing that. And he was, you know, that that felt bad. But he dealt with that. And I said, he and the boy became friends. He didn't have an issue where one of the advisors at the school who was very pro supportive of LGBTQ continued to refer to him by female pronouns, occasionally,

throughout his whole three years there. And it was very unfortunate, we, we actually just left that school, and now he's going to a public school nearby. That was very hard on him. Sure. And there, it's kind of an odd thing, since How often do you just have to refer to someone in the in the third person like that cracked? Just, you know, in front of him? Like, is he? Is she standing there talking to her, you know? And so,



08:11

yeah, that's, yeah, that just feels icky. And I'm sorry, I, I'm really, really sorry. This is just it's so fascinating to me. And I'm sure, you know, as you've been on your journey, your personal journey, and then your journey with your son, how extraordinary to be able to experience all of this together, but I'm sure see it from a very different light, a very different angle than, you know,



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I have, you know, with



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my journey with my son.



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So I wonder if you could kind of just share a little bit more, if you don't mind, or if you're comfortable about, you know, your personal journey and just how this has kind of all evolved over time. Mm hmm.



09:06

Well, sure, and I'll just say that I'll start by saying I'm very proud of my son, I love my son, except my son will think he's a wonderful person. I loved him when he was my daughter, I love him as my son and he's a great kid, I really just want him to be happy and safe in the world. And, you know, my I'm divorced now but my ex and I definitely have had been able to share the process together of of parenting him as he went through these different stages and trying to figure out what we should be doing as parents to support him and then what we as parents needed by ourselves. So not you know, not all of it was easy. I mean, being queer family, we were probably more open to this. And less surprised by this

than a lot of parents would be

 09:55

sure But still,

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it is a shock.

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Well, that's what I was kind of, you know, I think it's a shock no matter what.

 10:05

Right unless,

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unless you see it from a very, very young age. And, you know, and and i don't think shock is a bad word. I think it's, you know, it doesn't mean it's bad. It just means you're surprised. And I think that's where people kind of get tripped up like, Oh, my gosh, it was a shock. Well, yes. And we kind of rolled with it. Right. Right.

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So right, in kids probably are good at shocking parents, whether they are on an LGBTQ journey or not.

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They're different. Yes, they are. Rob,

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what I will say is that just from my hearing stories from other parents that have a transgender child, that some of them some of the children do know very early. And, for instance, I have a working with a mom now whose son is three and may never transition, but definitely is gender fluid and defining, defining himself expressing himself in different fluid ways in terms of wearing dresses and things that they were very surprised to see at that age. And we did not have that experience, because our son looked very feminine until he was 11, or 12. And went through all the girly girl stages that that people go through. And so I think one of the things developing now in the the transgender community is that not everybody has the same path. And not everybody knows when they're young, and it can happen older, and then that that surprises people, also, because, you know, maybe they're in the bargaining stage of but what you didn't know, this is different, and you are so this way, and you were so that way. And so absolutely,



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absolutely, I think it, I think you're right, and that it does look different for everybody. And I think that's based on you know, probably a lot of a lot of different things, you know, Emilio and pletely knows research behind the statement whatsoever, it is just my gut feeling that there's there are genetics behind this. And just, you know, it's just is it's just the way that we are created, and things everything manifests at a different time, just like, you know, kids get taller at different times, you know, everything else. So I think that's, I'm sure it's quite interesting for you working with parents, and kids who, you know, are on this journey,



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right. And I would definitely say that I probably work with the parents and transgender adults as well, quite differently than had I not gone through this experience with my son. When you go through something from the inside out, you get a much deeper understanding you, you know, you have a lot more information. So I think honestly, in had I not gone through this with my son. And I had parents come in who are more conservative about, oh, I don't know if this is legitimate with my child, I don't know how to handle this. I think I might have followed that lead a little bit. Because there are some extra experts in the field who would say, you know, you have to be super careful tickets super slow, and really question question question. And then there are other professionals who will say, respect what your child is saying? Well, you know, let them allow them to explore this. So I would definitely say that I, you know, became more obviously, of a pro transgender transition person, after watching the pain that my son went through when he was unable to present the the way he felt.



