

S2E4 AUSTIN FOU DY

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SPEAKERS

Elle Billing, Austin Foudy

E Elle Billing 00:00

Hi, my name is Elle Billing. I am a chronically ill queer femme, and I'm tired. I'm here this episode and every episode to dig at the roots of our collective fatigue, explore ways to direct our care and compassionate and sustainable ways and harness creative expression to heal ourselves and our world. And welcome to Hoarf Radical care in a late capitalist heckscape. My guest for this episode is Austin Foudy. Austin Foudy is an emerging artist and longtime Boise resident working in acrylic based mixed medium. He enjoys exploring the mystery of textures, shades and depth. With a degree in English literature, he enjoys the potential for the open interpretation of a narrative through his abstract creations, in contrast to more familiar, direct literary content. Austin cares deeply about supporting local artists of all forms in the burgeoning Treasure Valley scene, anticipating with enthusiasm, the growth and potential of Boise in this vein. I'm really excited to have Austin on the podcast today as a fellow artist, as somebody who used to live in Idaho, and I'm just really thrilled to be able to interview another emerging artist. Well, hello, Austin, welcome to the podcast.

A Austin Foudy 01:40

Hello. Thank you.

E Elle Billing 01:41

Yeah, it's nice to have you on Hoarf. I have to admit, I didn't tell you this in the email. And I don't usually spring things on guests, but like, you've been on my list of people to contact like, since November.

A Austin Foudy 01:52

Oh,

E Elle Billing 01:52

I was just chickening out. It's easier for me to ask people that I that I know and like have more rapport with

A Austin Foudy 01:59

Sure.

E Elle Billing 02:00

Like when you started painting I was really excited about, I'm excited when people start painting like, oh, look, someone found art. And then I just really enjoyed watching you grow as a painter. And I was like, oh, I should get him on the podcast. Oh, but like, I'd never met him in person. Like, I don't really know him. Just a creeper on his on his Instagram. And then I was like, Oh, fine. I'll reach out. I'll do it. I'll do it. He's doing great. That is all that to say. I'm very excited to have you here.

A Austin Foudy 02:25

I appreciate it. Thanks for asking me in. Yeah.

E Elle Billing 02:29

Sorry, if that was weird. I've been weird the whole time we've been talking. So that's just how it goes.

A Austin Foudy 02:34

I'll definitely reciprocate in the weirdness for sure. So let's

E Elle Billing 02:39

Yeah, reciprocal weirdness is going to be the name of my other band. We were talking before, and I cool band name came up. But our reciprocal weirdness is going to be my other band name. Anytime cool phrase comes up. Those are going to be my bands.

A Austin Foudy 02:53

I love it.

E Elle Billing 02:55
And of course, we can edit all this out. It'll be fine. We're not live.

A Austin Foudy 03:00
Or are we?

E Elle Billing 03:01
No! I like being able to edit where I screw up. I don't like to be wrong in public. It's it's a thing I'm working on. I think it's going better now. Like our little dots are staying green.

A Austin Foudy 03:14
That's my kink. I love being wrong in public.

E Elle Billing 03:17
Oh, that's an interesting. I would say tell me more about that. But I don't know if we have time to get into that. And I don't think it's that kind of podcast.

A Austin Foudy 03:26
No, I don't think so.

E Elle Billing 03:27
I have a friend who has that kind of podcast. Okay, so how have you received this is a care focused, and creativity focused podcast. And I always ask my guests, how have you received care this week?

A Austin Foudy 03:40
Yeah, I love that question. Um, this week, I have really focused on self care. And so providing care and love and space for for myself this week.

E Elle Billing 03:52
Great.

A

Austin Foudy 03:52

I'm a habitual, over giver, under nur-, like, self-nurture. And over the past months, went through a pretty stressful traumatic breakup. And just uh, it's been it's been a year to put it lightly. But I've been taking time to focus more on really moving forward throughout my days with with intention and a direction that's going to serve me best at both in my space and in my mental well being. As somebody who suffers from clinical depression. I need to, I have to listen to those things pretty acutely and frequently. I don't, and that's that's what I find myself in those troughs of despair and trouble.

E

Elle Billing 04:37

I definitely resonate with that I have depressive disorder and chronic illness. And so I definitely understand needing to like move with intention. And to keep myself out of those troughs. And when I find myself in them, being able to say, Okay, I know where I am. I know I'm not going to stay here. This is what I need to do to, like, feel this and then move through it,

A

Austin Foudy 05:02

definitely.

