



Kink and trauma

Guest: Dr Liz Powell

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[00:00:09] Jaia Bristow

Hello and welcome to the Trauma Super Conference. My name is Jaia Bristow, and I'm one of your hosts. And today I am very happy to be joined by Dr Liz Powell. Welcome, Liz.

Dr Liz Powell

Hi. Good to see you Jaia.

Jaia Bristow

Good to see you too.

So Dr Liz believes that great sex can change the world. They are the author of *Building Open Relationships*, a sex educator and a licensed psychologist specializing in queer, kinky and non-monogamous relationships. You can read Dr Liz's full bio below this video.

And if you're interested in a conversation on trauma-informed non-monogamy, check out my interview with Mel Cassidy, but today Dr Liz and I are going to be talking about trauma and kink.

So, let's start off Liz by what is it you mean by kink? Because that's often associated with sexual deviancy, and we're talking about trauma and our mind can go to all kinds of places. So let's start with that.

Dr Liz Powell

Kink is actually a really tough term to define in a lot of ways because it's a huge umbrella. Kink basically refers to any practices around sex or sensation or relating that are outside of a very standard traditional, what we would call vanilla monogamous kind of script.

So kink can include anything from sensation or impact play, where you're using either your body or implements to create sensations on someone. Those can be pleasurable or painful or a mix of both. It can include domination and submission, where people voluntarily offer up some control of some aspects of their life to someone or receive control over aspects of someone's life. It can include bondage. It can include things like wrestling or playing. It can include role playing. There's a whole lot of different things it can be, but it's basically a way to think about things outside of what we often call

the sacred circle of sexuality, which is like monogamous sex between people who are married, usually in the missionary position, definitely straight and cisgender.

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And so a lot of things can be kink, it's about challenging taboos, it's about challenging norms and breaking out of those boxes.

Jaia Bristow

Fantastic. I love it. And I think you've done a very good job at defining something you said was difficult to define. So I was surprised when we first talked about doing a talk on kink and trauma because I'm curious, what is the connection between, what you're calling kink or any form of alternative sexual practice and trauma?

Dr Liz Powell

I think a lot of people who are not in the kink community or who haven't explored kink themselves often have a lot of misperceptions about kink. One of the most common ones I hear, especially from rad femme leaning folks, is that kink is abuse, it's a way to normalize, they would say, men abusing women, and that is not what it is. Kink is not traumatizing, necessarily.

As with any activity, if done from a bad place, if done with poor intentions, it can be traumatizing. Or if it hits on someone's landmines it can be traumatizing. But a trip to the grocery store can be traumatizing. The way that we relate with someone romantically can be traumatizing. So kink is not necessarily something that creates or perpetuates trauma.

It can be something that people who have experienced trauma use as a well negotiated and relatively safe container to explore and work through and almost re-experience in a healing way, some aspects of things that have been traumatizing for them before.

I tell a story in a lot of my classes about humiliation play, that when I was married, I got married when I was very young, 23, to a man, and we were going to be mostly monogamous, and he was very emotionally abusive to me for the entirety of our relationship. And one of the ways that he was abusive towards me is he would talk about not feeling attracted to me or talk about me not being good enough for him in certain ways.

And after we separated I was doing kink play with one of my lovers, and we did a scene that was all about him talking about how I wasn't doing a good enough job and I wasn't hot enough and things weren't good enough for this to work for him. But as soon as the scene was over, he held me and told me how hard it had been to not just cum immediately and to not just immediately feel great, have an amazing time, and how hard it was to stay in character.

And so seeing that contrast between what the reality was and what I had been told, and what I experienced in that moment, was hugely healing for me. Because kink, when done well, is very clearly negotiated with clear boundaries, clear understandings, clear ways of communicating in the moment, even if we're not sticking with normal, yes means yes, no means no kind of constraints. It is a space where you can take the stuff that is scary for you or hard for you or painful for you and play with it rather than it being a thing that you have to avoid or are afraid of or are trying to keep away from. So it can provide you with this container in which to re-experience and re-explore things that have been painful for you in the past.