13:48

Right. Right. And I think I so happy that you hit on that, because I think that is one of the biggest pieces that perhaps it doesn't get touched on enough, I don't think unless it's from a parent who has watched their child come out, and any in any way, whether it's sexual identity or gender identity, and to watch the pain, self loathing, agony, we all have the mental, you know, depression, the anxiety, so many struggles that they go through that then, you know, can lead into other issues as well. And I don't think that that's talked about enough. Mm hmm. And I just wonder if you could speak a little bit to that, and perhaps, you know, what we can do to validate that not only for our kids, but for our parents. Woohoo. You know, because as you know, it's you can't do a lot more than be present and support them, but you can't fix it



14:57

right?



14:58

For sure. For sure. I wouldn't say our journey with our son is finished, either he has other life stages in terms of post High School and young adulthood and branching out into other parts of the world where there may not be a whole lot of acceptance, we have no idea. So obviously, we worry for him, I was going to go back and say that as part of our journey, we did have to work through some feelings of grief, as parents, because we had a daughter that we felt like we lost. That's not always a real popular thing within the within the community, because parents will emphasize, just be joyful for the child, just be happy for the child. And of course, we wouldn't put any of our feelings on our son, that's not his problem. We do angle on that in our own zone. Yes. But again, with the parents who feel whose maybe child was aware, much younger, and they don't feel like this was a very different change for their child, it felt to them more like an unfolding, and it didn't feel as much like that to us. So, you know, you have expectations of what my daughter's going to be like, and what we're experienced as a parent of a daughter, and we had to grieve that which is fine, because I would much rather my son be alive. And well. And that's the main point of it. But to your point, Heather, the depression rate in the LGBTQ community, as you know, is much higher, and possibly three times as high or more as a heterosexual community, the suit, the attempted suicide rate is very high in the transgender community. And that is obviously because of not only just transphobia in the community, but also the gender dysphoria of people who are, who experienced transphobia in society, and so really struggle with trying to be accepted and love golden, survive really. Right.



16:59

Right, absolutely. I mean, it breaks my heart every time I, you know, you've read these things, and then you have the personal experience with, you know, you with your son, you know, and, and me with mine, who the more that I learned, the more that you know, I have such compassion for any child, any person who, you know, goes through the coming out process, whatever it may be, and just the, the steps and the difficulty and, and knowing that even you know, that my son, you know, he, he, we almost lost him to suicide. And, and we were fully supportive and loving, right group. So, so these are the things that, you know, I think we really have to be aware of, because they are true, like, I think a lot of times, you know, we can say all these statistics, and then you're like, but really, yeah, really? Yeah. Right. And I also wanted to just go back to your comment on the morning. Because I think that is a huge, huge piece. And for the parents, and I love that you said that. This is, you know, what you go through as a parent, what we go through as parents is, that's our process. That's not to be put on our kids. And I think that's super important. And it is important for us to have that process and to go through the mourning, you know, you more into loss of a daughter. And, you know, I remind, I use this funny analogy of like our movie reel that we create in our heads, right? It's the change in the movie reel, and it's okay to mourn that change. It's not a bad, you know, changes a bad, it's just a change. And so it's kind of the letting go of what was and then now we have what is and like we said, would much rather have a happy fulfilled, you know, child? Mm hmm. Yeah. And then them trying to fit in a box or living an authentic life.



