

Ep 42_ Eli Lawliet, PhD (he_him)

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SPEAKERS

Eli Lawliet, PhD (he/him), Adam James Cohen (he/him)



Adam James Cohen (he/him) 00:09

Hi there, welcome to the Second Adolescence podcast. Here we talk about all things queer healing and Second Adolescence. So what is Second Adolescence you might ask? Second Adolescence is a sort of developmental life stage queer people navigate in our post coming out adult years after growing up within an anti queer world. For many Second Adolescence is about healing the wounds of our younger queer selves, gaining the experiences they missed out on and unlocking what it means for us to exist as our most free and true selves. I am your host, Adam James Cohen, psychotherapist and human who went through his own second adolescence. On this week's episode, we have Dr. Eli lawliet, who uses he him pronouns, Eli is known online as The Gender Doula and if you aren't familiar with him or his work, or are new to knowing what a gender doula is, Eli we'll talk about it. And gosh, I was just so struck by how Eli's work is really helpful for literally all of us. Even those of us who aren't really seeking out the support of a gender doula specifically, just listen in, you will see. And this conversation was also really helpful for me personally, just to get to have as we are in the midst of a world that just seems to continue to be filled with so much harm. You know, we're having this conversation anticipating a really contentious 2024 here in the States with this upcoming election cycle. And Eli really acted as a helpful guide in this conversation for how we can all really navigate these political times that are just so painful, and do so in ways that really tend to what we need as individuals as part of the collective. I just feel so grateful for Eli coming on to the show. And I'm so honored to invite you all into the conversation truly, so many things were covered. And I'm just, I'm still processing. I'm recording this after the conversation. And I'm so excited to listen back in with you guys again because this was just such a great conversation. And as with each episode of Second Adolescence, I really want to invite you as listener to listen with open curiosity, knowing that each of our stories are different and unique, you might hear some guest share things that really differ from your experience, whereas other guests might share things that really speak to what you went through or are currently going through. And I really hope that all of this happens and that together we can continue growing and expanding our awareness of what life and queerness and healing can be for folks, if after the show you want to connect further, feel free to head on over to secondadolescencepod.com for show notes and more. Or you can follow the show on Instagram at

@secondadolescencepod. All right. Welcome to the conversation. Thank you so much for being here. Before going anywhere, I want to invite you if you're open to it just to give listeners a little mini introduction to who you are just to provide a little context to the conversation.

E Eli Lawliet, PhD (he/him) 03:01

Sure, my name is Eli. Professionally, I am the gender doula. I have been a gender doula for almost four years. I started in January of 2020. And as a gender doula, what I do functionally is that I help people who are questioning exploring or transitioning their gender in whatever way they need. So I provide full spectrum support for pretty much anything that's related to gender. So that's me.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 03:27

Okay, I have a ton of questions about your work as a gender doula, I'm sure we'll get there. But one place I wanted to actually backup and start, which is a place that you offered to kind of lead this conversation with is naming we're recording this in mid October of 2023 amidst a ton of global suffering, terror, and oppression. And on top of that is, you know, locally in the States and in other countries, that's we already are navigating this continued anti trans anti queer legislation, vitriol. And I think so many of us and so many of the queer and trans people listening to the show, and the people that you work with, are just like, struggling to navigate and hold all this, you know, we're approaching November 2023 election cycle, we're at this conversations anticipating 2024 We're in the States, there's just going to be a lot that's going to be up and activated. And I'm already like feeling anxious thinking about it. But first place. Yeah, I'm curious, like, how are you individually doing? And also, what do you think about when you think about the greater trans and queer community as we're just existing in this time right now?

E Eli Lawliet, PhD (he/him) 04:42

Yeah, I mean, I think for me, personally, I think I'm doing pretty well, all things considered. And part of the reason why I'm doing pretty well is because I have a lot of context for the moment that we're in. And I think that that's a really important thing, because the fact is is that these backlashes are cyclical, and have happened before. And we always persist, right? And not everybody survives. And I want to be clear about that. Because I'm not saying like, Oh, it's all fine. It's not, it's not fine at all. And also, though, we have transistors who've been through this, we have elders who've been through this, we have sources of support and guidance that we can lean on. And because I've studied, I have a whole academic background where I studied trans history. And I've seen sort of like how people have weathered these storms. And I think that that's given me a lot of resilience for this because I'm like, okay, as challenging and as horrible as this is, the more we're able to come together as a community and rely on one another, the better we will fare through. So knowing that I've just been focusing really deeply on community, and on resourcing myself and the people around me as much as possible, and it truly has been making a huge difference.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 06:00

