

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E257: Queer Eye Star Opens Up About Hitting Rock Bottom: Jonathan Van Ness

I think it's actually still kind of hard for me to talk about but I am down to go there your square chin makes me feel safe

The conversation starts on a cornfield and rural Illinois being a queer

Feminine child is hard. There was sexual abuse and there was bullying

But all that trauma came back in the most self-destructive era had my face in a plate of coke then I discovered sex work

I got HIV I put myself in so many really dangerous situations. Someone pulled a gun on you. Uh-huh take me into that moment

You start out hairdresser and now your name is on the marquee of Radio City schedules been crazy How are you feeling?

Grateful and at the same time really frustrated. I just see so much transphobic garbage all over the place people really think that

There's little kids going to school as a boy and coming home as a girl

This is really serious

And so this has been a really hard time and I think being a public figure who is constantly Expected to be a ray of sunshine it can be challenging

But why I've been able to get to where I am is like cuz I think I'm resilient

I have been able to sit with a lot of shame and like a lot of heartbreak and still be

Joyful when you talk about your trauma without becoming your trauma

Do I get to ask the question the next person yes, and also they'll be turned into cards

That people will play with their families and stuff. Oh, so it can't be what's the sluttiest thing you've ever done

Jonathan Van Ness's story is an impossible story coming from a place of sexual abuse sex work

depression and despair

To becoming the leader in his industry

The story you're about to hear is not only hilarious because that is what Jonathan is

But it's also the evidence that you might need that passion and resilience will take you to the place that you want to go

To this conversation is going to make you laugh

It's one of the more real conversations

I've ever had with anyone on this podcast because Jonathan doesn't hold back his story is heart-wrenching

It is unthinkable

And it's incredibly important

Over the last couple of months. There's been this huge rise in the conversation around

Trans rights and there's been a huge rise in transphobia. You've probably seen it

Today, I'm gonna ask him about that

Where has it come from?

What is the truth and if you're someone like me that feels quite uncomfortable about the narratives we're seeing in the world

What can we do about it?

How can we help? It's time to have that

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E257: Queer Eye Star Opens Up About Hitting Rock Bottom: Jonathan Van Ness

uncomfortable conversation

Where do we need to begin this conversation to understand you

The conversation starts on a cornfield and rural Illinois in the late 80s

Darling

What happens next? Oh

Well, I went to school my I come from a broadcasting family and like a family of journalists may I grew up my mom

worked in the local newspaper and advertising and my dad worked in the TV station

So that's kind of where it started I

Was born in 1987. I think that was like another really interesting time in queer history and what was to come for the next few years

Being that it was like the height of the height of the AIDS crisis and I think understanding not understanding that but

being a very queer a

Feminine small child in that time

There was so much like anti queer vitriol all then

Which I didn't like know that's what it was called

But I felt it and it's so it's interesting being like this age now and having like this

Renaissance not in the Beyonce way of like such anti queer sentiment. You're five years old when your parents separate

What's that like for you? I actually just had a joke about this in my new

Set my first reaction was like can I have the ring like my brothers are really devastated?

I just was like all about that diamond like I've always loved jewelry. I was like, oh my god

That would look great with my geodes

So I didn't really understand like any sort of like emotional implication from like my parents divorce

Love my dad. Love my mom, but I was like I

Kind of I think I was like maybe too young to fully understand. I do think that it ultimately set me on like

Like my stepdad and I I

My mom started dating him when I was like six and I write a lot about him in my first book over the top

I'm visiting with Steve and so ultimately he taught me so much about what it is to be a good person

What it is to have integrity what it is to ask for help

He had been sober for 28 years when he died in 2012 and he was like and he and my dad are both really important to me

But Steve and my dad like were really good

You know role models in my life in a lot of ways and but it took me like from like six to like 16 to like like Steve

Uh, but then I eventually like really, you know loved Steve and appreciated him so much for all the things that he taught me

Ah, thank you

Just for context the shoulder thing is uh, do you want to explain Jonathan?

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E257: Queer Eye Star Opens Up About Hitting Rock Bottom: Jonathan Van Ness

Yes, it's like this gorgeous like little like tube dress tiny and what it can give you is this like turtleneck moment
But that's giving me too much restriction. It is pride
So we need the shoulder out because it's really like this is he Miyake moment
That's like the shoulders meant to peek a boo. Is that is he missy ackee? Yeah?
Oh, that's beautiful pretty right? Yeah, I want to scream in the microphone. I was good. So excited talking about dresses
So he's just told us to
What contingent on this interview was us letting him know whenever the the the is he missy ackee
Number just slides a little too high up. We've got to remind him to slide it down. So if we say shoulder, that's what we mean
Um, how did you get on with your peers when you're that age?
Did you feel like you fit fitted in per se? No
No, um, but I did have some really good friends and some people who I I think
I know I knew really early that friendship was really important. So I always had like some really close friends
um, but
A lot of times I think there was like, you know
quite a bit of like widespread bullying
But I think that that really hit a fever pitch like more like
You know like sixth grade like post sixth grade
Like maybe pre that there was like a little murmurings and like a little bit of weirdness
But I think kids are like so young at that age that they're not really like or at least in my case
It wasn't like that horrific
Um bullying wise at the time it was more like post sixth grade. I feel like but also it's like so funny
I just noticed this like part of me that's like
Like being 36 and still talking about it
Like I feel like because I have processed so much of it and I've worked so hard on letting go of a lot of that and
um
So like for me, it doesn't really hold a lot of
like
Like bernie brown she talks about like, you know, can you talk about your trauma without becoming your trauma? And I think in
like
I think it's actually still kind of hard for me to talk about like I have this like
Harder part that kind of comes up and is like, oh like I just don't like going there
But I am down to go there your square chin makes me feel safe
But yeah, you know what I'm saying?
Well, you you take me there you take me to where you want to go because I I am
In my own experience only black kid in an all-white school. I grew up in Devon in the southwest
Which is like the countryside
So I remember the feelings of just constant because it's a small town as well and you're different this

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E257: Queer Eye Star Opens Up About Hitting Rock Bottom: Jonathan Van Ness

constant feeling of almost
A constant state of like my body was always in
Fight or flight almost just like subtly
And I read I read hints of that in your story, but please do tell me
What your experience was no that total that absolutely resonates
I think I also write a lot about like this idea that like
Like a lot of like joy and like happiness can coexist with grief and like shame like these emotions
don't necessarily like invalidate each other
So even though I did have a lot of hardships and there was abuse and there was bullying
And there was a lot of othering like I think that's why I'm still so obsessed with figure skating and
gymnastics
Like when figure skating and gymnastics was on the tv
I was the happiest person of all time like none of the other things mattered
So I think those kind of moments of like escapism
Like were these really healing moments why even now as an adult like those types of things are so
exciting for me
And I'm just like so into it because I think it like it strikes at like that core memory of like
Just being really into something else
Which I'm glad I'm still into that even though I'm like more into my life now than I was then
obviously like
I did get out of there and I did
Like you know a lot of my dreams came true
The escapism what in that situation what were you escaping from?
Feeling like really I mean I was like I said a really queer kid in a very like sisset world
So my hometown is like my family was like quite well known in my hometown and I was really like
Unabashedly myself and so there was a lot of like feedback from that as I got older
So that I think that was like a lot of and I also was you know abused
I am survivor sexual abuse. So there was like
Like I would hear about like other kids and like, you know, whether it was like poverty or like see it
on the news
Like kids or like even just like kids at school
Like you know, there's like kids at school who like clearly are going through it
And like do not have the access to the resources that you have
Um, but meanwhile I was like definitely having people call me faggot definitely being sexually
abused
And I remember thinking like I'm glad I don't have it as bad as like, you know
So it's like it's interesting how like our perspective like is
like
Just so funny like it's like when you're a kid you just don't have anything to compare it to but looking
back to it on it
I'm like, I think of my little inner child and like all the things that my nickname growing up was jack
Like what he went through and I'm like, oh my god, honey
That was like so

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E257: Queer Eye Star Opens Up About Hitting Rock Bottom: Jonathan Van Ness

intense

You know, like just growing up like there and like having yeah, it's intense

You've been really open about

The incident of sexual abuse that you've experienced and how that had a sort of cascading impact on the rest of your life

Is there a point where you where someone around you highlights the significance of that to you at that age?

