

Conjuring Up Courage #102

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

Shohreh Davoodi: You are listening to episode #102 of Conjuring Up Courage, and the Girl Gang is back together again for some Pridepalooza shenanigans. In preparation for this episode, I gave listeners the opportunity to submit questions for the Girl Gang to answer for this very special queer edition Q&A. And y'all did not disappoint. We gave advice on several topics, including how to decide whether or not to come out, different ways to engage with your queerness, and strategies for making more queer friends. This episode is definitely a spicy one, so I hope you can handle the heat.

To access the show notes and a full transcript of this episode, head to shohrehdavoodi.com/102. That's shohrehdavoodi.com/102.

This episode is brought to you in part by Ample + Rooted, an inclusive therapy practice that provides an affirming and welcoming home for diverse individuals to reclaim their inherent worth. The folks at Ample + Rooted created a guided meditation on cultivating self-trust just for listeners, and it's available in the show notes for this episode.

[Music plays]

This is Conjuring Up Courage, and I'm your host, Shohreh Davoodi. As a self-trust coach, I help people come home to themselves, so they can be more of who they are, and less haunted by who they think they're supposed to be.

I created this podcast to celebrate what's possible when you commit to being brave. You'll hear from diverse guests who are refusing to let fear and self-doubt stop them from building fulfilling lives and creating a

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better world for everyone. I'll also teach you my favorite tools, strategies, and mindset shifts so you can do the same.

Consider this your invitation to stop living according to "shoulds" and to step into your motherfucking magic instead. Stay open, get curious, and let's grow together.

[Music fades]

What up, what up, what up Girl Gang! How's it goin'? [Light laughter]

Tiffany Cunningham: Yo, yo, yo? Yo? Yo yo.

Shohreh: Comin' in hot. Comin' in hot.

Ally Ridnour: When your elder millennial friends try to be cool [Laughter].

Tiffany: Do you want to try that again?

Shohreh: I'm sorry, do you want me to re-record an amazing intro, because...
[Tiffany laughs]

Ally: No, that was great. I love it. I love it, let's roll with it [laughs lightly].

Shohreh: I refuse. I thought it was awesome.

Ally: I loved it in, like, a way that I love normcore. Or like when my mom calls her friends her "peeps." It's the same energy.

Tiffany: Halfway through that I realized how old I am [Shohreh and Ally laugh].
That's like that Steve Buscemi meme where he's like, what up, fellow teenagers? [Laughter]

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- Shohreh:** What up, youths?
- Ally:** Yes, it was very much that [laughs].
- Shohreh:** Well, you're welcome. And that's what you get [Ally and Tiffany laugh].
So, that's the tone I'm setting for this. We are gonna be old people answering questions that probably came in from younger people [laughs lightly].
- Ally:** Oh no.
- Tiffany:** I mean, that's my life, so, you know [Ally laughs lightly], whatever.
- Ally:** I'm the youth of the group, don't worry everyone.
- Shohreh:** That's right.
- Tiffany:** You're a baby.
- Ally:** You're in good hands, [exaggerated] baby.
- Shohreh:** You got this [laughter]. Ohhhh, for those who maybe haven't listened to a Girl Gang episode before and don't know you or have somehow forgotten, could y'all just quickly introduce yourselves for everyone?
- Ally:** Yeah, what's up bitches? [Laughs]
- Shohreh:** 'Cause that's better than "what up, what up, what up."
- Ally:** I thought we were comin' in hot, I came in hot! Anyways [light laughter].
Hi guys.
- Shohreh:** [with accent] Hi.

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- Ally:** I'm Ally. My pronouns are she/her, and I identify as a bisexual woman. Um, or queer. Whatever. I'm not picky.
- Shohreh:** Bisexual disaster.
- Ally:** Yeah. Oh god, yeah. Chaotic. Disaster. Yeah. That's it. [laughs lightly].
- Shohreh:** Perfect.
- Tiffany:** I'm Tiffany, and my pronouns are she/they, and I identify as a woman, but only in the vaguest sense of the word [laughs lightly].
- Ally:** Mhm. Mhm.
- Shohreh:** Feel that. Feel that.
- Tiffany:** And bisexual with a healthy dose of sometimes demisexual? I don't know. There's a lot of labels being thrown around these days, and I'm just like, people, and I don't really care where they identify or what's in their pants. Like I don't care [laughs lightly]. I just like people [Ally laughs lightly]. Sometimes I like having sex with them. Sometimes.
- Ally:** Sometimes.
- Shohreh:** That's fair.
- Tiffany:** It's really interesting. I'm sure like many other people I have been in, like, pandemic gender identity/sexuality crisis because we don't have to be perceived by anyone or often. I am a woman in the same way that "Wuthering Heights" by Kate Bush is a Bronte adaptation. Like, it is,

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but it's the weirdest fucking adaptation you've ever heard in your life [Ally laughs]. That's how I identify.

Ally: I love that.

Shohreh: Thank you for that. That was majestic. [Ally laughs]

Ally: This introduction has gone off the fucking rails [laughs].

Shohreh: Yeah, we are crushing it already. Everyone, if this is going to be an indicator of what's ahead for the next hour of your life, strap the fuck in.

Ally: You don't come to a Girl Gang episode expecting, like, orderly, eloquent [laughs lightly] ...

Shohreh: Yeah, my solo episodes and Girl Gang episodes are like polar fucking opposites [laughter].

Ally: I saw a TikTok today that was, like, I love best friends that are all, like, individually, like, extremely intelligent people but when they come together they cancel out their intelligence, and I thought of you guys. [Laughter]

Tiffany: We share one brain cell. We do. [Laughter]

Shohreh: Yes. We're all fighting over a single brain cell at any given moment. [Laughter]

Ally: Yes. Love you!

Shohreh: Love y'all too [Ally laughs lightly]. I think everyone listening knows who I am, but just as a reminder, I'm Shohreh. This is my show. This is not the

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Ally show. That's a separate show. [Ally laughs] And my pronouns are she/her. In terms of identity, I'm a cool late-in-life lesbian, so yay me! Yay pandemic realizations!

Ally: I just thought you were gonna say, "I'm a cool lady!" [Laughter]

Shohreh: Also that.

Tiffany: That is true. That is factual.

Shohreh: Welcome to the Girl Gang Q&A where we don't actually answer any of your questions and we talk about whatever the fuck we want instead [laughter].

Ally: Surprise! [Ally laughs]

Tiffany: There was an outline for this episode [light laughter].

Shohreh: Yes. So I guess I should tell y'all what we are doing tonight [laughs lightly], which is, this is a Q&A, and it's a queer edition Q&A.

Ally: Yay! We're gonna A your Qs.

Shohreh: [Laughs lightly] We're gonna A your Qs. Okay, you are a nerd. That's that brain cell that I must have had it in that moment, and you didn't. [Laughter]

Ally: Am I wrong? Are we not gonna A the Qs? [Laughter]

Shohreh: [Laughs] We are. I just, like, my brain automatically tried to fill it in with other words besides answer questions, and it, like, went in a bad place, so.

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Ally: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. This is a particularly spicy episode, I feel.

Shohreh: [Laughter] Oh my god, it's so spicy. Drink some water everyone.
[Laughter]

Tiff: [Makes strangled laughing sounds]

Ally: Okay. Alright. Oh, Tiff.

Shohreh: Okay, we're gonna take some deep breaths to re-center. [Deep breaths]. Okay.

I invited y'all to submit questions for our Queer Edition Q&A. You did not have to be queer to participate as long as you stayed on the general theme of queerness. So we have a variety of questions that were submitted that we are going to be answering today.

Uh, this is just my general disclaimer that we're just, like, three random people, so obviously we cannot give you any mental health advice or medical advice or anything of that nature. Take everything we say with a grain of salt and I guess also a splash of hot sauce 'cause of the spiciness. We're going to do our best and we're gonna tell you what we think from our own experiences. But for all of these questions, there's no right answer, there's no perfect answer. And that's what you signed up for, right? You wanted to hear from the Girl Gang, so hear from the Girl Gang you shall.

Ally: [Laughs lightly] You know us. You know that we're not, uh...