I so appreciate you naming that, that feels so helpful, just to kind of pull back and really just take this contextual lens that you're offering here about the history of what progress has looked like and how there's been, like you said, the cycles of movement, and then kind of resistance against that, then our resistance in response and continued movement. And in that there's something that feels really strengthening, and also kind of your lens and focus and emphasis on leaning towards finding strength and togetherness and community during these times to support our own individual resourcing little on collective resourcing. Oh, absolutely. And I guess Yeah, like, do you find in addition to community, you know, I talk a lot with people in my practice about the things they need to do as individuals to get through the day amidst all of this oppression. What have you found that? Like, yeah, some folks you work with, or people, you know, what it's like individual resourcing also look like in addition to community resourcing? Yeah,

E

Eli Lawliet, PhD (he/him) 06:56

I think individual resourcing is so important. And I think that in the sort of pop culture, social media conversation, there's been this dichotomy created of either like, people are like, Oh, I'm doing all my self care, and I don't do any community, or only community matters. And self care is bullshit. So like, that's as all binaries are very, very false. The way that I view sort of self resourcing is that we resource ourselves so that we can show up for ourselves better, so we can show up for our communities better, so that we can show up for our relationships better, and ultimately, so we can show up better for our Earth, right? So this is all interconnected, it's interwoven, it's not just like this dichotomous, like you either have to choose yourself or community. That's just not real. Yes. And so I think for resourcing yourself, I think the first thing is how do you resource yourself and like this could be obviously a whole class of information. But some things to start with are... Are you sleeping? Are you eating? Are you spending time in ways that help you feel rested? Sometimes people are not nap people. But sometimes if you just like, sit with your cat, or like your dog for 30 minutes, like that's gonna be really refreshing. So whatever it is, or even sometimes, like taking a walk or dancing around the house wildly to a song, right, that too, can be rest, you know? So what are the things that help you feel more present? What are the things that help you release stress? And how do you help your body to function at the best way it's able to in the moment? Those are where we start with resourcing.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 08:45

Yes, totally. And it can get really challenging, I think for folks to kind of do that almost in the sense of like giving ourselves permission to do that. I don't know if you see this, but it there's so much like, pressure might not be the right word, but maybe like pressure to like, be involved pressure, to be aware of pressure to kind of be educated pressure to understand what's happening and like that can sometimes pull us out of ourselves meaning to be understanding what's happening with this legislation, or what's happening in these countries? Or, okay, how can I turn this into action, which is all powerful and important. But I find with some people, it almost feels like they have to choose what I'm hearing and kind of what you're speaking to is like it's about both it's all both and and finding also what we need as individuals. For some people. Maybe they're more resource to do that action based activism, or more resource to bring in more information for other people they're tapped. Does that kind of resonate with maybe some of the folks you work with?

E

Eli Lawliet, PhD (he/him) 09:41

Yeah, what I would say is that we have not really evolved to be aware of every single thing that's happening on a global scale all the time. That's not something that our species has evolved for. Our bodies are not there. We're not there. We're not able to do that. And yet we're trying. So one thing that I would remind folks is that it's very helpful to start in your specific and unique circumstances. So what I mean by that is, if you are in the United States, and you're aware that we're in the middle of this huge backlash, and trans people are being attacked, that feels very scary. So the first question I have is, do you live in a state where you are at risk? And if you don't, that's already a place for your nervous system to release a little bit. Right? If, for example, I live in California, I'm extremely privileged in that way. We're very like, comparatively safe here, right? So when I hear those things, and my nervous system goes up, I can remind myself, actually, you're safe, you are in your apartment, you have laws that protect you. And in doing that, it's not about me being like, Oh, I'm fine. And it doesn't matter that other people are being harmed. It's the I'm fine. And I can calm myself down. And then I can move forward from that place, right? Instead of moving from a place of like, hi, nervous system activation reactivity? Yes. So that's step one. Now, let's say that you are in one of those states where you are directly under attack, so then I would get even smaller, okay, am I in a safe place right now, if I am in my house, or my apartment, or I am with my friend, am I safe in this place, physically, right now, and starting from that point, and obviously, if you're in a place where you're not physically safe, right now, the next step would be to try to get to a place where you can be safe, even just for a little while, whether that's the park or your car, or whatever, getting really micro and starting from that place, and really like being aware of your exact circumstances in that moment. Because as long as you are physically safe in that moment, you can route to that. And that way, what your next steps are not dictated by something that's happening, not to you, right? If you're in a state where there's a lot of anti trans legislation, and you're just like, constantly Heike, activated and panicked, then it's going to be impossible for you to work in that space in any way, whether that's activism or consciousness raising or anything else, right. So like getting more rooted in and finding the safety in your body, or in that moment, will then create a foundation that you can actually build on. And

