

Save the Date Podcast (produced by Coffee Meets Bagel)

Dawoon Kang

Hi everyone, this is Dawoon, your host and CMB's chief dating officer. We're starting off a little differently today because I have some news. This episode is our 20th and our final episode. We started Save the Date to give you, CMB daters, the tools that you need to date more confidently, so you can go on better dates and ultimately find a great relationship. In the twenty episodes, we covered topics as foundational as: what matters most in a relationship, what you must look for in a long term partner, what is vulnerability? And also topics that are super tactical, like how to create the best online dating profile, how to flirt, how to go beyond small talk, or how to talk about sex. We hope that you found this series informative and it has helped you become a confident dater. Please share the podcast and our Instagram clips with your friends and loved ones so they too can learn how to date confidently, go on great dates, and find a lasting relationship. Again, thank you so much for listening. It means the world to us. And now...on to our final Save the Date. Hello, everyone! Happy Pride. Welcome to Save the Date, your dating survival kit from Coffee Meets Bagel. I'm Dawoon, your host and CMB's chief dating

officer. Today I'm joined by Ariella Serur, a queer dating coach who's on a mission to disrupt traditional dating advice and transform the dating pool into one we enthusiastically want to jump into. I love that our mission really alligns. So in line with what Coffee Meets Bagel is trying to achieve, which is to give everyone a chance at love. I definitely want to ask you about how you came to create that mission, which is really inspiring. Ariella is not only a dating coach, she's a certified life coach, registered yoga teacher, and is currently receiving a graduate advanced certificate from Columbia University's School of Psychology and Sexuality, Women and Gender with a concentration in LGBTQ issues. In her practice, she helps quote, "kind, queer folks navigate the dating landscape so they have the courage to go after what they want in dating and in life without feeling overwhelmed or exhausted." close quote. Thanks for joining, Ariella.

[Ariella](#)

My pleasure. I'm so happy to be here. I know that's a mouthful to read.

[Dawoon](#)

(laughs)

Ariella

You did great.

Dawoon

Great. I really am curious about your mission statement, which when I first read it, I thought it was so inspiring. How did you come up with the particular statement? I feel like there must be a, you know, good back story.

Ariella

(laughing) Totally. Well, how I came up with the statement is really how I came up with my practice and what it is that I do. And basically, I had gotten my life coaching certification and I was trying to figure out "Who do I want to help? What's the change I want to make?" And I knew I wanted to help queer folks, people--anyone in the LGBTQ+ community. So it was like, "What do those people need? What am I qualified to do?" And it came to my attention that dating coaches existed.

Dawoon

Mhmm.

Ariella

I hadn't previously known. And I have always been obsessed with dating. I have a very interesting background with it. But people in my life know me as the person that dates. So I was like "Let me look into this a little bit more." And I found in my research, that a lot of dating coaches out there spoke in language that wasn't applicable to queer folks. It wasn't applicable to folks that weren't cis women. It was very exclusive and based on really strict heteronormative ideals--

Dawoon

Right.

Ariella

--that we're kind of taught to feed into. There was a lot of psychological manipulation, how to get him to text you back, that kind of thing. And the more I read it, I was like, "Wait, we gotta tear down this whole system, and rebuild it from a place of integrity and personal values and clear communication, and gender-free, anti-oppressive--as much as possible--dating advice that's actually inclusive to everybody that wants to be included, instead of inclusive to an elite few.

Dawoon

Yeah, I love that. And the thing I really like about that approach-- value-driven kind of dating advice--is that it really will be applicable to everyone, it doesn't matter if you're queer, non queer, you're straight, right? Because it really is just my personal values instead of the norms and expectation that's been formed in this heteronormative society that we live in.

Ariella

Absolutely.

Dawoon

Yeah. And so I think, you know, for our listeners, whether you're queer or not, I think the conversation today is going to be applicable for all of you because of that. Let's kind of step back, for those of us-- you know, we have all kinds of daters listening--for those people are not familiar with queer dating, could you explain a little bit more about what it means to be queer? What kind of identities and experiences in your opinion falls under this category?

Ariella

Yeah, so when I say queer, I'm using queer as the umbrella term right now for everybody that falls under the LGBTQIA+ spectrum. Now, some of those folks won't actually identify their sexuality as specifically queer. They'll be like "I'm part of the LGBTQIA spectrum or I'm bisexual," and they won't use the term queer. Queer is sometimes just a shorthand for anybody who is not cis and heterosexual. Everybody that's not cis and straight can kind of fall under this umbrella. So often I'll say queer or queer and trans, particularly because sometimes binary trans people don't identify as queer as a sexuality. So it's kind of everyone who's not cisgender and straight.

Dawoon

Right.

Ariella

And cisgender means identifying with the sex you were given at birth-

Dawoon

Yep.

[Ariella](#)

--and its corresponding gender. So, if you were assigned female at birth, and you feel like a woman, you're a cisgender person.

[Dawoon](#)

Yep.

[Ariella](#)

So that's a little tidbit if your listeners are unfamiliar.

[Dawoon](#)

Great, great, thank you so much for that basic explanation.

[Ariella](#)

(chuckles) Yeah.

[Dawoon](#)

Let's go back to kind of what you alluded to in the beginning, you know, what you observed a lot of dating advice and tips based on--it was very heteronormative kind of dating advice that's not applicable to--or it doesn't speak to the queer community. Could you kind of

delve into some of that, just as an example? And how you've kind of-- I don't know if modification is the right word--but how your current approach is different than that.

Ariella

Yeah, for sure. I think--so for an example, kinda like I mentioned before, there is the--I see a lot of ads, and a lot of dating coaches out there who are particular--usually straight white men telling women how to act in order to get men to pay attention to them.

Dawoon

Mhmm.

