

Episode 4.2 Dreaming Big Wild Worlds with Dawn Serra

AUGUST 30, 2019

- Hannah McGregor: [00:00:00](#) I'm Hannah McGregor and this is Secret Feminist Agenda and I should probably start with an apology. I promised a fortnightly schedule and then immediately took a three week break. It was not intentional, I had a technology mix up. I would blame mercury retrograde, but I get the impression that mercury is just always in retrograde. Either that or I might not be great with technology. I'd prefer to blame a planet. Anyway, moving forward, episodes will be fortnightly and you're going to hear from some amazing people this season, I have a bunch of the interviews already lined up. I hope that you are braced and ready and, because this interview is on the long side because it was great, I'm going to do less preamble than usual and jump straight into the introduction. Here we go. Dawn Serra is a therapeutic sex and relationship coach and pleasure advocate as a white, cis, middle-class queer fat survivor, Dawn's work is a fiercely compassionate invitation for each of us to deepen our relationships with our bodies and our pleasure as an antidote to the trauma, disconnection, and isolation so many of us feel. Your pleasure matters, your body is wise and Dawn's work is all about creating spaces and places for you to explore what that means on your terms. Okay, it's a Loud Off, let's see who's loudest.
- Dawn Serra: [00:02:08](#) Let's see who blows it out!
- Hannah McGregor: [00:02:12](#) Oh my God. I am making a podcast with a friend of mine who is like, I would say more finicky about audio production than I am and he keeps, like he monitors the levels as we record and then he was like, "Oh, I have to take you down. You're clipping." And I'm like, I'm sorry.
- Dawn Serra: [00:02:28](#) I just record!
- Hannah McGregor: [00:02:29](#) Yeah yeah yeah! I clip all the time. Obviously every time I laugh directly into the microphone. Woo. All right. Welcome. Hi. Hi. I would like, I even though there is going to be a bio right before this, that everybody will have just heard, this is all getting edited out. Or is it? Who knows! How does podcasting work? Hard to say. I would like you to talk a little bit about your business.
- Dawn Serra: [00:02:57](#) Yeah!
- Hannah McGregor: [00:02:57](#) What you do.
- Dawn Serra: [00:02:58](#) Yeah, I do some really cool stuff.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:03:01](#) Yeah you really do!

Dawn Serra: [00:03:01](#) I do. I feel so lucky every day that I wake up. So I run two different companies. One company is as a person who helps produce other entrepreneurs online events.

Hannah McGregor: [00:03:14](#) Awesome.

Dawn Serra: [00:03:15](#) And the reason I started doing that was I had created my own online conference called Explore More Summit with my other side of the business that's all about like sex and relationships and bodies and trauma. And I found that a lot of people were hungry for the model I had created. And also there tends to be this trend among online white women entrepreneurs of liking to only speak to other thin white cis entrepreneurs. And I was like, we need to do something about this. And so now my model actually has financial penalties for people that don't center marginalized voices and equity inclusion. Yeah, so that's really cool. And then the other side of my business is I am a sex and relationship coach and a sex educator. And so I have a weekly sex podcast, called Sex Gets Real, which is awesome. And I work with individuals and couples and like one-on-one therapeutic work. And then I have my annual online conference and so I spend like,

Hannah McGregor: [00:04:17](#) Which is what led into that second one of, gotcha.

Dawn Serra: [00:04:20](#) Exactly, right. And so I spend most of my days talking to really interesting people about everything from how we relate to each other to pleasure and sex. I'm really interested in the intersections of like healing, pleasure, fat bodies and the connections between how we treat food and how we treat pleasure, which is something, yeah, I really love. And then I work with people around, you know, really intimate issues of shame and disconnection and that kind of stuff.

Hannah McGregor: [00:04:50](#) I understand from reading your website that you started off more in this IT world, which makes sense with this work with online events and working with other entrepreneurs. How did you make it into this like, working with people and having these intimate conversations about sex? Like where did that come from?

Dawn Serra: [00:05:09](#) I know it's so funny. I was in, I worked for a Fortune 150 for 17 years. Most of that was in IT, and I eventually moved into managing the copywriting team for the company. So I have a very tech heavy background doing computer programming and like really old school like COBOL, you know, like green screen type government type machines. And through that process I was getting all kinds of certifications in corporate coaching and I really liked the aspect of getting to work with people and kind of work through the things they were afraid of and finding ways to thrive and to make a little bit of money on the side. In the early two thousands my girlfriend at the time, and I went to a sex toy party, like an in home Tupperware type sex toy party, right? And I had a

blast and the woman who was running it pulled me to the side and said, "I think you'd be really good at this. Like, you're just really not freaked out. You're not in shame. You know, like a lot of people are, so would you consider it?" And why not? Lemme just try it. Who doesn't want to piddle sex toys? And so I signed up and it just like took off, and over the course of the next year and a half, I worked with thousands of women around their shame, around how many of them didn't know pleasure, around how many of them didn't feel like it was okay to masturbate. And yeah,

- Hannah McGregor: [00:06:40](#) I mean I guess the sex story parties become, for a lot of people, sites where they first explore the idea of like masturbation.
- Dawn Serra: [00:06:48](#) Yes. Yes. And what was fascinating was in the group dynamic you get very much the, 'I'm performing what I've seen in Sex In The City' right? So being super chill and super fun and I've done all this before. But then to purchase I would always go in a private room so people can make private purchases and then in there the truth would emerge. Like it's only here when my friends aren't around, I feel safe saying I've never orgasmed with my partner, or I've never used a sex toy before and I don't know where to start, or how do I ask my partner to do something new. And I really, really liked that exchange. Like that opportunity felt really important. And I did not like the company, and the their ethics. So I ended up leaving, but it just never left me how alive I felt in those exchanges. And so I started going through certification programs and doing training and I kind of had my eye on leaving my corporate job at some point and then I ended up getting switched over to a super misogynistic manager and I was like oh this is it!
- Hannah McGregor: [00:07:54](#) Oh! Look at the time!
- Dawn Serra: [00:07:57](#) I'm out! Here I go! And I just, right around the time I started my podcast, was around the time that I just kind of pulled the plug on the corporate gig and took the leap.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:08:05](#) Yeah.
- Dawn Serra: [00:08:06](#) And started doing this.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:08:07](#) So was the podcast a way of like saying, you know, I am doing this work now I am going to start having these conversations and publicly identifying as somebody who has conversations about sex?
- Dawn Serra: [00:08:18](#) Yeah. It kind of started as a joke, my friend and I...
- Hannah McGregor: [00:08:23](#) As most podcasts do, pretty frankly, right?
- Dawn Serra: [00:08:26](#) Yeah. My friend and I were sitting around and she was super pissed because she had heard a podcast that was run by some porn stars and they had essentially said, no one who wears a strap on gets

pleasure from wearing the strap on. They just get pleasure from getting to like fuck someone or do the thing. And she was like, I actually really get off using strap ons. Like, what the hell are they talking about? And you know, I had just started moving into space and I was like, well, we should tell the world that it's different! And she was like, yes, we should. In the next week we had our first episode done.

