

Trailblazers in Love: Understanding & Advocating for the LGBTQ+ Community with Jeff Lutes

Sue Marriott: Hey everybody. We have a treat for you today. A very good long term friend and colleague, Jeff Lutz is with us. Jeff is a licensed professional counselor in private practice in Austin, Texas. He's also the executive director of the Contemporary Relationship Conference and the Queer and Trans Affirming Professional Certification Program. Very interesting, we will definitely talk about that. He's published chapters in books and textbooks. He's written a book for children about family diversity and he's presented at many [00:02:00] conferences, a lot of it related to marriage and family therapy. His new book, Trailblazers in Love, Conversations with Remarkable LGBTQ Couples, Together 20 or More Years, was published in October and He and his husband Gary Stein have been together since 1998 and are now empty nesters and Traveling Portugal right before us, giving us many good tips. So welcome Jeff.

Jeff Lutes: Thank you, Sue It's an honor to be with you today

Sue Marriott: So, part of what we wanted to do today, I think even though Ann and I are together and we're out and we're clearly a couple and things like that, sometimes we get so busy talking about the science, even diversity, but there's so many kinds of diversities, but we don't necessarily sink into the gay world and to LBGT issues and so much is changing and we're in such a hostile environment. I thought, who better to sit down and have a chat with [00:03:00] about the current state of affairs You know, really helping people understand our plight. Really, you know, you know, you've been doing this for a long time and you'll hear this as we go forward. And Jeff does things like confronting people in churches in this very loving, peaceful way, but that is very intimidating and scary. And I've been involved in some of this. And I have to tell you, it's like both aggressive and peaceful. So we'll get to that. But you've been doing this for Is it your life? I mean, your lifetime, pretty much? What got you started? And how is it that you are able to You know, what was your initial inspiration and what's your

Jeff Lutes: juice? You know, I grew up in the Southern Baptist Church in central Kentucky and I didn't know it. When I moved here in my mid twenties, but I actually moved to Texas of all places so that I could come out because the [00:04:00] community that I grew up in was very conservative, very religious. It's changed a lot. Lexington, Kentucky, my hometown is now ranks really high on HRC's scale of very affirming. cities to live in. Believe it or not. But at that time, it was very conservative. And so I came here to come out and you know, it's funny, I remember. In the late eighties, early nineties, when I first started my practice, there were seven, eight, nine of us in town that were sort of the gay identified therapist. And it was hilarious because I think I'd been licensed like two years. I barely knew up from down. So to be considered an expert. On all things LGBTQ was kind of funny back then, but now if you look at, for instance, profiles on psychology today, you see that most therapists check the box of being LGBTQ friendly. [00:05:00] I want to talk later about the difference between being friendly and affirming and being competent to work with that community, but I just got interested primarily in working with same sex couples. And it just occurred to me and my experience was that while some therapists believe that they should just stay in the therapy room, to me it never felt right to just do that. I had to go out into the world. Be part of Equality Texas, which way back then was not even called Equality Texas. And to get involved in the fight for our equal rights. And then I stumbled across this organization called Soul Force, but a fellow by the name of Mel White had started, Mel was a ghost writer and a filmmaker for a lot of the. Religious right folks of the 80s and 90s, Jerry Falwell, Billy Graham, Jim and Tammy Faye Baker, [00:06:00] Oliver North, all of those guys, and when he came out as a gay man, they immediately kicked him to the curb, and so he used Gandhi's term, Satyagraha, Translated, it means soul force or truth force, and tried to apply the principles of non violence to our community and how we could affect change within communities of faith because he believed As I do that religion remains kind of the primary source of misinformation and discrimination. So I got involved in that organization first as a volunteer and later stumbled into the executive director position. But that's kind of an old chapter of my life. I don't do as much of that.

Sue Marriott: Well, what's important about it? Well, so many things. But you were able to also recruit and involve, like, it was a way of pulling people in that wouldn't normally be, you know, advocates or what have you. [00:07:00] One of the things that really moved me way back then was that so much of this, and you would call up untruths, were coming from the pulpit and not all pulpits and not all religion, religious institutions, things like that, but. You just mentioned some of them, a large majority of the rhetoric was coming from within these institutions. So, how effective do you think that you were?

Jeff Lutes: We used to joke that sometimes we weren't sure if we were changing others at all, but we were changing ourselves. And that was part of it. Standing on the front lines, risking arrest, sometimes crossing over a line where we knew we were going to be arrested, was part of. Strengthening our own sense of self. And, you know, I think that has a ripple effect in terms of the work that we do in the world. There are many stories in which I think we did affect change. I remember taking a bunch of queer families, some with [00:08:00] children, some without, and we went to six of the biggest.

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Jeff Lutes: largest mega churches in the country. And one of those churches, he's not there anymore, but Bill Hybels in Chicago started this mega church that has branches all over the country. People in religion would know that name. And we had a meeting with them and You know, you just sort of didn't feel like it went anywhere.

Jeff Lutes: It was back and forth, our beliefs, their beliefs. But when we got done, the second in command of this big, huge megachurch with tentacles that go out all over the country came up to me and he said, Jeff, you know, we believe marriage is between a man and a woman. And we believe that the Bible says this and that and the other about.

Jeff Lutes: Same sex marriage, but what you are doing with your children is From God because he had seen us with our children and all the other families with their children So there are these little subtle [00:09:00] small ways in which we hope we created some cognitive dissonance that maybe if those people go on and have a relative come out to them or have some other life experiences.

Jeff Lutes: Maybe we are one piece in the puzzle that affects change over time.

Sue Marriott: And that you could even get an audience with these folks is amazing. You know, I remember going to Colorado Springs with our little kids at the time to focus on the family and, you know, they were not focused on our families for sure, were they?

Jeff Lutes: No, no. And, you know, I love that you remembered that because we did an action there two years in a row. Where we closed off the street, we were able to get a permit and do a direct action in front of Focus on the Family. Judy Shepard, Matthew Shepard's mother, was with us one year. And then this guy who was making a name for himself in New York City.

Jeff Lutes: We got him to come and do a [00:10:00] concert in front of Focus on the Family. You've probably heard the name now. Billy Porter. Uh, that's awesome. Yeah, just this amazing concert in front of Focus on the Family. So it was fun work, but it was also sometimes very taxing and emotionally draining. So these days I just think the world of people that still have the energy to do a lot of

Sue Marriott: that work.

Sue Marriott: Well, and you know, some of, also my experience was the pain of addressing it so directly is really tough, but also what's really hard as, uh, you know, somebody who certainly engaged in quite a bit of advocacy is when we would lose and we've put our hearts in it and we've put our time in it, just our spirit, our soul was in this fight, and then we would lose very badly and there would be no.

Sue Marriott: mourning. It was an incredible loss. And I just think of all the advocates, little baby advocates out there and things like that [00:11:00] about it's sort of a thankless job. And it really takes its toll because we're absorbing and hearing the hatred. And, you know, we could just duck our heads. So I'm just so appreciative of all of you out there that are still in the fight.

Sue Marriott: Jeff, I would say that you and I are both still in the fight. We just maybe do it more comfortably. From my

Jeff Lutes: rocking chair. Exactly. On Zoom. Right. With a bottle of Merlot. Exactly.

Sue Marriott: Well, and then you continued and tell us about the contemporary

Jeff Lutes: The first year was called the Contemporary Couples Conference.

