

Ep 16: Second Adolescence w/ Brian Watson (he/him)

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SPEAKERS

Adam James Cohen (he/him), Brian Watson (he/him)

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 00:09

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 writer Brian Watson. I was excited to interview Brian for many reasons, but one of which was because we've had a good amount of guests so far on the show who are born in a similar time and Brian brought to this conversation, his experience growing up as a gay man born in the 1960s. You know, he shares a lot about what it was like for him in adolescence navigating the underground gay hookup scene in the late 70s, during the beginning of his sexual awakening, and then what it was like for him to come out and navigate life as a gay man amongst the AIDS crisis of the 80s. He has a fascinating personal journey that eventually took him to Japan, where much of his second adolescence played out, and he goes on to share about how his second adolescence was really about his reunification between his romantic and sexual selves. This is a theme that we see often for a lot of us queer people. And his story is one that absolutely exemplifies that. And I'm excited to invite you into it. And as with each episode of the second adolescence podcast, I want to invite you as listener to listen with open curiosity, knowing that each of her stories are different and unique. You might hear some guests share things that really differ from your experience, and you might hear other guest share things that really speak to what you are going through or have gone through, 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 where you can follow the show on Instagram at [@secondadolescencepod](https://www.instagram.com/secondadolescencepod). All right. Welcome to the conversation. Thanks for being here. Brian, welcome to second adolescence.

B Brian Watson (he/him) 02:04

Thank you, I am so happy to be here.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 02:06

Awesome. I'm so happy to have you here and really curious and excited to see where this conversation goes. And I guess before going anywhere, I like to first invite the person in your shoes just to give a mini little introduction just to give the listeners some context to who the person is behind the voice.

B

Brian Watson (he/him) 02:23

So I grew up in the suburbs of New York City, just north of the city in a place called Nyack. 1980 I was 14, my father passed away, he was 38, I was already aware that I was attracted to guys. So that kind of shut me down emotionally, which is not the best thing for building up your authenticity in any way. But then, basically three years later, HIV AIDS arrived. And at that point, I'm 17. I'm already very sexually active. But the next year, I started a small college in Western Massachusetts called Williams. And I basically returned to the closet. Not that I was out, but like the sexual closet, I should say. And involuntary celibate is definitely a bad thing to be validated because most of the in sales have like awful opinions. But at that point, I was truly involuntary about it. I had no choice, very small school, very small town. And I was very nervous. I did start to come out though as a gay person, probably between my junior and senior year I was working in the summertime there. And I made a very strange decision. At the end of my senior year, I decided to move to Japan thinking it was a gonna save me from HIV AIDS and be let me be gay in a completely different way. And I arrived in Japan and basically, within the first week, I'm being told, you need to be back in the closet, you know, you're working in a high school, they're not going to like this, you're going to bring bad reputation to the program. Let's just dial it all back. The funny thing was, is that after three years as a teacher, I then went on to work for the organization that told me to go back in the closet. Oh, wow. Yeah, you know, it was strange. And thankfully, I could be out to my non Japanese colleagues there. And during my three years there, I met the man who is now my husband not related to the program in any way not related to where I worked. And then for the rest of my time in Japan, which was another five years I did a year of freelance. I did three years of working for a company that does software localizations I was headhunted to a company in Kirkland, which is just outside of Seattle game 98. My husband spent about 10 months thinking about it, and eventually did move and join me here on a student visa at the end of 98. He understandably did not really love being on a student visa at that point in his life, and we made the decision in 2006 to move to British Columbia in Canada, thinking that we would Get a permanent residency. Hey, you know it should be it should be really easy. Well, it wasn't. And a 2013 release, we were ready to start applying the premier of Canada at the time, Stephen Harper decided to change all the requirements. And really the only people that were going to get these visas were people who were working in the oil sands industry. Maybe a month after that terrible news, the United States Supreme Court ruled in USP Windsor, that the defensive Marriage Act was invalid. And all of a sudden, I could sponsor him for a green card in the US the morning, I heard that decision. I went into the bedroom, I said, Honey, we're gonna get married. And within a week, we were married here, July 7 2013. And then in 2015, in the middle of the worst windstorm, I remember, we moved back down here. That was seven years ago. It's been wonderful. I started working for the company that I had been freelancing for, for many, many years, they asked me to take over the brand new employee resource group for queer people. And it actually turned out to be an awesome thing. Because I asked everybody in the group, what do you want to do? And they said, We want to go to the Pride Parade in Seattle. And I said, I'll ask, you know, thinking, they'll never do it, they'll never do it. My company is very conservative. They'll never do. And we did it. And then in 2020, I started writing my book, partly because I was working

from home. Sure. But also, it had been 40 years since my father died, all this stuff that was coming up yet again. And my therapist said, you know, why don't we just start writing some of this down? Yeah. So I did. And I know that's far from being a short bio.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 06:43