E

Elle Billing 05:03

And it did. And it was like an intentional choice to have to be able to like move through things that way. Because before when I was like overtired and overstressed and overworked, like there wasn't space to actually have those kind of intentional thoughts about providing care for myself and choosing how to process my feelings.

A

Austin Foudy 05:22

Absolutely. And it's so it's so insidious how that, those little subconscious narratives can creep in, like, you know, the tendrils of little vines and sort of infects your psyche, in ways that you don't anticipate if you're if you don't move forward with intention. And I've caught myself in quite a few of those those troughs lately. So eating well, you know, I've been going to the gym a little bit, taking time to create, to paint, to read, spend time with my dogs, and it's finally, finally, mid spring here in Idaho. And, you know, so now there's sunshine and yard work and gardening and whatnot that I can pour myself into, and I really try to take care of myself in the space that I have.

E

Elle Billing 06:12

That's good. I'm glad that you have different spaces that you can carve out for yourself where you can do that.

A

Austin Foudy 06:17

Yeah, very fortunate. I feel very privileged to have the space that I do.

E

Elle Billing 06:22

Yeah, I'm glad you mentioned, you know, using painting as part of that, can you share a bit about how you -- I know, painting is still new for you, or fairly new? Can you share a bit, or a lot, about how you started painting and how that is part of your like, your self care now?

A

Austin Foudy 06:38

So last year, because about this time last year, that idea popped into my head, I think I saw somebody on YouTube or Instagram painting, and I was like, you know that that might be interesting, aside from, you know, the requisite high school art class. You know, art one, or whatever it was called, I was never really artistic in an aesthetic type of way. I have a degree in English literature with a gender studies minor. So my art has always been through literary creations. So writing short stories, or even nonfiction, expositions. Yeah, so last year, last spring, I was gonna be interesting. I went to work that night, somebody, I brought it up to somebody, and then they were like, Oh, I have an easel for you. So that night, they brought the easel to work, I work in a bar, they brought the easel in. And I just went to town, I went to the art store in downtown Boise and picked up some basic supplies, the colors that I thought might look good together, and I just I started playing. And it was very, very cathartic. It coincided with a six month sobriety stint that I did last year, after after I got COVID. Last year, last January, and right after I recovered, I quit drinking, I quit smoking, I -- you know, for six months straight. And I started painting right in that interim, and I just found that the creative output had intensified so greatly with with that sobriety, and, yeah, it I mentioned, it was cathartic, I was able to pull something out of my subconscious that I didn't know was there, and was in a much more figurative form than most of the other artistic expressions that I've I've engaged with prior.

E

Elle Billing 08:33

Yeah, I get that. Like, what is the word that people use? grok. I grok that? I don't know if people still say that. I don't go out much. But like, that resonates with me, too. I was an English and reading teacher and a poet. And I've been writing poetry since I was a little kid. And I'm saying like, using writing poetry loosely. It was really bad. When I was little, of course, I was a child, right? But like it was meaningful to me as a young person to put words on paper. I started getting migraine headaches when I was 28. And writing became, has become, more difficult as I've progressed.

A

Austin Foudy 09:18

Sure

E

Elle Billing 09:18

neurological condition, like finding words and phrases to express certain things in a specific way can be really hard when you're fussy about words. I actually wrote a poem about blank spaces and like, you can't keep a dictionary of, like, words you've forgotten. Like you can't document what you've forgotten, but being able to like turn that into something poetic when you don't have the words to make it resonate with other people. The way that it feels for you, for myself, or for oneself is super frustrating. And so to get around that I started painting, or I intensified my painting practice

A

Austin Foudy 09:58

that makes me so happy

E

Elle Billing 09:59

Those feelings and that frustration and that need to express myself. I've been told my whole life that I'm very dramatic. And I know they're -- "THEY" But you know, the universal "they" are not wrong. They they are, they are not wrong. I have a lot of big feelings, and I have to do something with them to be okay.

A

Austin Foudy 10:21

I can relate to that as well. Absolutely.

E

Elle Billing 10:23

And so I had to try and kind of transition from writing into painting, but text still finds its way into my art, because that's where I started. But like you said, about finding a thing inside your psyche or something like your subconscious that you didn't know, was there. And now it's on a canvas. I look at things I've painted. And I'm like, did I do that?

