

## Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness & Carson Tueller

**JVN** [00:00:00] Welcome to Getting Curious, this is Jonathan Van Ness. I'm so excited to be joined by our guest this week. You are someone who I've followed on Instagram for a very long time. Absolutely stunning. Absolute. I mean, Carson Tueller is who you are, is your name, but you. You have many commas. You are gorgeous. You are an advocate. You're an activist. You are really just someone who I'm so excited to meet.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:00:24] Thank you. I'm so excited to meet you, too.

**JVN** [00:00:26] But so our question this week is because every episode of getting. Here's the question. Question is of the day. What is ableism?

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:00:33] Mmmm.

**JVN** [00:00:34] It's a question we've heard. It's a term I've seen, I guess I like literally. I don't know what it, what it like. If I looked up in the dictionary what ableism is.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:00:47] Yeah. So able-

**JVN** [00:00:49] How have you experienced or whatever?

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:00:51] Yeah. Yeah. Ok so. I define ableism as valuing able bodies over disabled bodies. Or non-disabled bodies over able bodies. If you want to see it that way. So it's valuing them. It's discrimination against people with disabilities. It can look like a lot of different things, but essentially it's prioritizing and valuing kind of your stereotypical abled body over other bodies that don't function in the same way. Does that make sense?

**JVN** [00:01:21] Yeah. And, and it's that radiates, though, into so many different facets of life.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:01:29] Mmhmm. Yeah.

**JVN** [00:01:29] Like accessibility.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:01:31] Mmhmm.

**JVN** [00:01:31] I mean, like. Yeah. How we think about like planning how to do anything in anyone's life.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:01:37] Yeah. Like any structural things, we're gonna have conversations about accessibility. That all is inside of ableism. Right? In terms of like are we also making sure that people with disabilities have equal access? But then ableism also seeps into other areas of life that we don't often think about, like the fashion industry. Do we have like clothing and fashion for people who have different bodies or clothing that's accessible for people who, you know, can't do buttons or who need-. Yeah, just kind of different kinds of access, so-. Even talking about the film industry and representation, so it ends up showing up in a lot of different places.

**JVN** [00:02:26] So what is I mean, how can people that are like-. I guess I just, so obviously, like I'm someone who like, and I'm like, so like I don't even do to people often get nervous on how to say anything? Or like how to say things.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:02:45] Yeah. Yeah. Yes, of course. Of course. Because people want to see like, "do I say handicapped. Do I say it differently abled. Do I say disabled"? Or you know, lots of questions like that.

**JVN** [00:02:58] Yeah. I mean there's so many like you know, Buddha says there's so many paths to the top of the mountain. So like is there several acceptable ways, like what's your experience with that or like what do you like?

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:03:07] OK. So for the most part, the question generally is, are we going to use identity first language, which would be I'm disabled. Or if someone is autistic, that I'm autistic. Right? That's identity first or person first. I'm a person with a disability or I'm a person with autism. Right? I know that the autistic community prefers identity first language. Some people will say, you know, I like to identify myself as a human first and then you know that I have a disability. Yeah. So this kind of is kind of split. It tends to be leaning more towards identity first and really just taking the stigma out of saying "I'm disabled".

**JVN** [00:03:52] Right.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:03:52] Yeah.

**JVN** [00:03:53] So it's like basic because it's like I feel like. It's like. Yeah, it's like it's so basically like identity versus like saying like "I'm Carson". Like because it's like that is your fucking Carson.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:04:03] Right. Or like if I were to do a parallel with sexuality, it'd be like I have same gender attraction versus I'm gay. Right? I'm a person with same gender attraction as opposed to I'm just gay.

**JVN** [00:04:14] Oh, I get it. I get. I get it. Yeah.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:04:15] Yeah.

**JVN** [00:04:16] Yeah. So I'm a person with. Well I guess I really don't know. Well I just like yeah, I do. I have male attraction. I'm a person with male attraction. Yeah. 'Cause I don't really think I'm a man with male attraction. Much non-binary person with male attraction.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:04:31] Yeah.

**JVN** [00:04:32] Yeah, yeah.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:04:33] Yeah. Yeah. So in terms of kind of terms that are considered appropriate. "Accessible" is a great term rather than kind of like "Handicap accessible". A lot of people are just saying accessible. Yeah. Handicapped is not used terribly commonly in my own experience. I know a lot of people don't love that term.

**JVN** [00:04:56] So disabled is the working term.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:04:58] Yeah. Disabled tends to be kind of like the catch all appropriate way to talk about disability. Some, I know some progressive people inside of like physical disabilities are also reclaiming the term "crip". It's like the "crip community", "crip the vote". You know, that kind of like movement is also kind of being reclaimed maybe in the same way that like 'queer' is or was.

**JVN** [00:05:21] So your your story with disability is one that I think is, you know, very incredible. And how because I mean, some people are. Well, what is your story? Is what I should ask.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:05:34] Yeah. So because-.

**JVN** [00:05:35] I know what I know. But that's because like I've been following you for a long time. So it's like. But for people that maybe this is their first time, you know, meeting you or interacting with you.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:05:42] Yeah, totally. So I was born without any disability. And then at 23 years old, I was a freshman in college, and it was five days after Christmas. It's a beautiful day outside. Went with my family to a trampoline park. I had done Tumbling my whole life, which I know we connect on. A love for gymnastics. And I had it was just I was 6'5. I mean I am 6'5. But, you know, I got too tall to pull some really cool stuff in so I could always do more at trampoline parks. And so I loved going with my family. Went there. Tumbled into a foam pit and broke my neck. So I injured my spinal cord at C-8, which is right at the level of my hands. So I'm kind of between a paraplegic and a quadriplegic with some impaired hand function. Yeah. So I have a complete spinal cord injury, which means that it's like completely paralyzed. Some people have partial paralysis and I'm pretty completely paralyzed. So it's been six years. So I've been doing the paralyzed disabled, using a wheelchair thing for six years now, which is not a lot of time. You know, I was still learning a lot.

**JVN** [00:06:52] Yeah.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:06:53] Yeah.

**JVN** [00:06:54] I mean, because you've lived on it. It's really around that. I mean, not drawing comparisons because it's but just for time in my mind, it's like that's around the time when I found out that I was HIV positive. So it's like a different. It's like two thirds of my life, like I was, you know, living one way. And then like this last like seven years, it's been like a different way.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:07:18] Totally.

