

s2curlyfull

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SPEAKERS

Curly Dax, Elle Billing

- 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. Curly Dax is a deeply passionate artist with only a little bit of chill. Having 130 houseplants doesn't cross her mind when the opportunity to adopt another plant friend appears. Curly lives by the motto, "nothing is too small to find joy in" so you can catch her cheering on her plants whenever new leaves are sprouting in her personal or studio plant collections. I'm excited to have Curly Dax here as my guest on the podcast for this episode. Hi, welcome to Hoarf How are you today?
- C** Curly Dax 01:17
I am doing good. How are you?
- E** Elle Billing 01:19
Good. I'm not too bad. It had been really, really cold for a while, like several days where it never got above zero. We've had two days where the temperature got above zero. So I think that's that's good. You know, I'm I'm happy.
- C** Curly Dax 01:32
Where in the world are you?
- E** Elle Billing 01:35

North Dakota. Yeah.

C Curly Dax 01:37
Oh, my.

E Elle Billing 01:38
Yeah.

C Curly Dax 01:39
I'm in Virginia. And it was 22 today, and I was like, oh my god, it's freezing.

E Elle Billing 01:43
Yesterday, when I went to work. It was 10 degrees. And it felt nice. Like, that's how cold it's been the last week, that I got out of my car and it was 10 above. I was like, Oh, this is nice. This is nice. I was like no, why do I live here?

C Curly Dax 02:01
That's like a great example of how everything is relative.

E Elle Billing 02:03
Yes, yes. Because when I was living in Idaho, yeah. 20 was like, Ooh, this is cold. Or 10 was like, unbearable. And now like, oh, 10 is nice. Because it was like 30, 40 below last week.

C Curly Dax 02:19
What?!

E Elle Billing 02:20
Oh, yeah, we were in a severe wind chill advisory for days. It was like so dangerous. It was dangerous.

C Curly Dax 02:27
Oh, my God. I'm never going any farther north of Virginia. I can't do it.

Oh, my God. I'm never going any farther north of Virginia. I can't do it.

E Elle Billing 02:32

Yeah, I, a lot of us don't necessarily live here by choice. This is just like where we were born. And now this is where we will die.

C Curly Dax 02:40

Understandable. Sounds like --

E Elle Billing 02:41

Farmers can't move. This is just where this where, this is where the land is.

C Curly Dax 02:46

Very good point.

E Elle Billing 02:47

Yeah. So I'm excited to have you on the podcast today.

C Curly Dax 02:53

Yeah.

E Elle Billing 02:55

So I'm gonna start with my first question. And that is, how have you received care this week?

C Curly Dax 03:00

So I took notes on this because I was like, Hold on, I need to make sure I can say the things

E Elle Billing 03:05

Great!

C Curly Dax 03:06

C Curly Dax 03:07

And I was like, Hey, I was like, that was the question. I really want to make sure I can shout out my friends. So one of my friends got me Popeye's this past like, well, like a couple days ago, because I was like, I can't executive function to get myself to eat food right now. And I need something that I don't have to do anything for.

E Elle Billing 03:26

Oh, I'm all about that. Yep.

C Curly Dax 03:28

Yeah. And yesterday, I was having a lot of like, emotional and physical like, volatility or like, my pain like spiked because I like was and then I got really frustrated because I felt like I didn't do enough for me to be hurting and then have to sit in bed for like the next several hours. And then my friend was like, you've been working through -- not even talking about your physical -- you've been working through a lot of like, emotional heavy things. And that makes sense why you need to rest.

E Elle Billing 03:58

Yep,

C Curly Dax 03:58

plus the physical thing. Pain is tiring. Dear God, pain is tiring.

E Elle Billing 04:04

Yes, it absolutely. It's so exhausting.

C Curly Dax 04:08

See, my friends are phenomenal when it comes to my medical stuff as well. But I also like, loved on myself and cared for myself by making myself lay down into bed. Like, No, we're just gonna get in bed, we're gonna get in bed. We'll get out of bed if we get out of bed later. And I was like, we're gonna cry in bed. We have lots of feelings. We're not feeling particularly good. We're tired. All the things I became really, really fragile and tender as the day wore on yesterday, especially. But ya know, like, it's, it's really, it's been really important to be able to lean more into my friends, especially as of late, but always, especially as an emotionally volatile and volatile in the way of like, a lot of reaction, not necessarily the way of like there's a negativity and it's just like, I react very much to a lot of things surrounding me like volatile compounds react very easily with things around them.

E Elle Billing 04:56

No, I totally get what you're saying. I have big feelings about everything. Yeah. I respond to things in my environment and in my inner life. And no, I totally follow what you're saying.

C Curly Dax 05:12

It's a hoot. It's a hoot and a half. It's like seven hoots some days and it's wild.

E Elle Billing 05:16

Yeah. Yeah. My dad came home the other day. And I was just sort of I looked like a, I call it my old fashioned painting lady. Like, the lady in the old paintings was like, languishing on the couch.

C Curly Dax 05:29

Oh, my God. I need a couch. So I can do that.