- Hannah McGregor: [00:09:03](#) That's great. Where do we find something to record with? We have to shout about strap ons!
- Dawn Serra: [00:09:06](#) We literally had a little teeny recorder sitting on the desk and we bent down and talked into it.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:09:11](#) Oh, I love, I mean it was 2014 like you started a podcast before starting a podcast was,
- Dawn Serra: [00:09:16](#) Kinda the thing to do!
- Hannah McGregor: [00:09:16](#) something every asshole was doing.
- Dawn Serra: [00:09:19](#) Exactly. Yeah. And a couple of months in, that's when I really realized like, oh this, this is important.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:09:26](#) Yeah.
- Dawn Serra: [00:09:26](#) You know, like this is, this is resonating, people are writing in. I'm really feeling an opportunity to stretch. And that was right around the time that I quit my job.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:09:38](#) Yes, gotcha.
- Dawn Serra: [00:09:38](#) Cause it finally started to feel real.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:09:41](#) Yeah.
- Dawn Serra: [00:09:41](#) And then my cohost stayed with me for about a year and a half and then she got a really awesome promotion, but it was in public service so she just couldn't be associated with something sexual.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:09:50](#) Rude!
- Dawn Serra: [00:09:53](#) So yeah, I've been on my own now for almost 200 episodes. Yeah.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:10:00](#) I think 270...
- Dawn Serra: [00:10:02](#) 273 episodes. Yeah.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:10:05](#) That's so many episodes. That is a level of sticktuitiveness that I think, I mean it's probably also necessary for being an entrepreneur

and starting your own business and doing stuff freelance, like you've got to like come up with an idea and stick with it. But like, oh boy, gosh!

- Dawn Serra: [00:10:21](#) I've, I've only taken maybe four or five weeks off in the five years.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:10:29](#) Two months off every year I'm like, Ugh podcasting is making me tired, I quit!
- Dawn Serra: [00:10:34](#) I have seriously been considering doing that, you know like can I just have a couple of colleagues come in and kind of take over the podcast for like a month or two so that I can just kind of rest and I'm really, really hungry to make that happen.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:10:48](#) Yeah, it's good. A hiatus is good. Hiatus from everything is good. I mean that, that's how podcasts become successful is like longevity and consistency. Like people want to see that episode pop into their feed on the day and at the time when that episode shows up and it's like, listen, is it weekly?
- Dawn Serra: [00:11:09](#) Yup, it's weekly.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:11:10](#) So it's like, you know, not every episode is gonna be a slam dunk, but it's going to be there when people are looking for it, and I do think that that is a big part of what makes the medium a place where people are willing to have sort of intimate, uncomfortable, vulnerable conversations is, is that there's the intimacy of how we listen to them right? They're in our headphones a lot of the time following us around our lives, so it feels private even when you're in public.
- Dawn Serra: [00:11:38](#) Yeah!
- Hannah McGregor: [00:11:38](#) And then it feels like a structural part of your life.
- Dawn Serra: [00:11:42](#) It's like a ritual.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:11:43](#) Yeah! Yeah, have you found that people reach out to you with a kind of like openness that they might not via different, like I find podcasting in genders, that kind of intimacy from strangers.
- Dawn Serra: [00:11:58](#) Yeah. I feel really, really, really lucky. Many of the listeners followed me from the beginning when Dylan and I were doing the podcast. And we kind of started the podcast like, let's talk about sex, but primarily let's talk about our exploits, let's talk about our sex lives.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:12:16](#) Yeah.

Dawn Serra: [00:12:16](#) People were meeting in the classes we were going to in the dungeons we were going to. And, you know, you run out of material eventually doing that.

Hannah McGregor: [00:12:25](#) Fucking sex party every week!

Dawn Serra: [00:12:25](#) And so I started adding more educational elements, and then when Dylan left, I really shifted the direction and I made it much more social justice based, much more intersectional much more focused on like trauma, oppression and all the ways that that does impact our experiences of sex. And I feel really blessed that so many people came with me through that cause it is radically different now than it was. And I get questions every week and they are so vulnerable and so tender and people trust me with such hard things, really hard things, you know, sexual violence and abuse and their deepest fears that they can't say anywhere else and being able to hold that really does feel like a gift.

Hannah McGregor: [00:13:19](#) That's remarkable and also sounds remarkably hard. And I'm thinking about, you also had Jess Baker on your podcast and when I first reached out to Jess I got this automatic response email she has this big form email that includes this, like if you have gotten in touch with me about, you know, a traumatic thing, I may not be able to respond and here's some resources. And I was thinking about that, like there's gotta be boundary-drawing that happens around that and like how do you manage that unsolicited outpouring of people sharing this really intimate stuff, particularly when sort of coaching and working with people is also your business. And it's like you can't spend a hundred hours a week answering people's hard, vulnerable emails when you have all of this other stuff you're doing.

Dawn Serra: [00:14:08](#) Yep. Yeah. I think part of the boundaries that I've managed around that is I pretty periodically will share on the show like that I really do treasure every email that I get. You know, it really does feel like a Christmas present to get to open and see what's inside cause they're all so different. But that because I get so many and because it just takes so much time to really sit with the things people share that I can't reply to most of the emails that I get and that only a percentage of them make it on the show. And I do have a backlog and I, you know, try to work my way through it when I can and, or I really do hold on, you know there's some emails I get that I deeply appreciate, but I also know I'm not the one to answer that. I can't speak to trans experiences. I can't speak to the experiences of being disabled in certain ways. So I hold those until I have guests on that can speak to those experiences, and then we dive in. And sometimes that's a long wait but so far I've only received really two complaints from people that feel a little frustrated, you know? But for the most part, everyone is just so excited when they do get something in and they hear something. And I do get emails all the time saying, you haven't answered my question, but this episode

spoke exactly to what I needed to hear and I just want to say thank you. So I find that the listeners are just really, really generous and that makes me, you know, I know I can open it, feel into it, put it in the folder and unless it's something really, really important, you know, I don't feel the urge to reply right away.

Hannah McGregor: [00:15:39](#) But it becomes a sort of how you figure out things that need to be talked about and guests you need to be bringing in and,

Dawn Serra: [00:15:44](#) Right.

Hannah McGregor: [00:15:45](#) Yeah. That's great, that's great. So I'm really, in like what stood out to me as I've been listening to the podcast and looking at your writing is how central to your work the sort of anti-oppressive and social justice oriented understanding of sex and desire is, and I'm really interested in the, in what you just described in terms of sort of starting with this like, you know, making a podcast with a friend and going to dungeon parties and like sort of having fun, and then that shift where you were like, hmm, I want to have different kinds of conversations. Can you talk about where that shift came from? Like was there a, was there a Eureka moment or was it more of a gradual like, Oh, there's different kinds of conversations I want to have.

