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[00:00:01] **Speaker 1** You know, it's a whole world and it really does open your eyes like it just. It's. It's wild. Easy to still get trapped in our own minds.

[00:00:08] **Speaker 2** It's so weird. So what's next out of the country?

[00:00:15] **Speaker 1** Oh, next out of the country. I just got back from Mexico. We were in See Politano and I was able to do it is the only. Like, it's a tiny little community, but it's the only nude beach in Mexico is a pretty conservative country. So it's a where a lot of, like, queer people go and just people who don't have like a lot of who is going to be accepted, I guess, like it's a very. Oh, my God. So we met people from all over the world just there to be accepted. And it was really.

[00:00:44] **Speaker 2** Is that Pacific or Atlantic?

[00:00:46] **Speaker 1** It is Pacific, yeah. So our friend lives in Oaxaca, and so we were we were Mexico City. So yeah, Mexico City. And they believe that it's like just at that. I don't know where I'm going next, actually.

[00:01:00] **Speaker 2** Is that north or south of you?

[00:01:02] **Speaker 1** So Mexico City. Well, hockey's really in the tail part of, of, of Mexico and then it is almost directly west of that. Yeah.

[00:01:13] **Speaker 2** He's really.

[00:01:14] **Speaker 1** Gorgeous.

[00:01:15] **Speaker 2** Okay. So real casual, No stress. Oh, how how are you? Oh.

[00:01:24] **Speaker 1** I have a cuckoo clock. Well, my grandma is like, how can you handle that? And like, it's amazing. It's amazing. The.

[00:01:31] **Speaker 2** So how are you feeling?

[00:01:32] **Speaker 1** Good.

[00:01:33] **Speaker 2** You're okay.

[00:01:33] **Speaker 1** All right.

[00:01:34] **Speaker 2** Well, it's good if. If you're okay, let's kind of go back in time a little bit. You grew up in Wisconsin. What was your with you your entire life? Abortion was legal, accessible. And while there were fights over the edges on it, it was a different mindset than where we are today. So if you could kind of take me back to like when you were a teen and when you were growing up, like, did you think about it? Did you get into arguments about it? Was it like a family topic?

[00:02:03] **Speaker 1** No, no, I don't think we really talked about we're from kind of more middle northern Wisconsin and my family's pretty conservative. And so I actually grew up pretty, I would say not thinking about politics, not thinking there was more than what I heard in the household. So I didn't really question or challenge most things. Yeah, I mean, like I mean, I when I got to college, I remember thinking for the first time, I think it was a during the Bush Gore, roughly. I think that was the first time I voted that I realized that there's a whole different mindset out there. So I don't think I really I think I was really late to bloom in terms of my mental thinking or thought process outside of like what my what I'd learned at home. So we didn't talk about it wasn't a thing. I never even thought about it.

[00:02:52] **Speaker 2** So when did when did that mindset change Like you came to college and you started I mean, is it fair to say broadening that or experiencing new things?

[00:02:59] **Speaker 1** Yeah, I think it's just like being around a different viewpoint. So knowing like knowing that there were alternative ways of thinking and it's not like I mean, just Madison has more people is all has different people. I still notice that even when I go back to my home town or, you know, anywhere that there's a pretty well everywhere is a bubble, right? So this is the bubble and the different bubbles and what Martha was. So yeah.

[00:03:27] **Speaker 2** So I guess kind of woke me up to the, you know, the the big topic here. Yeah. Well, how old were you? What, what, what was coming out in your life?