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 12:30

it's so human to continue acting and not taking that moment to really check in like, how is my body feeling? How is where am I feeling safe? What is happening in my nervous system, because like, I think just so many queer and trans people have, unfortunately gotten so used to just being in a constant state of nervous system activation. And yet, as you're speaking to, like, the first step in all of this is really grounding in our bodies and finding safety in our present moment. Oh, yes. I so appreciate you naming that. And it's tricky for folks who feel like I actually don't know how to feel that safety with the context I'm in right now. Yeah. And also, I really feel like at the beginning, I really appreciate you naming. We're not wired as humans to know as much as we know, we're not wired as humans to be so aware about all the issues and suffering and different things that are happening in the world at once. And yet, I think social media and internet culture creates this myth that we are not doing our part if we're not. Yep. So like, when you said that I felt my nervous system, just settle because I think that's something that I am part of this world I to feel like there's pressure to be able to be holding and aware of all this happening, so that I can hopefully do something about it. And it's just too much.

E

Eli Lawliet, PhD (he/him) 13:45

Yeah, I mean, I definitely like I want to name Adrienne Maree Brown's work, specifically "Emergent Strategy". So many things in that book that I think are very helpful for this moment, honestly, in for this exact dynamic that you're describing. But I think that I'll give like a brief summary of why I'm referencing her work, which is that she talks about, for example, creating the world that you want to see in a micro scale, because that echoes out in the macro. So if you want a world where trans people are loved and supported, you can start that by supporting your trans self, or supporting your trans friends, right. And you can create that in a deep, deep way in like the micro with like you and your friends. And then like watch that echo out from that deep but small place. And there's a lot more I highly recommend reading that book for anyone who hasn't. But also that approach over time, integrating it into my life has allowed me to have a different approach to the news cycle, which is that if I see something activating, and I've really pared down my news intake tremendously, so I don't see activating things as often as most people I think, but if I see something activating, I ask myself immediately, is there something that I can do in this moment to improve this situation? And if the answer is no, then I stop interacting with that topic. Yeah. If the answer is yes, then I can do that thing. And then I can tend to myself and my feelings. Yes. And I think that that has been a really helpful method, because the fact is just repeatedly sharing this stuff, for the most part is not helpful. You know, like, there is a certain importance to like awareness and to like helping people know that something is happening broadly. But I think the constant repetition and the added sort of moral posturing of if you're not doing this, you're a bad person. Or if you're not doing this, the way that I say you should be doing it, you're a bad person. It's just unhelpful, and it's not real. So instead pulling back and being like, Wait, can I call a representative? Can I write an email? Can I donate some money? Can I volunteer my time or energy? And if the answer is no, or if you've already done those things, then release it. It's not yours anymore.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 16:08

Yes. I mean, as you're talking, I can even just like this image of like, you're taking in this input, that's like energy in your body. But then in your, you're modeling how to give ourselves permission to like, Okay, what to do with that. So it's not just staying in our body, but like, I can either move it, can I do something about this, okay, I can channel that then out of my body into action, or into donating or whatever. Or if the answer's no, then being okay, I'm gonna actually let this go. And I'm gonna give myself permission that I don't need to keep holding this, oh, I love that. That's making me think of a client I work with where another form of boundaries that they use, which I love, is they only go on social media and the internet at 11am to 11:45am. Because they know like, if it's boundaried, if it's not in my nighttime, if it's not in my evening time, like that fucks them up too much to have like that input in like these more sacred times of their day. But like, so like being boundaried. Also with like, when you open yourself up to kind of what's happening out in the world in a way that you know, you're gonna be resourced enough to hold it, then to be able to make that decision of oh, can I do something about this? Or can I let this go? Yeah, wow. Okay, there's so many places to go in this conversation. I'm just pausing. I'm so grateful. You're here. And I'm just so glad we connected. This is so cool. I want to pull us No, we've been kind of in, at least on my end is there's a heaviness to kind of the talk about dealing with things in the world. And with all the oppression, I want to bring us up just a touch to something that I know you talk about. And this idea that I'd love to kind of pick your

brain about, you know, this idea of transmis and queerness. As a spiritual practice, I want to kind of pivot us into that. I'm curious if you could share about that. I mean, it's all connected, but curious where that goes.