E Elle Billing 05:32

Right. So like, I that's what I looked like when my dad got home for lunch. And he's like, are you still sick? I was like, No, I showered. This is normal. This is what I look like after a shower. He says, I-- I don't think that's normal. I was like, oh, sorry. This is my normal. Like, this is what I have to do after a shower, like I'm okay. Or like, I will be okay. I just need-- I just need to languish for a while.

C Curly Dax 05:56

Yeah, I know that exact feeling.

E Elle Billing 05:58

Yeah. But like he was very concerned when he walked in the door. It's like, Are you Are you okay? Like, yes, but no, no, but yes, I'm just being I'm just being a lady in a painting right now.

C Curly Dax 06:10

This is expected. That's something I've had to like, think about a lot more. Especially thinking about like my health and like reactions mental and physical. Like, my inner dialogue is external a lot of times now because the fact that I'm like, fairly, you're going through a lot, this is

fucking hard. And I spent a lot of time alone, because COVID. My ass isn't going outside. Um, if I really actually don't have to go to the studio, I don't see people in person. Really. I have like a handful of people who are in my like, tight, like little circle, that we see each other. But that's it. Really, but what's expected that has something to do like, probably think about, like, people, plants, expectations of everything in your life. So yeah, it sucks, but it's expected is like a thing I just like have as like a check of like, criteria. I was like, does this suck? Yes. Is this expected? Yes. Will you be okay? Yes. Does it suck right now? Yes.

E Elle Billing 07:10

I really appreciate that framing because No, it is not normal for someone to need to recover after a shower. But it is expected for me to have to recover after a shower. That's-- I like that framing. It's like does this suck? Yes. Is this expected? Also Yes. This is why I don't shower every day. Nothing would ever get done.

C Curly Dax 07:34

Okay, so can you kind of a small plant nerd out?

E Elle Billing 07:36

Absolutely.

C Curly Dax 07:37

Perfect. Okay, cool.

E Elle Billing 07:39

This episodes about you nerd out about what you want.

C Curly Dax 07:44

Like I make plant pots and like my whole thing is, right.

E Elle Billing 07:45

Yes.

C Curly Dax 07:46

That's my main thing, in the way of like, what's expected is like, what are the conditions and

situations and like inputs that you're able to give your plants like a plant, and also like, what is that plant capable of based on like, what kind of plant it is, what life stages am and then how it's affected by all those factors, like what can be expected of that plant. When I like have been really slacking on being on top of my pest management and like, it is expected that I am getting a lot of yellowing leaves on certain plants because spider mites have started moving in. Okay, that's how I tired myself out. Like how yesterday was refilling the humidifiers and a watering can, and moving a couple lights around and I was like well, my back burns and my hips below I'm gonna lay down but like what is expected based on what I'm giving the plant. So when it ends up with pests, the plant is already stressed. So it's more prone to getting sick and more prone to getting pests. It's like, okay, one, we're not going to blame the plant for an external thing hurting it. We're also not gonna blame the plant for not doing for excelling air quotes, and putting out all this new growth and stuff when its needs aren't being met. Right. So I'm like, what is even, like, what is a reasonable expectation for this kind of plant in this situation with these outside factors. Also, sometimes just like innately certain plants are more or less hardy than others to like certain conditions like humidity. Some plants, people like I could never grow this outside of like a greenhouse cabinet, right? Or a terrarium. And then other people like I have that same plant but like, I got it when it was like a tissue culture baby plantlet and I'm hardened it off and adapted it to being in ambient humidity. So it has never been in a greenhouse cabinet and it's as big as yours. It's like this plant started and was conditioned from literally when it started growing, you know to now, versus like a plant that you got from a like kind of niche luxury kind of boutique where it was always in humidity. High humidity. Yeah, that was like it's really interesting.

E Elle Billing 09:45
That's really cool.

C Curly Dax 09:46
We're realing nothing but complicated plants

E Elle Billing 09:48
We're complicated plants. I like that. you just like unlocked a new area in my brain, I think.

C Curly Dax 09:54
Yeah.

E Elle Billing 09:55
Because like I love taking care of plants too. The first thing I did when I moved back in with my parents --I've talked about this in another episode. But at the time, this area was in the middle of a drought and everything was really brown. And it was kind of depressing. And so I bought a bunch of house plants because I needed green in my life. So I've been taking care of these

indoor plants. And I've basically taken over any -- there's not a lot of good windows in the house. And so the two really good windows that we have, I have plants in them now. And it's just part of my weekly, monthly, daily routine to take care of these plants. And I have one fern in particular that like I can see cycle with the seasons, because it's so-- our house is ,because it's so cold, and we have to run the furnace. Our house is dry.

C Curly Dax 10:38
Is it a Boston fern?

E Elle Billing 10:40
No, my Boston fern's doing great. I've been able to split that one out and then like, let the little runners go out and propagate themselves. And they had a little baby and I'm like, so proud of that baby. I'm like, I did this! Well, I facilitated the fern doing this. Yeah. So my Boston--

C Curly Dax 10:56
You tended to it.

E Elle Billing 10:57
Yeah. My Boston Fern had a baby. No, my Kimberly fern.

C Curly Dax 11:01
I've never heard of a

E Elle Billing 11:02
a Kimberly Queen Fern, I think is what it is. gets really, really ragged in the winter. And it's like sitting next to my humidifier in my bedroom. And it just can't. just it struggled through the winter. And then in the summer it does so good. Because it's so humid here in the summer. And then in the winter. It's like why?

