

# Episode 32 - Understanding Daily changes

Mon, 5/3 12:11AM 26:29

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

stage, lgbtq, connor, process, days, sexual orientation, aware, point, helpful, identity, parent, learned, child, internal struggle, self loathing, steve, feelings, internal, contraction, situations



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Welcome to Just breathe parenting your LGBTQ T. Love podcast transforming the conversation around loving and raising an LGBTQ child filled with awesome guests practical strategies and moving stories host Heather Hester always makes you feel like you're having a cozy chat. Wherever you are on this journey. Right now, in this moment in time, you are not alone. And here is Heather for this week's amazing episode.



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One of my favorite things about this podcast is hands down. The really lovely people I've gotten to meet through interviews, the just breathe Facebook community, and those who have reached out through my website. While we are all on a similar journey, in a broad sense, each of our stories and every one of our children are unique. Some days that uniqueness is quite beautiful. And other days, it can be scary. And most days live somewhere in between. Adjust breed listener made a really fabulous content request for the survey. And I have spent a good deal of time thinking about it. They asked for more information on changes during the coming out process that they seem to change, meaning their kids as often as they explore. I interpreted this to be curiosity around the day to day process, as opposed to the 30,000 foot view of the coming out process, which is a lot of times how we look at it. So I've taken some time to get really quiet and go back to those first days, months and years. And I've asked Steve and my kids to weigh in as well. We've recalled some interesting changes, and even a few observations looking through the lens of where we are right now. I thought it would be really helpful to briefly revisit the cast model of the coming out process since I haven't touched on it in much

detail since Episode Two. coming out is a lifelong process. So I find it particularly helpful to review the stages every so often because each time I do I learned something new, or I see something in a different light. I will attach my cheat sheet that I have to the show notes because it is incredibly helpful to have the stages available for your child to read to they will identify with each stage in a different way, every time they read it. Remember, Connor felt he had completed the process when he came out to us. And he had no interest in working through the process for quite some time. So the first stage is identity or orientation confusion. Basically, this is shock, amazement, fear, to realize or become aware of gay lesbian bisexual thoughts, feelings, attractions, or recognition that their physical gender does not match their mental emotional gender. As they contemplate Who am I they go through rejection, denial, and acceptance. This is all internal work at this point, this is all these are all feelings and thoughts that they are completely going through. inside and likely we have no idea that this is going on. So stage two is identity and orientation tolerance. At this point, they begin to wrap their head around the possibility that these thoughts and feelings they've been having are real or true. They have feelings of isolation and alienation. And they wonder if maybe this is just a face so they kind of just sit with it. They often will look for an explanation. And they will want to learn all they can about sexual orientation, gender identity, LGBTQ community resources, and if you are aware this is going on. If they have talked to you about this, it's really really important at this point to encourage them to talk about the loss of heteros. actual life expectations, meaning allow them to grieve the change in their movie reel. I've talked a lot about us as parents, giving ourselves time and space to grieve our movie real explosion. But it's really important for them to do that as well.



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It's also very, very important to encourage them and allow them the space to work through the many feelings and changes, because only that will allow them to continue moving forward. Stage Three is identity and orientation tolerance. At this point, they begin to realize that they are not alone. And they begin to seek an LGBTQ community or social group for support. Some may come to terms with parts of their sexual orientation or gender identity, but not fully embracing it, which oftentimes will lead them to live a double life, it is crucial to be aware that self loathing and shame are very common overall. But especially in this stage, your support and support from friends and or a professional, are critical for them to be able to work through this internal struggle. For example, Connor had no desire at this point, to seek out these communities, these, the social group for support the different types of groups that were available in his high school. And what he finally was able to articulate was that he saw his internal judgement of himself. He projected that as judgment from others, and so he was really hesitant to put himself out

