THE RESILIENT KID PODCAST

Season 6 – Episode 2

Beyond The Binary with Alex

Ashley: Hello, and welcome back to the Resilient Kid podcast. I have a very special guest today, Alex from Beyond the Binary. Hi, how are you?

Alex: I am doing very, very well. Thank you very much. Thanks for having

Ashley: me. Oh, it's my pleasure. So we have Alex here because I'm doing lots of interviews with young people to hear their narrative, to hear what, how they've grown up, how that has been different.

And so as parents and educators, we can have an understanding of what it's like, of really what it is like out there. Growing up in a completely different generation as well. And I think that's really important. So Alex, you and I met at Danny Wallace's Big Festoon, which was. Just off the charts, as she is, obviously but yeah, the big festoon is such an amazing event to bring people together and people that might not meet each other in everyday life.

And I just, your energy was amazing. Yeah, it was just amazing. I've always

Alex: got the energy at those events though, because Dani just makes, makes such a safe space. And, you know, she's doing incredible work. You know, I'm one of the inclusion consultants that works with the speakers and works with the team at ITQB.

So, yeah, I have got so much energy for that event. I've got so much energy for that woman. She's just unbelievable. Oh, wow.

Ashley: Well, it was really funny because I was on the flight squad and it was my first Danny event and people kept saying to me, have you been to one of these before? And I was like, no.

And they were like, oh my God, Ashley, you must be insane. Like this is wild. And they were like, how'd you know Danny? And I said, oh, you know, I've had a couple of conversations, done a little bit of a course with her. And, and that was just something else. And they were like, I can't believe that you're here, like, having not really been in Danny's world for very long.

Here you are, just bringing it. And, and because, but, but that is, that is the world, isn't it? If you don't know Danny,

Alex: you have too just

Ashley: bring it. You have

Alex: to just bring it.

Ashley: If, if you don't know Danny, go and check, go and check Danny Wallace and The Queen, she's the, we call her the Queen Bee. That's her company.

She has a beautiful community on Facebook, the Hive. And she's a public speaker and she teaches others how to do it and how to do it large as well, which I love. Yeah. But yeah, you can't help but bring the energy when you are in her presence. Absolutely. So Alex, so that's how we met. Tell me a little bit about.

You growing up, what was, what was life like for

Alex: Alex? So I grew up, so I'm from Manchester. I live in Bristol, but I am from Manchester. I'm a Northerner at heart. Yeah, up, up the Northerners. I was such an outgoing kid. I was always into musical. I was always doing performances, or you know, for my parents, or like dance shows at school, and you know, I was that super outgoing, flamboyant kid and you know, I was what we would call a tomboy, so I was very much into like, being with the lads, and, you Getting my knees dirty and climbing trees and playing football and you know, I had a really, really happy childhood.

Where I was doing all sorts of you know, all sorts of adventurous things, let's say. And it was kind of around about age, 10 or 11 when they started to, you know, my body started to change as, as it naturally does. When you get to a certain age, you know, I was assigned female at birth. So I started to go through puberty.

So started to, you know, certain things started to grow in certain areas, you know, like those lumps and bumps started to grow. And, you know, I was always be, I would be the kid that would be, you know, getting about with no shirt on. And I was then being told, you know, I wasn't allowed to do that. So, like, I started to experience, like, this, this, what we would call anxiety, and, like, confusion, and it was like, I don't understand why I can't do that anymore, like, why am I being treated differently, and what, what then the question around my gender really started to kind of come through.

I still continued, like, doing musical theatre and did amazing things with musical theatre, you know, I was got a scholarship to the New York Conservatoire for Dramatic Arts I worked with some amazing celebrities you know, and all that sort of stuff, but just this question around, like, my gender, I was really there at the forefront of my mind.

But I went through high school and then, you know, I started to question my sexuality. And I was like, oh, maybe this is why I felt a bit, you know, a bit different, let's say. So it came out as being a lesbian, but, you know, it kind of took a bit of a nose dive. This is where, about age 13 or 14, my mental health really started to get impacted by, you know, external factors and judgment, really, from other people not really having a community, not really kind of finding resonance, or having, you know, this sense of belonging or connection with other people that were experiencing the same things as me. I was I bullied in high school for like the remainder of my years in school but I carried, I just, I just really wanted to continue to be this very bright, shining beam of light, let's say but under the surface, like my confidence was being knocked, like I was feeling very anxious, I was feeling quite ashamed of who I was, I was feeling really embarrassed that I was questioning my sexuality, but also at the back of my mind was I don't feel like a girl, I don't feel like I am in the right body, but that kind of stayed very suppressed because of this lack of community and this lack of support, so then kind of carried on through to high school sorry, through to college.