Ariella

That's kind of a lot of dating coaches. Obviously, you have some amazing exceptions on this podcast. (laughs) But a lot of the dating coach industry, when it's like that, is kind of interwoven a bit with pickup artistry. There's so many overlapping tactics to get people's attention. So basically, I like to ignore all of that and start from-- exactly like we were saying--values-based. And instead of trying to figure out what you can say to get someone to text you back, it's

more "How...why can't we just say what we want to say?" or "How can I say the thing that I want to say in a way that it will be best received?" or "How can I get consent to have a conversation that feels a little awkward?" or "How can I approach someone and really understand if they're interested in me without trying to check for--" in pickup, it's indicators of interest that are like, "Okay, three check marks and I can ask this person to go home with me," when we're not really acknowledging that even what we understand as checkmarks, what we understand as indicators of interest, oftentimes are the way that we've been socialized to behave.

Dawoon

Right.

Ariella

Especially as women. So it's kind of--I like to look at the broader sense of how can we communicate well, regardless of what we're going after, and who we're talking to? How can we show up as our fullest selves in that way? And how can we question everything else?

Dawoon

Right, right. Yeah, so, you know, this reminds me of a few episodes ago I was talking to--I've, you know, I forgot which dating coach that I was speaking to--but how these kinds of stereotypes about dating and what, you know, men should do, women should do, blah blah blah--a lot of times actually end up sabotaging our own dating success.

Ariella

Totally.

Dawoon

So I have a lot of, for example, female friends who are kind of waiting for their, you know--straight female friends--waiting for, you know, their male counterpart to take action, ask them out, right?

Ariella

Totally.

Dawoon

And because--they have no problem asking them out, but they also feel--again, because of the stereotypes that are associated with dating--that they're gonna be misunderstood as somebody who's desperate, or too aggressive, or whatever else. And so because of their fear, they end up kind of acting in accordance with the stereotype that's been assigned to a straight woman, for example. Which I don't think is very healthy, or, you know, for both men and woman, you know, how liberating, right, would it be if all of us could just kind of speak up our mind and feel free--have the freedom to be able to do so?

Ariella

Yes, totally. Because if not, then we are continuing to perpetuate the system and perpetuate stereotype and gender binaries and whatnot, when--and we'll pass that down, then. If your friend winds up getting with a guy in that way, what are their kids, if they have kids, going--how are they going to see the world, you know? As opposed to trying to really tear this down before we start putting ourselves out there, then we can really move from a place of values.

Dawoon

Yeah.

Ariella

One of the first things I do with clients is get clear on what their values are so that I'm also not projecting my own values onto their dating experience, right?

Dawoon

Yeah.

Ariella

So I'll get clear on your values so that will make your dating profile born from your values, and send your text messages from your values, and figure out how you're going to approach someone you're interested in based on what you believe and your values. So, I think that that is kind of our--that can be our North Star, instead of the societal boxes that are usually our North Stars, and we politely stay inside.

Dawoon

Right, right. Actually, one of my questions was going to be what are some of the most common challenges that your clients come to you for help these days? Are one of them communication? We're just now talking a lot about communication and how--I think in dating, whether or not it's because of stereotypes or something else, because you're kind of nervous and of course you want to make a good impression, and you don't want to make a mistake--communication in general, is just challenging.

Ariella

Yeah.

Dawoon

And then the stereotype, of course, adds more complexity to it. So I'm curious, is communication a big issue that your clients come to you for?

Ariella

Yeah, sometimes. I'd say communication is up there. A lot of my practice is based on self-understanding. Understanding yourself and

your desires, and what's going on for you, and then learning how to express it in a way that other people can receive.

Dawoon

Mmm.

Ariella

So, yes, a lot of people come to me for communication. And it might also be because that is kind of what my work is geared towards. So sometimes communication is yes, sure, writing dating profiles or, you know, having a fuck buddy that you want to have a serious conversation with and now you've developed feelings. So it's like, "How do I say those things?" Or "How do I tell my partner I want to-- the person I'm seeing--how do I tell them that I want to be having sex more?" Or, you know, "how do I ask out the person that works at the dispensary I'm really interested in?"

Dawoon

Yeah.

Ariella

So sometimes we can learn communication in that way. But another thing that I specifically have folks come to me for--I have a lot of people in their late twenties who have prioritized career, who are now like, "Oh, I guess I should have started dating. I feel a little late to the game, I haven't really put much effort into this--I was really focused on my life and setting it up." Or I have folks that came out after--I mean, we say "came out later"--but there really is no timeline, so I'm putting that in air quotes for the people listening. But sometimes that can even feel like you came out later when you came out in your mid twenties as opposed to high school. Or for some reason you're navigating the dating pool in a different way and you want more support doing that. So it's mainly folks come to me if they want to learn how to date better, if they've been dating and it's not feeling aligned for them, or it's not going in the way that they want it to, or they want to learn how to date, period. And they either have never dated before or are new to dating in a particular pool, be it a queer pool, or a non-monogamous pool, anything along those lines. That's mainly what folks reach out for.

Dawoon

I see. Let's, you know, I find the more specific we can get into, the more helpful it is for our daters. So you know, you mentioned some of your clients, they came out quote unquote, "later" in their life, or they feel like they did, and they're kind of starting to date in the queer community for the first time--what are some tips for those of our listeners who are in that pool? What are some tips that you could--you know, or words of encouragement you could share with them?

