

Episode 45 Q&A

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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.



00:32

Welcome to Just breathe, I am really happy you are here today. Every few weeks or so Steve and I sit down and talk about the podcast and brainstorm ways that I can continue with a very personal touches that I love. ways to get to know more of you to really understand why you listen, and to learn what you really want from this podcast. So during our most recent chat, I was sharing some of the feedback from the surveys. And I want all of you to know that I read each of those very carefully and work to incorporate your suggestions. I love hearing from you. And I always return to staying connected with the pillars to embrace, to educate, to empower and to love and my mission, which is to make sure that no parent or ally feels alone. How can I do this better? How can I connect with more people? These are my daily questions. So the idea that came from this most recent chat is to have a quarterly q&a episode. I know this is not earth shattering. But I do think it is totally in line with staying connected with you all. So today, I'm starting with two of the more popular questions that I've received in varying forms. I'll remind you again at the end, but this is your invitation to send me your questions, email me, message me on Facebook, put it in the survey, whatever is easiest for you. And I will answer them in an upcoming show. So the first question pulls together questions that several of you have

asked that work really well together. It is what parenting skills will help us one, navigate challenges and to empower our children in the process. One of the ridiculous comments that fly out of my mouth in moments of stress or frustration as a parent is that was not in the manual. I know it's silly, but I believe we all have moments where we think, why didn't we know this? Or how are we not prepared? Or where is this information so that we can do better next time. Of course, there are a 1000s of parenting books out there to help guide us but I'm thinking after reading What to Expect When You're Expecting and what to expect the first year, most of us opted for parenting by gut feeling, or either similar to or the opposite of how our parents parented right? Learning specific parenting skills for all the possible scenarios is way too daunting of a task, especially when you have little people running around. So then we end up here, and a space with our adolescent teen or young adult needing a specific skill set that we had no idea was even a thing. If you've been beating yourself up as I did for a while, stop. Now. Remove the phrases, if only or I should have from your vocabulary and get ready to move forward. Here are the six parenting skills that I believe are the most valuable for navigating challenges that arise when parenting an LGBTQ i a child that will also help empower them. One, learn to be an active listener and train yourself not to be an active responder. So let's break this one down. Being an active listener means being present in the conversation, leaving your to do lists work and any other distractions at the proverbial door. Active listening needs eye contact, open body language like keeping your arms uncrossed not fidgeting



04:59

and verbal acknowledgment. On the flip side, training yourself not to be an active responder means checking your unfiltered responses. teams, whether they are LGBTQIA or not like to see things that elicit responses. And typically the response they're looking for is one of shock or dismay. The important note here is that they do that to distract from what is really going on, or having to talk about the deeper issues that may be bothering them. So when we train ourselves to just roll with what they say, and respond with validation, and open ended questions that continue the conversation, we cut through all of that teenage Bs, and let them know that they have a safe place to share. This is not to say that you can't ever have an emotional response. Just have it with your spouse, your partner, therapist, or a friend at a later time. When I share stories with you about the times that Connor has shared things with me, and I have been freaking out on the inside, but cool and connected on the outside only to share it with Steve or Maureen or a friend later. This is what I'm talking about. So how does this help empower your child? Well, in so many small ways, but mainly through validation. When you respond to your child with a comments like I'm hearing you were angry when your friend left you out of the text group about going to the beach, that must have made you sad too. Am I hearing that right? You can even follow up by asking if they would like to hear your opinion or if they would like

advice. Regardless of how they answer. They feel heard. And feeling heard as part of the amazing triad of empowerment. Feeling heard. Feeling seen, feeling loved. Number two, employ a team approach. We cannot be all things at all times, especially when we are going through our own process. Create a team of family, friends and professionals who are either part of the therapeutic support, emotional support, educational support, or all of the above. Asking for and leaning on others for support shows strength, wisdom, and bravery. Remember, your teen is watching your every move. And this is an excellent skill to teach. And it is also incredibly empowering for them to realize early on, that they are not alone, that someone has their back. Number three, educate yourself. cultivate an open mind, and a spirit of awareness. You may be tired of me bringing this one app but all three of these pieces are so vitally important. They are important parenting skills. They are important life skills, and they are central to Becoming Empowered and empowering your child and others. Opening your mind to new information is powerful modeling for all of your kids. They are required to be in school right now. But showing them the benefits of being a lifelong learner will have untold benefits, soaking in education about sexual orientation, gender identity, the LGBTQIA community and parenting teens in general, not only imparts a spirit of awareness, but it will also allow you to be more calm and moments of stress or uncertainty and feel more confident in your ability to help your child navigate what ever comes their way.



