

ELO podcast Showing up Episode 3

[MUSIC PLAYING]

SOPHIE: Please note that Showing Up features themes of trauma, mental health and resilience, which may be triggering for some. So please listen to your body's cues, take breaks, and use self regulation strategies. Don't hesitate to ask for help. No issue is too big or too small.

SPEAKER 1: You can always reach out to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-8255 for support. They will be available to talk with you and connect you to local mental health resources.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

SOPHIE: Hi, everyone. I'm Sophie and I use she/her pronouns.

REBECCA: I'm Rebecca, and I also use she/her pronouns. So we're both part of the trauma informed care team at Cultivate Learning at the University of Washington. Welcome to Showing Up. This is a time where we talk about trauma informed care practices for Expanded Learning opportunities or ELO programs. ELO programs basically include anywhere where young people spend time outside of the school day classroom setting, like after school care, summer camps, and skill based programs.

SOPHIE: But first, it's time for pupdate. So Rebecca, I remember when I first got my dog that you and I were talking about what to name him, and I told you and some of our coworkers that I was going to name him Monty after a gardener that I really love.

REBECCA: Mm-hm.

SOPHIE: And Kim, one of our co-workers, she warned me to not name a dog after a gardener.

REBECCA: [LAUGHS]

SOPHIE: And I didn't listen because I thought Monty was such a cute name.

REBECCA: It is a cute name.

SOPHIE: It is a cute name and also, Kim was totally right, he loves to dig.

REBECCA: You know, he's just doing his gardener duties.

SOPHIE: He's doing his gardener duties. He takes it very seriously. There are times where I appreciate it because he'll kind of dig up grass that I want to get out of the border that I'm trying to make. But we're working on making an environment where he can engage in positive behavior choices. We've been like putting chicken wire down around the plants that I want to keep and putting a little bit of dirt over it, which he's been very offended by because he does not like digging on the chicken wire.

REBECCA: [CHUCKLES] He's like mom, I want to help in all the places.

SOPHIE: I know. Rebecca, he dug like halfway down our foundation, practically. Like he dug up the whole root system of a very established rhododendron, I felt very bad for it.

REBECCA: No. Oh, my goodness that is an intense digging.

SOPHIE: He's really committed.

[LAUGHTER]

REBECCA: So committed.

SOPHIE: His giant shovel paws--

REBECCA: Oh, my gosh. I love it.

SOPHIE: --help us garden. So that's my update about Monty. If anybody has tips on how to help dogs stop digging, let me know.

REBECCA: I do not have any tips for digging but Gus, my pup, is-- I'm sure everybody's heard by now-- but both Monty and Gus our poodle mixes, which means they need hair cuts otherwise their hair will keep growing. But Gus has always had kind of a hard time at the groomer, especially during the pandemic when he couldn't go for a while and just never got used to going.

So we tried a couple of different things. He's on some anti-anxiety medication when he does get groomed, even just with me and my partner at home. And lately, we've been-- in order to clip his nails safely for everybody, we've been putting him in this little sling that we like hang up on our pull up bar.

[LAUGHTER]

But the good news is I think we found a new groomer. They are a friend of my brother's and they're really, really gracious and are willing to do like a really, really slow introduction. So I'm really excited about it. So we might just go on a walk with them so they can meet Gus and then get Gus in when it's really quiet and just for like a little brushing. And just like really slow steady introduction to make it a really, really enjoyable experience for him. So hopefully, we don't have to do the sling anymore at home.

SOPHIE: Yeah.

[LAUGHTER]

REBECCA: Oh. I mean, sometimes you just need a little bit of a slow introduction to support.

SOPHIE: Either via sling hanging from a pull up bar or meeting people slowly.

REBECCA: Yeah, I'm hoping the latter is the better option. Meeting people slowly, lots of treats, make it fun for him.

SOPHIE: Exactly.

REBECCA: So that is our-- that is my pupupdate for today.

SOPHIE: I love it. Best of luck to you and Gus.

REBECCA: Thank you.

SOPHIE: Well, today we are talking all about trauma informed care and queer youth. So we'll be talking about young people's developing gender identity and sexual orientation as it applies to both trauma and resilience, and how to best support queer youth. This topic is really close to my heart as a now adult but previously young person who identifies as queer. And in my professional life, I've also worked in several ELO programs with queer youth as well.

