

Ep #147: LGBTQ+ Q&A with Dr. Sonia and Gretchen Hernandez



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Dr. Sonia Wright

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Welcome to *The Midlife Sex Coach for Women™ Podcast*, the only show that combines a fun personality, medical knowledge, sexual counseling, and life coaching together. To create unique sex coaching that helps busy women awaken their libidos, address intimacy issues, and learn how to express their sexuality for the rest of their days. Here is your host, certified life coach and sexual counselor, Dr. Sonia Wright.

Alright, come on in, so good to see you all. I am so excited about today's call and I'm so excited to be doing this call with one of my favorite people and one of The Lit Clit team members and her name is Gretchen Hernandez. And I have been so fortunate in the people that have come to me. It's really like the universe has come to me in different ways and sent people to me that are just here to make a difference in my life and in your lives, the lives of my Diamonds.

So I would like to introduce Gretchen Hernandez. And I'm going to have her introduce herself and then we're going to start taking some question. So, Gretchen, please go ahead and introduce yourself.

Gretchen: Well, thank you, Dr. Sonia. I am so happy to be here. Hi, everyone, I am Gretchen Hernandez. And I live out in California. And I traditionally have been a business coach and mental health coach but I also have a passion for the LGBTQ community. And part of that is because I am a member. I am a pansexual. I came out late in life when I was 49. But I am part of a huge rainbow family. In fact, I started counting the other day and out of 14 of us, meaning parents, siblings, spouses, kids, all of it. Out of 14 of us, 10 of us are queer. I'm like wow.

I joke around that in my family we have to come out as straight. So we have four straight and 10 queer. So it's very fortunate to be in a family like this and to have that kind of support because I know that there's a lot of people out there that they are the only rainbow sheep in their family. And

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although sometimes they'll call themselves the black sheep, it's like, no, that's a rainbow sheep. That's the fun one. So I like to help all of us to celebrate our authentic selves and to recognize that we can come out at any age and sometimes it's our partner who's coming out.

And so sometimes that can also have an impact on us. So talking about everything out in the opening, it gives us a great opportunity to discuss all of those different details that we don't necessarily feel comfortable talking about with other people that just don't understand.

Sonia: Yeah. I think that this is a very important topic and that's why it's included in The Lit Clit Club. And because as you said, so many of us come out later in life. I came out at 40, 41 years of age. And I had absolutely no idea. Some people are like, "From birth I know that I'm queer." It was like because I'm pansexual I was attracted to men, the male gender, people of male gender. And so it didn't really faze me. I always thought I was heterosexual until I saw this woman that was more masculine and it made me question a lot of things.

Because it really hit me up side of the head, I was almost [crosstalk]. So it had been a really long time. And ultimately it's the person's personality that attracts me and not necessarily their gender. But I do tend to shift towards masculine men and masculine women. That's kind of the energy, that I am non-masculine kind of non-binary individuals. So we each have, there's a spectrum and there may be a spectrum of time that we come out and we start questioning and thinking.

And so I wanted to definitely make sure that people within the LGBTQ+ community had the opportunity to ask whatever questions they also needed to ask around sex and sexuality. To make sure their questions were answered and to make sure that there is a safe place for them also to be able to have these discussions and also be able to ask whatever questions that may be on their minds. So maybe we'll just have a little bit of a discussion at the beginning and then we'll get into some questions.

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And I should say for the people that are here with us, we are so excited that you're here and also feel free to put any questions that you have in the Q&A. And there's an anonymous feature if you want to utilize that but feel free to utilize that, any questions, anything you need coaching, anything that you'd like, questions that you may have just in general. We're definitely here to answer. We don't know all the answers obviously. But if we don't necessarily know the answer, we will work at getting the answer and then send that out in an email. So we're definitely here to do that.

So you mentioned, Gretchen, that you come from a family that identifies as queer where it sounds like 80% of the people are queer. But that's not normally the case, so it might be shifting over time as more and more people feel comfortable discussing their sexuality. And I look at the younger generation and they really have an understanding that this is more of a continuum. And they make come out and they may identify themselves and it may be shifting over a period of time as well. And I think that that is completely fine, we get to identify.

I look at my own journey and I at one point identified myself as heterosexual and then I ended up identifying myself as a lesbian. And then I went through a phase where I started to date men again. And then I was like, I don't know exactly what I am because I am very much a fundamentalist in terms of being a lesbian, this is the way it is. And then I started opening up to different types of partners again. And then I settled in on pansexual and finally I was like, I am just queer, I'm not identifying myself. I am me, I am Sonia, I am queer, I like a spectrum of individuals and that is fine.

But we may go through a phase, well, how do you coach people when they're coming out, when they're just doing this investigation, when they're just starting to wonder what's happening and what it is around their identity? And feel free if anybody listening to this conversation has questions or needs coaching. Just feel free to put it in the Q&A.

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Gretchen: Well, the first one that jumped into my mind was actually my youngest sibling. And so I have two sisters and what's interesting about this is that we all have the same dad but we all have different moms. And so we just met each other 15 years ago. And as far as wondering does this actually run in the DNA, how is this possible that you can end up with three sisters that have the same dad and that we're all queer? Kind of makes you wonder. That could be a DNA thing.

