

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live

All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

Nadia Bokody: Well, it is lovely to meet you? What do we call this? Like, this is how we meet in 2022, over Insta lives.

Shohreh Davoodi: This is the—I was just saying when I was on, uh, live that it's like, 6:15am here, and I know it's evening for you. So we're at just, like, completely different parts of the day and parts of the world right now.

Nadia: But very appropriate for Pride Month because this is how queers meet, right?

Shohreh: Seriously.

Nadia: Online. I feel like this is, like, the only way that you can meet fellow queers, is online [laughs].

Shohreh: Yeah, I think I've met some of my best queer friends, or people I still haven't met in person yet, thanks to the pandemic, like, probably would have actually gone to maybe be able to see them if the pandemic hadn't happened. But in the meantime, it's like, no, you're—you're livin' the dream online.

Nadia: Absolutely. Well, it is lovely to meet you, e-meet you, whatever we're calling it. Um, I, uh, well for people who don't know, I actually discovered you via your podcast, um, specifically the episode that you did about coming out late. And as someone who also came out late—and I have a fairly well-read sex column over here in Australia, and I came out also publicly through my column, and I've got a YouTube channel that I came out on.

A lot of—um, I have had so many, particularly women, um, and like, femme-identifying people saying to me that, you know, how did you—

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live

All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

how did you know? Like, how did you work it out? And, like, why did it take you so long to work it out, coming out later in life? And I just thought the podcast episode you did on that answered it so beautifully. And I think if I remember, I reached out to you on Insta and said, oh my god, I feel so seen by this episode and we have to do a collab. And now, here we are, two late-bloomer lesbians [laughter].

Shohreh: Yes! No, I was so appreciative when you sent me that DM. And you sent me some voice notes and we were kind of going back and forth, um, and I was like, yes! This is the whole reason I wanted to record that podcast episode is because I was like, this is gonna speak to a very specific subset of people—

Nadia: Absolutely!

Shohreh: —but, like, for those people, it's gonna be so meaningful. And they're gonna be like, wow, this explains my experience. And I've had a lot of people reach out and tell me, like, no one has ever quite explained it or put it into this language like this for me before. Um, and it's been really meaningful.

And for those of you who are on the live, umm, if I remember, I'm pretty sure it's episode #128 is that specific episode. And my podcast is called Conjuring Up Courage, if you are thinking that you want to listen to that.

But first, since like I said, you're in Australia, I'm in the U.S., our audiences probably don't know each other, maybe we'll just start by

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live

All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

introducing ourselves, who we are and what we do, before we get into all things late-bloomer lesbian today?

Nadia: Sounds great. Um, well, yeah, I'm over here in Australia. First and foremost, I'm a sex columnist. Um, it sounds very millennial to say, but I am also a YouTuber [Shohreh laughs lightly] and just a creator of lots of different types of content across lots of different platforms. But basically, the content I create is mainly sex-positive content. Obviously since coming out, I try to do sort of more queer sex-focused sort of content as well because anyone in the LGBTQ community knows, we're very lacking with that sort of content online. So, I try to do a bit of that.

And yes, only came out—it will be just over a year ago now that I came out sort of publicly as a lesbian. Before that, I was identifying as bisexual.

Shohreh: Nice! So, uh, for those of you who don't know me, I'm Shohreh Davoodi. I am located in Austin, Texas. And I work as a self-trust coach, primarily for queer folks. Not every single one of my clients is queer, but the vast majority of them are. And a fun thing that happens is that people may come in to work with me not thinking that they are queer or maybe wondering if they are, and then by the time we're done, they're like, oh, turns out I am queer, I'm gay, I'm genderqueer, whatever it may be. And I'm like, wonderful! This is, like, my dream.

One of my—a former client of mine reached out to me a few months ago in my DMs, and she was like, I just want you to know, like, since working with you, I'm so much gayer. And I was like, this is the legacy I

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live

All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

wanna leave behind [laughing] in the world, is just making people more gay.

Nadia: Yes, 'cause honestly, we're just making the world gayer, um, one client at a time [laughs].

Shohreh: Exactly, exactly. And so what I help people do, what I like to describe it as, is just coming back home to themselves. Like, we all have a lot of inner wisdom, things that our bodies are trying to tell us, but because we live in a world that is really shitty, especially to marginalized folks, and it's constantly teaching us that we can't trust ourselves, it can be really hard to hear our own inner voice over all that external noise. So I help people to kinda figure out who they are, what it is that they want, like, what are they hoping to do with their lives, and separate out some of those "shoulds" that they feel like they've been living to that are making them feel like crap.

So, I love what I do. It's super fun. Fun fact, I used to be a lawyer before I started my own business, like, five-and-a-half years ago now.

Nadia: Wow!

Shohreh: Yeah, so I've had my own journey as far as professionally goes, and that's not even to speak of the queer journey. Which, I came out officially as a lesbian, I would say, let's see...is it two years ago now? It might be. Actually, I think it was probably a year ago that I came out publicly, um, but it was maybe a year-and-a-half ago that I knew and was going through a divorce and all of those things. Which, we'll get into because the next thing I wanna talk about is our experiences as far

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

as thinking we were straight, and then we both did the straight-to-bi-to-lesbian pipeline, so, yay for us.

Nadia:

Yes. And we also don't want to perpetuate any stereotypes here because while there are women like us who identify as bi and then go on to come out as just lesbian or gay, um, I think it's also important to note here that being bisexual is a legitimate identity. And sometimes it is treated as a stepping stone on the way to being gay and that people are just making their minds up. And it's simply not the case. I've got lots of, um, bisexual friends, some that are in, um, opposite-gender relationships, some that are in same-sex relationships, um, and they are, you know, very legitimate in their sexuality.

And I think it's definitely a misconception that bisexuality is a stepping stone. I think it was actually sort of perpetuated a little bit by *Sex in the City*. I think there was an episode where Carrie was saying, like, oh come on, that's just a step on the way to gay. So, even though there are, um, women like ourselves that do go through that journey, I think that's an important thing to note. Because there is—unfortunately, I've noticed within the queer community itself, even, there is quite a bit of, um, bi erasure and even biphobia.

Because there's this awful stereotype too that if you're with a bisexual woman, then she might cheat on you with men or something, um, which is just simply not—those are two separate factors. If your partner is going to be faithful to you or not, it's certainly got nothing to do with their sexuality.