REBECCA: I also identify as queer. I feel like it's something not many people know since we are both in heterosexual relationships, especially at work.

SOPHIE: We're like-- we're undercover queers, Rebecca.

REBECCA: We really are. And now we're outing ourselves.

SOPHIE: We have our little pride sunglass emoji.

REBECCA: Yeah, this topic is also near and dear to my heart. I think in high school, I had some queer friends and parents of those friends that responded in a very homophobic way when they found out that their child was queer. And that just created a lot of trauma for them and for our friend group. And so I hope with this episode, we can help support youth as they're developing their identity and also sharing that with the adults that are working with you.

SOPHIE: Yeah, absolutely.

REBECCA: In this episode, we will be chatting with a queer youth activist Morgan, Elliott Hinkle from Unicorn Solutions, and Robert Calvino, and my friend Mylinh Boyd, who are youth advocates from API Chaya.

SOPHIE: We're so excited to welcome Morgan, a queer youth activist and leader from Washington state here to share about their experiences. Hi Morgan, Thank you so much for being here.

MORGAN: Hi, I'm Morgan from Mueller. I'm a junior I use they/them pronouns. And I-- mental health in the queer community is a very important subject to me as a non-binary and a bi-person and someone who has many, many friends and loved ones in the queer community because it's just-- it's significantly more of a pervasive issue than it is in many other communities.

REBECCA: Thank you. And I know some of those issues are kind of around like coming out and identity and those are important things when thinking about being queer and mental well being and mental health. Could you tell us about your experience about coming out in middle school and then again in high school?

MORGAN: Yeah, absolutely. So like a lot of people, I kind of had to separate queer identity crisis. I figured out I was bi first and it was pretty confusing for me because I didn't really have a word for that. But being chronically online, like being on Tumblr in 2012 '14 or whatever, it was really helpful to see communities that were like that and kind of get the language for that.

There's a lot of downsides to getting all of your source on identity from the internet, from a place where everyone is anonymous and there isn't really any accountability. But for the most part it was a really, really important experience for me to be able to have that language describe myself. And when I came out, it was really, really not a big deal. I just-- my mom asked me if I liked girls and that was it, that was the whole conversation.

[LAUGHTER]

But it hit-- even though I knew my parents were supportive and I knew they wouldn't like throw me out or anything, having my non-binary identity crisis was a lot harder. Because to some degree, figuring out your sexuality is just figuring out what you do, what you like, and figuring out your gender is figuring out who you are. It's much more of a personal question. It's much harder to consider, especially because you have these very hard set mind like, mindsets and thoughts about who you are. And just having to question that is not very fun.

Sometimes it's a really big deal. And even though I knew I had that support, I was still so incredibly nervous about coming out to my parents about it because I thought, oh, this is going to be the thing-- this is going to be the thing that gets me thrown out. And I feel like that might be a universal thing. Because as a queer person, you have you physically have to come to terms with the fact that you're different from many of the people around you, and probably always will be.

And I remember seeing like a lot of stuff online about how trans people have this realization that, uh-oh, this is going to be the rest of my life. I remember feeling so lost when I figured that out. I remember feeling like I was making it up, even though I knew for sure that I wasn't. I just remember absolutely rocking my world, which is fair.

SOPHIE: I'm curious to hear from you about how adults in your life, either your parents or other people did show up in a way that was supportive.

MORGAN: I have had a lot of support, and I've been really lucky with that. I remember in middle schools like coming out and then immediately becoming more aware of all the little rainbow flags and all the little

signs that say this classroom is an inclusive place. And I remember that being like kind of corny, but really ultimately pretty helpful. Just seeing those little signals about what places were safe for me emotionally even though I knew we live in Seattle, and it wasn't really-- I wasn't going to get hate crimed in the hallways, it was really nice to just see that explicitly. This is a safe space for queer students and we're standing with you.

There's something a lot more active that a lot of my really good teachers do where they ask for pronouns at the top of the year, not verbally because that would take a while. But a lot of my teachers have put out a Google form where they say, all right, what pronouns do you want me to use in class? What pronouns do you want me to use when I'm calling or emailing home because not all students have a supportive environment. And putting that out there and making it mildly mandatory for the entire class was a much more concrete active step that told me that this was a safe place.

