

Finding Mr. Height Podcast

Ali

And we're back with Ariella! Ariella, we are so excited to welcome you to the pod. Hi!

Ariella

Hi. Thanks for having me.

Ali

Yeah. So, as we mentioned in our intro, Ariella is a queer dating coach. And we are just absolutely thrilled to have you here. We have been, as I mentioned, we've been getting questions about how we sort of address the queer community and dating this whole time we've been having a podcast, and we've been trying to figure out, how do we do that? And then I came across you on Instagram. And actually, one of my followers suggested you to me on Instagram.

Ariella

So fun. Thank you, you...follower. (laughs)

Ali

Well I had asked--

Roark

Yeah, I love how--

Ali

Oh, go ahead Roark.

Roark

I was gonna say, I just love how social media has been able to create connections like this. Because although social media can be bad for a lot of things, I think it's great for things like this.

Ariella

Totally.

Ali

Yes, absolutely. First, we want to make sure that we're getting our terminology right here as we have this conversation. So, how do you like to refer to your own sexuality so that we're getting it right in this

conversation? And how do you like to refer to--I know your handle is @queerdatingcoach so that gives a little bit of a hint.

[Ariella](#)

A little bit.

[Ali](#)

(laughs) I would love to hear more about that from you.

[Ariella](#)

Yes, I identify as queer. Queer can also be the umbrella term for the whole LGBTQIA+ community. Sometimes people still identify as queer as the umbrella but don't identify as queer as their sexuality label.

[Ali](#)

Okay.

[Ariella](#)

Sometimes people don't identify with queer at all. But it's generally--the more accurate way is to say LGBTQIA+, but queer is kind of the shorthand for the LGBTQ+ community.

Ali

Got it. And we talked about this before we hit record, but your pronouns are she and her, right?

Ariella

Yeah.

Ali

Awesome. Ours are as well. I love that you, first of all, were able to get queerdatingcoach as a handle on Instagram.

Ariella

I know.

Ali

That feels like something that should have been taken. Congrats!

Ariella

I agree. It was so weird. Even when I was starting the business, I was like, "Should I take it? It's so obvious." (laughs) And then I was like, "Wait, I think yes."--

Ali

That's why. That's why you should take it!

Ariella

I think that's why we take it, but I was like, "I should have a catchier name, that's just what I am and what I do." And then...no, I got it. And I'm so glad that I did. Because now it feels very on brand, but I was a little like, "Ah, it's so on the nose."

Roark

Has anybody tried to buy it from you?

Ariella

Hell no! I'd tell them to back the fuck off! (laughs)

Roark

Oh. Yeah, my name is unfortunately an outdoorsy clothing brand, and so I don't think I'll ever get Roark.

Ariella

Ahhhh, okay. Yeah, yeah, totally. That makes sense.

Ali

I mean, I'm certainly not getting Ali.

Roark

Yeah, definitely not. (laughs)

Ariella

Mhmm, yep. I hear that.

Ali

But yeah, this is very us to be far afield in the first five minutes--

Roark

We're so far afield to the conversation, it's very on brand. We're like, "Let's talk about LGBT dating." And then we're like, "By the way, your Instagram handle, okay--"

Ariella

But how much money do they go for, now that you mentioned it?

(laughing)

Roark

Oh, I mean, depending? Whatever...okay, this is no--

Ariella

Okay, sorry. Okay, we'll talk about that later (laughs).

Ali

So, no, your handle is, obviously, as you just said, queerdatingcoach. It's what you do.

Ariella

Yes.

Ali

And so, tell our listeners a little bit about the services or the engagement that you have with the queer dating community, and sort of what you do as the queer dating coach.

Ariella

Yeah. So basically, what I do is evolved from what--it came out of what I was seeing done, and what I wanted to do differently. So when I was looking into dating coaching, I noticed a lot of it was super gendered and

heteronormative. And there just wasn't a lot out there for people like us. For queer and/or trans folks. So, what I'm doing is trying to really take down a lot of the structures and tease out a lot of what exists in the world so that we can have dating advice that is gender-free, that's based on personal values, and where we can really treat people in a way that feels aligned for us instead of in a way where we're conforming to the kind of roles and norms that we were taught to conform to. So that's what I do in a broad sense. And on the logistics side of that, I work with folks one-on-one. But right now, primarily, I'm running a course called Date Better Boot Camp, which is basically everything that you would need to know in order to learn how to date or how to date better. And it's a four week intensive with video modules and group coaching. So that's where I've really been, you know, getting my hands on multiple people at one time, which is also really nice, because then people are really learning from each other.

Ali

That's awesome.

Roark

That's really cool.

Ali

And you just launched it, right?

Ariella

Yeah, I launched it...we just finished--today's Monday--so we just finished week one in the program out of the four weeks and I launched it couple of weeks prior to that, and it went fairly quickly. It was a really wild process. I had never launched a group program before. So it's been a lot of work but very rewarding. And it's really fun to see people engage with each other and be like, "Wow, I learned so much from reading that thread between you two. Thank you for sharing them, for posting that for us to see you." So that part's really a beautiful benefit from group coaching as opposed to one-on-one coaching.

