

## Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness 300th Episode Special

**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. Today is such a surreal episode. I think about having this idea to do this podcast standing behind my chair in, like, West Los Angeles in 2014. And now fast forward six, eight years. We are embarking on our 300th episode. And to celebrate, we're turning the mic on you, our listeners, once more. If you've ever wondered, "What's it like behind the scenes of Getting Curious?" This is the episode for you. Without further ado, to quote Kathi Dooley, let's embark on a stunning journey, led by your curiosity.

Grace, who is 17, texted us: I was wondering how your podcast came about and how you started doing it? Let's take it back, Grace, to the year 2016, when you were 11. So basically I'd been doing *Gay of Thrones* and I loved doing *Gay of Thrones*. It was my first experience in entertainment. It was the first time I'd ever, like, performed or written or helped produce. Once that first season was over, I was, like, "What? The gig's up? Like, I want to keep doing stuff." And I was in the salon, but doing *Getting Curious* allowed me an avenue of something to work on where I could really be the director, and I could really be the creator. And I could do the jokes I wanted to do, and I could learn the things that I wanted to learn. I think the first 50 something episodes of the first season, like, I literally did it with, like, me and one sound engineer. Like, I was cold emailing, like, 50 professors to find our first guest on the show ever, who was Dr. James Gelvin. I just learned so much. I learned about booking, timing, writing, editing. I learned so much through, just, all of it. Then eventually, we, we moved some networks. We made the shift from a bi-weekly podcast to a weekly podcast, which was really exciting as I got more support and as the podcast grew.

So that was really exciting. We also went from a 30-minute convo to, like, way longer convos because I was just, like, "Why are we making it short? Like, let's let it marinate, like, let's really get into it." *Getting Curious* used to be, like, one or two people. Now it's, like, we got a whole team! We got, like, a nuclear team and then we got, like, an extended team. Erica Getto we couldn't be here without. Zahra Crim we couldn't be here without also, I think getting to, like, turn *Getting Curious* from a podcast into a standalone Netflix series and get to create those six episodes on those topics was such a huge learning experience and something that I'm so proud of, and I'm just proud of us that we were able to do that. So it's been such a wild ride, but it's also just been like one of the rides in my life. My brain is so grateful for it. I'm so grateful for it. I love getting to connect to academics. Not that I'm one, but I love getting to learn from academics. And it's just really cool that I get to do this. I know I've said that, like, 18 times. I just love it. Okay, we have a voicemail from not one but two listeners, Phillip and Robert. Roll that tape, honey.

**Philip + Robert** [00:02:59] Hey, Jonathan. Hey, Jonathan, it's Philip and Robert. We just wanted to say how much we love *Getting Curious*, and it's actually one of the things that brought us super close together: listening to you. So we're big *Getting Curious* fans. And as someone from small town Illinois as well. Your show really has opened up my mind and helped me explore what's really out there, different options, different possibilities, and I

just really appreciate you for that. Yeah. And then, so we both have a question that you could possibly answer for us. So my question is, what has been your favorite episode of Getting Curious and what topic that you've discussed would you like to dig into more? And then my question would be as someone who doesn't have a beauty routine. As a male, what would you recommend as, like, an essential thing that is needed in order to kind of, like, jump start that? So hopefully you answer our questions! We love you, Jonathan! Love you. Bye.

**JVN** [00:04:03] Boyfriend twin voices. Am I right? Literally could not tell the difference between their voices at all, which I'm obsessed with. Meanwhile, they're, like, brothers who listen to me and I'm, like, gross. We're obsessed with them. That was so cute. Love! And I love you guys listening together, it's really cute! Okay. So it's really hard because we do have 300 episodes, but some of the ones that stick out to me from this year, specifically: Jacki Antonovich, her history of, like, abortion restriction in the United States, I think about all the time. Our episode with Sabrina Strings about, like, the history of fatphobia, really hugely transformative for me this year. I learned so much. Tina Lasisi this year. Dr. Tina Lasisi, like, I learned so much about hair that I did not know, and as a hairdresser, like, I thought I would have known. And that was really, like, taking me to a whole new world. I love a good disaster episode, you know that I love that.

Our Indigenous science and history episodes always really slay for me. Dr. [Robert E.] Eisenhower-Ramirez, who passed away, like, oh my God, like, he was in 2020. But his episode was incredible. That was, like, "What happened to all the racist fucking piece of shit fucking racist bastards from the Civil War?" Like, he was such a genius historian and I just loved getting to interview him. I also love how we are able to connect, like, colonialism and eugenics to topics like cheese or ice, because I think that one thing that I have really truthfully learned on Getting Curious from people like Audra McDonald, from people like Ashlee Marie Preston, there truly is not one aspect of American culture that racism, the transatlantic slave trade, the colonial legacies, I mean, there's no—, there's no aspect of American culture that it doesn't touch because American culture was built on so many evils that are yet to be confronted and acknowledged in a straightforward, authentic way, which is honestly one of the things about Getting Curious that it's been so helpful for me.