[00:05:32] Jaia Bristow

That makes a lot of sense. And I think there's a few really important elements in what you're saying. So number one is, as you're saying, kink isn't just about going beyond traditional sex. It's about going beyond traditional sex in a really safe way with really clear negotiated guidelines, boundaries, safe words, whatever one needs in that moment. And so then it provides a container, a very safe container, to be able to explore traumatic elements.

And I think there's something, particularly in what you've just said, in the example you gave with your lover, where you were exploring this dynamic with your abusive ex, where you talked about but then afterwards this person held you and looked after you and checked in with you. So let's talk a little bit more about after care and why that's so important to not reinforce trauma patterns, especially sexual trauma.

Dr Liz Powell

One thing that I would say before we talk about after care is that, when we talk about safety as it relates to sex or to kink, I prefer to think about things in terms of risk awareness and risk assessments and what level of risk we're willing to accept. Because nothing is ever actually safe. Even if people come in with the best of intentions and the best negotiation and the best possible skills, we're all still messy humans, and there's still going to be risk.

And so what I like about kink is that people make much more of an effort to be explicit about what the risks are and how they're going to mitigate them than a lot of people do, particularly in mainstream heterosexual monogamous dating world. In mainstream hetero monogamous dating world, there's a whole bunch of stuff about not explicitly negotiating, or you say we're going to be monogamous, but don't talk about what that means. Whereas in kink, you're required to do more explicit negotiation, which creates a greater risk awareness. And I think because you know that what you're doing is risky, you are more attuned to risk and more prepared to handle things potentially going in challenging ways.

And after care is one of those things that we do to help handle challenging experiences. After care, for those who don't know, is that after you do, what we call a kink scene, which is an interaction set basically, which may have a set amount of time or set of activities that we're using, at the end of it people come out of their roles and generally the person who was the top or the dominant, so either the person who was giving the action or who was taking some amount of control or decision making power, will help the person who was bottoming or the submissive to come back into a normal headspace and check in with them about how they're doing and see what they need.

And so after care can include things like cuddling or some people have a really soft blanket they like to wrap themselves in. It can include talking about the scene and what went well and what you want differently next time. It can include giving snacks and water to make sure that people's bodies are doing okay. Because when we do things like sex or kink, our bodies burn through a ton of our fuel and a ton of our water source. And so it's actually really common for people to end up having a blood sugar crash as soon as they come out of a scene. So we want to have some snacks so that there's food to replenish our body.

And it's about caring for the bodies and the minds and the solar spirit, or whatever you want to call it, of the people who were involved in the scene so that they can then come back to a normal day-to-day headspace and move back into the world and be okay.

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After care, particularly if you're playing with stuff that relates to a trauma or to anything like psychological dynamics or any heavier kinds of play or stuff that's more intense, is a really good way to ensure that we can come out of role and come back to reality and check in about what reality is. In kink a lot of times we are pretending to be mean people or people who are doing cruel things for cruel reasons, and it's play. Dan Savage used to say that kink is like cops and robbers for grownups with your pants off. And it's a game and the same way that at the end of a play, the actors are not still the person they were portraying. The person we portray in a kink scene may be parts of ourselves but a specific version of that or a specific role that we have put on for that time.

And after care is where we get to discard those roles and reconnect as real humans. And it gives both people, or all people involved, an opportunity to just check in and see, how are we each doing? What do we each need to feel good here? Is there stuff that's still causing us some problems or stress? How do we move forward out of this? What do we want to do in order to make sure that we are all taken care of?

And for most folks, after care also usually involves a check in a couple of days later because sometimes it takes a couple of days for stuff to settle or shake out or for you, to see that something is still sitting with you wrong, that you want some support around. And I think this very explicit framework of, we're going to do something that is intense, and then we're going to be very particular about taking care of each other afterwards, is something super helpful for people who have experienced trauma.

Because in trauma a lot of times the experience is, something really intense happens and then I'm supposed to go back to regular life. And I haven't gotten to talk about it and I haven't gotten to process it. And I'm just expected to go be a person now. And that huge shift between I am in danger and I am not okay to, I have to talk about the weather and the local sports team, is really challenging for a lot of people. So after care instead creates this very intentional framework of, we've done something intense and we are going to explicitly take time to process and recover from it and set up an expectation that we will reconnect if there is still stuff bugging us.