C Curly Dax 11:22
Same.

E Elle Billing 11:23
Why am I here? And I'm like, I will never buy another one of you. I'm so sorry that you're here.

Like I it's like I apologize to this plant all winter long. I'm like, I'm so sorry.

C Curly Dax 11:33

I'm trying my best. You are trying your best.

E Elle Billing 11:36

I'm so sorry. I'm like, I'm sad too.

C Curly Dax 11:40

exactly. i, i feel that in my soul.

E Elle Billing 11:42

Yeah, like, I am also this fern. I have alligator skin and eczema. And my sinuses hurt. And I am sad.

C Curly Dax 11:52

See, okay, this is I'm not I'm not running this podcast, but what kind of plants in your collection do you most identify with?

E Elle Billing 11:59

Oh, that's a really good question. Probably that fern. Like, especially like in the winter, but like, not in the summer because I hate summer too. like, but as far as like that for needing, like so much attention. I'm I am. I'm fragile. Like physically, like I've gotten less fragile emotionally, like I understand myself better. But like physically, I am just so delicate. I get a cold and which, no biggie right. It's a cold but it like takes me out for so long because I also have chronic migraine disease. And so anything in the region of my head just knocks me flat on my ass.

C Curly Dax 12:43

Mm.

E Elle Billing 12:44

And I have eczema. And so like, as soon as the air starts to get a little dry around here, I'm like triple layering my lotions and I just I feel like that fern. It's just like, it's so dry.

C Curly Dax 12:58
Yeah,

E Elle Billing 12:58
yep, it's that fern. Like as I'm looking. And like in my head. I'm looking at all my plants. Yeah, it's the fern. It's that one fern. Just looking a little scraggly right now. But it's it's it's trying so hard. It's really really putting up a good effort.

C Curly Dax 13:15
See, I have so many plans. Like, I have so many fucking plants. I have thrown away. I have like thrown away some plants this past week because I'm like, I'm back in my phase of culling.

E Elle Billing 13:28
Yeah.

C Curly Dax 13:29
And excising especially and reducing.

E Elle Billing 13:33
When I had a garden out in Idaho. That was always the hardest thing for me. And you know, my, my grandma taught me to garden when I was a kid. And then and that was here in North Dakota, where it actually rains. And then I moved to Idaho where it doesn't rain very much the high desert. And I had to like relearn everything because it's like dry climate, irrigated gardening and the soil is terrible. And the hardest thing for me was like culling and thinning them like but the they're alive. Like, why would I take these out? But it's like, oh, because like, like, you have to do it for the health of the whole system. But it was that was one of the hardest things for me. Okay,

C Curly Dax 14:11
Okay, so that like literally, that's like a thing I talk about. And like, I haven't written a lot of poetry lately. I want to get back into it and recording more of it because I really like my voice actually. Like that's one thing about me. My words are my most powerful medicine.

E Elle Billina 14:25

You have a great voice.

C Curly Dax 14:25

Thank you.

E Elle Billing 14:26

Yeah

C Curly Dax 14:26

my voice and my medicine in through my words. And the way I synthesize stuff is like my most potent form of medicine and magic that I can share with others. Because I'm like, life is so hard to stick around for sometimes. And I'm just like, I want people to know that they're not alone in that awful hardness. Because like I have been saved by the kindness of strangers, by my friends, by institutions, by psych words like it's so important to share any grappling hooks that people you find with others, because like, you don't know how close someone is to slipping just by looking at them because people have thought I was doing so good. So good. So perfect. So like, I was like, Wow, you're so like you're doing so much. And I'm like, Yeah, and I'm also empty. I'm numb, I'm sad. I'm crying when you're not seeing me. Or I can't do anything because I'm in so much pain when I try to walk. Like, I don't feed myself because it requires me to stand up to get like, which also being a fat person, like a whole other thing when it comes to like, I don't eat and having to get my mom break that down. And my mom was like, that's not a good thing, woman. And she's like, Oh, wait, yeah, you're right. Like it took a minute. It took many minutes, many years, but we figured it out. But circling back to like the culling, and like pulling plants, I did something like that with my Monstera I had a gigantic pot of Monstera that I got from like, Great Big Greenhouse, which was a really great greenhouse here in Richmond, Virginia. And it was like, really, and truly like 20 Monstera of different ages and maturity levels all stuffed into the same like 10 inch pot. It was like, really intense. But also like this Monstera will never look air quotes Good and like really be able to be grown out and also just like sit in a space well, because there's no front and back of it. Because of the way all these plants are just sort of scattered in the pot. I think that some people don't realize that monasterio have a front and a back, there's a front and back to those plants.

E Elle Billing 16:17

I didn't know that I don't have a Monstera though, either.

C Curly Dax 16:20

So yeah, so So once they're like they have aerial roots that come out only on the backside, the leaves all face and grow the other way. So put that back against planks or moss poles or supports.

E

Elle Billing 16:31

Okay, that makes sense.

