

Ep 45_ Tess Clabby (they_them)

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SPEAKERS

Adam James Cohen (he/him), Tess Clabby (they/them)

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 00:09

Hi there, welcome to the Second Adolescence podcast here we talk about all things queer healing and second adolescence. So what is Second Adolescence you might ask? Second adolescence is a sort of developmental life stage queer people navigate in our post coming out adult years after growing up within an anti queer world. For many Second Adolescence is about healing the wounds of our younger queer selves, gaining the experiences they missed out on and unlocking what it means for us to exist as our most free and true selves. I am your host, Adam James Cohen, psychotherapist and human who went through his own second adolescence. On today's episode, we have queer style coach Tess Clabby, who uses they/them pronouns, Tess was someone I specifically wanted to get on the show because I was really curious to be able to dive into a conversation around how we might be able to use fashion and style really as a tool in our own healing and liberation and holy smokes test blew me away and offered so much insight. And honestly just inspiration and excitement to further look into doing this on a personal level for me, but also, I think this is going to be such an invitation for you, the listener to explore Hey, what would feel most true and free for me in terms of how I show up in the world, and how I express myself through what I wear, Tess is rad. This conversation was rad. And I just feel so grateful for the work they're doing in this world and for taking the time to come speak with us. And as with each episode of second adolescence, I really want to invite you as listener to listen with open curiosity, knowing that each of our stories are different and unique, you might hear some guest share things that really differ from your experience, whereas other guests might share things that really speak to what you went through or are currently going through. And I really hope that all of this happens and that together we can continue growing and expanding our awareness of what life and queerness and healing can be for folks, if after the show you want to connect further, feel free to head on over to second adolescents pod.com For show notes and more. Or you can follow the show on Instagram at at second adolescence pod. All right. Welcome to the conversation. Thank you so much for being here. Welcome, Tess, to Second Adolescence. I'm so excited for this conversation. Before recording, I was sharing how excited I was. So I'm just so pumped. You're here. Thank you.

T Tess Clabby (they/them) 02:38

Yeah, I'm happy to be here too

mean, I'm happy to be here too.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 02:40

Yay. And so Okay, so there might be some listeners who are familiar with you and your work, there might be others who are brand new to you and your work. I'm sure we'll hear a lot more about you and your work as we go. But what's like a mini little snapshot to introduce who you are for folks who are new.

T

Tess Clabby (they/them) 02:55

Totally Yeah, my name is Tess. I use they them pronouns. I identify as queer and trans non binary. And I'm a queer style coach. So I help queer, trans and non binary folks develop their unique sense of personal style and learn how to shop for their body so that they can express a more authentic and expansive version of themselves to the world.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 03:15

Oh, yes. I mean to so much. Yes. And this is exactly why I wanted to have you specifically on I'm so curious to dive into this conversation because this show this community, this whole idea of Second Adolescence is all about like this process of healing from kind of growing up in a world that didn't make us feel like we belonged, and finding kind of what it means to live our most like true and liberated life and exist in such an embodied way in our authenticity. And I've been increasingly curious about how style and fashion can be this tool in that process, I guess, like maybe even just starting there. Why might it be interesting and powerful for queer people in particular, to explore more intentionally, like, how they relate to their fashion? And what style is for them? And yeah, why might that be important for folks?

T

Tess Clabby (they/them) 04:05

Yeah, totally. And I feel like there are multiple different levels. Like I think it's important for so many reasons. Yeah. What we wear impacts how we feel like we have to put on clothes every day, we have to get dressed every day. And like how we relate to that process is just like the energy that we are starting all of our days with. So if that energy is like great, then we're starting our day like feeling good about how we're presenting ourselves to the world. And our relationship to our clothing is often very intimately connected to both our relationship to our bodies and our relationship to our gender. So clothing is like a medium through which we can start to heal our relationships with our bodies and with our gender. And figuring out how to dress in a way that feels really good. Feels really affirming feels like who we are and Learning how to dress for ourselves and like our own joy versus what other people think, or how we've been told to dress or how we're supposed to present can be a really liberating journey. And it's also like, there's also this reality that how we present ourselves. And what we wear is like one of the very first things that other people notice about us. And so for folks who are like reclaiming how they are expressing themselves in the world, whether that's because you've

like, recently come out as queer or like, transitioned and have a different gender identity and want to express that outwardly, clothing is just like the first tool that we have to show the world who we are. And to express that.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 05:39

Yes, like exclamation point, exclamation point, exclamation point, how did you come into this work, and then maybe share a little bit more what it means to be a queer style coach?

