

Redefining Health & Wellness

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Featured this episode: Shohreh Davoodi & Ally Ridnour & Tiffany Cunningham

Shohreh Davoodi: Hello everyone, this is episode #70 of the Redefining Health & Wellness podcast. Today, The Girl Gang is back to provide a soothing balm for your soul in the form of feminine rage. We are getting unladylike once again and giving the patriarchy a big ol' middle finger. We talk about body hair, expression through clothing, tattoos, masturbation, vulva diversity, and the choice to be child-free. To access the show notes and a full transcript of this episode, head to shohrehdavoodi.com/70. That's shohrehdavoodi.com/70.

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However you choose to invest in the podcast, thank you for believing in me and tuning in each week.

[Music plays]

Welcome to the Redefining Health & Wellness podcast. I'm your host and resident rainbow glitter bomb, Shohreh Davoodi. I started this project because I saw how black-and-white messaging about health harms

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everyone, and I wanted to paint a more honest and vibrant picture. This podcast is a space where we can reimagine health together by confronting limiting misconceptions, delving into aspects of well-being that are often ignored, and prioritizing conversations with marginalized individuals. I encourage you to take what you need and leave behind what you don't. Are you ready for this? Let's fucking go!

Well, The Girl Gang is back once again to the podcast, and it's by request because I asked my audience what kind of content they would like most for Election Day, 'cause at the time we're recording this, Election Day is about 20 days away. There's a lot of dread, panic in the air. And I was curious what people might want to listen to because Election Day is a Tuesday and so there'll be a podcast release, and the overall consensus seemed to be something that was more lighthearted and that could take people's minds off of the seriousness of that day. Well, what's the most lighthearted thing that I could think of? The Girl Gang.

So welcome back, Ally and Tiffany!

Tiffany Cunningham: Hewwood!

Ally Ridnour: Yay! Hi everyone.

Tiffany: Hi.

Shohreh: You have an immense responsibility for the listeners to take their minds off of the terribleness of the 2020 election.

Ally: I just wanna say to future Ally, 'cause I know you're gonna be listening to this, take a deep breath, okay?

Shohreh: I feel like everyone listening right now should just take a deep breath. Like, everyone just like take a few deep breaths, look around you for something

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you can focus on, do a little grounding, and prepare yourself for shenanigans, which will hopefully distract you for at least an hour and a half of the day.

Ally: Yeah. We got you!

Tiffany: We try.

Ally: Yes [laughs].

Shohreh: We are doing a public service, obviously, so [laughter].

Ally: I don't know, I'm not gonna say you're welcome until this is over.

Tiffany: They don't know what they've gotten themselves into.

Ally: Maybe.

Tiffany: Shohreh, tell the listeners what they've gotten themselves into [laughs].

Shohreh: Why thank you, Tiffany, I will! So last year we did an episode titled The Girl Gang Gets Unladylike, where we talked about all kinds of things that are typically categorized as unladylike but that's bullshit. And we realized that the list of things that are categorized as unladylike that we could talk about is pretty much infinite because our society sucks. So, today you are getting The Girl Gang Gets Unladylike Again, and we're gonna go through some new topics and wax philosophical about the ridiculous expectations that are placed on people regarding these things.

Ally: Yay!

Tiffany: Huzzah!

Ally: Buckle in, babies.

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- Tiffany:** Girl Gang gets unladylike, part two: ladies' choice.
- Shohreh:** That's right. We doin' it, we doin' it. Okay, so a very important ladylike topic, we're gonna start with some things that I would file under the "bodily autonomy" topic, which of course, if you've ever been a woman or raised as woman in this society, you know that [laughs] bodily autonomy is not something that people want to afford to you. Hmm. So fascinating how that is. So, we're gonna first start by talkin' about body hair.
- Tiffany:** I also feel like we've been having this conversation about body hair all summer.
- Ally:** Yes.
- Shohreh:** We have.
- Tiffany:** So, we have, like, thoughts.
- Ally:** Yeah, quarantine has changed the way that I feel about body hair, I will say that. But overall, I wanna say that society's approach to women specifically having body hair, uh, fucking sucks!
- Tiffany:** Yes.
- Ally:** As a hairy gal myself, I have spent most of my life hating the hair that my body grows from the neck down and that sucks.
- Tiffany:** Yes.
- Ally:** I've mentioned before on the podcast, I think, that I grow a lot of hair everywhere on my body. And specifically, I can remember starting to grow pubes and, like, noticing that nobody else seemed to have pubes in the way that I had pubes [laughs]. And I know this because I grow such a large, vast amount of pubes that even as like a 12-year-old wearing, like, a very

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high-coverage bathing suit, you'd still be able to see the pubes that I was growing outside of my bathing suit.

Shohreh: Okay, so I want to say that there's definitely people who are gonna be listening right now who are gonna be like, um, my pubes grow like that too! You're definitely not alone in that. It's you thick-haired peoples.

Ally: We're soul sisters! And yeah, it's thick and also the area is very large. So if you're one of those people—

Tiffany: Luscious!

Ally: —hi! Everybody, I think, should feel free to like keep their body hair if they so choose, and if you're one of those people, you also should. 'Cause I can remember feeling like I had no choice but to remove my pubes because of how much I had, if that makes sense. I can remember the thought being expressed, like, it's okay if you have pubic hair as long as you can't see it [laughs]. Which, like, what the fuck! But like, as long as you can't see it when you're in your underwear, when you're in your bathing suit, then that's okay. But if you can see it, no, that's gross.

So if you're one of those people, hi! I see you [laughs].

Shohreh: I guess we should state that just in general the overarching expectation for women, at least in the U.S., is that you are like a hairless newborn—

Ally: Yes!

Shohreh: --everywhere. And that has just a terrible effect on people and starts from a really young age. Like I can think back to when I was in middle school, wanting to start shaving my legs, and my mom didn't want me to because she was like, oh, if you start shaving your legs, it's gonna grow back faster and thicker, so we should wax your legs instead.

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Tiffany: [laughs]

Ally: Oh my god, you waxed your legs?

Shohreh: Yes!

Tiffany: I was gonna say, I had that exact same conversation with my mother, up until the part where you said “wax” because my mother [laughter] just didn’t want me to shave my legs at all.

Ally: It’s a misconception, but the reason why people think that is because when you wax the hair, you stay hairless longer because you’re pulling it out at the follicle, and then also, the hair as it starts to grow has a tapered end as opposed to the blunt end of shaving. So I think that’s why people think that if you shave your hair it grows back thicker.

Tiffany: Yeah, rougher.

Ally: Yeah, the hair itself is not thicker, it just looks that way, I suppose. But also, ouch! I cannot imagine waxing as a middle schooler.

Shohreh: It did not feel good. I mean, it was just like a horribly painful experience, but for a long time she would not let me shave. I remember I think I eventually reached high school and then I was like, fuck you, I’m gonna just start shaving, and she was not happy about it [laughter]. But also, like, shaving, while not fun, is far less painful than waxing your entire legs, like—

Ally: That’s so much area to cover.

Tiffany: That’s so much work! Holy shit!

Shohreh: It’s a lot. Again, I don’t know why the thought process was what it was, but it’s like, you know, I was doing that. I remember right before I started college, y’all, I started shaving my arms because I was embarrassed that I

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have like not blonde arm hair. And mine's not even that dark, not that it matters, but it's not like it was like black, you know, thick arm hair.

Ally: Yeah.

Shohreh: I think it's just like pretty relatively average brown arm hair. But I shaved my arms because I thought that they needed to be smooth and hairless, and I'm just like, baby Shohreh, why?

Tiffany: Baby Shohreh, why?

Ally: You are not the only person I feel like that I've seen have that experience of shaving arms, which is so odd. I mean not odd that you did it, obviously, because the pressure was there, of course, but odd that we put that pressure on women.

Tiffany: It's odd that we've somehow made the image of women into, like Shohreh said, hairless newborns, and it certainly speaks to certain levels of uncomfortableness with the male gaze. A lot of that comes from the consumption of porn and media where basically every single person that you see in mainstream porn is shaved like a newborn, which is really weird to be sexualized.

Shohreh: Or they just have, like, some kind of little design. I remember a friend in middle school telling me she had shaved a landing strip and I was like, a what?

Ally: Oh my god, really?

Shohreh: What do you have? And I'm like, how did you even know about this? Like I did not have that kind of knowledge. And she was like, yeah, I think it's sexy and guys like it. And I was like, okay.

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- Tiffany:** Every time I do, like, a full shave in my pubes I regret it because it always end up growing back with ingrown hairs and little bumps and you're like, nobody ever talks about that because everybody expects it to look just like bare, like a snow-covered hill. It's like, no, bitch! This thing is, I don't know what to call it. [laughter] Uncomfortable at best, janky at worst.
- Ally:** There's some topography.
- Tiffany:** Yes!
- Ally:** It's a weird area to shave, first of all. There's crevices, there's inner and outer bits, you know. It's delicate, so you're kinda scared.
- Shohreh:** It's not easy to shave!
- Ally:** Yeah, I can remember being young and shaving my pubes, which first of all, I just wanna say, the first time I shaved my pubes was because I had a boyfriend who put his hand down my pants and I hadn't shaved. I was at that point, I think trimming, but I still had pubes. And he was basically like, oh, well whenever I sleep with a girl, if I touch her vulva and there's pubes, I give her one more chance, and then after that, I break up with her.
- Shohreh:** And we hate him! [Laughter]
- Ally:** I know!
- Tiffany:** Why?
- Ally:** But at the time I was like, oh my god, like, I have to please this man, I have to keep this boyfriend, so I better make sure.
- Shohreh:** I feel like we've all had that embarrassment. Like I can remember times, even with actual boyfriends where I hadn't shaved and sexy things started happening, and then I was like panicking, like, oh my god, I don't want you

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to see me, I don't want you to touch me. And I'm just like, that is ridiculous!
But that's what I thought.

Ally: Yeah. I would apologize. Any time I took off my pants and wasn't like freshly shaved, I would be like, oh, I'm so sorry, I haven't...

Shohreh: Ugh yes.

Tiffany: I would say that in general it seems to be a, more of a like male to female experience because when I have been with people who have vulvas, they don't care as much.

Ally: Yes!

Shohreh: Amazing! When you have a vulva and you know what it's like to have vulva hair, you don't care if there's hair? Fascinating!

