

LOVE IN A F\*CKED UP WORLD PODCAST  
EP12 AMA WITH JESSICA LANYADOO (PART 2)

Dean: I'm Dean Spade. Welcome back to Love A F\*cked Up World, the podcast, where we talk about how to build and sustain strong connections because our movements are made of our relationships and are only as strong as they are. This week, we're bringing you part two of the Ask Me Anything episode with the brilliant queer astrologer, Jessica Lanyadoo, host of Ghost of a Podcast.

I loved getting to talk through these listener questions with Jessica, and hear her perspective. Thank you to all the listeners who submitted them. Part one of this episode was released last week, so you can find it linked in the show notes or in your feed.

These questions were submitted via Patreon at [patreon.com/deanspade](https://patreon.com/deanspade). I hope you'll join us there and submit questions for future Ask Me Anything episodes, be part of ongoing conversations we're having there, and get access to live events and content that I don't post anywhere else.

Okay. Let's jump back into the questions with Jessica Lanyadoo.

All right. I'm gonna read this one.

Jessica: Okay.

Dean: Okay. "I'm navigating a [00:01:00] crossroads in my partnership / marriage, one in which I have felt stagnant and unhappy for many years. Over that time, I've also done a lot of deep diving into the colonial constructs of marriage and the nuclear family, and with that vision for a different way of being in relationship. I'm also queer and have never been able to be in a queer relationship.

All of this has brought conversations about opening the marriage. Many of my loved ones have encouraged me to break up with him, but I don't feel ready to emotionally, nervous system-wise, or financially. In the meantime, I've been envisioning a space of my own, like a tiny house in our yard to create, sleep, and have friends over.

I imagine this will help me maintain some connection and intimacy with my spouse while helping me decenter that relationship in my life. The future remains to be seen, and I would love any insight y'all might have for folks looking to explore slower relationship transitions that exist in the gray space of possibility."

Jessica: I have a lot of thoughts on this one.

Dean: Talk to me.

Jessica: Like a lot of thoughts. I have like some truisms. And one of them for me is [00:02:00] if you're in a monogamous relationship or a primary relationship, (and not all relationships fall into that kind of like linear structure, but most do), that's the place where you're supposed to get your meals.

If you're like, "I'm not getting my meals, but I would like to stay in the relationship and get my meals elsewhere", for me, that is, you're no longer staying in the relationship because of your partner or because of the relationship. You're staying in the relationship from more of an avoidant perspective.

So like a slow unwinding of a relationship is something you do with your partner, not in your backyard with other people. What you do in your backyard with other people is being single, but like maybe not financially and emotionally independent. And this is a question where, you know, and I don't have all the facts, but this person wrote a question and did not say a damn thing about their partner, their spouse.

And personally me, I don't like marriage. I'm not married. I'm forever "fianced". I don't, yeah, I don't have a ring to [00:03:00] prove it on, but I am forever "fianced". I'm not a fan of marriage. I don't like marriage. I'm, I think it's really great for a lot of people. People love marriage. But when you get married, there are certain agreements. And you can have different agreements, but this person isn't suggesting that they have an alternative marriage. They're just saying they're married.

And so for me, it sounds like they're not collaborating with their spouse to end this relationship. What they're instead doing is trying to be okay with leaving before they leave. And that can end up turning you into your spouse's bad guy. That can end up really being selfish and harming your partner. And it can take the potential for an ongoing friendship and like fuck with it, and that's not great. And then furthermore, I think the vast majority of the time when we leave a long-term relationship, whether you're, you know, married or not. And marriage is a big deal because the government's involved, right? Once you involve the government, it's a big deal to like get out of the [00:04:00] relationship. And if you are in a heterosexual relationship in 2025, the man has power in the relationship and that could get more real and more intense given the political world we're living in. And I feel like what I'm saying is obvious, but Dean, tell me if it isn't.

But that all said, I feel like if you are in a marriage, it is only fair to collaborate with your partner about what it means to be married and what it means to be partnered and to make sure that there is consent on both sides. Nobody likes breaking up. Everybody is scared to leave their spouse or their long-term partner, everybody.

If you're waiting for that moment, when you feel ready, that moment rarely comes unless you wait for calamity. And what a lot of us do is we push ourselves or we push our partner to a point where there's calamity and then we don't have a choice. We have to leave. But that's the short term easy way, but the long-term hard way. Because you turn [00:05:00] yourself into the bad guy in a way, you don't need calamity to leave.

So again, I don't have enough information to know if the advice I'm giving is like perfect for your situation. But the fact that this questioner didn't share details about their spouse or their spouse's needs for me is a little red flag.

Dean: I love your answer. It like went somewhere I wasn't expecting and it was a challenge to me. I'm like somebody who loves to like never break up and just become friends or whatever. It's not always true. But I've had some of that in my life. But I also really advise against that for people a lot of the time because just as you're saying, whenever you break up with someone, of course you still love many things about them or you wouldn't have been together this long usually. And so you are giving something up, and we all wanna like not give anything up. And I do see a lot of people's worst behavior occurs when they don't have a bounded period that indicates 'we are changing our dynamic'. Like I've seen a lot of people be like, okay, we're breaking up, but we're not gonna take any break from the way we communicate.

And then they're super jealous about each other's new people and they violate each other's privacy or they say a lot of judgmental stuff and like actually so much more of the damage happens after the [00:06:00] breakup than in the final period. And so I can see, I really see what you're saying. On the one hand I really believe in like creativity around family and relationships. And people can open relationships and not do the relationship escalator, but instead do a different thing where like, now we're gonna not live together, but we're still gonna co-parent in these ways. Or actually we still like to have sex, but we don't wanna be monogamous or primary, or you know, I think people should get to like be creative in that.

But then we have to just watch ourselves to be like, am I just avoiding conflict? Or is one person the decider too much, you know? Um, and the other person's not being considered.

Jessica: That right there is the thing. In this situation, I'm hearing that the questioner is the decider. And I, in my experience with counseling people, because this kind of relationship structure is not my way, but in my experience with counseling people, I will say there's usually one person who actually just wants to leave, who doesn't wanna deal with the conflict or the loss, or who doesn't have the financial capacity to leave. Like, right? There's layers

[00:07:00] here. And that one person is like, let's try the relationship with a hat. Let's try the relationship topless. Like, you know, just like try the relationship in different ways.

And the other person, because they don't wanna lose their spouse or their partner, they're like, okay, I guess I'll try that. And if your partner is agreeing to something because they're scared sick of losing you, then you are in a position where you may be abusing your power in that dynamic. And that must be interrogated.

Because in my experience counseling people, the heartbreak we experience over someone hurting your feelings of somebody leaving you, oh, that's awful. God, it's awful. But the heartbreak that we experience over the fucked up shit we do? That shit stays with you a lifetime. And so it's important to find ways of navigating this that are collaborative if your intention is to respect the relationship or the spouse.

