

Kirsten Waters

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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. My guest today is Kirsten Beverly Waters. Kirsten is a fitness instructor, personal growth champion, LGBTQ public speaker, and author of the new book Struggle Guru. She is a pioneer in innovative movement methods for healing and brings a fresh perspective to beating struggle, which is something all human beings encounter. I'm looking forward to our chat today and learning how we can turn our struggles into superpowers. So without further ado, welcome Kirsten and thanks so much for being my guest today. Thank you for having me.



01:18

You are welcome. So we are giggling because we we had a funny conversation right before we started recording. So just all of you are probably out there thinking what on earth is so funny? We think we're funny right now.



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So we're gonna just start today with just talking about your book and talking about what struggle guru means. Yeah. So struggle guru really takes a look at our autobiographical stories, and how that starts to influence the way in which we breathe, we move we think so. Ultimately, our autobiography is influencing our biology. So it's it's changing the way that we make decisions. And coming from a standpoint, neurologically, our default is to

create stories, it is a narrative to create stories for ourselves. And sometimes those stories don't play out, right. We've all worked in scenarios, that never happened. But we're always in this narrative state. And really, there is this sense of needing to draw meaning and value from our experiences when we draw on our memories. And so being able to examine those memories, examine those experiences, and maybe change the values and meanings that we're extracting from them can help move us from this state of paralysis or feeling stuck and progress us forward in our lives. So ultimately, helping people realize that struggle is not our enemy. Struggle is actually our greatest ally, and our teacher to help us progress as human beings growing. I love that. And I love your perspective on that you actually had a really, really



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good quote. And I mean, you had lots of good quotes in your book, but one that I had highlighted that I loved,



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was leaning into struggle, you will find freedom. And I think that's such a great and not just freedom, mental freedom, but physical freedom, spiritual freedom, this is something that I still believe in that your mental state does, you know, at some point end up affecting your physiology in some way. And I think it's fascinating, you know, there's studies that are starting to come out really proving this, and in your book is really, you know, one of them that talks about kind of how that happens. Um, can you talk a little bit about that?



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Yeah, you know, the mind is, the mind is powerful. And one of the ways that I draw on the connection to the power of the mind has come through my experience with yoga, meditation, mindfulness, as well as spirituality. I definitely view myself as a Christian and I believe in God, and I believe whether you have a specific religious practice, we all have deep rooted beliefs, and that affects our mental capacity and what we see as possible, oftentimes, right like whether that's science, that's the thing that is grounding us or it is God or Buddha or Allah or whomever.



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There is this connection, this capacity to expand ourselves through the mind. And so I look

at this space of our energy, our being our essence is formless. If I pass on tomorrow, the essence of my being is not restricted by this physical vessel. That is my form. But it does have the capacity to expand this form and expand this body expand my mind because the brain is different than our consciousness, they are not the same. So this essence in the spirit



05:00

virtuality within me has the capacity to transform, even my brain, transform my thoughts, transfer my stories, which are going to impact my body, they're going to impact my immune system. They're my mental health, my physical well being my connection with the entire world around me. Thank you for saying it's been such a understandable way. I think people really, that's such a great way to kind of be able to visualize how that works. And a lot of times, you know, when you read about these things that can be so very scientific or 200 pages on something that you just need to be concise. Right. But that is, that is, I think it's absolutely fascinating, but so true. And you see it over and over again, right. And, I mean, I know I see it in my own life. And I've seen it in people's lives that I know that it's, you know, my children, family members, friends, whatever. So, I'm so glad that you, you know, are doing this and doing the work that you're doing. Also, I'm struck by, you know, when I initially picked up, and I'm sure this was somewhat intentional on your part,



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Colleen, the book struggle guru, of course, you know, somebody picks it up thinking awesome, I'm gonna get a guru, I need a guru. Right? And I love who you actually mean, the struggle guru to be? Can you talk about that? Yes. So, again, in yoga Guru is, is a highly revered term, and I don't take that term lightly. So it's interesting, at first glance, someone may think that I am calling myself the struggle guru, and I am not, I am no one's guru. My hope is always to be a teacher, that I see myself as this conduit to link us from maybe an external experience that we can't see. Because even though it's external, it's still so close to us. But draw it inward and draw that connection inward. So the struggle Guru is within you, within the listener Now, within each and every person that ultimately our greatest teacher exists within us. And, again, this for me, I believe that we are divinely created and intertwined in my very DNA. And my essence is, God Himself, herself itself, right. And so if there's something so divinely created within me, there is clearly and an omnipotent presence that has a knowing and an understanding that this human fleshy body and brain hasn't quite caught up to, and that there are moments that we can that we can tap into that I think we all have that. And again, you might not see that as God, it may be science and looking at all these things are nature, these these bigger than us,

right? entity.