T Tess Clabby (they/them) 05:47

Yeah, my story, I have always really been into clothes and playing around with fashion and style, I was in middle school in junior high like serving Lux doing my thing. So it's always been an interest of mine, and something that I gravitate towards. And my mom taught me how to sew when I was young. So that's like, part of my background too, is I have this technical background in terms of knowing how clothing is designed to fit body shapes. And then how I got into this work really comes to like my own journey of coming out and figuring out my gender identity, which was really intimately connected to my journey with style. Like that was actually the first clue that I had, I came out as queer in like my 20s. And then I came out as like non binary when it was maybe 29, or 30. So like, a little bit later in life. And the first kind of hints that I started to get that something about how I was identifying and presenting in the world was not quite aligned was through my relationship to clothing. I started noticing, oh, when I'm wearing like these things, I feel really uncomfortable. Okay, that's information. And so I started just sort of collecting that information, and making shifts in terms of how I presented and seeing what felt more aligned. And ultimately, that is what sort of led me to discover my gender identity. And that actually, I'm trans, I'm non binary. Okay, and so then how do I express that. So like, my journey with clothes, and my journey with gender is just like constantly informing each other. And so I went on this whole journey for myself. And then I started having friends sort of reached out to me for help friends who were sort of going through their own gender transitions, and discovering style and clothes in a new way. So I started helping them and I was like, Oh, this is something that people really need. And that is like really working for folks. And you know, the more I started talking to people about this, and about doing this kind of work, it was like, every queer person who I talked to was like, Oh, my gosh, that's so amazing. Like, yes, we need that, like, people aren't really doing this.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 07:39

Right, which was my reaction when I came across your work. I'm like, Oh, I got to talk to test. This is so, so powerful. And it's just yeah, this has been something I've been personally looking more at in my own personal life. So many of my clients my psychotherapy practice have been really like starting to explore, like, how they're expressing themselves out in the world and what feels authentic to them. And I just see this as such an important conversation that maybe people don't often give themselves a lot of permission to really dive more intentionally into thinking about style and fashion. I mean, even like my own story, I feel like I used to, like really proudly identify someone who like didn't care about how I dress in the world. It was like a badge of honor, kind of but then like, in unpacking that, in recent years, I've kind of come to also be curious how, you know, that was just like another tool for me to hide, like, since like

growing up in my own story that was so my trauma response, if you will, growing up queer and anti queer world was like learning to suppress and hide myself. And so I've been in this really fun phase now of like, okay, what would it mean to not hide and like, who is the knee within there that like needs to authentically be out here. So very pumped, you're here and this work that you're doing. And you were mentioning, kind of a lot of different facets of what people are coming to you perhaps like wanting and what they're curious about, but also is hearing some different elements of the work you do with folks, it sounds like in this greater process of finding style and using style as a tool of expression. I'm hearing like, probably both, there's like an internal process of maybe understanding maybe some blocks or limitations or whatnot. And also, then this external process of trying things out and gathering this data, I guess, like, where do you start? If someone's like, I want to find my authentic style. I don't even know if that like is the right phrasing. But for the lack of a better phrase will say authentic style for right now. But if people are coming to you wanting to begin, like, what's in that beginning phase?