But I remember, we took my youngest sister to the park and she was probably about 17 at the time. And my other sister who was already out as bisexual and I wasn't totally aware yet of my sexuality. I thought that I was heterosexual but I always knew that I had been attracted to feminine men. And it's interesting because I'm also attracted to masculine women. So it's always kind of the opposite. But we asked her, "Hey, have you figured it out yet, do you know your orientation?" And actually it was my other sister who asked her and I thought, whoa, that was pretty bold just to come straight out and ask.

But because she knew that we were supportive and loving and open to all of the things, her response was, "Yeah, I don't know, I'm still trying to figure it out." And so it was nice to have that open discussion of just saying, "Hey, we recognize that not everybody is straight." And that instead of just assuming that someone is straight is just to ask. But you also need to have that trust that's established. You wouldn't just come up to a coworker and say, "Hey, so what's your orientation?"

Sonia: Yeah, there needs to be that safety there. You would feel you're safe to express yourself. You're not necessarily going to be judged and you're going to be appreciated for who you are and not necessarily any labels and interpretation of labels that people would put on you. So that's what we hope for. And I see that with there's more gay straight alliances in school. And there's a lot that's happening with these younger kids which is pretty exciting to me to know that there's more acceptance and there's more opportunity out there.

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Now, I know that some people couldn't attend and some of them had sent in some questions. And so let's kind of look at these and start doing some coaching around them.

Gretchen: Okay, so let me read this one here. Okay. My girlfriend wants me to hold hands in public but I feel weird doing this because girls were teased when I was younger if others thought they were a lesbian. And yeah, that it can be uncomfortable. And it's interesting, I have had this experience also with my daughter. My daughter's lesbian but she wants to hold my hand. And so we'll be out in public and she's considerably taller than me. And I haven't actually been with a woman because I discovered I was pansexual while I was married to a man.

But it's one of those of, yeah, when we start to decide yeah, I'm actually going to hold hands because this is important and I love this person. And it's definitely a choice I mean because the landscape out in the world it's not always safe. And so we have to kind of also look around, make sure that we are safe but test the waters. And we might start off in a safer area where we get comfortable with that at first. And then as we get more and more comfortable we go out to other spaces and start holding hands.

And the more that we start seeing same sex couples holding hands the more it's going to be comfortable for everybody because this is a way of life. We've held this privately for so long but the love is there and it's real and it's okay to express this out in public.

Sonia: And so I love how we have different ways of coaching around it. I'm always focused on the safety aspect and recognizing whether you're gay or straight, people have different concepts about displays of affection in public. And whether you're heterosexual or not heterosexual, there is different concepts as to if you feel comfortable doing it. But you're right, there is an additional layer on top, when you were talking about people with different orientations other than heterosexual.

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So when we kind of add that layer on and we have to start thinking about safety, there is many different reasons why somebody would choose that they want to hold hands and somebody would choose that they wouldn't necessarily want to hold hands. And so yeah, if we're in a safe environment, I feel like I had a lot of my formative adult years in San Francisco. And so hey, that's a relatively safe place to do just about whatever you would like to do.

But then I came to Minnesota and not even the twin cities of Minnesota which is also a relatively liberal place but I went to Rochester to do my residency. And I actually came out during my residency down in a relatively small city away from the twin cities. So it did not necessarily feel as safe. So I think that is important to know where we are and what we choose to do. And also if you have a partner that it's very important to them to find out what does it symbolize, what does it represent for your partner? Because your partner may not care.

We might have the doctrine that because we want to be out and proud and loud that we need to hold hands. But it might mean something else for your partner. It might be something that is important to them or it may not necessarily be something that's important to them. But I think the conversation is important to have. But if you feel strongly that this is something you'd like to do, then yeah, you can ease into it and also safety is an important aspect, definitely at this point in time in our lives and it's something to take into consideration.

Gretchen: Yeah, absolutely. We've got another question in there. I came out as non-binary last year and I use they, them pronouns. Alright, good. But sometimes I slip up and refer to myself with female pronouns. How will people take me seriously if I can't even get my pronouns right? I can only imagine what that's like. You've been your whole life using a certain set of pronouns and changing anything takes time. I mean even if you're changing a routine of driving to work, how many times would you have found yourself driving to your old work just because it was out of habit?

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And it doesn't mean that people won't believe that you're working at the new place. It's just, whoops, I forgot. So with anything it's all part of habit formation. And there will be times that you may share that, oh, yeah, I forgot my pronouns, let me correct that. And it kind of lightens things too because it allows all of us to be human. And it's like, okay, yeah, I didn't get one right, let me correct that. That also gives them a little bit of grace too that if they happen to not get your pronouns correctly, that they also know the right behavior of just admit, hey, I forgot the pronouns, let me correct that really quick.

And so it's just a practice thing. It's not anything to get hard on yourself about that people won't take you seriously or anything like that. It's just a change of language, a different habit. So just keep at it and eventually it will be your new way of talking all the time and you'll forget that you ever didn't remember how to drive to your new way of work.

Sonia: Yeah. And I love that. I love that in terms of we get to decide what it means for us. We get to decide if we're going to be critical of ourselves or we're going to be like, this is a process and I'm learning as well. We look at our thoughts and we decide how do we want to process and think about this experience. I am just so dreadful. I remember, my son is 23 right now but when he was about 17, he sat me down, so this is what? Six years ago and he said, "Mom, I want to tell you that I am a cisgendered male."

