

Curious Fox Podcast

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Hello.

Speaker 2

Hi!

Speaker 3

Hi.

Speaker 4

Hi!

Speaker 5

Hello.

Speaker 2

I'm curious about...

Speaker 5

I'm curious about--

Speaker 1

I'm curious about--

Speaker 4

I'm curious about building open, authentic, loving relationship

Speaker 3

I'm curious about jealousy.

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I'm curious about polyamory.

Speaker 4

Does is it just mean that you're fucking all the time?

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How can I tell my parents that my partner is already married?

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I'm curious about--

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How do you know when you're too busy to have another relationship?

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I'm curious about dominant and subordinate relationship.

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Speaker 5

How can relationships evolve with people as they grow and change?

Effy

Welcome to the Curious Fox podcast, for those challenging the status quo in love, sex, and relationships. My name is Effy Blue.

Jacqueline

And I'm Jacqueline Mislá and today we are continuing our focus on pride by talking about queer partnerships, specifically queer dating. We're curious, what makes queer dating different than straight dating? So we decided to ask Ariella, the Queer Dating Coach. Ariella leverages her coaching and personal dating experience to design individual coaching

experiences and a Date Better Boot Camp to help LGBTQIA+ folks date better. She works with queer folks who find dating elusive, impossible, exhausting and confusing to navigate the dating landscape with courage and delight.

Effy

Ariella is also a longtime Fox who has been engaged in the Curious Fox community for years, and we're thrilled to have her on as a guest. I'm personally thrilled to have her on a guest right now in my life because I am that person who's finding dating in the queer world elusive, impossible, exhausting, confusing and all of the above, and more right now.

Jacqueline

(laughing) Yes, tell us more!

Effy

It's funny that I'm revealing it all on the podcast.

Jacqueline

I feel awkward even right now--

Effy

I know, because it is awkward! No, I have a crush on a woman that I don't know where her--where she orientates. And I am stuck in that place of being friendly and cute and flirty with her and it is landing as friendly warm, you just want to be her friend.

Jacqueline

(laughing)

Effy

And I just can't seem to get a break. And it's, you know, and I don't have that much experience in doing--I have experience in dating women who either I know for sure they're queer or I know where they stand from the beginning. So I'm kind of navigating a world where I know what's going on. And in this instance, right now in my life, I have no idea what I'm doing. Which, you know, when it comes to love, sex and relationships, there's always a ton to learn. And I hold a lot of knowledge in my head. So it's weird to find myself in this "I don't know what I'm doing!" territory--

Jacqueline

Expert to novice.

Effy

Yes. Exactly. Expert to novice in a heartbeat.

Jacqueline

(laughing) And you've tried, right? I think that you have alluded to things and seen if she would out herself or reveal kind of her interest and nothing yet.

Effy

No, it's kind of--I think from the outside looking at it, I would say it's a beautiful budding friendship between two women who, you know, have a common way of looking at the world, and, you know, have passions and interests that overlap. And there's room for collaboration, and we're kind of getting to know each other, is what it would look like, I think.

Jacqueline

But on the inside one of those women wants to make out with the other woman.

Effy

Yes! And I don't really know how to add that part to everything else that's happening. And because all of the other stuff is true, too. Right? That's

exactly how I feel about her and that's why I like her. And I want to make out with her. And I think that's where I'm like, "I don't know how to go from that to that with somebody that you don't really know where they stand." I mean, I know that ultimately, at some point, I'm just going to ask because I'm just gonna get bored of all the back and forthing and all the suggestions and being cutesy. At some point, I'm gonna be like, "Hey, so where do you stand with all this? I know where this is going. But right now I'm kind of lost."

Jacqueline

Yeah, you mentioned that last time too that it's the New Yorker in you, "Let's move this thing along. What are you? What am I? Is this gonna work? If not, I need to know how to categorize this in my brain and keep it moving."

Effy

Yes, yeah.

Jacqueline

I know that you've had sex with women, you've played with women. Have you been in relationship with a woman?

Effy

Yes, I have been in a relationship with women, mostly in the polyamorous structure. It hasn't really been--I never dated a woman when I was monogamous, I should say. But I have dated women where--well, I wouldn't say dated, but I've definitely being in a relationship with women in the poly context, that was also sexual. It wasn't just like we were metamours, but it was just like, "Oh, this is the person I'm seeing right now." But not in a solo, exclusive kind of way. Not that it makes a difference.

Jacqueline

Yeah. Well, I know that you and I've talked a little bit about how it feels different to date folks of different gender identities. And so tell me more about that, because that is true for me, but that difference hasn't necessarily felt like a barrier.

Effy

Yes, I think that's actually a really good distinction. I think, for me, as a woman dating other women--that's the experience I want to talk about right now because that's what's happening to me right now--I find it bizarre, because I feel like with men, there is a different life experience. There's already a part of me that will never understand because they won't

walk this earth as a woman. So there's a disconnect and I can kind of manage my way around that disconnect, and it kind of creates space. And I feel like I can hide in my womanhood, which is a part of me that they will never understand and they will never know.

Jacqueline

Mmm. Mhmm.

Effy

But I feel like when I'm dating a woman, we share an experience. I feel so much more seen, and so much more exposed. I just feel vulnerable. I feel like I can't dance around them like I could dance around a man who doesn't ultimately--just a bunch of things that he just doesn't know, right? So you can--maybe (laughing) I shouldn't be putting this out into the world. I don't mean this in any kind of malice way. This is me retrospectively analyzing my behavior.

Jacqueline

(laughing)

Effy

I just feel like with a woman, I feel more vulnerable, because I feel like they have--they can see through me in a way that a man can't. It's a story that I hold in my head. And I'm usually not talking about my experiences. This is also an additional layer of--I'm usually talking about theory and what happens in psychology. Now I'm like, "So...I like this woman, and I can't get her to take me back." (laughing)

Jacqueline

Meanwhile I'm like, "Does she know who you are? Do I need to send her your Google profile?" You're very interesting. I would want to go on a date with you.

