

Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness & Norah MacKendrick

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. On today's episode, honey, what is it? On today's, what is it? On today's, what is it? Ooh, you didn't even see that intro coming, honey. I'm trying to switch it up, make sure you're on your toes, honey, you know I love a good intro. But on today's episode, we are joined by Norah MacKendrick, where I ask her: why are toxic products *still* for sale? Welcome back to Getting Curious, everyone. So you'll remember, and maybe you won't, but hopefully you listened to this episode. When we spoke to Dekila Chungyalpa about environmentalism earlier this year, we talked about consumer choice briefly. This week's guest studies the evolution of consumer choice as America's go-to defense against chemical and environmental harm, and how the government and industries have designed the systems this way. Norah MacKendrick is an Associate Professor of Sociology at Rutgers University. Her research and teaching explores environmental health, gender, food, consumer studies, and science and technology studies. Norah, how are you?

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:01:06] I'm fine, thank you. I'm having a good day. How are you?

JVN [00:01:10] I am doing good. And, you know, people can't, like, see the podcast video. But I just have to say, your gorgeous striking silver hair color is so fucking pretty.

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:01:19] Thank you!

JVN [00:01:20] And normally I wait till the end of the conversation to talk about people's hair and how pretty it is but, like, today, I just have to say [SNAPS] this hair, this side part, it's serving. I'm obsessed. Tell your hairdresser they're doing a great job. And this is so good.

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:01:31] I will. I will pass that along. Thank you.

JVN [00:01:34] Just flying colors. So good. So we've spoken with a number of guests about toxic exposure through everyday consumption. Can you remind us, though, how many chemicals and toxins are we likely to be exposed to in a lifetime?

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:01:47] Well, that's a very good question. I've heard estimates like, "If you, you know, take a shower and use basic cosmetics, you're exposed to about 128 chemicals." And then you have all this stuff in your furnishings and your food. The Centers for Disease Control has a study where they use biomonitoring. So this tests your blood, urine, breastmilk for traces of chemicals, and they measure 300 chemicals. And so you can, in theory, your body can contain traces of all 300 of those chemicals. So I pick a safe number and I say it's several hundred that we are exposed to, or at least we can measure and know that we were exposed to in our lifetimes. The Toxic Substances Control Act is responsible for overseeing something like 87,000 chemical substances. Now, not all of those are in use today,

but that just gives you an idea of how many chemicals are out there that the EPA, it's largely the EPA, is responsible for overseeing.

JVN [00:02:50] Which was just largely gutted of all of its, like, oversight powers from the Supreme Court earlier this year.

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:02:59] Yes. And I'm still learning how that's affecting climate change and climate change regulation. I'm sure it's going to have an effect on chemical regulation but I just haven't sat back to really understand the implications it will have.

JVN [00:03:12] Fun! Yeah, anyway...

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:03:15] Yeah, I don't feel optimistic.

JVN [00:03:16] So going back to that, EPA, they have oversight over the Toxic Chemical Control Act.

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:03:22] Yes, Toxic Substances Control Act. So that was created in 1976 and it was revised in 2016. And it was revised in 2016 in some, in some good ways. But then, of course, what happened in 2016, Trump was elected. We had a Trump administration taking over the government and the EPA. He appointed Scott Pruitt, who had sort of made his career off of suing the EPA.

JVN [00:03:55] Yes.

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:03:56] And then it was either Pruitt or his successor that appointed Nancy Beck, who is a lobbyist for the American Chemical Council, very friendly with industry, very anti-regulation. And they made a mess of things. And the folks that Biden has appointed within the EPA are still cleaning that up. So the new legislation is promising, but it's going to take us a while to really see what it can do, because it was more or less rolled back and kind of put on pause during the Trump administration.

JVN [00:04:31] And what are the harms of the chemical exposures and burdens that it puts on the body?

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:04:36] There are several. So it impacts our neurodevelopment. There's a higher risk of cancer, including in children and young people. So uterine and vaginal cancer, liver cancer, breast cancer, brain cancer, testicular cancer, and thyroid cancer. Reduced fertility. Lower birth weight, impaired immune function. Oh, and also diabetes. They think that there's a relationship between toxic exposures and diabetes, so metabolic disorders.

JVN [00:05:06] And is there anywhere in the world where people are living toxin free?

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:05:11] No. Even in the Arctic, so a place that's very far removed from industrial production. So if we take, say, blood and urine samples from folks living in the Arctic, we'll find that sometimes their body burdens of certain chemical substances are much higher than people living further south. And that's because of how air and water move towards the poles and carry with them toxic chemicals that stay in the environment, get into the food chain.

JVN [00:05:42] Because they're, like, in northern Canada and northern like Finland and like Lapland and like Scandinavia and stuff. And like Serbia! Right?

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:05:50] Right. So they're living in the far north.

JVN [00:05:52] I can't believe people are just like out there with, like, the polar bears just like really, like, getting exposed to toxins, but—and then, like, how does someone's gender, race, or class affect the number of, like, toxic exposures? I would imagine Mississippi's drinking water crisis or, like, Flint. Like, I would imagine there's a lot of environmental racism. There's a lot of, like, class stuff. And even, like, with gender, if you're like, you know, this is, like, a little bit, you know, beyond the binary. But, like, anyone who's interacting more frequently with, like, deodorants, creams, makeups, like, anything that you're, like, slathering on your skin on, like, an everyday basis.

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:06:31] Yeah. When it comes to gender, race, and class, race and ethnicity matters because it influences where you're most likely to live because of residential segregation and because of where really toxic polluting, either hazardous waste sites or polluting industries, are located. They are predominantly located in residential spaces that are majority Black and brown and/or low income. So if you're living in a contaminated community, then your exposure is much higher than somebody living, say, near a park and very far away from a polluting facility. And so that's going to be someone who is more affluent and more likely to be white and highly educated and able to move and not be in those highly polluted spaces. When it comes to gender, gender influences, your occupation, so what you're doing, so whether you're working in a hair or nail salon, whether you're working as a farm worker and exposed to pesticides and / or working with heavy industry, but gender is also relevant because as you mentioned, it's what your your personal care routines and how many products you're using. Now, we're starting to see that change, at least among younger people. I'm seeing more and more younger people using cosmetics and beauty products. And, you know, gender doesn't seem to matter as much anymore. But historically, it's really depended, like, if you are a woman, you are using more cosmetics, you're using lipstick, you're using, you know, eyeliner and eyeshadow and you're dyeing your hair, etc., etc.