Tiffany: We know what the people want.

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- Ally:** Yeah.
- Tiffany:** They want Ally.
- Ally:** Publicly admitted to have one brain cell, so... [Laughs lightly]
- Shohreh:** And if you didn't know about the Girl Gang and you submitted a question, that's on you [laughter], so...
- Tiffany:** Hey, if you didn't know about the Girl Gang and you submitted a question, thank you. [Ally laughs] Thank you very much.
- Ally:** We love you.
- Shohreh:** Alright, so, we actually have two questions from different people paired together. They have some similar themes, so that's why I'm putting them in the same category.
- So, first question is: "I feel like I'm bi but I'm in a het marriage, and I feel like publicly IDing as bi feels pointless and detracts from LGBTQIA folks since I enjoy the privileges of being cishet. Thoughts? Does it matter?" That comes to us from Married and Attracted to Women.
- Ally:** Okay.
- Shohreh:** So then second question that I'm pairing with that one is: Have any of you, or your queer friends, talked to a [queer] therapist about coming out? I've been married a while but I think I'm bi and debating the risk/point of coming out. Been really working on accepting myself though, my body, my values, my identity, etcetera. Worried if I keep

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this to myself it will hinder or block my progress. And that question comes to us from Confused About Coming Out.

Ally: Hm.

Tiffany: Hm.

Shohreh: Also just want to say that I answered a question very similar to the first one in Episode #86 where I did a Q&A. So if you are the person who submitted that question and you haven't listened to that episode yet, I recommend that you go check that out and find my answer there. I'll, obviously, be adding some things here, as will Ally and Tiffany, but I have some thoughts on that out in the podcastsphere already.

But Ally and Tiff, I would love to hear your thoughts on these questions to start.

Tiffany: So, up until very recently, I was also a bi in an outwardly seeming heterosexual marriage while both me and my ex identify as bi. When you have some people that look straight, certainly they enjoy straight privilege, but part of the thing about being bi is that you're bi whether you're with a man or a woman. And to say that identifying as bi even though you are in a straight-passing relationship is doing a disservice, I think it actually helps the visibility and understanding of what it means.

'Cause if you say you can only participate in queer spaces if you're with someone of the same gender, it like kind of just, like, mows over a whole section of people that may not feel any sexual attraction, they may be pansexual, bisexual, frog sexual. I think to say that you can't

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identify as something because you only understand the space as one thing, it makes that space less safe for a lot of different people.

It took me a really long time, actually, to feel comfortable in queer spaces because I had that feeling sometimes too like I wasn't queer enough. I felt very uncertain in my queerness. I've had that feeling every time I've been with a male partner. And it has taken a long time for me to accept that it doesn't matter who my partner is, I'm still gay [laughs].

Ally:

Yeah, and if you think about it, if you're somebody that's bi or queer or pan, statistically, you're just as likely to, like, fall in love with somebody of a different gender or the same gender, so it doesn't make you any less bi or queer just because you're in a straight-passing marriage.

I do think it's an important thing to know that you do have privilege being in a straight-passing relationship. But that shouldn't stop you at all from living as authentically as you'd like to, and if that means coming out, then absolutely, you should do that. I think if anybody views that as, like, hindering the LGBTQ community, then they're wrong. That's a bad take [laughs lightly].

Tiffany:

The other thing that I would probably say is that, to kind of talk about both questions, it's like the idea of coming out is something that is so personal and so unique to you. Like, how you approach that and what it means to you is totally different from what it might mean to me, it might mean to the person next door. Like, there's probably people all around you who identify as things that you don't know about because they don't necessarily feel safe sharing them. And I think to come out

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requires a lot of trust, and it requires a lot of faith in the people around you.

And my therapist is actually, uh, queer, and they are non-binary and they have a female partner, and they helped, you know, they've kind of talked to me a little bit about their own experience. And when I was at the very beginning of this whole, like, I haven't been perceived by another human being, and so now I understand that gender is truly a construct, and like, why do I have to participate in it?

The reason I had been doing it is for the palatability to others, maybe I shouldn't be doing that, blah, blah, blah. When I went through this, their first question was, "Well, what do you want to do about it?" And I had that sort of same, like, confusion of well, what do I want to do about it? And they said, "You don't have to come out. How you tell people about it and how you approach it, your story is your own. You control your narrative. And if you don't feel comfortable coming out at work, then you just go on being who they expect you to be. And you can probably make little changes and they won't even notice because they are only perceiving you through their eyes. Like, they don't see the whole picture."

Ally:

Coming out doesn't have to mean, like, you come out to the world, you come out to everybody, you make a public announcement. It totally *can* mean that if that's what you'd like to do, and that is, by all means, an awesome thing to do. But maybe it just means, like, sitting down with your partner and saying, like, hey, you know, I want to talk about the fact that I think I'm bi or I know I'm bi. And just getting that validation

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of being seen by your partner, or maybe your family, or maybe your friends. Like, you get to choose who and when. You may do it in stages.

Often, I choose to, like, "come out" to people that I feel comfortable with, you know? I'm like, I know that I feel comfortable with this person. I think I allude to it on social media, and anybody who knows me really well knows, but I'm not super comfortable with, like, a social media public announcement because I don't want to be perceived by that many people at the same time [light laughter].

Tiffany:

The thing that has occurred to me many times before is, like, our understanding of, like, "coming out" and how that's handled is really controlled by the media and what stories are being told about it. And so the stories that are being told about it are people who do make a big statement. They're either stories of celebrities who are coming out, like on social media, lots of articles. Or you hear news stories about children coming out as queer and either being totally accepted by their family and how heartwarming it is or totally rejected by their family and how tragic it is. Like, there's no in between. There are no normal stories.

The point is that if the only stories that you know are that you make that your whole personality, your whole story, then of course coming out is terrifying because there are so many more facets to you than just being bi. And so, I, personally, think of it as just one part of me, and I don't allow everybody to see all of me all of the time. Like, I go through life and sometimes I don't wanna be perceived at all.

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Ally: [Laughs lightly] Yeah.

Tiffany: The idea that you have to make a big deal out of it, it needs to be where, sure, it can be a visible part of your life, but Ally, I liked the way you said that. Where you have alluded to it on social media, it's not, like, big, flashing neon signs, but people can make an inference whatever they want.

Ally: Yeah.

Tiffany: And if they're close enough to you, then they'll probably make the correct one.

Ally: And, yeah, just to be clear, that's how I've preferred to live, that's what I'm comfortable with, but you may be somebody who loves the idea of it, like, being a big neon sign.

Shohreh: As the neon sign in this conversation [laughs]...

Tiffany: Well, that's the thing, and I think the neon sign is the case for a lot of people because it's such a big thing, like, now. And the way that people who are coming out are basically essentially getting a whole new life from that moment forward, it's like having a birthday party. It's something to be celebrated. I think there's a lot of queer people who, when they do come out, they are living life as loudly as possible because for so long, they have been smothered [laughs lightly].

Shohreh: Yes. Again, I am sort of the neon sign example of queerness, and there are a lot of reasons for that. One, I'm a Sagittarius, so my entire life is a neon sign. Thank you very much. Two, I literally live my life [laughs

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lightly] on the internet, as you can see, based on these episodes, based on many episodes of the podcast, content, whatever. That's a choice I have made for myself, is to share a lot more of me than many people would feel comfortable with as part of my work and as a way of getting my story out into the world so that it can benefit other people. And a lot of people are not comfortable with that.

And I think the fact of the matter is, people like me are the story, like you were saying, Tiff, that's more in the spotlight because it's an easy thing to spotlight. Someone is giving you the information, someone is putting it out there, whether it's a celebrity, or it's an influencer, or it's a baby influencer like me. Like, those are often the stories that are seen.

And I think it's such a good point that coming out means different things to different people. You don't have to be out everywhere or anywhere. Like, there could be public places where you're out. There could be, you know, you're out with friends but you're not with coworkers. It can really be whatever you want it to be. That's like the beauty and magic of queerness is that you get to decide.