Effy

Oh, well, thank you. She doesn't know me as you know me. So she doesn't definitely have that big piece of information. And, you know, she has her own world and she's an expert in her own field. So I think that is also attractive to me. She just knows a lot about her stuff. So, you know, I don't think she knows me that way. We talked about what you do, but I don't think she kind of has the details on it. I don't know how she would feel. I don't know, would it be interesting to her or will she be overwhelmed? Or would she find that intimidating? I have no idea.

Jacqueline

Mhmm. Yeah. And then once the reveal does happen if she's interested, and then you're in that fun and awkward, flirty stage, and what do we do with this energy stage? All of that.

Effy

Yeah. So what would be really interesting is that if this turns out that she does end up being interested in me, as her first experience with a woman, that would be kind of fascinating to me, because I've never been in that position.

Jacqueline

Mmmm. Mmhm.

Effy

I've always had relationships and sexual experiences with women who are way more experienced than I am.

Jacqueline

Yes.

Effy

Which has been kind of--I've been leaving on that. I've just been like, "I don't know what I'm doing!" And they're like, "Ugh! I'll show you."

Jacqueline

(laughing)

Effy

So that's usually how I've been rolling. So if for some reason--let's say she's never had that experience with someone other than the opposite gender for her. And she wants to kind of explore being with a woman with me, and that I would be the first woman for her--that is going to be interesting, because I just don't know anything about that space.

Jacqueline

Well, but neither is would she. So that's even better, right?

Effy

(laughing)

Jacqueline

There's no precedent.

Effy

Yes, exactly.

Jacqueline

You would be setting the standard; that actually feels like the best case scenario. Cause then she's like, "Oh, this is what it is." Honestly, I think at that point, then it becomes about you. It's not necessarily about being with a woman or being with (unintelligible) she has in our mind is just now this connection that she has with you.

Effy

Right. And frankly, I mean, all joking aside, that is kind of how I feel about her anyway. The fact that she's a woman is--she just happens to be a woman. It's just there's everything else about her that I really like. Like I said, she, you know, she's an expert in her field. And she, you know, talks about it with such, you know, so articulately and also with humility and humor. And she's warm and friendly. And from her position, she can be very, you know, there could be many other ways that she can be and she chooses to be very accessible and warm and willing to connect. And I'm kind of in awe of her as a human being. And I think normally when I'm in that place, it's just--and she's beautiful. So I'm, therefore, I'm crushing on her, you know?

Jacqueline

(laughs)

Effy

And I think the fact that she's a woman is just a consequence, really more than anything else. And it would be amazing if she comes to that on her side, too. If she's just like, "I actually like you as a person and--oh, look, you happen to be a woman. Let's just figure it out." Would be my ideal scenario, rather than that she gets hung up on the fact that I'm a woman. I would prefer the former. But time will tell. I will reveal more.

Jacqueline

(laughing)

Effy

I will reveal more. (laughing) This is like some soap opera. I will reveal more, Foxy listeners.

Jacqueline

Yeah, I'm excited to hear about it. Yeah, I mean, I think this is great timing then that we're gonna have this conversation with Ariella, because I think you can bring all your questions. I am interested in the conversation with

her because I am not dating anyone else. I have no plans to be dating anyone else. But I want to take a look back at my dating history, because I think I've shared with you in the past that I don't believe that I've seen dating men and dating women as different, or that I've done anything differently. But that could--I don't know if that's true. (laughing) I think that could be the way that I'm looking back at it. And so I want to really hear her experience in what is a distinction, if there are any, to overlay that with my experience and be like, "Oh, yeah, I did do that. That's true." In my own mind, I've been like "Meh. I navigated everything so smoothly."

Effy

(laughing) That's funny. Do you not find though with women--like woman to woman--that there is that transparency that you just can't get there with a man just because they don't walk this planet as a woman? I don't know, there's something around that that makes me--that's where I hit that sort of note of vulnerability that I don't hit with a man.

Jacqueline

Mmm. I don't--Yes. I've had that experience. But to me that feels more like a connection point. That hasn't necessarily made me feel vulnerable? Yeah, I'm trying to think--I think my vulnerability comes more with seeing my playful side or seeing me wrong. (laughs) In the struggle--things like

that, I think prompt more vulnerability than understanding my experience as a woman.

Effy

Mhm.

Jacqueline

That, to me, just feels--it feels nice to be able to complain about menstruation. And the person is like, "Yup." You know what I mean? It feels complain about wearing a bra, or things like that. Actually, I enjoy having that connection.

Effy

Yeah. Maybe it's the avoidant part of me that likes the parts that men don't get as places of hiding. I hide in the shadows of not being seen sometimes. And I seek comfort in, ultimately, there are parts that they won't be able to see and touch. You know?

Jacqueline

Yeah.

Effy

And then I feel like with a woman, that I think there's a part of me--that avoidant part of me is going, "There's nowhere to hide!" (laughs)

Jacqueline

(laughs) Alright, so that makes sense to me. Because I think I'm actually longing for the opposite. I think that I am actually so...visible in the world--I was gonna say seen. I'm so visible in the world because of my work, the queer response work or my social justice work. But I don't think I am seen. I am visible but not seen. And I think that in my partnerships, I am desperately looking to be fully deeply seen.

Effy

Mmm.

Jacqueline

And so I don't actually want there to be any hidden crevices. I want to consume and understand all of who they are and be consumed and be understood. Which is why I think that feels different for me.

