



## **Toxicity in Asymmetrical Relationships**

**Guest: Jimanekia Eborn**

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**[00:00:09] - Jaï Bristow**

Hello and welcome to this conference. My name is Jaï Bristow and I'm one of your hosts. And today I am very, very pleased to be welcoming the wonderful Jimanekia Eborn.

Welcome, Jimanekia.

**Jimanekia Eborn**

Thank you for having me.

**Jaï Bristow**

Thank you for joining us. So you're a queer sexual assault and trauma expert, a trauma media consultant, and a comprehensive sex educator.

And today we're talking about toxicity in asymmetrical relationships. So do you want to start by telling us a bit about what are asymmetrical relationships and what sort of relationships does toxicity show up in that dynamic?

**Jimanekia Eborn**

Yeah, honestly, I think that asymmetrical or toxic relationships can be in any type of relationship that you have. It can be in some of the obvious ones that people think of instantly, which would be like family or the person that you're dating.

And then if we expand a little bit more, the people that you work with, friendships and then you keep going. When I also say the people that you work with, it can also be your therapist, your doctors, your medical care, it's oftentimes people that you think you can trust.

It's the people that you go to when you're seeking this kind of support, where it then turns kind of opposite. Where they are either using you in a way that you don't notice, you become their therapist, right?

**[00:01:36]**

I've had many individuals that I've worked with and many friends that are like, I don't think this is supposed to be therapy. I'm like, well, how was it? They're like, well, my therapist started asking me questions about things I thought about their lives.

Or the doctor was like, well, what do you think? And putting things upon them. And then I've had friends and relationship where I have to stop them and go, do you want a consultation? If so, I will charge you and that will change the rest of this dynamic.

It can feel very overwhelming. It can feel very confusing. It can be very fast. It can happen so quick that you're like... And it can take you for a bit of a whirlwind.

And it's one of those things that happens so often that we don't talk about enough, and I'm excited to talk about it. I hope that everyone takes away a little something. I hope everyone starts to question things a little bit more and also stops people from absorbing all of their information and brain power and energy in a way that doesn't feel good for them.

### **Jai Bristow**

Thank you so much. I think that's like a really fantastic start because people often hear toxic relationships and immediately just think romantic relationships or family relationships.

But I love what you're talking about, about when there's trust and there's basically an abuse of power within that. And that all the different forms that can look like from the medical system, from therapists, as well as friends, family, partners, et cetera.

And I think you're pointing at two different things here, which are both super important. There's the relationships where there's an established asymmetry. So like an established power dynamic, an established fact that we're not peers, like doctor, patient, therapist, client, parent, child.

But then there's also the ones where you think that you are peers, but they still are taking an advantage of. There's still a power dynamic in play, and that can happen a lot in friendships and partners or with work colleagues.

You have the established boss or manager and managee... Haven't done this in a while, apparently. And then you have your colleague where there's meant to be a peer relationship, but then you find out that actually there's an asymmetrical relationship there as well.

So I really appreciate this theme and you naming all these different ways that toxicity can show up.

### **Jimanekia Eborn**

Absolutely. I think that it's so common and it disguises people. It disguises people... It disguises itself within the relationships, which can be really daunting. It can also be pretty traumatic, right?

Like when you think you can trust someone and they end up utilizing you and sometimes feels like pressure. It can feel very much like, again, like a traumatic situation which leads to not being able to trust individuals.

**[00:04:40]**

It leads to not being able to speak your mind because you're like, well, someone's going to do this or someone might steal my information, right? That's also a form of power dynamics.

I don't know how many times I have experienced it in a way that I knew it out the gate. I think over time, in knowing myself and also being in therapy with a good therapist, I have learned the skill set to ask questions. But when you're in it, I'm going to say this, like most abusive relationships, you don't often realize it.

And sometimes the individuals don't necessarily know that they're doing it out the gate. Right. I think we can also note that that sometimes it isn't purposeful, but then it can bloom into something.

And then there are the people that have very ill intentions and seek specific people out because, either they are very intelligent, they are very loving, they are very all of the above. They like to show up for people.