19:17

100% correct. And then you touch on the fact that there's a loss for the parents, sometimes when their child transitions. And again, that is something that is our issue to deal with, not their issue to deal with. And one of the things that comes along with that is that the child may ask their parents to put away the old pictures of them that are sitting around the house from before their transition, because it's very painful, it can be very painful for the child to look at that image. And that's something that sometimes I've been part of some parent groups on Facebook that are very supportive for transgender parents of transgender individuals. And that's one of the debates that comes up is should the parents have to accommodate their child's requests to take their old pictures down. And just like not using the dead name anymore, I guess you could call those maybe in some ways, dead images, and probably different youth feel differently about that. But our son, you know, we had to take all the old pictures down and put them away. And that includes I'm a big scrapbooker. So that includes that type of thing, and even baby pictures. And so fortunately, we had a fair number of pictures of our son that were gender neutral, because at that time, his his queer family, we just, you know, dressed him, however, when he was

little, so sure, but it was almost probably in a kind of an interesting loss for him that I would never be able to really understand. He hasn't talked about a lot, but you know, to be able to show his friends pictures when he was little or necessarily talk about his childhood a whole lot.



21:04

Right? Well, I imagine that will take some time for him to I mean, he's still very new on his process, right? So for him to really be able to work through all of this, and feel like he can get to the point where he can just really talk about it. And a very rich, that's going to take time, because I think too, you know, on top of all of this, he's a teenager. Right? So



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he has all of that going on?



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Yeah, I mean, I think you know, for better or worse, it's Yes, it's great, the kids are coming out earlier and younger, because then they have the support and the love of their families. And, and for the most part. However, they are also going through like huge hormonal flux shaped fluctuations, and their brains are still growing and developing. And there's all this other stuff going on that it's like,



22:02

Yeah, wow. Right. And that's part of what can make parents of kids who want to transition. Nervous is because they feel like, you know, here is this child, you know, 1213, or son was barely, you know, starting out adolescence, and, you know, what a time of confusion and and of trying to find yourself and define yourself under the influence of all these hormones. So how is this child going to be able to make decisions about changing their gender for their whole life, and that's something parents can get really stuck on. But that's also why, you know, if you're in a good therapeutic hospital program, that they will have gender specialists that can explore all those things with the child, you know, their thoughts and feelings and how long they've been having those feelings and thoughts and how they think about themselves in the world. So the parent doesn't have to make that decision for the child. There are experts who can do that, who can help. Help that? Who can



23:02

help that? That's so good. I'm so glad you said that. Because that's actually something that I'd wanted to add to this and fallen out of my head. So thank you. Because I know that is a huge, you know, counter argument. Right? And it's out there, right? How, how does a 12 1314 year old know for sure. And I think that is a super important point, because a lot of, you know, again, the counter argument is, you know, parents are pushing their kids through this, which I find very low. Anyway, because anybody who actually knows a parent of a kid who's, you know, transitioning, or a parent of a kid who's, you know, gay, lesbian, bisexual knows that they're like, Hey, I think you should try this out. Because



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you see what the lesbian, right? Exactly,



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I want to sign you up for you know, like, just a life of that's going to be way more difficult. So



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it love,



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you know, we just want our kids to be happy. But I love, love, love, that. We are in a time where there are experts who understand this. You can come at this from a very objective scientific point of view, and really help our children in at us, right.



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Oh, thank you for



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saying that. Well, you're welcome. You bring up so many good points that I will probably forget half of what I want to say. But one of them is the idea. One of the counter

arguments that comes up to transitioning is what they call the regret rate. And I'm not sure if you've heard of that. But what if my child or young person or adult goes through the medical physical transition and then regrets it. Once you start taking hormones. They're some of the changes Just really are permanent and irreversible. And in some aren't, but it is once you have surgery, that's pretty, pretty, pretty pretty, are very expensive to reverse. And I did some research on that. And it's hard to find regret rates that aren't related to the surgery rate. There's some research about adults who have had surgery and then regret it transgender adults. And some surveys say that's only one to 2%, there's there was one survey that said it was closer to five or 10%, which I again find difficult to believe. But I believe that study was looking at the fact that after even after they had the surgery, and they continue to feel some dysphoria, and experienced transphobia, that that was a big part of it. I don't think it was necessarily about the decision to opes I made a decision that I'm not that gender, I think it was more about what it was like to live as a transgender person.