JVN [00:08:13] Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. I think about, you know, Jamie Lee Curtis, incredible entertainer. I also remember that Activia commercial and, like, a gorgeous billion probiotics, honey. So let's say you're in a yogurt section of a grocery store and you want to

avoid toxins in the products you buy and the container it's packaged in. How is this, like, an example of, like, precautionary consumption?

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:08:38] So if you're standing in the aisle of the grocery store and you're worried about pesticides, you're worried about artificial colors and flavors, you're worried about the product packaging because you know that plastic is an endocrine disruptor. Then you're looking at a product that's basically allowed to be sold on the shelves. But it's up to you as the individual to apply your own standard of safety to pick what sits well with you. If you've shopped for yogurt recently, you know that it's a bewildering landscape of choice. We now have dairy, we have non-dairy, we have no sugar added, we have sugar added. We have different kinds of sugar, different flavors, and then also different packaging. We have the plastic container and we have the glass container and we have the ceramic container now. So it's really overwhelming. The plastic container arrived on store shelves, I don't know when exactly, but plastic is a popular material for packaging our processed foods because it preserves foods really well. No one really has evaluated whether that was a great choice for our health. So it's convenient, it's cheap, and industry likes it and consumers can, you know, they can handle it, too.

JVN [00:09:57] So are you saying that cheap and convenient things could possibly lead to, like, [CHUCKLES]. No, I'm just kidding. That's, I get it. So we're doing something, like, all the time that kind of affects everyone because it's cheap and convenient, but we don't really know all the effects of, like, what it could do.

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:10:13] No, and that's the thing is, is we often spend a lot of time thinking about what food we're going to eat, you know, what things we're going to consume, put on our body or put inside our body, in terms of food. We don't often think about the packages that that food comes in. And those packages, we're learning, are just as important pathways of toxicity as the product itself. So plastic is a powerful endocrine disruptor. So it messes with our hormonal systems. And no one really asked consumers for their permission to use such a compound in yogurt production. We don't have a lot of choice over that. We have more choice over what kind of yogurt we want.

JVN [00:10:56] But the yogurts themselves get tested. But we don't understand, like...

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:11:00] An organic yogurt in order to be certified organic, the farm that produces the dairy, it's going to be inspected every year, a couple times a year by the National Organic Program. And that's out of the USDA, the United States Department of Agriculture. And they have a set of guidelines that producers have to follow in order to be certified organic. And once the farm passes that and then they have, you know, follow up monitoring. But it's not that frequent because it depends on staff and access. So they have to follow those guidelines. But then that milk is sent to a production facility, it's turned into yogurt, it's put into a container. There is no testing going on. There's no testing to see, "Are there any pesticide residues left over in that milk?" No one is testing that unless it's an

advocacy organization that's wondering, "Oh, is organic yogurt really organic?" And I was just looking this up yesterday and there was a study in the last year or two where they found that indeed, organic yogurt is organic. So there's not a lot of fraud or a lot of, you know, bait and switch going on.

JVN [00:12:13] That's cool.

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:12:15] Yeah, I was, like, "Oh, okay, here's a bit of good news. I'll take it."

JVN [00:12:19] I love that for us! But, like, it's kind of just operating off, like, good faith and, like, access because, like, hopefully, like, you know, you just don't know. And then it's, like, serial numbers and, like, hopefully, you know, if there's like a recall, like there's kind of, like...

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:12:31] Right. Once that milk is used in production, it's used for a yogurt, there's no testing going on. And, likewise, the containers that are used to hold the yogurt, those aren't being tested for their safety. It's consumer advocacy groups or environmental advocacy groups that say, "Hey, wait a minute, what kind of plastic is being used?" Or, "This yogurt smells a little funny." I mean, this happened in the case of cereal, where the cereal bags were smelling sort of weird when consumers opened them. And eventually the producer took the cereal off the shelf. But no one actually, like, there was no FDA in there testing this cereal bag to see what was in it. It was the Environmental Working Group that got a hold of these bags and tested them and told us what was creating the smell that consumers didn't like.

JVN [00:13:25] So, like, in the yogurt section, this proverbial yogurt section, you got, like, no sugar, sugar added, like, dairy-free, coconut-derived, like, you know, all the, like, organic, non-organic, I'm sure there's, like, some "natural" thrown in there. But, like, if you don't just, like, pick whichever catches your eye first, like, who's taking the time to do this? Because, like, sometimes you just want some fucking yogurt, you know?

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:13:52] So precautionary consumption means you're going to read those labels, you're going to look at the product, and you're going to decide, "Yeah, this is what I want to avoid and this is what I want in my product," and make your own decision based on what you feel comfortable with and your own standard of safety. Now that standard of safety could be, and is most likely being, influenced by environmental, health, and consumer advocacy groups that are getting the message out there that our everyday products do have a lot of toxic substances in them and that there isn't a lot of regulatory oversight over our food and consumer products.

JVN [00:14:31] And some classic, like, historical examples of that are, like, the clock painter ladies who, like, painted with, like, lead paint. A bunch of them got, like, really intense cancers, got super duper sick. Or, like, the whole Teflon thing, or, like, Erin Brockovich, favorite movie

of all time. There's a lot of these examples through history where, like, through lack of regulation and then people getting sick, it led to some sort of regulation. But then it's, like, how does mainstream things and other things still kind of fall outside of the cracks and, you know, reaches of regulation, which then to me begs the question, why doesn't the government just make a certain standard where, like, everything is organic, everything doesn't have pesticides? Like, is it just capitalism? And, like, you know, is it just that? Is that pretty much it?

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:15:16] That's the— [LAUGHS], that's the short answer. It's capitalism. But can I go back to something that you said? Cause that's really important because you were mentioning people using lead paints and people living in contaminated communities. Precautionary consumption is about our everyday, fairly low-level exposures to toxic substances. I mean, that adds up over time, and it matters. But if we're talking about where you live or what job you have those exposures, that's the real deal because you're getting a big dose of exposure.