Jeff Lutes: We then changed it to the Contemporary Relationships Conference because we wanted to be more mindful and inclusive of polyamorous and open relationships and all the many ways in which people do relationship and form families. That got started because Like all of [00:12:00] us, for many years, I was going to professional conferences, these large national conferences, and when I or others would ask the presenter about same sex couples or those of us in the queer community, I typically got some kind of response that went something like, Oh, yeah, yeah, you all too, you know, as if we were just sort of this afterthought, if we had been thought of at all.

Jeff Lutes: And so I, I really wanted to create a space in which we could talk about our relationships among those in our community, queer therapists and allies. who just sort of got it and where we could just be ourselves and talk in a more transparent way about some of the issues that affect us. So I started putting it together in 2013.

Jeff Lutes: I believe, Sue, you presented at the very first conference in 2014. Uh, I'm not

Sue Marriott: sure if it was the first one, but yes, I was definitely at least cheering you.

Jeff Lutes: Yeah. [00:13:00] I didn't know if it would take off but here we are about to, uh. Do our 11th one. We did, uh, six or seven years in Texas, several years in Austin, a couple of years in Houston.

Jeff Lutes: Then of course, during the pandemic, we were virtual like everybody else. And this year we went to my alma mater, the University of Kentucky. And this coming May in 2024, we're going to the University of Cincinnati, which I'm excited about. So. Welcome people to join us. It's contemporaryrelationships.com.

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Jeff Lutes: We're actually in our call for presenters. period. We're receiving submissions right now until January 12th. So if any of your listeners would like to join our team of presenters, they can go to our website and, uh, they'll be guided into how to submit. This

Sue Marriott: might be a good time to go back to what you mentioned earlier about the [00:14:00] difference between sort of acceptance or being friendly versus being competent, because I'm thinking about your certification or the certification.

Jeff Lutes: You know, I think there are a lot of therapists who, most therapists, have a good heart and Certainly see themselves as friendly to our community, but I think it's important to understand that while many of the issues in our relationships are very similar to the issues in heterosexual relationships, there are differences.

Jeff Lutes: And people need to get training and experience on those differences in order to be effective. So, in addition to the conference, We, not quite three years ago, began to brainstorm how would we put together a more comprehensive training. And we came up with QTAP, the Queer and Trans Affirming Professional Certification.

Jeff Lutes: And so, we have a small group, usually about a dozen folks or so, that [00:15:00] continue on after the conference. And over the course of the year Get roughly 60 hours of training. Some of that is asynchronous learning through pre recorded courses that our faculty have put together. They do that on their own time.

Jeff Lutes: Then we have 10 hours of anti racism training because we believe strongly that when you're working with this community you really have to look at the intersectionality of identities. And so we make that a very strong component of our certification program. And then we have individual and group consultation as well.

Jeff Lutes: So, it's kind of a more in depth dive into learning about working with folks in our community.

Sue Marriott: There's lots of therapists that'll be listening and a lot of these good hearted therapists that consider themselves friendly. What are some of the things that therapists get wrong or that would be different that you would want to be able to say?

Jeff Lutes: First [00:16:00] of all, understanding and being generally aware of some of the terminology. Cisgender, transgender, polyamorous relationships, open relationships, pansexuality, you know, just learning about those terms are important. And creating a sense of comfort within yourself as a therapist to have some conversations that may lie outside of the conversations that people sometimes have in therapy sessions.

Jeff Lutes: I remember not long ago, two men in my office talking about how they wanted to open up their relationship. And I was so struck by the fact that here were two guys talking about having sex with other men, and it was one of the most intimate, open, transparent, and loving conversations I think I've ever witnessed.

Jeff Lutes: And the irony, right? And I think some therapists might have [00:17:00] been unsettled by that or not known quite how to handle that, so part of it's just experience and being able to sit with feelings that come up as you do that work.

Sue Marriott: And, I don't want to confuse the sort of sex positive world as the same thing as gay and lesbian, right?

Sue Marriott: But there is an overlap. And so some of the cultural stuff in our communities, especially with men, they have been way ahead of the curve and being able to talk about what they actually want and sexual agreements and things like that. But that doesn't necessarily mean that if you're working with a gay person that they're, you know, having sex.

Sue Marriott: You know what I mean? Like, uh, all over with whoever. So it feels like that those two things are separate, but very related. They

Jeff Lutes: are, you know, um, they are related, but they are separate. I, I remember, I can't remember why I think I was putting together a PowerPoint or [00:18:00] something, but. Seven or eight years ago, I looked through my caseload and all but one of my same sex couples were monogamous and all but two of my straight couples were polyamorous and that Kind of surprised me.

Jeff Lutes: It was like, whoa, I thought that would be the other way around But Austin is a very progressive city. And and so it wasn't the case. I'm sure that has changed back and forth Many times over the years, but yeah, they are very different things. I think part of it is to remember that. Until 2015, marriage was not an option for those of us in our community, and so we were sort of forced to look at ways that we could connect and relate, perhaps before the general population.

Sue Marriott: But I agree with the intimacy of having those kinds of conversations with your partner. The institution of marriage sort of seems to convey a certain security, the embeddedness of the, of it, the financial, things like [00:19:00] that. There's something about the polyamory community that, you know, we can learn from around being able to talk about boundaries, being able to talk about what you really want that you might not can have in this relationship, possessiveness, all of those things then get exposed and are able to be worked through.

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Sue Marriott: So my experience definitely has been, it can add a level of intimacy, just like you're saying, that surprises a lot of people. And they're, you know, in a more static system that is. Kind of preordained a little bit, like there's a script for what a married couple are supposed to look like, what they're supposed to talk about generally, and I had an interview with Jessica Fern, who published *Polysecure*, it was really interesting, and I encourage folks to continue to learn about that and their competence, and with all of these things.

Sue Marriott: What are you kind of noticing? Because you get to see all these proposals. What's the GLBTQ, and is that still the right term? GLBTQ? Uh, are [00:20:00] those the right letters? And what's going on in the community, you know? I'm so old, I'm not hearing about it much anymore.

Jeff Lutes: I think most, uh, put the L first, LGBTQ.

Jeff Lutes: Certainly the term queer is, is the more common. term. That, that began, I guess, in the late 80s, early 90s. You know, those of us of a certain generation remember that term as a pejorative, but younger folks began to reclaim that term, and now it's, uh, in part to sort of overcome the dilemma about the alphabet soup, right?

Jeff Lutes: Trying to say LGBTQIA. Whatever, right? So yeah, and what was the other part of your question?

Sue Marriott: I'm sorry, Sue. Well, just the, no, that's okay. So just even like the term queer. Yeah. So the meaning of that to some degree has changed. If somebody identifies as queer, because sometimes you, I think it can be queer and not even necessarily gay.

Sue Marriott: So can you explain that a little bit? Yeah, I

Jeff Lutes: think it's just [00:21:00] anybody that doesn't see themselves within the cultural definitions of heterosexuality or being cisgender, you know, somebody that maybe sees themselves as gender nonconforming or gender fluid, just doesn't quite fit into the boxes and the messages that our culture gives us about what it's supposed to be, mean to be a man or a woman or, yeah.

Jeff Lutes: So it's, it's kind of a fluid term.

Sue Marriott: Yeah. I think of it as kind of a little bit, not revolutionary, but counterculture, you know, like pushing against something. Does that fit for you?

Jeff Lutes: Oh yeah. Yeah. I have a, a client that I just talked with the other day who, you know, if you were looking at all the, her demographics, uh, she's straight and she's cisgender and.