[00:03:34] **Speaker 1** I was 26. I had just started working at Epic. Um, and I was having a good time. I mean, it's a great job. I had a lot of freedom, I guess. Um, uh, I think the moment I had just gotten out of a relationship, a long relationship with somebody for four years, and that was actually the father. And I knew immediately I would say the day after, I just felt it in my body. I felt that I mean, I told the people I was with. We were up in the doubles as a bunch of friends, and I'm like, I think I'm pregnant. And how do you know? I'm like, I can just feel it. I can feel it in my body. And I was kind of joking, but I could feel it. So it's one of those things where I just and I was on birth control. And so it was one of those things where you got to take birth control every day at the same time for it to be hundred percent effective. And it's not even 100% effective. It's the 93 or 97%. And that's hard to remember. I can't even do that today. You know, I can even get my dog his medicine on time, you know, just one time a month. So it was one of those things where there was a window, there was room. And as soon as I could, I took a pregnancy test. And I was correct in my assumption. And it's one of those things where, you know. It wasn't like I had a choice. I knew exactly what I was going to do. It wasn't like I hemmed and hawed over it. It was like, okay, well, next step. And I didn't. I've always believed in free the right to choose, but I didn't know what I would choose until that happened. And I don't know that anybody does. I really don't. I don't think you can, with 100% certainty, say that you would or would not. And I, you know, I did know. And I think how I contacted the father and it was a subpar exchange. And that kind of solidified my already the choice that I'd already made. And it was honestly, it was very a very easy process. I was able to well, plan parent Dr. Christianson, who is a gem of a man. I was able to I didn't tell anybody except for these two friends at work, two gay men. If you don't want to be judgy, just tell the game and you know they're going to help you out. And the dad, you know, is kind of like girl. Everyone that we know has been in your shoes, you know? So that was a really nice thing to hear. And it was like, um, I don't know, it was a kind of like a, like a very simple path. I made an appointment. They make you have a consultation before you can, you know, make the appointment. I was shocked to find out that my insurance covered it and also very, very grateful. I thought that was just, I mean, so awesome because it's health care, you know, and I worked for health care companies was, you know, Hmm. And, you know, like, the whole process was pretty seamless. And I'm not crying because of the the actual you know, I don't think about my abortion very often, to be honest. But I do think about people who don't have the right to choose and are lucky enough to get to choose the direction of their life. No, because my life would be so different. I would have a 16 year old. And I'm not saying they wouldn't be a great mom. I probably would be. You know, I got the toolsets, but I didn't want to be a I never wanted to be a mom. And I'm not maternal. I'm not I love kids. I just don't want my own. And I've known that for a very long time. So, you know, I did everything I had to do. You know, they make you take an ultrasound, which, you know, I think science is great. I think it's awesome. I, I was they ask if you want to see and I did and I think, you know, that could be troubling for some people. But I was like, I don't see anything. I'm not this is not my area of expertise. So it kind of was just like, okay. And then they you have to watch a video. And Dr. Christiansen, let's just he's like, you have to watch this video. It's a video they give us. They make you do it. But I'm going to stand. I want you to look at me. I'm back here. And every time they say something that might sound scary, I don't. You look at me and I'm going to say, because this is not a factual video. And that was like because they'll say, like you, I think one line was they were like, you may never get pregnant again. This is a risk of whatever. And he's like, you know, And I was just it was just you felt just such love and understanding and like, just, you know. But that being said, it was hard for me to be there at the actual clinic because, you know, I was 26, but you saw all walks of life in that room. You know, you saw young children, you saw older women, you saw couples. And it was of all backgrounds and ages. And, you know, I'm not judging how anybody got there, which is why I would I would hope that no one would judge me either. But, you know, it's not just one type of person that's getting this care or, you know, making this decision. And I think that was really eye opening for me because that's the first time you're all in the same room where you're about to do this thing and you got nothing in common outside of that. So that was that was interesting.

[00:09:36] **Speaker 2** Were there other people in that waiting room looking at each other, or were they all kind of focused on their moment?

[00:09:42] **Speaker 1** No, You know, honestly, that isn't to say to like the there was two girls that were there kind of laughing. And I remember thinking, they're young. I don't know. I mean, it's hard to understand how to deal with this sort of decision. And I can't I mean, again, I was an adult and I. Don't hold. They were, but they were definitely ten more years younger than I was. And, you know, a lot of people handle that kind of stress with with laughter or awkwardness or, you know, whatever it was. But I tried also not to look at everyone, which I'm I'm kind of sad about now because I think that making that eye contact and like, it's connecting. Like, it's like I, I feel you. I feel you know, I think I was telling you before, like at this festival that this past weekend where I was just making so many great connections and this one woman had asked me if I was a mom and I was respond with, no, I had an abortion. And she said, I love that that's how you phrased it, because it's like just because it's like an active choice to not be a mom. It's like because a lot of times you don't know why people choose not to have kids or don't have kids. Because I've gotten before like, oh, you know, you just haven't found the right person yet. It's like, No, no, that's not it. You know, I don't want to be a mother. And she as a woman because she had two kids. She was just very grateful that that's how I responded, because she's like that. That frames it for me. Now. I know, like, you know where you're coming from because I think some people don't talk about it. People do not talk about it. I was told not to talk about it after I told my mom, you know, I was told never to tell my father, like, why I'm not ashamed. I don't feel bad about this. You know, It was a choice that I made and I would make it again 100 times. I wouldn't do anything different.