A

Austin Foudy 10:43

I know,

E

Elle Billing 10:43

I made that?!

A

Austin Foudy 10:45

I used to feel that. And I suppose I still do feel that about things that I've written. You know, you

go back

E

Elle Billing 10:50

I do that. Yeah, yep, I do that when I write to like, I wrote that, because especially now when I look back at poems I wrote, but when I was more well, than I am now, I'm like, I don't know if I could do that again.

A

Austin Foudy 10:59

Well, that's, that's, I think that's the beauty of art. And this this spontaneity of art anyway, is that, you know, even if it's whether it's writing, or painting or drawing, etc, center, the person who created that, that image, that piece that that essay, whatever it may be, that person is gone. Right? Like, so the person that wrote that thing, or created that painting in that moment, no longer exist, because now you've transcended that point in time. And so through all of your experiences that led you up to that that piece, which whatever it may be, it stops there.

E

Elle Billing 11:44

Yeah, like, I couldn't paint what I painted last year, because I'm a different person this year.

A

Austin Foudy 11:48

Right? Like, sure.

E

Elle Billing 11:50

Yeah, who I was, that is not who I am now.

A

Austin Foudy 11:53

Yep. And I, you know, I think that's analogous of just about everything in life and life itself. You know, we walk through relationships, the person that I was, and, you know, my last romantic relationship is not going to be the same person that I will be in my current or future, you know, romantic relationship or encounters.

E

Elle Billing 12:12

That's really important. I think. I was married. I shouldn't laugh. Because it was a serious thing, right? The reason I laugh, I've been divorced almost 10 years, which was twice as long as I was married. And people who didn't know me then, when they find out I was married, are very surprised. Like you were married, they're like to a guy. For one. And like, for how long? And like,

really, like and then and my parents, my mom, mostly because she's the nosy one. She still asked me. It's been 10 years since I got divorced. She still asked me like, Were you happy? Did you like him? Do you wish you hadn't married him? I said, Mom, that was so long ago. Like, I'm not even that person anymore.

A Austin Foudy 13:01

Yeah, why is that relevant. Yeah,

E Elle Billing 13:03

right. Well, it's relevant, because I live with my parents. And my mom only has a limited number of things she can talk about.

A Austin Foudy 13:10

Certainly, gosh,

E Elle Billing 13:11

yeah. Which is fine. Like, I knew that's what was gonna happen when I moved back in with my parents. That's the kind of relationship my mom has with people. But like, my ex husband isn't that person either. So like, I can't stay mad at him for things that happened 15 years ago, like it hurt me then, I am no longer that person. Like, we are not those people. We are, we have moved on. we'd learned from it, I hope. I hope he's thriving. I'm sure he's thriving more now than he was when we were married.

A Austin Foudy 13:44

Certainly, and but at the same time, there's no need to dwell on much of that passing, you know,

E Elle Billing 13:51

right, exactly. And that's what I tell my mom too. I'm like, I'm not going to dwell on it. Like, there's no point in like, wow, I know you want to talk about it, because it's like a frame of reference that we share is that but like we can talk about other things that have happened since then. I don't want to rehash everything that I've done ever in my life. So you mentioned like that first painting you did. You were like, wow, I just came out of me. This is really cool. So you obviously kept doing it. And it's been about a year.

A Austin Foudy 14:18

Yeah. Yeah.

E Elle Billing 14:20

Do you know about how many you've done? Like, have you been? Are you hoarding them? Do you have like a library of paintings? Have you been selling them? Have you put them in a gallery?

A Austin Foudy 14:30

I would venture to guess that I've probably created anywhere between 25 and 30, like, solid pieces that I've completed.

E Elle Billing 14:41

And there's their sizable canvases. I've seen them on.

A Austin Foudy 14:44

Yeah, yes, some of them are pretty large. I just finished a pretty small one yesterday. That was pretty nice. But But yeah, within the first I'd say within the first six months, I sold like nine, nine pieces.

E Elle Billing 14:59

Great.

A Austin Foudy 14:59

So sure. straight off the bat, I mean, I was I was selling, selling work just based off of word of mouth, and Instagram, et cetera, et cetera. And that felt really nice. It was very validating and affirming. But it was also a surprise because I didn't engage with creating to be sellable to market myself. And in the last couple of months, I've been doing a little more of that. I know you've seen some of that on online. For me, it was, it was just about expression.

E Elle Billing 15:31

Yep.

