

# The Full Stop podcast

Episode 57, November 2023

## Why is nobody talking about childless men?

Don Martinez (00:00:00)- I can't be too soft. Does that make sense? Because then I'm somehow I lose sexual currency. And that, in turn, has led to, in many ways, is related to my singleness, I think, in some way. And my struggle has been to say, I'm going to be that that's who I want, that's who I am. And there is a real masculinity and strength in that way of being and take it or leave it.

Michael Hughes(00:00:34)- Welcome to the Full Stop a childless not by choice podcast and online community with Sarah Lawrence, Berenice Howard-Smith and me, Michael Hughes. Our podcast delves into the many reasons as to why people are childless, and we hope that with all our special guests and the discussions we have, will help you craft your own narrative as we all learn together. Now, if you'd like to be part of our inclusive online community, just jump over to our website. There you can find all the information and you will hear people mention Chester in this episode. And this is a reference to many of us meeting at the Story House childless event at the Story House Theatre in Chester, UK.

Michael Hughes(00:01:18)- Now this episode is also our contribution to International Men's Day, but of course, seen through the lens of being childless. As we explore the provocative by design question why is no one talking about childless men? So let's meet our panel of guests. So thank you, everyone for joining us, and welcome to International Men's Day 2023. And today we are going to explore the question. Quite a provocative one. Why is no one talking about childless men? And today we have with us a great panel of guys who most of met. And Don is. I'm yet to meet you, but that day will come. So rather than me rattle on, I'm going to introduce you to the to the guys in the panel, and then we'll crack on with answering that question. So first Jay Palmer. Who are you and what do you do?

Jay Palmer(00:02:18)- But firstly, thank you for having me on today. And it's it's been amazing meeting you guys at story House and then some pranks when we hooked up and stuff. I'm Jay Palmer, I'm a musician, as you could probably tell.

Jay Palmer(00:02:35)- So I'm a guitar player. I do this full time. I build guitars, build amps, I teach music. I also have a YouTube channel where I post a lot of my music and gear reviews and things like that. I'm part of the childless community. My wife and I are. My wife has been this show. Lots of people know Bindi in the community, and she's introduced me to the community over the last few years, and it's been just wonderful actually getting to know everybody in the community, becoming part of it as well. I'm I'm quite a half a glass, half full kind of guy, so I'm quite positive about everything. So it's been interesting interacting with everybody and also starting to contribute a little bit to this whole question about childlessness as well, and just really looking forward to interacting more with everybody.

Michael Hughes(00:03:39)- Thanks, Jay. I'm great to have you here. And all the way from California with West Coast America at a very early time in the morning. We have done. Please. Who are you and what do you do?

Don Martinez(00:03:51)- Hi, everybody.

Don Martinez(00:03:52)- My name's Don and it's good to be with all you guys again. I've been out for a while, but it's good to see you, Michael and Russ especially. Yeah, I'm in California. I am a marriage family therapist. I've been doing that for about ten years, and I came into this community because when I turned about 53, it became apparent that I wasn't going to have children. By that I mean that I'm childless, not by choice because of being single, not being able to find a life partner. Aaron told me, you know, hey, hang in there. Guy in his 50s. Good stuff. You're in your prime, you know, you can still. So and so, but it. When I turned 53, it just

became on. I don't know, just more real and apparent that it it just didn't make a lot of sense to try and have children for a number of reasons. So I'm 59 now and I think I'm, I don't feel a lot of pain anymore when I see a young man with with a child, for example, playing, I don't feel that tug that I used to.

Don Martinez(00:05:08)- I used to have to kind of walk away a little bit. But so when I see that same scene, I don't, you know, you feel a little bit of that sorrow, but it's not as strong anymore. So still continuing to go through the grieving process. But it is definitely. An experience that I have to keep to myself, especially with my family. It's just if you don't have any children in a Filipino family, I should mention I'm immigrant or son or eldest son of an immigrant Filipino family. In that context, it's a real prenatal culture. So my story just is. Mostly the questions I get. So darn, how's work? And then it just sort of dies from there after I answer it with one question, because we don't know what to talk about other than. With the children and how they're doing. Things like that. So this community has been real important for me to just have a place where I can be seen and feel seen and be taken as a whole person.