JVN [00:15:46] That's, like, OSHA.

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:15:48] Yes, yeah, they're responsible for protecting workers. But those protections have problems.

JVN [00:15:56] But this is, like, consumers. There's lots of times where people use stuff and you don't think it's a big deal. And then it's, like, you know, they used to, like, prescribe, like, pregnant women cigarettes because they kept your baby, like, fucking less big and then you wouldn't, like, hurt your fucking. I don't know. It's just, like, I think I heard that in the thirties. It was like a thing. What protections can precautionary consumption offer consumers and what are its limits? One thing I was thinking about is, like, what if you aren't able to read? Or, like, what if you don't have access, it's like food deserts?

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:16:24] We do know that if you give somebody a diet of all organic food and they're just eating organic food, we can measure that difference in their body. So their internal pesticide burden goes down. It doesn't disappear because these things are still in our general environment and they're still in the body from previous exposures. But it makes a measurable difference. But that really depends on someone eating *all* organic, *all* the time. So it can have a measurable impact, but most of us don't live in that kind of bubble of organic food. And it's more expensive. It can be harder to access, although it's getting easier all the time, and it depends on knowing what to look for. There are lots of people for whom reading a product label or trying to decide, like, what's the difference between something that is non-GMO and something that's organic is totally overwhelming. They don't have time. They've got bigger things to think about, so they're not thinking about those things. So being able to practice precautionary consumption is a privilege. It requires that you have time, requires that you have something called consumer literacy. So you can look at a product label and make sense of it and kind of understand what it means. And that takes time to kind of

learn like, “Well, what's the difference between an ingredient label and the nutrition facts label? What is USDA organic and what does that mean?” So people who can do that really effectively, it's a form of privilege, in my view.

JVN [00:17:58] So then you argue that precautionary consumption isn't just filling the void of chemical deregulation. It's, like, an intentional part of the process, which is giving, like, American, like, rugged individualism. And it also is giving, like, every person for themselves. And it's also giving, like, widespread structure versus, like, an individual, like, it's important to understand, like, the difference, you know?

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:18:22] It makes sense. It makes me think you're a sociologist because we talk about that all the time, like that's our thing. You are hereby, like, granted the title of sociologist.

JVN [00:18:33] Honorary soc–, that happens to me sometimes when I interview academic people, like, but I do think, like, as hairstylists, like, we talk to so many different people that we do give you, like, multifacetedness, you know, like, we just—

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:18:43] Sure.

JVN [00:18:44] And I've been really inspired, like, with JVN Hair, like, how I can try to, like, push the conversation forward, like, from within the industry. But, like, it keeps making me think about why we don't have more regulation to keep things cleaner for all of our consumers in the first place.

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:19:01] Yes.

JVN [00:19:02] Like, who gets rich off of people not having access to, like, all the best food, all the best beauty things? Like, I think I don't like the answer. Like, I can already feel it.

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:19:16] Yeah. I wish we didn't need precautionary consumption. What motivated me to get into this work was realizing, like, “I would like to go into a store and not really have to read the label.” I would like to look at that yogurt and say, “Alright, you know what I feel like key lime today, not vanilla,” and that's, like, the level of engagement I have with that label, but it's not like that. Maybe you have experienced this with JVN Hair – it is more expensive to source sustainably. And, you know, you, you have to use different suppliers and that can be complicated so that price gets passed on to consumers. And we are accustomed, especially in the United States, to having fairly affordable food and not spending too much money on our food. And if you do spend a lot of money on your food, you're sort of labeled as kind of bougie or, you know, snobby or upper class. And that's because it does require a lot of money to eat organic and to eat natural foods. But ultimately, yeah, we should be able to walk into any store, whether we are buying a cosmetic product or we are buying

our food or our furnishings, and feel like it's, it's more or less going to be safe and good for our health and good for the environment, too.

JVN [00:20:35] Well, you really hit the nail on the head, though, when you said that, like the, the cost gets passed down to the consumer. And that's a way that, like, Sallie Krawcheck, when we got to interview her a few years ago, it's, like, this economy is and has always been wired to, like, punch down, like, it always passes the buck, like, down and down and down.

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:20:54] We're talking about a price of something going up. So that cost is being pushed down to the consumer because they have to pay more. But if we don't have a safe consumer landscape or, you know, food supply, the cost gets pushed down to the consumer. It's not necessarily monetary right away, but it's, like, the cost in terms of health and poor environmental quality and, you know, overflowing landfills and health problems. And so those problems don't go back to the producers. The producers are not held accountable for those kinds of costs that consumers are bearing. And not all consumers bear it in the same way. I mean, more privileged consumers can shop their way out of this problem.

JVN [00:21:40] Right. So since 1900. It's a long time ago, honey. 122 years ago.

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:21:50] Yeah.

JVN [00:21:51] What's the story of chemical production been in the U.S.?

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:21:55] So since 1900, people were mainly concerned about heavy metals at that time.

JVN [00:22:01] It was giving lead.

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:22:04] Lead, arsenic.

JVN [00:22:05] Yes, arsenic.

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:22:06] Yeah, arsenic.

JVN [00:22:08] Yes.

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:22:10] [LAUGHTER] Not good. You don't want the heavy metals.

JVN [00:22:13] So but what happened since 1900? Like, how has the regulatory framework evolved, like, going along 1900, blah, blah, blah.

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:22:19] Okay. So in 1900, there was no FDA. There were no regulations governing the safety of our food supply and our consumer products. So this was a

time when you might find, like, things like sawdust in bread. You might find jams that aren't jam, they're just basically sugar and coloring. And there were also problems of how medicines were being manufactured. So sometimes medicines would be manufactured with the wrong ingredients or in unhygienic conditions. And so people were getting sick. So there was this one individual, Harvey Wiley, he was really concerned about this, was concerned about all the new products that were coming out. You know, no one really knew if they were safe for our health. And he really pushed this Pure Food and Drug Act, which was passed in 1906, and that eventually led to the formation of the FDA. The FDA was formed in 1930 and it was really to implement, with more force, the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906. But it never really was able to do so. Industry interests from the get go have always had greater power than government regulation, and that was really disappointing to me when I was doing research on the history of this for my book. So it's not a story of, like, "Everything was really good and government was really strong and then, you know, maybe in the seventies or eighties they rolled this back." It turns out it was never really very good.