Because if you're really [00:08:00] like, I'm not really in this marriage anymore. I wanna live in the backyard. I can't really afford to move out and I wanna have a gay old time, respect, but how exactly does your partner's needs fit into this mix? Like I'm not hearing a space for the partner. And that's where when we feel oppressed or repressed and we finally are like, fuck it, I'm gonna take care of myself. There's a way that the pendulum can swing too far into entitlement.

Dean: Mm-hmm.

Jessica: And that's something that I think is important for all of us to be mindful of when making any kind of like a radical shift within relationship, it has to be consensual. And that's sticky a lot of times for a lot of people.

Dean: Which I think, you know, I, years ago I read a self-help book that blew my mind when it said we shouldn't compromise in our relationships. So I think that also speaks to the partner who's, if there's a partner who's afraid. I gotta give Jessica what she wants because I don't want her to leave me. So if she wants to open our relationship, or if she wants to live in the backyard or whatever.

This really blew my mind in this book. 'cause it was basically like when we approach relationships [00:09:00] primarily as compromise, we soon are in a little box that we created. You know, so Jessica and I are dating and she doesn't want me to go to graduate school in another city or country. So I don't, and then I don't want her to hang out with that friend because I'm jealous and then she doesn't want me to...you know? And so then we're both making each other's world smaller. And this is your average sexless marriage.

So what that means is that everybody has to advocate for themselves. Even though we don't know where this is gonna end up, if I'm really advocating to go to graduate school, and Jessica's really advocating that we fuck other people, we may or may not reach a place where we can be in this relationship and have the things we want. And that's worth the risk 'cause we want our chosen relationship instead of caging each other. And with the whole framework of marriage and "forever", and our attachment systems' obsession with finding somebody who will love us more than ever forever -- but then also being very curious about other people -- is hard here, you know? And I think you can go through those storms with people and actually end up choosing to be together and renegotiate.

I think most healthy relationships include major renegotiations once in a while because it means people are growing and [00:10:00] changing, which we want for ourselves and our loved ones, but everybody has to advocate for what they want. I can't just be like, I gotta hold onto Jessica no matter what, and therefore I'm not gonna...and then later I'm pissed 'cause you're doing something, you know?

So yeah, I feel like this is a complex piece about how we want our relationships to make us more alive and more ourselves. And that means I have to be kind to my lover expressing their wants, even if their wants terrify me, if I possibly can.

Jessica: Yeah. Yeah. And I think, you know, so much of what you're talking about is not what I associate with marriage, it's what I associate with relationships.

And I think like it is important to acknowledge that marriage changes things. Because it's a "thing". And I think there's so many assumptions and expectations and centuries-deep worn grooves into what marriage means. It may be that like this person and their spouse, one of them or both of them can't actually do a non-traditional marriage.

Or they might need to really like consciously address the [00:11:00] marriage component. I don't know why I'm so stuck on it, but I feel like that's like relevant to the questioner. And I also think, you know, they did mention finances, and if...my general advice for anyone in a situation where they're financially reliant on their partner: if you are considering leaving, prioritizing financial independence should be like at the top of the list. And moving into the backyard is more financial reliance on the partner. Right? So for me it is a sticky thing, but it's really important to not get trapped by your own expectations, by the expectations of community or in a, in a situation if you can avoid it.

And I, part of what I think is happening in this dynamic is again, I get like really strong feelings of like, this person needs to work

materially on cultivating freedom as opposed to like internally, because you can be internally free, but if your circumstances are ensnaring you, then you're just prolonging the problem in a way.

Does that make sense, what I'm trying to say?

Dean: Yeah. I think also we have to put in, as giant [00:12:00] raging homosexuals, that I'm so glad this person is queer. And a lot of people I meet who are queer and in a straight marriage have a hard time finding queer community. And even before you're figuring out whether or not you're gonna start having sex with other people, you need to find some queer friends.

Like that is gonna be essential to getting whatever it is you want next in life. And to finding out how to, like sometimes I know people find a person to have sex with, but they haven't found any queer culture or queer community. And that is like the thing that like makes the whole thing really worth it.

So I think that's the other thing I would say is like working it all out will work better if you have queer community.

Jessica: Agree. Agree button.

Dean: Okay. Do you wanna read the next one?

Jessica: Okay. This question is not dissimilar. "How do you assess if you wanna open up your relationship to flirt back with a friend? How do you communicate your longings and take risks with everyone involved?

I'm currently in a closed monogamous agreement, but I feel flirty energy from a dear friend through their [00:13:00] comments. I'm scared to lose my relationship, my friendship, and to ask about their flirty comments. A flirty and physically affectionate interaction doesn't sound too bad, but is it just a fantasy or is it worth exploring? I feel like I'm coming into contact with the edges in monogamy."

Dean: I mean, I think curiosity is a beautiful thing. And we wanna have relationships where we can be honest and curious. And a place I would start would be talking to this person's monogamous date to be like, "I'm having this question", you know? It doesn't mean any decisions have been made. You haven't addressed it with the flirt first, which I think could feel hard for the monogamous partner. I would just float that this is a question for you.

Opening up relationships is hard. People have also a lot of fear around it 'cause people have heard it's hard or seen it not work for some people. Some people open their relationship, but really they

wanna get outta the relationship. You know, there's a lot of questions here. I was in a monogamous relationship for 11 years and we opened, and it has, we've stayed together. And [00:14:00] that's been maybe four and a half years ago or something. And I share that just because I think it is possible to do that if it's genuinely something that everybody wants to do.

And we were lucky. I think part of the reason it worked well was that it wasn't like either of us were like, "I must fuck this person". Sometimes I think it can be hard on the relationship when somebody's really driven to go fast because they want this one connection, and the other person gets really wrapped up in jealousy about that one person.

So I look out for that. Like, can you raise this question really genuinely with your partner about what all of this means to you in a really trustworthy way? And get to have an open process around that that doesn't feel rushed or pushy. I think that's more likely to generate curiosity on all sides.

Jessica: I really like your unpacking because what I was gonna say was something very similar, but in more of a hammer than a feather kind of way. Which is to say, yeah, if you're like very monogamous with your partner and you're like, I need to open up the relationship so I can get with this specific person, that [00:15:00] doesn't go well. Like if my partner came to me with that, I would be like, who are they? Should I, should I find them? Should I look at their Instagram?

Making it about somebody else is stickier than making it about yourself. And if you don't really wanna be a monogamous, but you actually just wanna get with your friends, then be careful because some doors cannot be unopened. Right? Like this is a really important thing for you to consider. And I would also say something you said, Dean, which is, don't talk to the crush first because that's, that is outside of the relationship's monogamous agreement.

Because to me, the agreement of monogamy is not just about body parts and where you put them. It's about having an agreement that like you don't keep any kind of parts of your sexuality and your romantic life separate and secret from me. And so as soon as you start keeping secrets with other people about your sexual dynamic, you're outside of monogamy as far as I am concerned.

And this is about accountability, right? [00:16:00] Accountability to like, am I just feeling restless and like I wanna have a fun, flirty thing that has nothing to do with my partner? Am I super into this other person? Or do I wanna change our actual relationship? Because if you wanna change the actual relationship, then I think it's reasonable to expect that if you're both willing to do the work, then you'll have an experience like you did Dean, where you're like, yeah, we worked

through it.