**JVN** [00:07:19] So is it something? I mean, so how, how are you?

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:07:24] I'm good. I'm good. I, I'm really happy. I'm really happy. And I can tell when people see what I post on instagram or see what I write-. Have kind of an expectation that my life is hard or that it sucks or that it's something-.

**JVN** [00:07:42] That's not my-.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:07:43] But it's not?

**JVN** [00:07:43] That's not my takeaway.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:07:44] Oh, good, ok.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:07:45] Not that it sucks. I mean, that is definitely that it's hard and like on those-. But I mean, you're so eloquent and beautifully spoken with your words. And I think you've only just opened my eyes more.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:07:56] Oh, thank you. Thank you. Yeah, I I love my life. I love my life. I think the first if you would have met me the first two years of after my spinal cord injury, you would have. It's not that it was a different person. I had a very different relationship to my body and a very different relationship to my worth as a human being. That was the biggest difference. I believed that I was like inherently irreparably broken after my spinal cord injury. And it took me a while to realize that that's what I believed. That I believe something was wrong with me. And I was just going to live out the rest of my days kind of just as this broken tragedy doing my best.

**JVN** [00:08:40] So you, were you living in Utah?

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:08:42] Yeah. Yeah.

**JVN** [00:08:43] So you were living there and you and you-. Like it's January. That happens. And it was about, was there a particular like light bulb moment or was it just like kind of a series of like coming to terms like, did you do therapy, like, like, like emotional therapy? Like what was your approach? Because also, it was like the same year as you came out to your family. So it's like so much flux? So much change.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:09:10] Yeah, my whole identity changed. Yeah.

**JVN** [00:09:14] Because growing up gay in Utah is like a whole thing in and of itself.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:09:21] Yeah. Yeah. And I grew up Mormon. Right? And so I grew up in like that Mormon context. And my family's always very loving and supportive. But we had a lot to work through and I had a lot to figure out in terms of my identity and how it works with my faith. Right? But yeah, I think over time it's like I started I mean, I remember being in my hospital room. Just like several days after I was paralyzed and had my phone out in front of me and there were just three words on my phone and it was paralyzed, paralyzed, paralyzed in the notes section because it was like that first moment that I realized like, "Oh my gosh, I don't know who I am". Because I was like this tall guy who ran everywhere he went. Who was a swimmer, who is studying music performance. And none of that could be true anymore. And I just didn't know who I was. And therefore, I thought didn't know what my value or my worth was in the world. And it was like this existential crisis. And I wondered if I wanted to go throughout life feeling worthless. And little by little, I pushed back against that. You know, it's just like it didn't make sense to me because I would kind of like do this logical thing. Where I was like, "Look, I'm just sitting now. Why do I feel like this? You know, my spinal cord works differently. Got it. But why should my worth have such a shift"? And I started like looking at social narratives and my own narratives and really discovered that I could reclaim my worth in a serious way. And I had, I had. There was a pivotal moment on June 16th of

2018 when I was sitting next to my sister, and in the car, we're in for my parents' house. She's 13 years old. And we had gone on like this little like brother sister date. And I had referred to the day of my accident as the day of my death. Kind of like with some dark humor. And she turned to me and she said, "What if we called it the day of your rebirth"? And I thought it was cute. I mean, it was just like, you know, my innocent 13 year old sister being, like, optimistic.

**JVN** [00:11:31] I feel like really trying to rebrand this joke.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:11:35] Yeah, exactly. So I gave her a kiss on the cheek at, you know, and I sent her inside and I went off to the gym. But that started like this cascade of discoveries over the next three hours where I realized that I could reframe everything I thought about myself, my injury and my worth. Like cause I couldn't justify how I was right and she was wrong. Why? Why was that the day of my death? Why couldn't it be the day that my life started? Why can't, it's true if I say it's true.

**JVN** [00:12:07] Yeah.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:12:07] There's no one who can say whether or not either of those are true, right?

**JVN** [00:12:10] Yeah.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:12:11] And I remember looking in the mirror at the gym, and for the first time in like four years, seeing my whole body again, it's like. I'm still here. This is like my body's perfect and everything changed after that. And I realized, like, we can claim our worth. We can change what we say about value in human beings. And that was like the impetus of all of my activism and advocacy. That was a long story, but there you go.

**JVN** [00:12:35] Not at all. I was riveted. It was a beautiful story. So was this. I mean, there's just. Was this ever something that you ever like, what is your relationship to disability? How has it changed from being like pre-accident and post accident?

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:12:57] I think, gosh, I don't have-. Disability was so far out of my mind before my injury. It's like it was nowhere down the line. Right? I mean, I remember just it was like two months before my injury. I was walking into the gym and there was a guy on crutches that I now realize must have had some partial paralysis. And he was just like struggling to get in the gym. And I thought like, "Oh, my gosh, that looks so difficult. I'm so lucky I don't have to deal with anything like that". And so my, my kind of relationship to it was like, it's a burden and it's a trial. It's something terrible and difficult and something I would never want to experience.

**JVN** [00:13:41] Yeah.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:13:42] Yeah.

**JVN** [00:13:42] And then that happened to you. And. And now. And now.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:13:46] Yeah. And so now I realize like there's certainly an ease to having a body that functions completely. But my body is just different. It's not worse. It's not better. My

body works the way it does and doesn't. And I work really hard not to place any value on that because that's where I get into trouble in terms of how I experienced myself and my worth in the world. So I need a wheelchair to get around. And it's certainly inconvenient, especially in a world that doesn't create space for me sometimes. But yeah. Now I work really hard to just look at disability and disabled bodies as being on a spectrum. There's a spectrum of bodies that work a particular way and don't work a particular way, just like there's a spectrum of color or gender or sexuality.

**JVN** [00:14:37] So does it. Do you like, what pisses you off? Like when people do something? What's like the thing that like I should never do? You know what I'm saying? Like what fucking pisses-? It's like, don't fucking look at me like that.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:14:53] Yeah. Oh, gosh.

**JVN** [00:14:55] Unless you're cruising me in the gym.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:14:57] Yeah.

**JVN** [00:14:58] You know?

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:14:58] Yeah.