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Ultimately, the teacher is there, and your struggles can become one of those masters through one of those gurus within you, to lead you on your path lead you on your journey. Absolutely. And I like the connection that you made.



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I think that's so you know, important I, I am also a yogi, and I've do a lot with chakras and you know, the crown chakra been tapping into your higher power, your higher self, whatever that may be, you know, it's a connection right into all of this. And I think so this is so vitally important



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for people really to, to learn about and to embrace, because it really is empowering, that we have all of this within us, it's, we have access to it, right. And guess it does take work. And I, you know, you you point that out, you know, throughout your book that you know, the different pieces of work that you you know, that that needs to be done and in ways that are so doable, so accessible. And I think that that's just



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something that people will connect with. So I kind of want to move from, you know, talking about your, the struggles, the struggles within and how really those can be. Those are our ultimate teachers, right, and how that relates specifically to the LGBTQ experience. Absolutely. I don't think that there is a person within the LGBTQ plus community or a parent or a loved one of someone within the community that doesn't identify with struggle. It's a universal experience. And it might be struggling with coming to terms with our identity within the community and struggles for our family and our loved ones to connect to that identity because



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It's, there's so many ways in which life continues to shape us. So in the book, I talk about analogy and dilemma and like all these labels that we place on ourselves, and we feel like

we have to stick the stickers on us to identify ourselves and from a very early age, right, like, their gender reveal parties, right. So before I even take your first breath into existence, there is already a label and identity associated with you. So if you don't identify with this said, label, it is breaking down your very connection within yourself. And that's something that's so hard to work through. And it's hard to work through as the person experiencing it, and hard for the person whose birth to into this experience. And as, as it had, it had their own formulations and visions and dreams and and understandings of who you are. And so there's this conflict between the two. Oftentimes, when you come out that somebody usually says, Well, I never felt like I knew you. And this isn't the person I raised, or this isn't the person that I was friends with, or I knew or, and there's such a conflict in there, that



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digs deeper into struggle and brings us closer with struggle that it can feel overwhelming and suffocating. And so within, so many of the people that I work with it within LGBTQ plus community and their families is first stepping back from the label itself, coming back to the person, the energy, the experience, the essence of this person, if your child tells you, I am transgender, it does not change the essence of their being doesn't change them as your child, if the child says, you know, Mom, I'm gay, it doesn't change who they are. And we, we have such firm beliefs in that label, and how it constructs the human being that we miss this opportunity to connect back to the energy, there may be a time period again, where, you know, even for myself, I was lying to my friends, I was lying to my family living two different lives, because I couldn't come to terms with who I was. And I was afraid of what coming to terms with who I am, would do to these relationships, and I didn't want to lose that. But if we strip that back, the person that I am, was still there. And it's taken years, even with my family and some friends, not at all they left, right. But to say we're always there, it was my image of who you were, that was imposing an added struggle to this, because there's their struggles on so many, so many aspects. So it's a lot of unpacking is not as simple, oh, I'm struggling with my identity, I'm struggling because you are a child of mine that is struggling with their identity. There are very complex layers within it.



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There absolutely are. And I just, that's such an interesting way to look at it. I really, I enjoyed that chapter a lot as well, because I often use



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the movie reel analogy for from the parents point of view, right? And, and then coming back to that, that the parent needs to mourn that movie real, and then see who their child is, right. And mourning is not a bad thing. It's part of the parent process. Right.



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But then also thinking, you know, just in our journey so far,



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I think, and I've seen this with you know, several different adolescents, teenagers, where that label is is so important, because I think initially



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the coming out is so very scary for so many of the reasons you just mentioned. And, and having that label to kind of grasp on to give some kind of solid ground, right? And then it's it's it me being able to let go of that label and realize that's just one piece. That's one piece of the million pieces that make, you know, in my case that make Connor Connor, right that make him this extraordinary person. So but it's definitely a process and it is, it's complicated. Like you said it is multi layered, and depending on everything that's behind all of that for both of you know, the person going through it and you know, the parent, loved one friend that's also going through it but in a very different way. And I appreciate so much your perspective on that and sharing your experience with that. And I think that you know that that in and of itself is a very powerful reason for people to pick your book up and give it a read because



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It's different than a lot of stories that are out there. And so I, I do appreciate that very much. It does just have it, right. Like, that's part of the reason you have this podcast to share these various perspectives and stories. And that's the purpose of struggle guru, the more people who share, even if we share a million coming out stories, even if it's all lesbians, it will all be different. We can we could be a million identical lesbians that would probably be too much for the world to handle. But



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nowadays, there's, there's a million lesbians are identical. That poor mother, I don't know what happened. But



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by the power of God, a million identical lesbians appeared in the universe.



