

Ep. 35: Second Adolescence w/ Shlomo Satt (he/him)

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SPEAKERS

Adam James Cohen (he/him), Shlomo Satt (he/him)



Adam James Cohen (he/him) 00:10

SHello, and welcome to this week's episode of the Second Adolescence podcast. I'm your host Adam James Cohen. On this week's episode, we have guests Shlomo Satt who works within the Jewish non-profit sector and is based in New York City. And gosh, Shlomo is so many things. I am so excited to share this episode. Because this was just such an interesting and powerful conversation. I feel so grateful to Shlomo for letting us all into it. He shares with us about his experience growing up within Orthodox Judaism, and what it was like to navigate that community and their rather limiting beliefs around such things as queerness and mental health and really how that posed some challenge for him as he was navigating childhood and into adolescence. He goes on to share about his experience being sent to conversion therapy, and then what recovering from that has looked like. And he later walks us through how traditional psychotherapy (not conversion therapy) and 12 Step programs became helpful spaces for him to do the healing and growing work that was really needed. And he also talks about how he found himself really placing a lot of emphasis in his life on growing, but that inhibited his experience of fully living. And so he goes on to talk about what finding kind of more living and life has meant for him, and what else was entailed within his Second Adolescence experience. And it's really powerful the way he talks. And he mentioned community a lot throughout this conversation, it's really evident that community is such a big part of both his own personal experience, but also professional work. And I just feel really excited and honored that he's sharing his story within our community. And as with each episode of second adolescence, I really want to invite you as listener to listen with open curiosity, knowing that each of our stories are different and unique. You might hear some guests share things that differ from your experience, whereas other guests might share things 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 secondadolescentspod.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. Thank you so much for being here. Welcome to Second Adolescence. I'm so excited and really get curious to see where this conversation goes. And start at the beginning. I'd like to begin with inviting

the guests on your end to give a little mini introduction to who you are just to give a little context to the person behind the voice for listeners. And I know the WHO ARE YOU questions just like a ridiculous one to answer in like a little quick soundbite. But how would you answer that just to kind of set the scene?

S Shlomo Satt (he/him) 03:05

Sure. Happy to be here. I'm very excited. My name is Shlomo Satt. I live in the Upper West Side neighborhood of Manhattan in New York. I grew up on Long Island in a neighborhood called Far Rockaway. I work in the Jewish nonprofit sector, transitioning from one position to another. But I work in like the communications and engagement field within the Jewish nonprofit sector. I am engaged to my partner Mattan. He's from Montreal. We're gonna get married next year. I have a dog named Jack's. He's a 33 pound mixed breed. And I like to say he's 100% dog. And he's really sweet and cute. And we love him. And I'm very active in my local community in the Upper West Side.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 03:56

Awesome. Okay, I have so many questions just about everything that you just shared everything from your dog to this upcoming wedding, all of it your work, but okay, I guess just to land here. Why did you feel pulled to want to come on to this podcast?

S Shlomo Satt (he/him) 04:10

So I was chatting with a friend who has recently come out. And he was saying that he was listening to this podcast, and he thought that like I would like it. And he's like, Oh, and you would be a good person to be honest as well. So I took a second and like search to the podcast, and then look to see what the content was. And I was like, oh, yeah, I wouldn't be a good guest on this. But I actually thought like, oh, there's no way I'm gonna be able to, then there is such an easy way to apply to be a guest. So I'm like, oh, that's that's actually not as hard as I thought it was. What drew me to it. Two things. One, my adolescence pre coming out. And then my adolescent study with adolescents, my life quotes coming out very, very different. And I think that I went through like a mini adolescence again, another thing there's this theory that I remember learning in undergrad because I was a psych major called psycho social moratorium. And it refers to this phenomenon that occurs in Western countries between the usually like the ages of 21 and 30. And it's where people change a lot about themselves and their lives. So changing careers, changing locations, where they live to do with their living with a lot of that exploration. And it's something that I find very interesting. And it's like, super like tied to like what this is. And I actually have given a report about this theory. And it's something I talk about with Fievel. So sounds perfect.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 05:39

Oh, that's awesome. Okay, so I'm curious, then, to hear more about this concept. And how it kind of ties into our queer experience in our second adolescence is, oh, there's so many places I want to start, okay, let's first actually land in your personal story, then we'll kind of see, see

where we go from there. You mentioned your pre coming out adolescent years, tell me about where that took place, and what that was like?