**JVN** [00:14:59] But you're like, "Don't even do that. I have a boyfriend. Leave me alone".

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:15:01] Right. OK. I think as I don't love when people ask me just like out of the blue before they ask my name, before they ask anything about me, like, "Dude, what happened to you"? Like mostly it's more it's just annoying at this point. I'm not terribly offended, but I'm like, I didn't come here to talk about how I broke my neck six years ago anymore than you came here to talk about whatever trauma you experienced six years ago or ten years ago. Right? Like if it's like-

**JVN** [00:15:31] Let's talk about the thing that was like a really pivotal, like difficult thing for you to like, like on a random, like I'm just out at the bar, like having a drink or like yeah.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:15:39] Totally.

**JVN** [00:15:39] Yeah.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:15:39] Yeah, yeah, exactly, it's just like not relevant. I'm like living my life, doing my thing, lifting at the gym or like you said, having a drink at a bar or something. And I'd rather talk about like my shirt.

**JVN** [00:15:52] Yeah or like. Yeah. Yeah.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:15:53] Anything any other thing. Right?

**JVN** [00:15:55] Did I not take a break? Oh yeah. That's okay. Got it. I got so engrossed in everything that you're saying that I forgot to take a break. I should have totally took a break like

forever ago. Okay. You actually you need a break or anything? Yeah. I still have to take one. We're gonna be right back with more Carson Tueller after the break. ... Welcome back to "Getting Curious". This is Jonathan Van Ness, we have Carson Tueller right across this gorgeous table from me. So, yeah, it's like random, like unsolicited, like questions about like why you're in a wheelchair, like not fierce.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:16:24] Yes.

**JVN** [00:16:25] Obviously.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:16:25] Yeah.

**JVN** [00:16:25] Yeah. Yeah. What about like your. I mean, because you're very much active and involved in the in the dis- Do I say "disabled"? Can you, yeah disabled community.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:16:38] Mmhmm. Yeah.

**JVN** [00:16:38] Yeah, yeah. So you're very involved as an advocate and activist. You're very visible. When you were saying like, you know, in a world that doesn't create space, I think that your visibility is creating space and, and sizing. That's an interesting internal conversation of like who is the onus on. Like everyone should be making space for everyone like that onus should be on everyone. It shouldn't be on the people who are different to have to make space. But sometimes it is that trailblazer. And is that person who can start to make space and that is an important, you know, trajectory for a person to do so. I, you know, thank you for for doing that. But for being someone who is active in the disabled community and being an activist, what, what is kind of some of the stuff that's going on in the disabled? Is that what, like you tell me about everything. That, that seems like a patient thing I'm asking, but I've got to ask about.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:17:28] No please yeah.

**JVN** [00:17:28] Like what's going on like and like what? Like what are some of the important like, is there like, is there any like issues going on within the disabled community? Is like you should be for Bernie or you should be for like this person or is there like, or is there like what's the tea? What's going on?

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:17:45] Yeah. So, ah man. Right now, there are so many things. Right? So the thing about the disabled community is that it encompasses like intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, developmental disabilities. Right? And so it's like we're talking about a huge number of issues and things, everything from like having more inclusive classrooms for kids with developmental disabilities. Right? So that they can like learn alongside peers without disabilities, to making sure that the subway system in New York City is accessible. P.S., You know, it's not. So right now. I mean there-. So basically I'm saying there are a billion issues each inside of, you know, different kinds of disabilities and things. But certainly. Part of step one would just be to enforce the laws that we currently have with the "Americans with Disabilities Act". There is just a really low level of accountability in terms of how that those laws are enforced. And, you know, they're being threatened to be weakened by the current administration. And I mean, for example, I was on the bus. No, I was on the ferry. No, rewind. I can't take the subway system here in New York City. I work in Times Square. So for everyone else, they jump on the subway, get there and like, you know,

whatever they get there 30 minutes or something. I've got to push myself to a ferry. I get on the ferry, I wheel a couple blocks to a bus stop. I get on a bus and then I have to, you know, get off and wheel to, to my office. It's like three times longer commute because the subway is not accessible. So I'm with my dog. I have a service animal who like retrieves things for me and can pick things up off the ground and carry things for me. And we get to the bus stop and the bus driver opens the door and asks if I have any kind of identification for my dog. And I explained that per the A.D.A., there is no requirement federally that I have to have any identification. He said he was required by like per his training to request that and that he couldn't let me on with my dog if I didn't have that, which is just literally not legal.

**JVN** [00:20:05] Yeah.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:20:06] Right? But he doesn't know that. He's receiving some different training. I know that because I have to know that. And he closed the doors and left me. Like sitting on the sidewalk with my dog. And this is just like an illustration of how there's not a consistency of accountability for enforcing the A.D.A so that people actually have the protections they need to get from point A to point B or to be able to be with their service animal in a public space. Stuff like that.

**JVN** [00:20:33] So you, so just to back up a little teensy weensy bit. Because I started following you when you I think you still lived in, where did you live?

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:20:42] Utah.

**JVN** [00:20:42] Yeah. OK. I want to put words in mouth. So you lived in Utah and then you recently moved to the city. In like the last like-

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:20:50] Six months.

**JVN** [00:20:50] Yeah.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:20:51] Yeah.

**JVN** [00:20:51] Because that I don't know if you've ever had, like, "Eat, Pray, Love". Or heard Elizabeth Gilbert second book was which was "A Skeptic Makes Peace with Marriage". But in that book, she talks about how like the five most stressful like events in a person's life, and one of them is moving. And so you're in a new realaish. Ish.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:21:06] Yeah.

**JVN** [00:21:06] And you move. So that's like a lot going on.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:21:08] Yeah.

**JVN** [00:21:09] So like, what has it been like navigating New York City as someone who is in a wheelchair?



**CARSON TUELLER** [00:21:15] Oh my gosh. it was so hard. I mean, this is like the first time that me and my boyfriend were living together first. K. And like, he knew, of course, that I was in a, that I use a wheelchair. That was not a surprise, but like knowing what life is like for me. We had only spent weekends together or a few weeks together on trips and things. So there was just so much we were dealing with and that he was dealing with. But then, like just navigating New York City, it was a nightmare. Because in Utah I have a vehicle I can just like hop in my car because it has a ramp I like get into my cute little van with a ramp and just like, go wherever I need to go.