25:57

Sure. And that makes a ton of sense to offense, the physical transition is one thing, but the mental emotional piece is totally different.



26:09

A lot of work. Mm hmm. There.



26:13

Yeah. And one of the other things you brought out was the fact that we had to go through many, many checkups and interviews and our son had had a therapist that the work with Lori's Children's Hospital in Chicago, which was excellent. And they wanted to have letters from the therapists and medical people that he'd seen before to, to make sure they had done their due diligence about his transition.



26:43

That's awesome. That's really



26:44

good. And I think that's really good information for everyone out there, you know, listening to this, or whatever point you're listening, wherever your child is, in this process, these this is really good information for you to have to know that this kind of help and direction and support is out there. And so I'll put some links to all of this too. And my show notes just kind of have some resources. Great. So parents can do their due diligence before they



27:15

great. So a bunch of pages of resource lists, but



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awesome, that would be great. We'll put that out there for everybody. Because I, you know, I do think that the more information you have, and the it's better to be



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well informed.



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Exactly. Right.



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So good. So I'm going to just skip around here a little bit, because I want to ask you, cuz I think we're kind of in a good space for this. But I have a private Facebook page. And I have a number of parents on that page, who are parents of transgender kids, and, you know, their questions that I just can't answer, because I don't have the answers yet. And I kind of have them, you know, answer for each other. Like, I encourage them to really, Mm hmm. Somebody asked a question, go ahead and jump in. Like, that's great. But there was a question that came up recently that nobody could answer. So I wanted to ask you, so she asked, How do you introduce them, both to strangers and those you haven't seen for a while. So she has a male to female team. And the teen has told her that she sorry, she wants her to introduce her as her daughter. She says, I know we shouldn't care what others think. But she has 510 17 years old and does not look at all feminine yet. My husband suggests we introduce her as see her chosen name, our transgender daughter. I'm really very supportive of the upcoming changes. And I know she is. But this part is very

awkward. So she's just looking for a little guidance on and I there's 1000 parents out there who are like, Yes, I don't know how to do this. Right. Good question.



29:06

Right. What?



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What is your advice on that? Great question.



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One of the things I would recommend is asking, I think you already alluded to the fact that the the child asked to be introduced by her new name. Is that correct?



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Yes, she wants to introduce her as her daughter. She just wants to be introduced as her daughter. So and a husband suggested See?



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Yes, okay. Well, I usually support what the wishes of the child or the individual are. And sometimes parents do have a difficult time following the lead of the child because we're not really used to doing that. Right. But in this case, it's very important and so if the child is ready to be out, sort of Speak as a female with a new name, that's an important stage that's would be called social transitioning. Okay, she's ready for that and she wants to be introduced by that name or our daughter. See in the parents are comfortable doing that, then probably they should do that Ay, ay, ay, doubt that any trans transgender child wants to have the term transgender in their introduction. I doubt that. I mean, if she did, that was fine. I haven't really heard that before.



30:33

Okay. That's, I think that that was part of my question to just didn't read. That's why I thought this was really great, because it was several parts here. That were really great.

And so I think, yeah, that's a great thing. I'm glad you answered that. And then also, just to kind of defer to the child. Mm hmm. I just kind of wanted your feedback on that one as well. And I know she did, too. And I think part of this and I may be just completely reading into this question a little bit. So if this were me asking this question, let's just say it that way. I feel like some of this is like that, where as a parent, to the idea, right, and you're still, you're still kind of transitioning. So do you have any advice for like, as a parent how to, like, yes, it's uncomfortable. Mm hmm. And,



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yeah, yeah. And do it?



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Anyway, okay.



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You know, the thing we I say, like, yes, it's uncomfortable sit in the being uncomfortable. And it's easier to tell our kids that than to do it ourselves. Right.