Ally: Because the idea of taking a razor to anything near my clitoris is like, honestly, scary, even as somebody that's been doing it for a long time. Which I want to say, I really don't shave my pubes anymore. I do wax them occasionally, but still, as an almost 28-year-old, the idea of putting a razor anywhere near my clit is still scary to me [laughs].

Shohreh: I mean, it took me until my late twenties to just like decide for myself that I was going to grow out my hair. I just like one day, and it probably, honestly, took being with my partner for a long time, where I felt comfortable and, you know, kind of felt like I was in my own situation and even then, I didn't ask permission—I don't want to put it that way—but I did kind of mention it where I was just like, hey, I'm thinking of just like growing out my pubic hair because it's really annoying to have to like keep up with it and do all this stuff all the time. And he was like, okay, you know, whatever you want, which is fine. But I didn't just do it, right? I still felt like, I

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was like, maybe we should talk about this because I think there's still that lurking fear of, oh god, what if he's not attracted to it or he hates it.

And then I did the thing. And I basically just do some like grooming around the edges and I kind of do some maintenance stuff so it's not as thick, especially during swimsuit season, during winter I don't give a fuck! [Laughter] So like, I am grooming, but the hair is always there now, and I actually really love it and got comfortable with it very fast. Which is not to say that anybody has to come to that conclusion, but I never would have known that until I gave myself the opportunity to try it. Other people have tried that and been like, eh, I actually just don't really like having hair, and that's fine too.

Tiffany: It's a really good example of that idea of bodily autonomy because there's a lot of people who, like you said, will kind of give people a hard time that do wanna shave. And you just have to remember, you take care of your body and they can take care of their body. And nobody needs to worry about the other.

Ally: Yeah. I would say something this year that really I've been able to confirm with myself is that when I do remove my hair, it's because I want to and not because I feel like I need to. Because I, for probably like the first, I don't know, three months or so that we were in quarantine, just did nothing to my body hair. I just let it all grow, like my armpit hair, my pubic hair, my leg hair. I just let it all out.

Tiffany: I distinctly remember there being a competition.

Ally: Yes, which I just want to say, I kicked everybody's ass [laughter].

Shohreh: Okay! Okay! That's debatable!

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- Ally:** Is it? I had far more armpit hair than you did.
- Shohreh:** You had more, but mine was darker and more illustrious!
- Ally:** It was darker!
- Shohreh:** And more illustrious!
- Ally:** But the competition was who can grow the most hair, which I did.
- Shohreh:** No! We specifically said that the competition was who had, I think we said the most magical armpit hair [laughter].
- Tiffany:** So, can we just give both of you a participation award?
- Shohreh:** Fine, Tiffany!
- Ally:** I think Shohreh set the rules later on when it became evident that due to my genetics I was going to grow more body hair than anybody else!
- Shohreh:** No, no, no, no, no! That's not how it went down! [Laughter] But this actually brings up an important point, which I do want to mention here, which is that this armpit hair growing competition was between me, Ally, and our friend Susanne, and one of the conversations that we had was the fact that all three of us benefit from thin privilege and we benefit from pretty privilege. So us growing out our armpit hair is not like anything that radical. Even though it feels internally radical, like in a larger society it really wasn't that radical a thing to do. We really didn't have to worry about any repercussions.
- Whereas if you are a Black person, or a disabled person, or a fat person and you want to do that same thing, because you're already more marginalized in your body, it is gonna be seen as a much more, like, terrible thing for you to do, radical thing for you to do than us doing that.

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And I think that's just important to mention in talking about this. We did this for fun, but one of the reasons that we could feel comfortable doing that is because of the privileges that we have.

Ally: I think it's more likely if you're already in a marginalized body for people to hold the opinion that having body hair means you're gross or unhygienic, which is an opinion that some people hold, which is fucking wrong, first of all, if you think that. If you think that body hair is unhygienic, you're objectively wrong. But yeah, I think being in thin bodies ourselves, it's less likely for people to hold that opinion about us.

Tiffany: I mean, as the fat person, I will say that it definitely feels like society tells me that I owe them. Like, I have to shave it off in order to get that extra step. But at the same time, I have white privilege, and I certainly have also the privilege of not giving a fuck, so [laughter] I generally just don't shave my armpits unless I'm going to perform or something. But there's a worry. Like, there's a little voice niggling in the back of my head whenever I am running around with hairy pits.

Shohreh: I think in general, one thing I'll say for all people when it comes to your choices about hair, is that just taking the time to bring awareness to why you do what you do, if you like it, do you wanna do it, the cost/benefit analysis, I think can be really helpful. Because a lot of us just learn what we were told we were supposed to do when we were growing up, and we haven't really done much unpacking or thinking about it since. You know, I only started growing out my pubic hair when I had time to unpack that like, oh, I've been doing this thing that I don't even like doing for decades because I was told that I had to be attractive to men.

And I was like, oh wait, I don't give a fuck anymore about being attractive to men. I did give a fuck, but far less fucks than before when I made that

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decision. And so I think just like, with all things, bringing more awareness to that and just taking the time to think about it. Like, you know, Ally what you were saying with our competition, one of the things for me that it did was increase my tolerance for my armpit hair where I go much longer periods of time now without shaving it. I didn't ultimately make the decision to never shave my armpit hair, and maybe I will eventually, but through that I was like, oh, but it doesn't bother me as much now that I've gotten used to seeing myself with it. And being like, oh, okay, it's this thing, it's not that bad, this is different than I would have known before, where I was used to shaving my armpits, you know, every frigging two days or something like that.

So sometimes experimentation is just enough to tell you a little bit more about what you like and don't like and why.

Ally: Yeah. I think I held a certain degree of guilt for wanting to remove body hair. Like, does this make me a bad feminist because I *do* choose to remove my body hair? And so, I think, yeah, for me it was good to unpack that like, for one thing, I find armpit hair quite uncomfortable. The more hairs in my armpits, the more sweaty I feel, and I don't like to feel sweaty.

Shohreh: I mean, you do have two hairs growing out of every follicle at a minimum!

Ally: It's a lot, you guys. It really is [laughs]. However much armpit hair you think I have, double that. [Laughter] I was in quarantine, I was not having sex with anybody, so I certainly was not removing my body hair because I thought that somebody was gonna see me naked [laughs]. I was doing it because I was like, this is what feels comfortable to me, and this is what I prefer. And so I think I've been able to let go of this guilt of like, if I make this choice, I'm doing a disservice to women out there by perpetuating this. So whatever your choice is, it's the right one for you.

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- Tiffany:** Yes.
- Shohreh:** I'd agree with that. Alright, so I think this is a good time to move to our next bodily autonomy topic and that is to talk about clothing and the choice to wear whatever the fuck you want, and also, sort of the judgments and the considerations that have to go into that when you are making clothing choices.
- Ally:** This is such an interesting topic.
- Tiffany:** Yeah!
- Ally:** I feel like as women, in particular, like no matter what your style choice is, there's always criticism [laughs]. If you like to show off your body, there's people that say that that's wrong. If you're somebody that doesn't like to, there are people that are against that. It just kind of feels like as a woman, no matter what you wear, somebody is critiquing what you're wearing, and I hate that.
- Shohreh:** It's not even just men who are doing this. As women, a lot of time we have a lot of internalized misogyny that we then turn outward on other women. I can give a literal personal example from my life where I did this. I like to joke that this was like Feminist 1.0 Shohreh before I upleveled.
- When I was in college, I was the girl spouting that leggings aren't pants.
- Ally:** [audible gasp]
- Shohreh:** I will admit it, hand in the air. At the time I had heard that from other people that why are people just walking around in leggings. It was a big thing at my college where there was this separation between the girls who wore leggings and the girls who didn't wear leggings. And I was just like, I don't understand, leggings aren't pants. Well, you know, now I quite literally live

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in leggings and I look back and I'm like, oh. Oh Shohreh, that, no. No, you were wrong.

But again, internalized misogyny! Like I had grown up with the messaging that I should be judging other women for what they wore and that there were right things to wear and wrong things to wear and that certain things were like, sluttier or more inappropriate. And, you know, that's just upbringing that I got from my parents and that I got from other people over the course of my life.

And this even happened, oh my god, I hate this story, but a couple of years ago I went to one of my closest friend's weddings, and another friend of ours was wearing this really cool outfit that was basically like pants with these slits that went up the middle of each leg. So like the legs flowed on the pants.

Tiffany: Well that sounds cool!

Shohreh: Yeah! It was freaking cool. And there was this other person there with us, and I heard her talking about this woman and her pants and being like, I can't believe she wore that to a wedding. And I was like, what do you mean you can't believe she wore that to a wedding? And she was like, that is so inappropriate to wear to an event like this. And I was just aghast. I was like, what are you talking about? It's not like she wore a white, you know, wedding gown to somebody's wedding. She's wearing some fucking cool flowy pants that show her legs, okay.

And also, like, what does it have to do with you and what does it have to do with this event that we're at? It's not taking anything away from this event that she has chosen to wear this. I was like, why is this even a topic of conversation? And again, this shows my own growth over time because

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maybe when I was in college that would have been me. I might have been the person saying that. But the person saying this was well into their thirties, so I was like, what? How? How have we not learned this lesson yet, lady? Jesus.

Tiffany: Well, we definitely get told that there are certain things that are appropriate for certain bodies to wear. Our mothers teach us this, like school teaches us this, magazines teach us this. You definitely see things where you are finding that thing in like Good Housekeeping where it's like, "dress for your shape."

Ally: Oh my god, yes.

Shohreh: #flattering

Ally: Yeah, I was gonna bring that up. The idea that everything we wear should be flattering.

Shohreh: Aka, making us look thinner!

Ally: Yes, that's a fatphobic thought to have if you think that everything you wear needs to be thin because what you mean is, I want this to make me look thin. You say "flattering"—I want to highlight the thin parts of my body. Which is not to say you can't have certain outfits that make you feel really sexy in whatever way that means. But the fucking articles that are naming body shapes after, like, "apple shaped" and "pear shaped."

Shohreh: Blech.

Ally: Yeah, fuck that.

Tiffany: I am, like, pastry shaped! [Laughter]

Shohreh: But what kind of pastry are you, Tiff?

