

Ep. 25: Second Adolescence w/ Nat Urban (they/them)

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SPEAKERS

Adam James Cohen (he/him), Nat Urban (they/them)



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 Nat Urban. Nat is a queer non binary artist and writer who is currently working on a bad ass project on queerness. And girlhood, which you'll hear them talk about towards the end of this episode. But first, gosh, Nat brings such an interesting and important story to the show. And I feel so grateful they wanted to lead us all into it, you'll hear them share about their own adolescence in which they actually came out and kind of stepped into this role as this primary out loud and proud queer person in their high school who other queer people started looking up to, but not shares how this out loud and proudness was kind of connected to this overcompensation for some painful rejection they were experiencing at home and lots of internal struggle they were navigating, they go on to share about the evolution of their experience in their queerness. And their mental health journey and how stepping into their non binary identity in the past couple of years has come with another layer of needing to travel through a second adolescence, this was such a powerful conversation. And just a heads up there is discussion about the topics of depression, suicide and self harm. So I invite you to do whatever you might need, as you listen to take care of yourself. And as always, as a listener, I want to invite all of you to listen with open curiosity, knowing that each of our stories are different and unique. You might hear some guests share things on the show that really differ from your experience. Whereas you might hear other things shared that really speak 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). All right. Welcome to the conversation. Thank you so much for being here. Welcome to Second Adolescence. I'm really yeah, I'm really excited and curious to have you here and curious to see where this conversation goes. And I guess before going anywhere, I like to invite the person on your end of things just to give a little mini introduction to the listeners just to give a little context to who the person is behind the voice before we get started.

N

Nat Urban (they/them) 02:41

Yeah, I'm Nat. I use they them pronouns. I'm 22. I just graduated from college. So you know, I have no idea what's going on with my life. As happens when you just graduated college, I just moved to LA and I'm really into costume design getting into like seamstress thing sewing, super excited about that. And I also am currently taking a gap year and hoping to go get my PhD in gender studies. That's kind of where we're sitting right now in life.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 03:06

Oh my gosh, cool. First off, congrats on graduating college very excited. And yes, it is such a wild time, right like that time right after college. There's such a transition. And it's so common for people to be like, Well, I'm still trying to figure this out. I don't know what's gonna come next. It sounds like you have a general clue. You're thinking about going back to grad school. Tell me about that interest of going to get your PhD and gender studies.

N

Nat Urban (they/them) 03:28

So my undergrad degree was in restrictive sexuality studies, creative writing, and Spanish cool. three majors. I don't know how to not do everything.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 03:37

Busy Bee oh my gosh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

N

Nat Urban (they/them) 03:40

So in doing that, I came out during that time as non binary. And I really like restructured the way I look at the world. And something that's really, really interesting to me is how I navigate the world as a trans person, because I think a lot of theory can end up really, like nebulous and really like up here, out of the body. And like at the end of the day, like I have a body and I do have to navigate the world, as does everyone else. And so I'm really interested in these ideas of embodiment and like actual experience because once again, I think theory gets super caught up and nebulous in like, Have you heard the saying of like, they're playing commands, which is a version of chess that doesn't exist. We're talking about philosophers where it's like, you're spending all this time playing commands, which isn't a real game. It's not affecting the real world, you're playing a made up game and you're studying a made up game. And sometimes I feel theory, get bogged down in that so I'm really, really interested in centering ourselves in experience in bodies and context of history. You know,

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 04:42

cool, okay, I want you to be my professor. I want to take all the classes. I am loving this and I feel like I'm gonna learn a lot. Yeah. Okay, well, so it's starting to make sense why you wanted to come on the show, but I'm curious like, tell me why did you want to come on? It sounds like

yeah, of course you have your hands in so much work around gender studies and all of that and your own personal experience. But yeah, what, what pulled you to want to come on and share your story?

N

Nat Urban (they/them) 05:09

Well, first of all, I didn't think I was going to, I'm playing this game lately, where I see things that I say that sounds cool, but nobody would ever want me to do that. And I say, well, they're gonna say no, if I don't try, so I'm going to try because the worst they'll say is no. And they weren't gonna say that if I didn't try. So it was partly an exercise in me having a little faith in myself, and trying for new things. And things that I don't necessarily think I'm qualified for. But I know that people around me would lift me up and be like, No, you can do this. Yeah, but also, I feel like my experience of second adolescence is different than other people's because I did initially come out very young, like I had high school girlfriends, that is something almost none of my friends can say is that I had a high school girlfriend. And so there's this idea of like, well, I came out younger. So in theory, I would have had those normal coming of age rituals hit at those normal times. And I won't necessarily have that second adolescence, I found that that's not true. And I find that I am experiencing everyone around me having a Second Adolescence. And the way I'm experiencing that, from the outside has also affected the way I'm able to navigate, especially the dating world, in terms of where people are at in their journey. And I find myself considered a queer elder to people older than me, which is weird. And something I've been thinking about a lot is age in terms of queerness. I mean, I have 30 year olds who are like, they came out later than me. And my experience of queerness is bigger than theirs, and they come not bigger than that's not the right word. But you know what I mean, and they come to me for advice, and I act as an elder to those people. And that can be really confusing. And because I came out so young, I've been out for like, I don't know, six months, and I was already the poor elder because that's longer than anybody else was out. And so I never really had the chance to center myself on my own identity, because I was trying to be out loud, proud for the people around me. Because I think there was one last name power couple, and that was really it. And so there was not a lot of people who were clear and happy. Because we had a lot of kids at our school, like getting sent back to foreign countries to go to Catholic school, when they got caught being queer. That was right around the time, what's her name on Tumblr, I can't remember her name, but she committed suicide, because of her experience is trans. And so that was like the context of the world I was living in of like, there's a good possibility, I'm gonna get kicked out of my house, when I come out. There's a good possibility, like this is what's happening in real life to people around me. And so somebody's got to be okay. Somebody's got to be okay. And I'm okay with that being me. And so I never really had the chance to settle into my own identity, because I was really, really working hard to be that person for other people. And I did that throughout college, too. I mean, I came out as non binary, I think, junior year. And senior year, I was like, No, I'll be the bitch. Like, I'll be the mean, I'll be the means I think class, I'll say something. Because I know you're too scared to and I'm graduating, what are you going to do? What are you going to do to me, I'm leaving. And so I've been playing that role for a long time. And there's stories I hear from my mom about her friends whose kids have looked up to me, and it makes me feel so good. But there's also like that underlying feeling of judicial neglect to me, I don't know what I'm doing. I don't know what I'm doing. And nobody does. But I don't know. I feel like I inhabit a really interesting middle space.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 08:24