Effy

Yeah, no, I think we almost have--I feel the same. I feel visible. I'm fine to be continued to be visible and I am also fine sometimes just not to be seen because it gives me comfort that I can, just like, you know--I can be visible and not seen--and that gives me comfort and space that I need as a mostly turtle, sometimes an octopus, sometimes some weird hybrid creature that's taking over the world...sent from space. But I think I, you know, and I think some something about a woman to woman connection where I just feel like there is nowhere to hide.

Jacqueline

Yeah. Well, actually and so that, again, I think goes to the conversation that we are having with Ariella because she talks about courage and bravery as being part of the dating experience.

Effy

Totally, totally. Yeah, I can totally see that. And I'm really looking forward to that conversation.

Jacqueline

Yeah. So there were three things that we wanted to explore specifically that we are curious about. What makes queer dating different than straight

dating? What are the main concerns and common strategies that she's seen in her work? And what is one thing that we can all do to be braver in our dating lives?

Effy

Here here. We hope you enjoy the interview! (music plays)

Ariella

The thing is queer dating and quote, unquote, "straight dating" or not queer dating, isn't actually all that different. It's just that queer folks need a specific set of resources and guidance that straight people have. So, for example, a lot of dating coaches out there that are heteronormative--a lot of their coaching and a lot of their advice is just super gendered. It's super steeped in these systems of oppression that doesn't actually support queer people. So it's not that queer dating itself is totally different, it's just that the advice and the rhetoric out there wasn't made for people like us. So I am hoping to kind of bridge the gap and bring a non-gendered dating advice. Dating advice that is super radically inclusive and not trying to uphold any hierarchy. Dating advice that isn't ableist--to the best of my ability--that isn't racist. So the actual process we hope would actually be, you know, similar in a lot of ways, but we just need more inclusive rhetoric.

Jacqueline

Mhm.

Effy

That makes a lot of sense, actually. Because it resonates a lot with me, because it's the work I do as well. Relationship Coaching, there's plenty of resources for heteronormative, mononormative, dating and relationships. I do what I do because there just isn't enough resources out there.

Ariella

One hundred percent. Yeah. And also the group of people I care most about. (laughs) So, selfishly from a business standpoint, I'm like, "Who are the people I want to be having conversations with every day?" That's usually folks that fall into the LGBTQIA+ spectrum, and also the people that are most under-resourced when it comes to dating and relationships.

Effy

That makes a lot of sense.

Jacqueline

That does make sense. And I think what I love about what you're saying is, as soon as you said that, I thought to myself, "You're right." All I've heard is "If you want to catch a man, this is what you do."

Ariella

Yes!

Jacqueline

"If you want to date a woman, this is what you do." And I love--what it sounds like is--if you want to have a connection with a person, this is some of the things you should do.

Effy

Exactly.

Ariella

Exactly. When I found out dating coaches existed and started to do some research on them and some of the big names of who do dating coaching, I was honestly appalled at what I found. And how much of dating coaching was how to get a man to text you back, how to hook this person. And it was so disturbing. And it made me so angry that I was like, "Wait, I love

dating. I love connecting in a way that feels very gender-free. How can I help other people love it too? How can I change some of the noise that's out there on what dating is and dating looks like?" So that's what I'm hoping to do!

Effy

Yeah, absolutely. I love that and I totally agree with you. I think there are a few dating coaches that we follow. There's a couple of good dating coaches that I follow that infuriate me. I follow them just to keep an eye on what's going on and I am in fury, every time. I'm on my soapbox.

(laughing) Just having a whole--infuriating. So I totally, I'm with you. One hundred percent.

Ariella

Oh my god. The ammo. I was able to create a lot of content in the beginning of my business just out of the sheer anger of what it was that I was reading.

Jacqueline

(laughing)

Effy

Yes. Yes, yes, yes!

Jacqueline

I love that. I love that. Okay, so let me ask you this question: So what drew you to the work is you love dating, you love connecting with people, you love the queer community, and you were like, "I want to put these things together." What kind of folks have been drawn to you and your work? Is there a theme or pattern in the type of clients that you're working with?

Ariella

Yeah. So, exactly what you're saying, I love dating, love the queer community, love connection. And I see that a lot of other people don't feel that way. A lot of people are afraid of dating or find it exhausting, or awful, and really don't enjoy the process of it, are super outcome-oriented. So a lot of people that come to me are folks who want to learn how to date. So either they're new in the queer dating space, or they want to learn how to date better, where something isn't totally sitting right with them, or they don't feel like they're enjoying what they're doing to the extent that they could be. So people will come to me to kind of help infuse some joy into the process, and help them see dating as a journey of personal growth more than how to get from point A to point B.

Jacqueline

Yeah, cause I imagine that spills over into how to be in a relationship with someone. How you start off that experience with someone sets the tone for what that relationship will feel like.

Ariella

Yeah.

Jacqueline

In Episode 54, we talked about kind of coming out later in life, if you will. I started dating a woman when I was in my thirties for the first time. And so I'm wondering if that's also part of the experience--if you're experiencing and working with folks who maybe didn't come out during their dating period of their teens and twenties. And now are both navigating dating period as an adult, you know, as an older adult, maybe because they've opened up, maybe because they realize they're bisexual or queer. And so, yeah, so I'm just curious if that's a part of the population, because that was certainly something that I had to navigate through.

Ariella

Totally. Right now I'm mainly working with folks in their late twenties, early thirties. But my clients have basically ran the gamut from twenty to forty.

That's who mostly comes to me. But I'll say, even people that come out in their late twenties, we all feel late to the game! I was listening to your last episode about coming out later, and I think that all of us who didn't come out in high school or early college, in some way, a lot of us still feel like we're late. So it's kind of this false narrative that we have. So a lot of the folks that come to me who are in their late twenties, who either came out late or who have prioritized their career, and now are like, "Okay, I'm feeling out place, where I want to meet someone and do this intentionally in a way that I enjoy." Those are the people that tend to come my way. And they still feel late sometimes, you know, in their own view.