And I felt like that was so I was just like, feel like I was like witnessing kind of like a montage of your life. It was so fun to get to experience kind of the overview. And I'm excited to dive more into or the nuances if you're up for that. Okay. Awesome. Awesome. Yeah. You mentioned you were born in the 60s, and kind of coming of age and adolescence in the 80s. And so curious, like, what was like growing up childhood, like, and then moving into your adolescence, as you gained more awareness of your identity? What was that process for you?

B

Brian Watson (he/him) 07:18

It was very interesting to be chronological about it. I do remember pre puberty, we were living in this apartment on the Hudson River. And every floor of the apartment building had its own trash area with a shoot down to the incinerator. And people would leave abundance of magazines or bottles or things in the trash area. And I and my brother and a bunch of other boys in the building, we would roam the trash areas to see if there was anything worth collecting. Right? And one of the boys a kid named Billy, he found this stash of magazines, and he called all of us into his bedroom for the big reveal. And he flicked the cover off his bed to show us these magazines. And it was stuff I never heard of. I was hoping it was more National Geographics, because that was what I was collecting. But it was Playboy and Hustler. And I'm like, why are these ladies in bathing suits? I don't understand this. But the other boys were like, super excited. And I A didn't understand why I was the eldest of all of them. At the time, I was probably 10. And it was like, what or I'm not sure what the what the excitement is. And they started pulling through the magazines. And I'm like, I don't understand what the dynamic is here. And I left I just walked out of the room. A Billy was like, Don't tell anybody. What would I tell them when we moved up the hill, after my father had needed to retire. So we had to move from the apartment to this old house that our friends renovated. I mean, it was falling apart. And that was why we could afford to get it. It ended up that Kevin and I had this bedroom up on the third floor that was once the maid's room, little tiny room and I had a drawing pad. And I've always had like ideas and things pop into my head. And with the drawing pad, I started having these ideas about gangs in New York City and the gangs weren't violent in the typical way. We think of gangs being violent, they weren't mugging their their victims, they weren't punching their victims. What they were doing was they were stripping their victims naked. And this fascinated me and I would go through and that and all these details and it started off with the gangs were ethnically organized and and there was like an Italian gang and an Irish gang. And what they would do once their victims were thinking was that they would paint them different colors, right so that you know, the colors of the flag. But then, as that continued to progress, and I you know, also at the same time realized that my artistic abilities were terrible. But I just kept going And the women victims fell out of the picture. And I was thinking much more about what these gangs were doing to men. And at some point, I would be alone in my bedroom doing all this drawing thinking about all these things. At some point, I felt really funny and strange and shy. And I sort of took the pad off of my lap, and I rolled over because my feet, my legs had fallen asleep. And I realized that maybe the reason I was feeling these things was the part of me was very hard, all of a sudden, and I didn't know what that meant. But I did think it

was worth exploration. And so I certainly did, after that realization. And after I subsequently started doing my own laundry. I was with my mother in a stationery store at the corner of Broadway in Maine and Nyack. And they had this rack of magazines, and the very top row, there were like cardboard placards that cover the cover of the magazine, so you could just see the title. And I saw the same titles that Billy had found Playboy house or something, I don't care. But there was one called playgro. I thought, what is that, and when my mother was not looking when the shopkeeper wasn't looking, I sort of lifted it up. And it was the cover that had Reynolds on it, right? So massive chest of hair. And I was very surprised, let it fall back. And I did a very strange thing. And I maybe a week later, I asked my mother if I could buy the magazine. And she said, why would you want to buy that? Right? And to hear my parents tell it I was a very good liar for all of my childhood, but I never thought of myself that way. Right? So she asked me this question, I'm panicking. How do I answer this? And I said, to compare, and she said, I don't think that those men are going to be a very good comparison. I don't think they're going to be average in any way. And that was very wise of her. But it was also very frustrating. I didn't, I didn't get to get my magazine. Around the same time as the magazine thing happened. My father needed to have the talk about the birds and the bees,

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 12:19

because you're how old at this time again?