And I was that shot with my mental health and my confidence and my self-esteem. I dropped out of college and left musical theatre behind. And then as a young adult, I started to engage in substance misuse and became addicted to cocaine. I was drinking very, very heavily. And then I was arrested at the age of 22. Because I had just completely got to this rock bottom point of life and just not having a clue who I was. And it all kind of stemmed from this lack of community, this lack of resonance. Not finding or not having other young people that I could speak to

about my experiences of who I was. And you know, that kind of then led into, you know, whether you're going, you're going to go to prison or you're going to go to rehabilitation and it was rehabilitation that I, you know, I couldn't have lasted in prison. You know, I'm ADHD so prison would probably not be the place for me to be. And I went to rehabilitation and like, you know, unlocked a whole bunch of things about who I was and this connection of self and, you know, kind of letting go of external judgment and just being me authentic. Just being who I am soulfully.

And then, you know, I was able to kind of really come out, like, come out, as we say, as being trans non-binary. And, you know, I, I've never felt so like liberated within that but when I was, you know, as a, as a kid, it, there was so many questions about You know, gender norms and expectations of what I should be doing as a young person, what I should be experiencing as a young person and not kind of fitting in that, not really fitting to that mold, which was quite a difficult a difficult experience, I would say But yeah, it was a rollercoaster as a kid, if I'm being honest, just around navigating, you know, these questions of gender, these questions of sexuality, and not really having much to connect to around that, you know.

Ashley: I think there's a few things there, and thank you, Alex, for sharing that. I know some of your story, but I, before we started recording, I was like, what do you mean you got arrested? Like, I didn't know that. You know but, but it's really important because, you know, I can sit here as a therapist and go, wow, that's a journey.

You know, I can see exactly why you got into the coke, to the drinking that, of course, but as a parent, you know, and I know you've got very loving, supportive parents because you do talk about them. But like, as a parent, for you to go from this musical theatre starlet at the time, to all of a sudden, you're dropping out of college, you know, you're hitting drugs, you're hitting this because, you know, and it feels a little bit like you've found a little bit of yourself in the musical theatre world.

But actually there wasn't anybody that was your tribe that you kind of got on, hold on, they look like me, or they certainly feel like me. And I think that's so important. And I, you know, I bang on about resilience all the time and, and talk about how important it is that we look at the components of resilience. It's not just about hard times and getting through them, but actually the components and that

connection, that, that missing tribe. And it's no wonder you're in Down East because what a travel it is. But, you know, like that missing track, that's so, so important, innit, that connection that you didn't see.

Alex: Yeah, massively. And I didn't have, I didn't have like my community of people. You know, like, your, my parents have been on a journey as much as, as I have, especially around gen, my gender identity, and you know, that they were, I was destined to be on a stage. I was destined to be you know, telling, telling my story, whether that be my story or whether that be as a, as a character.

And my parents, you know, were so invested in that. Because I was, because I was so passionate about it. And then when that kind of dropped off and that my parents went through this like it's their fault, it was their fault for, for, for not listening or it was their fault because they didn't pick up on the signs or all of those things. And it wasn't a, a fault game. It was simply just because of the, when I was going through this, the lack of awareness, the lack of knowledge, you know, all those sorts of bits and pieces that came with it, like, there was no blame, and there never will be any blame with my parents, ever, ever, ever. But as a young person, that sense of community was such a big missing puzzle piece for me.

Being able to see myself in somebody else, and when I say see myself in somebody else I mean that being able to go, oh my goodness you feel the same as me, oh my goodness you are experiencing very similar things to me, and that connection of emotion and that resonance of experience was not there, so it was very isolating, it was very I felt like I wasn't normal, you know, I felt like I was experiencing these things, you know, I actually got to a point where I was, I think I was about 17 or 18 where I thought that I had a mental illness and I thought that I was You know, I was experiencing all these abnormal things whereas, and it was, again, it was this lack of knowledge, this lack of awareness of what we would call gender dysphoria.