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

Um, but that was just me having a little [laughing] rant about bisexuality. I'm known for going off on tangents.

Shohreh:

No, thank you for saying that. This is not a biphobic space. I am so glad that you said that. I always remind people: bisexuals actually make up the vast majority of the LGBTQ community. But they also experience a lot of internal, like, issues from queer people. Like, bi people—I was bi for a period of time, you were bi for a period of time, you know, and it's like, you're getting it from people outside the community and then also within the community there are a lot of people who are biphobic and that's bullshit. You and I clearly do not stand for that.

So, yes, throwing that out there. If you are bisexual, we love you. Just because we ended up realizing we are not bisexual does not mean that happens for all, or anywhere near the majority of, bi people. That was just our personal journeys.

Nadia:

Absolutely. And, um, I do have a lot of people that, um, follow me or consume my content that are bisexual. Actually, it's been really lovely to hear from a lot of women who said that they were identifying as straight and it was only after I came out and they read my column and they watched the YouTube video and they started sort of doing a bit of self-reflection and went, oh my god, I'm bi!

Because I think we—the whole bi erasure obviously happens because if you're not in a same-sex relationship, then you can't be queer, which is ridiculous, as you and I know. So, a lot of them have just been married to a man their whole life and had an attraction to women but felt that it

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

wasn't legitimate enough to call themselves bisexual because they had never had any kind of romantic or intimate experiences with a woman.

And so that's another thing that I'm sort of big on saying, that your sexuality—and this is something that we're all told, and this is anyone who's listening who thinks they might be queer, whether that's bi, lesbian, gay, wherever you are, it does not need to be proved or legitimized through... in acting it out, through being in a relationship, through having sex. Um, and that's important too.

And I think it's especially important when people are first coming out because I think there's almost a bit of pressure. I felt it, certainly, when I was first coming out, of, like, alright, well, how many women have you had sex with? Or how many relationships with women have you had?

Shohreh: Right.

Nadia: Um, and that was—I was getting that from people in the queer community and outside of the queer community as well. Because I think there's this thing of like, we need to make sure that you're a proper queer, you know? [Shohreh laughs]

Yeah, I think it's a really important thing for people to know. And anyone listening in, I really—I know that there's a lot of bi-curious people who follow my content, and that's just such an important thing to know. That your sexuality is valid whether, you know, you ever acted upon your same-sex attraction. That makes absolutely no difference.

Shohreh: Mhm. Yeah, I always tell people, I'm like, if you're queer, if you feel queer, then you're queer and you're queer enough. Like, you actually

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

don't have to do anything beyond that, if you don't want to, to be a part of the queer community. And, like, fuck anyone in the community who thinks otherwise 'cause that's just gatekeeping that we don't need.

Nadia:

Absolutely. And it's been nice to see people be more open. So, I mean, going back to your question that I think you asked me quite a little while ago now [laughter], um, it actually was really refreshing for me. Because when I realized that—I thought, like, "oh my gosh, I don't think I'm bi; I think I'm actually gay." And it was during my first sort of, I guess, relationship with a woman, that particularly the sexual experiences—I'd had sexual experiences with women when I was younger and had crushes.

But I was dealing with a lot of my own internalized homophobia, and so those experiences always involved a lot of alcohol and they usually occurred with, um, you know, friends who were straight and experimenting and who the next day very much wanted to put it behind us and be like, that was very much just a drunken encounter, let's not, you know, deep dive into that. Let's just put that sort of behind us. Um, and I'd inevitably have, like, a little crush afterwards and then think, oh gosh, this is wrong. I need to, you know, bury this down deep.

And then it wasn't until actually, ironically, in my thirties, being in a relationship with a man who I had told I was bisexual, um, that I actually felt safe enough to say to him, look, I'm having much more of a draw toward women than I guess I had maybe sort of let on—to anyone, really. And, um, I want to explore that through an open relationship. And he was very supportive. Like I said, it's not for you, it's not for your,

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

you know, sexual gratification, this is just literally me going out and meeting women on dates snf, you know, having sexual encounters and all of that.

Um, and then I met, um, I met someone special, and I realized that there were a lot more stronger feelings coming up. Um, and so I sort of ended the relationship with my boyfriend at the time and said that I was still sort of trying to figure my sexuality out. And I sort of pursued things with her, and it was when we were having—when we were being intimate that I just had this moment of, because I was sober, and I was cognizant, and I was fully present.

And actually, ironically, it was my boyfriend who had sort of almost given me the permission to just—I had a lot of shame around it before that, and I think that's why it was always involving a lot of alcohol. I think because he was like, of course you can explore that. Like, there's nothing wrong with you exploring that. I felt, I guess, more confident about it. And then having those experiences where I was really present and cognizant with her, I was like, oh my gosh. Like, this feels like what sex should have always felt like.

Shohreh: Yes! [Laughs]

Nadia: And sex never felt like this. And that was such a huge "aha" moment. But, you know, I do think not only have I had many relationships with men, um, and sexual encounters with men. But also, being a sex columnist who writes a fairly prominent sex column over here in Australia, I'd written quite graphically about my experiences, you know, navigating hook-up culture. As I never identified as, um, bisexual, so to

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

the average reader I would have, you know, appeared to just be sort of a straight woman.

So, for me, it was a big thing to say that I was a lesbian, and I was concerned about, like, am I even allowed to say this? Because I have had, you know, a fair few sexual encounters and relationships with men. So how could I possibly be a lesbian? And it was only through talking to my gay friends at the time, who were actually—I didn't have any lesbian friends at the time, I only had gay male friends—and they said, like, this is you. This is your journey, and you can identify however feels right for you. There are women. You know, we've seen examples, obviously, like famously Cynthia Nixon out of *Sex and the City*, she was with men and then she came out much later in life and is, you know, now happily married to a woman. Um, there are examples of people coming out much later in life.

And the way that I sort of see it for me, I felt the need—and not everyone needs a label and I want to make that clear as well, but I felt the need to label it because it was really important for me to not identify as bisexual because I wanted to make it clear that I wasn't open to having romantic or sexual relationships with men. Because I just absolutely wasn't. But I do also feel—and I'm obviously interested to hear your thoughts on it, but I personally feel like sexuality is a bit of a spectrum.

And, like, my first girlfriend that I, you know, had those experiences with that really helped me to come out, she was hard on the gay end. Like, she just, even if I talked about, um, you know, having sex with a

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

man, she's like, I don't know how you did it! [Laughter] And then you've got people who are hard on the straight end and then bisexual people, and then I think there's a whole thing in between.