Abusive individuals seek these individuals out. Right. It is sometimes a cycle and you will notice what types of relationships that people have. The places you won't notice it, of course, like teacher student relationships, you don't know.

I remember back in my day, they had rate my professor and maybe you could learn a few things, which is... Or like a therapist, you don't know that that therapist is not a great therapist until it's too late sometimes.

Until now you are processing their feelings and you walk out like, did I just pay to help someone else? I'm confused. How does this work?

And the power dynamics of it all, right? As stated, power dynamics are not bad. It is helpful to name different relationships so you know where you are. I think it's really helpful to know what kind of relationship that you're opting into. But then when it becomes unconsensual is where things change, is when you don't know what you're getting into, is when you don't necessarily know how to handle it because it's not what you signed up for.

### **Jaï Bristow**

Yes, I think that's so important. And you talked about how often when you're in an abusive or toxic relationship, you don't even realize it at first, and it can be really hard to recognize.

And sometimes the person who is being abusive or toxic, and often you need a bit of... It takes two to tango, right? But even so, if the person who is abusing the power, that can be consciously or it can be unconsciously.

And so I'm really curious about how do we recognize if that's happening? How do we recognize if we're in a toxic relationship, an abusive relationship, if there's an abuse of power, if someone is taking advantage of us, especially in those sort of power dynamics, established power dynamics, like with a therapist, like with a doctor, how do we know what other questions to ask? What are the things we need to do to be like, hey, hold on, this isn't okay?

**[00:07:50] - Jimanekia Eborn**

Yeah. I think there's two big things that instantly come to mind. The first thing is how does your body feel? Like, it can be very somatic. I know sometimes I'll get into spaces and my body goes, hate it, and it tenses up. And I'm like, what is happening? Did I hurt myself when I wasn't there?

Which then further pushes me to question more of what's happening. Because your body often knows things before your brain catches up, before your voice box opens up, right? These are the things that we don't often think about.

Why is it that my chest tightens up when I'm around certain people? Why is it that I start to feel uncomfortable, my breathing changes? I think those are things to note in any situation, right? It is safety. And I will speak to this before I go to the next thing.

Safety looks in two ways when I talk about it. Safety is that external thing, like, are they trying to throw things at me while they're talking to me? Are they threatening me? And or internally, are the questions they're asking me putting me in a bad head space? Are the questions they're asking me making me uncomfortable? Are the questions or things they're saying to me making me feel like I need to do more work to support them?

If you're not opting into that consensually, is that something you want to actually be doing? Which I think then leads to more questions. And then another thing that I think is always really helpful is asking people around you that you do trust, right? There oftentimes when people are in abusive relationships, they don't notice it, they don't see it, they're like, well, that's just how they are.

That is an often thing that I hear. Well, that's just how they are. This is just how they maneuver. It takes sometimes people outside of you that aren't in that relationship to go, hey, are you okay? Hey, I notice this. Can I check in with you?

Oftentimes it is the individuals that actually care about you that often show up for you, that see it before you do. So I think those are often the two ways that people notice. It's the people that love and care for them that aren't trying to use them, and or it's somatically within your body.

And some people go, my body? How does my body know? It just does. Okay, let's just keep up. Our bodies hold on to information. Our bodies are often stories that we have collected, and they're embedded in us. And it's also stories that are being written daily.

And sometimes we got to go back and check in on that story and say, hey, I've been in this before, how did I handle it before? Hey, this feels similar to something. What was that thing? And then you sit with yourself and go, oh, I remember this. And I remember how this went. And it did not go well. It was not a healthy relationship.

Then you can start to figure out what you need to do to uncouple from that. And uncoupling isn't just romantic relationships, right? Like, everything is a relationship. This right here, this interview, this conversation, we are now sharing a space. We are now having a relationship.

Do we understand that there's a power dynamic here? Yes. Someone is asking me questions. They are in somewhat control of the questions being asked, and I am answering them. But I've also opted in. So being mindful of the things around us, the things that are coming at us, and the things that we're also sharing.

## **[00:11:19] - Jaï Bristow**

Fantastic. I love that. I love the idea of really trusting our bodies because our bodies sometimes have more information or quicker information than our brains.