**JVN** [00:21:55] Yeah.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:21:56] And here it's not like that. And I was, it just brought up so much grief again. I felt like 10 times more paralyzed here than I felt in Utah. And I, I mean, I just remember a few times where I just like broke down on the couch and just like bawled for hours just because I was so mad that I had to deal with it. And also, you know, couldn't help but compare how much easier it would be if I could just get on the subway, you know, or just walk to this or that place.

**JVN** [00:22:29] Isn't it legal for the subway to not be accessible?

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:22:32] Yeah. Yeah. So to, I mean, per my understanding or to my understanding, it's there have been a lot of like lawsuits that have been filed against New York City. So I believe they have a plan, something like a 10 year plan to get the subway stations accessible. But 10 years is-.

**JVN** [00:22:51] A long time.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:22:52] A long time. And I have things to do.

**JVN** [00:22:54] Well, not only that. And then like in. Yes. And like sometimes I feel like we have to joke about things because it makes you fucking cry. You couldn't make a joke about it, but it's like that like creates like so much like economic and just like life stagnation for like disabled people.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:23:07] Yes! Yes.

**JVN** [00:23:07] If you can't get to where you need to go and it's like that's opportunity lost. It's like it's so much like it's expensive to not have those opportunities.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:23:15] Yeah. Okay. This is so good. And also because people with disabilities are treated like a cost to the system so often, you know, like one in five Americans has a disability. And. A lot of individuals want to work. People have disabilities, they want to work. They want to contribute to the system. I mean, if, if my disability has absolutely made me more competent and smarter and more like a better problem solver. So like we I know that we've got gifts and skills that would really be a huge benefit to our communities, to our country. And we're just creating like traps in terms of like we can't we don't let people get into the workforce because of something like transportation. But then if people need long term supports and services or like, you know, long term health care, you know, we've got like what's happening with welfare and Social Security. So people are stuck. And people can't get out of these poverty traps or these like transportation issues. And so they just can't contribute. I have a lot of privilege, like a lot of

privilege, because I have some financial stability that allows me to get something like an Uber. If, you know, I get left by a bus. And that's not. Available to a lot of people. Right? And especially because people with disabilities are more likely to experience homelessness and poverty and other healthcare issues. And so people don't just have 50 bucks to drop on an Uber to get home. Right? And it's like I mean, it's costly for me. I certainly have had to budget to be able to like, you know, accommodate that. But I don't know what other people do. I also have the strength to actually push myself places. And it's so tough. So people who don't have the same privilege or financial stability I have I just don't know how people survive.

**JVN** [00:25:13] What resources are there for people that have disability and can't get the resources that they need? Is there any?

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:25:21] Yeah. I mean, so right now we've got like. Are you so are you talking about like a government things or like-?

**JVN** [00:25:27] We'll just. Yeah. Just because like I mean, am, and I, with the work that you do, I'm guessing you've like met like a lot of different people within the disabled community who have to like get it, get what they need somehow and-.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:25:37] Yeah.

**JVN** [00:25:37] And you're saying like the skills that you, like are like being a better problem solver and being like that. Like what are other people doing or not doing? Like what are kind of some other issues that other people are facing that you've encountered?

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:25:49] So, I mean, I know that there are other nonprofits that do work that will, for example, if you have an apartment that's not accessible, they'll do renovations or modifications for you and you can get on the list to receive something like that. And I know of other small services that help people with accessibility or rides and things like that. But for the most part, it's such a large issue. People are really you know, you rely on government assistance for a while if that's your only option. Right? And then I mean. I don't like, I don't know exactly what people do to kind of make it.

**JVN** [00:26:29] Yeah. So again it because it really is just that I think that like people don't talk about.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:26:34] Yeah. Yeah. And there's a lot of like shame around having to be dependent or being trapped inside of like such a low income or something or you know.

**JVN** [00:26:46] So for you it sounds like, you know, re-, reclaiming and rediscovering your value. That your value was not intertwined with, you know, what your body does is so valuable and important. I think that so many people, disabled or not, have that issue like not understanding their value. And so can you speak to like any more of like the in that process and in obviously that you told us the story with your sister, which is so cute. With that light bulb, you know, discovering those three hours. But I always feel like, you know, like value and self love is not like ever a light bulb moment. It's kind of thing we had like practice like we do all the time, which is like so lame. Because I really wish we could just like turn that on and then just be done with it, you know?

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:27:31] Wouldn't that be nice?

**JVN** [00:27:31] Yeah, like we just don't have to deal with it anymore, but what are some of the tools that you use day in and day out to help you retain that connection to your value and your self-worth?

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:27:40] Yeah. For me. I find, I find the power to challenge myself worth by always remembering that it's all made up in the first place. Like gold is valuable because human beings decided that it was valuable. It's not much different than a lot of other metals. Right? But it's got this color and, you know, has a rarity to it. And so we've decided it has a certain value and that value has changed over time. Humans are the source of creating value. And because of that, I always know that worth and worthlessness are just like arbitrary. And so none of it's true. And I know that if I'm suffering because of a lack of worth, it's inside of some story or narrative like, gosh, I, I rolled past the mirror in the gym recently and saw kind of like my legs and in my body a certain way that had me. Kind of hearing a lot of negative thoughts about my body and just like, "Ugh, I don't like the way I look". Or I don't, why am I still in this wheelchair. Whatever it was. Right? And that, like, thought kind of just like started this cycle of. Yeah. More negative thinking and emotions around like my body. And so it was just a moment for me to be like, OK, what's at the root of that? Okay. Yeah. It's probably me still feeling like I need to look a certain way in order to feel a certain way. And like where did that come from? Okay. It probably came from the media or seeing some other like really chiseled hot guy that I'm jealous of, you know, like comparing but like going back to those roots of this is all made up.

**JVN** [00:29:29] Right.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:29:29] I get to say that my body just perfect the way it is and that my cute little skinny legs with swollen ankles are just darling.

**JVN** [00:29:36] They are. So. Do you ever see the series "Push Girls"?

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:29:41] No.