09:31

Number four, model healthy mental health habits and teach your kids how to care for their mental health. I will not go into this one very much since the last episode as well as Episode 10 went into mental health care and advocacy in really great detail. Still, it is a vital skill for navigating potential parenting challenges understanding the intricacies C's of mental health were to seek support. And the valuable skills and tools that are available are all pieces that you will want to know backward and forwards so they are readily available and any challenging moment. Number five, don't ride the roller coaster. This one is more of a tip than a skill. But I felt that it was an appropriate time to talk about it. And a really good place just to mark this one. So what does it mean? Well, you know, those moments when your child is happy one minute, snappish, five minutes later, a puddle an hour after that, and then completely content. It is so easy as parents to get on that ride and want to hold their hand through each emotion, right? We've all been there. And what happens, they are fine. Because this is a day in the life of a teenager. But we get off the ride with an emotional hangover still and fix it or solve it mode. And they're looking at us like we're nuts. Don't get on the ride. awareness and practice are key with this one, you will not be successful overnight. Because this response is pretty much in our parent DNA. It has taken me quite some time to accomplish this one. But I have found that I'm most successful. When I'm an active observer, meaning I let them know that I can remind them

of available tools that I see them. And if they need support to ask me, but I know they are capable of working through whatever emotion they're feeling or situation they're dealing with. The empowerment is built right into this one. The message of you've got this, and I'm over here if you need me, builds confidence and resiliency, which are two components of being empowered. And number six, the final skill that is so important to navigating challenges and empowering your child is patience.



12:24

Unless you are one of those extraordinary souls who was blessed with a spirit of patients from birth, this one also takes a practice. The good news though is that you have been practicing it since the day your child was born. So this is not a new skill. It is however, a crucial one, especially as challenges cross your path. I have had to actively work on patients my entire life. So I understand that. While it sounds simple, it may be the most difficult of all the skills. When I created this podcast, and I named it just breathe. One of the biggest influences was that for me, cultivating patience takes a lot of intentional breathing. Having patience allows for mental clarity, and physical calm, which are both so vital on this journey. We never quite know what will come our way. Having the ability to be patient with our child as they work through their process, or with our spouse or partner as they work through their process or experience challenges differently than we do or with others outside of our immediate family who may not understand or who may need more time. This patience will not only serve everyone around us in a positive way. It saves us physically, mentally and spiritually. So on to the second question. This one is actually more of a request, but I have a feeling it may be one that is felt by many. This listener asked. I was like more on integrating true Christian beliefs. I was taught that it is an abomination. And my theological world has been rocked. So first time translating the word it and the above quote to mean being LGBTQ i A and this is just for clarification, zero judgment. Second, if this topic does not apply to you, or if it is not of interest, fast forward to the last five minutes or so of this episode, I am ending with some really profound thoughts another listener shared with me and you do not want to miss them. So this question is has two parts. One, wrapping our heads around factual theology and to realizing that we can reformulate our definition of Christianity to be more in line with who Jesus wants us to be, as well as have a more authentic relationship. So the first part, wrapping our heads around factual theology. If you've been listening to me for any amount of time, you know that my favorite experts on this topic are Susan katrell, Colby, Martin, and Matthew vines. Each of them has their own unique and beautiful take on Christianity that is grounded in theology, which I found to be both refreshing and comforting. As I began my own theological journey over four years ago, they each really delve into the six clobber verses as they are called, and explain why each verse was either mistranslated or misunderstood.

For those who are having a hard time with letting go of the idea that being LGBTQIA is an abomination. Know that it is a process. I have many people in my life who are still grappling with it. Religion has deep and firm roots. It is scary to let go of what you've believed your entire life. Take it one step at a time, one day at a time. Sometimes you may sit in the same place for many days. And that's okay. What I will say here as gently as possible is it takes courage and a leap of faith to suspend those roots. And allow yourself to explore the very real possibilities here. Go slowly. Take a breath.



17:11

read one chapter of one book with an open mind. Set with that information and digest it, even question it. Then read another. Breathe, pray, meditate. Listen to your intuition. This is your child. You know them. And you have watched their process so far. In your heart of hearts, do you believe they are making a choice? Or can you consider that this is who God created them to be? I have cited the article many times that helped me on my faith journey, the one that discussed how God created day and night, and land and sea. And even though it is not mentioned in the Bible, we do not look at dawn and dusk or marshes and streams as abominations. I often bring this up because it is such a powerful visual, and helps pull us out of black and white thinking. It allows us to pause and pull apart truth from dogma. Ultimately, the action step here is to take the time to educate or re educate yourself. The second part of this question is how can we reformulate our definition of Christianity to be more in line with who Jesus wants us to be? as well as have a more authentic relationship? One of my favorite quotes from an author I interviewed last year Kiersten Beverly waters was God doesn't have an ego. He doesn't care how we come to him or what name we use to refer to him. I think about that, quote, often, and usually in conjunction with who Jesus was and who he is. He was the original champion of minorities Think about that. Not once does he mentioned anything about homosexuality, let alone condemn it. If you are really listening to this question with curiosity, than it is likely that you learned and believe that the traits that make one a quote, good Christian, are pretty specific and narrow. But if you can just shelve all of those should and should not just one moment, and think about who Jesus was and who he wants us to be. It's really not that narrow at all. He's stated that we should love our neighbor, as we love ourselves, to treat others as we wish to be treated, and to judge not lest ye be judged. That's a lot of love and acceptance. So how do we shift into a more authentic Christianity? Well, first of all, it takes time. This is deeply personal. Spend time and prayer and meditation. Ask yourself what you want and what you need. Search for messages of love, not fear. Read books and articles written by or recommended by those who trust. Be gentle with yourself, and with those around you. For me, realizing that I was even allowed to see Christianity from more than one angle, that I could have an authentic relationship that I could expand my beliefs was truly mind blowing. I'm not kidding you. This process, though, took me several years.