Dawn Serra: [00:16:29](#) I think it's a combination of things. When I started the podcast, there was a lot of things I didn't understand. You know, like I had experienced my own sexual traumas and had started really diving into the nuances of consent, which then take you into the nuances of power. And then that leads you into like entitlement and privilege. But I had just started to scratch the surface and ,you know, admittedly I still had transphobia that I was working through, I still had all kinds, I mean I still do, but I had all kinds of fragility around my whiteness and those kinds of things. And I think as we started doing the podcast and I started getting these questions, it really started demonstrating to me how little I knew. And I really let that dictate so much of what came next. You know, like I'm not trying to be the expert in someone's experience that I just really fundamentally can't understand, but I can hold it with compassion, I can not shame you. And then I started connecting with other sex educators and with other authors and relationship experts who were really talking about the barriers to pleasure. You know, when you walk out of your door and experience microaggressions all day as a black woman, your feeling of safety in your body is very different. And so accessing pleasure is a very different experience. And I really started listening and of course, you know, it was off the labor of a lot of people who experience the world very differently than I do, but it just started becoming so clear to me that while I love Dylan to death, you know, wanting to make it very entertaining at some point started feeling a little empty for me, you know, because I felt like the more entertaining it was, the more we were ignoring the things that were actually causing the

pain. And that's, I think really where the shift started coming is I started asking myself like if I'm getting literally thousands, literally thousands of emails from people saying, I don't know how to tell my partner that I've been faking this whole time. I don't know how to take up space. I don't know how to say this hurts. I don't know all of these different things. Then clearly the problem isn't us. I have these problems. So clearly the problem isn't us. So what is the problem? And that's what started really leading me down the path of exploring systemic issues and cultural issues. And, you know, really investigating pop culture and so many other influences. And then of course that opened me up to things that were already being said by very smart and amazing people in the world. But I was finally really able to find ways to integrate that. You know, and then it started feeling so rewarding and so challenging and so confusing and meaty and like that's what turns me on is that kind of stuff. And so then I just wanted more. You know, and that has been what's feeding been feeding me for so long.

Hannah McGregor: [00:19:30](#)

That's amazing. That's so, I had a fairly similar experience of coming to podcasting, though it was, I think even more sort of ass-backwards, like I had no idea what I was doing and was like, this isn't a podcast, this is just me and a friend sitting down and recording our conversation. But you start to get a listenership and that listenership starts very quickly, starts to ask of things from you. And the top thing in my experience and what I've observed of other podcasters, the top thing your listeners ask of you is to be considered. They are saying to you like you think you know who you're talking about and you're wrong cause I'm here and you are not talking about me and you are not thinking about me and you're not thinking about the way that your talking impacts me, so please consider me. And like that is the top kind of feedback of some form that I have gotten, and you have an opportunity in that moment to either say no thank you. Nope, nope shan't, don't, don't want to. Sounds hard. Which is I think what most people do, I'm guessing based on like what I've heard of the podcasting landscape. Most people are like, Hmm, sounds hard, no. Or you can say yes. And when you say yes you open yourself up to, I mean really exciting new kinds of relationships with your listeners and also to new kinds of challenges as well. I keep, I'm in the middle of a re-listen, my probably annual if not twice a year, re-listen to this Dungeons and Dragons podcast called The Adventure Zone, which is - don't I sound cool? So cool. I love a Dungeons and Dragons podcast. The thing that made me start re-listening is that I just read the second graphic novel in the series of graphic novel adaptations of their Dungeons and Dragons podcast.

Dawn Serra: [00:21:20](#)

Amazing!

Hannah McGregor: [00:21:22](#)

Very trans-media property. Anyway, it's hosted by these three brothers from Huntington, West Virginia and their dad and it is like four cis, straight white dudes and it has become one of the

most popular like online fan properties for queer and trans listeners because they did this thing really early on. I'm kind of obsessed with these brothers, like I'm really fascinated by the way that their movement through the world of podcasting tells a story about the capacity of podcasting to like seed forms of social change. And I think a really foundational thing is that in the first podcast that they made, which was a comedy advice podcast, one of their first ever sponsors was an online sex toy store called extremerestraints.com and they very early on started these like three really vanilla, straight white guys started being like, cool, well here's the thing, you, you put your penis in a cage. They just had to get right into this nonjudgmental space of like, cool, do you want to put something in your butt? That's great! Here are some things you can put in your butt! Do that.

Dawn Serra: [00:22:32](#)

These people are giving me money to tell ya!

Hannah McGregor: [00:22:33](#)

Yeah and I can't be icky cause you're selling it. So it was just like, alright! So I think that's a sort of part of this early story. But when they started making The Adventure Zone, listeners started saying like, Hey, you know what? It'd be really nice if there was some trans representation in this. It'd be really nice if you thought about this. Oh, it would really- like, and they made the decision to respond to listeners and that made their lives harder in a lot of ways because once you have, particularly, I mean this is a massive like millions of listeners kind of property. So like once you've signaled to people that you will take feedback and change things,

Dawn Serra: [00:23:12](#)

Everyone has an opinion!

Hannah McGregor: [00:23:14](#)

Everyone's got a lot of ideas about how you're doing things wrong and so then you have to start making these judgment calls, right? But they've also like you can build community in this really radically different way through the simple and yet incredibly hard gesture of saying like, okay, I see you. Like okay, I'll try and I will keep fucking up and I will say when I have fucked up and I will apologize and I will keep moving forward. And that mode, like that vulnerability, being that kind of public figure demands is hard.

Dawn Serra: [00:23:47](#)

It is.

Hannah McGregor: [00:23:48](#)

It is hard. And it's kind of sounds like, it sounds like you came into it with this willingness to have these vulnerable conversations already. Is that just like, is that just something you've always felt this ability to make yourself vulnerable with other people?

Dawn Serra: [00:24:08](#)

I think so. I mean, I was definitely, I was raised in a house where my mom had been like a total hippie, you know, like Southern California hippie girl.

Hannah McGregor: [00:24:19](#)

I was also raised by hippies!

Dawn Serra: [00:24:19](#) Yeah. And like growing up, you know, she would tell me now it was very performative, but she would tell me about her sexual exploits. So in middle school I knew about my mom's threesome.

Hannah McGregor: [00:24:31](#) Yup!

Dawn Serra: [00:24:31](#) And I think that because talking about those things was just what we did, that I became a beacon of permission to use Kate Kenfield's phrase, for my friends. And so from very early on I found friends were trusting me with their shame. And I think that because that had just kind of always been how it was for me, that that's something that's pretty easy for me to do. I feel very comfortable in that space. And I've also learned that usually when I go first than other people are like, Oh God, now I can say the thing. And so I think I came into it willing to really share myself and then found all sorts of other beautiful things to discover and grow into myself. It's been really extraordinary.

Hannah McGregor: [00:25:18](#) Yeah, it is extraordinary, and it sounds hard. Like I said, you talk about it in this sort of like very joyful way and it also sounds, sounds like hard work-

Dawn Serra: [00:25:27](#) Yeah, it is.

Hannah McGregor: [00:25:27](#) To be taking in these stories and to always maintain that vulnerability.

Dawn Serra: [00:25:34](#) Yeah, and I think one of the things that I find both nourishing but challenging at the same time is there's a temptation I think especially with advice podcasts or shows, you know, like when you think of like the Dan Savages of the world of the Cheryl Strayed, you get this question and then the tendency is to treat it like the complete picture and to respond to it with these very like absolute answers that will, here's what I would do. But it's become so clear to me, especially in back and forth dialogue with people that I have answered, you know, they're giving me what feels really important and tender in the moment they write it and that it's a microscopic piece of a much bigger picture. And so I think part of the work that I've really had to do is to begin to trust the people who listen, to understand that you are the expert in your life, you're the expert in your relationship. And I might have information and experiences you don't have and I'll give you my opinion, but I'm not ever going to position myself as knowing.