Jeff Lutes: But very much considers herself part of the queer community because of her friendships and her belief in [00:22:00] advocating for our community and just, she just sees herself as more fluid in

Sue Marriott: that way. Is that insulting to other people in the queer community?

Jeff Lutes: I would hope not. And I've not heard that a lot

Sue Marriott: of you.

Sue Marriott: No, I haven't heard that, but I do know that there are, well, let's talk about pronouns actually. You know, that there are just norms and things like that that are changing and growing. One thing I want to say is that it's not like trans and the trans community is new. I think the visibility is new, but from recorded time in all cultures, there have been people that are recognized as two spirit or there's other terms for them in different.

Sue Marriott: from different cultures. And they're typically seen as being given more respect, being given places of honor, you know, historically. So there is pushback around pronouns and people being upset about that. And I thought it would be helpful for us to just spend a little bit of time explaining what the pronouns [00:23:00] mean, what it means to individuals.

Sue Marriott: You had mentioned before we got on the Story about the three old men in the bar. So that might help us put this in some context of like, now we've got to just sit and talk about this and learn and update our language.

Jeff Lutes: Yeah. There, there's a hilarious video that's floating around and it's three gay men in their sixties or seventies sitting across from three young men.

Jeff Lutes: It's not a scripted video. It's an actual. Video that some researchers did and they're sitting across from three gay men in their 20s and these young gay men throw out some terms And the older gay men had no idea what they're talking about. And I think they did a little bit vice versa as well So that the terms are constantly changing and I'm sure there's language in terms that I as an older gay man I'm not quite Hip width, but you're right.

Jeff Lutes: It's constantly moving and changing. And the pronouns are important just because I think for many years, people felt misgendered and they weren't able [00:24:00] to correct that they had no way of saying, no, that's not how I really see myself. So being able to. put the correct pronouns in their bio, in their email chain, wherever they need to do has been a really powerful way of reclaiming that part of their identity.

Jeff Lutes: I also think the pushback about pronouns has to do with All that we're, the attack that we're seeing on the trans community right now. You know, the trans community is the gay and lesbian community from 10, 15 years ago,

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right? They're still attacking the gay and lesbian community, but they know that public opinion has largely shifted in our favor.

Jeff Lutes: And so, trans folks are the new thing that they can go after in the culture wars, and it's terrible in places like Texas. Just, just in September, Texas passed a, a ban on hormone therapy, and Puberty blockers [00:25:00] for trans youth. There was talk about coming after parents and providers who were affirming of trans youth.

Jeff Lutes: I mean, if that day comes, I'll just give them the handcuffs and say, lock me up.

Sue Marriott: Yeah, it wasn't just talk. Like, I think about that initial case that At Child Protective Services that were that one of their own investigators was investigated and I've seen a big exodus of people that either are parents of, you know, non binary children.

Sue Marriott: It's really, really, really scary. Very, very intimidating.

Jeff Lutes: All of my trans youth in my practice whose parents are affirming have sort of a backup plan, like where they're going to go to if things get worse. Oh.

Sue Marriott: So painful. And going back to pronouns for a moment, part of what is so important, you know, I think for one part of the importance of it is like when we're growing up, nobody's wondering, [00:26:00] you know, back in our day of like, Oh, I wonder if she's going to be gay or I wonder, you know what I mean?

Sue Marriott: Like there's a projection of what I'm going to be. And that's still true about gender so that people that aren't identifying as their biological gender aren't getting language back to them that is affirming, that feels right. And a lot of times they don't know it. So the idea of then at some point recognizing and having a language that fits, then becomes so life affirming and so then utterly, utterly important.

Sue Marriott: There's some research showing, you know, that of course. Because of the discrimination and this erasure and, you know, I think some families that are okay with gay people, if their child was trans, it's a much difficult, more difficult than if they're gay. So as far as, you know, families being the primary source of support, it's still more likely that a trans individual is going to be rejected [00:27:00] than anybody else really.

Sue Marriott: And so the suicide rates are higher. Depression, just violence in general, being beaten up, being murdered, especially if you're black trans woman. But there's also research. What's important is that if you do use their chosen pronouns, if you do use their name that they would like to be called, that just having spaces that affirm them in that way reduces some of those Symptoms tremendously.

Sue Marriott: And we talk about kind of raising the bar of security. It's a very easy thing to do, even no matter where you come from, where you're listening from, just like if somebody's name is David and they want to be called, they like, just call them the name that they want to be called. Even, I know it's uncomfortable for you, but just think about your discomfort compared to the risk that they are taking and trying to express themselves in a way that is often not welcome in our communities and in society.

Sue Marriott: So,

Jeff Lutes: Deadnaming can [00:28:00] be incredibly painful too. Yeah, and say what

Sue Marriott: deadnaming

Jeff Lutes: is? Well, deadnaming is just calling somebody by the name that they used to have before they changed their name to fit their gender identity. And, uh, you know, I have a, um, let's see, how do I say this in a veiled, protecting confidentiality way, I have a A young trans woman who went to a conservative high school and really struggled with depression.

Jeff Lutes: Now in college, a progressive university, and it's just flourishing because they're able to, from day one, and that's part of the dilemma, if in the transition you're known by family and friends, and then you make that transition, it's just hard for many people to remember, especially early on. to call you by your preferred name.

Jeff Lutes: So when they get into environments where it's just a, not an issue and no one ever knew them any other way, it's incredibly. freeing for them. [00:29:00] And just, it's been amazing to watch this young woman just take off, uh, and excel. A grade point average that I can't even fathom.

Sue Marriott: That's wonderful. And that, you know, it takes, like, even affirming people. There is a, um, learning curve. You know, the idea is if you do misgender someone, not to make a huge deal about it. I think, I don't want to say what everybody wants, but. You're, you're in a better position to speak to that. So if, you know, somebody's trying to get it right, but messes it up or continues to mess it up, like what's the appropriate, I think it's appropriate

Jeff Lutes: to apologize and correct, but you're right.

Jeff Lutes: Not, not go on and on about how sorry you are, but yeah,

Sue Marriott: and then try to don't make it about you. Yeah. Don't make it about you. Right. Or how hard it is for you. Or, you know, a lot of times we unintentionally do that. The other thing that I try to do is thank them because it is a burden for people to have to continue to correct or teach or kind of bring us along.

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Sue Marriott: And it [00:30:00] is our job. So when somebody's kind enough to update me, it's like, thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Jeff Lutes: And sometimes they may not be strong enough to correct us. So we need to remember that. And even if they don't say anything, if we catch ourselves to correct. Because they just might not be in a place that they're able to say no, actually, this is my name or this is my pronoun.

Sue Marriott: Yeah, that's right. So, just a little bit more about the difference between non binary, you know, somebody who, maybe who's somebody whose pronouns become a little bit more creative, but that they're not necessarily trans. There might not even necessarily be non binary. I don't know. Like, what's the difference there?

Sue Marriott: Like, I'm thinking especially of kids, teenagers, things like that. Right now, you really do get to explore your sense of yourself and your gender. I mean, it was never a question before. And so, someone who may say that they identify as something not just their [00:31:00] birth orientation, right, they're both not, not that they were assigned at birth, doesn't necessarily mean that they're a trans individual.

