

Babette ([00:01](#)):

I love to take diagnostic quizzes as a fun activity. I feel like they're very much like, you either have ADHD or you don't. And they're like, "And babe, you simply have ADHD." And I'm like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah." But I feel like it's more of a spectrum. I feel like there's an ADHD spectrum in a way. I'm someone who's unmedicated and can still pretty much get through my day and get through my work. I was just hyperactive as a child and told to constantly be quiet and I just get really hyper. But it was so funny because I took the test and I got that I didn't have ADHD, and they who are so sure I didn't have ADHD actually got that they have ADHD. And so I was like, "[inaudible 00:00:44]." You really thought it was so binary, but it's actually not. And I'm like, "Oh."

([00:46](#)):

I think the reality at the end of the day is neurodivergence is sets of incredibly normal and common characteristics that we put into certain categories because it's helpful for our little human brains to understand. Everybody has characteristics that show up in different ways, and I feel like labels provide you comfort and that's great, but I feel like I'm someone who toils over, can I really call myself neurodivergent? I'm really high functioning. I can really get through my day. I don't really have any problems. It doesn't set me back in the workplace.

([01:21](#)):

And then I booked the wrong ticket for the wrong weekend. And I was like, "It actually does affect my life and my workplace." We had the Gender Spiral LIVE! show in LA. My family lives in the Bay Area. I was trying to line it up so I'd be kind of on the same coast the same weekend, and then just take a plane from Bay Area to LA. What had happened was at one point our show was on June 2nd. I do have to say our show at one point was on June 2nd. It was moved to June 9th. And I think something I'm realizing is auditory processing is a big thing for me, which is that if something's not written down, highlighted in yellow, put in size E [inaudible 00:02:03], I'm not going to remember it. I'm not going to remember it.

([02:05](#)):

And it comes up in friendship. I don't really remember things my friends say. I'll be like, "Oh, you never told me that." And they're like, "I absolutely did." And it's just auditory. I feel like as a child that looked like Babette doesn't listen, Babette doesn't follow instructions, dah dah dah dah. And so that was a moment that I was like, "Oh no, I have ADHD." Because you know. And you know what? I actually was talking to someone about this yesterday. I just remembered the distinct look on your guys' faces when we were having this slow realization. You were being so sweet about it, but there was something about both of you guys. Your faces just dropped. And that's the face of disappointment that I've faced many times throughout my life when I've made a silly mistake. I make silly mistakes on important tasks, that's how ADHD manifests for me I think. It doesn't mess with my life very often, but that's one moment. That was a pretty big one. That was a pretty big moment.

Ally ([03:02](#)):

You're in grad school at a very prestigious school. You're like, "I've got this." And then you're like, "And I will see you guys on the 2nd." And we were like, "Oh."

Babette ([03:14](#)):

No, that's exactly it. I think I'm like, "Oh, if my ADHD was so bad, I really couldn't be doing everything that I was doing."

Ally ([03:21](#)):

Well, that's so interesting that you say that because in today's interview when I was talking to Devon Price, our guest, he talks about these kind of dated interactions that people had with doctors when they were trying to get diagnosed with autism, and things that the doctors would say, like, "No, you're so polite," or, "You're in a relationship, you can't have autism." And it's just like, no, the face of neurodivergence aren't these extremes that maybe we have seen in sitcoms or whatever. You know what I mean? It's a lot more, I don't know. I think that the neurodivergence, I'm not sure if this is self-selecting, because sometimes I'm like, "Everyone's gay." And I'm like, "No, I just picked my friend group." But I am like, "Everyone's neurodivergent in some way."

Babette ([04:16](#)):

Right. Yeah. Is everyone neurodivergent? Because what is this model of the perfect healthy neurotypical? I guess it's exactly what you're saying. It's exactly what you're saying, actually. I was about to say, "I don't know any neurotypicals." And I'm like, "Oh, I just have a lot of mentally ill friends."

Ally ([04:31](#)):

Yes.

Babette ([04:31](#)):

I just have a lot of mentally ill friends.

Ally ([04:36](#)):

Did I find this group because I fit in with it? No. But also, I do think that there's a ton of writing out there about what neurotypical looks like and how it's just what is best in a capitalist system. What is the best worker bee. So I don't know. My therapist gave me this really interesting book about ADHD that the premise is kind of wacky, but it's like in the time of hunter-gatherer, we're starting off strong. You're already picturing me kind of nude next to a fire. But the premise is that in times of hunter-gatherer, hunters brains, everything happened really fast, high risk, high reward, get the kill, massive feast or famine kind of mentality. And then the gatherer was a little bit more like slow methodic work every single day adds up to order and stability, and that you needed both. In modern times, people who have ADHD are just hunters. Which I'm like, "Okay, positive spin." This is extremely gender euphoric to hear that I'm just a hunter in a farmer's world. Which is the name of the book, Hunters in a Farmer's World.

Speaker 3 ([06:03](#)):

Am I even queer?

Speaker 4 ([06:04](#)):

I think I want to take testosterone.

Speaker 9 ([06:06](#)):

I mean, I'm wearing men's underwear right now.

Speaker 5 ([06:07](#)):

Is that a boy? Is that a girl?

Speaker 4 ([06:09](#)):

Man, woman, cisgender, transgender. We're born into language.

Speaker 3 ([06:13](#)):

Butch, femme, two girls.

Speaker 10 ([06:14](#)):

Decolonized.

Speaker 3 ([06:15](#)):

Trans, BIPOC.

Speaker 11 ([06:17](#)):

Neurodivergence.