E Eli Lawliet, PhD (he/him) 17:46

Yeah, so my family is conservative Christian. And that's how I was raised. I was quite young, when I decided that didn't make sense to me. But I continue to perform it to keep the peace through my childhood. And so when I was a young adult, like 18, to 20, I was like, I'm an atheist and fuck spirituality. And I was there for quite some time. And it wasn't until later on as part of a combined health crisis and the trauma of academia that I was like, I need spirituality, like, I need a spiritual practice, I need something. And the first place that I turned was queerness. And to me, like that is my spirituality. And I don't know how to explain it or what that means, but it is what it is. And that's where I started from. And I journeyed a long way from that point, and it's much more cohesive now. But I would say that, for me, when I say spirituality, I find it important to describe what I mean. Because what I mean, I think is different from a lot of people, I'm starting to realize that when I'm talking about spirituality, I'm talking about your connection to the earth into yourself. And when I say your connection to yourself into the earth, your body is literally made of the same materials as earth, and the stars. And you have blood and DNA and pieces of different ancestors, you have an entire ecosystem in your body, actually multiple ecosystems in your body. Like that is all points of connection. So I don't really care what you believe with regard to like divinity. When I say spirituality, I'm talking about something that's available to everyone by virtue of the fact that we are made of the same stuff as the Earth that surrounds us and all other living and nonliving creatures. So that's where I'm starting from with spirituality. As far as transness I really leaned into transness as spiritual because transness is a third space or liminal space, it's like the not this not that somewhere in between journey and whether or not people identify as binary, their process of getting to that point where is different from a cisgender binary person, right? Yeah. And I think that that process creates a well, or access to a well of sacred knowledge that is not available to folks who have not experienced that process. So not all trans people choose to drink from that well, or choose to approach it or even be aware of it. And that's fine. And we all have our agency. But I think that if you choose to turn toward it, and really be in communion with it, it can deepen your spiritual practice and your spiritual relationships to the earth in ways that are extremely gorgeous and unique to this community.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 20:40

Wow. Wow, that's so beautiful. Could you share a little bit more about really kind of what that looks like, even day to day?

E Eli Lawliet, PhD (he/him) 20:47

Yeah, so for me day to day, I do a lot of work with transcestors. And I think that this episode will come out after my workshop, but I'm sure I'll do another one next year. But I'm collaborating with a person named Izazela Amanzi, who's incredible, incredible. Their brand is transgressive medicine. And we're doing a workshop on accessing transsexual wisdom, which is all about our different transsexual practices, because we have two different like cultural backgrounds. And I

think it's very helpful to have multiple perspectives on this. Especially because I'm white. And I think that when a white person is talking about spirituality, there's just like lots of danger, or a lot of people, which I totally honor and respect. And so just being very, very aware of that, and the fact that that can be a danger area, or red flag area for a lot of people. But anyways, for me transsexual practice, I talked to my trans sisters every day, they talked to me constantly, sometimes I have to be like, I need to, I need a little bit of space. They have so many ideas. So basically, what that looks like, functionally, is I have an altar, I have photos on the altar of specific transistors, I have offerings there, depending on what I'm you know, getting information I'm getting, there's always water. But there's usually other things too, right now there's flowers, I will talk to them every day. And ask them for support and how that support comes. Like if folks are curious about how that support comes on my blog, there's literally a blog post, that's messages from your ancestors. And the way that that came through is that last spring, I just kept getting woken up at like 4am With all these like, really loud thoughts in my head. And I was like, Oh, my God, this is so much. And I would try to go back to sleep because I wanted to rest and I wouldn't be able to. And I realized, like, Oh, these messages are messages that want to be shared. So I wrote them down. And at the time sharing them felt really scary, because talking about your spiritual practice as openly as I am right now is extremely vulnerable. And people can think all kinds of things. So I was like, This is so scary, but I shared them anyway. And immediately was able to go back to sleep and not have like these worry and wake ups anymore. So it's like, okay, all right, message received, you know, but those messages are there. They live on my blog, you can access them, you can read them. I think that they were deeply for this time. So if folks are curious about like, what that actually sounds like, it's available.