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You'll have different perspective. I mean, okay, so we'll use a biblical sense. Let's take a look at the New Testament. How many different variations Do you hear the same story? Right? They're all different. Are they all valid? Absolutely. So the more people who share their stories in struggle, the more we can expand our language, we can expand the language of struggle within, especially within the LGBTQ community, we can go beyond so many times the stereotypes, right, like everybody thinks of these coming out parties and things are going to be rainbows and unicorns, and everybody's going to be so happy or, or that the opposite, everybody will reject you. And that will be horrible. Every experience is different. And unless more people are empowered with the courage to share that story, the more we will buy in to these polar binary systems that say, these are the two stories you have, either everyone loves you, or everyone hates you. There's no in between. That's not true. Right. Right. But I think you have you had someone on I think you had a woman on your podcasts, you said, you were talking about like the heavens, and like Earth, and then talking about on and does like morning and night. But there's dust that's in between, like same sort of thing. Like there's there's not just this coming out, not coming out. And, and for anyone listening, I don't want to tell you this, but parent or person experiencing it, there are endless journeys of coming out, I am constantly coming out. It wasn't a one and done. And it continues to evolve. And you're right, you grasp onto that label at first, because you need something to identify with, like just wandering aimlessly with nothing would be very confusing, right? Like, we need something. But it's okay to evolve that label. It's okay to evolve that experience. Because we don't know eat baby food anymore, right? Like we evolved. We don't crawl on our hands and knees anymore. we evolve. But we don't see that when it comes to like gender and sexual identity. We think that it's okay, I've come out this experience, my parents are over it or they're not over it. And this is just where I am. And that's where struggle. And that's where we have to come back to that narrative of was that what I'm telling myself? Because I've been conditioned? Because that's what I'm seeing in popular places? Or am I really having the conversation and it happens as well. In the book, I talked about projecting my own insecurities and frustrations on my mother and blaming her for not seeing me first and seeing that I I was struggling so much with my identity. But that's me projecting it onto

her. That wasn't her experience. She'll tell you that she had some thoughts or inclinations, but she didn't know like what she was experiencing. So both perspectives are valid. And both stories need to be told in order for us to evolve from struggles lesson. Absolutely. Oh, my goodness. And I think to that, you know, building on that. That is why sometimes you feel like you're revisiting the same struggle, right? Because I found that so fascinating. And I know I'm sure I'm not the only one who has said, because you say it in your book. And I was like, Oh my gosh, yes. Like, okay, clearly, there's a lesson here that I meant to learn because I have I am revisiting this struggle. And it's coming in a slightly different form. But it's essentially the same thing. Right? And so I've missed the lesson, what is the lesson, right? That's constantly, okay, supposed to be learning something, right? There's always something to learn. There's always some way to grow. And I think that is, you know, backing up just a little bit, such a powerful point that you are constantly coming out, you're constantly growing and growing forward. That is something I know especially, you know, Connor ran into where he just like, he totally thought he was like, okay, I've told everybody, I'm out. Right, and then realized, you know, six 810 months down the road. Oh, there's like more work to do. And I don't know if I want to do that work because it's hard. Right? And it's, it can be painful. That's hard enough being a teenager, and you know, all these things or young adults. I mean, it's it's not just teenagers who have a hard time.



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So I think that's such a it's a powerful point, and it's also



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So I think a little bit comforting to know that this is, you know, it's not something you have to like, rush through and figure out in a day, you know, this is something that is ever evolving. Well, and I think that as much as we want to, we want to be seen, right? That's what it comes down to. I want someone to see me see all of me, we reached this point, you know, I reached a point where I was tired of not being authentically myself. And I point that out in the book, you'll reach a point where what you will lose, if you are yourself, if you are truly honoring yourself, is not worth hiding who you are for the rest of the time. And it's still hard. There's experiences I try to explain to friends of mine who are heterosexual cisgender cisgender, meaning they identify with the gender assigned to them at birth. And they're like, I can't I can never imagine that I've had the police called on me for using a women's bathroom because I have short hair, and I was wearing a baseball cap in the bathroom. I have been asked to stop teaching youth ministry classes to young boys, because parents were concerned that I would be prone to pedophilia, like, there are stereotypes and stigmas that get attached that you then no sooner do you

come out and you have this label, you're like, take the label off.