**JVN** [00:29:42] Okay. It was this incredible series on IFC. And it was about these four women in Los Angeles that were living with diff, on, you know, all in wheelchairs, but on different spectrums of ability. And there was this one girl who was talking about how she had been in this like really bad car accident on the 405. And that's where she had her spinal cord injury. And that's where in. That's like where she incurred her injury. And then she ended up doing this like stem cell thing in like, in like Brazil or Port, some other country where it wasn't legal in America at the time. And it caused, it, it enabled her to get some movement in her arms back.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:30:20] Yeah.

**JVN** [00:30:20] And but she was saying how like within her friend group, it it there was a big controversy over like, you know, if she should try to regain movement or try to do treatment and the the side of the disabled community that said, like, well, you really shouldn't. It's like, you know, we should be celebrating our bodies where they are, like not trying to fix them because they're perfect where they are. And, and there was just like this kind of pull there. And so I guess like where, I guess the question like, where do you fall on that spectrum? Like do you-?

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:30:51] Such a good question. Yeah. Yeah. I mean, like I have that question all the time because there was such a facility to being able to like walk up steps. Right? Or run or I mean there are a lot of. So I don't have sensation like from my chest down either. And that comes with a lot of complications. I personally and I'm sure I'll get push push back from some people about this, but I personally don't think that I have to be fixing myself. And how do I say this? Let me rewind, like. To. Desire greater function. I don't think is inherently ableist. I think to desire or seek greater function doesn't mean that I-. That that function was like more valuable. It just means it's more functional. For whatever task, right? It's no different than like I, I go to the gym to be strong so I can transfer my body from my wheelchair onto the couch or something. Because it's useful. I need to get off my butt. And if I could get sensation back, I would. Because it provides so much information. It allows my body to know if I'm in pain or if I have a cut or if, you know, there's there's some utility to it. And I don't think it's inherently ableist to pursue those things. I do think it's a problem, though, if our like medical system has the context of fixing disabled people. So I think you should always be the the the choice of a person with a disability and that like their choices should be respected. And we shouldn't assume that people with disabilities want to look different or be different. Right? People are very comfortable in their disabled bodies.

**JVN** [00:32:46] Yeah. I think part of like I would like why it's such a conversation is because it's like we know that acceptance is so much of a key to happiness and your ability to like love yourself and to, you know, bloom where planted, so to speak. And so it's like if you're, it's almost like if you're, you know, asking someone to not be in a place of acceptance. But I think I kind of see what you're saying is like, well, I can be in a place of acceptance and still want more function. And that doesn't have to be neg-, because the, is that ableist didn't even come into my head. But I guess that is ableist cause you're basically saying like if you had more function like would that, but it's not about value. It's about just like your ability to like navigate things easier.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:33:31] Yeah. Yeah, yeah, exactly. And I think it's a complex conversation and I'm sure there are a lot of valid points. You know?

**JVN** [00:33:40] It does kind of lean me to vote. No, I just, I'm not going to cut you off right there.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:33:43] No.

**JVN** [00:33:44] No.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:33:45] Go ahead.

**JVN** [00:33:45] No. Well, it just was like kind of like leading me to like voting because it like it makes me feel like, you know, under the Trump administration, we know like after he won, he like, you know, he may like the brog-, the broadest gag rule ever, like as far as like, you know, not giving any money to like any foreign charities that do any sort of family planning or contraception or, you know, and, and like, you know, directing the CDC to, like not use those seven words and like "trans" and "evidence based" and "science based" and like these like seven, you know, terms. So it's like I would imagine that this administration has been particularly like not helpful for the disabled community at large.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:34:27] Yeah. It hasn't been. I know that there have been some. And I'm not an expert on this particular topic, but I know that part of the accountability of the A.D.A. has been weakened or there's been a push to weaken it under the Trump administration. The details of that I couldn't tell you. But yeah.

**JVN** [00:34:46] Well, one other thing that I was thinking about, just like in the timeline of it all, is that like, you know, you already were like, being a gay man brought up in the Mormon Church is difficult. And that that is a marginalized, like those are two-. Because I think that being Mormon is its own a minority and then being gay is its own minority.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:35:09] Yeah.

**JVN** [00:35:09] And then coming to terms, and then being disabled is its own minority, although probably much more common than people are made to think.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:35:20] Yes yes.

**JVN** [00:35:21] But it's like 2013. That was like Obama's second administration coming into the age of Trump. And it's like, you know, people's voting and like societal, you know, decisions that get made. It seems like they would affect someone who is an a disabled person more.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:35:41] Yeah.

**JVN** [00:35:41] Because like those votes that like those decisions that get made would make it the less, the less ability that you have to like navigate the world. It's going to affect you more, it seems like.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:35:51] Yeah. No, absolutely. Absolutely. Like policy and and having an economy and leaders who. Allocate funding or invest in the lives of like all people, including people with disabilities is-. I mean, it's what we should be looking for. If we care about lifting the place of people with disabilities.

**JVN** [00:36:15] We're going to be right back with more Carson Tueller after the break. ... Welcome back to "Getting Curious". This is Jonathan Van Ness. We have Carson Tueller. Yeah. Why do I keep wanting to say Tueller? What do I keep saying instead? Because I think we just like to talk about it.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:36:31] Tuller.

**JVN** [00:36:32] Tueller.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:36:32] Tueller. Yeah.

**JVN** [00:36:33] It's like a soft, is like that soft "e".

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:36:35] It's like a Tuesday. The "tue".

**JVN** [00:36:38] Oh. I, yeah. Carson Tueller. Right? I nailed it that time, right?

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:36:43] You nailed it. Yeah.

**JVN** [00:36:43] Yeah. Ok, wait. What were you gonna say?

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:36:46] Okay. So I what I was going to say is I like to tell people like investing in a world that's accessible is really good for all human beings. Right? Like being a human being means you've got a body. Having your body means you're going to experience-. The bodies fall apart.

**JVN** [00:37:09] Yeah.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:37:09] Let's just say that. Right? Bodies fall apart. They get old, they get weak, they get injured. And investing in accessibility is good for everyone. You don't know when you're gonna get a knee injury and when you're 70 years old, you're still going to want to get on that subway and go somewhere and not walk down seven flights of stairs. You know? It's really just an investment into humanity is how we frame it for a lot of people.

**JVN** [00:37:31] Yeah, it's so important. For it, like and it's also just something that like is very much underdone. I mean, do you notice a difference in, in traveling now, like in places that are like more accessible and less accessible?