Ariella

Totally. One: that there is no late, you're perfectly on time. We're happy to have you! Be gentle with yourself. There is a lot of learning that will be happening and a lot of--sometimes the question that comes up is "How do I figure out--I know I'm queer. I know I'm new to being queer. I don't want people to feel like I'm experimenting with them. And I also am not exactly sure what I like or who appeals most to me and whatnot." So, I would say to get--one of the things that I talk people through is feelings-based standards. So to get really clear on how you want to be feeling around someone you're involved with, so that--like in your last episode--we can ignore, we can kind of let race and sometimes gender for queer folks, we can allow type to

all fade into the background and we can really question what we've been taught in that way. And we can go out with lots of different people and see "How am I feeling around this person?" So I would say to focus on how do you want to be feeling around the folks that you are going to date. Then, in the moment being like, "Hm, how is it that I'm actually feeling when I'm out with this person?" And understanding, if you are on your queer journey, it's okay to learn as you go.

Dawoon

Mhmm.

Ariella

I think a lot of us have the fear in our head that we're gonna hurt people, or there's a lot of tropes out there of straight girls making out with their queer friends at parties and then being like, "Oh, I'm still straight," you know. Tropes and so many of us have been there-- myself included. (laughs)

Dawoon

(laughs)

Ariella

Because of that, a lot of us feel inhibited to actually try and put ourselves out there, because we aren't a hundred percent clear on what it is we're looking for. And I think that is probably the biggest thing to tell new queer daters, you don't need to have a hundred percent of the information as you enter into the dating pool.

Dawoon

Mmm.

Ariella

You can really guess, be kind, be transparent about how things are going for you, and learn by doing. Not learn by researching and trying to have it all figured out first.

Dawoon

Yeah, because a theoretical kind of understanding is different than actual practice.

Ariella

Yeah.

Dawoon

Would you say it's important for, you know, those of us who are starting this for the first time, and you mentioned "I want to make sure that the other person knows that I'm not experimenting, that they're not being experimented on. But, you know, at the same time, I'm also trying to figure myself out, do you think it's important that you be transparent about--

Ariella

About that?

Dawoon

--where you're at? Yeah.

Ariella

So I think this is largely up to you. Because you need to know in your heart of hearts you're not experimenting. I think that if you know that, and if it's not impeding--like in your last episode, about the elephant in the room--if you're able to be present with this person, and you're not like, "God, didn't wind up saying that this is the first time I'm going out with someone like this, and whatever." If you're able to be

present, I think it's totally up to you. Your past is your past. If you know that you're queer and feel comfortable in that, your past history does not dictate what you need to share or not share as it relates to newness. I think that if you're in a sexual situation, and you're feeling confused, or not present, or like you don't know what to do, and you're being really taken out of where you are because those thoughts are in your mind, it's totally cool to talk about it--

Dawoon

Yeah.

Ariella

--if that's drawing you away from the situation. I don't think there's a hard and fast rule here. It's whatever feels authentic to you and allows you to be present.

Dawoon

Yeah, you know, this almost reminds me of--sometimes we get, I get questions from daters, like "Do I communicate this tricky situation that I'm in?" For example, "I am a divorcee, when is the right time for me to actually share this with my date?" And then, you know, I give

the same exact advice, when it feels authentic to you. And if you find yourself worrying "I feel like I should," there's something there, you know, for whatever reason, your self is telling there's something there that you need to look into. And to kind of ask "Why do I feel this way?" And if there's a legit reason, yeah go and do share--

[Ariella](#)

Totally.

[Dawoon](#)

--but it just has to feel authentic to you. There is no right or wrong answer here. And I guess, kind of going back to the whole reason why your dating practice--dating coaching practice--is based on personal values.

[Ariella](#)

Yes. And so what we're talking about here is really the question of disclosure. When do I disclose a certain thing about myself? Which is really common also, as it relates to gender, it relates to trans folks when they disclose if someone on a dating app doesn't know, and also really big as it relates to disability. So these are all areas in which

you have to kind of see how has this worked for me in the past? What allows me to feel most present? What is safest logistically?

Dawoon

Yeah.

Ariella

And so it's a complicated issue and a really, really personal one.

Dawoon

Yeah. And you also have to feel good about the fact that, you know, the relationship is such that it doesn't feel--it feels authentic, and it feels good, and it doesn't feel misleading. If you're constantly asking yourself, "Oh my god--" just pause. And it requires--I think it warrants a close observation. And also the other takeaway that I kind of pulled from what you shared is for--particularly for those of us who are kind of exploring this for the first time--it's important to be introspective, right?

Ariella

Totally.

Dawoon

Because yeah, because you're figuring it out. And, you know, each interaction I'm sure there's going to be a lot of learning that we take on about ourselves, about what we like. So, you know, that seems one of the key lessons.

Ariella

Totally. I think being introspective is spot on and assessing how it feels in the moment--if you need to go to the bathroom and get some water or remove yourself from the situation. Or if you have something that you play with that makes you feel really grounded in the moment--anything that allows you to be like, "Okay, this is where I am. And this is how it's going for me." And I think all of that is a super important part of the process.

Dawoon

Great. Switching gears a little bit. You know, we talked a lot about heteronormative expectation and how a lot of times that really sabotages our own dating success--are there expectations and norms that exist in the queer community that you observe that is just, you know, getting in the way of our dating success for our queer daters?

Ariella

You know, I've been asked this before--there is not overarching themes in this way for me so far in my work. And if there are, a lot of it is still pinned back to social structures and the way that we've been socialized. So if anything is showing up that's really inhibiting queer daters, it's kind of still the same things that show up that inhibit straight daters. Or, it could be internalized homophobia, or things along those lines, where someone still has some barriers to transcend to be really comfortably out. Or there are problems being out to your family and wanting to date and wanting your partner to feel supported, but there are certain family members that aren't aware. So that sometimes comes up, but I would say, for the most part, it's the same kind of communication things that come up with everybody, and where gender roles and--okay, you know what? There is one, there's one that comes up actually--

Dawoon

Oh great.