No, I think that the problem with I'm like sexual abuse is

So many and I you know, I don't like blame anyone for this because it's just like what happens that there's such this like an

insistence on like like

Not talking about it

You know, like like don't let anyone find out and I understand that because like you like it's like

You just don't want people to find out like whether it's like bringing shame on the church or

Bringing shame on like why didn't anyone prevent this? So it's like it I don't think it was like

I think we just all wanted to like

Just get through it and I don't think any like there's so much shame and stigma tied up in sexual abuse

That I think when it happens you're but at the same time like

my mom

Was really wanted to deal with things like in a very head-on way and like really wanted it was like therapy

Like we gotta get like once she knew she was like fuck like we gotta like but

Then there was like other forces and like other people and you know our lives that were like

I don't think and whether that was like church leaders or other people that were like, I don't think that's really you know

Like what happens if you talk you really want your kid to be like, you know, it's so

They're in especially like small rural spaces and I think that's part of what makes me so angry when we think about

Um, you know when people would say, you know that trans people are you know groomers or drag queens or like all these idea that queer people are groomers like

There is so much sexual abuse in churches

There's so much sexual abuse in rural communities and urban communities and all the communities

And when you look at the statistics most often it is like a man that you know

It is like a man in the family a man in the church a friend of the family

It's someone that you know, it's like not random queer people

um, and I just think

Part of why we have these like

fantastical ideas of like these threats to our kids is because of the thing that I was just speaking about that like

We don't talk about what really happens because we want to keep it private

We want to keep things really inside and so when you're like, um, when you're

Draw it like it just it makes it

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E257: Queer Eye Star Opens Up About Hitting Rock Bottom: Jonathan Van Ness

And also it's like this like smoke and mirror thing when you're saying that it's one thing
It's like gas lighting really from this whole other
thing which in this case is like the pervasive sexual abuse in
churches and um
You know in families and communities
That is just so you know not spoken about and we're over here talking about
drag queens and trans people
You said though that your mother was very um proactive with going to therapy and things like that
Which is an incredible thing. Yeah, so for the time
Especially because even now that's quite seen as being quite a progressive thing to do
But but back then when you're 16 years old for that to be one of the first sort of suggestions to take
you to therapy seems to be
Honey, I was in therapy when I was five
I remember like
Like I remember like being at therapy when I was so little that like I had to like look up at my mom
like this
Like holding her hand, you know, I'm saying like
Because when they got divorced we went to like family therapy. So like therapy was always very
normalized for me and my mom
um
It's just like one of the things I just am so grateful to her for
That she like normalized therapy like thank god. I don't think I'd be alive without if she hadn't done
that
What about if I'd asked that that 16 year old version of you? What are you gonna do when you're
older?
I always knew I wanted to do hair
Like but I think my family was like you need to go to college so I was like
Maybe I was like I'll be a lawyer or something but then I was like you grow. You can't be a lawyer
You're gonna I love doing hair. I think I knew I wanted to do hair. Yeah. Yeah
I I think about my teenage years and I think I didn't know
The impact I used the word formative at the start
I didn't know how I'd been formed until I was an adult and I saw like patterns playing out
What were the prints sort of that left on you from your earliest years that
Stayed with you as an adult
I think my for like I went I think one of my big first phases of like
wanting to understand
More about like
Like my trauma or like my story. It was like Eckhart Tolle in a new earth in the power of now and
like
2008 or nine
It was like when Oprah was talking about him and I was like, who's this Eckhart Tolle honey?
And then I read the power of now in a new earth and I was like
Ego, I don't have an ego. What's he talking about?

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E257: Queer Eye Star Opens Up About Hitting Rock Bottom: Jonathan Van Ness

And I was like, oh, that's like the story that we tell ourselves
Like my stories that I'm like this like gay kid from this little town and I was like
Abused and like this and that I love cheer and I love to like really I'm like the observer of that like
I'm not really that I'm like this like that was like when I started to learn about like what meditation
was and what stillness was and
um, that really gave me a lot
of healing and kind of like
clarity and then I uh
That didn't last that long because I did eventually get addicted to meth like not that long after that
So but thank god I had that introduction to that sort of healing at that time because I was able to
come back to it
So that and then I think so then my stepdad got really sick the one that I was talking about earlier
Steve he was diagnosed with cancer in like 2009 and I was really far away
I was like living in LA they were in Illinois and I was in a really um
You know
Difficult working situation. I was like in my first serious relationship and then all of those um
all that trauma manifesting itself was came back in terms of like
um
My sexual compulsivity. So I'm like in love for the first time and I just like was having such a hard
time
Like in my first relationship like just cheating non-stop and being like a like which I talk a lot about
in my first book
um
And so that was when I was like, okay
I really need help like I don't know like so I'd had that versatile introduction to healing with like
Eckhart
You know solo 21 22 then Steve gets sick. He ultimately dies and then it's after that that I'm like
Really need help and that's like when I get into therapy. That's when I um
Start to get into 12 step myself
uh
Which I I think being a non-binary queen anything that's too much this or that it's like so sobriety
was like
Oh, I just like I don't want to be totally sober, but I dig it a lot of healing there um
So I'm kind of a harm reduction queen, but
So all through my 20s
I think and I and I don't think that we ever get to a place as much as I wish that we would where
you're just like
Delt with my trauma. It's like in a box. I never have to look at it again
I never have to deal with it again
And I think it's interesting the ways that your circumstances change and then your trauma or your
you know that baggage
Or your ego is like is Eckhart refers to it will
Like manifests itself in different ways, but I hope that we get or I hope I get better at um

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E257: Queer Eye Star Opens Up About Hitting Rock Bottom: Jonathan Van Ness

Like not identifying with the trauma or the ego like when it's like being a nightmare even though that's like also constant struggle
Like ask my husband like where the fuck is my eyeliner?
You went to um university, right?
First semester you dropped out like I did
Why did you drop out?
I got really bad grades and then I got addicted to drugs and then I realized that I wanted to be a hairdresser
So what was that going to waste all that time and money for?
Was university or college or I think they call it in the u.s. Um the first time you
Got addicted to drugs was that the the first time you started to seriously sort of experiment with drugs?
Does weed count
Not really then no. Yes. Yes, then it was like I had smoked weed, but that was the first time that I ever did like
Really intense drugs. You were one time home though, right?
You're away from this the small town the issues of your your teen years at that point
So what was um, what was that context and environment like?
Well, my mom was so right
She was like honey, you're too young and I was like get fucked i'm leaving and honey
I was so too young like I just immediately just had my face in a plate of coke like the first time I saw cocaine
I was like
Like the first time I was like saw like I was like that's ecstasy. Give me six
um and the next thing I knew you know because like
Like my parents got me like that like thing that you get at university like the little like campus like card for the food
So they're like your foods paid for your dorms paid for like you really don't need very much money, honey
Like so like they my mom gave me like 300 dollars a month because like everything else was paid for right
Like what else could you fucking mean? Like I didn't have to work
Like because like they did everything right like so cool right like so
But I was like, well, how am I supposed to get all messed up on drugs all the time if I only have 300 dollars?
Like that math isn't working
So right like that's like that's like two days, you know if you're really going out with your friends
So then I just was like then I discovered like sex work and then I was like, oh
Next thing I knew I was like pulling tricks to like
Get drugs so that I could do more drugs and then after doing that for a few months. I was like
And I dropped out of college like through that. Um, I was like, um
Because my mom had cut me off by then I was like mommy
Um, I was just sorry. I'm like literally selling my body like I feel scared

