

# Britt East Interview

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

gay, parents, people, kids, experience, gay men, grindr, important, love, feel, life, part, book, space, straight, adults, carry, sorts, world, empathy



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Welcome to Just breathe parenting your LGBTQ T. Live 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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Welcome to Just breathe. I am so happy you are here today with me. I am delighted to introduce my guest for today. Britt East is the author of the gay Man's Guide to Life and is a speaker who uses his experience, his strength and hope to challenge and inspire change oriented gay men to get down to business of improving their lives. He is approachable, he is engaging and he is no nonsense. So without further ado, here is Britt east. just thrilled to have you



01:24

on Thank you. I'm absolutely honored. I'm a huge fan of your podcast and more importantly, the work that you do in general, the advocacy. It's just O'Rourke, I'm honored to be here.



01:34

Well, thank you, thank you so much. That really does mean a lot. You know, it's one of those things that I often think, Okay, I hope that I hope that people are hearing this and you know, feeling it. So thank you very, very much. Um, so let's just go ahead and get started because I have some some fun questions for you. I really thought there were a couple of things that stood out to me in your book. And for everyone listening, we will dive into Britt's awesome book. It's called gay Man's Guide to Life a little bit later in the interview, but I wanted to touch upon the idea of cultivating sustainable gay friendships. I think that's a really hard thing. And could you just talk about that? Because there is, you know, like you said, there's this internalized homophobia. I know that, you know, Connor does struggle to and he's not alone. You know, he has shared that with about other friends as well. Could you just talk about that a little bit.



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huge topic. Let me start by saying in general, all things being equal, you can assume the level of trauma that a gay man has endured based on his age, and where he grew up, you can make a presumption there. And so this is different for different age groups in different geographies, the level of internalized homophobia, they've subsume to the level of bigotry they have experienced. We carry all of that with us for the rest of our lives, like a sack of rocks, and inhibits all relationships and inhibits all of our relatedness. And in fact, many of us are so wounded that we don't even see it, we spend our time living behind a series of masks. When it comes to gay men, for some reason, that often seems to be a best little boy in the world complex. Many gay men, although certainly not all, are often high achievers as a way to be unseen, to be unquestioned. And if you've ever tried to be in a relationship of any kind with a high achiever, you know that it can be difficult. It can be transactional. And we often as gay men, look for relationships that lead us somewhere that are of some use to us, because we're still so scared to be vulnerable and known. First off as men in this culture, and the short game. We have such an abhorrence for the feminine, such deep seated agony that we turn inward. The way it is often expressed is that our friendships with other gay men are tentative at first, have we slept with them? Do we know them from somewhere? Are they too gay? Are they going to outlive us or embarrass us? Or are we attracted to them? These are the thoughts that run through our minds when we meet each other. Especially for think we're the only guy in the village kind of thing and we come across someone else that we recognize. It's not necessarily immediately intrinsically joyous experiences often feels a little bit nerve racking and anxious. Then friendships with people in the street community is are also challenging for us whether we are still wrestling with the residual shame of our sexual orientation, we have, we have not yet attuned to the trauma that we endured the bullying maybe, for instance, at the hands of straight men as children. If we carry an undue amount of misogyny with us, that is often expressed negatively inhibits our friendships with women,

maybe we see them as attachments, as accessories to our life as opposed to fully realized human beings. You know, there's all sorts of stereotypes and cliches about the wacky guy, next door neighbor. And we might slip into that role inadvertently and use it as a mask. So that we're not truly seen or known. We're just performing. So we're performing a friendship. So we could go on, and on this topic I write at length about in the book, and we could talk for hours just on this. But the bottom line is, when you meet a gay man, it's important to know that there is an epidemic of loneliness in our community, that many of us are walking with and wrestling with. And so while we are doing fine by and large today, and there is so much less bigotry and hatred than we've had in the past, we still carry that risk those residual issues with us. And they're expressed in all sorts of different ways on a daily basis.



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So what are ways that would be helpful? So for instance, me as a straight cisgender, woman, how could I be a better friend to you, a gay man,



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as adults, the best thing we can do is see each other as fully realized complex individuals and create space for all of our humanity, to get curious, and question, what prejudices and biases we might be carrying, that we're not even aware of. I mean, look, in a world steeped in strict supremacy, all of us make homophobic choices from time to time, even gay people. So of course, straight people, your goodness, put your foot in your mouth, you're going to step in it, you're gonna do something that you don't mean to do, and you don't mean any harm by it. And you just kind of step in a cow pie. And the best we can do is have the spirit of generosity, mutual generosity, to create space for one another, to make mistakes, clean up after them, own them, and then move on and love one another. But as soon as we start forcing each other into the, to the arena of playing roles, that's actually a violent dehumanizing process, whether we're de sexualizing, your gay friends, you are using them as entertainment, using them as ways to colorize and accessorize your life that then is leading us away from from our humanity and inhibits any sort of true mutual exchange of energy and love and vulnerability.