Jeff Lutes: That's right. Well, you know, the first thing that comes to mind when you say that is years ago I interviewed Judith Stacy who's a New York City retired sociologist and she did a study back in 2001 on same sex parents and she later had to go to court because the religious right was Cherry picking her work and using it against us, but for instance, one of the things that she found in her research is that kids with same sex parents are slightly more likely to at least experiment with dating someone of the same gender, but ultimately not any more likely to claim that as their identity.

Jeff Lutes: When they get older and so, yeah, I think it just, if you're in an affirming environment in which you can really [00:32:00] explore who you are, you're going to do that. If you're in a less affirming environment, then you're, you're going to stay hidden and impersonate somebody that you're not. So, yeah.

Sue Marriott: That brings to mind, I think it was with you, that didn't you and I interview John Gottman about his research on long term couples?

Jeff Lutes: We did too, and I was thinking, I'll never forget it. Actually, I talk about it a lot because it was the Friday after the Tuesday 9 11. It was a training in Dallas and all the flights got canceled that week, and so only those of us who could drive got there and you, not, not me, you had actually somehow set up a launch with Dr.

Jeff Lutes: Gottman so that you and I could talk to him about his 11 year study with same sex couples.

Sue Marriott: Which was fascinating. It was. That's so great. I forgot that context. You just, but I do remember that [00:33:00] research that was used against us. Really fascinating. And you know, just As a quick reminder about that research, it was very, some very cool things, but really what came out was it's less about being gay or lesbian or anything like that.

Sue Marriott: It was about gender. So two men together do have different characteristics and two women together can have different characteristics, you know, around sexuality, around emotional expression, but that, that. Ends up being quite separate from sexual orientation. That's

Jeff Lutes: right. And I see that in my office all the time.

Jeff Lutes: You know, men in our culture, and this is a gross generalization, but often true, men in our culture are taught to talk when they need to solve a problem or make a decision. And women talk to connect, you know, lots of standup comics. Talk about how my wife just blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, because women don't really, it's almost like the, the content or the topic is secondary to [00:34:00] their desire to connect and a lot of men don't get that.

Jeff Lutes: So, um, you put two men together and the danger is. They have a lot of strengths. Um, they tend to stay more calm in, during conflict than heterosexual couples do. It was one of the findings from Gottman. But one of the dangers is, given how men are Socialized is helping them learn to connect on a deeper level and to women sometimes it's how do you connect but still maintain your sense of self and not lose your individuality.

Jeff Lutes: So

Sue Marriott: yeah, it sounds so kind of a little bit stereotypical. It's like, I'm like, is that really what the finding was? I don't want it to be. And perhaps

Jeff Lutes: it would be different today. Because that study was several years ago.

Sue Marriott: Yeah, yeah, yeah. What I remember about it was that we had more humor, and that lesbian bed death wasn't true, and that, this is just statistically, we had sex on [00:35:00] average less often, partly because we're not socialized to initiate, and that we'd like to feel really connected before that happens, but that the sex itself was more satisfying.

Sue Marriott: That was one of the findings. I remember that. I was like, yeah.

Jeff Lutes: Gottman went public and said, straight couples may have a lot to learn from gay and lesbian relationships. He

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Sue Marriott: did. I had wondered about that if he had continued that because that was a long time ago And this was a longitudinal study where they looked at people over time I believe and I had wondered if that research I continued.

Jeff Lutes: I don't know of another Study or a continuation of that study. My understanding is that he did that study of same sex couples Not so much because he was interested in our community, but he wanted to understand differences in gender And he thought observing two men or two women together might be a way to do that.

Sue Marriott: Certainly. Yeah. So anything else that you're seeing through the conference about what [00:36:00] people are interested in either learning about or teaching? Any particular trends?

Jeff Lutes: I think there's a trend towards really wanting to increase understanding and awareness around gender identity. It sort of mirrors what's happening Culturally and politically, that's a big push.

Jeff Lutes: And also for helping people understand the, not only polyamory, but all the different ways that people form relationships and connections. We have presenters that come and talk about kink and fetish and, you know, all kinds of stuff that if I had hair, it would blow my wig off. But, uh, it's great stuff and I'm always glad to have them be a part of our

Sue Marriott: conversation.

Sue Marriott: Well, I love that continuing to push the boundaries and expand the space of what is seen as healthy and normal. And One of the things we talk about on the show a lot is secure relating doesn't necessarily mean that you are [00:37:00] safe, but you have enough of this internal stability to be able to manage big feelings and stay connected.

Sue Marriott: And I think these kinds of trainings really grow that. Secure space, being able to, you know, not have our wig pop off when whatever it is that we're hearing in sessions. You've written several things. Your article chapter was about, why don't you just tell us about it?

Jeff Lutes: The professional Well, during my time working with Soulforce, I was learning a lot and encountering so called conversion therapy or reparative therapy.

Jeff Lutes: Sometimes when we would go to Christian universities and we would bring folks from our community, they would make sure they had The guy or the woman there who used to be gay, but no longer is, you know, supposedly, so this was, I [00:38:00] began to dive into that research and learn more about it and, and find out just how many people had been damaged by that.

Jeff Lutes: Exodus International was. An international, a huge organization that folded in 2009 when the executive director went to his board first and then came out publicly and said it doesn't work. It never has work. I'm not sure we ever changed anybody and I apologize for how we harmed people. So I had put together a presentation along with a colleague here in town and we went to AMFT conference in I think in 2010 or 11 and gave a talk on that topic.

Jeff Lutes: And it just so happened that somebody in the audience was a textbook. Editor. And he contacted us a couple months later and asked us to write a chapter on the dangers of reparative therapy. So I did that and then a [00:39:00] few years later another couple of editors asked me to contribute on that same topic and then a few years later another one.

Jeff Lutes: I don't want to write about that anymore, I'm tired of it. No,

Sue Marriott: no, no, no. You know, we were watching this series called, um, A Long Way Home, something like that, that had a, it was historically based and it had the most chilling depiction of conversion therapy that I have ever seen. So hopefully the word is out about that.

Jeff Lutes: Well, we're certainly fighting it and there are more laws, particularly making it illegal to practice with minors, but we're still fighting it across the country because there are those that want it to be. Something that we use not only with minors, but with all queer adults. So even though Exodus folded over the years, a number of smaller organizations have sprung up.

Jeff Lutes: So it's still very much with us [00:40:00] and we've got to keep, uh, alerting people to the dangers.

Sue Marriott: Yeah, because it would be like, let's say somebody's listening. So let's say you're a cis straight guy and you're listening. Basically, it would be the same thing as kind of being forced and brainwashed and with medicine and with very aversive techniques, scary aversive techniques for you to shift your orientation from women to men.

Sue Marriott: And if you can just even imagine the impossibility of that, it's the same thing, basically, it's, that's how, you know, there's no way that something like that is going to work from a soul perspective.

Jeff Lutes: One of the things I did during my time with Soulforce was organize a conference called the Ex Gay Survivors Conference.

Jeff Lutes: It was People who used to call themselves ex gay and but they had never had a place that they could come together They found each other online and in different chat rooms But they had never been able to [00:41:00] come together in one space and we had over 200 people come from across the country Some from the UK and

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Canada just to be around other people for a weekend talking about what they had been through and some very moving experiences.

Jeff Lutes: Like we played some music and had them go up on. On a white piece of paper that had some prompts and write down whatever came up for them and, you know, some of them more heartbreaking spending tens of thousands of dollars trying not to be gay. And we've got to keep fighting against that kind of dangerous misinformation.