I think something that breaks my heart a little bit in both of these questions is that in the first one, the statement is, "it feels pointless." And in the second one, it's debating the point of coming out. So there's this idea that, like, there's no point. And I hear some internalized biphobia from both of these people in this idea that it is pointless. Because we definitely live in a society that suggests that, well, if you fit into the heteronormative model, at least visually, like someone from the outside looking in that's what they're going to think, then you, like,

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don't count as much. And we have this, of course, within the queer community as well. We have rampant biphobia within the queer community. And so I just want to say that, like, you get to decide if there's a point.

Ally: Yes.

Tiffany: Yes.

Shohreh: It's ultimately up to you. If coming out, or being more open in any way, feels good to you, feels like it would honor you, feels like it would allow you to live more authentically, then that is the point.

Ally: Yes.

Tiffany: Uh huh.

Shohreh: And you get to do that. And anyone who says otherwise can go fuck themselves because that's not the spirit of the queer community. Like, bi folks, pan folks, y'all are not only members of the community, you're literally the majority of the queer community by a large margin.

Ally: Yes.

Shohreh: So, this idea of, like, oh, well it doesn't count if you are, you know, dating someone of a different gender, like, it still counts. There's nothing to count towards. It's even, like, weird language.

And the other thing I want to say here too is, you know, both of you were kind of dancing around this idea of, like, will it detract from people who are experiencing more marginalization? And I think it's

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good to have a sense of that. Of like, oh, I don't want to do that. Right? I don't want to center myself in a space where other voices should be centered. And you can honor your identity and still not center yourself in places where you shouldn't be centered.

So, as an example, if you are a bisexual person and you are in a straight-passing relationship, if you are in a room with a bunch of straight people, you then become the voice that needs to be centered on queerness in that space. But if you are in a room or a space and there are a bunch of Black trans women, then you're not the voice that needs to center itself. I'm not the voice that needs to center itself. Right? So it changes based on the space that you're actually in at any given time on how loud your voice should be or how much you should kind of be hanging back and listening.

So it doesn't mean you have to constantly silence yourself and you're not allowed to talk. That's not true. It just means that you need to be thoughtful about where you do raise your voice and where your voice is needed.

Because for me, again, like Tiff, I was in a straight-passing marriage with a man when I identified as bisexual. And one of the reasons I wanted to come out publicly is because of questions like these. Because so many people feel like it doesn't matter and it doesn't count. And I wanted to be an out loud, living example of a person who was openly queer and bisexual even while being in a relationship with a man because I feel like we don't get enough examples of that. Clearly we don't get enough

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examples of that, or both of you would feel like there could absolutely be a point to this.

So if anything, I think that can be the point too, is we do need more representation, and your existence, your representing in whatever way you want to represent, doesn't de facto take away from other people in the community.

Tiffany: Yeah. Well said. [Ally laughs lightly]

Shohreh: Why thank you. I've thought about this a bit. The only other thing I'll add, because the second question specifically asked if any of us have talked to a therapist about coming out, and I will say that I have. I don't think I talked to a therapist before I came out as bi, but I have had a long-term therapist throughout my entire divorce/re-coming out process, and I highly, highly recommend it.

I specifically found my therapist looking for a queer-affirming therapist, and my therapist happens to specialize in people who come out later in life. So she was a perfect fit for me in that way. She is queer herself. And that has been really important because she gets it. So if you can find a queer therapist, I think that can be really affirming as you are trying to navigate this.

Tiffany: Exactly. Also, the Girl Gang is a high advocate of mental health, right?

Ally: Yes [laughs lightly].

Shohreh: Alright, I feel like we covered those questions pretty well, so I'm going to move on to our next question. So, this question, I kind of see it as a

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follow-up to the other two questions, and it was submitted by a third person.

So this question is: How can people in heteronormative, monogamous relationships engage more with their queerness? And this was submitted by QueerAnon, not to be confused with QAnon [Ally laughs]. Literally what they wrote.

Ally: Yeah, dangerous territory to get into with a name, you know?

Tiffany: Uh-huh.

Shohreh: They heard it was gonna be spicy, I guess [Ally laughs].

Ally: I am somebody that's in a heteronormative, monogamous [nervous sing-song voice] relationship.

Shohreh: Yeah you are [Laughter]. [Sing-song voice] Ally's got a new boyfriend!
Ally's got a new boyfriend!

Ally: [Laughs] Oh my god, oh my god. If he's listening to this, no, he's not. Turn it off right now [laughter]. I'm gonna give you three seconds to turn it off, and that will be that. Okay. Goodbye! [Laughter]

It's mortifying; I'm blushing right now. Okay.

Shohreh: Cute.

Tiffany: Aw, so cute.

Ally: Oh my god, we have to stop this right now [laughs].

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Shohreh: Y'all, I'm very single, so if there's any, like, hot ladies out there who want to reach out, you know where to find me.

Ally: [Laughter] Are we just plugging ourselves now?

Shohreh: Yes.

Tiffany: Oh my god.

Ally: [Laughs] I was trying to be like, I can speak on this, and now it's like, hello, listeners! Let's learn about my personal life [laughs].

Tiffany: But we love your personal life, Ally! It's a joy. [Ally laughs]

Shohreh: It is, it is. Anyways, the point you were making was...

Ally: [Laughs] Yes, there was a point to this, otherwise I would not have disclosed anything personal about me. Do not perceive me. Okay.

So, first of all, I would say that pretty much at all times, I'm surrounded by other queer folks. Most of my friends and acquaintances and people that I see on a day to day are also queer, and for me, that gives me this sense of community that still makes me feel very engaged in, like, my queerness. I talk often with the person I'm seeing about my own queerness and that makes me feel, I don't know, validated and seen. Like it's important to me that he views me as who I actually am.

Shohreh: He's allowed to perceive you.

Ally: He is. Sometimes. I like to engage in queer media and that makes me feel more, like, engaged in the queer community. So that's my answer.

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Shohreh: Yeah, queer media has been huge for me, especially when I was still married. And our relationship was monogamous the entire time. There was a period of time where we were discussing opening the relationship and that didn't ultimately happen before we ended up deciding to get divorced.

But throughout our relationship, at the point in time where I had come out as queer, which I guess was, like, the last two years of our relationship—we were together for a total of ten years. And during that time, queer media was one of the most important things in terms of engaging with my queerness. So I just tried to get my hands on a lot of queer books, on lots of queer TV, podcasts, like, I try to follow tons of queer people online. And that just helps me feel more connected to the community, especially at that time where I didn't have nearly as much queer community as I have now.

I feel like now I have a ton of people in my life who are queer. But at the time, I didn't, and I didn't know a lot of the terminology. Like, I was just very confused [light laughter] and following other people and reading different things and watching stuff has been super helpful for me.

And for the record, this is an ongoing process. Ally just got me started on watching RuPaul's Drag Race. I know I'm [Ally laughs lightly] very late to the game with this, but I'm learning new words every day. It's basically like a queer vocabulary lesson every time I turn on an episode.

Ally: It literally is, like, it's whole own world if you are, like, somebody that just wants to maybe, like, immerse yourself a little bit in queer culture.

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Shohreh: Yes. Like, I watched Pose first, which is fictional, and then I was like, ooh, this kind of makes me want to watch RuPaul's Drag Race. Then, now having done that, there's actually, like, a Wiki dictionary for RuPaul's Drag Race.

Ally: There is.

Shohreh: So clearly I'm not the only person who has needed this information.

Ally: Yes, there is.

Shohreh: But yes, there's been a lot of that. So I think that's probably the number one way I would suggest is to start finding queer media, especially if it wasn't a big part of your life before, which is really common. Because most of the mainstream media is, like, very cisheteronormative. Like, most of the stuff that you learn about in school, or even the things that are popular, it's very rare that they're queer stories or that they're written or created by queer folks. So you kind of have to actually go out of your way to seek it out, and once you do, you realize that there's tons of it.

So that's a huge piece of this for me, is the queer media. I think, Ally, you know, you mentioned how you are in community with other people. Most of your friends are queer. And that's kind of the direction that I've gone in as well, where now most of my friends are queer. But it wasn't that way at the start. And I highly recommend, if you don't know a lot of queer folks, like, get out there and make some queer friends. And we've got a whole other conversation about this coming later with a different question. So don't worry, I'll give context for this.

