

Ep. 10: Second Adolescence w/ Michael Constable (he/him)

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SPEAKERS

Adam James Cohen (he/him), Michael Constable (he/him)



Adam James Cohen (he/him) 00:09

Hello Hello and welcome to this week's episode of the Second Adolescence podcast. I am your host Adam James Cohen. On this week's episode we have Michael Constable Michael is the host of "Reaching Out" - a podcast in which he interviews other queer people about their coming out stories. It is such a good podcast, big recommendation, so go check it out. And today he is not acting as the interviewer, but as the interviewee, as the guest. And he's one sharing his own story. And it was such a good story. I'm so excited to invite you into hearing this conversation. He's someone who came out at age 28 and traveled through childhood and adolescence and even into his 20s not really being cognizant of his identity. And he shares about why that was and what the journey was getting clear on being gay and what the process then was of coming out and trying to integrate gayness into his identity and how his second adolescence was really filled with so many meaningful and uncomfortable firsts and new experiences and just so much growth. So bottom line, great conversation, I'm excited for you to listen on in. And as with every episode of this show, and each guest story, I want to invite you as the listener to listen with open curiosity, knowing that each person's story is different and unique. And they might share things that really differ from what you went through. And they might say things that absolutely give voice to what you went through or are currently going through. And I really hope that all of this happens and that together we can continue growing and expanding our awareness of what life and queerness and healing can be for folks, if after the show you want to connect further feel free to head on over to secondadolescencepod.com for show notes and more or follow the show on Instagram at [@secondadolescencepod](https://www.instagram.com/secondadolescencepod). We'd love to hear from you. Alright, enough for me for now. Welcome to the conversation. Thanks for being here. Welcome to second adolescence.



Michael Constable (he/him) 02:07

Thank you so much for having me.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 02:08

Hell yeah. So before going anywhere, I like to invite the guests to just share with the listeners who they are to give a little context to the person behind the voice. So aspects of identity and any other just basic intros before we go more into your story.

M

Michael Constable (he/him) 02:22

Yeah, absolutely. My name is Michael constable pronouns are he him? I am a cisgender gay man. And I'm originally from the Midwest. I'm from Michigan. And so I grew up there until through college. And then I've kind of been bouncing around since I've lived in Arizona, Texas. Then I was a nomad for a couple of years traveling around doing like a working remote program called Remote year. We'll talk about that we get into my coming out story because that was a pivotal two years for me that I came out during when I was 28. And now I live in San Francisco. And you know, I do like the San Francisco tech thing. And I also have a podcast, which is how we got introduced.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 03:04

Yeah, exactly. Yeah. Tell me about your podcast.

M

Michael Constable (he/him) 03:06

My podcast is called reaching out with Michael constable. It is a podcast on a mission to make coming out easier through story sharing. Today was episode 16. So we're 16 episodes in Yeah. Just started in October since I came out. I wanted to do something about sharing my experience. And I wasn't really sure like what that was because I felt like I came out a little bit later I came out when I was 28. And I always found like sharing of stories and coming out stories specifically to be like, super fascinating to me, because you know, when I was in the closet, I just I always thought that everything was so straightforward. Like you were out and by the time you're in college, and then you just like move on with your life. At a certain point. I got to be like, maybe like 2526 I'm like, I was still heavy denial. But I was like, you know, I think I might have like missed my window. Luckily, I found out that that was not true. I ended up coming out. And then as I was coming out and I started to meet other gay people and other queer people and hearing their stories, I was just like, why didn't I know about this earlier? I'm not sure what the tipping point was. But I randomly got into podcasts that summer. I was never into them beforehand. And I thought to myself, I was like, Wait, maybe this is what I could do. And then we started in October and it's been really fun.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 04:16

Oh my gosh, hell yeah. There's so many things I want to say. And so many parts of your story. I want to dive into first Yes, yeah, I definite plug in recommendation. I love your podcast. It's been so fun to listen to it. So everyone go check that out. Okay, where to be again. Um, I guess first off How are you feeling as a podcast host being a guest on a podcast?

M

Michael Constable (he/him) 04:38

Oh my gosh, Adam, I'm so happy because it's like I get to do the fun podcast part, but I don't have to edit the episode.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 04:48

great. I'll take care of that. Okay.

M

Michael Constable (he/him) 04:51

No, I'm actually it's actually really fun. I'm super like all jokes aside, it's super, super fun. And this is the first podcast I've been on since being a podcast host myself. So it's it's really fun.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 05:00

Cool, awesome. Well, welcome. So I guess before we go anywhere, I'm curious about when you first heard this idea of second adolescence, curious, like, Where did your mind go? And what either resonated or what questions popped up as you kind of thought about your own experience?

M

Michael Constable (he/him) 05:15

Oh my gosh, it totally resonated right away. And I loved it. Because I've written a couple of blog posts about my coming out. The first thing I ever published or like, shared more publicly was for Pride Month, my first year in San Francisco, I decided to share like a blog post just coming out that people in the company volunteer to share their stories. And then it was shared to the company. I was like, You know what, maybe I should try that. So I did. And as I was going through it, I remember talking about my like, post coming out life, and I'm a huge 30 rock fan. And the way that I described like moving to San Francisco specifically, I was like, probably a year into coming out at that point. So I was like, 29 when I moved here, and I never been around like a big gay community like this before. Yeah. And I just remember feeling so behind in the way that I described it in this blog post, is there's this scene when Steve Buscemi is like undercover detective. And it's a flashback of him trying to infiltrate a high school. And he's this like, obvious elderly man wearing like a backwards hat, a hoodie, a skateboard over his shoulder. And he's like, how do you do fellow kids. And that's how I felt. I felt like I was like the world's oldest teenager. Because I was like, going through all of these firsts, when I'm 28-29 years old. And then the aspect of like, the Castro, in San Francisco, in general, really just like feeling like this big gay community that I felt very behind in. It kind of felt like I was like back in school, like back being an adolescent, but just going through all these things as a 29 plus year old in the last couple of years. So it really resonates with me in that sense, because I'm sure we'll get into like I just like was going through so many firsts, and I'm still am I'm 32 now. But still, like I find myself, you know, going through some firsts that like, people are going through backward. They're in high school as teenagers. Yes. So totally, I haven't found it to be necessarily like a bad thing. But it's just I had to adjust to it for sure.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 07:11