08:21

Wow, that's really powerful. And I think that that last part that you hit on, is probably what younger generations are seeing. And I may not be completely accurate, but I'm just kind of guessing. So I'm wondering, do you think that's, that's true? Because I think, you

know, teenagers, especially are here, they're trying to, they're trying to figure things out. Right. And, you know, there's like the, you know, my son always joked about being, you know, the gay best friend, you know, I'm the gay best friend, you know, I'm the prom date. I'm the the safe prom date or the safe what have you, right? Yeah, he wasn't alone in that. And even though he felt very alone, and that, and so I'm wondering, then kind of shifting that just a little bit, but piggybacking on it. What advice? Or how can we help our kids, both our kids who are in the LGBTQ community and our kids who are straight? How can we better parent them and better



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just give them better tools to treat each other with respect and love and kindness and compassion. When it comes to kids in particular, I think it's important to recognize that so much of what they tell you is rooted in the present and is fluid. If you're if a kid comes out to you as gay, that doesn't mean they will necessarily identify that way their entire life or even the next 15 minutes, these roles are changing all the time. For one thing, the language is changing all the time for one thing. So I have tremendous empathy for the straight community, trying to keep up, keep on trying to catch up. And, you know, as adults, that's why I say it's important for us to cultivate a spirit of generosity. When it comes to kids, if you extend that generosity to making everything okay. However they identify as, okay, whether it's day by pan, anything in between fluid, whatever their gender orientation, and you show genuine empathy and curiosity. But the most important piece happens even before that, you know, kids, especially teen teenagers are excellent bs detectors. And if you are, if you have any authentic portion of your life, they are going to home in on it and hold you accountable relentlessly, and throw it up in your face. If you the more that you can cultivate a life of diversity. And you set that stage before they're born, frankly, but certainly as they're growing up there, you're going to signal in all sorts of unconscious subconscious, inadvertent ways that whoever they are is just fine. Because you have a wide range of friends and loved ones of all races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, gender orientations, presentations, expressions, what have you, you have a full, you know, rainbow of love in your life. And that signals to the community that signals to everyone that you love that it is all okay. And they can be who they are. In that moment, whatever it is.



11:50

That is fantastic. I just want to take all of that and just like, put it as like my quote for this episode. That is so far. I mean, that's really perfect. And that is, that is the message that I, you know, I so wish I had known 20 years ago, 22 years ago, because I have had to shift,

you know, me personally, I've had to shift a lot. And I've had to be very vulnerable with my kids in that, you know, here's where I, you all know where I was. And you all know where dad was. And and this is what we're working through. And we're in we're learning and we're trying to understand, and oh my goodness, did we I don't know why we saw things that way. But now, you know, it's like this explosion, right? In the middle of raising kids is not the best time for that to happen. So you're absolutely right, that ideally, that, you know, just embracing and embodying that



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that's the key word, by the way. embodying is the key word you exude love for everyone.



13:07

Right? That unconditional love. Right? And, and really understanding what that means. I have begun actually to write a lot about this. And I, the more I, you know, kind of write about it and, and research things. And I think most most of us really don't truly understand what that means. Like to love unconditionally. Right? Absolutely. And this might be, you know, somewhat naive. But I feel like if you have that everything else is possible. Then you said



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that perfectly, I thought you were going to go to a naive space. But possible is the key word because you've created a platform that Launchpad for your children that they can then jump off of and have adventures and experience life, including all of the shadow and darkness and downsides. That's part of the journey that you wouldn't want to you would not want to deny them anyway. So it doesn't guarantee any outcome. But except that everything is possible. I think you said it beautifully.



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Okay, well, thank you good because sometimes I think I get in this idealistic space of,



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it's easy to get there.



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Right. And



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so, we want to love one another and it's easy to think okay, now, and this is so what I so want to impart to your listeners too. It's so easy to think okay, now am I done? I love I love my kids. I've reached this destination of where I truly don't think I hold any conscious prejudices or bias towards anybody in the queer community. Okay, now, am I done now? Are they just going to be happy? The answer's no. You're not done and they will not be happy. That is just the starting line. But not the finish line at the starting line.



15:00

You weren't kidding, when you said you didn't, you weren't gonna hold anything back. There it is, people. That's the starting line, we're all at the starting line. So buckle your seatbelts, all the sweating and crying we've been doing so far, it's just the start.



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Just, there's love in the four walls of your house, that your kids are going to be prevented from experiencing pain when they enter the world, especially a world steeped in straight supremacy, you're wrong.



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Right? And and prepare them for it. Right? If so,



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pair children for something you in many cases know nothing about at least their lived experience. I mean, there's only so far that empathy and research can take you and if you've never lived as part of a sexual minority, there's only so far and that's where that mentorship to a diversity of loved ones and your family or your friends comes in so that they can cultivate those relationships with with benevolent adults and witnesses on their own.