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But, like, also, online friends are real friends. Tons of my queer friends are people I met online. Maybe I met them through the podcast, or through Instagram, or through other things, and these are people that I talk to on the app, off the app, and they have been huge in supporting me in my queerness as well. Because I think the thing about queerness is we do have to seek out stories that are similar to ours because it's really easy to think, like, oh, I'm the only one who is going through this experience, right? And, like, something's wrong with me.

And for me, especially on the front end of coming out as bisexual, I had a lot of, like, internalized biphobia, like the two last questions of feeling like, oh, should I be out? Am I really bi? Like, do I just want attention? Lots of stuff that we talked about on our Girl Gang episode about bisexuality, which I will link to in the show notes.

And then lately, as I have gone through a divorce and decided to drop the bisexual label and identify as still queer and, you know, a lesbian, like, there was tons of that stuff coming up again. And one of the things that was helpful for me was seeing stories on TikTok of people who literally had the exact same experiences as me. People who were getting out of relationships with men and coming out as lesbians in their thirties, and I was like, oh shit, I'm not the only one.

It's just very affirming to, like, know this is a thing and it's happened to a lot of people. And, like, I'm not an idiot for not knowing this about myself. And it's like, I know that logically, but in order to feel that, I also need to see it. Like, possibility models are so important to see that this is an actual thing and you're not alone. And finding that community,

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finding other people to talk to—you know, we talked about queer therapists in the last question. A queer therapist can be a part of your queer community, can be someone who helps you learn how to engage more with your queerness as well.

Ally: Mhm, and TikTok for sure. TikTok will bring a lot of gayness into your life.

Tiffany: Oh yeah.

Shohreh: How many times have we waxed philosophical about TikTok in our episodes? [Laughs lightly]

Ally: Specifically gay TikTok!

Tiffany: It's a really good example of, like, how to seek out the community that you want to find. Like, 'cause if you just go with, like, default TikTok, you're going to end up with, like, white people dancing, and that's not cool. [Ally laughs] But I think that that is, the question being, like, heteronormative, monogamous relationships, it's like that sort of fallacy that being queer only is present in the bedroom. But you and your partner can basically do things together that are queer-centered. Like, you can look for activities in the local queer scene. And it doesn't even have to be, like, going clubbing. That's a whole other rant that I won't go on. But find, like, a queer pottery class that you can do together, because—

Ally: I want to do that.

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Tiffany: I know, right? That'd be awesome. [Ally laughs] But there's a queer club for everything that you can think of. I promise, you just have to go look for it. 'Cause, like, the way you engage with it is to show up, essentially. 'Cause if you don't show up, then people don't know that you are. And it kind of sucks because you fade into the background and people start to think that bi people don't count.

Shohreh: Mhm. [Ally laughs] Even in your relationship, right, since it's a hetero-passing, monogamous relationship that this person is in, look at your sex life. Have you started to queer your sex life? 'Cause a lot of people are stuck in these heteronormative sexual scripts. So that is an area where there is so much room for exploration and play, even though your partner is straight, right? You don't have to be queer to try to move away from the cisheteronormative sexual scripts.

So there's lots of room there to be like, okay, what are some of the scripts that I've fallen into, right? Like, whether that's about, like, penetration is king and we don't do anything else. Or, the male orgasm is more important than the female orgasm. Like, just really trying to look for those things in your own relationship.

Ally: Can I peg this man?

Shohreh: Can I peg this man, right.

Tiffany: I mean, I'll be honest, like, that question was something that actually played a large part in my own separation. Like, the way that intimacy occurs between people, and how you and your partner interact, and the scripts that you guys are following, like, when you look at them and you

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start to see how you're relating to your partner and you start to sort of reconsider what is important to you? You don't have to do everything that your partner asks you to do, but to explore them, and to consider them, and to, like, maybe look at their own internalized homophobia or biphobia or whatever. Like, you know, if they don't put your sexuality as important as their own sexuality, then you need to reconsider maybe your partnership and how that looks.

Like, that was the question I had to ask myself. Like, if your partner isn't willing to give and to receive in the way that you need, then ditch him [Laughter].

Shohreh: Yes. And maybe you've never even thought about this and you haven't had a chance to talk to your partner about this. So there's so much opportunity here to have those discussions.

And also just to consider, like, do you feel like your partner is honoring your queerness in the way that you would want them to or that would feel good to you? I think sometimes bi and pan folks in straight-passing relationships feel like their partner is also ignoring this piece of themselves. And I'm not saying that you feel that way, I have no idea. But if you do, or if anybody does, it's a conversation you can have with your partner about, like, hey, I feel like in these interactions, you're treating me as a straight person. I'm not a straight person and I wanna talk about some other ways that we could maybe be in relationship so that I feel affirmed here.

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'Cause if you don't feel affirmed in your sexuality in your own romantic relationship, then that's really tough and it's hard to kind of extend that outside of there 'cause it's so close to home.

Tiffany: You know, I would follow that up with the best way to see the joy that comes with having a partner that affirms your sexuality, whether they themselves are queer or not, is that TikTok, the, um, the bi wife energy.

Shohreh: Mm, that's a good TikTok, yes.

Tiffany: Where the song is like, "Bi wife energy!"

Ally: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Tiffany: If your partner celebrates you, and all of you, including your sexuality, like, that just makes your relationship so much more joyful.

Shohreh: The only other thing I wanted to add, and I'll put a caveat on this, is queer fashion can be a really fun place to engage and explore. And also, you don't have to dress in a way that doesn't feel true to you. So fashion is like a fun way to play with or display queerness but it's also not a requirement.

So if the fashions that are popular queer fashions don't feel good to you or aren't something you'd want to wear, that's totally fine. It's not something you have to do. But I know some people have found for themselves that in being a hetero-passing marriage that being able to play with fashion and present as more queer or signal as more queer has been very affirming for them.

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And, of course, this is so dependent on, like, your location and the space that you're in because sometimes it's not safe to do that. So, assess the scenario and whether that's okay for you to do. But I know for me, when I was in my marriage, that that was super affirming for me. I started playing with a lot of different fashion than I had before. I was already tatted up, but I've only gotten more tattoos. I already loved rainbows, so that was easy, lots of rainbows [Ally laughs lightly] in there.

But I've really started playing with taking things that may have been a part of my life when I thought I was straight, and, like, changing them up. So, for example, when I was a lawyer, I used to wear suits or blazers all the time and they were, like, stuffy and not fun. This is not to say that there aren't super fashionable lawyers, because there are, I just wasn't one of them. And so, I've, like, rediscovered suiting now, and blazers and all these things, and like, queered them up in terms of the patterns and the cut and how I want to wear them. And that has been super fun. And you don't have to be dating someone who is the same gender as you in order to do that and play with fashion. So that could be a really great playground.

Makeup and hair also go along with that. Again, TikTok, you will just find, like, wonderful queer fashion icons doing cool shit with their makeup and their jewelry and all of these different things. So there may be an area in just, like, a subset of fashion that's fun for you if there are certain parts that are less fun or interesting to you.

[Music plays]

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[Ad break]

Hey y'all. Let me take a moment to tell you a little bit more about Ample + Rooted, an inclusive therapy practice that is directed by my dear friend and colleague, Neathery Falchuk. The awesome practitioners at Ample + Rooted not only serve folks locally here in Austin, they also serve folks online all over the globe. Through therapy, mindfulness practices, courses, trainings, and events, they support, guide, and hold space for folks to feel valued and nourished.

We talk a lot about systems of oppression on the show and how they can disconnect you from your inner knowing. And the Ample + Rooted group believes it is your birthright to both inhabit and trust your physical and emotional self without shame. Luckily for y'all, the kind folks at Ample + Rooted created an exclusive guided meditation on cultivating self-trust for listeners of Conjuring Up Courage.

You can access the free guided meditation and learn more about Ample + Rooted in the show notes for this episode.

[Music fades]

We are gonna move onto our next question. This is a little bit of a longer question, so listen in: "One small silver lining of the pandemic has been that many of us have found additional time for reflection, self-discovery, and realignment. And for some of us, that's led to new ways to understand our queerness, or in my case, coming out as queer to myself for the first time"—yay you!