there and in those situations, so just, you know, be aware that that is also a possibility. This takes time, and it takes work. And it's definitely one of those two steps forward, one step back type of things just be patient, and be gentle. stage four is identity and orientation acceptance. So here, they begin to accept, not just tolerate, which is wonderful, and a beautiful step, they actually begin to form friendships with other LGBTQ people. And the biggest piece of this stage is they realize they can have a happy, healthy, fulfilling life that they will be, Oh, okay. At this stage, they also may begin coming out to those close to them. stage five is identity and or orientation pride. In this stage, they begin to feel a sense of pride about who they are, and around their sexual orientation and or their gender identity, and they want to let people authentically see them. One thing that is really, really noticeable at this stage is that they're social and or political viewpoints become very much an us versus them LGBTQ versus straight. And they see things very, it initially is very black and white. And it is one of those times that I highly recommend it as much as you might want to jump in and say but try to look at it from this point of view or try to look at it from this point of view, to really just sit through it and let them they're really still trying to work everything out and figure out where they are. So



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I've watched this play its way through And I do know that it is just part of this process. So if you can, as best as you can sit with it and just let them work their way through. It's very common because of a lot, a lot of these viewpoints and the way they start to really experience them in a very personal way for them to feel anger, an experience a lot of anger. And anger can be a very helpful tool. Unless, of course, it's accompanied by violent behavior really encouraged them, to allow their anger and to work through their anger, because this will help in developing coping skills for handling others reactions, micro aggressions, lots of different things that will happen once they're out in the real world. This takes practice. And I highly, highly recommend therapeutic support. Allow them to be in situations so they can learn. And try your very best. And I know this is a hard one. But try your very best to resist that mama bear temptation to jump in and help them out of every situation, let them kind of flail a little bit and get their footing and figure out what they want to say and how they want to stand up for themselves. It will in the long run, serve them so well. And it will allow you to let them go a little bit easier. The final stage is called identity and orientations synthesis. In this stage your child integrates their sexual orientation and or gender identity with all other aspects of self. And they recognize it is one part of their whole being of their whole everything that makes them the incredibly beautiful, unique person that they are. At this point, they can now move fluidly through their life without defining spaces as LGBTQ, or straight. So now that we've had a little review of the stages of coming out, The following are some very specific examples of situations or many stages, kind of these daily changes that we encountered. appearance

is probably the number one daily change. As they are working through these stages and their internal struggles, the easiest and arguably safest way to express the intensity of their internal experiences through appearance. So unless it is something offensive to you, or an egregious attack on your family values, my advice is just to roll with it. When Connor dyed his hair for the very, very first time, I was definitely thrown a little bit I wasn't quite prepared for it. And I learned to just lean into it and to breathe. And it really helped me to work through my own stuff as part of my process. And the more I was able to just let the appearance experiment happen, the better it worked for everyone. From observation and research, I have learned that allowing and rolling with this expression helps them really embrace their authentic self more and stay away from much more dangerous forms of expression and experimentation. And that is a really, really important point.



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attitude is the second area. And it really is and I think I'm sure everyone will agree with me on this. It is a universal teen form of parental torture, right? It's developmental and completely normal. And there are hundreds of books and websites out there on why teenagers are filled with sass. However, for the purpose of this topic specifically, know that the edgiest or the most sharp tongue behavior doesn't come from a place of trying to irritate you, generally speaking,



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it is



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really their internal struggle just spilling out. So they don't have much of a filter at this point. So anything that's going on on the inside is gonna come out, sideways, or ugly, or sassy, or shocking. So just be aware of that, I know that it's so easy to have a knee jerk reaction and be angry or come back with a comment or want to, you know, discipline or give consequences. But if you can allow yourself enough time to pause and understand or remember where it's coming from, it will help you in your response, included acceptance and understanding of self in this section as well, because it definitely increases and decreases over a long period of time, there were days where I would think, yay, finally, he is really beginning to love himself. And then a few days later, he would be back in the pit of self loathing. I believe the theory of expansion and contraction really plays into this. As they begin to love and accept themselves. All of themselves, they expand and it feels good. But it's also new and can be a little bit scary and small experiences tend to trip