And I think there was something you said about support, about are you supporting the person who's meant to be supporting you? I can't remember exactly how you phrased it, but you said something about support, and it really stuck out for me.

Because that's often the thing with therapists, with doctors, with parents, for example, they're all people who are meant to be supporting you. That is their job. Either they're being paid or they opted in when they just became a parent right. Or a caregiver.

And yet, if you're the one who is the one offering support, who is supporting them in some way, then that's when you know that that's a big red flag. That's a big alarm bell that needs to go off.

So that's one of the things that I really took from what you were saying. And also the trusting the people around you, trusting the people you have established relationships with that you have people who love you, who care about you because they will often see things more than you will see for yourself.

And sadly, often the people who love us sometimes even love us more than we love ourselves. And so are able to see things because they sometimes I know this with my friends sometimes that feeling of like, you deserve better, even you deserve better than you think you deserve.

And it goes both ways. I think that about them and they think that about me, right? So that's why trusting the people who love us, that they want the best for us. So I think that's really important.

I had a question about the somatic part about the body and how often what you're describing, it can be a trauma response, right? That suddenly feeling unsafe, feeling like something's not right. And so how do we know if it's like, oh, it's intuition, there's something that's actually not right here.

Or how do we know? Oh, it's just my history and my patterning. Because I have issues with authority, because I have issues with asymmetrical relationships, because I've been traumatized by doctors in the past. How do we know which it is?

## **Jimanekia Eborn**

This is my favorite. This is where we talk about being triggered. I often find that when people are like, oh, I'm so triggered. I'm like, Are you triggered or are you uncomfortable?

Because triggered is like a buzzword. They just throw it around like popcorn these days. And so let's actually get into what that means. And so when we are triggered, we are actually taken back to a traumatic time in our lives.

For some people, it is a visual thing. They can be visually there. They can physically feel everything that happened. They suddenly feel a breeze past them. That is a very real thing. Now everything that happens that is uncomfortable is not a trigger. Are you literally just like, I don't want to be bothered, I'm uncomfortable. I don't like this situation.

**[00:14:17]**

That's also okay and I think that that goes hand in hand with the conversation we're having is, how do we know that is where we have to start questioning ourselves. Once you are say, I'm sitting here drinking tea, having a great day, and there's nothing happening in my body, my thoughts are clear, I'm thinking about the next step. And then something happens that makes me uncomfortable.

My body tenses up, my throat dries up. I can't really think clearly, right? Like, am I uncomfortable or am I triggered? I start to ask questions about this. Do I visually see anything? Do I feel like this has happened before? Or am I just uncomfortable in this state?

And I think that that allows for you to really figure out what's happening and the somatic aspect of it. I often think of the three areas where uncomfortableness, trauma, trigger. All of these things show up. Often my shoulders tense up.

People hold a lot of tenseness in their shoulders. In their hips. Does your back suddenly start hurting? Does your hips feel tightened? Are we often leaning forward? And you're like, I can't move anywhere.

Your gut. People always go, what? I'm like your gut. This is where I ask you, when's the last time you had a bowel movement? And they go, what? And I'm like, we're adults. Come on, let's get our poops together. Because these are often places that things are held on to.

And so if you are in an uncomfortable state, say your therapist starts to ask you questions like, so this happened to me what do you think? And you're like what? Your brain starts to go what, what, what? You start to spiral a bit. That is where you start to ask questions back to them.

Oftentimes when I'm in a state where I'm like, I don't know how to handle this moment, I will ask questions back. Either it will stop the engagement from happening or it will allow them to go, oh my God, I'm so sorry. I didn't realize what I was doing.

Because as we stated before, sometimes people don't know and they get really comfortable, which great, we want people to be comfortable around us. We want people to show up around us. But we don't want it in a way that's going to be harmful for either relationship, for the connection, for the trust.

And so when I think of somatically I think of truly how my body is responding to what is happening. Again, it might just be my thoughts are like spiraling suddenly, and I'm like, why am I suddenly feeling like someone just shook my head 5000 times and spun me in a circle? That might also be like hey, can I take a minute?

