

## Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness Listener Q&A

**JVN** [00:00:00] Welcome to Getting Curious, I'm Jonathan Van Ness and every week I sit down for a gorgeous conversation with a brilliant expert to learn all about something that makes me curious. But today, the tables are turning. On today's episode, I'm joined by all of you for a special listener Q&A episode, hosted by my husband, where you are all asking...

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:00:23] What's it like to get curious?

**JVN** [00:00:28] Welcome to Getting Curious, this is Jonathan Van Ness, and on this week's episode, tables have turned. I am in the hot seat. I am going to get 21 questions, but it'll probably be more than 21 questions and with none other than my husband Mark Peacock, who will be the conduit of your questions. We asked social media. We had tons of responses. We're really excited to break it down. Without further ado, welcome, Mark? How are you doing?

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:00:53] I'm good. How are you?

**JVN** [00:00:54] I feel like we're Ana Gasteyer and Molly Shannon in that SNL skit that you don't know about because you're British, but where they would, like, put on these, like, sweaters and they worked at this like NPR station. I'll have to show you when we get home. But it's cute and I'm excited that you're here and I'm excited that you're going to interview me, babe.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:01:11] I'm excited to be doing it.

**JVN** [00:01:13] OK, so tell everyone what the first segment title is.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:01:16] So the first segment is about the Getting Curious podcast.

**JVN** [00:01:18] Yay, babe. What's the first question?

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:01:21] OK. So Jessica asks, how did the idea of Getting Curious get its start?

**JVN** [00:01:26] It's been six years. It's, it's such a long time that we've been going. But it, it really started with in the beginning, it was myself and a sound engineer and we did everything. So I was like the producer. I was the idea maker. And really, I wanted to create something that was really creative and didn't have a lot of oversight as far as, like, "Yes, you can ask that question. No, you can't ask that question. So it was really just a very, like, creative idea that I had in my head where I wanted to explore things I was curious about. I wanted to do it in a way that I was new to, which at the time was podcasting. And so that was really kind of how it got started. But really, at the beginning, it was definitely nobody flocking to me and me booking so many people and like, you know, finding, emailing, like, 15 people that were, like, historians of Islam. I also, like, interviewed my cousin about Diva Cups. I think that was, like, the third one I did. It was about, like, different menstrual cycles, which is so typical for you to talk to your first cousin about. But it actually was a really good episode because my cousin's amazing and she is brilliant and has worked so hard to bring advocacy and equity to people in her life. So I'm really proud of how the, of how the podcast started and what I was able to accomplish, and it's actually how long it's gone.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:02:41] OK, so Meghan asks, do you have a giant list of topics for the show? And how do you decide what do you want to learn about first?

**JVN** [00:02:49] So for the podcast, it's, like, I have notes and folders and, like, running lists of things I'm always thinking about. I have an amazing production team for Getting Curious the podcast, which is really helpful. For the show, it was, like, we had three weeks for pre-production, so it was, like, nine of us thinking about all of these different ideas and then thinking about what did we have access to in Manhattan to create the series, knowing that traveling was not going to be an option with the coronavirus pandemic and knowing that, you know, traveling in experts was going to be difficult, if not impossible. So of the questions that we came up with which, you know, the guiding light for all of Getting Curious and the TV show and the podcast is that I really need to be curious about it and like, really want to learn about it. So once we had all of these ideas, it was about figuring out what we could accomplish in New York City, or, like, the northeastern corridor because we were really, like, very local. And that was kind of how we decided what to pursue for the TV show.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:03:46] Jane asks: I'm curious about how you seem to have a non-judgmental curiosity when interviewing your guests. How do you remain present and open with the people you're interviewing?

**JVN** [00:03:57] I think that it's really hard for us to give something, as RuPaul says, that we don't have. It's something we also talk about in program. And so if you're constantly judging yourself and you're not in a place of acceptance with yourself, it's going to be really difficult to interview people and stay present with anyone when you're asking them questions. So I think it's from having a good relationship with myself where I'm, like, I've had good practice with meditation and therapy and yoga to like, not judge my thoughts as I have them and to try to, like, realize that I'm not my thoughts. I'm, like, the observer of my thoughts. So just, like, when I'm interviewing someone, if they are saying stuff that either, you know, is hurtful or, like, offensive, which doesn't happen too often, at least on my show. But in general, when I'm having a conversation with someone, I'm trying to recognize their humanity and not necessarily, like, what it is that I'm hearing them say because I always will try to meet someone where we have common ground, which is that, like, we're both humans. Even if I am diametrically opposed to your views. And that's something I think that I'm really good at from doing hair because I've had to do so many different types of people over my career, and I come from a very conservative place, so I'm able to be patient with people. But I think that in order for us to better our relationship with others, we first have to better our relationship with ourselves.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:05:20] And so, the next question, it can relate to the podcast, but also to the TV show. Are there any topics that you're curious about that you haven't been able to find an expert on? Or were there ones in the TV show that you weren't able to find for a specific topic?