And when I found that terminology, I was like, oh my, there it is. That's exactly what I've been experiencing for 10 plus years. I'm not going mad, I'm not, I'm not going crazy, like that's actually something that I'm, that is a real, is a real experience. It's a real internal experience that people have.

But yeah, like that missing community was a big, was a big missing puzzle piece for me as a kid, as a, as a young person, yeah.

Ashley: Well, as a, as a mom of a musical theatre lovey my son, like I spend, oh, probably 10 hours a week doing the, doing the, you know, back and forth or sitting and waiting in cafes while he does rehearsals and all that.

So just even that, there must've been a grief for your mom and dad that they've got this Star because you're so invested, they're interested in you, you know, even that must have been really hard, but then to feel like they couldn't, they didn't know how to support you or how to help you. So what I wanted to do, Alex, is just for those listening who are not quite sure, when we talk about gender and sexuality. Could you just define those terms for the listeners? Because I want them to understand there is a difference, you know, and, and particularly in this context.

Alex: Yeah, of course so there is a big difference between sexuality and gender. So sexuality is what we feel in our hearts towards other human beings, you know, it's that connection through emotional, through physical, through spiritual, through sexual, through all of the different elements that come with our attraction to another human being and that can, that can, basically be however you want it to be and that's what we feel in our hearts towards another human being, you know.

Despite gender and despite their sexual orientation, what we feel in our hearts. And then with gender identity, gender identity is a sense of self within the body and within the mind. And our gender identity Again, is dependent on us as individuals around what we feel like if we think like sexuality is external and gender identity is internal.

And that again is dependent on each individual human being and, you know, there is this big conversation at the moment where gender is what you, you know, what you were assigned at birth, for example, or gender is binary, which is what we would say is male or female. When it's actually when we're talking about the sex characteristics that we've been born into, so when we're talking about Being assigned female at birth, we're talking about feminine sex characteristics.

And those are the things that we don't have any control over. Those are the things; those are all the scientific y bits that we have just been birthed with. And that's just how it is, that's just what our body is, has been, has been given, you know, when we've been you know, when we've been cooking in, in our parent’s bellies, or whatever.

But the sexuality and gender identity, again, like, are completely separate things. Completely separate. And again, that is just dependent on that individual, of how they feel about themselves and how they feel about other people.

Ashley: And, do you know, I love that explanation, where you talk about kind of it coming from the heart. In that and, and I, and that is so true.

Alex: Yeah.

Ashley: You know, that is so true. There is, there is something there that you just said around oh, I, I've got something to tell you as well at the end, and I purposely haven't told you, reminds me. But you also said about binary there. So, so how we kind of go male and female, like I, so I, my pronouns are she and her.

And I think a lot of, particularly educators get really worried around this and I, you know, my, my advice is don't presume, you know, because, because the natural, if we don't know, we say they and them anyway, but don't presume, but actually don't be afraid to ask.

Alex: Yes, that's it. Do you know like it makes such a big difference. So when we're talking about male, and like when we're talking about binary, so gender binary, we're talking, what we would say is cisgender. So what you are assigned at birth and what you are aligned to, what you still aligned to in your gender identity. So being a cis man or a cis woman, so gender binary.

But what is beyond the binary, is where the name comes from, or what is outside of the gender binary, is a lot of fluidity of sense of self. So that'd be non-binary, that'd be trans, that'd be gender non-conforming, or gender fluid, or whatever that might be. And that again is dependent on that individual, and what that is basically an alignment to is stepping away from this gender binary of what we have been this construct of what we have been kind of given into our world.

We've been told that that's how it is and we've all gone, okay, amazing, thank you. And that's what it's been like for thousands, thousands of years. And it's kind of moving away from this construct. So that more people can experience and express themselves freely and more authentically. But when we're talking about pronouns, this is a really quick way of giving people that space to be affirmed in themselves.

So asking somebody what their pronouns are, giving them the space to share their pronouns. You know, like, that is such a big factor. When I step into a space, when I'm networking, or when I'm delivering training, or whatever I'm doing, or going to meetings, and they say to me, oh, can I just ask what your pronouns are?

And I say, yes, my pronouns are they, them. Can I ask what your pronouns are, please? Or my pronouns are she, her, or he, him, or whatever. There is this instant connection before we've even started a conversation. There is literally almost like a blanket of respect and validation of each individual human.