Okay, there's so many things I want to say and places I want to dive into and questions I want to ask, but I guess I'm just like, there is this double edged sword of being the person who has the access or ability or whatever to step into that space of being that out loud and proud vocal person, the role model, like, it's such a gift to be offering to folks, and I'm sure there was some sense of feeling some strength from that yourself. And there's also so much laboring that that involves, and as you're speaking to it by stepping in that role, it's gotten your own way of being able to fully dive into your own internal experience and sift through what you need to sift through. Whoa. Okay, so just to set some context. So where were you growing up? Where did that kind of first adolescence take place?

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Nat Urban (they/them) 09:10

So I grew up in the northwest suburbs of Chicago, people there know my town because we have the IKEA everytime you know that people, I'm like, Oh, this is where I'm from. And I'm like, you have the IKEA I go. Yes. So I grew up heterosexual mom and dad, I have a younger brother. I was a dancer and a figure skater. So you know, my idea of my body so healthy. Yeah. habited these really feminine spaces as a young person. And we're in the suburbs baby. Like I didn't know what being gay was until I was maybe 14 Because I'd never even heard the words before. So yeah, I was growing up in like a world really devoid of queerness like I didn't even know that was an option. I didn't know it was a thing until middle school. Yeah, that's kind of the context.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 09:58

Yeah, totally. Okay, instead Then it sounds like starting in adolescence, as we're getting older, you started to discover your queerness. Like, what was that process? Like for you?

N

Nat Urban (they/them) 10:08

Yeah. So like every other bitch when I was 14, I got a Tumblr. And I never saw anything about lesbians. But I saw a lot of stuff about gay men. And I was like, That seems about right. Like, it was very much like, okay, that makes a lot of sense. There was never any moment of like, Oh, that's weird. I was like, No, yeah, vibes. Let's go. And then later, I was like, Oh, I could do that to guys. I could do that. But there was a lot of fear around that. And when I was like, 14, I told my mom everything, you know, I was 14. And I told my mom, I was like, hey, like, I'm questioning, I don't really know what's going on. Because it is like you're in the middle of puberty. Nothing makes sense. Everything is weird. And it was very much a moment of like, I don't know what's going on. And I just want to talk to you because you're my mom. And she was like, Nope, you're following a fad. Like, you just want to be like everybody else. Come talk to me when you have real concerns about who you are. And I was like, damn, okay, I actually repressed that memory until I had to come out again, which was rough to remember that three years later, it was rough. And so through that time identified as bisexual for a long time, I played the label game. I don't know if you know about the label game where you'll take just any labels, you don't have to be all the way gay. Like there was a while where I was like, Guys, I'm home a flexible, because as long as I could feasibly end up with a man, I didn't have to tell anybody, there was still a chance I would be normal. And I really wanted to be normal, so bad. And sometimes I still do. It's something I struggle with a lot is like, I love being clear. And I would not like to be anything else. It makes me so much who I am. It's something I'm so