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Right. Well, having come out myself, and, you know, earlier in my life, and I guess, having that experience to lean back on a little bit and choosing when and who and how, and why, you know, I would reveal certain things to people. And one of the jokes my ex and I have is our dry cleaning lady who we were very friendly with didn't know that we were a couple, however, when I brought in my mother's wedding dress to be cleaned, and then who are you marrying, and I'm marrying her, we sort of came out to our cleaning lady and then invited her to the wedding. And it was just kind of funny, a funny part of the process. But that's so great. So however, we were able to talk with our son about, again, sort of coming out how to do that in different times in different ways. And sometimes we would do that, for him in terms of telling relatives and friends, adult friends. Sure. And I would say this, I believe we told the grade school, I actually don't remember if he did that process himself and asked his teachers to use the new name and the different pronouns and things or if we help with that, but I think we were really blessed and fortunate that we have been met by almost complete support, which I know is not the case, we live in a very liberal community. So that's not the case, everywhere. In fact, you know, I have some

family members who are not in support, but I have some family members who are extremely supportive. You know, and I will say, you mentioned your Facebook group. And I know that this dialogue goes on in the the Facebook groups that I'm a part of, as well for parents of transgender kids, and they throw out these questions and they talk about their feelings, and they just get a very nice range of what other people do.



33:32

Right, which I love, actually, I'd love to put in, you know, again, in the show notes, a couple of those groups, if you wouldn't mind sharing them. Because I think that, you know, just the more support that, you know, we can find his parents, the better they, you know, just the easier it becomes and walk through things that are very difficult when you know that you have people around you right,



33:57

can we do something? Sure. You mentioned Heather that the child is going through the transition, but the parents or the family goes through a transition as well. And you went through something similar if your child is LGBT, q that that now we're the parents of uh, you know, gay or child or whatever that is. And now we're, we're a family that has a transgender child in it. So you might make different decisions. I know that there were places that we were thinking we were on the road that we would think about stopping to eat and if it says seem to not save, we would not either, you know, mean, but the family of the family does go through a transition. It's just very helpful. I did want to mention another really big resource, which is Oh, yes, yeah. If you know about p flag for parents and friends of lesbians, gays. So there is a group called PGI, which is parents of transgender individuals. Awesome. They have a Chicago chapter. So it's PTSD. Chicago as well as there are other counties and hopefully across the country. That's, that's widespread. And that was really invaluable to me. Because I could go in that room. And it was a combination of parents, and then some young adult transgender folks who had transitioned. And it was so helpful, you know, I could sit there and share whatever stage of the process I was at, and these people were 100%, understanding and non judgmental, and then it was so heartwarming to see these young adults who had transitioned who were living a great life who were happy. So let's say, you know, My son was 1415, you know, going through all that stuff. And then here was somebody 25, who was happy to be who they are as a transgender person,



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right.



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So it's such a vision and to see supportive parents, and there were some parents who had lost, you know, here were, like, you mentioned, supportive parents who still had lost their child to suicide, and it was heartbreaking, but then they had the group,



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you know, as support support, because they get it they understand. Right. And that's huge. Thank you for that. I you know, I love p flag, and, but I did not know about PGI, so that's fantastic. And I will definitely link that. Because I know I've listeners who are all around the country and the world. So you know, I've tried to put enough out there that people can access, because we are, you know, you both you and I both are in the Chicagoland area. And so I think we are blessed in a lot of ways to be in an area that not only has a lot of resources, but is also more progressive, and accepting. so grateful that we live here. And I know there are a lot of others who are just struggling with not having access to the resources that we do. So I do you know, always I'm always searching for great things that you can be accessed, either you know, virtually, or, you know, especially right now in the time of COVID. That can be, you know, a lot of these things are remote. So you can just get on a zoom, which is lovely, right? So I'm really liking it. It really is. I mean, it truly, truly is. So thank you. I'm going to shift a little bit here because I am watching our time Rs, you and I were talking about this a little bit before we started, but my family and I are we are huge Harry Potter fans in this house. Yeah. And I mean, just, I read, I literally read the books almost over a year, the entire series. Yeah. And I read them all to my kids. I read them all to Connor. And then when my younger ones came up, read the ball again to them. Yeah, and it's just part of our kind of our fabric. And it's, you know, a lot of is a the writing is brilliant, right? The story is beautiful. And it's the whole, you know, good defeats evil, right? Yeah,