Before we've even started talking about the weather or hobbies or work or whatever it might be. There is a blanket level. of respect and validation and that's what we need to remember when we're thinking about pronouns that even if you feel like you don't need to share yours that person that you're speaking to may feel like they need to share their pronouns with you so they don't get misgendered so that we don't start to lose assets of that individual because A lot of people get into this space where they're going, well, I'm a woman or I'm a man and I use he, him or she, her pronouns. Why do I need to tell people what my pronouns are? And it's like, yeah, I completely hear that. But what about what the other person is experiencing? What about what the other person's feeling? And it's getting away from this assumption, face value. Because you're so right. If I was to say somebody's going to walk into this room now and I don't tell you their gender and I don't tell you their name, how would you refer to them?

You would refer to them using neutral pronouns, which is they, them, because we as human beings have been programmed again over hundreds and thousands of years that we have to make assumptions from what's in front of us. And it's almost like this kind of like meter of, you know, what am I looking at? Do I see masculine features? Do I see feminine features? What am I making? Okay, right. I have now made the assumption that that person is a woman. So I'm going to refer to them using she, her pronouns. And we just automatically do that. Like, that's no one's fault. There is no blame. But we automatically do that as human beings because we've been programmed to do that for hundreds and hundreds of years.

So it's catching ourselves in that and going, right, okay, I'm going to think about that because I don't know what the other person might be experiencing.

Ashley: Yeah, I think you're so right. There's a, there's a few things I think there that I kind of want to pick up on. A, our brain, you're absolutely right.

There is no blame. Our brain will take in the millions of bits of information. That it seeing, it's scanning, its hearing, feeling, the whole thing and it will try and make an assumption to, to navigate the situation it's in as fast as possible and that's where the, oh you're a woman, I'll say she, her, you're a man, I'll tell him.

And actually it's just, backing that up a little bit and going hold on a minute Let's just say they and them unless we know different or let's offer ours and I found I found that I've probably been in this space a long time anybody who's listened to the podcast will know I grew up, the percentage of gay people in my family is extraordinarily high in the fact that that was the representation I've seen.

So I wanted to be gay when I was younger, wanted to be a gay man actually is what I wanted, but only in the sense of, cause that's what I seen. I loved the lifestyle. I loved my cousins who were in the village. You'll know the village. And actually then when I started to develop and puberty hit and I realized I actually was attracted to guys.

I was a bit like, oh, how's that gonna work for me then? If that's the, if that's what I want. But actually I'm attracted to guys, so obviously not on the scale, but it was, I, I was very lucky to grow up in a family that were, I wouldn't say completely open. My great, my great grandmother was very Roman Catholic, so that was a little bit of a tricky situation for some of our cousins, but to be fair to her I remember going to my cousins 21st with all of his friends who were all very flamboyant, all from the village, and my nana saying could you just ask your friends, and he'd never had an open conversation with her.

He had with his mom and dad. Everybody else, but not her because she was bobbing on a bit and she said, Kev, just, just get your friends to dial down the eyeshadow a little bit next time. And that was it. That was the whole conversation. He knew he was okay. And they, and he was accepted then by her. And we were laughing going, you was, you know, you've been terrified of this matriarch of our family.

And actually, she didn't care. So, you know, I, I've been lucky to be able to grow up and see what that means as a family, but I know also, I recognize that there is. You know, a real hardship and a real difficulty with parents getting their head around stuff and, and being open to learning as well, Alex. I think that's the difference, isn't it? Is that open to actually learning about something that maybe they didn't grow up with.

Alex: Yeah.

Ashley: You know, and just even like, I think having that openness to talk about it irrespective What is on the table, you know, whether they, you know, they want to come out, whether, you know, they've, they've got a real confused sense around what it means to be them.

And that sense of self that you were talking about, just having those open honest conversations with the family. It's, you know, I know I'm lucky. You sound like, you know, you, you had a supportive family. What, what do you think, what kind of signs or what kind of behaviors do you think might indicate that a teen is and it might be earlier than teens, but, you know, that a person, a young person is exploring or, yeah, exploring, I guess, their gender identity.

Alex: Yeah, I think with young people at the moment, like, especially like the younger generations, there is so much more awareness, there is so much more knowledge of what they can identify as.