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Because



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what do you prefer? Do you want me to say that I'm a muppet? I don't know, like, what's the safe? What's the same thing I can be? And there's, there's so many things that get placed on people because there isn't enough discussion. People are afraid to have discussions, they're afraid of what they don't know. I know, for parents, I've had conversations where they feel like they did something wrong. And they're like, Well, my child is just different. I caution you on different is based on a system that says normal is heterosexual. So that makes me abnormal, right? Like this. When we create these systems. If we say this is right, this is wrong. That's the binary system that exists and is in place. And it's much like when I tell somebody that I'm gay, and I'm a Christian, and they're like, a, how's that work? works fine. God made me works just fine. Right? That's right.



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That's how it works. works great. Hey, but actually hard for people to wrap the wrap their minds around it. So I often encourage youth that I work with, to reach out to mentors to groups and organizations or listen to podcasts where they can realize that they're not alone in this and it is it's hard. It's, it's so hard, I would be like, just today I had three direct messages from people who know nothing about me and social media telling me that they're praying for my soul, or they wish that I would get COVID and die.



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I don't know them. Why, like, this is so painful to you that you want, you want to send that to me. There's there's pain and there's hurt and I remind myself that what is being sent to me is only a reflection of the pain and suffering that somebody else is experiencing. So when somebody is bullying someone because of their, their gender identity, or their sexual identity often find it, they don't even have a sense of their own identity. And so it's this insecurity and fear. And I tried to convey that to our youth, especially because as adults, I think we start to develop a little thicker skin. Although there are plenty of adults who

we're all susceptible to do to it. It is not no one is immune. But for youth, especially right now where when I grew up, there wasn't social media to bully me 24 hours a day, 365 days a week. So I could create a safe space, even if it is in my home where it wasn't certain, right, like I could find some quiet space. Right? Do that for youth today. So



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it is it is a process and I just encourage people listening to eat or be more open to the experiences that your children are having, having or for the youth who are maybe listening saying like trying to find some advice for talking to my parents that you're not alone. And the experience in the journey will be continuing and evolving just like you



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just like any other child evolving with their parent, you continue to evolve and grow. And you're gonna have differences and disagreements and things are going to change. It is a part of the process of life. And my hope is that we can continue these conversations where more parents want to initiate a conversation of I do truly love you and accept you for all that that you are mean because I've heard this with with parents they say that but then their child comes out and they're like, except for that.



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Right? Okay. I missed that on the child parent agreement clause. Like there was one spy every everything but this rainbow. We're not



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Okay, anything else, and it's hard.



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It is really hard. So I want to talk a little bit about physical well being and you've created a movement based healing technique that is really unique. And I'm wondering if you could kind of describe that a little bit. When I discuss movement with with anyone, I mean, I've evolved, I started in fitness before I started really in yoga, I believe that when we observe our mind, fully, we move our body more intentionally. So I have a training program that I work with people that's actually called home. So Oh, em, and it is a mind and move the

body that we get so caught in the physical that we forget to address the the mental spiritual aspects of ourselves. And so struggle guru purposely kind of glosses over the physical and stays in the, the mental, because mental is part of adjusting the physical, and so many people write out and work in. So in terms of movement practices, we want to move in a way that nourishes us, that strengthens us, that empowers us and every person is going to look different. So there are series of questions that obviously I asked throughout the book that help you come in better tune with yourself, to be able to kind of direct what it is you need most, because so many times we default, again, to what media and billion dollar industries tell us that we need that we need smaller waist lines, and six pack abs, and everything will work perfectly. But instead really looking from this space of of nourishment and movement practices, whether it's walking in the woods, or going for a run or practicing on your mat, climbing a mountain walking your dog, I mean, it can be any number of things, if we are open to it.



27:08

Right? Thank you for sharing that I really, really appreciate it, I would not have been able to do that justice. I really liked one, one of the chapters that I loved in your book was called compass, you are the ideas, you know, looking at the compass is something that guides you, right, physically guides you if you're on a hike or a walk or whatever, and but you really break down the the directions and what they mean and in your life and how to, you know, look at them and what needs to be



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what needs to be Thank you very much.



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Yes, what needs to be adjusted to, you know, kind of find your truenorth and to be able to move through life? So could you talk a little bit about that as well? Yeah, the compass as you're describing, it is one that I have created after years of experience personal and then also in my coaching and in my training with with other students. And the compass, as you said, North is our authentic self. And that can become caught up in today with very hashtag, like pretty people. And like authentic self authentic voice, but again, our true self is our essence is our is our energy. So it does not require that this physical vessel be in existence, the energy is always there it is much like the wind, right? Can't see it, but it was always felt. So that is our true north. It is always anchored to our southern point, which is our spiritual belief system. And for every person that's going to be different again, for me,

that is rooted in Christian principles, and spiritual teachings. But for others, everyone has a belief system, right? We have strong beliefs. So it doesn't matter what your your religious or spiritual connection is, we have a belief system. And that is going to directly impact the way in which we express our essence. Our Eastern point is our experiences our external education. So that could be connection with coaches, teachers, mentors, our formal education in schools, it can be the community groups that we connect with the social platforms that we connect to, those are all experiences that are directly tethered to our Western point, which is our wisdom. So we will develop wisdom from these experiences from these people from these constant interactions. And it all comes together to create this compass that really guides our lives. And in the, in the book I've discussed that know if if you know anything about campuses, if your truenorth is off by just one degree, if I'm in the house right now, and I turn North pointed towards my living room and it's one degree off, I might end up in the couch instead of at the coffee table. But if I'm in my life, and I'm one degree off