If you are often in situations or you've had situation like this, hopefully not often, but you are allowed to kind of step away to figure out what you need. The bathroom, if you need an excuse, let me give you one, you have to go to the bathroom. There's always I have to go to the restroom and that is helpful. Maybe utilizing that can also be a time to give you space to opt into figuring out what's happening for you.

## **[00:17:24] - Jaï Bristow**

Thank you so much. I really appreciate that distinction between triggered and uncomfortable. And that if you're triggered, it's a trauma response, there's some trauma there that needs looking at.

Whereas if you're uncomfortable, it sounds like you're saying it's more like an alarm and alert that there's something not right in the moment. It's not to do with history, it's to do with right now.

And I'm curious because talking about history and right now, sometimes if it's a brand new situation, we don't always know what to expect, right? So if you've had therapy before and then you're with a therapist and they're asking you questions, you can be like, hold on, this doesn't feel right. This isn't what therapists is supposed to do.

But if it's your very first therapist, for example, then you might just be like, yeah, maybe... It feels weird, but maybe this is part of it. Maybe I'm meant to answer questions and maybe it's a tool to help me work on my stuff and maybe you don't know. I mean, for me, I've seen that in relationships, for example.

My very first ethically non monogamous relationship, my first polyamorous relationship was exactly that, it was a toxic, abusive relationship. But I was completely unaware and I thought the problem was me because I didn't know what it was meant to look like.

And luckily, just like you were saying earlier, I had a community of people who cared about me, including people who had been in the non monogamy polyamory world for a long time, who were able to say, that's not okay. That's not non monogamy. That is abuse. That is toxic. That's not right. Get the hell out of there. Look after yourself. Right?

But so I wanted to ask you about that. Like, when it's the first time, it's even harder to recognize. What do we do then? How do we know?

## **Jimanekia Eborn**

I am always someone that says, do your research before you get into new things. So what does that mean? I love to use my good girlfriend Google because she's free. And like, researching, there's tons of information out there now, thankfully and sadly, because there have been so many toxic relationships that there are many articles and examples now.

If you are going to a therapist, let's just talk about therapy for a minute. If you are going to a therapist and the questions start to go not in your benefit and they are no longer about you, the person that is coming for the help, the person that is paying for this, that's where I think you should start to question them.

Hey, you're telling me a lot about your relationship. Does this have anything to do with what I'm here for? Right. And you still might have someone that goes, no, yeah, it's fine, it's fine.

If you are asking questions and they're not getting answered in a way that feels like they're actually listening to you, flag. Flag on the play, as I say, red flag on the play.

## [00:20:18]

If it is no longer centered for healing, and I'll get to my thoughts on healing, no longer around healing for you, no longer about giving you skills, no longer about teaching you and supporting you, same thing. Red flag on the play.

If it is a friendship, right? New relationships, you're learning who people are. You're learning how to connect with people. But if the things that they are doing, they make you feel away, if it's not loving, if it's not excitement, if it's not like, oh, I can't wait to hang out with that person again. Question it.

When you are into new things, it should feel exciting. It shouldn't make you question who you are, it shouldn't make you question where you've been. It shouldn't make you question your own skill set and or the way that you think.

If we're talking about ethical non monogamy, as I also participate in this style of relationships, if it doesn't feel good in the way that they communicate, in the situations that they put you in, ask those questions.

And remember that if the questions and the answers don't feel in alignment for you, you are allowed to pull back. You are allowed to go hey, this doesn't feel good. Can we have a conversation about what's happening and why it doesn't feel good for me?

And if they go, I mean, I think this is blah, blah, blah, if they try to overtalk it, flag on the play. These are flags all day. If they are not green flags, and sometimes a yellow flag, it doesn't mean that it's bad because I like a color system.

If a yellow flag is happening, this is where we can go, okay, this doesn't feel awful, but something's a little off. Let's ask more questions so we can get back to the green. If they're just red flags, maybe we just escape. And when I say escape, that means we remove ourselves from that situation.