**JVN** [00:05:36] You know, at least for the TV show, specifically, it would have been nice for the snacks episode to be able to share more experts' opinions from, like, a Health At Any Size perspective or from an intuitive eating perspective. Those are kind of mediums and modalities of healing that I've only really learned more about since wrapping filming, which is annoying. But we're looking now for lots of people, and I'm also just taking more time to kind of learn and do more of my due diligence and more of my research on those issues. But in the moment, we've really been able to find, I think, incredible experts and incredible guests that have really generously shared their scholarship and their expertise with us, you know, across the show and the, and the podcast. Which I'm really incredibly proud of because I think, you know, in TV especially, we're so used to these, like, certain formulas and we in Getting Curious, the podcast and the TV show have really tried to break that mold, and that is platforming other people with expertise from academia that would really, we wouldn't get to interact with outside of an educational, like, classroom-driven place. And I think it's really special that especially in Getting Curious, the TV show that we were able to bring people that

do such incredible work out from their classrooms and their museums and bring them into our living room, which I think is really special.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:07:08] Yeah. So I feel I know the answer to this one. So Sam would love to know: is that gorgeous apartment with all the colorful furniture yours or someone else's or a set created for the show?

**JVN** [00:07:22] That was a set, created for our show. It was a gorgeous loft space in Manhattan that we rented out and dressed to be the set. Although that gorgeous piece of artwork that's behind the bed in the show is now in my house. That was by our incredible friend and former guest of Getting Curious A'Driane Nieves. I love that piece so much. I'm so happy that it's mine now, but I was really impressed with the personality that we were able to create in that set, and I felt like it could be my apartment, or it felt like it could be our apartment, babe. And I thought that it had such an amazing vibe in there. I loved it.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:08:00] Well, I mean, the next question does follow on to that, and I do think they did really well in pinpointing certain aspects, because someone else has asked: What's *your* interior design style?

**JVN** [00:08:09] It's funny, interior design is, like, one of those things that I feel like I don't know as much about it. Like, I'm definitely not Bobby. He's definitely, like, the, he's just such an icon and guru in interior design. But I do know that I'm very opinionated, like I know what I like and I know what I don't like, but I can't describe it. I just don't have, like, the language for it. So I always thought that my interior design style was kind of, like, Miss Honey from *Matilda*. I thought that it was, like, I wanted, like, a cottage, like, a rustic yet modern, like, cottage barn. But then my old friend told me that Miss Honey lived in, like, a ramshackle, like, cottage that was, like, dilapidated, but I just remembered the garden being really pretty. So I just, I feel like I like kind of whimsical, cozy, lived in, not too pretentious and, like, comfortable and arty.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:09:04] Yeah, it's very, like, country-modern slash, mid-century modern with lots of rugs.

**JVN** [00:09:14] Yeah, I do like rugs.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:09:15] Love antique.

**JVN** [00:09:17] But not anymore because they're all in storage, because the cats and the dog piss on them all the time. So no. Yeah.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:09:22] Someone else has asked how much of the filming gets cut from the actual production?

**JVN** [00:09:26] A lot actually got cut from Getting Curious the TV show, because each episode has to be between, like, twenty two-ish and, like, twenty five-ish or twenty six minutes. So I would say we probably shot, like, each episode we shot, like, hours. There was at least, like, two whole scenes from every episode that got cut out that just didn't make sense for timing or just took us too far away from where we were going or thought we were going or made it too convoluted. So, like, there was probably, like, yeah, like, eight to 10 minutes that got cut from, like, every episode.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:010:09] And was there one in there that you really wish could have made it in somehow?

**JVN** [00:10:15] Yeah, there is. I think our segment with Lee Hennessy, and he is an amazing transgender farmer and we had an amazing scene with him and another scholar Gabe Rosenberg where we got to go to this, like, dairy goat farm in upstate New York, and it was fascinating. We got to learn about some of the ways in which our modern gender binary was derived from agriculture ideas in the seventeen hundreds. And it was devastating because I love Lee Hennessey. I love his work. I love everything that he shared with us. I love Gabe Rosenberg and his work and everything he shared with us. And unfortunately, it just didn't work in the, in the flow of the gender episode. So there was some really difficult decisions that we had to make for the direction of the show. And that's always so hard to do. It was the first time that I had to kind of make those decisions on this show.

I've been in a position before with Gay of Thrones, where I was, like, no or yes, or advocating for something that should stay or should go with Queer Eye, I obviously don't have a choice in that because I'm not a producer, so I have no say in what happens in the final cuts of Queer Eye, ever. But that was something that was really so truly difficult to do with the TV show is figuring out what to cut because those people are amazing but you have to think about the, the experience of the person watching and kind of the arc of the curiosity. And the great thing about that is, is that we have a podcast, so if it doesn't work on the TV show, I can have these experts back and I can talk about in the podcast, which you'll know, Lee Hennessy and Gabe Rosenberg are coming on. At some point they're coming on! So that's fun.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:12:03] Yeah, babe. Okay, so, oh, international person! Jordan from Tokyo asks: How many hair tosses did you perform whilst filming Getting Curious?