Effy

Yeah, for sure. That's interesting. Also, just going back to what you were saying, Jackie, that so much of it is partner choice, and I think dating--1) it's, you know, I think if you're going to do it to find a partner you might as well enjoy the process, and not for it to be an awful experience and hate every minute of it. And 2) do it in a way that will really allow you to connect with somebody so you make the right partner choice.

Ariella

Yes.

Effy

Because a lot of the time, by the time I'm talking to people, I've heard way too many people saying "I would have picked differently. If I know what I know now, I would have picked differently," you know? And no hard feelings, it's not personal. It's just they didn't have a good understanding of dating or the process or figuring out what they want early on in life.

Jacqueline

I was gonna ask that--is it that they didn't really know enough about themselves too and what it was that they were looking for?

Effy

Exactly, pretty much. And then they didn't think it was allowed, or they didn't--just also I think just weren't very good at conscious dating. They weren't clear on what they were looking for. They're sort of just going through the process. And, like you said Ariella, kind of hating it and just want it to be over.

Ariella

Yeah. Cause I actually think a lot of us aren't taught how to figure out what it is that we're looking for in the first place. So it's not knowing what we're looking for--maybe from a sexuality standpoint of who we're interested in.

Sure, fine. And that becomes a normal part of exploration. But beyond that sexuality journey, we're still not exactly taught what we should be aspiring to have in relationships, especially when so many of us have not had strong relationship role models in our lives, especially not strong relationship queer role models in our lives. So I do think there's a bit of a knowledge gap of "How do I figure out what qualities best suit me? And how do I focus on how it is I want to feel when I'm in the presence of someone that I'm connecting with." And allowing that to kind of guide our dating journey, instead of approaching things from a more superficial standpoint, or just swiping on apps and pretending that you are dating in that way.

Jacqueline

(laughs) Yeah.

Effy

I cannot agree with you on the dating app part.

Ariella

(laughs)

Effy

I feel like it is--you're kind of kidding yourself thinking "Oh, I'm dating by swiping." I just don't think it's a good way to, you know, you should definitely not have swiping as the only way that you want to date and find people to date.

Ariella

Yeah. I think it's--there are so many different ways to date people. And I think that you can allow dating apps to be your primary way of dating people, if you're using them intentionally. If it's really an intentional act for you or you're paying attention to how you're swiping, and you are initiating conversation with people in a way that allows it to be as meaningful as possible, then I think that it could be a way to date. You just have to be intentional and do it from a place of your own values.

Jacqueline

Yeah. I think that to your point about values-driven dating, values-driven partnership, exploration, knowing yourself--that's such a core part of all of this. I think we put so much focus on the other person who we're trying to find and not enough "Who am I? What do I want? What do I need? What does that look like?" And then being really honest about that, too, I imagine. I mean, Effy and I have talked about on the show how with folks,

they're tentative about talking about who they really are. That they want children, they want an open relationship, that they want to live together, that they want to live separately, because they're like, "I don't want to scare the person away." And you're like, "Oh, no, no, actually. You absolutely should be--and it's not about scaring them away--but you should be filtering based on those things."

Ariella

Totally.

Jacqueline

If having a family is really important to you, and the person who's sitting across from you in the in the dinner table does not, have that conversation early!

Ariella

Absolutely. A huge part of my practice is centered around learning how to understand yourself and learning how to express yourself. And the communication piece is really important.

Effy

Exactly. I want to dig into that more. I also wanted to add that we--I agree with you, Jackie, that often we end up looking for a person with a checklist of qualities that we've been told we should have in a partner, and we're seeking a person and not have enough clarity around the relationship itself. We don't talk about the container in which we want to connect with this person, you know? I think that's what we worry about to dig deeper into. So I'd love to hear more about then how you coach people in figuring that piece out.

Jacqueline

Yeah, yeah. So Ariella, how can we do better?

Ariella

Well, I think that we're touching on something that's really important here, which is this kind of arbitrary list of checkboxes. And that's kind of the only--I'd say one of the main teachings that are given for how to figure out who it is that we want--is this list of checkboxes that are totally passed down and steeped in patriarchy, and misogyny, and priorities that might not be true to who we actually are. So, a big thing that I'll do with clients is reorienting standards from these objective descriptors. Reorienting them away from, you know, "What does the person look like? What do they

do?" towards "How is it that I want to feel in the presence of someone I'm connecting to?"

Jacqueline

That's beautiful.

Effy

I love that.

Ariella

So that's what I call feelings-based standards. And we'll get really clear on that, from the beginning, of "What are my ideal feelings in the presence of people that I invite into my life? And how can I honor that that is enough of a standard to go with in the beginning of dating?" And, of course, there might be some logistics involved, like "Does this person want kids? Are they monogamous or non-monogamous, or poly or whatever?" So there might be other things that are introduced that can be written on paper. But the problem is that when we do look at a list of checkboxes, removed from how it is we want to feel, we wind up having something that checks all the boxes, where we still don't feel the way that we want to feel. So my process is to go to feelings first.

Effy

I love that. Where I had landed recently on that, which just aligns with what you're saying--which I feel very affirmed--which is, "Is this situation allowing me to show up my best self?"

Jacqueline

Mmmm.

Ariella

Yes! Okay. So there's actually three parts of this feelings-based standards--

Effy

Tell us!

Ariella

Which now you're kind of harkening on part two. So part one is, "How is it that I want to feel the presence of someone else?" "How is it I want to feel about myself in the presence of someone else?" And part three is "How do I hope others feel in my presence? What is it that I need to make space for?" And the part two of "How do I want to feel about myself," I think is really important. And the goal there becomes to start seeing ourselves that way first. To really--if we want to feel sexy, and talented and smart, we

need to figure out how to give that to ourself. And then we'll be able to tell really quickly whether the person we're talking to sees us in that same way. It's kind of like a mirror, where if they're not seeing us and we want to be seen, if they're not supporting our own vision for ourselves, we'll be able to tell very quickly.