Hannah McGregor: [00:26:39](#) Yes.

Dawn Serra: [00:26:39](#) And I think that that has helped shift...I think in the beginning I felt like it was my responsibility to fix the things. And that felt really burdensome, and I think now I just feel more like a steward or a facilitator and that I get to offer people new questions or new ways to think about an old problem. But it's not my job to assume

I know how to fix this. And that has helped me really grow and stretch. But also feel more resourced around some really hard things.

Hannah McGregor: [00:27:12](#) Yeah, no kidding. That sounds to me like a really a particularly feminist de-centering of expertise saying like, I'm not gonna claim the authority here. I'm not gonna claim the position of the expert. I'm not going to claim some like unilateral theory of everything. I'm going to de-center expertise and sort of focus on, yeah, on helping people sit in their own expertise and understand themselves as, as having the knowledge that they need.

Dawn Serra: [00:27:37](#) Yeah. It's really rare that I make definitive statements and I usually call it out when I do like, you know how rare it is that I say this is wrong. And when I say this is wrong, I want you to hear that this isn't okay. Right. Or things like that. But it's really rare that I go there. It's usually like, well, here's 20 things I'm curious about. I hope that's helpful.

Hannah McGregor: [00:27:59](#) Just a lot of thoughts that I have.

Dawn Serra: [00:28:01](#) Yeah! You know, cause like my hope is I'm going to give people an opportunity to feel less alone, to feel seen so that the shame has less of an edge and then to give them new perspectives on an old pain or a question. Right? So they've probably been staring into this void, worrying about it, cause that's what I do, for a really long time. And if I can just get them to maybe shift the perspective around the corner just enough that, oh well it's not quite what I thought it was, then I feel like I've done my job.

Hannah McGregor: [00:28:33](#) Yeah. That mentally sent me back to a weird series of emails that I woke up to this morning. I'm thinking about that like de-centering expertise and some time ago got an email from a listener who was uncomfortable with the fact that one of my guests, Tara Robertson, had referred to Jordan Peterson as a white supremacist. And in the email this person said, you know, oh, that seems like you didn't prove it, you didn't offer any proof that he's a white supremacist, and that seems like a really outrageous allegation to say without any proof. And I was like, wow. Yet another reminder that the people who are listening to your work are not necessarily the people who you anticipate. Like, and a lot of the time it's in a way that's like, I must open myself up and think about, but sometimes it's like, oh, you are also listening. Okay. And I decided, I was like, you know what, this email is going to be hard to answer and I decided to do what, you know what it sounds like you sometimes do which is make an episode about it instead.

Dawn Serra: [00:29:37](#) Yeah.

Hannah McGregor: [00:29:37](#) And say like, okay, I'm going to think through white supremacy and what it means to call somebody a white supremacist and you

know, the particular forms that Peterson's work engages in, but also the wider cultural problem of like how we wince away from that term and what it means to like as a white person, understand yourself as located within and consenting to white supremacy all the time in everything you do. And I emailed them and I said, you know, heads up, I made the choice to respond to this question via this week's episode and then never heard back from them. And today got notifications on my website, pingback notifications that they have made, they wrote a big blog post about it and about how this interaction as part of their coming to realize that feminism is bad and wrong. Cool. Well I won that one for sure. Great job, me! Pat on the back!

- Dawn Serra: [00:30:26](#) Evil feminists, again!
- Hannah McGregor: [00:30:26](#) And then there's like three comments on the blog post already from people being like, congratulations for starting to realize what bullshit feminism is. Okay. All right, well doing good work here. But the reason it sent me back there is that thinking about somebody like Peterson, people who become these guru figures because they're willing to give, like, these unilateral confident directives that are like, you need to live your life like this. That is tempting when you have a platform to be like, yeah, and here's my rules. Rule number one, everybody shave your head. Let's go. Like the second somebody gives you power, you can see how people take that position 100% and run with it and to instead constantly sort of say, look, I've got this platform and I'm going to use it to de-center my authority, value voices that are not my own, figure out how to, like you were talking about with your business model, like cool people want this business model I've created. Great, how can I use this as a way to actually de-center my authority over it and position other people in positions of authority.
- Dawn Serra: [00:31:53](#) Yeah. One of the things that I try to communicate to people who are considering working with me in a one on one capacity, who sign up for my conference and I say it on the podcast all the time, is you won't get simple answers here.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:32:10](#) Yeah.
- Dawn Serra: [00:32:10](#) I'm not going to offer magic bullet solutions. I'm not going to offer you one, two, three steps and everything is fixed.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:32:18](#) Damn it! I want a listicle!
- Dawn Serra: [00:32:20](#) I know, right? Cause I think like so many people, and I know that I've certainly and continue to do this, but like when we feel alone, when we feel ashamed, when we're struggling, we just want someone to tell us what to do. And there's so much money to be made and being the person that's willing to say, I know you should do! And that's, that's not how I want to do relationship. And that's

fundamentally how I see my work. You know, all of the work that I do is about being in a relationship with people in a different way that really undermines the ways that we've been indoctrinated into systems of oppression. Right.

- Hannah McGregor: [00:33:01](#) Oh gosh. Yeah. I love telling people what to do.
- Dawn Serra: [00:33:04](#) I know, right?
- Hannah McGregor: [00:33:07](#) I try really hard not to do it on this podcast in particular. Who knows if that's actually successful, but like I'm always like, Hmm I'm going to tell somebody what to do and they're going to do it, then I'm going to get sued. But like in interpersonal relationships, a big learning curve for me in my thirties has been hearing people tell me about things and not assuming that they want advice. Like even just pausing and asking the question like, are you interested in advice right now? Or you know, are you just asking to be heard?
- Dawn Serra: [00:33:40](#) Yeah.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:33:40](#) And then people will say like, Oh, I really don't want any advice for this. I'm like, cool, great. Wow, that sucks. What a hard situation. Oh, I really hear you. Do you want to get ice cream? Like, it's so often what people want. But my instinct is to be like, no, no, no, but listen, but listen, I can solve this, but listen, I've got a really great idea,
- Dawn Serra: [00:33:57](#) I know exactly what to do.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:34:01](#) I do this so much that my nickname during my PhD from my friend group was Dr. Mom Boss.
- Dawn Serra: [00:34:09](#) I have to say that's kind of amazing.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:34:11](#) It's really good!
- Dawn Serra: [00:34:11](#) Yeah, I like that a lot and I would feel pretty proud of that. But also I'm taking that note.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:34:21](#) Yeah, exactly right. It's like, okay, I'm hearing you. I'm hearing what you were telling me and just give me a decade and I swear I'll work on it.
- Dawn Serra: [00:34:30](#) Yeah, well I I'll start.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:34:33](#) I'll start. Yeah. It's just hard cause I'm so bossy. Okay.
- Dawn Serra: [00:34:38](#) It's true though. I mean there are certainly circumstances where, like I had a client earlier this week where it was just so clear to me that the situation they were in was not good. And it's so hard in

those moments not to just be like, oh okay, come on. Like, listen to everything you just shared. This can't be how you want your life to be unfolding. Right. And it's so hard to catch myself in those moments and just allow them to be where they need to be. You know, that's been also one of, I think that's one of the things the podcast has also really helped me with in my private practice is there's not really any resolution, you know, I do hear back from people sometimes, but I kind of offer what I hope helps and then they go and do what they feel ready to do. And that's the end.