It's, like, this is my higher education, like Getting Curious is, like, it's my college. It's, like, I love to be a student, I love to learn things, but this is where I really get to learn things that I wish I would have learned and expanded more on in college. And so to have academics that are so willing to come on and share their hard-earned wisdom and knowledge with us is—, not only is it so kind of them, but it's also, I'm really inspired by being able to bring more knowledge to people who deserve this knowledge, because the point of erasing history, queer people, and accurate historical events from youth is not to "protect innocence" or "protect the kids," as the right would so often say. Because when you turn the TV on, kids are exposed to violence, kids are exposed to abuse, kids are exposed to so many things in daily life vis-a-vis entertainment, all these other ways. And Republicans have like nothing to say about it. The reason that Republicans and the GOP so badly want to prevent history from being taught in schools and want to prevent queer people from being able to be queer in public is so that they can keep the status quo in place. They don't trust

people with knowledge, and we can trust people with knowledge. You can tell kids history and they can handle that history. If you look at Germany, there is education around the Holocaust. There are a lot of things in place where they are not skirting that history away. It's a part of German culture to own and accept. The gay stuff is, like, a different topic outside of that because gays continue to get screwed for like a long time. But yeah, I mean, Jake Newsome, his episode about, like, the pink triangle legacies.

It's just, it is very much an honor for me as I have learned more about history, and as I've learned more about American history. It's really cool that I get to share this with other people who also want this information because I know that I'm not the only one who has these questions and feels cheated by the fact that we didn't get to learn about it in school. And also, like, university and continued education is not an option for so many people. It's not financially an option for them. It's not a time option for them. And so many people like me want to keep learning. And so I just love that I get to do that and we get to do that here together. And I think that this is such a cool community that we've created. And thank you for asking that question. I appreciate you guys so much, Phillip and Robert, I love you so much. Keep being fucking hot gay, fabulous sluts together. I love you so much. And please keep listening to Getting Curious. They're like, "We are not sluts," and I'm, like, "This is a sex positive podcast, okay? Get over it."

This question is from Getting Curious superfan Jen from Atlanta. We love you, Jen! Is loving yourself getting easier as you become older or is it still a daily choice and mindset? It's a really gorgeous question and I think that it's "both and." I think as I've gotten older, it has become easier because I've become better at getting rid of my shame faster and working with my therapist and working with myself to just be in a better overall mindset. But that's been because of the daily choice and, like, daily mindset kind of work. And obviously that stuff like ebbs and flows based off of, like, the stress of your life and kind of what things are going on. And even when I think over the last, like, three years or four years, the only time where I really felt like I did kind of lose a really important part of myself was when the pandemic happened and I stopped going to gymnastics and stopped going to figure skating, like, being cut off from those expressions of, like, moving my body and, like, being in community with other people who are into the same things.

That was really hard for me and that made me feel like I lost a little bit of, like, that, that spunk. It has gotten easier, but is also very much linked to my ability to, like, do something that brings me joy for me in some sort of, like, movement-based way. Sometimes that's yoga, it's meditation, sometimes it's walking the dog. So it doesn't have to be, like, strenuous activity, but it's just, like, something that is time for me. Something that really brings me joy, especially, like, to my inner child, is I think what really helps me stay in a place of learning to love myself. Because really I feel like that's what growing old and adulting is, is it's, like, learning to be like the best parent for your inner child. So we can, like, continue to lift people up and take care of people around us. So I hope that helps. We love you so much, Jen. Yay!

This episode is giving you transatlantic realness because I recorded some of it in Texas, but I'm also recording some of it from London. I'm actually in a gorgeous closet that I think has,

like, pretty good acoustics for a podcast. It's giving carpeting, it's giving clothes, so it's absorbing the noise. So I hope it sounds great. Sometimes, you know, you try to get into a studio, but honestly, funny story. The studio we went to, the air conditioning was broken and you're thinking, "Who needs air conditioning in London in January?" Well, honey, this was giving Madonna 1994 interview. It was so hot she couldn't even think. I was wearing, like, a fleeced long sweatshirt dress. And I literally had sweat rolling out of cracks and crevices that I didn't even know that my body had. And the really sweet sound engineers were, like, "It's really hot in there," like, "are you sure?" And I was, like, "Honey, give me a hot coffee. I'll be fine." I wasn't fine. It was—, I was never hotter. So long story short, that's why I'm recording from a closet in London. Here we are. I'm so excited.