And understanding that it's okay. I think that there is shame put upon us, which leads to guilt. Those are the good cousins that no one wants to hang out with as I always say. Shame is what people put upon us and guilt is how we hold on to it.

We don't love that. And so with shame, if you start to feel like they are shaming you and blaming you or making this like a you thing, when it's really you just questioning to understand, to be present, to connect, flag. Is it a good one? No. So let's step back.

And I think that there's a lot of... And we have to be honest, there are trial and errors, right? When you are learning how to use your voice, when you are learning what specific types of relationships look like when they're new.

But again, if at any point you feel uncomfortable, you are always allowed to take a step back and check in with yourself and also use the people, I'm going to keep going back to that, use your people. If they truly love you, if they truly want to show up for you, and let's note that it's not always easy to ask for help, to ask for a reflection, but I promise you they would love to.



**[00:23:32]**

Yes, tell them the thing, walk through it with them, and if they go what? That sounds wild. Ask them why, right? Let's get back to asking questions. Why does that sound weird to you? And sometimes having the things reflected back to us in a different way that's outside of our own headspace can be really helpful to really understand where you are and what's happening in your head because sometimes it's a little jumbly in there.

Maybe it's a lot of thoughts and voices and what ifs all at one time, if you're myself. And you have to get out of that and sometimes you do need help doing that.

### **Jaï Bristow**

Thank you so much. I love everything you're saying because I'm really hearing how it doesn't matter whether you've been in this dynamic, similar dynamic before or not. Whether it's a trauma response or not. Whether it's a repeated pattern, it's like it's all the same tools. It's trust your body. If you're not in doubt, ask questions and or take a time out, whether it's going to the bathroom or just saying, hey, I need a couple of days, or whatever.

It doesn't matter the type of relationship. These are tools that are always there. It's relying on your network, on your community, on your support people, on the people that you trust. And it's talking things through with people having that external perspective.

And no, it's really fantastic tools. And you're talking about the flags, and I love the flag and the color system as well, but you're talking about recognizing red flags in others. How about recognizing red flags in ourselves?

My friend was telling me about a date situation the other day, and I had to say to her, I love you, but right now, he's not the red flag, you are. And she loves me because I'm very honest with her.

But how do we recognize the red flags in ourselves? How do we, again, use our people and trust our people to help mirror when we're the ones that are bringing the toxicity rather than the other way around?

### **Jimanekia Eborn**

I mean, it's true. We all have moments, right? And so that's why I say reflection, and then the thought that came to me when you were just asking me the question is when people go, well, what if I don't have anyone? What if I don't have friends? What if I don't have anyone to reflect with?

And I think that's always a hard space to be in. And I will say to both questions, I will answer both of those, the one that I gave myself and the one that you have given me.

When you feel like you don't have people, I will say do inventory of who is actually in your life, because there might be relationships that you just haven't nurtured that actually are awaiting to be bloomed.

**[00:26:29]**

As my nonprofit, Tending The Garden, how do you tend the gardens in your life? How are you taking care of those relationships? And then to your question of what if you are the red flag, honey, you might be. You might be the problem. How do you think about that?

One it takes self awareness. Which is also really hard for some individuals. And you might learn that in reading books. You might learn that from your people. You might learn that when you have a good therapist.

I think you have to be honest with yourself. I think you have to also be willing to hear it. And it doesn't just have to be from outside. It has to be from... The calls coming from inside the house, honey, sometimes you have to go, hello? Is that me? Oh, it was me. Okay, let's talk about that with myself.

And is it always nice? No, because no one wants to be the bad guy, right? No one wants to feel awful. But sometimes, and there is no excuses for it, but it does happen. Sometimes I'm not always nice. Well, let's be honest, I always say that I'm kind, that I'm not necessarily nice. And I will explain that is my trauma.

When people approach me, I'm like, hi, what do you want? What do you need? Talk faster. And then I'm like, oh, okay, well, yeah, I can help you with that. But it is a protection thing. So is it you not being nice because you want to keep people at bay until you feel like they aren't going to harm you?

Maybe that is something that's coming up. So it might be your past traumas that make you a little flaggy, little pink, maybe a little red. And then you go, oh, it's a little safer now. It's a yellow flag now. Okay, I'm really getting comfortable now. It's a green flag.