- Hannah McGregor: [00:35:30](#) There's no follow through of like, Hey, I said you had to do this.
- Dawn Serra: [00:35:33](#) Right. Every once in awhile I'll hear like, Oh, thank you, that's exactly what I needed to hear, i'm gonna think about that. You know, or I started that conversation you suggested and it took us in this whole other direction, now I have to figure this stuff out. But it's just constant unfinished business.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:35:49](#) So you have to be comfortable with that.
- Dawn Serra: [00:35:51](#) I just have to let that be, you know, I put this out there to this person that just had this horrible thing happen and I may never hear back. And so how do I resolve that for me?
- Hannah McGregor: [00:36:02](#) How do resolve that for you?
- Dawn Serra: [00:36:04](#) Uh, it's become much easier. Okay. But in the beginning there was definitely a lot of, did I do it right? Did I cause more harm? Should I follow up with them? You know, and there was a lot of worry and also kind of this like needing to know, you know, and so I would follow up more often, but it just got to a point where there was just such a volume coming in that that became harmful to me. And so just out of necessity, I had to start letting go. Otherwise it was just going to burn me out. You know? And that was really the choice for me.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:36:40](#) Yeah. Oh, letting go.
- Dawn Serra: [00:36:41](#) Yeah. Letting go.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:36:42](#) I met a cool four year old last night. Who knew all the words to Let It Go. It was good. We put on the song and she performed to the entire thing.
- Dawn Serra: [00:36:50](#) Let It Go. Yeah!
- Hannah McGregor: [00:36:51](#) Just spinning. Then there was like a one scene, it was like her parents kept being like, this is the part where she throws off her cape. And I was like, okay, thank you. Yeah. Yeah. Oh, this is the part where she lets down her hair. Okay. All right.

Dawn Serra: [00:37:04](#) I see it, I see it!

Hannah McGregor: [00:37:04](#) I see the hair letting down happening. I see it sir.

Dawn Serra: [00:37:07](#) I mean, you can't go wrong with a good song and spin.

Hannah McGregor: [00:37:10](#) Yeah!

Dawn Serra: [00:37:15](#) A fact. A fact of life.

Hannah McGregor: [00:37:15](#) It's really enjoyable watching children spin. I'm really into kid dancing.

Dawn Serra: [00:37:19](#) Yeah, me too.

Hannah McGregor: [00:37:20](#) And how like, great and also bad it is. It's really...

Dawn Serra: [00:37:23](#) Yeah, I've really been interested, play has been a really big like undertone for me the past couple of years. Like I got really into Stuart Brown's Play Theory through, you know, I found him through Brené Brown's work and I've really been invested in,

Hannah McGregor: [00:37:37](#) Are they related?

Dawn Serra: [00:37:39](#) They are not, isn't that funny, strange. Uh, but I've really been getting into play as a modality for like healing and connection, and children I think are such an extraordinary place for us to see what it means to really not care. And I think I often find we get so confronted as adults when we consider what would it take for me to be able to behave and move like that. And it feels almost impossible to be able to arrive there. And I'm so grateful that we have these little humans, you know, that give us an opportunity to really see what the possibility is to be embodied and present and not caring if anybody thinks this is pretty, but I want the yellow crayon and this really ugly barf, green crayon on the page at the same time, you know, and singing, even if it's bad. And I'm so interested in like how we can bring more play into our lives. I think especially as adults, we are so, because of capitalism, we're so focused on like productivity and output. And I think children and just play in general and silliness is something that I really, really want more of us to be willing to surrender to.

Hannah McGregor: [00:38:55](#) Yeah. Yeah.

Dawn Serra: [00:38:57](#) Why not stop at that playground?

Hannah McGregor: [00:38:58](#) Like, Oh my God, I love, just get on a swing!

Dawn Serra: [00:39:02](#) Just get on a swing!

Hannah McGregor: [00:39:02](#) Have you ever seen a swing you didn't kind of want to get on?

Dawn Serra: [00:39:05](#) Exactly!

Hannah McGregor: [00:39:05](#) Or you walk by a hot day and you walk by a splash park. There's all these kids in the splash park.

Dawn Serra: [00:39:13](#) Get in your undies and run through that shit!

Hannah McGregor: [00:39:13](#) Ugh! I wanna go park but will I get arrested? Who knows?

Dawn Serra: [00:39:16](#) But that desire, right?

Hannah McGregor: [00:39:17](#) Yeah.

Dawn Serra: [00:39:18](#) It's so real,

Hannah McGregor: [00:39:19](#) Oh yeah. 100%. Oh, I spent two weeks in July visiting some very dear friends of mine who have a four year old and I was staying with them at their cottage and I when I was packing, I was like, Oh yeah, I've got all these books I'm going to read. And my friend Bart was like, yeah, you think you're going to read? That's cute. That's really cute. You know there's a four year old here, right?

Dawn Serra: [00:39:41](#) Welcome to life with a four year old.

New Speaker: [00:39:43](#) But it was incredible that like so much of the day ended up being centered around play, like just by definition. And I was like, nothing has ever pulled me out of my, like manic Workbrain more effectively than a kid who's like, do you want to run in circles around the cottage?

Dawn Serra: [00:40:04](#) Right.

Hannah McGregor: [00:40:04](#) It's like, all right, let's do it.

Dawn Serra: [00:40:06](#) You want to make a pillow fort?

Hannah McGregor: [00:40:07](#) Yeah!

Dawn Serra: [00:40:08](#) We can do some pretty cool things inside one.

Hannah McGregor: [00:40:09](#) This is my first day there. She was like, do you want to play doctor? And I was like, I'm going to need you to tell me what, tell me more about that. I have followup questions before I say yes to that. Turns out what she meant was like diagnosing her stuffies with various ailments and then treating them.

Dawn Serra: [00:40:31](#) That makes sense, oh yes we are not talking dungeon version we are talking four-year-old version.

Hannah McGregor: [00:40:37](#) Yeah, yeah, exactly. I was just like, listen i've heard that playing doctor can mean a thing. It's just, lets just check what that meant and okay, alright, we're good. Oh yeah, this sounds great everybody, the first time we played everybody just had a broken leg.

Dawn Serra: [00:40:55](#) When all you do is jump around, I guess you break your legs.

Hannah McGregor: [00:40:57](#) You break things. Yeah.

Dawn Serra: [00:40:58](#) Makes total sense. That's the other thing that i'm so just like, I'm so interested in our, and Adrienne Maree Brown has really brought me into this, but I love how she talks about like when we create a world that's free from all these systems of oppression, what will that look like? And how it's science fiction now for us to imagine these ways of being and how foreign it is for so many of us as adults to be able to imagine these worlds. You know, like we're so bound by reality and what's achievable that dreaming big wild worlds feels like it's reserved for a very specific set of people with very specific jobs, right.? You know, like writers and,

Hannah McGregor: [00:41:46](#) Imagineers.

Dawn Serra: [00:41:47](#) Exactly, yes.