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Shlomo Satt (he/him) 06:01

Sure. So I grew up Orthodox Jewish, so very, into their community, with a very, like clear set of values, and almost like procedural way of living. within my community itself. My family wasn't considered like the super religious of that community. But certainly, relative to 99% of the United States, we were a very religious community, I didn't grow up feeling that there was anything like particularly weird or different about the way I was living, I knew that it was different, but it didn't feel bad, per se. But then as I got older, a little bit like my childhood, and started to come to the Accept, the fact that I was gay, was when I started to realize like, there's something that's not gonna work, something's gonna have to give here, because there really isn't a space for queer people to exist within the orthodoxy that I grew up in. And so there's a lot of like, internal strife about that throughout, I would say, like 12, to 20, and definitely even post, but that was more like recovery from it, where I wasn't being my authentic self, because there was no space for me to be there. And I don't even mean sexuality wise, I mean, like, just me, because I was depressed and so conflicted about various aspects of my identity, the way I was presenting myself to the world was definitely not authentic. I also went to conversion therapy for three years, which is a big part of how my growth was stunted. Because obviously, conversion therapy is a sham, and it doesn't work. But I was in this environment where I was like, expecting to change my sexuality become straight. And then I would go and do the thing that all my friends were doing in the Orthodox spaces. And so I sort of put everything on hold, because I'm like, Oh, well, once I'm done with this, like, I'll be able to continue in that way. And that obviously did not happen. And so I sort of had to like, again, reevaluate. Okay, so this doesn't work. What am I doing with my life? And so that's sort of what started process of really becoming who I am today.

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 08:10

Wow, how did it all that fuel for like little you in adolescence, who was first kind of discovering queerness? And then feeling like, okay, yeah, this doesn't fit. And then having this whole, I mean, and feel free to kind of share as little or as much about the whole conversion therapy experience, but I guess, like, get what was like happening emotionally for younger you at that time.

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Shlomo Satt (he/him) 08:30

So the way I described myself, I had this like, weird gift of being incredibly self aware, even from a very young age, which has certain things that are really positive, like I have a really strong moral compass. And I know exactly if what I'm doing is aligned with that. I also the negative side is that when things aren't aligned, internally, I feel it really strongly. And it's not like I'm trying to it just I just feel it really strongly. And so there was a lot of conflict and just really believing that I was not being authentic. But I didn't even know what was authentic me. I had no idea. I know concept. I also, I certainly had no expectation of what it could be like to be a gay man in this world to be queer in this world, there was no place for me to even look to see anything that was remotely normal or healthy. And so it was it was just a lot of darkness, a lot

of conflict. And as a result, and this is like going back to that like self awareness, I used to like say that I was like a human hurricane because anywhere I went, I caused a lot of distress around the people around me and that was really because I was sort of just such a mess and people trying to be nice to me or people trying to accommodate me or, or be in my inner circle often ended up getting hurt as a result of my lashing out which stemmed from just really feeling lost in terms of who I was and where I was going. I

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 10:00

totally, and you mentioned 12 to 20. There's that time frame. Was that all occurring within kind of that phase of life? Or where are we talking right now?

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Shlomo Satt (he/him) 10:09

Yeah, I would say that was primarily during that period. So I was always more attuned to emotions, as a kid, but I didn't really, I don't think I don't think it was a very difficult child up until I started to sort of realize that something was different about me. And then things got really hard. But definitely between that period of 12 to 20, obviously, like being a 12 year old, 20 year old, very different in terms of just like, emotional development and in physical development in terms of hormones and whatnot. So a very different type of confusion. But it definitely was during that period, and my conversion therapy was from like, 16, I always get confused was like 16 to like 19, or like 16 to 20 around that time. So that's sort of were like 12 to 16, and was sort of just feeling really lost. Yeah. And then 16 was like, Oh, maybe I have a way out of this. And but that was conversion therapy. So that was a whole nother issue.

