

006 Episode 6

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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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Welcome to Just breed, the podcast



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focused on transforming



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the LGBTQ plus



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conversation and supporting you on your journey with your LGBTQ loved one, you are not alone. Welcome to Just breathe parenting your LGBTQ teen. My name is Heather Hester and I'm excited to be with you to transform the conversation around loving and raising an LGBTQ child. Wherever you are on this journey, right now,



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in this moment in time, you are not alone. So happy 2020 I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season. And just lots of fun and wonderful memories and moments with family and friends. safe and happy travels. Just lots of joy. And rest. I know a lot of scattered time

to rest and travel, which was wonderful. So happy 2020 Happy new decade. And we I wanted to share a few fun things that that we did, and some new things that we tried. During this this time with all of my kids home for break and from college and just being together, we actually took a trip to Asheville, North Carolina for a few days. And it was a really meaningful trip for a lot of reasons. First of all, it was a kind of a full circle trip for Connor because that is where he spent about six months and a therapeutic boarding school year and a half ago. And it was a really, really lovely time to go back and meet up with a mentor of his from there who was just a wonderful person for Connor a wonderful influence and friend, and just really good time for the family to be there together. So we could create some new memories. And I think there was some closure for Connor and some celebration for Connor to see how far he's come since he left there. So while we were there, it was New Year at the New Year. And we decided instead of just doing resolutions, we would set intentions for the new decade, because it is the beginning of a new decade. And we talked about things that we wanted to leave behind, and things that we look forward to in this, this new decade that we have and, and some goals and some things that we like to see Come come to be and to manifest in



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this new decade.



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And that was a really, really fun thing for us to do and to really hear what each one of us had to say and to share and being that you know, my kids are 12 14 16 and 19 there's a lot of different perspectives and different ages. And that is a you know, developmentally it's a huge difference. So that was really fun for Steven I to to do that with them. And it got me to thinking what my intentions are for 2020 and beyond. Personally and then as well for this podcast for just breathe in for you for each of my listeners out there. And what I came up with for just breathe for this beautiful podcast, but I am loving to create, in general the big picture. I'd like to continue to reach more people who are on this journey. This journey that I'm on my family is on that I know so many of you are on and that is really my greatest goal greatest intention and to share the message of love and healing and comfort and incredible joy. So that is my my big picture. intention and for each of you for each of my listeners out there. My intention for you and Steven I actually really talked about this when we were driving back from Asheville. What it is Just a really powerful intention would be, and this is something that I've been really working on as well as setting boundaries, you are on this beautiful journey. And it's one that potentially requires will require a lot of internal work. Focus on being present, allowing yourself to ask tough

questions to be asked tough questions by others, to have hard conversations, to gain the ability or work on your ability to sit with the uncomfortable emotions just being uncomfortable that comes along with that. And, and I, I, that is my hope for you. I want you to be able to set boundaries with people and tasks that are energy suckers. And finally, to set boundaries with those who do not support you. So those are my intentions for you. And for this wonderful podcast for 2020. And now we're going to go into the topic of today, which is talking about the importance of support, which is really kind of the end, we took a little break from your process



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and talked



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about, you know, handling struggles and tough situations during the holiday season. But I want to kind of circle back to that and talk about the importance of support during this coming out process for you during this journey, for you, for your child for your family. Why is this important? Well, there's two main reasons that I see. First, as we focus on our teen, our child who was going through their process, as we focus on our other children, our spouse, our partner, our other family members, our jobs, et cetera, et cetera, we forget to take time for ourselves, and to really process everything that's coming at us. So support is really having a good support system is really important for that reason. And the second reason is, in seeking support, in whatever form allows us will allow you to show up as the best version of ourselves, and to really be your authentic, true self to be present. So, thankfully, there are many, many types of support out there. Some that are really obvious, and some that we may take for granted. The end goal is that you do not feel alone, that you feel supported, and that you're receiving the guidance that you seek, and the guidance that you need. So the first type of support that I'm going to talk about today is therapy. Because that's that's a big one. And I've just kind of divided this into two sections, individual therapy, and then family or couples therapy. And, as I've mentioned, I think in every episode here in there, I am a huge believer in therapy, and I would not be where I am today, my family would not be where where we all are today. If it weren't for the professional support that we have received from so many different professionals, therapists in this this area, everyone should see a therapist at some point in their life, it just helps you to be a better person. And why is this? Why does Why does it help? Well, the basic reason the most simple reason is that it is an objective person, outside of your family and friends whom you can say anything and I mean anything and be your raw, vulnerable, messy self without judgment and receive feedback and advice that is holistic, researched.