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E257: Queer Eye Star Opens Up About Hitting Rock Bottom: Jonathan Van Ness

Like can you just put some money in the checking account? Like I'll drive the car home
I'll be like I'll just come I'll kind of I'll
I'll be back in three days. Can you just I'm scared and she was like Jesus. Yes. I'm so my baby
And so she did them poor mom, right? Um, and so she did that
cutely though
Like right before that I found this kitten in the hood of a car
Um, who was my first cat bugged the first and honest to god
I write about him too
like he really gave me like the will to like not be a sex worker and
Because at first it was like for funsies for to just get drugs for partying, right?
Then once I got cut off it was like no, like I don't want to go back home and like show that I fucked
up
So I just need to like figure it out
But like that was really not where I wanted to be it wasn't like I was like doing sex work from a place
of empowerment
I was doing it from like a place of like deep trauma
Like wanting validation trying to support a drug habit like it was not a good place for like an 18 year
old to be
And I was like really it was a really like I put myself in so many really dangerous situations
Someone pulled a gun on you, right? Uh-huh. Yeah, it was really like really really dangerous
situations
um
and so
Yeah, that was like I mean I look back at some of the things that happened and I honestly can't
believe that
I made it
because
It was
Really like so touch and go and a lot of situations like one little thing different and it could have
Like so many situations, but that's true of anyone but it was really
You know traumatizing but so I find this little cat
And I realized when I find this little cat I was like I want this I want to raise this little cat
He was like this like little black cat in the hood of this car
And um, but that really was like so
Super healing for me and I think that started like I'm such a little like animal parent
I have like five cats and three dogs now with my husband and
That I really think it was just like such a huge like turning point
like
Just like falling like just falling in love with like cats and dogs or just like so healing
Finding a little cat in the the boot of a car seems to be trivial
But it's not is it because really what I heard there is in a moment where you were in a
Bit of a desperate situation that cat gave you a reason and a purpose
Yeah, I know it's a meaning

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E257: Queer Eye Star Opens Up About Hitting Rock Bottom: Jonathan Van Ness

Yes, and then I just continued to be like a huge source of like joy and like grounding
Like in my life that is like really
So not trivial like really really was a huge turning point quick one before we get back to this episode
Just give me 30 seconds of your time
Two things I wanted to say the first thing is a huge
Thank you for listening and tuning into the show week after week means the world to all of us
And this really is a dream that we absolutely never had and couldn't have imagined getting to this
place
But secondly, it's a dream where we feel like we're only just getting started
And if you enjoy what we do here, please join the 24 percent of people that listen to this podcast
regularly
And follow us on this app. Here's a promise. I'm gonna make to you
I'm gonna do everything in my power to make this show as good as I can now and into the future
We're gonna deliver the guests that you want me to speak to and we're gonna continue to keep
doing all of the things
You love about this show
Thank you. Thank you so much back to the episode. So if you go to hair school, yeah
Where did you go LA the evaded institute at Minneapolis? Oh, Minneapolis. Yeah
And how did that go for you cute? I got better there. I got better there and then I um, and then I
Move back to Arizona after I finished school. So I only lived there for about a year
Um, in my mind, I felt like my first experience in Arizona because that's where I went to college was
like this failure
And I really wanted to like go back and do better and like not have it be a failure
um, and so
I moved back and then that was like a really cute time like I got till like I like worked more for myself
the first time
I had like my own chair at a salon
And that made me kind of feel like responsible for like the first time and like I turned 21 in that time
And then after a few years of that, I was like I felt like I couldn't really cut myself out of a paper bag
Like I felt like I was in a good hairdresser
All I knew how to do was like chunky kelly clarkson highlights like circa light breakaway 2004, you
know what I'm saying
So then I wanted to move to LA and work at a really good salon and have a devil worse product
experience
So I did so then I moved to LA and then that's when I like really like figured out how to do better
hair
Because I got a good job at assisting at a salon. That was really good. And how were you doing at
that time?
How are you doing on a personal level? Yeah, like you're 22 years old
Yeah, like I think it was I was I think I was like handling the move to LA pretty well up until
My stepdad got sick and then that's when it was like and then and then like my little like healing era
came to like a screeching halt
Also the relationship it was like falling in love and my stepdad's

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E257: Queer Eye Star Opens Up About Hitting Rock Bottom: Jonathan Van Ness

diagnosis like together like

Yeah, much all my trauma got triggered in

was bad

Was there something in hindsight that you think could have been done to stop the stepdad's illness situation

Resulting in destructive behavior. Was there was there was a therapy needed or a conversation?

Or was there was it a lack of a support network or something that could have kind of caught you in a moment where you were

You were falling without really knowing you were falling

No, well, I don't think so because I

I realized that I was like doing things sexually at that time that like I regret it and like I didn't feel good about myself afterwards

And that's how I was kind of like, oh, I think this is like a problem and then um

And that also kind of started happening like right after I met like my like the my first love

And so and I told him about it. I was honest with him. I got help

um, so he knew I got a therapist at that time, but like

ultimately like I wasn't ready to to deal with it and so

No, I think

That was kind of an interesting lesson of like you can have all the support in the world

But if you're not ready to like sit with your stuff like it nothing's gonna move

you but um

He it wasn't until he left me and uh, Steve died that I and I got HIV that I was like

Okay, I really want to like not do this anymore

And that was when I ultimately like was able to get better, but I needed

to really I did it with a lot of support, but I needed to

Hit rock bottom and then get the support

I hear that a lot, you know, I hear this

I remember approaching, um

Got a friend who is in the public spotlight and I was trying to figure out how I could help them because they clearly were

Are in a difficult situation so I approached their management and said what can I do to be a

Supportive in the situation their management said to me. We've been here quite a few times and in fact until the person wants to

make a change, um

They won't and often you have to let the person hit rock bottom

before change will happen and I remember

At first hearing that being really uncomfortable with that

The idea that you have to kind of let someone get there on their own

And even if the route to there is downward first before it's up. It feels really

Hard to accept. I guess especially when you love the person

Do you think that's true? Yeah

Yeah

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E257: Queer Eye Star Opens Up About Hitting Rock Bottom: Jonathan Van Ness

But myself that always said, you know, you like not every like
Well, he this is like all 12 step like well known 12 step phraseology, but like every bottom has a
basement
So I can always get worse and also like you don't have to ride the elevator to the bottom
So like not every like like everyone's rock bottoms like look different
Like it doesn't mean that you have to like oh, yeah, I mean someone's gonna like bite it necessarily
I mean they might but
Um, some people are just like who I got like a dui and that was enough. Okay
Other people are like
You know, yeah, everyone's bottom looks different
Some people don't survive their bottoms. Yeah
Um,
Sex addiction
Something we don't talk about enough. We talk about drug addiction, alcohol addiction
We even talk about social media addiction and screen addiction
But having a conversation about sex addiction seems to be
Harder than all of the aforementioned forms of addiction
I remember having terry cruz on the podcast when we're in la and him telling me that he had a
porn addiction
And it was just during his life
On the surface someone might find it hard to understand how something like that can destroy one's
life
Um, you you talk about having a sex addiction and going on a sex addiction course
I believe when you uh during that time when you roughly ran you the la time
What impact was it having on your life and your relationships?
Well, it's interesting because I think if i'm correct. I think that like sexual sex addiction
Like is not like a recognized addiction and like the d s d whatever dsm
Yeah dsm. Um, but it's whereas like, you know other ones are
um
So the effects that I was having on my life was like obviously I got HIV
And but even before that like I was already like going to meetings and I'd already been to rehab
Twice before I got HIV. So um like a sex sex rehab. No, they were like well one was
One had like a sex uh, like a sexual compulsivity like course like within the program and then the
other one that I went to
I found like an outpatient that that did that work
So I could like I went there like, you know during the day from like this other rehab
I had to be like an in you know resourceful queen. Um
But ultimately it's like a process addiction, you know, whether it's like gambling food like sex. It's
like a it was like a process
Addiction so the way that um, it was affecting my life was like just you know doing things that I
regretted
Um, I describe a lot of like disassociated behavior like this like inability to like just get off
Like couldn't get off the phone