**JVN** [00:12:15] Oh, I don't know, too many to count. I do too many in a day to count. I don't even have to be on camera to do a hair toss. I just do it instinctually, all the time.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:12:23] And how many people did you comment on their hair?

**JVN** [00:12:26] Everyone.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:12:27] Okay. So obviously you've promoted Queer Eye in the past but obviously Getting Curious is your own show. So what's that been like? How's that been different to promote something that you're so close to and obviously it's a take of your podcast. So it's something you really love, so you're very precious about it.

**JVN** [00:12:48] It has been really challenging, actually, because with Queer Eye, people know what the premise of the show is. They know what the format is, so they know what to expect. And also, frankly, there has been a huge disconnect between the ways in which Netflix kind of did marketing for Queer Eye and then has done marketing for Getting Curious. So with Queer Eye, there was a lot of billboards, there was a lot of posters, and there was a preexisting format that didn't really need explanation. We were only introducing ourselves into this preexisting format. With Getting Curious the TV show, we had help in terms of having a home and having a place to create it. But as far as, like, introducing it, that was really kind of left more to me and my team to figure out how to do. And I think that it's really difficult because Getting Curious, the podcast is a format that my followers know, and fans of me and the podcast know. But for people that are just getting introduced to it, the format of the podcast and the TV show are very different. As you know, if you're listening to this and then have watched the show, they're both different.

So I think for me, it's really been hard because I have been so close to it and it's been kind of difficult to like, zoom out and give an elevator pitch about what the show is. It's really been hard, and I could probably, like, go take a marketing lesson in college about it because, you know, it's challenging to talk to something, talking just-, because that's the other thing, it's like when you get interviewed about it, a lot of times, like, people haven't watched it either, so it's not like you're getting any help from the people who are interviewing you because they've only seen, like, clips or excerpts or had one of their producers explain things to it. And they're,

like, not even getting the name of the show right, which happened a lot. The amount of time that someone called "Just Curious" was... hah!

But yeah, so it's, it definitely is hard to kind of not be, too, I don't know. I just, it was probably the hardest I've ever worked in, the most I've ever put into anything from the creation of the series to then, you know, promoting it to the level that I have promoted it and put so much work behind that because you have to strategize where to go, when to go, who to talk to. You know, how all of that is-, it's just, it's it's so much strategizing and really relying on yourself because we have, at least for this project, it was, like, I really wanted to create something that was true to my vision, and I think that because of that, I have had, it, it feels kind of, like, pushing a boulder up a mountain, actually. That's what it feels like. That's what press and promoting a new show that no one's ever heard about and trying to break the format on a TV show feels like.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:15:47] Yeah, yeah. I mean, I can completely vouch for, like, how hard you worked, because, you know, obviously I saw the whole process of this show, from the initial idea all the way through to, like, now. And you know, I could see the early mornings put in, the late nights, the calls whilst we were in the car, you know, there was so much going on. So, you know, I could see how passionate you were behind it and, like, how much effort was kind of put into every facet of the show, pre-production, production, post-production, marketing, promotion. You know, that whole thing. I could see exactly how that was. I'm so proud of you, babe.

**JVN** [00:16:28] Thanks, babe.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:16:32] So, with a second season: what would you like to focus on? Is there a specific category or topic that you're really interested in that you think would be brilliant for television that would work better than podcast?

**JVN** [00:16:43] Anything visual is so interesting, I'm really curious about, like, the history of purses and, like, how purses have been made and, like, high fashion, like, how purses and bags, like, became commodified and, like, when. I'm also really curious to go create olive oil. Because we just recorded an amazing episode about olive oil and how it's created. And so that would be really cool to get to go out and do. And I'm also, like, training in sports always fascinates me. But, like, obscure sports, like, can I learn to train to become, like, I want to train, like, an Olympic Ping-Pong player. Curling, I want to go learn about curling. Yeah, there's so many different things. I think, you know, for season two. If we get lucky enough to have one,

that's the really cool thing. And actually not to be, like, but I definitely, when I pitched Getting Curious the TV show, it was before COVID, and it was originally meant to be something where we got to go out in the world, we were traveling. It was, it just was a lot more outside of Manhattan. And so I think that that's one thing that if we got to do a season two I would really like to do is get to explore, like, different places. Because one difference between this show and the podcast is that the podcast you really only need audio. And for the TV show, it's very visual. But what you can create on TV is completely dependent upon what's available to you and, like, where you physically are, and if you can travel. And obviously when we created Getting Curious, the pandemic curtailed a lot of what we were able to do, and while I'm super duper proud of what we were able to do, I'm also excited to get to have another chance where we can kind of explore past the confines of New York City.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:18:30] And you know, if you do olive oil, you should go see Kelis, because Kelis has her own olive grove and she's just made her own olive oil. This next question is basically asking: how do you balance everything that you've got going on your plate, like, work-wise to everything else? And how has this changed from before Queer Eye to now?