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Ally: Yay!

Shohreh: Claps!

Tiffany: Yay!

Shohreh: "This work has been done in relative social isolation though, and while I've become comfortable in my safe space at home, trying on and playing with my queerness, it's still new to me and unknown to the people I'm now trying to reconnect with after not seeing for a year. I guess this could be a simple, "Ah, how do I come out?" question, but I think there's the added dynamic that we've all been changed by the experience of last year. And now there's a pressure to go back to normal.

I don't want to go back to pre-pandemic normal, but I'm also still a baby queer still working to understand my own identity and expression. I know queer is not a destination, but a doorway. But how have you all decided when to let folks in? Any advice for a pandemic baby queer?" And this question comes to us from Only Taking My Masc(/k) Off at Home

Ally: Well, first of all, congratulations to you. That's really exciting. We're so happy, and we're glad that you have figured that out for yourself. Congratulations. That's awesome.

Tiffany: Yeah!

Shohreh: So I'm thinking about the actual question here, which is the, "How have y'all decided when to let folks in?" and thinking about that decision.

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And I think, as Ally mentioned earlier, safety is a huge piece of when I've decided to let people in. And for me, now having come out and had these revelations twice, and who knows how many more times that will happen, also, I have to feel good with it first before I feel ready to discuss it. And again, the contexts are different. Like, the bar may be lower to talk about it with a friend than the bar is to talk about it publicly, for example.

I've been privately identifying as a lesbian with y'all for quite a while now, but I've only publicly started to talk about this, like, within the last month. So I think, again, it's a bit dependent on circumstances in terms of like, who the person is when you let them in, right? Like my friends were all let in to developments in my queerness long before my family, who I keep at arms' reach and I only give a little bit of information to. Or at least most of my family; my sister is an exception to that.

So that's one piece of the puzzle, is, like, who are the people? What's your relationship with them? How comfortable do you feel like you need to be to let them in?

And then I think in that how, there's also this question of literally, how do you do it? And you mentioned how the pandemic has changed you and you don't want to go back to pre-pandemic normal. And I'm with you on that. And I think even for folks who didn't do exploration around sexual orientation or gender identity over the course of the pandemic, everyone has been changed by this experience. Everyone has discovered shit about themselves or their relationships or their lives that they maybe weren't expecting.

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And so I think that's actually a great in for the people that you love and feel comfortable with to just have that conversation, right? How has the pandemic changed you? What do you not want to go back to that was here before, right? Like, what do you like now that has shifted? And if that feels good and comfy, that could be a great in-road for you to then be like, oh, you know what? Here's some things that I was exploring over the course of the pandemic. And see how that goes over. So that's just something I was thinking about in terms of the actual conversation.

Tiffany:

To the point of the question being, like, how do we let people in? The idea that we were talking about in a previous question about seeking out queer community, it's a lot easier to feel affirmed by other people who've experienced the same thing. So, if the goal is to be affirmed in your queerness and have a safe space to explore what that means to you, finding spaces where you *can* queer things up is great.

And I think there's little hints of this throughout the whole episode, but thinking about those spaces not necessarily as being one specific thing. Like making the community that you want to find, you know, online.

Or basically the thing that is coming to my mind is my therapist said this thing that I feel like will make sense after I say it. But my therapist and I were talking about boundaries, and how, like, me, specifically, has a problem with boundaries and I let people walk all over me and I am afraid to set boundaries in my personal life. And my therapist said that normally, they would say that I should start with people who are close to me. And that the easiest way to practice is with people you trust.

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And for me, what they suggested was starting with strangers because there is no consequence to it. Like, if you see a stranger, they're going to see you and they're going to leave. You may never see them again.

In context of, like, queerness, you may not feel comfortable yet with being out to your closest friends and family, but you can make little baby steps out in public. You know, they don't have to be grand gestures, it can just be small things. It can be like, okay, I have this hat that I bought as sort of the first baby step of me exploring what it meant to reject the current interpretation of femininity. To say, like, that was the first piece of gender, or lack thereof, affirming clothing that I wore.

I was thinking to myself, like, in this how of the question, in this how of, like, how do you go about letting people in? Use the confidence of interacting with strangers if that's something that you can tap into with people who don't have major consequence, to build up the confidence to where when you do start to let people in, you will have a little bit more practice under your belt. Because if, you know, you're just starting to explore it, you don't send a toddler who has just started swimming off a high dive. You don't push a baby queer out of the closet.

Shohreh:

I think that is such a great suggestion. And that's actually a general thread of advice that I use with clients a lot of the time for all kinds of things. And I think that speaks to, from what I was talking about and what you were talking about, for some people, the place that's going to feel the safest and most comfortable is going to be with friends. Like, you two were the first people that I've come out to multiple times now

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because I was not afraid of what would happen with the two of you because you're both queer and that felt really safe for me. Whereas like, you know, my straight friends were a little further along because I need to be affirmed with people like y'all first.

And then there are some people that the thought of, like, talking to anyone familiar about it is super terrifying, like you're saying, Tiff. And so you have to build up to that. And there's so many wonderful ways to do that. Like, I'm thinking about how in the period of time after we decided to get divorced and where I was still kind of trying to understand my sexual orientation, the direction that I was going in, I remember that I had to fill out paperwork at one of my doctors' offices. And there was a section I hadn't seen before for sexual orientation where you check a box and there was a variety of options. And I checked the gay/lesbian box, and that was, like, my first foray into being like, I'm gonna try on this identity.

Because like you said, Tiff, there were no consequences. I could go back online and check a different box at any time if I wanted to because this was just like my personal identifying information in their online system. The only people who would maybe know are, like, the doctor and a nurse there, no one in my personal life. So it was a way for me to be like, let me try on this word and see how it feels to me to choose this box instead of this other box. And, like, if I change my mind, no harm, no foul, it's not going to do anything.

So looking for those little opportunities can be a great way to be like, how does this feel for me? How does this sit with me? And it will

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probably be weird at first, for the record [laughs lightly]. And that's okay, too.

Tiffany: Yeah, it is. One of the things that I see kind of as a thread through this kind of whole exercise, and also, like, just in general, is that a lot of people forget the idea of being on a queer journey. Like, it doesn't mean that you pick one thing and then stick to it for the rest of your life. Like, you may have to come out a couple times. Like, Shohreh, you were not the only person I know who has had to come out multiple times [laughs lightly].

Shohreh: It's a very common experience, I've now learned, which makes me feel good to know I'm not the only one.

Tiffany: Sometimes there's multiple layers of fear when you're talking about being comfortable in your queerness around other people. Because there is that fear that if you do decide that this is the right identity for you, whether it's your sexual identity or gender identity, whatever it is, when you change your mind, there will be consequences. And in reality, or at least in an ideal situation, changing your mind should not have consequences. It should just be a part of who you are. I could get the same, okay, well, no, this whole, like, non-binary thing, we're not working on that anymore. Like, we're good with being a woman. That's the thing: you can just keep going on your journey, and it's not something that ever really stops.

Shohreh: Yeah. And I don't fuck with people in the queer community who are like, "Oh, you can never change your labels," or "Oh, you did the wrong

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thing 'cause you changed your pronouns so you did this thing." Like, that's unacceptable. That's not okay. Anyone who is saying that kind of shit to you, you send them to me, 'cause I'm gonna have a conversation with them that will start with, "What up, what up, what up?"

Ally: And end with throwin' hands [laughs lightly].

Shohreh: End with throwin' hands, that's right! So there are, of course, people like that out there. I think in my experience they are the minority. They may be a vocal minority, but like straight up, they are wrong, and that belief system that you can't change and grow, like, goes completely against the entire essence of queerness, so fuck that noise.

Tiffany: Yeah, we don't fuck with them. Like any sort of LGBTQIA exclusionism is just not welcome in my house.

Shohreh: Mmhmm.

Ally: Yeah

Tiffany: Yeah!