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E257: Queer Eye Star Opens Up About Hitting Rock Bottom: Jonathan Van Ness

Couldn't stop cruising like I just felt like I wasn't like in control of
Like I wasn't in control like so if you were to say like in you know in part speak or like ifs
It would like like that firefighter was like so blended in my driver's seat
Like I couldn't I couldn't get centered self like into the goddamn car
When you say cruising you mean you were like searching
Yeah, it's like a queer term for like what like gays do when you're like
Yeah, whether it's like you're cruising on grinder or you're like in a bath house or you're like
whatever you're doing
Can you tell me about that journey so
At some point you realize that you've got sexual compulsivity
At some point it becomes a problem in your life and you lose your partner in this case and there's
you know
You realize that you've lost control of that and then at some point you get to a stage of healing where
you become aware
And you understand where the origin of this sexual compulsivity
That third point understanding the origins of that sexual compulsivity
When was that and how did that happen? Well, you know, it's interesting. I think it's it's um
That reminds me of this thing that this one guy in rehab said he said like
Not knowing
Why he was an alcoholic is not what made him crazy
It was needing to know why he was an alcoholic is what made him crazy
Um, so I think it's a lot and and that was actually a huge disappointment for me
And I think we put way too much emphasis on like trying to like understand your origin story
Because like once I understood my origin story and it was like really clear his day
And like I'd done all my work and I'd done like all of this processing and like
All of the memories came back and like I already had all the memories
But then like there was just certain things that I was able to connect and like really understand very
clearly
Um, I was still left with the scarring and I was still left with the patterns
Like I still once I knew it wasn't like I was like, ah, well now I don't want to fuck 20 strangers
anymore
Like it wasn't like that like all of that pattern and all of that like, you know
Feels insecure once validation won't stop till they get the validation
Then they feel insecure again for doing the thing and then it like just a cycle that like repeats itself
all the time
And we talk about that in sexual compulsivity
It's like the trigger and then like the trigger to do the thing and then you start cruising for the thing
And then you do the thing and then the shame from the thing just makes you go right back into it
So it's just this like cycle
So, um
Really it was just like understanding through so much
Like repetition of hurting myself
Like there's like, oh, I don't really want to do this. I don't feel better after I do this

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E257: Queer Eye Star Opens Up About Hitting Rock Bottom: Jonathan Van Ness

Like I think I'm going to but then I don't and um, so it was really just like they're continually like Really hurting myself and then going back to therapy like falling off the horse getting back on like and also like

Meth use has a huge part to do with this for a lot of queer people at least and I mean There are straight people as well, but I think it's probably like lesser numbers Because of like, you know, the whole like meth and sex Like scene, which is, you know, quite prevalent in queer communities Um, so it was not quite prevalent, but it's like prevalent. It happens And so I think once the further away that I was able to get from meth the easier it was for me to heal from

Because also it's like and I talk a lot about this in my new show fun and slutty. It's like, um, sexuality isn't bad

Like sexuality is good. Um expressing our sexuality is good. It's lack of uh, it's lack of consent. It's abuse

It's manipulation. It's doing things that you regret. Those are the things that are not good Um, but you know decoupling that and like kind of understanding that and understanding like are you doing this because you have a trauma response

And so you're doing this or you do this because you really really want to do it So there's like a whole, you know, conversation about like sex positivity to be had here, too Um, and you know, a lot of people are really opposed to the idea of sexual compulsivity or sex addiction

Because they're like that's really not sex positive and maybe it's you know, x y z or whatever But for me, I think it's way more important to recognize that like

In my case it was I didn't feel good

And now I feel better and I know a lot of people like myself who were able to like You know come more into a space of healing and more into a space of like balance with their like sexual self

so, um

But again, just like anything that's never like all the way just like done and dusted like you're always in conversation

With yourself and with your trauma and and your behavior and like how you want to regulate that or express that

I would also be remiss to say like, I mean

I already had a lot of healing

Prior to meeting my husband and I think that's part of like why I even like Met him, you know, universally speaking anyway because I had done that work

But having a husband who I can be open with and honest with and who you know It doesn't judge me for the things that I've been through and he can like create a safe space for you know to hold my

Stuff with me is really helpful as well

I was just chatting to some friends this um this weekend friday about how

We I was trying to figure out because one of my the people that I was with the three of them. They're all single

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E257: Queer Eye Star Opens Up About Hitting Rock Bottom: Jonathan Van Ness

They're they're seeking not to be single and I was I was saying to them that I found the right person in my life when I was
Not necessarily the
The completed version of myself, but I had to do a lot of work to even find that jigsaw piece that matched
Me as a different shaped jigsaw piece like I had to do a lot of work
And I wasn't all the way there because I do feel like you go on a journey with that partner
But you have to kind of be aiming in the same direction at least
So I guess my question to you this is a bit of a tangent is
Do you what do you think about that about like
The the season where we find
The the right person how much work do we have to do?
on ourselves to be ready when we meet
that person um
There's this other type of therapy that I love called packed therapy
Which stands for like the psycho biological approach to couples therapy, which was um invented by
Dr. Stan Tatkin, so he created packed therapy and so
He talks about an insecure functioning relationship and a secure functioning relationship
So earlier when I was speaking about my mom and my stepdad and I was like that secure
functioning relationship
My first relationship was an insecure functioning relationship with my first partner
That in conjunction with like my stepdad's illness and then just being like 24 and 25
Out of my window of tolerance could not handle firefighters were activated
All fucked up, you know like my life kind of so that's that
So but stan says that you can an insecure functioning relationship can turn into a function as a
secure functioning one if both parties want it
If they're both willing to like work on themselves work on the relationship and also stan says that
like a lot of
Um brokenness or like trauma in oneself can actually really be healed through that sort of like
couples therapy
So I don't know if you really have to be like a more full that whole thing of like two
Fully formed circles need to make the chain because like if you're a fragmented how are you like
you're gonna make a fuck up
So I think I think we actually it pisses me off when people get too much into that like relational
expert stuff because like
Just like we all have our own experience like every relationship has its own experience
So we can like pull from some like
You know, um, what's that called like, uh
Like we can pull from some like data of
Or like but like not real day like just like oratory like data of just people talking about it and telling
us things
And well my friend this and my friend that but like ultimately I think that like
There is there's like a different path for everyone to find like their relationship and whether or not it

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E257: Queer Eye Star Opens Up About Hitting Rock Bottom: Jonathan Van Ness

starts

And I also think even in my marriage like I feel like we've had moments that we got married after like six months

Like in the middle of a fucking pandemic like it was

You know, it was it was a weird time, you know, because we just started saying I love you and then borders shut down

And then I was like if we want to keep

I don't know if I can just not get fucked by you for like years and like a respiratory pandemic like I

Like, you know, like I think I need you to like get over here

But he was British and I'm American and so we just were like, let's see what happens and then

Once you get to the end of that s da visa or whatever

It's like

Either got a good marriage and so it wasn't the way I think either of us ever imagined that like we would get married

But like we are so happy. I'm so glad that we did we've learned so much about each other

We're like it's like I'm so happy that we did but like when I was little

I don't know if I was like

Imagining that would like I'd get married in like a backyard like with only a judge because

Like, you know, no one's family could be there because there's no, you know, I mean

So something beautiful about that though. No, it was amazing and I'm like so happy that we did it

But I just think everyone can have like a different

Like a pro and just because you've had this or that or

Like everyone just has like their own way and I think that's like cool. Movies fuck us up though, don't they?

