

Pronoun episode with Grace

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pronouns, gender fluid, refer, neutral pronouns, grace, questions, feel, spectrum, people, comfortable, categories, understand, conversation, lgbtq, talk, moving, thought, little bit, share, binary



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



00:34

Welcome to Just breathe. I am so happy you are here. We have reached the end of Pride Month 2021. But as I mentioned in my newsletter last week, our efforts matter and make a difference 365 days a year. Pride Month gives us a time to celebrate, to do some intensive learning and to rejuvenate for the other 11 months of the year. I thought that discussing pronouns would be a great way to transition because understanding them, and using them respectfully is a seemingly small, but impactful way to make a difference every single day. My 15 year old daughter Grace is joining me today to lead this conversation. They have been so helpful to me as I continue to learn. The longer you've been alive, the more difficult it is to change your pattern of speech. And on a deeper level, the understanding or your understanding of ever shifting language, it is important to note the ever shifting aspect. Because this is where some pretty fiery debate occurs. The meaning and use of words has regularly changed since the inception of language. However, there are many who are quite uncomfortable with change and fight this reality with fervor. And oftentimes ugliness, social media and the wonderful, awful internet make the debate seem more intense. But the truth is, there have always been those who have embraced change.

And those who have thought it, we can just hear all of the arguing better now. So what grace and I would like to do today is share valuable information, tips and experience to help you all understand the importance of pronouns moving forward. So to get started, Grace, would you like to share your pronouns with us?



02:41

Of course, my pronouns are she, they and he?



02:48

And would you like to share why those are your pronouns?



02:52

Of course. So I started out with she her pronouns, because I was assigned female at birth. And from then I've recently just discovered that I'm comfortable with both all three. And none of them seemed out of place when someone would refer to me with all three of them. So I've just learned to accept that all three fit me.



03:26

That's really, really great. It must be a little bit of a journey to get to that. I know that last night when we were talking about this, you asked me to use it, to use he just to see how it felt. Because oftentimes, when things are written, or you're referred to in writing, it's a little bit harder to get a feel. Do you want to share a little bit about that and how you kind of it kind of occurred to you to just explore this to see, you know, and what that feeling is, for example, I'm just going to interject really quickly, you said to me, You ask referred to me as this is my mom, he is a writer. And for me that didn't feel right. But when I said this is my daughter, Grace, they're going to be a sophomore at nutria. he really enjoys theater and art. How did that feel?



04:28

It? It felt really awesome because to me, learning something new about yourself is super exciting. There's kind of this new world of opportunities that you get, because, obviously, you you want someone to refer to you as whatever you're most comfortable with. And when you start to question what you're most comfortable with and you learn the new

thing, means that you're comfortable with it suddenly just describe it. There's this feeling, I guess, that kind of just like bubbles up in your chest that maybe it's pride. But in general, it's just super exciting to feel and to know something new about yourself.



05:22

And kind of maybe validating. Yeah, for sure. So, I want to, we're gonna back up just a little bit here. So we can kind of start out with how to use pronouns, because I think that's maybe the biggest question that people have, especially those of us who are older, and have always used pronouns in a very traditional sense, and really never given pronouns that much thought as to their the meaning that they have for other people. So could you just share a little bit about that, before we move into some of the more the the deeper things surrounding this?



06:03

Yeah, of course. Um, so the use of pronouns is pretty much like you were saying, it's not, you don't really second guess it too much when it's straightforward, or a cisgendered person you're referring to. So when I would refer to you, you use she her pronouns. So when a sentence, you're just, when you switch to someone who uses a different pronoun, you're just taking another second to step back and replace what you had originally put, and put that they them in there, or he him in there, just to go with what they're comfortable with?



06:53

And how would you learn what somebody is comfortable with? What is the best way to find that out?



07:00

The best way is to simply just ask someone, when you meet someone new, you always introduce yourself with your name. So you would just instead of just saying, Hi, my name is Grace, you would introduce yourself, Hi, my name is Grace, I use a she they him pronouns. And then they know what you're comfortable with.