Effy

I love that. Such a conscious and wise way to connect and spend that time with somebody, rather than having some arbitrary conversation about what you do, where did you go for your summer vacation, you know. Just going in there very intentionally, and sort of unearthing some of these really, really important foundational stuff for relationships.

Ariella

Yeah. And I think another big reason why I try to encourage people towards feelings-based standards, is because there is so much body hierarchy in our society. Our society is so fatphobic, and ableist, and racist in all of the ways. That by really looking at who it is that we've historically been attracted to, and trying to investigate, "Where did those attractions come from? How much of that is taught? How much of that is what we've seen in media?" When we investigate and kind of weed that out, and then just reorient on how it is we feel with someone. Do I feel turned on? Do I

feel attractive around this person? We can move away from whatever mental image we've been working with, towards this more sensing experience when we're in the presence of someone else.

Effy

I love that. I also find that approach anchors you in your body because I can--

Ariella

Yes--

Effy

I've definitely both, you know, witnessed and been in the situation where-- that I get tangled up in the other person so much that I abandon myself, or I've been on the receiving end of that, or I've witnessed it in the table next door where the person has kind of abandoned themselves and they're wrapped up in the other person so much that they're not checking in with how they're feeling.

Ariella

Yes, for sure. I often talk about there's two ways people usually show up on first dates. The first one is arms crossed, measuring the person in front

of me up to the person in my head. Very judgmental, jaded. And the second one is really leaning in, really wanting the person in front of me to like me, and wanting to impress, be impressive, be liked. And both of them aren't quite, you know, landing on this center ground, which is really showing up authentically yourself. And, you know, aiming to treat someone the way that you hope that they feel around you and sensing how it is that you feel in their presence, too.

[Effy](#)

Yeah.

[Jacqueline](#)

I'm taking a lot of notes, because I just think that there's--what you're describing just feels so applicable beyond even this conversation in this moment. I know, a few years ago, for example, birthdays--which my birthday is coming up, by the way--

[Effy](#)

Yayyyy!

Jacqueline

--birthdays have been historically a big deal for me, and always felt a little disappointed when it wasn't, you know, I didn't get the parade and I didn't get the big thing. And realize that I was setting folks up to fail, if you will, because I was saying "These are the things that I want." And even if I got those things, maybe, it didn't have the experience that I wanted. And so a few years ago, I started to make that shift and say, "This is how I want to feel on my birthday."

Ariella

Mmmm.

Jacqueline

And I then started to own what about that is me? If I wanted to feel peacefulness, solitude, joy. Instead of putting that on other people, how am I going to manifest that for myself?

Ariella

Yes!

Jacqueline

How can I have an invitation to those around me who are like, "What do you want to do?" And I'm like, "This is how I want to feel. What we do doesn't matter. This is a feeling I'm trying to get." And so I imagine then that that translates to the dating experience. Not only how do I want to feel with this person, but what do we want to do together? Is going out to dinner going to elicit the feeling and the experience that I want to have? Or maybe we want to go, you know, do trapeze together or something. I don't know what that looks like. But I'm wondering if that's a part of the conversation that you're having with folks.

Ariella

Yes. And I think that what you're saying is so interesting. Part of the reason why I love dating is that I feel like it is such a fertile ground to learn about things in other areas of our lives. So, exactly what you're saying about the birthday, totally think that's exactly feelings-based standards, feelings-based, leading with feelings. And I listened to ya'll's last episode on the coming out later and hearing Effy tell your story again about having a corporate job that checked a lot of boxes and living life in a way that was checking boxes, and yet still not feeling the way that you want to feel. So all of these kind of move through the interpersonal space, and also the life space of how we're actually choosing to live.

Effy

Yes, no, I mean, how you do anything is how you do everything.

Ariella

Yeah.

Effy

And I think putting certain--tackling some of that stuff in an area that we're actively engaged in allows us to focus our work. And then I think from there, it generalizes, right? Once you sort of master this idea of feelings-based standards, right, that now becomes a practice of yours that you can use for choosing a career, for picking an apartment for, you know, all the different areas of your life, because it's just good awareness to have, I think, right?

Ariella

Totally.

Jacqueline

So you talked about wanting first to put the list aside, and to get clear with yourself what you want to feel in their presence about yourself, be perceived, all of those feelings. Tell me more about what else you do in

your work, because I know that a big piece of your work has also been about bravery, and dating with courage. And that feels really interesting. And, of course, reflecting on an Effy's story and thinking about the courage that it is taking, that she has to leverage in order to continue to explore this connection. So can you talk more about that? I noted also that in your work, you shared that you used dating in the beginning almost like an experiment. That it was--you did dating immersion. That you were an actor, and every time you went on an audition, you also went on a date. So you were just dating all the time as a crash course and learning. And that took a tremendous amount of bravery. And so I'm just interested in you exploring courage a bit.

Ariella

Yeah. So that--just for a little bit of context--I was fearful about dating in the beginning. I found it fun, but there was something about it that felt scary. And same thing with auditions. It's like we're putting ourselves in these experiences to perhaps be judged, for people to notice things about our character, to then have the story in our head of maybe we're not good enough, you know? It's these experiences where they can feel scary. So I tried--I was like, "Alrighty, for every audition that I'm going to go on, I'll try to go on a date. And I will hopefully in the process make both less intimidating, make both less scary." So I think the reason why I care a lot

about dating, and I talk about in my messaging a lot of the time, that I want folks to learn how to date better, so that they have the courage to go after what they want in dating and in life in general, right? These kind of transferable skills. And I think the courage piece comes in because we are constantly brushing up against our edge of discomfort in dating.