Jaia Bristow

Fantastic. And so I'm really hearing some of the key elements you're talking about, about how what's really important around kink and alternative sexual practices is setting the safety before. So that explicit communication during, so having a bunch of safe words and making sure you're remembering its play so no matter how cruel it gets, it's not real. Or how intense it gets and at any point if it feels too much, we can snap out of it. And then after care, which isn't just immediately 10 minutes after, 'You alright?' 'Yeah, I'm alright'. 'Alright bye'. And it's this ongoing and how that can be, just setting that element of safety, that container of safety before, during and after an intense event can really be supportive to those who have a lot of trauma.

Dr Liz Powell

Yeah. The explicitness of negotiation there is another helpful thing I think for a lot of people with trauma. Because I think a lot of folks who have experienced trauma have a lot of fears about taking up too much space or about being a bother. And they may be experiencing something that's causing the discomfort that they wish they could process with a partner, but that they feel like they shouldn't because it would be, they'd be bringing the mood down or they'd be causing a problem or they can just hold it.

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And instead, there's this very strong expectation that we will talk about what's coming up because we know stuff is going to come up. So we're going to process it together because that's the way to do it.

Jaia Bristow

That sounds really supportive. And so I guess one of my questions is when and with whom is it a good idea to practice kink? Because number one, it sounds like probably a one night stand is not the best time to start exploring all your sexual fantasies and those kinky desires if you're not then going to have that connection with the person afterwards to create that after care.

And for people, we've touched upon this already, but people who have a lot of trauma, especially sexual traumas, it sounds like it can be safe, but maybe there are certain things they should be doing or shouldn't be doing or should be aware of. So let's talk about when and with whom it's a good idea to explore.

Dr Liz Powell

That's a very person by person determination. So let's take a one night stand example. If you're talking about a random that you meet at a bar, then a one night stand is probably a terrible idea to explore stuff with. However, if we're talking about someone who my friends know, who they've known for years in the kink community and they've vouched for and they know how that person plays, and we've just decided to hook up, that might actually be a safe person.

So I think there's an element of how well do you know this person? Something I teach a lot when I talk about kink, and I'm teaching kink is that I think another big misconception that people who aren't in the community have is that every kink scene that you do, every time you play, you're trying to play as hard as possible. Like from 0 to 10 you want to see how high you can get, and the goal is eventually to get to a 10. And that is not true. Your kink play can be maxing out at a 3 or a 4 every time. And that is totally fine. You're still doing the kink, you're not doing it wrong.

And so I think from this risk aware and this harm reduction perspective, if what you want to do is explore kink with people, asking yourself questions about, how well do I know this person? Is this someone who is like a known community member? Is this someone who is a complete stranger? What do I know about how this person interacts in sexual and kink and relational spaces? What do I know about how much this person is aware of stuff around trauma and capable of seeing landmines and addressing them themselves? How much do I know about myself and what will happen if I have a tough reaction, and this person ends up unavailable to help me with it for whatever reason? What other support do I have around me?

And so looking at what are all the various risks involved? What are all the various support or mitigation factors involved? And making decisions from there.

In general, I would say your first few times playing with someone, don't play as hard. Again, unless it's like a very well vetted person, unless it's someone who you super know in the community, or unless it's like you're coming back to your huge support network for the next several weeks. The less you know someone, probably the less intensely you want to play. The more you know someone, the more you're probably going to feel some sense of trust and ability to go to deeper places with them. The more support that you have, the easier it is to play deeply, because then even if something happens to this other person who you're playing with, you have more people around you to help you out if

something goes poorly for you. The more that you have worked on your stuff, and you have your own footing and your own strategies for dealing with any challenging feelings that come up, the deeper you can go with people.

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And so looking at it as like, what are the risks? What are the things I have to offset those? And making that decision on a big scale rather than a light switch, I think is really helpful. Because I think that for most folks, if we take this abstinence approach of, don't do kink with a one night stand, people are still going to do it, they're just going to feel more shame around it. And that's going to prevent them from seeking resources and support if something does go poorly. So if we think about it instead, in terms of harm reduction, what are the potential harms that could happen? What are we doing to mitigate those? How do we feel about the risk picture that's left? That gives you a lot more leeway to make decisions and to find what feels right for you.