I had no idea what that was but I want to be supportive. I was like, "I am here for you honey, no matter what." And he was like, "Do you know what cisgendered is?" I'm like, "No." And it's just like my identity aligns with my gender and sex at birth. And so he had to explain that to me and then we started having this discussion. But it's a beautiful thing that we have the opportunity to choose different pronouns. Yeah, sometimes it's not necessarily easy to remember the pronouns and when to use them and such.

But I think that the fact that we continue to do the work, to use the pronouns, to correct ourselves, it get easier and easier. And I think that it

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shows that there is respect there. And there are a lot of pronouns that are out there. But I think it's something that's very important. And I kind of celebrate with anybody that no matter what their pronouns are, but that they actually get to choose and express who they actually are. And I think that's a beautiful part of all this, definitely.

Gretchen: Absolutely. Alright, we've got another one. Says, I'm a bisexual single mom. I love being with women but I feel I owe it to my kids to find them a father figure but all the men I date are jerks. I really prefer to be with a woman. Would I be a horrible mom if I didn't give them a dad?

Sonia: Yeah, the mom guilt is so real. And honestly, no matter what we do and choose as moms, there's always this level of guilt that is there. So, so often we think that we know what our children want and what's best for them. We haven't even checked in with them if they even care. So many of them are like, "Whatever you want, mom." We are like, "Oh, my goodness, it has to be this way. If it's not this way, I'm not giving my children", I remember when I divorced from my son's father. And I went through so much. I was so worried that my son's going to grow up in a broken home and all that type of concept.

And you talk to my son now, he's like, "Thank God." We are great as co-parents and we're very good friends. We actually vacation together and things like that, my husband and I, but my son is like, "It is so good that you two are not married because I don't know how this would go and how I would survive if we all stayed together." So we get to look at generally our children want us to be happy. But sometimes there's different concepts. And honestly, it depends where you have your family unit. If you're in an urban setting, the odds are it's going to impact them less.

If you're in a small town and they're like, "Your mom is the one that's dating other women", or something. It is going to impact them differently. But many, many, many studies have shown that children of gay parents are very well adjusted and they do very well in life. They've had to learn to expand their belief system and their ideas and they're just these inquisitive

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type of people, highly intelligent. Study after study says that these children tend to be very well adjusted and they have the ability to make choices for themselves. They see their parents made choices for themselves that were good and healthy choices for them.

And so in turn they have seen, instead of seeing a parent that is miserable dating a bunch of jerks, they're parents that made a wise choice that positively impacted their life and who they end up being. So we kind of have to take that into consideration. And there are a lot of really great wonderful guys out there. So it also makes you wonder, is your mind selecting the jerks because that's not what you're interested in.

Gretchen: That's a very good point.

Sonia: You're interested in women. You get to explore that aspect of things. Gretchen, what do you think?

Gretchen: I'd like to add to think about what are the characteristics that you would want from that father figure? What was it that you thought they wouldn't be getting if they didn't have a father figure? And I know that for my husband one of the things that he brought up, his mom was originally married to a man who was very abusive. And so luckily she got divorced and she's been happily together with her wife for 27 years now which is absolutely fabulous. My husband talks about how he doesn't know how to fix things and he thinks it's because he didn't have his dad around.

And so he'll get kind of hard on himself. And I am there like, "Okay, well, if that was the characteristic, that doesn't necessarily mean that it has to be a man thing." My mom was a carpenter in the 70s and I thought that was fabulous. So I love to learn how to fix things and build things and do all that. And so if you're thinking of having that father figure because he knows how to fix things, no that there are women out in the world that also know how to fix things and to do all of the things.

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So when we're looking at who we want to have in our family unit and helping to take care of our kids, let's look at what are the values that we want, what are the characteristics? How can we nurture these children? And even if for some reason with the partner that we have that maybe between the two of us we are missing something that we'd like our kids to get developed in. Well, that's where we have the rest of the community to turn to. There is always someone out there that would like to develop, help us develop our skills, help our kids develop their skills.

And it doesn't always have to be 100% on the parents to do it. and happy parents are so much better than parents that are not happy, or worse yet, if there's any kind of abusiveness going on, just so that you can have this one extra aspect. It's not quite worth it.

Sonia: Yeah. And then usually the person you choose doesn't even have that aspect anyway. You're like, "I need to figure this out because they're bad at fixing things." And then you're muscle man and you're fixing the stuff all the time or you're hiring somebody. It's just, I swear, it's just bullshit. You get to be living your best life with whomever you want to live that life with. I've been married to men, I've been married to women. For me it's the focus on who is the individual, not specifically on their gender, who is this person? Are they a good person?

I joke because I had a thing for women with toolbelts, I just do. And my girlfriends are always like, "Stay away from these women with toolbelts." They get me, every time, I'm like, "Ooh, they've got a toolbelt." It's not about the toolbelt, it's about the woman that's attached to the toolbelt.

Gretchen: That brings in a whole lot of ideas for bedroom play and scenarios and stuff. It's like, alright, bring the toolbelt.

Sonia: But honestly, if a woman could change a light bulb, I'm already in love.

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Gretchen: I love it. I love it. Alright, we've got another question here. It says, my husband never seems interested in sex. He says that he's straight. And so the question was, is he lying or is it just that there's something wrong with me and he doesn't want to have sex with me?