REBECCA: I know you've mentioned first kind of finding this online community through like Tumblr and then having the support of friends and your community also, can you tell us about other places where you found strength and support in your community?

MORGAN: When I started mock trial this year, it was my first year where I was fully out as non-binary and trying to kind of live like that. And it was kind of-- it was kind of nice to do it this year because since I didn't have to be in person, it was kind of like a free trial of being trans. And I just-- I was absolutely really touched by how immediately down and supportive every member of my team was.

When we started the year and we were introducing ourselves as officers of the club, we all used our pronouns, not just me, I didn't have to ask for that. And when we started doing introductions in the court this year, all of us introduced our pronouns as well. And most of our judges, all of my judges did not question that at all. They didn't ask me any further questions. And when they would call my co-counsel, Mr Chung or something, they would just call me counsel. And that's just the noun term for a lawyer and that's fantastic. It was so nice.

REBECCA: Yeah, that's awesome. I love that. I really appreciate how you shared some really concrete ways that friends, and adults can show up for queer youth. I think that sometimes people can get really spun out about what it means to show up.

MORGAN: Being a really good ally doesn't need to be incredibly difficult or incredibly performative, it just needs to be really consistent. You just need to be consistently showing support, consistently establishing safe spaces, and consistently making trans and queer youth comfortable.

SOPHIE: Morgan, thank you so much for being here with us today.

MORGAN: Yeah, thank you.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Yeah, all the dudes and the girls seem cool with it, when the wizard be dropping the umbrella, it's a nuisance. Not following the feeling of the instinct, just falling in line with the cemetery. Got a mouse with that no, no. Hey, don't be--

SOPHIE: All right. It is time for our word of the week.

REBECCA: We are going to share a vocabulary word every episode to help build shared terminology for talking about trauma informed care practices. Today we'll share our definition for the term resilience.

Resilience is the ability to adapt well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress. It means bouncing back from difficult experiences and is the behavior that's learned and developed.

SOPHIE: In the queer community, this can look like community care and community building. So the ability to find and form family like bonds with other queer individuals is a source of strength and resilience. Chosen families provide life giving social connections that help us through traumatic experiences, including systematic discrimination or lost connections with blood relatives. Chosen families are a place for positive identity formation where queer people can form a sense of pride.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

SPEAKER 1: API Chaya is an organization that empowers survivors of gender based violence and human trafficking to gain safety, connection, and wellness. Email that you can reach out to us on it's info@apichaya I- N- F- O @ A- P- I- C- H- A- Y- A .org. You can always call our office line the phone number is 206-467-9976.

SPEAKER 2: You can also contact us on Instagram and Facebook.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

SOPHIE: Today we are talking with Elliot Hinkle, founder and principal of Unicorn Solutions. Elliot, thank you so much for being here with us today.

ELLIOTT: Thank you, I'm happy to be here. So my name is Elliott Hinkle, I use they/them pronouns. I live in Portland, Oregon, and I get to do work with young people here and across the US. Usually supporting consultant work, whether that's a training for providers, workshop, like empowerment for young people, helping providers better understand how to support queer and trans youth in foster care, sometimes not in foster care but other systems.

REBECCA: I love that, and what an awesome role model for young people to have with you doing that work. So thank you. You mentioned empowerment for young people. Could you share how you're working to empower queer youth through your work?

ELLIOTT: Yeah. So one way that I'm doing that is with kind of a collaboration with friends, a collective, it's called the LGBTQ youth exchange for change. Some of my peers who also have experience in foster care who identify as trans or LGBTQ. And working to try and partner with corporate philanthropy efforts to say, it's great to fund pride floats but what people really need is often in small communities that don't get recognized.

And so how do we better support those communities and better direct those funds? And sometimes it's just about think corporate philanthropy not knowing who to connect with or where the best place is to put that money. So part of our work has been trying to do that and empower young people to work with us to tell those stories and say, here's why this needs to be different.