B

Brian Watson (he/him) 12:21

12. So we have only one bathroom in this house. And he leads me into the bathroom, he sits down on the toilet seat down. And he sits me on the tub in front of him. And he starts talking about when a man loves a woman, He will put His penis in her vagina. And I'm like, what, I didn't say anything to my father as he's going through this. But I you know, I flush Scarlett, I had no idea what a vagina was to begin with. Thankfully, he realized that I was embarrassed about it. He said, I'm sure they're going to talk about this in school. At some point, I won't go into too many details. But what I do want to tell you is this, you're going to start going to parties. And in my experience, young girls will mature faster than young boys. And you know, they may want you to play spin the bottle, they may want you to practice kissing. I want you to wait. I want you to be a good boy in that respect. But also wait until you know that it's right. And I think that that was one of the few pieces of advice that my father gave me that I honored to this day. I have not given into the girls daddy. Anyway, after he passed, and I knew at that point that I was very much attracted to men held me 14 It was very strange because his passing left me with this big question in my life would he had approved? Right? I didn't react well to his passing. I actually shut down emotionally. And my mother noticed it. I mean, I wasn't talking a whole lot. I certainly didn't want to talk about Daddy, I certainly didn't want to talk about that. Both of my parents were very young. Nobody really knew how to talk about grief with children. Understandable. My mother found this public welfare psychologist in Nyack that she basically dragged me to literally as she tried her tactic was to say things to the therapist that were wrong in the hopes that I would be you know, being a little miss no at all that I was at age 14, that I would correct her and I was just like, nope, nope, I'm not having this. So a different tact that she tried was to let me take piano lessons. We had this very old upright piano and it was terribly out of tune. And she offered to have it fixed up and tuned and brought up to the room that my father had died and which, okay, and then offered to send me to piano lessons down the street and I took two It really, really well. At that time I had pocket money. I

was also not a fan of walking right back home after lessons. And so I would explore Nyack, I would walk around. And there was a brand new stationery store that had just opened up. And I walked in and they had many more magazines, first of all, and none of them are covered. And they had a whole section of what I now we call porn. So it was the hustler it was the playbook, but it was also titled, like huncho, and mandate and blue boy. And I had a \$10 bill in my pocket. And I got as many magazines which probably about three and brought them home. And I was like, This is what I wanted all along. And I made the mistake of hiding them under my mattress. And because I was doing my own laundry, or at least putting everything into the washing machine and turning the washing machine on, what I wasn't doing was taking it out of the dryer, folding it and bringing it back up all the way up to the third floor, from the basement. My mother did that. And my mother made my bed every time. And I'm sure she discovered these magazines. Did she say anything? No, I was the weirdest. I kept expecting her to yell at me. I kept expecting her to ask me about them. And I mean, they they were you know, they were not play girl. They were not meant for a female audience. They were very, very hardcore in terms of content. I don't think she read them. I don't think she looked at the pictures. I just think that they went right into the trash. So I continued to buy more magazines. Over the years, I amassed a pretty decent collection before I had to go to college. So anyway, I said that I was very sexually active. And what did happen. I think there was an article in mandate about where to cruise in New York. And I'd memorized the entire article. And I had lessons at Columbia University. While I was still in high school, there was an advanced science program, and I think calculus and other stuff. And I would just go down and do these classes. afterwards. If my classmates weren't interested in staying in the city, I would go down to that area where all this cruising was happening. I found quarter booths, which you know, these things where you would walk into a very small space and drop a quarter in that slot, and maybe three minutes of a porn movie would play. I came out of my three minutes and stepped into the hallway and a young kid, probably around my age 16 or so. came up to me and he said for \$5 I'll suck your cock. And I said to him, well, for \$5 I want to suck your cock, because I did. And that was a pivotal moment. That same year, Rocky Horror came out in the movie here. And I was like, finally seeing me on the screen, FSA died, my mother rented cashflow fall to the second movie. And it was hysterical to me because I was studying French and I could follow along she had to read the subtitles, and asked me why I was laughing several times in the movie. But at the end of the movie, she said Do you really think there are people like that out there? And I knew exactly what she meant by that. Are you gay to are you like these people in the movie? And I was I was not going to answer that question. I kept it very academic. Oh, I'm sure there are people out there like that. somewhere. Somewhere.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 18:31

So I'm curious, like, because it sounds like yeah, when your mom was asking you that you knew, Okay, I'm going to share this part of my identity with her. You're having these experiences, like in the porn movie theater. And then with that six other 16 year old boy like you're getting to explore sexuality, but kind of in the secret of way, like what do you remember going on for you at the time, as you were kind of thinking about your identity, and traveling those spaces of kind of exhilaration in those moments to then having to keep something secret.