Sonia: It's not an either or. So first of all, there's absolutely nothing wrong with you. If a person does not want to engage in sexual intimacy, you are not the problem, even if they say you are the problem. And in fact if they say you are the problem, the odds are, there's something really happening with them that they don't want to deal with and so they're blaming you. Women have a tendency to blame themselves no matter what the situation is. We don't know if this partner is gay or not. There is a lot of women that deal with menopause.

There's a lot of men that deal with their male menopause where their testosterone could be dropping and they may not be. Often what could be happening as well is erectile dysfunction and they don't want to deal with this at all. They don't want you to know that it's not working the way it did previously. And so that is the fastest thing to roll up the shop, it's just done, closed up. You're like, hello, hello. And so we start thinking on these black and white things. We start thinking, they're not having sex with me, it has to be me or they have to be gay or whatever this is. But it's usually not an easy answer.

And I can't say for 100% that he's not gay but the odds are if he was enjoying sex and having sex with you, and then this has just shifted over time, there's probably something else going on. If you're in this relationship with this person and from day one they never really wanted to have sex with you or they only would only have sex in a certain position where they actually wouldn't see your female parts and things like that. Maybe you start thinking, and I know, Gretchen, you've had some experience with. So I'm going to ask you, what was your experience like and if you could share that with people.

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Gretchen: Yeah. So I have been in relationships with men where they didn't want to have sex. And sometimes it was because they were gay and sometimes they were straight and they had something else going on. So first I'm going to talk about when they were gay. So as I mentioned, I've always been attracted to feminine women and so oftentimes that can be gay men or what did I say, feminine women? Feminine men, sorry. So I had my first gay boyfriend when I was in middle school and didn't know he was gay at first. And then eventually he came out and it was like, okay, we're going to be friends.

I was engaged to a man for five and a half years and then he came out as gay. And we did have where we started off having a sexual relationship and then it tapered off to almost nothing. And I did start to internalize that it must be something wrong with me. But there were actually clues along the way including a huge stack of Playgirl magazines in the closet with his name on there. So there were clues but I decided I wanted to turn a blind eye to it because we were in love with each other and the love was always there, it was real.

And it's possible that you can be in love with someone and not have that orientation and so it was a really, really hard decision to break off that engagement but it was more important to me that we had our own authentic lives. So he was able to go on and have relationships with men. And I was able to go on and be in a relationship where someone actually wanted to have sex with me. And so now I'm in a relationship, my husband is bisexual and he was scared to death to even come out to me. He just came out about five years ago or so, we were already married.

He was scared to death and I thought, oh my gosh, I hit the jackpot. This man who's into dudes, he's effeminate and he wants to have sex with me. Fabulous. Now, I have also known people that are very dear to me that got married to a man who didn't ever really want to have sex.

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And I think that's where we need to look at all of the letters in LGBT because it keeps going on and there's the letter A which is asexual. And there are people out in the world that are asexual and I don't think that we really talk about it enough because, I don't know why we don't talk about that one actually. But that can definitely be a possibility too is that they may be in love with you and just not interested in sex. And that's something that it's important to have those conversations but not take it personally because we're all wired differently.

And if someone just is not interested in sex, it has nothing to do with you as a person, it's just that's their own preference. And, Dr. Sonia, I don't know if you have anything to add about our asexual friends.

Sonia: Yeah, I do. So asexuality, that's usually defined as a person that does not want to necessarily have sex with another individual. Now, there's a gradient as well, there may be gray, which is when they get into committed loving relationships, they may be into. Now, this is separate from, there's the continuum, some might be asexual which means, I don't want to have sexual intimate relationship with somebody. I would love to have a relationship maybe but not sex with a person.

Then there's somebody that may be gray that's like when I'm in a loving committed relationship, I am more interested in having sex to maybe a limited extent they might be. So there's a lot of different areas in there and labels and how people choose to see themselves. The important aspect, if you are a person in a relationship with an asexual individual, is you get to decide if that's the type of relationship you want.

You two get to have discussions about this and decide if this might be a place where you're in a relationship and non-monogamy may be something that you would like, so that you have another relationship with another individual that may be sexual in nature if it works out that way. There's

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many different ways that can be done, this can work for you if you find yourself in this situation. Where sometimes we call it mixed orientation relationships as well where somebody might be heterosexual and their partner is gay. And you decide if that's going to work for you or not.

Many people choose to stay together because they still love the individual and other people choose to stay together and have other partners, other people choose, I love you, but this is going to be too frustrating for me and not where I want to be. So any choice is the right choice for you. You don't have to be like, "I'm going to stay together for the kids."

Let me just say that, it's very rare that I see that the, I'm going to stay together for the kids actually work well. There's usually some element of resentment and anger in there that festers in some way. But if you two come together for a loving type of discussion and figure out how this is going to work.

That usually is how a lot of communication and not coming from a place of shame in terms of whatever choice you're going to make and whatever person's identity, their sexual orientation is. It does not need to be coming from a place of shame. I know that sometimes if you're asexual, that is also a place of shame that feels like it's really not understood at all. The majority of people think there is a human right, it's a sexual right. Now, people that are asexual doesn't mean that they don't have sexual feelings and maybe they want to masturbate or they're fine with sexual pleasure, self-pleasure.

They just don't want to have sexual experiences with another individual. So we do need to be aware of that. Some people that are asexual don't want any type of experiences. Others may be fine with masturbation, self-pleasure but not really want sexual intimacy with somebody else.