And it's someone who has your personal well being as their priority. So it is just this wonderful, you know, one on one place where you can just let it all out and have someone who is so knowledgeable in mental health. So I couldn't remember as I was going through this, creating this episode, whether whether or not I had told my story yet of how I had met my therapist, but I, very good friend of mine, invited me to a self care workshop



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about



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four and a half, almost five years ago. And at the time, self care, I had no idea I was intrigued by the idea, I had no idea really what it was. And I thought, Okay, well, this will be fun, let's let's do this



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self care sounds like something that I could probably use. And my now therapist happened to be leading this workshop. And I was so intrigued, I still remember sitting there in her family room, and just being blown away by the things that she was sharing. And I contacted her afterwards. And because I wanted to learn more, and we ended up setting up our first session and, and the rest is history. So four and a half years later, she is a huge part of my life, I get kind of choked up thinking about her, because she has really helped me see and helped me learn so much and has supported me and my family. through everything that we've been through. I remember a very funny story about a friend, the same friend who took me to the self care workshop, had said to me very, very early on that for her, seeing a therapist makes her a better friend, a better wife, a better mother, a better employee, etc, etc. Because she gets all the stuff out that they don't need to hear her ruminate on or process. And I thought, Oh my gosh, that's so smart. Because, you know, as much as our friends and family members are, you know, I will talk about them a little bit later today in this in this episode, such an incredible support system and a very important support system. It is also good to have, you know, this very objective person who you can really get the messiness out with and begin to process through some of the really difficult issues with so I loved that. And I've always remembered her saying that and thought I would pass that on to you. If you don't already have a therapist, if this is just a brand new concept, or if it's something that you've really been thinking about for a while, and you're just not sure how you want to approach it. The way I like to liken it, I got very, very lucky with the way that I met my therapist and that we clicked right away and that

she that we work so well together. That is not typically the case, I liken it to dating a little bit. So be patient with the process and don't feel badly if you don't click with the first person you meet with, you will know when you've met the right therapist for you. So it is it's okay and and don't worry about hurting the therapists feelings if you don't click because they understand how this works. This This needs to be a person that you can be 100% vulnerable with and 100% honest with that is a huge, huge piece of this. When Connor came home from Asheville, from being way I had already pre screened therapists for him and still had a meet with five to make sure that one of them was one that he would click with. So it does take a little bit of time it takes some research but it is well well worth it. I will put links in the show notes for different ideas and ways that you can search for a therapist if you don't have any specific connections at your fingertips, so that should be helpful. The other type of professional support that I wanted to touch on is family or couples therapy and there are lots of variables at play here. But for for couples therapy is specifically when you are going through this when you're on this journey, the journey that we are all on. It is really, really important that you and your partner are able to communicate how well do you communicate? Do you need a place outside of home to vent about what's going on to process What's going on? Do you need extra guidance support



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somebody who can help give you extra resources or just resources in general, and information and help educate you, or at least point you in the right direction



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of



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becoming more educated and understanding all the different facets of what's going on. These are the types of things that a couples therapist can do. And again, it is a



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safe place



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for both of you to be able to express how you're feeling, talk about where you are, be really, really honest and vulnerable about the process that you're going through. And the same for a family therapist, if you're really noticing that your other children are struggling, you are all having difficulty communicating as a family unit, or there's a plethora of things that could be going on here, a family therapist will really come in handy. And in this type of situation and help really just guide you through what each of you as going through, when when we are in these super intense situations, we don't realize what other people around us are going through, and may know that there is something but we just don't have the capacity to, to help to listen. And so it is, this is where having a family therapist is really, really wonderful because it is a time for everyone to slow down and to really listen to each other and be present with one another. And and then again, you have this objective person who can give guidance, give support, really give what the family needs. And that that is their objective is to support the family as a unit. You know, it can also be a, you might just need a neutral place for everyone to be together to process and to talk about things. Family Therapy is wonderful for that Connor first came out, Steve and I have that mentioned before we're at a loss for really how to help him to support him. We had very little information, we had very little knowledge, we just knew that. Okay, we will This is our kid, we love him, we're going to help him in whatever way we can. But we don't know how to do this. And just happened again, you know, and I believe this, these things happen for a reason. And that people are placed in our lives for a reason. And our wonderful couples therapist, Family Therapist was just she was placed in our life. And I again cannot say enough good things about her because she has been absolutely invaluable. And not only supporting us and listening to us, but really helping to educate us in all things LGBTQ, the community, the coming out process, the, you know, the different stages that these kids are going through how they're feeling, what different possibilities are of of things that can happen, how to support them when these things happen. And we're so grateful every single day that we met her and that she is in our lives, and we still see her and meet with her and we are just so so very grateful. Depending on where you live, you know we again are, I'd feel very, very blessed and grateful that we do live north of Chicago and so that we do have a lot of resources near us where we are able to kind of tap into we have different Family Services agencies and you know, lots of choices for therapists etc. You know, we, that is something that I will put in, put in the links for you on how to kind of track these different things down. But I just have to for all of you who do live, who know me personally and who do live on the North Shore, haven Youth and