C

Curly Dax 16:33

But when there's all these plants just like strewn kind of in a pot, and like, they just sort of all grow. And it's like, okay, and so very obviously, some of these are much more mature than all of the other ones. Some of these are just baby babies. So when I took out a bunch of -- I like sat down, I used all the energy for the day at the studio that day, like breaking up plants. I bought a big table potting that, put it on the table, and I have like videos and like stuff of me doing that which I don't think I've showed, I like took out all these like small plants. I potted like the three biggest ones together, those are still in the studio in a pot-- they need to get repotted again, re-staked properly, all that good stuff. But all those other little ones I was like, I will not be able to grow these, if I throw them in soil like I won't be able to take care of them. Because I don't want to just put them in a bunch of soil and then have them all facing the wrong direction. Again, I don't want a bunch of tiny pots of little monstera, right. Right. So I was like, Okay, we're gonna grow them hydroponically. So I had to, in the process of thinking through this, I'm like, I have to cut off all of these roots. This feels so counterintuitive. The roots are literally the thing that are sustaining the life of all these plants. And I'm like, I also know if I leave these roots on put them in water, they rot and necrosis the entirety of all of the plants, they'll eat away all the nodes so quickly, if I don't catch it immediately. And I'm like, I know that it's inevitable if I don't take those roots off because they're not suited for water. So they will rot. So I'm like, Okay, so I'm going to remove and cull what seems perfectly good -- it is perfectly good for a completely different environment, so that the plant will actually live in the way that it's going to live the rest of its life. hydroponically. in a lot of parts of life that's like it hurts. It's shocking. Okay, I need to get rid of us because it's more it's more detrimental and more dangerous to the longevity and health of everything around it. Which is how I also threw away my other two monstera this past week, because they have thrips and I finally stopped ignoring the signs that they have thrips and then I finally asked to plant group here in Richmond arvia tropicals and exotics. It's really cool, find the plant group in your area on Facebook, y'all so much information so many kind, kind people

E

Elle Billing 18:38

and they know what to do like about specifically to your niche climate too like, you know, I do about my fern that like gets dry and crackly. Even like in the middle of January in North Dakota. Don't grow ferns.

C

Curly Dax 18:54

That's like this. Everyone's calatheas. I'm like, y'all just stop trying to put tap water on them. I'm telling you let the water sit out overnight, you're gonna be okay. Your plant will be much better it helps evaporate like the chlorine and stuff off of it. There's also stuff that you can put

in water directly to like get rid of the chlorine but I don't have that. But like some plants are no like. The way my friend told me last night, she's like, Don't say you're needy, you need to find another word because everyone has needs

E Elle Billing 19:21
exactly!

C Curly Dax 19:22
same thing. Every plant has needs. Every plant has needs. Some of them are just much harder for like them to find like a person or place that like meets those needs. They have much, like a much narrower range of what is needed for them. And it's harder for people to be able to hit that if they don't know how. Or like their situation just isn't set up. Every plant will not thrive in your place. Whether it be same environment. My house is different than my studio. Like they we're in the same city. We're probably 15 minutes apart. Yep, completely different climate, kind of vibe climate. The building is, like cools differently. It doesn't get as dry there. XY and Z. So like plants do differently in both of these places. I tell people, it's like you're not necessarily bad at plants, you're not educated, or like you haven't figured it out in a way that fits with your life and the plants such are trying to keep some seeds. Because you also might be a good plant parent and also just repeated a good plant parent air quotes, right hard air quotes. And you're just always trying to get plants that are dissonant with your lifestyle, and your environment.

E Elle Billing 20:26
That's so good. Like, I, I love that because I'm doing this neurodivergent thing that I do, because it's like, the cognitive empathy. We're like, I'm gonna relate to you by telling a similar story.

C Curly Dax 20:39
Cool.

E Elle Billing 20:40
So you know, the fern struggles was like, oh, I should grow succulents, right. Well, only certain succulents seem to thrive here, because I have some that are doing really well and it's like, you almost get to neglect them, but I have other ones that have rotted because apparently I still managed to overwater them even though like I did, I did treated them the same as my other succulents. So like, yeah, certain varieties just don't do well with me. So I stopped growing them. Also,

C Curly Dax 21:08

Also, like if the soil mix was different. Yeah, if they came from different stores different growers, like the soil makeup could be different if you didn't repot all the soil like so one might retain water more than the other, ones roots might be more sensitive to drying out or moisture. That's the way most people kill succulents. Everyone thinks they're awful plant parent when they kill a succulent, like that's not true. They die really easily. Like they get stretched out

E

Elle Billing 21:31

they're not a good starter plant

C

Curly Dax 21:33

they're not. Everyone says like, oh my god, I even killed a succulent I killed a cactus since so I still plant pots at markets, especially in person all the time. This year in 2024, I'm going to try to reduce that maybe to two to three markets a month maximum, and gravitate more of my stuff ready to ship hopefully online. Because I don't have the energy to be going out in public. And also my health is too fragile. To be repeatedly risking COVID I can't I can't do anything.

E

Elle Billing 22:02

Yeah.