And obviously, I think I'm probably somewhere between bisexual and hard gay. I'm somewhere in the middle here. Because I was able to have—to be intimate with men, but I always felt sort of like, it was very performative and I was not super present. Whereas when I started having sex with women, it wasn't performative at all, and I felt really, really present and like I was just savoring every second of it.

Um, and so, yeah, sort of speaking with my gay friends, they sort of gave me that permission. And, going back to what you were seeing about people being gatekeeper-y of labels, I think it's nice to see that there is a progression happening now where people are being less gatekeeper-y about labels. You know, and I even had friends say to me, look, if for any reason you change and you want to have a relationship with a man again, like, you can do that too. We accept that.

Shohreh: You have good friends. [Laughing lightly] I just wanna say you do.

Nadia: Those friends have since said—that was when I first came out over a year ago. Those same friends have since said, we literally can't even remember you being straight because everything about you is so fucking gay.

Shohreh: Is so gay.

Nadia: They're like, you're just hardcore lesbian. Like, I think everyone's realized now, it's definitely not a phase. [Shohreh laughs] It's been really

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

nice. And look, even when I came out through the column and everything, I did expect some backlash of people saying you're jumping on a bandwagon or a trend or whatever. Um, but by that point, I'd come out to my family, I'd come out to—my grandparents are quite conservative, I came out to them. It was a really, really big step for me. Um, and I was really—yeah, I mainly honestly heard from a lot of women, and I continue to hear from women to this day saying that my column struck a chord with them because it wasn't a normal coming out story and it made them realize something about themselves.

So, it's been mainly positive, mainly positive experiences for me. There's been—oh my gosh, women will break your heart in a way that, well, I'm speaking from the perspective of a now out lesbian, but I feel like women will just destroy your heart and rip it into a million pieces in a way that a man never can. And I've had lots of relationship experiences with women now, but I can honestly say it's, even with all the, you know, stumbles along the way and the heartbreak or whatever, it's been so joyous and so—it's a feeling of peace. Just complete and utter peace. Like I finally feel like I am me and I'm living my truth.

Shohreh: Mm, ah, I love that. Thank you for sharing all of your journey to get to this point and how that looks 'cause I love hearing from other late-bloomer lesbians and the different paths that we've all taken to get where we are. 'Cause there's always some similarities along the way, but then there's these different steps that happen for each of us to make it happen. One of my favorite places on the internet—so I hate Reddit, in general, but there's a subreddit for late-bloomer lesbians, and that subreddit is—

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live
All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

Nadia: Really?!

Shohreh: Yes! Oh, it's so good, if you haven't been on it—

Nadia: Oh, I need to check it out. Okay.

Shohreh: —it's amazing. I spent a lot of time on there. I think I discovered it last summer, so it was actually a bit after coming out. But even then, just, like, reading people's stories—there's people there of all different ages trying to figure their stuff out. People who are married and with kids and trying to figure out, like, how to come out to their husbands and all this stuff. So, it's this really affirming space. But I love reading everyone's different stories and kind of the way everyone bolsters each other up in that community and provides support.

Because it's a really scary thing. Uh, because it does, when you're going through it, it feels like, has anyone else ever done this?

Nadia: Yep.

Shohreh: Like, is it absolutely bananas that I am trying to say that I am a lesbian when actually I thought that I've been straight my whole life and now I'm wrong?

Um, for me, I thought I was straight my whole life. I, um, now I can look back growing up and see, like, the queerness that was there. Like, I truly believe in my heart, like, I've always been queer. I just didn't really know how to tap into it. I think that I always had attraction for women and an interest in women, but I just didn't know it was there.

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

And as you mentioned, I have a podcast episode—my podcast is called *Conjuring Up Courage*—and there's episode #128 where I'm answering the question, how did you not know you were gay? Where I kind of went through all these different things about why I thought maybe it took me so long to figure it out.

And I grew up in a really religious household. I grew up with parents who were fairly conservative in that way. And I also grew up in Texas, in a very conservative area where nobody in my high school who I now know to be queer was out in high school. Like, at that time, that was just not a thing. And then, of course, didn't have any representation growing up.

Nadia: And that's huge.

Shohreh: It is, representation matters.

Nadia: Like, the whole concept of you can't be what you can't see, like, it's so true. Like, I—that's what I related to. I think we're in a similar age bracket, you and I, and we're seeing so much more representation now, which is amazing.

Shohreh: Yes.

Nadia: But we just weren't seeing it when we were younger, it was so rare.

Shohreh: It was so rare. And, like, the representation that we did have was almost entirely, like, white gay males. Like, that's what you got in the media with, like, *Queer Eye* or *Will & Grace*. Like, there was far less representation of other aspects of the community, of lesbians. Um,

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

unless you watched *The L Word*, which I didn't. That would not have been a show I would have been allowed to watch growing up.

Nadia: Yep, same.

Shohreh: I wasn't even allowed to watch *Will & Grace*, like, my parents were very strict about media.

So, you know, for me, I dated men. I ended up marrying a man, um, who I was with for a total of ten years. We were together five years before we got married and then five years of our marriage. And it wasn't until, I think maybe two years into our marriage, that I actually realized I was bi and came out as bi. Because I had some really close friends here who were bi and who were very open with talking to me about it and kind of dispelling some of the misconceptions about it. And so, I just kind of realized, something clicked for me where I was like, oh, I think that word describes me. Bisexual. Like, I think that's me.

And I came out to my husband. And at the time I was like, this isn't gonna change anything about our relationship. Like, I just want you to know that I am also attracted to women. He was like, oh, okay. Like, I remember he was surprised that I felt strongly enough about that that I would be willing to take on that label and, like, be, like, I am bisexual, versus just being a thing that was in my head. But we both thought, you know, nothing was going to happen from that and then it was what it was.

Of course, the way I like to describe this is kind of like this Pandora's box in my brain, where as soon as the option was there—like, I allowed

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

myself to be, like, no, you are attracted to women, and it's okay that you're attracted to women—suddenly, like, not only could I not turn it off, but it became more and more powerful. Where, like, literally, I think it was about nine months later, I remember—we had a couples' therapist because we were just working through some communication issues—and I remember going to her separately, in a separate session, and being like, I so strongly feel that I need to, like, date and be with women that I think I have to get a divorce. Like I was like, I don't—I don't see any other way.