A Austin Foudy 15:32

It was just about expression, about getting something out, about about taking the time to shed

the distractions for an hour, two hours, three hours, however long, you know, I sit in my studio, and in paints or handle the material handle the medium. But honestly, a lot of my paintings just go up around my house.

E Elle Billing 15:57

Yeah, yep.

A Austin Foudy 15:58

It seems. So it seems so bizarre. And so Oh, super superfluous to like the point, I suppose. But there are some things that I've created that I really enjoy looking at.

E Elle Billing 16:10

Oh, that's, you should absolutely love what you paint. I think it's great that they're up in your house, you know, made a thing that you love.

A Austin Foudy 16:18

Right?

E Elle Billing 16:19

I think that's so much better than being a self critical artist.

A Austin Foudy 16:22

Yeah, I'm not I'm not creating things to be appealing to somebody else. I want to create art that I would want to view myself that I would want to hang in my house. And as a result of that I often do.

E Elle Billing 16:34

Yeah, that's I think that's really great. I mean, I think so many artists go through the like, Oh, I'm terrible. I'm, like, I don't like what I'm doing. This could be so much better.

A Austin Foudy 16:44

Yeah.

E Elle Billing 16:45

Or those of us who are trying to market right, I hate marketing. It's like, his favorite part of everything I do is like, trying to get people to look at my stuff is like the people say, Oh, you have to find your niche. You have to like, Who's your ideal customer? Like, and all the, all the stuff we have to we're supposed to, you know, in quote fingers are supposed to do to appeal to an audience. And it's like, what if I just make art that I like, and then other weirdos like me decide that they like it, too. And then they buy it?

A Austin Foudy 17:20

Exactly, exactly.

E Elle Billing 17:23

Which isn't the greatest marketing strategy when you're depending on your art for your income. But certainly, but like, art should be about what you know, I make what I love. And then other people love it, too. If there's social commentary woven in there, good for us.

A Austin Foudy 17:40

Sure,

E Elle Billing 17:41

because they're usually as with mine.

 17:44

I've noticed that

E Elle Billing 17:45

even if it's weird,

A Austin Foudy 17:46

I have certainly romanticized the idea of being a full time artist or a full time writer, novelist, et cetera, et cetera. Just in the same vein that I really enjoy cooking. I can't imagine being a professional chef. Because the rigor and yeah, I mean, I'm certain that it is very fulfilling for

so many people. Yet at the same time. I know a lot of people who a lot of chefs who work in the service industry here in Boise, and they seem so exhausted and so tired frequently. And it seems to me like the joy of of the arts that surrounds it is sort of robbed by the rigor

E

Elle Billing 18:28

that's really what happened to me with education. I love teaching, I love kids. It was just the joy got sucked out of it to the point where I experienced severe burnout and a medical crisis. I think that that's a really excellent observation about turning anything into like when you're when your hobby becomes your side hustle becomes your full time gig I think sort of problem is capitalism destroys everything, kills-- it kills everything. we love. you...

A

Austin Foudy 18:58

Yeah, no, it really does. And you know, I I do hope that someday I'll be able to rely more fully on my artistic creations. Yet I'm not I'm not in a rush I you know, I created a website I have a pretty solid social media foundation right now, which is you know, it's just started but it's growing and you know, if if that day ever comes great, but I'm not looking to get on get you'll be hip to all the latest trends in SEO and b2b marketing like I don't I don't care

E

Elle Billing 19:31

the letters SEO make my eyes cross. Yeah, it's not my favorite. Like I saw I look at analytics and stats as just like, oh, look, it's a number.

A

Austin Foudy 19:42

Sure. Right.

E

Elle Billing 19:44

And then I put it away. Like I don't, I can't obsess over it. It's just the I prefer to obsess over paint pigments. And like ASMR, paint mulling videos like that, that I'm if I'm gonna obsess about anything related to my art, it's gonna be like Make the actual art making process, it's not gonna be the business end of it, I'll find someone to do that for me.

A

Austin Foudy 20:05

Certainly, and I just arrived so much joy from from the process of creating. And I really feel like if I turned that into a business, too soon, I'll be extremely unhappy with the outcome. And so, to that effect, like I mentioned, I create art that I would want to view, my website is a website that I would want to navigate, because it's mine. And you know, we get to step back at a certain

point and make those self serving selfish decisions when we want to, especially with for things like that, and that I spent a lot of time not listening to what I wanted, or, you know, it feels really nice to be able to own something creatively.