Oh, absolutely. Totally. I mean, I so appreciate you sharing all that. I think that is such a common feeling of feeling. Yeah. When you said feeling behind. I so personally connect with that to my journey started maybe three years before you when I was 25. But absolutely feeling like, I was just starting to date for the first time when, like, my peers had been either married, or I've been doing this since they were 13. And even within the gay community feeling like ooh, I started to meet people who've been out since high school or even in college. And so there was this feeling of behind, both in St. spaces and also in queer spaces. So yeah, absolutely. I so resonate with that. But okay, we're going to go more into your second adolescence. But before doing that I have so many questions about kind of, it's often helpful before going into second adolescence really makes sense and understanding of our first adolescence and where we came from. So you mentioned growing up in Michigan. What was growing up there like? and yeah, we'll go from there.

M

Michael Constable (he/him) 08:04

So I listened to two podcast episodes this morning. In preparation for this, I listened to my own coming out story on my podcast, the first episode to like, kind of just refresh the memory totally, I recorded a while ago. And then I also listened to your episode today with Zach and I feel like I need to be friends with him. He seemed like such a fun. He is the best. So cool. Yeah. So but I was listening back to mind, just like I wanted to put myself back, you know, in that era, and just like kind of have it be fresh and really like the way that I remember growing up, like I grew up in a suburb of Detroit, it was a nice summer was like very great place to grow up. But it just wasn't very diverse. And again, this is like me how I remember it. Now. I do feel like sometimes I wonder if I like am changing things in my mind to like, fit my narrative of like, why I stayed in the closet longer. But like this is to my memory, this is the best that I remember it. But it's a very nice place, like really great place to grow up, but just very homogenous. I think it was a lot of sameness. And I feel like a lot of people that I've talked to about their coming out stories, they're like yeah, there wasn't really a gay representation in high school, maybe like one or two people that were out and that was kind of the same for me it was like, there maybe like two gay kids in high school that people knew were out. And it just wasn't like the environment that really fostered you know, encouraging you to really be different or you know, it didn't seem like the place you know, to just safely come out and just be yourself and then on top of that I also found myself you know, getting involved in like football I play football through my whole since like third grade forward through high school so you know, that's its own special type of environment to be starting when you're in third grade and to like be in you know, that more like masculine energy like to be surrounded by that for your entire life. I definitely think that kind of like, you know, plays a factor into the story too. And also, I think I knew like looking back whenever I say this, I feel like it sounds like hard to believe but in my mind this is again, like how I remember it. Like looking back, you know when you come out



10:00

People always ask, especially when you come out at 28 People ask you, when did you know? Like how long? You know, what did you know? And my answer is honestly, not till I was 20. I didn't know, like, I didn't acknowledge it in myself, or to myself until I was 20. But looking back, I can remember, you know, there were signs, like, there were thoughts that I had that I just

brushed off at the time, or just like really repressed and locked down, you know, back as early as, like, when I first got into football, like I remember, like, maybe having like thoughts about a boy, but like, I didn't really have the vocabulary or like knowledge to, like, really know what that was, but just remember, like, a certain feeling. But yeah, so I grew up in this pretty homogenous city suburb. And, you know, I was playing football, I was definitely the kid who I was like, very active, and I was like, one of those people who could be friends with anybody, you know, it wasn't like super Clicky. Like, I have, like my main group of friends, but I was also the person. And, you know, by the time I'm in high school, that, you know, I was friends with everybody. So it wasn't, I was never, even though I was in the closet, I wasn't really, in that space of feeling very isolated, at least from like, a social perspective, that I think it was when we started to get older. And people, you know, kind of what you said before, about feeling behind, you're like, cisgender straight friends, and they're starting to like, date and have sex and like, you know, do the whole thing. And I'm just sitting there, like, I don't know what to do. Like, I wasn't super attracted to girls, but like, I wanted to try to make it happen, but it never felt right. But I still in my mind, was like, I still didn't think like gay was just not a possibility. For me. It was not on the table. And not me. It couldn't be me. And I couldn't be gay. I remember like thinking that.

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 11:39

What do you remember about like, learning about being gay and my queerness? Like, what kind of messaging was happening? I'm thinking about both that time period, but also within football culture. Like, yeah, were you coming to learn being gay meant?

M

Michael Constable (he/him) 11:51

Yeah, I honestly, like I didn't have besides like the people that I mentioned in high school that were like the two. I don't know if it was exactly two. But the small number of people who were out, I they weren't in my circle of friends. I think there were different ages. So like, I just remember thinking that it was something that was undesirable. And I also feel like there is probably a little like, pressure from like, my family, like, you know, looking back, I do remember certain, like homophobic comments that have been made, not directed at me, but just said, in general, that made me feel it's not okay, like, I can't I can't do that. And so I think that probably also add to the extreme repression. I think it was so in denial that it just wasn't even on my radar. Like, I don't even really remember having gay influences in my life. Like there's a gap in my life where I don't even remember really like having a gay friend until I was really like 25. And I moved to Austin and started working in tech and made a bunch of gay friends at work. But before that, you know, even like the football thing, I don't remember like explicitly homophobic things in that situation. But again, it's the general environment of it is just very, bro you very macho, you know, very masculine, and it might not have been like, overtly homophobic. It also just was not also super inclusive, and like, embracing difference. Totally, if that makes sense.