C

Curly Dax 22:02

So like, like, and also like, I have to sit there and I'm like, okay, so I am also black. I am fat. I am seen as a woman, I am non binary, but I am seen as a woman, right? So these things automatically increase the difficulty and danger for me in the healthcare system. So I'm like I have, I have to be even more careful. It's like, okay, COVID will fuck you up in so many ways, which some people do not want to admit. Look up actual long COVID research. And also, if you really, truly want to put a face to long COVID Go on x, which is what Twitter is now called. And look up like hashtag like living with long COVID or living with LC. So like it's so dangerous. So like I'm gravitating away from doing in person markets. But a thing people tell me at my tables all the time, is I have a black thumb. I even killed a succulent and then I'm like, or I killed an airplant. When it comes from an airplant. I'm like it dried up. And they're like, No, and I was like, Oh, the bottom of it got mushy and rotted and molded and then they're like yes, and I'm like, there's the thing is there's one of two ways to kill those plants. Almost always. It's you don't water them enough, you don't give them enough moisture because everyone's been educated to water them incorrectly. Let it be known with air plants, you submerge them in water, not their flowers that they're blooming because that will rot. But you submerge them in water for like 10 to 20 minutes, you can do like 20 to 30 depending maybe every week or two. And then you shake them out gently but really well and you let them dry upside down is best because it allows water to run away from the crown which is where they grow from. They don't have roots. They are like orchids that grow on the sides of trees, they get their water through their leaves. And so think: it's in a rain forest, huge influx of water, it rains, then it dries out. Okay, I'm going to submerge it then dry it out. to like as like the rhythm of that. So everyone's

been told to like spray them with a slug. I'm Mister. I'm like nothing and nature gets its moisture from a spray bottle. Nothing gets its moisture that it needs and water from a spray bottle. No one gets misted to stay alive. Like

E Elle Billing 24:17
that's a really good point.


C Curly Dax 24:20
That's the thing is like, wow, that makes a lot of sense. And I'm like, yeah, a lot of things are like, not as complicated, but also have never been framed or like you've never been explained things to like, actually. So like, I was talking to them like, like I'm so dumb. I'm like now you just didn't know. See that makes sense. When I explained it this way. You get it? In succulents, almost always I'm like, did it dry-- Did you forget to water it? If it's not that they're like it rotted? And I'm like oh so you overwatered it. And the thing is you can overwater a succulent one time. And over watering is frequency of water and not letting the soil dry out enough between watering.

E Elle Billing 24:58
Yep

C Curly Dax 24:58
for those needs of that type of plants roots, and it brought it and I'm like, you could have overwatered at one time. Your housemate could have watered your plant when you didn't know they have. And your succulent rotted. Now you think you're a bad plant parent? No, no, homie. They're so fragile. So were we, but like as humans like, but like, they're so fragile, and it doesn't make it hurt less necessarily that your plant died. But like, please don't personalize things like that. It's like, you're, we're all trying our best. We're acting within the knowledge that we have. And so often people are doing like their best by plants. Like they're really trying to do their best by plants, people too yourself, as you can, you know, but like, we're not malicious normally to our plants, we're trying our best. And, okay, here's the thing, I say that some people like don't, I always feel nervous about saying to some people, but I'm like, you can try your best. And sometimes your best isn't good enough for whatever you're trying for. And that is just like, Did you meet the qualification? Like for like, whatever the the rubric is? That doesn't mean you're a terrible person. Like, it doesn't mean your worth as a human is bad.

E Elle Billing 26:06
Right.


C Curly Dax 26:07

 Curly Dax 20:07

Okay. I failed at this thing. Yes, categorically. I did. Okay, cool. I failed to keep this plant alive in my care. Cool. That doesn't say anything about me as a person.

 Elle Billing 26:20


You know, that is something that took me a long time to internalize is like, you can be bad at the thing and not be a bad person. Yeah, and, I mean, I think the binary of good person-bad person is rooted in capitalism and white supremacy anyway. Because we want, what most binaries are to, let's be honest. We want everything to fit in a neat category, because then it's easier to dismiss people, and then write them off and get rid of them. But you know, having grown up as like, with a lot of pressure to perform and things, and what and as a recovering people pleaser, and a recovering perfectionist, being able to say it's okay to be bad at something, it's okay to be learning, it's okay to have something fail miserably. That's how we learn. You know, and I was a teacher for over a dozen years. And I told kids you know, you all the time you learn better from the mistakes you make than you do from getting it right the first time. And I truly believe that as as an educator, but like, I couldn't apply it to myself. It was like, oh, the rules apply to everybody except me. Like, I have to be perfect. No, no, I don't, no I don't. Like I can kill a succulent, and like, still be okay.

 Curly Dax 27:33

You can kill a plant, you can kill all the plants you've ever had, you're still worthy of love. You're not a bad person. Like, everything you touch doesn't die. You have yet to find a plant that jives with your lifestyle. And truthfully, plants might not jive with your lifestyle the way like, that's okay. Like, you're not a bad person, because plants don't work with your lifestyle.