E

Elle Billing 20:48

Yeah, absolutely. And that joy is so important. There's not enough of it. I mean, I think about like how people always look forward to retirement, because then they can do the stuff on their bucket list, or then they can travel or then they can do whatever. And it's like, do it now like, the things that we love and want to do now. But I mean, you did mention before, it is a privilege that we get to create art. Now, in our young, I don't know how old you are. But like, I'm 38. I'm not at retirement age. I'm not an old person. But I did leave the traditional employment world early due to illness reasons. But like being sick isn't a privilege, being able to say I'm to-- like, being able to actually walk away from work was the privilege. And being able to like slow down and experience joy and be intentional was definitely a privilege. And being able to be here for my parents' elder years is great. Certainly most of them most of the time. Like I said, my mom's a little nosy, but you know, I knew what I was getting into.

A

Austin Foudy 21:45

I'm 35. I feel very privileged to have a steady couple of jobs that I enjoyed showing up to, though I'm very ready to get out of the service industry nightlife scene, but you know, I have I have a great house with reasonable rents, you know, a lot of space, five bedrooms, two baths on half an acre. And my rent is reasonable. Yeah, that I can pay it by myself, which is it's an excessive amount of space, but that's the product of a ended relationship. But you know, I don't have children intentionally. So I won't have children. I made that decision long ago. TVasectomies are amazing. I just have to put that out there. Yeah. You know, birth control is one of the, like, hormonal birth control a little tangent here is one of the most horrible thing is to put somebody's body through. And that simple choice for me, not only solidified my desire to not be a parent, my want to not father children. And you know, it's cheaper, honestly, in the long run, yeah. Both on you know, financially in many ways, but all that to say, you know, I am very privileged to have certain amenities in my life that allow me to paint 48 by 48 canvases or larger or to paint a room studio white so that I can view my art and, you know, untainted environment, you know, things like that. Yeah,

E

Elle Billing 23:21

I, my studio is like, moss -- not moss green -- like sage, dark sage green, which makes it a little tough, but I wasn't, I wasn't allowed to paint that room. It's fine. Yeah, I always -- add a little moment of vulnerability for me, I always wanted kids and it didn't work out. But I love being an auntie, and I'm a godmother. And like, there's other ways for me to exercise those mothering, nurturing parenting skills that I have. And, you know, as I worked as a teacher for a long time, and I still have those skills and capacities, and so yeah, I don't have kids of my own. But that ended up, I think, working out okay, because I also now don't have any energy to do anything ever. And that would be really difficult if I had children.



A Austin Foudy 24:10
Certainly, yeah.

E Elle Billing 24:12
You mentioned earlier that when you started painting, it coincided with like a brief period or a six month period where you were where you were sober. And I know recently, you posted something on Instagram about doing that again. Is that something that you're willing to talk about a little bit?

A Austin Foudy 24:28
Yeah, absolutely. Honestly, they're no off topic subjects for me.

E Elle Billing 24:33
So I just as a little background, and I like talking about it, because it's, it overlaps with me a little bit. So it's something we can have a conversation on. I've I've been sober since 2018. But I had actually been doing 12 step for five years before that. So like, I'd been going to a 12 step group for something other than alcohol. And then in 2018, I was like, Hey, maybe I should stop drinking. too. And it was a good decision. All my medication works so much better when I'm not drinking alcohol. Imagine that.


A Austin Foudy 25:07
Yeah.


E Elle Billing 25:09
And so And 2018 was also when I was when I first started painting, so there's like, oh, when you ...


A Austin Foudy 25:16
funny how that happens


E Elle Billing 25:17
yourself, you have to do something with your feelings. Imagine that.


A Austin Foudy 25:22


 Austin Foudy 25:11
Yeah.


 Elle Billing 25:24
And it's like, oh, I don't all my negative coping skills I have gotten rid of. So now I have to do something. And it's hard. So what made you decide I guess to do that, you said, you're 30 days sober this time?


 Austin Foudy 25:40
Yeah, so I,


 Elle Billing 25:41
that's when I guess last time I checked or saw was on Instagram. And at that point, it was 30 days. .

 Austin Foudy 25:47
Yeah And that was just a few days ago. So it's a little over a month now.

 Elle Billing 25:51
Cool.

 Austin Foudy 25:52
Yeah, this this time around I I work at a bar, like I mentioned. Alcohol is very accessible. It's very easy, very cheap. For me, cheap.