15:57

Right. Right. And that has been I will tell you one of the hands down biggest helps for Connor, and that he's had both a mentor and now a therapist who are both gay men. Awesome. Huge. And because you're the benevolent adult relationship, like you hit the nail on the head, that is what they need



16:26

a percent of it.



16:28

Right? I mean, the difference is extraordinary. And, and I will tell you that it you know, he's at school in New York City, knowing these things allows me to, you know, he can go back there, and I'm not losing sleep, you know, I'm not, like biting my nails all the time I'm, here is where you're supposed to be.



16:54

And as parents, it's part of your journey to relinquish control. And I can say that, because I don't have any kids. So it's easy for me to sit up here and, and say, Okay, get over, you have to I mean, that's it, the more that you try to constrain and control them, you're just going to drive them nuts, and they're going to rebel Anyway, you all know this. And so when you go through a traumatic experience, or many traumatic experiences, as part of which is par for the course, and raising a queer kid, then part of that is finding a path to sit down your trauma and heal, so they can witness that healing in you. Mm hmm. And thereby heal part of themselves, your family as a unit, if part of you or are not, well, then none of you are fully Well,



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that's correct. I mean, that is you are absolutely right. You know, I would say I'm as calm or happy as my least calm or happy child, right? I mean, that's. And so I'm just kind of naturally, but being, I think, to that point of being aware, and of the fact that they are watching everything, and being willing to be vulnerable with that process of, of healing of, you know, even when there's, there's times where I'm like, Oh, my gosh, I just, you know, want him to stay here or, you know, my, my next oldest, she's a senior, and so she's going off to college. And the idea, there's a big, she wants to go to college in the UK. And I'm

like, Oh, dear Lord, like me, right? But I'm like, hey, right. So I feel like the more I say this out loud, I'm like, that sounds like a great idea. You know?



18:38

This is bringing up so much for me that because what I hear from parents, I talk to a lot of parents of queer kids and what I hear from them so much as what can I do? I think a better question is, who can you be just by being values and embodying your love? It's not everything you need to do a lot. I mean, who are we kidding? You need to do a lot but that I think, 85% can you be Who do you want to be? What do you value go be your values? There's for so many of us, there's a huge disconnect as adults because we are often find ourselves in situations where we feel forced to wear multiple hats or wear different masks or, or, you know, participate in different roles. It's tough. I cannot I can only imagine how tough it is and how its component would you have children, yet that's part of the mantle you take on as a parent is to more fully step into your being, because that's going to be 10,000 times more powerful to your teenagers in particular than any word that you tell them. Who are you being



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right. You are absolutely right. I mean, it is they go through they go from thinking that you walk on water, that you are the smartest, most beautiful human ever. an overnight. You are literally the dumbest human ever. And you know, you're embarrassing, and you can't hug anymore. And probably not gonna say goodnight half the time. And there's a lot of sass. There's a lot of that. And it doesn't matter if they're gay or straight.



20:18

Right? That's just teenage behavior, information process. They're, they're in love with you literally on a biochemical level as little children. And it's important that that bond is severed so that they can step fully into adulthood. And the severing of that bond is really, really painful for everybody involved.



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It is, it is because it's a long process. You know, it's like a multi step process.



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And it's not so like you said, toggle back and forth some days, and they come back to you and you get, you get seduced back into this adoration, like, Oh, well, they really do love me. It's like, Okay, well, the next five minutes, they're swearing at you. So it's, you know, eggs.



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Play, right, are giving I love that the looks that I get from my daughter's



21:04

Oh,



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yeah, they take my breath away sometimes. So, yeah, you have to have thick skin, and just know that your job. And this has taken me a while to like, be able to kind of calmly sit in. But my job is to prepare them to be free, and to be their authentic, who they are like,



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who I be.



21:33

Right.



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So they're so important, what you what you also said, Be who authentically who they are, is because that's what's going to eradicate this epidemic of loneliness and gay men. No, statistically gay men are more likely to die in a state of persistent loneliness than any other portion of the population, including lesbians. And that's just an unfortunate reality. And so much of it is because we don't know how to be authentic. We were never given those tools, it was never modeled for us, we were killed during the AIDS crisis, the people are literally gone. And so we don't have those mentors, those of us that were left grew up

with, you know, it's like trying to learn this stuff. We to teach it to ourselves, there were no healthy role models in the media among our peers, or any, so we don't have good writ large, we don't have good systems and practices of relatedness. So we need that we crave that so much from our parents to model that for us.



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Having people like you who have survived all of this, and you're such an incredible role model and you're speaking your truth and your speaking, you you don't mince words, and you do give it straight. And I think that's really important, because that's just being truthful. And I think that when you're really truthful, and kind and loving way that is the very best gift you can give to someone. And and you your generation is the generation that Connor and his generation are looking up to, and are so blessed to have because you have blazed the trail essentially, thank you first because like you said, I mean so many before you are gone. Right? So you didn't have that.