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 11:07

Right, right. And then okay, so then what happened at 20? What do you mark that as kind of the before and after? Yeah,

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Shlomo Satt (he/him) 11:14

so I had sort of a like, a moment, or it was like a series of moments really, where just things were so bad that I needed to start to take the reins of my own life, I was sick and tired of being sick and tired. I was in a religious school in Israel, which is pretty common for Orthodox youth, you know, to go study there. So I was in a religious school in Israel. And I actually really liked to school, I really liked the people in the school. But I was so depressed that I couldn't wake up on time. And I was missing lots of study sessions and just couldn't string just like any sort of success together of being consistent. And as a result, they asked me not to come back. I was like, hoping to come back the next year. And they asked me not to come back. And that, to me, was a really, really difficult moment, because I'm fairly bright. And I've always found that school came easy to me. And I like learning. And so being removed from an institution because of my behavior was certainly something new. And it was, there's a lot of shame, because my friends were still going back, you know, maybe I was if my friends were, and I wanted to be with them. But I couldn't, because they wouldn't let me. And so I came back back to America that summer. And I think I sort of just like was a little bit in a pit over the summer, didn't really do much. But

even then I think it was just like the last time of where I really was just sinking to a deeper and deeper depression. And towards the end of that summer, I just was like, this is just not it. Like, this is not what my life is supposed to be like. And for the first time ever, I was willing to accept that conversion therapy didn't work. I wasn't willing to say it doesn't work for everyone. I was willing to say that it didn't work for me. And so I'm like, Okay, this didn't work for me. I need an alternate way to be happy. And so that was sort of right about 20 years old.

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 13:10

Wow. And then, okay, so that alternate form of being happy, like, what did that next step look like for you?

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Shlomo Satt (he/him) 13:17

So it started with me getting a therapist that was not a conversion therapist, but one that was culturally aware of where it was coming from, he himself was an Orthodox Jew. So it was a little different than I would say, like a standard therapist want to think of someone because he was coming with a specific viewpoint. However, because he's a good therapist, he really made it his job to separate that from what was happening in the therapy room, like in a therapy room, he was my therapist. He actually is an ordained Rabbi as well. But like, he wasn't wearing that hat in the therapy room. And we just started talking about stuff just going through all of these things. And there were two things that I set up in the beginning of when I started working with him, that really helped me be successful. One was I said, we will never discuss conversion therapy, in terms of me becoming straight ever, in this room will discuss my experience, but we're never going to talk about me changing my orientation. And number two was, I'm going to call you by your first name, because a big part of my therapy process before was Doctor this that mister that Rabbi that and I just, it was so removed and not personal. And I didn't really feel comfortable. It felt like I was in like a laboratory. And so I said, I'm going to call you by your first name. And like I need that for, for me to be able to like work well. And he agreed. And he's like, I wish everyone called me by my first name. I'm a rabbi and a social worker, not a PhD. But he's like, everyone calls me those titles. I wish they'd just call me by my first name. So it was nice that he was amenable to that. And that sort of was a good foundation to start off with him.

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 14:56

Wow. I guess I'm curious if you could tell more of like what you were doing in that space because Hearing Like, that's where you really started to unpack more about your own experience your relationship to queerness. Like what was happening in that chapter of therapy?

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Shlomo Satt (he/him) 15:08

I actually had this realization, like, sort of recently, the way I see things is very, I'm gonna use a fancy word. So kradic, like the Socratic method of debate and arguing, because you sort of break something down little piece by little piece, a little piece, a little piece. And eventually, if you're trying to convince someone, something, they'll agree to all the tiny, tiny steps and get to the resolution of like, oh, actually, I see your point. It's also something that you do internally a

lot. I break things down very slowly, and then eventually, it clicks. And so that's sort of how I was approaching what I was experiencing as a teenager. And I was not out at all didn't even know any queer people that were out. So there was no like going to an event or something like there was no explanation that way. During that time, it was very much just discussing things from a more theoretical perspective. But that actually, let me understand myself. So sort of breaking down my beliefs about myself breaking down my space within the Orthodox community, even breaking down orthodoxy. And sort of seeing that I was seeing things from a very black and white perspective, like I'm either this or I'm that. And that's not what real life is, real life is not black and white. And so talking it out through him, I was able to see a much broader range of myself and of the spaces that I existed in. And by doing so, I also saw where I could fit in those spaces, and where what I could accept about myself and what I could build off of from myself, instead of just saying, I'm depressed. I'm like, That's it, you know, like, there's a lot more to that statement.

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 16:43

Right? Okay. So then, like, as this perspective was coming in for you, how did that translate to outside of the therapy room in your life? What did that start looking like?