We have some incredible new questions. And y'all, just, thank you so much for being a part of this Getting Curious journey. It is really one of the highlights of my life. I've learned so much important information from this podcast, it has shaped the way I am as a person, it shaped my view of the world. And I'm just so grateful that you continue to be on this ride with us. We wouldn't be here without you. So thank you for supporting us. Thank you for supporting our work. We love you so much and thank you so much for submitting these brilliant questions. So let's get to it. First of all, we have Marissa from Vancouver Island, which, shout out Vancouver Island, that one season of Alone. Yes. "How do you choose your experts? You've had some really interesting and very specific topics, and I'm curious how you and your team sort out the experts for your interviews."

So believe it or not, the first, like, 50 something episodes of Getting Curious, I booked all of those and researched those experts myself. It was a really big lift. For these last few years, four years or so, we've had incredible people who have helped us to book our guests. Erica Getto is our executive producer. She and our associate producer Zahra do an incredible job of sourcing experts. So I think, like, Jue Guo is a great example. Like, I really wanted to learn about, like, China and, like, the oldest civilizations of China. And she was a professor in early China, which is really close to ancient China, but not completely ancient China. So sometimes it's about, like, getting the closest that we can to the thing that I'm curious about. And I do think that in academia, like, PhDs and experts, there's so much specificity in what and how academics study what they study. So finding someone who feels comfortable to, like, answer the questions that I have is kind of hard. But also we do it all the time. So Professor Jacki Antonovich, for instance, like, I wanted to learn about the history of abortion restriction and reproductive legislation in the United States, and she is a literal historian of American medicine, but it's a little bit more specific to the American West. But she does have an amazing understanding of, like, all of, you know, early America and how reproductive law came to be in the U.S.

So I just think our team does an amazing job. We have such incredible episodes coming up this year. I'm really excited. We're going to actually be introducing some more, like, experiential episodes. Like, what's it like to be a teacher? What's it like to be a plumber? What's it like to be all sorts of different, like occupational experiences? Because I think it's so true that, like, you do not have to be a Ph.D. to be an expert in life. We all have expertise in so many areas of our lived experience, and I'm excited to dig into more aspects and more angles of the human experience in 2023. So I think that's another thing

about Getting Curious that I do just love is that it allows me to evolve as an interviewer, as a student, as a researcher, as a person, as, like, an amateur journalist. So I just, I love it and I'm really excited to see what comes through this year. So now we have a voicemail from Yuko. So let's roll that tape.

**Yuko** [00:14:40] Hi, Jonathan. I'm Yuko from Washington State. I just want to say that I love your podcast so much and I learn so many things from it. Mutual aid, Indigenous science, clouds, gender binary, and more. English is not my first language, so I need to listen two or three times to fully understand. But I love listening to you while working in my garden. My question is how you and your team select the topics and compose the show, also which one is your favorite. I'm looking forward to listening to a new episode every week. Thank you so much for doing this. I love you. Bye.

**JVN** [00:15:37] So I think really, like, when it comes to the episodes and selecting our guests, I think the thing for me that's really important is that, like, getting curious really started from, like, me needing to be interested in what I was learning about. I think a lot of times in school we don't really get to learn what we're super curious about. And so as an adult, I really just wanted to learn about things that I've always wondered about. So I think that's the first thing, is that I really need to be genuinely curious. And no matter what episode we've done, I really end up—like, scissors is one of those. And that was, like, “Wait, I use scissors all the time. I'm a hairdresser. Like, I need to know more.” I didn't know I was super interested in scissors until I learned about, like, their history and how they came to be. And I think those are always kind of fun when someone else's work and scholarship kind of informs my curiosity, even if I didn't necessarily know. But I hope that answers that question. I just think I love getting to really get to chase down that genuine curiosity. So I love that I get to do that in my life. But I could honestly talk about the Getting Curious archive and upcoming episodes for, like, the next 7 hours. For this 300th episode celebration, though, I figured we could take some questions about the spirit of curiosity. So much of getting curious is about getting to know yourself and building community. At least that's what it's been for me. So we've got a great question from Lana in Ontario about doing just that.

**Lana** [00:16:53] I'm Lana in Ontario and I just finished listening to your audiobook of Love That Story, and I got so amped up and emotional listening to you describe the LGBTQIA Community Resource Center that you have dreamed up. It literally does sound like heaven, I want to be a part of it. I'm a student right now. In a program called Community and Justice Services, and I don't know what I want to do with my life because like you, I have so many interests and passions, and it's scary for me to think about committing to one course and abandoning all of the others. And especially when you work with people, there's a lot of, a lot of burnout and second-hand trauma, which is one of the reasons why this idea of yours resonates with me so much. It incorporates joy and connection in the healing process which is so desperately needed on both sides of people needing to access services and the people providing the services. This makes it sound so much more exciting and sustainable, and I just really hope that this dream becomes a reality and that places like this become typical because I want to work there. That is exciting to me. So I guess my question to accompany this is, what do we need to do to make this happen?