07:27

And that encourages them also to either share their own pronouns if they feel comfortable, right? Or, also how to talk to you right? How to refer to you, which I think is just a really, really easy, you know, it's one extra little step in a conversation or for emailing, adding your pronouns and your signature. Right, are, it's a super easy way to just let people not only let people know what your pronouns are, but help others feel comfortable, right? Yeah. So I kind of want to just since since I brought that up, we're going to talk about that a little bit more, even though I know that was going to be later in our conversation. Because it's one of the things that you said to me a while back, when we first started talking about pronouns is that you'd said that somebody had questioned you about why you use your pronouns, and your zoom. name tag, thank you. I don't know why I can't remember that in your zoom name tag. And you had said, which I thought was so lovely. was so that other people would feel comfortable using their pronouns, so they wouldn't be worried about being made fun of or bullied or discriminated against or just to add that comfort level, which I thought was such a great thing, especially, you know, the past year. Plus, we've been on a lot of zoom, you did school almost completely on zoom. So you are on there with a lot of kids your age, and it's a very, very lovely, just discreet, quiet way to say, hey, you're okay. Right. Like you for who you are. And I just thought that was really, really lovely. So can you share some other ways that people could share their pronouns? And also find out what other people's pronouns are?



09:45

Yeah, um, like we said earlier, just asking the pronouns when you meet someone new, and it is always harder if you've known someone for a long time, but you can always do it. Bring it up in conversation. And if you're not comfortable, maybe they have it. Where I've always put my pronouns is in any social media platform, you put it into your bio. And then anyone can access them very easily, easily. So those two ways, I think, the simplest ways to know someone's or make yours more clear,



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it's almost so simple. You don't really, it doesn't occur to everybody to do that. Right? Yeah, that's, it's this is not a difficult thing. It just takes a little extra thought. And a little extra time, especially at the beginning when you're learning, right. So what happens when you mess up?



10:44

When you mess up, you don't want to make it. So of course, I think everyone, or most

people's first reaction is to apologize endlessly. Which apologizing is, of course, super important. And you want to make sure you do apologize. But you don't want to make it seem so obvious that you just misgendered him, you just simply say, I'm so sorry. And then you can backtrack real quick, put their right pronoun in and continue on with the conversation, unless they have something else they want to talk about, or if they intervene in any way, but just try to make it more, I guess, normalized, because it is an easy thing to trip up on in the beginning. So you want to make it known that you're sorry, but also don't make them feel like all their attention. Like, there's some, like there's a spotlight on them.



11:48

Right? And I think that, you know, and remembering that it's remembering that we're all human, we're all gonna make mistakes. And so it's a little bit of having, you know, a little humility, and a little grace, it is not the end of the world. Okay, so moving on. Is it okay for someone to, for one to ask questions. Meaning, let's say I don't understand. So, again, last night, we were having a conversation. Last week, we were having a conversation about this, and you were sharing things with me about yourself and about some of your friends. Is it okay to ask questions? And if so, what types of questions? You know, what a really good questions to ask so that we can understand better that are good clarifying questions. Of course, it's



12:47

okay to ask questions. Questions are an amazing thing. Because if you don't understand something, you are you want to figure it out. And then be you ask him questions, already has another step towards them feeling validated. Because you are showing that you want to learn, you are showing that you are willing to accept them, you just need a little bit of help to get to that point.



13:17

Like more open ended questions like, why does that feel? What does that pronoun feel comfortable to you? Or what? made? You know, they feel more comfortable than she? Like those types of questions? Is that what you're kind of thinking?



13:36

Yeah, that works. And also just like, questioning, what does it mean? Like wondering,

because my dad, he will, when I first told them about she they pronouns, obviously, he was a little bit confused, which is so understandable, because it's new, it's a really new, and one of the questions he asked me just, is what does that mean? And I think when you ask something like, why do you use them? Whenever you're asking a question, and if you're not sure about it, you can always ask the question and then say, if you're okay with answering that, if not, that's completely fine. And I understand. I like that. Just making sure that they feel comfortable in the conversation and it's equal ended.