[00:11:37] **Speaker 2** That it's the stigma is part of why we want to do this. And can you walk me through, in your words, the difference between shame and stigma? Because you say you don't feel any shame, but you certainly must understand the stigma.

[00:11:54] **Speaker 1** Yeah, definitely. No, I don't feel any shame. And, you know, I think in the beginning I told people close to me, I called my sister immediately when I got out of the clinic, I got into the car, I called her and she just started falling and she's like, I'm not crying because you got an abortion. I'm crying because you didn't think you could tell me beforehand. And I just didn't want to put that on her because she's great, you know? And I knew that she you know, I didn't want to be talked out of it. And I she was upset that I thought she would do that because she went, you know, she wasn't there. And I think the stigma that's like I guess the difference because there wasn't a shame. But like, you know, you have to be careful sometimes. Again, you know, I told my mom and looking back, maybe I shouldn't have because of how it affected her, because, again, it was not you know, we were she was actually here. We were walking up by the Capitol and there was giving all these pins about like, you know, pro-choice. And I was just, you know, I took one. And she's like, oh, she was just kind of not not a fan. And I'm like, mom, like, you know, you can't you can't go judging, you know, people. I'm sure you know, plenty of people have got an abortion. And she's like, I don't know. No, I don't. It's like, well, I'm sure you do. And then I felt the need, but I don't know what to tell her. I actually threw somebody we knew under the bus first, like, and I felt real bad about that. So that was like and also me. And we did not talk for, oh, I think we walk for six miles or something like that. And we just did not talk. And then the next thing she said is, Don't you ever tell your father that crush. And, you know, I remember thinking, okay, okay, I can do that for you. You know, like, I don't want to hurt anybody. But like, the reality is, it's my choice, my life like it was. And I don't even know that he would be crushed, you know, like, but and I. Right. I'm an open book. I write about my life and I have chosen not to write about this because I don't want to affect people in my life if I don't have to, which I'm actually really sad about because I feel like it's a because people don't talk about it. And I am able to in a way that I think I don't know can make it seem exactly what it was. It was a choice that I made. And, you know, I don't I don't regret it. I don't feel bad about it. But even I've started to kind of tell people in whenever it makes sense that I want to throw it out there, because it's not I don't I'm not flippant about it. And I think you have to be careful about like making jokes about it or like how you bring it up. But if it makes sense, I do now. I bring it up all the time. Like, for example, this afternoon I took the afternoon off and I'm like, I'm sorry, I'm doing an interview with you about my abortion and this my colleague that I work with. She goes. First of all, thank you so much for telling me that. You did not have to share that. I'm like, No, I did. I do have to share these things. It's something that happened. And I'm you know, I think I to share it more. I think the older I get, the less I care about what people think about me. And I think that is very freeing. And, you know, people are afraid to talk about it because of repercussions that might happen. And I don't care about any of those like, come at me, you got me. You know, I just it was legal. I know now it's a felony. I know people are like, oh, afraid of X, Y, Z, but I can't live like that. You know, like it's something that I did. It's something that I'm and I don't want to say proud of, but I am really proud of the way I handled it and you know how I went about it. And I just don't have any regrets. And so I'm just I don't know, I just made the decision. But like, if I can help other people talk about it or feel okay about a decision that they made that I want to do that.

[00:16:02] **Speaker 2** How isolating is that feeling of having this thing that you have to be so careful about talking? That's a thing in your life that you know is probably a thing in a lot of other people's lives?