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Shlomo Satt (he/him) 16:53

a big part of my outside of the therapy room life was I was actually in more than 112 Step Program, the main one at the time. And this was because of conversion therapy was going to I like to say the s fellowship was just like the sex addiction umbrella, because there's a lot of them in 12 Step, there's like many, many different versions, being perfectly honest, I don't think I ever really needed to be there. But that was the way that my community decided that I need to deal with it, and thankfully, ended up being a much more positive experience than it was negative, which is good. So that was, that was a big part. And then in my experience with those fellowships, I also started going to some other ones, and most prominently going to AAA as well. And today, I do drink alcohol, I consider myself recovered. But I certainly had a weird view of alcohol, that was probably a good idea for me not to drink too much. And so there actually was a ton of growth going on. For those who aren't familiar with 12 Step. The substance is really like the last thing that gets talked about, that's what gets you in the door. But 95% of the program has nothing to do with your substance, or behavior, or whatever it is, it's about the 12 steps, which is a growth program. And so like the combination of therapy, and then the fellowship that I was having, with my fellow, like 12 Step people really was advanced in rapid state of growth. And I think like, that's where the adolescence really occurred, because I was in a growth mindset, you know, 24 hours a day, I actually didn't really have a social life. Like I was so focused on getting better. Yes, that only like, once I graduated from undergrad, I was like, Oh, wow, maybe I should start going to events and like, having fun instead of just working and going to school and going to meetings.

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 18:42

I mean, I can just really hear like you were putting in I can only imagine how much work like to do the healing work of you know, the decades plus before of suffering. Like whoa, like, yes, okay. Yeah, you've missed out on some perhaps, enjoyment of certain things at that age. Other

activities. What not sure. But gosh, I mean, am I wrong and hearing like, wait, that was actually so powerful and meaningful that that was your priority, then did that allow for things to come next?

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Shlomo Satt (he/him) 19:10

It definitely allowed me but like looking back, there's no way in hell, I could do that. Again. I just go to sleep before 11 waking up six something, I would go to an AAA meeting in the morning, I would come home, get ready have drive to my first job. Then I would drive to my second job. Then I would go to school. I had school at night. And then I will go to another meeting. And sometimes because my two other jobs weren't always every day of the week, sometimes we would actually throw in a meeting in the afternoon there. And this is also like Long Island is very much not a commuter friendly place. So you have to drive everywhere. So looking back and like how the hell did I even managed to do that? But I think it was more of a necessity I needed it. I was coming off of such a traumatic experience growing up that I really It just needed all hands on deck. And I really wanted to be happy, the things that I was doing was making me happy. And so the momentum and then the just desperation, I felt like allowed me to do this like superhuman schedule, which collectively over that several year period was a very rapid period of growth.

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 20:22

Wow. And then Okay, so what happened next.

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20:25

So that's like, the more interesting part, I had a lot of theoretical and internal growth like a ton. I wasn't really like living so much, I was more growing. And then towards the end of my undergraduate is when I started, okay, let me branch out a bit more. And I sort of realized, and this could be something, I think I feel like a lot of queer people can relate to this. And I don't know why necessarily, but I was a gifted child, people who were gifted children can commiserate a lot about this, it's like, we're always told that we have a lot of potential. And many times, it's actually very deafening. And like stunts growth, because we're told, Oh, you can do whatever you want. And then we just don't do much, because it's hard to choose. So I had that. And then I also had that with like, friends, like, I had a hard time relating to friends, because I was like, Oh, they don't get me, they don't really understand me. So I can't be silly. Like them, I can't lower myself. And I'm saying, I'm saying that with air quotes, which obviously, you can hear that. But like, that was the viewpoint that had I really thought of myself as like, just like better than because of how I saw things because of my emotional understanding. But it was, it was really like, bullshit, I needed to consciously make myself appear of my peers. Because if I was living in this way of like, better than I wasn't experiencing life, like they were, and they were having fun, and they were enjoying themselves. And not everything is an existential crisis and needed to just like consciously, like, throw that out of my brain and be like, just be a normal human beings. Okay, stay up late, wake up with like a hangover. Like, if you need, like, those kinds of things that like, are just a regular human experience. And maybe they're not the ideal, maybe they're not this elevated way of living that I was thinking was necessary for someone like me. But actually, what was necessary for someone like me was to

just fuck around and find out, you know, sorry, no curse words. But like, that's really like what I needed. And so that's what started, you know, just going to events with my friends and trying to hang out making more of an effort, not only selecting friends who I thought had like an elevated status, or who were more intelligent, or had something that I desired, just people who were good people who liked me, and I liked them. And that was that I did a trip down to Miami with a whole bunch of friends, many of them I actually didn't know. And that was the first time I had ever done something Hoosick extended, like three, four days, were like 10 or 12 people, we stay in two apartments that were near each other, and we would like do meals together and go out together. And that was like, Wow, I'm just one of these people. And this is nice. And so that's sort of like was the first time where I felt that I could just be regular. And by and just to finish this, like I don't mean to say that there's anything morally amazing about being normal. And I use that word specifically in the context of for me, it was important to be ordinary, and I don't mean to, like exclude anyone when I say