passionate about the community I love, but God if I wish I wasn't normal sometimes. Because what would my life be like if it was And so eventually, I bless the power couple of my high school check me in the back room of the bandroom. And we talked, we had a very serious talk and they were like, Nah, come on. You're gay. No, I'm like, gay. Oh, no. And for a long time, lesbian was a bad word. Like, I would not say lesbian. I was gay. And I didn't like it. It made me feel icky. I think a lot about bad words now because I love to be a lesbian. I love to be a dyke dyke is my gender. It's my identity. It's everything right? Yeah, I have a mirror behind me that says, it's my favorite. It's my prized possession, because that were security for so long. And I eventually did come out again, I came out when I was 16. It was really rough. But it was fine. My parents got mad at me actually. Because I told them I had a safe place to go if they kicked you out of the house. And they're like, why would you do that? And I was like, Have you ever heard yourself talking about gay people? Because I have. I was there. I heard what you said. Even if you didn't register, that I was listening. I was. I remember when gay marriage was legalized. And I was in the car with my mom. And I was testing the waters. You know, we were doing the little toe dip. I was like, What are you going to say? Is this gonna make me feel safe? And I just kind of was like, Oh, that's really cool. Like, that's really awesome. And I, you know, saw this awesome story of like, some guy's mom who like ran through the house who like, Oh, my God. And I was really excited because I was like, Oh, I could like to have a life. Because that was a big thing for me was I was just like, well, I'm simply never going to have a life. I can't, I can never come out. I can't get married. My family's gonna hate me. Everyone around me is dying and getting shipped off to foreign countries getting sent to Catholic school. Those are the stories I'm seeing. This is the life I'm seeing. I don't see a way for me to ever be happy. So gave it a shot legalized. That was my moment of oh, like, my life doesn't have to stop. Maybe this doesn't have to be a bad thing. Maybe I could have a life that would be a little normal. Once again, at the time, I wanted nothing more to be normal. And I like brought it up to my mom in the car, little toe dip in the water of like, is this gonna be okay? And she was like, I just don't think it was the Supreme Court's place to step them. And I was like, Cool. We're going back in the closet, baby. They didn't know, they didn't know that. That was what I was doing. They didn't know us testing the waters. And so when I did come out, clean. That's funny, because I have done this but three foot by four foot painting of myself laying on a gay flag. And then I realized I had to take it home. Like, I can't hide this. And I was really proud of it. It got into an art show. So I was like, Well, I have to tell them now because it's got to come home. It's going in an arch. I got to say something they want to know. And I want them to know, but I'm terrified. And so I finally told my mom I like had a full I would have like about once a month just like a full screaming, crying, throwing up breakdown. And they would be like what's going on? I'd be like, I can't tell you. And that'd be the whole conversation and it happened. Like once a month, happened a lot. Um, and I finally told her and she was like, okay, and I was like, What the fuck do you mean? Okay, like, What do you mean? Okay? I have this whole history of all these terrible things. You've said about gay people, all the things you've said to me. And it's just fine. And that was really hard for me to process like, I've only just rebuilt my relationship with my mom, like my relationship with my parents is very new thing because of how messy that all was. And it took me years to get an apology because I really wanted an apology for how things went when I was 14, because that really fucked me up for a long time. And still, like it's still something that I talked about in therapy, and still something that bothers me and acted as, like starting place for a lot of complex I have now to kind of build off of, and she just kind of was like, Well, I don't remember that. And I was like, okay, cool. Like that was a formative trauma for me. And it's great that you don't remember that. I'm glad you don't have to deal with that. It's something I've had to deal with a lot with my parents of like that not realizing they do bad things. And like, there was a conversation I had with my parents were like, my dad called me to my face of failure. He was like, Well, if you do this, you're a failure, and you failed. And obviously, you start crying like what the heck. I'm later, later, I texted my mom about it. And I

was like, well, he called me like a failure to my face. She was like, that didn't happen. I was like you were sitting next to her. What do you think that didn't happen? You're right. They're bad. But it did happen. And they don't mean it. Like they don't mean to. But it's hard to realize that you've made a mistake. And apologize. It was hard. And for a long time, the apologies I got were like, well, sorry, I'm a terrible mother. And I didn't know what I was doing. And it was my first time being a mom and I like cool. It's my first time being person like it's my first time existing. So I don't think that's I don't think that's a free pass.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 16:33

Let me I want to just jump in real fast just because I'm I mean, first off, like my heart is hurting so much for little you who's having to go through all of this. Yeah, she's been through the wringer. Totally, totally. And I'm also then thinking about what you shared before how in high school, you did rather quickly step into this empowered queer role and some thinking about kind of these two, almost seemingly opposing forces of where you were kind of internally not feeling that support within your own kind of family system and, and your own mini community there. But then, at some point, you shift into kind of being this support for other folks, tell me about how did that happen?

N

Nat Urban (they/them) 17:16

Yeah, I think part of it is overcompensating one thing about me, I have to do everything all the time. You always have to be doing a good job. That is something I'm working on. But how my life has been where I just need to be perfect, I need to be right, I can't be failing. And so it was almost a way for me to apologize for being clear, was to be the best at it. And knowing what I was going through, I knew that everybody around me was going through too. And it took a long time for me to realize that like being queer wasn't a death sentence to my happiness in life. I knew I wasn't going to necessarily die. But I really didn't think my life was going to be anything. And I am born to that life long time ago, which sucks. It's not so much like the day used to mourn that your grandma might never buy you a wedding dress, and might never speak to you again. It was a hard day, it was not a good day for me. And so knowing that that was happening to the people around me stopped. And also when you're one of the only out queer people, you're who people come to, regardless of whether or not you're ready for it, because you're one of the only ones especially once our lesbian power couple graduated, it was me. So people were coming to me for help. And I had to do the best I could. And I didn't want them to feel the way I felt. I wanted them to feel supported. I wanted them to feel like it was an okay thing. And you know, I have people when I graduate come to me and be like, hey, like you were the first lesbian I saw, like, be happy. And you were the first person who I thought, Oh, I could be this and be happy. Like, this could be okay. And a lot of that was me covering up how unwell I was. This is so bad. But like literally I've had nurses when I go to like, see them for my depression that I walk in. And in the hallway. I'm so happy. And the second we sit down, it's just like, bam, tears were sobbing. I haven't slept for two weeks. I'm unwell. I'm suicidal. And they're like, I never would have guessed. I was masking. Like my therapists know, when I come in and I sit down that there's no way to know how I'm doing. Unless I'm doing really, really bad. There's, you got to ask me like three times for me to stop acting, basically and pretending that everything is great,

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 19:25

because that's what you had to do. That's what little you learned to do. Yeah.