Hannah McGregor: [00:41:50](#) Right? Like it's for white dudes in Silicon Valley to imagine our future for us and then profit off it.

Dawn Serra: [00:41:54](#) Or like writers from Hollywood.

Hannah McGregor: [00:41:56](#) Yeah. Who are also white men.

Dawn Serra: [00:41:59](#) Exactly. And I think like one of the things that I've learned, a friend of mine had me come over and babysit her seven year old a couple of years ago and our seven year old was like, let's play Barbies. And I have fond memories of playing with my Shiva dolls and my Barbies, but she made no sense in how she was playing with these dolls. I mean, the rules changed with every breath and I felt totally lost. And it was such a weird experience to realize I was like that at some point. But I had completely lost the ability to just create in the moment and respond, right, the way that a six or seven or eight year old would. And so I love this, like the first time we played, everyone had broken legs, it makes no sense, there's no why, it's just how it is. But that's what we're imagining. And like allowing that to be true. You know, I wish we could bring more of that kind of free imagination into the ways that we dream of being in our bodies and relating to each other and having sex and all the things, you know, I really like how so much of what Adrienne Maree Brown talks about is like we are existing inside of the imagination of ultimately white men right now. And most of us don't want to be there.

- Hannah McGregor: [00:43:14](#) Oh, that's such a great point. It's like what we imagine for ourselves as versions of what pleasure can be, versions of what relationships can be is so constrained. I have spent so much of my adult life feeling like I was failing because the options I saw in front of me were so finite. And even in, you know, in previous communities, which were queer communities and lefty communities and intellectual communities and whatever, like I wasn't raised in a conservative church, like it wasn't, you know. And yet the options I saw in front of me were coupling, marriage, homeownership, reproduction, and this kind of logic of like, well, at some point in your life you choose a single person to be in a relationship with and that becomes your primary relationship, and friendship by definition falls to the wayside and here's how your life will be structured. And so at some point, if you have not also achieved that, you will be alone and tragic.
- Dawn Serra: [00:44:17](#) Right! You will die horribly alone and sad, with many cats. But frankly to me, dying with many cats sounds great, so...
- Hannah McGregor: [00:44:23](#) I mean it's actually like, that's part of it. It's like you'll die alone as a spinster surrounded by cats. And I was like, wait a minute, I love being alone.
- Dawn Serra: [00:44:31](#) Right?
- Hannah McGregor: [00:44:31](#) And I love being surrounded by cats. So this sounds great, like will I be in a gingerbread cottage in the woods? That sounds amazing. But I also, in Vancouver in particular, my community here is so much more diverse in terms of the lives that people are living. Like I know so many more people living different kinds of adulthoods in different kinds of relationships, communities, formulations, and that has like just been breaking my imagination open that I was like, Oh, these are the possibilities. Like Oh no, there's so many more and this if these are options. Probably there are even more options.
- Dawn Serra: [00:45:09](#) Yes, 100% and I think like one of the things that I think causes so many of the people that I work with so much pain is they know about oppression, they know about the harms and the violences of the world, they know there's different ways of being. They consider themselves, you know, like very progressive and imagining into new worlds and yet they still feel shame that they want sex at a different rate than their partner. Or they still feel afraid because they've put on weight. Right? And like I think there's a special kind of shame that so many people who consider themselves to be really committed to different ways of being in liberation, but then secretly so secretly way down, deep inside I still feel broken. Especially in comparison to the way the world says I should be. And that is something that I think is, that's a place I really love going with people and just really giving people a place to be able to speak the unspeakable. Because I do think there's, like, there's, I've worked

with people raised inside of very conservative Christian families and now as adults, they're starting to realize maybe those stories weren't true. And really having to grieve that and there's a unique pain in realizing I might be really different than I've been told I'm allowed to be, but I think that there's an even more acute pain sometimes to feeling like I've broken free from all those things, and yet late at night I still am stuck and hooked by those fears that I know I shouldn't have. Right. And there's that should...

Hannah McGregor: [00:46:53](#) Yeah, yeah. God, the shame is like it's almost, it's a bodily response, right? It's like it's inside you in this way that you often can't think your way out of like when this whole sort of higher part of your brain is like, Oh yeah, no, totally, totally living in this anti-oppressive structure. Don't apply, but like under your skin, just as like these deep visceral responses.

Dawn Serra: [00:47:16](#) These constrictions, you know, the not knowing why you get that weird feeling in your stomach, you know, when you bump up against one of those edges and feeling like, well I can't say that to all of my super open friends because they're clearly not struggling with it when really pretty much everybody is. But you know, like I think that's another just like a really beautiful place for more connection and healing. And I think that goes back to what we were talking about earlier around just really modeling vulnerability. That there's so many things so many of us are not saying because we're afraid it's going to mean we belong less. But often when we say that we find there's more belonging to be found.

Hannah McGregor: [00:48:01](#) Yeah. Wow. Wow. That felt really something.

Dawn Serra: [00:48:07](#) This is literally my life.

Hannah McGregor: [00:48:12](#) To simultaneously know, really know that vulnerability, seeds connection, and yet to feel that deep fear of like, well, but it won't be true for me. I am the person, other people's vulnerability makes me want to reach out to them, but my vulnerability will make everybody I know shun me immediately.

Dawn Serra: [00:48:31](#) Yes!

Hannah McGregor: [00:48:32](#) That's a remarkable, sort of like we're all just have been gaslit and then are continuing to gaslight ourselves. Yeah.

Dawn Serra: [00:48:40](#) Yeah. That concept of the ways we gaslight ourselves has become a really core piece of the work I've been doing with people around their pleasure. You know? Like what are all of the ways that you told yourself you weren't feeling a thing, that you were feeling over all the times you told your body you can't possibly be hungry right now. What are all the times that you denied yourself access to something you knew that you wanted but you were scared that if you did what it would mean? You know what I mean? Those are all

the ways that we're denying our reality and it adds up and it creates a body that doesn't trust us. And then we wonder why it's hard to let ourselves be seen really vulnerably during sex or why we can't quite connect with that person we care about or why we feel so uncomfortable in our bodies when we've been doing all this work around body positivity. Right? And I think it just keeps coming back to, we've been taught, I mean from the youngest of ages, we have adults telling us, you don't really need that right now. You're not really hungry again. You don't really have to go to the bathroom, you just went. And those are all ways people are teaching us to deny our realities, what our bodies give us. And I think now we're all just so skilled at it, we don't even know we're doing it anymore.