 Elle Billing 26:06
And I lived in Idaho for for a number of years. And I know the culture there is either you're LDS or you drink a lot. At least that's what it seems like to me.

 Austin Foudy 26:18
Yeah. I mean,

 Elle Billing 26:19

E Elle Billing 26:19

I grew up in North Dakota, which is regularly the binge drinking,

A Austin Fouody 26:23

for sure.

E Elle Billing 26:24

But the highest binge drinking state in the country. So I'm aware,

A Austin Fouody 26:30

I make a living off of the fact that that is something that people do. I was I'm an I mentioned, I went through a pretty, pretty rough breakup separation involving an open relationship. And everything in between it was it was a nightmare situation, but through throughout the last year, while I guess since my last sober stint, I found that I was utilizing alcohol as a means of escape. And it wasn't really, I don't believe that I demonstrated any elements of dependency on alcohol, certainly, like build up your tolerance and the hangover is going to are just kind of a constant thing. But it was just it was the activity that I did, I would always go to the bar that I work because it's cheap for me and have a beer or a cocktail and read a book, or have a beer cocktail and catch up with a friend or have a cocktail and catch up on returning emails or, you know, so not only was I drinking when I felt like there is something to celebrate, or like, I was bummed out, or I had a rough day, it just happened to be ancillary to everything else that I did. And my emotional state in the last several months, certainly necessitated me taking a closer look at the activities that were helping or hindering my very survival. Because I found myself drinking more than I was eating, for example, or sacrificing sleep to drinking. And I woke up one day, and it was like, well, that's That's enough. And that's enough. So, you know, a little over a month ago, I just, I just stopped there, there was no real lead, lead up to it. I kind of thought about it for a couple days beforehand, but just stopped. And the first couple days, you know, it's like, especially when you're when you work in that scene, when you when you're surrounded by the inebriant. There is a little pressure to kind of slip, or oh, maybe one's okay, whatever. But I truly think that my my body has thanked me and it's, again, I don't think that I'm maybe medically, doctors might have something to say about it. I don't think that I fall into the what we consider to be as like an alcoholic category. And I believe that there's so many other reasons, aside from alcohol, alcoholism, to quit drinking or quit using a substance or quit a certain behavior or habit.

E Elle Billing 29:18

Absolutely. And that's kind of what when I quit drinking, like, I wasn't, I don't think I was at the point of dependency either. But I made really bad choices when I was drinking, right? If I had, like, traced all my bad choices, back to their origin point, at least 80% of them started in the bar.

A

Austin Foudy 29:38

Yeah, I can relate. Yeah. And

E

Elle Billing 29:42

I have migraine disease and major depressive disorder. And both of those medications operate, that I take operate on the brain and I shouldn't drink when I'm on them. And I have a lot of sensitivities to foods and apparently to fermented things and I I was down to like only two beverages to adult beverages that I could drink without getting instantly sick. And I was like, I'm putting way too much effort into like trying to maintain some kind of social drinking habit. Yeah, well, Ill Why is it so important to me to find like the drink I can still have? Why is it important for me to have a drink while I grade essays?

A

Austin Foudy 30:24

Right, exactly.

E

Elle Billing 30:26

Why is this a thing? And it turns out, I can't have fermented things like, like not even fermented foods. Like, I can't have kombucha I can't have sauerkraut, like all of those things make me sick, all of those awesome things, all of those awesome things that I love.

A

Austin Foudy 30:43

I'm So sorry.

E

Elle Billing 30:44

Yeah, like, and I used to make my own Kefir or kefir. However, I've heard it both ways. I used to like have my make my own and then like press cheese from it and use it for buttermilk biscuits and things like that. I can't have an I can't make sourdough pancakes anymore. None of those. None of those things all off the table. And here I was, like clinging to white wine. And like 44 North Vodka. And you know what, I can't have potatoes either. And so like, I was thinking that gluten free vodka was like The Thing and it here that's made with potatoes and I can't have potatoes. So like, I was just making myself sicker this whole time.

A

Austin Foudy 31:23

Well, that's that's really the thing there. There is a even on a base level whether you whether you think that you can have a couple beers, you know, on the weekend or not there is your body is processing a toxin. Don't get me wrong. I love spirits. I love beer I Love You know, I had a non alcoholic beer yesterday, you know, like I, I do find ways around that because I do enjoy

those things. But alcohol is the only state sanctioned drug that is acceptable. But it's the only drug that is socially acceptable to do in public today. And so there's not the stigma on that front end, because you're the bottle of booze that you pick up where you're served from that the bar has a tax stamp on it every single one

E Elle Billing 32:10

Yeah, it does.