Ariella

And this is when--I was on a podcast and someone called this (Australian accent) "getting stuck in the chat." She's Australian, the podcast host. And she's queer and she was talking about how sometimes she'll be on a date with someone--with a woman--and they will both be talking so much, and they really want to make a move. And neither of them are able to kind of move through making a move because of our socialization in that way of quote, unquote, "men are supposed to be making the first move." So she talks about, she finds herself to keep getting "stuck in the chat, stuck in the chat." So it's like, "How do we actually transcend the physical barrier between us if we can tell that someone's interested?" So I'd say that's probably the one thing that has come up multiple times...where I see people need some guidance.

Dawoon

Yeah.

Ariella

Beyond that, it's a lot of--there's more of a question mark around how we're supposed to show up, and more kind of creativity and fluidity in

social roles when we're showing up in a queer way, for the most part. So it's not super binary in "I have to wait for this person to text me because they're this gender," or whatever it is.

Dawoon

Yeah.

Ariella

So I say stuck in the chat's the one I do see come up.

Dawoon

Let's talk about that, because that, I'm sure, a lot of us who are listening, you know, some of us at least have run into the situation where I want to make the move, but I really just don't know how, because of the socialization.

Ariella

Yeah.

Dawoon

Any help you can provide there?

Ariella

(laughing) Okay, there's a few things. One--so first, it depends if you're reading the other person, if this other person seems really interested, or if they seem like you can't get a read or if they seem not interested, right?

Dawoon

Yeah.

Ariella

So we'll kind of approach all of these in different ways. If you can't get a read, sometimes it's nice to cross the physical barrier--not to touch them, but to move closer to their circle and see how it affects them.

Dawoon

Mmm.

Ariella

So sometimes that's an easier way of even--there's a menu across the table--if we're not using QR codes--you know? Something that like

my hand is going into your space and seeing did something feel buzzy there? Did they stay where they were? Were their hands resting on the table, if you got closer were they kind of pulling back and sitting upright? So it's kind of noticing how people are responding to us.

Dawoon

Mmm.

Ariella

That's one thing to do. Another thing if you're in a place where you would--like in this example, on this podcast I was mentioning--she was at her apartment and this person was over with her. So right? That's a totally different situation, but they sat on opposite sides of the couch.

Dawoon

(laughs)

Ariella

So that would be a matter of first getting your bodies closer in space. So that could be like "Do you mind if I sit closer to you?" Or it could be one of you going to the bathroom-- or if you go to the bathroom and you come back and you choose to sit closer and see how that feels. It's a lot of testing and recalibrating and noticing and then voicing if that's, you know, going right so--and then I'd say the last thing is just to literally say "I'm thinking about--I'm thinking about kissing you. Can I kiss you?" Or anything, any variation on a consent-based theme of "I want to do this thing. Is that alright with you?"

Dawoon

Yeah.

Ariella

Which I think is always a safe way to handle a first kiss if you are nervous, or you can call it out. You can just say, "Wow, I'm so nervous and I really want to kiss you. Can I do that?"

Dawoon

Yeah. Oh my god, how cute is that? (laughs) That's so adorable.

Ariella

(laughing) I think it's okay to name--we could just name more of what it is that is actually going on inside of our bodies.

Dawoon

Yeah.

Ariella

And normalize that we don't need to pretend to be ultra confident, sure daters a hundred percent of the time--it's not realistic.

Dawoon

(laughs) Yeah, because who really is, right?

Ariella

Exactly.

Dawoon

Maybe, you know, very, very unusual, you know, .0001% of people, but I mean, I certainly can speak for myself--I'm totally a wreck when I,

you know, when I was dating. Especially in the early days of dating is--
-yeah, I'm just so nervous.

[Ariella](#)

Totally.

[Dawoon](#)

And the tip that you gave, I think, especially when it comes to a physical move, consent is really important, right? And that tip is so-- and that's why safety is so important and, you know, making sure you have a good read on the person is important and calibrating and making small steps. And that's such a great tip for anyone, anyone who's dating--

[Ariella](#)

Yeah. Totally.

[Dawoon](#)

Straight, queer, whatever. If you want to make a move on physically, that's...you know, reading is important. And if you feel like you--I think you should err on the side of confirming, and, you know, 100%

certainty when it comes to this by actually naming it and asking versus kind of jumping the gun when you're unclear what's going on with the other person?

Ariella

Yes. Also there are great non--I just took a great non-verbal consent class.

Dawoon

Mmm!

Ariella

So if you're someone that is confused, about "how do I read these skills?" Also acknowledging sometimes, based on neurodivergence, if someone's autistic, it can be really, really challenging for folks to actually read what's going on with other people. So, totally normal. And there are a bunch of resources out there to help us learn how to read other folks better, or you can always name "I'm having trouble gauging how you're feeling in this moment. Would you mind cluing me in or letting me know?" Or whatever it is, we can practice speaking up in that way, too.

Dawoon

Yeah. I love that. Can we go back to the topic of those of us who are kind of exploring this for the first time? And I'm not...you know, how can I get more comfortable? I love the specific tip you gave here about, you know, what we can communicate. And so if I'm somebody like that, and I'm dating for the first time, I feel like I'm at a point where I feel like I want to share that I'm at this stage. That it feels right to me, but I don't know how to express that. How could I do that?

Ariella

So, just to make sure I'm understanding your question. The question is: how do I actually tell someone that I am dating for the first time?

Dawoon

Mhmm.

Ariella

Because I want this person to have the information?

Dawoon

Yeah. I'm kind of dating in the queer community for the first time and I'm new here, and I'm trying to figure out what I want kind of thing.