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To be honest, unfortunately, for Connor, so many of my peer group are struggling with the basics. But at least we're here and we're trying, that means Connors generation is going to need extra love and care to fill in some of the gaps that we don't have the capacity, the ability to provide. So many of us are still tremendously traumatically age delayed. And so, you know, we're doing the best that we can, but we definitely need for the kids coming up, they're gonna need extra love.



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That's good. Good to know. And good to, you know, I think that's a really important point for for everyone listening to know that. And, you know, for the kids who are listening to know that. And, and I think that it is so phenomenal that the work is being done. Right? That so that that in and of itself is a good model to follow. Like, the work has to be done. It's hard. So even with that, even if the capacity isn't there, yeah, even if the, you know, emotional maturity isn't there, right? It's the Oh, okay. It's okay to work on this though. This is this is a good thing, right? Instead of I need to be this one way I'm supposed to act like this because I'm, you know, fill in the blank.



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And as usual, the burden falls on women. Because frankly, men in general are just so far behind the personal growth and development there. relatedness expertise that women have been forced to, in many cases, learn and chosen to. In other cases that women I think in, especially in your listeners, I suspect there's a lot of mothers dragging fathers along. And if they're not, that's probably some sort of a blessing. So you have, you're dealing with children, if they're gay, if they identify as gay men, by parent men, that have kind of a double whammy. They're dealing with all the trauma heaped on them by society that forces them into certain masculine roles, which is only compounded by homophobia and the bigotry of those still trying to eradicate us. Mm hmm. So women always be the ones doing that heavy lifting, it's not fair. Thank god somebody is doing it. But that's the unfortunate reality is that I suspect a lot of moms listening know this already, intuitively, if they have not thought through it, that unfortunately, a lot of the burden to fill in those gaps to do the research is going to land squarely in their laps.



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Absolutely. Once again, it is very true and, and you know, what I, I feel like I am blessed because my husband has, he's open. And he's willing, it's just really hard, you know, to the point of like, the emotional connectedness that's a lot more difficult, and, and wanting to, you know, kind of work through that. So he's still the place of like, working through a lot of things.



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As women, you can have curiosity and empathy for the masculine experience in this culture, which is so impaired. I mean, look for all of the the litany of harm, foisted on the world by straight men, straight sis men, they are also harmed in that equation. They are so emotionally constrained. I mean, it's so it's almost a violent act for a man to shed a tear in the society. So he's, he's trying to God love him. You know, he's, I'm sure he's trying as hard as he can. And you're over here, like, Okay, I'm glad you're opening up to this, but I need you over here. And that, unfortunately, for the next decade, likely, I mean, things are changing, women are stepping into positions of power in the equation shifting, but for the next decade, it's going to unfortunately, fallen laps of women to in many cases to drag their their husbands along this journey. And it's like to inform them like Dude, I'm real glad that you know that you're not, you know, using homophobic language or you're not beating the kid or you're not doing this for that. But that's just nothing. I mean, that's just like table stakes. You know, you got to get in the game to see them as fully realized, budding adults,



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right? Exactly as as human beings.



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That's what we all want cardless of our orientation of any kind of ethnicity or race. That's what we all want complex human beings. Right.



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Right. Again, this is this speaks to me just maybe being idealistic is probably the best word. But just why is this so hard? I say this all the time. Why is this so hard? Why can't we just see each other as human beings and just love each other and appreciate like how weird and different we are, you know, it's kind of fun, but



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your technology or the fast faster than our bodies, and our culture can keep up. And our culture is evolving really quickly as well. There has been, and I say this as empathy to your audience. There has been nothing like the cultural shifts in the queer community that human history has ever recorded. The level of acceptance that has moved through worldwide global society, for all sorts of reasons is monumental and mind blowing. For instance, I literally never thought anybody would hire me for a job when I was growing up. Because I'm gay. I think about the consequences of that thought because it was literally true. I literally thought I would be a pariah cast out of society. never in my wildest dreams did I think I would have the legal right to get married much as being married, which I am today. So when you carry those thoughts forward, there are great consequences attached to those, but also the unintended consequences of all this social change feels like upheaval, to many people that have never experienced it or thought of it. We live in a pluralistic society. Lots of people have never thought about these issues. And they deserve the grace, the space, the generosity, to come along with us and get on board as they show a propensity to love us.



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That's lovely. I mean, and and I think that is that is an important way Look at it as well, which is kind of flipping the compassion, right? Yeah. Because I think it's very easy to get in that space of feeling anger. When it's, you know, you or as a parent feeling that mama

bear anger



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perfectly the limbic brain gets triggered it's fight or flight, you go into my bear mode, you see red to protect your kids. And that's just human. And that's why we all need self empathy and room to clean up after our messes and the power of curiosity, self reflection, and go like, Oh, well, that wasn't my best moment. I guess I need to go, you know, clean up that. But it said the principal or how yelled at that other kids mother, I need to go clean that up and on that, but that you know that modeling that for your children is also a gift your children do not want or expect perfection?



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Thank goodness.