14:25

Sure. So they don't feel like they're under fire of questions or being scrutinized, but more that it's coming from a place of being curious and wanting to learn and wanting to understand. Yeah, and you know, and again, everyone giving yourself grace, to just know that you're going to mess this up, and you are going to ask questions, the questions are going to pop into your head and come out of your mouth before you can stop them and that does happen, but part of this whole exercise is practicing, being more aware and being more thoughtful with your speech. Yeah, let's move into a little bit of talking about the possibilities of pronouns, and all of the different ways they can be used. And what that might mean,



15:18

with anything in the LGBTQ i plus community is never ending, there's never going to be a limit on how many pronouns you can use, what pronouns you can use, what your sexuality is, anything like that is never ending. And sometimes you don't have a label for it. But there's so many different possibilities for what pronouns you can use. Like, I've currently figured out, I use three, but in a month, it could be anything else. And going with that, I use three, that doesn't mean I use all pronouns, because there's so many more, there's, so there's G, they, he, but there's also things called Neo pronouns, which is more just short for neutral pronouns. And there's things like z, Zim. And it's spelled two different ways. There's x e, and there's also z. And there's so many different things like that.



16:29

And what do those mean? Because I think that is something that a lot of people have questions about, like, what is that if somebody uses z, or the other one he shared with me last night was,



16:45

um, so for z E, there's two different combinations for instead of z. So z, Zim, it's z here. So it's spelled h i r, but you would not pronounce it like her? It's here.



17:02

Okay. And when would you use that? Or when would one and what? What instance or instances are those pronouns that one feels most comfortable with?



17:14

So it's really up to the person who's using them? instance? I don't use them currently, I can't explain it as well. But for my understanding, because I know a few people who use them, it's completely, so they're in the Neo pronoun category. And that is because it is just another complete set of more neutral pronouns. So they're not. So there's the gendered pronouns, which is she, her and he, him, and then they then Z's, him, and everything, that's all neutral. So all of those, you it's more when someone doesn't feel attached to any gender, or they feel in the middle or something like that. But depending on the person, they might not like they, or they might want more than just they, they might need other things, or it just feels right. I think that is, it might be a confusing way to explain something. But it is probably one of the most accurate things I can say about pronouns. For someone who uses three, it just feels right, there's something about it, where you just, it feels correct for you, and you can't really explain it so much further, because it's just how you feel.



18:46

I think that's actually a perfect way to describe it. Because there are many things in life that happen or that we come across, or that we, you we decide to do, because it just feels right. It just an everyone has had that experience at least once in their life, where they can say, Oh, I mean, everybody can connect with that feeling. And it may not have to do you know, it may not be related to their pronouns may be related to something totally different. But I think you described that perfectly. It just feels right. And it, you feel connected to it. Which I think is just a really, really lovely way to describe that. Thank you and that it really made me as you were talking about that, once again, recall this amazing article, which I've talked about many times on this show that this is my daughter who shared it with me I always say my daughter shared this article with me. Grace is the one who found this awesome article. And you the more that we learn, and the more that we

talk about this, the more that I'm like oh my gosh, this person was So just spot on with talking about how everything is on a spectrum. And of course, this article was written very specifically, in a, it was in a Christian newsletter or magazine, I believe. And it was a response to the whole thought of, you know, God made heaven and earth, land and sea, you know, moon and sun. And, you know, what do you do when there's dusk? and Dawn? Do you freak out? Because Oh, my gosh, it's an abomination? Because it's not in the Bible. No, of course not. You don't freak out. This is the same thing. And this, I go back to this all the time, because this is all on a spectrum. And it I think this is one of the most beautiful things that has been discovered and really talked about right now. When that people find something that they really connect to, that really speaks to them, like, your pronouns, like being something that's not on the binary, and being able to speak about that it just reinforces this, the truth of this, right? And, and this is, you know, one of the big things that's out there is all there's so many more people who were, you know, coming out, there's so many more people who we don't what, what hasn't always been like this, well, it hasn't always been like this, because people have been afraid to talk about it, not because they haven't been feeling this way. People have been feeling this way. And I've been connecting with this, always. So it is extraordinarily brave, for you to come on here. And talk about this with all of the people who are listening and sharing your experience, so that I can learn more, so they can learn more. And so we normalize this conversation. So thank you, thank you, thank you so much. I just, I just appreciate my daughter so much, everyone. And and Yes, she is my daughter, she just we had this discussion last night too, because you're probably all wondering this, I refer to her as my daughter. But she has three pronouns that she currently uses. So these are all things that we are learning and, and I want to just validate it and and learn how to do it better. And she's good at correcting me too. Just so you all know. Unless there's anything I know, I just chatted for a long time about that article, which I love so much. Is there anything that you want to kind of add to that before we move on?