N

Nat Urban (they/them) 19:29

Yeah, cuz my parents couldn't know. And those like once a month breakdowns were the breakthrough of how I was feeling. But in between that I didn't want anybody know. So being able to act as that person for the people around me made myself feel better that I was hiding in line, because it's not a fun way to live. Living a life sucks and it wears you down really fast. And you just hate everything. It makes you hate your parents because you're like God, like I hate you right now. You see me as a person who isn't real, and that was a huge thing. So Trying to be the person I wanted to be trying to be a real person at school was really important to me of like, I don't get to be a person very often, at that point in my life, and sometimes still, I don't get to feel like a person, I don't get to be a person, I have to be this construction of what other people believe to be. So when I'm at school, I get to be a little bit of a person. And I'm gonna do all the little things I do to apologize for existence. And part of that apology is being there for other people for a long time. Like, I have a super messed up relationship with failure. And I felt like me being queer was my big failure in life. So everything else had to be perfect to apologize for clearness, ruining the rest of it. Were like, Well, that was my big mistake. And that's what I get. And I can't, I can't mess up anymore. That's it. That's the mistake. being accessible part of illusory apology. Part of it was I know what I'm feeling right now. And I don't want anybody else to feel that and part of it is fake it till you make it. Fake it till you make it. You know, I hated myself for being queer for so long. And I was so uncomfortable, but I faked it till I made it. You know, I it was that overcompensation of like yeah, I'm not lesbian. Haha, like, what are you gonna do about it? Fake it till you make it? If I pretend long enough, eventually, I might start to believe it. Yeah, yeah.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 21:20

Gosh, I mean, yeah, just like that. Fake it till you make it like, again, this double edged sword like on one hand, it's a survival strategy. It gets us through, and can give us some sense of both protection and strength. But yeah, as you're speaking to, when it's coming from this place of overcompensation, there's something underneath that has to be tended to at some point, and we just might not be at a point yet where we're able to attend to that. And it sounds like for you that a lot of that has happened kind of as you've gotten older. And so yeah, I'm curious, like, you mentioned, despite kind of getting to have a queer romance in high school, and I'd love to meet if you want to share about that. Actually, I'd love to first like, let's start there. Yeah. What was that like?

N

Nat Urban (they/them) 21:58

Dude, it was so crazy. So that was after I started seeing my first therapist who was an older lesbian. And Was she a good therapist for my brain? Not necessarily, but she was what I needed, where I would go in and we do the little like, how are you to be like, Oh, I went to see a movie with my wife. And I'd be like, tell me everything.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 22:25

Right, that's possible?! Yeah.

N

Nat Urban (they/them) 22:27

Literally, like, my therapy with her was basically you can have a wife a day, you can be successful, you could go get a job and be successful, have a life and go to the movies with your wife on the weekend. So I got my first girlfriend, we met at a high school dance. She went to a different school than me, she went to like one of our rival schools. I thought she was so pretty laid back some very saying it's the 2010s She was wearing a fedora. I thought she was so cute. And so my friend went over and gave her my phone number because I was too scared to. And then we texted like, all day after the dance. Like we were at steak and shake God, it was high school. And I was texting her and we were talking. I don't remember what our first date was. But we ended up dating for about three months. And it was weird. I am one of my only friends who ever had a high school girlfriend. And I forget that often when we talk about exes, and I'm like, oh, yeah, my high school girlfriend. And they're like, You did what? But yeah, I mean, we were 16. So it was pretty lame. You know, we went to the mall. I remember how our first date was at the mall. So High School of us, we didn't have cars. So you get dropped off at the mall. And I was Valentine's day right after we had met. And so she was like, I need you to come meet me. There's a quote, I don't really have time. Like I have dance class. Like I gotta I have stuff. And she was like, Well, if you could just like stop by the mall. Like if you could get whoever's driving you to stop by, I have something to give you. And she gave me a rose. She's like, hey, that a little escalator and gave me a rose and gave me a hug. And I had to go, I was like, but how cute is that? Like, that was like, literally like at the time it was like a top two moment of my life. I was like, Oh my God, not only is this validating who I am to myself, but I'm having kind of like a little love story moment. And we dated for three months. You know, obviously we broke up. We broke up two weeks before prom. Whoopsie Oh, no. But you know, lesbian therapist helped me through that breakup, which was awesome. And that's the only thing I got to have my first breakup in high school too, right? So there's like this practice element of like, I've had practice having relationships, you know, and it was fun while it lasted.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 24:41

And I'm just Yeah, I'm just struck by it because like, okay, because on one hand you were able to start getting to have these experiences that maybe other people don't get to have until a little bit later. But yet because you were kind of really thrust into this role of this out loud and proud queer person, it sounds like there are also elements of people second adolescence that you had to step into later in life. Tell me about kind of that part of your story. What happened there?