Roark

Yeah, that's amazing. And congratulation on your launch.

Ariella

Thanks.

Ali

Yeah, I know you--both of you can relate to how much work and investment goes into that type of stuff.

Ariella

I know, that's why I was like, "Wait, how much is a handle before I knock it?" (laughs)

Ali and **Roark**

(laughing)

Ali

No, but I love what you said about seeing what was out there and trying to think how you would change it. Because that's a similar mindset--in a very different niche--but a similar mindset to the one I had when I thought, you know, I think I want to get into dating coaching is because I was seeing a lot of--to your point, heteronormative advice--but also, even more specific than that, heteronormative sexist advice?

Ariella

Yeah, misogynist. Really, really intense. Really intense.

Roark

Mhmm.

Ali

Yeah, even coming from female dating coaches also.

Ariella

Yeah.

Ali

And stuff that was just very negative is like a lot of what I was seeing out there. And I wanted to provide a really positive but also practical space, because I feel like within dating coaching there's the positive "It'll be great! And what's meant to be will be!" And that's not helpful.

Ariella

Totally.

Ali

And then on the other--yeah--and on the other--

Roark

Highly actionable, what happens happens. (laughs)

Ali

Right! Yeah. So actionable. But then on the other side of that, it's, you know, super negative, and, you know, cynical and--

Ariella

Based in manipulation tactics and--

Ali

Yes, exactly!

Ariella

Really scary. It's really scary that that is actually branded as dating advice.

Ali

Yes. Terrifying. And, you know, and so many people have just been drinking this kool aid for so long and we've been socialized in this way. To the point where now, I'll post a text script about how to, you know, tell someone you don't want to go on another date with them. And people will comment and say I'd rather be ghosted. How have we gotten here?

Ariella

Yeah, totally. Totally. How is transparent communication not preferable?

Ali

I don't know.

Ariella

Yeah, I don't know. I don't know.

Roark

Ariella, we're actually sort of touching on the theme right now where, you know, we recently had Logan Yuri on the podcast, and one of the things she says in the foreword of her book is about how a lot of research shows there's a huge Venn diagram in queer dating and straight dating. That a lot of us are dealing with really similar issues, just like emotional availability, mature communication, interacting with other people, is a universal experience. And yet, I'm sure that those of us who are women who date men or men who date women have huge blind spots to certain things that affect the queer community that I just can't even think of. What are some things that you would like straight people to know about queer dating where either we could be a better friend, a better ally, or just anything kind of comes to mind?

Ariella

Yeah, it's interesting. You know, a lot of the struggles are really the same. I'd say, sometimes people are like, "But, what's the difference? There must be a huge difference cause you're a queer dating coach!" And I'm like, "No, it's just a lot of your advice doesn't work for us. A lot of my advice works for everybody." (laughs) So it's really just a matter of kind of breaking open--figuring out different solutions for the same problems, and more expansive solutions. So the only thing that really comes up when folks ask me this is, sometimes when two women are on a date they can have trouble figuring out who should make the first move. You know, sometimes that comes up with anybody of any gender, you know? And sometimes that can happen in heteronormative dating too, I just think the difference is--even in in straight dating, you understand the system you're operating in, even if you're breaking the system. Even if you're like, "Fuck it, I'm paying." And you're out with a guy and you're a woman, whatever, you're like, "I know I'm saying fuck it, because I'm paying." Where in queer dating, you're not operating within a structure quite as much. So, there's just a little more that might have a question mark on it, which I think allows for a lot of nuance and creativity and fun and conversation. But I'd say that's kind of the main difference: is a question mark versus boxes. And what we're dealing with with the question mark, what we're

dealing with the box is kind of the same issues, and we just kind of need to handle them a little bit differently.

Roark

Yeah, that's such a great framework. That feels like a lightbulb moment for me. That's really cool.

Ali

I totally agree. Because, we've talked about this before not related to dating really, but we are both people who enjoy understanding what the structure is in a situation. And, yeah, that's a major lightbulb moment for me too, where I get very uncomfortable. Let's say, we talked about being in a foreign country, and I don't speak the language, and I don't understand what their laws are, and I'm not sure how to operate because I don't understand?

Ariella

Yes.

Ali

Makes me extremely uncomfortable.

Ariella

Yes. So, that experience, super common even as it relates to queer dating, and a lot of people will come to me because they're like, "I'm new to queer dating. I feel like everyone has the map, and I don't." So there are still things to be taught. But it's still mainly regular...traditional--I don't want to say any of those words. It's mainly dating that deals with how to deal with other people and how to understand your own emotions. And then there are some extra things that you might deal with as a queer person that we get into. But it's more about the support of a queer person, the camaraderie of fellow queer people, than anything that's "Oh, our map is totally different." I'm just like, "I'm gonna support you while you figure out your map, because we don't have so many maps around here." You know? So that's kind of more of the vibes than "Here's exactly how it goes around these parts. Fall in line and you'll be great." You know what I mean?