38:16

that's, like the



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age old story. classic story. And I know that over the past few months, we've all been

heartbroken that JK Rowling has come out with being so anti transgender. And this is a belief that is held. And I know we touched on this a little bit a little bit earlier. I just wondered if you could kind of touch on that more, as far as, I guess, in a couple different parts. Why you think she's doing this? Now? Just total speculation. But then also, why you think there is this? You know, transphobia is different than homophobia? And if you could talk about that a little bit.



39:04

Mm hmm. Well, I agree I, we have the same relationship with books in the movies, and was was a much bigger fan. I know. Well, one of the issues, she is being painted as transphobic because of her comments and other decisions that she's made, one of which is that she has a character in her new novel, that is a man who dresses as a woman to lure victims so that he can murder them. And there's a sense that that's not a trans affirmative type of choice that makes people angry. It supports this idea that transgender people even though I don't know that that character is but the transgender people are dangerous. As you know, there's a high murder rate with transgender folks, especially black transgender women in urban is not just urban areas across the country. And so this is a life And death matter to a lot of people, as well as when you have such a broad platform that JK Rowling has many million Twitter followers or whatever, she influences a lot of people. And if someone's sort of on the fence, they may because they respect her, they may feel like, Oh, yeah, maybe she's got a point there. So one of the one of the factors behind her choices is this age old debate of whether transgender people are real. So trans men are real men or trans women are real women, because they their genitals may or may not match, expressed identity. And so there's a term that people are calling her which is turf, which stands for trans exclusionary, radical feminist, and turf, turf is usually an insult. So there are some individuals who might claim that term and be proud of it. Who would feel that unless you were born, biologically born, a woman, you do not belong in women's spaces. And this is a big, big, big heated issue, not only here in the UK as well. And it has pretty dire consequences it, it encourages transphobic behavior. Absolutely. So why she's doing it, I have no idea she she is entitled to her beliefs. But many of the things she's saying are not scientifically based, which makes it dangerous. So she's saying, she may say things that that conflate sex and gender, and sex and gender are not the same thing. Right? So she's spreading this information. And the reality is that both sex and gender occur either on a continuum or are very fluid there isn't, there isn't always a very strict, either or binary, that people like to believe there is. And so some people are very reticent to let go of that binary, they they are very comfortable with strict definitions of male and female. And, you know, that goes back to the issue of toxic masculinity, and there being a right way to be a man, you know, strong, masculine, tough, don't talk about your feelings, which is very detrimental to all men in terms of mental health. Correct. And

there isn't as great of a term in terms of toxic femininity, but this idea that women should be quiet and submissive, and, you know, their needs are secondary, they should be feminine, and caretakers, and all of that. Right. So just boring. Working all those lines makes people uncomfortable. Mm hmm.