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- Tiffany:** Cupcake!
- Ally:** Ooh!
- Shohreh:** Yes! I mean, if we're gonna name our bodies after foods, we might as well have some fucking fun with it. Jesus.
- Ally:** Yeah, I wanna be like a yummy food that I pick. Yeah, I can remember being like ten, eleven, twelve and reading these magazines and being like, oh what body shape and I? What should I wear? Ugh, the shit that's like oh, if you're pear shaped you should never wear XYZ. No, fuck off, you should wear what you wanna wear. It doesn't fucking matter if you think it's gonna make you look bottom heavy or, I don't know, unproportional or whatever. No! Fuck that. This makes me mad! [Laughs]
- Tiffany:** It's funny to think that the idea of clothing in general, that we buy, is not constructed for bodies, it's constructed for hangers. No mass-produced clothing will ever look correct on a human body. In order for anything to look like well-constructed, you have to have it tailored, which is a privilege thing. And in order to get clothing that is affordable, you're gonna have to buy pretty much things that are mass manufactured. And it's really difficult to find clothing that's mass manufactured that fits on a human being, let alone looks, we don't even want to cover the fat part of it. [Laughter]
- Ally:** Yeah.
- Shohreh:** Right, 'cause the vast majority of clothing is made for a small minority of bodies that are thinner and are in the "straight sizes." And that's the other thing I was gonna say too, when you were saying that a lot of the clothing is made to fit on a hanger. I think the thinner that you are, the more likely the clothing will look good on you because it sort of conforms to this general "idealized" body shape. And then as you go up in sizes, like,

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bodies have a lot of diversity. It's not like everyone has this hourglass shape. But they design the clothes as if everyone has the same proportions. So then you have people who are like, well, this fits me in my boobs, but it's way too short in my arms or whatever.

And that goes back to what you were saying, Tiff, about needing tailoring. I mean, once upon a time that's all that clothing was. All clothing was tailored. It was literally made for the bodies that were wearing it. We live in a world where that's not possible anymore, but it creates a lot of problems and it creates a lot of access issues when it comes to clothing. Especially when you consider that for a lot of us, what we wear is self-expression. It's how we want to show up in the world. And for those who have less options or less affordable options, that can really stunt what you're allowed to show off and what persona you want to put out there, and that just fucking sucks.

Ally: Kind of going back to getting into the unladylike aspect of this, how we're told certain things that we may wear may make us slutty or trashy. I can specifically remember, like, you remember when everybody wore low-rise jeans? [Laughter]

Tiff: Mmhmm.

Shohreh: How could I forget that era?

Ally: Right. For one thing, I will never go back to low-rise jeans; they do not work for my body. But I was wearing low-rise jeans, and I'm certainly bigger in the hips and butt area than I am in the waist, so low-rise jeans just did not really work for me. I would always have that dreaded gap in the back, and I didn't get things tailored because I was probably like thirteen or fourteen at this point. So I can remember I would sit down and my

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underwear would stick out, and especially if I was wearing a thong, god forbid [laughs]. Which I just want to say, I had to sneak buy my first thong because my mom was like, “Only whores wear thongs.”

Shohreh: Me too!

Ally: And I remember, [laughs] I was like, mom, I just don’t want panty lines. Like, I just [laughs].

Shohreh: Mine was bright orange with like glitter on it. I can still remember the stupid thong [laughter].

Ally: Mine had cherries on it.

Shohreh: Of course it did [laughter].

Ally: I remember I was like, I wasn’t trying to be sexy, I just didn’t want, I didn’t like underwear lines.

Shohreh: I was trying to be sexy! [Laughter]

Ally: I remember I would hide my thongs and wash them separately because I didn’t want my mom to know I was wearing thongs. But then I would wear them, and then I would get the whale-tail coming out of my jeans. And then I’d be like, oh my god, I’m such a slut because my thong is sticking out. But really, it’s like, these jeans just aren’t really made to fit my body, so of course when I sit down, they’re gonna bag out and sink down and you’re gonna be able to see the straps of my thong [laughs]. I remember, I just was like, it plagued my life. I was like, how do other people wear jeans and not have their thong stick out? I don’t understand, what’s wrong with me that this is happening? I didn’t understand.

Tiffany: Your butt is too powerful, Ally. [Laughter]

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Ally: It can't be contained. It's always trying to escape [laughs].

Shohreh: Well, and you mentioned that this is happening in school too, and that kind of brings up the school dress code thing 'cause that's one of the earliest ways that girls are taught that their bodies and the clothes that they wear are under different rules and expectations than what the boys would wear in school.

We all got that messaging that we are distracting the boys, and so, if our freakin' skirts don't reach our fingertips, or too much boobs are showing, or whatever the fuck other dumb rules that they had, like, you were made to internalize the blame and the shame from that, of that, you've done this horrible thing and you're a bad person. And like, when you set girls up with that from a really young age, that's a long-lasting effect.

Ally: Yeah, and I just wanna say, I got pulled out of my classes frequently to be dress coded. So I missed out on, and I'm not alone in this, I missed out on class time because I would have to go down to the fucking principal's office and hold a dollar bill to my leg to make sure that my basketball shorts were long enough [laughs].

Tiffany: I will say, coming at it from the other angle as somebody who spent their teens, and high school years, and years beyond, like, into less shapely clothes—not even worrying about the fat part—it's like, the dress code, because it tells you that XYZ is not appropriate, it also tells you that that's what female-presenting people wear. And so, if you are somebody who doesn't like to be wearing super revealing clothing or if you want to wear more masculine clothing, that is also judged by other people. I spent most of high school wearing men's jeans and Hawaiian shirts.

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Shohreh: You know, one other thing I wanted to say on the clothing front too is the conversation I've been having lately and this is going back to different privilege that people have and what they can wear, is that one of the things I've really enjoyed now as being an adult is that something that has become much more central to my clothing choices is comfort. So I really like soft fabrics, I really like flowy pants and sweatshirts and all these different kinds of things. Even in my more "dressy" clothes, I almost always will put comfort above the look or the cut of it, which was not the case when I was younger when I would wear really uncomfortable clothes because I liked the way that they looked. And I'm just not willing to sacrifice that anymore. I think there's some people who will still gladly sacrifice comfort for fashion. I am not that person. I like to be comfy.

And, I've also been told by a lot of fat activists about the fact that as a thin person, I don't get judged for wearing athleisure. I don't get judged for putting my hair up in a messy bun or going makeup-free. This is the same thing with the shaving the armpits where there's this higher expectation on fat folk to look put together or to look cute because they're trying to overcome these societal stereotypes. Whereas for me, it's like, oh, she's so sporty, she's so cute, if I wear athleisure, and that's like a really fucked up double standard that fat people aren't afforded the same luxury of comfort that thin people are.

Tiffany: It's definitely a feeling of presentation, thinking about the unladylike aspect of it, as a woman presenting yourself in a specific way when you are going grocery shopping, going for a job interview, going for whatever, you know, like a date. Whatever that is, society is saying, well, you are going to look in a very specific way. And it feels like, as a fat person, like very performative. It is very much a, like, you are doing something for other people.

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The idea that comfort...I mean, I love being comfortable. I love it. We have stated before, I quit giving a crap about what other people thought of me. The idea of dressing for comfort can be really difficult as a fat person. Like, just finding clothes that are comfortable to wear. I mean, I will say, I jumped on the leggings-as-pants trend way too quick, [laughter] and it was so comfortable. And it was just like, oh god.

Shohreh: They are! I was being an idiot. They're so comfortable.

Tiffany: Ah yes. Amazing. They're just amazing.

Ally: They are.

Shohreh: I think that it's performative, like you said, and it's for safety in some ways. It's a way of protecting yourself going out in the world from dealing with the way people are going to treat you. And some people, again, the more privilege you have, the more you can kind of push those boundaries and give less fucks, and the less privilege you have, the more you might say yeah, I need to lean into that safety because it will protect me and I have all this other shit that I have to worry about that's more important, so easier to just put on the makeup, put on the dress, than to not.

Tiffany: Mmhmm.

Shohreh: But I just wish people would let everyone wear whatever the fuck they want and that makes them happy, and I've now reached a point in my life where I like will not tolerate comments that I hear from other people about what anybody else is wearing. Like, if you dare to say something like that around me, I will bite your fucking head off because I just think it is such a shitty thing to do. It's so catty. It's so unnecessary. Especially when men are saying that about what women choose to wear, where I'm just like, we don't have to wear things for you.

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- Ally:** Oh my god.
- Shohreh:** We can wear things for us. Go to hell!
- Ally:** Yeah, if you have not been specifically asked for your opinion—
- Shohreh:** Then you can shove it up your ass! That’s where it belongs!
- Ally:** Yeah, and it’s the person wearing the clothes asking for the opinion. Like, [laughs] if I don’t specifically say, “What do you think about what I’m wearing?” I don’t want to hear it. [Laughs] I can remember, oh my god, sorry, quick “fuck men!” [Laughter]
- Shohreh:** Alright, I’ll allow a “fuck men” tangent.
- Ally:** Thank you. Thank you so much. I love wide-legged jeans. I think that they’re fantastic. I think they’re comfortable. I think they’re great. And I got my first pair at a time when I had a boyfriend, and I remember putting them on and being so excited ‘cause I just thought they were so cute. And I was so excited and I walked out into our living room, and my boyfriend at the time was like, “I don’t like those jeans. You don’t look good.” And I just like, deflated. Like I was so sad.
- Shohreh:** We hate him too!
- Ally:** Yeah!
- Tiffany:** We do.
- Ally:** And I was like, I kinda was able to pull it together and be like, I didn’t ask you and I don’t really care. I’m not dressing for you. But on the inside, I just was like, devastated. I was like, it doesn’t fucking matter if you think they’re cute, I think they’re cute! Don’t say that! Like you might ruin somebody’s whole ass day, or week, or month, for an opinion that’s trash. [Laugh] So

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number one, if you're a man, know that women are not dressing for you, they're just not. They want to be cute for themselves. So if you don't think what they're wearing is cute, keep it to yourself. Question why you don't think it's cute. Is it because it doesn't make them look like a sexual object to you?

Shohreh: There's this amazing TikTok sound that y'all have probably heard where it's like, I don't dress the way I do for the attention of men, I dress the way I do so that the 13-year-old girl with her friends will stare after me and say, "She's so cool." And I'm like, yeah! That!

Ally: Yes. Yes.

Shohreh: That's what I'm doing.

Ally: I do not give a fuck if a man thinks I'm fuckable. [laughs] But I would love for a young adolescent girl to be like, wow, she looks so cool [laughs].