22:52

Um, well, I guess bringing up that everything in life is on a spectrum, you sometimes might just think, Oh, well, pronouns are in a spectrum, which is true. Sexuality is on a spectrum. All of these are never ending spectrums. But life in general, anything you come across is on a spectrum. There's not just one thing or two different things, there's always going to be a middle ground and something between those middle grounds and so on. I think there's just you forget to think about it that way. Absolutely. Because no one calls life a spectrum. It's not something you run into every day, where it's like, oh, life's a spectrum, until you stop inconsiderate, where you realize how many things on a spectrum. And it's all just these never ending possibilities. And not everything has a label and not everything needs a label.



23:48

I think as humans, we like to put things into categories, and it's uncomfortable when we cannot. And so I think that has become, you know, for centuries and centuries a default, right? Just everything in a category, everything in a neat box. And that, again, is one of the really awesome things about this is that it's it's blowing that up. They're never ending categories. Never exactly, they're never ending categories. And and I thank you for, for sharing that because I think that's a really important perspective and and also just giving everyone kind of the permission to think outside of those categories. Right. And to really allow your mind to go to that place. I think that that's definitely can be scary for some people to allow their minds to consider that. And it's, this is giving permission. Right? That's okay. This is a good thing. Anytime you allow your mind to expand and just absorb is a wonderful thing. So I know one of this is one of the questions that we again, we talked about last night was the difference between being gender fluid and being non binary? And how pronouns fit into that? Or don't fit into that? Can you? Can you share a little bit about that? Because I think that can be that is confusing. For for many of us,



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yeah, of course. Um, so my understanding of it, because I was looking into it a little bit more when I started to question if I also used he him pronouns, along with she there, because gender fluid is you don't have a set of constant pronouns. You can wake up one day with she her pronouns, like you feel comfortable with she her, and you don't want to use them, or he him or anything like that, 20 minutes later, it could change an hour later, anything, any set of time, it doesn't matter, they just are constant, there's change, it's not a set of pronouns that they use every day, I use, she, they he pronouns every day, any minute of the day. And that's my constant set of pronouns, and gender fluid, there's can be constantly changing, they can, of course, use a set of pronouns for a day, or two days or whatever. But that doesn't mean they're always going to use those pronouns. So with gender fluid people, you want to make sure you're constantly checking in with them to know, or have them update you, when they change it. So that makes it a little bit harder. Like if someone introduces themselves at gender fluid, then you're gonna have to be a little bit more diligent in knowing how they want to be referred. Because it will be changing. And then that is, the difference between gender fluid and any pronouns is, you have to follow what they want, at that current moment, for gender fluid people, and any pronouns, you have to use a mix of any products. So it can be all the Neo pronouns we talked about, you can use all those you can, obviously I would suggest checking Yeah, of course, this is okay. Right? Before you go off and use these specific pronouns, but normally any pronouns would mean any point on you know, have she, they heezy, anything like that, they are okay with, they would like to use all of them. And you, when someone tells

you, they're gender fluid, or they use any pronouns, or they use multiple pronouns, you must use a combination of their pronouns, obviously, with a cisgendered person, or someone who uses just she, her, he, him, they, then you use just that one set. But when someone uses multiple or any or gender fluid, it does not mean you get to choose which one you want to use in a sentence, it means use a combination of them, like, you refer to me earlier, as they and he in a sentence. And that's correct. You use as many of them as you can, you just constantly are switching them up. So you're not constantly just being like, Oh, this is grace, she, she her, hers, that sort of thing. It doesn't mean a one day I'm going to refer to grace as her or the next I'm going to choose they you don't get to choose that you just have to think a little bit more in use a combination of them because when someone tells you that they use multiple or any that means they want multiple or any and that's what they're comfortable with. And that doesn't mean as each interval person you get to choose Okay, I want to use this select out of them just because they're comfortable with using she doesn't mean they constantly want to be referred to as sheet.



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And then what does where does being non binary fall into that



29:58

um non binary Binary would be any pronoun that isn't gendered. Okay. So non binary could be a mix of the neutral pronouns, or it could just be they them, or it could just be one of the other new pronouns. So they might say non binary, but you can always check, I would suggest always checking, just to make sure you know which specific set of neutral pronouns they would like to use.