Gretchen: So good. That was a great explanation. Thank you. And for everybody on the call, feel free to keep adding in your questions. We're here to answer any of those for you. Alright, so the next one on the list is I

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met someone recently that's transgender. I am really into them and ready to get physical but we haven't talked about parts or if they've had surgeries or not and I don't know what to expect. How do we do this without awkwardness?

Sonia: You may not be able to do it without awkwardness. Okay, if you were in a heterosexual relationship and you needed to talk about the parts, it wouldn't be any less awkward. Maybe, maybe not. So say you have vaginismus or something where you have pain with sex and you might need to know ahead of time, what size is your penis if you're over here, the hetero. That would be kind of an awkward conversation. So when we're over here and we're talking about different genders and sexual orientations and things like that, somehow we put labels on it in some ways that this is going to be hard or it's awkward.

Whereas over here with the heterosexual relationships it's nice and normal. It's not, it's about people and it's okay if the conversation is awkward but it's so important to have this conversation. You don't want to be realizing things right in the bedroom. If somebody is transgendered, maybe they're male to female and maybe they have had surgery and they have a neo vagina or something like that. This is important information we need to know. We need to know, do you need lubrication? Do you need dilation? Do you want penetration? Do you not want penetration?

We need to ask these questions outside of the bedroom. So it's okay. Is it somebody that is transgendered and they're female to male? Then we need to know what exactly, how do they like to be pleased? Do they like to be touched, do they not like to be touched? Where do they like to be touched? These type of things are definitely important. So it comes to the place where yeah, it might be somewhat of a difficult conversation. It might be an awkward conversation but it is a valuable conversation. And anything that's valuable then we get to do this, we get to ask these questions, we get to do it.

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And we can preface it ahead of time, it's like, "Hey, I'm really finding that I like you and I'm interested in taking this to a sexual level. And I want this to be a good experience for both of us. Is there things that I should know? Can we discuss this?"

Gretchen: That's a good way of putting it.

Sonia: "How can I pleasure you? This is what I like in terms of pleasure, I would like to know a little bit about anatomy, if that's okay with you to discuss because I don't want to get to the situation where I might be flustered and upset things as opposed to if I had time to read up on different procedures." And there's so many different procedures. There's some people have bottom surgery. There's so many different ways this might have been done so these all become important questions. Do you have scar tissue? Is there some area that might be painful?

What exactly do you like, how should we do that? These are all conversations and questions that we have no matter what the gender is of the person. But if they might be having surgery or having had top or bottom surgery, then we do need to be able to ask some of these questions.

Gretchen: Yeah, I completely agree. And I also like to think of the person as a human with skin. Anything on the body, it's skin. And even if we did start to get a little hot and heavy without having that conversation first, we can just expect that we're going to feel skin and that we can enjoy the feeling of skin. And just leave it at that. And we can definitely ask them, show me how you like to be touched. And yeah, there might still be parts on a person's body that they don't want to have touched. And that goes even for people that have never even had surgery.

I know that my husband thinks that touching a stomach is a no, no. And I'm like, "Oh, no, I love touching stomachs, let me touch your stomach." But

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that's something, we can just feel the skin, just skin in general. Even just rubbing somebody's arm can be very sensual and such a turn on. It doesn't necessarily have to be about our parts. I don't know if that's helpful.

Sonia: I'm going to ask the question here. Thank you, I think that that's a great answer, we are skin. The question that I have is in terms of okay, so maybe you're divorced, maybe you've come from a situation where you're going from a hetero situation into a same sex relationship or dating or something like that. But you're coming out in your 40s, and you're like, "How the heck do I do the coming out in your 40s or 50s or wherever, how exactly am I going to do this?" And how do I do this with this online thing that's happening now?

The last time I dated was 20 years before and you just went down to the local bar and dance club and talked to people and exchanged numbers and did it that way. But now everything's online, what are we supposed to do now? So yes.

Gretchen: Yeah, there are definitely, if you want to do the online apps, there are some apps that are specific for LGBT. But you want to make sure that when you're looking at those, there's somewhere it's really just for the hookup. And I think that's more like your Grindr apps. But there are also ones where it is more for the relationships, that it's like, no, we're not looking just for the hookup.

I'm not saying there is anything wrong with a hookup especially if you're just now coming out and you're like, "Hey, I've never been with a woman before or I've never been with a transgender person and I really want to because I'm turned on them." Okay, go ahead, go out there, have fun, as long as that's what both of the people are looking for.

Sonia: So I'm going to have the safety conversation here. So go ahead and have fun but we're going to be talking about safety here and this goes for trans, hetero, same sex, LGBTQ+, it doesn't matter. When we're talking

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about these apps and we don't necessarily know somebody, there's certain things that are important. You don't give out all your information at the beginning. So you can get a Google number so it's not your real number that you're using. You can get a burner phone or something like that.

So that's kind of important to protect yourself, your identity because you don't know who all these people are. Don't meet at your home or something like that or at their home for the first time. Make sure that you meet in a public place like Starbucks or something like that. Tell your friends, your family, or whomever your safe person is, where you're going to be, when you're going to be.

You can call before you have your meeting, you can call after you have the meeting just to make sure that they're safe. There is nothing wrong with when you get to that point, taking pictures of people's driver's license and sending it to a friend and then they delete it after everything's fine. And I went through different phases in my life where after I got divorced I was like, "I'm going to start dating." And I started dating and then I had this person that was interested in doing swinging and things like that. And I didn't stay with that person but I learned a lot from them in terms of how to go about doing that.