Additionally, I work on something called Youth Thrive as a trainer and advisor for the center of the Study of Social Policy and youth thrive is really about what are the things that all young people need to thrive. So while I support folks that are in systems, Youth Thrives promoted and protective factors are things that all young people need, even if they're not in a system.

And so that for me is really important because it can sometimes take it away from focusing on someone's lived experience in a system to say every young person deserves to have these things. They deserve to have resilience and ideally resilience that isn't built out of just negative experiences. They need social emotional competence and support of adults. So some of the work that I do is really just trying to tie the

work that kind of gets academic and heady to the lived experience of young people and providers to make more sense and to connect those dots. And I just find a lot of enjoyment in doing that for myself.

SOPHIE: I love that you are thinking a lot about ways to help bring and encourage protective factors for everybody. I heard you mentioned the word resilience and we've been talking about resilience on this episode. How do you define resilience?

ELLIOTT: So I like to use Youth Thrive definition of resilience. And they define it as managing stress and functioning well with [INAUDIBLE] stressors, challenges, or adversity, building on an individual's characteristics strengths and interests. So for me, it's important to think about-- resilience isn't necessarily just about bouncing back, because to bounce back, there's actually a lot that goes into that, there's so much more to it. That's one aspect that resilience can look like.

But I think resilience is something that's a little more complicated. I think resilience is exhausting, I think it can be hard to have resilience. And as much as it can be looked at as, they're so resilient, I think there's plenty of folks who wish they didn't have to be resilient and just got to experience life as it is.

REBECCA: I really love how you framed that. I think that's something that a lot of people don't think about when they think about resilience, that it is a lot, right? Like, they have to be resilient because of different circumstances. Another protective factor that we've talked about in the past is to build the supportive relationships. So what are some considerations that adults should keep in mind when working to build those supportive relationships, especially with queer youth?

ELLIOTT: I go back to Youth Thrive because it has been a really great place for me to see lots of different curriculums or theories and ideas in one place, like from unformed care, as well as resilience, things like that, and developmental processes of young people. And so I think for me, there's an importance around social connections that's highlighted in Youth Thrive. One positive adult in a young queer person's life or young trans person's life can make all the difference in that young person sticking around, and feeling validated in who they are.

Loving and affirming queer and trans youth, I will forever say that, that is suicide prevention and it's such an easy thing for us to do. Some of the things that come to mind are the same things, I would say, for a lot of youth, is that youth need a caring and trusting relationship with a competent adult who could listen in a non-judgmental manner, is dependable and can be counted on, provides well informed guidance and advice, has spiritual support, provides opportunities to engage with others in a positive manner.

This is some of the stuff that Youth Thrive highlights. But it's some of the things that again, all young people need some of those things that can kind of get lost as life gets crazy and we don't have time to totally think about it or to slow down and say, what is this young person maybe missing?

So I think it's important to think about how we as adults have kind of a charge. But it's also like a sacred space to have a connection with a young person in this really important developmental time of 16 to 25, when your brain's still coming online. And it's a really-- it can shape a lot of the rest of your future. And so I think adults being really clear on how you can show up for young people consistently and be there for them. I think it's so important for helping the next generation.

SOPHIE: Elliott, I loved that connection that you made, that these practices are ultimately fairly basic and can also be sacred. Because it is such a treasure, I mean, getting to know somebody in a deep and authentic way is perhaps one of the biggest gifts you can both give and receive. Elliott, Thank you so much. It was really a pleasure to talk with you today.

ELLIOTT: Yeah. Thank you for having me.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

SOPHIE: I'd like to welcome back Mylinh and Robert from API Chaya for this episode. So for folks who maybe missed our last episode, would you both like to introduce yourself, share your pronouns and tell us a little bit about your work at API Chaya?

MYLINH: My name is Mylinh and I use they/them pronouns. I get to be the youth and family advocate.

ROBERT: My name is Robert. I use they/them pronouns, and I get to be the youth program coordinator and one of the community organizers.

REBECCA: I love that one of your program's goals is to provide youth options to transform culture in a way that empowers them. Mylinh can you tell us more about what that means and what that looks like?

MYLINH: API Chaya is an organization that empowers survivors of gender based violence and human trafficking, to gain safety connection and wellness. And we build power by educating and mobilizing South Asian, Asian, Pacific Islander, and all immigrant communities to end exploitation and create a world where people can heal and thrive.