**JVN** [00:18:35] So that is such an incredible question Lana, thank you so much for asking it. I love the idea in my book about our community center. I want to make it happen someday. I think that that's one thing in Love That Story that I loved getting to learn about in my second book was, like, this, like, Methodist Community church that was above the really the only gay bar in my hometown. And this, this church was just such a gathering space and such an important space for the queer community in my hometown that was outside of a bar. And I think the bars are such incredible, important, safe spaces for the queer community. And also at the same time, I think that we need other safe spaces that are outside of bar setups for so many reasons, like, because some people don't like going to bars. Some people are dealing with recovering from alcoholism and other addictions and maybe a bar isn't the place for them that feels the most affirming. I think as long as I'm producing television, producing the podcast, raising my animals, writing books, doing everything that I'm kind of doing in my career, I don't know where I would get the bandwidth to, like, set up my community center of my dreams.

So I'm thinking that might be more of, like, my, like, second second act part, see? So it's very much on my heart and my mind. I want to figure out how to do it. But I do think that there are other ways. How we can start to find community now. One thing I remember it's talking about in yoga a lot is that one of the hardest aspects of yoga is just, like, getting up and going to class. And then once you're there, you're like, Oh my gosh, this wasn't so hard. Like, you know what kind of took me so long to get there? And I think that, like, that is really true of so many, like, things that we do in life. So whether you want to get into, like, pottery or you want to get into learning a new language or you want to get into like walks, like there are, like, activities around all of our towns, big and small walking groups, art classes, community college classes that are more affordable for us. If you want to go, just take, like, one, like foreign language class or. There's just so many ways that we can get into things around us, but it just feels, like, so daunting sometimes. And I think once you take that first step to find the thing that you want to kind of pursue, that's one way that you can immediately get into building community.

I think another thing that comes to mind is Dean Spade and mutual aid. And there is so much mutual aid community building all over the United States and really all over the world. And if you don't know about mutual aid in your community, you can literally Google, like, "mutual aid" and your city and see what comes up. And there's just so many people that I think are, you know, are looking to build relationships, that community in their lives. So I hope that helps answer the question. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. But thank you so much for your question and thank you so much for reading my work and Love That Story. Okay, so here we go. We have a related question from Bev about facilitating mutual aid. Oh, my God, I didn't even know we were getting into that! Meta! And social activism within religious circles. Here's a condensed version of her voicemail.

**Bev** [00:21:34] Hi, Jonathan. This is Bev, and I hope you're having a gorgeous day. I'm a pastor. I am white, straight, cis and I'm also the mom of a trans daughter and a queer daughter and I have a passion for reform, for solidarity work, and mutual aid. But I'm not interested in centering myself so much as helping to facilitate conversations about how we

care for our souls in a white supremacist, end stage capitalism world. My primary ministry settings have put me in places where those I minister with are not as aware of the reality of life for folks who are marginalized. I mean, not that there is one reality. And I'm thinking of ways I'd like to be involved in more public ministry, relationship building, solidarity creating. If you're ever interested in conversation, I'd love to have that.

**JVN** [00:22:51] So that's a really good question. I think, I do think that a huge thing that I've learned from community building mutual aid, solidarity work. I think about even, like, Sister District and Lala Wu and Gaby Goldstein, they didn't think that this would be a year that we'd be flipping any state legislatures. Like things were really bleak in the midterms or so we thought. And while we did lose the House of Representatives to the Republicans and a very slim majority, we did build our majority in the Senate, mostly, minus Kyrsten Sinema. But also we did flip the Senate in Michigan and we did hold state legislatures that we didn't realize and we did hold all of our governorships. And that was due to a lot of work that people like Sister District did. And what Sister District is brilliant at is the long game. We have got to be better about the long game. I think that in this society, and I am so guilty of this, we love instant gratification. We want to get there and we want to get there faster. And when we suffer setbacks, it is so easy to throw up your hands and say, you know, get get a case of the fuck-its, as my stepdad would have said, which is program speak. He didn't, you know, coin that term. But it's true.