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Yeah, exactly. So your brain gets triggered, and it just takes over. And it's perfectly normal and human and just give yourself a break. You know what I mean? That will never not be the case. That's just part of being in a human body. And so it's just a matter of having this self reflective practices built into your daily routine, that gives you the space to evaluate what happened over the course of the day, and think, wow, I did a really good job. They're like, Oh, that wasn't so great. And then to figure out what to do with that,



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right? You're speaking my language. I love it. self reflection, is all stuff that I just did the blog. And probably you like, like me, this has been something that, you know, we've we've learned in the last decade or two that we have just embraced and loved, right?



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I did not come out of the womb like this. I had to have my life completely fall apart and start from scratch and be like, Okay, well, I guess I have a blank slate now, who do I want to be? And just build it from scratch?



32:01

right? Exactly. Well, it's funny, because before you 10 years ago, I still remember this conversation that I had with a friend on the phone. And, and at that point in my life, I was like just giving myself away to volunteer work all the time. And that's all I did. And I was ridiculous and stressful. Not the volunteer work isn't great, but it had gotten to that, like, unhealthy point. And, and like constantly twisting myself in knots for you know, my family and for friends. And you know, what you do when you're not fully aware of self? And her saying to her, I think I'm gonna write a book that's called Who should I be today? You know? Because I felt like that's, I mean, that's truly how I felt my life was like, Okay, well, who does everybody want me to be today? Because that's who I'll be. I know, I'm not alone in that there are millions of us who feel that way. Right. And so



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many of us are hiding, because for whatever reason, we don't allow ourselves I think we can afford and maybe it's true, to display that level of vulnerability to the world, or even to, you know, even to friends. I mean, just depending upon our level of inner strength and awareness, and what we think we can afford and endure, so many of us just kind of slap a smile on it.



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Very true. It is very true. I think if you reach a point where you just can't live like that anymore, it's likely you just need to



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be authentic. You want to be able to live that way that a moment longer. You just reach that point. And that's when change happens. For most right. What was for me?



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What me as well, me as well. So, See, I told you, we would totally get off on another tangent. It's way too much fun. But I will shift back because I have I do have, there's a couple of things that I really want to touch on with you. So making a huge shift here, but this is something that I have been dying to talk about. And I really wanted Connor to talk about. But he was a little bit nervous about, like really addressing it head on. But you talk about hookup apps and disposable relationships. And, and all of that, you know, finding

genuine love real love true companionship. So I really want to talk about this because this is something that first of all the apps and the disposable relationships is a huge thing. And I think that it came to me as such a shock. I wasn't sure how to handle it. And I know there's so many parents out there that either Are you know experiencing this Same thing, or have no idea that this is coming. And I think it's rather inevitable, especially if you have a child who is gay, or bisexual. I remember, you know, one of Connors, a few therapists ago, said to me, I was asking him about this and and he said, Well, you know how there he was like, in a heterosexual relationship? Who was the one who says no. And I was like, well, the girl, right? And, and he's like, yeah, so and a gay relationship? who say no, the mom and I was like, Oh, this is like hurting my body. Right? I was like, well, thank you for these, like, between the eyes perspective? You know, I just kind of across trying to figure it out, like, how do I, you know, at that time, Carter was like, 17, right?



36:04

Yeah.



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Right. This is kind of where, you know, obviously, there's the age thing, which there's the age thing that you all you think, law, I have a list of names I carry in my wallet. But I just wonder how if you know, if you could give just your wisdom on this, because I think it would be really meaningful.



36:34

Your kids are gonna have sex get over it. So that's part of it, and they're gonna have sex that you may not understand or have ever heard of, or ever want to who cares, you don't get to weigh in on that. When they're in public. Obviously, when they're adults. Sex is intrinsically part of the gay culture. And we could talk about that for hours, what I would recommend is that parents who are readers read up on gay history because you will learn so much about the culture and identity and our ways of being even day to day, just through our just a reading of, you know, a rudimentary, cursory study of gay history. So for instance, real quick, when it was illegal for gay people to congregate, which was just basically gentle genocide. We would meet for furtive sexual encounters, in the parks and bathrooms in the back of backs of trucks, and straight people can have all the judgments they want to about it, I don't want to hear it, I don't really care. Because really, there was no space for us to exist. Right? Now think about that dynamic in the 1950s. And earlier, carried forth in the generation since the laws have changed and almost everywhere in the