And she was like, well, you could try to open the relationship, um, if you don't want to go straight to divorce and this is just something you want to be able to experience. 'Cause for me, I didn't know this about myself until I was already married, and that feels like such an important piece of information to have, maybe before you commit your life to somebody. So I felt very much just, like, robbed of these experiences that I didn't get to have.

And so my ex and I were planning to open our relationship and we were kind of both in therapy and talking about what that would look like. And this went on for, like, six months before, and then the pandemic hits. And so suddenly the pandemic hits, we're all stuck inside. We have not opened the relationship because obviously it stopped being safe to do so at that point, especially in those early days of the pandemic.

Um, I ended up reading Tamed—or Untamed, excuse me, by Glennon Doyle which is a book that has helped a lot of people figure out their sexuality. And I remember reading this book—I had it on audiobook.

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

I'm, like, in the shower, and I was, like, sobbing. Because Glennon is describing her relationship with Abby Wambach. For those who don't know, um, Glennon is in a lesbian relationship with Abby Wambach. And I just was like, crying, being like, will I ever get to have that? You know? Like, there was this piece of me that just was like, I am meant to be with a woman. Like, I have created the wrong life for myself, and I don't know how I got here, and now I don't know how to get out of here. And it took me another—

Nadia: Wow.

Shohreh: Yeah, yeah.

Nadia: What a realization. Like, what a realization. And yeah, that feeling of being trapped I think is something that probably a lot of women can relate to.

Shohreh: Yeah, I mean, we treat—obviously marriage in society, and for good reason, we treat it as this is a permanent thing that you're deciding to do, and there's so much stigma against divorce as well. So there's all these societal things that keep people in relationships that maybe it turns out are not the best fit for them anymore and maybe never were.

And it was about four months later that I went to my husband at the time, and I was like, I think that we need to have a divorce. I was like, I don't think that I can love you the way that you deserve to be loved. Like, I am now realizing I am not actually attracted to men romantically and sexually the way that I thought that I was.

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

And at that time, I was not yet claiming the word “lesbian.” I just knew that, like, I needed to be with women and I did not want to be with men anymore. Like, I was just like, I can’t imagine continuing to be with men.

And that was one of the things when I was, like, talking to my therapist, too. Like, she was like, so, if, you know, your husband was out of the picture, would you date men? And I was like, absolutely not. She was like, okay, well, that is something to consider. So—

Nadia: It’s funny because I had a similar experience. And I remember a friend saying to me, at the time, maybe you’re just leaning really hard into the woman part of your bisexuality. And I was like, yeah, maybe that’s what’s happening [laughter].

Shohreh: Maybe. Maybe. Like, it’s pretty telling when you’re at that point. And, like, my, uh, my ex, I remember us having conversations, like, through the divorce process, and like, he and another one of my friends were the first people to be like, well, are you maybe gay? And, like, I wasn’t quite—

Nadia: Wow.

Shohreh: Yeah.

Nadia: So, actually, they said it to you. That’s so interesting that someone else said it to you.

Shohreh: I know, I know. And it’s like, I think it was sitting there in my subconscious. Like, it was there, I just wasn’t ready to claim it yet. And I think one of the reasons I didn’t want to claim the word lesbian yet, at that time, is because I felt like I had so much empathy for my ex-

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

husband and what he was going through with the divorce. And I think I felt like, does this delegitimize, like, our relationship, and, like, the ten years that we spent together? And also, like, what does it say about me, literally, as a self-trust coach, helping people come home to themselves, to be, like, but I didn't know this huge thing about myself.

And so, I think I just had a lot of fears about, like, what other people would think if I [crosstalk 00:26:56].

Nadia: Oh, I hear that, definitely.

Shohreh: You know? Like, what will, are people—you said the same thing when you were talking about your story, too. Like, when you've dated men your entire life and then people don't see you as, like, necessarily queer—like, for me, I was just recently bi—like, that's a big jump for a lot of people's brains to be like, how the hell did you go from that to, like, being lesbian? Like, how did you not know that?

And so, at that time, I was like, uh, I don't know. But I do remember my husband, like, as we were going through the divorce process being like, okay, so, is there any other men that you would be, like, attracted to or interested in besides me? And I was like, no. And he was like, I think that you're gay [laughing lightly]. I was like, cool.

Nadia: Wow. So your husband was the one who called you out on being a lesbian, essentially.

Shohreh: Yeah, yeah. He absolutely did. Um, and, you know, this was after we already—I had already been like, we need to get a divorce, and we had decided that yes, we were going to, and we were just talking about it

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

more. But it was also that same thing that you were talking about, where it feels like, I've never been with a woman, so can I actually claim this? Like, I think I still had those doubts too of, what if I'm wrong? Like, what if I go out there and, like, start dating women and it's like, not what I think?

And I talked to my therapist about that, and I was like, you know, what if I'm wrong? And she was like, well, what if you're wrong? Does it matter? Because you're still unhappy in your current situation.

Nadia: 100%.

Shohreh: So, at the end of the day, it seems like you still need to exit this relationship and you still need to explore, um, this other path. And she was right, of course. And I was not wrong. Because our bodies are very, very wise. And, you know, my body, throughout that relationship at different points, was trying to tell me something was wrong. But it wasn't saying, like, hey, you're gay. Hey, you're gay. Or, I mean, it was, but I couldn't interpret that. I just didn't have the tools at the time to be able to hear that and understand that. So it was just coming up as, like, something doesn't feel quite right here.

But I also was like, I can't leave a relationship that is objectively good with this, like, objectively wonderful partner who I love and care about. Like, to be clear, like, my ex-husband, like, we were best friends. Like, we had a good relationship in ways that so many people would die to have. What we didn't have, and I didn't realize at the time, was we didn't have, like, a true romantic and sexual connection because I was gay. But we live in a culture that, like, teaches women, like, this is what

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

you're supposed to want, this is what you're supposed to have. And so I just didn't realize, because I had nothing to compare it to, right? I hadn't been with a woman.

Nadia:

And not to mention, could I also just add, we actually normalize women having sex that is performative and does not include pleasure for themselves. We absolutely normalize it. We hear our female friends talking about, oh, well, it's my husband's birthday, I guess I've gotta give him birthday sex. I better do it. Or, um, you know, we hear our friends talking about faking orgasms and things.