Yeah, they really do

You know

Expectation expectation expectation and that kills happiness and makes us confuse real with, you know, I don't know some other shit and

That's a really great answer

It's a really great answer. We do we try and work out the perfect formula for things too much in life

But there is really no

Perfection when you're dealing with such complex organisms

forming complex relationships, so

You move to is it st. Louis? Yeah, st. Louis. Yeah, st. Louis when you were 25

What was that about? Why did you leave it? I?

um, wouldn't it be closer to my stepdad

and so, uh

Yeah, that was my and also because I was like couldn't stop

I was like LA is why I can't stop doing drugs and having sex with strangers even though I love this person so much

Like let's and then unfortunately is my stepdad always said no matter where you go. There you are so obviously leaving LA

Didn't fix anything and then he actually passed away like three weeks after we left LA and got to st.

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E257: Queer Eye Star Opens Up About Hitting Rock Bottom: Jonathan Van Ness

Louis
so it was like
bad on bad and then I really
really
freaked out like then I was that was like the most self-destructive era
Take me into that moment
Want to fine
It's in the book
Yeah, I read I read um, I read I read that that was a very difficult time for you. Um
Because I also just think that like
We don't need to like I don't need to like war story
Which is like what we call it in rehab like when you talk about like
The worst thing I mean there's a way that you can do it like with respect and like not speak
You know it's like I was doing this much things and these drugs and but like
I also
You know in protecting my energy like I've been on an international tour for 10 days like I've given
myself so much into like
My new show like which has been I'm so proud of it. It's like my third like hour of comedy, but like
I'm not all the way in a space where like I want to speak to that part of my life right now
So I'm just going to set a really loving boundaries. They don't really want to chat about it. It's fine. I
respect that a lot
Thanks, honey. What what do um
If I if I when's the next significant moment in your life then so you that
Steven is his name Steve Steve Steve passes away. Um
Causes a series of issues in your life
Um, you move back to LA. Mm-hmm. Did you ever think tv and media would be part of your not in
this way?
No, and how exciting that that
That like it was such like a curve ball
But no, I mean I just was like accidentally telling a really talented producer
An actress and comedian friend of mine, uh, who is a client about game of thrones
And I was like, have you seen this show? It's like this and it's that like I did a little impromptu recap
of it
As I was like doing her hair and when I was done. She was like, that's a series
And so then we did gay of thrones that was like december of 12 and then the next year we start
doing gay of thrones that like
march and then um
Gay of thrones came out and it was meant to be like one episode
But then we got alfie allen for our second episode and then funny or die was like keep doing this
And so then I went really from being like
A hairdresser to learning on the job
How to be a performer how to like improv
How to deliver scripted lines how to write how to produce

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E257: Queer Eye Star Opens Up About Hitting Rock Bottom: Jonathan Van Ness

I mean I was writing and producing and didn't even know that that's what I was doing because I was doing it on the job
so like
Like I just learned like this whole new skillset kind of like over the years like for like three months a year
Like I would do gay of thrones and I just like kind of slow and then after doing gay of thrones for two years
I was like, oh, this is so fun. I want to do this more
And so then that's when I started my podcast getting curious
and then
I did I got to like learn how to produce that and learn how to research for that and book clients for that
I mean, I think I did like the first 50 episodes with like myself and a sound engineer, but I was like looking at myself
Like it was like
I was like just learning like all of these things that I had never really done
and so
Then I really started to get like stung by that bee and I was like I want to do this more
And I always have loved doing hair, but I was like I want to be I want to write more
I want to be more on camera
I want to like I want to do this more often and then in 2018 the queer. I or it was actually not 18
It was 2017. I read that the reboot was happening and they were casting for it and I was like
This is my mom
Like this is what I've been waiting for like this is the vehicle like I always loved queer
I growing up my grandparents and I would watch it together. It was like
I'm ready and then I uh went to that audition and that audition was
literally
Like the scene in mean girls when they're all at the fountain and everyone's like tackling each other
Um, it was like that except for everyone was like being really sweet
And I remember like this one creator of the show like his eyes like I said this like funny thing and I
was like, okay
You need to be like you are on gay of thrones all times like you need to be on 15
and you need to say fucking one-liners
All the time like just be the funniest you have ever even thought about being for the next 48 hours
Capiche like that's what I was thinking like in my head and I did like I was just like and I just was
like so on
Why you
You know, I think so I I have my not me darling
Well, I have my suspicions, but I for you to you know
It wasn't just an audition even the stuff you were doing with um, was it funny or die?
Wasn't it the the channel back then? Yeah gay of thrones. Yeah. Yeah, um
Do you ever pause and think like
What is it about you that made you really successful in gay of thrones and then really successful in

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E257: Queer Eye Star Opens Up About Hitting Rock Bottom: Jonathan Van Ness

queer eye?

What is it about you and your own assessment?

I don't know

Really? I really don't because I think it could have been a million people. I think that I have I think I'm resilient

I think that I have been told no so many times and didn't turn around and go back

I like found a different way. I think that's really important

We've got resilience, but you know just from meeting you now you have a remarkable talent for wit and humor

You're very funny and you have a very

Unforgettable personality. You're like you're unbelievable energy

And no, I'm no, but I'm I'm Jen, you know, I think you know, but you know, you so I can't do what you do

And I've only met you for like, I don't know an hour or so and I can't be I'm not as hilarious and witty and

I don't know. I don't I can't almost describe it that

some people just have like a really

Engaging personality and you have that you have that like energy

That's a huge part of it. Surely your success

Um, because you're in you know, especially on tv and I don't know. I really don't like I see people like I have

I know people that make me laugh that I think are way funnier than me

Like way funnier way more witty way more like unforgettable personalities

but like

I think that a lot of the people who I'm thinking of like

had

Some message from the like in their lives were like they were like either

Or like their moment hasn't happened yet. It's one of the two. Yeah. Yeah

Um, but I think for a lot of people that like maybe like backed away or like we're like, I don't want to like because like I

Because actually in retrospect like I really

As much as I think that like oh, I didn't chase my dream. I actually really did chase this

Like with gay of thrones, you know, like I like I wanted

More than gay after I mean gay of thrones started in 2013 and I didn't book queer I until 2017 and then there was no

Knowing if queer I was gonna work or not until like 2018

So I mean 2013 was 10 years ago. Like I've been at this for a long time

um, and so and there was like so many setbacks like so many

Setbacks through that time

You're authentic self

I've sat here with a lot of people in tv and tv and media can often make us

It can incentivize us to become a cat like not character

But like and I sat here with jake Humphreys and a wonderful lady called fern cotton who a tv

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E257: Queer Eye Star Opens Up About Hitting Rock Bottom: Jonathan Van Ness

presenter love for a uniform

Yeah, so fern told me on on the podcast that she spent 10 years as a tv presenter and she

I think realized at some point that she was living outside of herself and at least

Um, she wasn't able to reflect the full array of her who she was

And that resulted in panic attacks and other sort of psychological issues she had

And it's and it's made and now she's so successful doing happy place where she's able to be herself so this conversation around

Or like being your authentic self being the pathway to your greatest success

What what is your take on that this idea of like

Showing up as yourself regardless of the temptations or disincentivizations or incentivizations to be something else

How important to you has been being yourself regardless?