world, which is wonderful and beautiful and to be celebrated. But we still carry that baggage that cultural baggage with us. So now, not only do we have the masculine, feminine dialectic dynamic that you described earlier, where you know who is going to be chaste, and who is going to be chaste? Who is going to be ravished and who's going to do the ravishing not only do we carry that and have our own cultural confusion around that, but we also have the, the, all of the harm from our ancestors, culturally, that we carry with us today. So that, that then adapted into a cruising behavior, then we're bathhouses, where we could go on mass to release this pent up desire. This pent up the sexual urge, which was inhibited, constrained and often illegal, excuse me illegal and other facets of our life. It would just explode on the weekends, and we would go out and have as much sex as we could. Lots of straight people don't have this dynamic in their lives. It's totally foreign to them. So that's why I cut to today, we have things like hookup apps where, you know, you spend five minutes on Grindr. And you can see the worst of us, frankly, the most racist behavior in our community the most misogynistic behavior in our community. The most exhibitionists from a standpoint of an alienating transactional mentality where we're not, you know, it's one thing to be sex positive. If that's in alignment with who you truly are having lots of anonymous sex, I have no judgments about that. But if it's not part of your alignment, if it is a trauma response, then there's probably more loving states of being that you could embody a different energy that you could exude. And so here's my take on on hookup apps is that I'm agnostic of the platform when it comes to finding love. The key is the energy that you bring more than the things that you do dislike when we were talking earlier in the conversation, what can parents Do not focus on who can you be. The same is true with gay people of age finding love, who are you, who can you be be authentically yourself, go engage in activities where you can shine that light as brightly as possible. Thereby attracting people who see the real, you follow the energy. And, you know, let love flourish from there. So whether it's an app, or it's in person, or it's a website matters very little, from that regard. Now, if you do use apps, you have to understand that they are easy, convenient spaces for the worst of our behaviors. And the least, maybe worst is a little loaded, maybe the least evolved the least aware of our behaviors. And so when you wade into those spaces, as a gay person, you just have to understand that you might have a lot of, you might have to weed a lot of noise out separate the signal from the noise. And you might have to be really guarded about what information you share and, and who you are and who you trust. And because there's a lot of predators out there, there's a lot of you know, so in that regard, the spaces are very different. But in terms of your success, in terms of your ability to find love, it matters very little of the mode in which it happens. It's much more about who you are in the moment, and allowing the true exchange of energy to happen without without an agenda.



41:35

And I think that's, that's really important. And that's something that can be practicing that can start early, right? And really kind of figuring out who that is who,



41:49

like, if you're a parent, and you have a kid who's a 15, or 16, it's like, okay, you should not be on Grindr, you know, it's it's, it's against their policies or platforms, and your kids are likely sneaking on all sorts of places where you don't want them to be. And I can only imagine how challenging it is for parents these days to manage all these technologies. I mean, it's, it's, I bet it's overwhelming for a lot of parents. The key is to start sooner, in training them in their own personal dignity, not to the words that you say, but the energy that you exude, the state of being you embody how you occur in the world, do you walk through the world with personal dignity and diversity? Do you cultivate a panoply, a pluralistic set of friends and loved ones? Or are you telling people one thing and doing another, you know, if you start with Grindr, you got problems already, if you if you're starting the conversation with Grindr, it's too late. And it's going to be a lot of cleanup work to do. And probably the best thing is to hire a paid professional like a therapist who can help you navigate through that process as a family.



42:58

Yes.



43:01

What you said?



43:04

That is 100%. Correct. And and this is exactly why I wanted to bring this up, because you're absolutely right. If that is when you are figuring things out, and your kid is on Grindr would help you. I mean, there's, there's nothing you can do. Alone, you need help, you need professional help, to help to figure that out,



43:28

don't have to be put in place, regardless of sexual orientation for their own protection. I mean, you're charged with their protection, first and foremost. So some places you have to find the art of where you stand firm, where you relent, where you do research, there's an art to that based on your belief system, as a parent and as a family, your culture, and you have to find your own way. But don't hesitate, please, to reach for subject matter experts as needed. You don't have to do this alone. In fact, you probably can't.



44:01

No, no, and thank you for saying that. And reiterating that, because I do say that a lot. And I also just, I think one of the things, you know, at least that we saw, and one of the reasons this happened, because, you know, to your point of having boundaries and rules, we had a lot of rules and a lot of boundaries. And maybe on the other end, right, where, you know, Connor felt like he needed to be a certain person a certain way. Right? There was this expectation and, and you know, the only thing



44:39

I want to time in there is I want to make sure you give yourself enough empathy that he would have done a certain amount of that regardless of the level of constraints you imposed upon him. Maybe some of that was fault. Maybe some of that was tone deaf. I wasn't there, I don't know. But I hope you'd give yourself empathy as a family that some of that's just individuation, regardless of his sexual orientation, regardless of anything. He experienced.



45:02

Yes, I think you're absolutely. I mean, I know that you're right. And you know, after the span of time I do you know, there was there was a decent amount of time that I was like, Oh my gosh, what are we done?



45:15

I'm horrible.



45:17

Oh, yeah, sure. I mean, yes. And but now I guess I just say that out loud to everyone. So

that you're not thinking in your head? Oh, well, my kids a rule follower and gay are, beware,



45:36

because there's all sorts of things your kids doing that you know nothing about, regardless of whatever, regardless of how wonderful you think that relationship might be. They are complex, individual humans, even if they're in the body of a 13 year old.