Tiffany: Yeah.

Shohreh: Alright, so our final topic under the "bodily autonomy" section is tattoos and piercings. Fuck yeah!

Ally: Woo!

Tiffany: Which is funny because, you know, as you were saying, the 13-year-old girl, like, I often think about the 13-year-old girl that I would have wanted to be, which was very much like a riot girl, punk kind of goth girl. And very central to that idea was tattoos and piercings, but I was not allowed to get tattoos and piercings, and everyone in my life had opinions on tattoos, and piercings, and dyed hair, and just all of the alt sub-culture stuff. Like, the idea that as a woman taking part in an alternative sub-culture of tattoos and piercings, it's like, there's this idea that by doing that you become less

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ladylike or you become less feminine. It's like, no! Tattoos are beautiful. They are just gorgeous, and they're like self-expressions. I was so happy when I got my first tattoo [laughter].

Ally: Did you guys all hide your first tattoo from your mom because I did.

Tiffany: Yes.

Shohreh: Oh god, should I tell this story? Okay, I'm gonna tell, like, a really fucked up story from my past [laughs], but it's The Girl Gang episode.

Ally: Love how you're laughing as you say it. You're like, ha haha, trauma!

Shohreh: No, it's not trauma, it's just like a dumb choice that I made. And I was like, do I want to share how stupid I was when I was younger? But I already just shared about how I was stupid with the leggings-as-pants thing, so this is just another one.

Okay, so, I also was really into the idea of tattoos, Tiff, when I was in high school in particular. I used to doodle them, I used to draw them on myself with sharpies.

Ally: Me too!

Tiffany: [audibly gasps] I did that too!

Ally: Yeah [laughs].

Shohreh: And I was enamored with the idea of tattoos. I really, really wanted them. So after I graduated from high school—and I graduated from high school a year early, so I was seventeen when I graduated—I moved to Wisconsin with my family, and that summer I was living in the Milwaukee area with my family before I started school at UW Madison that fall. And I met this group

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of friends who, some of them were my age and some of them were older and already in college, and one of the guys bought a tattoo gun—

Ally: Oh no!

Shohreh: —and offered to give me a tattoo. And his only tattooing experience was on his own body at this point where he had just been playing with doing tattoos on his body. And I was like, yeah, let's do this! Let's definitely [laughter] let this 20-year-old who has just bought a tattoo gun off eBay give me a tattoo. So, I did. [laughter] And he tattooed a very bad 11:11 under my hip bone.

Tiffany: Oh no!

Shohreh: I was really into 11:11, you know, like the time on the clock, because of the Something Corporate song, Konstantine, so that's my emo heart for you [laughter]. And yeah, it looked bad. It was very uneven. I later went somewhere to get it fixed, and it didn't help that much. I mean, it did make it better, but it was like never gonna be even. I should have just not touched it and then I could have gone and removed it later. And after many removal sessions later and a cover-up, you can no longer see it. But boy, that was a dumb mistake when I was seventeen.

Ally: I've never seen this tattoo before.

Shohreh: Yeah, so the flowers that are on my hip bone on that side cover what was once there, the 11:11 that lived there [laughter]. Oh god.

Tiffany: You realize that the very first thing that we ever did when we hung out was we decided to go get piercings. Do y'all remember that?

Ally: Oh, was it?

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Tiffany: Yeah, like that was, remember, we were gonna go meet for dinner and I met Ally first and we were talking about, like, what should we do, and I was like, I really wanna get my nose pierced, and then it just evolved from there.

Ally: Oh, hell yeah [laughs].

Shohreh: We have gone to the piercing shop together multiple times—

Ally: Multiple times!

Shohreh: —at this point, I think we've each gotten a few new piercings over the course of our friendship.

Ally: I definitely got my conch pierced with you guys. And I just wanna say my favorite piercing that I've ever had is my septum piercing. And I have a lot of thoughts on this because I think that a lot of piercings and tattoos in general, people are like, it's not ladylike blah-blah-blah. But I think septum piercings, on women, people are like, it's gross, you look like a bull, that kinda shit

And I hate that! I think septum piercings are so cute, and I had mine for a long time and I loved it very much, and I took it out because a boy I was dating didn't like it. And that's my biggest regret in life, I just wanna say [laughs]. I don't regret a lot of things, but I do regret that I took out my septum because a boy didn't like it. The same boy that didn't like my wide-legged jeans, so, you know [laughs].

Tiffany: We hate him!

Shohreh: Yeah.

Ally: He really took a toll on my personal style [laughs].

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Shohreh: So, going back to the experimentation point, I actually had a septum as well, and I got it despite the fact that my partner was like, “I don’t really like septum piercings and I probably won’t be attracted to it.” And I was like, I don’t give a fuck, I’m getting it anyways. And I did. And I actually took it out because I didn’t like it on me. Like I tried probably six different pieces of jewelry, it was a whole thing, and I think it was partially because my septum is not perfectly aligned, so I just like couldn’t find a piece of jewelry that fit.

Which is fine because now I have a double nose piercing, which I love so much and makes me gloriously happy. So I found the right combination for me, but I opted to get that piercing even knowing that my partner was like, I’m not gonna be attracted to it, and I took it out just because I didn’t like it. So sometimes you try things that you think you’re gonna like and you’re like, eh, not for me.

Ally: Yeah, and that’s okay. But I loved my septum. I will be getting it redone one day, probably when I feel safe going to a piercing place again, which is hopefully soon. But also, another harsh critic of my septum piercing was my mother [laughs], unsurprisingly. She thought it was disgusting. She said I looked like a bull. And when I took it out, she publicly posted on Facebook that she was so thankful that I had removed my septum piercing.

Shohreh: Okay!

Ally: Yeah.

Shohreh: Come on, Sue [laughs].

Ally: I know! I was old enough that I was like, whatever, I don’t care. But if I had been younger. And certainly I was affected by my boyfriend at the time not

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liking it 'cause he thought it was so gross and was less attracted to me because I had a septum piercing, [laughs] which is so shitty.

Shohreh:

It is so shitty, and in general, this goes back to the whole stop giving your opinion about other people's choices and their bodies when you're not asked, 'cause like, my mom pulls this same shit and she has been doing it since I started getting piercings that she had not given me permission for and started getting tattoos. Like, my mom would make comments, like when she was okay with me getting my nose pierced with a stud, but when I first changed it to a ring, she lost her mind and she was like, "What is your grandmother gonna think?" She also said I looked like a bull, which seems kind of silly 'cause like, not the same place, but she would say that all the time.

Even recently, like when I wanted to get my double nose piercing, I was telling her about it and I showed her pictures of it. And I was like, look how beautiful it looks on this person, and she was like, well it looks beautiful on *them*, it probably won't look like that on you. [Laughter]

Tiffany:

Garbage.

Shohreh:

I was like, okay, Margie!

Ally:

Okay, Margie! [Laughter]

Shohreh:

I feel like this is a good point too to talk about some of her commentary about my tattoos as well because she just does not like tattoos. She definitely thinks they are not ladylike and that they take away from my beauty or whatever the fuck you wanna say. And every time I get a new one, she's just like, ugh, I can't believe you got another one, when are you gonna stop, like are you gonna cover your whole body?

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And like the biggest fight we ever got into about it—I don't even remember which tattoo it was after, I have a lot of tattoos at this point, so I cannot keep track—but she texted me and she was like, I thought your whole thing is about people learning to love and accept their bodies, so isn't you getting tattoos completely go against that philosophy? And I sent this long, ranting text back where I was like, no! Me helping people to love and accept their bodies is perfectly aligned with getting tattoos. I get tattoos because it's like beautiful art and I think that it enhances my body and it makes me love my body even more because they make me happy, so fuck you.

Ally: Like a very basic misunderstanding of your whole line of work [laughs].

Shohreh: Yes, it is, which unsurprising coming from there. But I just finished a half sleeve and she's not happy, and I'm like, too bad [laughter].

Ally: My next plan for a tattoo is I'm going to involve lots of spooky shit, unladylike shit. Hopefully it's going to involve a dagger and a spider and that kind of stuff, so I look forward to my mom's critique of that. I will say I'm lucky in that I have an older sibling who got tattooed before I did, so I was not the first daughter in my family to have to tell my mom that I got tattooed, which I think did soften the blow for me. My mom is still very, has this kind of exasperated response when I get another one, like, oh god, another tattoo, that kind of same line of when are you going to stop blah-blah-blah. But I wasn't the first one.

Shohreh: Tiff, what do your parents think about your tattoos?

Tiffany: Oh. Well. [laughter] Okay, I, first of all, didn't get my first tattoo until I was in my mid-20s, and so, while I did make an effort to conceal it for work reasons—like, I wasn't going out and being like, look at my tattoo guys; like

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I was actively covering it up for work—but my mom doesn't like them. But she also has, for the most part, refrained from making any commentary because I think the closest that she ever got to making commentary was the most recently one I got, which is the memorial tattoo of my cat on my thigh. And the first time that she saw it was when I was performing, and she was just like, oh, that's new! [Laughter] So, I think she's actually had more of an opinion on hair color.

Shohreh: Fascinating!

Tiffany: I think it just speaks to a general disapproval. I guess maybe a couple of weeks ago I did my hair like electric pink.

Shohreh: And it was glorious!

Tiffany: It was glorious, and I really, ugh, I'm so mad that it washed so fast. But the first time I saw my mother, she did the, "Oh Tiffany, what did you do to your hair?"

Ally: Oh my god.

Tiffany: "Why did you do this?" And I said, "Well, because I think it looks fantastic. Thanks mom!"

Shohreh: Wait, I don't know your mom's name, so I can't make a statement. What's your mom's name?

Tiffany: Carol.

Shohreh: God, Carol!

Ally: Carol!

Tiffnay: God, Carol!

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Shohreh: Ugh.

Ally: We hate that!

Shohreh: So I feel like the moral of the story with bodily autonomy is just that let people do whatever the fuck they want, and if you have thoughts about it or if you don't like it, just keep that shit in your head. You can think whatever you want, but nobody wants to hear it.

Ally: Yeah.

Tiffany: The good rule of thumb is, if you see something "wrong" with somebody and they can't fix it within 15 seconds, don't say anything. You don't have any say on anything they can't "fix" in 15 seconds. Like tell somebody they've got vegetables in their teeth, but don't tell them what to wear or what to—

Ally: Yeah, you don't like their stylistic choices.