SOPHIE: Mylinh thank you for sharing all of that. And Robert, I'm curious to hear from you as well, how queer identity and your queer identity and the queer community show up in your work at API Chaya.

ROBERT: I love this question everywhere. [LAUGHS] That's the answer, we can move on. I'm kidding, there's a lot more to that. There's something very-- I have found very generative and creative inherently to queerness. I have heard both in my generation and also in the younger generations as well, of queer youth using the word queer as a verb.

Let's clear this up, queer the land. Like young people can have so many different relationships to how they express name and interact with their identity, with themselves, let alone with other people. The approach that I usually have and the reality of our work is that gender and sexuality is always happening, just like race. And making space for dignity and safety agency and belonging in all of our interactions with young people.

Because I know that, for example, young people who are being raised as young boys are definitely impacted-- are definitely impacted in the ways that they are currently being trained to be the way that cis heteropatriarchy wants them to become young boys and men and enactors of violence, and then actors of violence on themselves.

I think that's a huge way that I constantly see that that's showing up in like literal interactions that people have. Young people are always replicating, well, the things that they're choosing to do and then also things that they're being trained to do and really constantly trying to name. When there are things that might be falling outside of our values in a shared space, hey I wonder is that what you wanted to do there. Have you thought about the impact of that?

And then also really raising for folks like, hey, I noticed that you did this thing. How do you feel about that? Is that how you want to treat people? Whereas I come from, really lifting that up around gender norms and sexuality norms can really be a helpful way of encouraging folks into their growing edge, and also inviting folks to actually be like, this is OK to challenge those things here. Because so often, so many other places, there's a lot of punishment. But there's so many ways in which it's just not encouraged to challenge things. And so for me actively sharing the ways that I can challenge it in the space with love and compassion are really helpful daily practice for me.

REBECCA: Maybe Mylinh you to take this one of how you discuss kind of queer identity or queer issues with youth or just talking about maybe how to clear it up with you.

MYLINH: Young folks are getting to witness just more exposure to queerness within media queerness, within their friend groups. And so when I discuss queer identity and queer issues with young folks, it's just another like-- it's just like any other topic that I would broach with them. How is school? Who are you dating? Who are you interested in?

I do ask them these questions because I feel like it gives young folks a chance to really talk about their life in a way that they can't with their parents, right? Their parents may say no, don't-- you can't date, you can't do any of those things, or their teachers might not be available to have those conversations with them.

And so to get to do that with young folks, I find that I get to dig into what are they interested in, truly interested in? And also as a person who identifies as queer, I identify as queer and non-binary. And so that always comes up with my conversations with young people that this is how I identify. If this is something that you're open to exploring and having a conversation around, I would love to have that conversation with you.

If there are any resources that you are questioning your identity, and you just want to read more and it feels too overwhelming to discuss that with someone, then here are the resources so you could do that on your own time.

I also find that young people, if they're questioning their queerness or coming into their queerness, or identify as super, super queer, that they often look up to me and look to me as a model for how they can be queer. And I love to remind them that actually, it's not all butterflies and rainbow for me. There is so much internalized work, there's so much of internalized homophobia, sexism that lives within me. And that is from what I've learned growing up, that there was one way to be a girl, there was one way to be a boy, and that there was nothing in between.

And as an adult to get to choose to live on a spectrum of gender versus subscribing to what society wants to box me into is so radical. And to let young people know that when you find a community that sees you, truly sees you, is so, so inviting. Is so beautiful. You find a sense of belonging there.

And so when I discuss queer identities with you I'm like, it's amazing. You will generate options for yourself that you didn't know were possible. And to be queer is a radical act, is a resistance, and I love to empower young folks to make that decision for themselves.

SOPHIE: Robert, I'm curious to hear from you too. What are some ways that you, in your work with young people, focus on helping their queer identity, especially feel seen and supported.

ROBERT: Something that I'm working on as a queer person in this work is bringing myself, my whole self including my queerness into the spaces that I work with young people. And I think there's a lot of internalized things that I have around it's wrong to bring that into this space. You can't share that with younger generations or you can't even share that with older generations.