But if it's really just like "I have a bestie and now we have sexual dynamic", that's not really non-monogamy. Now we're more actually into polyamory. We're into not just having a sexual dynamic, but having an intimate sexual dynamic with someone else. When opening things up to your partner, who you have a monogamous relationship with and a monogamous agreement with, my thinking is like, it's really important to be mindful. Like when you open the floodgates, your partner gets to flood in the gate, right? Your partner gets to flirt with their bestie, your partner gets to fuck whoever they want. Again, thinking about it outside of this one crush and this [00:17:00] one like exciting, flirting, dynamic is your assignment for yourself.

That's your self care. That's your responsibility to your partner, and in this space, it might make sense to be a little less flirty with the bestie so that you don't do that thing that we do when we're really crushed out on someone and we have chemistry with somebody where you're just like, oh shit, it happened, I didn't mean for it to happen. Oh my god.

When you knew. You knew, right? Like we know when we're like pushing things. So yeah, that's my take on that.

Dean: I like that this person's question indicates that they're letting this crushy or flirty feeling ask a bigger question about their life. In the years leading up to when I opened my relationship, I was like, oh, what are these little crushes I've had mean?

And I like didn't think they were things I needed to pursue, but I was like, oh, I'm like, yeah, having a, like a little crush on somebody or flirting with somebody. And I'm like, oh, what does this mean? My boyfriend and I had both been in open relationships before our relationship and we'd always said maybe we would do that someday. And no pressure. Don't lie or just do it. If you wanna do it, let's actually talk about it, whatever. So I was like, oh, this is good information. So I think using crushes as [00:18:00] information can be nice for ourselves. It doesn't mean anything particular necessarily about this person or the future.

And then the other thing I was thinking about was, yeah, like what does monogamy mean? Right? Like it could be that in our relationship it's fine to look at dating apps. Or in our relationship, it's fine if I like jerk off in live chat with someone, but we're not meeting people in person. Or, and people do all kinds of things. You know what I mean? Like, let's just be real.

Or in some people's monogamous relationship, it's like you can't talk to our, your friends about our relationship. I mean, some people have very locked down levels of exclusivity about emotional pieces, not

just sexual things. In some people's monogamous relationship, you talk to your friends in every detail about your sex life with your partner and yourself or a porn or whatever you're into. So just like even getting to have a conversation with people in your life about what you mean when you say you're monogamous with each other.

Jessica: Yes.

Dean: And if you want to change even that to start, even if you wanna be like, I wanna look at dating apps and I don't wanna hide that from you. Or I want to talk more with my friends about sex than I have been, and I wanna make sure that you know I'm doing that so it's not a surprise or whatever. [00:19:00]

Like just, I knew somebody who was in a relationship where it felt like all their friendships were couple friendships with their partner and they were like, I wanna have some independent friendships 'cause I'm not getting some needs met. Or there was too much exclusivity. So just like all those fine tuning things that are about like letting the crush or the flirt like wake you up to be like, is there anything I've agreed to that's not updated with me right now?

Jessica: Yeah, I love that. And I will say like this conversation for me, and I think this person said that they were queer, but it reminds me like I gave a talk at the first ever queer astrology conference in San Francisco a number of years ago and it was entitled Queering Astrology.

And what you and I are really talking about is like the queering of our understanding of what is monogamy, what is non-monogamy, how to navigate those things. And what you're describing with your partnership sounds like it might be a little different from this person, 'cause this person said they have like a traditional monogamous agreement. Whereas you did something that I have done I think in all of my relationships where I'm like, yeah, we're monogamous now and like we'll talk about it. Because it's [00:20:00] like such a like not gay, \_queer\_ ethos to be like, "things change, we'll change, we'll grow. What's a relationship?" Right? And I think a lot of times monogamy functions under a series of assumptions.

Dean: Mm-hmm.

Jessica: And one of the most common things I've experienced with folks that are like married or like in monogamous relationships, that's all they've ever really considered. When I ask them like, "okay, well why do you wanna be in a relationship? Or why do you want monogamy? Or why do you wanna be married?" They literally are stumped because no one's ever asked them that question, including they have not asked themselves that question. And I think that's, again, just like a good thing for this person or anybody to think about is like, it's okay if

you haven't asked yourself the kind of obvious base question, because most of us don't. It's just, you know, you and I live in a very queer world and where that's like, I think more of an expectation than in most worlds it might be. If that makes sense. Like you have to be like --

Dean: Yeah. And I think some of the listeners of this podcast are in [00:21:00] that transition. Are people who I heard from who are people who may have some level of queer identity or non-binary identity, have been in a pretty straight relationship and are figuring out how to queer those expectations or ask those questions. Or like come to a more consensual relationship with themself about what relating might look like, that means kind of wiping the decks of like the things that were presumed that they wanna make sure they're really choosing. Um, so I love this question.

Jessica: Yeah. And to your point if that's the case, like the piece about making sure that your access to queerness is not just online, that it's in meat space, like "meat". Meat space community is really important because there's layers and generations of community around how we navigate gender, how we navigate relationship structures, consent, you know, all of this kind of stuff.

And I feel like having the experiential layer of it is really important. So there's that.

Dean: Call a queer elder.

Jessica: Call a queer elder. Shit. That's our next [00:22:00] podcast collaboration. Um, okay, wait. I will just say like you kind of referenced porn and the last question on this document is about porn. I think we should insert it up here.

Dean: Great. Yeah.

Jessica: Do you like that?

Dean: What do you think about pornography?

Jessica: Um, sorry, I just saw the comment. Yes. Call a queer elder. I literally think we should do a podcast called that. I'm pitching it to you. Let your team hear it. Okay. Hope says yes. Now you have to do it. Dean, I know you've got nothing but time.

Dean: I do what Hope says. And I've been doing that since I was 25.

Jessica: Okay. That's exactly what I wanna hear. You heard it here first folks. Okay, so what do I think of porn? What do you think of porn? Okay, here's the thing. We live in capitalism and patriarchy. We live in a ableist, racist world. Therefore, porn's really fucked up.

Also, porn's great, porn's fun. It just, who's making the porn? How's the porn being made? Is it exploitative? I mean, we should be asking that question about porn. Also, about DoorDash, also [00:23:00] about fucking AI. Like we should be asking the question about everything and not just the thing that gets fucking demonized. And porn's fun when it's not exploitative and terrible. What do you think of porn?

Dean: Yeah, I mean obviously, yeah, so like I come from a very pro-sex politics that's very tied in with solidarity with people doing sex work. And so in that sense, you know, we're against all like using banning of porn or of sex work or whatever, usually in the name of protecting women, all of that is bad for people. It's bad for women, it's bad for sex workers, it's bad for queers. Whenever porn is banned, it's always queer porn that gets banned or queer bookshops that get closed. Or I know we can all be called obscene for being queer and trans. And that is of course the politics of today. So we wanna like avoid anti-sex politics. And we can talk about how porn, yeah, can be exploitive and porn can also have a weird role in our own lives. Like there are plenty of people I know who are struggling with how to deal with it. There's so much intense stuff available to them at all times. And it's just like one, like everything else. [00:24:00] Like you can have it with video games or with Instagram or with any substance or food or process.