So, we as women, and you know, potentially if you are—not to say that every woman who makes these comments is secretly queer, but I think there are a lot of queer women out there as well, and I know that, you know, I was in that stage myself, where everyone is talking about how they're not actually really enjoying having sex with their boyfriends and husbands and how it is a service, it is a performance, it's something they exchange for fidelity. And so then you think, okay, well, then, this is normal. Women just don't really like having sex with their boyfriends and husbands.

Um, and then, yeah, it's not until you have that sexual experience with a woman and go, hold everything! [Laughter] This is what it's supposed to feel like!

Shohreh:

Oh my gosh, yes. The performative thing is huge. And I know you and I talked about this in the DMs too when we were first connecting. Because for me, like, yeah, sex was performative for most of my life. Like, I learned from a young age that, like, what mattered most was

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

how sexually attractive I was to men, and, like, how much pleasure I could give them. And, like, the exchange there was that I get, like, more power in society. Like, I am put in a better place in society.

I mean, that's, like, a very curt way of putting that. But that's, like, what all of the messaging over the course of our lives as women that we get. That's, like, what the main thing that comes out of that that we learn, whether we're willing to say that out loud or not. Like, that's definitely something that I had going on in my brain.

Nadia: 100%.

Shohreh: And so, like, I remember in the early days of our relationship, the sex was definitely—like, I was still in that performative space. Like, I hadn't really come into my feminist awakening yet to unpack some of that stuff. And then, as time was going on, like, I remember my sex drive just, like, fucking tanked. Like, I had no interest in sex at all. And I was doing—I just assumed, like, something was wrong with me. Because of course I did.

And, you know, I'm, like, going to the gynecologist. The gynecologist is like, oh, you know, it's really common for people who've been on, like, a birth control pill for many years. We can switch you to an IUD. We can try some other things. And it's like, I just was like, oh, I'm just really stressed out. I've got all these things going on. Like, there's too much other pressure in my life to, like, wanna care about sex and have any interest in sex. And, like, no. I was just having sex with the wrong person [laughs].

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

Nadia: Absolutely. And I think that's also a testament to the way that, actually, like, the medical system also lets women down because we're just—and this is the sex columnist part of me coming out—but we so deprioritize, um, women's pleasure and we just really treat it as an obstacle. And I remember, um, with one of my first serious boyfriends, having a similar experience where I was going back and forth to the doctor, the gynecologist, and just saying sex—like, every time I have sex, it's burning. And they tested for every STI that you could test for, and they said, you do not have an STI. They were testing for all these other things. I think the doctor ended up just giving me constant, um, thrush treatments and just sending me away. I was like, I don't have thrush, I don't have an STI. Every time I have sex it's burning.

This went on for a year, and then finally I saw a female doctor who just took a little bit more time with me. And she said, um, you know that if you are dry during sex, if you're not lubricated, sex will burn, it will hurt. Because it's like the friction of the dryness, right?

Shohreh: Right.

Nadia: She's like, are you actually turned on when you're having sex? And I was like, oh, not really. And she was like...we've solved the problem. And, literally, that was the problem. She was like, well, you know, you could get personal lubricant and things like that. But I just found it interesting that I was getting tested for all of these conditions and no one thought to say, is your vagina actually relaxed and happy during sex? Like, literally. Like, it's such a simple, basic thing, but we don't actually, you know, put a lot of emphasis on women's pleasure.

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

And I think because we are told to put our needs, our desires, and our pleasure aside for men, that's, you know, part of being in a patriarchal society, that is part of the machine that allows so many women, like the exact story you've just told, to repress, um, and lock away in a Pandora's box, as you described it, our sexuality. Because your comfort and your desires and the things that excite you and bring you to life don't matter. You're a supporting character in a man's life.

And it's such—it's not just about owning your truth when you come out. It's also about just, like, stepping into your fucking power. That's how it felt for me, like I was stepping into my power and saying, actually, this is about what I want, what excites me, what makes me feel full and happy and complete. And I just think, in general, whether you're straight, queer, or otherwise, women are not taught to do that. And it's such an incredibly powerful thing to, you know, prioritize your own comfort and pleasure.

Shohreh:

Okay, so, I don't know if I've ever talked about this, like, on the podcast or anywhere else, so this is interesting. But I wanna talk about this because you just mentioned this thing with the pain. So, towards the end of my marriage, I actually started having, like, pelvic pain whenever we would have sex, which was not very often because like I said, I was avoiding it as much as possible. But I was getting this, like, really—it was kind of like an intense cramp, and it did not feel good.

Um, and I ended up going to, like, a pelvic floor physical therapist. And she was like, yeah, like, your pelvic muscles are really tight, whatever, we just need to kind of work on relaxing that. But didn't really look into,

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live

All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

like, you know, thinking about the reasons of, well, why is this happening? Like, why did this come out of nowhere?

And I went and I saw a massage therapist, I remember, after my divorce. And she had me fill out this really long form. And I ended up talking about the pelvic pain thing, and she was like, well, you know, it's obviously very common for the pain that we hold in, like, our mental anguish, to show up in our bodies. So, if you were gay and you, like, didn't wanna be having sex, like, doesn't it make perfect sense that your body was, like, acting out in pain when you were forcing yourself to do something you didn't want to do?

And I was just like [explosion noise], mind blown with that. 'Cause I hadn't made that connection, you know? Like, I was just like, oh, my body's just doing something weird. And it's like, no, it was doing that in reaction to something. I mean, like, there were times when we would have sex towards the end of our relationship where I would just straight up disassociate, or I would, like, cry and need to, like, hide it. And I just was like, I'm just being triggered by something in my past. And I was like, no, your body, all of this time, has just been trying to tell you, this is not right. This is not where you want to be. This does not feel good. And again, I just didn't know.

And so I want to say that for anybody else who's listening, if you're experiencing that, like, something is not wrong with you. Like, your body is trying to talk to you. And it's just a matter of figuring out what it's trying to say, and, like, interpreting that. And it's really tough when

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

you don't have the tools and you just immediately assume, like, I'm broken, and I need to be fixed.

And you're not broken. Uh, you just need to figure out what's going on, and that can be a process. Obviously, it took me a long time to make that connection and I didn't make it myself; I needed a medical provider to make it for me. You needed a female medical provider to be like, hey, this might be what's going on. Like, it's not—because of the ways that we're taught to distrust ourselves, that just doesn't immediately pop into our minds.

