

# 004\_Episode 4 FINAL

Sun, 5/2 11:59PM 32:06

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

feeling, stage, aware, child, connor, process, teen, parent, acknowledging, lgbtq, important, grateful, embrace, feelings, seek, fear, avoidance, big, guilt, guidance



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Welcome to Just breed, the podcast focused



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on



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transforming the LGBTQ plus



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conversation and supporting you on your journey with your LGBTQ. You are not



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welcome to just breathe parenting your LGBTQ teen. My name is Heather Hester and I'm excited to be with you to transform this conversation around loving and raising an LGBTQ child. Wherever you are on this journey, right now, in this moment in time, you are not alone. So today, I know it's this episode is coming out a couple of days before Thanksgiving. And I just wanted to touch on gratitude. And as this is my fourth episode, I am beyond grateful for all of you who are out there listening, everyone who has given me feedback and love and just incredible vibes and support. And I am so thankful I'm so

thankful for all of you. And I'm so particularly thankful for my family, my my little family of six, my husband who has been beyond supportive and encouraging and helped me so much with with what to talk about and how to put things out there. And I'm just I'm so grateful for his love and his friendship. And for my Isabel and my Gracie and my Rowan who just give me such incredible energy and such incredible love. And I am so grateful for each one of them every single day. And for Connor, who was the star of the show, my darling Connor, who will be coming home for a little break for Thanksgiving. And I. Gratitude is not even a you know a big enough word. I think for all of us that we're feeling so excited for him to be home. I think his dog might dislocate a hip, she's going to be so excited that he's home. And we just so grateful for him grateful for how well he's doing grateful that he is figuring out his, his who he is, and is taking his process in his own strides. So I just wanted to share that with you quickly before we before I get started on our topic for today that I thank you for listening. And I am grateful for all of you. So today we are going to start talking about the coming out process for you for parents, and family members and friends and anyone else really close to your teen or your child who was in their process. And the reason this is really important is because it is a process. So whether you were surprised by your teens coming out, or you've known for years before they officially told you there is still a process there, there are still things that you go through and that people around you are going through. And I always feel like it is easier to move forward when we are aware of what is going on. So as we focus on on our teen who was coming out our other children, our spouse or other family members, we forget to take the time for ourselves and to process everything that is coming at us. So it is important for us to take this time to be aware of these different steps and and be patient and gentle with your step self as you go through these steps because you may go back and forth you may go through them multiple times. Be patient with yourself and ask your team to be patient with you too because sometimes they forget that we're just a few years older it it takes us a little bit more time. Moving on into the stages. The first stage is



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shock.



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Now this one applies. To you, if you had absolutely no idea like us, if you have known for years that your child was gay, lesbian, bisexual transgender, then probably not such a big surprise when they came out to you. But if you did not have any idea, your first stage, your first feeling is going to be shock. This, you know, potentially should only last a few days, it's a natural reaction. Allow yourself the time, don't beat yourself up for it. Just allow yourself

to go through the process. Be aware that in this stage that you may ask questions or make statements that you wouldn't normally ask or make such as? Are you sure? Yep, we did that. And we asked that question. And it's one that we both look back on and shake our heads in disbelief and have apologized a million times to counter for but you know, remember that coming out to you is something they likely have thought about for weeks, months, maybe even years, they are sure. After stage one, roll into denial. Now, again, not everyone experiences this stage, but be aware of the following reactions and these will kind of give you a clue. And you may not feel these, but you be aware of other people around you and what their experience might be as well. For instance, hostility. For example, feeling angry, telling your child no child of mine will be queer, or using other hurtful language. Be aware of this. And be again, be aware of others around you using this type of language. Another example is avoidance, not acknowledging that your child has come out to you, or someone around you not acknowledging it, or changing the subject, anything to avoid the topic. Be aware of that. indifference, not caring, for example, and this is a little different than avoidance, because you're actually addressing it or someone is addressing, they're saying something to the effect of, if you choose that, quote, unquote, lifestyle, I don't want to hear about it. So they're acknowledging it. They're just stating that they're indifferent or letting your child know that they don't want to hear about it or you don't want to hear about it. The fourth potential reaction is rejection, or thinking it's just a phase. And that's, that's probably the most obvious of the denials, just rejection of the idea. Saying that they're going to work their way through this. This is teenage rebellion. This is just something they're going through right now. So just for to be aware of hostility, avoidance, indifference and rejection. If you notice that this stage seems to linger, once you are aware, either that you're feeling this way or someone close to your child is feeling this way. seek guidance on how to handle it. Because it is really important that this stage is worked through. Before you can move on. I will have resources listed in the show notes for you to help you either find guidance or some some ways that you can work



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through this. So



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take a look at those if you're in need. Stage Three is guilt. And this is something that I think most of us go through. Most parents go through most loved ones go through. You may be feeling like you've done something wrong, or view they're coming out as a problem as an



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what causes this.