You know, it's something that people can have a struggle with or that they can feel affects their sexuality in ways that they don't like. I also meet people who are grappling with that. So to me it's just like everything else: how's this going for me? How does this make me feel? How does this relate to my values? Are there things that I'm doing with this that don't feel aligned or that I...And I think it's really hard with sex, like if I have shame about something I'm doing with my sexuality, is that just cultural shame? Am I just being shamed by our culture and then I have internalized it? Or am I experiencing like a concern that's grounded? Because a lot of times we can use our politics to like shame ourselves.

So I think this stuff is really complex. And again, it's an area where I'm like, you gotta have friends to talk to. It's like that's the most useful thing is just to talk to friends. Like, do you, do you watch porn? I, I watch this and I feel like, is it okay that I watch it? Or like, do you think there's a way to watch things like this more ethically? Or, I don't like porn, is there something wrong with me, or like, [00:25:00] whatever that is. I think I want everyone to have more friends and talk to their friends about sex. Like that is the thing that I think would make our sex lives safer and better.

And shame is really dangerous for us because we are likely to hide and not get support and sometimes fall into behaviors that aren't benefiting us. Like shame just really like leads to all of that. So for me, like shame wants to hide. It's beneficial to instead phone a

friend.

Jessica: You know, in astrology, Pluto governs coming and shitting and shame. It governs kink and power play. I mean, there are other ways I could look at different planets associated with kink, but you know, playing with power is so Plutonian. And so there's a way that the porn industry capitalizes on our shame. You know, 700 years ago in the 1990s of San Francisco, I worked in a phone sex office, and I did the dispatch. I didn't do the calls, I did the dispatch. And back in the day there was a distinction [00:26:00] because phone sex was a thing, whatever. But you know where we had the most callers always? The fucking Bible Belt is where. The Bible Belt, because there was shame around sex and sexuality. And shame can create kinks. And then those kinks create shame. And then we have a cycle. And so, you know, as a more introverted person than you, I'm like, yes, having friends to talk about this stuff with is a great goal. And also, not everyone wants to talk about sex with their friends, or some of their friends are just like not the right people.

So if you can't have a good friend to talk to about it, get a therapist. Not Chat GPT, not a language model. A therapist who you can talk to. Or if that's not accessible, make it a mission to consume sex-positive content, videos, writing from sex workers. And when I say "sex-positive", I don't mean positive about porn inherently. I mean not starting from the premise that sex is inherently bad, or coming, or kinks are inherently bad, right? So that's what sex positivity [00:27:00] is. It's not having a value judgment on sex and sexuality and gender from the get, which a lot of people do. I think we all do.

Dean: Yeah. And I mean, it's obvious, but I feel like I just need to say it anyway: it's so amazing to take things that you feel are taboo to feel or think, and play them out with people in kink. Yeah, like that is so lovely. Like there are ways to engage consensually about all the things we most fear: wanting to control and possess others, wanting to be controlled and be possessed, wanting to submit and dominate. Like these are all really typical reactions to living in this kind of society that are like their drives. And it can be so much fun to find people to do them with in ways that really interest you, or watch people do them in ways that were consensual when they chose to record the thing.

You know, there just actually is, there's so much community out there about all of that. And I, yeah, I think if people feel any fear about looking into that, yeah, it's just, it's there. And luckily there's a lot of online community and there's [00:28:00] gatherings and there's, you know, there's so much.

Jessica: Yeah.

Dean: If you wanna make your life more about sex, which I think a lot

of people would really benefit from.

Jessica: Mm-hmm.

Dean: Um, you can find ways to do that and find like your people. And it might, it might be a lot of hunting. Yeah. But like it's, there's beautiful books. There's so much stuff.

Jessica: There's so much stuff. And this is where, whether you're gay or straight, I always point people towards queer thinkers, writers, when it comes to topics of sexuality. Because there's less well worn grooves and assumptions in queer theory and the queer politic around sex (from my perspective).

But of course, I'm a homo. I don't know, maybe that's too much of a pitch. I wanna just say one thing, kind of adjacent topic, which is the anxiety and terror that so many of us are living under in 2025, and I'm confident in 2026, and I won't go further than that because come on, let's metabolize what we can.

Um, for some people it's gonna accelerate your sex drive, it's gonna accelerate your drive to watch porn or do other things that provoke intense emotions. And for other people, it's going to diminish your [00:29:00] sexuality and diminish your sex drive and diminish your interest in or even capacity to be in your body.

And that's okay. Both of these things are okay. You wanna start from a, a foundation of "shit is fucked up". You are a person in a body. You are navigating complexity and systems of oppression inside of your own shit. And if you are finding yourself really struggling with sex by overdoing it or underdoing it, that's cool.

Start from a place of acceptance, of witnessing yourself and giving yourself permission to be where you're at for now, as long as you're not harming yourself or others. Right? And that's an important question. Am I harming myself or others? If the answer is no, then hang out there. And if the answer is yes, then how can I adapt so that I can be where I'm at without perpetrating harm against myself or other people?

Right? Because I have also conversely seen, you know, people be in kink situations with people where there is not clear consent, there is abuse of power and people get really hurt. [00:30:00] And so you wanna come at this from as clean of a place as possible. And how you get clean with your intentions and your motivations is by cultivating presence and acceptance for what is, before you try to, you know, change the vibes. You know, I think that's an important thing to say. Porn is sticky. Sex is sticky, you know?

Dean: Yeah.

Jessica: It's important though.

Dean: That's why this book and this podcast is, these are the areas where most of us are not really aware of what's going on with ourselves and where shame gets in the way. And we have super strong reactions to ourselves and others.

Trying to find ways to also not judge other people's use of porn or sex, or other people's sexual practices, to like really be caring and it's, this is all really hard with partners and with people in our close realms.

Jessica: Yeah.

Dean: One day at a time.

Jessica: One day at a time, man.

Dean: All right. Here's another question: "do you have suggestions on how to navigate gender envy when newly attracted to someone? How do I know whether I'm attracted to things about them that are unrelated to my own personal aspirations, [00:31:00] or I'm attracted to them because I wish I had some quality that they have? I don't wanna feel like I'm disrespecting my hot friends or putting them on a pedestal, and I wanna make sure I'm being honest with them and myself before pursuing anything."

So part of what I get outta this is the person is trying to figure out like, "do I just admire you or do I actually wanna fuck you?" Or it maybe even, "do I wanna be like you or do I wanna fuck you?" And there's so many dilemmas in this. So like one thing is, you know, some people are like, "I have a type and I only like..." and I really encourage us all to like be more flexible with that, if we can be.