Speaker 4 ([06:18](#)):

Cisgender, hetero, patriarchal, capitalist girl boss,

Speaker 5 ([06:21](#)):

Femme lipstick everyday.

Ally ([06:22](#)):

T for T, fag boy relationship.

Speaker 12 ([06:25](#)):

Butch.

Speaker 13 ([06:25](#)):

Boyish, and spritely.

Speaker 3 ([06:27](#)):

The softer morphe.

Speaker 5 ([06:29](#)):

Oh but you're so feminine. You're so feminine.

Speaker 14 ([06:31](#)):

Attraction to a hot T boy.

Speaker 4 ([06:33](#)):

I used sexuality to try to understand my gender.

Speaker 16 ([06:36](#)):

What does it look like for non-binary people to "transition"?

Speaker 15 ([06:40](#)):

I was a boy. If I was looking down at the memory, I was a boy.

Speaker 3 ([06:43](#)):

It's really difficult to look at gender identity head on.

Speaker 4 ([06:48](#)):

Wait, um. [inaudible 00:06:58].

Ally ([06:58](#)):

Our guest today I'm really excited about, his name is Devon Price. He's a psychologist and author of a book that I recently read called Unmasking Autism: The Power of Embracing Our Hidden Neurodiversity.

Babette ([07:10](#)):

The title of that book synthesized something for me, because I love the term neurodiversity, I think, versus the neurotypical neurodivergent binary feels hard for me.

Ally ([07:22](#)):

Yeah.

Babette ([07:22](#)):

You know what I mean?

Ally ([07:23](#)):

No, no, no, totally. It's like neurodivergent and neurotypical has judgment values in it for sure.

Babette ([07:31](#)):

Exactly, exactly. I feel people make jokes about neurotypicals. And when I was in college, I feel like I was maybe one of the least mentally ill one of my friend group. And it was just like, I'm just going to put it out there. Just one of the lesser. I mean, it's a spectrum. It's a spectrum. And I just feel like, no, I am someone that's very high functioning, but I also know that those ideas about high functioning are kind of ableist and outdated anyway.

Ally ([07:54](#)):

Totally.

Babette ([07:55](#)):

But it just did feel like there are people who are neurodiverse and there are people who aren't. I look at my parents and I'm sure they'd call themselves neurotypical, but it's like, honey, someone's going on there. Something's happening. Neurodiversity, I feel like, just encompasses the spectrum of human existence.

Ally ([08:14](#)):

No, totally. When you hear that, you just think of a lot of space for a lot of different people, versus there's kind of this repressed downtrodden group of mentally ill people and the tormentors above them.

Babette ([08:30](#)):

Exactly. They're sewer people, just churning-

Ally ([08:32](#)):

Skittering around eating pizza in the subway.

Babette ([08:33](#)):

... throughout the world, kind of skittering like rats. You shine lights on them, they go, "[inaudible 00:08:44]." I passed a deadline.

Ally ([08:49](#)):

Anyway, Devon was kind enough to record an interview with us fresh out of top surgery, I'm talking days. I was really excited to talk to him.

Devon ([08:59](#)):

I'm Devon Price. I'm a lapsed social psychologist. I'm a professor and I'm the author of the books *Laziness Does Not Exist*, and *Unmasking Autism*.

Ally ([09:10](#)):

And you have an upcoming book, I believe, right?

Devon ([09:13](#)):

I do, yes. *Unlearning Shame*. We don't have a release date yet. I'm putting off copy edits right now.

Ally ([09:20](#)):

Great. Okay. Well, I'm really looking forward to that. I am a big fan. I have a therapist who I love who absolutely loves you, and so I feel like I have a kind of like a parasocial relationship with you through my therapist. So honestly, Liz was so happy that I was talking to you. If you feel comfortable, would you want to start off by talking about some of the things with top surgery that you've really enjoyed experience wise? Or something that you're looking forward to?

Devon ([09:52](#)):

Sure. So for people listening, I just got top surgery. I'm five days post op. And if I had known that I would feel so much relief even while I'm in the throes of supposedly the discomfort and the pain, that it would

feel this much better than just having a chest I didn't want, even while in the throes of recovery, I would've done it so much sooner. I was so afraid of that period. And just having never done a major surgery or anything like that, or having been under anesthesia ever before, I really let that keep me from going for it for a long time. There's just a lot of things I used to do to try and negotiate my chest dysphoria, things just working out a lot and just really obsessing over what I was wearing. And it's just already such a relief.

(10:36):

Even now with all of this binder and drains and stuff on, already the silhouette is so different and already how I feel is so different. I'm so amped for it. It's just holistically great. And also just taking the time to do something for myself like this and having this new experience of just the human body and consciousness that is involved in doing something like a major surgery. It has also been a shade of humanity and the human experience that I didn't know about before, and it's cool to get to experience it on my own terms rather than somebody getting a surgery when they don't want it or something like that.

Ally (11:11):

Yeah, but experiencing the elation of body mod, you're just like, "Whoa, I get it."

Devon (11:20):

Yes. I mean, I had always been a tattoo, facial piercings, body mod kind of person, but now I understand the people who are addicted to plastic surgery. And I mean that in a complimentary way.

Ally (11:31):

Totally.

Devon (11:32):

I wish there was more stuff that I wanted. I want elf ears. I want horns. Let's go.

Ally (11:35):

Yeah. Yeah. You're going to get a tail. Yeah, yeah,

Devon (11:38):

Let's fuck it up.