And if you have a trustworthy person, they don't mind showing you their ID when the time comes and it's appropriate. Somebody that never wants to show their information or you get this feeling like you can't trust them, listen to your instincts in all of this. This becomes something that's really important to do. 99% of the time people are safe and really nice individuals but you do get to protect yourself and you do get to make sure that you're doing what you need to do. It looks like there's another question.

Gretchen: Yeah. What if you have an unusual name, should you not tell them your name for a long time? Because just my first name is easily Googled with doctor [crosstalk].

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Sonia: There's no way to hell you should be telling anybody you're a doctor. There's no reason that you need to tell anybody you're a doctor. I mean I'm a doctor and my name is Sonia. So if you put Dr. Sonia in, you're going to find me in Minnesota. So you can sure as hell know that I'm not telling people that I'm a doctor. There's no reason to give out that information. You can say you work in the medical profession. Honestly, if you're a woman and sometimes because I'm a woman of color, they wouldn't even go to the fact that I'm a doctor.

Like I say, I work in the medical field and they'll think you're a nurse. If they're really being respectful, that's what they tend to think, otherwise if I say I work in radiology. They think I'm the radiology tech maybe. Or they think I'm the medical assistant but I generally don't even go there with that information either. But there's no reason to give out your occupation and there's no reason to give out your name. This is at the beginning. At some point if you're on Bumble or those different things, it is tied to your Facebook app or something like that and so they do tend to have your actual information on there.

But there's a lot of apps where you're anonymous and you don't necessarily have to use your name.

Gretchen: So I'll add in a little bit more. So before I married my current husband, my best friend gave me a challenge to date 18 people before I picked one because I was a serial monogamist. So she was like, "No." And I had all of these hangups like who's going to want me, I've got two toddlers, all that. But I was surprised, there were more than 18 people that wanted to go out with me but my name is Gretchen. That's also not a very common name and I was doing like what Dr. Sonia said, which is meeting out in public.

And even back then when I was dating all of these different people, they could still Google my name. But I was also cautious about what I would put

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out there in the public realm for people to see. And so one of those things was my address. And even as a professional, I'll tell people in general where I live, out on the coast but they don't know the exact city I live in. And I don't tell them my address. So the same goes with dating. I mean 18 people, as you can imagine, that's a lot of different people, a lot of first dates. And there were a lot of ones that I thought I had screened out well.

And then once we had the date I realized, oh, no, but we met in a public place and they didn't know where I lived. And they might have had my phone number so they could text me. But that's the nice thing with the phone number is that you can always block people too.

Sonia: You can block people but with a Google number you don't even have to worry about blocking somebody. You could still block somebody but they definitely just never had your information. So I like that. I always use my nickname which is my name but then I don't have to worry, and if they got through these several different hoops where I felt then I could trust them, then yes, I would give them additional information and such. But yeah, you get to choose what level of information you get to give out.

Now, an important thing to do is to recognize that as women we tend to be more people pleasing. And so we tend to defer to other people as opposed to deferring to ourselves. This is an area you need to defer to yourself and to protect yourself while you're doing this additional dating type of thing. So it is okay to protect your information, it's okay to choose not to date in your area if you don't want to. You get to do whatever feels appropriate to you and you don't really have to please anybody else especially at the beginning.

That's just about protecting you and keeping you safe. And that's the most important thing. Having said that, it is, I mean I really didn't meet anybody that I was too worried about but I also trusted myself. If something felt a little off, I would just block them right away. I didn't say to myself, they're

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probably okay. That's how people end up with [crosstalk]. They're probably okay, but there's clues, there's thing that if we listen to our intuition, if we listen to that, that we don't necessarily get ourselves into a situation. So it's always better to be cautious and to protect yourself.

And yes, we do live in this interesting age of dating and the majority of people are pretty nice and respectful and reasonable individuals.

Gretchen: Yeah, okay. We've got another one. My husband is bisexual and brought home an STD after having sexual encounters with men. I feel so disrespected. I love him and I want to stay with him but I don't want to be treated this way.

Sonia: I'm going to be honest, if this individual has done this once, they will probably do it again. And they're choosing in that moment the pleasure side of things because really if you're bisexual or whatever and you choose to have more than one partner, now I'm going to talk a little bit about non-monogamy here. If you have a nesting partner or a primary partner, discussions happen because if you're choosing to have more than one partner, they may get to this place where body fluids are being shared.

And if body fluids are being shared then it's not just you and your partner. It's you and your partner and your partner's partner and your partner's partner, partner, partner. This is a long [inaudible] here. So something that's important to do is to get the STI testing very frequently on a regular schedule but also use a barrier method. Or decide that you're going to lock in and there's only so many people that are going to be involved in this body fluid sharing thing and nobody's going to step outside of that.

Gretchen: Kind of like the COVID bubble, right? [Crosstalk] decide who's in your bubble, [crosstalk].

Sonia: Yeah, definitely. So if we're talking about we're not sharing body

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fluids or it's just me and Joseph and Ed and [inaudible] or something like that and that's the only people in this unit, then that's what it is. Nobody chooses to go outside of that. But it's something to be very concerned about if your partner is bringing home an STI because they're not adhering by the rules that you have established. And they're putting your health at risk. And if they've done it once the odds are they will do it again.