B

Brian Watson (he/him) 19:02

You know, it's very strange, because for the longest time, I thought it was separate that it was all sexual, until I was a junior in high school when I was 17. And I had a crush on somebody for

the first time. And he was a senior and stunningly handsome. And he was the captain of the baseball team. I know this sounds like a trope. But when he graduated the night after graduation, there was this big party. And I tried to figure out how can I get him alone and be seduced him? Really, and he was famous for being the guy in high school that had all the pot all the time, and I was the good kid. But I went up to him at the party and I said, I've never tried marijuana before which is true. Would it be okay to smoke a joint with you? So we broke off from the party found this really secluded place and you know, it was very true to smoking pot. In the 1980s, I didn't know whether I was hired or not. And I started talking about love with this person. And unfortunately, he responded positively to this discussion, because it's unfortunate because it made me think that the conversation was going in a different direction. But he had been thinking about how hard it was for men to talk about love with other men, and how it was something that he really very much want to just talk about. And as we continue to smoke, and he got high, I finally press my luck. And I asked him if I could practice with him, even though I was very practiced at that point. And I remember, I remember the smell of him, I remember the touch of him that he listened. But the next day when I went over to his house, in the hopes of replaying this, of building on that experience, he didn't want to go there, and was talking about his girlfriend, and I was like, fuck. And then after that, I went to college, and I thought, I need to be straight. I need to be straight. I can't do this anymore. At first of all, there's nowhere to have sex here. And I didn't see a way to meld romance. We have sex in any way. I asked my good friend, Amory freshman year, if she would go out with me, thankfully, she said, No. And thankfully, we're also still friends that I made the mistake of going to a therapist at college my freshman year. And I swear to God, he sat me down. He said, I just think you're happy and don't want to admit it. I'm like, okay. Did you like get all those fancy degrees so that you could tell me that

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 21:41

what sent you into therapy in the first place?

B

Brian Watson (he/him) 21:44

I was depressed. I was very depressed in freshman year, and I didn't see anybody else who was gay. And if I did, I panicked, because they were out and flamboyant in a way that frightened me. Because people automatically quickly assumed that they were gay. And distance them from you know, there was a gay and lesbian union when I was a freshman. And everybody made fun of them. Oh, freshmen don't be caught near the JLU table, because then we're gonna know. It was tough. When I finally came out. I had the really strangest thing in my senior year, I always start coming out to my friends. And they were like, oh, yeah, we knew. Oh, okay. Yeah, for the most part, everybody said they knew. My parents, I think either. My mother would pay in particular, it was very funny. I bought this book about how to come out at a bookstore in New York City, I think it was called different lights. And I read through the script, and I practiced it. And then I drove home from college, and I sat her down. My stepfather was next to her. He was a former social worker, he was totally ready for this conversation. But my mother was like, it was almost as if she had read the same book, because her questions were line for line right out of the script, right? What about grandchildren, I just want you to be happy. I'm so scared about a, it was just a very strange thing. And then she ended the conversation by saying, I don't want you to tell anybody else in the family. I don't know how your grandparents would react. I don't know how my brothers and sisters would react. And I also don't know how your siblings would

react. So please, let's just keep this between us. When I got back to college, I realized that she and I had spoken on the phone, probably every week. That stopped. She didn't call. And I also didn't call her either. I was like, Okay, this is where we're going. That's fine. By the time I graduated, she was ready to sort of be in the same room, you know, had pictures taken together, but we weren't having significant conversations. The fact that I decided to move to Japan definitely had her very worried. I think the thing she said to me at the airport as I was getting ready to get on the plane was I'm terrified that you're going to die all alone in a foreign country.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 24:07

And was that because of her fears around aids? Or? And yeah, wait, what was going on for you in terms of your own relationship to what was happening with the AIDS pandemic.