[00:16:17] **Speaker 1** Um, I have I happen to have a lot of friends who have gone through a very similar experience. So I don't, I don't feel isolated. I don't feel, I don't feel isolated, but I can imagine people feel feeling isolated. I think if I were close, my family and I, we just see the world different and that's not going to change. And so I think a piece of it is I had already felt that separation from them. And though it wasn't necessarily that, you know, it would have been worse, I think, if that were the only thing. But it kind of was just something that was, you know, part part of it. But I can't imagine, like, I mean, again, I grew up in it. I, I voted Republican the first two times, you know, like I I've learned to I've learned how to be who I want to be and like, what is okay sharing what's not okay sharing. And, you know. That changes year to year, I think. But for the most part, it's already out there, you know, like I can't take things back. I just don't need to. I don't need to dig deeper into a lot of it with a lot of people.

[00:17:32] **Speaker 2** What was what was that process like or how long was that timeline did it take for you to move into that realm of being comfortable with yourself, being deciding who you want to talk about it when you wanted to talk about it and what that conversation felt like?

[00:17:48] **Speaker 1** Well, I think with everything, it just surprised the journey of the process. I mean, I think I got there a while ago. There's a lot going on in the world, and I don't think that like, honestly, like it's just become I mean, this just happened last summer, right? So, like, now it's like a bit like a bigger deal, I think. And so there were other things to focus on, I think, that weren't necessarily me or my abortion or the right to get an abortion. And so I think when when that happened, I just kind of thought I mean, I can't imagine being a young girl. Not. I mean, I have friends with kids that are little girls, you know, And like, I just can't imagine what it's like to be a mom, especially of of young, young girls. And I just, you know, if there's anything that I can do, it's like I got to I have to I have to do that, you know? I don't know. I think that timing is pretty key. And I think that was a good time.

[00:18:55] **Speaker 2** I mean, and we've seen more of that. We've seen more women say, I have to tell this story. Yeah.

[00:19:01] **Speaker 1** Well, I think the problem is, is like, you know, we focus on, you know, the health care aspect of it. You hear about these terrible stories about, you know, people not getting the medical care that they need. And I don't even know what that's a discussion, honestly. That's health care. Like that is it blows my mind that that is something that like we have to like, actually discuss. But it kind of takes away the conversation from from the choice aspect of it, which really is what you're saying as a woman. I don't have a right to choose what to do with my body. And I think because there's all these other horrible situations that we kind of have to focus on, like, holy crap, like this is like a big deal. It's also like it's also a big deal that I'm not allowed to do what I want with my life. Like, we can't forget that. Like, it is a choice that we should have, you know, and I that gets lost in it because there's all these other terrible, terrible reasons to talk about it. And I feel I feel so grateful that I was able to make that choice.

[00:20:06] **Speaker 2** Could you imagine what you would do or what you would counsel someone younger in this environment?

[00:20:13] **Speaker 1** Oh, man, I've already thought about being one of those people on the underground. Like I will help however possible. Like, I mean, I have I have nieces, you know, I would be there for whatever. I mean, I will drive anybody anywhere. I will. I will, you know, whatever they want.

[00:20:34] **Speaker 2** I mean, you grew up in the center of the state. There's women there who are going to be facing these decisions. And the convenience aspect or the practicality of whether they have time or access to make that trip, especially if they're getting friction in their personal lives. I mean, that makes a difference on the practicality of making a choice like this. Mhm.

[00:20:57] **Speaker 1** Yeah. I mean I was super fortunate, right, Like I had a job I had, I mean I was in this house but like, you know, I had all of the resources at my disposal and now, now all of those. If someone doesn't have those resources, even the choice is taken away and they have to figure it out, you know, and I don't know. I don't know. I don't know what it's like to be in that position, But if I could help, I would do so. Like, you know.

[00:21:24] **Speaker 2** When you think about the the people that are opposed to this choice being accessible at all. Do you get? Do you feel any anger towards them? Do you think they're misunderstood? Understanding? Is it just that they don't know enough people that have been in that situation that they can't appreciate it?