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 23:35

totally. And okay, so I'm curious, like, as you're really intentionally trying to experience life in the game, these experiences in this quote, unquote, regular normal way. I'm curious about that. Plus, you mentioned earlier, like growing up, there was a disconnect between you and your authentic self. And so much of your journey has been like, really reconnecting and living from this authenticity. I'm curious, like, where does that whole lens of your experience come into play with when you started having these experiences like what was your own process, I guess, of rediscovering or reconnecting with authenticity, what that look like. Yeah.

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Shlomo Satt (he/him) 24:09

So that like sort of social experimentation that I started doing that was like, the classic view of adolescence of just try a whole bunch of things and see what sticks, right? Which is super common, and most people do when they're like, 13-14. You know, that was really where I started, I restarted that I wasn't really able to do that as a teenager. And I think that when I think of second adolescence, I don't think of me coming up with anything new. I just think that I was actually able to connect to what was there all along. I don't think I was a different person when I was 15 versus when I was 25. Right? Like I don't, I think it was the same person. It was the ability to be able to connect to who that was. And so just by sort of putting myself out there socially and going to different types of events with different types of people. I naturally started to shift and sort of find a groove, like, Oh, I like this element of this, then I didn't like this element, let me go more towards where I'm finding myself. comfortable and enjoyable. It took quite some time. And I do think that even today 27, and I live with my partner in the Upper West Side, and I have a career and he has a career and we're building the life together, I still think this is going to happen again, my sponsor, which in 12, step like your sponsors, like your mentor, he said something great to me, which was that life is like, an onion, or more like growth is like an onion in the sense that you're going through the same stuff, you're just going at a deeper level, you're not rediscovering anything new, but it's going to be a new understanding of something that you already knew. And so that's how I understand it. So when I was first reaching out and trying to find myself, it was a very surface level of just where am I comfortable? And now it's more like, what are the values that I ascribe to what are the ways I

want to live? So it's on a similar thread. But it's not to the point of where I'm making that much of a drastic change in my life right now. Because I have a community I have a place where I already am. I did that first part of the process.

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 26:15

And yeah, you mentioned your partner makes me curious to also go back in time. Like when and how did like exploring romance sex relationships, like when did that come into your story? And what was that like, at that time?

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Shlomo Satt (he/him) 26:29

So it was really like, confusing for me, actually, because I had experience in this 12 Step groups, which across all 12 Step groups, there's always going to be a ideal of abstinence always no matter what, it looks different, depending on which group but that's going to be a theme no matter what. And so it was very confusing to me, because I was like, wanting to date and everything, and how can I do that? So it took it took a lot of internal work with my sponsor to sort of authentically be in a growth mindset, but also maybe not take on everything from from 12 step as it was being handed to me. And it was actually really interesting, because I felt like I was at a point where I sort of knew who I was, right? And I like, Okay, I want to like start dating and meeting people. And I dated a few people, like just, you know, a few dates here. And there, I think was over like three or four months. And it didn't really go so well. It went nowhere. And this one person that I did it for a month ended up like cheating on me. And I just was like, not very happy about it. So I told my sponsor, I'm like, I'm not dating anymore. It sucks. And he's like, who said you get the right to do that? I'm like, What do you mean, he's like, just because you had a bad experience doesn't mean you can just throw that away. Like he like very strongly reprimanded me for saying to stop dating, so you can't do that. So you have to continue dating. Like as your sponsor, I'm telling you, you need to continue dating, which is like such a funny thing to hear. But he really did push me and I sort of made a decision to date people that I felt like I had a closer cultural connection as well as value system. I think before anyone who's willing to go on and do with me, I was willing to go on and do with them. And that that could work. But it wasn't working for me. So little bit more thought process took my time a bit more. And eventually, I did find my partner, who also grew up Orthodox, but more to the left. So not nearly as extreme as I did. And there was a lot of just like, shared experience that we didn't even need to explain because it was just known that we shared that. And when we first met, when we first connected, I knew that there was something different about him I didn't like I think love at first sight. I don't know if I really believe in that. But I knew that he was different than the other people I was talking to because he was very communicative responded right away. And I said, okay, like this might be worth it. Like, let me like actually put in some effort here to really try to see if this could work. And it was gradual there. Whereas as we got closer and continued talking and dating each other, I got more comfortable with him, he got more comfortable with me, which I think is a very normal process. And it allowed me to also be more vulnerable. As time went on. In the beginning, it was it was hard to be vulnerable sometimes. But I pushed myself and I said, if there's something I need to share, I need to share it. And if I really want this to work, I can't not share things like I have to I actually developed like a system. I called the rule of three. And we both have this now we've both adopted it, which is every they'd have something that I want to share with my partner, maybe it's a little bit critical, maybe it's sensitive, vulnerable. And I just think of it once I let it go think of it again.