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 13:11

Totally. Yeah. And so then, while you were playing football, and like being in high school, and were you seeing like other people start to date, and like what was happening as you're in that time period, where you were seeing maybe your friends or people around you like getting to

explore their romantic and sexual selves? What was going on for you in high school there?

M

Michael Constable (he/him) 13:29

Yeah, I mean, I tried to be a part of it. You know, I had like little flings I, there were a lot of basement party make outs and stuff like that, trying to, like, you know, fit in and I've never had a girlfriend, but I was like borderline close to having one. I think my like junior year, and like, We kissed after school a couple of times, they actually like scared the hell out of me. And I remember being like, is anybody watching? So like, I tried, I did, like, at a certain point. I don't remember which year it was. But some point in high school, like I tried hooking up with girls, and I was just like, Oh, this isn't happening.

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14:04

And so that's when I started to get like kind of nervous, because I was like, oh, no, like, there's something wrong with me. Like, why am I not into this? And so that's kind of when I remember like, the first time a girl wanted to sleep with me in high school. And it just not happening. And I just remember that was the first time I was like, oh, no, not only am I like behind, I also don't even think I can do it.

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14:22

And so that was the first time that that happened. And then I go to college and I'm in a fraternity, which is like the football atmosphere multiplied by like five in terms of like the toxic masculinity around it. There are a lot of good people in there too. But the Greek system at the school I went to Michigan State was also not the most queer friendly that's kind of how it started, I guess.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 14:44

Wow. And at this time, like while you were kind of in high school first having this moment first off like my heart breaks for a little high school you who was like trying so hard, and then just wasn't working and like yeah, I can imagine that just must have been really confusing and terrifying and all of it up but then like realizing Okay, I can't feel this way for girls and going into like college at the same time. Were you noticing any feelings coming up for other guys? And what was your response to that?

M

Michael Constable (he/him) 15:11


Looking back? I truly don't think so. Like I've I've talked to people who, first off, I'm so surprised that how many other gay men that I've talked to that were also in fraternities and that they like

had crushes on their friends in the fraternity. For me, I think I had it so locked down that I never had like a crush on a friend I never had even in like high school or college. I don't remember that ever being a thing. I think I just remember being like attracted to certain celebrities. Like, I don't know why, like Bruce Willis is coming.

 15:38

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But I saw I remember seeing other people that I didn't know and being attracted to them or like a stranger. I was never attracted to like my classmates. I don't think that I remember really, I think I got really, really good at compartmentalizing and like locking things down like, totally to a scary degree. I think I just got really good at it. And so I don't remember having that experience. I do remember maybe thinking like, someone was cute, but like, it was never something like longing for them, you know, for us to like, have something it was like, Oh, I can tell that this person is attractive. And I'm attracted to them. But I would like leave it at that and not explore it or think about it any further.

 Adam James Cohen (he/him) 16:06

Totally. The unconscious boundaries you set up are so strong. There are so strong. Yeah, yeah. And it makes sense that like, celebrities are like distant enough where it's like, almost safer our mind. I think it's like, kind of let those fantasy play out. But it's more real. If it's happening with someone we know in our sphere. So yeah, I mean, that was me in high school, for sure. I remember, I was close friends with a lot of guys. And there was a few who would crack through the walls where I was like, fuck I'm feeling this way. But for the most part, I like yeah, I got very skilled at just seeing them as like this brother figure or, or like making sure I didn't make a lot of eye contact or like doing different things to keep that wall in place. And that's been a big piece of like, my second adolescence is learning like, Oh, what do I need to do with that wall in order to like, connect with men? You know? Yeah. So okay, college happen, then what? Where'd your story go from there?

 Michael Constable (he/him) 17:15

College basically, just a quick overview, it was like a lot more of that scenario of like, trying to like date a girl. And then in my mind, it was like, the entire time was always like, Oh, I just haven't met the right one yet.

 17:30

She's out there. I just haven't met her yet. And so there's a lot of pressure to try to, like have a story to tell after a party because everybody's hooking up with everybody. And there's all you know, everyone's like recapping the next day. Like, I felt like I needed to, like, be able to join in on that. And I do remember, every single summer in between years in college, I would have

like, a chat with myself. And this continued actually after college too. But I think it started there. Where I would like think to myself, like this is the year like if you don't sleep with a girl this year, then what's wrong with you like, each year, it was this year, this is the year like this is the time and then after college, it would be around New Year's when I would have this talk with myself. It's like, okay, 2015 this is the year I finally is gonna happen. But I never did. And then I graduated college and moved to Arizona where I didn't know anybody. And all my friends are still mostly back in the Midwest. And most of them were in relationships that they'd been in for a while, and were in relationships that they would pretty soon get engaged and like start that whole thing. And I remember we'd have like these reunions where we meet up usually would meet up in Chicago, because most of them are in the Midwest. And I remember this is like, right, as like apps like Tinder were coming out. I think even the early early Arizona days for me, I think I even got on like match.com Before Tinder was like, actual thing or like a trusted thing. Yeah, I would always try to go to these reunions with my friends and like, have a name to give them like a girl that I have been dating. So usually it'd be, I would go on a couple of dates with a girl and then you know, it gets to the point where you're, it's kind of like implied you're supposed to have slept together by now. And of course, I wouldn't do that. And I would usually like Ghoster bail, you know, which is great. But then I didn't know what else to do. And I didn't because I didn't have like, I couldn't explain why. Right, because I didn't really even know why at the time. So I would just like end up ghosting, but then I would, you know, go to these reunions of my friends and be like, Oh yeah, I've been going on dates with this girl and like give a name and so it would just kind of like buy me time and then go back to Arizona and like try to figure it out and not see them for like another year or something like that. So it was kind of like a repeat cycle of that. And after a couple years I moved to Texas moved to Austin. That's kind of when things started to shift a little bit. I felt like up to Arizona I grew up thinking like from I was raised to like, be on that like linear path of be a good student play football, being Student Council.