Jaia Bristow

That makes a lot of sense. And I really appreciate you explaining all of that. And I think it's so important whenever we go beyond socially ascribed boxes, beyond traditional boxes, which *Beyond Boxes* is the name of my podcast because it's something I like talking about a lot. But so with sexual practices, especially if we're going beyond the norm or beyond traditional sex, then it's about that thing of understanding, suddenly we're beyond the box, what are we doing? And it's not a one size fits all. That's the whole point of going beyond boxes, is that it's not one size fits all.

So it's really tuning in and checking in with oneself, with the person we're involved with, or people we were involved with, and figuring out what's true in that moment. And I think it's really great to remember that there are different definitions of a one night stand as well, and it's not always just some random that we meet at the pub.

Dr Liz Powell

Well, and I would apply this within the box, too. I think one of the things that we see, particularly here in the States where the abstinence only education is much stronger, is that because there's this idea that if you're doing cisgender heterosexual monogamous kind of sex and dating, you don't need to do a ton of explicit negotiation, you don't need to do a ton of actual risk assessment. Aside from if you are like a cisgender woman, and then every man is trying to rape you, and if you get raped, it's your fault. But don't be a prude and not put out, because then you're a terrible frigid person that no one's going to love.

The way that we even think about sexual and relational risk inside the box is still broken. I think everybody would benefit from taking this approach to the way that they look at sex and dating relationships, of what are the risks? Like, realistically, what are the risks that I'm looking at here? What are the factors I can bring in for risk mitigation or to eliminate those risks? And how do I feel about that risk picture?

Jaia Bristow

I couldn't agree more. I'm 100% with you on all of that. And I think it's also good to remember that whilst kink is going beyond normative sexual practices, I have friends who are cisgendered, heterosexual and monogamous who are also very kinky. It can happen. There is sometimes crossover with those of us who are more queer or alternative, but not always. And so again, it doesn't really

matter about the boxes of the labels. It matters about it's helpful for everyone in the world to ask those questions of themselves, whether during sex or any kind of relating, especially for those who are trauma survivors.

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Would you say there are any kinky practices that you would recommend for people trying, I know once again, it depends on the person, I guess, but are there any specific kink practices that you would recommend for people working on trauma, especially sexual trauma?

Dr Liz Powell

Again, that's super personal, because I think that what feels safe and what feels dangerous to people, even people who have experienced the same traumas, is often very different. I think the shorthand I use a lot of time is like start low, go slow. Start at a low intensity, amp it up very slowly to see where you start hitting things.

Different people are going to find themselves pulled towards different kinds of kink activities just naturally, depending on what they're into and who they are. I don't know that there's any particular single kink practice that is going to be more helpful for some folks than others. I think it's much more about the overall kink practice of learning to negotiate and be really upfront and honest about what does and doesn't work for you.

A big thing I see in the kink community in general, but in particular among folks who have trauma and who are bottoms, is that people don't use their safe words as often as they should. So a safe word, for those who don't know, is basically a word or a phrase that you use during a kink scene to indicate that you need stuff to stop so you can check in and see what's going on. The reason we use safe words is that sometimes the way that we're playing, no doesn't mean no and stop doesn't mean stop. So we have a special language that we come up with that allows us to be in those roles and still have a way to communicate clearly that we need things to change.

Almost everyone I talk to in the kink community, particularly folks newer to the community, are hesitant or afraid of using their safe word because they don't want to ruin the moment. They want to be able to be okay and they can deal with it, they can endure. And sex and kink are not endurance sports, unless that's like your particular goal. But usually the endurance we're going for is not how much pain can I tolerate that I'm not enjoying?

So I think in general, this practice of using negotiation skills, being honest about where you're at, checking in about what's working and what's not is really important. I'm a big fan of psychological play. So using the ways that we talk about things and that we frame things as a way to interact with our shame and our fears, and some people hate that.