Ally (11:39):

You mentioned the binder thing. I remember getting the surgical binder that you have to wear afterwards and being like, "This looks exactly like my normal. You're going to make me wear this a few more days? How dare you."

Devon (11:52):

I know. Yeah, it's like you have to go over this hill to reach the valley underneath.

Ally (12:00):

What was it like for you to have all capital letters, boobs? I read your top surgery article and I fucking loved every bit of that. What was that journey like for you from that chest to this chest?

Devon ([12:15](#)):

Yeah, I had this experience that I think is not uncommon for a lot of trans masks of having this attribute that other people really valued and were even envious of and would just project that onto me my entire life. So yeah, I had this experience all throughout my life of having just this body type that people, especially cis women, projected all these expectations onto and told me that I was really lucky to have. And so I kept for years trying to wrap my brain around how can I make this work for me? And so I had all these different phases of trying to dress like Joan from Mad Men and trying to be sexy in that particular way, and it just completely did not work. And trying to see it as a source of power, the way that it gets presented as a source of feminine power or whatever, but it only ever made me more self-conscious and more uncomfortable. I could just never this thing that everybody else seemed to like. But it was a real mind screw to be able to think about parting ways with it.

([13:17](#)):

That all started to change once I stopped hormonal birth control and things went down a little bit in size, and that was pretty euphoric. And so then I was like, "Let's do this a little bit more," and then I started testosterone and I went down two cup sizes, which was huge. I went from triple Ds to D-C area. It was very dramatic. People don't know that that's a thing, that sometimes your cup size goes down on T. And so that made binding a lot easier. I started lifting weights, which also made binding easier and just kind changed how things distributed.

([13:52](#)):

And for a while I kind of told myself, "All right, I'm good. I can live with this." But at some point you just have to realize that you can do better than what you can cope with, what the bare minimum level of comfort is you can endure. And so finally this year, I was just ready to just go with it, and didn't feel any of that weird obligation of owing the world this body part that I never even wanted, which was this very silly thing to think in the first place, but you just really get bombarded with that message.

Ally ([14:23](#)):

Oh my gosh, totally. It's saturating. It is really crazy where you're like, "Oh, what am I giving up?" I'm really interested in your doll mode way of operating. How did that feel when you were dressing up like Joan from Mad Men? Was it fun? Or were you just kind of passing the time that way? Or was it always a pretty negative experience?

Devon ([14:48](#)):

I guess I kept feeling this gap between I could recognize how I looked in a photo or how I looked in the mirror, and I could intellectually understand, "Okay, this is checking off a lot of boxes. In theory, I have executed this task." That never actually led to anything that I expected that it would unlock. I didn't feel more confident. People didn't even necessarily treat me in any kind of way that I wanted to be treated. It never really felt perfectly put together enough, and there was just so much work that goes into actually being a Joan on Mad Men that there was no way my ass was ever going to do. I was not wearing makeup, but I was wearing these va va voom silhouettes.

Ally ([15:29](#)):

Oh my god.

Devon ([15:29](#)):

It was such a weird mess. It was definitely intellectually interesting. I don't know. There were so many times where I was like, "Why can't I enjoy this? This seems like I should at least be able to feel like a bad bitch about the fact that I can do this." But instead, I would still all the stereotypes that sometimes actually hold true, like looking in the mirror I just couldn't quite resolve what I was looking at or really quite see it objectively. It just always felt really uncanny and staticky and confusing. So then I just kind of gave it up. But yeah, I don't really remember it being fun. Other than I love a jewel tone. We love a jewel tone, but I was about it.

Ally ([16:06](#)):

That stayed.

Devon ([16:07](#)):

Yeah.

Ally ([16:08](#)):

Would you dress up as Joan now? Or do you feel like that's kind of in the past for you?

Devon ([16:12](#)):

I think I'll probably have that really common effect that a lot of trans guys have after they get surgery where they feel more free to embrace more feminine silhouettes again.

Ally ([16:22](#)):

Yes.

Devon ([16:23](#)):

I love having the [inaudible 00:16:25] hips, and now I've got the [inaudible 00:16:28] flat chest to match it.

Ally ([16:31](#)):

The raw power.

Devon ([16:33](#)):

Yes.

Ally ([16:33](#)):

So you are getting a tail?

Devon ([16:35](#)):

Yeah, I'm a furry and all that, so let's make it happen. So I think I will definitely play more with just a little bit more feminine appearances some of the time because it won't have all of this baggage on it. And I'm lucky enough that I'll probably still read as male to most people, which also it just helps. The idea of not having to worry about how I'm coming across and just knowing that I won't have this part that I'm just hyper aware of, I think will be really great. I mean, it's already really great, but it'll be great once I can see it and have some cleavage coming out.

Ally ([17:11](#)):

Oh my god, yes. The muscle cleavage also is coming in. A pretty common thing that we're talking to people about in this show is this idea of gender failure. I think a lot of people share that feeling of things about them that are successful still feel like failure. Have you felt the opposite side of that since your transition? Have you felt gender success? And if so, what was it?

Devon ([17:40](#)):

Yeah, I think I feel both success and failure, right? Because there's definitely still times where I'm very acutely aware of being smaller than most guys or having little limp wristed little mannerisms. And even though those are things that I love in other guys and have always looked up to and envied, I feel like it's serving for them, but for me, it's clocking me or whatever. Which is totally unfair, and it's a judgment I would never make about somebody else, but I still have that projection of, "Oh, people are going to see me this way. They're going to perceive me as something that I'm not."