Ariella

Mhmm. So, I'd be curious about the context of the conversation first, so it's a little hard to kind of jump in there. Like if you're on a date with someone...if you're dating someone casually, and it's going well, and you're not feeling ready to be in a committed, monogamous relationship yet, because you still feel like there is more learning to do for yourself on your queer journey, I can see that being a situation where you're like "this, you know, I--" Okay, so then how you would have that conversation is, first you would get consent to have a difficult conversation. See if the other person has space for it. Or has time. Then I would--

Dawoon

Like, "could I bring something to you?" or something like that?

Ariella

Yeah, totally. Exactly like that. So if we're hanging out, I might be like, "I have something that I've been really feeling called to share with you. It might require a little bit--It might be it might be difficult to hear. It might not be. It might require a little bit of emotional work. Maybe not, but it might. Do you--does now feel like an okay time to talk about this or would you rather wait till after dinner or as we're walking around? What feels comfortable for you?" Something like that. I mean, that was kind of a long-winded one. (laughing) You could just be like, "I have something kind of tricky to talk about. Can I talk to you about it?" You know, there's all these--I'm just in the camp of name what is present and true for you.

Dawoon

Yeah, but this is good because what--it is expressing what feels true for you. And it could look long-winded, like the example you shared--

Ariella

Yeah, totally.

Dawoon

It could be something else, right? It doesn't really matter. There's no right or wrong. And so, you know, I think there's a tendency--at least for me--I was like, "Oh my god," criticizing how I'm expressing myself, because I'm like, "I'm babbling on. Shut up! What are you doing?" But really there's (laughing) no right answer.

Ariella

There's no right answer. And, so much so that you could actually be like, "Wow, I'm really babbling on to avoid talking about this thing with you. (laughing) I'm gonna just--are we good? I'm gonna start saying it, is that okay?"

Dawoon

(laughing)

Ariella

There is no--this is all born in your own style of communication. We could totally name tendencies we're noticing inside of ourselves, too, that we're saying.

Dawoon

Right.

Ariella

I think that there's no wrong here. As long as--when it comes to having a conversation like this, I think the only thing to do is to make sure that the other person is prepared to have a conversation with you.

Dawoon

Great. Great, great. So I did that, I got the consent, and I was told this is a good time...

Ariella

So I might say something like, "I am really enjoying seeing you. I want to keep seeing you. And it feels like we might be moving towards partnership. And I'm not feeling ready for that step. I am new to my queer journey and feel like I have some more understanding of myself that I need to do before I take that step with someone and I just want us to be on the same page about that. And I want you to have this

information so that you can act accordingly and do what's comfortable and right for you."

Dawoon

Great.

Ariella

That might be a way.

Dawoon

Wow, it sounds so easy when I listen to you say it. (laughs)

Ariella

(laughs) You know what, I would just think about "What do you hope the outcome of telling this person is?" I'd get really clear on what is the intention behind giving this information to someone else?

Dawoon

Right.

Ariella

If it's you're feeling guilty about it, or you're withholding, I would probably investigate that a bit more. I'd be like, "Okay, am I? What makes me have to tell this person? My past is my past in that way--" There are no hard and fast rules when it comes to how we handle coming out.

Dawoon

Yeah.

Ariella

And related to other things about your past, I wouldn't say that that's a--sometimes you really should be sharing things about your past.

Dawoon

(laughs)

Ariella

But as it relates to your own coming out journey, there's no--it's totally up to you.

Dawoon

Yeah.

Ariella

But a lot of times people might feel more comfortable kind of bringing it up on a first date. And that could look like--if you're gonna get consent, it could be a little bit more like "I have something that might be awkward to share." You know? It might not be a deep kind of thing where we're already seeing each other. So, your consent can be based on, you know, what's actually true in the situation. So "I have something to share. I feel awkward, I'm feeling inclined to talk to you about it. Is that okay if I share something personal?"

Dawoon

Yeah.

Ariella

That could be the way that that consent piece looks and then I could be like, "I am feeling awkward. I want to let you know, this is the first time I'm actually dating in a queer way. I'm really enjoying it. Nothing

to worry about. I know I'm queer. I'm happy to be here, but I'm feeling inclined to share this information with you."

Dawoon

Yeah.

Ariella

It could be like that. I guess I approach these conversations with a bit of a sense of humor, and understanding that we all have shit, and we all have stuff that we can share or not share--that it's okay.

Dawoon

Yeah.

Ariella

And sometimes it's not that deep, and we can, you know, get consent and be responsible and have hard conversations, and they can feel less hard than we think that they might feel.

Dawoon

Yeah, yeah, exactly. You know, I think, like I said, when I hear you say it, it sounds super simple. But when I'm, you know, when you're actually in the situation, just it could feel hard, because it's jumbled with our emotion, right? Like, we're feeling nervous and I don't know how the other person is going to react. Hopefully positively, but I'm worried about that. So it could feel more complicated than it actually is--

Ariella

Totally. So what I do with clients in this way, is that I'll never give--if you were a client, I would never spew something like that to you. Because then you're gonna try to emulate what I'm saying--

Dawoon

Right!

Ariella

--instead of what's right for you, right? So instead, I'll be like, "Okay, these are the bullet points you want to hit. You want to get consent, however that looks for you. You will probably want to name what's

going on for you that you want to share this information. You'll also probably want to name what your intention for sharing the information is, or how you hope the other person will respond."

Dawoon

Yeah.

Ariella

And then you want to say the thing. And then sometimes you want to ask a question after.

Dawoon

Yeah. Right, right, right.

Ariella

So I'd say that, in that piece, those might be the five steps I'd say.

Dawoon

Yeah. This almost reminds me of nonviolent communication concept.

[Ariella](#)

Totally.