T Tess Clabby (they/them) 09:24

Yeah, yeah, it's super individualized. Like, that's why I do one on one coaching is it's gonna look different for everyone. And I really need to just meet people where they're at. And you're totally right, that there are these sorts of different realms, like one realm is giving people practical tools like looking at styles of clothing fits, like how to fit their body, like where to shop. And then there's this other realm that's like, what do we need to unpack here to free you up to express yourself and get past these fears and these blocks and these limitations that you know a lot of us have these stories that we've internalized that we don't even recognize are impacting us anymore, right? because they like go so far back. So where I start is I really get to know my clients, one of the first questions I ask people is to describe their relationship to queerness and their identity and their words and on their terms. And then I need to get to know, you know, what's your lifestyle? What's your day to day? Like? what function do your clothes need to serve? And then where are you at right now, you know, people come to me in all sorts of different places, like maybe their body has changed, that can be a big one. So then it's like, very practical, okay, we're like learning how to dress and shop for a different body than we've ever known how to shop for.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 10:32

You mentioned kind of both now and also earlier how part of the almost like socialization with style and fashion involves our relationship to our body, also our relationship to our gender. And also maybe in that is also like our perceived relationship other people have to our body and our gender. And I guess like, I'm curious, on that level in the unpacking, like, what do you find? Yeah, are these stories that people have to uncover? What's like, in that unpacking of like, how we've been socialized, perhaps to relate to style and fashion and how that pertains to us and our gender, our bodies, our selves?

T Tess Clabby (they/them) 11:06

Yeah, totally. There's so much there. And I think an important part of this process of how we can start to like, uncover these stories, because being able to even just identify them is the first step, right. So getting folks to learn how to tune into how you feel in your clothes. That's the

first step even before we can like, identify those stories, because so many of us have been taught to prioritize how we look at our clothes, right? Not how we feel in our clothes. So that's a starting point from which, like, everything else kind of starts to get uncovered. And then we all have these internalized stories. And you know, some of them are similar across the board, just sort of like gender stereotypes. And you know, you can or can't wear these types of clothes because of the gender you were assigned at birth. And this whole concept that clothing is gendered, which actually clothing is just pieces of fabric sewn together into shapes to fit onto bodies. So we all have all of that. And then we all have our own personal stuff. Like a lot of people will have things that someone has said to them at some point in their life. And maybe it was something like seemingly benign at the time. Like maybe it was a past partner who said, like, Oh, I really love it when you wear this, or Oh, you really look great in that, you know, maybe it was even like read as a compliment at the time, right? But then it can sort of like become this seed that gets planted that then you start to leave, okay, well, if I want to, like be attractive to my partner, or like potential other partners, this is what looks good. This is what people find desirable. And then we can start limiting ourselves to that thing, because of this, like one little thing that someone said that we don't even realize anymore is still impacting us. Or you know, it can be someone said, oh, you should never wear horizontal stripes or whatever. Just like random fashion rule. You heard one time, there's so much emphasis in fashion, talk about like, what's like flattering, which again, is just all about how you look and how you are perceived by other people, rather than about how you feel and what makes you feel good. Yes. And it's all from this heteronormative perspective, right? Like the assumption that the desire is to present in this heteronormative way to like, attract this kind of a partner. And these are the things they're going to find attractive,

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 13:12

Right! I bet there's so much that comes up for the people you work with, like there's so much in this idea of kind of how we're relating to clothing. And I love your invitation for all of us to really focus on how we feel in clothing as like the first step, which I guess Does that make sense? But there's so much in that the way you're describing it, you're inviting us to really developed more connection to like this, like inner knowing within us what feels okay, what doesn't? Where do we feel free? Where do we feel constricted? Wow. Okay, that's cool. That is cool. ,

T

Tess Clabby (they/them) 13:46

Yeah and like how we feel can also be impacted by how we look like these don't have to be like totally exclusive things, right? Particularly when it comes to gender. And if you are wanting to present in a way that feels aligned with your gender, how you feel about a certain clothing might be related to like how you feel it impacts the way you look. But yeah, but at the end of the day, it's coming back to like, how do we feel in our clothing? Because how other people perceive us and like respond to that we can try to influence but we don't actually have any control over that at the end of the day.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 14:19

Right! And I can imagine that's gonna be a bit of a hurdle folks might have to navigate in this process of finding what feels best for us. We're so socialized as social beings to like be cognizant of the other and so much of us have our own kind of traumas and stuff regarding

kind of other people's interactions with us and kind of policing, our queerness our gender, all of the things and so I guess I'm curious about do you find that for folks, that becomes a challenge of working with maybe some fears or anxieties they're having about kind of how either particular people in their life might kind of respond to a new way of expressing or strangers in the grocery store? I don't know. Like, I'm curious about that part, which is is a block for a lot of folks, when we're in this process of trying to find ourselves.