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You may spend endless hours asking yourself what you did. Or if you were a bad parent, that you made your child quote unquote, different and seeking an answer to any of these here you will almost always land on yourself as the one to blame. If you are a single parent, you may feel like you failed your child not being able to be most both mother and father. And here's a big one that comes along with guilt many many times which is frustrating. Shame. Shame may be wrapped up with the guilt Not allowing you to share these feelings with anyone, which makes this stage particularly difficult. So first, I want you to understand that this is a normal part of the process. Be gentle with yourself, maybe even take some time to journal, what you're feeling, journal what you're thinking, just write it all out. Second, stop looking for something you've done wrong for blaming yourself. There are many, many factors at play. But most Simply put, this is how your child was created. If you find yourself stuck in the shame spiral, seek guidance, really important, which I know is particularly hard because shame, like I said before, many times does not allow us to want to talk to anybody. But if you are aware that this is where you are, or perhaps this is where a loved one is, seek guidance. And again, I will have resources listed for you in the show notes to help you through this one as well. stage four is where it really starts to get kind of kind of the upswing of these stages of the process. And this is where you start to express your feelings, everyone starts to express their feelings. Acknowledging which is wonderful. Now, it's important to note that can only reach stage four, if stage two and stage three have really been acknowledged, and you are working through them, and you are aware of them. And I want you to be ready. Because once you get here, the full gamut of emotions are going to come things that you just you never knew you had inside of you that it's gonna start coming out. So it may shock you. But my my theory is always better out than n, because holding on to it will only cause it to fester. And that is



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just bad.



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Getting it out. Talking it through letting yourself feel these emotions, feel how you're feeling. This is where healing begins. It's also where communication will open up. Deeper

communication, more transparent. Communication, real communication, this is where really beautiful things start to happen. And yes, it's messy, and it may feel uncomfortable, and not your usual way. But remember, remind yourself this is just, this is real. This is where the good stuff happens. Be aware of where your child is in their process to where they are with professional guidance, where they are, as far as how vulnerable they may be feeling, what their vulnerabilities are. If you're feeling especially emotional, or if you're worried about what you might say, you feel like all of this, these thoughts, and everything's coming to the surface and you're just not sure it might be best for you to just get it all out to a professional or to a clergy member, or to a friend or family member who understands what's going on for me. In the almost three years since Connor came out to us, I believe I have felt every possible feeling truly, oh my goodness. at this particular point, when I was at this particular point that we were talking about, I remember feeling incredibly overwhelmed. Doing all I could do to just keep my head above water and could barely breathe. Literally all the time. I felt so fragile and was working so hard to continue to be what my kids needed what Connor needed. What is about grace and Rowan and what Steve needed, what my work needed. I felt like I could just shatter at any moment. Connor was sharing a lot. I was reading and researching as much as I possibly could. And I was feeling so alone. I didn't know who I could really talk to I was scared about what this meant for Connors future, what is his future look like? What will people think? Yes, I did think that, yes, you may be thinking that and that's okay. This is part of the process, you're human, and allowing yourself to be human, and recognizing all of the feelings, the good, the bad, and the ugly and getting them out and exploring them and working through them. So you not worrying about what other people will think. Do I hate saying that out loud? Yes, I do. But I did. I did worry, Steve worried. We were scared. And we were, we were mostly scared because we didn't want people to judge Connor. And and I'm talking all people, our closest friends we were worried about. So just know that there isn't a feeling that is bad to have, as long as you address it, and work through it. And just so you know, it did take us weeks and months in most cases before we shared outside of the three of us. And a lot of that, too, was based on Connor, because we were very aware of allowing it to be his process, his timing, this was his story to shut share with others. And, you know, waited for kind of his green light to say, Okay, I'm, I'm, it's okay for you to tell so and so. And I'm going to tell these friends. So I know this is a little bit of an aside here, but I just thought that was important to share with you. I think it's also really important to note that my therapist was incredibly