 20:00

You know, go to school for business or something and get a job at a big company, get married, have kids work forever, and then retire. Like that's all I had seen in like my life in terms of examples, and nothing about it said to do anything different than that.

 20:16

But moving to Austin, I did a little career switch moving from Phoenix to Austin was like, you know, Austin just in general is like a more welcoming open city. So I think that helps start to shift my mentality around my life and like what I could do and deviating from the linear path. The first deviation was I switched careers. And that was like a big step for me. And I think that helped me start to think outside the box a little bit. And then also coupled with like, being exposed to gay people like having gay friends and hanging out with them and like going out with them, and even celebrating, I remember, I was in Austin when gay marriage was legalized. And so I remember going out in the streets with like, my gay friends afterwards. And like, that was the first time that gay was like, actually ever around me regularly, like, part of my like, daily life. And how do you remember feeling around gayness at the time, like meeting these gay friends and kind of being in the city seeing the flags? Yeah, I remember feeling. I don't really have specific memories of Austin for that, like, I don't remember how I felt about it. What I do remember from Austin was there's this one time, one of my descargue is never walking

home from like, sixth street at night. And we live by each other. So we were walking generally the direction of home. And I remember thinking, like, we were both like we had been drinking. So like, I like let some of my walls down a little bit. And I was like, if he invited me over for like a nightcap right now, I would probably kiss him. And I remember thinking that and I remember we got to the intersection where we deviated and like, went our separate ways. And we stood there and he asked me if I wanted to, like, go have a nightcap, essentially. And I just remember, like, I remember I could like feel this. Not tension, but like this. Something I could feel it like it was yeah, it was like this spread like I could literally like wait, like kinda like weighed me down. And like I said, I was just gonna go home. And so I I remember walking home and just thinking like, Oh, my God, that that could have happened. But of course, like the next day, I just kind of ignored it brushed it off and didn't do anything about it. I just remember the feeling of like, I don't know, I just feel like there was like something on me like, my heart was like, beating so hard. And I just felt like in slow motion like kind of in quicksand. Almost.

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 22:24

Oh, told. I mean, you were like, right, caught between, like desire and that wall that you'd had up forever. And like those boundaries, you had a prepper. And they were like, directly pushing against. Yeah.

M

Michael Constable (he/him) 22:35

But it didn't happen. And I just kind of, you know, I remember like really thinking much of it. The next day, I didn't feel like guilty about it, or like shameful about it. Like, I just put it in the box. Put the lid back on, then moved on.

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 22:48

Yeah. Wow. So then what happened? Like what then started to kind of open up the lid?

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Michael Constable (he/him) 22:54

Yeah. And so then I went on my first trip to Europe one summer for work. And I came back and I was like, Oh, my God, I have to like, keep traveling. Like, I don't know why. But I like need to do this. And I came back and I got a Facebook ad for this travel program called Remote here. And essentially, what remote your is, is a company that facilitates digital nomads or people who work remotely to travel the world free, you're switching cities every month, and you put in a group and you travel with the same group for a year, moving to Austin and switching careers kind of got me thinking differently from that linear path. And remote year was like the next step in that it was like, Oh my gosh, like, this is like an insane idea to do, like, how could I do this? But then, you know, how can I sell everything and just like, go travel around the world for a year. And I mean, I'm still working, I still work for the same company. So I was like making money. But it's still like, that seemed like a very wild thing to do at the time. But I just like felt compelled to do it. And I did it. And it was kind of nice, because it was kind of like when you move to new cities like a fresh start, like none of these 50 people knew me. And so you kind of can be whoever you want to be totally. And granted, I was still in the closet the entire time. I

started this when I was 27 in 2017. And you think about it like this is basically you're traveling with the same group of people for a year, everybody's looking at everybody. Everybody's going on dates with people in all these foreign countries like it objectively sounds awesome. But I was not participating in any of it like now off to the point where people started. I mean, this wasn't the first but like no one asked me to my face if I was gay. Someone did ask me once if I was asexual, because I was one of the few people on the trip that was not publicly not hooking up with people. And not disclosing of any dates or any like hookups or anything like that. And so it started out great because no one knew who I was. But like quickly after a few months, people started to like catch on like why is Michael not going on dates? Why is he you know, and I went from feeling like this fresh start to also then after a few months feeling like I'm kind of back in the same place where people are wondering and I don't have an answer for it. And I don't know really what to do. I probably thought like I don't know what's wrong with me. I'm sure that's what I probably thought at the time,

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 25:01

because at the time you weren't, yeah, identifying as a gay person, what was your internal awareness of who you are.

M

Michael Constable (he/him) 25:07

So at this point, the best way to describe it in terms of like gay porn? I would. This is like, where my mind goes, I couldn't get myself to watch gay porn unless I had been drinking or something. And then the next day, I would feel absolutely terrible, feel shame, all the things. So what I would do is I would watch buy porn with two guys and a girl. But I felt okay about that, because there was a girl in it. Totally, she was involved. Could I tell you what color hair she had afterwards? Probably not. Right. But like, I felt that was okay. And I still was not gay. So that's like, where my head was.