Sue Marriott: I'm just so touched by that about, uh, again, you organizing something like that and how healing that that must be, uh, then you continue to write. and you got interested in a book on long term same sex couples. What inspired you in that direction?

Jeff Lutes: Well, it's, uh, nothing like the podcast that you [00:42:00] do, but, uh, several, uh, for a couple of years before the pandemic, I interviewed same sex couples that had been together for a long time, and just decided a few years ago that I wanted to transcribe some of those interviews and add to them.

Jeff Lutes: And so I interviewed 17 LGBTQ couples that have been together. I think the youngest one, two women, have been together 21 years. And then there are two women that are just shy. I think they're just before their 59th anniversary now. And we just had conversations about their coming out experiences, and how they met, and the adversity that they faced in their culture, their churches, and how they overcame that to form such resilient.

Jeff Lutes: Bond and it was just really heartwarming for me to be a part of that and so I just decided to share it. It's called trailblazers in love and it's available on Amazon and Barnes and [00:43:00] Noble. And it's kind of an interesting book because it's a square eight and a half by eight and a half and it's got a lot more photos than a traditional book. But a lot more text than a coffee table book.

Jeff Lutes: So it's kind of a hybrid of the two. A lot of people are getting the hard back as a, as a way to have a coffee table book. And the nice thing about it is you can literally just pick it up and read one chapter, one couple story and put it down and come back and pick a different chapter. I did it because I still, even though it's gotten better, I still have so many particularly young queer clients who, who come in and they say to me, Jeff, you know my, this guy I'm seeing, it didn't work out.

Jeff Lutes: I'm so frustrated. I just don't think gay relationships work. And then a couple hours later, invariably, I'll have a straight client come in complaining about the same things. I'm trying to meet somebody, or I was dating and it didn't work, but the difference [00:44:00] is straight people never blame their dilemma on their sexuality.

Jeff Lutes: Gay people run it through that cultural shame piece where they feel like there's something wrong with us and our ability to form loving relationships. And, you know, part of the problem is visibility. Folks my age are not down on 4th Street dancing at the gay bars till 2 in the morning anymore. We're out in the suburbs washing our dog and so.

Jeff Lutes: You

Sue Marriott: don't know us.

Jeff Lutes: Okay, let me stand corrected. Me.

Sue Marriott: I just went to a Beyonce concert. Lizzo. You are hitting girls. I am dancing.

Jeff Lutes: I am dancing. Go for it. But sometimes the younger community doesn't see these long lasting older. So I wanted to tell their stories as a way of sharing some hope and inspiring others.

Sue Marriott: We've just had such parallel paths. Cause I do remember I was one of the, I was the [00:45:00] first intern at OutYouth, which is a local nonprofit for gay kids. And one of my memories of that is that those kids would come in and, it was coming from within the community too, around this high sexuality, particularly for the boys, high sexuality, you know, it was this freedom, but that doesn't necessarily match where everybody is.

Sue Marriott: And so there was kind of like, I'm either going to be in this very stimulating, highly sexual path, or I don't fit. And, you know, relationships aren't for me. And at the same time, there was a little rag that, you know, you would pick up in the bars and it would be the gay, kind of the newspaper, but it wasn't really a newspaper.

Sue Marriott: And really what it was before things were online, it was tons and tons of sexually related ads of one kind or another. And at that time, this is how this dates it, but there were obituaries. And so one of the things that I've thought was [00:46:00] important was we created a weekly, or I don't remember if it was monthly or weekly, but a article that was really talking about long term couples and really wanting to have kind of a counterpoint to that around like, no, this is, we still get freedom.

Sue Marriott: And part of that freedom is being able to settle down and whatever way that that looks like for you. And then I remember you and I did Passionate Pairs. Oh my gosh. For the

Jeff Lutes: same reason. I did have, I had some hair then, I think, at least a few, yeah.

Sue Marriott: That's right. But again, it was like these long term works, I mean these workshops for couples, like with, so this whole notion of, yes, um, intimacy and coupling.

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Sue Marriott: Can happen does happen already happens and so you're really highlighting through your book these stories And I've seen the picture. They're beautiful incredible pictures of these Faces of people [00:47:00] and another thing I like about what you're doing is there's so much Like, now the young people, you've got kids, I've got kids, I mean, they know it, they think they know it all, and I'm a dinosaur, like, there's so far left of me, that I really do feel like Hello.

Sue Marriott: You know, I was out there. I was marching. I was doing things like part of why you can do what you're doing is because of all the people in my generation did the thing that they did. So there is something about like, uh, yeah, don't write us off. You know, we. The chain of social justice is long and everybody just has their one piece that they're doing and and Jeff the piece that you're doing here with this book is just Incredible and I think that you said it's a great gift potentially

Jeff Lutes: I think so, you know, one of the things I liked about it is that these couples did they were so vulnerable They didn't try to [00:48:00] act like they were flawless.

Jeff Lutes: I mean everything is in the book from bankruptcy to affairs to addiction and To rejection from family and being thrown out of churches. And the very first chapter is Lisa Rogers and her wife, Maureen, who Lisa was the co founder of OutYouth that you just mentioned. And the very last chapter is. Phyllis Fry and her wife, Trish, who unfortunately passed away just two years ago from cancer.

Jeff Lutes: They were together 48 years. Phyllis is the first openly transgender judge in the country. And her story of doing advocacy work back in the 70s. Just is amazing stuff. I mean, I remember how hard it was in the 80s and 90s I can't imagine what it must have been like for her and others so many years before that

Sue Marriott: So I [00:49:00] love the collecting these stories and I really encourage again any of you youngsters listening to honor your elders but also like there's a lot of opportunity to collect stories here and I'm thinking about even in pride events and stuff like that, reaching back to some of you and people before us that, and really honoring and having them be part of planning the different event.

Sue Marriott: You know what I mean? Like being able to cross those divides. There

Jeff Lutes: are forces that want nothing more than to erase our stories. That's right. To make sure that we're invisible. And so part of books like this and, and many others is, is collecting our history. And being sure that we share those stories.

Sue Marriott: So, I was thinking, Jeff, if you could talk to the parents and the folks that have family members that might have somebody that is queer or gender non binary that either they're having trouble with or that maybe one of their family members is having trouble with, can you speak to them directly and [00:50:00] maybe give them some guidance and some thoughts?

Jeff Lutes: Sure. You know, I think it's just really important that family members, first of all, are patient and understand that there's no one way of coming out. And, you know, some people come out on Facebook to thousands of friends and other people, uh, go through a very long process of figuring out who they think at least will be the safest person.

Jeff Lutes: And maybe that's the only person they tell for months before they try someone else. So to be very patient and allow. that person to have their own process of coming out and to not force it, to, as a family member, to try to learn as much as you can about what it means to be part of the gay community and to kind of question maybe your own biases and your own areas of blindness or misunderstanding about the topic.

Jeff Lutes: And, and then of course, Just being willing, I think, to challenge [00:51:00] homophobia whenever you see it out in the world. When a workplace person tells an off collar joke, or makes an anti gay comment, or just even a microaggression, having the courage to speak up and maybe even express that you have a loved one who's gay.

Sue Marriott: there was an example at one point of being able for empathy development to, you know, to think about this idea of, I'm assuming, uh, heterosexuality right now that you didn't choose. You're not, it's not like an active choice and it's like, Hmm, which one am I going to, you know, I am choosing to be attracted to the opposite sex and that for, to kind of channel the idea that it's the same thing and to ask somebody to be different, is that fundamentally different and And strange, frankly.