Tiffany: Yeah.

Ally: And consider that, if you don't like what they're wearing or how they've chosen to present themselves, then you're not the audience for it and that's okay.

Tiffany: And ask yourself why.

Ally: Yeah [laughs]. I think that as women we're told that we have to try to be palatable to everybody, which means not making stylistic choices that a general population won't like. Like oh, don't get tattoos because men don't like them. And that's bullshit. If you don't like a stylistic choice that a woman has made, you're just not the target audience for it. It's not for you, okay. So if you don't like it, it doesn't matter. That's fine. You can not like it

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in your head and then move on. That's my TED Talk on that. Thank you [laughter].

Shohreh: Okay then. So next we move to everyone's favorite topic of sexual relations.

Ally: Let's talk about sex, ba-by!

Shohreh: Yes. We're gonna talk about sex and we're gonna talk about lots of very unladylike things, and we will start with ye olde masturbation station [laughter].

Tiffany: Jilling off. I hate that term! Jilling off.

Al Yeah, I don't like that at all. But what I hate even more is flicking the bean.

Tiffany: Oh god, I hate flicking the bean.

Shohreh: Wait! Who says that? That's fucked up.

Ally: You've never heard that before?

Shohreh: I'm sure I've heard it once, but I feel like, is that still common parlance?

Tiffany: Yeah.

Ally: I would say not in people that I hang out with, but I've certainly heard it many times.

Shohreh: Alright then. That sounds obnoxious and I don't like it.

Ally: Yeah.

Tiffany: The idea that we have to have special "lady terms" for doing a deed like masturbation is one of those ridiculously gendered things that we don't need.

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Shohreh: Didn't we just have a whole text thread recently about the stupid names for vulvas and vaginas out there?

Tiffany: Mmhmm.

Ally: Yes, yes, yes, hate it. We could do a whole episode on that 'cause those make me viscerally angry [laughs].

Shohreh: God, some of them were so disturbing.

Tiffany: Oh yeah.

Ally: Meat curtains.

Tiffany: Oh god. One of 'em was like hot dog garage?

Ally: Ughhh!!

Shohreh: Ugh, that was a terrible one!

Ally: Yeah. Pink Panther. Never use that, that's horrible!

Tiffany: But anyways, masturbation. I love masturbation. It's fantastic!

Ally: Me too. And I can remember being a teenager and just always being like, well I don't masturbate, that's disgusting, girls don't do that, girls don't masturbate. And then I would like go home and secretly masturbate and feel bad about it.

Tiffany: I don't remember talking about it with anybody when I was in high school, but I definitely was masturbating. Even though I may not have even known what it was called at the time, like I was just having that moment where you're like, oh, I'm pressed up against the arm of a chair and it feels really good, and why don't I move back and forth, it feels even better.

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- Shohreh:** I feel like that's how most kids discover masturbation, is just by realizing that oh, accidental genital stimulation feels pleasurable.
- Tiffany:** Yeah.
- Ally:** I don't know if you guys experienced this. I just feel like I remember going through that phase where I didn't quite know what I was doing, like humping my pillows and whatnot. Going through this phase where it just was like understood that girls didn't masturbate, and I kinda knew what I was doing, but I didn't really know what I was doing. And then I just really stopped because it was like understood, at least, I don't know, people I hung out with, that boys watched porn and boys masturbated, but girls didn't because that's gross and girls don't like sex [laughter].
- Tiffany:** Oh no!
- Ally:** Which is so wrong, by the way.
- Tiffany:** Sweet, sweet summer child. I mean, as somebody who grew up reading erotic fanfic far sooner than they should have, the idea of masturbating was a very large part of my day-to-day life. I never thought that masturbation was something that shouldn't be done. I think it was more like, it shouldn't be done where people can see you.
- Ally:** Yeah [laughs]. Okay, I used to read erotic fanfic as well. I read Pirates of the Caribbean fanfic. [Laughter]
- Tiffany:** I *wrote* Pirates of the Caribbean fanfic.
- Ally:** Oh my god. [Laughter]
- Shohreh:** Maybe Ally was reading Tiff's fanfic.

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Ally: I would only read ones where Elizabeth ended up with Jack Sparrow 'cause I thought that he was more interesting and attractive than the other guy.

Shohreh: Yeah, of course you did, Jafar lover!

Ally: [Laughs] Yeah, okay.

Tiffany: I wrote Jack and Will slash, so...

Ally: Ooh!

Shohreh: Much better!

Ally: Yeah. But anyway, I can remember reading it and then getting wet and then feeling kind of—

Tiffany: Tingly?

Ally: Well, and just being like, did I do something gross? Like why am I wet down there, like am I doing something wrong and bad?

Shohreh: Yeah 'cause we're not taught about our freaking bodily sensations or like what to expect, we're just told, "Don't do this." Like I very much grew up with purity culture and religion where that was not an acceptable thing to be doing and that masturbation was just bad. So I was someone who really had to overcome that guilt about masturbating as a thing that I shouldn't do. I feel like I not only got the message that just like in general girls don't masturbate like boys do, but I especially got the message that when you're in a relationship you don't need to masturbate.

Ally: Yes! Yeah, my first boyfriend I remember being like, well, masturbation isn't gross, but we have sex so there shouldn't be a need for you to masturbate.

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- Shohreh:** We hate him. Did we mention we hate him? We hate him.
- Ally:** It's not the same guy that didn't like anything that I wore, but it was the guy who didn't like that I had pubes, so.
- Shohreh:** Exactly, so we hate him! [Laughter]
- Tiffany:** Hate him.
- Ally:** We do still hate him. And I remember being like, okay, yeah, yeah, yeah, and then I would go home and secretly masturbate because the sex we were having was not satisfying to me.
- Shohreh:** Yeah, you did actually need to masturbate in that scenario [laughs].
- Ally:** Yeah! Oh yeah! We would have sex and I would not get off at all in the slightest, and then I would go home and furiously masturbate for two hours [laughter].
- Shohreh:** This is also just like so patriarchal, just this idea that oh, well, once you have a man, like he can give you all that you need sexually, and so there's literally no purpose for masturbation if you can have a nice warm cock at your disposal.
- Ally:** All your needs are being met [laughter].
- Shohreh:** There's a million reasons to masturbate. I mean, it is a form of self-care, it's a form of regulating and grounding yourself, it's a way of getting to know your body and what you like. There's so many reasons to masturbate. And I'm sure there are people out there listening right now who still feel shame at the idea of masturbating while in relationships. And I just wanna hug all of you and say that you can get yourself off whenever, and as much as you want, and however you want to do it, and it says nothing about your

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relationship. It says nothing about the quality of your sex. Like those are separate things.

Ally: Yes!

Shohreh: And it's okay. And if you have a partner who is telling you it's not okay, like no! What they're saying is not okay and needs to be addressed. They're wrong.

Tiffany: Reevaluate that relationship.

Ally: Go forth and touch yourself if you so desire [laughter].

Tiffany: I would say the other kind of adjacent unladylike thing is the idea of buying toys for masturbation. The idea of a lady going into a sex shop to buy a toy feels like it's only been recently that those places have been made, I don't even want to say a safe space for women, but there are places that do sell sex toys that feel women-friendly.

Shohreh: I also feel like things moving online has made it more accessible for people, or it feels safer to purchase than having to like walk into a store and potentially deal with any shame or people seeing you or whatever.

Tiffany: Up until maybe 15, 20 years ago, the idea of a woman walking into a porn shop just was, I don't, I felt like it was unthinkable.

Shohreh: Unless you went with your significant other and it was like a kinky fun thing basically.

Ally: Yeah, and also, I think the messaging was that if you as a woman chose to masturbate, the way that you did it was like, you lit some candles, and you laid down some rose petals on the bed, and you put on some smooth jazz, and you sensually touched yourself [laughs].

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- Shohreh:** Hey, which like, if that's your masturbation style, by all means.
- Ally:** No shame to that, but for me, that's not what it looks like [laughs].
- Tiffany:** No.
- Ally:** If that's not what it looks like for you, that is also just as valid.
- Shohreh:** I think again, there's this patriarchal piece with toys, right, of like, it's not fair to your lovers to use this electric vibrating toy because he can't possibly compare to that. And, you know, it's all about caring about his feelings and all of this stuff. And I'm just like, again, there's multiple ways to use toys, there's all different kinds of toys, and a penis feels very different from the vast majority of vibrating toys and they both have value, so it's like, it's not like it's one replacing the other here.
- Ally:** Right. I love a good penis, and I also love a good vibrator, and I love them together, I love them apart—I love them all [laughs].
- Tiffany:** Yeah, my experience masturbating is that like, I generally enjoy having toys when I masturbate more than just using my hands, and that's been my entire life. So even when I was masturbating as a teenager, I was trying to find things that vibrated. And up until I started having sex with partners, I didn't even think that was unusual. And then all of a sudden it was like, oh no, you can't use your vibrator in bed. It's like, fuck you.
- Ally:** Yeah, fuck that. If you wanna use a vibrator in bed, go for it!
- Shohreh:** And I think that's a much more common line of thought for heteronormative couples as well because I feel like toys are extremely common in queer sex.
- Tiffany:** Oh yeah.

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- Ally:** I feel like straight couples, like cishet couples, it's like, if you're using a vibrator it means that the man is not enough for you, and that's bullshit.
- Tiffany:** Yeah.
- Ally:** Some people need or want a vibrator or another toy to help them orgasm, and if that's you, then that's totally valid. That's like you do you, you know?
- Shohreh:** Or maybe you just find it fun or it brings a new element into the bedroom. That's all fine too.
- Ally:** Yeah, and if you're sleeping with somebody that isn't okay with that, then they suck. They're wrong [laughs].
- Shohreh:** Ally, I want to give you an opportunity to step on your soap box about 69ing.
- Ally:** Ugh, I hate 69ing, you guys [laughter]. Who was I, Tiff, were we just talking about this or was it somebody else?
- Tiffany:** Yes. No, we were talking about it.
- Ally:** Like do I talk about my hate for 69ing with everybody in my life?
- Shohreh:** I've definitely talked with you about it before. [Laughter]
- Ally:** I think it's bullshit. It's like marketed as this really, really sexy, I don't know if anybody can relate to this, but to me I feel like it's marketed as this like extremely sexy, sexy position. And it's not, okay? It's bullshit! I don't...you're receiving subpar oral stimulation and you're giving subpar oral stimulation and it just doesn't feel good and you have to get into a weird position. I don't like it.
- Tiffany:** It doesn't work for all bodies.