Ali

Right? Like we've been keeping this from you and now you may have it.

Ariella

Yeah, I'm like, "There is no map. Everyone's making it up. But, some of us have been making it up a little longer, and we can help you through it and

you can be supported in the process, and you can know that you're not alone. But it's not-- I don't have a...there is no rulebook that I'm teaching you. I'm teaching you how to understand yourself and how to express it so people can receive what it is that you have to say, and so that you can find dates and relationships that feel enlightening for you."

Roark

Speaking of being new to queer dating, I reached out to a couple girlfriends of mine who are gay to get some questions for you. And we also reached out to our Instagram followers. And one of the ones a friend of mine brought up, is that she has noticed on the apps since COVID, a ton more women expressing bi-curiosity, or an openness to dating other women. And she was wondering if you've seen any other changes in COVID. And, as sort of the part B question to that, if somebody is sort of starting to recognize some same-sex attraction, how do they kind of honor that and explore that?

Ariella

Yeah, I think it's a great question. To the first part of have I recognized any other big themes, I would say, just in general, COVID was such an introspective time for a lot of us. So on a personal level, I see a lot of friends moving through gender journeys, sexuality journeys. But more than

that, life journeys, career journeys. You know? So there's not necessarily anything else I'd say dating-wise that I'm like, "Wow, this is so different." It feels like we've all just kind of went through the wringer and are figuring out how we want to put ourselves back together and that might look a little different than it did before. I'd say, though, that maybe one thing that is changing too, is people's willingness to investigate their own biases. I'd maybe that's a slight difference, too. And something that feels really important and great that has come out of this time is a lot more awareness and awareness of privilege and awareness of biases. And yeah, maybe more of an openness to look at where that comes from, to examine social structures, to examine systems of oppression, and figure out how they want to move forward in a way that's more aligned for them, in a way that supports what they believe and what they're learning. I'd say maybe that's my answer to part one.

Roark

Yeah.

Ariella

Part two of if you're someone that wants to--that has noticed same sex attraction, who wants to explore that--or who has noticed queer attraction, I should say, who wants to explore that? I think--this might be

controversial--but I think it's okay to start dating. I think it's okay to learn by doing and to go out with people. And I think a lot of queer folks, especially if they're new to being queer, have a fear that they are going to be using someone else as an experiment, and it's a really understandable fear. It's a really understandable thought that one might have of I want to really treat this person with care. I don't want them to feel experimented on, or anything like that. And I think that that comes from the trope of straight girls making out with their queer friends and then leading them on and being like, "But I'm straight, but I'm straight." If you're not doing that. If you're like, "Yeah, I'm queer. I know something's different. I'm trying to figure that out. Let's hang out." I think it's okay. Or you can keep it to yourself. But I think that if you are someone--if you know you're queer and you're not experimenting, and you're exploring, it's different. You can figure out what you like and who makes you feel the way that you want to feel--or who you feel the way you want to feel around, because no one can make us anything--you can find that out and get more information by actually going on dates with people and being like, "Hm, how do I feel? They kind of did it for me." And it might be totally unrelated to what the person looks like and you might totally surprise yourself with who you wind up feeling attraction around. So I'd say it's okay to focus on exploring and not worry about experimenting, because you're on the journey in earnest.

Roark

Yeah.

Ali

Yeah. And that's probably where a lot of that communication comes in too, right? In terms of where you're on that--on with that journey.

Ariella

Yeah, it's interesting, I think that it's largely up to the folks that are on that journey to disclose or not disclose where they're at.

Ali

Right.

Ariella

I think it's really based on your own preference, comfort, what feels important, and what feels like will help you be present. Instead of if you're feeling distracted, like "I can't stop thinking about the fact that this is the first woman I've ever sat across while getting a drink. I am so not here, and I'm just totally in my head about it." It might feel better, it might make you be able to be more present, by sharing that. But I don't think that you--as it relates to things from your past, you need to disclose to a date at a

certain time. I don't think that where you're at on your queer journey is one of those things that has a definitive timeline.

Ali

Yeah, and we've talked about that a lot. Actually, the episode that aired on the day that we're recording this, which is about grieving while dating, we talked about disclosing that and, you know, is there a right time? And we were saying something very similar: that there, you know, you can be your authentic self without revealing everything about yourself.

Ariella

Absolutely. And I think that, especially on first dates, you don't need to reveal the depths of your soul. And if you noticed something is tender for the other person, you also don't need to get them to reveal the depths of their soul, because you don't know how long you're going to stick around, or what the nature of your relationship's going to be like. So, why poke on a bruise if then you're not going to help put a bandaid on, you know? We can allow these things to exist, or we can meet people and engage and notice something might be tricky and be like, "I'm not gonna press on that right now."