N

Nat Urban (they/them) 25:09

Yeah. So one thing that comes into it is I only came out as non binary two years ago. So there is this sense of like, I have to relearn myself through this identity. And there's a lot about myself. But looking back, as I've said, a couple of times, I wanted so badly to be normal. And I would do anything to apologize for my queerness and be normal in every other way. Like, I look back at pictures of myself, and I'm like, Who is she? And is she okay? And I think of my younger self as

a girl, even though I no longer identify as such, because that's the life she was living. And she did not dress the way she wanted to. She hated her body, she was so skinny, oh, my god shaded her body. And so there's all of those pieces of kind of relearning who I am when I'm not apologizing for existing because that's so much of what my life was, was apologizing for existing, apologizing for being different and apologizing for ruining my own life. And so kind of the opportunity to leave that behind requires relearning who I am. So there's that aspect of a second adolescence and that I am going on testosterone soon, that's going to be a new puberty, my attraction is going to change. A lot of things about my body are going to change things. I don't know if I'm gonna be okay with yet because a lot of feminine shape of my body is a crutch, where at the end of the day, I know at least I'm pretty. And if I lose that, I don't know how I'm gonna be. And so like this relearning about myself, this relearning of how I date people, because there are people who don't like that I'm trans. And there are people who don't get it and treat me poorly because of it until there's this extra layer of dating of like, am I gonna be safe? Are you going to be respectful? I had a hookup that misgendered me the entire time. And that was really hard for me. But I wrote a poem about it. What \$100 So golden, like silver lining?

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 26:59

Oh my gosh.

N

Nat Urban (they/them) 27:01

\$100 That's so terrible.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 27:03

No, I mean, sometimes you have to laugh. I so get it like, it seems like I can see humor seems like it's been a tool of yours to just process when things are just fucking shitty.

N

Nat Urban (they/them) 27:15

Yeah, well, you know, you gotta laugh. It's ridiculous. It's funny. You have to laugh. Sometimes. Right? therapists will look at me I'll make a joke about somebody will go no, not Haha, I know. Well, a little haha. Damn. Like, come on. Little buddy.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 27:30

I mean, it's kind of like yeah, like that overcompensating like, on one hand, it's a tool, it helps us. And then yes, it's both and right. Like it can be useful. And then we also have to tend to kind of what's underneath the last as well. Totally, exactly.

N

Nat Urban (they/them) 27:42

Yeah. So even though I dated when I was in high school, there were this is where I'm gonna get academic about it. There are coming of age rituals that I did not get to interact with. So like on social media is a big thing that I've been learning about is coming of age with tools with queerness. In terms of social media, there are things that I couldn't post because it wasn't safe. I never had a date to the prom. Never. Well, I almost did. I broke up there. But it's not like I had a dating pool at school. It's not like there was some guy who thought I was cute, who's gonna ask me to the prom with a sign in front of everyone. You know, I knew I was never going to be popular. I knew I was weird. I knew a lot of people hated me because it was weird. One of the first things that happened to me freshman year of college was I got a prank phone call from someone from my high school to this day, I don't know who did it to call me like, and make fun of me. And like to say, I don't know who it was. But it was one of those moments of like, sometimes I let myself forget how much people hate me for existing, and that I'm not always safe. Because it's not fun to remember that I'm not safe. And so sometimes I just kind of forget on purpose. And so a lot of those things like later kind of have come out in ways of like, I have to relearn how to navigate the world. Because I spent so much of it hiding. I have to relearn how to date as I learn who I am, and learn how to interact with those people because I'm about to go through boy, puberty, sweaty, icky boy puberty. That's gonna affect how I date. I am attempting to get tested for ADHD autism. My therapist was so surprised. I told him I'd never been tested. He was like, Really, I was like, yeah, that diagnosis, if there is one, it's going to change how I date how I go through the world. So having to relearn these things about myself and relearn my identity has made it really difficult, especially because let's be honest, I still haven't fully processed the high schools. We've only just gotten to it in the last year. My parents only just gotten the point to actually being able to apologize. Fresh freshman year of college, I didn't think I was gonna have a relationship with my parents. I thought that that was dead and over. I thought I was gonna hold on to it for them to pay for college and then I would graduate and I would never talk to them again. That's where we were Right. Now I call my mom for fun. That's weird. Oh, I think they went to therapy and didn't tell me about it. It's really crazy.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 30:07

Whoa, because did they just start acting and talking differently towards you? Or what did you notice? Like what was from your? Yeah, how did you see this?

N

Nat Urban (they/them) 30:13

So freshman year of college at the end of the year by counselor said, so when you go home, you should go to the hospital, and I said, Oh, damn, that's crazy. Have you thanks for not calling the cops. Okay. And I told my parents, I said, when I come home, I need to go to the hospital. They were like, see, or some therapists? And I said, No, no, no, I need to go to the hospital. And I think that scared them. I don't think they knew how bad it was. So we had to do like some family therapy. And that was like the first glimpse they got into where it was actually at mental health wise, which was not a good place. And there were a couple times where I just got I got really mad at them. And I was like, Listen, I'm tired of hearing like boohoo for me. I'm a bad mom, like, I really don't give a shit. I was done being sad. And I was angry. I was like, I don't care. Like, this is so bad. And this is the wrong words. But I'm sorry that you broke your child, but I'm the one that's broken. So get over yourself. And I know that's not the right

language. But that's where I was at where I was like, I think or that's the hurt, or you feel bad about it. But at the end of the day, I'm the one who wants to kill myself and you get to go to bed at night. Like, right, so grow up, you know,

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 31:24

yeah, I need you to stop talking about your own experience. I need you to tune into mine as your child. Yeah.