([18:12](#)):

But I definitely felt acutely as a gender failure as a kid, and also a gender conscientious objector I feel like. Some things I was deliberately very much choosing to fail at, because there were just a lot of gender norms that just seemed so absurd to me and they shouldn't be applied to me. And also because I was conventionally attractive or whatever as a woman, I was always trying to kind of spit in the face of that. So just things like not shaving my legs, not wearing makeup. Anytime I felt like I was getting too close to a certain ideal, I would just give myself a really fucked up haircut or just do something weird to mess it up, to reject it at the same time that I was-

Ally ([18:58](#)):

Gender sabotage.

Devon ([19:00](#)):

... yeah, I would do a lot of gender self sabotage, even when I was wearing dresses all the time or doing a lot of gender conforming behaviors. It was just this weird way of reconciling the unreconcilable. Yeah.

Ally ([19:12](#)):

Wow. Yeah. How did you come out, I guess, in all the different ways that queer people have to come out? And what does coming out mean to you?

Devon ([19:21](#)):

I've come out a lot of times as a lot of different things. The very first one was when I was in high school and I identified openly to everyone as asexual. This was the early 2000s, and that was the only word I

could get at that really conveyed a sense of like, "Nope, we're not doing this thing." It felt kind of gendered to me also. It felt like almost kind of an agender. I didn't have the word for agender or non-binary or anything like that, so identifying as asexual both meant get the fuck away from me, all of you annoying straight people at school. And also, I'm an other, and I'm outside of this.

(20:02):

Eventually, once I was in my 20s, I knew a lot of non-binary people. I had already known trans people, but only very binary ones starting in high school. So by the time I was in my 20s and I was kind of familiar with the concept of non-binary people and lots of different ways that people could transition. Then I came out as non-binary. And since then, I'm a very slow transitioner. I do one little step at a time to see how it suits me, I guess. I used to be very much a coward where when I came out to my partner at the time back then as non-binary, he asked me if I wanted to do any surgery or hormones or any presentational changes, and I said no. And then a few years later, I just started taking hormones without even telling him,

Ally (20:49):

Wow.

Devon (20:50):

It was very messy, but I just felt that I had to do it because if I mentioned it first, then I would just be so afraid of the reaction that I just would never do it. So I really, for a while, went kind of buck wild, and it was partly because he was a straight guy, and so I was still kind of in the straight world. I started hormones. I changed my name and gender marker. I did all these things without telling anyone. And then a few months later was like, "Surprise." Oops.

Ally (21:25):

Oh my god, I love that.

Devon (21:25):

When I tell some people that, they'll think that, "That was really inconsiderate messed up of you to do. You know that, right?" I mean, yes, it was irresponsible, but I feel like it was the only way that at that time I could have gotten there. I just had too much shame.

Ally (21:39):

Oh my god, yes. Well, when you're looking for that permission that you know is not coming, you just feel so fucking trapped. I think a lot of trans people that we talk to, one of the biggest emotional hurdles for transitioning is transitioning while you're in a relationship. And I actually have a quote here from this beautiful top surgery thing you wrote. You wrote, "For a truly embarrassing length of time, I could only see myself as I imagined my boyfriend's eyes did. I tried living a male life while still remaining attractive to someone who's solely interested in women, and it didn't work." Would you tell me about that? That is so beautifully put.

Devon (22:21):

Yeah. I was transitioning by half measures for, again, years. So I was on low dose T and I would feel really good about a lot of the changes that were happening, but if certain changes went too far, like my muscle development or body hair, for example, I would want to pump the brakes. And so I would either reduce my dose or I'd switch to every other day, or I even started getting laser hair removal for a period of time, trying to straddle this line of being able to recognize myself and feel strong in my own body while still, I guess, if you put Vaseline on the lens and squinted from far away enough, being like, "Oh, yes, that's the same woman that was here before." It was not a realistic thing to expect to work, and I think it put both him and me in a really tough position.

[\(23:11\)](#):

Do I wish that he had been able to say, "This is not working for me. I'm not attracted to you anymore," sooner? Yes. But I understand that as hard as it was for me to say what I was going through, it was equally as hard for him to be the bad guy and broach the subject either. So we were both two just incredibly conflict avoidant people not facing this spread between us that was kind of growing. That was especially worsened by the pandemic where I didn't really have avenues to be out around other trans people and out in queer spaces as much anymore. So the idea of losing this 10 year connection felt way, way, way more scary.

[\(23:48\)](#):

It wasn't until after vaccinations started happening and it started to become possible to imagine that there would be a future again, that I could really think about what I wanted that future to be. That's when I really had to call it and just say, "Fuck this," where I'm going full dose T, I'm lifting weights every day. I'm growing out my happy trail. I'm ending this relationship, and I'm going to not be in denial anymore.

Ally [\(24:14\)](#):

Yeah, totally. I've experienced that on the other side of things where I feel like I've dated a number of people who were like, "I am not interested in men anymore. I'm a lesbian." And I started T in one of those relationships just being like, "Interesting. Well, are the changes that happened to my body going to be really unattractive or remind you of past things that you're saying you're no longer attracted to?" And yeah, it's hard to let go of labels that you think still really suit you because I definitely don't feel like I'm transitioning into a cis man. So it's still different, and it's actually, I've found it's still very hot on me to have something that maybe they're like, "Oh, on a guy that's not as hot." But I think it's also important to create the space that you need to go as full forward as you want if you were feeling like you were holding yourself back.