Ali

Yeah. So, on that note of, you know, people who might be exploring new feelings that have come up for them recently and kind of trying to figure out how to navigate that. We got a few listener questions from women who have primarily dated men, have more recently, kind of like Roark was saying, realized that they want to explore or have already started exploring dating women and they're not sure how to navigate dating apps in that context. And if they should be trying different ones or, you know, how do they approach that? Do you come across that with your clients?

Ariella

Well, I'd say there's only a few queer-specific dating apps at this point. So, the dating app question in itself is, I think you should be on the dating app that you like being on. So, if you like being on Hinge better than Bumble, you should be on Hinge. If you like being on Tinder, then you should be at Tinder. So it's not very like "Okay, now all the queer people move into this corner of the world." It's kinda be where you want to be, with the exception that if you are a queer woman, or a non-binary person, or a trans person, there's also a lap called--a lap (laughs). An app called Lex--I combined the words in my head--Lex, L-E-X, which is kind of a queer personal ads app where people post for friendships, or really particular sex kinks, or "I have the room opening up in my apartment," or "Let's all meet

at the beach." It's kind of this queer catch-all, primarily in big cities. So if you're in the middle of the country, it's kind of more spread out. I was checking it as I was traveling across the country during COVID. And there were some places where it's not really used. But if you're in New York, especially right now, it is popping off every day. So there's a specific app for that. But, beyond that, if you find yourself defaulting to heteronormativity? If you find yourself--you're on the app, and maybe you have men and women now checked since you usually have to check a binary gender on dating apps.

Ali

Yeah.

Ariella

If you are curious to give more intention towards queer dating, you can also remove the men for a bit and see how that feels. I know when I--I had defaulted to heteronormativity for years and years. And when I started dating in a queer way, I was like, "I am only going to date queer people. And I'm going to see how that goes. Because I think it's time that I do this for real." So that was kind of just my intention. I was not looking to be set up with with straight guys and I took it from there. So I think it's okay to be like, "I'm gonna do a little experiment for myself, where I eliminate the

people I'm trying to not focus on, so that I can focus on more the people I want to focus on."

Ali

I really like that.

Roark

Yeah, I think that's a great strategy.

Ariella

With the dating apps, as far as gender inclusivity, that's just where it gets tricky. Sure, if you are a woman, and then you started realizing, okay, I want to be dating in a queer way, there are apps that are absolutely for you. And if you're someone who throughout this time has realized "I might not fall into a binary gender category," apps are trickier. And a lot of them still make you choose a binary gender to show up in the deck ads when you sign up. The exceptions being OkCupid and Field, and Lex and Her are kind of the ones that don't make you do that. But, by and large, a lot of the ways dating apps go are still things that might not feel good to you from the get go. So you need to pay attention to that and take care of yourself and do things that feel good and right to you. Because it might not be as straightforward.

Roark

Yeah. You mentioned the success of Lex in big cities. And that dovetails really nicely into a question we got. And even--I mentioned my girlfriends already in LA--some of them talk about swiping through--

Ariella

The whole deck?

Roark

Hinge or Bumble in LA. And so we got a question about, what do you recommend for people who are in smaller places with smaller populations that aren't going to necessarily have the same queer dating pool?

Ariella

Yes. It's a great question. So I basically think about meeting people in four different categories, which I can share. So for the folks in LA, for example, if you've gotten through the deck, and if you're like, "Every single person that I have messaged with is an absolute fail and this is not good." Or if you're like, "I fell off, and now I want to message that person again," do it. But dating apps are still only one out of four ways I think about meeting people. So...you want me to tell you the four ways that I think about it?

Roark

Yeah, please.

Ali

Definitely. I wanna know!

Ariella

(laughing)

Roark

Yeah, now I wanna know the other ones!

Ariella

Now that I gave you that cliffhanger. So basically, it's the first one's dating apps, online, Instagram, whatever. The virtual, appy space. The second one is what I call "conscious communities," not conscious spiritual conscious, like, "I know, I'm here." So that could be work if that's not a boundary for you. That could be a volunteer work, or a book club, or a class that you take. Where you show up in community with people that are usually doing the same thing. The third one is friends of friends. So that's your wider network, you're like, "Oh, I want to tell you about this person," or "I'm looking for someone like this. Do you know anybody?" So that's

your wider network. And then the fourth one is total strangers, people you see on the literal street. That's kind of all the ways that I think about meeting people. So if one of them doesn't work for you, or your location, or you swipe through every single person, there is in LA--good for you--you can turn the volume down on that quadrant and turn the volume up on a different quadrant.

I love that. Roark is on a mission right now regarding quadrant four, total strangers, and my heart literally goes pitter patter just thinking about it.

Roark

I did it on Saturday!

Ariella

Wait, tell me more. I am--quadrant four is my favorite quadrant. So I'm totally with you.