I just think that, like, we have to understand the long game. And when we have setbacks, when we have short-term setbacks, yes, those have real-world implications. Yes, people will suffer because of those short term setbacks. But that doesn't mean that we want to, like, throw up our hands and say, "We don't want to engage in this work anymore." So I think about George Goehl on deep canvassing. I think about Kolina Koltai and Nadia Brashier on combating misinformation. I think about Dekila Chungyalpa, about her work and connecting different churches with, like, getting into climate activism that you would think would normally not be into climate activism. So I think the things that they all have in common, and another thing that really comes up for me here, is learning to kind of, like, stop asking, like, how these things affect yourself and start asking how they affect others because we can't always center ourselves in questions around community building and mutual aid. So it's like, "What do you need? What's your experience?" And then ultimately it's, like, "How can I be of service?" And it's hard. I certainly have struggled with that. I am still a white girl from the Midwest at heart, so I like to center myself. Oh my God. You know, I hate to say it, but it's true. So I hope that resonates. And thank you so much for your question. And I love our Getting Curious listeners. This next question is from Krystal in Tennessee.

**Krystal** [00:25:27] Okay, you may think I'm crazy. Just turned 42 years old. I've never in my life wanted to meet anybody as much as you. I need to know how you have so much confidence and how you keep it up, especially when you have a sickness that cannot be cured. I've been sick. I've got two boys, just had my first grandbaby. I live in Knoxville, Tennessee. And I would really, really love to hear from you. You were the best and the best person I've ever seen in my life. And I need, I really need information from you to help me keep going. Thank you.

**JVN** [00:26:02] I don't really feel like I have a sickness that can't be cured. I mean, I am living with HIV, and at the same time, while we don't have a cure, I do believe that there will be one in my lifetime. I think that's part of, like, what I have to believe. It's just really interesting. I just don't think of myself as a sick person. I think of myself as someone who is living with HIV and what we know about, about our fight against HIV/AIDS is that undetectable equals untransmittable. And so I'm an undetectable person. And what that means is, is that I adhere to my, my HRT, which is my antiretroviral therapy. But basically I take my pill daily. It kills all the copies of HIV inside my bloodstream. And so that makes it so that I can't spread the virus sexually. I don't have copies that are detectable to a test, like in my blood and my spit and my semen. So I am really feeling great, feeling gorgeous, have tons of T cells. I'm really doing the damn thing.

So I think that it's really like whatever you're living with, whatever your condition that you're living with, you need to have a doctor that you feel supported by and that you feel understands what you're going through. I have an incredible doctor who their office has been specializing in HIV care for like 30 plus years. They're just incredible. I love them. I've been with them for a long time. So I think it's about having a doctor that you feel encouraged by. And then I also think that it's about before I got HIV, I was always so terrified of it and I had so much fear. And also this, like, honestly, like misplaced sympathy, like, "Oh my God, like, what would I do if I had HIV? Like, that must be so this. It must be so that," but it's like everything that everyone has is like, is, is their burden. It, it's their thing to bear. It's hard to explain, but in a lot of ways, I feel like contracting HIV actually saved my life because I realized in that moment that things could happen to me and I wasn't invincible. And if I wanted to recover, if I wanted to get better, I had to get serious about stopping my self-destructive behaviors and learning how to prioritize my health. And so HIV was a part of that. And not that it's true of that for everyone. But I just think when you are dealing with an illness, part of it is learning to accept that that's a reality now.

Something that I once was told in yoga that really helped me is, like, what you resist persists and what you accept flows. And so I think accepting what it is that's going on helps so that once you accept it, you can move forward with your life. And while I have accepted that I am living with HIV, I don't accept that HIV will make my life shorter, harder, worse. No, In fact, I think that HIV has made me healthier. I've only gotten more attractive. I've only gotten more difficult gymnastic skills. I work harder and longer than I ever did in my mid-twenties before I contracted HIV. So I just think we are not our illnesses. We are not our sicknesses. We are these, like, resplendent, beautiful, complex ass creatures who are capable of so much. And I will not be defined my disease, bitch. And I don't think you should either. So we are hot sluts, Krystal. So repeat after me. Krystal, we are hot sluts and we will not be defined by our motherfucking health, okay? Because we are too motherfucking gorgeous for that. Okay. Yeah. Go, Crystal!

Oh, yeah! But the confidence. That's the other thing, Crystal, about confidence. I love that I, like, literally answered that part last. Like, it's not like I wake up every day and I'm like, I am the most confident person in the world. I have moments of doubt. I have moments of self-destructive behavior. I have moments of insecurity. Absolutely. But I also have a lot of



moments of connection and community and confidence. And so I really think that part of my connection to confidence is understanding that none of our thoughts are fact, like, all of our thoughts are thoughts. And so when I have those moments of insecurity or even confidence, none of those thoughts are necessarily reality. They're, like, the stories that we tell ourselves in our head. And I think that really, like in our heart, when we are identified with, like, that humanity that I was talking about earlier, that's where the confidence is knowing that we are. Imperfect. We are flawed. And also we deserve love. And also we can always get better and improve. So it is this duality is where the confidence comes from. Is this actually security and knowing that everything changes and nothing stays the same. And even in spite of that, I'm always going to be a bad bitch. Voicemail number five from Tanika. Oh, my God. 15 years old and... a research project is... oh, my God. Oh!