As how they can present themselves, how they can be more authentic. There is so, there is so much more awareness in the younger generations now, it's, it's scary. But like, when we're still thinking about the barriers that the LGBT community still face, and, and, and I'm talking, you know, about if I was to kind of niche, it down to the Trans community for example, there are so many barriers for young people who are exploring their gender identity or who are, who are identifying within the trans community.

And it takes a real, and the first thing that I want to say is it takes a really big, big. It takes such a strength for a young person to come to somebody and say, this is what I am experiencing. This is how I feel about myself. So first of all, it's affirming that it's like, it's, you know, it's validating that that is something that they're coming to you with, with confidence because they see you as a safe person.

The signs. And when, I don't want to say like it's a kind of a tick box exercise because it could fluctuate between one young person to another young person but the affirmative like of their gender identity so if say for instance they have been Assigned female at birth, and they are questioning and exploring their gender identity.

It might be, whoa, stop calling me a girl, I'm a man, or stop calling me a girl, or stop calling me a boy, because I'm not any, I'm non-binary, I'm non-binary, I'm non-binary. And really affirming that within, within them. Dysregulated behaviour, or You know, impulsive behaviours, so you might find that they're, they're getting, they're going from 0 to 100 and being really, really angry, or 0 to 100 and being really sad, and being very isolated, and showing you know, depression signs, and showing very high levels of anxiety isolating themselves, you know, shutting themselves away, if they're putting on like, say for instance, several layers of clothing to hide certain elements of their body.

So again, if they've been assigned female at birth and they have breasts, putting on a lot of clothing to hide that sort of area of their body young people may start to explore things like binding and taping and tucking. If you have any young people that are doing that, or there are signs of showing that people are doing that, please open up a conversation with them because there are very unsafe ways that people can be binding, taping or tucking.

And also, like, asking people to share pronouns, so coming to you and saying that I don't use those pronouns anymore, I use these pronouns, and really affirming themselves within that. And also experiencing or sharing levels of dysphoria, so dysphoria being, you know, I don't feel like a, like a girl, you know, I'm in the wrong body, you know, why do you keep referring to me as a girl when I'm a boy? Why do I have to go and put this pair of, why do I have to put this dress on when, you know, girl, when boys don't wear dresses, for example. You know, and then we're talking about, you know, young, younger, younger young people, but like teenagers thinking about that erratic behaviour, that complete isolation the shame.

Shame is a really big thing that comes through for young people who are experiencing or who are kind of going through the self-discovery journey of their gender identity and their sexuality as well. This internalized homophobia and transphobia that is held on and it's like, you know, it's like trying to crack, trying to crack a conker, trying to get through that internalized homophobia.

But those are like some of the things that I would say are quite Like evident that people will be experienced. However, it intertwines in other mental health, like declining mental health. But this is where education, this is where affirming conversations need to be a really big priority and opening up those conversations with our young people and giving them a safe space to be able to come and share that.

Because like I say, it is a real big strength when, when a young person comes and shares that, Like, I was 24 when I came out as being trans, like, I could have come out as being trans. 10 or 12 years prior to then, if I would have had the community, if I would have had the knowledge, if I would have had a sense of support and validation of what I was experiencing, you know, was okay, like, I could have been, I could have been, you know, happier, let's say, if I could have come out 10, 12 years ago But you know, I wouldn't change my journey for anything in the world, but when we're thinking about our young people, we don't want them to be waiting 10, 20, 30 years for them to feel like they can actually be their full authentic selves, so really getting yourselves more knowledge, more knowledge of terminology, more knowledge of the LGBT community in itself, you know, connecting, making connections with other people that are experiencing things of what you're experiencing and really giving them that space to share, because if they cannot share and they feel like they can't share, their mental health is impacted and very, you know, their resilience will not be there.

Their level of resilience, their rejection, their confidence, their self-esteem, all of those things will be knocked to the curb, so we really do need to start to think about some of the things that we can do to help positively impact their self-discovery journey.

Ashley: Yeah, I think I love, I love the way that even just asking pronouns is almost like that gateway to going, I see you, you know, I see you, I hear you.

And I think that's, you know, such, such an important kind of starting point. And yes, we don't always get it right, you know but at least acknowledging and validating what, what can parents and Educators do, do you think, to navigate social situations for young people who are going on this journey, do you think, Alex?

Hold space.