T Tess Clabby (they/them) 15:04

Absolutely, that totally comes up both the strangers in the grocery store and the like people who are close to us. And you know, sometimes the people who are close to us, even if we know that they are supportive, that can still be the scarier part, because they're going to notice if you start presenting in a new and different way they're going to notice and maybe they're going to say something. And maybe that's kind of scary, because then you have to, like, step into that and be like, Yes, this is this is me. But yeah, I definitely see this, like fear of being seen being noticed. And I mean, you know, there's this reality that it can actually be dangerous to be out in the visible way, as a queer trans person in the world. Like, depending on where you live. That's real. Yes. But yeah, I mean, most people who come to work with me, they're like, wanting to express that more in a place in their journey where, where they want to express that, but then they can run into these fears. So something that I will invite my clients to do when they're like coming up against this is just like, play around with their clothes and their own expression, in the safety of their own home for fun, you don't have to like wear something new, that feels a little bit scary, a little bit edgy, like out in public for the first time when you're just sort of playing around with it. And it's coming back to this like feeling of playing dress up. Like when you're a kid I used to, I used to love playing dress up, a lot of kids would play dress up like that was like an activity we would like, we would like play with clothes and like put on fun outfits for fun. Yeah, so like, I invite my clients to do that and to like play around with their outfits and their expression when there's not this pressure to then like wear it out into the world and like be seen and perceived right away. And then even just like wear this new outfit around the house, like have dinner with their partner or like whatever, dance around with their cat like, just in this outfit and get to just like be in their own safety with it and feel into the joy of it before there's this sort of like outside pressure of like, Oh, what are other people gonna think,

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 17:01

Oh, I love that. I love that. And then yeah, a bit of what you just shared brings to mind before recording you mentioning how so much of your approach is in helping people kind of be curious to like, in their fashion journey, find the expression that like their younger selves would authentically embody, like essentially, through fashion through style, like, unlock and give space for their younger selves, who was maybe there before the world told them they couldn't be to get to live out? Like, could you share a bit more about that? ,

T Tess Clabby (they/them) 17:32

Yeah yeah. So I mean, this is something that I've been exploring on my own journey is this idea of like, connecting with my kids self, that's kind of how I talk about it. I like thinking about my, my kids self. And you know, being trans like, there's like so much sort of, like unpacking and

healing that's happening with our relationship to our younger selves, right. And what that looks like, can be different for different people, depending on like, as a kid, if you were allowed to wear the things you really wanted to wear, some of us were for me, when I think about my kids self. My style now is like, pretty similar to like, what five year old testes was wrong. And so there's this joy and freedom and healing of like, reconnecting back with the version of myself that hadn't internalized all of these ideas about gender yet that like, hadn't gone through all this socialization that hadn't like gotten made fun of by other kids for my presentation back before that, like who was I? And how did I express myself? And like, what threads of that can I pull and bring into my current expression. And then I think for some people, it's like a little bit of a different process, if you know, they really wanted to wear something as a kid and maybe weren't allowed to, that can come up to so as an adult, you get to be the one to give yourself that permission. That like, okay, I can wear this even if it is just around my own living like even if that's where you're at right now. You got to give yourself that permission and that freedom that your kids self didn't get to have.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 19:00

Totally and right there is so illustrative of the healing that can happen in giving ourselves permission to find what feels most true and fun and free. And how this inner child younger self kids self healing can occur in this process. Oh, I love that and that's just so much of what I talk about within the realm of second adolescence that is such the a goal within this work is finding reconnection to that kid self who was our perhaps most free and most kind of knowing and most like integrated self before the world kind of pulled that apart.