Constantly! Even me, I consider myself to be a great dater, and yet I find myself in situations where I'm like, "Wow, I am terrified to go talk to that person right now!" So I think a huge part of dating is honoring the edge of discomfort and noticing when you're feeling it, and then figuring out "What skills do I have? What tools can I anchor into? What values can lead me to move through that discomfort, even a tiny bit?" This doesn't mean going from zero to one hundred, it means taking a baby step in a direction that you want to move in. So I think it's just a lot of navigating bravery, and trying to turn the volume up on our own courage, so that we can really go after what we want.

[Effy](#)

I love that. I mean, I think courage--Brené Brown talks about it a lot; it's all her work is around courage--I think it's key in finding the right partner as well. It's like both have-- within the dating process, which is what you're talking about, which is to kind of realize the discomfort, and it's scary, and you do it anyway. And I think also, finding a partner from a place of courage is very different than looking for a partner to feel safe. And I think that, in the long term, makes a huge difference.

Ariella

Totally.

Effy

So if you can master dating with courage, the chances are, you're going to find a partner as your most courageous self, which might mean that you're then picking a partner that is a partner and a collaborator, not someone that you--not someone that you're seeking safety from.

Ariella

Totally, totally. And I think a lot of courage also comes down to our relationship with ourselves. And our ability to catch ourselves after something scary happens, or, you know, or rely on our community, or resources, or therapists, or whatever it is. But there is so much that stifles us when it comes to dating. So much of putting ourselves out there that feels so scary, that when we can create fertile landing for ourselves to come back to after a scary experience, we'll be able to move through the scary experience better. Which is totally inspired by non-monogamy and what I've learned from you two. That it's--I talk about cushioning the hard part. And is that a term--I can't remember where that term came from or if I made it up. So I'll explain what I mean by that.

Jacqueline

Well, I like it.

Ariella

Cushioning the hard part. (laughing) I might've made it up, but I've been talking about it for so long now. Okay, so talk about cushioning the hard part, as inspired from non-monogamy, as it relates to predate rituals and post date rituals. When we're in relationship with someone and a lot of times folks talk about coming back to your partner--if you're operating in some kind of hierarchical polyamory or non-monogamy-- coming back to your partner. How it is that you'll reconnect after you go off and go on a date with someone else? In my last relationship, we also really focused on pre date rituals. How will we connect before the hard thing happens? So we've kind of cushioned whatever the hard part is. And I talk about that as it relates to solo people in the dating world--how can you already cushion what is going to be hard with yourself? How can you already kind of take care of yourself before you do the hard thing, so that even if you drop a little bit, even if you were scared, and it didn't go the way you would have hoped, you're not dropping from your baseline to, you know, below baseline. You're like, "Okay, I lifted myself up. Now I might be back at baseline and I'll be able to pick myself up again." So it's things like this

where we can take care of ourselves preemptively so that we are able to be more courageous than we might be.

Jacqueline

And are those scariest moments you find like right in the beginning? So I'm thinking again, reflecting back on Effy's story--which I think actually is a common challenge within the queer space, right? "I don't know this person's orientation. So I don't know if I have the freedom to go over there and flirt. Is there consent for that? Are they going to be offended? Is it going to be uncomfortable? What's going to happen?" And so just the amount of bravery that it takes just to initiate that--not just conversation, but a conversation with a flirty question mark. (laughs) I know from experience, it takes a lot of courage. So I'm wondering, you know, what you've talked to about that--kind of any advice and tips that you've given around that?

Ariella

Yeah, I agree. The stakes feel really high i the beginning of connection. I think things obviously still feel scary and super vulnerable when in relationship and navigating conflict, and whatnot. But there is something that tends to feel like this wild roller coaster when you're first getting to know someone, where people need a lot of help. So yes, that is a super

common question of "I don't know this person's sexual orientation. What can I do about that?" I wound up writing an ebook about it a couple months ago, because there is this element of queer flagging, right? How do we present ourselves in a way that's queer? Which also is problematic because it's an exclusive way of presenting. It's not honoring femme folks as much. It's, you know, honoring one type of queer look. So the ebook was basically about "What is your queer flagging? How do I recognize queer people in the wild? And why is that problematic and how is that exclusive? And what can we do anyway? How do we connect anyway?" So a lot of it comes down to gauging indicators of interest and paying attention to how this person is responding to you. So the first thing I would ask you, Effy, is "What is the nature of your conversation with this person like? How is she talking to you?" So you can answer that if you want.

(laughs)

[Effy](#)

Yeah, no, I mean, this is the ambiguous part, right? She's being friendly back. And also, we're texting a lot right now. So there's a lot of fun emojis and high fives and very cutesy. But I think this is what, you know, this is what I'm saying, is hard to distinguish from a budding friendship. So, I think she's being super friendly back and she replies to all my messages.

And, you know, we have a good connection, but it's unclear to me whether she sees any of it as flirting or just a budding friendship.

Ariella

What would you ideally want in this situation?

Effy

I think, to be honest, I think I'm being impatient.

Ariella

Okay.

Effy

You know, the truth will reveal itself, obviously, at some point, and I was saying earlier on, that it will end up in a place where I will just ask her outright. It will get to a place where I'll be like "Sooo, what's your deal?" And I will have that conversation with her and it will be clear; I'm just being impatient. But I just want to know where she's at. And, you know, Jackie was joking earlier, it's just the New Yorker in me that's going "C'mon, get with the program! I wanna know!"

Ariella

I'm curious, what's making you pause on having that conversation sooner?

Effy

Well, a couple of reasons. We've met very recently, and we're also collaborating on a project together that makes us colleagues for the time being.

Ariella

Totally. Okay.

Effy

But I mean, colleagues, not, you know, we don't have corporate jobs, we're building--we're actually building a village. And we're--our hands in mud, and we're building things.

Ariella

Wow.