So I think it's tough to say if there is a particular kink practice, because just what people are into varies super widely. What works well for people with trauma versus not so well for them is really different. So I think it's just hard to narrow that down to one thing.

Jaia Bristow

That's understandable. And that makes a lot of sense. And I guess in what I'm hearing, I'm hearing that it can be supportive. And you've also talked, we talked earlier about safety practices at the beginning, like pre-negotiating structures and guidelines and stuff, we've talked about after care, and now you've

just touched a little bit on how to create the actual, during the act, during the event, how that can be safe, including things like safe words. Are there any other practices for how to ensure safety during sexual practices?

[00:23:10] Dr Liz Powell

Check ins, tons of check ins. In kink people who top will do a combination of observing body language and how the person is moving and reacting and actual, explicit check ins. And explicit check ins, depending upon how you play and who you're playing with, can be completely out of role check ins where you say to someone, green, yellow, red, where are you at? Or 0 to 10, where are we at for intensity right now?

Or they can be things that you do in role, where you come up with ways within the roles that you've taken on to check in about things or to communicate about things. I'm a big fan of explicit check-ins personally, because I think the 10 seconds it takes to check in isn't going to pull people so significantly out of role that they can't get back. And a lot of times my brain space is too full to come up with extensive ways of checking in and role. So I'm a fan of explicit check ins that are out of role, but people do things differently.

So check in is a really big one. Again, monitoring, specifically the top or the dominant, doing a lot of monitoring of how the bottom or submissive body is doing. What's their breathing like? Are they tensing or relaxing? Are they pulling away or pushing towards? Are they going silent? Are they still talking? It can be helpful to develop safe words that you can use if someone goes nonverbal, particularly if people have a tendency to go nonverbal, which a lot of trauma survivors do.

For instance, Shay and Stefanos, who are some amazing kink educators out of the San Francisco Bay area, they have a system that they use where you have your hands. And the system that they created was one where it takes motion to indicate a green rather than staying still indicates a green, because if someone has gone nonverbal and they freeze, they may not be able to move to indicate that there is a problem. So for them, green is both hands. Yellow is one hand. Red is no hands.

But different ways that you can check in and see, how are we doing? Are we okay? Do you need more or less? Do you need some water? Do we need to adjust your position? People who do a lot of bondage or rope plays will often have things that they have the person do with their body to double check that there's not any impingement on nerves or any cutting off of blood flow.

So just being very aware during the scene of how things are going, how bodies are doing, how brains are doing, rather than just diving in and going until we feel like we're done.

Jaia Bristow

That makes a lot of sense. So check ins, monitoring, safe words, safe gestures, which are nonverbal. One that was really helpful for me when I had a partner who was really into martial arts was the double tap. Because in martial arts when you literally can't move, if you're pinned down and you double tap, it means like, get off me, I'm choking or can't breathe or can't move or whatever it is. So all these nonverbal cues sound like they're just as important, especially for people who go nonverbal because of trauma or feel shy or ashamed, to use explicit safe words.

So it's really helpful to hear this list of things people can do. Actually, before this, I'm curious do you consider kink a form of therapy in helping heal trauma?

[00:26:31] Dr Liz Powell

I think that kink is one of many things that can be therapeutic. Is it therapy in that it is like a thing I would prescribe to people who have trauma? Not necessarily. There are a lot of things that are therapeutic. A bath can be therapeutic. For some people a nice glass of wine can be therapeutic. A chat with your friend can be therapeutic. Is it therapy? Not necessarily.

And there are people who are looking at ways of incorporating various somatic body focus practices or even things related to kink for more specifically, therapeutic kinds of practices. So like bondage is one that's very common, which is a kink involved massage healing practice. So bondage is very cool. There's some amazing people who practice it. There are people who do specifically therapeutic kink. That is one of the things that they're very into is people have stuff that they want to work through, and they know that they're very good at holding a container for that.

So I think again, it can be therapeutic, but it is not necessarily the same thing as therapy. And this is not to say that therapy is the one size fits all for everybody. That is absolutely not true. One of the biggest complaints I have about people who share my profession of professional therapists is that often they think therapy is the solution to everything. And therapy can be helpful for a lot of things but it is not the only way. It's not the only good thing.