Shohreh: I think the last thing I'll say with this question, you know, this was a any advice for a pandemic baby queer, is that, like, looking at your own language, right? Like you said, "I know queer is not a destination but a doorway," and so I think just really trying to remember that and embody that for yourself. And it's all about, like, experimenting. Get curious, right? Just see how things feel and what you like, and don't be afraid to try things and then if you decide you don't like them or you

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don't want them right now, that's totally okay. Like your queer journey is yours.

Tiffany:

I also want to say, like, the community and the connections that you could make now are so different than how that was being done 10, 20, 30 years ago. And the way that we talk about queerness sometimes hasn't quite caught up to it. And so, the internet and the communities that you can find online, like Shohreh said, internet friends are real friends. Like, you can find places to explore over the world that you just have to access through social media or your computer that just weren't around like when I was a baby queer [light laughter]. Because I'm old [light laughter]. Come on people, I'm old.

Shohreh:

Many options.

Alright, so our next question starts out by saying: "I love this quote by Alex Locust from Shohreh's podcast," and they write in the quote, so let me read the quote from Alex to you:

"Queerness, to me, like the most evocative metaphor that I can think of, feels like, you know, we get that Willy Wonka's golden ticket and it's like a ticket out of heteronormativity. The heteronormative life has set up all these paths, and queerness feels like a ticket out. And I feel like for me, once you get that ticket out, it can provide the snowball effect, where you're like, 'And also, this doesn't work for me either. And no, that doesn't work either.'" It's a beautiful quote from Alex from the episode that Alex did with kali.

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So it goes on to say: "I'm wondering, beyond the obvious, i.e., living your best life in regards to your sexuality and gender, what has the golden ticket of queerness opened up for you? Are there things that living into your queerness and/or non-binary thinking has allowed you to see or experience in a new way? Do the schnozberries really taste like schnozberries?" And this question comes to us from Charlie, Looking for a Way Out of the Heteronormative, Bucket.

Ally: Hi, Charlie, thanks for writing in.

Tiffany: Hi Charlie [Ally laughs].

Ally: I'm gonna say, just off the bat first and foremost, I feel like gay fashion and makeup is so much more interesting to me personally.

Shohreh: Holla!

Ally: [Laughs lightly] And I feel like my personal queerness gave me a ticket out of feeling the need to present myself in a heteronormative, feminine way. Do you know what I mean? Like, I still very much enjoy feeling feminine, but it's in a very different way. And so I feel the freedom of, like, I'm going to look pretty in a way that is pretty to me and is not necessarily the prescribed version of, like, what a...

Shohreh: We've all abandoned the male gaze, essentially.

Ally: Yes, exactly. Freeing myself from the male gaze, and with that, feeling like I can wear and do my makeup and dress however the fuck I want. However, like, ridiculous it might seem [laughs lightly], that feels fuckin' awesome. And honestly, I feel like I get more compliments? But I get

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compliments from, like, other queer folk, and that feels better to me [laughs lightly]. So that's my answer.

Tiffany:

I agree. I definitely think that, like, once you're aware that there is this very specific brand of heteronormativity that we kind of all participate in and it's kind of like the default settings, or at least the supposed default settings, I think not only did it give me, like, a vocabulary to actually understand things that I was thinking, it gave me permission to try things that I hadn't given myself permission to do.

Like, I'm always giving examples. I know that the idea of the nuclear family just never appealed to me. I couldn't figure out why. I did not see myself represented there and it was something that I had never considered wasn't an option because of the community that I was raised in. That was kind of the default settings. So when I recognized that I was queer and, like, I was bi, and I was a weird kid [Shohreh and Ally laugh lightly], I gave myself permission to reject that. It was like it didn't have to be the default settings. And in fact, there were no default settings. Anyone that tells you otherwise is selling something [Shohreh and Ally laugh lightly]. Yes.

Shohreh:

I think this idea of the default settings and how queerness allows you to make them no longer the default settings is so true. And that's a thread that runs through so many of the things that we've talked about here and in the queer community in general, where cisheteronormativity is seen as the norm such that, like, queerness is seen as other. That's literally why we have the word "queer," right? Because it means different or other because we have been othered as a community.

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And so, queerness, in so many ways, is about saying, like, yeah, this thing that y'all are doing, we don't want any part of it [laughs lightly]. We find it boring. And we want to live our lives in different ways that are better for us.

And I don't mean to imply that, like, if you are a cis het person, that you are boring or your life is boring [Ally and Tiffany laugh lightly]. I am not throwing that much shade [laughter].

Tiffany: Can I? [Laughter]

Ally: Yeah, I am.

Shohreh: You may! What I am saying is that so much of my work is in intentionality, and when you're living in defaults, often that means that you're doing things without intention because you've just fallen into doing them. And there's no power in that. So queerness, for me, is so much about agency. It's about being like, there are choices and I get to make them. And that's, like, terrifying and there's a lot of power needed for that and a lot of self-trust that needs to happen. But it's also really, really exciting.

Tiffany: Yeah, I would agree. I would also connect that with, like, the question said, like, "beyond the obvious of living your best life." I think that all of the things that I would say the golden ticket, like all of the experiences and media and community and all of these things, like, they are all pieces of the best life. Like, the best life is like a quilt.

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And I think one of the most important pieces for me was, there's being intentional about things and I think a lot of it is not only being intentional, but—I was reading your thing, Shohreh, the thing you wrote about the courage versus confidence, and, like, the idea that doing whatever the fuck you want and not thinking about other people's opinions, like, the idea that you are going to immediately walk out of the door post-pandemic, like, as this, like, beautiful queer butterfly that's never gonna be afraid of anything, like, that's not true. Like, everybody is gonna have self-doubt. And the idea of opening up to that queerness means that the awareness of being able to not give a fuck is an option.

I got really into "Critical Role" this year, so I have like a comfort character, somebody that I just really admire, and is really super hella hot. So Taliesin Jaffe—I've talked to the girls about this, I promise [Shohreh laughs lightly]—so, he did this interview, and he was talking about how when he was a teenager and he made this decision that he was just not going to give a shit about what anyone thought. And it was like, it was this beautiful story where he was, like, in a private boys' school and he was the weird kid. And one night he, like, got depressed and, like, went out and sat in the snow and drank whiskey. And, like, the next day, he just woke up and said, "I'm just not gonna give a fuck."

And that really resonated with me because I think for the longest time, participating in heteronormativity meant that I had to give a fuck, and I didn't wanna give a fuck. I was like, all of these things, all of these experiences that bring other people so much joy, they hold no joy for

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me. And I'm currently in the process of Marie Kondo-ing my life: that which does not spark joy, I'm just getting rid of. That is that intentionality. That is the, I'm not going to let other people dictate how I live my life.

Anyway, I'm done now [Shohreh and Ally laugh].

Shohreh:

Yes. I agree completely. And you mentioned how you have the option to not give a fuck. And I think that's an important distinction because most people are not going to, overnight, just be like, "I don't give a fuck anymore" and have no feelings about any of these things, right? Like, feelings are gonna come up. There will be fears and there will be concerns about what other people think, and that's normal.

And as you continue on in your queerness journey, you get more comfortable and then more confident as time goes on in that not giving a fuck and realizing how good it feels to not do that. So it can take time, but the more little steps that you take of like, "Hm, I'm not gonna give a fuck about this. I'm not gonna give a fuck about this," then that can really start to grow into some bigger areas in your life.

And for me, in thinking about things that living into my queerness has allowed me to see or experience in a new way, I think family is one. Chosen family is a really big piece of the queer community. And that's because a lot of queer folks have been rejected by their blood families, or at least parts of them. So that has been a really beautiful experience for me. And thinking about that family isn't the thing that my mother has said my whole life of like, "blood is thicker than water," which

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apparently is not actually what the phrase is in real life, just a mistranslated one. I think we've actually talked about this before in a Girl Gang episode.

Tiffany: Probably.

Ally: Yeah, we have.

Shohreh: So let's just repeat ourselves. Because I talk about my mother a lot. [Sing-song voice] Trauma! [Light laughter] But anywho, so, I think that is something that's big, of like family doesn't have to be this thing. It can be whatever I want it to be, and I can designate other people as my family. So that's really beautiful and important.