keep my mind on it. Think of it a third time, that means I need I need to share it because that means like there's a persistent thought process here and there's something that's that's really going on, and that really helped me. So if I had an issue or something wanted to talk about, and it came up in my brain three times, organically, I would share it and that was really, really helpful to sort of build a Be vulnerable, but also connective experience with somebody else.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 30:05

I love I love it the rule of three. I love it. Yeah. Yes, that is like a helpful tool. I'm just gonna keep that one in my back pocket. That's fantastic. And then okay, so then now there's an engagement. So now like this is going to be a part of your story, like, how are you feeling about that coming up next, and this marriage coming up next,

S Shlomo Satt (he/him) 30:23

we talked about engagement for quite some time. We live together already, for gosh, three years before we we were together for four years, and lived together for three years, before we got engaged, which I'm someone who goes into things quickly. And so like, that itself was a very big lesson in patience for me, because I make decisions like in four second slot, but he's the opposite. So it's a nice, we meet in the middle about things. When I first got engaged, there certainly was a degree of insecurity just because of my background and where I'm from. And it didn't necessarily feel like I was as engaged as straight people were engaged, like, I felt like it was a different type of being engaged. The reality is like, it's exactly the same thing. The people are different. But the commitment is exactly the same thing. And I am no less engaged than anybody else on this planet. And that sort of has sunk in I think, more recently, we've already done a lot of the wedding plans, but it is going to be in a while till October of next year. So there is quite some time. But recently, I've been really confident in myself that wherever I exist, I inherently belong. If I belong, I'm going to act like I belong. And I'm not really going to take shit from others, or is that even others as myself? The insecurities of oh, maybe I don't belong here. No, I belong, unless there's like an actual thing that happens that tells me I don't belong, which for the most part doesn't happen in life, I find that needs to just go. And that's been like a real mental mind shift for me. And I think the reason why is because when I'm thinking about raising a family, because my partner, I do want to have kids, like, I don't want my kids feeling like they don't belong. And if I don't want my kids feeling like they don't belong, I better work on myself. So I don't feel that way. Because if I do feel that way, my kids will certainly feel that way as well. And so it's this weird, like backwards thing, where the only way I'm able to get to my destination is by thinking about like my progeny getting there. But that is the impetus for me to say like, Okay, well, if I want that to be sorted, I need to do that for myself. And it applies to like a lot of other things as well. But certainly with just confidence and comfortability with myself is a huge example of that.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 32:37

So many different times throughout this conversation, Shlomo, I've just had, like, goosebump moments are just like, I feel so much in response to what you're saying. So I just want I'm just so pumped, you're here talking and sharing all of this. But yeah, when you said, Wherever I exist, I belong, like, oof, that is it, finding ways to really embody that because so many of us for

whatever our context was, grew up really doubting our belongingness. So I'm like, overtly not like being excluded and all the things. So like that is, so often the work for us is to like, find this internal state of okayness and belongingness. And finding that ability to just like show up as we are, wherever we are, oh, my gosh,

S Shlomo Satt (he/him) 33:17

the way I visualize it, is having a seat at the table, it doesn't mean that I want to be there, it doesn't mean that my presence is going to be more than anybody else at the table. But it does mean that I'm at the table. And that's like, inherent, really inherent like, there are many communities where they'll say gay people don't belong in the wrong because by virtue of them existing, they inherently belong, you can try and accent the narrative as such, but it just incorrect. If someone is in your community, that they are part of your community, it just as simple as that. And even though for me, I always excluded myself from my community, I was just as much a part of it as I was then as I am today. Today, some of it is by virtue of no longer identifying with certain things. But being x something is actually a form of identifying with something right. And so I think it's a more advanced concept in terms of for it to settle in and really feel that, but practically, no one can say that you don't belong if you exist in a community. It's just it just incorrect.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 34:21