T

Tess Clabby (they/them) 19:38

Yeah, kids are like so good at dressing for themselves and dressing for their own comfort and joy. Like kids don't care what's in fashion. Kids don't care what the rules are like kids just want to wear what makes them happy.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 19:52

Yes. Oh, that's it. That's it. Okay, everyone's invited to ask the question. How would my Kid Self dress? Experiment with that! Okay, so then like for folks who are maybe similar to how I have been with maybe they have some hang ups around like, just feel really unplugged from style fashion, like don't even know where to start in terms of thinking about, well, how do I explore even what would feel good for me? Like, should I be looking at people on the street and being curious about style? Should I be just looking at people on line and being and just making note of like, oh, maybe I want to try that, like, what do you have you found for folks is kind of like a practical like helpful data gathering for folks who are, who maybe they're not ones to naturally find themselves like in a thrift store or shopping around kind of exposed to wear garments and clothes might be.

T

Tess Clabby (they/them) 20:41

Totally. Just starting to pay attention and noticing what you're drawn to, and what you're attracted to, just like on other people out in the world is a great starting point. I think it can be

attracted to, just like on other people out in the world is a great starting point. I think it can be helpful, too. I really like using Pinterest for this. And it's pretty easy to learn how to use so even if it's not something that you've ever used before, are familiar with. It's like not that daunting to like, get on Pinterest and like just start searching a couple of terms, you know, maybe just start with queer style, if you don't know how to get any more specific than that and just kind of see what pops up. And what's cool about Pinterest is that once you start sort of collecting images that you like and feel drawn to, it'll start showing you more similar types of things. And you can discover more easily that way. So like, if you really want to start looking at what styles of pants should I try or you know, whatever, I think that can be a great place to start. Some people will use social media. And that can be a helpful tool as well. One thing I will say is, wherever you're looking, whether it's Pinterest, social media, whatever, trying to find people who have bodies similar to yours is really important. Like a lot of times what we'll see kind of in like the fashion world is we're showing these just super thin sis models, right? Who just a lot of us, our bodies just don't look like that. So trying to envision ourselves in those clothes can be hard. And if those are the images, we're feeding ourselves that can start to contribute to like, maybe not feeling so great about your own relationship to clothes. Yes. So trying to find like people who look more like you. And then there's this whole other realm where like, I have some clients who want nothing to do with Pinterest or Instagram or any of that. So like one of my clients, the homework I gave them was to just sort of like go out into the world, like go on a walk in the woods and notice the like colors and textures that like they're drawn to. Because like that's what it is to it's not necessarily just ultimately, yes, you have to be able to translate that into a top wear a pair of pants, but you can start with just like colors and textures and shapes. It doesn't always have to be capital F fashion.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 22:33

Ooh, that's cool. Okay, I didn't even think about that. Yeah, these other elements that are a part of garments and clothing, but they can be tools in to find kind of what feels most exciting. Yeah, whether that's a texture, whether that's a color. Wow. Okay, fun. Sounds like fun. Sounds like fun. Like, your job sounds so fun. What's it like for you to like, pull back and see that this is the work you're doing in the world?

T

Tess Clabby (they/them) 22:57

Oh my gosh, it's so awesome. It's so amazing. I was actually reflecting this to a friend recently that I'm fairly introverted. So oftentimes, when I'm like, you know, go do a social thing or whatever, it can be draining. But what I've noticed doing this work is pretty much whenever I get off a call with a client, I am like, energized. I feel awesome. I feel so excited. Because yeah, it's fun. And it's so amazing to see this work that people are doing and the like transformation that they're undergoing in the way that they start to light up and be like, Oh, cool. Like, I feel excited about this now or like, wow, this like one little tool just like changed everything for me. And I get to like, just be in that joy with them and celebrate with them. And it's just so life giving.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 23:40

The coolest that's so cool. Does anything else come to mind around obstacles or blocks in the process for folks or anything else to name around? Where you've seen some people need extra support or need some extra kind of push in the process or just have to sit with and be with

support or need any extra kind of push in the sense or just have to sit with and be with whatever the obstacle is? Yeah. Anything else to say there?