I totally agree with Ally about the fashion and the makeup and all these things where it's like, there's a reason that there's a whole TikTok trope where people are like, "watch me go from, like, a straight teenager to [Ally laughs lightly] a gay adult!" and, like, you see how their, like, fashion and the hair and everything changes, is because it does open up these possibilities of, like, oh! If my main goal isn't to look sexy for men, then there's so many other options of like what you can wear and how you can act and what you can do, which is just, like, really fun.

And I think something else that I would say is joy, which I know is very general. But I feel that living into my queerness has allowed me to experience joy in new ways because when I thought I was straight, joy had to be confined within these default settings. And so it was muted in some ways. And I feel like even though there's so much pain in the queer community, we are not only our pain. There's so much fun and

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laughter and joy in this community, and being a part of that has really allowed me to see joy in different ways and to see opportunities for it and realize the both/and nature of the fact that, like, you can have really painful experiences and you can still seize joy and pleasure. And I think queer folks do that better than anyone.

Tiffany:

And I would add one more thing, and I would say representation. Because once you open the door out of—like, you basically walk out of heteronormativity in your queerness—you start to see yourself in other people. Like, you start to be able to recognize yourself in media, in fashion, in community, in literature. And I think we touched on this earlier, but just to really emphasize, like, and it connects to joy too because the first time that you see yourself, you see someone who looks like you, that acts like you, you feel a joy that you just didn't think was possible. Like there's a reason they call it gender euphoria! But I think that you don't know what you're missing until you find it.

Shohreh:

Yes, because I think for so many queer folks, again, not everyone, but a lot of us spend so much time pushing things down over the course of our lives before we get that permission and we realize that it is possible to do something different. So being able to actually step into being your full self is a euphoric experience. It's the like, oh, something's not wrong with me, and this can be, like, a beautiful and wonderful piece of who I am."

And if you've never felt that before, or you've spent a lot of time trying to, like, push those feelings away because they weren't seen as

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acceptable, like, oh my gosh, you just like—so many warm fuzzies in your body.

Tiffany: It feels so good. Everybody should get a hat [laughter].

Shohreh: Or your version of a hat. Whatever your hat is, get that.

Tiffany: Yes. Whatever the hat is, get the hat. I promise it's worth it. Get the hat.

Ally: Mhmm.

Shohreh: [Sighing] Awesome.

Tiffany: The hat being a metaphor for joy. [Ally laughs lightly]

Shohreh: Alright, so we have one more question that was submitted, and this question is a seemingly simple question, but not an easy one. And it is: "How do you meet platonic queer friends?" And this question was submitted by Nicole.

I think we've alluded to this a little bit, we've kinda talked about it, but we will answer it more directly now.

Ally: Get a gay hobby [Tiffany laughs].

Shohreh: Yeah, I was about to say.

Tiffany: Okay, so I can answer this question one of two ways because I feel like there's the obvious practical application of how do you make platonic queer friends, but I think there is another facet to this, which is re-evaluating what you think friendship means and how that looks.

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Because I have never met a queer friend group that didn't fuck somehow. [Shohreh and Ally laugh]

Shohreh: Okay, to be fair, the three of us have not fucked.

Ally: Yet.

Tiffany: I mean, yet.

Shohreh: I mean, yeah, there's always a yet, but I just wanna say it is possible—

Tiffany: No, no, no. This is the reason why I say that is because between the three of us, at least, we have a very free nature of sharing our sexuality and our sexual experiences, our romantic experiences, our experiences with family and friends. And I would say that I love you guys! Like not to be super cheesy, but I love you guys.

And for a long time, the idea of a platonic friend, it wasn't as deep of a connection. You were always putting the romantic relationship as the priority, as the only priority. You limit yourself to what you can do when you're "platonic friends." But when you realize the friendships that you could have with people who you may not necessarily be romantically involved with, it changes the way that you look at friendships.

Like, and the reason that I say I've never met a queer friend group that didn't fuck at some point, it's because the boundaries that are drawn between the sexual nature of a friendship and the intimacy of a relationship and friendship get blurred. Like, I miss cuddling with you guys. I want hugs. You know, it's like, the intimacy, and the closeness, and the fact that, like, we've all seen each other's tits, and we've all sent

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each other lewds, and not necessarily for the intent of solicitation but that's because that's what people think of. Like, I send artsy nudes. Like I want you to appreciate the artsyness of this [Ally laughs lightly], like the lighting, and the posing, and the look at how fucking badass I am. I'm not sending them to you because I want to have sex with you. But y'all have seen my tits. Y'all have seen my butt.

Shohreh: I want to back up for one thing, which is to say this also answers the past question of, like, what are the things that living into your queerness has allowed you to experience in a new way?

Tiffany: Oh yeah.

Shohreh: And I want to say consent-based living, okay?

Tiffany: Yes.

Shohreh: Queer folks center consent way more than straight folks do.

Tiffany: Yes.

Ally: Yeah, that's true.

Shohreh: I was thinking about this because we always ask for permission before we send each other nudes and lewds and things of the like because we just wanna make sure that everyone's okay with it. Of course we can have a blanket consent or whatever, and there are some things between us that we do have a blanket consent for, but I rarely have conversations about consent in that way with my straight friends. And so I wanted to tie that in as well because consent is important.

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Tiffany: That really is a good point because I think that not only do we ask for consent for sending lewds, but we also ask for consent for a lot of different things. And it has allowed us to really deepen our friendship and how we relate to each other.

And I think that when you are in a space that has a healthy understanding of friendship and consent and how that whole is wrapped up with intimacy, and how do you meet platonic queer friends is making friends. Like, it doesn't necessarily mean that they have to be queer. Those that you can make healthy relationships with, whether queer, straight, cis, trans, whatever, they will be able to connect with you in a way that is healthy and mature and will be an intimacy that will rival your romantic and sexual relationships.

Shohreh: I think that's a really good point to even just look at the word "platonic," right? And we can't know how you are using it, Nicole. I think my assumption here is probably that you meant people that you don't fuck that you want to be friends with. Because it is absolutely a trope in queer communities that, like, every friend group has, like, exes that are in it, people—a bunch of people have already slept with each other, and that may or may not always be the case. But one of the reasons is because straight folks very much have this idea of, like, if you've broken up that, like, you can't be friends because men and women can't be friends, apparently, unless they're dating? Which is a ridiculous and silly concept.

And so, this is another way that queer folks have kind of bucked that norm of like, no, you can be friends with your exes and you can be

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friends with people that you've slept with. And it's an extremely common occurrence in the queer community that you go out on a date and maybe you sleep with someone, and then you ultimately decide, like, you know what? Let's just be friends. And you have a friendship. It's not like, oh god, I slept with you and, like, we can't be friends anymore.

And so I think that you will find that, but I will read platonic as meaning someone you're not fucking currently, and you know, how to find people like that. And I think, like Tiff said, right, how do you make any friends as an adult? It's sort of the same idea. I think for queer communities specifically, is you've gotta go where the queers are.

Tiffany: Yeah, you've gotta go where the queers are.

Shohreh: So the three of us, we met at Sky Candy, which I didn't know at the time was an extremely queer space [Ally and Tiffany laugh lightly]. And, like, the majority of the people at Sky Candy happen to be queer. Many of the instructors are queer. Because it's a very queer-friendly aerial space here in town. So through building my hobby at Sky Candy, which I started to do early on after moving to Austin, like, not only did I expand my friend group in general, the adult friend group, but also it just so happened that I expanded it by a whole lot of queer people.

So sometimes you find out as a surprise that spaces are more queer than you thought they were [Ally laughs lightly], and other times that's what you're seeking out, right? There's queer-specific meet-up groups

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in most cities, you know. Maybe if you're in a suburb or a town, there's less of that. But looking for that.

We've already talked a lot about how online friends are real friends. So tons of my platonic, for the moment [light laughter], queer friends are online. You know, with queer people, I just want to leave that window open.

Ally: No, no, seriously.

Shohreh: You just never know when you'll want to crawl in there and make yourself cozy [laughter]. Can we tell that I'm super horny though? Like...

Tiffany: Okay, look listeners, Shohreh needs to get laid [Ally laughs].