- Hannah McGregor: [00:49:52](#) Yeah. That's, I mean that was literally the question my parents would ask me, do you really need that right now? Do you really? And I was like, Oh shit, I don't know.
- Dawn Serra: [00:50:01](#) Yeah. Like if I say yes do I get in trouble? Cause there's clearly like a tone, right? And if I say no, then they,
- Hannah McGregor: [00:50:10](#) Well if I say yes, they're going to tell me I'm wrong.
- Dawn Serra: [00:50:12](#) Right!
- Hannah McGregor: [00:50:13](#) That I don't actually, because they know what I need more than I do. So at what point do I learn to know what I need? Like well I mean it's going to be after 35.
- Dawn Serra: [00:50:22](#) For sure! Maybe even after 40.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:50:27](#) That's a, I had a lot of, again, at the cottage cause you know like surrounded by children away from work in the ocean every day is like, it very quickly moves me into this mode of like I am ready to do some deep thinking and talking like let's just get into the shit. And we ended up having a lot of conversations about the problem, which is a problem that I think one of the friends I was visiting with identified with the problem of knowing what you want.
- Dawn Serra: [00:50:54](#) Uh huh!
- Hannah McGregor: [00:50:54](#) It's like, I am a really competent person. If I figure out a thing I want to achieve, I go after it and I'm very good at achieving it. How the fuck do people figure out what they want? That's like,
- Dawn Serra: [00:51:07](#) Yeah, yeah, right.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:51:08](#) How does anyone ever known what they wanted? Like where does, do they tell you? Do you ask a genie? Like what, who, where did

people just not, do you have, do you dream about like, how the fuck has anyone ever figured out what they wanted?

- Dawn Serra: [00:51:22](#) Right. And that is the, that's the core issue I have with so much of the consent education happening in sex-positive spaces. Ask for what you want, say no to what you don't. How the fuck am I supposed to know what I want, especially when it's a new situation or when I have trauma or when being embodied is really difficult for me because my body is a difficult place to be. You know? I mean like, there's so many things that have to come before that. How do I even know what I want? So few of us do. You know when I ask people what do you want? I have no idea. Can we normalize that? That it's okay to not know, right? Because I think so many of us are pretending like we do, which is another barrier to that connection.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:52:08](#) So what do you like, how does consent play into that...being willing to say you don't know what you want.
- Dawn Serra: [00:52:14](#) Yeah, yeah. I think like for me, and you know, of course this is very context-based, there's certain places where if I don't know what I want, it needs to be a no and I'm walking away. But in general with people that I trust-ish or know somewhat, you know, if the answer to, Well, what do you want? Is, I really don't know, then I think what can come after that is, But maybe we can figure that out together. You know, would you be willing to help me try some things? And I might really not like some, but can we make that okay? And can we maybe go on a discovery together? And I'm so interested in us all being able to be that level of vulnerable to say the, I don't know, but maybe we can find out versus I've got to make something up right now because they're looking at me. And the expectation is, as an adult, I should know. And I think that's often how we betray ourselves. You know, we try and force ourselves into an answer and then we find out later that didn't feel good and we aren't sure where the blame lays. And often it's because we've betrayed ourselves.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:53:18](#) Yeah, yeah. And that's such a messy hard conversation to try to have in really open ways about those moments when we do betray ourselves, when we do force ourselves into positions of doing things that we don't want because we don't know how to articulate that and don't know how to say no and don't know how to draw boundaries. And that, like that I think has been the really striking thing about conversations about rape culture over the past three years. When did Me Too happen? Was it only, three years ago?
- Dawn Serra: [00:53:46](#) I know it feels like 20 right?
- Hannah McGregor: [00:53:50](#) But like that, you know, it's all of, it's the massive liminal space of like the messiness of consent and the way that so many of us have

been taught to not be able, not only to articulate a desire, but certainly to say no thank you.

- Dawn Serra: [00:54:10](#) Right. Right. Because like to be able to do that means the people that are part of the exchange, at least on some level, I think need to be able to understand the power.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:54:22](#) Yeah.
- Dawn Serra: [00:54:23](#) And I think that's something else that's so few of us ever learned. I mean, that's not something they teach us in schools. How to, I mean, that would just disintegrate the systems, right?
- Hannah McGregor: [00:54:33](#) They're teaching us to believe in power as a natural and correct structure. Yeah.
- Dawn Serra: [00:54:41](#) Right. And I think like that's, that is where so much of our work has to be, you know, I mean, as a cis woman talking to a cis man, there is something I'm moving through the world with that they don't have. But if I have more money than this cis man, there is also a different level of power there. And so it's very nuanced and very complicated. But I think even being able to feel into that without the answers gets us closer to what I think we're all hungry for.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:55:11](#) Yeah. What are we all hungry for?
- Dawn Serra: [00:55:13](#) God. Ease. Not being taken advantage of. Getting to feel pleasure. Not feeling so burnt out. Just to start.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:55:25](#) Ease is such a- ease is also something that came up a lot during these two weeks that I was away of talking about ease versus pleasure and how a lot of the time I, and I think a lot of people I know mistake pleasure for this kind of like it has to be Instagrammable. Like you're not having fun unless you are doing something that photographs well, and like you gotta be just like on a beach or doing a hike or at a party or like there's gotta be a set, right. So it's got this sort of, I mean there's productivity and this is capitalism at work for sure, the sense that our pleasure must also be productive in some way, if only in the way of like producing a sort of public image of the self that is one that experiences pleasure. But ease is like so unproductive. Like ease is just like I spent a whole day lying naked on a bed playing Stardew Valley on my iPad listening to podcasts.
- Dawn Serra: [00:56:25](#) Great!
- Hannah McGregor: [00:56:25](#) And I was like, there was certainly a part of my brain that was like, you are wasting your vacation.

Dawn Serra: [00:56:30](#) Yes!

Hannah McGregor: [00:56:30](#) You are, what you could be doing, so you can't take out a single picture of this for Instagram. This is completely ungrammable. And it wasn't like, it wasn't like joyous. I wasn't like wheel I was just like deeply at ease. That's a really underrated sensation,

Dawn Serra: [00:56:49](#) It really is. And I think that that concept of wasting a day, is so interesting, you know, like can we actually waste a day?

Hannah McGregor: [00:57:01](#) My God.

Dawn Serra: [00:57:02](#) You know? I mean.

Hannah McGregor: [00:57:02](#) I was like, of course we can. Wait, no! Days aren't commodities, you can't waste them.

Dawn Serra: [00:57:10](#) Yeah. And that's the thing, like, I'm super obsessed right now with The Nap Ministry. Are you familiar with them?

Hannah McGregor: [00:57:17](#) No!?

Dawn Serra: [00:57:17](#) Yeah. Yeah. So there's an artist, I'm not going to get her name 100% right, but I want to say it's Tricia Hersey or Hershel. But she is a black feminist artist who, it's specifically for black women, but I think there's something for all of us inside of capitalism specifically, but she really sees the resting black body as fundamentally opposed to all of the ways that black bodies have been exploited and used and told they need to be more productive as a counter to the kind of that lazy narrative. Right? But so much of what she writes about is literally sleeping and napping and taking care of ourselves without it needing to be about anything IS healing work. It IS counter-cultural work. It IS what helps us to counter capitalism and it makes that productivity and perfectionist parts of my brain at least be like, Oh shit, can I take as many naps as I want? No, I can't. That's what she's offering. You know? And she's got this beautiful critique of culture and like colonialism and capitalism and the impacts of, you know, white supremacy on black bodies. But I think the invitation inside of that of literally activism can be napping. You know, that's extraordinary. We don't always have to be doing.

Hannah McGregor: [00:58:46](#) Super resonates with with things that I've seen my friend Lucia write about recently, who is a black feminist who also is experiencing and writing a lot about chronic illness, and she has been writing about that idea, you know, her struggle with rest and her struggle with the need for rest, her body's demand that she rest. And trying to think of it in terms of her ancestors and their inability to rest, their incorporation into the violence of the slave trade and the violence of capitalism and the idea of like actually

maybe resting is the greatest sort of gift I can give to my ancestors, is that I am allowed to be at rest.