Nadia:

Completely, you know? I've seen, there's a viral tweet I've seen go around a few times on Instagram. And it says something like, uh, when a woman can't, um, have an orgasm during sex, we tell her that the problem is with her. And when a man can't enjoy sex or a man can't orgasm during sex, we also tell him that the problem is with the woman. It's always about women's—you know, it's always about the woman not being enough, you know?

And I think we are just so, also taught as women to be people pleasers. And you put your comfort aside for your husband or for your children or for your family. And when you, you know, you take that on, you really internalize that, that manifests in so many different ways. And I don't think it should be shocking when we are raised to, you know, squash down our needs all the time, that there is a little, like, there's a huge world, as both you and I have discovered, of these late-bloomer lesbians.

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

And some of the research, um, that I was reading when I first started, like, writing about this too, was saying that, um, there are, of course, gay men who have had similar experiences to us. They've been in many relationships with women or had sex with women before realizing they were gay and coming out as gay. However, it is significantly more rare among gay men for that to happen. You know, a lot of the surveys and stuff they do, it tends to be that gay men tend to come out earlier than lesbians and are less likely to have had opposite gendered sexual interactions.

Lesbians, even—not just late-bloomer lesbians, but lesbians in general, are way more likely to have had at least a couple of opposite-sex relationships and sexual encounters. Because like you said earlier, we are taught from a very young age that your currency in this world, the way you have value is, it's your sexual currency, it's your sexual appeal to men. Um, and so, we just go chasing after that and don't think about, hang on a minute, but what is it that I want? What is it that turns me on? That excites me? That makes me feel at peace in myself? Because we are taught that that's what we need to do.

And so, um, you know, it is—it is very common, you know, for women, I think, to, to have, you know, been with people of the opposite gender before going, no, actually I am gay. And actually, to the extent of like you just described, ignoring searing pain, you know? Because we are taught that—yeah, we're constantly taught that we have to put what feels good for us aside. It's about other people's comfort.

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

So, rather than asking if it was something about your husband that was creating the pain for you, like the fact that he was a man [Shohreh laughs], you internalized it and saw it as my body is broken; I need to fix it. Not for yourself—you weren't trying to fix it for yourself, but so you could please *him*. So it's always about, you know, the male gaze and all of that. And I think that's a lot of the untangling that you have to do, and that was a lot of the untangling that I had to do.

When I was coming out, one of the things that helped me realize I wasn't bisexual was a girl I follow on YouTube, um, who identified as bisexual, she was engaged to be married to a man and they'd had an open relationship arrangement. And during the lockdown, she couldn't go and have sex with women or date women anymore, and she fell into a deep depression and realized that she actually just needed to only be with women. And then came out as gay and talked about the concept of compulsory heterosexuality and how it is so thrust upon women that we must divert the male gaze always.

And I think you described that so well in that podcast episode about how that construct, you know, tricks us to ignore all of the signals. 'Cause everything you're describing, it's like all of the signals were there, but you were just ignoring them.

Shohreh:

Yeah. I was ignoring them, absolutely. Because I didn't know how not to ignore them. And, um, the other thing you were talking about the differences when you did go on to actually start having sex with women. And that was—so I'm like the, um, typical, like the most lesbian story ever, which was that, like, the first woman that I went on a date

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

with is actually my girlfriend and we've been together for ten months. And, like, she is the love of my life.

Nadia: I love it.

Shohreh: And I thought I was gonna go out and have all this sex and, like, go on all these dates and do the thing. And then she appears in my life, and I was like, well, the plans have changed. The plans have changed. [Light laughter] I adore her. She is absolutely wonderful.

Nadia: Aw, I'm such a romantic, you're gonna make me cry! I love that.

Shohreh: [Laughing] Sorry. Um, but we—the interesting thing was in going from having sex with men and then, like, our sexual relationship, one of the biggest differences was that whenever I was with men, I never was turned on by giving, ever. That was not a thing that turned me on. Like, when I was actually receiving pleasure, yes, like, I could get turned on and I could be in it. Um, but never from actually giving pleasure.

And so, suddenly when I'm with a woman, realizing, like, oh, this is supposed to be enjoyable too? Wait, *the whole thing* is supposed to be enjoyable? [Laughing] Like, from beginning to end? I was like, oh, well, this is news to me. Maybe if I had known this before I would have realized that something was up. Because it just feels so different, like, in my body and in my experience.

And, like, there are like, phrases that I would hear throughout my life that I'd be like, I don't really know what that means. Like, "weak in the knees," for example. I'd be like, if someone makes you weak in the knees, like, I don't understand. And then, like, you know, I'm having

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

these experiences with her where I'm like, oh, now I get it. Now I get it. All of these things that people have talked about, like, what sex is supposed to feel like, like what love is supposed to feel like, that I just kind of logic-ed my way out of. Now I'm like, how did you go so long, like, being so undernourished in this area of your life and thinking it was fine? Because now, it's like, once you have it, you're like, how could I ever go back to that? Like, my body was miserable, and I just didn't know it.

Nadia:

And it's so funny too because yeah, I think, yeah, when you've had those relationships—those opposite-sex relationships, it is hard for some people to understand. I think there were people who would, you know, in trying to be supportive, they said, but, you know, if you do want to go back to men, we understand.

I've seen different analogies for it, and there's a really good one I've seen, which is for late-bloomer lesbians. Like, you're driving a car. You've got this, like, it's a used car, it's not, like, the best car, it's not, like, your dream car or anything. But the car is getting you where you need to go, and you can get to those places in that car. Then, one day, someone gives you a Ferrari, or like a Porsche or something. And then they say to you, now, if you ever want to go back and just give the Ferrari back, you can have the used car, if one day you'd prefer the used car to the Ferrari. You're never going back to that. It's like, the used car was fine, it got you around, you were able to get by, but now you have a Ferrari.

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

So, now, like—and that’s exactly what it feels like. It feels like... I was, obviously, not so hard on the end of gay where, like, my first girlfriend said that, um, you know, she knew from when she was a child that she was a lesbian and that she could never, like—she couldn’t look at, like, a man naked or anything. It would just be so—she would be so turned off by the whole thing.

Shohreh: Right.

Nadia: Obviously I was able to get through these encounters and do them and do the performance and all of that. Um, but at the same time, when I then had those experiences with women, it was like, holy crap! Like, exactly what you said. Like, every part of it feels good. Like, giving, receiving. Also, like, simple things like thinking about it and replaying it in your head hundreds of times, thousands of times over. Which I would never have sex with a man and then replay it in my head. Ever.