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25:43

And then so I truly didn't think I was gay. Like I still even after 27 years. And then I turned 28. I like still didn't think I was. And at this point, I had like many gay friends. I didn't think anything was wrong with it at this point, because like, I had so many gay friends is like, of course, there's nothing wrong with that. But I still didn't think it was for me. Like, I still held on to that belief of, Oh, it can't be me. I can't be gay that I had since I was like a kid, you know, growing up in like hearing some, you know, probably some like homophobic statement. So like, total, that script still kept up. I kept reading it I kept replaying in standard linear path. Yeah, they on that man, because that would make me not be on it anymore. And then, so remote your ends. And for some reason I like knew I could not just go back to Austin. I was like, I can't just like, after a year of traveling the world, I can't just go back to Austin. Like that sounds insane. To me. For some reason, I couldn't tell you why. But I knew that I had to quit my job, and that I had to go travel somewhere. Nothing lined up afterwards. And I couldn't tell you why. I just needed to do it. And I truly needed to do it. I don't have a better explanation. Besides, I knew I needed to do it. Yeah. And so then I came back to Austin for like a month or two, put in my two weeks, and then went back to Europe with my friend. This is June of 2018. And I'm in Europe. And after like a month of being there, my friend Ryan and I were like, on my friends terrorists just like on a

Wednesday. Truly still, like in my mind, I still had like no intentions of like coming. I was not, I didn't go on this trip to like allow myself to come out. That wasn't at least maybe subconsciously. But like, I was not aware of myself, like doing that intentionally. But this one Wednesday, it was a Wednesday afternoon or something July 24 2018. And we were drinking alcohol spritzes just kind of like having screentime to ourselves, like No, we weren't talking to each other. I finally decided to switch over from girls to guys on Tinder. And I always wanted to do that before in the past. But I could never bring myself to do it. Because by the time I like knew that I wanted to do that I was either in Austin or traveling on remote year and had gay friends around me that would have seen it. And I wasn't ready to like have that conversation or like, let them see that. Because I didn't even know really what it was because I still didn't think I was gay. But anyways, we were in Barcelona. And I remember thinking like, I don't know anybody in the city. I could switch over right now, but no one would know. And so I did. And it sounds so bizarre to me that like that simple switch of the toggle of men to women on Tinder is what open the like floodgates of my gay life. But that's literally what it was totally. And I remember the biggest surprise was just seeing all the different types of gay people. For some reason, I just like had a very limited view of what I thought gay people like, who they were, where they were, from, what they acted like, you know, just like the typical tropes that most TV shows growing up had about like gay characters. And you know, growing up, I think I thought like, oh, I don't think that that's me. So if that must mean I'm not gay. And so I just kind of like was in this operating of the space of like, not knowing what I was. But like just swiping through people. And like just seeing all of the different kinds of people there were it was just like this eye opening moment that I just did. I don't know. It's just like this really huge moment that opened my eyes to everything and like to say that that's all it took for me to like, finally come out. Like that really was I texted my friend Shelby. While I was swiping and I told her I thought I was by and I'm not sure why I felt compelled to tell her like that quickly, but I did. And then later, you know, a few weeks later, I met up with her in person, and I like confirmed that I was not by I was gay. But it was really that swiping on Tinder that let it all out.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 29:26

Wow. Yeah. Well, I mean, it sounds like yeah, you mentioned at the beginning, like looking back, you can see kind of how the pieces kind of fit into the puzzle. It sounds like unconsciously stuff was being worked out. Like you knew you had to go travel again, like you knew you needed to be in some space. Sounds like absolutely to create some freedom and space to like, let yourself be and oh, what a powerful moment with that. Poof, that one swipe that one swipe. Wow. Yeah. Okay, so then, like, did that start? Okay, I'm dating men now.

M

Michael Constable (he/him) 29:58

Yeah, so I mean, Pretty much I still had a couple more weeks left in Europe. And so I was on Tinder, I'd still like, I still think at this point, I was like, switching back to women before I would close the app, just in case someone came across. I don't know. Hi, I feel like I did that for a while. But I just also remember these first conversations, I just remember thinking like, I'm never gonna meet this person. I wasn't trying to meet people yet. For some reason, meeting people in Europe felt like really scary to me. And I don't like no, I don't know why. But I was just too intimidated to do it yet. But I do remember just taking advantage of being able to talk to somebody and saying anything that I wanted, and like I'm saying that I'm gay, like I could, I

could say anything that I wanted to these people, because they don't know me, I'm never gonna know them. And I can just finally, like, everything that I've like, kept in my little like, boss,

 30:51


I could just say it. And it was the most freeing feeling in the entire world, being able to just like, I don't even know what I said. But like, I just remember saying, like, I could say that I'm gay to this person, and it wouldn't matter. And so I mean, I probably did just to like, say it in the other person's probably like what? I'm like, Of course you are.

 31:10

You're swiping guys on Tinder. But for me, I was like, yeah, there's just like this huge relief in this like burden.

 Adam James Cohen (he/him) 31:18

Oh, my God, super cool. And so much goes into like that first either writing out I'm gay or saying it aloud. I'm gay, like, so much happens in that moment. So I get that you were just really excited by I'm feeling liberated by this opportunity to get to do that as much as possible. Whoa. Okay. So then, like, it sounds like that started the coming out phase for you. What happened next in that journey?

 Michael Constable (he/him) 31:40

Yeah. So then I still wasn't ready to come out to a lot of people. But I came out to some of my close friends and my brother and sister, because I knew that they would be like, the most supportive, literally. So this point, I never, like, hooked up with a guy never kissed a guy did nothing. I actually, like started coming up before I even hooked up with anybody. Which looking back, I'm like, interesting. You didn't even like try it first to like, double check. But yeah, just before you like double down on this, but no, I mean, I think I finally was like, all the pieces clicked. I was like, obviously, this is what it's been the whole time. So I was coming out to people. And then I like, had my first experience with a guy, you know, I went through my first like, I would say romantic rejection. I mean, in the sense that I like still didn't have like people to talk to really, like I came up some of my girlfriend's, but I didn't have anybody who was gay that I felt like I could talk to despite having gay friends, which feels kind of bizarre to say that, but for some reason, my existing gay friends, like I didn't think that they just weren't the people that I needed to talk to at the time. So I remember feeling like pretty isolated, and like to alone with my thoughts. And I needed to like, speak to somebody and get them out. And then so I still traveled probably for another year after I came out, because I didn't move to San Francisco till almost a year after that afternoon in Barcelona. So my first dating experiences were while I was traveling internationally, and I was only be places for, you know, a few days or a week at a time. And so I would have like my sister, and I call like, micro ships where I meet somebody on like a dating app, and we hang out. And we probably spend like the weekend together. It's like a really beautiful, wonderful experience. And then I just move on. And it's like, it was kind of