A Austin Foudy 32:11

That's so not not not only are you paying for it in that way. But you know, since I quit drinking, I, I sleep a lot better. I'm a lot more clear headed. I make much sounder decisions I'm able to provide for myself. My appetite has returned tremendously. I've put on weight, which is a that's always been a big struggle for me being underweight. You know, you talk about things like allergies to certain things. I actually believe that I'm allergic to the consistent quantity of alcohol that was in my system. Like my skin. I have been having issues with eczema.

E Elle Billing 32:47

I have eczema, too. Yeah. It's like a chronic, it's chronic inflammatory condition. Yeah.

A Austin Foudy 32:53

And alcohol does not help that in fact, it exacerbates it to the point where it's painful for me. And so since I've stopped it stopped drinking again, my skin's cleared up I feel healthier, I'm sleeping more soundly, because there's also an interesting thing that happens with the sugars from alcohol, whatever type you imbibe in as they metabolize as you sleep, it actually wakes you up between two and four hours after you've gone to sleep. So there's a reason why when you go out drinking you you likely wake up in the middle of the night confused as to why

E Elle Billing 33:27

I never thought of that. Like the the metabolism part. That makes sense.

A Austin Foudy 33:32

So all these things you know, I find that I have more time to do things. I also have a lot more money because I'm not pouring it down my throat every so expensive.

E Elle Billing 33:40

I found Okay, so I was out shopping for Christmas and, and I found alcohol free spirits. And I

was like, you know, I really missed the taste of Gin. I liked Gin. I know a lot of people were like you would like Christmas trees. And I'm like, I know isn't a great? And I was like, Oh, they have alcohol free gin. Yeah. I was like, that sounds great. And I was like, no, that sounds like a bad idea because it costs money. And the last thing I need to do to do is to become a snob of alcohol-free spirits, and alcohol free beer, like, because I was such a microbrewery snob and I was like, just a craft brew, bitch. And I was like, I don't need to be doing that with like, non alcoholic versions. I can't afford that. Like what? No, put down the bottle! and I did, and I did not look back and I'm probably saved a whole lot of money because I did not buy it. Because then I would be like, Oh, well, like my dad doesn't drink anymore because it makes him too sleepy on his meds. But he was too like whiskey and coke. Well, they have this alcohol free whiskey. So I asked him about it. And he's like, Oh, I had whiskey cokes in college, because it was alcohol. He's like, I don't really drink that as an as like a grown ass adult. I was like, oh, okay, so I'm glad I didn't get the whiskey. Yeah. That was 50 years ago.

A

Austin Foudy 35:04

Well, I mean, that's, that's the thing I like I, as a bartender, I started just drink drinking vodka is shooting vodka because it's, you know, when you're on the job and you're allowed to drink that's the easiest thing in most palatable thing that doesn't wreck your stomach and ruin your life while you're working. Yeah, yeah. I don't miss shots of vodka. I don't miss having a you know, Tito's and soda after work. But what i What I miss is sitting in my backyard drinking a beer. And this that process and there's something that's nostalgic about that for me. But you know, for with non alcoholic beer, for example. I feel like it's the spirit and the essence is there. But when you when you pick up a six pack, your objective is to finish the six pack, right? Yeah, yeah. You know, and I find that when when I'm drinking non alcoholic beer. I'm not counting how many I have left anymore.

E

Elle Billing 35:57

Yeah, yeah, you're like, Wow, this is pretty tasty. I'm enjoying myself with this beverage. Yeah. Which is why I started drinking. But like, that isn't what it became, you know, it's not how it ended?

A

Austin Foudy 36:11

What was the most difficult part of stop- like quitting drinking for you? If you don't mind me asking,

E

Elle Billing 36:17

oh, the most difficult part. All my friends still drink.

A

Austin Foudy 36:22

Yeah.

E

Elle Billing 36:23

But I quit drinking briefly in college. And it was much harder then. and the way I got around that was I always showed up at a party with cheese and crackers that I'd carry around. So no one could hand me a drink. Like, I would just carry around a box of crackers and those like cheese spreads. And that's what I would have at a party instead of drinking as I would just walk around with my own food. Because no, because I don't like to be rude. And I'm a very social drinker. And so if somebody hands me something, I feel bad saying no.