Shohreh: Look, y'all, I am a hot divorcee and I haven't gotten laid in, like, nine months, which is the longest I've gone in my entire adult life. So my vagina is gettin' a bit crusty [Ally laughs], and I would like to change that. This is not me soliciting my listeners for sex, for the record.

Ally: [Laughs] But it is.

Tiffany: No.

Shohreh: There's a power imbalance there that I don't feel good about ethically [laughter], so...

Ally: It's a little bit of like, "JK, unless..."

Shohreh: If I found you on a dating app, maybe fine. But otherwise, probably not [light laughter].

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Tiffany: I'm just saying, like, you, like all other single queers, deserve to both rut your way through the gay clubs and find your special person. Those things do not have to be mutually exclusive.

Shohreh: No. And also, that will be the order that this is happening. We're gonna go slutty phase for a long time [laughter], and then eventually I'll be ready to settle down. But, uh, it's not going to be for a while [Ally laughs].

Tiffany: I joined a LGBTQIA Destiny 2 plan called "Friendly Gaymers,"—like, it's gay, g-a-y—partly because I wanted to be involved in more queer spaces, but also because trying to game with dude bros is fucking nightmarish.

Ally: Yeah.

Tiffany: And I have consistently found that queer spaces? Infinitely more pleasant than...

Shohreh: Yep. Yes, they are. [Light laughter] And like you said, those can be available in whatever community you like, even if it's not in person. So maybe you can't go to a drag brunch in a local restaurant where you live.

Ally: Aw, I want to.

Shohreh: But especially with the pandemic, now there are so many cool virtual drag events, so you could go to one of those. And then maybe you start talking with someone in the comments. Like, there really are a lot more options now with the widespread nature of the internet and all of the

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different spaces on there. And I think the pandemic has only made those online queer spaces more prevalent because people didn't have anywhere else to meet and we all still wanted community.

So looking for those kinds of things, or you could start your own as well if that's something you'd like to do. Maybe you want to start a queer book club or a queer gaming community in your area, and maybe you just, like, post about it on Facebook Marketplace or wherever people do these things now. I think MeetUp is still a popular option. So I think you have a lot of different choices.

But yes, there is this part where you do have to put yourself out there a little bit more because as we've talked about, not everyone is openly out. And so you have to kind of go looking for it, whether it's friendship or dating or anything else. There's less of this kind of like, natural meet cute for queer folks. You have to seek it out, which if you're not used to doing that can be a little bit scary. But queer folks are usually some of the nicest people that I've ever met, so.

Ally: Yeah, also, Nicole, we will be your friend. I just wanna say that.

Tiffany: Yeah!

Shohreh: We're gonna offer our friendship services to all listening who are like, "I need more queer friends." Hi, hello, the Girl Gang will be your friend [Ally laughs lightly] for the low, low price of \$2,000 an hour [laughter].

Ally: Literally just DM me about Avatar or Drag Race and I will be your friend [laughs lightly].

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- Shohreh:** Yeah, thanks to Ally, random people still DM me about Avatar [Ally laughs], like, "Have you watched yet?" I'm like, "No, go to hell Ally Ridnour for screwing me over with this."
- Tiffany:** But why haven't you watched it yet, Shohreh?
- Shohreh:** Because I watched She-Ra because it was more exciting for me because of all the rainbows. And I can only do so much animated stuff at a time.
- Tiffany:** She-Ra is fucking awesome.
- Shohreh:** I know, She-Ra was amazing. So I am going to watch it [Ally laughs lightly]. I just, like, when I do an animated show, then I need to, like, take a break where I see actual people first and then I can come back.
- Ally:** I'll just say that I'm content that you're watching Drag Race and we can take our time on Avatar because we have plenty to talk about.
- Shohreh:** We have so much to talk about [Ally laughs].
- Tiffany:** I'm just happy to hear that you watched She-Ra [Ally laughs lightly] because Noelle Stevenson is, like, one of my fucking icons and I'm really happy that you're watching She-Ra [Ally laughs].
- Shohreh:** Okay, so that is all of the questions that were submitted from other people that we're going to be able to answer today. Thank you to everyone who submitted questions, even if we couldn't get to them. We love doing Q&As because they are ridiculous. Hopefully there were some actually helpful nuggets in there for all of you. I think that there were.

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For our wrap-up, I want y'all to fill in the blank that I've been having all of my Pridepalooza guests fill in. The theme this year for Pridepalooza is "Queerness is _____." So if you could please fill in that blank for me and tell me what queerness is to you.

Tiffany: Queerness is dope as fuck [laughs].

Shohreh: Damn right.

Tiffany: That is my contribution.

Shohreh: I loved it. I loved it.

Ally: I was gonna say something like, queerness is the chaos gremlin that lives in my brain. And that is my answer, officially [laughs].

Tiffany: Yes.

Shohreh: This is your answer. Okay. Alright.

Ally: Officially [laughs].

Shohreh: If that feels good to you, then we're gonna take it.

Ally: It feels great to me, thank you, Shohreh.

Shohreh: Thank you both for coming back again for the bajillionth time [Ally laughs lightly]. I always appreciate it. I especially love getting to have you on for Pridepalooza [cheers]. And I hope that everyone is having a great Pride so far! And I will have all of our information in the show notes as per usual, so if you want to keep up with Ally and Tiff, their Instagrams are there. Neither of them are particularly active on

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Instagram, however, they do check DMs on occasion, so you could always reach out to them in that way. [Ally laughs]

Tiffany: Yeah, also I might start pimping my art page. I will try.

Shohreh: Yeah. I will add Tiff's brand new art Instagram to their bio so that y'all can check that out too if you're into artwork.

Ally: Woot woot! Yay, Tiff! And follow me for butt pics. Hehe.

Shohreh: And follow Ally for butt pics because even though she may only post every few months, the vast majority of the time you're gonna get a butt pic when she does post.

Ally: That is true [laughs].

Tiffany: It's just so good.

Shohreh: It is. Our social media personalities are so, so different [light laughter]. Well, thank you everyone for listening to us—

Ally: Yes.

Shohreh: —talk about nonsense, interspersed with occasionally answering questions [laughs lightly].

Ally: You're welcome for the entertainment. You knew what you were getting yourself into. Let's not kid ourselves.

Shohreh: And if you didn't before, you do now [laughter].

Tiffany: Y'all keep surprising us and saying that you like us, so we are going to still keep coming back whether you like it or not.

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- Shohreh:** Yes.
- Ally:** It genuinely shocks me when people are like, "I love the Girl Gang episodes." I'm like, "Are you okay?"
- Shohreh:** Yes, once again, the shout-out that every time I get a review that talks about the Girl Gang, I send it to these two and, like, why are, like, every three of my podcast reviews about the Girl Gang? Because they just come on here and outshine me, and I love it [laughter].
- Ally:** My ego is out of control, you guys.
- Tiffany:** I think Shohreh, you're the only one who could handle holding a podcast up on your own because, um, as we all know...
- Ally:** That is accurate [laughter].
- Shohreh:** Each of your individual podcasts would be ridiculous [laughter].
- Ally:** My podcast would be like six hour-long episodes that drop, like, twice a year and it's just me shouting about, like [laughs lightly], I don't know, frogs or some shit [Tiffany giggles].
- Tiffany:** Mine would just be, like, the random incoherent Tumblr ramblings [Ally laughs] just like, interspersed with the occasional, like, fan art.
- Shohreh:** Okay, quick unison bye!
- Everyone:** [Sing-song] Byeeeee!
- [Music plays]

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Shohreh: And that's our show for today. If you're enjoying Conjuring Up Courage, don't forget to subscribe through your podcast provider of choice so you never miss an episode. Additionally, if you haven't left a rating and review in the Apple Podcasts app yet, you can do so from any Apple device to help more people find and benefit from the show. I also love hearing from listeners, so feel free to take a screenshot from your podcast player, post on social media, and tag me. My username is @ShohrehDavoodi on all platforms. Finally, you can sign up for my email newsletter, The Sunday Share, and get more details about how to work with me by going to ShohrehDavoodi.com. Thank you so much for listening, and I hope you'll join me for the next episode.

[Music fades]