Ali

Wait, you've been hiding this from me.

Roark

We didn't have a lot of time for updates. (laughs) Yeah, I was at a friend's birthday slash belated bachelorette party. She's now planned--this is her third wedding. Just because of COVID cancels.

Ariella

Oh, okay, I was like "Oh, this is fast--"

Roark

No. (laughs)

Ariella

Okay.

Roark

And so I asked a guy out at a bar--he lives in Canada. So, the first one is not a success. But it was great just to turn up the volume. I tried it. I put myself out there. It was scary. And it was fine.

Ariella

What did you say?

Ali

Yeah, what'd you do? What was the approach like?

Roark

So...the problem is, things aren't yet I think in COVID mixing and mingling. So we were seated at a table and he and some other guys were at the bar. And so I would have had to very boldly get up from the table, talk--and that just felt like a lot to me. And these other girls moved in. It was a cute group. And so I was like, "All this lost." And then when we left, I wrote on a napkin just my name and my number. And I touched him on the shoulder and I said, "I didn't want to interrupt, but I think you're super cute. And, you can give me a call." And he was like, "Wait, wait, wait, what's your name?" He was like "Great, let's talk to you instead." So we actually chatted for a minute and I was like, "No, I really gotta go." We were leaving. And but yeah, so Canada.

Ali

Fuck Canada.

Ariella

I love that! I love that.

Roark

Thank you!

Ariella

I think it's great.

Ali

I have done the phone number napkin pass several times in my life, including when I was sixteen. I gave my phone number crumbled up on a napkin to this guy who worked at my local grocery store who it turned out was twenty-five. (laughing)

Roark

Okay.

Ali

I read it completely wrong. I thought he was my age. (laughing)

Ariella

I am worried about doing the opposite, to be honest. I am, as I get older, figuring out someone's age is becoming harder and harder. And I am so worried about handing someone something in that way or going to talk to

someone and being like, "Oh my god, I didn't know." I'm not afraid of them being under eighteen, I'm just afraid of them being a ripe twenty (laughs). Oh, oh, god, I'm so sorry. I don't know how to back (laughs)

Ali

(laughing) How do I rewind the tape?

Ariella

Oh, you graduated this year? I need to go. Yeah.

Ali

That's so funny.

Ariella

I think that that's great, though. I'm trying to think if I ever did--I used to ask out strangers a lot. That was really my MO. But I can't remember if I ever did a napkin...I don't think I've ever done a napkin thing. I've been the recipient of a napkin here and there.

Ali

Oh, look at you!

[Ariella](#)

Yeah, well. (laughs) But I love that. I think that that's brave and amazing, Roark, that you did that.

[Roark](#)

Thank you. But that actually takes us to a listener question, which is, how do you recommend--in a queer way--to approach somebody where, just statistically, my odds of giving my number to a heteronormative man are a lot higher than if I was hoping for a queer person?

[Ariella](#)

Yes.

[Roark](#)

And so, can you talk a little bit about that?

[Ariella](#)

Yes. Okay, I want to just--so we're not approaching them in a queer way, but I totally understand what you're saying.

[Roark](#)

Yeah, I'm sorry.

Ariella

No, no, you're good. You're good. I'm just--for clarity of the question, I was like, "What is a queer way?"

Roark

No, thank you. Thank you.

Ariella

(laughing) Okay, yeah. We throw glitter at your face and then ask you out.

Yes, so--

Ali

Wait can I do that? I'd love to do that.

Ariella

(laughing)

Roark

I actually think would be very on-brand for Ali.

Ali

It would be so on-brand. Okay, sorry. Continue.

[Ariella](#)

That's so funny. I totally--so the question is, "How do I know if someone's queer when I want to approach them?" Is that the question?

[Roark](#)

Yes, and, sort of, how do you work up the courage to potentially-- obviously rejection comes, no matter what your sexual orientation preferences are--but like I said, I am less likely to be rejected because the person because--

[Ariella](#)

Because of sexuality.

[Roark](#)

--I don't want what you want.

[Ariella](#)

Yeah. Yeah, I totally hear that. It's a great question. This has come up a lot in my coaching as well. So I did write an ebook about this a couple of months ago. So it was how to tell someone is queer and how to connect with them regardless. (laughs) Because sometimes you really won't know until you ask. Most of the time--I wouldn't say most the time--sometimes

you don't know. There is a queer look--I'm putting in air quotes to the people listening to the podcast--so sometimes those are really recognizable flags, essentially, to realize if someone's queer. And there's a real history to that where when queerness used to be outlawed, or when queerness used to be criminalized and pathologized, where it was seen as mental illness, it would be a real question of how do we find each other or how do we find community? And this is back from all the way from the--I mean, in the 1800s, people were finding each other in this way--to the term flagging more comes I think, from the 70s, which is when gay men would put handkerchiefs--different colored handkerchiefs in their back pocket--to signal what they wanted. So that's kind of where flagging comes from. So there are kind of queer telltale signs that someone might be queer, but they're also really exclusive. To just look for those tends to be femme-phobic and ableist where if you're talking about the way someone sits, or how deep someone's voice is related to their gender, there are a lot of holes, there are a lot of gaps in what it is we might be looking for. But I'd say even as a queer person, to familiarize yourself with who might be queer, so that might mean making more queer friends and having them kind of show you who they think might be queer, as far as strangers. Or sometimes I'll talk through some of that with folks, but it is--it's touchier and it is exclusive, so I like to be really clear about that. So I

think the easiest way to tell, is to not try to tell if someone is queer, but to try to tell if someone's interested in engaging with you.