But then the danger is I might be like, "okay, I'm gonna try it. This isn't my usual thing, but I'm feeling something." And then I might find out I don't wanna go forward, right? Like, "oh, what if I can't sustain attraction to some type of person that's outside who I've traditionally been attracted to?"

My feeling is like this is about consent. So yes, if you're attracted to somebody at the time, you can have that attraction and pursue it to the extent that you want and you can stop at any time. That's the nature of us being interested in consent. We might wanna ask ourselves why we're attracted to [00:32:00] people, like if they have a status or a quality, but that's also an okay, I mean, I think it's okay to learn about ourselves through attractions. As long as we're being honest all the time. I don't wanna be like, yes, I'll be your betrothed husband when actually, I just wanted to like see what it was

like to go on two dates with somebody with your qualities. So as long as I'm keeping people up to date and not misleading anyone about what I'm doing, I don't think there's something wrong with exploring different kinds of attraction. And as long as I'm not being extractive or acquisitive. I definitely think that there are people in our communities where someone's like, "I wanna date a black person. I wanna date a trans person." I want, you know, like there can be ways in which certain kinds of qualities people become acquisitive about, and people who have some of those have been through a lot with that, and it's really damaging and unfair.

So trying to be self-aware if we're using someone in a way that they're probably not consenting to, and that involves difficult repeated power dynamics, and we're not always able to be aware of that. But I think we can all stand to think more about how those [00:33:00] dynamics might be impacting dating and attraction.

What do you think?

Jessica: Mm-hmm. Yeah, I think, I think not being extractive is really key. And something this person said in that question really kind of like stuck with me, which is like, "I don't wanna put my hot friends on a pedestal." That's how they said it, right, I didn't make that up? Right?

Dean: Yeah.

Jessica: To me, what that implies is that they're crushing out on their hot friends, not just "how do I know if it's gender envy?" It's also like the boundaries of like, "I really like you" and I really like you" seem to be like confusing for this person. And I'm curious about how that's about gender. Right? Because they didn't share if they were like questioning their gender, if they are trans or non-binary, which I usually think of like envy in that context, but I don't know what this person's deal is.

So it really comes down to consent, like you said. It's just like, you don't wanna be a bathtub man. That's not an expression you know, because I made it up and I, I use it as though it's a thing. But like there's like a certain kind of person [00:34:00] who's just like, "Hey baby, you're so fine. Did you have a hard day? I'm gonna run you a bath. I'm gonna put rose petals all around your bath. I'm gonna make sure that you feel great." And then they run the bath. And then they get what they need outta you, and then they leave your apartment and your bathtub overflows and you have to deal with fucking water damage. There's certain kind of person who only gets off and can only have any kind of sexual intimacy by promising romance even when they're not in it for that.

I call that a bathtub man. Don't be a bathtub man. And as long as

you're not being a bathtub man, as long as you're being like, yeah, I'm curious about exploring this. Like I think it would be hot for the two of us to hang out. Not, I would love to get to know you better, like be clear with your language about what you're offering and what you're asking for. As long as you do that, you know, you're good.

Dean: So I recently had a conversation with a friend who was concerned about whether or not someone was genuinely attracted to her.

Jessica: Mm-hmm.

Dean: She was like, I'm not the type of person this person's usually attracted to, and I'm a little worried they're attracted to me because they admire something about me. That this person had a certain [00:35:00] relationship to something she had done in the world and was kind of a fan.

Jessica: Yeah.

Dean: And I think this is also interesting about ourselves. What do I wanna be wanted for?

Jessica: Yeah.

Dean: Can I stand to be wanted for which, you know, parts of myself? And if I want to have experiences of being wanted for things I'm not usually wanted for, what am I gonna have to do to get that? You know? And just being real about that. And then she also told me a story about somebody she knew who wanted someone 'cause this person had a preexisting status they knew about. And then after they were together for a little while, they were like, "well, I'm not into it", 'cause like the bloom is off the rose. Right? Like I was so excited to connect to this person 'cause I had an idea about them, but I actually don't have sustained attraction. That, you know, you can imagine that being hard for the person who --

Jessica: Yeah, it sucks!

Dean: -- left, but you know, we're all doing it, we're not transparent to ourselves.

Jessica: Yep.

Dean: So I can't entirely know what I wanna be wanted for, and I can't entirely know why I want you, but I can try to do a bit of inquiry about it. And try to be ethical and transparent and honest as much as possible. And, we are gonna hurt each other's feelings. [00:36:00]

Jessica: Yeah. And Dean, what you're bringing up I think is really important and may or may not be relevant to the questioner, but it's

the parasocial relationship. Like, I don't date people who are into astrology, period. I don't fuck people who are into astrology, period. Like I just, that for me is like, you know, because then there's no risk of that. Like the parasocial relationship is something that in 2025, nobody is immune to. Everybody has parasocial relationships, everybody. And we don't understand it enough, psychologically, emotionally, spiritually.

Then when that parasocial relationship becomes a material relationship or a sexual relationship, oh my god, we have like all of the most like pedestal placing behaviors all activated at once. It's really hard. And so I also think like this thing of placing others on a pedestal, it is important to state that that is a behavior of not having a real relationship with a real person. Placing someone else on a pedestal is a practice of not truly knowing them and not allowing them to be messy and not allowing them to be really different than what you [00:37:00] think they are. I feel so strongly about that.

I'll never forget, I was once at some like big dinner and I met somebody who had listened to my podcast and we were chatting and I was loving our conversation. It wasn't like, it wasn't sexual or romantic, but it was like, it was like, oh my god, I'm adoring this person. I'm having so much fun. And then they turned to me and they were like, "you're really different than the way I thought you'd be." And it hurt my feelings so bad. I was like, "oh god, I wasn't performing myself. I wasn't narrating a podcast." Um, I was just being a person and I was talking about like my insecurities and my feelings and my thoughts and my theories, and it like disappointed this person. And I was like, \_oh, that's terrible. \_

And it just, it like alerted me to a different layer of the parasocial dynamic. And I think that like trying to like eke it back into this question, it is really important if this person is like crushing on their friends, to make sure that they're crushing on their friends. So again, the whole person, which [00:38:00] I think is to your point, really just about consent, isn't it?

Dean: Yeah. I think also I love what you said about how kind of everyone's affected by the parasocial. I just wrote a new section in a new edition of Mutual Aid about parasocial relationships.

Jessica: Thank you.

Dean: Because it's such a big deal in activism.

Jessica: Yeah.

Dean: Because it's like parasocial relationships aren't just for like celebrities. It's like literally someone could just be the person who started the mutual aid group and is known in your town that way, and

then you're having a whole thing, oh my god, I'm having lunch with so-and-so, or whatever. There's a pressure. I think parasocial dynamics are just a form of pressure. And a lot of people listening might be, you might be the only trans activist on your campus, or the only black feminist doing this work in your town, or whatever. And so people are having a parasocial relationship to you that you don't get to choose about, because it just means you're important to them in some way that predates you getting to know them one-on-one.

Jessica: A hundred percent.