42:47

It really does, doesn't it? You know, you hit on everything that I was hoping you would, you know, answer and head on, because I think it is such a, you know, I completely agree that she absolutely has the right to her opinion. And I'm a strong believer in that, that everybody has the right to their opinion. But when you are a person with the type of influence that she has, I think you have to be a little more careful about how you state your opinion. And this is something that, again, is so timely, that I just it is confounded me, I guess as to why, you know, she's kind of jumped on this and really gone at it. It just, it just makes me sad. It really does. Because I feel like there's, you know, there's been so much progress, you know, educating people and people really be, you know, wanting to, you know, open their minds and learn that this isn't sector mental. It's a setback. It really is. So thank you for, you know, addressing that and talking about it, I just would add a couple things. One is JK Rowling is being irresponsible in stating the things so broadly and publicly that she's stating she's not an expert in this field. She has some opinions about these things, but she's saying things that can affect people in a life and death way. And even if she, in some ways would be smarter for her to just refrain from commenting. And instead, she's almost going out of her way to support you know, what people call the the turf group. And in some ways, it seems like transgender folk are at the stage that lesbian gays were almost in the 1950s you know, with fighting for basic rights often and not another. Not always, but in some ways, in some ways, absolutely. Apps. I couldn't agree more. And I thought it you know, the more that I learn and the more that I think okay, it's great that we have this community that is you know, the LGBTQ plus community, however, what each of those groups individually have to deal with out in the world. And as people as a human beings is quite different. It's it's just, you know, for me, it's something more that I learned, the more that I just want to advocate and support. And, you know, I know, Mike, my kids do and my husband does and, you know, many members of our family do now and it's so it's, you know, and I feel like that's how it how we do this right. And just, you know, just continue to educate people. And I feel like, yeah, holy cow, you just you are you gave so much today. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. I mean, whoa, whoa, so many wonderful pieces of, I'm gonna listen, this is one of my favorite parts about editing, actually, as I get to listen again. And I'm like, Oh, yeah, that was really good.



45:51

So



45:52

I'm just wondering if you know, to kind of wrap up here, if there's anything else you'd like to add any wisdom you'd like to share? Just this is your open open forum tech to add an end.



46:07

Wonderful. Thank you. You're welcome. I do have a couple things. I'm sure I'll think of eight Boris's. One thing I wanted to say about parenting is that I'm also Buddhist. And there's something very Zen about the process of parenting, where it's almost continual letting go. And it's, you know, often not an ego boosting type of activity. And, you know, being able to put somebody else's needs completely first, and yet have some sort of a self as a parent is a difficult process, but a great metaphor for life, a great learning experience to adult.



46:44

And oh, my gosh, absolutely, it is it is a constant process to



46:50

learning process. I wanted to mention when it came to the physical medical transitioning that I wanted to emphasize that medical providers are not free to just provide any type of medical transition surgery, at any age, the medical providers might be bit insurance does not approve does anything at any time. So for instance, for my son to get top surgery, at 14 turning 15 took some work to try to get permission, you know, authorization from the insurance company. And I think we had excellent benefits, which work to his favor, but otherwise, people are at the option of having to cash pay, which is obviously 10s of thousands of dollars. Sure. And so even in terms of bottom surgery, I believe that providers will not do that until 18. And over, okay. And so parents don't have to necessarily be worried that all of this can and will happen, you know, immediately. That's not the case.



47:52

Okay. Yeah, I'm glad. Thank you for adding more to that. Because I just think that's good information for everyone.



48:00

Mm hm. Right. One thing I wanted to mention that's different in the LGBTQ community versus the transgender community is that the issue of passing, passing is a term that would refer to a transgender person, if they were identifying as female that other people saw them completely as female and didn't even question didn't even recognize that they were a transgender person. Okay, they passed for a cisgender person,



48:31

right. And that makes sense



48:33

that that is, in some ways, a privilege that all transgender people don't have access to. And that may depend on the age that you transition. So if you transition young, even before all the hormones have their chance to kick in, then you don't have to do so much work to undo the change the physical changes that your body has started to go through. Sure, sure. Also, then that would go back to probably how many resources your family had, how supportive they were at different ages to allow, you know, puberty blockers and hormones, you know, during adolescence, sure, on therapy, and that can lead to some very painful issues, even the murder issues of transgender women were. So the less a transgender person is able to pass the more subject they are to transphobic behavior in the community. So they will be recognized as transgender and then people will express their hate and their violence in their discrimination. So it affects all areas of their lives from their ability to get housing to employment, you know, which affects their financial status, which affects their health, even how they're treated by health providers, how they're able to date and move around the world safely. So it's a big issue, and not all transgender folk necessarily want to pass some may stay activists and they may say I don't I don't care what what gender I appear to you, I don't care what you think about that I have the right to live as I want to live and screw your opinion about.