Ali

Mmm. That's a great distinction.

Ariella

Then we don't need to worry about me watching you from afar and being like, "Oh, well, her fingernails are cut, but she's crossing her legs," or whatever it is. Or she's holding her friend's hand...any of that. It's easier to just approach someone and then sense, are they interested in having an exchange with me or are they not? At the same time, if you--I mean, this kind of depends on safety--but there was a world in which people still could do a napkin thing like you did, if you're going to give it to someone who's really big in size and is really muscular, and that person might be offended if you think that they're queer. I think that that's something to be careful for based on how folks might have been socialized, but I think it's also okay to, you know, write on the napkin "I might not be your jam. This is awkward." (laughs) You know, whatever it is, we can still acknowledge the humanity in it, too. But I think the real thing is to just focus on does it seem like this person is picking up what I'm putting down? And if not, I'm respectful, and I walk away.

Roark

Totally.

Ali

Yeah. Which I think is fantastic advice for anyone of any orientation approaching someone ever.

Roark

Absolutely.

Ariella

I agree. I completely agree.

Ali

The number of times that I have very clearly not been open to what someone is putting down--

Ariella

Yes. We're not taught really what to look for, as far as whether someone's genuinely interested or not. And I think that the way that women have been socialized to behave can sometimes telegraph interest, when really it's discomfort, or trying to be polite and not shut someone down or make

them feel bad. When in reality, if anyone was taught how to actually read nonverbal communication in that way, you'd be able to see that my laughter with my closed arms and my squinting my eyes, you might be able to understand that that is...I'm not interested. You know what I mean? So it's kind of this missing education gap of what we can look for in other folks and there are classes to take in that and there are resources out there. I just took a great nonverbal consent class, which, if you have trouble understanding whether someone's picking up what you're putting down, a class like that can really help.

Roark

Actually at my elementary school--I think they might not teach it anymore, which is odd, because it was sort of before its time and so if anything, it should happen now. But it was a mandatory period of school. We had communication class. And a lot of it was body language, how to like how to navigate social scenes. From as functional to here's how to firmly shake someone's hand, or, you know, here's what it means when somebody is turned away from you. And their body language is saying they're very closed off, don't keep--unbelievable.

Ariella

Yeah, that's really great. I think that we need more of that.

Roark

Yeah.

Ali

Yeah, that is awesome. And I think that that's super important, too, I think to think about when we were talking earlier about, you know, navigating for those of our listeners who are straight and thinking about, you know, how to navigate when they're with their queer friends, or when they're kind of trying to be supportive, etc. I think we often come from that heteronormative lens that we don't even realize. So, a story that I'll tell is a close friend of mine, she's bisexual, and we were out together and this woman approached us and we were all talking. And it took me about fifteen minutes to realize that I was third wheeling in the conversation. (laughing) I was like, "I need to leave. I need to leave now"

Ariella

Yeah. Oh, my god. So funny.

Ali

But because I'm coming--I realized, wow, I'm coming from this lens where this person is just a friendly friend.

[Ariella](#)

Totally. Yeah, that's a really important thing to recognize. Sometimes I'll have code words with my friends for that purpose. (laughs)

[Roark](#)

That's super smart.

[Ali](#)

That's a smart idea. I mean, I do that when I--just in general, with my friends as well, of, you know, "Help," or "Hey, leave us alone."

[Ariella](#)

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Totally.

[Roark](#)

Those are very discreet code words, Ali. Help and Leave. So subtle. (laughing)

[Ali](#)

(laughing) Very, very subtle. And that is my brand. Subtley.

[Ariella](#)

That's really funny. That's a great thing to notice. I should--that's a really important, I guess I don't hear that perspective, right, because I am always talking queer people. So that's not something actually that comes up a lot. But that's a really interesting example for me to keep in mind for how straight folks can be better allies when it comes to our friends out flirting, because I'm kind of like, "Oh, I don't know. I usually go out with queer people." So that feels helpful. So I'm glad that you shared that so I can be like, "Well, Ali said..." If you feel comfortable.

Ali

Oh, yeah, absolutely. Please, and she and I laughed about it later. She's like, "Yeah, I kept being like when is this girl gonna leave?" (laughs)

Ariella

Oh my god, so funny, so funny. You're like "I am prepped next time." Next time you're gonna leave way too soon and she's gonna be like, "Where are you going?" (laughs)

Ali

"You leave me hanging with this stranger."