great in the sense that there was no like confusion at the end of it really, because for me, I went into it being like, Oh, I know, I'm just going to be here for a couple days, it's not going to be anything serious. And I think for them, it was similar. And it's been some of the most beautiful experiences I've had with a guy, I'm still close friends with some of them today. And like, I would go see them if I you know, was visiting, like, I'll go grab dinner with them or something. So it was like a really interesting way to start dating and like, exploring things with guys. It was really interesting. And then I moved to San Francisco, because at a certain point, I had been traveling for two years and like, just been on the move. And I felt the need it was about a year and a coming out maybe a little less that I was like, I want to have like gay friends, I want to have like a community I want to have, you know, be somewhere and give myself a chance to get into a relationship because with these microchips like you can't, you're never there. And so I ended up moving to San Francisco. And I think that's when my like true second adolescence really started. It was because it was when I was in this big if you can think of it like a high school, like the Castro feels like a school. And I'm like a new student. And I'm also like, the youngest kid in the school from like, gay maturity standpoint, at least it felt that way. And so then that's when, you know, I really got to start, like dating around and with the option of it, you know, do I want to see this person more often? And that's what I learned. Like, I can't say that I learned this fast enough, but like, how to be like graceful about like dating in a city. You have to learn how to like navigate that because you're gonna see these people getting a coffee in the morning. You know, you have to like learn all these things. And I wasn't used to like seeing people that I've been talking to on Tinder for three days on the muni going to work in the morning. Like oh my god like this



35:00

I was like telling my friends like, how do you guys handle this? Or like, I remember specifically, like, I first moved here in Pride Month, and the people that I moved in with became my friends. And they invited me to go to this pride party at the Phoenix hotel. And I, you know, it was on Tinder, and I was like chatting with people and like, probably a couple people. And they all were going to the Phoenix. And I was like, I can't go to the Phoenix, what if they're all gonna see me and that it's gonna be awkward. I like these types of situations I like ran into. And I didn't know how to like do that I didn't know how to do.



35:32

And like looking back now it's like silly and funny because like, everybody knows everybody. And I know that and like, there's like, no degrees of separation. Like everybody doesn't, you know, can feel that way. Like the learning curve to that was like, shocking. To me. I'm not like a confrontational person, or like, conversationally makes me nervous. So the thought of running into people and like having to, like, have that moment where they're like, both walking up to me, and then I have to be like, Oh, no, I've been talking to both of us.



35:59

Totally. That scared me so much. But like, looking back now, I can just like laugh about that. Because everybody, you know, goes through that at some point. In a community like this, it feels like that's a very common scenario. And I know that now. But at the time, I didn't, and I

just felt like, so behind so young, so naive, like just all. Yeah, I felt like a teenager. Really.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 36:21

I just so that idea of feeling like a teenager. I mean, that second adolescence, right there. That is the experience some of us feel when we're like, stepping into this world that we really have no idea how to navigate everything from one on one interactions, like how do I have a first kiss? Like, how do I have sex with the man? How do I do all of that, to like the general dating sphere and navigating these new social dynamics like you've never been in before, like at this party with these different guys like wild.

M

Michael Constable (he/him) 36:50

another thing that I found to be super interesting, and really, honestly, probably one of the most challenging parts. Now that I'm thinking about it, of coming out. And this was specifically when I moved to San Francisco was dealing with these emotions that I had never experienced before. I wasn't ever serious into like, dating what I was doing women, but like, I could go on a date and talk to somebody that wasn't a problem. It was dealing with feelings and emotions, whether it was like, an attraction to someone that's not being reciprocated, or vice versa. And I just remember, when I like, had genuine feelings for another person, I realized quickly first off that I'd never had that before, at least romantically. And then also when they, I didn't know how to deal with rejection, I guess, like in the romantic sense. And like, when somebody wasn't as interested as I was, I just remember, that's another point where I thought that, it's like, wow, I really feel like I should have gone through this, like 10 years ago, should know how to deal with this now. But I remember that being one of the most difficult things to get used to is just when you're coming out later, or even early two, but I felt like very behind when I was 28, not knowing how to deal with like romantic rejection. And just like having feelings for another person, I realized I was like how I've never had this before. And like, just navigating all of these new feelings and emotions for the first time in your life was, that was probably the most challenging part of coming out. Not even telling people like dealing with everything, like with the life things, like adjusting to living a gay life. And like all of the things that come along with that, which, for better and for worse, is, you know, romantic feelings for people. And so I remember that being an extremely challenging piece for me and my coming out.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 38:34

Totally. I mean, yeah, learning how to feel and how to have these feelings that show up in dating in romance in all of that, again, so many people start to figure that out in middle school, in high school, definitely in college, and my people, I mean, often straight people, so I'm thinking of who are getting to have easier access to basically working out those muscles and having those feelings for the first time. Like, it's one thing to be a queer youth having those feelings that within the shame that our culture puts on to us for having those feelings. That's like, so complicated, but like, being in your late 20s having these feelings for the first time that a lot of your friends had when they were 14 15 16. They've had decade plus of experience getting used to how do I make sense of what I'm feeling? How do I then communicate that? What do I communicate? Why do I feel so crazy?

M

Michael Constable (he/him) 39:26

That specifically, I remember I thought I was going crazy. I really Yes. I didn't know how to react. Yes. And then on top of that, I didn't feel like I had people to talk to about it in which made it feel even more isolating and amplified it if anything else, I was like what's happening to me? Totally, totally. My journal at the time, my first year of dating when I was 25. Was google doc called "I feel fucking nuts" like because like, that was all I felt as I was like, falling in love for the first time navigating dating for the first time. Like, I didn't know how to like how do you text that? guy like, when do you like what do I say? Like, what is he thinking about me like all of the crazy adolescent energy that shows up there? Because our romantic and sexual selves at that time were our adolescent selves. And like, over the last few years for you, it sounds like it's been about, alright, letting those parts of self grow to now meet you in adulthood. But it takes some time. And it's complicated. It's very complicated. Yeah. Does anything else like kind of come to mind? Is that kind of these key moments throughout your second adolescence of those firsts?