It's such because like even like because I I I totally understand but even that feels like um

I don't think like what is like all the way authentic

What's like all the way yourself because I always get leery when we're like because like if if the alternative is like

I don't think that there's a such thing as being like all the way yourself or not yourself at all. Mm-hmm

Like interesting

So I think it's like a spectrum like everything is kind of really much more of like a spectrum than it is like a binary

like choice

So and like when she was saying with fern it was like, you know, she's like a tv presenter

But she couldn't show like the fullness of herself

So like that's why I wrote over the top because I and I think and love that's where I say like or no

It's an over-the-top I say that like I love an episode of queer

I just as much as the next person

But if I can't tell you my full truth and tell you who I really am

Then like I can't help other people like me and I actually can't even be myself

And then the whole crux of over the top is and what I ask in the book is like

Would you still want to have a selfie with me?

Like would you still love me if you knew my whole story? And so that's

you know, and then I say and love that story that

The resounding answer that I got from so many people was yes, you know, I do still love you

And like in most cases it was like even more so but were there parts

Um, I think we always have parts of ourselves that are informed by external factors

Like if I didn't get feedback from people when I go like when I say something funny

That that if I didn't get positive feedback from that would I still be making all those jokes?

Like so does that mean I'm not really you know

I'm saying like every every way that we show up in the world is because of like our socialization our relationships

Like our communities like I don't think that that makes you like it's really like your relationship with

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E257: Queer Eye Star Opens Up About Hitting Rock Bottom: Jonathan Van Ness

yourself
and I don't think that like
I don't think there's like authentic and like inauthentic
There's like
There's like sometimes I'm more like this because of this this thing and sometimes I'm more like that because of that thing
You know what I mean? Perfect makes perfect sense
That's so interesting
But it is the truth and I you know, I think it's actually like more authentic is like
Being able to like speak to what you're actually feeling like in the moment like I feel like earlier when we were saying like
Um, like I literally caught myself. I was like, oh like, you know, Brené Brown says can you talk about your trauma without becoming your trauma?
And I was like literally laying that up because I was feeling vulnerable with you
I was and I didn't like it
So I was like, oh yeah, I totally can like I can totally speak and it like doesn't really hurt me
So I don't really want to talk about it that much because it's like
But then it's like actually that was really protector park that was coming up
Because I didn't want to talk about it and I felt like I was going to become my trauma
Like because I am a little tired and I am a little run down
Like after the last two weeks like I've worked my fucking ass off for these last two weeks
And another thing that's interesting that I don't really want to talk about but when I was originally supposed to when we were
Going to do this the last time I had like a really close family member die
Super young super out of the blue like which we don't but she got strep throat and died in four days
My sister-in-law and so that's why I wasn't in the united kingdom
Which I also didn't ever talk about publicly because it's like not anything I wanted to talk about but like it's I think really what being authentic is is having the courage and like the vulnerability to say like
This is what I'm going through
Like this is like actually the thought that I actually had in my head like when I was about to try to lie to you
Like this is really what it was
And like for me, it's like sometimes it's like if you come up to me for a selfie and
Like especially on that day like with leslie my sister-in-law like I wasn't taking selfies
It wasn't in a good mood when my cat fell out of a window
And you asked me for a selfie. I wasn't going to take a selfie
And sometimes I'll be like yeah, like let's just like let's do it
But then sometimes but you know normally if my life is okay, and I'm not going through like some horrific trauma
That's not the energy. I give you when you want a selfie. I'm like, yeah girl. Like it's like let's do it
But sometimes I'm not always like that
And so I think that's really what's authentic is saying that like just because you always see me like or

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E257: Queer Eye Star Opens Up About Hitting Rock Bottom: Jonathan Van Ness

the two episodes of

Queer Eye that you saw being five years ago and you remember me saying some funny quippy things

What's really authentic is me being able to be like that's not always who I am

And there's actually like a fuller picture there

So I think that is like what authentic is but there is there have been moments like where I was probably like

Totally someone asking for a selfie and it's like sure girl. Let's do it on the inside. I was like I want to die

Like I don't feel good. I feel awful

And then the expectation of someone that I need to perform that for them constantly no matter what's going on

That shit wears me out, which is why I can't do it all the time

so

like that's

yeah, I like

I just think authenticity is like this like buzzword that we use when like really what it is is like

Are you willing to like?

Be open about like what you need

Like what your experience is like what someone's like expecting a view regardless of how the external world might respond

positively or negatively to that. Yeah

Gosh, um, then if that is the definition of authenticity, it's even harder than I thought because authenticity is it's often portrayed is just like

Like being being your personality warts and all being that you know

My personality slightly weird in certain ways being that regardless of company

but in the definition you've described there, it's like boundaries and like

Staying true to myself regardless of the consequences of that externally, which is as you say I have tired days

I have days when I'm in a bad mood when I'm when I need some space where I don't want anyone to talk to me

And on those days expressing that is authenticity

Yeah, yeah, I love that

My girlfriend came upstairs yesterday when I was having a shower and she said to me that she tried the heel protein shake

Which lives on my fridge over there and she said it's amazing low calories

You get your 20 odd grams of protein

You get your 26 vitamins and minerals and it's nutritionally complete in the protein space

There's lots of things but it's hard to find something that is nice

Especially when consumed just with water and that is nutritionally complete if you haven't

Tried the heel protein product do give it a try the salted caramel one

If you put some ice cubes in it and you put it in a blender and you try it is as good as

Pretty much any milkshake on the market just mixed with water

It's been a game changer for me because i'm trying to drop my calorie intake

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E257: Queer Eye Star Opens Up About Hitting Rock Bottom: Jonathan Van Ness

And i'm trying to be a little bit more healthy with my diet
So this is where heel fits in my life
Thank you heel for making a product that I actually like the salted caramel is my favorite
I've got the banana one here, which is the one my girlfriend likes but for me salted caramel is
The one
How are you feeling?
Now, yeah, you know your schedule's been crazy. You've been doing a little work lately. Yeah, how
you feeling?
Look I feel
I feel really
Grateful and at the same time I feel really frustrated
Um, and that's the best way I can explain it right now. I'm going through a lot of grief
I just lost my sister in law two months ago
I'm watching my nephews like grow up
You know dealing with unimaginable grief watching my brother deal with unimaginable loss
um
So talking about you know, I'm feeling and
It's just this has been a really hard time and I think balancing
Your private life with being a public figure who is constantly expected to be a ray of fucking
sunshine
No matter what is going on
It can be challenging
um
so
I love my hairline
I love what I get to do with jvn hair. I love that I get to be a comedian. I love that when
I want to like do a show I can like there's people that want to come see my comedy like
Comedy has been so healing for me
And it's like one place in my career where I get to be a reverent and I get to like I feel like I'm the
most myself
On stage. I think that's like the most
Accurate and unfiltered like version of who I am is like on stage
But I think like any artist when you like like I'd just been burning the candle at both ends for the last
like 10 days
so
Like in this very moment in my life
Like actually this particular moment. I feel frustrated and grieving
um
When I zoom out a little bit and give voice to that frustration
And now I can like sit with this for like longer than actually like to like give a larger answer
um, I feel
Like
Actually, it's the same I feel grateful and frustrated

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E257: Queer Eye Star Opens Up About Hitting Rock Bottom: Jonathan Van Ness