Devon [\(25:12\)](#):

Yeah. I saw a tweet maybe a year ago that said something like, "The second that you start transitioning, you should end your relationship no matter what, and just circle back after a couple of years." At the time that I saw it, I was very incensed because of all I was going. I was like, "That's not fair. That's unreasonable. You're just projecting." And now I would say, "Oh, yeah, no, I think you do have to really have some space." You have to be able to really check in with how you actually feel and not have somebody looking at you every day where you're worried about how they're perceiving you accurately or inaccurately.

Ally [\(25:46\)](#):

Yeah, totally. I think that's so important. I definitely have experienced that and tried to find that space. I think especially with T, for me top surgery felt maybe a little bit less of a crazy shift just because I was already binding. It wasn't really that big of a shift. But T definitely you're kind of like, "Oh, I'm not changing into a different person. I'm just changing into a different version of myself." And I think having freedom to just go wild is great.

Ira ([26:19](#)):

I actually have a top surgery question for you while we're on the subject. I've gone back and forth about the idea of it for so long, and I feel like everyone always has a bunch of voices in their life. They're like, "Maybe you should wait. Really think about it. Be really sure this is what you want," and all this stuff. I guess my question is, how did you know for sure that you wanted top surgery? Were you ever completely a hundred percent sure? Or were you just like, "I'm going to go for it," and then it turned out great?

Devon ([26:50](#)):

Oh, I have so many thoughts about this. I'm literally working on an essay about this right now. One thing that I have noticed is I think in the trans community, we have a lot of fear of being the thing that the TERFS say we are, that we're the trans cult that's manipulating people into transgenderizing themselves, and we're not cognizant of the risks and the irreversible damage and all this fear-mongering.

([27:13](#)):

And so to overcome that stereotype, I think a lot of us are very, very judicious and outlining all of the risks, all the complications that could happen, in articulating that it's not a promise that you're going to feel any better, and talking about the existence of detransition. All of that stuff is important to do. It's responsible to do. I don't want to knock it. But I think we end up hearing the ceiling of negative experiences. We hear the absolute worst it can get, and we don't hear about the floor. We don't hear about the many, many times where it's relatively painless, where you actually like the result more than you thought you were going to, where even though you agonized over losing nipples, you actually don't miss them. All of these things that can happen that are a lot of times more the majority experience rather than people having a negative experience.

([28:03](#)):

So that's certainly been my experience even so far with surgery. I was really afraid of surgery itself for a long time, and I wasn't sure that I would be able to cope with the idea that once I made this decision, it was set in stone and it was done. I'm autistic and one way that that looks for me is that I identify with inanimate objects and I feel empathy for them. So I felt really bad for my boobs. They didn't do anything wrong. These are my little buddies. I'm sorry, I don't mean to kill you. All this silly emotional stuff. That was another thing that I was afraid of, that once they were gone that I would miss them or something. And I was so wrong. It was for me not an issue. Surgery was not painful. It was not debilitating. It felt like a pleasant outcome, even right out the gate, even with all the discomfort that that entails. I like how I look, and I don't think it's going to take anything away from me. It just doesn't feel like it is.

([28:54](#)):

Are there people who feel the opposite way after surgery? Absolutely. I think it's important to talk about, and I don't want to ever downgrade that. But I think I was so afraid of being so certain that I would never experience any doubt before I pulled the trigger that I waited a little bit longer than I wish that I had.

[\(29:12\)](#):

And the same thing was true for me with starting hormones too. I used to read all the TERF detransition blogs and fear monger myself, and write out these long arguments with myself about, do I really know that I want to do this? When you have that much stigma and shame put in your brain, it's never going to completely go away. You're still going to always have the idea of what other people are thinking, but that doesn't necessarily reflect what you actually think.

[\(29:34\)](#):

The last thing I'll say in terms of what finally got me over the hill and more serious was just looking at the future and thinking about all of the attacks on trans health that are happening, and knowing, "Okay, I feel okay if I'm on hormones and I work out and I bind. All those things together, I can live with where I'm at. But if any of those things falls through the cracks, if I can't get hormones anymore, I know I'm not going to be in a good way. So I want to get my body in a place where I can live with it, even if it became hard to get hormones." And that helped me feel more in control of a really precarious, uncontrollable time. And so I do feel good about that. Even though it's kind of a dark reason to be the final reason, that just also really helped give me peace of mind.

Ira [\(30:22\)](#):

No, that makes so much sense. And I've thought a lot about that too. I mean, yeah. Do I postpone it more? Or do I just do it just to make sure I've done it?

Devon [\(30:30\)](#):

And it sucks to be in that position to have to do that.

Ally [\(30:34\)](#):

Kind of Prepper vibe, but it's like, "No, it's real. It's based on reality." Okay. You wrote a book, Unmasking Autism. For listeners who haven't read that book, could you give us a little rundown of what you were doing with that project?

Devon [\(30:50\)](#):

Yeah. Unmasking Autism was born out of me finding out that I was autistic in my late 20s after years of, despite having a PhD in psychology and having some clinical training, a limited amount, but some clinical training, knowing very, very little about what autism actually was and how it looked enough that I never put together that hating being in loud, bright, unpredictable places and needing to know all of the facts about something and being hyper literal and having a monotone voice and all these things were autistic traits. I just had no idea. I had only the most narrow stereotype, white cis boy obsessed with trains at two years old conception. And no hate for the white boys obsessed with trains. We love you.

Ally [\(31:32\)](#):

We need you. Honestly, public transportation needs you.