Alex: Like, hold space for them. You know, if they are, and again, these affirming conversations make a massive, massive impact. If you are able to hold that space for them, and you're able to say to them, Listen, I might not fully understand, but I completely see you, I respect you, I validate you.

Like, if, what, what do you need me to do to help you on this journey? What support do you need from me to help you on this journey? And if you don't know

the answers, it is okay to say, I don't know the answers, but I will find the answers for you. I will find out what the, what I, I will find out what you need to know.

I would be saying as well to educators and parents, please find as much knowledge and education as you possibly can. You know, please don't go down the rabbit hole of TikTok or Instagram or, you know, the media. Please don't go down that rabbit hole. Find reliable and healthy sources. Find reliable lived experiences.

You know, social media is great to find those things, but don't go down the rabbit hole of just consuming that negativity, because There is a big element of fear, and as a parent, and as an educator, we are almost, we are initiated into this protector role. And all we want to do is protect these young people, we want to hold them, we want to nurture them, we want to look after them, and we don't want any harm to come to these young people.

Because harm, it causes pain, it causes upset, it causes all these negative emotions. But what we do in the process of trying to protect them and hold on to them and in still that the experiencing or going through the self-discovery journey is a negative thing, we in still even further negative experiences and the negative emotions on them. So allowing them to, allowing them to navigate their own journey. You are also on a journey as well, but it's allowing them to navigate that journey by giving yourself that education, that awareness, learning of people's lived experiences, you know, learning, you know, from people like myself, learning from my lived experiences and really listening in to, you know, how we can start to make a difference, finding resources, finding people that you can connect with, finding communities that you can connect with in your area. But I think the biggest thing that is such a validating thing to, to have is holding space for your young people. Even if you do not know, even if you do not understand, that is okay.

But just respect and validate that this is their lived experience. It could be temporary. Their self-discovery journey could be a temporary emotion, but it also could be a permanent one. And no matter what, whether it's temporary or whether it's permanent, we affirm that. We affirm that so heartedly because it allows them a safer route to finding who they are authentically and not having to go and find pockets of spaces where it's like this people pleasing, where it's validate me, validate me, validate me, and that's exactly what I did. I went and found Manchester Gay Village for all of the wrong reasons. I wanted, I wanted people to love me, I wanted people to like me, and because I was searching for all of these, you know, all of this kind of like all these negative kind of like side effects of what

I was experiencing. I found negative experiences, I found drugs, I found alcohol, you know, I found toxic and abusive relationships, you know, all of those things.

So, it's, it makes a massive, like one, one small One small sentence of, I see you right now, I don't fully understand but I hear what you're saying, how can I support you? That one sentence could literally stop a young person from going into complete spiral. And that's, that's what it all comes down to. And it's building, and again, it's building the resilience of these young people so that they can go through and have a positive adult life.

As who they are authentically, whether that be trans, whether that be cis, whether that be non-binary, whether that be a lesbian, gay, whatever, whatever it is authentically to them, allowing them to be seen and heard, allowing them to be validated makes such an impact of how they navigate adult life.

Ashley: And I think that's so important. What you say there, Alex, there's two things that come up. One, you know, we all want to be seen and heard. We're human beings. Of course we do. So to just hold that space and, and, you know, and teachers particularly are really, really good. All the best teachers I've ever known gone, I don't know, but I'll find out.

And just having that and going, I don't know this. This is not my lived experience, but guess what? I see you; I'm going to go away. I'm going to find out and we're going to get you the support you need, you know, and just hold it in that space. But the other thing that you said, which I think is really important is that sometimes it's a temporary thing and sometimes it's a permanent thing.

And, and for me, I've had young clients, I've had parents who've come to me and they've been, you know, worried or they've been, I've been anxious around, around gender identity for their young person, and I've gone, do you know what? This, this might be temporary, but it might be permanent, but I tell you what, why don't we put that on the back shelf and just meet them where they're at right now? And then, you know, and actually giving that young person the space to just explore and find out and. Be accepted for just a day of where they're at today is so, so important. Alex, I literally could speak to you all day. I absolutely loved this, but I know that your work beyond the binary is far more important than sitting and talking to me.

Is there anything else before kind of we finish that you think? cause we've, you know, we've talked about offering your pronouns, asking about pronouns. Opening

that conversation. Giving, giving young, giving our young people. And I talk about not just cause I'm from Manchester and we talk about a kid all the time.