**JVN** [00:18:54] Well, before Queer Eye it was just me in a salon with my clients, my business partner Monique, and, like, one assistant. And it was, like, I just needed to make sure that I got enough sleep and then I didn't do drugs, and then I went to yoga. So that was a lot more manageable. I think when I started doing Gay of Thrones, that was my first taste of, like, that, you know, for 10 weeks a year, I would do hair, like, five days a week and then film Gay of Thrones on Sunday and Monday or, like, watch it on Sunday, film on Monday. It just was something where, like, my attention was required, like, on my off time for like a side project. And so it's, it's really just been re-learning work life balance and maybe re-realizing that I have none. Before Queer Eye, I did have work life balance and I did have a lot more time for myself. And I think the thing that I could have never been prepared for, just, I knew I wanted to be an entertainment, I knew I wanted to produce. I knew I wanted to create, but I didn't know that that meant that you would have to learn how to, like, manage people. And so being, like, a CEO and being a decision maker and being someone who needs to be strong for people and on time for people and clear, and communicative and authentic and courageous.

Because that's the stuff that keeps you up at night, is, like, if you're doing a TV show in a pandemic and you want to make sure that everybody's safe, but you also want to break down barriers and really show what curiosity and joy and connection can look like. But you're up against all of these other things like, you know, safety in a pandemic. Or even before COVID,



like, I, in the first year of Queer Eye, I got a lot of opportunities to promote alcohol brands, and at first it was, like, you know, money that I hadn't really ever seen before. And I was, like, "Oh my God, I won a national commercial? Yes, I'll do it. Who cares what it's for?" And then realizing later, like, "Oh, like what would my stepdad think if I was promoting alcohol? Like, what do I think that I'm promoting alcohol? Is that really what I want to promote? Is that what I really...?" So learning to be more in my integrity, learning what I would say yes to learning more of what I would say no to and what I want to be about and what I don't want to be about. That's been a big lesson in doing everything so publicly, because everything is so public.

And really before Queer Eye, so much of my healing was finding work-life balance, and finding my worth as a hairdresser, finding my worth as a friend. Finding out what my worth was to myself and my recovery. And I think that slowly over these last, like, five years that I've been, you know, really doing entertainment full time, which I started filming Queer Eye in, I think it was, like, April or May of 2017. So I'm going on, like, five years of being in this business pretty full time. And I think I'm starting to claw back work-life balance, more of it. And learning to set boundaries and learning what my worth is. And learning how to take care of myself better because it's definitely been when you finally have something happen that you've been working for for so long. You say yes to everything. And our capitalistic society, especially in entertainment, makes you think that have you ever say no, if you ever take any time off, you're going to lose all of your opportunities because someone else is going to come take it. And it's not something that you think, it's something that people actively tell you. And as an entertainer and as a creator, the people that hold the purse strings, the people that say yes to your dreams coming true will always let you know in some way or another that you have to be willing to do what they say and work. And figuring out, like, who really holds the power and some of those, like, old power systems in, across all industries is something that is taking, it's just hard to navigate. Yeah. Really good question, though.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:23:11] And then just kind of following on from, you know, the podcast, the telly, your books. So when you come to writing books, do you have, like, a structure on how you do it? Do you have a number of days, times?

**JVN** [00:23:23] Yes!

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:23:25] So how do you do it?

**JVN** [00:23:26] So for writing, I'm a definite morning writer. Both times I've written a book, I had an idea to write it. And then I started creatively writing and then I had a whole bunch of words and no structure. So then in both cases, I did an outline after I started creatively writing and having the idea. And then from that outline, I'm able to fill in the gaps of what the creative writing left out and weave together the story that I'm telling. And then it's just having an editor to help make sure that it makes sense. Especially in my new book *Love That Story*, there's a lot more interviews and research that went in to some of these essays. So I'm excited to share that style of writing, because it's more research-driven pieces and some, like, first-person experience pieces. So some are memoir-ish, but some are more investigative.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:24:16] Any more questions on that topic before we move on to the second segment.

**JVN** [00:24:24] Well, I would say that one thing that we've learned about on *Getting Curious*, the podcast from Meredith Broussard about algorithmic bias and techno chauvinism, which is this idea that algorithms and technology can make better predictions and can make better choices than what humans can. That's definitely something that I'm finding with *Getting Curious TV*, and Netflix has an algorithm, that's how Netflix reaches people, like, when you turn on your Netflix, no two people's Netflix looks the same. Everyone's is different. And so ultimately, what have we learned about algorithms on this podcast: that they favor cis-het people, they favor people that look more like the people who made these algorithms. And because computer science and algorithm-making has been dominated by white, straight, cis-het men, we know that algorithms just don't have the nuance. And so I never really understood how that was going to affect my TV show, you know, until later, but I guess just as someone who is a creator and an entertainer and wants to get to do this more often, being able to access *Getting Curious* on your Netflix and actually watching it and making sure that you're, like, I always read these comments., it's like, "I want to savor it! I don't want it to be over!" And then I just like, want to scream, like, "Don't savor it! Watch, watch it!"