**Tanika** [00:30:48] Hi, Jonathan. My name is Tanika and I'm 15 years old. I just wanted to tell you that at school, we're doing a research project on an inspirational person. And I chose you, I think you're, like, so cool. And I just want to know if you have any advice on dealing with mean people or bullies. I think as a teenager in high school, we dealt with a lot of that. And I think it's really amazing that I have the opportunity to ask you about overcoming it and just being yourself. So, yeah, that's all! Have a gorgeous day.

**JVN** [00:31:19] Oh, my God. Tanika, I love you so much. Thank you so much for submitting your question. And I just, when I was dealing with a lot of bullying in junior high elementary school, middle school, it felt like it was never going to end. It felt like a really permanent place to be. It just felt endless and kind of hopeless. And it's so weird now. And I'm sure that you've heard adults say this. It's like, you know, the older you get, the faster time seems to go, oh my God, it's so true. Like, I can't believe it's like a whole nother year. I feel like I was doing Getting Curious episode one, like, 3 seconds ago. So I think understanding that, like your place in school, this place in life, is so not permanent. And also, like I'm sure you've heard this, Tanika, but young folks can be mean as hell. Like, they can just be really mean. And I think at the same time, when people are bullies, when people are mean to you, sometimes when we get hurt, it makes us not want to reach out. It makes us not want to be vulnerable. It makes us build a shell, build a wall, because we don't want to let people in and hurt us again.

And I think that, like, when you are hurt and when people have been bullying you, it's almost and you need to ask for help and actually be vulnerable. Which society and kids would tell us that asking for help is weak, but actually it's really strong to ask for help because it is vulnerable. So don't go ask the bullies for help. But I think finding other young people in your age that you can be friends with, that you can connect with, and maybe they're not in school, maybe it's joining, like, swim or, you know, some extracurricular activity and you can make more friends there or meet more people there. But just know that this is not permanent. It's not forever. Know that you are so deserving of people's friendship. You are obviously clever as hell because you're only 15-years-old and you're listening to this podcast. So honey, like, you're already ahead of the game. I just think you're amazing! And it just, just keep up the faith because I hope that doesn't sound hollow, cause it's like, "Oh, just keep the faith." Just know that it will get better. You have

such a bright future. You're going to meet so many people who love and adore you and also know that you deserve that.

I would also wind up this answer with this. Diane von Furstenberg once told me, "The most important relationship you will ever have is the relationship that you have with yourself." And I know that I've said that on this podcast a lot, but your relationship with your parents, with your friends, with your family, with everyone else, is going to be impermanent. We get older, we move, things change. But your relationship with yourself, that is deep, that is really kind of endless. Like, you will be having this relationship with yourself until you leave this Earth. So having, like, positive self-talk with yourself and not taking on bullying as a message, that means that you aren't worth love or worth friendship. That's really important. And I think a way that you can do that is through affirmations. So take your cute little self, Tanika, right in front of that mirror and look in the mirror and say, "I deserve love. You can say I accept myself completely."

Say some of those mantras like ten times each morning in the mirror. "I am loved. I accept myself completely. I am a good person." You can say those affirmations, like, maybe ten times, spend 30 seconds, maybe a minute in the mirror doing that. And then by strengthening your relationship with yourself, when anyone brings any sort of, like, ickiness into your world, you don't have to take that on as fact because you have a stronger relationship with yourself. So, Tanika, I love you. Thank you so much for calling in to Getting Curious. And please let us know how things are going later. We love you to pieces. You're amazing. Okay. Here's another question from a listener about a topic you know I love: shoes. Shoes! Do you guys remember that YouTube viral video where it was, like, "Shoes. Shoes. Shoes. What're those shoes."

**Anonymous** [00:34:55] Hey, gorgeous. I'm calling because my daughter just came out as trans, and we've been working on updating her style and finding new outfits, working on makeup and all of that kind of stuff. But the thing that is the most challenging from a mom's perspective is finding her some decent shoes to wear. She's a 13, 14. And all the shoes I can find, honest to God, are, like, either, "we're going out to the club," "meet me on the stripper pole," "I'm the mother of the bride," or "I'm the most boring executive in the world." Or just Doc Martens, 24/7. Where can one find cute, fashionable shoes in a 13/14 for a teenager? Help a girl out! Where are some good places to go shopping? Thanks. Love you.