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And I continue one degree off for 20 years of my life, I'm in a completely different wilderness. And that's usually when people come to me as a coach and say, I don't know how I got here. I don't know who I am. I don't know why I'm feeling this way, because I'm in the wilderness. And the wilderness arises, because we're just slightly askew. And part of that I really attribute to the fact that we always say, fake it till you make it, right. So we people, and we set our north to the people we want to emulate, which is a lovely, lovely way to start your journey. But it is not a way to live your journey. If I'm always following the path of someone else, I will end up in their wilderness. But they were given the tools they needed through their life experiences and struggles to navigate that wilderness where, for me, it is a wild jungle that I do not know how to navigate and I can't get through and I'm just bushwhacking trying to get through and I'm getting pushed back by nature. And I feel torn down ripped down worn, fatigued, distraught. And so if we find ourselves in these wilderness, I asked people from a rescue standpoint, or our natural inclination is like, I'll keep moving, I'll go back to the last point, I remember, you know what, that'd be fine, then if I was walking from my kitchen to the living room, but if for 20 years have been going the wrong direction, I probably don't remember the last time I was going the right direction. So that's stop, take an inventory, take a look at that compass and start to recalibrate it. And we will start moving in the way of our wilderness and our direction in the ways that struggles will continue to inform us in our truenorth. To honor our essence and our purpose. I think that is such a powerful visual. I mean, I really, I loved it so much as I read it, I highlighted like half of it. Because I personally really connected with that, because I for 20 years was probably at least one degree off, if not more. And I think that's probably more common. That's a common experience, or more likely for people than it is to be, you

know, on your true truenorth path from the get go, right? I mean, I think that's a gift to be able to really tap into who you authentically are to that essence. From day one. I just really identified with that. And I thought all four points were so powerful, and just it made so much sense that all of those pieces work in tandem, that they all need to be aligned, right? It can't just be one that you're paying attention to all four of those pieces you need to be paying attention to. And it was just such a meaningful chapter. So I, I had to bring it up today. And just, you know, again, encourage people, we've had a crazy year, it's been 2020.



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I think 2020 might actually become a verb,



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or an adjective. I mean, right? And then it's one of those, I think, one of those years that really is highlighted that everyone struggles.



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I don't think anybody is leaving 2020 unscathed. And in completely different ways. Has it changed your perspective or your approach? And life in your in your work? And how is it really made an impact on you?



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I think the way that it's impacted my work is more people recognizing struggles that because they were so busy because everything was open, right? Like before, like you were traveling everywhere, and you had practices and school agendas, and all these different things, that in many ways were distracting us from our own struggles and the lessons that were there before us that some of those struggles that have been in our face and keep repeating were more evident. And we were able to address them.



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Even if it's just acknowledge them and say, Oh, I see you struggle. I see right there. I see what you're doing right there. And I feel like it's poetic in the fact that it is 2020 and our vision, trying to be 2020 we're trying to create this clear vision. People think that because I

have eyes, I have vision. I don't need eyes to have vision, right? I don't, I don't need these, these eyes to really see the world in the way that it can impact me. And so this 2020 vision is basically stripping people of this superficial layer that and mask that we can hide behind and saying what are we really made of Who are we really what are our deepest struggles? What are our greatest joys? I mean, it's really bringing in this Chinese medicine principle of yin and yang, these opposites that have to work in harmony. They are they are intrinsically connected. They are not separate and this is why, you know, north and south North depends on South



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existence in order for anybody to make sense of what north is right? Like it, you have to have these two tied together. So I feel like 2020 is helping people to really take a look intrinsically and and say, Okay, what is most important to me? What do I have to be most grateful for? And also what is making me most miserable that I need to make a shift in? And people are, are truly I'm watching people take steps for true transformational change that is stepping them closer to their truenorth rather than being pulled askew by all of these other experiences. And certainly we are also in an election year, so there's plenty to pull you a skew.



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What political party you are on, there are so many things, just flipping us around. Yes, yes. Yes, yes. Good enough.