Don Martinez(00:06:15)- So good to be here.

Michael Hughes(00:06:18)- Thanks, Don. And we have Russ from Melbourne. So Russell. Who are you and what do you do?

Russ Pata(00:06:28)- Uh, yeah. That's a loaded question. I'm doing all right. It's 8:00. All done. It's 2 a.m. in the morning. My name's Russ. I live in Melbourne, Australia, 54 years of age. My childless, not by choice journey started back in 98, at the age of 28 with my wife. And we went through, uh, assisted reproductive technologies. Initially up until about 2006. And then we did one, um, one final, abortive effort in 2012. I've probably got to the point now where I'm, um, relatively at peace with that. If you can take out. Father's Day, Mother's Day, Halloween, Christmas, New Year's and everything else where it pretty much gets posted on pretty hard by the marketing gurus.

Russ Pata(00:07:30) – I am a Paramedic by trade. Currently looking at moving into the family violence space as a specialist there. It's going to be an interesting conversation. I think there's a lot of things here that need to be discussed.

Michael Hughes(00:07:52)- Thanks, Ross. And we have Mike Sparks. So again, Mike, who are you and what do you do?

Mike Sparks(00:07:59)- Good morning, everybody, and thank you for welcoming to this group this morning. Yeah. Name's Mike Sparks, 65 years old, live in Hertfordshire in the UK, 30 years as a broker and fund manager. Following that I ran a charity for five years and subsequent to that I mess around in antiques, in particular antique and period lighting. So I've got the right surname. The story of ending up was being childless. It wasn't something that really bothered me. And until I began to get older and it was really turning 60, I saw that as a bit of a milestone, really, and that's when it kind of really hit me.

Mike Sparks(00:08:45)- Beyond more from a from a point of view of who do I leave things to and, and stuff like that, and ended up in this situation following a failed. Well, I failed in the end surrogacy arrangement with my first wife, which tragically ended in a miscarriage. And that sort of brought the whole world crashing down for quite a long time. Um, as I say, I have really suffered with this as I got older, and it's about legacy and and being surrounded by lots of friends and family, all who have children and sometimes just feel completely excluded and just not part of it. So joining finding as I did and stumbling across Mike's great group, Michael Ross and others who have been involved in doing it, I've really engaged with it. I've met some great people, and most of you look forward to meeting others again as soon as possible. I had a great time in Chester. Will be there next year for sure. And that's about it. About me. Anything else you want to know? Ask me privately.

Michael Hughes(00:09:58)- All right. Thanks, Mike. And lastly, but not least we have Robin Hadley with us. So, Robin, people should know who you are. But just in case they don't. Who are you and what do you do?

Russ Pata(00:10:17)- Okay, I'm Robin Hadley, I'm a rugby kid from Old Trafford in Manchester.

Robin Hadley(00:10:24)- I've got a minute, seven seconds a year to get through. Um, and that's five seconds going to go in. Really? So I'm a working class lad and I'm a job in academic. I think at the moment. My route into childlessness is, uh, one through circumstance and part of the circumstances. Me and I was quite shy. I'm seven of the seventh youngest of eight kids, and I'm also, um, congenitally deaf. I had a birth trauma, and that left me with 30% hearing loss on both ears, which is got worse as I age. When I just smile at you, I probably haven't heard you!

Robin Hadley(00:11:20)- I have no idea what you've said! And what happened? I got married when I was 26, and I was doing an okay job as a university technician. A scientific and technical photographer. Not brilliantly paid, but steady. Very steady. We got divorced. My wife was younger. She changed job, moved in with the younger crowd. After being in-sync in what were our plans? Reproductive plans were out of sync. And I kept the house and there was an economic crisis. The mortgage rates went up, and I really didn't go out for about two, two and a half years as I just tried to keep the payments going and then eventually managed to sell the house, moved back to Manchester and got him all with a really nice woman. And at one point she said, you know, I want to have your babies. And but the relationship broke up. And then I met my wife just before I was 40, and she's a few years older, and although she had once had babies, she didn't know she was older.