And here's why. When I first began reexamining my theology and theology, I was really angry. I was angry that what I had been taught was simply not true. I was angry that I had lived in capsulated by religious fear for most of my life. I was angry that so much misinformation had guided my decision making. Because of all of this negativity and fear, I had to mentally blow all of it up and start from scratch. I share this with you, because I want you to know, the transformation is possible. No matter where you are. That authentic Christianity is possible.



22:05

God created your beautiful child and he does not make mistakes. I've studied, read, listen to my intuition enough to believe unequivocally, that being LGBTQ i A is not a choice, and not a sin. So to round out today's questions, since my answers were rather lengthy, I went to share some thoughts that a listener shared with me, she's asked to remain anonymous, but gave me permission to share with all of you. So this conversation that I'm about to share is part of an email conversation that we had discussing a number of things, but the beginning here is about how inclusivity is being taught at school. And she says, that's really useful just to hear you confirm what I was beginning to think that it may not yet be the norm to have inclusive resources for kids as they enter enter these educational units, either at home or at school. And useful to hear that others are feeling like hey, why is that? And that people are in turn looking for and demanding more inclusive books or other materials and perspectives. One other thing I wanted to say, part of what is interesting to me as I listened to the parents, you get a process to episode is this. My view of myself and my husband is that we are very liberal, very secular, and very tolerant. We have had gay friends, since we were young adults, we have gay friends as part of our lives now. And more and more we hear about family and friends who are coming out younger, who were trans. And while there are some surprises and adjustments and thinking, basically, I think to myself, Oh, we are very tolerance and accepting. And this has translated to what I realized now, an attitude that in its own way, was probably not very helpful to my daughter. It translated to me feeling I was respecting her desire for privacy. And so I didn't actually talk very much to her about coming out. Because in my mind, I was tolerant and coming out and being gay wasn't a big deal. So ironically, while it's good that no one rejected her, no one argued with her, no one told her this was shameful. On the other hand, aside from me saying some supportive things when she first opened up to me, and maybe one or two times along the way, I personally haven't delved in and asked her about it, about what she is going through. It has only been this past week as she opened up to me about it. hostile environment she and her friends are experiencing at school that I have thought about that angle. It was like, oh, everything is fine. She comes from a tolerant family where being gay is no different from saying, actually, green is my favorite color. And so no problem she came out all is fine. How dumb of me. Anyway, that's all I wanted

to say. But when I heard your stages of the parent process, I realized that I'm going through a new stage, but it actually takes its own kind of spin, different from maybe what a lot of families may go through the blaming and shaming and actively arguing about it. But we all need adjustments. And I recognize there's also likely a piece of it that does grow out of something less nice. Was I nervous about talking to her? Because I didn't feel deep down, I understood or can identify with being gay. Was there any element at all of shame in there for me? Certainly, I know, for my husband more than me, but me too. We have approached it like, Oh, she's 14 things might change, not because I'm ashamed, but because she's only 14. Think of how much our minds and bodies change as we grow from ages 14 to 25. But as you put it, know, if they have come out to you, they have mauled this over a lot. And they know, yes, she is still coming into her identity and figuring it out. And for instance, the other day, she told my husband that she has come to understand her identity as lesbian rather than by she told us earlier, and that's okay. And it's all okay. That was my basic message when she came out that if she changes her mind in whatever way or if she doesn't, that it is okay. But I didn't offer more of the support that I should have been giving her opening up with questions and listening, offering a listening ear about what she is thinking and feeling.



27:08

I know that was rather a lot to absorb. But I think she has so many profound thoughts in there that so many of us can relate to right? I love her vulnerability and her ability to pause and look at her views and beliefs and say, Wow, maybe I could shift a little bit here. It's also a viewpoint that we don't hear about often, but I think she hit the nail on the head in her self reflection. Here's what I love the most though, this mom's willing to be human, to be open to different ways of understanding and to allow others to see her authentic self. Her daughter knows she has loved and that is the most important piece. So I hope you enjoyed this first q&a episode. I would love to answer your questions on a few future episodes. So email them to me or message them to me on Facebook or Instagram, or send them to me in a survey whatever is easiest for you. I want you to know that my new website is finally live. Check it out when you can. I am so so grateful to Kaia George, Alexandra and Justin at living proof creative for all of the love and hours of work they poured into making my vision a reality. I love hearing from all of you connecting with you, and learning how I can make the show better for you. Reach out with comments or questions and consider leaving a review so I can get to know you better and to learn why you listen. Until next time.



28:56

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.chrysalismama.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.