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Going, like it kind of feels like twister. We're all waiting to see if we're gonna have to contort ourselves in the way that is going to like compromise our ability to hold our form any longer. We're just going to collapse down on the twister.



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Oh my gosh, that is so perfect. That is so true.



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Like each experience is like 2020 is like right hand on red. That's Election Day. Right, left

hand underneath right arm on blue. That's gonna be all of the Supreme Court stuff. Like it just keeps going through climate change, like, gender roles ever. You just like, um, so when I said I wanted a pretzel, I meant I was just hungry. I didn't need to contort myself into. Right, right. Oh my gosh, and that is totally what it feels like, right? I mean, that is such a perfect visual. Oh, my goodness. And you know, the more people that you're trying to, I'm just picturing, you know, my kids and my family. And that is goodness, that is exactly the way it is felt. And and the constant like, Alright, like, Are y'all okay? Like, who's you know, I don't really care how you're doing in school, are you mentally, you know, how, how's the mental health going? Because that is what you know, that's where everybody is at this point. Right, really? So I mean,



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don't don't get me wrong. I do care about academics. But at this point of this year, the other stuff is more important. So we have we have definitely had our



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Oh, goodness. Yes. Mm, right hand on red



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blend.



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With everything happening in 2020. How do you think it'll affect the LGBTQ community? I think that there are many ways that the LGBTQ community is going to be impacted no matter which way it goes. In my personal opinion, I think that we



38:01

may be deluding ourselves to believe that either side is truly advocating for us, and that it's going to take truly a unity of the nation to to see transformation. And that isn't, isn't politically aligned. Its humanity aligned, its human rights aligned. And unfortunately, those things get linked to specific political parties, which I've watched, divide homes, divide communities, and create a space for more hate. And that saddens me Because ultimately, I believe that the majority of the people in this country exist within the middle and are

moderate. And aren't these extremes that are publicized and seen and that most people that I talk to that I know who are Republicans aren't trying to take away my ability to marry, or my ability to change on my driver's license my gender, like, they're, they're not the ones who feel that way. But they're also not the loudest voices, right? And this is why I would ask people in struggle guru to share your story. Because everybody says, I'm just one, you hear it in voting, why don't you vote and mine doesn't count. It's just one. But one leads to another leads to another leads to another. If 50 people hear me and they talk to 50 other people how it's the drop in the in the still water, it's the ripple effect, and we can impact it. And in order to do that, you know, we we have to come to the table and we have people who are moderate and who are sitting in the middle. They're comfortable, right? Because you're imbalanced in the middle. If you look at a scale, right like that center point, you don't move either way because you're going to let the other side's teetering.



40:00

But you have to make a choice. And that choice comes down to not about red or blue, picking a particular political party, but saying what are my values? And the unfortunate piece again, look at that compass, right? Like what are my beliefs.



40:16

And we use belief systems to justify sometimes some of the most hateful, hurtful, harmful things. You know, I buy the the Bible slung at me more times than I care to admit. And you know, I was going to go to seminary school, I studied Greek, I can read the New Testament in its original context, and I can battle with the best of the minds that want to come at me with Scripture. But I know that that's not going to change change their mind. So



40:48

I am trying to approach and I'm trying to keep this as neutral as possible, because I'm talking about taking a stand. But mostly because I just can't bear to hear more divisive, hateful



41:02

things and I could say awful things and, and speak, the pain and anguish that I have in my heart over one political party. And it's not even the political party. It's one person and

people listening know who it is, and they may support this person. I have people that I love and I care for who have voted for the President.



41:25

That hurts. It's hard not to take that personal and I tried to separate that right. And that's the same thing. People tell me what try to separate your gayness from who you are in love you are. And I'm like, this is not the same thing. It's about the same thing. Not even a good thing. So I don't, I can really answer that to the way that is true to what what people need to hear. I I think that the fact that there's a Supreme Court that ruled on someone's ability to fire me for who who might choose to love is ludicrous. The fact choosing to love a single person for the rest of my life is so horrible to someone. And that same person's gone through three marriages and kids to why am I the one being judged? Like why am I the one ruining marriage? I'm not. But no, you can't look at our own problems we can't look in in those spaces. So I don't know what will happen. All I can do is breathe, because honestly, it does bring me great anxiety to think