Absolutely. And so Okay, so this idea of community and belongingness is making me think about, you know, so many of us who grow up within a context where we weren't able to bring our fullness into it, to say it lightly. We can all have different relationships with that context and place of origin as adults. And I guess I'm curious, like at this point in your life, how are you in relationship or not in relationship to that culture system within what you were raised in that first part of your life? What does that look like for you?

S Shlomo Satt (he/him) 34:52

Great question. It's as many things it's complex in terms of my physical actual place or grew up and talked about like Tonica unfortunately, they have made it very clear that that town is not a space for queer people to exist. And actually, one thing that I learned from my sponsor as well is respecting. And I use respect in a different way, but respecting what people's desires are and meeting them where they are. So it doesn't mean I support the opinion. But if someone tells me their boundary, I will not cross that boundary. And it's actually antithetical for me to cross that boundary, because then when I set boundaries was to have them not cross my right. So they've set a boundary that I don't belong there. And for better or for worse, I accept it with my family, it's similar to they have sort of also set up my biological family, for the most part has also sort of set a boundary that I don't belong in their family system anymore. And it's really rough. It's really difficult, but I'm okay. And through therapy and other things, I'm, I'm not mourning it. Thankfully, I did, but I'm no longer anymore. And so I accept that I accept that. That's the way that things are today, doesn't mean it can't change. But that's the way things are today, in terms of the broader like, context. So Jewishness, orthodoxy, that kind of thing, because those are things associated with how I grew up. But it's not tied to a physical location or a specific set of people. I feel that I completely belong in those completely, like not even any

shred of doubt about that. I live in a still very Orthodox community today. I don't go to like synagogue that much. But I engage in Jewish ritual. Very often, my peer network is also mainly Jewish. And I think that I'm a value to the other people in the community that the communities that I exist in, I think that honestly every person is I think every person is a value. My difference isn't a detractor it's it's an adding to. And when I can see myself that way, it transfers on to how other people see me. I'm not in the business of other people's brains, like they say, you know, other people's thoughts about yourself, and is not your damn business. Like that was something that my sponsor would tell me. So I tried to actually not think, Oh, how are they viewing me, but from body language, and from practical like connection points, I'm able to tell that when I show up in a space where I am, like, I add value to this group. That is definitely how it comes off. And it's really interesting, because I think that without actively trying to I ended up being sort of a role model for people that went through something similar to me and maybe are experiencing it now. There isn't really an intention to me to do that. I'm not putting any ads in the newspaper, like let me be your own mana. Like, that's not what I'm doing. I'm just trying to share vulnerably with the people that I'm surrounded by. And through that process. I don't claim credit, but I see by osmosis how, like the effect that could have on others. So much of that, like I honestly, I feel that if there weren't pushback, I would have allies that can back me up because they know me. And they're there for me. And they see me as I am they don't see me as a hot topic. They don't see me as an agenda item. They don't see me as a political rule. They see me as Shlomo. And they're like, Yeah, of course, no more belongs, like what do you mean? So that's, I honestly forgot what the question was. But that was my answer!

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 38:27

It doesn't even matter. I feel like that even last section is one of the many of this conversation I can't wait to go read listen to so much of what you've shared today has just been so powerful. And I'm just as a receiver, even in this conversation, I just feel so grateful. And I feel so you mentioned like you mentioned like kind of by you showing up in vulnerability, like that's kind of in your community like that, you know, essentially invites other people to either connect with that or to do so themselves feel more permission, all of it. Like I feel like that's happening even in this conversation. And I just feel so touched that I got to have this time with you. And Okay, before we wind down and let you go. And I'm going to just stop I often just rambling Gosh, when I wasn't feeling so big, particularly about I guess in their story. So thank you so much. But has there been any? Is there anything that hasn't been a part of this conversation that wanted to be included? That hasn't been shared yet?