Effy

So it's not like we're in some corporate office and there's HR that you have to worry about, it's not that. We are working together. So I want to kind of

ease into that. But we also--the nature of the work is that we work during the day, and we'll, you know, we socialize and sort of drink and smoke at night. So I think it will resolve itself. It's just, I'm impatient and I want to know.

Ariella

Totally.

Effy

And I want to know. There's a part of me that also is saying "I want to know before this crush just wears off. And I just wipe it--you know, just swipe it away." I kind of want to sit with it and see it through without losing interest. So that's kind of where I'm at.

Ariella

Yes, totally. There's two things I want to say here. First, this kind of wild sparking "Are they interested in me, are they not?" This kind of energetic "I am sending emojis. She sends only one emoji," all that. This process is so--it's hysterical. It's hysterical and also it's so joyful. This kind of chaotic "I want to know the answers and I don't know," but it is also when our body's experiencing so much sensation. In a way that if you wind up

dating this person a couple months down the line, and you're gonna be like "Oh. I miss the days when..."

Effy and Jackie

(laughing)

Ariella

So I would just say to you and everyone experiencing that, allow the sensation to be joyful, and appreciate this moment, because when you're no longer in the sparky curiosity of it all--frustration, you know, hunger of it all--

Effy

Anticipation.

Ariella

Right, and then it feels like normal, that will become normal. So allow this to be a good moment.

Jacqueline

Yeah, don't rush it, don't rush it. You don't crush much. And so sit in it and enjoy it. (laughing)

Ariella

The other thing I want to say here, though, is that there's this element of "I don't know this person's sexuality, so I don't know if they're interested in me." And I don't think that those two are the same, necessarily. So we never know if someone's interested in us, regardless of their sexuality.

Jacqueline

Mmmm. Yes.

Ariella

I mean, sometimes you know if someone's really overt and sharing things with words. But when you're in a budding thing, and when you're starting to get to know someone, a lot of times you don't know their intention unless you have a conversation about it. I would encourage you to focus less on how this person identifies, or what her sexual history is--as you, for example, you don't claim to an identity in this way--that she could be feeling you out in a similar way, where she's not so caught up on labels and understanding her sexuality might not be true to her anyway. It might be that she has had a history of dating cis men, and then that doesn't necessarily feel like what she's interested in this moment. Back to Jacqueline's "Who am I today?" So I don't think that's as important as

assessing if she's interested in you, period. And I think that if you don't want to have that conversation yet, totally makes sense. And I think the conversation is exactly the right thing to do to illuminate what happens next. The other thing that folks can do here is test the waters a bit, which is more like turning the volume up on flirting or saying a certain thing and seeing how this is landing with her. It could be crossing the body space barrier. It doesn't necessarily mean touching someone else. But playing with your proximity to someone else and seeing how that lands.

Jacqueline

Mmmm.

Ariella

So that could be another way where you can start to deduce signals, but ultimately, you are a conversation-based, transparent person--as am I--that will probably wind up happening is you talking about it. (laughs)

Effy

Yeah, no, I think so too. I think I just want to add one one last thing, and then I want us to sort of go into the rapid fire. I totally understand and I'm totally with you about the sort of the body barrier, getting into sharing

personal space. And this is, in addition confusing me because I'm here in a culture where people are affectionate--just as a culturally affectionate--

Ariella

Totally.

Effy

The consent culture as you talk about it in the US is actually very hard to communicate here. You know, people hug and kiss at an introduction. Corona was--COVID was a huge deal, because you shake hands and kiss, you know, places in Europe at intro. People you don't know. At all times, you know?

Ariella

Yeah.

Effy

So, especially women are very affectionate with each other, physically affectionate with each other, which makes it extra confusing for me, right?

Ariella

Totally.

Effy

Because in the US culture, especially in our communities, consent is a big thing. So by the time you're asking consent, you're kind of navigating some of the stuff. But here, you're like, "Oh, we're hugging. But what kind of hugging are we hugging?" So, anyway--

Ariella

Yes!

Effy

I think I agree with you that at some point, it's gonna be a conversation.

Ariella

Yes, I totally agree with what you're saying. It can be really hard to tell, especially if you're also building things together and people's hands are in different, you know, you might all be on top of each other in a type of way. So that might be difficult to assess. The only thing I would say to that is that, you know that there's the hum. (laughs) I don't wanna really explain this, but--

Effy

No, I hear you!

Ariella

The hum, the buzz of sexual tension. And, perhaps in this case, that might look more like if you're sitting next to her, sitting a little bit closer, or engaging for a longer amount of time, or holding eye contact a little bit longer. These things where you can try to feel out is there a hum of something moving between us? Or does it feel like it's kind of like (pshh) the air is just falling. (laughs) Which is so nuanced and hard to--it could be hard for someone to distinguish. That's not something I necessarily get into with coaching, especially in the beginning stages. But I feel like for you, as someone that's had a lot of experience relating to people and having intimacy, you might be able to sense more than you're giving yourself credit for, or you might be able to figure out ways to set yourself up to be sensing more.

Effy

I love that. I'm putting that on my agenda. (laughs)

Jacqueline

(laughing)

Ariella

I heard one thing out of a podcast I did recently--Coming Out Pod--and one of the hosts was talking about this little trick that she used to do when she was dating, where if you're sitting in a circle with people, and then someone leaves to go to the bathroom, you inch your chair a little bit closer to where that person's chair was and you assess whether they move their chair away from you. (laughs)

Jacqueline

Ohhhh! Nice!

Ariella

It's so funny, but that would be an example of like, "Okay, chairs one inch apart, or, you know, the chair's five inches apart it's normal friend territory, our chair is three inches apart, does that allow a buzz to happen here? So that might be something to play with, too. And it can't be like too awkwardly close where someone's like, "Did you move your chair on top of mine?"