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 40:30

Oh, yeah, so pivotal for you. I mean, having sex was like, that was a really big one for me, too. I remember, I got really lucky and that the first guys I hooked up with, I was in Austin. Like, I just happened to be in Austin. Actually, I wasn't living back there. But I was like, passing through. And I finally had the courage to like, go meet up with people. And I found myself like chatting with guys who were older than me, because it just felt like, you know, there was like, a maturity aspect to it that I found that I needed at the time, because I was like, I felt so young. I mean, I was younger than they were, but I just felt, you know, like, I needed somebody to like, show me the ropes kind of thing. And I lucked out, I did really look out because I found first couple of times, I hooked up with men, it was with people who I was very open and honest with about me being so new to this. And I just found people that were really like, patient and supportive, and just like, genuinely seemed like really good people. And so it was a really great, like, intro into that. But sex was like the biggest thing because I think I grew up with this notion that basically like sex was bad. Like, I remember being told that sex was a swear word, or something along those lines growing up, you know, it just was never something that was talked about. It was something that I got in trouble for. If I watched on my computer, it was something that I couldn't watch on TV shows if it was there. So like, looking back, I'm like, I grew up with sex was bad. Like that was that was it. And it makes a lot of sense to me now. And then all of like the failed attempts with women growing up. So like, until 2008. I had zero positive reinforcement around sex. Like I it was something that I was very nervous about. And yeah, like, I remember when the few times I tried to make it work with a girl like I would like be shaking. I remember I would, you know, my heart would be racing. And I was really nervous that that would happen with guys. And if it did, I would be like, now what like if it's not guy like, what, what else? And the first couple times it happened and I was like really, really nervous. It maybe being gay wasn't the answer. But I realized in with the help of like, the specific guys that I'm thinking of them were kind of like my intro, it got better, and it went away and like now it's fine. But those were like some really stressful carnally. Yeah, I also got like, really, like around the gay community in general, just how open everybody is about sexuality and how, you know, everyone's like, super open about it. And that again, I find myself even today still, like, I'm still not super comfortable always talking about it. And like engaging in some of these conversations. And there's a lot of like pressure, I feel like, especially if you look on like Twitter, like gay Twitter is like the craziest place on earth. And I'm just like, wow, I am literally 12 years

old. Every time I read it, every time I go on Twitter, I'm like, I am the most sheltered little boy in the entire world. But that's been something that I, you know, grown in a lot. But also like, I still know I got I got some stuff to work with and unpack. Sure, sure, we all do. We all have stuff to unpack. But I mean, like, second adolescence is equal parts, gaining these experiences we never got to have and healing the wounds whatever we carry from our first adolescence. You know, it sounds like one of your wounds, for lack of a better word here is of around sexuality and how this was something that was so associated with shame and wrongness and what have you. And sounds like kind of part of your second adolescence has been learning how to invite that into your way of being and without the shame that comes with it. Yeah. Anything else come to mind for you in terms of like, what does healing meant for you in this journey in terms of thinking about younger Michael

M

Michael Constable (he/him) 43:58

Yeah, so now, you know, I, when you come out a little bit later, it's really easy to find yourself going down the rabbit hole of being envious of people who came out in their teens and in college, and had so much time to like date already. And so like, it's easy to do that. I've talked to people who are younger than me, and they've already been out for seven years. And I'm just like, so jealous at times. But I've really found a lot of like comfort in meeting other people who have come out later. And those are some of my absolute favorite conversations to have. Because, you know, obviously it coming out stories, there's relatability in almost all of them. But the I find the ones that I have with people who also came out later to just be like really therapeutic to me. Like in the sense of like not feeling alone in that sense. Totally. But also, you know, I think what's been healing is just the way that I've fully like, embrace it and love it for something that was so terrifying and something that I hid so long and so intensely. I mean, I've been out now for almost

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45:00

like three and a half or four years, but even before this, like before I had a podcast, I really feel like I leaned into it and embraced it really quickly. It was like, once I made the switch in my mind that this is who I am like, of course, that's what it's been this whole time. Yeah, I was like, I've already wasted 28 years hiding this, I'm over that, like, let's freakin go. Like, I came out to myself in July. And then I was like, even with like, my parents, I know, some people like wait years to tell their parents, I couldn't do that. I was like, I need to just tell them so I can move on with my life, like I and I felt like I couldn't do that till I told them. So I told them within like six months of me coming out to myself. And then after that, you know, I moved to San Francisco shortly after. And I was just like, I wanted to, like drink from the firehose of like, gay life in San Francisco seemed like the perfect place to do that. And so that's kind of what I did, it really blows my mind for something that I was so ashamed of, and hid for so long that now it's like, you know, it's not everything about me, but I love it, I wouldn't change it, like, I wouldn't like press a button and be straight, all of a sudden, I would not do that. I like don't want that at all, I really don't want that. So that has been really healing for me, just the fact that I have embraced it so much. And that I'm like, so proud of it. And also, like, I love sharing my story, I love sharing other people's stories, because of like helping other people because I know that when I was 2425, you know, refigure, like the day after that almost kiss in Austin with my, my friend, if I had heard more stories, and like known that it, you know, isn't all just this one carbon copy of what I thought it was, I think it would have helped me come out earlier. So that's also

been really, really nice. And you know, I've had some good feedback from the podcast, I've had some people like, reach out and say that, you know, someone's story really resonated with them. And, you know, it's like helping them come out to people like it's really nice. And I think that's kind of also like helping with it all, too. It's like a really great, really great feeling.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 46:49

Oh, big time. I mean, there's so much personal healing that happens in being able to offer something for other people that you wish you could have had and just join in this, like, collective healing that happens. I think that word gets thrown around a lot healing. It's one of my favorite words, though, because, particularly as it pertains to queerness, because like, so many of us have so much to heal from growing up in such an anti queer world that even still, obviously, like with everything that's happening in the news and legislation. Now, it's still not an easy place to be queer to be trans, all of it. 's all about healing. It's all about finding community. And that's why it's so cool what you're doing with your podcast. And I just feel really grateful to what you're offering. And I personally resonated with it as well. It's definitely kind of the motivation for me doing this for my end of things. And even just having this conversation with you getting to learn your story. I feel like parts of you get healed to right, like every single conversation we have with people, even if it's not a super similar timeline, or aspects of the story that absolutely align with ours. There's bits and energy that's overlaps. And it's like, oh, yes, so yummy.