A

Austin Foudy 36:53

Right? You feel obligated,

E

Elle Billing 36:54

like I have way stronger boundaries now in my 30s than I did at 19. So it was easier as an adult. Or as like a more grown up adult to say no, I'm not gonna drink. And my friends were pretty understanding about it. Really the final thing that ultimately made me decide I lost a family member to complications from alcoholism, that same year, and that actually made any of the hard things about quitting much easier. Because my cousin passed away when he tried to get sober and detox, unsupervised, he got ill. And then there was a very long process of him getting progressively sicker in the hospital while trying to recover. And it was just really devastating for our family. And so that really, honestly, made the hard parts pretty easy. Like, I know, that was that was bad. We're not going to do that.

A

Austin Foudy 37:50

Yeah, yeah, definitely. Yeah, I certainly think that, and I'm so sorry to hear about your cousin.

E

Elle Billing 37:57

Thank you.

A

Austin Foudy 37:58

Yeah, there is definitely a point where you have those those moments of realization or clarity, where it's like, well, I see how this could go. And with with my history with depression, and I've had a voluntary commitment to a mental health institution in my past, I could see how it would take, you know, just a severe life event to push me off that edge, you know,

E

Elle Billing 38:24

yeah, yeah

yeah, yep.

A Austin Fouady 38:25

And recognizing that I don't know how long I plan on this, this stint of sobriety being this time. I'm very, very comfortable in it right now. And I really don't feel any pressure to start drinking at this point in time. The nicer weather kind of screws that up a little bit. But yeah, yeah, I just, I was not handling my emotions well, in the last several months, and on top of that, I just wasn't creating, over the last year between the period between the last six months since of sobriety, and now I hardly created I don't think that I can be an artist and be a drinker at the same time.

E Elle Billing 39:07

That's interesting. You know, when people ask, Why do you paint well, I have to like, I can't NOT create. I have to exercise my demons because I can't exorcise them. Right. So like the option is you either knock them out with substances or you like work them out through creative process, one or the other. We just have to do what we can with them and try to coexist peacefully, I guess.

A Austin Fouady 39:30

Absolutely. And I think that staring those quote unquote, demons in the face and working with them working alongside them, I think that's where a lot of really profound Magic happens artistically. And what I mean whatever whatever your artistic medium is, like for for writing, for example, I can drink and write all day long. Some of the greatest stories I've created have been the product of me sitting down with copious amounts of whiskey.

E Elle Billing 39:57

I think Stephen King doesn't even remember writing? Cujo?

A Austin Fouady 40:03

Oh I Yeah,

E Elle Billing 40:04

because he was like so drunk and on whatever drugs like the whole time he wrote it.

A Austin Fouady 40:09

Yeah.

E

Elle Billing 40:09

But like he's in, has been in recovery for a long time too, because he was like "I was killing myself." I mean, it's not an uncommon phenomenon among writers and artists to deal with substance abuse.

A

Austin Foudy 40:21

My dad, who is also an educator, he looked over me dinner one time, and he said something to the effect of I think I figured out why you drink. And I was like, Oh, yeah. Why was that I was very intrigued. Of course, he goes, so you can deal with all of us. And he didn't mean family. He just meant the world at large. You know, I'm a very introverted person and I am forced to be an extroverted scenarios and territory all the time, like we most of us are, I can't bartend without being slightly friendly, and personable and a little bit gregarious. But I certainly think that substances can be used, or are used frequently to mask something else, you know, to mask what's going on internally with us. You know, like, do I miss drinking? Sure, drinking on a patio on a Sunday afternoon. Sounds really, really great. But I think I'm happier. I think I'm much happier when I when I don't drink. I think I'm more in touch with myself. And I think I'm more in tune with with the world around me. I feel like I'm more present for my dogs for example. I'm also grateful for the means and the ability to find sobriety even if they are shorter periods, or however long I choose to do it with with the support and you know, not experiencing withdrawals. You know, there's alcoholism in my family. And I don't feel like I struggled with with the pull to alcohol as those individuals do. Well, I'm just a lot, I'm a lot friendlier.

E

Elle Billing 42:00

Well, thank you for talking with me today. I really appreciate the time you took to share about all the things today.

A

Austin Foudy 42:08

Thank you so much for having me.

E

Elle Billing 42:12

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