Effy and Jackie

(laughing)

Ariella

I heard it and I was like, "That's funny. That's interesting!"

Effy

Yeah, I'm gonna try this. I'm gonna try this and I'll be sure to report back to everybody.

Ariella

(laughing) Perfect.

Jacqueline

I think the two biggest takeaways that I had from this conversation--and I think it translates to what you're talking to right now with Effy--is this idea of feelings-based standards. And so, you know Effy, instead of the labeling, "What is she? What isn't she?" Just how do you feel around her? What do you want her to feel around you and how are you creating that experience? And then love this language about honoring the edge of discomfort, and it sounds like you are on that edge. (laughing)

Effy

(laughing) I am totally hanging off that edge right now!

Ariella

Totally.

Jacqueline

We would love to--first of all, we would love to continue to talk to you forever. But we can't do that. So you will be taking over Instagram for Curious Fox at the end of the month: June 23rd through the 30th--and you and I are going to be doing an Instagram Live on Wednesday the 23rd, and so we can talk more about all of this then. And so people want more of Ariella, which of course that you do, then in the show notes, and at the end of the show, we'll give you opportunities for you to be able to connect with her. But we want to ask you four rapid-fire questions before we end our time with you, because we are very curious about you. And so the first is, what is one piece of advice that you would give to your younger self about love, sex or relationships?

Ariella

Honor your feelings. (laughs) I think that would probably be it.

Jacqueline

That's perfect.

Effy

What is one romantic or sexual adventure on your bucket list?

Ariella

Absolutely to have an orgy. Probably one that I host. The person I'm seeing now has hosted a few and my parents just bought this new lake house. (laughing) So I'm like, "How do I set this up?"

Jacqueline

(laughing)

Effy

Nice.

Jacqueline

I love it, make sure everybody gets a copy of Effy's Play Party Etiquette beforehand at the orientation to the orgy.

Ariella

Absolutely!

Jacqueline

Yes. Okay, next question is: how do you challenge the status quo?

Ariella

I question everything. So much so that I'm in talks with the person I'm seeing now about a relationship and I'm like, "We would need to figure out what the function of the relationship would be, what the purpose of the relationship would be, what the goals of the relationship would be." I question a lot of societal norms. And really, probably too much so that I like to go through everything with a fine tooth comb and make sure it is truly born out of my authentic self and not me going along with what we've been taught.

Jacqueline

Mmm. Love that. Yes!

Effy

That's the way to be. That's the way to be! Okay. Last but definitely not least: what are you curious about lately?

Ariella

I think that relationship piece, actually. I think that this is probably the first time in my life, I've really felt future feelings about a person, and yet I'm really sitting with the questions of "What makes us relationship? And what is the purpose? "And that's what I'm currently noodling on a lot.

Effy

Mhm.

Jacqueline

Well, thank you for joining us. It has been a joy talking to you. It's been super interesting. I have a page full of notes. I'm not even dating--

Ariella

(laughing)

Jacqueline

--and I am taking feverish notes because it feels--to your point, I feel like these are transferable skills. That this is not just about dating, this is about how we show up in the world, how we get to know ourselves, how we prioritize the experiences that we want to have, how we live in discomfort, how we, you know, find courage and bravery. Love all those things. Love

that you're going to be taking over at the end of the month to help round off pride for us, and really excited about our Instagram live together and chatting more with you.

Ariella

Yes, I'm so excited. And if there's a way that folks can ask questions after this that I can answer my week taking over--I'm not sure if we can set that up somehow or folks can always send me a DM and say "This is from Curious Fox."

Jacqueline

Yeah, we'll do some inquiry on Instagram and we'll get your questions from the audience and set us up for some Q&A.

Ariella

Perfect, that sounds great. I'm looking forward to it.

Effy

Thank you, Ariella!

Ariella

Thanks so much! (music plays)

Jacqueline

To learn more about Ariella, follow her on social media @queerdatingcoach or on her website queerdatingcoach.com. Ariella will also be doing a Curious Fox Instagram takeover from June 23rd to June 30th to help us round off and end pride with a bang. So be sure to follow us at wearecuriousfoxes.com to participate in her June 23rd Instagram Live and to get a daily dose of her queer dating tips. If you enjoyed this podcast, let us know by rating the show and leaving a review. Subscribe on Apple podcast or follow us on Spotify and Stitcher. If you want to tell us what about the podcast moments have felt impactful or what topics that you would like us to explore, you can share that with us by emailing us or sending us a voice memo at listening@wearecuriousfoxes.com or you can share a recording and we can put it on our show if you call us at 201-870-0063. You can also engage with us and find photos of us in all of our pride and colorful glory on Instagram or Facebook @wearecuriousfoxes.com and while you're there, click on the blue follow button so that you can stay connected and join in on the curiosity. And finally, for the extra curious among us, join our Patreon. Become a supporter of the Curious Fox community and get access to more--to podcast extras, to interview questions for guests, to extra special moments, and even events just for you. We have posted some interviews recently and some other bonus content and so go on to Patreon and find it and, while you're there, you

can find and access every single video recording of every workshop that we did both live and via Zoom. So if you want to go down a rabbit hole of curiosity, explore all of the workshops that we've done, introduce yourself to all of our educators, then go onto Patreon.

[Effy](#)

This episode is produced and edited by Nina Pollack, who we wish we could bring around with us on all our dates to edit our awkward moments. Our intro music is composed by Dave Saha. We are so grateful for their work, and we're grateful to you for listening. As always, stay Curious, friends. (music plays) Curious Fox podcast is not and will never be the final word on any topic. We solely aim to encourage curiosity and provide a space for exploration through connection and story. We encourage you to listen with an open and curious mind and we look forward to your feedback. Stay Curious, friends.

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Speaker 3

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Speaker 4

Stay curious!

Speaker 5

Stay curious.

Speaker 6

Stay curious.