B

Brian Watson (he/him) 24:16

I told everybody that I was going to Japan for just one year, because I didn't want to go to graduate school. At the time. I had majored in biology, I had written a thesis on animal behavior. I had a lab full of mice that I needed to euthanize at the end of my senior year, and did not want to go back and spend the rest of my adult life peering into my sexual organs to tell if they were, you know, ready to get pregnant or not. So I lied, I told everybody, I'm just taking a year off. I'll go to graduate school in a year, but I really, really really didn't want to be gay in the United States. First of all, I had no idea of whether anybody would find me attractive I was I had always been heavy. I knew that I needed to read Tonight, the sex part and the romance part somewhere, but I couldn't figure out how that was going to work. Who on earth would find me attractive enough to go beyond a quickie? And so I moved to Japan. And I'm not even clear if I thought that I was going to Japan because I thought there would be a solution to that sex and romance problem. I just thought I can't be in the United States. And it was challenging the first four months in Japan. I didn't know anybody else who was gay at all. I had spent three months in a homestay, terrible, I had to lie about having a girlfriend and back in the United States, for Maria got pressed into service as my fictional girlfriend and that was because you had to live with one of the people I worked with one of my teachers I worked with he as lunch one day, he said that he had a niece who was studying English and very much wanted to meet me and she was a lovely girl. And I didn't say anything to him right away. I thought that would be rude. But my homestay mother asked about the lunch afterwards, and I slipped I told her what had happened. And as she very correctly, made the connection that I was uncomfortable about this. I had told her when I moved in with that homestay family, that I Amory with my girlfriend, because she was also very much a Yenta type and wanted to set me up. So when this teacher asked me for something very similar, she sort of stepped in on the behalf of Emory and went to the PTA. Oh, God, what have I done? That was another reason why I said to my supervisor, I need my own apartment. I can't do homestays anymore. I eventually learned how to do the personal ads in gay magazines in Japan, which were completely different from gay magazines in the United States. First of all, there were magazines specifically for heavy people. And for older people, and of course, the ones for the young, slim boys. Sure. But there was a much wider range of porn available. And I was like, I have found my people, these people like fat people, Oh, my God. So I did some personal ads, I met a few people and nothing seemed to trigger I became a very much a serial monogamist. You know, it's like, one nice dance, it took a long time for me to realize that what I was encountering was the sort of curiosity factor. People

did want to sleep with me, but once was going out, you know, check bike guy off the list. And I didn't get that my friends, Cameron, and then my new friend, Todd, were so frustrated, because I would, I would, I would call them and say I have met the one. I have fallen in love. And it was just a one night thing, right? I mean, I assumed every single time that that person was going to call back, then I was going to see them again. But time after time, after time, it was nothing. Finally, in 1993, my fifth year in Japan, they said, Stop, you need to stop, you need to first of all not have sex on the first date with anybody. And I gave up. And at that point, I was a member of the gay bulletin board service, the dial up modem, all of that business in Tokyo. And there was a big event happening in the city in November, late November. And I wanted to see if anybody would go with me, you know, put all this information out there. And a bunch of people said, yeah, yeah, we'll go we'll go. And only one person showed up. And I had been chatting with this person on the BBS actually, he had given me his phone number as well. But he never wanted to date me. And I couldn't figure it out. And but he was the one person who showed up. So we got to this festival, we go to this event, we're walking around, and it's super crowded. But he didn't want to lose me. And at some point, as we're walking around, and going from attraction to attraction, he grabs the hem of my coat from the from the back, and follows me around, holding on. And I am trying not to cry. I am trying not to fangirl and trying not to lose it. I guess this is the most romantic thing that has ever happened to me. And we go to the festival, we go do all the things and we come back and he's still holding on to my coat. And I don't want the day to end. We've done all the things that we were supposed to do for the festival and I don't want this accident of a date to end. And I say hey, do you want to have dinner together? So we walk up to this temple a place and he's had dinner, he's had all the food that we've eaten so far, doesn't say anything at all. Then we come back down and it's time to say goodbye. And I really, really, really wanted to invite him back to my place and he didn't. And I watched him get on the subway and go home and then I turned around and walked over to the train and took my train home. And then I called Todd and Cameron the next day and said I did it. I did it. I finally had a birthday. That wasn't sex. Can I have sex on the second day?

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 29:57

What'd they say?