[00:21:45] **Speaker 1** No. I mean, I think everyone has the right to believe what they want to believe for themselves. So, like, if you're passionate about that, I think that's great. Like, don't get an abortion, but like, don't tell me what I can do with my body. You know what I mean? It's the same thing as a gay marriage. It's it does not affect you literally at all. Like not even a tiny little bit. I think religion has infiltrated so many decisions that people have like put into law where I have a really heart and I'm not religious, like, I'm just not. So like if I think everyone has a right to their own beliefs, I if you know, I have a heart, I'm not angry. I'm not angry at anybody who thinks that people shouldn't get an abortion. But I am a little confused as to how that affects them or their life or why they put so much time and energy into it, especially when the services to take care of children just don't exist past being born. You know, no one wants to help the kids that are already out there. But yet we want to make sure, though, you can't you you've got to have it, you know. And so I'm just confused. But I've learned a long time ago that, like, logic isn't something that works.

[00:23:08] **Speaker 2** When you think of you see, you know, a lot of women who've made this choice. Mm hmm. What is the likelihood that anyone out there knows someone but doesn't know that that's who they are?

[00:23:20] **Speaker 1** Oh, 100%. Like, 100%. And everyone knows someone who's had an abortion. No doubt. No doubt.

[00:23:28] **Speaker 2** Do any of them have a right to know that?

[00:23:31] **Speaker 1** No, no. It's my information to share. You know, it's. It's our information to share. It's like. I mean, again, I work for I worked for an electronic medical record that is a that is people are all up and they don't want to see their medical chart for a reason, that it's mine. It's my body. It's every you know, and I understand that. So, no, it's it's my information to share. You don't get to say what happens to my inside. It's not outside, it's inside. It's mine. It's all mine. It's literally all mine. It was given to me by somebody else. Actually, all of this is mine. You know what I mean? When it comes out. Okay, I understand that maybe other people have a stake in it. Whatever. But right now it's all in here. And when is the last time that anything inside anybody's body was up for discussion?

[00:24:21] **Speaker 2** Know how you talk about you feeling an obligation to to share or you have opinions and putting words in your mouth. Do you feel like you sitting down for this and sharing your stories is part of a duty to MC to speaking for speaking for women who don't feel comfortable or maybe don't feel in the same position of being able to share that information?

[00:24:41] **Speaker 1** I don't feel obligated. I feel like I just want to. I feel like, why wouldn't I? Like, why would I hide this part of it? I share everything else, you know, like, especially in this day and age where everything is out there, you know, people share what they had for dinner, breakfast, what they're doing going at store. Isn't that. It's like, I don't want it. I want it to become part of everyday language, I guess for me, not for everybody. Because, I mean, there's a reason why people don't want to talk about for whatever the reasons are. It's fine, you know. But I do I on the off chance some of listening or hears it like and I they can connect with that that's why I write I write things that are really uncomfortable on the off chance that it reaches somebody and help somebody. So I know I don't feel an obligation. I feel more of like a need.

[00:25:30] **Speaker 2** I guess if the process became more normalized that more people felt comfortable sharing that story, how much would that shift public perception? I mean, you made the you talk about gay marriage a little bit ago and it's it seemed like there was a shift as more people saw gay people be able to be married and like the world didn't fall down, that they went, oh, I guess that's okay. Do you think there is room for that kind of thing?

[00:25:58] **Speaker 1** Yes. And I think right now our political landscape is bonkers. Like, I don't know what happened. Honestly, I don't know what happened. It used to be something that was very again, I come from a more conservative and I both sides are just losing it to the extremes. And like, I have a hard time with this being in it at all. Like it. It really bothers me that it's become such a highly charged piece of politics because it's our bodies, you know, like and the people making these decisions are often. Not affected at all in any way their lives are going to change. So, yeah, I would hope so. I hope so. I hope we get to take this off off the any sort of political. But it's it's almo it's I mean right now it's it's a bargaining chip. It's something that they got, you know, so I don't know, I would hope that it could become more just a choice that people get to make, you know, whether or not to get married, whether or not to have children, whether or not I mean, why why is that not a choice? I don't know no one to be forced to have a baby being a and this is what that woman said to me. She goes, I would never force being a mom on anyone if someone does not want that. It is the hardest job in the world. And if someone is not all into that, absolutely not. We don't want those moms out there. No one does, you know? So if someone does not is not for whatever reason, ready or, you know, like that, that's okay.

[00:27:32] **Speaker 2** There there's a a a mindset that this is all about control, control over women's bodies, control over other people, ordering people to to make them lesser. Mm. Do you, do you feel that do you believe with that do you agree with any of this.