M

Michael Constable (he/him) 47:18

Yeah, it gives perspective. And I love when stories are so different, but you find those little nuggets of relatability. And you're like, it's not like you would need to relate to everything in the story. And like, that's not really the point is, you know, part of it is also to just like, be able to, like, relate and connect with people. But I really love when someone's story and backgrounds like so different. But you know, it's like, you guys can bond over the fact that you went through similar stuff. And when I like moved to San Francisco, and I think I've finally realized this, I found myself and I guess this isn't surprising that I have this podcast, but because on every first date I've ever been on, there's a point where you're talking about coming out stories and totally bring it up all the time. Yep. And it's just one of the most fascinating things when I first started coming out was just hearing everyone's story. It was so nice, totally. And like part of me feels bad that I don't remember some of their first names. But those first dates absolutely was a huge healing part of the beginning of my second adolescence, just like finally getting to meet other gay and queer people that I had no exposure to growing up and Yeah, ah, yeah, I so, so resonate with that. Yeah, I also I think in terms of like, healing, I like being able to see my growth since I've come out too. And I just think back to conversations I had and words that I use to try to explain it. And like now I cringe at some of the things I said, But you know, I have to be kind to myself a little bit because I didn't I honestly didn't really know too much better, but, you know, using words like normal and like stuff like that to describe like, I'm just a guy who happens to be attracted to God. Like, right? Like all those things that like if I heard myself say that I would like slap myself in the face. Right? Right. But that's what he knew, then that's when he knew then but in a twisted way, I'm happy that happened because now I can look back and recognize that I would never do that and like you can like see the growth that you made. And so that's really nice, too. And I remember like most

of my gay friends from remote year he told me when I first came out to him, he recommended that I do some research and read up and like learn about like gay history and like the first time I've heard someone say the word Stonewall before

 50:00


In other time, I was like, no, like, I'm not interested in that, like, I'm not worried about that. Like, I just I'm probably I probably thought I'm just a guy who happens to me.

 50:11


But now that is I totally see what he was saying in the value in it. And I like don't even consume media really doesn't have a either, like a gay storyline, a gay character, or you know, even just like watching gay documentaries, like all of that stuff. I'm trying to get into reading. So like, I have a bunch of gay books that I need to read. I haven't read them yet. I will, like maybe you went to Mexico City.

 50:37


That's what I'm telling myself. But just like reading up on like, gay history has also been like a really fun and informative and humbling experience as well.

 Adam James Cohen (he/him) 50:47

Cool. Cool. And now we're, we got to get to wrap it up soon. And I can't talk with you all day. I want to so awesome. Getting out of the conversation. Yes. Before you wind down, like what was that like for you to kind of go through your journey in that way.

 Michael Constable (he/him) 51:02

You know, I try not to wish that it happened sooner or differently. But that's kind of the main thing when I like, look back on how far I've come. I try not to dwell on that and like to dwell on like missed opportunities, and, you know, being more generally comfortable with certain things. Now, I'm just happy that it happened. Because I truly, there was a point like right before, I think I did remote here when I was 27, where I truly resigned to the fact that I was just going to be like alone and have a couple dogs and like, travel maybe. And I was okay with it. And so I am just so happy that it happened. And now my whole thought process is like if I can help other people not wait till they're 28 to come out, then that's kind of what I want to do. So, you know, I feel really energized and motivated by what I'm working on with the podcasts and stuff. And I try not to like worry too much about what happened like it happened. It's, you know, it's in the past. And I came out which I never thought I would so try to focus. Try to focus on that.

 Adam James Cohen (he/him) 52:01

Yeah, and yeah, if people wanted to connect further and follow what you're doing and connect with the podcast, where's the best place to direct them?

M

Michael Constable (he/him) 52:14

Yeah, absolutely. So the best way to get a hold of me or reach out to me is through Instagram, you can reach me and shoot me a message at my personal Instagram which is @Michaelwingsit or you can follow along with the pod and the podcast is on Apple and Spotify and everywhere else. It's called Reaching Out with Michael Constable. And you can find it on Instagram at @reachingoutpod.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 52:32

Awesome. Awesome. Go check it out. It's great show. I love it. Well, Michael I so appreciate you this has been such a treat. And shout out to Michelle for connecting us our mutual friend I'm just so pumped that we got this time to connect I'm really eager to continue following your work and look forward to seeing where things go next.

M

Michael Constable (he/him) 52:43

Yeah, and thank you so much for having me Adam and next time you want to come on my show and then we can continue the combo.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 52:58

I'll be there. Oh yes, sir. Oh, it's cool. Let's do it. Hey, thanks for joining us for today's conversation. Feel free to head on over to secondadolescencepod.com for show notes and more. And you can connect further by following the show on Instagram at @secondadolescencepod. If you're interested in being a future guest on the show and you want to come on and share about your own second adolescence visit secondadolescencepod.com/beaguest and you can submit your interest there. Alright, that's it for me for now. Whether it's morning, afternoon, night, wherever we're finding you and your day go on out there and keep doing things that would make younger you absolutely thrilled. That is what it's all about. Alright, take good care.