B

Brian Watson (he/him) 29:59

They said If you have to, but don't don't come crying to us if it works if it doesn't work out! So at the time, I was 27 here, it was 23. He was still in college. And he agreed to come over to my place. But it was on a Friday night after classes finished. He was going to get there very late now I lived outside of Tokyo, about an hour by train outside of the city. He went to school on the other side of the city. And so by the time he got to my place, it was late. I was horned up. I was ready. At that point, waiting, waiting. Ready. Ready to go. And we laugh about it right now. But it was the clumsiest seduction I have ever done. I basically when he came in, I said the showers over there. I'll be in the bedroom Yeah, yeah, yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. Totally, totally cringe. I hate to remember it at this point he loves.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 31:01

It's so I mean, that's like our younger selves, like who are navigating trying to figure out how to be in those romantic and sexual situations. Oftentimes, we look back and it's totally...

 B

Brian Watson (he/him) 31:10

Yeah. But we spent a whole next day together. Those are the first pictures of the two of us together are from that second day. And then the third date, I rented a car and we drove it up to this other festival all the way up in the mountains, absolutely amazing place. And we had to park the car in the field. And I left the lights on by mistake. And so we get back to the car, and the battery's dead. And Hiro thankfully knows enough to say, well, let's just sit in the car with everything off for an hour or so. And hopefully the battery will come back up. So we sat there for an hour, we talked about our dating history and who we had gone out with and we talked about why he didn't want to go out with me before that which turned out to be a massive misunderstanding. Somebody else had told everybody on the BBS that that person and I were dating, and we had spent maybe 15 minutes of French kissing, and that was it. So he thought I was a slot. Here I thought I was like I don't I don't want I don't want that energy. But anyway, after we had all this conversation about, you know, our dating histories, and whether we were free to date each other at this point, of course, we've already we're on day three, and maybe a little bit too late to be having that conversation. But it worked out. I eventually moved into the city, he started basically living with me without living with me. So his parents also lived in Tokyo, but the advocate in my apartment and so most nights, he would rather just leave work and come to my place rather than going to his parents place, which is exactly what I wanted. But I have to say that my ideas about what a relationship were all of that needed to change because in the year before I met him, somebody was living with me in my apartment, I thought it was the perfect relationship. He said he loved me. And you know, our first couple of days were romantic and sexy and fun. And he asked to move in very quickly, I thought, oh, that's exactly what I need. This is how relationships work. We moved in together and but like very quickly said about the third month in, he didn't want to sleep with me anymore. It was perfectly happy to live with me perfectly happy to tell me time and time again that he loved me. But he just said I just don't feel this sexual attraction anymore. And I went along with it because I thought that this was normal. I had no idea what relationship dynamics were supposed to be. I let him walk all over me. He didn't work. While he was away visiting his parents. I went to another international friends meeting. And there was this tall, handsome Japanese guy who had just come back to Tokyo. He was living in Australia, it was so amazing to hear somebody speaking English with an Australian accent who looked like this guy blew my mind for a little bit. But we sat down in a playground after the meeting, and talked for like three hours until the sun went down and the lights came on along the way. And part of the conversation I realized that this person who was living with me Nori, his name was he was using me, this person who was talking me through it, he let me express all of these things. And I had been so in a practice of ignoring my feelings after my father died, that I wasn't ready to think about or talk about these things until that very moment. And I think that was probably the first step towards realizing that I could have a healthier relationship that when I was currently right, but afterwards, I had a confrontation with Maureen I pulled him up and I said, you need to go. I need you to move. This is not working.



34:42

You are using me and I don't want that. And the first thing he said was you want it to be used, which was like, no, no, I didn't. I'm glad you told yourself that but no. I had to go on a business trip. I was going to spend three weeks in Europe, and I left a note in the UK artment I said