[Ariella](#)

Yeah. Totally.

[Ali](#)

"I'm trying to help you out!"

[Ariella](#)

Oh my god, so funny. Yeah, that will probably happen.

[Ali](#)

Yes, most likely. Well, one of the other things that we wanted to talk to you about actually related to--so as I mentioned, my friend is bisexual and a lot of the questions that we got from our listeners were women who are bisexual and trying to navigate bi erasure and how they can--especially if they primarily date men--I think a lot of listeners that wrote in have been concerned about communicating that to--especially if they're dating cis straight men--and communicating that without being, you know, potentially fetishized or, you know, all the things that are wrapped up in that. I'm curious your thoughts?

Ariella

Yeah, totally. I mean, bi fetishization is prominent. So I think it's a matter of, yeah, you might be fetishized and then you'll realize that this person isn't for you. Or if they are really cool and you feel like they are approaching this with a growth mindset, you can teach them, if you have the bandwidth. Or, you can set up the conversation ahead of time to tell them how you hope it is that they respond to the information you want to give to them, and hope that they fall in line in that way. But I would say that if you are a bi person, and you are dating cis straight guys, it's important that you are able to honor your identity, if that's what's important to you. So I would say still, you know, participate in queer things, find queer friends, because when we are in relationships like that, where there is bi erasure, it can feel really unsettling to not feel seen in our totality. So I would say just figure out how you will stay connected to community if you're in a monogamous relationship so that you know you're not erasing yourself, if that if that feels important to you to have queer community in that way.

Ali

Well, isn't that just the perfect, I think, sort of ethos of what we're getting at here, right? Is being connected to that community--and especially for anybody in a relationship--of maintaining that connection to who you are--

Ariella

Yes!

Ali

--in totality.

Ariella

Yes, totally. Yes, completely, completely agree. And it will help your relationship too, if you are connected to yourself and your friends and your interests outside of the relationship, which can be really hard, especially coming out of COVID. Because so much--if you were with a partner at that time--even me, I started dating someone during COVID, and our lives got super intertwined, because there wasn't access to a lot of other life. And trying to undo the the layers of that or to try to invite our social circles back in, it can be a really difficult process. So, it's important and be gentle with yourself, because it is a really big transition that a lot of folks are trying to make at the same time right now.

Ali

Yeah. Earlier in our recording when Roark and I did our updates, I went on a first date with a guy a couple weeks ago, and he texted me last week that he actually realized he wasn't ready to start dating post COVID yet. I

was his first date back out in the world, and he realized he wasn't ready for that yet.

[Ariella](#)

That's interesting. Yeah, I mean, we're gonna come up against certain boundaries that we have that we didn't know that we had, and all that is just a matter of honoring what's true for us and trying to express it in the kindest way possible. But it's--yeah, I can imagine that that's--I mean, the first time I went out to eat, I was like, "Have I ever been a person before?" I am new to this body, to these conversations," you know? So we're all adjusting. And I think the way that the world has opened back up so rapidly, just makes us feel like we shouldn't need adjustment time and it's not true. We do.

[Ali](#)

Mm. Yeah.

[Ariella](#)

I'm curious, do you--and maybe this is something you talk about but I just don't know, Ali, but--do you tell folks you're a dating coach and are you upfront about your business? How does that work for you?

Ali

That's a great question. So, it's not my full-time job. So I don't talk about it upfront immediately--

Ariella

So you have something else to talk about first.

Ali

Yes. If someone says what do you do for work, the thing that pays for the apartment I'm sitting in is not dating coaching.

Ariella

Right.

Ali

So it is an authentic-- and my career for the last fifteen years--so it is it is an authentic answer to say that I am in corporate retail. That's what I've done for the last fifteen years.

Ariella

Great. Uh huh.

Ali

But I do try to get it in--

Roark

Heh.

Ali

(laughing)

Roark

Sorry. I'm fifteen.

Ali

No. That...no.

Roark

(laughing) I'm so sorry.

Ariella

You're good.

Ali

Wow, I so rarely make dirty jokes that when I accidentally make one my whole body turns red. Okay.

Ariella

Perfect.

Ali

So, in any case, I have been trying to mention it sooner. In fact, I actually was about to post to my story, and then I lost track of time. I told somebody on Bumble today that I have a dating coaching business on the side. And he was really excited about it, asked me a couple questions. And then he said, "Well, could you be my dating coach? Because there's this girl on Bumble named Ali who seems really nice."

Ariella

Awwww!

Roark

Wow.

Ariella

I think that's kind of cute.

Ali

I loved it.

Ariella

Yeah, I thought you were gonna say--I thought it was going in a different direction. I thought it was going to "Oh, can you be my dating coach because there's this girl named Jessica on Bumble." (laughing) I was already rolling my eye, but that's actually really cute.