[00:27:49] **Speaker 1** I mean everyone's watch The Handmaid's Tale, right? Like it's like a slow progression of rights being taken away from you. Absolutely. Yeah. I just I don't again, I don't understand. I don't understand why it's up for discussion. I do not get it. I just don't.

[00:28:06] **Speaker 2** So when you when you reflect on your time, you said you don't. I mean, it's not like this is an everyday part of your conversation. How often do you think of it? Oh, of having an abortion. Is that like an occasional does it take an outside factor to remind you? Yeah.

[00:28:21] **Speaker 1** And also in fact, ah, until recently this, until it became a thing where I'm like, holy moly, what would I have done? I would have driven to Illinois, you know, like there's, I mean, I still would have got done. I would find a way, you know, there is no way that the option or the not being able to would have stopped me or prevented me from doing what I did. And no, I don't think about it because it's literally just the same as like choosing not to get married. I don't think about how I didn't choose to get married every day, but when people like, you know, ask you a question, Yeah, okay, then I think about it. But sometimes, you know, I again, I don't think about having a 16 year old. I don't think about that. I don't think about it because it really wasn't this momentous thing for me. It was like this happened. This I this now is what needs to happen. And then I moved on. You know, it it was it was an event, but it wasn't it didn't it? It didn't have a major impact on me where I'm like thinking about it all the time and I wish I wouldn't of and I, you know, like, I just don't think about it unless it comes up.

[00:29:23] **Speaker 2** One of the things we spoke on the phone, though, is that there's evidence all around you of that decision, the ability for you to make that choice. Yeah. Like everything surrounding you is evidence that you're able to do these things.

[00:29:36] **Speaker 1** Yeah. You mean like the the world climate or the.

[00:29:40] **Speaker 2** Just like your life?

[00:29:41] **Speaker 1** Yeah, my life. I mean, yeah. Okay, So you write.

[00:29:45] **Speaker 2** The evidence within this house.

[00:29:47] **Speaker 1** Yeah. You know. Okay, so it's not that that I think about the abortion I or my decision to make a or have an abortion if more of I think about the life that I have now, like I am so grateful like I do, I look around. I mean, I've been to 30 countries, I've hiked the Appalachian Trail, I've hit the Pacific Crest Trail. I moved to Europe for a year. I've lived in Finland with dogs. You know, I feel all of the things that I've been able to do. I would not have been able to do my life drastically. I guess maybe pivoted after that moment and not necessarily because of my abortion, but more of maybe it was because of my abortion. It's almost like I knew I was never going to have kids. But if you're not going to have kids like college life, go do all the things right. Like I'm in one. Just go to work and come home every day. I was like, Well, I can do this. I have the freedom to do this and I've done it. And people that's not just I know there's people out there doing all these things with kids. I think that's wonderful and beautiful and great. When you have a partner, it's harder when you're alone. And I don't have a desire to be married or to partner up with anybody. It's just not my thing. I just, you know, like, I think there's beginning middles and ends to everything, and I love that. But no, my life would not be possible if I would have had a kid for sure. And I'm very proud of my life.

[00:31:13] **Speaker 2** So it's interesting, you talked about being at the festival and reacting the way you did when the woman asked you a question. If you hadn't, if you answered that way and there was a negative or a hostile or a prickly reaction, how would that affect you?