JVN [00:23:45] Like lobbyists have been fucking it up forever.

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:23:48] Forever!

JVN [00:23:48] Like special interests have been fucking it up forever.

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:24:50] Forever.

JVN [00:23:51] The tale as old as time.

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:23:52] Yeah, yeah, as old as the 1900s.

JVN [00:23:57] Yeah.

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:23:58] So we've really never had a system that's done a great job of looking out for consumer safety. And so it's been an issue for people who are concerned about public health: mothers. Mothers were organizing in the early 1900s through the thirties and forties and fifties around having safer consumer products, safer foods. And in the postwar period, that's when you saw this huge explosion in chemical production because of all the innovation that was happening during World War Two. And government just was not set up to look at all of these new chemicals that were being produced and used in consumer products. And then in 1976, when TSCA, so the Toxic Substances Control Act, was passed, they grandfathered in something like 60,000 chemicals that were already in use and said, "These new rules are onerous on industry. So if you already have a chemical in production, you're excused from this legislation."

JVN [00:25:00] It's really weird for me hearing you say, like "when TSCA was passed." When I think TSCA, I think Michelle Kwan, bronze medal, 2004 World Championships, like, I'm just not

used to, like...so between 1930 and 76, like, shit's still kind of, like, not super. And also I would argue that, like, Erin Brockovich would say, like, in her book, like, "Superman's not coming to save you," a lot of these, regulations, like it comes from good intentions. It's to give the appearance that it's like getting safer and it might make it safer, but, like, we could always do better. And because of the special interests that to do lobby against, like, a more robust implementation of a lot of these things like it and they just take so long like to and like implement because of like federal leadership changes and stuff like what you saw like in 2016, like that stuff gets passed, but then Trump puts it on ice. We also got to learn about that in an episode about disability politics, about, like, how, like, there was a lot of disability legislation and stuff that had been, like, negotiated under Nixon. But then Ford was, like, "Eh, I want to rethink all this." So just, like, the leadership changes can, like, derail a lot of this stuff because it's such a large system to implement. And then who pays the price is, like, the people who have to, like, consume this shit because you got to eat, you know, you want to wash your face or whatever, like, run your car or whatever the stuff that you're doing. So, okay, now, let's say that a product has been, like, deemed toxic, like, a type of couch foam or something. Like, who would make that call that this thing can't be used anymore?

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:26:29] It's technically up to the Environmental Protection Agency, the EPA, to make that call. What typically happens is that advocacy groups, so environment, public health, consumer advocacy groups will flag some research or some new science that has come out suggesting that this compound is problematic and put pressure on industry and the EPA to do something about it. So if the EPA decides it needs to look at this compound more carefully, it still has several years before it's going to act. So it's going to put it through a risk assessment process, and this takes some time. Meanwhile, that product is still out on the market, still being sold, and consumers are still buying it and manufacturers are still using the compound in their manufacturing process. So it can take, like, two, five, or more years for the EPA to make a call and say, "This substance is no longer allowed to be used."

JVN [00:27:34] So basically the product is still out. Like, once the EPA would say, "Hey, this isn't safe anymore." It's not like some other body comes in and, like, clears it off the market. Or if it was, like, a food recall, sometimes they'll, like, they'll call that stuff. But in this case, if it's like a couch foam, the couches are still out there.

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:27:49] Yeah. So if the EPA decides that a compound is too hazardous to be used in consumer products, then industry can't use it anymore in their manufacturing. Now they can ask for a delay. They can say, "We need more time to find an alternative," and they can ask for more time before the EPA starts to, I guess, get really, really upset that they're continuing to use it. But in actual fact, what ends up happening is that these advocacy groups are very good at getting the message out and they're already pressuring retailers and manufacturers to stop using these compounds. And there's consumer pressure coming from people saying, "You know what, I don't want this in my couch foam. Please take it out." And so by the time the EPA makes a decision that compound is maybe not being used in a couch anymore. Now, not to say that like a really educated consumer might say, "Okay, I

don't want this flame retardant in my couch foam, so I'm going to get rid of my couch and I'm going to buy a couch that does not have it." Well, where does that disposed couch go? It goes into donations, and so that goes into someone else's home. And so it doesn't disappear. Even if it goes into the landfill. That foam is decomposing and it is getting into our air, our soil, and our water. And that's one reason we find these compounds up in, like, in the Arctic is because they, they're transported up there. It never really disappears. And people who are relying on donations are kind of at risk of some of the older crumbling foams that have these problematic flame retardants in them.

JVN [00:29:30] And also, if you think about that, like, it's not, like, landfills have, like, a barrier between the garbage and the ground. And as you just keep heaping more stuff on top of it, like it seeps down, it's going to eventually make its way to groundwater, it's, going to, like, expand. I don't know exactly how that works, but it seems, like, pretty I think I can imagine, like, how that stuff would cycle in that world or in this world! Ha! Because we live in it. Yeah, that's fun! But here's the thing. You're in the EU. How might your experience as a shopper consumer differ than, like in the United States?

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:29:58] Mm. Well, your experience as a shopper is: you're still encountering labels, you still have organic certification, you still have some toxic substances and endocrine disruptors in your products, but you don't have as many as are in the United States. And that's because as a shopper in the EU, you can be sure there's a regulatory body and a regulatory infrastructure that is much more precautionary. And by precautionary, I'm referring to the precautionary principle that's—, it's a policy ethic that says, "If there is a threat of harm to health or the environment, we will move to restrict an activity until we can prove it safe." So the European Union starts off with the assumption that something might be harmful and it has to be proven to be safe. In the United States. It's the opposite. It's assumed to be safe until someone can bring forward enough evidence to show that it's not. So in the European Union, you know that there are more regulations governing your food and food quality and, all of the chemicals that go into your consumer products. So you're exposed to fewer toxic chemicals. You know, sometimes, especially those of us who study environmental policy, we look at the EU as, like, "Everything is perfect, everything is rosy," and it's not. I mean, industry has an influence there. They've really slowed down moving on regulating endocrine disruptors. So these compounds that mess with our hormones and that's a problem. But in comparison to the United States, they are doing a much better job of prioritizing human health and environmental health.