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 23:16

Awesome. Wow, we'll definitely link to your blog and you and I want to honor the sacredness of your own personal practice. And I just see it as such an offering for you even letting us all into what that looks like for you personally, because it is helpful for folks who are in the space of seeking to want to understand okay, well, what does this actually looked like for me? So the practical example is so helpful. And I just yeah, really named that that's a real offering free letting a sense. So thank you for doing that, for sure. And yeah, I'll definitely link to this blog. I'm so curious to read it. And then that's a maybe a nice transition into your work as a gender doula. You mentioned a bit up top when you're introducing yourself about really what that work is. And then also like, Who is the person that's coming to work with you? And what is that process? Like?

E

Eli Lawliet, PhD (he/him) 24:03

Yeah, it's so interesting to try to answer this question. So in this conversation, I've focused so much on spiritual things, but I also have like a decade of experience in the academic world, I have a PhD. And my research has always been about trans people and has focused primarily on transgender health care. So I have a very robust understanding of transgender health care how it's evolved in the United States and why it is the way that it is, which is really, really helpful, especially if I have clients who come to me and they're like, I have impostor syndrome. I'm not trans enough. And I'm like, I can tell you the for white sis men that gave you that, like in the 1950s, you know, like, so like, that part can be really helpful, but also I can talk to people about things like HRT and dosing and surgery and how to navigate insurance. Like it can be very

practical work. One thing that I do focus on Times is I'll call doctors offices and grill them a little bit. Or, for example, if I have a client who's vulnerable socially because of how they present and how their gender is read by other people, I might even call housekeepers and just see if there's someone who's actually safe to come into their home, because that's the support that they need. Right? So like, I can do stuff like that. But I can also like hold people through the challenges of gender exploration. I've had people come to me who don't identify as trans but who have questions about their gender. And we'll work through that I've had people who are like, I think I might be trans. And we'll work through that. If people are like, I know, I'm trans. And I want to do this now. And we'll work through that. So it's all about meeting people where they're at. And just by virtue of my unique path in life, I have a very robust amount of skills and resources for all the different ways that gender shows up in the world. And I bring those to the table as a gender doula and do my best to support people in the way they need to be supported. And if I can't do that, then helping them find someone who can wow,

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 26:08

I'm just so struck by like, how much of a need there is for this work. Like, it's such a missing piece of like the current current medical system, like, there isn't someone doing that role? Yes, there's therapists and doctors endocrinologist who are offering and supporting the greater gender affirming care. But oftentimes, folks are in need, particularly those who either there's a lot of fear or lack of access to knowledge or resources. There's such a need for the work you're doing. Oh my god, thank you for sharing that. That's so special. How did you get into this work? And that might be like a long conversation.

E

Eli Lawliet, PhD (he/him) 26:48

so I was in my second year of grad school, and I was listening to a podcast and the podcast had a doula on as a guest. And she was talking about doula work. And she said, I believe we should have a doula for every threshold of life. And when she said that, I was like, Oh, my God, we need gender, doulas. But at the time I was in the second year of my PhD, I was applying to law school. And I was like, this is a really good idea for someone else who isn't me to do and I tried to just forget about it. Fortunately, I was in the midst of a very intense chronic illness experience and journey. And as part of that I was seeing this trans body worker, and every time I would go in for body work with this person, this idea of being a gender doula would come up so strongly. And after months, literally of this, I was like, I think I'm getting a calling. I think that's what's happening here. I'm a Taurus, and I'm very stubborn. So it takes me a long time to sort of like realize that it took literal months of everything in my life being like, do this. And I was like, Oh, God. So I turned down my law school acceptance and made a exit plan from academia. And I reached out to the doula who had been on the podcast and I said, I understand that you are not a trans person, and that you don't know anything about this. But I had this idea from hearing you talk. And I wonder if you would be willing to help me, her name is Erica Livingston. And she's so so kindly scholarship to me into her mentorship program. So I was able to do two rounds of doula mentorship with her and her partner, Laura Interland. De and that was like really helpful, because I had all this academic knowledge, but I didn't have sort of training around holding people and all the different skills that you need to navigate to the work. So that was extremely, extremely helpful. And through that mentorship, I started my business started seeing clients actually quite a bit earlier than I had expected to, but I was, you know, as ready as I was going to be. So I'm glad that I am glad that they pushed me to start when they