Because if, if you don't watch it, it makes the algorithm think you don't like it. And just, that's just one thing I want people to know is that, like, new TV shows need support, and if people don't watch it, they get canceled. And that's just what it is. And so while we have time and while we have this opportunity to grow this TV show, I just want people to watch it and to understand that for a queer creator who is openly non-binary, who's openly HIV positive, who is wanting to integrate curiosity and joy and connection into entertainment, which is sorely lacking. If you have watched *Getting Curious* the TV show and you like it, and you want to see more of it, this is your opportunity to be vocal. This is your opportunity to share. This is your

opportunity to, like, tell your friends and family about it. I always thought as a hairdresser, like, I could do 10 great heads of hair in one day. But if you fuck up somebody's hair, that one person is going to go tell 500 people. So sometimes, like, bad negative stuff travels farther than positive stuff.

And that's just kind of how we are. It's, like, when we see something cool, you're like, "Oh, that's nice, moving on." But really, what Getting Curious needs to, to grow and to proceed at Netflix is it needs support. It needs people watching it, watching all six episodes, talking about the episodes, and sharing them and encouraging their friends and family to tune in and to watch it. Because like I mentioned earlier, we, we didn't have billboards, we didn't have bus, bus stops. We didn't have this huge marketing push that I've experienced the benefits from, you know, like, from Queer Eye, for instance. So if you're into Getting Curious, this is our opportunity to support it, share it, watch it, and really make sure that algorithm knows that this content is sought after. It's desired. It's wanted, and that's really the way that we make a way forward for, for Getting Curious at Netflix.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:27:50] OK, so moving on from the podcast, TV and all that kind of stuff. We're going to talk about self-care, obviously that's something that you're really known for. This question comes from Claire. You and your team are really busy. What do you do for yourself to refill your tank, maintain a positive energy, and stay curious? And in turn, when you're feeling down, what are some of the things you do to get into a better headspace?

**JVN** [00:29:13] Really good question. So one thing I was mentioning earlier about, like, work-life balance is that, some of it's been, for when it comes to self-care, is, like, readjusting what my expectations are for my own relationship to self-care. I used to need to have, like, a lot of alone time and, like, prior to Queer Eye, like, from doing hair, I used to be, like, "I need to have at least like three nights at home, alone a week. So I can, like, recharge." And that's how I was able to like, you know, kind of recover and, like, not relapse and get through my 20s. Then obviously, when you're doing Queer Eye and you're around people just, like, 24-7 and like, I have a team now, so I've just had to like readjust like what self-care means to me. It used to be like a whole night alone. Now it's, like, a 20-minute bath alone or, like, needlepointing or meditation or a little yoga or like going on working out. Or it's you. It's my husband, it's my support team. It's, like, saying to someone, "I'm having a really hard day. I'm feeling really challenged. I'm feeling really overwhelmed. I need you to, like, take care of the cats and figure out what we're eating for dinner. And I'm going to like, go needlepoint and, like, just not talk for 20 minutes." And so, it's asking for help. That's really what it is, it's like it's learning to ask

for help. So I think that when you become so much busier and also if you're like me and asking for help is a struggle. That's one way that I've gotten more into self-care.

And actually, self-care can also be, it's times where I'm showing up for my friends, it's times where I'm using my awareness and I'm using my privilege to help people who I love. It's, that is self-care to me is like taking my time to, like, love on people who I believe in, and I think that they should, I want them to get the success that I've had and make it their own and go on their own paths. So that self-care, community allyship is self-care for me, asking for help is self-care and then readjusting what it is that self-care is, because we are not always in the same situation. Our situations are changing, they're always fluid. So self-care also has to be dynamic and changing and fluid. And like I said to Angel in this last season of *Queer Eye*, it's, like, we have to challenge our ideas of self-care because it's actually more than it's more than a mask. It's more than a bath. It's more than, like, getting a great shampoo. It's more than going to treat yourself to a haircut. Self-care is those things, too, it is our external, but it's also our internal, and it's also the way in which we treat ourselves. So self-care can be topical, it can be baths and treatments and those types of things because it's a way of showing up for yourself and saying, "I love myself, I'm worth my own time, I'm worth my own effort." But it also can be you need to go be a service and help other people. So self-care is something that's different for everybody and really cannot be a blanket prescription for all.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:30:58] OK, so next question: what you do or say to yourself in that moment, just before you do something that requires courage?

**JVN** [00:31:08] Fuck that bitch! Fuck her, and fuck the horse they rode in on, I will not be...! I'm just kidding. That's not really what I say. Actually, something that takes courage, if you're doing something that's courageous, that means that your centered self is there, because it takes courage for your center itself to be present. So usually if I'm doing something I know that takes courage, it means that I know that I'm in my purpose and then I know that I'm making like a purpose led decision. So usually it's, like, I might be a little nervous, but there is this drive that just leads me to do the thing.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:31:44] And then following on that, Johanna asks: when did JVN decide to acknowledge their HIV status in their book? And how did you cope with pre-release jitters?