[Dawoon](#)

Yeah, yeah. So for those of you--or those of us who are not familiar with the concept, it's basically a way of communication, a lot of introspection that has to go in before you actually communicate. So first, you kind of make an observation about the situation. And then, kind of like you said, am I feeling guilty? What is the emotion that's compelling me to actually share this? So you kind of identify that and share that. But it's surprising because we're not used to being so introspective as to why we want to say certain things. If you start asking "why why why," there's so much that actually can get uncovered that you may choose not to share, but it's a discovery for yourself also.

[Ariella](#)

Totally.

Dawoon

Right? And then the third layer is "Is there a need that, you know, an underlying need that I'm trying to be met with?" So for example, here, maybe I'm feeling guilty, and maybe I need reassurance that that's okay from the other person. That maybe that's what I need. Maybe that's why I'm feeling compelled to share, as an example. And then you can kind of make the request, if that's what you need, so that the person can actually give it to you if they feel inclined to. Yeah. But, you know, but I remember when I first learned about the concept, I was blown away by the level of thought that's required for me to just understand what I want (laughing) you know?

Ariella

Totally. Yes, it is not always so simple. But, yes, it is--I only know a bit about--I've taken a class on nonviolent communication. So it's in the soup of how I guide people. And I want to acknowledge that these words come out of my mouth very fast, and these scripts and these tools feel familiar to me. And if they don't feel familiar to you, or if it sounds way easier in my mouth, that is totally normal.

Dawoon

Mhmm.

Ariella

Communication is my bread and butter in this way. So this is what I really care about and work with folks on. So, don't worry or feel self-conscious. We are not taught to communicate in this way for the most part, and that is totally normal. And there are resources out there. And we can learn how to how to do it and incorporate it.

Dawoon

Yeah, and it's also about practicing, right?

Ariella

Yes.

Dawoon

And every practice is gonna make it perfect. So first time you try it on, it's gonna feel--you may even feel awkward, like, "Oh, hey, I'm just saying all these words."

Ariella

Yes.

Dawoon

Right?

Ariella

And then, you can even say that! You could be like "I'm practicing expressing myself in a way that's different than I usually do. So this might take me a moment to process. I really want to try to do this in the best way I know how. Can you just hold space for me while I am figuring out what it is that I want to say?" You know? We can add all of it. We can just have the human experience be part of the conversation.

Dawoon

Right. And the thing that I think we often forget is, you know, again, when I hear you say that, I'm thinking if my date said that I'd be like, "This is so adorable, and the fact that person is putting so much thought into what they want to communicate, that's hot!" But I think a lot of times, I don't know, I tend to be self-critical. So then, in my

head, I'm like, "Okay, well, this is gonna sound badly and stupid."
But, you know, I think when we kind of turn the table around, and think of ourselves, our date saying that, I mean, it really is very endearing in a way, right?

[Ariella](#)

Yeah.

[Dawoon](#)

I've never--

[Ariella](#)

And it shows emotional intelligence and--

[Dawoon](#)

Exactly!

[Ariella](#)

That same turning the frame around or turning the camera around or "How would--I if I heard my best friend say this or if I heard my date say this--how would I feel? How much less judgmental am I of

everyone else besides myself," you know? Those are all really important tools for dating, too.

Dawoon

Yeah, yeah. So, you know, I really hope all the listeners out there, you know, start experimenting with this, because I can tell you from a personal experience, even when I--when the conversation didn't go as articulate in my head as I hoped, it never--the other person was always so appreciative of my attempt to be transparent and thoughtful, and sharing.

Ariella

Totally. I agree. I think that's what will happen.

Dawoon

Great, another specific question: so I've heard about this biases that exist in the queer community in terms of who's authentically queer, especially regarding bisexual people. So if I'm a bisexual dater, any tips on how I could deal with that?

Ariella

Honestly, that's the same tip of how do we deal with any micro or macro aggression that we face in the dating, in the world world. It is true that there is so much--I don't want to say hierarchy--but there are so many biases within the dating community, like you said. And I think it's on all of us to examine where these biases come from, and try to unlearn those. And if we're finding ourselves having a conversation with someone who's bi and then feeling a type of way about it, that's on us to do the work to handle that. And it's on the people themselves who are bi and who notice that someone says something biphobic or who rolls their eyes when you say that you have an ex boyfriend who is straight--or whatever it was--to handle the situation the way that they feel most comfortable and to either allow those people to slip out of their dating pool and move on or engage the people in conversation. But I'd say it's the way we handle anything that is a microaggression, right?

Dawoon

Yeah, yeah, I mean drawing--being firm and drawing boundaries I think it's really important here. And making sure that you kind of--I don't know if protect ourselves is the right word--but just not allowing

those people to get to us, I think is kind of the word that came to me. So yeah, you're right, whether it's this particular situation or any kind of particular situations with any kind of aggression, do not--just do not accept that, I think. That's the number one important kind of message that I would like to share...do not tolerate it.

Ariella

Mhmm. Totally. I agree. And I have a bit of--a part of my curriculum of the course I'm running now kind of talks about how to deal with microaggressions on first dates, and how to navigate a pretty awkward conversation after if someone said something that hurt your feelings, especially if you want to engage with them. Especially if you're like, "Oh, I actually really like this person, I think that they could be better." (laughs)

Dawoon

Yeah

Ariella

How do we, you know, call them in and grant them the grace to correct them if they're open to it, or acknowledge that we don't have the space for that and we're not interested and move on.

Dawoon

Right. So, one of the last topics I wanted to touch on is dating apps, of course, being Coffee Meets Bagel is a dating app. (laughs)

Ariella

Totally.

Dawoon

And so right now, Coffee Meets Bagel is currently working on being more inclusive in terms of gender representation. Our current setup, for example, it doesn't, we don't have an option for trans people to be able to sign up, which is really unfortunate, honestly, I personally am embarrassed about that. But the good news is it's being worked on right now. First, could you talk about why this is so important for any kind of dating apps, Coffee Meets Bagel or not, to have these options?