Devon [\(31:36\)](#):

Oh my god, in this country now more than ever, we need you. We need the train boys. But after I found out I was autistic, I learned shockingly that there are a lot of different ways that autism can present and

that a lot of us who don't meet that stereotype, we wind up having to mask our disability, compensate for it in different ways, pretend to be someone that we're not, eerily similar to the trans experience because it's the same thing in a lot of ways. There's this script for the person you're supposed to be that society passes down to you, and it doesn't fit and so you just clench your way through trying to be that person until there's a breakdown and you realize you can't do it anymore.

[\(32:18\)](#):

That's what Unmasking Autism is all about, myself and the other people who found out later in life usually that we were disabled and started to question everything about what society said we were supposed to be up to that point.

Ally [\(32:32\)](#):

You wrote about autistic people feeling like they were thrust into situations where autistic people, they all seemingly know what to do in them and just feeling kind of fish out of water. That really reminded me of the trans experience. Do you feel like there is a high correlation with queer and trans people and neurodivergence?

Devon [\(32:54\)](#):

What I usually say, especially when a cis person asks the question, is that autistic people aren't necessarily more likely to be trans; they're just more likely to be out. And there's a lot of reasons to think that that's the case. We know from research that autistic people, if you throw them into a moral dilemma, they're way more willing to stick by their guns and make a sacrifice to kind of stand by their morals. Autistic people, we just tend to be more likely to be consistent in our actions and our beliefs than non-autistic people. That doesn't mean we're better than anyone else. We can still have horrible beliefs, but we're more consistent with them. We're human beings and some of us suck. But I think that that points to the fact that we're more likely to be out and more likely to be honest.

[\(33:37\)](#):

Autistic people are also more likely to be bisexual or gay, and we're more likely to be whistleblowers at companies that behave unethically. We often tend to really need a social rule to make sense for us to be willing to follow it. If something strikes us as totally unfair, we will just not follow it, even if there's massive consequences. And so I think that leads to a lot more of us questioning this artificial state of affairs that is cisgenderdom. Cisgender is the artificially created category. Anybody can choose to step beyond that, and it makes sense that people who are already outsiders are more willing to say, "Okay, no, these rules make no sense, and I'm going to step beyond them."

Ally [\(34:20\)](#):

Wow. Yeah, totally. That's so cool. I really love your reframing of autism as a superpower and a lot of the positive ways that you wrote about it in unmasking Autism. Can you talk a little bit more about Unmasking and your work with Heather Morgan? What were some of the exercises that you really liked or that helped most?

Devon [\(34:44\)](#):

Yeah. Heather Morgan is a coach that I cite a lot in my book. When I wanted to set out to talk about what masking is and how we can go about unmasking, I just really wanted to look at what resources

have autistic therapists and coaches come up with so far to work on this kind of stuff? Heather has really just written the book on getting back in touch with your pre masking self basically. She has this whole process called the Values-Based Integration process or exercise, and the way that it really starts is by cultivating a sense of trust in the person that you are beneath the facade of the person you pretend to be. So a lot of us, if we're masking and camouflaging ourselves, it's because we're afraid of what's going to happen if people see ourselves not in that state, that we're going to be ostracized, that there's something bad or wrong or disgusting about us. All of these things make it really, really hard to even be in touch with your authentic self.

[\(35:45\)](#):

What Heather has clients do is just sit down and think of three to five, potentially more, experiences in your life that are just really peak experiences where you felt fully alive and yourself, and when you think back on them, you feel like, "Oh, if all of life were like this, life would be amazing," and using those experiences to figure out when are you in your element and what do you really value in life? For some people, those moments might be times of connection or times where they were really engaged in their creative output. It could be a beautiful moment in nature. It could be absolutely anything. But those times where you really felt in touch with yourself, those moments tell you who you actually are behind the mask, what you really care about, and who you could actually be if you weren't so stifled by the expectations of being neurotypical.

Ally [\(36:43\)](#):

These kind of infinite moments that you still have the memories of. That's really cool. So I feel like you came to terms with multiple identities in this way, and have done just so much work on both of them. What was that like? What was kind of your order of unmasking and then remasking, if you will?

Devon [\(37:11\)](#):

Yes, unmasking and then remasking. It's funny because when I was writing this book, I felt like such a hypocrite because I was encouraging all of these people who are reading it one day down the line to embrace their real selves, and to be honest about what they need, and to be willing to be difficult to be around once in a while. And I am one of the most repressed, workaholic, neurotic, self-doubting, insecure, judgmental motherfuckers in the world. I write about this stuff because I'm bad at it and because I need it. I wrote a book that I wished had existed when I was starting to figure some of this stuff out, and just collecting all of the pieces of information and stories that I learned along the way.

[\(37:55\)](#):

I think that has positioned me to be able to be really good at speaking to this kind of story, because I know how much it feels to constantly be scrutinizing yourself and thinking you're being weird or inappropriate, or that you don't deserve to be comfortable ever. But that also means I am just constantly uncovering in myself more limitations and more invisible unspoken rules that I've imposed on myself about how I can earn the right to be alive.

[\(38:23\)](#):

My first book was all about productivity and overwork and burnout, and that was one of the first points where I started to question things. I hit a really bad period of burnout after graduate school where my body was just breaking down, and that forced me to question how much work I demanded of myself in order to believe that I was worth being alive. And from there, there was just a cascade of new ways to disappoint people, new ways to let things go. And I say disappoint people in a positive way; I think it's a

skillset we all have to have. And just learning what to say no to and what to let go of so that I could actually be myself. And from there realizing I was disabled and going deeper and deeper into my transition were very much the logical next steps because those things were just all wrapped up in one another, and the shame of those things were all connected.