N

Nat Urban (they/them) 31:30

Like I really don't give a shit that you feel bad, you should feel bad. That finally hit them. Once again, I think they went to therapy. Didn't tell me about it. Because the way that they communicate, it changed a lot. Because for a long time, I've been trying to change the way we communicated where I'd like when I go home. You can't talk to me about food, and whatever diet you're on, you can't do it. Because I work so hard to feel better about myself. And then I come home, and I have to start over. And for a long time. They just couldn't. They didn't get and all of a sudden the way they communicate. It changed. And you know, like one time I came home and my mom was like, Oh, are you happy to be home? And I was like, honestly, like, not really. And it hurt a lot because she looked like ticked dog. I felt awful. I felt awful. But I didn't want to lie to her. I wasn't happy to be home, I was feeling really unsafe with myself. And it was like the first time that that wasn't my fault. And she didn't talk about like how that hurt her. She did look like a kick dog. But that was the end of it. So I haven't asked about it. But I'm pretty sure they went to therapy. And thank God, because they have they've worked really hard. And it's cute, because sometimes I'll go home and my mom will tell me a story about something that happened. And she did I do a good job. Because they're really trying they want to do a good job. They want to have a relationship with their child. And thank god, there's life is so much better having that support system. But it's also really weird, because I fully more did that relationship a long time ago. And it came back. And I for a long time and sometimes still don't know what to do with that. Yeah, totally. It's weird. But yeah, anyway, my mom's my friend now, which is weird. Yeah, part of it has been like censoring myself around them less because I spent my whole life censoring myself around them. And so now when I text them, I try really hard to be authentic of how I would text to anybody else of like, Yeah, I'm gonna talk a little weird. I'm gonna say some weird shit. Totally. I'm, that's who I am. And I need y'all to submit on that page and your job to do that level of even if you don't get it, to accept it. And there's been a couple times where my mom has asked me like, she asked me she was like, so you're a lesbian? I was like, yeah, she was like, but you're also not a girl. I said, Yep. She said, can you explain that to me, I said, I don't think you're gonna get there. I just need you to be okay with it. She said, Okay. And they're working on it. They're trying really hard. They fuck it up a lot. But they're trying really hard. And that's more than I ever thought I was gonna get.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 33:47

Totally. I mean, gosh, I just want to say I'm so appreciative that you're being so generous with this part of your story with the journey, it's been with your parents, I think for so many queer people that is unfortunately, also a part of their experience of having to navigate whether it's parents or other close relationships that are meaningful to them, but are sources of past pain,

maybe current pain. And as we get into adulthood, we tend to have a bit more ability to do what we can at least from our end to change things whether that means having to do what you did, which I hear like put up certain boundaries where you need to, but while also do what you did, which is unabashedly be yourself as well and kind of bring your authenticity into that relationship. And in an ideal world, hopefully parents do which maybe your parents have done, which is to kind of work on their own stuff that they're working through and not kind of place that all on to their queer child to do that work for them. Gosh, it's just such a journey for so many folks. And I think I can I just feel really appreciative that you let us into what your journey has been because it's not easy the ideas of setting boundaries it's not easy stating your needs it's not easy. Dealing with big there's a grief there. There's there's so much so I'm cut just to hear that it's gotten to the place that it's at now and also really sensitive to. It's weird now and you're still processing like, what does this mean? What is this relationship? And oh, yeah, where does this go from here?

N

Nat Urban (they/them) 35:13

Yeah, it's weird to trust them, because that's something that I never did. And that has been really weird. Like, I remember being in high school and like, I had straight friends who were like best friends with their mom. And I was like, Dude, what? How is that? Okay, how are you navigating that, and now I'm like, Oh, my God, guys, I gotta go call my mommy. Like, you know, she still messes up. So does my dad, they mess up all the time. But the way they mess up, the way they deal with those mess ups is different. And the way they see me has changed a lot. For a long time. I think they saw me as broken. And I saw me as broken. And I'm still working on that. But there was a lot of like, you're in therapy? Weren't you better? Why do you still have panic attacks? Don't you have tools to deal with this? And it's like, well, I have tools to make it less bad. But it's still gonna happen. And you know, they're better with that now, where it used to be like, why is this even happening? Now? It's like, okay, like, what are the tools? Do you just need to sit on the phone with me? Like, you know, how can I how I never used to call my mom, when I was suicidal, or, you know, feeling like I was gonna hurt myself, I never even crossed my mind to call my parents. And they didn't know. And now like, my mom keeps her phone on at night. So that if I text her call, and she can be there for me, and I do I do, which is crazy. And she still doesn't really know what to do. But it's nice to know that she, she cares enough to want to sit with me through it. Because I know it's scary. And sometimes you just want a hug from your mom. And it's a thing I didn't think I was ever gonna get again. And so I tried to really embrace the fact that I still get that, because I know a lot of people don't like cry. I love my mommy.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 36:43

I mean, cry. Absolutely, there's, of course, so much feeling here. There's so much here. And there's been so much in your story. And I just feel so honored and touched again, that you're letting us into it. Because I think yet like unfortunately, so many of us queer people have so much pain in our stories and pain and our histories, pain, our presence yet to tell those stories, and share those stories and invite other people in who are feeling the same thing. Like, that's how we create a community. That's how we don't feel alone. And that's how we heal as a collective, queer people. And so I just feel so grateful that you're being so transparent with your journey and story to support this healing of the folks who are listening. I wish I could jump to that screen too. And just kind of give you that hug to Oh, my goodness. Okay. Well, I want to

talk with you all day. There's so many more places to go. But before we wrap up, like was there anything in particular that wanted to be a part of this conversation that feels like it hasn't been shared yet? Or said or anything else lingering on your end?