Ariella

Yeah, because people feel really excluded! (laughing)

Dawoon

Right, right.

Ariella

It's important so that, you know, anyone who wants to date, or use your service, or support your business can actually do that.

And...yeah. That's why it's really important and it's tough. Dating apps can be really hard for trans folks, and hard for queer folks. But there are a lot of apps that are trying to do things differently, or better, and are handling it in many different ways with varied levels of success. But it's important so that everybody that wants to be at the table can be at the table.

Dawoon

Yeah, absolutely. For those of us who are, you know, queer daters, and are using apps that are not specifically that, you know, that I can sign up to use, but they're not specifically targeted towards queer communities. So there's like all kinds of-all types of people kind of

involved. Any dating tips for--you know, there could be some situations that gets created because of that setup--so any dating tips you could provide for those of us who are using general dating apps?

[Ariella](#)

Well, it's interesting, because my brain originally was going to, you know, tips for anybody on dating apps. The parts where situations can really be created are--and I'm not sure what Coffee Meets Bagel's plan is--but there are basically two different ways that apps are handling gender at this point. One of them is that you can pick from a pretty--a gender expansive list--what gender you identify as, and then you can, on the other end, you can be like, "Okay, I want to swipe for--" and you check off how many genders you want to be swiping for. That's one way to handle it. The other way to handle it is more common at this point, which is where you can pick your gender from a gender expansive list, you can choose to have it show on your profile or not, but then you still need to pick a binary gender of which deck you're gonna show up in, which is still a little bit problematic, and can be dysphoric for trans folks who want to be on the app, but then still have to be like, "Oh, but I still have to choose if I'm a man or a woman," if they're non-binary, and so on. So I would say,

regardless, what can be tricky here is that if you're on a dating app like the second example, where you're a trans person showing up and you picked that you're gonna be in the women's deck, and then people are swiping on you, and then either finding out that you're trans after or seeing that in your name and saying something hurtful, that can be really hard. There can be a lot of aggressive, not nice things said in dating apps and in life in general. So, I think it comes down to, again, honoring your own boundaries, what you have space for. And sometimes it's taking a break from a dating app, or leaning into meeting people in a different way, because dating apps are just one tool. And it could be turning up the volume on your communities and allowing friends of friends to introduce you. If you find that putting yourself on dating apps is putting you too much in the line of fire to be harassed or hurt, then it might not be where you feel best. But hopefully there are great people out there on dating apps too and it's just a matter of conserving your health, and your mental health, and your mental bandwidth and doing what feels good for you and not what feels harmful for you. And getting the support you need when things are hurtful.

Dawoon

Right. Thank you for that. Well, okay, wow. So, I see that our time has flown by. Ariella, so this was really an informative discussion, even for myself. So thank you so much.

Ariella

You're welcome.

Dawoon

If our listeners want to, you know, stay in touch with you, or are interested in your coaching practice, or whatever else is that you're up to these days, how do they stay in touch with you or learn more about you?

Ariella

Yeah, so you can follow me on Instagram @queerdatingcoach. That's also my website, queerdatingcoach.com. Right now I'm running a course called Date Better Boot Camp, which is a four-week intensive of everything that you would need to know in order to learn how to date or date better. I'm not sure, by the time that this airs, I might be starting signups for the next round. I might be in between rounds. So

if that's something that's interesting to you, feel free to shoot me a DM and kind of ask where I'm at in the process if it's not clear, based on my social media, and I'll get you on a little priority invite list. And, yeah, we'll see if it's a fit moving forward!

Dawoon

Great. Awesome. And my last two quick questions that I ask--well actually just one question that I ask every Save the Date guest. What is the best dating advice you've ever received?

Ariella

Received? Trust your gut. I guess, it would be that. I can tell you why I love dating, my biggest piece of dating advice, if you want to hear that? (laughing)

Dawoon

(laughs) Yeah. Please!

Ariella

I love dating, because I never take for granted how impactful a brief moment can be on my life. And I think that you feel kind of similar,

based on what I've heard you talk about, that it's kind of allowing all of these moments to be learning and to be life lessons.

Dawoon

Yeah.

Ariella

And what there is to receive from an interaction that isn't necessarily dependent on whether--success isn't I end up with this person, or I don't end up with this person. It's "What did we give each other here? How do we impact each other here? And how have I changed because of our time together?" And allowing that to be success, too.

Dawoon

Yeah, I love that. And, you know, I think dating is great, because we all need love, right? The sense of belonging and connection, that's such a fundamental, it's air, it's like an oxygen for, I think, human beings--

Ariella

Mhmm. Totally.

Dawoon

We just can't survive without that. And, to your point, also to try to make a relationship work--however serious or casual it is--with another person who is, you know, has a completely different background than you do and, you know, upbringing and whatever else, and to figure that out. It takes so much work, right? And, but in that process, there's so much learning that comes with it. And I think that's why dating makes us better people.

Ariella

Mhmm. Totally, I completely agree.

Dawoon

Yeah. Awesome. I actually hesitated to ask this question or not, but I want to practice our own, you know, practice what we just preached, which is like, "Okay, just name it even if it's awkward," so I hope this is not offensive. But I thought maybe this could be helpful, because I do hear from, you know, my queer friends who are dating in this--you know, speaking of the regular, more mainstream, non queer-specific apps that people use, and sometimes you can get hurtful remarks from people who found out that, you know, when you share that

you're trans or something like that. And, you know, I think education is really important here for, you know--how does it feel to be on the receiving end? And I think about what kind of tips we can share, people who are, you know, they've been matched, and they found out that as a match is transgender and, you know, if it's not--if you're not interested in pursuing, how do you actually kind of communicate that in a respectful manner? You don't have to be harassing, right? So would you be willing to talk about that?