30:27

Okay, that makes sense. So I think, here, especially, but just in general, one of our biggest tips, one of our biggest lessons is asking, and taking the time, this is going to take a little bit more time, too, especially if you are, you know, if you have a child who is gender fluid, if you have a friend or you're speaking with or a co worker, that you put the effort into just taking those few extra seconds to think before you speak to really be conscious and respectful of what this other person is asking you to do. Is there anything that we've talked about that we didn't cover yet, or any advice that you would like to give to all the parents listening all of the Allies out there, just so that we can be, we can be better so we can be more aware,



31:45

take the time to really understand and be respectful of any person you run into. And something I know we talked about before, this just came to my mind is that running into people, or if someone doesn't introduce their pronouns, or it's just like a barista at a coffee shop or a worker, and you want to refer to them, I'd suggest just using neutral pronouns. They might look feminine, they look masculine, whatever it is, I'd suggest just going to the making your default, they them, making it a neutral default, so that you not accidentally misgendering someone. And in my experience, even if someone's pronouns are gendered, they're not going to feel misgendered when you use them, because people use they more than you might think, to refer to someone. So it's just kind of another, like, it just feels natural to them. They might not use they them pronouns. But it's just a good way to make sure they feel accepted. And they don't feel really out of place. Because if they do use he him or neutral pronouns, and you call them she her, that can really hurt. And even if it isn't someone you know, it can feel so great for someone to refer to you the right way. And that goes with sir and ma'am. like trying to just make it more neutral in any way you can. Um, because for someone to go out like if they're transgender, it is amazing to be referred to as the right gender without even having to tell someone because that means they're passing that means there. They look how they feel on the inside.



34:02

Their outsides match their insides. Exactly. Yes. I think I was just going to reiterate the use of them. That is something that has been used in language for a long time. I can't give you a date on that. Exactly. But it is something that we all use more than we realize that we use. They them is used to refer to anybody and in any situation. So a little bit of this is giving yourself extra time to think through. But there's also a fine line between being thoughtful in your speech and overthinking it. Because the overthinking is what leads to the effusive apologies and the you know, going overboard.



34:53

So you don't want to go under board either, right? Like you got to find a fine line or a lot The fine line. Yeah. You just got to, like, kind of find what feels good because especially with misgendering, someone, you don't want to make it too obvious, but you also don't want to make it seem like you don't care. Right? Like if you just like, oh, and continue on, then it's like, oh, you don't really care.



35:20

Right? Don't be dismissive, but don't be hysterical. Yep. Find find the the line in between there. Yeah. Oh, my goodness. Well, I think that was amazing. And really helpful. And I, I learned more today, I hope all of you learned so much today. But I just want to thank you so much for doing this with me. I was very excited last week, y'all when grace and I are sitting and talking. And they were bringing up all of this, this Teddy's topics, and it was so great. And I just said, Hey, would you be interested in doing this episode with me? Because this is an episode I've been wanting to do for a while. And I thought, who better to talk about this than somebody who is walking the walk? Right. So walking the talk. So thank you so much for doing this with me, you're so proud of you. So I just want to wrap this up with some tips that I found an article when I was researching as as usual researching this topic and researching this episode, and I found a blog in a in a podcast episode actually, that I will link to this podcast as well. That was done by a PhD and linguistics. His name is Dr. Kirby Conrad, and he had four really, really great tips and they're gonna sound so simple, but because it's a lot of what we've talked about today, but I think they will all they will hit home and really help everyone out. So the first is, like grace, and I have just been saying a million times, slow down. Plan your speech. Meeting another's needs sometimes means talking carefully and thoughtfully, which will feel awkward at first, but just do it. Number two, if you're incorrect, Listen, do not talk over someone if they are correcting you. Be humble, and cultivate an attitude of awareness. Number three, Don't make excuses. Period. And number four, like we've also been saying a lot, if you mess up, correct yourself briefly, and don't make a big deal out of it. You are human, and it's going to happen. So one last thought before we wrap up for today. Know that the kindness of effort is not lost on whomever you are speaking to or speaking with. You can go with one or both of my favorite mantras here. Get comfortable with being uncomfortable, or embrace the messiness. Either way, just keep moving through it through not around not backwards is the only way to greater understanding, empathy and ally ship. Until next time.



38:45

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.