50:11

Right. And I'm that, you know, that depends on who that person is and how they're how they're how they're made, how they're built. Right. And and I'm sure also geographically where they are. Yeah, it's a lot easier to have that attitude in New York City than it is to have it.



50:30

Were yours. Correct?



50:32

Correct. So thank you for adding that.



50:36

The world is changing. And even since we started this journey to our family of about four and a half years ago, so many more people are coming out publicly as transgender there every day in my newsfeed, I get some my Facebook newsfeed, I get some update about whether it's a senator or official or a person in a profession or an actor or actress who's who are, you know, breaking that wall of inclusion, this demands that laws are going to have to change. Now there's this, you know, obviously, more places are, especially in Chicago area are adding gender neutral bathrooms, which are very helpful. But it takes so much patience and faith for the transgender folk to sit around and wait for these things to happen. Meanwhile, they're still being treated violently, and discriminately. And all those type of things. I think Change is inevitable in this area. And I would say that the worth of a transgender person is exactly the same as a worse worth of a cisgender person. Absolutely. And I believe in even though I went to raised Lutheran, strict Lutheran and went to Lutheran college and studied theology, I believe in a God that loves transgender individuals. So I hope that the spiritual communities become more embracing and inclusive. It's very important for people.



52:03

And it's very important for people I agree. And I do see, you know, I see some movement there as well. Which is so important. That's so funny, I was raised Methodist, but really kind of Church of God. And my grandfather was a church of God, Minister, I went, I went to a Christian reformed college. So I get your I appreciate your background, although I will

tell you that you will appreciate this too. I don't know how much Christian reformed, they believe in predestination, and all that, which I do not. And I, you know, just be MLA disagreed with my professor and ended up getting a, you know, a D and his class because I just good, I still laugh, I'm like, Well, you know, he probably wouldn't, but now, you know, I'm like, this has come in so handy for me, because I have such an understanding, you know, just because of my background. And that's always my thing. You know, this is God created our kids this way. Oh, I have no doubt in my mind, oh, this is all part of his plan. And so, anyway, that's my little bit on that.



53:19

Well, in human, I believe humankind is evolving. You know, if you read some of the stuff about Indigo children and these souls appearing to teach us things, and so we, we dig in, and we resist, the Native Americans have some, you know, these are some much older, much older civilizations that sometimes have much more evolved beliefs. And they had this idea of the Two Spirit, people who were really not binary or male and female. And so it's interesting to see how our culture has taken on some beliefs that are really historically braced.



53:57

Um, I would I agree, I think I think that's I love Yes, I've read all several several pieces on that which I find so fascinating. It must have been a year or two, actually, my daughter came across this article, this fantastic article written by a non binary person, and it was an article on religion, but really, specifically Christianity and was talking about how you know, in the Bible, just because the Bible says day and night, or land and sea, doesn't mean that, you know, when dusk comes that people are like, Oh my gosh, it's an abomination. It's dusk, you know, that's not in the Bible. And it was this great article, because



54:37

I was like,



54:38

that is so fantastic. And this person was able to just really, you know, just zero in on each of these things. And they're, like, you know, humans are created the same way. And, you know, all across there is this whole spectrum, this whole



54:55

beautiful,



54:57

you know, just this lovely article. So anyway, I have to share that it's one of my favorites. I always love, you know. That's great. Well, I just want to thank you. Thank you. Thank you so much for being here today and other. This was such a fun conversation and just enlightening and so many ways and empowering in so many ways. So think, yeah, this is where we're going to leave everyone for today. We want to thank everyone out there so much for joining us to remember to just breathe, taking those few minutes each day to focus on your breath, and calm and center yourself will give you so much strength and clarity. If you have ideas for just breathe or feedback, let me know at my email which is in the show notes. Please also subscribe to and review. Just breathe on whatever platform you are listening. Please join the private Facebook community to chat with other parents and allies who are just on the same journey as you and remember to share this with anyone who needs to know that they are not alone. Until next time