**JVN** [00:35:54] Okay. Can I tell you that I used to hit up Payless so hard for my heels? They had big sizes. I loved those sizes. They were cute. I really learned how to do all my, like, Beyoncé, like, character dancing in Payless Shoes. So do not look past a Payless. Also, I am going to do a little bit of research and put it in the episode description of this episode. There's an incredible designer who makes shoes for people with larger feet. A lot of times it's trans women or non-binary people, and they make beautiful shoes in a wide variety of sizes. So I'm going to ask ALOK about that because they're the one that turned me onto this designer. They're fierce, they're fabulous.

I do think that in terms of inclusive sizing, because shopping in real life can be frustrating. It's like I was saying earlier, like, going to yoga can be the hardest part, but then you go to yoga and there's no mats, there's no class. That's the worst part. It's like you actually get up to go and then you don't have what you need. And that can be a really frustrating part about shopping. So before you go, I would recommend going online, doing a little bit of research before you go out to the stores and make sure that they make the sizes that you're looking for. Make sure that it's available so you're not just, like, super disappointed once you get there. And also, like online shopping, I know sometimes it may be, you know, it's not the greenest. So maybe you just, like, put on, like, the five day, like, truck delivery. So it's not like having you on a plane or whatever. But online shopping really can be great because if you are nervous, if your daughter's nervous about having to go in public and do all that stuff for the first time, it could be good to just like bring the dressing room home and kind of learn more where you feel a little bit more safe and and not, like, having the judgmental eyes of other people unless she's like, "Fuck that. I want to go out and then go out, honey."

It really just depends on a little bit of, like, the demeanor and the disposition. If you're easily frustrated like moi, I would say maybe go and do a little bit of research online before you get over there. I love a Poshmark moment. I love a Real Real moment. You can get some really bougie shit way cheaper, which I absolutely love so that you can kind of like find really fresh, gorgeous clothes without totally breaking your bank. I do think that, like, one important thing to remember is that, like, this is not a race. Like you don't have to learn how to do hair and makeup and wear all the right shoes and blah, blah, blah. Like, all of that is great and it's good to have confidence and it's good to like, know how to accomplish looks that you want to look. But we are beautiful and deserving of love. You know, just by however we look on the outside. So just knowing that this is more of a marathon, it's fine. Like fashion is fine, makeup and hair is fine.

I also think that it really is just, like, a lot of practice, like, kind of going into anything with fashion, hair and makeup, with an open mind and not being too hard on yourself and just being really open. And at any time when you notice that you're getting frustrated or aggravated or especially if your daughter is getting aggravated or disappointed, it's like, just put it down, take a break and you can come back to it. You know, it's totally okay to put it down, take a break, come back to it, because it takes people a minute to learn. But thank you so much for supporting your daughter. I mean, we just need so many more parents like you. Thank you so much for supporting your beautiful daughter, for asking questions. And I just think that's beautiful. [SINGING] I love you. I really do.

And here's our next question from Robert and Phillip. Should I not make this a singing podcast? Are we living, you guys? So I want to circle back to the second part of your question about gender-inclusive beauty, since I think it's relevant. So let me read a part of their message again. "If someone who doesn't have a beauty routine is a male, what would you recommend as an essential thing that is needed to jump start that?" Honey, I hate to sound like a broken record, but you know, it's got to be the sunscreen. I think that really sunscreen is a great way to jump into skincare, jump into self-care. And it has so many relevant, impactful health benefits as well. So I think that's really great. Getting into

sunscreen is a great place to start. I also think, like, starting with, like, one product, a place is great. So like a facial sunscreen, maybe, like, a hair pomade or like one thing for your hair styling. Or if you don't have hair, like put that sunscreen up on your scalp and then maybe it's like, you know, a fragrance or like body lotion. It's like just do one thing per area. And then once you do that for like a month and you actually show yourself that you're into cultivating this routine of self-care, then you can add that like serum under your sunscreen, Then you can add that, like, second, you know, hair product and not end up with what I lovingly refer to as like a product graveyard. When you just go into hot and heavy and buy everything and then you never actually use it. So that would be a good message, I would say is, like, start with one product and then build from there.