45:52

Yep. And they will always be five steps ahead of us with technology no matter how hard we try. Yeah, exactly. You know, and so I bring this up, and I want to do to really expand on it more, so everyone is aware. And, and it's just, you know, information to keep in your pocket and keep you know, it's just one of those things that you're like, oh, okay, I need to,



46:22

it's tough, because there are predators out there. There really are. And it's tough to account for the full range of, of human behavior, and I'm sure it can feel overwhelming, you're not going to be able to protect them from everything. That's why it's so important to empower them, to continually educate yourself and share that knowledge and wisdom and insight as a family with one another. Mm hmm.



46:50

You're absolutely right. Who? Absolutely right? Oh, my goodness, I want to shift a little bit, again, to talking about your book because it is beautiful. And I will, I will put a link in in my show notes as well. But it is called a gay Man's Guide to Life and everyone. It is so beautifully written and just honest. And you really share. I mean, all of your experience and all of your humaneness and and i think that's, you know, what makes it so easy to connect with everyone. I mean, again, I'm a straight woman, and I connected with a ton of it in there. And I know you write it right at the beginning, you're like, Hey, this is you know, I'm a gay man writing for gay men. I'm telling you that. There's stuff for everyone in there. It's awesome.



47:51

I'm so glad you said that I did a subtle thing. When I was naming the book, I did not call it A Guide to Life for gay men. I called it a game Man's Guide to Life. So it's written through the lens of my experience, and the unapologetic use of our culture, which is separate and distinct from straight culture. So I could speak directly in shorthand to other members of my community. But certainly the concepts in there are kitchen table wisdom that anybody from any walk of life could utilize.



48:24

Part of that is, maybe what I connected with, is that it was really helpful. You talked about, you know, reading basic, gay history, part of it was just helpful for me to understand and understand what it's like to be, you know, obviously, I could never fully understand but, you know, it just gave me so, so much more more understanding of what it's like to be a gay man. And things that are very specific to being a gay man as opposed to being you know, a lesbian woman or bisexual, right? I mean, all very different experiences. With love, if you could share what inspired you to write it now.



49:12

I, my life fell apart over 20 years ago, just over 20 years ago, and part of my journey was the 12 steps. And that's where I found my voice. Sitting in those rooms. taking down my masks for the very first time in my life was a thrilling experience. And I knew I would be forever changed. As part of that process, you tell your story. That's, that's just part of the process for any 12 step program, regardless of whether it's drugs, alcohol, sex, addiction, whatever. I had people along the way telling me Hey, you got to write this stuff down. It's so amazing. I'll help so many people I just did not feel right. And so I procrastinated for decades. Because I did not want to monetize my memoir, in a way that felt like I was prostituting my pain. So, I was working with a life coach, a couple of years ago, who helped me flip the script and realize that if I put the reader in the center made the reader the hero, then I could bypass that kind of ick factor I was having around, just exposing all my wounds for the sake of getting raw and real. And as soon as I did that, as soon as I made it about the reader, and just use my experience as context, then the whole project opened up for me, and the process went very fast.



50:54

That is awesome. And was it helpful?



50:57

Oh, yeah, definitely. Um, I've been telling my story for years. So, you know, everybody wants to know, because it's all out there in black and white. So everybody wants to know, is that like, overexposing anything, and I'm actually, it doesn't feel that way. It feels that feels a little more surreal. Like when I meet people that are that I don't know, and they know this or that about me. And they reflect that back to me. I'm like, Oh, well, yeah, I guess I put that in the book. Oops. It's just a bit, you know, I've been doing it so long, that does not feel overexposing. The main thing is, it's just so thrilling to get letters literally from all over the world of people who had been suffering in silence coming out of the closet, in 2020. And now 2021, in their 70s, their 80s. From all the countries who have all sorts of different experiences, it is so humbling and moving, that has been the greatest gift.



52:00

I love that I love that so much. And see, that's I'm glad that you found a way to flip that. So you were able to share that, because that's so powerful. Telling your story. So others feel like, Oh, I can do this. Right? Like it just you just gave millions of people permission to be their authentic self,



52:27

I just wanted to be the really mean big brother, maybe the family that they never had, and to give them a kick in the rear to get out there, get in the game, start taking up space for God's sakes, to stop slinking in the shadows to be who they truly are, and let their light shine bright. Maybe for the very first time, I wanted to be that for them I never had and I wanted it to be that for them. And so I was not really concerned about the cost. And I believe that it's really been negligible. It's really been just a joy.