N

Nat Urban (they/them) 37:40

Yeah, I would love to talk a little bit about femininity and girlhood. Because it's something that's so interesting to me, I have a friend, their name is Andy. I love them dearly. They're my bestie. And they're the only person in my life allowed to call me a girl. But some people are like, Well, why am I not allowed to call you girl? Especially like white sis, gay men get really defensive. They're like, well, I call everybody girl. Like that's like blatantly untrue. If I was a trans man, and I said that to you, you would immediately stop. The only differences I still, to your mind looking at. It's like a girl. And one thing about me and my friend, and it's part of why I'm doing this project about queerness. And girlhood. Part of it is Reclaiming my own childhood, of all of these things that made me feel dirty. And all of these things that I felt like were a bad word aren't beautiful, like all of these things that made me feel predatory and gross. Like no, I wasn't in love. And that's lovely. And that deserves to be held gently, instead of treated with the disgust and horror that I often find myself looking back on and still feeling today where I feel predatory flirting with girls. There's no reason for me to feel that way. But it's something that is hard to let go of. So part of it is like a healing journey for me. Absolutely. But me and my friend, we always talk about femininity, because we have this experience of feeling so connected to the history of womanhood and the history of femininity. It's part of why I love fiber arts is there's this like deep, rich history of women and resistance within fiber and arts. And there's this connection, I feel to like my female ancestors. But at the same time, I know I don't identify as a woman. And so finding that way to interact with that history has been really interesting. And the way my friend described it, which I think is the most beautiful way to describe it is that womanhood is like a dead rose. And we're wearing white gloves. And it's dead but beautiful, it's grotesque, but it's something that we still love. And it's something that maybe hurt us with its thorns, but it's still beautiful. I like to describe us as like archaeologists, we're taking a dead culture and we're taking the bits that feel meaningful in a new context and holding on to those and it's something really unique. I haven't found a lot of people who I'm able to have those conversations with, which is why at least one of my best friends is because we're able to have those discussions that I'm just I'm so interested in experiences of girlhood. I was a camp counselor at a grace Okay, for a long time, we were all gay fun facts about the Girl Scouts as we're all gay. And it was one of those things where I was able to watch little girls experience the same things I had as a little girl. And there would be things like, you know, we would see a girl and we'd all be like, future lesbian coming through. We're like, we'll see you 10 years, because we weren't that little girl. But it was like healing for us as the adults, you know, we all like you're not allowed to really talk about it. But we all would have like a rainbow lady in our in our backpack in the middle schoolers would come up to like, you're in the lanyard. And you'd be like, ah, we see each other. And it was like, you're not allowed to say it that you know, what these girls are experiencing, and they know that you've been there, and they know that you're a safe space. So there's this question that that posited by I think her name is Marina gothic of like, are queer girls girls? Do you get to be a girl? If you're queer? Does that depend on how your queerness shows itself? Like, what is that? What does that mean? And like a lot of childhood and interacting with other girls was participating in heterosexuality that felt unnatural. Like I have friends who we talk were like, remember when you would choose your crush for the year because not having a crush wasn't good enough for you to pick one, in order to interact with girls that you had to pretend to interact with these very specific rituals. And also, I know people who are adults going through girlhood. My favorite tick tock series right now is still moldy,

who's experiencing girlhood as an adult. That's so interesting. I have so many questions about that, and how it interacts with my experience of queer girl hood, and how that interacts with a transplant experience of her girl hood. And how does that interact with somebody who's bisexual appear? All of these things, all of our experiences of childhood are so unique. And some of us no longer feel connected to girlhood for me. I'm like, Yeah, dude, little girls, I love y'all. Little girls are weird. Little girls are smart, little girls are up to things. And yeah, I just I'm really interested in this idea of femininity as a dead culture and taking things from our queer childhoods that maybe in the past were traumatic, or we didn't recognize this queerness or that made us feel dirty and wrong. I remember the first time I saw a girl naked was at summer camp, and we were in the showers. And I was so jealous, because the girl I had a crush on. I didn't know I had a crush on her with shower with her best friend. And that made me feel gross. That made me feel dirty. And looking back notice. Like I was 14? That seems about right. And so part of it is giving myself a space and giving other people a space to be like, Yeah, this is what the record was for me. And this is what that experience looks like. And it wasn't a bad thing. It doesn't make me gross. My experience of girlhood wasn't wrong, it wasn't weird. And being raised through a space of femininity or entering a space to femininity isn't inherently bad. And it can be something that provided us incredible growth, and that we still love and hold close. Even if it's something we no longer identify with. I always joke that the only time I'll ever have a gender is when I was a little girl. And when I'm an old old girl grandmother, those are the only times we'll ever have a genuine because there's something so visceral about those two experiences of femininity. I think part of it is the escape from being seen as a sexual creature. I feel like part of why I don't identify as a woman is because it's so tied up in relation to men and like, Oh man, I would hang out with women, I'd be like, I simply am not one of you. And the way that people view you when you say Oh, I'm a girl, I'm a woman. It's like an ill fitting suit. It makes me kind of want to be like, ooh, like that texture. It's the wrong texture. It doesn't fit, right. It's like that itchy Christmas sweater with a armpits edge because the seams are weird. It's not bad. It's just not right. And I've had a lot of people be like, well, you're less weight, your gender is lesbian. And I'm like, yes, because there's such a community there. And there's such a community of care and understanding of a history of experience, where it's like at the end of the damage, gender anarchists notion is real. But experiences are real. And the experiences I had growing up, put me in connection to and in conversation with this incredible, beautiful community of lesbians. And those are the people I want to hold connection to. They understand when I say my gender as a lesbian, because there's this too. Yeah, I don't know. I just I love femininity. I think it's so beautiful. I think a lot of us have a really negative relationship to it. Because of the harm it's caused us. But I think looking at it as something that is dead in our past, and that we can take what was beautiful, and hold on to it and give it a new context. I quote lesbian boats, man. And it's one of those things. It's like it's a super conservative art form. The average age of a quilter is 65. First of all, little ladies love me. I would like to say they're so excited. But also like it has a super conservative history. It doesn't have to and I can take this form that maybe is seeming as oppressive and give it new life and say Yeah, fuck A Seminary is seen as repressive and quilting is seen as an extension of that repression. And I'm going to say Screw you, and I'm going to take it and I'm going to make really cool deck art, and y'all are gonna suck it up. And I really want to take things that me when I was younger, dreamed about, and that was never possible and make them real for her, because her life was a break. And she could use a hug, and she could use some things that bring her joy, like I live in Hollywood, she mentioned nine year old me finding out I live in Hollywood off of Hollywood Boulevard, she would shit her pants, she would lose her mind, she'd be so excited. And so part of it is like I wanted to adventure, but part of it is I know that young man would be so excited to be here. And I know that she would not believe for a second what