please, I will be back on this date. I want you to be gone by then. I came back from the trip, opened the door, there was a note in the hall and said, I have found a place to move to. I need a few more days to get the rest of my things out but I won't see you you won't see me. I'll do it all while you're at work, and it was done. It took me a year to recover from that. I tried dating other people along with the one nightstands and there were a lot of those. So my relationship all of those skills that got retooled completely. At first I thought I needed here to move in with me. No, I didn't need that. At first I thought we need to be domestic is some way you know this sort of gay version of Ward and June Cleaver. Nope, didn't need that. And when I got headhunted away from Japan, up until that point, I never thought I was leaving. I loved Tokyo. I loved being material. I even love my crazy commute down to Yokohama for that localization job. That was the first time I was able to take a job in Japan and not the day. And then when I was headhunted for a job in Kirkland, I had the interview in Tokyo with the Vice President. And I came out to him during the interview, because I was not doing the classes anymore. And he actually in the context of the interview, he said, I want to thank you for trusting me. I want to thank you for being brave and coming out to me. And I think that was one of the reasons why they also think, wow, so And thankfully that person is still friends of mine died. Vice President, even those that shot went away. Yeah, it was a crazy journey. We had to figure out a relationship dynamic all over again. Once we were here in Washington State. Culture Shock hit me first, while he was not with me, I had to get over myself first. And then he moved here and got him culture shock all over again. He realized that I was much more of a slob.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 36:57

No. But in so much of what I'm hearing you share I'm hearing you know, when we think back to this idea of second adolescence, I hear so much of that occurred for you. Well, in Japan, yes. And that really became a big context within which a lot of your own growth and healing was occurring. And then also yet before and after that chapter, there was more of that. I'm curious, when you think to this concept of second adolescence and your story, how do you make sense?

B

Brian Watson (he/him) 37:21

From my perspective, it was a reunification. Because I look around at the people who are I went to high school with and it was admittedly a small group of people. But they were dating or talking about dating or focused on that it was never crude, but it was something I was walled off from. And, in part volitionally, so because I was so afraid of exposing myself to ridicule of exposing myself to criticism, I was already the fat kid, I was already the feminine kid. I mean, people definitely remarked on how effeminate I was. It made me very, very nervous. The same was true in college, I felt like a separate, entirely separate human being. I watched as my friends paired up, I watched this, all of this was happening, and I tried so hard to emulate it. And it was no, we all know where that story is going. But it didn't work. And then, as I'm beginning to realize that there is this one part that I'm definitely very capable of the sexual part. But then there's also the other part of adolescence, which is the romance part, which is the relationship that connection, the intimacy part that was completely divorced from my existence for the first 2324 years of my life. And I think I had my very first true date of the month before I went to Japan. So you know, there wasn't going to be a second. I actually drove from Williamstown, Massachusetts to Boston for the state of the other eye opening thing about this specific guy I met for the day, he took me to a bar, and we walked into this bar, and somebody cruised me, like looked me up and down and made me feel attractive. And I was like,

Huh, okay, some people do think I'm attractive in some way. I thought it would have to be me who was attracted to everybody else, you know, growing up with a steady diet of honcho and then i There were no fat people whatsoever. Important. And then, right as that Awakening was beginning to happen, I moved to Japan and started to discover this very, very vivid, fiber diverse, gay community in Tokyo. And I was hooked. I was like, wait a minute, this is what it's supposed to be like. Now, because I had spent so long divorcing sex from intimacy divorcing sex from relationships. It took a long time to get that right. And I think that was really where my second adolescence was, was this process of You know, one night stands thinking that they weren't when I stand right thinking that they were going to call me back thinking that I wasn't just another notch. And that's Itami. You know, I think people have asked me, weren't you heartbroken? I'm like, No, I didn't have the awareness to know that this was truly sad until I had that break with Noria until till I had one final adventure. There was this company in Tokyo that wanted to do video personal ads, which is this brand new thing, like they're gonna sell VHS tapes in the gay bookstores. And you know, each person had like 15 minutes to convince you why you should go out with them. And the guy who was doing the recording, was drop dead, gorgeous, super handsome. And we finished the personal ad. And he says to me, and I'm sure it was a complete Come on. But it's like, well, we also allow people to record a sexier segment, if you want to explore yourself on camera, if you want to expose more of yourself on camera, and I said, Are you asking me to get undressed? And sure if you're comfortable with that, as well, I would really only be comfortable if you undressed as well. Because I started seducing people at age 17. And I'm certainly not going to stop. But once that was done, that was probably the moment when I said, Oh, God, it is just a curiosity thing. These people are not connecting with me, because they want to know me. They're not calling me back, because that was all that they needed from me. And thankfully, Todd and Cameron paid, I guess you could call it a an inquisition via intervention. Intervention, there's the room when they staged their intervention and said, You will not sleep with somebody on their first date anymore. Because we're sick and tired of hearing it. And it's really boring, I think, okay. All right. I can't do it anymore. You're right. And so, yeah. Wow, you know, a few more bumps in the road, that terrible, terrible first seduction event with Hiro.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 42:06

So before we look at wrapping up, what has it been like? Because you've written this memoir, which I want to hear about, strikes me, you're someone who's thought a lot about your own story, and your own life and experience. I'm curious, what was it like just now for that last hour or so going over it verbally, and sharing your story?