JVN [00:31:46] So for you, as, like, a fierce, you know, researcher of all this, like, at your house, do you fucks with Tupperware or are you like, "I put my shit in glass and, like, only fucking glass. Like, I don't trust that shit."

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:31:57] Well, I mean, I would love to just only have glass, but I think this is what motivated me to do the work. It's, like, "Yeah, I would love to have glass, but

I mean, I have kids at home," and when they were little, you're not going to have glass containers.

JVN [00:32:11] Breaking shit all over the place, yeah!

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:32:13] Yeah, exactly. They're going to break it. They're going to break it. Also, it's heavy. If you're carrying your lunch, it's heavy. And the stainless steel is also great, but it's really expensive. So Tupperware is cheap. If you lose it, you can affordably replace it. So I do use Tupperware at home but when I use it, I'm, like, "eugh." But I will not microwave in plastic. Just never do that.

JVN [00:32:35] Ohhhh! Yes!

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:32:35] Don't microwave in plastic, don't put hot liquids or hot foods. You know, if you're cooking and you're putting something in a Tupperware container, wait for it to cool down. Don't put hot stuff in plastic because when you warm it up, that's when you have, like, the leaching. [CROSSTALK]

JVN [00:32:51] Yes. But then I also just saw this one thing about, like, food poisoning, which, like, different. But it also said that, like, for the like bacteria growing on shit that you don't—because I always, like, would let shit cool down before I put it in the fridge but they said that that actually doesn't keep it any cleaner and you can actually get it more fucked up from like letting it sit out forever. But for the leaching thing, it's like, just like, don't put it in scalding hot. Like, like, definitely, like, right? Like, don't do scalding hot but maybe don't let it sit out for like 3 hours so you don't get, like, some fucking, like, botulism shit and then—

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:33:19] You don't want that.

JVN [00:33:20] Shitting your brains out for like, the next. You can't even. Never mind. I'm not going to say that out loud. My filter worked. That was weird. [NORAH LAUGHS] So, then, like, our recent guest Michelle Pfeiffer—not to namedrop, sorry about it. Hair flips. I did have Michelle Pfeiffer on and I also did get to ask her about What Lies Beneath and it was major, okay! It was like a really fun experience. If you haven't listened to that episode, we're obsessed. So she founded Henry Rose, which is her, like, gorgeous perfume line. And it's cool because it's, like, transparent, like, with its ingredients. And that's kind of cool because, like, that, like, Personal Care Act, like, said that the word "fragrance" could encompass, like, up to, like, 3000 ingredients, like, many of which are endocrine disruptors and, like, not good. And she's really taken, like, a cool, like, stand against that. And a lot of it had to do with her kids, like, when she had kids and that was, like, what was her kind of impetus. So why is parenthood often the moment people learn about toxic exposure?

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:34:16] When people are learning about toxic exposure, I'm mainly going to talk about cisgender women. So women learn early in life that they have the

capacity to have a baby, to become pregnant, and what their body is exposed to exposes the fetus to the same thing. So, you know, we're taught at a young age, like, "Don't drink, don't smoke. All of these things could harm the future child." So when people are planning a family or when they do become pregnant, it brings that into sharp relief. Like, it's, like, "Oh, okay, I really need to remember that I'm a kind of conduit for toxins." And, I mean, that's unfortunate because fathers' bodies matter, too. So what fathers are exposed to matters. But we put a lot of attention on women because they're the ones who are pregnant and then are breastfeeding.

JVN [00:35:08] Which really is fucked up because, like, when I think about the amount of drugs I've done and all the stuff I've done, like if I wanted to like parent and child, I'm pretty sure I bet my sperms are like 27-headed, like I bet they're so messed up because of all the like— I just I've done a lot of drugs. I really have, it's been and it was a hard road there for a minute and, like, I don't even know what's going on. And if you have a penis, you should care about your fucking sperms.

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:35:32] Absolutely. But because of cultural ideas about who health matters for children, we've really focused mainly on mothers. And we're only learning now about how important father's health is and how healthy sperm are produced. And so, as it turns out, when it comes to healthy sperm, it depends on what a man is doing, like, three months before conception can impact the health of sperm. But do we see those messages for fathers? No, we do not. But the CDC now recommends that anyone of reproductive age, anyone who could become pregnant and who is not on birth control, abstain from drinking. And so maybe they've updated that in, like, the last year, but that was a public health message that they had for a while. So this is all to say that women become responsabilized, like, really young to know that their bodies affect the health of their future child. So when women are planning a pregnancy or become pregnant or after the birth of a child, they feel like everything they do impacts the health of the child and thereby impacts that child's future. So whether they develop cancer later in life, whether they develop a learning disability. In terms of eating habits, whether they become, like, junk food maniacs or whether they love, like, roasted broccoli and etc.. And kale. Kale's a big one.

JVN [00:36:58] That kale! So that seems pretty explanatory on, like, why, then, this, like, precautionary consumption can often become a gendered experience because of, like, family structure and, like, societal pressure of the patriarchy, etc.. So that, that totally makes sense. But then, like, what about this whole, like, idea of, like, the "pure vulnerable child"? Like, how does that idea and that, like, cultural dominance fit into this conversation?

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:37:25] So we have this cultural idea that when a child is born it is pure and only its external environment and typically the actions of its mother, although fathers matter too, can mess it up and threaten this purity. But we know now from doing tests of cord blood, fetuses are exposed to chemicals in utero. So we are not so pure when we're born. But there is this idea and women internalize this. So I've spoken to women who say, like, "When

my child is born, they're pure and they're perfect and I have to be careful not to mess this up." And they're vulnerable. And I mean that—the vulnerability—is supported by research. Infants are vulnerable to environmental chemicals because infancy is a time of rapid growth, rapid cell development, and a lot can get messed up from exposure to toxic substances. And mothers, increasingly, and fathers too, increasingly are aware of how these chemicals can impact child development. So they want to avoid that. But this, the idea that the child is “pure” and can only really be messed up by its environment and its mother, I mean, that's really putting a lot of the burden and a lot of the blame on mothers. And it's messed up in another way, too, in that we're seeing with the restriction of reproductive rights, that the prioritizing of the fetus over the mother also means that women can be prosecuted for what they're doing during pregnancy.