Red flags aren't always bad, right? I think we can also note that a red flag on the play could be like, I need to get out of this in this moment, because one of us or both of us are being harmed.

Can you go back after work has been done, which is realization, which might be having hard conversations, it might be doing your own education and or the person doing their own education around situations. Can we come back for them, from them? Sometimes.

Are there people that are just lost to the cause? Yes. But I think we also have to give a little grace in everyone is somewhat navigating different things.

Now, if they are abusive, if they are physical, if they are emotional, if they are spiritual, and you've had the conversations, you were like, I tried. And if they continue to do it, then you go, hey, put your red cape back on, honey, I'm out of here. Because that's not the people I need to be around.

But it does take honesty, even with yourself. Sometimes you might be the bad guy in a situation. And then sometimes people might make you the bad guy in situations. I always say this, we are all someone's villain in their story.

Now, is it because we were actually the villain, or is that the story that they are telling themselves and everyone else?

## **[00:29:46] - Jaï Bristow**

Yes. There's so much in what you said. I like to recap what speakers have said, but there's so much, it's fantastic stuff. I'm thinking back to what you said earlier as well about established power dynamics are okay as long as you consent.

I'm thinking about all the different flags and the fluidity of it that a red flag isn't always bad, that you can ask questions. You can be curious. You can take yourself out in that moment, but then come back in and with new tools, with new questions and see if the flags are changing colors or not.

I love what you said about guilt and shame and how shame is put on us, and guilt is how we hold onto it. There's so many gems in this interview, I love it all.

And that thing of, yeah, sometimes you are the bad guy, and that's okay. We all have our stuff. We all have our trauma. We all have our moments. We all have our faults. We all have our things we're working on. Sometimes we are going to be either the bad guy or the one that needs to do some more healing.

And sometimes we're the villain in someone else's story, not necessarily because we've done anything wrong, but because they're telling themselves a story that they need to reinforce, and they need to make you the bad guy to reinforce their story, to create their self fulfilling prophecy.

And I talk about this in another interview with Raphaela Fialo, so I recommend people check that.

## **Jimanekia Eborn**

That I love that, and I just love it. But before we to before we move on, I want to talk about the healing aspect, because everyone is like, well, I haven't healed yet, or, have you healed? What's your healing look like?

I honestly, in the last few years, because I also run a group, support group for sexual assault survivors, and I was like, what if we took healing off of its pedestal that we've placed it on? Everyone is always like, oh, my God, well, I haven't healed yet. Still trying to heal. What about the fact that every day is different?

So if we took healing off the table and say, I am navigating what it feels like, I'm navigating what it looks like for me to heal, because if we're constantly looking over here, well, Stephanie's already done this, and we had the same thing happen, you are not that person. So if we take this healing off this magical pedestal, take everything off the pedestal, it's not real. If we take it off and we go, hey, this is where I'm at today, and this is where I need to be.

I have been doing this forever. I'm a child of trauma. And some days I'm like, I got this, and other days I'm like, you know what? I got this bed. I will stay in it. I will get up and go to the restroom. I will order food or see if someone can send me some food and navigate it that way.

And so even in these relationships that we're talking about, when we're talking about what they look like and the flags and everything, remember that everyone is navigating through something differently every day, regardless if they are aware of it and regardless if they name it.

**[00:32:53]**

And that can affect you and everyone around it. And if you are that person, whatever you have happening for you can affect you and everyone around you. It is a full cosmic thing because we are all in this. Sadly and excitedly and sometimes together, right?

Like, no matter where we are, if we are in these relationships together. Remember, everything is a relationship. The people at the grocery store, your therapist, your friends, your coworkers, your parents, your siblings, it's all different types of relationships. And they all navigate differently. And some have to be stopped because they were navigating in a way that didn't feel good for you, that put you in unsafe places.

Or you go, this feels really weird, but really good. Let me continue on and ask more questions. But yeah, I just wanted to take the healing off the pedestal, just knock it over and realize that it's ongoing.

### **Jaï Bristow**

Yeah, let's talk about toxic relationship with healing.