And for a lot of people, their trauma isn't just about the specific event they experienced, it's the intersection of that specific event or events and larger societal structures of oppression that create day-to-day problems for them. And so, therapy can't fix racism, therapy can't fix sexism. We can provide support around it. But I think when we're looking at what is helpful for trauma, not everything is going to be therapy. That doesn't mean it's not helpful.

And so I think looking at what is therapeutic, what is healing for you, what feels like it's in alignment for you can be good. And to be frank, talk therapy is great but it isn't everything. There are a lot of things with trauma that we can't fix in a therapy room. Because particularly if your trauma is about a relationship, relational trauma has to heal in relationship. And therapy relationships are a kind of relationship, but they're not the same.

And so kink can be a way to address trauma in ways that we can't in a therapy room. If someone is afraid of being pinned down, I can't enact that as their therapist. That's not ethical. That's not what I'm trained to do. That's not the way to do it. But they could play with someone who can do that and who can help them explore that in a way that feels good for them. So I think that it's complementary things rather than all of it is therapy.

Jaia Bristow

I think that's a really good distinction between a form of therapy and something that's therapeutic. And as you say, therapy can't heal everything, but first of all, there's a ton of different forms of therapy within psychotherapy, within talk therapy, but just all kinds of other therapies, there's somatic approaches, there's talk approaches, and so, again, that it might be a helpful somatic complementary approach without necessarily being itself a form of therapy, I think is a really helpful and clear distinction.

My final question then is, do you have practical tips for how people can get started with exploring beyond traditional sex and start exploring kink?

[00:30:16] Dr Liz Powell

I mean, it's still kind of COVID time, it's still mostly COVID, so that's much more complicated to answer. The answer that I used to give would be that in pretty much any major city there's going to be some kind of a kink community that you can find and get in touch with.

One of the best ways to get involved in kink communities is through events that we call munches. So a munch is a get together of kinky people where there is no play. So rather than it being at the dungeon with people in their leather and colors, it's at a coffee shop and you have coffee and chat and you can meet people in a much less intense way. It's generally out of protocol, so nobody is in the role, you don't have to worry about who you can talk to and who you can't, you don't have to worry about seeing a bunch of genitals that you didn't sign up for. You can just go and hang out with people and meet some people as a way to have folks to talk to or say hi to if you do end up going to a kink event later.

FetLife is the most common website people recommend for connecting with other kinky folk. It's like a social network for kinky people. The thing I will say about FetLife is that it has its pros and cons. The user interface is very like the early 2000s internet and has not ever changed and probably will never change. And it has some security issues. For instance, someone created a piece of software a few years ago that was able to pull the user names of every user who was a woman under a certain age. It's also not, if you're used to navigating something like a Twitter or Facebook, it doesn't work like that. It's very particular in terms of how it functions and how you get to connect with people. So it's got a different set of ways to search or connect. It's got a different set of social norms, so there can be a bit of a learning curve if you do decide to join FetLife.

There are also a lot of Facebook groups if you like Facebook. Twitter is another good place to find other kinky people. There's usually people having kink discussions there. You can find people who are talking about different kinds of kinks and you can find them through a lot of different channels. There's usually hashtags that you can find that are related to those.

So I think it's complicated. The thing about these alternative communities is that most of them make it a little bit challenging to actually get involved because there are some people who just want to come in and jerk off to other people doing things in a way that feels gross to the people involved.

And another factor is that there can be very real consequences, socially and in terms of employment, for people who are kinky. So there tends to be a bit of a barrier to entry in order to really get involved with these communities because they're trying to keep each other safe and prevent someone from coming in and outing them all to their employers or outing them all to their former spouses so they lose custody of their children.

So just be prepared for it to take a little bit of time. For it to maybe be a little more challenging than you would think it would be. If there is a dungeon space in your town, most of them will let you go if you pay the entry fee and most of them, if they're good ones, will have people who are there as greeters so that people who are new can get a tour of the space, get walked through the rules and meet at least one person while they're there. It is still COVID, so if you're going to go wear a mask, please be vaccinated, don't be a jerk. But again, there are a lot of different ways to do it. It's more challenging during COVID times than not COVID times.