Jeff Lutes: Yeah, the joke is, like, Yeah, I woke up one morning and thought, Hmm, let's see. Do I want to be [00:52:00] generally accepted in the world? Or, would it be fun maybe to have my father disown me and my church kick me out? And maybe lose a job? Or, Right. Like nobody gets up in the morning and makes that choice. And just to understand, and there's actually some really great comedians on the street who go out and put their mic out in front of people and say, is sexuality a choice?

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Jeff Lutes: Oh yeah. People choose their sex. Okay. Would you tell us about the process of when and how you chose your sexuality? Oh, well, uh, no, I, so right. Like through the lens of heterosexuality, it's not a choice, but for queer folks, it is.

Sue Marriott: And it's an important point because I think it helps people move to empathy that if you're seeing it as more of something that isn't a conscious choice, but also I would say we have more choices now, like both of us have kids and raised kids with same sex parents.

Sue Marriott: You know in same sex families and there is more [00:53:00] freedom So to some degree there may be a little bit of a level of where there's some choice about it But I do think that you know, if someone's coming out to you, first of all, that is an act of trust And to see it as an act of trust. It's not an act of rejection.

Sue Marriott: It's not about you It's about them. It's incredibly irrelational It's relational. That's right. And it's an opportunity to learn even more that you didn't know. Find out more. Ask questions. Don't assume that, you know, if they want to tell me, they'll tell me. They might be thinking if they wanted to know, they would ask.

Sue Marriott: So it's way better to make the mistake of asking, including like, let's say, you know, they've come out a little bit, but don't talk about it. Ask them if they're dating. Find out how it's going for them. Ask them how their friends are doing with it. We just really encourage you to stay engaged, stay engaged, stay engaged.

Sue Marriott: You're

Jeff Lutes: making me remember that as a young man, when I came out to my mother, who Southern Baptist, very conservative, [00:54:00] cried when I told her, really struggled with it, did for a long time, but even in that initial conversation, as it unfolded, I was telling her about The relationship that I was in at the time and suddenly something I said got her off on another track and she was telling me about the man that she's dating and then sort of midstream, she paused and said, we're both talking about our boyfriends.

Jeff Lutes: And, you know, she, she had this moment of connection where she saw me as more authentic and therefore more easily able to connect with in a. Genuine way. So I've always remembered that moment.

Sue Marriott: That's wonderful. And even as you're saying it, it's like it's so normal to us. I just had this pang when you were telling me about your mother, kind of crying about it, like it's just normal.

Sue Marriott: We know that that happens, but when, when you hear it with fresh ears, it's like, how sad. I mean, it's, it's a sad experience [00:55:00] to be in that position of disappointing your parent and then having to absorb their reaction to that, even though that, in this case, you know, it sounds like it recovered very quickly and you guys were off to the next subject pretty quickly, but we know that that is not.

Sue Marriott: How it always goes by any stretch.

Jeff Lutes: Oh, yeah. It was an incredibly long process and in fact to this day It is sort of still very complicated she never forgets my husband's birthday or any of our kids and Sends all letters to the lute stein family But she also goes to Franklin Graham rallies and votes for Trump and believes that marriage is between a man and a woman.

Jeff Lutes: So, you know, it's really complicated how all those things sometimes fit together for a person

Sue Marriott: contradiction Contradictions being able to hold contradiction. So what about for therapists? Why don't you speak a little bit to therapists that want to understand [00:56:00] and be? more, uh, sensitive and kind of up to date on working with GLBTQ clients?

Jeff Lutes: Uh, good question. I, I think maybe in terms of three points. One is knowledge and skills or continuing education. The other is professional presence and the third is advocacy and activism. So Just like when you're working with any particular group, you, you need to have as much knowledge and skillset as possible.

Jeff Lutes: So being sure that your continuing education set includes all kinds of things around working with the queer community. You know, in our certification program and our conference, we have recorded workshops on working with. People of color who are queer. We have specific to Asian Americans. We have understanding the latest WPATH standards.

Jeff Lutes: WPATH is World Professional Association [00:57:00] for Transgender Health. Those standards are always evolving based on the latest science. We have workshops on how to change your gender. pronouns and name legally. You know, all those kinds of things are available not only in our program, but in other places. And just making sure that you're constantly making yourself available to those pieces of education is really.

Sue Marriott: Would you mind if I ask a quick question about that? So the, what did you say, WPATH? WPATH, uh huh. Can you just give an example of something that they would advocate for?

Jeff Lutes: Their standards are constantly changing, and I actually need to update myself because a new set of standards came out recently. But, for instance, when working with children, there's an awareness around you don't just Advocate for transitional care if the child is talking about it for the first time.

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Jeff Lutes: You look [00:58:00] for a history. You look for multiple stories over many months and years of people who have wanted to be the other gender, wanted to transition, so that you're ruling out other potential problems. So, that's just one example, but there are many parts of that

Sue Marriott: standard. That's, it's a great example actually because it brings to mind the trickiness that in our desire sometimes to be up to date and with it that especially I think for boys, for young girls to be masculine, they are tomboys, right?

Sue Marriott: And so they're, we don't jump to, oh, they're gender variant or they're non binary necessarily, but, you There is a danger of jumping, of like, of pre identifying, or of kind of going too fast. And, you know, now that we have these options and all these cards on the table. So that a boy who's [00:59:00] exploring their femininity, like that doesn't mean that they're necessarily gender non binary,

Jeff Lutes: right?

Jeff Lutes: Not at all. And I think as a clinician, you can hear the difference. If you're paying attention over time, you can hear the difference between a tomboy or a boy. That's kind of exploring their feminine side. It sounds really different in the way that they talk. People who are serious about transition, who really are going through dysphoria, talk about it in terms of as far back as they can remember.

Jeff Lutes: And they talk about a lot of self hate around the body that they're in. And they talk about a desire. In a way that tomboy and those kinds of folks

Sue Marriott: don't. So, and notice that there's no corresponding name to tomboy, right. There's not like interesting, right. Sally girl or I, I don't know what it would be, but, uh, , there's a little patriarchy in that I think, but, uh, because there's no room, right?

Sue Marriott: You're not [01:00:00] supposed to be like a girl, but it's okay for us to want to be more like a boy.

Jeff Lutes: Good insight. .

Sue Marriott: So that was the first one. You had the three. Yeah,

Jeff Lutes: just, you know, just making sure that you're constantly educating yourself and to be quite honest, one of the reasons I love doing the conference and organizing it is I feel like I'm constantly creating my own education and my own CEUs, bringing in these great speakers that have so much more expertise in certain areas than I do, and I love it.

Jeff Lutes: I learn as much as anybody else does every year. Secondly, I think, uh, professional presence. How do you present yourself professionally? What does your website say about you? Do you say that you work with queer couples, but all your images on your website are heteronormative? What is the language on your website?

Jeff Lutes: Is it all he, she, male, female? Husband, Wife, Boyfriend, Girlfriend, or are you more careful in how you present that language so that [01:01:00] everyone is Welcome to your practice. What does your paperwork say about you? I put questions about gender Identity and sexual orientation right under name, address and telephone number.

Jeff Lutes: And I do it not only as a question, but also a statement, right? Having the question that quickly in the paperwork says something about me and my practice. What does your waiting room say about you? Do you have some magazines that are, um, make it clear that it's a safe place to work with it? the queer community.