Like Dylan Mulvaney is a really good friend of mine. I love her so much
I've like watched what's happened to her in the press for the last few months. I'm like so frustrated
I just see so much like
Just absolute garbage like just transphobic garbage all over the place
I see really not very many folks
Really interrogating their beliefs around their transphobia
Interrogating like where are they getting their information?
um, and then even understanding like
Our transphobia
That we experience in our culture is like really truly rooted in like white supremacy and colonialism
And this conversation goes back like 400 years
And so that's like a really big systemic thing, but then living in a state where like
This woman literally just lost her life
Because this guy thought that she looked queer
like there are kids that like
Like their families are like moving like they can't like they can't like like their kids who like if they
have already started their transition
And they're like if they're you know 16 year old and they're a sophomore in high school
And they've been living
And their gender identity since they were like a five-year-old kid. They've been on puberty blockers
When they were you know little they had a concert of doctors and their family who cares about them
and loves them deeply
Help them transition
Because if they didn't transition in some cases not all cases but some cases like these kids
Will have such intense gender dysphoria that they can commit suicide. They can do things that can
truly never be
reversed
And so we have these people making these hyperbolic claims about protecting children
And about you know protecting children for making irreversible decisions
Uh bathrooms fairness and sports all these things when like trans people make up like at most like 2
percent of the population
Like gun violence is out of control
Education's out of control like people don't have access to the food to the health care
I mean my book's been banned like my book like peanut goes through the gold like they're talking
about banning
I mean like this is really serious. And so like it's just
frustrating
I'm grateful, but I think to like have had a lot of my dreams come true
Like I said earlier, but then in this like environment of
Like where you feel like oh my god, like if one person decides that like
Something that I said or did they can like I mean you literally because so much of the transphobia
that we read about
Like when you read like if you read an article about what happened to dylan

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E257: Queer Eye Star Opens Up About Hitting Rock Bottom: Jonathan Van Ness

um

Like the way that people just speak about trans people and non-binary people like the quotations the the inferred

Like threats or like not believing that we are who we say that we are

And but then like how that actually has like been taken farther now to like

revoking health care like, you know limiting access to health care calling health care child abuse

um

It's just really frustrating because it's such like a gigantic conversation that there's a lot of nuance and a lot of people have

Been exposed to misinformation and disinformation don't really understand. And so then and then I'm in this position of like

Like how do I balance like what I'm seeing happening to friends and people who I love

And then like running a business and trying to grow my business and then with this backdrop of all this fucked up shit

It's hard

So I'm like, you know, I'm grateful like and I and I'm also like a hairdresser who loves doing hair

Like I love good products. Like I'm someone who in my 20s

Like I would overdraft my checking account to get the shampoo and conditioner that I wanted like I

Because I know when your hair feels good

Like when you feel good about how you look like you just feel so much better

And I would literally choose like products over food all the time in my 20s

And so I wanted to make products that are clean and

But ultimately like more than clean like I really wanted to make products that work

Really really well that don't cost like a hundred dollars for a shampoo and conditioner

Like I just wanted to make really highly functional products that work on people's hair

The hairdressers love and that people love that they can actually afford and I'm so passionate about it

but like there's a lot of times that I can't even think about the cool things that I've done because I'm like

Literally like if you read comments right now, but who cares about a comment. I don't really care about comments

I care about like what's happened in my state like in texas like

I mean, they're like like

This like drag band that was just passed like I'm performing in texas in austin in december

Like I have to make sure like they're used to be able to be like now in this show fun and slutty

I wouldn't want kids there anyway. It is like an adult show, but like it is like

There is like I'm like there was there's a lot they were talking about that would like just force people to wear

clothes of their

like biological sex in public

That lot didn't pass or there's a conversation around it the way that we're like trending and heading and anytime where you like talk about like

Limiting a whole group's ability to like, you know access like information health care

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E257: Queer Eye Star Opens Up About Hitting Rock Bottom: Jonathan Van Ness

Education or just like their exposure to public under the guise of like protecting kids
Like historically we've really seen that a lot of times like
Against so many marginalized groups
So I think anytime when that starts happening like we all really need to be super leery
Especially because like sex abuse is such a huge issue and it is happening in families and in
churches and it's happening in schools
Um, I'll tell you where it's not happening. Is it drag queen brunch?
Okay, it's not happening there. Um, it's not happening in health care clinics
Well, maybe it could be in some places like I don't you know
But really it's like it is not happening in gender affirming care and it ain't happening at drag queen
brunch is
Um, it's either dentist or you know, some doctor might put gender some those things happen with
these crazy fucking cishet doctors
Who you find out we're like, you know, I'm pregnant eating their fucking patients or like that is what
it's like
Maybe that but like in gender affirming care and in drag queen brunch
It's not child abuse. Why where's this because I've noticed this what feels like quite a tectonic shift
in
transphobic narratives over the last couple of months in particular
It seems to have been this this ground and I can't figure out where it's come from
I was saying to you this too early on but if I don't know where it's come from
I don't really know part of it is conservative think tanks
So when Biden won in 2020
um
And we saw this in Virginia because the Virginia House of Delegates
It by one vote stayed Republican and then because they have off
Cycle elections in Virginia until 2019 it flips back to or it flips to Democrats and then in 2021
It reverses again and goes back to Republicans and the issue that they really used there was
bathrooms
and trans rights because the Democratic controlled
Legislator in that 19th session had done some things on trans rights
And they threw these conservative think tanks because a lot of times of Virginia because it has off
years like they use that as like a bell
Whether it's like test things like just on both sides like Democrats and Republicans
But they were throwing everything at the wall their abortion hell no
They don't want that that's not going well for them right now because most people support the right
to abortion
So for Republicans like that's not a winning thing right now
But the thing that in gay marriage, that's not really a huge thing anymore because most people
support gay marriage
But when they threw
trans rights
When they threw biological males competing against women in sports

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E257: Queer Eye Star Opens Up About Hitting Rock Bottom: Jonathan Van Ness

Robbing, you know your sweet pretty little white girl of her, you know hard-earned sporting opportunities
That stuck
That stuck hardcore that got people fucking circling the wagons, honey. So um
That is when we really started to see and when you were like, oh, it's just in these last three months
It has not just been in these last three months
That's because of the way that elections work and because we just had a midterm election
In november of last year and then they don't take office until january and then it takes months and months for things to get through
committee and stuff
All of this shit has been in the works
We've all been talking about this if you look at my getting curious that was canceled on netflix last fucking year
There's a whole episode about this and it's it talks about the anti drag bills up until 2022
As compared to that time we have four times more at that time and the graph was like this
So it isn't new and it just takes a minute
But um, I think another thing that we're seeing is that like, you know how you were saying like
Oh the lion or like the the thing of like the tiger's coming for you run away from the tiger
So that's like negativity bias versus like positive positive bias
That's why a story of like someone getting murdered or someone getting abused is going to go way farther than like, you know
The good news network story, you know, it's your negativity bias
So that's the other thing is that like because we have so much fear mongering around trans issues right now
um
That's also part of like why
Like it feels like it's going so much farther because people really are actually thinking that
People really think that there's like little kids going and getting hysterectomies like going to school as a boy and coming home as a girl
Having like full, you know, I mean like people actually have been convinced that like there's little teeny children
Who are making
You know permanent medical decisions with no parental supervision with no medical supervision
People really think that's true another huge issue that we're up against right now
Is that there's so much disinformation around like the fact that actually like
Biological sex is in and of itself a spectrum like that's not even a binary
like do you know what intersex is
Do I yeah, no, I don't so that's the eye and lgbt qia
There is like six intersex uh, there's six my friend elicia roth weigel is an amazing intersex activist
Her book is coming out. It's called inverse cowgirl. She also just helped produce a movie that just came out that is called everybody
But statistics show that up to two percent
I've interviewed her on getting curious if you ever want to listen to it

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E257: Queer Eye Star Opens Up About Hitting Rock Bottom: Jonathan Van Ness

But up to two percent of our population is and you should actually have her on this podcast because she's fucking major

But two percent of our population is intersex

We don't test everyone that's born for what our chromosomes are

So there's xx and then there's x y but then there's also a variation that's x x y

There's also some there's like these multiple variations are six main ones that qualify someone as intersex

um

And so what happens is and is that like if a kid is born intersex

Doctors they don't even mark that down like they will take the kid

They talk to the parent and they say like whatever the genitalia most appears as

They're and literally one thing that I have learned and have been told is like doctors will literally say