Ally ([39:16](#)):

Yeah. I'm extremely excited for your book on shame. I think that's really exciting. Okay, so you kind of have done a lot of very scary, very brave work, just back to back on yourself. And I love asking, I feel like a lot of trans people feel this way. They just feel very depleting, and sometimes they can feel very impossible or just impossible. What are some ways that you refill your tank? What are some ways that you stay motivated?

Devon ([39:47](#)):

I wish I knew how to do these things effectively, but instead, it's been more these cycles of just big bursts of insight and really feeling like I have a lot of agency in my life and that I'm willing to let things go and say, "Fuck you," to people that are limiting me, or situations that are limiting to me, and just going full speed ahead for a few months or a year. And then really hitting a wall, talking about burnout, and just having to mourn what I've lost or question what being myself means and what isn't going to work.

([40:20](#)):

It's only really in the last year or two that I've gotten at all good with the radical acceptance piece, for example, of just understanding that certain things are just not going to work in life. Certain relationships in my life with certain family members or people that I used to be friends with are just never going to work out. There's no way I can contort myself into making them sustainable for me and being willing to actually just accept reality instead of trying to force myself to fit a reality that isn't tenable for me.

([40:49](#)):

Something that does definitely refill me is just my relationships and my friendships. I've managed, especially over the course of the pandemic, to get a lot closer to certain friends in my life that we just spent a lot of quality time, mostly online together the first couple of years, and now in person, and just finally got to be a little bit more vulnerable going through things like the breakup that I mentioned and just pandemic trauma in general. That's really helped.

([41:15](#)):

I've had a lot of productive conflicts in the past couple of years with friends and people I'm in relationships with and people in my family where I've just actually been able to say difficult things instead of avoiding bringing them up, which was my strategy for a very long time. So that's really helped. It's not necessarily that I refill my cup per se so much as I get more and more confident in my ability to handle things and to just face things, and to just sit with what reality is rather than imagining things were different or imagining a world where just everybody loves me and I'm exactly what people want me to be, or whatever

([41:55](#)):

All those cliches about as you get older, it's not that life gets any better, but that you get way better at handling it has really, really rung true, and a lot of that comes from investing in relationships that help me get stronger too.

Ally ([42:09](#)):

Yeah. I love that. Almost kind of relationship pruning, and there are these intense energy leaks in your life where you're just like, "Wow, it really sucks to interact with this person," and maybe you can reclaim some of that energy and put it to where it will feel generative in other relationships.

Devon ([42:29](#)):

Yeah. I've definitely gone more deep in the last few years. Before that, I was really spread out, so again the pruning example really makes sense. I was trying to make up for lost time, having been a weird autistic unpopular kid, so I was trying to meet all of these different people, and be in all these different communities and scenes, and convince myself that, "Oh, I'm so likable. I have all these social skills. I can do all these things."

([42:51](#)):

That was fun. That was great for a time. But at some point I had to go beyond surface level connections and have relationships that would really evolve over the course of years. I've just had from that all these wonderful moments where sometimes I'll be spending time with a friend I've known for years and just realized, "Oh my god, I love you. I love this person. I actually know them now. I'm falling in friend love with this person." And just learning how to, again, navigate conflicts and actually see things grow rather than keeping it fake and masked and superficial or running away.

Ally ([43:20](#)):

Totally. Totally. Yeah, I feel like I've felt that as well, that kind of making up for lost time boost you can feel when you're like, "I'm chatting with everyone at the party." And then you go home and you're like, "Did I have one real conversation?"

Ira ([43:37](#)):

Hi. Popping Beck in again. I have one more follow-up question for you actually. So I this year finally got a formal diagnosis of ADHD. I'm 24, so sort of late diagnosis. But I was told by the psychologist that was doing my diagnosis, I had also asked about an autism diagnosis, and he basically told me that doesn't exist for adults and that it's so hard to do that, it becomes sort of pointless. And also, I've done a lot of reading about self-diagnosis. And I feel like even online I've just seen a lot. It might just be my algorithm on social media, but so many people are self diagnosing and coming out as autistic. Did you get a formal diagnosis? Did you diagnose yourself? How do you feel about self-diagnosis? I'm just curious on what you think about all that.

Devon ([44:25](#)):

Yeah, lots of thoughts. The first thing is that I've always made it a point to never discuss my particular journey with regard to either diagnosis or self-realization because I don't want anybody in the community comparing themselves to me or feeling like there's something that they need to make their identity valid. And when it comes to moving through autism world and autistic self-advocacy spaces, I don't know who's diagnosed, I don't know who's self-diagnosed. We don't ask that. Unless somebody decides to bring it up, it never matters. So that's definitely something I want to emphasize. Even though I'm sure if it's in your algorithm, you're seeing this all the time. The community as a whole, we really, really embrace self-realized people. There's a lot of advantages to going that route because again, talking about the legal attacks on trans people, having an autism diagnosis on your chart can sometimes

get in the way of you having certain rights. So that's another reason why people have to really weigh that decision.

(45:19):

All of that said, your doctor's definitely lying to you or doesn't know what they're talking about because there definitely assessment for adults. Do they often use tools that were designed for children? Yes. Is it a totally unfair process that still tends to exclude a lot of trans people, people of color, and women? Yes, absolutely. And for the most part, it's not covered by insurance programs in the US, so you do end up having to pay for it out of pocket. So it is hard to get. I have so many horror stories of people trying to seek out a diagnosis, and then the assessor says, "Oh, but you're so polite. You can't possibly be autistic." Or, "Oh, you're in a relationship. You can't possibly be autistic." Crazy stuff.

Ira (46:01):

Wow.