Robin Hadley(00:12:31)- She's healthcare professional and knew the risks involved in that. So it's a choice for me then of what to do. And I remember thinking, well, who would want me apart from this woman here who's brilliant and and batting out my league as it is? Where would I go? I'd have to look for somebody ten years younger. There's a generational thing there. Think. And so I chose love. And in my mid-forties, my job was on the line because digital technology had come through an outsourcing in universities. So the writing was on the wall, and I trained as a counsellor, and I did that mainly because somebody said, oh, I think you'd be good at it. And also you could do it in small blocks. And each block I did, I thought, well, you know, fail here, they'll find me out. And they, they haven't until I've just admitted it now. And I got a PhD in the end. Um, and social gerontology which is ageing sociology of ageing.

Robin Hadley(00:13:40)- But in the counselling in my MA because it was counselling had to be something you had experienced. And I was really broody in my, in my 30s and my supervisor said do that. And that's when I found out there was nothing about men, um, really about men's experience and how men felt. So after that, I did an MSC looking at the levels of rudeness because it's assumed women are broody and men are bothered to see how true that was. And it's not true. And then I did my PhD looking at older, childless men and the impact of childlessness across the life course. And that's me. I'm here now with you, and I'm very lucky to be here with you. Thank you for that opportunity. This opportunity.

Michael Hughes(00:14:26)- Oh, it's really good to see you, Rob. Really good to see you.

Robin Hadley(00:14:28)- Of course it is.

Michael Hughes (00:14:30)- Yeah. All right!

Michael Hughes(00:14:37)- From that one. So the genesis of this, this topic came from, for those who don't know, there was a quite a large gathering of childless people in Chester in the UK last month.

Michael Hughes(00:14:50)- And. The Full Stop podcast was invited to go along, and one of the things I wanted to bring to that was the childless men's voice.\* I put a poll into the child men's community and asked them, do you feel excluded within the childless community? And the results that came back, as I said, were quite interesting. It was a large sample. I have to I have to say that, but the two things that came back was some felt that they were excluded. They talked about language, particularly about what they see when people are posting. They would see it is childless women. That was by far the biggest thing that they had seen in terms of language. Now many felt that they weren't actually excluded, but men aren't well represented. So when it

came to some of the things that they felt contributed to the answers, was that they don't know how or what to say.

*\*note that Sarah Lawrence from The Full Stop podcast chaired a session with Robert Nurden, Andy Harrod and Bransby MacDonald-Williams.*

Michael Hughes(00:16:13)- They're not prepared to put themselves out there for fear of being a target of ridicule. There's an imposter syndrome, which I interpreted as. Am I really allowed to grieve as a childless man?

Michael Hughes(00:16:29)- One of the most interesting one was. No one's interested in my voice. And when I. When I thought about that, I thought, how sad is that? Now, I can't say that's my experience because I've obviously immersed myself into the childless community, and I, I don't see that, but I can totally understand why some men feel that way. And so I would like to hear your guys opinions of that. So let's start with. Do you feel excluded in the childless community? And let's start with Russ.

Russ Pata(00:17:12)- Look, like you, I suppose. Ever since you started the group where I came into it. After your ABC interview. I don't feel excluded in a space that is immense space. Uh, it seems like in that place we have a voice, and we, um, we have some very healthy dialogue.

Russ Pata(00:17:39)- We talk to each other, and we try and help problem solve it. There is a dearth of conversation outside of those men's spaces. Um, and it's one of those things where I believe men being men, where at times their own worst enemy- the the lack of willingness to have those conversations and also the lack of willingness to bring those conversations into the general public. There's issues with feeling feelings of shame and adequacy. Not a man if I can't have kids, that sort of thing. And I believe that. Yeah, that it it's. Yeah, there's definitely a level of exclusion there. Whether it's actively done or whether it's ambivalence, I'm not really sure. I don't think it is actively done. I don't think there's that sort of malice out there, to be honest. Um, but I think there's a level of ambivalence involved in it, um, or apathy. One of those two things. Yeah.