42:33

who I am. Could I mean, I already I had a I had people this this year come to classes of mine threatened my life. spit in my face. Tell me that, Oh, this is gonna be the year will cleanse people have you? Why is this happening? Why is this happening? Are we crazy? You don't need to have these, these conversations. But I want to have a conversation as the person who's like, I don't see. Laughter right? Well, then, where do you stand because we don't take a stand. That's a choice. But you know, in choice, who I am, I did not choose this right? You have a choice to check a box, blue or red, you have the choice to check a box on so many things. But checking the box on who I am is not a choice I have made. And when people assume that it is it's it's more than offensive. It's deeply concerning. It's deeply concerning. I think that somebody would choose such such a struggle for themselves for what? For pity, right? To being nice to be isolated. No one chooses this. No one uses this. We get to love the person that we love. That's our choice. I cou but not not in the sense of sexual orientation and identity that has nothing to do with it. And I truly believe that ultimately, what it comes down to is we are all attracted to the essence and the energy. And there is that connection. And for some people that ends up being people of the opposite sex. Others, it looks vastly different. But I am not here to judge and for any person who likes to throw the Bible at me.



44:14

Please, can you show me your spotless life? Please, before you cast my I don't need it. And I wish the best for you. And we can live different lives. And that's the beauty of this world. We weren't all created to be the same. We were created uniquely different. And I believe we like I said that I have been divinely created and if God makes no mistakes and there is no mistake in who I am and no mistake in the stances that I have to take. And you could believe the same that I have no, there's no mistaken in who they are either. But I just hope that we can continue to have conversations and evolve. That's all I can say without getting deeply political and



44:54

angry. I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I kind of triggered you a little bit there. I apologize.



45:00

But, you know, to me, this is a very powerful question as well, it brings up I mean, you articulated so much of how I feel,



45:12

even though I'm the mom, I'm the mama bear. And and I, you know, I've taken this all on and and you started this out with something that I think is, is what ultimately is the answer, which is, we are humans, all of us humans, and we somehow need to get to the place of being able to see each other, you know, see this as a human rights, see this, as you know, seeing each other as, as human beings, instead of red or blue, or right or wrong, or gay or straight, and being able to have these conversations. And that's why, you know, say I'm transforming the conversation, that is my ultimate, you know, that is what I feel is my purpose, my calling is to transform this conversation, and to talk about the love and to tamp down all of this hatred and divisiveness. And it's just, you know, as we have both talked about, it's just this year has really ignited it to a degree that I don't think we've seen many, many years. So Well, I know, that was a tough question. As far as feeling like, I can't necessarily talk about politics, I think there is a certain degree of we have to write because it's all intertwined right now. And it's not simple. It's not, it's not black and white. But I think the other thing is that oftentimes, when I asked somebody genuinely curious why they want to vote, the way that they want to vote, especially with the current president, coming up for re election, the responses, I like, the taxes are better under his.



47:13

Okay. But do you know that in 70 countries, it's illegal to be a homosexual? in 13 countries, you can still be put to death? Like why? Why are taxes? Why is money,



47:27

a greater value than a human life? And yet, there then will become arguments in terms of like pro life pro choice, so we can go on this forever, right? Like they're saying, that we can we can go through? And what it comes down to is, if it doesn't impact me, then I don't need to worry about it. And these are, there are people who are in service, caretaking positions, who are counselors, who are doctors who are researchers, people who are studying the human mind, who are saying, Yeah, but that doesn't, that doesn't hit home for me. So it's not a big deal.



48:06

I had more people rally around me because of cancer, and rally behind me because I'm gay. It's easy to go around something that is so socially acceptable. It is always hard to go against the grain, it's hard to swim upstream, it's hard to take a stand. But, again, if I look on a Christian value perspective, who did Jesus stand up for? Was he standing passes for the pharaohs for the tax collectors? No. So if we want to really live out Christianity, we need to really look at the teaching principles that exist there because I think we've maybe all got taught by different people.



48:45

Does not that's not what he was teaching. Right? Like know, anything Jesus like? Whoa, like, who wrote the Cliff's notes version on this, like last? inflation much like this opt in? And babble, but apparently not now. So we hate to have to continue the conversation. You're right, it is hard to have these conversations. And if there is anyone listening, who is voting a particular way that I am alluding to, I don't love you any less. I don't think of you any less. I'm just asking that maybe you think about the bigger picture and why why you really want to vote this way. And that goes either side like sit sit with that value system, we have to come back to that compass and some people will still vote the exact same way. But don't get caught up in the media don't get caught up in all all of these like little things that are just decided to design to infuriate us but right. What are distractions? Right, I would ask people to imagine what if, what if you were gay?



49:48

What if your child was gay?



49:51

would you vote any differently? Would you feel any differently and most people won't even entertain that idea.