Jeff Lutes: Do you ask about pronouns? I ask about pronouns almost the first thing, like as we're sitting down and I'm starting my clinical interview, I will say, what pronouns would you like me to use? And for a lot of straight cisgender clients, they sort of do a double take like, Oh gosh, I've never been asked that before.

Jeff Lutes: They just can't imagine why I would [01:02:00] ask it, but I do it for two reasons. One is to make sure that I don't make an assumption that I don't make a mistake, right? Just because someone looks to me male or looks to me female, that doesn't mean anything. So I always want to be respectful and ask. How they want me to identify them.

Jeff Lutes: And secondly, again, I'm making kind of a commentary, a cultural statement around the importance of asking about pronouns and being sensitive to them. So that's, you know, maybe a few thoughts about how do you present yourself professionally?

Sue Marriott: I love what you're saying about the photos and like representation and things like that.

Sue Marriott: The thing that I worry about is kind of almost the reverse. It's like in efforts to show diversity and to show allyship that I worry about, you know, like. intentionally finding images of BIPOC people, for example. And like, at what point, [01:03:00] I don't know, like that tension of, this isn't going against what you're saying.

Sue Marriott: It's absolutely true that people need to actually go find those images and make sure that those images are there so that people see themselves when they open the. But just interestingly, I, I personally worry about the other side of it, which is trying to show something, you know what I'm saying? That like, where it doesn't feel real or it doesn't feel genuine.

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Sue Marriott: Do you have thoughts about that? Or do you know what I

Jeff Lutes: mean? I think I do. And you're right. It's a balancing act. And when I talk about images, for instance, I think there's an image on my website of two people holding hands. And it's really kind of hard to tell whether they're male or female. That's all I mean.

Jeff Lutes: It's not like I feel like I have to have a matrix with one Interracial couple and one black couple and what yeah, it's not like that at all But just paying attention to what is the feel for my site and is it? [01:04:00] and welcoming to all people. Thirdly, I think that the final piece is advocacy and activism.

Jeff Lutes: And there are probably some therapists that would disagree with me about this, that think, you know, our work is in the office. But to me, if you're going to work with the queer community or any marginalized community, you need to have. Some ability and some willingness to get involved politically and in your community.

Jeff Lutes: So that just means things like calling your senator, calling your representative when there are anti gay bills. Learning the resources that are out there in the community that you can refer people to. Attending rallies and marches. to educate yourself and also show your support for that community. I think clients feel the difference when we're involved versus when we are not.

Jeff Lutes: And there are a lot of therapists that see themselves as [01:05:00] affirming, but I think you have to get them actively involved in order to be. Your best version of yourself as a therapist.

Sue Marriott: I love what you're saying and what you said earlier about calling people out or calling people in when you hear off color things, things like that.

Sue Marriott: Like that's another version of kind of advocacy. Absolutely. The other advantage of that is it also helps you continue to be more and more comfortable with difference. with the language so that you're not shocked that that is an important so that you're, you're really embodying this welcoming message because you've heard it and you know how those things sound or you know, you know what I mean?

Sue Marriott: That like, you really are there. And it, again, it's not performative or it's not like you want to be, but you can't quite say the word gay or it sticks. And you're, you know, crawl a little bit when you talk around it, you know, but that you're able to just say queer, gay, you know, whatever it is. And like asked pronoun, like being able to ask pronouns without blinking or respond to someone's request for a [01:06:00] pronoun shift or a pronoun that you don't expect.

Sue Marriott: And being able to be appreciative to be appreciative of, Oh, thank you for letting me know that. And that's a process. So I'm, I think what you're saying is like by getting more involved and really showing up and doing the rallies and paying attention to what's happening in the community, that that is a way to kind of internalize it more and, you know, take it into your body and make it more comfortable.

Jeff Lutes: And to the extent that we're comfortable, those of us who identify as queer, who are our clinicians, to be as out and visible about who we are in the world so that we can create a safe path and a safe space for others. That's also really important. I've noticed recently, I don't think I've said the words I'm gay to anybody in 25 years.

Jeff Lutes: But I say all the time, my husband and I went and saw this really interesting movie, I Just Came Out. Yeah. Right? There's a little. Lots of ways to do it. Little pub around [01:07:00] the corner. A lot of conservative folks I go to on occasion and I do that quite a bit. It's just my way of. Punching holes in heterosexism.

Sue Marriott: Yeah, I mean Ann and I being out here and uh, just being who we are, you know We're not waving a flag or whatever, but we are right like just our the personal is political. So it's important Going back to intersectionality for a moment, because it's just such an important subject, because it would be so nice if we were just only gay or only one, you know, only one thing.

Sue Marriott: But for many, many, many people, there's multiple marginalizations, and it can get very complicated. And I think that you're in a unique position with the conference that is beautifully diverse of kind of boots on the ground about how all that's going. Can you speak at all to your experience related to intersectionality, BIPOC?

Sue Marriott: Kind of crossover with race, with [01:08:00] culture, with specifically the different marginalized identities and how that plays out.

Jeff Lutes: Yeah, it's just really important. You know, I am a gay, white, cisgender male. So I have some personal understanding of what it feels like to be discriminated against based on my sexual orientation.

Jeff Lutes: But I'm also white and I'm also male. And I'm also cisgender and

Sue Marriott: I and you also Pat

Jeff Lutes: you could pass and I could pass and I have privilege Well, thank you. Some people might disagree sue about whether I

Sue Marriott: could pass

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Jeff Lutes: I'm getting over a cold. So my voice is deeper than normal Yeah, right those that know me would not say I pass but thank you for that Sue I guess

Sue Marriott: Well, you could if you wanted, if you needed to, like if you were in a dangerous environment or something, right? Like, which matters because some people cannot, they don't have that choice.

Jeff Lutes: [01:09:00] That's right. In fact, I did a couples workshop years ago. It's always stuck with me to, uh, black lesbian women who were a couple and they talked about how, you know, when they step out into the world every day, the first thing that they have to deal with is their color. They can. choose to hide their sexuality if they want, or disclose that to who, and when they want, but their color is visible and they can't hide that, and they wouldn't want to, but they have to deal with reactions to that and microaggressions every day, so you know, as a white male therapist, I have to really work hard at paying attention to how are all of my identities, all of the identities in my client interacting, and to ask good questions about that.

Jeff Lutes: My husband, for instance, is gay, deaf, and Jewish, so his experience as a gay man and coming out is different than mine. Right? Because of [01:10:00] different cultural variables and how he's been treated as a deaf man in the hearing world. So just not assuming that our experience of being gay is a template that can be applied to everyone, but really asking good questions and being curious and allowing our Clients to educate and inform us about what their experience has been

Sue Marriott: it makes me think to have like for some people Identifying as gay would be you know 10th on the list of how they identify Whereas for others, you know, it's more of a primary focus and And the differences about how that feels inside one's body is really different.

Sue Marriott: So being able to be curious about the individual sitting in front of you, you know, our preconceived ideas of whatever that is, like labels, you'd mentioned deafness. So then that brings to mind ideas about what deafness [01:11:00] means, but that would be very different than like hearing from Gary. what his experience is.

Jeff Lutes: Right. So we once went to dinner, Gary and I with another gay couple, two hearing friends. This was early on. And one of them said to Gary, I don't see you as a deaf person. And he was pretty clueless how that was offensive because essentially he was saying being deaf is less than being hearing. And I see you as just like me hearing.