Devon (46:02):

It's hard, and that's part of why the community is so supportive of self-realization. But if somebody decides, "Hey, I really need this piece of paper for my own legal protection to get accommodations at school or at work," those are examples of very valid reasons to really still stick it out and seek diagnosis anyway, and it can absolutely be done. It just takes a lot of persistence in asking around your community, and just asking autistic people in your neck of the woods, "Who's good? Who's an assessor that's not going to be a dick to me, who understands trans issues, who understands what adult autism looks like?" So it can absolutely be done, but it doesn't have to be done.

Ira (46:36):

Cool. Thank you for answering that. I appreciate it.

Devon (46:39):

Yeah, yeah, of course.

Ally (46:40):

Awesome. Where can people find you online should you wish to be found?

Devon (46:45):

Aside from my books, you can read my writing for free at devonprice.medium.com. You can also listen to it, too. So for my ADHDers, you don't have to read it. You can hit the play button and listen to it if you like. I write about all kinds of different neurodivergency stuff, queer stuff, political stuff on there. The place I'm most active otherwise now is my Tumblr, which is drdemonprince.tumblr.com. So feel free to hit me with a question in the ask box on there. I do actually check notifications on there.

Ally (47:14):

Oh my god, amazing. Well, thank you so much, Devon.

Babette (47:19):

Wow. Okay. So many things stuck with me from that conversation. I thought it was especially interesting to hear him talk about how long it took him to accept that he was trans because he was so stuck in trying to accept this body that was physically attractive to the straight men that he was dating.

Ally ([47:37](#)):

Totally. I mean, yeah, that was crazy. The tweet that he talks about where it's like, "If you're transitioning, you need to break up with your partner for at least two years and then maybe see if you get back together," I was like, "Okay." Yeah, I could see that for certain people. I think my experience of it in dating, I've definitely had similar fears where I'm kind of like, "Oh my god, am I becoming a man and I'm dating lesbians, and they're not into men?" But I'm kind of like, "Oh, yeah, I don't believe in that binary." And any relationship can end at any time with any change. You know what I mean? I think for something like that, I do feel like there's a lot more space than that than maybe an immediate breakup for anyone. But sometimes I'm like, "I don't really think my partners are less attractive to me. It's more like my fear." Which I think is present in any relationship where you're like, "Oh, god, am I going to stop being attractive to this person for X, Y, Z?"

([48:42](#)):

I also thought it was really helpful and just incredible to hear his experience coming out in these waves of neurodivergence, queerness, transness, and kind of making space for himself and coming to terms with things like letting go of things that weren't really working for him or this kind of masking behavior of trying to fit in and maybe expending undue energy on things that ultimately don't matter.

Babette ([49:13](#)):

Totally. It's like shedding the various myths, like neurotypicalness is a myth. Straightness is a myth. Cis is a myth.

Ally ([49:21](#)):

This is a myth. The dollar is a myth.

Babette ([49:22](#)):

Yeah, exactly. Yeah. Right, right. The final form is just actually going to live off in a cave with no currency. We all are trying to reach that point of trying to get to our true selves. But no, I totally get what you're saying. I think at the top of the episode, I gave an example of I associate my ADHD with my mistakes and the silly mistakes I make and as a negative thing, but I feel like the reality is that, I mean, I guess we live in a world that's "made" for neurotypicals, but most people are not that, and we would just be better off in a world that celebrated neurodiversity and the things that make people unique and special.

Ally ([50:18](#)):

I do feel like we're getting closer to that. I have friends who are teaching and they're like, "Yeah, I had a child call out for body dysmorphia." We are making room for these things. I don't know. Some of this is kind of difficult because it feels kind of like snowflake fodder for red meat Republicans to be like, "You're telling me you're not going to work at the Amazon plant because." Good god. But no, I do think the more space and care that we have for everyone is going to ultimately really help, because this is, not to get so broad, but a country where people fall through the cracks so easily.

Babette ([51:01](#)):

Right. This conversation is making me think that people our age, the things that we learned as kids are so outdated now. Do you know what I mean? It's like, there are people growing up right now who are going to have such a more nuanced understanding of neurodiversity, and I think people our age actually have so much unlearning to do about it. And it ties very much with ableism, and ableism as it intersects with racism and all of these other isms, as Devon talks about. So yeah, I feel lucky to learn from people like Devon, but also very hopeful that, like you said, things are just going to get better and more accepting.

Ally ([51:46](#)):

Yeah, totally.

Babette ([51:53](#)):

Gender Spiral is an original podcast from Audiation. This episode was mixed by Matt Noble, and music is composed by Chanell Crichlow, with art by Joey Han and graphics by Honey Hodges. This show is executive produced by Ireland Meacham; myself, Babette Thomas; my co-host, Ally Beardsley; and Sandy Smallens, with additional story editing from me.

Ally ([52:14](#)):

Thanks to our guest, Devon Price. You'll find a link to his Instagram in the show notes. If you like the show, please head over to patreon.com/genderspiralpodcast to support us for \$2 a month, or subscribe to a higher tier for bonus content, special monthly postcards, and even free tote bags.

Babette ([52:32](#)):

You can also check us out at genderspiralpod.com where you'll find a link to leave us a voicemail to ask us questions, tell us who you want to hear from, and what you want to hear about on the show. And follow us on Instagram. It's @GenderSpiral. Subscribe wherever you get your podcast to stay tuned. We're releasing a brand new episode every single week this summer.

Ally ([52:54](#)):

Tune in next week to Gender Spiral.

Speaker 17 ([52:57](#)):

Where you never have to spiral.