No, I'm a major cheese. I love cheese. So I thought that was really cute. But so I'm trying to inject it earlier and Roark, you talk about the podcast fairly early on in general, right? You've mentioned it.

Roark

Yeah, I tend to mention that I'm on--I have a podcast with this friend of mine. And so I do often mention it early. Because also, you know, similarly, this is this is definitely not my job. And...but it is enough of a thing that I want to do where I want somebody to be okay with it.

[Ariella](#)

Yeah.

[Roark](#)

And if they weren't, that's not a person that I can date, frankly. And so I think if I kind of mention it, mention the general content, and if they're like, "That sounds so much fun. I love to do this creative thing. It's so cool that you found a creative outlet." It becomes more sort of about that, then "Are you gonna talk about me on it?" You know? Then that gets a little weird.

[Ali](#)

Yeah. How do you navigate that?

[Ariella](#)

Totally. It's been interesting. At first my dating profiles during COVID were linked to my regular Instagram page, not my queer dating page, which tagged career dating coach. So now I actually archived everything on my regular page--I'm not super active on Instagram on my regular page--but I archived everything related to dating coaching, and removed it from my bio and say nothing about me as a dating coach. Because I'm finding that the inability to do any kind of separation is becoming stressful, where if I

want to meet someone, it's becoming one of the first things they find out about me. And that is feeling like...you have so many questions, which is really fun, but it also adds this really weird pressure into our dynamic where then I feel like I need to show up as the perfect date, which usually I am anyway. (laughs) But I just, I'm more feeling some pressure, and then the few times that someone has had the information or learns about the information, only one time was it fine. The other times, it was not fine. It was either someone intentionally--I mean, there was a really weird instance where someone was intentionally trying to sabotage the date, because she had the information. And was trying to fuck with me, so that was really messed up. So that kind of--

Ali

That's so messed up.

Ariella

Yeah, it was really fucked, so. So that kind of made me be like, "Oh, I'm not sure if people are privileged enough to have this information." And then the other time someone did kind of what you were talking about, but the way that I was thinking your situation was going to go, where then on the date she started to talk about someone else. And I was--she was like, "You should be my dating coach." I was like, "Ooh, I have really firm

boundaries." This is while we're out. I was like "I have really firm boundaries around not--I'm not coaching people that I've gone on dates with. So that can't happen. But we can always kinda talk about things casually or whatever." Because I was passing through town for this date, so it wasn't like things were going to necessarily go anywhere with this person. And then she started to really unload about her ex and having feelings for her. And I was kind of like, "Ooh, I'm so sorry. This is awkward. And totally on me. I wasn't clear. When I said that we can kind of talk about this casually, I actually did not mean when we're out together. When we're out together, I really want your attention to be just on me. So is there anything I could do to make this less awkward for you right now? Because I don't want to be talking about your ex while we're out." And she was like, "No." And then we just kind of had to sit with it. And move through it. (laughs)

Ali

Well good for you for communicating and sticking to that boundary.

Ariella

Oh yeah, 'm not gonna--I have one night out in this town. I'm not going to coach you. (laughing) On this situation with your ex. I hope we're having fun instead.

Ali

Yeah, good for you.

Ariella

Well, thanks.

Ali

No, I struggle with stuff like that where I'll say like, "Oh, no, I can't help," even with a friend, "I can't help you do that right now." And then I'm like, "Alright, I'll do it." (laughs)

Ariella

I know. It's hard. Boundaries are really tough. It's really--they're really tough. And sometimes it's easier with people you don't know. Sometimes it's harder. But it's definitely a skill to practice. It's really...it's a really tough one.

Ali

Yeah.

Roark

Totally.

Ali

Well, Ariella, thank you so much.

Ariella

That was fast!

Ali

Yeah!

Roark

We flew. But I feel like we covered so much.

Ariella

Yeah. We did. I just like talking. To you two, in particular--

Ali

You're in the right place for talking on end. But, let our listeners know. You know, we plugged you up at the front. But, where can they find you? And we've been also saying your handle throughout the entire episode.

(laughing)

Ariella

Yeah, just in case you missed it and you made it to the end of this episode. (laughing) My handle is @queerdatingcoach. Yeah, that's where you can find me. I'll be running another round of Date Better Boot Camp at some point in the near future. If you're interested in getting on their priority invite list for that, you can always send me a DM and let me know. But yeah, that's where I'm at. And queerdatingcoach.com if you want to check it out.

Roark

Amazing!

Ali

Yeah. Awesome. Thank you again, for being here. We really, really enjoyed--well, I don't wanna speak for Roark--but I think I can say that we really both enjoyed talking to you--

Ariella

You're like "I think Roark hated it. But I had fun." (laughs)

Roark

I give you permission to speak for me, Ali.

Ali

Thank you. Well, I speak for the pod when I say this was so fun and we really appreciate you coming on.

Ariella

It's been a total pleasure. Thanks for having me.