T Tess Clabby (they/them) 24:01

Yeah, one of the big things that can come up is people's relationship with their bodies and learning how to find clothes that first of all fit their bodies, and then not only fit their bodies, but like they feel good in and feel comfortable in. And this is a big thing for trans folks. Because clothing is designed in this very gendered way it was these assumptions about like the type of body you have, if you want to wear this type of clothing, like a lot of trans folks really struggle to find clothes that fit their bodies and affirm their genders. And there are like practical, helpful tools for like navigating that based on like, what sort of specific fit points folks are struggling with. And I think it can be helpful to remember that like everybody struggles with this trans folks have their own like specific struggles. Yes. And ready to wear clothing was like never going to fit everyone, right? Even like cis people, trans people, like whatever everyone's body is there's so much variation. In, in how our bodies are shaped so so many people struggle for so many reasons with finding clothes that fit them? Well, it's not just you, it's not a you problem. It's the design of the clothing. And lots of people experience this. And I mean, one practical tool for that people don't really think of tailoring as being an option. But really ready to wear clothing was designed to be tailored, the people designing the clothing, no, it's not going to fit everybody off the rack. And tailoring, I don't know, I think people sometimes have this conception of it as this like thing from the olden time, or like thing for only rich people. Right, right. But it's actually way more accessible than that. And it's something that like anyone can do. And so if you are struggling to like, find this particular, you know, a lot of people's struggles, pants like that can be a really big one pants are so hard to find that fit you well. Just factoring into your budget, that you're going to get them tailored so that they actually fit your body is something that literally anyone can do. And then like your relationship with your body in general, like when you start to really dig into clothing and style. It can just bring up body image stuff. And like that's just something that you're going to move through. And again, I think just focusing on how your clothes makes you feel is like the most powerful thing you can do, versus how you think you're supposed to look.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 26:15

Yeah, totally. And again, yet, like such healing potential, it might have to confront some things that I can imagine a lot of your clients are like, in this process or rubbing up against some friction, whether that's limiting beliefs, or kind of internalized what have you. And like what a cool container within which healing can happen in like giving themselves permission to move through that to allow themselves to find kind of what feels good. And also like, lol, I'm 36 years old, I've never once thought about tailoring, like, I don't even know that was possible. It just seems like something from like decades ago or that only certain kind of echelon of people have access to. That's wild. So we can just like Google "tailor", like, maybe there's one in my neighborhood.

T Tess Clabby (they/them) 26:17

Yes. You just bring in your pants and get the waist taken in a little bit or whatever you whatever you need.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 27:04

So funny. Okay, I'm giggling at myself. Okay. Cool. Cool. Okay, so I'm hearing those are some kind of the roadblocks that people face like anything else to name around outside of work with you, what have you find like for folks to be like, supportive of this? Like, are people doing this with friends or partners involved? Are they like, I'm curious, like, what else has been external tools in the work with clients?

T

Tess Clabby (they/them) 27:30

Yeah, definitely having people or someone in your corner that sees you and is affirming and can be in that like celebration with you, particularly when you're like trying something that maybe feels a little new and maybe feels a little scary, like having someone who's gonna like gas you up and be like, Oh, my God, you look amazing. Like, wow, look at you trying out this new thing. Like, just like that little thing of just having someone who's gonna like be in that celebration with you and be affirming. And then bonus points. If you have someone in your life who has a similar body to you who you can lay around in their closets together. Like that can be a really fun thing. And a way to like, try new styles with like, low pressure, like you don't even have to buy it. You don't even have to like, go into a store in public if like, you have a bestie, who you can just be like, let's play dress up in each other's closets and just kind of like see what happens. And not be like attached to loving the outcome even it's like, let me just try this thing that you have in your closet that I would never buy for myself. But like, can I what happens if I just play with it? I'd like just like having that sort of like curiosity and openness to maybe surprise yourself. And for things not to work to like not everything is gonna work. But when you kind of approach it with that sense of just kind of like play and curiosity, then it doesn't matter if it doesn't work like you tried something. Totally.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 28:50