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Ally: Yeah. I am happy to give and receive. I would like them to be separate so that I can focus on what I'm doing as well as what I'm receiving because I just feel like if I'm receiving oral sex while simultaneously giving it, I'm not enjoying the experience, and I want to enjoy getting my vulva licked, okay? [Laughter]

Shohreh: And as always, we're not shaming anybody who does enjoy 69ing, but if you're listening and you're like, man, I don't really like that position either, but you've been doing it because you've been told you're supposed to like it and it's really sexy and fun, let me just throw out a PSA: you actually don't have to do any sexual position that you don't like. And it took me way too many years to learn that and to assert that for myself in the bedroom of like, if I don't like something or if it's painful or not fun for me, then I don't have to do it.

And it's sad that it took that long, but I just want to throw that out into the world for anybody who still struggles to say that they don't like something, that life, if something isn't working for you, you do not have to do it. And again, if you have a partner who is saying that you do, it is time to really think about that relationship and reevaluate it.

Ally: Yes, we're here to validate your feelings. If something doesn't work for you, you don't have to fucking do it. And I think, you know, there's kind of a difference between maybe this isn't my favorite thing to do but my partner and I approach it respectfully and I'm happy to make compromises, versus like, I'm constantly being asked to do these things that don't feel good and my partner also knows that I don't enjoy them. Or maybe I don't feel safe expressing to my partner that I don't enjoy them. That's, I think, when it's like, okay, it's time to reevaluate that relationship.

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Tiffany: Well, I think as women we are also kind of discouraged from talking about sex with our partner and exploring new sexual positions.

Shohreh: Or with anybody.

Tiffany: Yeah, with anybody.

Ally: Yeah.

Shohreh: Y'all are some of my first friends that I've ever been able to talk openly about sex with and not feel embarrassed or feel weird about it.

Ally & Tiffany: Aww.

Shohreh: And it's like really sad that it took that long in my life to have friends where this could just be an open topic of conversation. I wish I'd had friends throughout my whole life where this could be an open topic of conversation 'cause I probably would have had a much more satisfying sex life if information exchange was more available.

Tiffany: Mhmm.

Ally: Yeah, I think talking about this is really helpful to people. It can help validate your feelings, or normalize experiences, or even just make you more comfortable broaching the topic.

Tiffany: And give you more ideas. I mean, I'm sure that there's probably a good portion of the population that have never tried anything beyond traditional missionary position and then they may not know that there's different experiences outside of vanilla experiences, and I think that information exchange is just as important. Trying things is important to learning whether or not you like them.

Ally: Yeah, yeah.

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Tiffany: You have to experience them to be able to say, okay, well no, this isn't exactly for me. It might be for somebody else, but it's not for me. Nobody kink shames here.

Shohreh: Yeah, and you need a safe environment in which to do that experimentation. You have to have intimacy with your partner and you have to be able to be vulnerable with them, and that's not easy. I mean, we live in a world that doesn't exactly teach us how to do that, and the more that we can develop that in relationships, the more likely that we can have these difficult conversations about sex or about anything else. And then ultimately that means we get more pleasure. And fuck yeah! We want more pleasure. Give us more pleasure!

Ally: Yeah!

Tiffany: Give us all the pleasure.

Ally: If you're having sex on a regular basis and it's not satisfying to you, you have the right to make changes, try new things.

Shohreh: Get a new partner.

Ally: Yeah [laughs]. Like whatever works for you, you are deserving of sex in the way that you would like it to be.

Shohreh: Okay, so I also want to talk about in this category, generally speaking, vulvas and titties. But on the vulva front, we were recently having a conversation where there's this awesome account that I follow on Instagram, it's called The Vulva Gallery. And it's this creator who does drawings of all different kinds of vulvas because fun fact, there are many, many different variations of what a vulva can look like in terms of where

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the inner bits are and the outer bits, and the size, and shape, and all these different things.

But, pretty commonly in the media there's like only one or two types of vulvas that are really shown, and I would argue this is the same thing for breasts too. There's a particular kind of breast that is more common. And so a lot of people grow up thinking there's something wrong with their body parts. They think, oh well, what's wrong with me that my boobs don't look like that? What's wrong with me that my vulva doesn't look like this?

And so, we were having this conversation and we were picking out ones from the gallery that looked similar to our vulvas, and that was actually like a really cool and fun conversation to be like, oh wait, this one looks like me! 'Cause it's like, again, you're not the only one. There are others that look like yours that are similar,

And I think we've all felt that shame and aloneness of what if I'm the only one who looks like this and my vulva doesn't look like what all the porn vulvas look like, so is something wrong with me or should I be ashamed of that? And that just sucks. It sucks that in so many ways we don't celebrate body diversity, and again, it's that lack of information exchange. Nobody talks about this. No one was talking to me about this when I was growing up to be like, there are all different vulvas, here are some pictures of different vulvas. If I was raising a child with a vulva, this would be a conversation I'd be having with them.

Tiffany:

Mmhmm.

Ally:

Yeah, and that like, for one thing [laughs], the way that your vulva is shaped and the color of it is largely genetic. However big your inner or outer labia is, however it all sits, that's just how it is. I think there's some

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kind of stigma that like, for example, if you have a larger inner labia, there was this stigma for a while that it meant that you had had a lot of sex or that your vagina was looser because you had “extra” inner labia, which is objectively untrue [laughs]. Vulvas just look the way that they look and one type is not inherently better or feels better than the other. I hate that, when men are like, oh, well this type just feels better. No, it doesn't. Do you even know? [Laughs]

Shohreh: Exactly!

Ally: How many vulvas have you actually, you know, what's your data point here? You don't fucking know! [Laughs]

Shohreh: And it's really easy to say that when you come in with that belief, right? Like usually it's confirmation bias. It's you seeing a certain kind of vulva in porn and being told that that's the beautiful, acceptable vulva, and so then you already go into a sexual encounter and if you see a vulva that doesn't look like that, you're going to conjure that in a way of like, oh, this feels different. And it's like, no, it probably doesn't feel different at all, but you just came in expecting that something was wrong with it and it's different.

Those feelings then get passed to your partner who then feels shame about the way that their body is shaped. And again, can't make a 15-second fix on this. And like, yeah, you can do a labiaplasty, but it's fucking expensive and ouch! You shouldn't have to do that, and a lot of people feel like they have to in order to again, be attractive to men. And I'm just like, ugh!

Ally: Yeah.

Shohreh: It makes me depressed.

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Ally: Labias are labias. The only opinion you should have on a labia is like your own, and I hope that your opinion is, “this is my labia” and that’s your opinion of it [laughs]. If you don’t have one, or if it’s not your own, you shouldn’t even have an opinion on it.

Tiffany: I’ve never met a vulva I didn’t like.

Ally: Yeah, right? And I can remember being like, seventeen, eighteen, and it being expressed to me, for one thing, the first reference I heard to different labias was innie versus outie. Did you guys ever hear of that?

Shohreh: I only recently heard this terminology via TikTok.

Ally: Yeah, so it’s like, an innie is where your outer labia kind of covers everything, and then an outie, I suppose, is when your outer labia is shorter and therefore like your inner bits are more exposed.

Tiffany: Huh.

Shohreh: Correct. I have an outie!

Ally: I have an innie, and I remember a boy that I was talking to was like, oh well, innie vulvas are—well, he probably said vaginas because teenage boys don’t know the difference between a vulva and a vagina—but innies are so much better than outies. And I was like, have you even seen a vulva in real life? Have you ever even touched one? You know what I mean? It’s like teenage boys that have never even been around a vulva have these opinions on them. And it’s like, obviously they got it from media, they got it from porn, and then those just get perpetuated. And then I as a teenage girl was like, oh my god, I’m so glad I have an innie because this random-ass nothing boy [laughs] thinks that innies are better. Such bullshit!

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Shohreh: There's all these stories of women who have outies who, again, went and got plastic surgery so that the inner lips didn't hang out anymore because they were so embarrassed by it or because shitty boys and men made comments to them about it. And that just breaks my heart that people truly feel like they have to change their body in that way to fit in. It's such a sucky thing about our society.

Ally: Yes.

Tiffany: The thing that occurs to me is like I never had conversations about innie or outie or vulvas at all when I was growing up. I don't think I was ever taught the difference between the vulva and the vagina until I was in my twenties?

Shohreh: Same. I was late to the game on that.

Tiffany: I still feel like even never having talked about it, the message was still communicated that certain types of vulvas and breasts were better. That was still communicated to me through media and through society.

Ally: Yeah, it's like the innie vulva and perky breasts. Which, first of all, perky breasts, again, are a genetic thing. Some of it has to do with the size of your breasts, but some of it just has to do with the way that your body is built. Some people's just sit differently or are shaped differently.

Tiffany: And age.

Ally: Yeah, yeah.

Tiffany: It doesn't matter. Sure, genetics will play a part, but as you get older your breasts naturally start to hang.

Ally: Yes.

Shohreh: Gravity is real! [Laughs]

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- Ally:** That's science, my friends! Of course, there's all these freaking torture devices like push-up bras to help us make our boobs look perkier 'cause that's what men like is perky boobs.
- Shohreh:** The amount of years that I wore just like padded, terrible push-up bras that were never comfortable because I wanted my boobs to look bigger is just astounding to me. Especially now that almost all that I wear is bralettes with no padding whatsoever, and I'm like, yay, my boobs are happy and free. And I have small boobs, so there's a bit of a privilege in me being able to wear things like bralettes 'cause they don't bounce around.
- Tiffany:** I love bralettes, and my tits are huge.
- Ally:** Same. [Laughs]
- Tiffany:** I guess they started making bralettes that fit big tits because I got some from the Savage Fenty—
- Ally:** Oh yeah!
- Tiffany:** Man, I love that shit.
- Ally:** Bralette technology has come further in the last few years.
- Shohreh:** Yeah, now that all the time and money isn't being put into fucking Victoria's Secret push-up bras, we have energy to put it into things that are actually comfortable. Go figure!
- Ally:** I just wanna say, if you're somebody that's never worn a bra before, push-up bras feel terrible. They do not feel good.
- Shohreh:** No, because it's like this big chunk of padding at the bottom that's squeezing your boobs into the middle towards each other. Like if I just do

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that with my hands, it's uncomfortable. And then putting it into a constricting device where it's there all night.