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:37:44] Yeah. I mean, I've been to Europe a few times. I've been to Brazil. I've been to Mexico. I think that the place that was most successful was Barcelona. Like Spain seemed very, very accessible, which was lovely.

**JVN** [00:37:59] So but you still you travel a lot.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:38:02] Yeah, especially in 2018. I was the president of a nonprofit called "Affirmation", which supported LGBTQ Mormons and former Mormons. So it's an international group. And so I traveled all over as president of that.

**JVN** [00:38:18] Love. What was your, so what was that like with that organization? Like so like what is your like what like so were, what is your faith?

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:38:29] Oh, my gosh, my faith. And I'm figuring that out. So I had, I don't know how to answer that.

**JVN** [00:38:36] Because didn't the Mormon Church, just like kind of like make it a little bit cuter to be gay or something? Like didn't they just do something like where they like not as much of a nightmare as they used to be or something? Like first they said that you couldn't like like have your parents and have your parents be gay. But then they like, no, no, no, we're not going to do that anymore.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:38:52] Yeah, okay. So this is how it goes. There was this policy that that people called colloquially "the exclusion policy", which made it so that. Yeah. Children of like Same-Sex Couples could not be baptized until they were 18 and they had to disavow their parents' marriage and like all sorts of just terrible stuff. That policy was rescinded. I think it was last year.

Yeah, so. So for all intents and purposes, the situation is kind of the same for most LGBTQ Mormons, but like at least that policy is not in place.

**JVN** [00:39:30] Small victories or something.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:39:32] Yeah very-.

**JVN** [00:39:33] But not. So that basically that organization that you are working with is all about like helping to like affirm and-.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:39:38] Totally.

**JVN** [00:39:38] And just like help to heal and-.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:39:41] Yeah, it's suppose to be a safe space so that people can come in or out of whatever process they need to safely with, or, with the resources we need. So there's no push for anyone to stay in the church or leave the church or do anything. It is just for us to affirm your identity exactly as you are. Nothing's wrong with you. And provide a lot of like leadership conferences, suicide prevention training for our leaders, things like that.

**JVN** [00:40:07] How much tension and anxiety does that cause an individual like coming up in the Mormon community and dealing with their LGBTQ-ness within the Mormon community?

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:40:20] Yeah, I mean, immeasurable amount. It's, Mormon doctrine is very gendered and very heterocentric. If that's a word, I just.

**JVN** [00:40:30] Yeah.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:40:31] And. Yeah. So there's just not an explicit there's not a place explicitly for LGBTQ people in the doctrine. And so there's also such a focus on eternal families. And there's a very particular path to having an eternal family, which is like marrying someone of the opposite sex in the temple. And there's just no space for again, like gayness inside of that. At least when I say gayness, I mean, you know, having same sex relationships and things like that.

**JVN** [00:41:05] So well.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:41:07] Yeah.

**JVN** [00:41:07] Yeah.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:41:07] Yeah. So, you know, when I was growing up, it was like, OK, do I want to be with someone that I love and really feel connected to? Because I was trying to date women. It was just like a no go. Or do I want to, like be with my family forever? Was how the question was posed for me. You know, it was like, do I want to lose my eternal family and like, enjoy being with someone that I love or be alone the rest of my life?

**JVN** [00:41:30] So you go to Chile for your Mormon, or for your mission, right?

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:41:35] Yeah. That's right.

**JVN** [00:41:35] So you go there and then you come home.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:41:38] Yep.

**JVN** [00:41:38] And you tell your family. In 2013.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:41:41] Yeah. Yeah.

**JVN** [00:41:45] Or 12?

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:41:45] No, you got it. Yeah. 13.

**JVN** [00:41:47] So were they immediately cool with tit or no?

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:41:53] Well it's like I came out and I was like I'm gay and I'm gonna stay a good Mormon. And so it was like a little more palatable. And then later on-

**JVN** [00:42:02] Does that mean like, I'm gay and I'm totes not going to act on it?

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:42:05] Yeah. Yeah. Celibate. Not going to act on it. Maybe even marry a girl.

**JVN** [00:42:10] Oh, is that. Is that like smiled upon?

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:42:14] Um.

**JVN** [00:42:17] Like "Yay, you did it"! .

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:42:19] It's not. Sorry. You like gave me the giggles. No, it's not smiled upon anymore. It's. It used to be pushed. It was like if you can just like get into it a heterosexual-

**JVN** [00:42:28] Cause it's so fucked up for the girl. Like, fuck, like God forbid she get fucked right for the rest of her life.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:42:34] Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Yeah. There are-. I mean like I have some like dear friends who are in some of those kinds of relationships and they have like made it work in a particular way for them.

**JVN** [00:42:44] But not for their pussy, honey.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:42:47] Yeah. There's a, it's a very, very, very complex.

**JVN** [00:42:49] See that would piss me off, honey. No, you better, no. I need my kitten needs to be scratched. She is itchy and she needs you to stick your dick in her.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:42:58] I totally hear you. I totally hear you. And in terms-



**JVN** [00:43:02] Or but maybe they're asexual.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:43:04] I don't know.

**JVN** [00:43:05] Maybe neither of them want to have sex either.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:43:08] I don't, maybe.

**JVN** [00:43:09] But probably not. But maybe.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:43:12] Yeah. Maybe. Probably not.

**JVN** [00:43:15] Yeah.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:43:16] Yeah.

**JVN** [00:43:17] So. Sexuality and is, you know, she's such a-. Wait. No, but. So you're family.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:43:23] But let me rewind and just say that what I said about like people in that situation was by no means like an endorsement of that's what people should or could do happily.

**JVN** [00:43:30] No, but you're just saying it happens.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:43:31] I'm just saying I happens.

**JVN** [00:43:32] Yeah.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:43:33] Yeah.

**JVN** [00:43:33] And I was saying like they're poor kittens. Like, you know, their vaginas.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:43:38] Totally. I totally-.

**JVN** [00:43:38] Because we all want to have connected fun sex.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:43:41] Yeah.