Okay. When we recorded a Q&A episode last year to celebrate the launch of Getting Curious on Netflix. We received more questions than we could answer. Skylar asks, "I would love to know how you and or others navigate the entertainment industry as an openly trans non-binary person. It's happening for more of us, but as a trans writer and actor, I'd love some real talk and perspective about the less-than-perfect moments and how to successfully navigate these tricky waters." Look, it is really difficult. The amount of times that I have run into transphobia, like lowercase t transphobia all the way up to like blaring capital T transphobia. I've kind of seen a lot of it in my career, and I think that having respect and cultivating respect and changing the trends of the last hundreds and hundreds of years that we're fighting about, when we talk about like gender liberation and when we talk about trans liberation and when we talk about really having a world that sees and honors all people, we have quite a ways to go because there is a lot of entrenched misogyny and transphobia and patriarchy for us to work against.

So I think that for me, it's never perfect. I also think that for me, being a survivor of abuse, like, I don't think I struggle with it as much now because I've had a couple more years of practice. But learning how to set boundaries has been messy for me sometimes. Like, sometimes I set a boundary too aggressively. Sometimes I wait too long to set the boundary and then it comes out stronger than I meant for it to. So I think that really the most important thing to have whilst navigating this space, these tricky waters, as you said, is and again, not to sound like a broken record, but it's the strongest relationship that you can have with yourself because as we know painfully, we cannot force other people to change. We can give information that we can share experience at the end of the day. People have to internalize that, make that their own, and then, you know, make different decisions if you're going to change their hearts and their minds. And that does not happen on our schedule. Like that healing and that learning process takes some time.

So while that time is being taken, having compassion with yourself for where maybe you could have done a better job or you could have been more patient, or maybe you didn't speak up when you wanted to speak up, and then that made you feel bad about yourself. Whatever the side is, whatever that spectrum that you land in as you're navigating. Being compassionate with yourself and knowing that this is not easy. Knowing that things are getting better and knowing that even if you get a no, even if you face rejection, you do not know when your yes is coming. And I hate to sound like Joel Osteen when I say that, but it is just so true. So I think that it's like resiliency and compassion with yourself. Being resilient

in yourself and being compassionate in yourself is how I navigate it. And I'm not always perfect. So it's like compassion, resilience. Maybe throw some affirmations in there. I love you so much and thank you so much for that question.

Oh, my gosh. So it's that time of the podcast where I usually ask whether there's anything we'd be remiss to not mention. So I'm going to ask myself. I—, wow. I think the thing that just crossed my mind, I don't even want to get emotional, but I might. I'm just, like, so grateful. I know I said it at the beginning of the episode, but I am fully crying. I'm just so grateful. This started as an idea when I was feeling unheard and I was feeling lost. And I think a lot of these questions that we've gone through about how do you stay resilient? Oh my God, it's, like, really making me emotional. [CRYING] I have learned a lot of that through building this podcast and. I guess I just feel like it really is so worth it. And it's not worth it because of the validation that, you know, awards, numbers. And even the validation from you all, because that does help. I mean, when I, when I hear that like this podcast and the work that we've done in this podcast has helped people learn, unlearn, whatever that really does help. And that is part of why I do it but there are just so many times when leading up to this podcast I could have not made it. And I could have—, and I don't mean, like, made the podcast. I mean, like, lived. And I'm just so grateful that I'm here and that. That I'm here sitting in a closet in London crying. I answer this question and I just, I'm just so grateful that I'm here.

So if you are having an idea, if you're listening to this and you feel like it's never going to happen, it's never come to fruition. I just think about Dr. Edith [Eger] and she and her telling us about, when she talked about becoming a doctor. And, and one of the professors that she said she said, "Well, gosh, I won't be 50 until I'm done." And he said, "Edith, you'll be 50 anyway." So there is something that you have been putting off wanting to accomplish, big or small, whatever. Don't get in your own way. I think getting curious is about allowing yourself to be curious and whether you accomplish it or not, allowing yourself to take that journey of curiosity. You just never know where that's going to end up. And for me it ended up with a lot of my dreams coming true, and that doesn't make my life perfect. I still have a lot of stuff that I struggle with and deal with so I'm not trying to say that it's all perfect, but I'm saying that the journey of curiosity is worth. So I love you guys so much and thank you for listening to Getting Curious. Thank you for supporting our work here. We love you so much. And that is all from our special 300th episode of Getting Curious.

You've been listening to Getting Curious with me, Jonathan Van Ness. Our guest this week was you, our gorgeous listeners. Without you, we wouldn't have made it to 300 episodes and we are so excited to keep learning and growing together. If you're new to this show and want to go [SINGING] on a journey to the past—that was Anastasia, if you didn't know—you can explore the Getting Curious archives wherever you listen to the show. You can follow us on Instagram and Twitter @curiouswithjvn. Even our theme music is Freak by Quin. Thank you so much to her for letting us use it. Our editor is Andrew Carson. Getting Curious is produced by me, Erica Getto, and Zahra Crim.