Shohreh: I never fantasized. Like, I remember telling my girlfriend, she was like, well, what kind of, like, fantasies did you have? I was like, I have never fantasized in my life up until now, like, being with you. Like, I would never think about sex after it happened. I would never think about, like, sex with a man to get, like, excited, or get myself turned on for, like, masturbating or anything else. Like, never. And I just was like, oh, some people don’t fantasize.

And it’s like, again, another sign that now I can look back and be like, yeah, that’s—that’s pretty obvious. Um, because if you’re having sex that you enjoy, of course you’re going to replay it and you’re going to

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

think about it. And, like, just thinking about it can get you excited. And that was never something I had before.

Nadia: 100%. Yeah. And I just think every element of it, without sort of being too graphic, but literally, like the visual, the smell, the taste, like, every single element of it is, like, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.

Shohreh: Yessss. All of your senses.

Nadia: Yeah, absolutely. It's every sense and just savoring every part of it. And for me, sex with a man, it was obviously something that I could do, I could get through it. I always felt like I was going for the gold star. I felt like, I can do all the things and I can do them really well. And I was getting high off of that because it was the male validation, which I think got particularly mixed up for me because I didn't, um, you know, I don't have, like, a father figure in my, um, life. And I think I was—through my relationships with men, all my, like, serious partners that I had, serious male partners, it always was, like, a strange sort of almost parent-child dynamic. Like, they were very, like, protective of me, but very, like, sort of looking after me. And I realized that I had sort of gotten that confused—my desperate need to just have, like, a strong, you know, male presence in my life, I had gotten that confused with, well, this must be—this must be love, this must be all of these things.

And especially like, if an attractive man was paying attention to me, I would get very excited. So I'd be like, well, I like men. Look at how excited I'm getting that a guy is paying attention to me. But now that I look at it, I can unpack it and go, no, I was getting excited about the, um, the fact that, you know, an attractive man, when we are taught to

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

aspire to, you know, attractive men, if he's noticing you, you mean something. You have some kind of worth. And so I would get nervous or excited and be like, this is me having a crush on this man.

Whereas now, I'm still unpacking this shit, so if a good-looking man—and I can notice if a man is good looking still—would notice me, I would still probably feel a bit of a rush of nervousness or excitement. But I just know so clearly now, and I'm unpacking that construct of, like, compulsory heterosexuality, that's not attraction. And especially because I have something to compare it to, the way I feel around, like, a woman I'm dating or a woman, you know, that I've been in a relationship with or whatever. It's completely different. And I'm also not—there's no sexual part of me getting engaged in that.

And the thing—it's very, very crude, but the way I describe it to my friends is, you know, sometimes I will see a man on the street and think, wow, that's a really good-looking man. And then I think, oh my gosh, does that mean I'm not a lesbian that I notice that man is good-looking? And then I think, do you want to see that man naked? Do you want to do things to his body? No. No.

Shohreh: No.

Nadia: I mean, it's a very crude way to think of it, but it's—and I think a lot of women, you know, even get that confused. And it's something worth, if you're listening now and you're a bit curious, you know, it's something worth unpacking. Why are you getting excited or nervous around a man giving you attention? Is it because you are specifically sexually attracted to that man? Or is it because you've been taught that that's the

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

ultimate form of validation you can receive as a woman is for a man to go, hey, you're a beautiful woman and I noticed you from across the room?

Shohreh: I think too, on the attraction piece, you know, we have been trained our entire lives to know, like, what a, like, sexy, like, attractive man looks like, right?

Nadia: 100%.

Shohreh: So, from a very young age, that's, like, shoved down our throats. That's part of the CompHet thing. So, like, of course, regardless of if you're a lesbian or not, like, you're gonna notice that. Especially for those of us who came out later in life, and, like, knew the power, of, like getting an attractive man to notice you. Like, you can't magically, like, put on a new filter that's, like, well, now I can't tell that this man is objectively attractive. Like, of course you can.

Nadia: 100%.

Shohreh: For me, the big change was that, like, when I first came out as bi, like, and was like, oh, you can be attracted to women, it actually took time—and this, I think, is why it took a little time between me coming out as bi before realizing that I was a lesbian—to start actually actively being attracted to women, if that makes sense. Like, before I started, like, looking at women the way that I'd looked at men my whole life. Because my brain, like, wasn't—didn't know how to do that because I hadn't allowed myself to do it my entire life. So, I had been doing it kind of covertly, but not openly.

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

And so it took a while for me to, like, start looking at women the way that I had always looked at men. And then, like, once it was there, this flip kind of switched and it was like, well, now I can see that everywhere, right? Like, I look at women in that way. But it makes sense to me that at first it wasn't there because, again, this was a part of my brain I'd just shut down and had been like, this doesn't exist. We're gonna ignore that this is here. And so I needed to give myself that permission before I could start seeing that.

But I have the same thing where it's like, sometimes a man will be an attractive man, and I'm like, I am not—like, I can recognize that you are an attractive man without being attracted to you. And I think that's kind of, like, the irony of the whole, like, you know, when women are attracted to other women, we're always like, am I attracted to you, or do I wanna be you? And that's part of the, like, struggle growing up, is because we're taught to compete with other women. And so, a lot of times we confuse our attraction and interest in other women to actually, like, wanting to be those women. Like, we think, like, oh, I'm jealous of her, I wanna be like her. Um, when in reality, sometimes it's no, you don't wanna be like her, you wanna be with her.

Nadia:

Absolutely, yeah. I completely agree with all of that. And it's, yeah, I think that's the thing of, like, distinguishing the difference between, you know, recognizing that someone is attractive versus actually being actively attracted to them. And that was like a huge piece for me that, like, really—yeah, I'd never, ever considered that. But am I actually sexually attracted to this person? For me, it was more a case of I would just be in relationships with a man that was giving me the most

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

attention, and then I'd be like, oh, I really enjoy this attention; therefore, this means I really like this man.

And exactly what you described, once I was able to unpack that compulsory heterosexuality, it was like a switch had flipped on. It was like, my whole life, I'd been viewing the world, but I could only see it in black and white. And then I flipped a switch, and I could see all the color and I can't unsee it.

Shohreh: Yes!