- Dawn Serra: [00:59:27](#) Yeah. The ultimate radical imagining. Right? For someone who's inside of slavery. Can I just rest and use my body in the ways that I want to use my body.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:59:37](#) Which is, so my brain just went immediately to Wall-e, which I've only seen once. Have you seen Wall-e?
- Dawn Serra: [00:59:46](#) I've seen Wall-e, yeah.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:59:47](#) It just immediately made me think of how in the imagining of that movie, speaking of sort of white men in their imaginations and how they constrain us, it's a dystopia because people have become so at rest that they have all become fat. And what a nightmare. Can you imagine a more dystopic future than one in which bodies are at rest and also fat. And how many utopias imagine fatness out of existence?
- Dawn Serra: [01:00:15](#) Absolutely.
- Hannah McGregor: [01:00:16](#) Because in a perfect future, nobody's fat. Obviously none of us, none of us would be fat if we had the choice.
- Dawn Serra: [01:00:23](#) Yeah, and also just how short sighted that the story you carry is that for everyone to have an opportunity to take care of themselves means they give up on everything. You know? I mean like what does that say about you and how tense you feel in your own life about what you must do in order to be worthy.
- Hannah McGregor: [01:00:47](#) I mean that like, like, I mean it's the Protestant work ethic playing out for us in that like the only moral subject in this future is this hardworking robot that tirelessly cleans a destroyed planet. That's like, cool well, that's a real nightmare you've painted for us. Thanks!
- Dawn Serra: [01:01:07](#) Thanks for turning that into a children's movie.
- Hannah McGregor: [01:01:11](#) People love Wall-e. And I'm like, hmm seems like a hellscape.
- Dawn Serra: [01:01:15](#) But yeah, and I think you're so right. Like what if, I mean, I think one of the most extraordinary visions of a future that I've ever had the pleasure of encountering was Mia Mingus' essay and Octavia's Brood. Oh, I highly recommend it.
- Hannah McGregor: [01:01:32](#) I own Octavia's Brood, I just haven't read it yet.
- Dawn Serra: [01:01:35](#) Yes. I think Mia's essay is one of the best in the whole book, but Mia in a very short story, imagines a world where everyone who's disabled has been ejected to Mars. Literally disability is not allowed

on planet Earth anymore. But on Mars, all of these only disabled people have created a colony where all bodies are accommodated and we're all abilities are exactly what we need. And that as bodies change, everyone unifies to find new ways. And it's just this beautiful tender imagining of what if we centered the bodies and need and what they needed then made that happen. You know? And like to me that's such an extraordinary imagining of a way we could be where we do exactly what we feel like we can do, and there's enough support for that to be what it is. And we don't have to push for more or be more to be worthy because we're all inherently worthy. Right. And I think that's like, that just made my brain think of so many things, you know, fat bodies, older bodies, disabled bodies, all the bodies in the ways they can be. And what would it look like if we all just fundamentally had the support we needed? And then what pleasure is available to us from there? What kind of connection?

- Hannah McGregor: [01:03:03](#) The gift of those of people who imagine those futures. I experienced similar sort of moments of brain opening, brain ripping down the center and opening up and growing at something new. Reading Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha's *Care Work*. Of like the way that they are thinking in particular about these, like a refusal of a sort of eugenicist future imagining in which disability is imagined out of existence and instead a like radical disabled future in which everybody moves at the speed of the slowest.
- Dawn Serra: [01:03:44](#) Yes. Amazing!
- Hannah McGregor: [01:03:45](#) Holy shit.
- Dawn Serra: [01:03:45](#) Mind blown. Yeah. It blew my mind too. I mean, I think one of the most common things that I come across in my practice is people who so desperately want to be able to have pleasurable, connected sexual experiences with someone they love. But their expectation is I spend every moment of every day trying to be productive, rushing from one thing to the next, trying to achieve, and somehow I'm expecting that in this very short amount of time to magically be someone else with a different brain and a different body. And when I think about Leah's essays and *Care Work* and all the things that got revealed through that, there was so much permission to be in a body that literally what I can do today is lay in bed and masturbate and write a few blog posts and I'm still worthy and I'm still cared for and I'm still met. And if we were to allow that to be true, the ways that we would then be able to show up so much more embodied and available for each other. And I think you know, so much of what *Care Work* revealed is that especially those of us who are able bodied or more able bodied is this needing for things to be fixed so we can go back to normal instead of what if this is our normal, where we're slowing down and caring for each other and where pleasure is allowed and centered and I want more of that.

Hannah McGregor: [01:05:16](#) Yeah. That just that question of what if we all slowed down? Like what if you, I've been trying really hard to think really since I got this job. Like, what does it look like if I actually practice what I am endorsing to other people? So what if instead of just saying academia is a culture of workaholism, we should all be striving for a better work life balance. What if I actually personally refuse to work more than 40 hours a week? What if I take every weekend off, just every single fucking weekend forever and other academics will hear this and be like, are you kidding me? I don't work on weekends. I don't. Because if you have to then I don't want to do this job. Because I don't like, it's not sustainable for me and I am an able bodied person and it is not like, in this whole system if there's, if you cannot be disabled and an academic then being an academic is valueless. Like then just the whole thing needs to get thrown in the trash. So like what if I also just try to live what looks and feels for me like a sustainable life. As a way of actually practicing the thing that I am claiming I value. And that was, that has also been a like, well, so far nobody's fired me for not working myself to death. So that's cool.

Dawn Serra: [01:06:44](#) And isn't it sad that that's what we're so, we're terrified that if we just do enough we'll be fired. And we won't be able to keep a roof over our head and in so many situations it's true.

Hannah McGregor: [01:06:56](#) Yes. Yes. That like, you know, I'm in a position of luxury. I recognize that and know so many people who like, the idea of saying like, well this is good enough, would never fly. Like it's just impossible. Yeah. Which is why we need to dismantle capitalism.

Hannah McGregor: [01:07:37](#) If you want to learn more about Dawn, check out her website at dawnserra.com that's D A W N S E R R A.com and follow her on Instagram @dawn_serra. You should definitely check out her pleasure course, which is enrolling for October right now and which you can learn more about at dawnserra.com/pleasurecourse. All of these links. Plus some very excellent show notes are available at secretfeministagenda.com. You can follow me on Twitter @HKPMcGregor and you can and should tweet about the podcast using the hashtag #secretfeministagenda. And of course as per usual, you should be reviewing this show. How else will I know whether I have value as a human being? And thank goodness there are three new reviews. So shout out to liarsong from Australia, To middlemeg from the UK and to non-binarynathan from the United States of America, which is how my podcast review website lists that country, the United States of America. You're all great and I love you.

The podcast theme song is Mesh Shirt by Mom Jeans, off their album, Chub Rub. You can download the entire album on freemusicarchive.org or follow them on Facebook. Dawn's theme song was Exposure Kills by Miss Eaves.

This episode was recorded on the traditional and unceded territory of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations where I'm grateful to live and work.

This has been Secret Feminist Agenda. Pass it on.