JVN [00:38:54] We've seen it in the U.S. We've seen it in Latin America, Central America, South America, I mean, but also in the U.S., like really, again, seeing it in the U.S.. And if you don't know about that, there's, like, this woman in Oklahoma who is accused of doing meth when she was pregnant and then they fucking threw her in jail. And this was, like, before the reversal of Dobbs. We have seen this happen and it's also can be litigated a lot in, like, child custody things which also, as we've learned, can, you know, have you wound up and all sorts of other things. And then how can race and class shape someone's ability to participate in precautionary consumption?

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:39:26] It can affect their ability to access these products. So we know that if you're living in an urban area. So I've done research in New York City where, you know, you can access spaces that allow you to purchase organic things and sometimes that are fairly affordable prices. I was really surprised at how, you know, like, there are now stores, like, say Target and major grocery stores, and Wal-mart, that have a fairly affordable price point for organic foods. But if you live in a more rural area, you're going to have a harder time getting your hands on those things. Or if you're kind of limited to one neighborhood and you have, like, one grocery store in your neighborhood. So in the neighborhood I live in, in New York City, like, all the organic things, all the so-called “natural” things, the prices are just jacked up. They're really expensive. So I have the flexibility, I can go somewhere else, but if you don't, then you're spending a lot more, and you just avoid those products altogether. So that's how sort of race and class can, can fit into this.

JVN [00:40:28] But also it's, like, the WIC programs, like, a lot of, like, the welfare assistance programs, like, for help for accessing food, like if you read the fine print, like they don't cover organic foods. So even if you wanted to, like, make more precautionary consumer choices, like, a lot of times assistance programs, like, won't even cover those because of the way that racism and classism is, like, baked into—, because it's like, “Well, if you need, like, assistance then, like, why are you spending it on organic?” Like, that's a little more expensive. It's so fucked up.

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:40:55] Exactly. Well, it's messed up because the message is also that, "You know, you should talk to your child and you should read to your child." And there's all this interference in mothers' lives to make sure that that child grows up to be healthy. But then when it comes to buying organic things, it's, like, "Well, no, sorry, the benefit won't cover that."

JVN [00:41:11] Right!

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:41:12] That's just, that's frivolous. So WIC does not cover organic foods, but food stamps will. So SNAP benefits will. But if you're on weight and food stamps, it's not covering your whole grocery bill anyway. So you are not going to spend any extra money on those things unless you somehow can to make it work. I have talked to women who have been able to do that, but only with, like, a lot of time and a lot of work.

JVN [00:41:37] Yeah. And, like, meanwhile, you know, we bail out, like, airlines, banks, fucking stock market, and then, like, people who, like, really need to feed their families are like getting nickel and dimes, like, and can't put food on the table. And not because they're not working. It's because things have been so inflated and so out priced and like access to those things have been made even harder to get. So we hate that story. So when we spoke with Sabrina Strings about racialized fatphobia, she talked about a "slender ideal." And this concept also appears in your work. What does the slender ideal have to do with precautionary consumption?

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:41:13] I found that women became aware of precautionary consumption and label reading, it's usually when they were in college or they finished college and they wanted to, you know, have better health or lose weight. It was really when their entry point into dieting culture and they had control over what they were eating, they were moving out of a dorm, they were cooking for themselves for the first time. And they were, like, "You know what? I want to lose weight. I want to be slender, I want to be slim." So they learn to read a label and that skill is important for precautionary consumption. So it was sort of, like, like, the gateway drug. It's, like, dieting culture is kind of the gateway drug in some ways to precautionary consumption because you learn to read a label and really think about what's going into a product. And so, you know, you're thinking maybe about sugar and calories and fat. And then that leads to thinking about, "Okay, well, what preservatives are in there? Are there pesticide residues?" And the list goes on and on.

JVN [00:43:13] How has that affected, like, consumerism of highly processed foods, like, has that also, like, given more rise to, like, less good options for people?

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:43:24] Sure. Because diet culture teaches people to look at the label for certain things. They're looking at sugar, they're looking at calories, they're looking at fat. And the marketing response to that: so we see an increase in these processed foods that have labels right on the front, like, "Only," you know, "100 calories only" or "no sugar added."

And so that creates a whole opportunity for food processors to create new products for people or even just brand them in a different way, to draw new consumers in who are really sort of, like, attuned to these things, like, low fat or low calorie.

JVN [00:44:02] Yeah, that makes sense. I remember talking to my dad about this one time and he was, like, "You know, you might say that a Big Mac isn't the healthiest thing, but if that's the only thing you can eat, the Big Mac's going to keep you alive." So what does choosing the right option look like if your choices are limited?

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:44:19] If your choices are limited, choosing the right option is about what you have control over. So if you don't have a lot of access to organic foods, you don't have access to a farmer's market, well then you're shopping around what's available to you. So maybe you're saying, "Okay, fine, I won't choose fast food, I'll make this food myself. It may not be organic. It may not be from Whole Foods or any of those fancy boutique stores, but I'll make my own food. And then that way I know exactly what's going into it." Where I live in New York City. I notice that people shop a lot at these really informal markets. There's, like, these pop up markets where people are selling all kinds of fresh fruits and vegetables at a much lower price than you would find in the grocery store. So in that case, then you're choosing to shop there. The food is fresh, it's affordable, and you're using that in your cooking and in your meal prep. And then maybe if you are a label reader and you're really concerned about artificial colors, artificial flavors, then you're picking the option that has less of those things that you don't want. So you still do have a lot of choice, but it is not this kind of, like, pristine, precautionary consumer landscape that you would find in, say, a more affluent neighborhood where you have multiple stores and lots of sort of, like, boutique organic options for shoppers.

JVN [00:45:45] What companies and institutions have stepped in to fill the government's void and how do they help consumers navigate what's safe?