Tiffany: I was gonna say, the wire is a big part of it. Like, you get this digging into your skin. And typically you're not shown how a bra fits correctly, so inevitably your band is too small and your cup is too small, or whatever. Oh, they feel awful. So bad.

Shohreh: I just remember thinking growing up too, so I was always really insecure about my stomach growing up because I did not have a flat stomach and I was obsessed with the idea of getting six-pack abs. And again, I'm someone who's always had thin privilege, I've always been in a smaller body, but I had this very much internalized idea that like, okay, well your stomach is bad because it's not flat.

And I had learned, you know, of course from magazines that like, okay, you've got to play up your good parts. So I was like, alright, well I have boobs, so I gotta like really present the boobs and really keep the attention on the boobs so I can ignore other parts of me. And I'm just like ugh, god.

Tiffany: I will say that I had the exact same experience but in reverse because I hated my stomach growing up because I was fat, and I had big titties. And basically, the message I got from everyone is, at least you have big tits. And wear the push-up bra, tap the cleavage, like everything was reduced down to the sexuality that I had as a "curvaceous woman."

Shohreh: How much time have we wasted in our lives, especially as teenage girls and in our young twenties, trying to mold our bodies, and our personas, and our clothing for the male gaze? Like when I really think about just the time, and energy, and money wasted, I am just saddened by it.

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Ally: Yes.

Shohreh: That so many of us go through that and it's really rare to not go through that. I'm hoping it's becoming more common. That people who are raising kids are teaching them different ways of being. But also, it's like, no matter what you do in the household, your kids are still gonna go out into the world and are still gonna get those messages about value and worth.

Ally: My hope is that the media is shifting. I know there's a lot to kind of work through there, but Tiff, like you were saying, Savage X Fenty, the brand I think is one that does really good with their message of inclusivity. And their social media, if you look at it, has all different kinds of bodies on it, which I think is fantastic. And my hope is that kids seeing stuff like that or adolescents seeing stuff like that are getting much more positive messaging than like, us, who grew up in the era of fucking Victoria's Secret, extremely thin except for gigantic booby women [laughs] being seen as like the only valid body type.

Tiffany: I would say as far as...the overarching theme of unladylike tonight has been fuck the patriarchy because all of these things are so based in patriarchal standards and capitalist standards. The idea that we owe anyone anything is bullshit.

Ally: Yeah.

Tiffany: Take care of your own shit. Be true to yourself. That's it.

Ally: Your body is yours, your pleasure is yours. You don't exist to serve men. You don't exist to be an object for men to look at. You deserve to do things that make you happy in whatever way that is.

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Shohreh: Yeah, and finding ways to get in touch with that, 'cause it's not easy when you've spent your whole life being taught that your own body isn't worthy and can't be trusted and that you need to look outside of yourself for the answers. So be patient with yourself. It may take some time to learn to listen to what your own body is telling you, and to figure out what it is that you actually like and dislike, and be able to have these kinds of conversations, which are hard at first when you're not used to having these vulnerable conversations. And I hope that you have safe, wonderful people in your life that you can start to talk about some of this stuff with so that the shame can dissipate a little bit and you can be more comfortable.

Ally: Yeah. Talk to your friends about what their vulvas look like 'cause I think that can be interesting. [Laughs]

Shohreh: Do it! I mean, I wish for everyone that they have friends that they can talk about their genitalia with.

Tiffany: Yes.

Ally: Yeah, I think that's actually really nice for normalizing, like, all these different types of vulvas and labias. Ask your friends! That's your homework. Ask your friends what their vulvas look like [laughter].

Shohreh: Get that text chain going, y'all. [Laughter] Alright, so for our final topic of this round of unladylike, we are going to talk about the choice to not have children. As in, the choice to be child-free, which I believe all three of us have, at least currently, made that choice for our own lives.

Ally: Yes.

Shohreh: Subject to change, but—

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Ally: Yeah. I'm 27, you guys know. So I would say I'm 99% confident in my decision [laughs]. You know, I always leave room for changing my mind, but I do feel quite confident in my decision. I certainly do not feel any desire to have children right now, which I have been told my whole life that I would feel by this age. I feel confident in saying no, I don't have that desire in the slightest.

Shohreh: I'm about to turn 31, and I'm pretty sure I would give myself 99.9, that extra little notch, that I have no intention of having children. I definitely will not be birthing any children.

Ally: Agreed! Agreed!

Shohreh: I've been 100% on that for a long time, so that's not a thing that will be happening.

Ally: Yes, no baby is coming out of my vagina.

Tiffany: Yeah.

Shohreh: Yeah, but I'm just leaving myself open, again, to the fact that sometimes weird things happen in life, or maybe I fall in love with someone who happens to have a child, or something happens to someone who I love who has a kid and I need to take care of that kid. You know, like there are all kinds of ways to end up raising children, so—

Ally: Yes, I'm not opposed to being a stepmom, I think. Like a hot, young stepmom [laughter].

Tiffany: I would say as the oldest and the most 100% sure that I'm never having children, the idea of having made that decision, having thought about it and put the time and thought into trying to make that decision, we aren't encouraged to have that conversation with ourselves, let alone our partner.

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Ally: Yeah. I think we're always taught to keep our mind open because our biological clock is eventually going to start ticking, and to that I say, mind your fucking business. Stop asking people when or if they're going to have kids [laughs].

Shohreh: I wasn't even told to keep my mind open. I was just told, "you'll change your mind." Great, thanks.

Tiffany: I am not shy about the fact that I am not suited to children, and so, the idea of mine extends to like, I probably wouldn't want to date somebody that has children. I wouldn't want to be listed as the person who in the event of death of a parent, I wouldn't be the person that they'd send the kid to.

Ally: And that's valid.

Tiffany: That's okay that I am not suited to children. But that's, like you said, the idea of coming to that decision feels foreign. The idea that we explore who is suited to having children and who isn't. Just because I'm a woman doesn't mean that I should be a parent.

Shohreh: Well, and I think even just the idea of being suited to it, it's like certainly there are people who are better suited to be parents than others, and there are people who may be suited to be a parent and they just don't fucking want to.

Ally: Yeah.

Shohreh: And that's fine too.

Tiffany: Or they might want to and they are, for whatever reason, society doesn't want them to be. If there's a child out there that a nice, gay couple can have that might have been mine, like please let the gays have it! [Laughter]

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- Ally:** I also wanna say, I talk to my therapist about this regularly actually, that it infuriates me that a lot of doctors will not let women make any sort of elective choice to get their tubes tied, for example, if they're under a certain age.
- Shohreh:** Yep!
- Ally:** Or even if they're like older, but haven't had any children. No doctor would ever perform that surgery on me as somebody in my twenties that has not had children, and that makes me so angry because I know 100% certainty I will never ever, ever birth a child.
- Shohreh:** Same.
- Ally:** Like Shohreh said, if I ever become a parent, it will not be because I went through a pregnancy and birthed a child myself. I used to have nightmares about being pregnant and giving birth [laughs]. I respect people that go through that, and it's not a choice I will ever make for myself. And it makes me extremely angry that I know this with full confidence, but it's not accepted, it's not believed by doctors because they're so certain that I will change my mind. I'm like, I've lived in my brain and my body for [laughs] for quite a while, so I think I know what's going on inside of it better than you do, sir.
- Shohreh:** At every turn, girls and women are taught that they're supposed to be mothers, that they're supposed to raise kids, and like any time that you try to say you don't want that, they doubt you. I knew as a teenager that I didn't want kids. Like I already knew that. I already saw the world in which people were going out to be parents, and I was like, I don't want that. I don't wanna have kids. And I remember my mom being like, that is so selfish. Like, I got the message over and over again that not wanting

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children is selfish, and I got the message about, who's gonna take care of you when you're old, and like all of this shit.

And I'm like, you know what's selfish, is bringing a kid into the world and not wanting it. Not wanting to take care of that kid. Not being able to step fully into your role as a parent because it's not something that you wanted in the first place. And I would only have a child and I would only raise a child if I was 100% certain I could give that kid the love, and support, and the resources that it needed. And I wouldn't do it for any other reason. And I have never felt that way. I've never felt that I could give that, that I would want to give that, that I would want to change my life to have children.

And again, this is not a statement against anybody who makes that choice for themselves. But the point is that it has to be a choice, and we're so often taught that it's not a choice. That we're just supposed to have kids, like it's the right thing to do, it's our purpose in this world. And I'm just like, that's not my purpose, and I've never felt like it was my purpose, and I'm so sick of people trying to tell me that my life will never possibly be as good because I don't have fucking offspring.

Ally:

Yeah, and that our bodies are going to inherently go against what our brains think. That once you hit a certain age, once you hit the age where your body is ready to have a baby, scientifically, biologically speaking, all of a sudden, you're just gonna flip this switch. And maybe that does happen to some people, but it is not everybody's experience and it's not really your business to say or to tell somebody with full confidence that it will happen to them because you don't know.

Tiffany:

Yeah, there's plenty of people that want to get pregnant and can't for whatever reason. They might be infertile or they might be transgender. There's all different reasons why people might not be able to get pregnant,

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and so, to comment on it for anyone, like, just to make it a topic of conversation, like whether or not somebody wants or should have kids is just argh. I don't like it. I don't like it at all.

Ally: Yeah, mind your business.

Tiffany: Yeah.

Ally: The only time you should comment on somebody's pregnancy is if they are actively pregnant and they are—

Tiffany: Actively giving birth.

Ally: Yeah, like starting a conversation about their own pregnancy, then like okay, then you can talk to them about their pregnancy. But other than that, mind your business.

Tiffany: I don't want to talk to anybody about their pregnancy unless they're literally in labor!

Ally: [Laughs] I don't want to talk about pregnancy in general. It freaks me out, like I—

Tiffany: Don't like it.

Ally: Yeah, people that do it are like strong. It terrifies me. I don't wanna do it. I literally used to have nightmares about giving birth.

Shohreh: And again, this comes back to this idea of making comments on other people's choices and their bodies. My sister was struggling with infertility for a period of time, and people would make comments about like, oh, when are you guys gonna start a family, when are you gonna have a baby, and they made her feel like shit because she was trying to have one. And

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that just reminded her of the fact that it was something that she was struggling with and she was already going through this really hard time.