53:06

Well, I think when you do things from that place of doing good, that that's what you're putting out there. Right, that's what you're gonna get back. So, I'm so happy. I'm just, I'm thrilled to hear that's how it hit, and how it's hitting. And I was just kind of curious, you know, kind of what made you finally decide to do it, but it'll tell you there were a couple of quotes that I really loved. I mean, there were a ton of them, but we don't have that much time. I'm just gonna read a couple of them. I printed out a bunch. And because I think these will specifically resonate with, you know, the younger in a generation and parents of, you know, the adolescents, teenagers, young adult. So the first one was, I only ever longed

to be loved, because to be loved was to belong, and to belong was to be real. But our society is brutal. And our culture is primitive. So I spent my time living the lives of others. And that one kind of move it didn't in the book moved to it. But this is the other one that I just these two really tied together for me. I was just too tender hearted for this world. And try as I might I simply could not pass in a monistic society, my femininity betrayed me. It wasn't just that I was homosexual. At that time. There were no words for what I was a beautiful blend of masculine and feminine traits that confounded most people I encountered. And that confusion often led to conflict rejection, harassment, Even violence. It was not long before I succumb to despair and depression, I retreated into an entitlement rage that exacerbated my character defects and led me to dark places. And you go on to talk about really powerful things. But I that that really resonated with me because I think that is still true today. And I'm just wondering, so many things. I mean, I think that will really, really resonate with everyone listening. And now as you're sitting, where you're sitting and everything you've you've gone through what advice would you give to your 15 year old self, your 20 year old self, your 25 year old self?



55:54

So one thing I want to say? And I'm going to answer your question, one thing I want to say first is that I've had one of the unusual experiences I've had with this book, is it getting shared with people that I never thought would read it. And so if you're a parent listening to this podcast, I encourage you to read the book prior to giving it to a child, because it is intended to be written. I mean, I wrote it intended to be read by adults. And so there are many kids out there that you know, are pretty sophisticated. And I leave that to parents to make that decision. But please read it first. Because it's not a children's book. It's not a how to come out and be happy book. It's pretty raw, pretty real.



56:39

I'm glad you said that. Yes, absolutely. I second that.



56:43

Yeah. So I just want to give that disclaimer out there. But and then you can excerpt it yourself and share parts with your kid or share the whole book. You know, that's, that's up to you. But just, you know, do your due diligence. Okay, so what I would tell myself when I was 15 2025, is that, especially on the younger side of that, is that I don't have to try so hard. That you know, you don't have to, you don't have to win Everybody over, You can just be who you are. And that is innately beautiful. You can afford to play you can you

have the luxury of laughter, even though you may not realize it, even though everything might feel like a battle. Because you're carrying a weight and fighting the world, you can sit down your sword and take off your armor, and grant yourself the space to be a kid, even if you're exploring that energy as an adult or young adult. And that's really what I missed out on is that playful, youthful sense of spontaneity and indiscretion and carefree because I was busy fighting the world, and fighting for survival because for me, it wasn't just the gay stuff. By the way, that's the other thing your listeners should know is that it was just kind of the tip of the iceberg. When I was growing up, there was all sorts of different flavors of abuse and trauma. So maybe I'm a little bit unique in that, but I was doing a lot of fighting. And so I missed out on the laughter and that's what I'm trying to go to pick up now is it's okay to be silly. It's not it's not a character defect, it's not a flaw, it's actually the highest play is actually the highest form of learning in art is at the core of our humanity. So to me, engaging in those expressions of self expressions I wish I would have and what I would tell myself is you have the space to go and practice that to learn that and I wish I would have known that then.



58:51

That is really really important. really valuable lessons and I thank you I was really curious what you would say,



59:00

cuz you know how tough I can be you've read the book. And so yeah,



59:11

it's tough, I can't be over exuberance of energy and it's like I really, I really enjoy embodying different spaces occupying different spheres now.



59:22

Yes, well that definitely comes through very much so you're the ability or the the comfort in your skin is very clear and beautiful. So I am so glad you have shared that and I think that um you know, hitting on the play and the the art is really quite amazing. I have to I mean I have to say because I think I've just found and I you know I'd love to hear from all of the listeners to see if they have found this to but specifically in this past year with you know Been everything with COVID and lockdown and remote schooling and all of this. All

of my kids and they're all very, very different and obviously different ages to, in their darkest moments during this time that has been their go to is some form of art, whether it has been writing music, painting a wall, doing some kind of art, artful makeup,



1:00:28

you know, all different forms of art. But art is at the core of our being mean anthropologists know they found humans when they find art.



1:00:40

That is



1:00:41

amazing. I didn't know that. See, I loved I always learned something.



1:00:48

But it is I think it is also quite, there's something about it that is very grounding and centering. I love that you shared that. And that's your teaching point. That is fantastic. That is what I have for you today. Is there anything else that you'd like to share or offer up?



1:01:13

Yeah.



1:01:15

I believe that we're all in this together. And that if each of us took a little bit less, we would all have so much more, and that there is no greater wisdom than kindness.



1:01:32

Wow. I hope you all enjoyed



1:01:36

this amazing interview today. And just really learned a lot from Brett and our exchange. Like I said his book will be linked in the show notes, please do take some time to read it. It is well worth your time. It is beautifully written it is engaging and you will learn so much. I also want to remind you that my upcoming course learning to just breathe will be opening on February the seventh for registration. So keep an eye out for emails on social media and the like. Get on the waitlist and sign up it is going to be filled with just a ton of really helpful information. Thank you for listening today. And until next time, remember that you are not alone.



1:02:40

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.