[00:33:52] Jaia Bristow

And I think as well as all those things, there's certain apps that are supportive for that, certain dating apps or things like Feeld or things like that where people can connect.

I'm also curious about people who maybe feel a bit nervous to join an alternative kinky community, but have either a partner or multiple partners, or are in a relationship or relationships, and want to start exploring kink with those specific people but everyone involved is a bit new. How would you suggest those people get started with each other?

Dr Liz Powell

So there's a brand new book that just came out. I'm trying to look up the actual title, but Kate Sloan, who's one of the Dildorks, just released a book called *101 Kinky Things Even You Can Do*. And so it walks through a lot of different things that are kinky and ways to try it out with people in your life. And it's very accessible to people who are brand new. So it's an awesome book that you can read in the comfort of your home and no one has to know you're doing it.

Other books that I really like are *The New Topping Book* and *The New Bottoming Book* by Dossie Easton and Janet Hardy. Those are less technique focused books and more about what it is to top or bottom and what it is to be in the kink scene. So those are really good books to read for that information.

Other things that you could do, don't use *50 Shades* as your guide. *50 Shades* is a book that has done a great job of introducing kink to a lot of people in the world, and it did not do a super great job of it. So find other sources that are more helpful. If you're looking for really good kinky erotica, Kit Rocha, which is the pen name of two authors, they do an amazing series called *The Beyond Series* that is really hot, kinky, polyamorous, queer sex, and it talks explicitly about things like negotiation and safe words. So really good stuff. Laurell K. Hamilton, a lot of people like her stuff for kinky or sex smut, if you're looking for that.

There's a lot of stuff out there. What I would say is read a few different things, try a few different things. The Society of Janus has chapters in most major cities. They usually also have intro to kink classes that people can take. kink.com has a whole education series that has a bunch of different classes on different aspects of kink that you can take, and they're all really awesome. Kink Academy, which is run by Princess Kali, has a bunch of video on demand classes that you can take. So there's tons of resources out there for finding different things and finding out how to explore different things.

Jaia Bristow

Fantastic. They sound like some really great resources. And then there's, of course, all the elements that we've talked about today about making sure to communicate and be really open and clear with each other. Negotiate boundaries, talk about safe words and gestures, have lots of check ins during sex, have check ins afterwards, check in again 24 hours afterwards, 48 hours afterwards, a week afterwards, a month afterwards, how ever long it takes, especially if it's a regular partner. Check in before and after each act. Don't feel like, I guess not every sexual experience has to be kinky. Remembering what you were talking about, about scales like you can start slow and build up, and all these great tips that you've been giving throughout this interview.

And then I know that you also, I think, lead workshops on kink. Do you want to tell us a bit more about your work and how people can find out about it?

[00:37:21] Dr Liz Powell

So you can find all of my stuff at drlizpowell.com I have a class that I teach called *Shamefully Sexy* or *Hot Healthy Humiliation*, depending on where I'm teaching it. And I teach it every so often. These days, most recently, it's been through the kink.com workshop series. I'm looking at putting that online. It's just a matter of finding time to record it. All that stuff, but yeah, I teach stuff through there and everything that I'm going to be doing you can always find it drlizpowell.com I also post about it on my Twitter, which is [@drlizpowell](https://twitter.com/drlizpowell), and my Instagram, which is also [@drlizpowell](https://www.instagram.com/drlizpowell).

Jaia Bristow

Fantastic. And I think you have a couple of other websites and work that you do. Do you want to tell us about those?

Dr Liz Powell

Yes. I talk about non-monogamy and polyamory with my amazing colleague Kevin Patterson, who is the award winning author of *Love's Not Colorblind*. We have a website unfuckyourpolyamory.com and we have our class up there, which is a 6 week course on how to do non-monogamy in a way that centers ideas about autonomy and healthy interdependence rather than coercion and control. And looks at societal structures and how they impact the ways that we do love and relationships.

Jaia Bristow

Fantastic. Thank you so much for your time today, Dr Liz. I really appreciate it. And I really enjoyed this conversation.

Dr Liz Powell

Thank you so much for having me.