[00:31:27] **Speaker 1** Well, that doesn't exist at Blue Ox. I mean, their whole theme is, you know, if you see some without a smile, I'll give them yours. But yeah, I think that that's kind of what I'm testing those waters. It's almost like I am very forthcoming with that because, I mean, especially with two women talking, it's more of it's not because again, I've had that like, you don't know a cuckoo clock. You don't know if it's because I couldn't have kids. You don't know. And this is I mean, I've had people I fly a lot and I've had people, you know, if I had a motivational speaker for the Idaho football team, Boise State football team sit next to me. And he basically told me like, well, no, you want children. Children are life. And I'm like, with all due respect, their their life for you, but not for me. And to be told that like and he didn't know what my situation was. He didn't know that I'd already had an abortion. He didn't chose to have an abortion. He didn't know if I was actually physically capable of having a kid. That could be a really terrible thing to say to somebody who had been trying for years to have kids, you know? And I think people just insert themselves with what they think life is into your own. And for me, it's just it was never part of the equation. It was never something that I wanted to add, add to my life. And I'm just I'm kind of like constantly blown away that people think there's one way to live, you know, you know how great it is to be able to be like an aunt, like somebody in an adult in somebody's life that doesn't have the isn't married, doesn't have kids, isn't like kind of following this playbook that we've been giving to live. You know, that's what everyone does, right? They go to school, they get a job, they buy a house, they get married, they have kids. And it's like, I'm not doing any of those things or I have a house and a job, but I have little girls in my life that look up to me because it's cool to see someone different than their parents, you know? And I think it's really important because it's hard to fit in to life. It's hard to find your place, it's hard to find your people. And like, I've never wanted those things and I always felt like an outsider. And so to have somebody as an adult, as an example, you know, and it's not not living rough, you know, to have somebody like that that doesn't have their own kid that they're only focused on. And when I'm with these kids, it's like this is, you know, you get all my attention and I don't have anything else, you know, dragging me anywhere else. I think that is a gift.

[00:33:47] **Speaker 2** How often do you come across people that hear about your travels and your lifestyle and your dependance? And I'm so jealous of that a lot without understanding like that came with choices.

[00:33:58] **Speaker 1** Yeah, well, that's what I say. It's like, I like that. I like that people I like that could be potentially inspiring for some people. But when they say I'm so lucky, it's like, No, no, no, I'm not lucky. I chose all these things. Like I literally made the choice for them to get from point A to point B, and this is we just took different paths, you know, And like, you cannot do both. You cannot have kids and not have kids. It's impossible. Right? And I just chose not to have kids. I think both are fantastic, right? This is the way I want it to go. And that's the way I went. And yeah, it's going to look different than yours. I mean, I do have a kid, I have a dog.

[00:34:32] **Speaker 2** But the key there is you were able to make.

[00:34:35] **Speaker 1** That was able to make the choice. Yeah. Yeah. And I think and I've written about this too, it's like, listen, I, I don't know what I would be like as a parent. And, you know, I interviewed my mom and I just in college, and she said the the main thing that she wanted to do when she was a kid is to be a mom. And it didn't connect with the way I was raised because she's not maternal. She didn't I mean, my mom was great, but I was shocked to learn that that was her biggest dream is to have kids. You know, it just I was. Oh, interesting. And that disconnect made me just kind of think about my own life thinking, wow, this is your biggest dream and that's how you lived it all. And again, nothing against my mom. Like, different times. You know, my mom's great, but I wanted my dreams to be bigger and I want to be more passionate about them.

[00:35:25] **Speaker 2** It's interesting you mentioned earlier that your mom had asked you not to tell your dad. Yeah. And he still doesn't know.

[00:35:31] **Speaker 1** He does not, but not as far as I know. Knowing me, he might. Knowing him. He's smart. He might. I didn't tell him my mom didn't home, so I don't know.

[00:35:44] **Speaker 2** Were there any apprehensions in this or balancing of like, you know, the greater good of being able to tell your story versus an event?

[00:35:51] **Speaker 1** No, I've been kind of waiting for the right time. I'm 42 years old. Like, at what point? You know, I own every decision I've made and I will take the consequences, whatever they may be.

[00:36:05] **Speaker 2** And speaking of.

[00:36:06] **Speaker 1** I know I do have a child. I forget. Sorry, Fred, you heard me say be so.

[00:36:15] **Speaker 2** Here it.

[00:36:15] **Speaker 1** Comes up. Yeah. I'm lucky you. Yeah. We got to get all the rescue dogs out there. You know, they need homes to.

[00:36:28] **Speaker 2** So along these lines, we've covered a lot of territory. There are more things that you can think of. Anything else you want to add in?

[00:36:39] **Speaker 1** I don't think so.

[00:36:41] **Speaker 2** I mean, I don't want to turn this overly political. I know we've kind of touched on it and the politics come hand-in-hand. They're kind of obvious with this. So, yeah, I mean, I, I don't feel the need unless you have any extra comments you want to make about the politics of today or I mean, I guess the broadest question along that lines would be like obviously we saw the political impact last fall and even this spring, the Supreme Court election. And, you know, Democrats certainly feel that this is a topic that is now in their favor.