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:45:53] We've seen environmental advocacy groups step in. And so one of the groups that's really active is the Environmental Working Group.

JVN [00:46:02] We love EWG!

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:46:04] Yeah. So they have the EWG verified program, which I think you were talking about Henry Rose. I'm pretty sure Henry Rose is EWG verified—

JVN [00:46:12] They are!

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:46:13] And that's a really high standard of safety. And I mean, it's the kind of standard that you would want the FDA to use. And the USDA for the EWG's, like, dirty dozen list. So these are fruits and vegetables that have the highest pesticide

residues, either in terms of the number of different pesticides that are used or the amount of residue that's on an item. So EWG is kind of stepping in where government is failing. We also have an organization called Mind the Store, which is part of, I think now part of Toxic Free Future. What they do is they go in to retailers like, say, Target, and they say, "Look, here's the problem with toxic chemicals in consumer products. We want you to voluntarily reduce the number of products in your store that have these things and opt for better options." And that's shown some success. And I know they're working on Amazon, too, but, you know, that's a much bigger marketplace. But they have had some success at getting stores to not just sell more green products, but actually take some of those more harmful products off the shelf and not sell them in the first place. I mean, we really do rely on these organizations, these advocacy organizations, to keep an eye on our consumer landscape and our food system. Without them, we would have really very little idea of what toxic substances are in our food and consumer products.

JVN [00:47:47] I like to think that as, like, a genderqueer person, I'm like, you know, very anti-binary. If one side of the equation, or binary, is, like, government regulation, and the other one is, like, precautionary consumption. It seems like there's a lot more emphasis on, like, precautionary consumption, at least in the United States, than there is in, like, government regulation. And so obviously, I don't think, you know, this could be my, my, my rural Midwestern-ness coming out. But it's like, you know, my dad would say, like, "Well, look at the post office. Like, you want to let the government do everything for you?" But then it's like, well, you know, it's a little bit deeper. You got like, some systematic shit there and, like, it's not really fucking funded, right? What could a stronger regulatory system look like that could make it a little bit more balanced and could keep us a little safer?

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:48:41] I struggled with this question a lot when I was writing my book because I thought, you know, "Is government regulation really going to work?" Like, in practical terms, like, can we put all of our eggs in that basket and say, "Regulation, that's the way to go." And also seeing how these regulatory bodies, you can create the best legislation in the world but if these regulatory bodies are not well-funded consistently over time, as you mentioned, if they're not well staffed, and you don't have that, that momentum over time, it really doesn't matter. You need all of those things together. So if I were to design an ideal regulatory system, I would say follow the lead of the European Union, that seems to be working for them. It's not perfect, but it's a good start. Look at what's happening over in California. So California is collecting information on toxic substances. They have Proposition 65, which requires manufacturers to list any problematic chemicals that are in their products.

And as a result, they actually have a lot of information about how to assess risks from chemicals. So we don't have to start from scratch to see, like, you know, "Is, like, DDT, dangerous or not." So there's a lot of information out there already. I think regulators could use that. They could reform the risk assessment system to be more precautionary and then use government agencies, give them the money that they need, give them the stuff that they need to cut some of that red tape, streamline the process a little bit more, and that will give you a

much better system. Now, I say that, but in actual practice, it is going to take so much work. Because another thing I found is that there are so many different regulatory agencies that are involved, and they all kind of overlap a little bit. And there are different pieces of legislation that they have to follow and it's kind of a mess. So there are days when I think, "You know what, we just need to tear it all down, get rid of everything, and then build it right back up from scratch." I think that would do a far better job rather than try to, like, tinker around the edges of what already exists.

JVN [00:50:57] So who do you think needs to be held accountable in our current system?

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:51:03] Industry absolutely has to be held accountable. Like, in our conversation, I've been putting a lot of emphasis on government but industry. And that's, you know, that's a big group right there. But I'm talking about the people who are innovating, who are making new chemicals for consumer products or for food production. The folks who are making those products, who are distributing them. And in fact, because of how global capitalism works, these are actually many of the same very large companies who are doing this. They bear a lot of this responsibility because there is a way to create compounds that prioritizes health and the environment in the design process, in the innovation process.

JVN [00:51:48] That's what we do at JVN Hair!

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:51:52] Good!

JVN [00:51:54] It literally is, like, we literally because like when I first got into beauty, I thought that synthetic meant bad. Then I learned about, like, Biossance and squalane and, like, really, like, squalane historically has come from, like, shark, liver or like olives. I mean, obviously, you don't wanna killing shark livers and then all of like, like global warming and then like the amount of processes that, like olive squalane needs to go through, like, to take the color out of it so that it can like play well with other ingredients and, like, last longer and stuff. But then these biochemists, like, invented this, like, molecular copy of squalane and then hemisqualane, which is, like, a half-sized molecule, but it comes from this like sustainable sourced sugarcane that's, like, endemic to northern Brazil. So, like, there is no forest clearing for it, like, goes off the water like from the rain because it's endemic to there. And, like, all of the squalane that we make for, like, all of our companies is literally grown from, like, a piece of land that's, like, a 10th of the size of the Central Park. Like, it's really little.

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:52:52] Oh, wow, that's amazing.

JVN [00:52:53] But it's, like, the other thing that's kind of a nice for us is that like we're kind of, like, a littler boat, so it's easier to, like, turn a little or boat versus when you have, like, a fucking huge barge of like a gazillion old factories and, like, I mean, not, you know, excusing anyone, it's just, like, easier if you're a little smaller because you can be a little bit more nimble.

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:53:13] Sure, and you happen to find, like, a source of—, is it squalane? Is that what you call it?

JVN [00:53:18] Yeah. Yeah.

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:53:19] You've, you've found a source of squalane that works the way you want it to. So, like, an example of something that's just really hard is that we do need compounds that keep things from burning up. Right, like, our electronics? They're fire hazards. And so they have all kinds of chemicals in them to keep them from bursting into flame. And that's really important. We want that. But it is hard to find a compound that will effectively, you know, act as a flame retardant and not be toxic to the environment or to humans. Sometimes those very properties that make a chemical useful are what make it persistent. It doesn't break down and because it doesn't break down it, like, builds up in your tissues and in the food chain.