49:59

But it is a



50:00

question that needs to be asked. And I often I mean, that's my things my mother taught me. Put yourself in somebody else's shoes. Exactly what it's like to not be seen, what would it be feel feel like to not be served? What would it feel like to walk out side of your home, hold somebody's hand and have that be enough to have somebody cut your head off. There are places I can't travel in this world because I I can't be myself or I could doesn't matter that I'm American, I could still be jailed. I could still be flogged, I can still be dragged through the streets like this is happening. These things are right. It's real things, things people like real trauma. And people always ask like, what trauma did you experience that led you to being gay?



50:45

was not a trauma that led to being gay. But you know, it traumatizes me how I'm treated for being gay. That sanitizes Me and you, you're the one who's choosing to engage in that or not. Right. That's the again, that's the only choice that's coming in here. And it's not mine. It's that the external experience. And if I internalize that, that gets filtered through me. It makes it really hard to rise above that struggle.



51:13

Absolutely, it does. Absolutely does. And I just thank you for articulating all of that. Because I think that all needs to be said, it needs to be heard. You know, a friend of mine said to me the other day, she was having a discussion with, you know, another friend

about this. And her friend said, Well, you know, are you voting with your wallet? are you voting with your conscience. And I thought that was such a simple, but very fantastic, fabulous, powerful way to look at this. Remember, like, I've had people who voted for him previously, and are like, well, I feel like I have to because otherwise I would be a liar. If I didn't, again, remember, you can evolve, you can take in new information, you can admit, you could say that at the time, I really was hopeful that he would do these things he did not. And because of that, I'm looking and realizing this is not the right choice going forward, it does not make you a bad person, it doesn't mean that you have to say that your choice was wrong, before you have new information. All you can do when you have new information, my Angelou said, when you know better, you do better. So we have new information we know better now. So what are we going to do to do better? That's That's all I'm asking. What are you going to do now to do better? That's all we can, right? That's all we can do? Absolutely. Absolutely. And I think you know, circle back to that circle back to that compass. so powerful. And if you can sit with that. Really set with that. And be completely honest with yourself, then that's, that's all that matters.



52:55

Right?



52:57

So, See, I told you, we totally get off subject.



53:03

But that was so timely and so good.



53:11

Oh, my gosh, you are just wonderful for putting up with me. Thank you. I'm gonna get a lot of hate there. And I feel like



53:21

No, I will not let that happen. If anybody sends her hate mail, you have to go through me. It will not be the first eight letter I received. Just know that you you have to work pretty hard to get on my wall of fame.



53:34

I am sure but here's you know what I always think when you start getting the hate mail, when you start getting you know, the mean emails, it means you're making a difference. And it means you're touching people, you're Touching Lives. You're touching the world. So take that hate mail. I am just fine. Right? Well, is there anything that you would like to kind of add to our tips that you'd like to give just to kind of wrap us up today? And to just close out this? This Awesome, awesome talk? Yeah, you know,



54:10

if nothing else, I want people to be able to walk away from this knowing that their story matters, and doesn't have to be in the LGBTQ plus community. But especially if you're in that community, your story matters. And each time you share it, even if it starts with just writing it down. And that might not even be a safe space. So just meditating it repeating in your head, your story, acknowledging your story, looking in the mirror and saying it to yourself is empowering. And that every time we share that story, we empower somebody else to use their voice. And the more people who feel empowered to share their voice and share their message, the more people we are going to reach and I believe that that will begin to transform the way people think it transformed the way that we



55:00

Act knave and transform the way people vote because we continue to have these conversations because right now, there's such a limited scope of understanding in the human experience of struggle, that if we would just open ourselves up, and I know it requires a lot of vulnerability, and Bernie brown does a wonderful job discussing vulnerability.



55:19

But being vulnerable and sharing that piece.



55:23

It could save lives. It may be someone you know, just sharing your story may save someone from taking their life because they feel so isolated and alone and unseen. And you could see someone



55:36

else know the power of your voice know the power of your story. Because as muddled and frustrating or as scary as it may feel right now, you may look back on it 20 years from now and be like, Wow, I can't believe all that I've overcome and the person I am today, and you can stand proudly knowing that you have honored that truth. And that story. Thank you so much for being here today. And being with me and just sharing, sharing your authentic self and your authentic truth and your wisdom with with all of us and I so appreciate that. Thank you for having me. Appreciate it.



56:16

Thank you so much for joining us today. You can find Kiersten at kBwaters.com. And I will also have this in my show notes for you. Just a few reminders for you before you leave, please feel free to email me at any time with ideas or feedback for just breeze. Please review just breathe on your platform of choice. Subscribe to my website to stay informed chrysalismama.com you can sign up for my newsletter there as well as access tons of resources. Join the private just breathe Facebook community to chat with other parents and allies. Remember to take that breath to just breathe. taking those few minutes each day to focus on your breath and common center yourself



57:15

and share this podcast with anyone who needs to know that they are not alone. Until next time