did. But that's how I got started doing this work. And when I started this, there was one other person who at almost the same time had the same idea, which I thought was so gorgeous. They're not working as a gender doula anymore, but I am like slowly trying to amass all the gender doulas, like if there's anybody I find who's doing this work and calling it that I have tried to bring them into my Discord group. And I'm like, let's be friends, you know, because I hope eventually that there's just tons of gender doulas. Yes.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 29:24

Awesome. And yeah, and I'm thinking about, you know, since starting this work, and all the people you've worked with, I mean, there's so much that's involved in this and for a person's process of navigating their experience of gender, like the amount of healing that happens and I think that's something you talk about to this idea of the healing that can happen in terms of even our own relationship to gender. I'm curious, like the listeners of this show. We have like a wide spectrum of sis folks, trans folks, people who are kind of in their their own process of figuring out kind of what is most truly ni but I think there is a collective need to heal from all the shit about gender that's been placed on to us. I guess I'm curious if you could speak on or what comes to mind me think about just like, what does it mean to heal our relationship to gender? And yeah, I mean, there's so many places to go. But yeah, what comes up?

E

Eli Lawliet, PhD (he/him) 30:14

Yeah. So one thing that happened when I started telling people I was going to be a gender doula is that all these people who I had only ever known as sis, people were like, Oh, I could use a gender doula. And I was like, Oh, really, I had not conceived of this work as being beyond trans people, specifically. So as I started to integrate that feedback, I realized that my ultimate goal from this work and from all things that I do is to make the world a better place for trans people. And I realized that in order for the world to be a better place for trans people, everybody needs to heal the relationship to gender, right, we activate people so much, because they are unhealed. And it's very activating to see a trans person loving themselves and loving their life when you have this deeply, unhealed painful relationship to your gender. And I think that that's the root of a lot of anti trans violence. So when I think about what that means, I think about the fact that every single person benefits from gender exploration from stepping outside of what they've been told their label means and allowing themselves to really get in touch with their values and how they want to show up in the world. And then building from that place, rather than building from a place of I have to because of this label. And so honestly, just that piece, if everybody would do that would like change the entire world forever, you know. So that's really what I mean, when I talk about gender explanation is for everyone, and that we all benefit from it. Because even if you are like the most binary cisgender, man or woman who's ever lived, there are things about that label that actually don't apply or don't fit, you know, nobody fits into the label that they're in 100% all the time, because there's a lot of contradictions even within a label, right? So allowing yourself to take that off and be like, actually, who am I? How do I want to show up? How do I want to be in relationship to people? What are my values? How do I bring those into the way that I interact with other humans and with the earth? And if that's your foundation, then your label doesn't really matter. But your gender is going to be something that feels good, and something that you feel good, enacting and performing? And that's life changing?

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 32:43

Absolutely, yes. Like so much. Yes. But it gets, it does make me wonder, like, you probably run into people like having some obstacles and roadblocks in their own process or their own resistance. I wonder if you could speak to like, what have you seen common or not, but just some of these obstacles or some resistance expressions that people might have to move through in this greater process of, essentially, what I'm hearing is like, finding what feels most truly freely you? Yeah, what have you found in that process?