Dean: And there's tons of that because social media, all of this is just happening. You don't have to have any real celebrity for this to be happening. And so that's really hard and it puts pressure on every aspect. It puts pressure on the speed at which we're going to escalate the relationship, because one person [00:39:00] knows more about the other one than the other one does. It puts pressure on what, what it means to talk about it to friends and what, and other people watching us.

Jessica: Yeah.

Dean: Because there's this importance about this one person. I mean this also takes place in relationships where there's age differences, where one person's lived in a town for a long time and the other person's new in town, I mean there's so many... But I just wanna name, these are forms of pressure. And really what they require is honesty, self inquiry and like deliberateness. Like, okay, what am I being motivated by right now? Do I want everyone to see me with Jessica because she's a podcaster? You're like, what's happening? And the other thing about parasocial relationships is people forget to take care of the person who's the object of projection.

Jessica: Yes.

Dean: So it's like, oh, they must be doing great, everyone loves them. And it's like, oh no, they're just like a person maybe who's also privacy is being violated, or who has a hard time dating in the town because everyone knows them. Or who, or actually maybe who I should be careful not to talk about so much 'cause it might be hot gossip 'cause they're known as the big blah blah blah in this town. Or you know, even someone who like ran for a local office. The smallest --

Jessica: Absolutely.

Dean: The [00:40:00] person owns the queer restaurant. I've met this person a million times. Like somebody, they're famous \_in our town\_.

Jessica: Yes. Yeah.

Dean: You know, enough to make it annoying for them, or to be vulnerable for them in ways that we all might not be thinking about, 'cause we're just like, "that's a wonderful status to have" or something. Or we all think, like being known is good in a culture that's obsessed with fame, but it's actually --

Jessica: It's isolating. I think it can be quite isolating. And I think like, again, to keep it to this person's question too, it's like even if you have a friend and there's nothing about the parasocial, it's just purely social. If you're really fixated on like this one characteristic of them, it's ultimately isolating a part of them in your psyche, and then it isolates them. It doesn't allow room for them.

Like maybe you love how strong they are, but then it turns out that they're like having an anxiety spiral and they're weeping one day and then that like destroys your crush, right? There's so many layers of how this functions parasocially, socially, and we all are participating in it.

And I think this is such a good point of inquiry, 'cause at first I was like, I'm not sure how to answer this [00:41:00] question. But I actually think this is such a rich question and related to so many things that are really active for all of us right now.

And did you hear that like Chat GPT is releasing like a mature, like an 'adult only' like sex and love robot situation? Not robot, but you know what I mean. Did you hear about this? I'm saying it wrong. For the record, fuck Sam Altman. But also it bleeds into so many of the questions we're addressing here today because it's like, what is a relationship at all? And what does it mean to be further encouraged to fetishize individual threads of our desire or what we think is interesting or good? And how can we resist that and really center our emotional integrity, our emotional complexity, the nuances of how we feel, our motivations, what we desire, and what we actually let ourselves go for? Right? Like that emotional messiness is where our humanity thrives.

Dean: Yeah. And also it's like as we notice all of these kind of dangers of [00:42:00] projection and of being projected upon, I also just wanna keep encouraging people to have sex.

Jessica: Yeah, yeah.

Dean: And try, you know, it's like I've known a lot of people who've really isolated themselves because they've like, oh, I'm the only queer professor in this town. Or I'm the, you know, I'm the Palestinian feminist in this region who's speaking out on these things or whatever. It's like the answer can't be that we have to be perfect and like never, you know, I don't know the feeling when it feels

people are watching you 'cause of some status or identity you have.

So yeah, I just wanna also encourage people to get support from friends, to still be open to people and to experiences like this is our one life.

Jessica: Yeah. I really appreciate that you always bring it back to that.

Dean: One more question that we have.

Jessica: One! More! Question!

Dean: Okay. So this person first includes an excerpt from Love in a Fucked Up World from page 292. So I'm gonna read this excerpt in case it's useful for people who haven't read the book or whatever. This is the section of the book: "While some people escalate when they don't mean to, others say they want more connection in sexual and romantic relationships, but unconsciously take [00:43:00] actions that block this from happening. This also comes up when people are narrowly specific about what kind of relationship they want. For example, being unwilling to connect with anyone unless it will lead to committed partnership. When we feel more secure in ourselves, we can become more flexible, finding greater enjoyment for what is actually available.

As we build our capacity to get safety from within ourselves, we may find that we can explore beyond our fears of being hurt, or the romance myth's fantasies of being fulfilled."

So the person's question is: "I find I'm one of those people who is very affected by the romance myth and have found your book really helpful as I start to release a lot of that baggage. While I still want romance in a partner, I'm learning not to feel so, so devastated at not having it. For background, I'm monogamous and don't think that will change, and I've been looking for a serious partner. How do you approach not being closed off to other things like you suggest? What does this really look like? What other things is it safe to be open to? If I really like someone, I feel driven to get them to ride the escalator with me and everything else feels like settling for less. What kind of things could people like [00:44:00] me be open to that won't hurt?"

Jessica: You gotta start, 'cause this is off a quote, off your book.

Dean: Yeah. This is like the idea of being here for what's here that I think I talk about mostly in Chapter 6. I think what's hard about the relationship escalator is people sometimes feel like very sensitive to like, if you don't wanna do this with me right away, I don't even wanna start dating you. And what I've seen happen is sometimes like

you and I go on a date, we have an amazing time and I wanna message more than you do. Or I wanna hang out more quickly, more frequently, and you don't. And I feel so freaked out and insecure from that, that I get out of it. On the one hand, it's like if someone's not for you or if you can tell they don't want the same things as you, absolutely, let it go. But I see a lot of people who are like in a lot of suffering, they cannot find the thing they want because they need it to be that thing out the gate.

Jessica: Yeah.

Dean: And that feels self-defeating, you know, because also like you might have to go on a lot of dates before you meet someone you wanna do more with or who wants to do more with you, even if that's [00:45:00] something you want. And it feels to me like, can I loosen my grip a little bit on my vision of the good life and be a little bit more like what's available here in this life that I'm in?

And this, I find this to be in so true in so many ways. You know, if I'm in an organizing group and I'm like, a good action looks like this one that I heard about in Chicago or Atlanta, and I'm just trying to force it through with this group, and it's like, maybe this group isn't ready to do that. Maybe we have to have more meetings, or maybe we're gonna do this other things first.

Or like just whenever I'm trying to force a solution or force an outcome, or I have a very narrow standard of what's acceptable, I have a question about whether any more flexibility is available. And it may not be. I really may be like I am so uncomfortable in a more casual dating scenario that I'd rather not date than be in that one.

This is all about choice. People I know who like desperately want a partner, you might have to do some casual dating. You know, a lot of people I know are like, "I would never be on a dating app", but like that's where people are meeting in their area. Or whatever, I won't go [00:46:00] to a gathering, like trying to figure out what's a balance of what I can bear to do and what's available. And can I have as much flexibility as possible?

And it's completely fine to have a solid 'no'. If you don't feel like you can say no, then you really can't say yes. So it cannot be about forcing myself to do stuff I hate. That is not a way toward happiness.