S

Shlomo Satt (he/him) 39:25

I think I think two things. The timeline of what we discussed is roughly 15 years. So 15 years and an hour, 45 minutes, it can sound like it went quickly. By no means at all. Did it go quickly. And if it went quickly, let it stick. I like to say that I'm a very visual person I take after my sponsor is also a very visual person. You can like imagine like a piece of food, okay. You crank up the frying pan real hot. You put it on one side, and you're like, oh, it's done. But on the other side, oh, it's done and you bite into it. It's rush it because you just like sear the edges, that was it, it may appear as that there's so much change. It's a drastic evolution. But once you get into it, it's still it's still half baked. Whereas if you take something put on a lower flame and let it like cook and savor and marinate, and then you have this like delicious dish afterwards. That's how growth occurs. In my perspective, it can't occur in these light bulb moments, they will happen,

light bulb moments will always happen. It's a product of human experience, there will be moments where I'm like, You know what, that was like a life changing moment. But the moment isn't what changed my life. It's what followed afterwards, like the growth that I did the actions that I took after that moment, how do I follow up? And how do I manifest that further. And so that's something that is very important. And so it's often very difficult for people who are currently struggling because they want out, they're just like, I can't I want out, I want to improve my life. And the sad thing is that it's going to take time, especially when you're talking about not just internal strife. But when we live in a heteronormative cis normative culture, there's going to be so many more layers to whatever we're dealing with. And it's going to take a lot of time, it doesn't mean it's not worth it, it doesn't mean that there will be happiness at the end of the road. But it's important to have that perspective. I think that's something that I like sharing with people who are going through it. And then I guess the last thing I'll say is, let's say one, if you're listening to this, and you're like, you know, I can I can manifest this, I can help other people I can. I'm in a space where I want to do this kind of work. It's also very important, just like one has to have patience for themselves. With growth, you also need to have patience with other people. I'm in touch with several causative people. And I put no timeline on what their growth processes at all. Because as soon as I have an agenda of like where I want them to be, I've already taken them out of the equation. Now it's about me, it's like me with like molding a playdough project. And that's not what we're talking about here. And so allow people to have their own space. And some people that they haven't texted me in six months, then they'll text me and I'll pick right up. And it's, it can be difficult, because it's like, What do you mean? Like was I chopped liver the past six months, you don't want to reach out to me? And that could feel like an insult. But the reality is they're just going through their process. If one establishes themselves as a resource for someone, we'll come back to it if it's valuable, even if it maybe isn't the timeline that you're thinking it's going to be?

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 42:18

Yes, yes, yes, yes. Yes. Yes. Like so much. Yes. To my neck hurts from nodding throughout this conversation. Yeah. Wow. Okay. Well, Shlomo, this has just been so great and so powerful. And before I let you go, if listeners who are listening are curious to connect or follow your work or reach out if anything resonated, are they? Are you someone who is open to receiving that type of contact? And if so, what's the best way to send folks to you?

S

Shlomo Satt (he/him) 42:47

So to anyone listening, I'll share my email with Well, Adam has my email. So if you reach out to Adam, I give him permission to send by email over, but if you want to meet me directly, I have my Instagram and Facebook are sort of like private. And so it might be hard to find me. But I do have a public Twitter. And it's mostly retweets of drag race, so don't expect that much emotional growth.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 43:09

Haha



S

Shlomo Satt (he/him) 43:11

You'll see a lot of Trixie Mattel. But yeah, but if you want to reach me, it's really easy to because you just type in my name. Shlomo Satt, S, H, L, O, MO, and then , S,A,T,T, you'll find me on Twitter send me a DM. And that's like a really easy way to find me. And that's public because there's not a lot of content. So I don't mind having that be public. And then if you happen to find me and not anything Instagram or Facebook is like there's always a chain, just DM me, and I'll be happy to have a conversation.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 43:41

Awesome. Thank you again, so much. This has been so special in so many levels. I can't wait to go read listen to this. And I so appreciate you coming on and being so vulnerable with your story, letting us all into it. Absolutely. Like that's how we help our community heal is by being with these stories. And so I just it's such a gift that you came on.

S

Shlomo Satt (he/him) 44:00

Thank you so much. And honestly really thank you for having this platform and having such a nuanced topic for your podcast. I think it's so wonderful. I greatly gain from Jeremy own story. And you've already helped like my friend who told me about this, you know, he clearly has been helped as well. So I'm just grateful for the positive energy that you're putting out there in the universe.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 44:29

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](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 secondadolescencepod.com/beaguest and you can submit your interest there. All right, 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 I would make younger you absolutely thrilled. That is what it's all about. Alright, take good care