**JVN** [00:43:41] You know? So. But you're family.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:43:44] Oh, yeah. I didn't mean to your question, so. OK. So I was like going to be a good Mormon, but I'm gay. Then I started to be like, I actually, like, want to be gay, gay. And so then I came out to my parents. I was like. So I think I going to date boys and do this thing. And like but I was still like being a very good boy. So I didn't like experiment a lot sexually or anything. And then that started to get a little bit harder for them, especially like my mom, who is a little bit more. She adhered to her faith a little bit more strictly than like my dad did. But now I mean, now we're in a perfect place. Like there's no issue whatsoever.

**JVN** [00:44:21] Like, very much. Just like love. Approve. Love. Great.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:44:23] Oh yeah, they love Ryan. They're like a hundred percent on board. They're allies. They're everything.

**JVN** [00:44:28] So when it comes to dating and sexting. Honey, dating is hard. It is a whole thing. You know, people are people. Which is a mixed bag on the best of days, you know? So it's like you're minding your own business and then like Ryan comes along.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:44:48] Yeah. I, so I was just like dating around. Oh, my gosh. I, I had I had several years of just like experimenting because I thought that no one would ever want to be with. This is all my internalized ableism. I was like, "Now that I'm paralyzed, no one will want me". And so I just like slowly started to, like, dip my toe in the water. Like, I would put on a picture of myself, like not in a wheelchair, like just chest up on like Tinder or something and then like, introduced the wheelchair later, see how people responded, see if I got ghosted like I did this like social experiment.

**JVN** [00:45:25] Were people just like fucking like just, cause then I kind of had to deal with that with HIV as well.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:45:29] Sure sure.

**JVN** [00:45:30] Like, it's like you're like okay. I mean not like again, different but it's like, it's like just the whole like "Oh, and I am positive" and then it's like crickets never to, like it's, like it's a thing.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:45:40] Yeah.

**JVN** [00:45:41] It does. I mean it, like I mean I had to get like a thick skin.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:45:44] Yes. Yeah. And there were certainly times where I experienced that. Right? Like just like a lack of interest or people just didn't want to deal with what came with it. Because I mean sex is not like the same as it used to be. So there's a lot of communication. There's a certain amount of vulnerability inherent in my sexual life. Right? And so like when it came to like hookups, there was certainly, you know, if someone just wanted something like, "I don't care, I don't want to know your name", but you don't want me to know who you are. Like, this is like that was not for me.

**JVN** [00:46:17] But that probably, like, wasn't. Yeah. I mean.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:46:19] No I don't want that anyway.

**JVN** [00:46:20] Yeah. Yeah. I mean I didn't want that anymore once. I was a really busy girl for a really long time. And then I was like, you know what? I do want to know more now, you know.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:46:31] Yeah.

**JVN** [00:46:32] Yeah. That's a different story for a different day. But so, so. But you were like. But because it's like so much of that, like of you coming to terms with, you know, your sexuality in relationship to when you had, you know.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:46:44] Yes.

**JVN** [00:46:45] The, how do you, your rebirth. is that how we refer to it?

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:46:50] Oh my gosh. I think I just call me injury.

**JVN** [00:46:51] Your injury. Got it.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:46:52] Yeah.

**JVN** [00:46:52] So but like you're at your time of coming out to having your injury. It's like. And the aid because you were like 23.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:46:59] Yeah.

**JVN** [00:47:00] Yeah. I mean it's just like such a pivotal ass age.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:47:03] Yes.

**JVN** [00:47:03] Like even like I mean have you had a book deal yet? I mean we're ready to read the book. Like it's gonna. It's like I need a screenplay. I need a book. I need all of it.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:47:13] Yeah.

**JVN** [00:47:13] Like you know? So but anyway. So but in the dating world. And so like you were dating and you're like but you were just experimenting for a couple of years?

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:47:19] Yeah. Experimenting a couple years. Like trying to figure out how my body worked. Trying to feel like, do all the different things to kind of be like how does sex work. How am I going to, you know, experience pleasure and orgasm and all those things. Which I'm happy to talk about. But then, you know, after several years of that, like Ryan was skiing in Park City and we like matched on Tinder and he, anyway, yeah. The whole story.

**JVN** [00:47:43] I love that.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:47:45] Yeah. We were do, we did long distance as friends for like six months before we even met in person.

**JVN** [00:47:49] But you matched on Tinder.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:47:50] We matched on Tinder.

**JVN** [00:47:51] And then you did a long distance as friends.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:47:54] Ok, listen. We match on Tinder and didn't meet. And he flew back to Utah. Never having met me. And we texted. And we face time for like six months. I was kind of in a relationship. He was in a relationship.

**JVN** [00:48:05] Sluts!

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:48:06] No!

**JVN** [00:48:06] You were literally timing your fucking other boyfriends.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:48:10] Listen listen listen.

**JVN** [00:48:10] Bitch no. I'm dating this guy right now. Let me just tell you something. If you're talking to someone else. And you're god damn-. Don't you be!

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:48:17] Oh my god. Listen.

**JVN** [00:48:20] You see, this is how it happens. This is how it happens You're dating and then some other fucking guy gets all your fucking Instagram and then next thing you know. Now you're in New York with some other guy.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:48:29] No, you got it. You got. I'm telling you on like-.

**JVN** [00:48:31] What, you weren't happy in the first one. So you really had to be in this one?

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:48:33] Scout's honor. That I was like, I was supporting him. We didn't talk, like, all the time. Right? It wasn't like we were like best friends. It was occasionally-.

**JVN** [00:48:41] But why did the other one not not work out? Was like the first guy a fucking scoundrel or something?

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:48:44] No.

**JVN** [00:48:45] It just didn't work out? Like just for both of you, like it didn't work out.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:48:48] No. We became like single at different times. You know?

**JVN** [00:48:51] But that's what I am saying is just like you were in a relationship and like "Bye". And then he was in a relationship, then they were like "Bye". And then you both were like, "Oh my gosh, like, now we're not in relaishs".

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:48:58] Well, it didn't happen intentionally that way. Like he was doing his thing. I was doing my thing. I ended up finally seeing him when I was in New York visiting another friend. And I was like, "Hey, I'm actually in New York now. I'd love to finally meet you". Right?

**JVN** [00:49:14] When was this?

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:49:15] And so I was like in Utah and he was in New York. So it was like I was not flying out to, like, meet some guy that I- you know, I mean?

**JVN** [00:49:21] Yeah. You're here with a friend.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:49:22] And I'm trying to make my case that I was not two timing anyone.