This is hard. I mean, I think for me it's often like sometimes what I do is I think, could I imagine that? And at first I'm like, fuck no. Fear reaction. And then I'm like, let me try it again in a couple days. Now what happens if I think about it? You know, like noticing my own capacity to change or get used to something or used to an idea. Or I've had the experience of wanting to communicate more than someone I'm dating, like wanting to, like, I, I could fucking text all day and

like I could sext like till the end.

Jessica: Girl, I know it. Let's, let's, let's go. Let's, let's just text to text to text to text. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Let's go.

Dean: And I love to communicate to an probably pathological level. And when I am dating someone who communicates less, it's really been a growth area to just be like, this doesn't really mean [00:47:00] anything about whether they like me or not.

Jessica: Mm-hmm.

Dean: This is really just like a reasonable difference among people about how they engage with the phone and the computer and the day, or how they focus on different tasks or how they are present in different, you know. And I have gotten so much out of just accepting other people more as they are, and believing them about what they say their experience is, unless there's some reason to not trust them, 'cause you know, like something really seems off.

So I feel like that that ability, you can't rush that, but the, just the experimenting around the edges with ourselves of like, wow, I'm trying to loosen my hold on the romance myth. I might not be ready for certain activities. What's possible? Could I give people a little more leeway after the first date? Or could I be willing to spend time with people and enjoy it even though it doesn't seem like it's going in that direction, a bit.

Jessica: Yeah. Okay. First, I'll say in my experience doing the work I do, when people have a fantasy about what, like the relationship should be, it is 50 to 80% of fantasy about who you are. Not about who they are. A [00:48:00] fantasy about who you are, how you are. If you want somebody who texts all the time, the fantasy about who you are is, I'm somebody who likes to text all the time. And the reality might be is I'm somebody who needs a lot of validation. Or the fantasy might be is I just like talking. And this, and it's obviously not about you, but the reality may be I'm scared that if they're not talking to me, they're fucking with someone else, right?

So the, the, fantasy that you hold about yourself is going to get in the way of actually knowing somebody and being curious about the dynamic unfolding. And so when, and this, this happens as we age, you know, we're just like, I know myself, I can't possibly date a Libra, or I know myself, I couldn't possibly go on a date with somebody who says they like reality TV or whatever it is, right?

This can be, truly, you know yourself. And it can be truly you getting in your own way and you having a belief system that is based in defenses or fantasies, right? And so I think that is something to be curious about and mindful about. And then [00:49:00] here's my

thing. This is my general hot take. You go on a date with somebody, you're like, meh. It's not a no. It's not like their smell made me wanna gouge my eyes out. It's not like they're fucking rude to the server at the restaurant. Like it's not a no, but it's not a yes. Always take a second date. That's my theory.

Because I don't know about you. I'm nervous on a first date. I'm not my normal, charming fucking self. I am like too much, not enough, weird. Most of us are weird when we're nervous. So my theory is three dates. It takes three dates to have a baseline sense of someone and to give someone an accurate baseline sense of you. Just fucking baseline.

And so my take is, do not go on long involved dates with somebody unless you know you like them. Right? So this is like, take a walk, have an ice cream cone. Uh, I don't know, like, you know, fly a kite. I don't know. Flying a kite might be very involved. I can't tell. I've never done it. But like do something shorter, smaller, something that [00:50:00] you would actually like doing. So many people go on dates where they go out for a drink, but they don't actually love going out for drinks or they're tired after work.

And I'm like, why would you do something you don't like when you're getting to know someone? Huge red flag about you? Like only do shit you like when you're getting to know someone because why would you wanna create a foundation with someone based on things you don't like? Be yourself. And if that doesn't vibe with the person, if they don't like you when you're yourself, fabulous data, don't hang out with them again.

It's not a treatise on you if somebody doesn't like you when you're yourself, but if you're trying to be likable and you're trying to be what you think they want and they don't like you, well who knows? Maybe they would've liked the real you. Be yourself on three dates until you know you like them or you don't like them, or they don't like you.

But if you're 'meh', always give them another chance. Always take the meeting. That's my theory about like work stuff, personal stuff. Always take the meeting, 'cause you just don't know. You know? Sometimes my worst, like social [00:51:00] exchanges have inspired my best work, you know? And it only inspired my best work because it confronted me with something of myself that I was like, ah, I don't wanna deal with this.

And then I dealt with it and I was like, Ooh, this is fertile. I can share it. So you just kind of don't know what'll come from, you know, it's kind of like dating strangers, hanging out with strangers. It's kind of like, I think of it as like a volunteer seed. You know, birds, they'll like eat seeds and then they'll drop seeds and then all of a sudden you're like, I didn't plant this lavender.

Where did the lavender come from? But who doesn't want lavender? It's gorgeous, but it's like it volunteered in your garden. Sometimes people just like spring forth life in your life that is unexpected and not what you would've chosen, but is still like lavender in the garden of your life. Like it is lovely.

And so being open to that means you have to take the meeting. You have to like go on the day not ignoring your boundaries or your preferences, but holding space for 'maybe' is 'maybe yes'. You know? And a lot of times I think people are like "maybe is not a yes", but [00:52:00] not a yes is also not a no.

Dean: Yeah, I, the advice you just gave, I would say is a good advice for aversive people. Like I have friends who just, they have a hard time liking people. I love people. Everyone I meet, I wanna be best friends with and I can't. So like I have to be like, "maybe means no Dean". Maybe means no for me for sex, it means no for me, for like, you know what I mean? So I think even just assessing for ourselves what are our maybes like? Or in work, is it one and in sex it's another, and with family time is another? You know, like what are you lying to yourself about?

Jessica: Yes.

Dean: To say, maybe sometimes. So I think that's a question. But I do think a lot of people I know who are really on the hunt for a certain kind of partnership or whatever. It is about becoming a little bit more flexible, and also looking, is aversion a mental habit that is preventing me from seeing what's good here.

Because also, like you're saying, like you might end up, like you might go on some dates on an app and then end up, some of the people become friends, or they become collaborators or you end up doing organizing with them. There's so many good ways to meet people and I know a lot of people who make friends by going on apps. You know, and I think that, or end up with people in their spiritual community from that or [00:53:00] whatever.

I also just wanna say that I think a lot of people could try casual sex. Like could just consider it. Because, you know, I just wanna put a pitch out there for it because I think like it can be easy in a sex shaming culture and in a romance myth culture to not know whether or not you might actually enjoy something about that, or whether there's a way to negotiate it in a way that makes you like it.

And that it isn't for everyone, but talking to more friends who do that or finding more queer community and talking to people who, and being like, what's it? Because people do it in very different ways. And get very different things out of it. Or people who date a lot, you

know, it's like some people jump right into relationships. Some people date a lot and sometimes have relationships. Some people have a lot of casual sex and never have relationships, or have a lot of casual sex and are in a relationship. Like just finding out what everyone's up to or why would some people go to sex parties or conferences or you know, just actually imagining there might be some things we like that we don't know about yet, I think is very, very good for us.