Yeah, play, curiosity, again, like kids self, like when there was just play and curiosity. I'm taking so many things from this conversation. But I feel like that theme really is sticking of really giving my own self more permission to find play in style. And I'm just so I'm so excited to continue from here. Okay, cool. This selfishly, so pumped for having a conversation. I mean, there's so many more places we could go in this conversation. I'm curious, like, are you finding that there was anything in particular that you feel like hasn't come up yet that you think would be helpful for the listener who is in their own journey of like, starting to maybe open up this question of finding what their own style and using style to support them? Yeah, anything else hasn't come up yet? Yeah.

T

Tess Clabby (they/them) 29:33

I talked about finding your personal style, right, and like expressing your authentic self. And I think it's important to also allow yourself to continue to change and continue to explore and not feel like you have to like land somewhere and like that's it forever. And kind of just like normalizing being in times of transition in relationship to our style, which like, maybe that can

happen because we're in times of trends. addition in other parts of our life, that might be related to like queerness, and gender stuff that might be related to like body changing stuff that might be related to like, lifestyle changes or like moving to a different place where like, the climate is different. So you're just like, literally have to wear different clothes. Yeah, so like so many different ways that transition can come up. And so like normalizing that, like, it's okay to be in a place of transition, it's okay to be in a place of experimentation and exploration. And it's okay to like, let yourself change and grow. I mean, that's, like, so much of my journey with queerness has been this, like permission giving, and like allowing myself to just continue to surprise myself allowing myself to continue to evolve. So like the goal, quote, unquote, of developing your personal style, like, yes, hopefully, you will, like, find some things that you like, land in and feel really great in and have in your closet for a long period of time. And also, you can allow yourself to continue to explore and experiment and change. And like, that's okay. I mean, it's more than okay, it's great. It's beautiful.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 31:07

Thank you for adding that because I could even feel in myself, like almost framing, "finding my style," as a destination and not just like, I mean, LOL It's a journey. But lol It is a journey, you know what I mean? Like, like it but as like, just like a way of being like, that's like a dynamic process that continues to shift like you're saying, like, based on whatever the circumstances are. And just from that I'm taking like, finding my style as just like a lens that I can allow myself to continue to be in, but not to find like, the singular outcome, but just the way of being a process of like, okay, this doesn't feel right. Okay, this feels more right. Oh, this feels fine. Oh, that doesn't feel fun. Just like, again, just continued permission to evolve and follow up. Feels good. Oh, I love that. I love that. Wow. Okay, so then, if there are folks who are listening, who would be curious to work with you, or even just like any type of queer style coach, but like, particularly with you, you alluded to some of the process, but like, kind of what are the phases of working with you? What does it look like? .

T

Tess Clabby (they/them) 32:09

So it will depend on like, where folks are starting from right now I have two different programs. One is a three month program for folks who are really ready to like, dive in and like make serious transformation and like, do the work. And then I have like a starter month, which is let's get you started, see if we can, you know get you to a good jumping off point. And then if you want to keep working with me from there, you can or if you're like great, like I have the tools, I can like go out and use them. Now, you can do that. So like the first session is going to be I'm getting to know who you are, I'm getting to know what the functional needs of your clothes are getting to know what you're trying to express where you're starting from what you're struggling with. And then the second session, typically we do a closet audit. So this is like a really important part of the process, I think is figuring out where you are starting from in terms of what you have in your wardrobe and how you relate to it. Because some people are going to be in a place where it's like, none of their clothes in their closet fit anymore. Like that's where they're coming to me, like literally, they just like, don't have clothes to wear on a day to day basis. And then some folks are gonna, like have some clothes that they like, and that fit their bodies. But you know, they have feel like they have some pieces that are missing, or they don't quite know how to put them all together. That's this whole process. It's not just like, okay, finding the individual pieces of clothing that like fit and feel good, then it's like, okay, how do

we put it together into an outfit? How do we style it in a way that feels good and feels like authentic to you? How are we expressing your personality with like, the way we put these things together? Yeah, so the closet audit, we figured out where you're starting from. So we know like what the next steps are to get you where you're trying to go. And then there's, you know, I give folks various homework assignments that involve playing around with clothes that involve making Pinterest boards that involve, you know, probably going shopping and trying things out. And then basically it's this process of like gathering information right in the beginning, they sort of try these various things, they gather this information, we come back together and we're like, Okay, what did you figure out? What questions came up? What are you struggling with? And we go from there. Cool.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 34:08