**JVN** [00:31:57] That was actually, really, really, really, really, really hard. And I talk a lot about that in my new book. But ultimately why I decided and when I decided was that like there were so many times in the first, like, year and a half of *Queer Eye* where I wanted to talk about

it. Well, actually, more like the first half year. It was like from like February to maybe, like, June, because it was like the summer of 2018 where I was, like, "I'm going to talk about this, but I want to talk about it in a book because I need a lot of time to get out my feelings and process this. And I don't want to be interrupted. And I don't want someone else to say it for me." And I was also just, like, writing a lot anyway for self-care and for creativity. I was just like creatively writing because I was going through so much at the time, and then I realized that there was a memoir there. So that's how I did it. And pre-release jitters was, um, I was filming a lot, and then my cat fell out of a window, and it was probably, like, the hardest, really, probably one of the hardest times of my life. It was really just brutal. I was extremely depressed and extremely anxious. And my life was flashing before me every day, with, with the book coming out.

And then losing Bug The Second in such close, cause I mean that happened in, like, August, and then the book came out end of September. So I almost feel, like, Bug, like, crawling out of a tiny window crack and then falling to his death and then the same day, like, adopting two new kittens because I was so unable to cope with the grief, like, I physically was so sick and I had so much guilt and shame about what happened because it was, I mean, it was an accident, but it was, like, I just if I wouldn't have cracked that window, it was just, so basically, I dealt with the prerelease jitters, like, bone-crushing depression, anxiety and then adopting two kittens and then being so overwhelmed with having four kittens or four cats to take care of as a single parent that I had no time to be worried about the pre-release jitters. And then it kind of felt like I can only imagine, like, what a base jumper feels like, cause, like, "Yeah, I have this parachute and I'm going to jump off a fucking cliff, and I hope that it lands." It just felt relatively really nerve wracking and unhinged.

Hope you weren't expecting a nicer answer for that one. But I also wouldn't regret it, and I wouldn't change it. I mean, I would change Bug The Second, if I could in a heartbeat, but as far as, like, coming out about it, there's really so much support and there is so much love and, like, acceptance. I do feel like I had a positive change in the discourse around what it is to live with HIV now. So I wouldn't regret it, and it was difficult to decide, and I also really had a lot of people in my life that were, like, "Do you have to?" like, "Do you, are you sure you really want to?" But I'm really proud of myself that I did, and I wouldn't change it now.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:35:00] OK, so the next question comes from Cameron: What do you do when you're seriously doubting yourself about a big change, like changing colleges, moving to a new city, doing a new job?

**JVN** [00:35:12] I think it's, like, ultimately we have to trust ourselves and trust that we know what we need, but it's really difficult to know that and to be able to, like, tell that apart. So I think sometimes when I'm making a huge change, in the past, I've done it impulsively. But as I get older, I'm trying to, like, sit with it a little longer before I actually jump in. And then usually, you know, sitting with, with the ideas and the reasons why we want to make a change, we can make a more informed decision if we can sit on it for a little bit.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:35:51] OK, so Charlotte asks: what is something you do every day, no matter how big that makes you feel your most authentically free?

**JVN** [00:36:00] It's not the things that I do, it's the feeling. If I'm doing something that doesn't feel authentic, then I don't feel free. I feel like I'm doing it for someone else.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:36:15] Do you also think that the coffee dance in the morning is something that, because there's never been, like, a commercial entity attached to it, it's just solely you freeing up and talking about a matter that you might want to talk about or something that's happening that day or something you're really excited about. And it kind of, it allows you to kind of break loose and be free in the morning.

**JVN** [00:36:34] Yeah, but it's like, but I don't do it all the time, because if I don't feel like it, or if I feel like it's performative or, like, I'm actually really depressed or anxious, I'm not going to get out there and do a dance to make other people feel better. It's listening to my intuition and, and listening to my, like, to what my joy is and, like, where my joy wants to take me, and it's also a little bit of curiosity, it's, like, allowing my curiosity to, like, lead me. I feel like that when I do gymnastics, things like that, when I do skating, it's like even when it's hard and even when I fall, like, I love it. I just know it feels good.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:37:10] Yeah. So Calli asks, you bring so much laughter and love to us? I'm curious what makes you laugh and what makes you feel so loved?

**JVN** [00:37:17] My friends make me laugh really hard. My husband makes me laugh. My friends made me laugh. My animals make me laugh. I can talk about my animals all the time. Yeah, they all are so funny. So that's what makes me laugh. Also, like, TV makes me laugh: Veep, Broad City, Golden Girls. There are so many shows that make me laugh. Comedians, too.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:37:45] OK. So Emily asks as a school teacher, how best can I support LGBTQIA+ high school students?