Sue Marriott: So the ableism,

Jeff Lutes: that's just, Exactly. It's invisible. Yeah, and you know, it's important because queer people of color are much more statistically at risk for depression and suicide trans women, right? So trans black women have the highest rate of not only killing themselves, but being killed [01:12:00] I mean, that's why, you know, at Transgender Day of Remembrance every November, an overwhelming number of people who have passed away in the last year are trans women of color.

Jeff Lutes: So understanding things like that, understanding, for instance, Asian Americans. Who are queer have a very different experience. Um, I was just reading the other day that it's gotten a little better, but psychiatrists in China Still have a very pathologizing view of sexual orientation and just kind of probably like we did in America 40 50 years ago So how that view from psychiatry permeates out into Asian culture not only in addition to The loyalty aspect in the Chinese culture or Asian Americans, much like in the Latino culture, there's this expectation that you will conform to the family [01:13:00] norms and not vary outside of that.

Jeff Lutes: So just some differences from perhaps the way we experience it as white Americans.

Sue Marriott: You know, if you are black, for example, you don't have to come out to your family, right? And your family is often the shelter for you, but then to come out as gay within a black family, because I'm thinking about the marginalization within marginalization.

Sue Marriott: So, The racism that we carry, you know, even as gay people that just by being raised as white people, um, and in privilege, and then also the homophobia that can be present in BIPOC communities.

Jeff Lutes: That's right. You made me remember that years ago when I was doing my work with Soulforce, we were being trained by an elderly black man that had marched right next to Dr.

Jeff Lutes: King. And I think we were all being very sensitive to [01:14:00] the fact that we didn't want to compare movements. We, I think we were saying things like, you know, we know that our movement for equality is not the same. And, and he actually said. Well, hold on. Yeah, we marched and we faced violence and we did all the lunch counter sit ins and we did everything.

Jeff Lutes: But before we went and did those things, and afterwards, we got to go back to our families and to our churches for support. And he looked at us and said, and you guys don't have that. So, yeah, just an awareness of how these different Marginalized Identities Intercepted. I'm so

Sue Marriott: touched by that recognition.

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Sue Marriott: That's the kind of stuff that we live without. So to have it called out by him, even you relaying it this far, I still feel it. It's funny.

Jeff Lutes: Yeah, it always

Sue Marriott: stuck with me. Yeah, because it definitely feels like it's less than. You know, like that we have it better [01:15:00] or that it's less than or something. So to have that validation is, uh, that's really interesting.

Sue Marriott: Well, and then also around, um, again, the, the, whether it be disability or whether it be neurodivergence, there is a higher association with in the neurodivergent community with gender and with. Sexual orientation, and I'm not quite sure why that is. I'm hoping to interview a person that has talked a lot about this soon.

Sue Marriott: But when we're talking about intersectionality, it's really thinking about, you know, like what is normal and anything that veers off of normal or what the script is is You know these quote variants or you know, like what is a normal brain? Well, there's no normal brain at all and I love the movement these like the disability movement and the neurodivergent movement where that they are Really calling that out and saying, You know, the problem isn't, you know, don't try to get us to be socially acceptable, move [01:16:00] society and widen the window to accommodate for all of us, which is the same message that we all are saying in all of our different movements.

Sue Marriott: So it's really lovely. And it's eye opening, you know, because we all carry it and don't know it.

Jeff Lutes: And I think that's why you're seeing such a pushback by some politicians who are so terrified by Black Lives Matter or the whole woke conversation is that they're just really terrified that we will get equality, that the hierarchy will be flattened.

Jeff Lutes: What a concept, that we'll all be treated the same and have the same. levels of privilege.

Sue Marriott: That's right. The amount of threat that that causes probably is a measure of the amount of privilege that you have, like what you're going to be giving up. Absolutely. Yeah, yeah, so that the folks that are on the bottom here, you know, there's no problem in opening up our eyes and opening [01:17:00] up our hearts and, and shedding some of these things.

Sue Marriott: But yeah, as the hierarchy gets higher and higher, then the investment is more and more to keep the status quo, and to keep the systems intact, that maintain the status quo, that protect the power over. So, It's powerful stuff.

Jeff Lutes: It's like that game that you played as a kid with the House of Cards and I

Sue Marriott: thought you're gonna say King of the Hill.

Jeff Lutes: Where you try to take out one card at the bottom without the whole. They're terrified that if we remove enough pieces of the system that's been in place, the patriarchal heteronormative system that it'll all collapse and Yeah, they won't be.

Sue Marriott: And the beauty is that the opposite happens, right? That that's what when we talk about secure relating and Your work in the conference and your work in your book is that the people that are kind of teetering on the top I think that's why I thought of King of the Hill because yeah, you can fight to get up there But guess what's happening.

Sue Marriott: [01:18:00] Everybody's aiming for you. Like it's not a secure place Versus what we're describing is where it's flat like it's a big King Arthur table and there's plenty of room for people to dance around that you actually gain more. You're not actually giving up something. You're giving up something that is not good for you and you're gaining something that is actually incredibly, incredibly good for you.

Sue Marriott: I like that.

Jeff Lutes: Well said.

Sue Marriott: I love it. So say again the title and where you can get it and your website and you know, how can people reach you? Trailblazers

Jeff Lutes: in love. And the subtitle is Conversations with Remarkable LGBTQ Couples Together 20 Plus Years. It's available locally here at Book People and several booksellers, but globally on Amazon and Barnes and Noble.

Jeff Lutes: You can just look it up by title.

Sue Marriott: And if they wanted to reach you?

Jeff Lutes: JeffLutzPsychotherapy. com Or info at [01:19:00] ContemporaryRelationships. com.

Sue Marriott: Right, and so don't forget about that conference that's coming up in May, whether you might like to be a presenter or like that you would like to attend, and the certification, which um, is really important.

Sue Marriott: And is there anything else? that you would want people to know kind of that I didn't ask or that we didn't cover that you want to

Jeff Lutes: include. Other than Sue Marriott rocks.

Sue Marriott: Are you going to make that your, are you going to make that your passcode? Sue Marriott rocks. Oh,

Jeff Lutes: there goes my bank account. It's hacked now.

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Jeff Lutes: No, thank you, Sue. I just enjoyed the conversation. It was good to talk with you

Sue Marriott: again. Absolutely. Well, thank you all for listening and In addition to Jeff's book, a reminder that our book will be out in April. It is called *Secure Relating, Holding Your Own in an Insecure World*, and also available at all of those places that Jeff [01:20:00] mentioned.

Sue Marriott: And before we go, we both noticed our covers were really similar. Yes. How do you, what did you think about that?

Jeff Lutes: I don't know. Did you hire a book designer?

Sue Marriott: Oh, this was all HarperCollins. This is all totally out of our hands. Yeah.

Jeff Lutes: Yeah. I hired a book designer and that's what she came up with. And

Sue Marriott: I saw a third.

Sue Marriott: I saw a third one that had a little bit of that same. Uh, somebody had sent it to us and it's like, what's going on? You know, I think it's just great minds that think alike. There you

Jeff Lutes: go. That's it. We just gravitated towards each other.

Sue Marriott: That's right. All right. Well, thank you very much for listening and we'll see you around the bend.

Jeff Lutes: Therapist Uncensored is Ann Kelley and Sue Marriott. This podcast is edited by Jack Anderson.[01:21:00]