[00:37:12] **Speaker 1** Yeah.

[00:37:12] **Speaker 2** Do you sense that? Do you?

[00:37:15] **Speaker 1** Oh, yeah. I mean, I think it was the wrong move. I mean, yeah, I mean, there's no nothing like going backwards, right, to get a bunch of women to be like, oh, no. You know, even people who weren't political before is like, Ooh, that is a little step too far, you know, because it is it's invasive. It's not, again, something that really should be on the ballot.

[00:37:41] **Speaker 2** When you meet other women, do you ever get a sense is this is something that comes up or how do you know when is the right time or when someone else may feel it's the right time to to realize that, oh, we have more in common than we think or that this is this is this can be normalized because it affects more people.

[00:38:01] **Speaker 1** Well, I do talk about it all the time. Now, I told literally everybody I know that this was happening and the reactions were all like, that's incredible. You're awesome. Like, Yeah, we should be talking about this more even for men, you know? And honestly, like, the reason I started donating regularly to Planned Parenthood was a man came to my door and I just felt so guilty. I'm like, Here, here I am. Like, haven't had an abortion. I had this man out there and like, and you're going door to door and what am I doing? He's like, I've got a wife and three girls. I'm right in your camp. I feel you. And that to me was like, okay, sign me up. You know, I got to do more. And I know that, you know, I'm very fortunate and it almost feels like a, you know, if you you can't take advantage of the services that are there now. I'm like, oh, you guys don't have them anymore. Bummer. You know? And so I think I think this is just the beginning probably of my involvement in, you know, whatever happens. But it's sad that it has come to this, that, you know, why I have to do something like that. But yeah, I don't I don't think that was a smart move on anybody's part, and I don't think it's an end. Well.

[00:39:16] **Speaker 2** If there's a woman out there watching this who's had an abortion and has not felt as comfortable talking to her family or friends, anyone else. Is there advice you would give them on what and how to do that, or is that so personal that.

[00:39:31] **Speaker 1** I think it's really personal. It depends on who your family and who you're dealing with. I mean, it took me a long time to even be comfortable in my own skin. This not not related to this. I think it's it's just it is different for everyone. I mean, and everyone's story is different. Again, I don't there's no reason for me to get an abortion except for the fact that I wanted one. I didn't want a kid. You know, I think some people have like that's not a good enough reason, but it is. I mean, that is that is that is a great reason. I made the decision for me and my unborn child that that's not the life I wanted. And, you know, I, I can't I can't think of a better I can't think of a better decision that I've made in my past, you know, But that's how I feel about it. And I don't know that everyone does, you know, I think everyone has their own demons that they battle with.

[00:40:24] **Speaker 2** All right. So the last thing we come to is your name and how you want to be identified in this. Um, do you want to use your full name? Sure. Okay. I mean, yeah, I want to give you that space because obviously there are bad actors out there. Yeah.

[00:40:41] **Speaker 1** I'm not. I mean, again, I think I do not live with fear like that.

[00:40:46] **Speaker 2** Okay. Can you say spell your full name for us?

[00:40:49] **Speaker 1** Yes. Tasha Kowalski, T OSHA, KW Alaska.

[00:40:54] **Speaker 2** All right. And how long have you lived in Madison now?

[00:40:58] **Speaker 1** Oh, man, longer than I lived anywhere else. I came here in 1999.

[00:41:02] **Speaker 2** Does it feel like home?

[00:41:03] **Speaker 1** Oh, yeah. Yes. Yeah.

[00:41:05] **Speaker 2** Aside from one year in Europe, you said.

[00:41:07] **Speaker 1** One year in Europe. I lived in La Crosse for grad school for two years. I did teach at inner city Milwaukee for like six months. So, I mean, I've been around, but Madison's home. Yeah.

[00:41:16] **Speaker 2** All right. What we would like to do now is we actually put the little wireless on you and you put that in your pocket and kind of give us a tour. Some of your your greatest hits. You play with the diaphragm. Oh. Oh, yeah. You can be one clap in four of your face. We perfect. Do you know what that's for? No, it's a little. It's a trivia thing. So we're using two cameras. And that way he can sync up the sound and the.