**JVN** [00:37:56] I don't know if I can tell you exactly as a teacher because I'm not a high school teacher, but I can tell you that to be the best ally in my opinion, you need to do the most research on what your LGBTQIA+ students are going through. That means being a really good listener, but it also means actively seeking out research and scholarship of, like, of people who are like your students who have maybe moved on from school that can speak to what they needed or what they didn't feel seen in. I think it's about understanding more, doing less. Because you've got to understand what they're up against before you go in there and start trying to be an ally. You can also do it in smaller ways: which is, like, when you see bullying, if you see transphobia, if you see homophobia, if you see internalized, you know, misogyny in and, in and around your, your students, I think it's important to call that out. I was really targeted for so much bullying in my junior high and high school life that a lot of teachers and educators knew, either knew was happening directly, saw, or heard about and made no efforts to do anything about it. And we all know who, like, what bullies or who bullies are and who is kind of making people's lives miserable. And it's just it's, like, "Oh, boys will be boys. That's what they do. They make fun of people." Or, "Girls are catty and they do this." And it's, like, no, no matter what your gender is, you can bully. You can exclude. You can be mean, you can torment, you can physically harm. That isn't. All of those things have nothing to do with your gender and they happen in all the genders. And so if you see that injustice, call that injustice out.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:39:35] Oh, we'll do this one because we figure this one out together in the car. Jerry asks: what is a good non-binary term for aunt slash uncle?

**JVN** [00:39:45] What did we say? We Googled it.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:39:48] Wasn't it, like, guncle.

**JVN** [00:39:52] No, babe, that's gay uncle!

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:39:56] What was it like, for your niece or nephew, we figured that out. [CROSSTALK] That's nibbling.

**JVN** [00:40:01] It's a pibling!

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:40:03] Pibling. Is that like a person...

**JVN** [00:40:08] Yeah, it's modeled on sibling, and it's, like, a pibling. Cute!

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:40:13] So Matthew asks: I'm curious about JVN's move to Texas. Was it a culture shock living in a southern red state? I'm from San Marcus, Texas, just south of Austin, and it's definitely more liberal than most areas in Texas.

**JVN** [00:40:28] Well, you kind of answered the question there. I mean, I feel like Austin is a little bit of, like, a Blue Island in Texas that feels pretty liberal, you know, right in here. But the second that you leave Austin, you're, like, "OK, you're in Texas." So yeah, I mean, Austin itself is a really green city, and there's so much outdoor space and it's just really different than New York City, where I had been for the last two years and really different from L.A. But it almost feels like a marriage of, like, L.A., New York and then smaller. And I think my nervous system really liked the smaller. I've been so bustly and just running so hard between New York and L.A., which I was, you know, doing hair bi-coastally in those cities for, like, two years before Queer Eye. So I was really going back and forth for, like, you know, every four to six weeks to New York, from L.A. for a, for a minute. And I got tired of moving so much. And then I came here for work and I just really liked Austin.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:41:23] Okay, so next question's gardening. Sara asks, What was the first vegetable you successfully grew?

**JVN** [00:41:33] Okra.

**MARK PEACOCK** [0:41:34] No.

**JVN** [0:41:35] Yeah it was.

**MARK PEACOCK** [0:41:36] It was the watermelon

**JVN** [0:41:37] That wasn't successful, it didn't get to adulthood. It rotted.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:41:42] It pretty much got there.

**JVN** [00:41:43] No, not really! [CROSSTALK] The way it got there is if we ate it, and we didn't because it fucking rotted. Because when we moved, we put it in the shade and then it got



over watered. And so that one rotted. And then last year they got attacked and we didn't really get to eat them because we went out, yeah.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:41:59] But then we harvested the pumpkins for the okra. So technically the pumpkins.

**JVN** [00:42:03] No, it was okra, babe, because we grew okra back in that rental house where we got married. [CROSSTALK]

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:42:10] Yeah, OK. OK. And then no gardening question. I don't know if you'll be able to answer this one. [CROSSTALK] OK. Ready. Yeah. Mm. Mm-Hmm. Jonathan, do you and your hubby compost? If so, any tips or tricks. Can you answer that one?

**JVN** [00:42:26] Yeah, I can. My husband built a fuckin tub. A big 'ol metal thing. And he takes, like, all of our food stuff and, like, grass clippings and, like, fuckin' ground up wood. And then he puts it in there and then he stirs it around and he has to add water sometimes, and then it turns into compost.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:42:48] OK. It's a wooden container.

**JVN** [00:42:49] Yeah, I said wooden. [CROSSTALK] I meant to say wooden.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:42:52] OK. But if you do do compost, just remember it's probably, like, 50-50 wet dry material. Because if you put too much like grass, then you'll get green sludge and they'll smell. So the words kind of or dry clippings, cardboard, anything like that will help balance out that. Gardening fact! OK, so skating and gymnastics! What some of the new moves, gymnastics moves, you're learning?

**JVN** [00:43:15] I've been working on a switch leap, which I have in my new routine. I've been working a standing full into the pit, which I'm very far from accomplishing on the ground.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:43:25] What old school gymnastics skills do you wish would make a comeback? So this person said mine is a back extension roll on balance beam.

**JVN** [00:43:32] That's very Shannon Miller.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:43:33] That's what they say.

**JVN** [00:43:34] I would say maybe like a good old fashioned, like, Dominique Dawes, like, punch out of your like to go back across the floor like do like two passes in one, like a rebound right into your next path.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:43:48] For me in ice skating, I'd like to see, like, a somersault on the ice.