Nadia: And you cannot unsee it. And that's why, you know, when friends are like, you know, but if you ever want to go back to men, we won't judge you, I was like, I can't unsee this. Like, this is...

Shohreh: No, you can't go back.

Nadia: Absolutely.

Shohreh: That's funny because I use that analogy all the time. Like, I always say, you know, imagine that, like, everybody else is growing up and they can see all this color and you can only see in black and white. And everyone else is describing to you what it's like in color, and like, you have a bit of a sense that your experience might be different, but since you don't know that color exists, you, like, try to fit their experiences into your own. But then, when you're finally given the, like, special prescription that lets you see the color, you're like, oh my god! This is what you all have been seeing all of this time? Like, how did I not know this? How did I not get to experience this?

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

And like you said, you will never give up the prescription. You're like, this is mine now. I'm going to guard it with my life. You could not pay me to go back to the black and white, and I refuse.

Nadia:

Absolutely. Um, I'm conscious of the time and wrapping up. But I just wanted to say, for anyone that's listening in and that has felt, you know, something has sparked for them that either of us have said, I would just encourage people to, um, you know, exactly as you do through your podcast so beautifully, to conjure up the courage to actually explore. And you don't have to do that in some big, grand way. But just consider—maybe even exploring is not even going on a date with someone, it might even just be, like you were describing, um, allowing yourself to look at people of the same gender. In the way that you've been conditioned to look at men, look at the opposite gender.

It might be if you've had a realization about yourself and you are in a relationship, you know, as a woman with a man, maybe having a conversation with your partner about, you know, is there room for you to be open for a little while so you can explore this side of yourself? I just think YOLO. Like, life is so short. And, um, I'm such a millennial. Life is so short, and you know, it's too short to live it—to live it for other people. And that's why I think both you and I, both our stories ultimately go back to living life on other people's terms, on the lives that we thought we were supposed to have that would make other people happy.

Quite frankly, fuck that.

Shohreh:

Mhm.

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

Nadia: It's your life and you only get one shot at this life. So, live it in fucking full, vivid color. And, um, I hope that you can find some courage to maybe start that journey from something we've said today.

Shohreh: Yes. Yeah, and I will add to that, like, there are so many ways to explore your queerness that don't have to be sexual. Like, certainly there are many ways to do it sexually with other people, or even with yourself, right? Like, you can literally start with porn—

Nadia: 100%.

Shohreh: —if that's what you need to feel like, am I attracted to this? But beyond the sexual, like, one of the things for me that really helped connect with my queerness was just to consume a lot of queer media. I started reading a lot of queer books and listening to podcasts and watching TV shows, like, documentaries. And all of that stuff, like, really helped me connect with the community and connect with the queerness in me, and, like, see where the similarities were in everyone's different stories.

I mentioned earlier in the conversation, like, that late-bloomer lesbian subreddit. There are lots of people in there who, like, don't know whether or not they might be a lesbian or might be bi, but they're reading people's stories, seeing what the similarities are, where they might fit into that. So there's tons of resources out there to explore this.

And then I'm always a huge therapy proponent. Therapy, like, really helped me through some rocky years of my life and figuring out my journey into my queerness. So, if you could find a queer therapist, like, I

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

literally found a therapist who specialized in people coming out later. Um, and that was wonderful for me to have someone like that to talk about stuff with. So, there's a lot of options.

But just know you're not alone. Like, not only do you have the two of us, but, like, there are literally thousands of people. People I've worked with, people I've talked to on the internet, people who are starting podcasts who have been through these things too.

And it's okay. I always say it's better late than never. Like, I am so glad that I figured this out about myself, like, before I didn't have the opportunity to. Yeah, would it have been nice to come out earlier? Sure. But, like, that's not the journey that I got to live. I got what I got, and so I'm just going to, like, live it up to the fullest now that I'm out, here where I am.

Nadia:

I absolutely love that. It's such a great note to end on—it's better late than never. Because I have had women reach out to me and say, I think it's too late for me. I've already been married to a man for 20 years. And I just think that's the exact way to look at it: it's not too late. It's not too late to start living your truth. It doesn't matter where you are in life, it doesn't matter what you're doing. The person that you have been to other people. It's never too late to live your truth.

Shohreh:

Mhm, absolutely. Alright, well, by way of wrap-up, um, just so everyone knows where they can find us, obviously y'all see us here on IG. I'm @ShohrehDavoodi on all platforms. I use Instagram the most and TikTok. Uh, but I'm also on Facebook and Twitter. My website is ShohrehDavoodi.com, and as I mentioned, I am a self-trust coach for

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

queer people. I do one-on-one coaching and I also have a group coaching program called Follow Your Arrow that is about to open for the next cohort. And I help a lot of people who are trying to figure out, like, what is my sexual orientation? What is my gender identity? And just not wanting to live their lives according to other people. And I also have a podcast called Conjuring Up Courage, which releases new episodes bi-weekly. My girlfriend and I just did an episode that came out this past week for Pride.

Nadia: Oh, yay!

Shohreh: Yeah, it's super cute. And then as we've mentioned a few times in this live, there's also episode #128, where I talked about all the reasons I figured out that I didn't know I was gay. So there's tons of stuff there. There's over 130 episodes at this point, so lots of cool things, lots of queer people on there for y'all to check out.

Nadia: Brilliant episode. Everyone should go and listen to that. I will link it on my Insta stories for anyone that wants to listen to it that's following me. Um, and definitely give Shohreh a follow as well. I'm on YouTube, um, NadiaBokody, or my sex column is on news.com.au every Saturday. And I'm on IG. And it has been so great. I love that we are now living in a time when, you know, there is—people feel that they have the permission now, and the room to explore who they really are. And thank you for the work that you're doing in helping people to do that as well because it's completely priceless.

Shohreh: Thank you. Yeah, I'm so glad we got to connect in this way. I'm glad we got to have this conversation, like, literally oceans away from each

Pridepalooza 2022 IG Live

All Hail the Late-Bloomer Lesbians

Featuring Shohreh Davoodi & Nadia Bokody

other. That is one of my favorite parts of the internet, is getting to connect with people who are right in my own backyard. Thanks, y'all, who have been on here live. If you came on late, this whole live is gonna be posted to Instagram and I'm also gonna get a full transcript made up in case you want to read it, and I'll throw that on my blog.

Nadia: Amazing! Thank you. Muah! Goodnight!

Shohreh: Bye!

Nadia: Bye!