E

Eli Lawliet, PhD (he/him) 33:10

I mean, I think the number one thing is that it's terrifying. It's terrifying, it's terrifying to be authentic, it's terrifying to look at yourself, plainly, it's terrifying to imagine relating to the people around you in a new way. And part of the reason it's terrifying is because there's a whole lot of other stuff wrapped up in how we do this, right. So the way that you show up in the world, gender is obviously impacting every facet of that in a lot of ways. But it also has to do with your relationships, your boundaries, how you conduct yourself in all these different spheres professionally, personally, it's everything. And so I understand when people react to this from a place of fear, and sometimes anger, because all of that is coming from this awareness that change can be socially dangerous, and that it requires a lot of grief and processing of grief. And these are all things that our culture has no reference point for. You know, so we have very few tools, very few skills, and this huge process that requires us to really, really go deep, deep, deep, and to shed many skins, you know, and to spend a lot of time in our own underworlds, right. And like all of these things, again, we don't have tools for so I understand when people have those big reactions, and when they feel really scared of this work. And I would say one thing that's been extremely helpful to me is taking a timeline off of it. So there's a whole realm of things in my life that I'm like, Oh, this is just lifetime work. There's no deadline. There's no finish line. There's no done yeah, this is just something I'm continuously spiraling around and will be for the rest of my life. And that brings them ease into it you know I can work with the lessons as they arise instead of trying to force myself in this very like wellness culture way to like always be improving and always be doing better. It's like no, that is also not human right.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 35:19

okay your work as a gender doula you're like also a life doula you're a healing doula like everything is encapsulated in this work.... How profound. I'm so touched when I hear you talk about your work because I can really feel how much honor you feel getting to do this work and how much it's a gift. I mean, I'm sure it's heavy and hard at times, I'm sure you're holding so much. And the way you talk about this, of course, I can see you listeners are just hearing you. But like, there's such an energy about you when you're speaking about the work you're doing. And I just feel so touched that you're doing all this work. Wow. And I can also imagine, yeah, there's a weight to it as well

E

Eli Lawliet, PhD (he/him) 35:58

There is, but I have a lot of practices, like everything that I'm saying would be meaningless if I didn't have like a lot of practices from myself that I was investing in all the time. I mean, the

didn't have like a lot of practices from myself that I was investing in all the time. I mean, the deeper I go into it, the deeper that gets. And the more beautiful and profound those practices get. For example, when I start a relationship with a new client, one of the first things that I do is explain to them that the space that we're in together, can hold what they need it to hold, because I have practices to shield myself and protect myself. And so if they bring their trauma to that space, they will not traumatize me, I'm safe. And if there's something that I need to shift in the conversation, I will always let them know. And if they need to ask and check in if it's okay to bring something up, they're always welcome to do it. But that space that we create together is meant to hold what they need it to hold. So that's what I tell my client, the background work for that is that I have a whole daily series of practices, I have monthly practices, I have annual practices, I have many, many different layers that I am doing energetically and spiritually, that allow me to hold immense amounts of grief and terror and rage and trauma, and to be able to gently release it at the end of a session and not bring it into my body and not bring it into my space. And it doesn't mean that there aren't hard days, I have one day. And this will tell you how often this happens. Because there's one time that I can remember where every single client that they was like deep, heavy, immense grief. And at the end of that day, I just had to lay in my bed. Like I just need to lay down. And it was fine. But most days, there's a mix of energies. It's not just the heavy, it's not just the grief. And also we laugh a lot. Like sometimes my clients will be talking about something incredibly heavy and deep. And then we'll both just like bust up laughing because we made a joke, you know, it's not just like all heavy are all tears. And I have a very multi layered robust set of practices for protecting myself and keeping my bubble with each client clear for their sake and for mine.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 38:13

Yeah, awesome. I feel like that's like an offshoot of this conversation. It's just like an invitation. I'm definitely taking it for my own self, but also for listeners perhaps of this, like what do we need to get through our lives, being really intentional about these daily rituals and practices doing what we need for our own resourcing. Even if you're not a healer, you're not someone who's holding other people's stories and wait, even if you're going to your tech job or your nanny or your A whatever working in the grocery store, like whatever you need. I'm just also hearing just such a greater invitation in this conversation to more intentionally bring care and nourishment to our own selves. So thank you for that, too.

E

Eli Lawliet, PhD (he/him) 38:54

Yeah, and I want to say because sometimes when people hear me talk about this, their reaction is to feel like, oh my god, I'm so deficient. Like I'm not doing anything that I should be doing. So I want to be very clear in folks who've ever been in a workshop or class with me will have heard me speak on this. I believe deeply, deeply in starting with like the smallest and easiest and simplest option. And I believe very deeply in the smallest the big. So what that looks like functionally, is that if you currently have no daily practice, no self care, etc. That's fine. Work feels like the simplest, almost laughably easy thing that you can do in 30 seconds every day. So sometimes when we're talking about connecting with the body, I'll tell people to start off by wiggling their toes for 30 seconds before they fall asleep. Can you do that? That's enough and let that be enough? Because the thing is that when you start to shift things in these really small, really simple ways, the impact is much bigger. Other than what you would anticipate. And over time, all these layers of practices that I have are things that I've built up over the past like probably seven or eight years. So that seven or eight years of teeny tiny, small simple

things, and also moments where I was like, Fuck it all scrapping all this, it doesn't feel good anymore, I'm going to start over, you know. So if all you have time for every day, is to close your eyes for 10 seconds, then close your eyes for 10 seconds. That's okay, that's a perfectly good place to start.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 40:32