we've done. And she would be absolutely in awe of who we've been able to become. And I want to keep giving that to her, because she's still there. And she's really sad, but I don't want her to be anymore.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 45:55

I mean, and that is the journey of queer healing right there. Being in relationship with our younger selves, and like being with their pain, being with their hopes, being with their dreams, and engaging in life now in ways that we both perhaps blow their minds, but also bring them such joy and bring them such healing. And I really hear that in your story. And also in this project. There's such a connection with this little you and offering such healing there. Oh, my goodness, this is so cool. And like what's the medium of this project?

N

Nat Urban (they/them) 46:26

Yeah, it's just a multistage project. I just started an internship with the Girl Museum. And my hope is through that I can do a series of ethnography, so interviews with different queer people about their experiences of girlhood. I really want to talk to Dylan Mulvaney, I'm really going to be up in her business, I want to talk to her so bad. And so I have some friends, I want to interview about their experiences with girlhood. And so I'm going to do a series of ethnographic interviews, and I've been doing academic research, so reading articles, doing literary reviews, looking at what other people have said and research around experiences of youth, girlhood and queerness. And then I'm doing poetry, and I'm doing a series of fiber arts. So I've got some art quotes planned. I've been making a lot of friendship bracelets, something about friendship bracelets is so deeply connected to romance, and queerness and lesbianism for me. And so I've been making a lot of friendship bracelets. And I also make clothes. And so a part of me wants to look at some of these other mediums that are seen as kind of repressive and dead feminine folk arts, crafts, and think of them as high art and think about how I connect with those things. So like, I'm really getting into knitting, I'm getting back into crochet, I'm learning how to tap lace, or at least I'm trying to, it's really hard. One thing I kind of want to do is think about what my younger self stream outfit is. And I want to make it for her. Because there's so many things about who I was when I was younger that I hated so much. I hated that I liked pink, I hated that. I was early on, do the shit rocks. Yeah, I got my hair pink all the time. And she would be so excited. And she always wanted also to do everything all the time. And I think we knew it wasn't possible. And I'm doing it anyway, everybody when they were little, their dream dog was like one thing. Like, I want to be a doctor, I want to be a veterinarian. I wanted to be a breakdancing artists from Paris. I didn't know that you couldn't be from a place you were born in. That's life. But I wanted to do everything. And I wanted to do all these big things. And somehow I didn't think we were gonna make it. I looked a little hairy there for a minute. But somehow I moved to frickin Hollywood. And I'm doing it. Being an artist. I am doing research that I love. That's insane. I can't believe I made it here. And I owe it to her to keep doing it even when it's hard. So I'm excited.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 48:43

Yes, I'm loving this. Ah, beautiful. Well, if folks who are listening want to follow up with you if they want to reach out if you want to kind of stay tuned. The work you're doing what's a good way they can do so if you're someone who likes to invite

N

Nat Urban (they/them) 48:57

that I do. I've got an art Instagram. It's called PeonyDaisyWhite clover. Those are all flowers have a lot of meaning to me and something I want to do a project with. I also have a personal Instagram, which is just @urbsie. Those are probably the two best places to find me feel free to like DM me even just to talk something about what they want me I love to talk, which is why I was like podcast perfect. I do not shut up. This is great. So yeah, just like even if somebody just wants to reach out to talk or something I said really resonated with them in their story. I'd love to hear about it. I love to talk about queerness there's a reason I'm the person all my friends come out to and that's because they could say literally anything. And I'd be like yeah, cool swag. Let's go. Let's talk about it. Love it. It's funny because I've had friends get mad at me that I don't give the like, I'm so glad you trusted me speech anymore. I'm like, because of course you trusted me. You know, I don't care. Of course you told me and I'm glad you did. So yeah,

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 49:51

cool. Gosh, not I'm just still so touched that you came on to offer your story and talk about the work you're doing and your whole healing journey. To me, which like for all of us is a continuous journey of course, but I just feel so appreciative and so grateful and so affected by our conversation, so thank you so much and I'm really excited to get to invite others into 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 guests 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. All right. Take good care.