JVN [00:53:04] Yeah. Silicones! They don't really degrade. So interesting. We don't use silicones. Ah! So as long as we, like, are in this capitalistic world, you know, honestly, who knows? We really could be Gilead in, like, three and a half weeks, like, so it could be a full restructure, you know. So as long as we are working within the system we have, how would you recommend listeners approach consumer choice? Like, how can we be more attentive shoppers? Yeah, let's start there. How can we be more attentive shoppers?

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:54:33] Well, the first thing I would say is that guilt is a huge problem with precautionary consumption because when you know that you could be making a better choice, but you're either too stressed. You don't have time, you don't have the money. There's a lot of guilt. So my first message is take a deep breath. It is not all on you. This is a systemic problem and you as an individual can only do so much. So pick what you can handle, and if you want help, there are good resources out there. The EWG is really one of the best resources that I've found. They have a database where you can look up different consumer products and beauty products. They also have just practical advice if you're on a budget and you want to reduce your exposure to toxics. You could also look at Mind the Store, they rate and give grades to different retailers and see which retailers are doing better. And some of those retailers are super accessible here in the United States. You will find that you can find all kinds of eco-friendly stuff. And the, the price difference isn't outrageous, and that's important.

JVN [00:55:42] It is, because it's, like, giving more accessibility. So I love that. And then, like, what labels or certifications should we seek out that you seek out?

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:55:53] So I look at organic because the certification system is really transparent. We know what we're getting when we certify something organic. And USDA organic is, is a solid certification system. It's not perfect, but it's pretty good. There is some organic fraud out there. You know, I'm not really the one to talk about it. I don't know

enough about it, but it does exist. But I look at USDA organic. I try to avoid plastic when I can because it's an endocrine disruptor. It's really the compounds that go into making plastic that are endocrine disruptors, but there are lots of times where I'm, like, "You know what? I just need this." Or, "I'm on a professor income. Like, I'm not buying all organic stuff for my family. It's just it's—, that's not happening." And I try to cut myself a little bit of slack. If I can buy more locally, like I buy locally sourced meats or fruits and vegetables, I try to do that, but I generally just try to take some pressure off of myself to know that I can't do all of this on my own.

JVN [00:56:59] That's important, and it's important for people to hear. So what are your hopes for the science and sociology of toxic exposure?

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:57:08] I guess when I hear that question, I think, you know what, we have so much science and we do have a lot of good sociology happening and policy analysis and that, that's happening. We're already doing a great job of that. What I want to see is a change in industry practices. I want to see industry, not only change their practices, but stop lying. Like, we've found out, through lawsuits, that industry has a vested interest in concealing when they've discovered that something is harmful to human health. And so, you know, I would like our attention to be put on that and on things like green chemistry, like, creating compounds where as part of the logic of innovation and production, we're prioritizing health and the environment. Like I'd like to see loads of money put into that. But I think, you know, that the sociology and science of precautionary consumption is going to continue to develop and continue to move. And I think it's moving in really good directions.

JVN [00:58:02] So, like, you obviously love the movie Erin Brockovich, right?

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:58:07] Yeah, it's been a long time since I've seen it, but yes of course.

JVN [00:58:11] Such a classic. And you said you had kids?

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:58:12] Yeah.

JVN [00:58:13] You know, one of the biggest threats to our future society that I see as a podcast host and, like, public figure is that these fucking damn kids don't know about fucking Erin Brockovich anymore. I am not a parent, but I am a leader. And this is my parting message for you. If you haven't seen Erin Brockovich, you need to see it. If you have not read any of Norah's work? You need to read it. You need to follow her. You need to be following this work. And my final question for you is what's next for you and for your work?

NORAH MACKENDRICK [00:58:44] A project I've been working on lately is looking at this concept of hormone balance, which comes from my interest in endocrine disruptors and how the science and regulation of endocrine disruptors is changing. And I'm seeing increasingly in

the wellness space this emphasis on hormone balance, like, "Hormone balance will lead to, you know, this wonderful thing or that wonderful thing." So I wondered, you know, do doctors talk about hormone balance? Is this a thing? So I've been looking at self-help books written by doctors to understand how they frame and understand hormone balance. And what I find is that the self-help world is a really bizarre place where very traditional ideas about gender and beauty and health are being shared and reproduced. And so my work is showing that, you know, hormone balance basically means conforming to, hegemonic femininity or hegemonic masculinity, meaning like being sort of, like, the very traditionally feminine and very traditionally masculine. And if you appear that way, then your hormones are balanced. So that's been kind of an interesting deep dive for me.

JVN [00:59:52] Mm. It's giving Britney Aldeen. It's giving. Yes. Good luck with that. We want to know how it goes. We love, that's important work to see the ways that patriarchy, like, and misogyny, like, seeps into fucking everything no matter what doesn't really matter.

NORAH MACKENDRICK [01:00:07] Yeah, including medicine.

JVN [01:00:08] Including medicine, like, literally fucking everything. These fuckers are testing me but, you know, but it's fine. Norah, we love you so much, and your work is incredible. Where are you active? Are you, like, active on the Twitter? Are you active on the 'gram?

NORAH MACKENDRICK [01:00:21] So I'm active on Twitter. And then I have, when it comes to Instagram, I'm trying my hand at, like, creating more sort of green advice for people that's partly around this message of "relax," but partly around this message of, like, "If you want someone to help you do these things, like, no one knows more than I do."

JVN [01:00:39] Norah, we're so grateful for you and your work, and thank you so much for coming on Getting Curious.

NORAH MACKENDRICK [01:00:42] Thank you so much for having me. It's been a pleasure.

JVN [01:00:45] Yes! You've been listening to Getting Curious with me, Jonathan Van Ness. My guest this week was Norah MacKendrick. You'll find links to her work in the episode description of whatever you're listening to the show on. Our theme music is "Freak" by Quiñ - thanks to her for letting us use it. If you enjoyed our show, introduce a friend, honey - please show them how to subscribe. Follow us on Instagram & Twitter @CuriousWithJVN. Our editor is Andrew Carson. Getting Curious is produced by me, Erica Getto, and Zahra Crim.