 Elle Billing 27:52

Yeah,

 Curly Dax 27:53

like it also it's interesting because where we put our value, like where we put our own personal like value judgment of like, oh, people who are really good at plants. So when I'm bad at plants, I judge myself super harshly because I've idolized and lifted other people's skills up and I admire them. And it's like, both/and I'm in DBT I have borderline personality disorder, which is an emotional regulation disorder, dear fucking God. It's not like, it's not dissociative identity disorder. It's kind of this whole thing of like, it's an emotional regulation disorder, primarily, like, and both/and is one of the big principles in DBT. It's like multiple things can be true at the same time, and multiple contradictory things can be true at the same time. Like, I could be upset about something and also sad. Or I'm like, I'm glad that happened. But also still really sad,

 Elle Billing 28:40

right? Yeah. I mean, that's what it was like, when I moved home. I was like, I was really sad. I was leaving my friends and my students behind in Idaho, but like, I'm--I know, this is exactly where I need to be. And I actually really enjoy living with my parents most of the time. My -- I get along really well with my dad. He's a really neat person and I enjoy getting to know him now as like an adult. And my mom asks me regularly, she's like, Do you are you sad? You left Idaho and I was like, yes, and like, I'm glad I'm here. Yeah, like, multiple things can be true at the same time. You know, and you were talking about we pedestalize people who are like really good at a thing that we that we enjoy doing. It just reminded me my grandma was like a really good gardener. And she always shared her produce with us and like every time I eat the first tomato of the season, it is just this huge sense memory, right? The smell the taste. It's like being back in my grandma's garden because most of the time if we were over there and we picked a tomato we didn't wait to get it in the house. We just wiped it on our shirt and took a bite out of it. And it's just like this fully encompass-- like this completely immersive memory and I think about how like especially around here and it's probably anywhere people are really proud of their garden produce like growing a really good tomato, especially like for how far north we are, right? It's like a big deal. And then I think everybody here is technically bad at growing tomatoes, because tomatoes are a tropical perennial, and we grow them as annuals. So we're really like, like, it's all perspective. It's all it's all framing, right? Like, yeah, tomatoes are great. And like, how impressive is it that we can actually get them to fruit in North Dakota, but at the same time, we are unnecessarily killing millions of tomato plants every season, because they can't overwinter? Because they're tropical perennials

C

Curly Dax 30:49

like, I was like greenhouse question mark?

E

Elle Billing 30:52

right, but like we don't grow. I mean, yes, people do grow them in greenhouses, but we don't like we just put them in our garden. And then when it frosts they're dead, you pull them out, you grow them again the next year. But like, that was just the thing that popped into my head, it's like we, the way we frame the skills too, is really important. Like, it's just, okay, now I remember where I was kind of going with this too, when you were talking about how you sometimes you feel bad when you stay in bed all day, or getting better about like allowing that space for yourself. And then about plants and some being better in your studio versus in your home. And where things are adapted and niche environments and stuff. My goddaughter has CP and uses a wheelchair. And for most of her childhood got really, really annoyed-- and still does, She's in high school now--but with people telling her to hurry up. And so at some point, someone bought her the book by Eric Carle slowly, slowly, slowly said the sloth. And she started, like identifying with and collecting sloths. And then when I got sick, when I got sick, I, a friend sent me a sloth. And now I have three little stuffed sloths. And she and I connect on this point that like, sloths are perfectly adapted to their environment. They're not too slow, right? Like, they go exactly as fast as they need to go. Like, right now. It's winter. My plants are not putting up new growth right now. And I'm not expecting them to. I'm just trying to keep them alive.

C

Curly Dax 32:34

Curly Dax 32:31

Maintenance! maintaining is also important, like 2023 was like year of maintenance for me. Like the whole year was a year of maintenance.

E Elle Billing 32:43

Holy shit. Yes.

C Curly Dax 32:47

I stayed alive. I stayed alive. I gained some coping skills. So I it made it easier to bear through the rest of the year. Yeah, cool. I

E Elle Billing 32:54

we made it

C Curly Dax 32:55

like the get my word for 2023. Someone like asked that question or something at the end of the year and was like, what was your word for 2023? And what's your word for 2024? mine for 2023 was maintenance like maintain, and 2024 is jump.

E Elle Billing 33:09

Ooh.

C Curly Dax 33:10

Because like, I'm gonna bet on myself, back and deeply into the bet on myself, do the things that make me happy. Explore. And, like, do it with the faith that I'm like, Curly, you're going to do it and it's going to pop or you're going to do it, and you're going to learn something. Maybe it won't work. Or maybe it'll go fucking thrillingly like splendidly. And I will also learn in the process that I don't like doing. Those are all important things to know I've worked at an opera. I used to be a costumer, I have a theater degree and I focused on like wardrobe management and costuming like sewing.

E Elle Billing 33:46

Okay, this is why friends because I have a theatre minor and I got my start as a costumer when I was like 10. Like volunteers as a volunteer sewist. Yeah,

C Curly Dax 33:55

yeah. I were working at the opera for the summer I worked at Wolf Trap Opera in Virginia like Northern Virginia. I think it's like Vienna, Virginia. And it's like a big deal like opera, I guess. And I learned that I absolutely hate sewing. Like, it's too stressful for me. It's too stressful. It's,

E Elle Billing 34:14

I get that. Yep, it can be very stressful. Yep.