Cool. Wow. And just again, sounds so fun. Wow. Well, and then if folks who are listening, I want to either work with you or even connect further. What's a good place to send them?

i 34:20

So you can find me on Instagram? My Instagram is @topstitchbitch.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 34:26

Wait, wait, wait, wait, pause, we gotta go back to tell me about finding the name. I love. I love it. I love it.

T Tess Clabby (they/them) 34:33

That just came from a very silly brainstorm session with a couple of friends a number of years ago and I was like, I'm gonna you know, have this Instagram that's about clothes and style and sewing. And so we were just like trying to come up with like, you know, silly sewing puns that felt right. And so like top stitch like that's the thing like that's a sewing technique like top stitching is a type of stitching, right? But it also you know, You, you throw the pitch out there. It's like a little sassy. We've got the rhyme happening, we've got a little bit of a queer reference with like the top part, you know, just kind of all came together.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 35:09

I love it. I love it. I love it. Okay, so you're on Instagram, which you do also offer like a lot of great just information and resources on Instagram so I just recommend all folks that kind of go dive in there. But and then then I interrupted you. Yeah, I don't know if there's anywhere else folks should go.

T Tess Clabby (they/them) 35:23

That's the main place in that I have a website. It's just topstitchbitch.com. So like, if you're interested in my programs, I want to learn more specifically about what I offer, that'd be the place to go.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 35:30

Awesome. Cool. I'll link to all of that in the show notes.

T Tess Clabby (they/them) 35:34

Oh, I also have a newsletter, you can sign up for my email newsletter if you want to hear what I'm thinking about or exploring in the format of an email.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 35:41

Cool any like insight into like different types of things you typically share in your email? Is it all fashion based? Is it other things? What's happening there?

T Tess Clabby (they/them) 35:49

Yeah, it's all sorts of things. So sometimes it'll be fashion based. It's really like what's on my brain. I'm also an artist and I make giant monster puppets in collaboration with my partner. And so like, I'll you know, share things about like the new project we're working on or like the monster parade we just did, and or just, you know, sometimes I'll just like philosophize about like, queerness. And yeah, whatever's on my brain.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 36:12

Oh, cool. Cool. That sounds awesome. Ah, well, gosh, Tess, I've am so pleased and grateful that you came on, I feel like this conversation was such an offering for people. And definitely personally, it's such an offering. But like, I know, there's so many other people who are curious to like, find more ways to like, feel more free. And I feel like so much of what you share today is really an invitation for folks. And so I just really appreciate you having this conversation, the work you're doing in the world, and it was just so fun to get to connect.

T Tess Clabby (they/them) 36:45

Yeah, I had a blast, too. And yeah, I love that framing. It really just is an invitation. If like there's one thing that I want for the listeners of this episode, it's just to like, invite them to find a little more play, find a little more joy in how they approach their clothes and their style.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 37:03

That's it. That's it. Hey, thanks for joining us for today's conversation. Feel free to head on over to secondadolescencepod.com for show notes and more and you can connect further by following the show on Instagram at [@secondadolescencepod](https://www.instagram.com/secondadolescencepod). If you're interested in being a future guests on the show and you want to come on and share about your own Second Adolescence visit secondadolescencepod.com/beaguest and you can submit your interest there. Alright, that's it for me for now. Whether it's morning, afternoon, night, wherever we're finding you and your day, go on out there and keep doing things that would make younger you absolutely thrilled. That is what it's all about. All right. Take good care.