There's a responsibility just to being possibly seen as a role model. I think people who are being raised as young boys, for example, see me and they think I'm a-- they think I'm a man when I'm not. And there's a responsibility to just being seen as a possibility model to people that I'm trying to really learn how to hold and bring in and model that it's OK to grapple with complexity.

Modeling is my own grappling in my own journey with young folks has been actually one of the most accessible ways for me to build trust and make space for them. And I think really being mindful of

generations of queer people, because you've had to create in the face of violence that we're like, this is queerness. And I think in how I model my own journey that it's my journey, it's not theirs. How do I share myself in a way that invites curiosity that Mylinh spoke to. How do I invite honesty in my interactions so that there's actually a connection that makes things possible, not just for them, but also for me. So that's not just this one way thing but actually that there's a real relationship there. Because if I believe all people deserve belonging, dignity, safety, and agency, then I have to be including that and that has to-- and mine can't come at the expense of them, and theirs can't come at the expense of me. And that's a huge way that we're trying to-- on our team, really uplift their dignity as young people, is that we're not putting them in our pedestal and we're also not trashing them. And often times, honestly, our society is really trash at figuring out how to do that. [LAUGHS] So I think I'm on my learning curve around this, and I'm constantly learning with them. How to just be in this world. And I think that's such a huge part about being queer to be honest. That's the mess of creativity and that's the joy of the mass of the creativity.

SOPHIE: I just feel so touched by all of that, like, I don't even really know where to start. But Yeah, I guess I wanted to chime in that I just thought that was really a beautiful reflection, Robert. So thank you. And I loved what you said about the joy in the mess of queerness and understanding your queer identity and owning that a lot of this work is understanding where we're coming for ourselves and how we show up.

REBECCA: Yeah. And Thank you both for being here today and for sharing all of your wonderful experiences and with us and with all of our listeners.

MYLINH: It was such a pleasure to be here. I am grateful and honored to be invited. I truly believe in the work that we do, and I truly believe in the young people that we connect with. And that young people right now are the truth right now.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

SOPHIE: Strategy spotlight is a time for us to share one thing you could implement in your ELO program or classroom. Our strategy spotlight today comes from Morgan, our youth guest from earlier in this episode and their teachers. So Morgan's teachers sent out a Google form at the beginning of the school year and asked students to fill it out. The form includes these questions. What is your preferred name to be called in class? What are your preferred pronouns for me to use in class? And what names and pronouns do you want me to use in emails, home with your parents or guardians?

REBECCA: This last question is especially important for keeping young people safe by ensuring you're not outing anyone or exposing young people to dangerous situations at home. So this practice aligns with principles of being trauma informed and relationship building where young people are able to feel safe, secure, and seen.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

SOPHIE: As we wrap up this episode, we'll leave you with a few reflection questions. Part of building a trauma informed care practice is building our own self awareness so we can better show up for the young people in our lives.

REBECCA: Our first question is, how are you supporting queer youth right now in your program? What are some key takeaways and things from this episode you hope to incorporate into your work to make sure youth are feeling seen and supported?

SOPHIE: For those of you listening that are working directly with young people, either professionally or in your personal life, we see the really important work you're doing and hope that this episode gives you some fuel to continue. Remember, one supportive adult in a queer young person's life reduces suicide risk by 40% according to studies done by the Trevor Project. Showing up ready to learn more and see young people fully can and does save lives.

REBECCA: Show up ready to learn, and know that you might make mistakes when learning to use new pronouns for some folks. Make sure you allow yourself some grace, it takes a minute for brains to adjust to new information. If that happens, though, you can correct yourself and then move on. Or if somebody else correct you, you can always just say, thank you for reminding me and make an effort to use the correct pronouns after that. In the show notes we've included some books and additional professional development materials, along with links to our guests from today from Unicorn Solutions and API Chaya.

SOPHIE: Thanks so much for joining us.

REBECCA: This podcast was produced by Cultivate Learning at the University of Washington with funding from the Ballmer Group. We'd like to thank our media producers Tifa Tomb and Ryan Henriksen and our graphic designer Tami Tolpa. You can find more of Cultivate Learning's work by going to cultivatelearning.uw.edu.

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