them up. And so then they contract. But the contraction is never as great as the expansion. So over time, there is incredible growth. The next daily change that we really remembered and observed his perceived openness. And what I mean by this is, how communicative or engaged they are with those around them how much they want to talk and share how present they are. Once I figured this one out, I can now tell within minutes of my kids waking up what their mental state is, which ultimately affects how they will interact with me and with others. If you haven't picked up on the theme, yet, where they are with their internal process, literally affects everything, which is why I really wanted to introduce or reintroduce and review the caste model before we talked about this, because Holy cow, it's just it truly does that that process affects everything. Most of these daily changes are impermanent, and much like the weather will change. Thank goodness, right. However, I know that as a parent, it is easier to be calm and roll with whatever is thrown your way. If you have an understanding of all the possibilities, if you know have a basic knowledge of what could be coming at you. So that is really why I created this episode. Finally, it may seem that their interests and everything are in constant flux. And again, you guessed it, this mirrors their internal process. I know I mentioned earlier that I asked even Connor to weigh in on this topic as well. I want to highlight their responses separately because I think it's rather cool and really quite helpful to hear viewpoints from a dad and a kid who has personally worked this process. So Steve recalled the following. He remembered that Connor was moodier, with many more ups and downs that the moods really fluctuated a lot. He remembered Connor being more closed off and guarded especially to him. And I think that's very common that There's definitely one parent that any child but especially a child who was going through the LGBTQ coming out process is more open with and one that they are definitely more closed off to. He remember that he was much more willing to finally express himself with clothes



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and hair colors and hairstyles, he definitely went through a stage of being less interested in being involved with the family. And again, this is very typical developmental behavior for any teenager, as a child who is dealing with the coming out process, being really aware of that is important. And noticing all these different behaviors. And the final thing that Steve really noticed was Connor, not being willing to really discuss much about the coming out process. And I really think that's a that is such an important point to bring up. Because in talking with so many other parents, this is very common. We want to talk we want to understand, they don't, they are working through all of this stuff. And there it is, it's very difficult for them to articulate it and put it into words and attach it feelings with these thoughts and emotions. It's a lot. So just kind of be aware that just because they say that there's nothing going on and they're thinking anything, the more likely answer is that there's just so much going on. And they're so busy processing it, that they cannot

articulate it. Steve's advice for how to handle them is just giving space to do these things, and finally, express who they feel they really are and continue to try to be involved and including them. And whatever you're doing as a family or doing things one on one, even if they decline, even if they you know, keep kind of pushing back, just keeping that door really open. And continue trying to make them aware that you do want to know more, and you do want to talk or you are available to talk. So Connor had a little bit of a different take, which I thought was quite beautiful. And I'm actually just going to quote him because I loved it. So he said, I think one thing that you could mention is the discomfort you have to learn to live with at first. What I mean is when you first come out your worldview is usually radically changed your perception of yourself changes, and sometimes others perceptions change of you as well. This is uncomfortable at first. But once you get past this stage of the coming out process is replaced with pride. The same can be said really, from a parent's perspective as well learning how to parent and support your LGBTQ child can be uncomfortable and unfill unfamiliar at first, right? I sincerely hope this look at day to day changes was calming and helpful. And just gave you a different look at what our kids are going through. And perhaps just a couple little bits of information on how to handle and and how to respond and how to just sit through being uncomfortable. Remember, again, there is my my cheat sheet will be attached in the show notes. So definitely use that. I find it extremely helpful myself. And before I sign off, I have a very exciting announcement. I have created an online course that is filled with every bit of information Steve and I wish we would have had four years ago. As well as resources we've gathered and lessons that we've learned along the way. It is a one of a kind course, and I want you all to have access to it. There's a link for it in the show notes that will connect you to more details as well as a free six part video series that I've put together to really give you more information. And truly, I've put a ton of information and techniques that I've used in those videos, so check them out.



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I am so excited to share this with all of you. Until next time.



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Thanks so much for joining Heather today. Remember to just breathe. Take a few minutes every day to calm and center yourself. Reach out anytime with ideas, questions or feedback. Please rate and review just breathe on your favorite platform. Subscribe to Heather's website [WWW dot chrysalis mama.com](http://WWW.dot.chrysalis.mama.com) to receive her monthly newsletter and stay informed. Join the private just breathe Facebook community to chat with other parents and allies and share with anyone who needs to know that they are not alone.