Yeah. But, you know, I, I have a real like intrinsic belief that the young people are ours. Like we, as a society, we have to scoop them up, see them, hear them, it's our responsibility. So not only to hold space for them, and to educate yourself, and that's not run to the nearest gay person, you know, that's not run to the nearest trans person, you know, and get them to educate you.

You educate yourself, look for, I thought that was a really good sentence you said there, about reliable and healthy. Yeah. Is there anything else that you think we, we kind of can give to parents or educators that might be looking at young people who are struggling with either their gender or their sexuality?

Alex: I think, like, I think I've kind of covered, like, the basics, because what we, what we sometimes do is look at it, and look at the bigger picture, and then overwhelm ourselves, and then we don't say anything, and we bury our heads in the sand, and we do that because we get fearful, and that's what human beings do, but I think, as well, it's meeting, and you're so right, meet the young person where they're at, Have your next logical step.

Don't go into it and go, oh, I need to do that. I need to do that. And what about in 10 years' time when they might want to do that? Or what about meeting them where they're at and having your next logical step? And I think as well as educators, as parents, be compassionate with yourselves. Give yourself that time and patience. We are not expecting, or your young person is not expecting for you to know everything in the 30 seconds of them having a conversation with you, they will simply just want you to just tell them that you love them or that you are still there or that you still support them no matter what. They would just want to hear that in that moment.

So it's about being compassionate with yourself. And if you don't get it straight away, that's okay. It is time and patience for who you are. And for where they are at as well but reliable, like, reliable and healthy sources of research. Please, please, please do that. Like, don't go down the rabbit hole of the newspaper or the news.

Like, find reliable resources like LGBT Foundation, Mermaid Foundation, Storm wall Mind Out, like, even myself, like, I am a, you know, I am a healthy and reliable resource, like, utilize me as well, you know, like, I am here for all of the

questions I'm here for. All of the knowledge that you need but just be compassionate with yourself, lean in, give those kids just that validation that they need if they are experiencing, if they are experiencing self-discovery questions or if they are trans or if they are part of the LGBT community, just give them that space and that validation.

Ashley: Alex, honestly, thank you so much. And I think it just, for me, and the reason I wanted to get you on the podcast was because I think it's such a, it's such a hot topic right now. And I think parents and educators are like, oh, I'm so scared of doing the wrong thing. And I think you've given them such beautiful and heartfelt advice and, and also a non-judgment for them.

You know, we do get it wrong, we're human beings. But be, be careful with yourself, you know, as in be kind and compassionate because you're not always going to get it right. So that was, you know, honestly, thank you so much.

Alex: My pleasure.

Ashley: Before we finish, I've got a little story for you. So I am a little bit of a secret fan of Strictly.

Alex: Oh yeah.

Ashley: I love Yohannes Raby. Now, the reason I love Yohannes so much is because I was born in South Africa and he's South African and so I absolutely love him. So I've been to see his show a few, few times and one was this year, I think, after meeting you. At the Big Fest Do. Yeah. And he welcomes his audience with Hello ladies and gentlemen, and our friends from Beyond the Binary. And I could have wept when I,

Alex: I love that. Oh my God. Right. That's it. I'm copyrighting it, I'm going to email him, I'm going to be like, you're using my name, therefore.

Ashley: Well, I was thinking you could like literally get him to record it for, if, if, if it had clocked beforehand, I would have recorded it. But you could, every time you walk out on stage you could have, you could just press play.

Alex: have it in the background.

Ashley: Yeah, how beautiful is that? I just,

Alex: more and more people now are opening up their spaces and it's beautiful to see and more and more people are, I'm seeing that representation, I'm seeing that visibility and there is just so much more hope for our young people so they can see a future, so they can see a future with positive mental health, with joy and contentment and you know, authentic living and yeah. I'm just here for it.

Ashley: Please everybody, follow Alex Beyond the Binary at Insta, but check out their website because it is a massive mound of information, but also, you know, Alex goes into schools, businesses to talk about this, to talk about how we can open up our spaces for To be more inclusive, you know, this is just like a nutshell of what Alex does and I think it's really important so that our young people can grow up happy and healthy, safe and loved and seen, I think is the most important.

Thank you very much today, Alex. I really do appreciate your time.

Alex: Thank you so much.

Ashley: Take care everyone. Bye for now. Speak to you soon.