Ariella

I could talk about it a bit. First I would--but more than that, I would encourage you to investigate what makes it that trans people are excluded from your dating pool. It's the same thing--I treat that like race as well. That we disguise a lot of preference as actual pretty deep-seated bias. So, if you are on that journey, and if you are going to take intentional time to be like, "Hm. Why did that feel...why am I feeling like this is a no all of a sudden?"

Dawoon

Mmhm.

Ariella

I would encourage you first to do that work--

Dawoon

That's such a great point.

Ariella

I would worry less about "How do I tell this trans person I'm not interested," and more "What makes me not interested? What have I been taught about trans people that would make them excluded from my dating profile?"

Dawoon

Right.

Ariella

And I would probably surround yourself--sometimes it's a comfort thing, and I would probably follow--get on social media and search trans activists and trans models and trans resources to have a better understanding of what it is that you might not understand so that people aren't excluded so much from your dating pool on that way.

Dawoon

Yeah. And, you know, whenever it comes down to, you know, exclusion--whether it's this, sexual identity, or race, or whatever else, one thing that I really emphasize is the more one--Yeah, ask yourselves, why, right? You know, all of us have biases and so, you know, we need to really investigate. And the other thing is the more exclusive we get on things that are what I call kind of superficial, the checkbox things--doesn't matter if it's education, if it's race, or is it your identity, the less you're able to really, I guess, assess if you would, people on qualities that really matter, which are things like values, right? And so that's something that is really important for us to bear in mind. Because again, I think, because we do that a lot, it kind of gets in our own way of dating success is my personal view. And I see that a lot and was, you know, speaking from my own personal experience, as well.

Ariella

Yeah, totally. And also, from the dating app perspective, apps have kind of a history of banning trans people on dating apps, because someone reports them or, you know, and that's all trigger responses from the people reporting them. Because they don't know how to

handle their own discomfort of something that might be new, or whatever it is--

Dawoon

Right.

Ariella

So it's like how can the system of the actual dating app itself make it so that there is a little bit more that goes into banning folks on dating apps for being who they are versus, you know, saying something that's homophobic or transphobic, you know?

Dawoon

Yeah.

Ariella

So it's kind of on everybody to question--to pause if you're like, "This is a no for me." And be like, "Where is that coming from?"

Dawoon

Mmhm.

Ariella

"And is that something I need to actually work on more than keep my dating pool exactly the way that I thought it should be?" Because you don't know what's on the other side of that. Could be amazing.

Dawoon

Yeah. Yeah. So well said. Thank you so much, Ariella! This was really informative.

Ariella

You're welcome. Do you have do you know when we can be looking out for more gender inclusivity on CMB?

Dawoon

I don't have the exact date, but it's coming up pretty soon, because I know our product team has been working on it for a while. I mean, the unfortunate--I guess the thing is, we--just to answer your question, we kind of--the first path that we're taking is the latter option that you described?

[Ariella](#)

Yeah, that's what most folks are doing.

[Dawoon](#)

Yeah. And part of it is because if we do the first way, we're just afraid there's nobody that they can choose, like we can't actually show anyone.

[Ariella](#)

Yeah. Totally.

[Dawoon](#)

And so until we actually get a good community of people signed up, I think, unfortunately, this is the way we can get around to being able to show people.

[Ariella](#)

For now. Totally.

Dawoon

Yeah, but you know, I do think about the thing that you mentioned about the reporting? And, you know, I know that's an experience that's fairly common. And so I think there needs to be a system that-- it's not even just that--people report other people for random reasons, "Oh, they ghosted me," or whatever else.

Ariella

Totally.

Dawoon

So we need to give people better tools to be able to classify certain reports so that we're not auto banning people just because somebody got a lot of reports.

Ariella

Yeah. Totally.

Dawoon

And then, yeah, the other thing is, I think there needs to be some education around this topic, also.

[Ariella](#)

For sure. And I'll also say, even when doing the latter, if there's a space for pronouns, that's really helpful. Or if you were to add that to the--I hope it's okay that I'm kind of giving my--

[Dawoon](#)

Oh yeah, yeah, please!

[Ariella](#)

--two cents here. Is that okay?

[Dawoon](#)

Yeah.

[Ariella](#)

If you were to add an area for pronouns on the app, because I had seen that there-- there's no gender, like you can't type in your gender, and there are no pronouns on CMB. If you were able to add in a gender and/or pronouns--probably and--and then allow folks who don't know what that is to click a little information "I" and then open that up, and then have a resource on why you've decided to include

this, what the hope of including this will do for CMB and for the greater community, and what pronouns are, and why it's appropriate to use pronouns, and all that stuff. If there's--you can help in the app do some of that educating itself. So, hopefully that helps a little bit.

Dawoon

Yeah, that definitely helps. Thank you so much.

Ariella

You're welcome.

Dawoon

Alright, well it was so nice meeting you, Ariella. Let's keep in touch. And I'll definitely let you know when we actually do launch those gender options.

Ariella

Perfect. That sounds great.

Dawoon

Yeah.

[Ariella](#)

Can't wait.

[Dawoon](#)

Okay. Thank you for being on the show!

[Ariella](#)

Of course, my total pleasure. You're absolutely lovely and I totally respect everything that you're doing, so--

[Dawoon](#)

(laughs) Oh, thank you. Thank you. (music plays) Save the Date is produced by Coffee Meets Bagel, a dating app on a mission to give everyone a chance at love, not only by making great matches, but also by empowering daters with healthy dating habits, so they can date confidently. Each episode of Save the Date features conversation with dating experts to explore what it takes to go on better dates, and ultimately find a great relationship. You can subscribe to us on Apple podcasts, or wherever you get your podcasts. If you have a guest recommendation for the show or burning questions you'd like answered, we would love to hear from

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