So reestablish what the rules are. Go get STI testing yourself. They need to get STI testing. And also recognize that when you get tested, there's still some things that may not show up for three to four weeks. So you might get tested for HIV but if it's a really recent exposure you might not have the antibodies until a certain time. So these are some important things to be aware of. And definitely having scheduled STI testing is important, really having boundaries in terms of who it's okay to have sex with and who's not.

Be very clear that you can't just go by that person seems like a really good person so they're not going to have an STI, that's not how STIs work. STIs don't sit there and say, "That person's nice so I'm going to avoid them. They've got the nice antibody, I'm going to go over here, doesn't work that way. So we have to recognize that it definitely is an equal opportunity type of situation with an STI but it is concerning if your partner's bringing home something because they are not valuing you and your health.

They have the opportunity to go out and have fun, which is great, but there also has to be a love and a respect for you and your body and your health that they would never want to bring something to you. And if they suspect something's going on, that they are getting tested. But the fact that there is an STI says that there is not a protective barrier being utilized the odds are and that's a little concerning.

Gretchen: Yeah. And what I'd also add is that you always have a chance to show yourself respect, even if your partner isn't, but you've decided you love that person, you want to stay with them. You can just elect that you're

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always going to protect yourself by using barriers. And it might not be as fun as having non-barriered sex but you know that you're keeping yourself safe. And if that's already something that you're going to be okay with, of your partner being with other partners. And as Dr. Sonia said, if they have gone and they've been with another partner, it's quite possible they're going to continue that.

So if that's something that you don't agree with and you don't want that in your relationship you might want to consider that decision, that maybe this isn't the right partner for you. So it's two different things. It's, do you want to be with a partner that also has other partners? Are you okay with that? And sometimes that's fine. Maybe you are. Maybe you have other partners and that's okay too, as long as everybody's in agreement.

But if it's something where that wasn't the agreement, where you really do want monogamy, allow yourself to have that because it does feel good when everybody's aligned and they're having the same thing, you can trust each other. But in the meantime you can definitely always empower yourself by using that protection.

Sonia: Exactly, yeah. Definitely. Another question.

Gretchen: Yeah. What are your favorite barriers for oral sex with people with vulvas? It's been a minute since I was fluid bonded the last time it came up.

Sonia: Yeah. So a dental dam wrap, those type of things, with a dental dam or Seran Wrap, you can put the lube on the side that's going to be touching the vulva because that makes it feel a little better and it doesn't feel as the resistance there. So say you have a dental dam, so you would put the lube on the side that's going to be touching the vulva, put the dental dam down on the vulva and then you can go for it and have a lot of fun. So that's with the vulva owners as opposed to penis owners then you can perform oral sex using a condom as well.

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And then you can decide what your level of comfort is and you can decide about the testing and things like that. But it's usually dental dam or Seran Wrap. And dental dam you can get in most toy stores and of course you can get it on Amazon in a second, yeah. And they even have flavored dental dam too, yum, yum.

Gretchen: And can you say again, where do you find those?

Sonia: You can go into any sex toy store, you can get dental dam but you can also get it online at Amazon.

Gretchen: Oh, I didn't know you could get that at Amazon. That's great.

Sonia: Yeah, just look up dental dam.

Gretchen: And flavored ones?

Sonia: Flavored dental dam.

Gretchen: That's fantastic. That is really good to know. Alright, and we have another question here. I have a private relationship with a woman. None of my friends or family knows that I like women but I'm afraid that their reaction would ruin my relationship. But I don't want to keep sneaking around, what do I do?

Sonia: So let's be very clear, their reaction cannot ruin your relationship. There is a step missing in here and this step is they have a reaction then you have a reaction, you think different thoughts, you take different actions and you ruin your relationship. Please be clear that you take responsibility for the actions that happen in your relationship, not the party of whomever is on this side over here. I'm going to be real with you. Now, having said that I can have a lot of compassion for when we have family members that don't agree with who we are and what we are.

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Or if it's going to be a phase or something like that. So the part that's going to be really important for you is to work on yourself in terms of how you're going to think and feel and act. They're allowed to have whatever feelings and thoughts that they want. You can't change another person. And using your energy to want them to change or to approve. I mean it's wonderful if they are able to, but that's not where I put my energy. Where I put my energy is okay, I may not be supported by my family and friends, this relationship is really important to me, what do I want to think in this situation?

How do I want to feel in this situation? What type of actions do I want to take? What is the end result that I want? If the end result is I want a really great relationship with my female partner, then you're going to have to look and see what kind of actions do I need to have in order for this relationship to work? How do I need to feel in order to do these actions? What is my overall thought that I need to have? So for example if you decide you want to be with this person, this woman, this is the person that you love, you're going to have to take actions like supporting your partner, being there for your partner, being out and being there for yourself.

Looking at your self-identity and being okay with it, coming out of the closet, those type of things, that's what you choose. Then you look, how do I need to feel in order to take these different actions that I want to take so that the result is I have this great relationship. I'm going to need to feel a certain way. Maybe you need to feel committed. Maybe you need to feel proud of who you are. Based on what that feeling is, you're going to have a certain thought, I get to have this incredible relationship, I get to be this person that I deserve to be in this relationship.

Or you have a thought, something like, in the circumstance of your parents or your family members not supporting you. Then your thought might be something like it's okay if they don't support me, I support me and this is

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the relationship I've always wanted to be in. So you look at the thoughts that you need to have. Right now the thought that I'm hearing is, there's an assumption there that my parents or my family has to approve. If they don't approve, their approval is going to ruin my relationship. It's kind of this thought that I'm seeing.