Jessica: Can I just throw something into that though?

Dean: Yes.

Jessica: If you're having casual sex, safer sex 100% of the time, [00:54:00] and if you don't know how to navigate or advocate for safer sex, then maybe casual sex isn't for you. And a lot of people don't, right? A lot of people don't. And I think that that's really important.

And I also wanna say, having casual sex does not mean snuggling after the sex, or having coffee in the fucking morning. That's not sex, that's intimacy. So, you know, the boundaries of what 'casual' means gets skipped over when we talk about casual sex. I as an astrologer, see so many people, their bodies can fuck, but their hearts can only make love.

And that's an important thing to know about yourself. And so like if you're like experimenting with casual sex and you thought like, okay, well I'm not a casual sex person, but I want to experiment with it, then I just wanna say to you, sex is not snuggling, sex is not coffee, sex is sex. And I am a big fan of like fucking in bathrooms, fucking in cars, fucking in places where there's no implied, like now we have to negotiate if we sleep over or not. And that's, you know, my kind of game.

But like, you know, lots of people love beds and the [00:55:00] privacy and the safety of a bed, great. But talk about whether or not there's gonna be a sleepover party before you fuck. If you're gonna have casual sex. That is my pitch. Because a lot of people lose the 'casual' when the sex is over. And they don't even know that 'cause they haven't experimented with casual sex enough. And we don't fucking talk about it enough except for in like very specific queer communities, right? And so I think for people who are dealing with like the heterosexual dynamic and the inherent power issues that exist between women and men, I think it's really important if you are not a cis dude, to advocate for yourself what you need and what you expect 'post coitus', and to negotiate casual sex, but safer sex. Right?

So I think those things are really, really important. And those things are the reason why a lot of people don't have casual sex that they like, 'cause they're not identifying those things. They're not owning

their needs around those things. They're not advocating for themselves.

So for whatever that's worth.

Dean: And also sometimes there's a muscle people build. Like I've seen people [00:56:00] who became queer or had to gender transition and became fags and then got into casual sex on apps or in bathhouses or whatever. And then found out they could tolerate some rejection. Before they would've thought they would've died if they had sex with somebody and then the person didn't text them again in the future. But then they found out that they could. So like there could be discomfort in the experiment, or there's discomfort when you're like telling someone what your boundaries are around safer sex or around COVID or anything. And I think our friends are the biggest help with that stuff.

You know, like talking it through with a friend or being like, will you help me? I need to sit down and write this text to this person before we meet up and tell them that I always have sex with condoms. Or that I don't wanna do this or that thing, you know? And I just need a friend to be there with me, you know?

Jessica: And also to that end, I'm so glad you brought up the text. My advice is have texts in the notes of your phone, that are not personal, that you write not in reaction to somebody, about masking, about fucking with safer sex, about sleepover parties. Write like a couple versions of the same text to a few different, you know, just a couple times on your phone so you [00:57:00] can copy and paste that shit. It doesn't feel personal.

This is an embodiment of the clarity of who you are and what you're showing up with and what you're showing up offering and needing, as opposed to like, oh, this is how I feel with Dean. How do I navigate safer sex with Dean? No, no. It's, how do I navigate safer sex? Not how do I navigate it with you?

And that depersonalization can help you to embody your boundaries, depersonalize the boundaries, and also depersonalize when somebody else has a boundary where you're like, what? They don't wanna sleepover? But I love a sleepover, you know? And that's the thing, if somebody says something you don't like, you can always be like, okay, cool. Why? You know? And then the person can say it, oh, 'cause I get crushed out when I sleep with somebody after having sex. Cool. Okay. We're keeping it casual now. Or I want you to be crushed out on me, let's try that anyways. Like, you know, you can have conversations back and forth, which is what you were talking about, right?

Like rejection doesn't have to collapse everything, but depending on your personality, depending on the people you're dating, a lot of

people are not comfortable with a back and forth about boundaries. So again, having that in the notes of your phone in advance [00:58:00] can really save you a lot of torture of trying to figure out like, how does this person need to hear it?

You just say it in a way that's honest about who you are. And if that doesn't work with that person, then they're not gonna work for you, period. Right? Maybe you fuck 'em and you keep on moving, or maybe you don't have sex at all. Cross each bridge as you come to it, but yeah.

Dean: Yeah. I think that sex and dating are a chance to do boundary practice in general.

Jessica: Yes.

Dean: To just be like, I do do this. I don't do that. And the more you're invested in the romance myth, the harder it is, 'cause like, how could I say no to this person who is my future betrothed? You know, who is, my whole life is riding on whether or not they like me back.

Jessica: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. It's interesting.

I call that the Disney princess thing, and yours is more gender fluid than mine. Um, but it is all kind of the same thing. It's just like romance happens in a kiss.

I feel like we've addressed a lot of really different questions that have really important throughlines around accountability and connection, and I love that. I love that for us. I love that for us.

Dean: I had [00:59:00] such a great time with you. Thank you. I'm so grateful to you for doing this with me, and I think that our listeners will be so delighted that you were giving your wisdom in this way.

Jessica: Oh, ditto. My listeners are just gonna be fucking overjoyed to hear more from you. And you know, we both have our independent podcasts. We're gonna share this on both of our podcasts, so people should be listening to both of our podcasts, is really the upshot here.

Dean: It's really true.

I love your boundary practice when you're reading people's birth charts. You really demonstrate the capacity to be direct and say the thing that's the hard thing. And that's one of the main learnings I get from listening to your podcast.

Jessica: That is my happiness to hear that, because that is like the crux of my work. It's like, can we be empathetic and well bounded

at the same time? Can we be kind to ourselves and to others at the same time? The answer is of course, yes, but not easily and not always.

So that's, that's really great. I'm really glad we did this.

Dean: Me too.

Thank you so much to Jessica Lanyadoo for [01:00:00] answering these listener questions with me. Jessica always offers such clear and grounded advice, and that's why I often talk to her about my own problems and why I really enjoy her podcast, Ghost of a Podcast, which I hope you'll go listen to.

Thank you for joining me for the latest episode of Love in a F\*cked Up World. This podcast is based on my book of the same title, which is out now from Algonquin Press. I hope you'll pick it up from an independent bookstore in your community, not Amazon or Audible. And if you're looking for another place to get audio books, try libro.fm.

Love in a F\*cked Up World is hosted by me, Dean Spade. It is produced and edited by Hope Dector. Thank you to Ciro, Eugene, Derekh, Kelsey, Lindsay, Jessica, Raindrop, Nicole, and everyone else who's helped with this podcast. Our theme music is "I've Been Wondering" by The Ballet.

If you found the show useful or you have ideas of things you'd like to hear about, we'd love to hear from you. Please join the conversation on Patreon at [patreon.com/deanspade](https://patreon.com/deanspade). We need each other now more than ever, and I hope this podcast offers tools and ideas that can help us sustain the strong relationships that we're relying on. I hope you'll keep listening, subscribe and share this episode with people in your [01:01:00] life.