**JVN** [00:43:52] Oh, the backflip on the ice, babe? OK.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:43:57] OK. Hair and beauty. Taylor asks: how do you find confidence through your hair? What was your personal journey with haircare and hairstyles that you have kind of donned over the years?

**JVN** [00:44:09] That's a really good question. It's been a very long journey to learn how to style my hair and style other people's hair. I talk a lot about it on our YouTube. I love getting to have, like, more of, like, a beauty focus-ed hair space to kind of explore that end. So not to like, literally do such a self plug, but head over to that [YouTube.com/JVN](https://www.youtube.com/JVN), and I talk a lot about that there.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:44:33] So quick fire, rapid fire round questions. Are zebras black with white stripes or whites with black stripes?

**JVN** [00:44:40] I don't know. I'm not a biologist.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:44:47] What is your favorite British snack?

**JVN** [00:44:45] English breakfast. Or Eton Mess!

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:44:54] Oh, you do love Eton Mess. Who in your humble opinion does the best British accent within the Fab Five?

**JVN** [00:45:00] Me, other than Tan.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:45:02] Really? [CROSSTALK] Do you like a sunset or a sunrise better?

**JVN** [00:45:11] Um, oh, sunset.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:45:13] Why do you think people often open their mouths, when applying mascara.

**JVN** [00:45:17] To concentrate?

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:45:19] In your book, I was shocked and proud to know that you spent some time in St. Louis, my hometown. Did you have a thought on IMO's pizza?

**JVN** [00:45:29] Oh yeah, it's really delicious. We love it. I think it's called IMO's and yeah, it's really good.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:45:35] What kind of animal would you be if you could be any?

**JVN** [00:45:37] I think it would be a Springbok because I would be very gorgeous and I would run and jump very beautifully, but also have horns to fuck you up and the Springboks don't have horns. Then I would just be one because they're really pretty. I can't remember they have horns or not.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:45:50] OK, so former guest Dr. Jessica Hernandez asks, What is your favorite dessert?

**JVN** [00:45:58] Oooh, ummm, uh, cinnamon rolls!

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:46:09] OK, so this is cute. So, Evie, age eight asks turtles or dolphins?

**JVN** [00:46:16] Aww! And dolphins, turtles and dolphins!

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:46:22] No, it's turtles or dolphins.

**JVN** [00:46:23] And! I'm going to blow Evie's mind, and! It doesn't have to be or, it can be both, we don't have to choose.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:46:28] So, last few questions. What advice would you give to people looking to spark that curiosity?

**JVN** [00:46:33] I think it's about giving yourself the permission to follow the curiosity. And when you get curious about something, like, go find the answer, like, don't be like, "Oh, I've got to do this or that or whatever." Just, like, allow yourself to follow your curiosity.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:46:45] Yeah. And how can people support your work on TV, podcast, and beyond?

**JVN** [00:46:49] Well, first, I mean, I think givers are listening to this part of the podcast, like, I love you so much, you are clearly supporting my work and you are really doing the most. So I love you so much for listening and for supporting it. And I think as far as the TV goes, sharing about Getting Curious and helping more people to get their eyes on it and watch a few episodes will be really helpful.

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:47:10] What's next for the podcast?

**JVN** [00:47:12] More of this gorgeous fact-finding information that we were doing, I got to give it up to Zahra Crim, our new associate producer, and Erica Getto, our executive producer who is doing such good work and are really just coming through, just helping me to create helping us to create this incredible show. I feel, I'm so proud of our work and I'm so proud of the work that we put into this to this podcast week in and week out, so hopefully more of our outstanding work is what's next for the podcast

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:47:40] And what's next for you.

**JVN** [00:47:42] And what's next for me is being a good life partner to you and being a good business person and taking good care of you in here and taking good care of myself and just trying to keep doing a good job with the opportunities that I've been given. So my own yogini recess would be that I love you all and thank you so much for listening and supporting the podcast and telling your friends and your family about it and supporting the show. And thank you to my husband for being such a good substitute guest host for this episode of Getting Curious. I love you all so much. Please talk about Getting Curious the TV show and the podcast if you like it, you can hashtag #GettingCurious, and we just appreciate your love and support so much. Thanks for coming this week, and we'll see you next time on Getting Curious.

You've been listening to Getting Curious with me, Jonathan Van Ness, and my very special gorgeous special guest host—

**MARK PEACOCK** [00:48:39] Mark Peacock!

**JVN** [00:48:41] Yeah, good job babe! Thank you so much, you did so good. Thank you all for sharing such gorgeous questions with us, I really appreciate it. We'll hope to have another episode like this again soon and in the meantime, you can join the conversation on Instagram and Twitter @CuriousWithJVN. Our theme music is "Freak" by Quiñ, thanks so much to her for letting us use it. If you enjoyed our show, introduce a friend and show them how to subscribe. Our socials are run by Middle Seat Digital. Our editor is Andrew Carson. Getting Curious is produced by me, Erica Getto, and Zahra Crim. Was that cute? Yay!