And then you're going to take these actions that eventually are going to lead to a ruined relationship so be aware of that. Gretchen.

Gretchen: And I'm going to add to that, so one of the things that I love to talk about is the change curve. So people process changes using the same seven step process and sometimes we're not aware of it. Actually most of the time we're not because nobody's really taught us about the change curve. And I'll tell you the seven steps of it and so usually you start off in denial. The change has presented itself, there is a denial of oh, no, that's not real. And then you go into an anger stage where you're trying to be angry at that change to try to make it go away so that the change doesn't exist.

And then there is an anxiety phase where you're arguing with reality, like it shouldn't be this way. And then you get into that acceptance which also has a depression part of it. So it's when you feel the worst at this new change, you're accepting it, there's not really anything that you can do about it. And at that point sometimes people try to escape that change curve, okay, I'm not going to be around this change at all so that I don't have to do anything with it. Or they start to realize, okay, no, I do want to have this person in my life or this change.

It's not going away but I want to incorporate this, so the next thing after depression is the experimentation phase. And so that's where people are experimenting with different things until they find the solution that works for them. And so solution is the next one, and that's where they find the thing that works and it might be kind of new still and they have to practice it quite

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a bit but then all of a sudden it's like, okay, yeah, this is the new reality, it feels really good. And they get to the final stage which is the full integration.

Now, every human goes through these changes and some people are early adopters. They go all the way from hearing that change to full integration and celebrating that change with you. And I happen to be one of those people. I love change for the most part, sometimes it's kind of hard. But when we can recognize that every human's going to go through this, that when we present our change to them they might have known us as a heterosexual person. And now we're saying, "No, I am actually in love with this woman right over here."

We can give them space to process through that change curve and know that even if at first they're in denial or they're in anger or anxiety or even depression, it's not permanent. And that they might have expressed this at one point but that's just part of the change curve and everybody processes change in a different amount of time. And that eventually they will get to the part where they're deciding to either incorporate you into their life and experiment and then have that solution that works for both of you. Or that they're going to choose yeah, I'm not going to spend much time around you.

But if we can give them that space to process it, it doesn't mean we have to be in the same room with them, we can just come in, let them know of the change and then leave and let them process their change curve over there. We don't have to be there to see their reaction. We can allow them the space to process it and then when they're ready to come over to the experiment phase, it's like, hey, yeah, let's hang out, let's try these different things. But know that they will eventually get there with you. And don't judge them on that very first reaction, just give them that space.

Keep yourselves over here happy enjoying that relationship and know that eventually everybody's going to get on the same page.

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Sonia: I believe in the majority of that, there are times where you come out and you lose people as you say. The majority of people will come over to a certain extent and then there will some people that are just not able to get onboard. And so it may be a mixture of both, but you're right, the majority of people usually do go through that change curve and they are able to join. But there may be some people that you will lose along the way. I just want to say that we're up at this point in time. So thank you so much for joining us.

I'll put the link in there for The Lit Clit Club. We want you with us. We want you to have a safe place where you can explore all the things and the questions that come up for you for around sexual orientation, LGBTQ questions around your life and sex and anything that you want to ask we want to create that space at The Lit Clit Club. So I have put the link in the chat and feel free to join us there. Thank you so much for joining us this evening. Have a great evening.

Gretchen: Thanks everyone.

Sonia: Take care, bye bye.

Hello, hello, hello, Diamonds, have you heard the amazing news? Dr. Sonia, that would be me and my amazing team has started a sex coaching and life coaching monthly membership program called The Lit Clit Club. The Lit Clit Club was made just for you. It's a safe place where women can come to create the lives that they want, the lives that you want. It's a place where you get to talk openly about your sexual concerns and be heard. There's no judgment, no reprimand, no labels, just acceptance, knowledge and freedom.

It's a place where you get to ask all the questions that you ever wanted to ask about sex and about life too. You get to dream big and create your life

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your way inside and outside the bedroom. You know I love the concept of creating the life that you want inside and outside the bedroom, that soul bursting life that you deserve. So come to the club for the sexual intimacy coaching and stay for the empowerment and the freedom.

Do you have questions about libido, menopause? Lord help us, menopause is no joke. Sexual health, relationships, sexual orientation, pleasure equality and orgasms, religion and intimacy? I am not finished with this list yet. Maybe you have questions about toys, maybe about non-monogamy. Perhaps you're interested in BDSM, maybe self-love, self-pleasure. Maybe you have questions about self-orientation. Maybe you need to work on healing from trauma.

Maybe body image is something that you want to focus more on and definitely embodiment. Perhaps creating the life of your dreams or journeying to your authentic self. Maybe you just want to stop people pleasing. Whatever questions you have and concerns you have, we have the answers and the coaching that you need. In all actuality, you have the answers inside of you. And the coaching will help bring that out. And you know what? You get to choose how you want to be coached.

You can be coached by video, by audio only or you can use the questions and answers session, it's whatever works for you. You get to sit back and relax and get the help that you need and your cameras are off. And every month we have a new workshop in addition to our regular coaching sessions. So click on the link below in the show notes and find out more about The Lit Clit Club. We can't wait to see you there in the club, come join us. Things are just starting to heat up. Alright, Dr. Sonia out. Love you all, Diamonds.