**JVN** [00:49:26] I know you weren't two timing, but it's like, it's like, oh my gosh, like I like. It's like "ah". So you meet him?

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:49:30] Oh, yeah. So I meet him. And he's just it's so easy to be with. And it was like so much fun. And I mean, the thing is that, the reason I kept talking to him, even though we hadn't met, is he's so funny. He's so funny, but also like so cute and compassionate and like Ryan was newly out of the closet. And so he was kind of like navigating a lot of things. And that's also why we were in contact some ia like I was kind of supporting part of this journey for him and talking with his family and kind of coming out still. And he would I could just tell, like the level of care that he had for me in terms of just like so perceptive. So like anticipating what I needed before I needed it. And then just being very, just like the sweetest golden hearted guy.

**JVN** [00:50:20] Love that.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:50:22] Yeah.

**JVN** [00:50:22] And then you're just like, I want to, like, cuddle every morning and then you, like, moved to new York.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:50:26] Totally. Yeah. Yeah. It was so funny actually. We went to Barcelona before we even went on another date. Like I was gonna take my mom with me to Barcelona because I was speaking gig and I was like-.

**JVN** [00:50:35] Girl bye.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:50:35] I was like. No, my mom is like, "Now I can't go". And so, like, "Ryan, like, I know this is totally weird. We spent two days together, but like, want to go to Barcelona"? And he's like, "Yeah". And so we explored Barcelona for like ten days.

**JVN** [00:50:48] And that's such a, try not falling in love with someone after like exploring Barcelona for ten days and I've never been there. But it was really romantic.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:50:55] Yeah. Yeah, totally. Yeah. So.

**JVN** [00:50:58] I love that.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:50:58] And then we did long distance forever. And then here we are.

**JVN** [00:51:00] So I mean really it sounds like we're feeling fulfilled. We're feeling gorgeous. We're thriving. And so I saw this one thing on Instagram and it like and this woman was like, like because

one is like, like what not to do with like. And if you actually post about this on Instagram, too, it's like like not giving, like unsolicited, like pushing and shit.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:51:23] Oh yeah.

**JVN** [00:51:23] It's like, "Don't fucking push my goddamn wheelchair unless I ask you for it". Like if I need help, I'll ask.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:51:27] Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's kind of like a given. I think.

**JVN** [00:51:31] Really? I feel like I could see well-meaning people like fucking up on that.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:51:34] Oh yeah. Yeah. Then-. When. When I say is a given, I think it's a given. Like I think most disabled people would agree with that.

**JVN** [00:51:40] Oh yeah.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:51:41] Yeah. Like let us ask you.

**JVN** [00:51:42] Yeah.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:51:43] Yeah. That's a good rule.

**JVN** [00:51:44] Yeah. Just like let's just trying to like make sure I like checking off like all the things we need to talk about.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:51:48] You're doing so great. Yeah. Yeah. The best thing is to ask. You know.

**JVN** [00:51:52] We have to wrap up since they have like another person coming. But I just have one more question because I think you were talking about like when you're talking like sex stuff.

[00:51:59] I love talking about sex stuff.

**JVN** [00:51:59] I think I was reading about this one thing about like, like much like something about like a long time, like much a feeling of like, like feeling really good for a really long time.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:52:12] Oh, yeah, yeah. Totally. So like orgasm is so different for me now. So spinal cord injury has come with like a few little gifts that are just like phenomenal. And one of them is that under the right conditions, I can experience orgasm for a very prolonged period of time. I have not met the like the threshold where that where it ends because I like we'll just like give up or feel like it's too much. I have to-.

**JVN** [00:52:46] So basically you're about, like you just fell like "Uhhhhh". So you could do that for like ten hours?

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:52:51] I mean, it's-.

**JVN** [00:52:52] Or it could be like different. Or you could be like "Ah".

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:52:54] No, no, no. It's definitely like-.

**JVN** [00:52:57] More like the first one?

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:52:57] Yeah. It's so much that it can be a little intense and it can kind of be like I sometimes need like a tiny break or sometimes I just like-. Yeah. It's so much that, it's very intense and I can't just like be there forever, which is like a good problem to have, right?

**JVN** [00:53:15] Yeah.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:53:16] Yeah. Yeah.

**JVN** [00:53:17] Love that.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:53:18] It's incredible. I often think that it is. Given how long it lasts and the intensity and the euphoria and the whole thing, that it is probably better in terms like the orgasm is better than what it was before, probably. Weird, huh?

**JVN** [00:53:35] I love that.

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:53:36] I know.

**JVN** [00:53:37] So really, if I was going to like wrap this into like a gorgeous bow, it's kind of like, don't ever, or just like, don't think about like what, like every, every life is full. And like and is worthy of like celebrating and, and finding value and worth in it. And it's like kind of just like, I mean, it's so basic was like, don't judge. Like someone else's like form or like what their experiences. Because like, it's like if the question is like what is ableism? It's like and you were saying, you know, before your accident and you, or your injury, and you had saw that guy like, you know, on crutches and you're like, "Oh, that must be so hard". And like, whatever. It's like, really like don't judge anyone else's, like, experience, like based off of like how they look because like, you just it's really like no one needs to be like looked at and like judged. Or like, oh, it must be so hard and it's like, "Bitch, you have no idea".

**CARSON TUELLER** [00:54:28] Yeah, I tell people, I'm like, well, I think sometimes in my head I'm like, "Girl, my life is better than yours". Like, I love my life when people are like, "Oh, is that like, you know, I could never do what you're doing". I'm like, "No, really, I love my life". Yeah. Okay. So like wrapping it up in the bow, I think is to say, like in the world of disability, it's really helpful to just check that, like check that assumption. Like, am I assuming that this body is broken? Or something's wrong with it? You know, and like just kind of going back to the spectrum, like just and we've done this in a lot of different areas. Obviously, we've done it. I use the, the sexuality example because I'm gay and I have experience there. But it's like, you know, straight was like the default, right? Like normal. And then homosexuality was like a variation of that or other forms of queerness. And we're getting into a space where we're realizing like, no, this is all on a spectrum. There's nothing wrong with any of it. It's just deviations of, you know, sexuality. And so looking at bodies in the same way, like everybody is worthy every form, every, it's all worthy, it's all valuable, it all works differently and it's all beautiful.