No, I love that because our journeys aren't linear and this new hashtagable heal and all this kind of stuff can... All the social media stuff, this idea, this comparison with everyone all the time, this idea that everyone seems to be doing so much better, or the comparison with others, but also with ourselves. Like the number of times I think, oh, but yesterday I felt like, good, why do I feel bad today? Or whatever it is.

So it's not just that healing isn't linear. It's just our journeys aren't linear. Our journeys are complex and that's part of what's exciting about life. And I had a realization myself not that long ago where I realized I was so caught up in trying to heal all the time that I'd sort of disconnected from actually enjoying and living.

I constantly felt like I wasn't good enough because I constantly felt like I was unpeeling more layers. There was always more stuff to work on, more stuff to heal, ways I could be better and more evolved and more enlightened and more this and more that.

And it was like, oh, wow, that's not healthy actually. This chasing of the ideal, this chasing of perfectionism, this chasing of even perfect health, like emotionally healthy, spiritually healthy, psychologically healthy, physically healthy, all of that. It's a lot to try and live up to.

### **Jimanekia Eborn**

It's a lot. I always remind people, this isn't fun. People are like, I'm having so much fun, I'm like what you doing. What are you doing? Because when you're actually having the hard conversation, when you are actually looking at yourself, sometimes you see things that you're not proud of.

Sometimes you see places where you were the bad guy and you go, oh, maybe I see what they're saying. Navigating through all of this isn't pretty. It's not roses. And sometimes we have to take our colored glasses off to see what's actually happening.

**[00:35:55]**

And you do get caught up in... These are all self help books behind me. Have I gone through them? Yes, at different times. But you don't need to read 1000 self help books for every month. If you're constantly reading all the things, when do you put it into practice?

If you're just constantly learning, great, I love learning. But also, when do you actually utilize what you've learned? Or are you just absorbing and being a sponge and be like, one day I'm going to do it, I'm so healed. But you haven't actually done the work. That is a mask.

### **Jai Bristow**

Yes, I feel slightly pulled out here, but yes. No, I think I noticed how you can have all the theory, and I think that's something that can be true of people listening in on these conferences. You get all the theories, but until you actually do the practices and do the work, the theory on its own isn't what's going to heal you.

And I'm saying that for myself as more than for anyone else. I get to the point sometimes where I wake up and I'm like, okay, I know that what I need to do today is I need to do some meditation and then do some exercise and then go for a walk and then not judge myself for having these thoughts and then do work in this...

And I know all the theory, I know that, but am I doing those things? Am I really doing those things? Or am I just, like, hiding from the world under the duvet? And it's okay to hide under the world under the duvet because, no judging, but I think it's really important to remember you have to actually do the work.

And this conference is all about relationships, and I see how for myself, there's a fear. There's a fear of... I know all the theory now of what to look out for and what not to do, but there's a fear of actually entering into relationship, of actually doing the work, of actually putting it into practice.

Now, enough about me. Let's go back to this. You talked about uncoupling earlier. Uncoupling, you've said a few times, all of everything is a relationship, right? And so you said uncoupling isn't just about a partner.

Uncoupling can be your therapist, can be your doctor, can be with family members, can be with partners, of course, can be with friends, can be with all different kinds of people. So could you talk a bit about the process of uncoupling?

### **Jimanekia Eborn**

Yeah, I think uncoupling can vary. I think sometimes it can be real quick for your own safety, and you go, hey, this doesn't feel good for me. I need to exit this.

Or you can also downgrade a relationship. And the uncoupling is a different level of coupling... In the distinction of maybe you're no longer in a relationship but now you're just friends, right? It doesn't have to be an end. It can just be a transition, right?

**[00:38:51]**

Maybe with your therapist and stuff, maybe you got to end that. You got to escape that and just say, hey, this isn't working for me. And I think there's also when we are uncoupling, we can be honest with ourselves and when we're taking care of ourselves and...

When I'm uncoupling with someone, how much do I want to share with them? If I feel like this relationship isn't safe for my internal, my external, whatever, do I want to say I'm uncoupling because X, Y and Z or just keep it very lax, this just doesn't feel good for me anymore. I need to not be a part of this.