And then people will say the same thing to me. They're like, "Oh, when are you gonna start a family? You should have kids; they'll make you so happy." And I'm just like, I've got a million amazing, badass things happening in my life and we're talking about my potential future children that I don't want. Why are we even wasting any time talking about this? I don't want to.

Ally: As if that is the only next valid step. If you're somebody that wants to follow the life plan of like I wanna get married, and then buy a house, and then have babies, that is awesome. That's your choice, and that is awesome. But not everybody does that, and that's okay too.

Tiffany: Yeah.

Ally: Just because you get married does not mean that your next step is going to be having kids, and just because you have a long-term partner does not mean that you wanna have kids. Maybe your idea of family is just me and my partner, or maybe it's me and my partner and our pets, or maybe me and my partner and our girlfriend, you know what I mean? Like, family can mean anything.

Shohreh: Yeah, man, woman, child does not equal only option for a family out there. That's like incredibly homophobic, and it's super heteronormative [laughs] and patriarchal, and I hate it.

Ally: The overarching message of this podcast episode is mind your goddamn business [laughter].

Shohreh: And fuck the patriarchy.

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Ally: Yeah! Stop assuming that everything is made for you and just live your own fucking life [laughs].

Tiffany: Yeah.

Shohreh: Yeah. Well, and we punish women who choose to do that, that's just a fact. Like in our society we punish women who don't fit into the boxes that society has said this is what a good woman should be. And to be fair, we also punish men who don't fit into the boxes that we've set out for them, which are also incredibly restricting. And we punish non-binary and trans people for not fitting neatly into the "man-woman" box of what we've been told it means to be a man or a woman. So it's like, these gendered assumptions fucking hurt everybody.

Ally: Yes.

Shohreh: And they need to go.

Ally: Agreed. I also wanna say one thing that I'm really fucking sick of seeing in media is any time a woman character doesn't have children, they always give her some like horrific backstory where she's been through dozens of miscarriages and she desperately wants a baby and it's this pain that she has to bear for her whole life. I understand that there are people that live that, but that's not every woman that doesn't have children.

Tiffany: I think there was actually literally like a coding in movies and media that said that if it was going to be approved by the censors, then you had to have certain requirements met. And those were very patriarchal and very, like—

Ally: Oh, like if there was gonna be a childless woman she had to have expressed the desire to have children? Ugh.

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Tiffany: Yeah.

Shohreh: Family values! [Laughter]

Ally: Yeah, I hate that. I have seen enough strong female characters and then, of course, the backstory where it's like, oh but she did want children. There can be a strong female character that just doesn't want to have kids ever and that's okay [laughs].

Tiffany: Yeah.

Shohreh: There was this awesome interview that I heard Oprah do, I think it was on her podcast. It was a long time ago. I was listening to an episode that she did with somebody. I'll find it and link to it in the show notes. But she and her guest had both chosen not to have children, and they were talking about their reasons why and what Oprah said really resonated with me. Where she said, the work that I am called to do in this world is incredibly important to me, and I felt that I could not simultaneously give myself to this work and give a child everything that they would need to be successful. And so she decided for herself, the work was so important to her that she was going to choose that over having that kid.

And this is not to say that you cannot be a great working parent, that's not what I'm saying at all here. It was just, her personal calculus was that she knew what kind of time and energy that she would have to give to a child, and she felt like the work that she was being called to do, that she couldn't possibly have both. And so she made the choice that goes against the grain of well, I'm going to choose the work, which is the less respected choice in our society, even for someone like fucking Oprah, right?

Tiffany & Ally: Yeah.

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Shohreh: Oprah is incredibly successful, freaking multi-millionaire, whatever, and there are probably still people out there who are like, I wish Oprah was married and had children. And I'm just like, maybe she wouldn't have been able to achieve all that she's been able to achieve if she had gone down that path. I mean, we have no way to know, but she felt in her bones that was the right direction for her. And I think, again, it's about really turning inward and deciding what's important to you and where your values lie. And that's been the calculus for me. I feel so strongly about my work and my autonomy and the life that I want to build for myself, and children just don't fit into that.

Ally: Yeah.

Shohreh: Maybe never. Definitely not at this time. And I'm okay with that.

Tiffany: Yeah, I think you said it really well. Like, if your desire to have children is not 100%, children require so much and you have such a responsibility to them and you are literally developing a new person. To have any doubt in your mind that you wouldn't want or be able to care for them the way that they deserve, unless it's 100%. If you were 99.9, that 0.1% of doubt, you have to really look inward and figure out what that is. Because you don't wanna have a kid and then not be able to give them what they deserve.

Shohreh: Or regret it and make them feel unwanted. What kid deserves to have parents who are like, ugh, I wish I didn't have children?

Ally: Yeah. I also wanna say, it's a selfish decision to have a kid if you're not prepared to love that kid however they—

Tiffany: 100%

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Ally: Yeah, however they turn out. If you're somebody that's like, I'm gonna have a kid, but if they don't behave the way that I think they should, I'm not gonna love them as well, that's selfish. You shouldn't be making that choice, you know what I mean?

Shohreh: That's true in so many different ways 'cause one of the things I often hear people say about pregnant folks is like, oh, well, as long as the baby is healthy. And I'm like, what if the baby isn't healthy? That's some ableist shit. If you are going to have a child, you'd better be prepared to have a kid who has any number of conditions or health problems because that is a risk that you take when you have a kid. So enough with this "as long as you're healthy" garbage. You've made the choice to have a kid, so whatever happens with that kid, that is now your responsibility.

Ally: Yes. And of course, barring people that elect to terminate pregnancies, that would result in health complications that would detriment the quality of life. I'm very understanding of that.

Shohreh: We're all about the right to choose on this podcast.

Ally: Yes.

Shohreh: To be clear, this is a pro-choice podcast.

Tiffany: But that's the thing, though—it is literally pro-choice. No one should be judged for their choice because it's their own decision. So whether you choose to not terminate pregnancies, or whether you choose to terminate pregnancies, or whether you think that it's right or not, that's your opinion. Keep it to yourself.

Ally: Yes. And also, yeah, if you make the choice to have kids, there will be a number of decisions you have no control over, so you need to be

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prepared to love that kid. If you're somebody that's like, I can't love this kid if it doesn't fit into a neat little box in whatever way that means to you, you shouldn't be having a kid. [laughs] 'Cause you don't have any control over that. And if you're not okay with it, then you shouldn't have a child. I'm just gonna say that.

Shohreh: Yep. Facts. And if you are a queer little bb and you have parents who treated you like that, one, I can relate, and two, I'm your mom now. So—

Ally: I was just gonna say that -

Shohreh: —come on over!

Ally: I was gonna say, I'm your mom now.

Shohreh: The three of us are gonna be your moms, collectively.

Tiffany: I'm an aunt!

Ally: I'm a MILF.

Shohreh: Tiff's just like, I am the aunt. Okay, MILF, mom, and aunt. We don't wanna have or raise children, but at the same time we will adopt you. You're ours now.

Ally: Yes.

Shohreh: So, it's all good.

Ally: I think Kacey Musgraves just tweeted that. She was like, if you're queer and your parents aren't accepting, I'm your mom now.

Shohreh: That's the only momming I'm gonna be doing in this lifetime.

Ally: Yes, same.

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- Shohreh:** Let me take all of the queer folx into my life [laughter]. That's that.
- Ally:** Yes, I'll be your mysterious hot stepmom. That's what I'm here for.
- Tiffany:** I am literally gonna be like the weird—
- Ally:** Gay, goth aunt?
- Tiffany:** Yeah, gay, goth aunt. Like that is literally my Discord title. [Laughter] Fairy gothmother.
- Ally:** We're your family now, and we love you. Very much. Wear whatever you want.
- Tiffany:** I'm gonna roll up to your party, like, bringing you booze and driving around with like peanuts.
- Ally:** Do you guys need condoms? Love ya! [Laughter]
- Shohreh:** Here's some vibrating toys, they're really fun!
- Ally:** Yeah, that's the only parenting I'll be doing if anybody needs a mom [laughs].
- Shohreh:** We're here for it. When I was in law school, some of the 1Ls when I was a 2L who were in my scholarship program, they called me Mama Shoh.
- Ally:** Aw!
- Shohreh:** Because I really cared about them and I took them under my wing. So, I'll be a Mama Shoh for anyone who needs it.
- Ally:** This will shock nobody, but no one has ever referred to me as "mom." I don't have that motherly instinct I don't think. [Laughter]
- Shohreh:** I apparently do for grown adults, but not actual children [laughter].

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- Ally:** It's easier to be a mom to grown adults that are less prone to temper tantrums.
- Shohreh:** Mmhmm. Alright, Girl Gang. We got very unladylike here. A lot of important messages, and thoughts, and ideas were shared. For those listening, I hope this has been a welcome break from Election Day stress and just a reminder to you all that no matter what happens today, we are gonna get through this. We are gonna come together in community and take care of each other. So just hold that in mind amongst the uncertainty that we can do hard things and we will get through whatever happens.
- Ally:** And if you haven't voted yet, what are you doing? Go vote right this very instant!
- Shohreh:** Yeah, stop listening to this podcast and go fucking vote.
- Tiffany:** Go vote.
- Ally:** Go right now! I can't imagine anybody listening to this podcast has not yet voted, but if you haven't.
- Shohreh:** Let's not discount widespread voter disenfranchisement, which is a thing, so if you've been prevented from voting, fuck everybody who did that to you. If you can vote, you have the privilege and the ability to vote, you better be voting.
- Ally:** Yes.
- Tiffany:** Vote! Vote!
- Shohreh:** Alright, Girl Gang is signing off for now. Goodnight everybody.
- Ally:** Goodnight.

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Tiffany: Night.

Shohreh: And that's our show for today! If this podcast has taught you anything or helped you in any way, I hope you'll consider supporting me in my effort to keep it going. You can join my Patreon community and receive members-only perks by going to shohrehdavoodi.com/Patreon, or you can tip me for my work through the payment links located at the bottom of the show notes for each episode. I would also encourage you to subscribe and submit a rating and review through your podcast provider of choice. I love hearing from listeners, so feel free to screenshot from your podcast player, post on social media, and tag me. Finally, if you're looking for more information on what I'm all about and how to work with me directly, head over to shohrehdavoodi.com. Hope to see you for the next episode.