C Curly Dax 34:17

And I'm like, I would much prefer to deal with the person aspect of theater of wardrobe management, maint-- like on the fly quick, like stage manager kind of thinking because I used to be a stage manager in high school and stage manager for four years. I did a little bit of stage managing in college, but didn't stick with that. I went more with wardrobe management. And even like I always said, like, look at the kinds of things that you like to do. And like, figure out like, okay, what are the what is this thing that you like about that? And like, where else can you find it if you don't want to be in that field? Or like, I have some friends who were like, SWorkers were like, I'm like, What is your what are your people ask for all the time. What is the thing that they're actually asking for? And then how can you do that in a way that you want?

E Elle Billing 35:07

Yeah.

C Curly Dax 35:07

They're asking for voyeuristic like to go to watch you or something. Right? Right. Okay. You don't have to be watched in a way that they're specifically asking for. Because like, you just looking at the data is like, oh, there are multiple people asking to be voyeurs. I'll do what I want to be void, like to be an exhibitionist for Right. Like being able to like look at stuff and then like, distill down what is like the thing that you like, or that you're okay with. Because I'm like, I like people stuff. I like making stuff. I like fast movement, not physically, like, like, I'm just like, ideas and thinking and like change. So making stuff I like repairs. I'm like, no, let let let's Okay, the show is going in the corset just broke the zipper on the course that we've quick change somebody into just popped, okay, I need XYZ people to do this, while I go into the stock room and find a ladder to go start looking for corsets that will fit this person. Because we need a black corset for this thing. But for this moment that we can get this person into right now.

E Elle Billing 36:09

Yep.

C Curly Dax 36:10

So like, figuring out like, the things that you like to do. And what you learned from experience was like, you don't have to like everything. You don't have to be good at everything. You're not going to be like, it's like not even just have to be you will not accept that you're not going to be good at everything. And things get slightly easier to swallow when you start failing. It's like

E Elle Billing 36:28

it's so true. Yeah,

C Curly Dax 36:30

it's not. I'm not failing at being perfect that it is impossible. I'm never going to be perfect. This is expected. Right? This is expected. I'm gonna fail itself

E Elle Billing 36:39

back around to the what is expected. Yeah.

C Curly Dax 36:42

Yes.

E Elle Billing 36:43

Like, oh, that's so good.

C Curly Dax 36:44

When it is expected. Okay.

E Elle Billing 36:47

Does this suck? Yes. was it expected? Yep. Yep. Can I move on? I sure can.

C Curly Dax 36:55

It's like, you know, what the world isn't doing? ending. Like, I say this to people, it's like, I felt like this before. And I've survived it. As my way of like, I'm not going to do a whole line of stickers, I think for Griot Goods with like, my, some of my sayings and stuff that I say like, I write a lot of poetry. I'm like, we're going to make drawings and stuff. But in like, I'm still gonna

hire my little illustrator, human. Hi, I'm Stacy. She's lovely. But I also want to draw more of the things like, the reason why you don't like me, is because I don't aim for perfection. Like, I don't aim for perfection of the things I show people. Because I focus a lot on the human body.

E Elle Billing 37:34
Yep.

C Curly Dax 37:34
And humans. We are not perfect. Inherently and innately in utero, our bodies develop asymmetrically. Okay, cool. There's no reason for me to sculpt everything with the symmetry tool on because bodies are not perfectly symmetrical. It's like, oh, this person's hip in this model is like higher than the other one. I'm like, Yeah, I will also tell people at tables. I'm like, oh, yeah, no, one of my hips. Like, I look at myself in the silhouette, like a shadow. And I'm like, Oh, yeah. Now this happens different than that hip. It's like, when things are expected. And you're like, and you look at them with like, Oh, that's cool. I learned a thing versus there's something wrong. The world feels real different, especially when start looking at your body. Oh, that's interesting. My nose is crooked. I didn't notice that before. It leans off to the right. Has it been looked at all the time? Okay, cool. On to the next thing. Or my breasts, this breast is larger than that breast or like, my hips are different. Things are really different when you like, look at them with an eye of observation instead of judgment. Like that's how I look at bodies and people especially now,

E Elle Billing 38:36
with that wonder and curiosity,

C Curly Dax 38:38
wonder and curiosity and no judgment.

E Elle Billing 38:40
Yep, no judgment,

C Curly Dax 38:41
because like, I wasn't nervous to tell people I'm like, I'm looking at people's bodies all the time. And I'm like, it's in a way of like, curiosity. I'm like, Oh, look at the different features of this person. Okay, cool.

E Elle Billing 38:51

 Elle Billing 38:51

I mean, the planters that you've made, I have two of them that you'd collabed with CTOAN on. I have Frankie and the fanny planter. The care and attention that is that you put into like, the butt dimples. I mean,

 Curly Dax 39:09

I didn't sculpt those models. I will say that. I did not sculpt those. were those ones that those are like actually her candles

 Elle Billing 39:16

Those are from her candles?

 Curly Dax 39:19

So I do the adaptation from candle to functional planter.

 Elle Billing 39:23

Okay, yeah. So I'm going to have to get one of your original designs then too

 Curly Dax 39:27

Oh, absolutely

 Elle Billing 39:28

but even like the ones I've seen on Instagram, like there's a lot of attention paid to like the details of the body. And yeah, and they're absolutely gorgeous.