Or do you want to go into detail because you think that it will be helpful? Sometimes you think it's going to be helpful and it can be harmful. I think before we decipher on what our uncoupling looks like, we look at the type of relationship it was.

Is it someone that can hear you? Is it someone that will use it against you? Is it someone that will harm you because you are leaving them? I will share something very quickly.

I always say I'm a child of trauma because my mother was murdered in front of me when I was one years old by my sperm donor, we don't call him anything else but a sperm donor, you take that as you want. Because she was uncoupling from him.

He had previously broken her nose and around this time she was like, I need to not be around you. It was an unsafe situation. Should she have possibly done it over a phone call? Should I have not been there? We don't know. We can't do the shoulda, coulda, woulda, but take that as a reflection of that uncoupling in a physical in person way was not safe.

So maybe you uncouple on a phone call. Maybe it's a text message and then you block them. Maybe it's an email, right?

You have to opt in in the ways that it feels good for you or you're like, hey, I really enjoy you as a person. I don't think we do good in a romantic relationship. It seems like we want different things, we are showing up differently.

Or you lied to me many times and I really care about you and I want to keep you around, but if we do this, I don't want to speak to you ever again. So let's figure out how we downgrade this. Again, if it's doctors or things, the cool part is you could just never go back. With a therapist, cancel the card, make sure it's not automatic, you don't have to go back.

But it can look different for everyone. There isn't just one way and I think the whole part of this conversation that I want people to take away is it has to fit for you. We can have a three day conversation about this and you go, but that doesn't make sense to me and that's okay. And this is where I tell you it's okay if what I'm saying... Pick what works for you.

If some of it doesn't work, leave it. If you are in a situation where you realize you need to uncouple from it, you decipher what that looks like in a way that allows you to stay safe and that's internally and externally. And if you can sit down and have a conversation, great. If it has to be an email, great. If it's a smoke signal, if you're like, I wish you well from the energy of the universe, great.

**[00:41:58]**

You are allowed to do whatever you need for yourself, but also know that every uncoupling in your life, because you will have more than one. I know it's true, you can't keep everyone. It will look different.

And also acknowledging that breakups, uncouplings, whatever, are still hard on both sides. People are like, well, you broke up with that person and they were abusive or whatever. Yes, but also, it doesn't mean that every feeling, every connection, every good time disappears.

I don't think people talk about that enough, like, well, you should just be over it. If you're not just over it, it's okay. And I think we should normalize that it was a relationship. You do have ties, you do have connections. So also take care of yourself when you are doing the uncoupling.

**Jaï Bristow**

Thank you so much. I think that's so important. And I love that piece you were saying about, just because you're the one to initiate the uncoupling doesn't mean that there's not a lot of emotion there. Doesn't mean that you're not going to need time to grieve and mourn the relationship. Doesn't mean that you're not going to still be very attached, that you're not still going to have memories, that you're not still going to have the pull to go back no matter how, quote unquote, good or bad or toxic or abusive or whatever the relationship was. And I know this from experience.

I also really appreciate you sharing some of your own journey and some of the things that have happened to you and that you've learned, so thank you. And thank you for this fantastic conversation, there's so many gems in everything you've said. I'm already looking forward to going back and listening all over again whilst remembering that whilst the theory is good, it's also about putting it into practice.

**Jimanekia Eborn**

It is the practice that makes it all come together.

**Jaï Bristow**

It is indeed. Jimanekia, thank you so much for your time today. How can people find out more about you and your work?

**Jimanekia Eborn**

Yes, [traumaqueen.love](https://traumaqueen.love) - yes, it is dot love. And I am Jimanekia on [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/jimanekia). I am Jimanekia on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/jimanekia), put Twitter if you want to talk about wrestling, that is where I'm at.

And if you want to find out more about my nonprofit for marginalized sexual assault survivors that is [tendingthegarden.love](https://tendingthegarden.love).

**Jaï Bristow**

Amazing. Thank you so, so much.

**[00:44:20] - Jimanekia Eborn**

Thank you.