Family Services, is hands down, one of the most incredible agencies I've ever known. And



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I have,



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I've been so impressed by the way they've handled so many different things that we've gone through and supported us and been there for us, day and night, the place where I now sit on their board, I would not, I would do anything for them. So you know that you are in the area and you are needing this type of support, contact them, I will put their direct contact information in my links. But if you are not in the area, there are agencies like this all over the country. And I will also put some links into the notes as to how you can find these different agencies. So the next area of support that I want to talk about is your faith. And this is, you know, this is a really, really big one. And I know this is wide ranging. And people come at this from lots of different angles. I will take a really deep dive into all aspects of faith in another episode. But for the purposes of support, only, I felt it was really important to mention, no matter what faith looks like to you, whether it's a personal relationship with God, prayer, the universe, whatever your higher power is, lean on that for support, ask for guidance. Ask for peace. Ask for comfort. There are many, many ways to explore your faith and to grow spiritually. The most obvious, I guess, or most traditional way is through your church. If you go to church, if you are involved in your church, that is an incredible source of support. If you do not, or if that is not comfortable for you. There are other ways that you can still



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seek



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faith support spiritual support, because truly It is a very personal and internal thing, right. So other ways that you can seek that and receive that are through prayer. And through meditation, those are two of my very favorites because it is very quiet. It is a form of communication. It is settling your mind. It is really listening for guidance and being open and allowing that guidance. If you're needing a little help or a little bit. You want somebody to kind of help you through this and you're not sure if you know a traditional

church is for you. There are many thought leaders out there spiritual thought leaders out there and can really help you through this and give incredible guidance. A couple of my favorite are Gabrielle Bernstein, Deepak Chopra, Oprah's soul Sunday, she always has just incredible people on there. I will put links into the show notes on how you can look up these people look into these different avenues. But the main the overall goal here is to use your faith, use your spirituality as a support system know that it is a support system and it is available to you and therefore you the next area of support that I want to explore is your family. Family can be



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an incredible source of support can also be an incredible source of pain. And I understand that and I understand that, you know, like, like faith family can



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also be quite polarizing. Family is important. Here's what I found on our personal journey. those family members who support Connor and our family do so with love. And many cases true unconditional love. They ask questions. They're curious, they want to know how they can help. And if it is outside of their current belief system, they open their minds to the possibilities. And that is a really, really beautiful thing. You may also encounter family members who are not supportive, who may even say hurtful or ugly things. Remember, this is not about you, or your child, this is about them. You cannot change their views. But you can change the way you respond to them. Setting a healthy loving boundary is the best way to protect yourself, your child and your family. So remember that, in times, you're feeling vulnerable, and you're feeling hurt, this is not about you, it is about them. And you don't need to accept it, you will know who you can lean on for strength and support. So the last area that I want to touch on for support are your friends. And friends are just, they're just an incredible support system. You know, whatever you want to call them, your your close friends, your tribe, your people, they are in many ways, kind of your chosen family, right? They are the people who are there to listen, they're sounding boards, they they love you, they accept you, they love and accept your child and your family and their people who are in your life because you've chosen them to be in your life, I don't ever want to feel like I'm imposing or that I'm just dumping too much out there. And what I want you to keep in mind is that, to always remember how you feel when you have a friend who was going through a tough time, what do you want to do, you want to be there to support them, to love them, to listen to them to do anything you can do to help them. And that is the way that they feel about you. So remember that, as you're you're struggling with, you know, if you are struggling with whether or not to really just lean in there and lean on

them. Good friends want to be there for you. So really allow them to do that. I have a couple of tools for you for today based on our different areas of support. But before I give those to you, I just want to remind you as always to breathe, because as we're going through, looking for support, and



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really



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trying to figure out what we need, and it'll change from time, you know, from time to time, what type of support you need. Just breathe, allow yourself to get quiet, to be still. And to really ask yourself, what do I need right now in this moment, and breathe through that. The mantra for today is to allow vulnerability, and to be open to the possibilities be open to possibilities. So this is another one, I'd love to just repeat one more time for you and to really have you remember and to put into your toolkit, allow vulnerability and be open to the possibilities. Each of the above support tools are valuable and these they serve a specific function. Remember that you're not alone. That is what support is for, to remind you that you're not alone to lift you up when you are feeling alone. That is, you know, part of the purpose of this podcast is to support you and to remind you that you are not alone. But there all of these other tools that I've given you as well. Allow yourself to be vulnerable and allow yourself to be supported. It is in this vulnerability that healing and growth can occur So this is where I'm going to leave you for today. Thank you so much for joining me. I do have exciting news. Next episode Connor will be joining me so make sure that you listen in because it's going to be lots of fun. And remember to check out the show notes on my website for all of these links that I've mentioned. They will also be in the show notes, blog. So you'll have two ways of getting those and please subscribe to just breathe and share this with anyone who needs to know that they are not alone. Until next time,