 Curly Dax 39:39

Yeah, it's like it's really important that like, when you when you look at the world is like, less of a scarcity competition thing, which is the antithesis of capitalism. To like, not not feed into that. It's like, wow, people, like as a small business owner, people might people want to buy CTOAN's candles, and their planters and my planters. Cool, there was enough interest for all of us to go around. And we're also all doing everything with our own little flair. Like our own difference. So I'm just like, when you're able to get to a point where you like don't see people as competition for existing, which is hard because capitalism makes everything a competition



E Elle Billing 40:17

it does.

C Curly Dax 40:18

But when you when you're able to get to a point where you're like not thinking of it that way, necessarily, it's like, really interesting. If that makes sense, like,

E Elle Billing 40:26

yeah, because there's enough space for all of us.

C Curly Dax 40:28

There's enough space for all of us. It's like, oh, wait, wait, everything, hold on, they can be doing their thing. And then also, it's like, okay, cool. I can help CTOAN, and I work for CTOAN for those projects. And it's not taking anything away from Griot Goods. It's not taking anything away from Curly. It actually enriches me like a lot like being able to be affirmed. And like, see, like, Oh, wow. Like, people appreciate this kind of feature. I put into it a bit of feature. That's a whole different people are seeing my stuff that wouldn't have because like, CTOAN is like, amazing. Her candles are great. I have a bunch of them. And like, they smell really good. And they like really like, they like have a really good set, throw, get get CTOAN, candles, they're fat, black femme human in the West, question mark?

E Elle Billing 41:16

Wisconsin, Milwaukee,

C Curly Dax 41:17

Wisconsin, like the

E Elle Billing 41:21

West of you,

C Curly Dax 41:23

west of me, me on the coast. I'm like, everything is west of me. Yeah. But yeah, so like, it's interesting. It's an interesting whole like, little, little thing of like, being able to see other people do well, and not take it as a threat. Because there isn't a first of all eat, like the way that really

is able to play out like actually manifest and like, show up as like when you stop trying to take from other people. So you can have -- it's like we both can do the thing.

E Elle Billing 41:51
Yep,

C Curly Dax 41:52
we both can do the thing. I'm like, I've been doing great. And there's another business that makes plant pots. It's called Brooded Pots. They're like, make the most beautiful faces and heads, like planters. And I like remember getting super self conscious about that. When I first saw them, and I was like, oh my god, I'm so someone's like, I really I really love your work your detail. I'm like, I really admire this. I'm like, I hope to like be like this one day in the future. Homie is like, oh, yeah, I've been. He's worked for Disney. He's been 3d modeling 3d printing for 15 years, like 3d modeling and animation and stuff. So like, he asked, like, how long have you been doing? And I was like, a year and a half. And I'm like, Curly, you're really over here about to whole shame spiral and be self deprecating to yourself, comparing your work to someone who has been doing it literally 10 times longer than you in places with budgets you can't imagine.

E Elle Billing 42:46
Yeah,

C Curly Dax 42:46
with access to tools and education that you have no idea. It's like, okay, pause, pivot. This is a whole possibility model like this, the whole possibility of what is capable in time. I'm like, Cool. This is where I'm at now. I wonder where I'll be in X amount of time. This is cool. It's fun. It's, ya know, and one of the things about framing and point of view, which is something I'm thinking a lot more about now.

E Elle Billing 43:12
And you've offered some really great reframes. I mean, just in the last, you know, 45 minutes of conversation, I really appreciate that. So I think that's a good, a good place to end. Thank you so much for being here, Curly. I really, really enjoyed talking to you. And I'm sure that we will have many more conversations probably off the record just because we like to hang out. But yeah, I mean, maybe down the road, we can do another episode. Thanks for being

C Curly Dax 43:41
that would be so fun. Yeah. Oh my gosh. Wait can I say one more thing.

E Elle Billing 43:44
Yeah, totally.

C Curly Dax 43:46
You are exactly where you need to be. And you're doing your best and that is enough. Living is hard. I'm proud of you for doing it. Now. Go drink some water.

E Elle Billing 44:01
Yes, go hydrate. Thank you for joining us on this episode of Hoarf. To view the complete show notes and all the links mentioned in today's episode, or to get a full transcript of the episode, visit [Hoarf podcast.com](https://hoarfpodcast.com). That's H O O R F podcast.com. Before you go, make sure you subscribe to the podcast so you can receive new episodes right when they're released. And if you're enjoying our podcast, I'd love to have you leave us a review in Apple podcasts. Reviews are one of the major ways that Apple ranks their podcasts. So even though it only takes you a few seconds, it really does make a difference for us. Become a patron for \$3 a month you can support the creation of this podcast, pay my editor and join a community of fellow caregivers out here just doing our best. Thank you again for joining me Elle Billing in this episode of Hoarf. Until next time be excellent to each other. Hoarf is hosted by Elle Billing at [elleandwink](https://elleandwink.com) audio editing by Ricki Cummings at [rickiep00h](https://rickiep00h.com). music composed by Ricki Cummings Hoarf is a production of Elle & Wink Art Studio, all rights reserved. Hoarf Podcast can be found on social media channels at Hoarf podcast at H O O R F podcast

C Curly Dax 45:52
can I do a small plant nerd out