It's easier to dig a hole than build a pole

So most people that are born intersex they will make into

Someone that looks biologically female, but these people will have to take hormones for their entire life

They have to have gender they have to have genital surgery like on their genitals when they are babies

I'm talking like operate on their genitals when they're babies and then when they're kids

And then they have to wear expanders when they're kids like their parents have to teach them how to wear expanders

So they will have a vagina that looks like other people's vaginas. So kids currently up to two percent of people

Now when you say that to transphobes, they'll say like, oh, well actually that study was wrong and it's only 0.02 people

It's not two percent. It's it's point two

in either way

Two percent of the population of seven billion

That's hundreds of millions of people who have intersex characteristics of

point two that's still

Millions and millions of people with intersex characteristics

And there's a lot of people who look like they're men who are actually walking around here with x x y chromosomes

A lot of men who can't have kids. It's actually because they have they are intersex

So intersex people exist all over the place

Like intersex is a real thing the idea of biological sex being a binary isn't even true

And if you talk to biologists, they will tell you exactly what i'm telling you

And it's interesting in a lot of these anti trans bills for kids

intersex kids are specifically carved out

So in these bills, it says you can't commit no general mutilation

No hormones your kid must be the the biological sex that they were born unless

They are intersex

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E257: Queer Eye Star Opens Up About Hitting Rock Bottom: Jonathan Van Ness

And then we must do genital surgery. We must prescribe hormones. We must enforce the binary
Hmm, so that's and i'm and you if you think i'm being hyperbolic right now
Not you or just anyone watching like do this research look up what intersex is
Because can i ask you a really important question?
That i've been i've been mulling over in my head and i'm gonna be on i think there'll be a lot of
people that are
mulling this question in their head, which is
How can i be a and i'm not even sure if this is the right word, but how can i be a better ally?
um, i think everyone needs to realize uh, i think the ally talk is a little bit garbage because it
Ally implies that like this doesn't affect me, but because i care about you i'm gonna fight against this
But actually these this transphobia affects everyone like it affects everyone
It affects cisgender women because like even now like there's little girls who like they're wanting to
like
There's this like little girls soccer team in utah where this one team beat the other team and the
Parents of the kids who got beaten accused the other girls of being transgender
And they were like that's why they got beaten so like as we start to like incentivize
You know checking kids genitals and checking like to make sure that you're who you say you are
And like and really like villainize this idea of transness
It starts like it's going to affect everyone like so if it doesn't affect you now
It's like we already lost our right to reproductive health care because the right to reproductive
health care in the united states goes hand in hand with its bodily autonomy
So whether you're talking about determining what your body does
Reproductively or determining what your body does as far as your gender expression
Like they go hand in hand and it's all about control
So that control affects everyone. So I think we need to like
Allyship I think is like oh like i'm gonna do this like even though it doesn't affect me
i'm gonna be your ally at least that's how i feel about it
Like that's like how when i think of but really it's like we need people to understand that like
If you're white racism, it doesn't affect you in the same way that it does for a person of color
But you shouldn't be like i'm gonna do you a solid and be an ally
You should do you should be you should be in that fight because
In injustice anywhere as an injustice everywhere and it will affect you and actually
the racism and the transphobia and the homophobia and the misogyny and the um
The way that we are like so like don't talk about disabled people and and what they need
Or people with disabilities in the disabled community is like all this does is like keeps money
In the most powerful people the most powerful people's hands
Like we all need to really come together and like like to me
It's like the corporate greed like that's really what is like causing so much of this
And then like corporate greed because so much of that is like made by republicans
They're like look over here. It's trans people. Look over here. It's gay people
Look over here. It's it's um, it's food stamps. Like they're being lazy like that's why we don't those
people are being lazy
These people don't even work

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E257: Queer Eye Star Opens Up About Hitting Rock Bottom: Jonathan Van Ness

These people are fucking crazy with their trans their their kids are running around like you know what I mean

So it's just a lot of like smoke and mirrors now as far as hair care or obsessive job in hair

It's absolutely gorgeous. Can I just say can I just say on this? Um, your team said to me before you arrived

They said we've we've worked with a few people, but nobody's ever been so deeply obsessed in the product

And been authentically obsessed in the product as you have so I've went through and I've had a little sample of all of them

They are the most exquisite exquisitely smelling products. I've ever thank you. I'm the wonderful of um ingesting nasally

Well done. I heard this is breaking records. Thanks. Um pre wash cup oil is amazing. I well, I think for me

I really love formulas. I love formulas that work on all hair types. Um

So for us

I'm really big on like the amount of product like if your hair is finer in density

You're going to use a little bit less if your hair is quite thick in density

Like a lot of hair per square inch are going to use a little bit more

That's an amazing heat protectant right there that has niacinamide and charged lemon protein in it

So it's it has no holes

That's amazing for people who just like want to put a little bit of nourishment in their hair

But it also has great heat protection

Even if you don't style your hair with a blow dryer or a curling iron

You're still experiencing heat from your body heat in the sun

So it's just a great hair hydrator

But no hold if you wanted for you if you wanted to like bring out your waves a little bit

We don't have any air dry cream in there, but uh, it's over there in the air dry cream

You could like put on your waves when your hair is wet and then like run your little like I saw it's the foam

No, it's a cream air dry cream

But you can like really like take that out with like a little like your little wave brush and really just like get like

Bring out your waves. Um, you could do like a sponge roller with that

um

I love our little air dry cream. It's great for textured hair. It's it's really great for like one eight through four

See, that's undamaged. That's great for anyone who's got like highlights heat damage swimming a lot

You've sold me and I can't wait for I hope you love it. We'll send some to you and your partner

Oh, we've got a huge bag here. Thank you so much. You're so welcome

We have a closing tradition where the last guest leaves a question for the yes. Who's your next one? Who's your next one? What about your life? Do you think is abnormal and why? Oh, okay?

Um, whatever

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E257: Queer Eye Star Opens Up About Hitting Rock Bottom: Jonathan Van Ness

Maybe like my five cats three dogs and seven chickens and that's like maybe more animals than like most people have

But I get so much joy from my family and I don't know if I really want human babies. I love my fur babies

So maybe that's that's I think why it's my life is so fun

Do I get to ask the question the next person? Yes, but do I get to know who the next person is?

I just had to ask a random question is someone I don't even know

Yes, and also they'll be turned into cards that people will play with their families and stuff

Oh, fuck. So it can't be what's the sluttiest thing you've ever done

Quick one as you guys know

We're lucky enough to have blue jeans by Verizon as a sponsor of this podcast and for anyone that doesn't know

Blue jeans is an online video conferencing tool that allows you to have slick fast

High quality online meetings without all the glitches

You might normally find with online meeting tools and they have a new feature called blue jeans basic

Blue jeans basic is essentially a free version of their top quality video conferencing tool

That means you get an immersive video experience that is super high quality super easy and super

Basically zero fast apart from all the incredible features like zero time limits on meeting calls

It also comes with high fidelity audio and video including Dolby voice, which is incredibly useful

They also have enterprise grade security so you can collaborate with confidence

It's so smooth that it's quite literally changing the game for myself for my team without compromising on quality

To find out more all you have to do is search bluejeans.com and let me know how you get on

Oh

You got to the end of this podcast whenever someone gets to the end of this podcast

I feel like I owe them a greater debt of gratitude because that means you listen to the whole thing

And hopefully that suggests that you enjoyed it if you are at the end and you enjoyed this podcast

Could you do me a little bit of a favor and hit that subscribe button?

That's one of the clearest indicators

We have that this episode was a good episode and we look at that on all of the episodes to see which episodes generated the most subscribers

Thank you so much, and I'll see you again next time