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helpful with



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helping me work through this. And the therapists that Steve and I saw and still see together also incredibly helpful in helping us work through this process as a couple and as parents, I like there's I cannot say enough about seeking professional support seeking guidance will help you with this process. Moving on to stage five, we have making decisions. So after you fully deal with the emotional outbursts, the trauma, the freaking out, or otherwise, expressing anger hurt, and anything else you set frame, you will then have the mental clarity to decide how you would like to proceed. And you have many choices, but they kind of all boil down to three different areas. So the first area or the first choice is to be a supportive parent, the air has been cleared, you are on a level of mutual trust and honesty, your relationship has been repaired or it is in the process of being prepared. And it is potentially better than it was before. You can now focus on your teen and your other children again, which is a really wonderful thing for us when we got to this point. So so wonderful, because the the energy level, the feeling like we're just constantly constantly kind of in this this fear cycle. And this, you know, like I said before, just so overwhelmed, all of that just calm down. And we were really able to then focus on you know, just loving Connor being aware. And it allowed us to really see what he had been going through and detail and ask better questions going forward. Being able to listen to him, to hear him to really see him and his struggle, and really begin to see the small, the really small nuances where we could shift and then shift again. And and that helped us as well with our other three kids and helping them through this process and helping them understand what What Connor had been going through what he is was currently you know was going through at the time is currently going through, being able to just get all of that other stuff out and dealt with. And then we could be much more clear and calm moving forward. Choice two, this is as much as you can handle right now, just getting everything out. But you're really not sure if you can go forward from here, you may still feel fragile, you may be unable to process anything further at this point. So you've made it clear to your teen, that you do not want to talk about it anymore. Again, this could be another close family member that this is where they are. So I want you just to be aware, and and to know that if you are here, if someone else in your family is here, it's okay. Remember that everyone has their own process. And that is okay. My advice if this is where you are, or if this is where a family member or a loved one is, talk with a professional or a trusted friend, to try to continue working through whatever may be blocking you from being able to move forward. Again, I will have resources linked for you to the show in the show notes and on my website to help you through if this is where you are. Or if this is somebody you know where somebody else is, as well. And then there's choice three. And this one is really just a continuation of stage four.



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But I think it's worth noting, just in case, and this is where it's the kind of back and forth you could be possibly into to stage five, but you're still in a state of constant fighting. And and if you are here, if you are able to take some time to consider why you're here. Is it fear? And if so, of what, what is causing you the fear, what are you afraid of? really tried to? And I know this is uncomfortable? I know this is hard, but it's really important to do in order for you to move forward. Is it a religious belief? Is it a political stance? Again, I know this is hard to do. But try to give yourself some time and some space in order to really analyze



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this,



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try attending a parent's meeting, or having coffee with another parent, who you are on the same page with who understands what you're going through. That might be helpful. locking horns with your team is going to get you nowhere fast. The goal here is to stop the fighting and figure out a way to move forward and to seek resources to help you work through this stage. Because truly, unless you get through this, you will not be able to get fully shifted through fully processed you you'll be stuck. Take some time. Be gentle with yourself, be patient with yourself. There's no use beating yourself up for this because again, everyone has their own process. There's not a timeframe, there's not a competition to get through this as fast as you can. Because I promise you taking the time that you need to get through it is so so worth it because what you will find is stage six, which is true acceptance. And this stage maybe, I think is the biggest shift of all. And it is certainly one of the reasons I'm doing this podcast and my writing the transformation from loving your teen without accepting their life, to loving your teen and celebrating the beauty of their uniqueness and knowing to the depth of your soul. They were created to be just as they are in this stage. You may also experience the following working through Your own guilt, reflecting on and creating a new stance on gay jokes, beginning to understand and be aware of problems you unknowingly created for your team, advocating for your child, and the greater LGBTQ community, embracing educating others. This is a stage of huge growth opportunities for you. Just allow yourself to be open. Getting to this stage takes conscious effort and work, but it is beyond worth it, I promise. I look at Connor, and I want to burst with love and pride, as I truly see his courage, his perseverance, his unique personality. And, yes, there are still struggles, that is part of life, but he keeps getting up

when he's been knocked down, or when he's knocked himself down. And he continues to figure out who he is and where he fits. And we love him, support him and encourage him. And even though he is away at college, remind him that he is not alone. This is how this podcast and my writing came to be. I felt so compelled, like the universe was kind of nudging me, even through all of the discomfort, my fear of speaking of being judged, the desire to do my part and transforming this very important conversation was stronger. So my tips and mental shift for you this week, the first is the same as always, because I think it's so important to just give you a gentle reminder to just breathe. And I think, hopefully by now you know what I mean by that. But just take a moment. And if this is the only time you do it, when you're listening to this podcast, so be it. But my hope for you is that you will take this on and do it at least once or twice a day where you just stop yourself. And take that big, deep belly breath and and hold it for three seconds. And let it all



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out.



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And just allow yourself to be centered and calmed. And take this mantra to embrace the beauty and the messiness. take that with you write it down, put it someplace where you can see it. So when you're in the middle of feeling all of these many, many feelings, you are reminded just to embrace this present moment because it is all part of this process. As difficult and heartbreaking and uncomfortable as it is. Remember, it's also full of beauty. And it's full of things that you just never may have realized are out there. So take a moment. And just repeat that to yourself. Embrace the beauty and the messiness. allow these steps to be a guide. Use the resources. And remember, don't rush. This isn't a competition, and there is no deadline. And this is where I will leave you for today. Thanks so much for joining me.



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Again,



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please check out the show notes on my website. For the links I mentioned today. They will also be in the show notes. And take a moment to subscribe to just breathe on whatever

directory you're listening to this on. And if you would like to have further conversation, come join us on the private Facebook page. There will be a link for that as well and forward this to anyone who needs to know



29:38

that they are not alone.



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Until next