B

Brian Watson (he/him) 42:26

You know, it was funny, when I started thinking about what I might talk about during this session in probably about a half hour before we got on the call the piece about second adolescence, being this reunification, that suddenly occurred to me that what I really, really needed from my second adolescence was for the sex piece to come together with the relationship piece, the intimacy piece, the love piece, really, all of those things that I had kept very far apart. Because I was so afraid of the intimacy piece, the feelings piece, and, you know, the people who love me that died, and I didn't want to think about that. I didn't want to talk about it. And I needed a terrible, terrible relationship. And I needed somebody at the very perfect moment to say, I will listen to you to snap out of that and start working on these things

that I consider to be very, very separate. They're not. They're not, and they're actually much better when they're together. But both of them are together. Nori wanted to give me the intimacy, the relationship part divorced from the sexual part. No, honey, no, no, no. There are people who can work that way. Absolutely. And no disrespect meant to people for whom that is perfectly viable for me. No. I had to have both together. And I didn't even know that until after the break up until after I started to say, this is a broken record. I Yeah.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 43:59

Yeah. Well, I have so many more questions that I want to know more about your story that I can't ask you. And I gotta let you go. But it sounds like you have a memoir where I can maybe get more before you go. Yeah. Tell me about if people wanted to both connect with you to learn more about you and your story, but also learn about your book and what this books about. Yeah, give me the info.

B

Brian Watson (he/him) 44:17

So it's really very simple. My name is Brian Watson. iamBrianWatson. So that's my website. iamBrianWatson.com. That's my Twitter. I am Brian Watson. That's my Instagram. I am Brian Watson. And most of my writing journey is on Twitter. My website does talk a little bit about the process as well. I have a newsletter based out of my website that talks about Japan. The things that I loved in the 10 years that I was there, the history I've learned about that might surprise people. And I love talking about Japan is one of my favorite things to talk about. But so that newsletter is there as well. And then my Instagram is a little bit more of a holistic picture of who I am to the flowers that I like to grow and take photos crowdsourcing, the crazy things that Hiro and I do together my terrible experiments with cooking. But you know, all of that comes together and Instagram, Twitter is a little bit more author writing that experience. And then, yeah, the website is some special beast. I'm trying so hard to get the hang on this bridge building. And I know I made several missteps, but it's a process. I have to remind myself, it's a process. And so yeah, please, I welcome hearing from other people, I welcome connecting with other people. I very much want to be part of my queer community and to hear other people's stories and to grow along with them. And so yeah, please, your listeners are more than welcome to come and interact with me. I can't wait to interact with them as well.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 45:44

Awesome. And then yeah, anything to say about the book.

B

Brian Watson (he/him) 45:47

So I am still in the process of querying, I really do want to publish traditionally, it's the right size. It's about 72,000 words. Right now. I'm in the middle of a second to last revision, I think. To be honest, writing a memoir has opened up so much for me, and I can't wait for it to be out on the shelves. It's called prying in a foreign language, Pink Lady, fictional girlfriends and the deity that answered my plea. It's about the 10 years before Japan, the 10 years in Japan. And it ends with me getting on the plane to leave and probably the worst moment in my life is hero.

gonna follow me? If he not, I don't know what's going to happen to me. And I can't wait for it to be out there in the world. I can't wait for people to say, I know that story. I love that story. I hear that story. I feel that story. So yeah. Awesome.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 46:40

Awesome. Gosh, well, Brian, this has been such a treat and oh, no, thank you. So good to listen to you talk. Again, I like I wish that we had more time I have all these other questions I want to ask you. But yeah, I just feel so appreciative for you coming on and contributing your story.

B Brian Watson (he/him) 46:56

Thank you so much.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 47:05

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 [second adolescence pod](https://www.instagram.com/secondadolescencepod/). If you're interested in being a future guests on the show and you want to come on and share about your own second adolescence visit [second adolescence pod.com/be](https://secondadolescencepod.com/be) A guest 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. All right. Take good care.