That's it? Well, Eli, before we wind down, I'm curious to feel like there's been anything else that hasn't been a part of this conversation that wanted to another so many, like, I want to schedule like hours and hours and hours with you just to talk about everything and hear your thoughts on everything, because I just feel so I'm taking so much personally from this conversation. So thank you. But for the sake of protecting your time and honoring your time, anything else before we wind down that feels like it wants to be included today.

E Eli Lawliet, PhD (he/him) 41:00

One of the biggest things that I'm really feeling strongly right now is that we know that the next 12 to 18 months, at least, are going to be very hard. And that's just a fact. And so all of these practices that I'm bringing up today, and these reframes that I'm bringing up today are really important for that. Because when you know that things are going to be hard. Instead of spending your energy and time scared and worried and anxious about how hard things are going to be anticipating it, you can acknowledge those feelings, and redirect toward a practice that's supportive. So if I'm like, wow, I'm really spiraling, I've been scrolling for an hour. And this is not feeling nourishing to me, I'm going to put my phone down and I'm going to go on a walk, or I'm going to call a friend and specifically asked if we can talk about like topics, or I'm going to pet my cat, you know, whatever the thing is taking an awareness that if you redirect your anxious and fear energy into preparation, and not unlike a prepper like I'm so scared, the world is gonna end way but in like, oh, I can actually resource myself if I'm going on a hike. I know I need to pack water. That's what this is. It's not that I'm going to be scared about when I'm halfway through my hike. And I realized I'm thirsty. I'm just gonna pack water. Right? That's the approach here is like how can you resource yourself knowing that things are going to be hard? How can you redirect your energy into more rest more gentleness, more time with friends more time in nature. Preferably, I know, that's hard for some of us who live in big cities. But honestly, I live in the middle of LA, there's concrete everywhere, and I have deep relationships with plants around here, you can find that nature even in the city. But yeah, that's the main thing that I want to make sure folks know, because I'm feeling such intense messages around this from the transistors and just in my sphere, of like, hey, things are gonna be hard. We don't have to lie to ourselves about that. But we can also prepare for it. And it really does make a difference. Absolutely. And this fall, I'm going to be hosting several breathwork sessions that are specifically for queer and trans holidays stress. I know this is a really hard time for folks typically every year. And so these are just meant to be some places where you can come for support for community, and for releasing some of that stress that's building up in your body with the breath. So those are open to all queer and trans folks. And I will send the link so that you can put it in with the show notes.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 43:41

Well, can I just feel so touched by this conversation and just feel so much gratitude that you

came on and you offered so much to our listeners, both of your own personal experience the work, you're doing your perspective, the years and years and years of like accruing knowledge and healing, I just feel so touched that you came on today, and let us all into you and your work. And I am really eager to listen back to this conversation. I feel like this might be a conversation, I come back to you multiple times over these next 12 plus months in particular, because I really appreciate you naming this, this is likely going to be a difficult year for many of us and so much of what you've shared today is such helpful tools to get us through. So thank you for that. And thank you for the work you're doing and this is just so special. So thanks for doing this.

E

Eli Lawliet, PhD (he/him) 44:30

Thanks so much for having me on. I really really appreciated this conversation

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 44:42

Hey, thanks for joining us for today's conversation. Feel free to head on over to secondadolescencepod.com for show notes and more and you can connect further by following the show on Instagram at [@secondadolescencepod](https://www.instagram.com/secondadolescencepod). If you're interested in being a future guests on the show and you want to come on and share about your own second adolescence, visit secondadolescencepod.com/beaguest and you can submit your interest there. Alright, that's it for me for now, whether it's morning, afternoon night, wherever we're finding you and your day, go on out there and keep doing things that would make younger you absolutely thrilled. That is what it's all about. Alright, take good care