Michael Hughes(00:18:56)- Thanks for us, Don. Um, when I think about this question, I think about something you told me some time ago where I remember you approached a group in the United States because you were looking to create a network of childless friends. It was a women's group. And they they well they didn't allow you in is, I guess, the best way of explaining it. And so when I think about exclusion, that that episode that we talked about some time ago comes to mind. So I'd really like to hear your opinion of that.

Speaker 9 (00:19:35)- Who do you feel excluded?

Don Martinez(00:19:37)- Hm. I do remember that conversation, and I've had ongoing conversations with the women's community, and I've even sat in like once in a while. There'll be sessions where it's kind of a meet and greet and it's sort of open, if you will, not just limited to women. So I've jumped in and been a part of like a little meet and greet of about 20 to 30 women. I'm usually the only man. Um, and honestly, I felt.

Don Martinez(00:20:11)- I guess excluded in the sense that the groups are specifically for women. So I've. I've said, look, there's I can't find a men's community out there yet. So would it be possible to join one of yours? And I think they thought about it carefully and then perhaps felt a little uncomfortable or weren't quite ready yet to have a diverse group. And so was was gently said, no, they're just for women. On the other hand, when I sat with the group as a whole, I felt very included in the sense that the women were very interested in my story as a man. And we're really grateful that I was there. I think many had partners who sometimes they wanted to understand a little more a male partners, perhaps, and were eager to just get any kind of male experience, just to feel a little bit included in the male experience in general. So I felt included in that sense. Very much so. But I did feel disappointed that I couldn't just jump into any group right away.

Don Martinez(00:21:28)- So I, I then thought about it more in terms of. You know why? Why do we as men struggle to have a group of men to start off with and sort of kicked off in that question. So. So I want to be careful there, because I did feel really I've talked to several leaders and hosts of some of the platforms, and they have been incredibly warm and inviting of of me as a man, just in general. But there is a the groups are gender focused. Yes. So.

Michael Hughes(00:22:10)- No, thanks. That that's that's a nice balanced view, which I think is important to bring into this conversation. Jay, what what would be your experience?

Jay Palmer(00:22:21)- Really interesting question on a number of levels for me because I'll explain in a second. But do I feel excluded by the community? No, personally I don't because of my experiences. My initial experience with the childless community in in terms of meeting people was when Bindi took me to Fertility Fest a few years ago and it was for a men's talk.

Jay Palmer(00:22:48)- So there was Benjamin Zephaniah and Rod Little who were doing their talk. So there were very few men there, but I didn't feel excluded by it. And storey House was the next experience that I had again, you know. I think. The bindi was a little bit concerned that I might feel a little bit out of my element because it is predominantly women there, but I actually found it absolutely fine. And I think that's more of a reflection on on myself. And where I am with life and just my outlook and stuff. And the context which I was going to mention earlier is just my background. You know, I'm, I'm Indian, I'm Indian heritage. I have long hair. I've been like this since I was about 16, 17, 18 years old, which wasn't the dumb thing in an Indian community. So I've experienced exclusion from that perspective. I also experienced it from the perspective of the music I like. I'm a rock musician, so throughout the years I've experienced it at various stages in terms of that.

Jay Palmer(00:24:16)- So there's the ethnicity, my likes, my music, etcetera. But what wrapped all of this up was I was a very shy person. I'm I would like to think I'm a very gentle person as well. And this is something that I've observed within the community when I've met men in the community. So when I was at story House in Chester, hanging out with yourself and Andy Harrod and a bunch of other people. One thing came to mind which was like, these guys are really like me in terms of I'm quite a gentle person. I'm not really a shouty alpha type of personality. And I think and I felt that that's something that. Which is one of the reasons why we feel excluded. Because. Sometimes some of us have lived on the fringes. We've not been the ones out front, the very outspoken people. There's been a change in how I feel over the last year or two, and I'm just more confident within myself, so I'm able to just be myself. I don't feel excluded by pretty much any community now.

Jay Palmer(00:25:35)- It does kind of like, you know, poke a little bit sometimes, but it's only for a brief moment and it's just taking stock of where I am and knowing that there is a community out there that is inclusive. We're here today. This is this is inclusion for me. You know, even if it's on a small scale, it's not as big as the the, the women's community, granted. But it's a start. And it all has to start somewhere and grow from that seed into the tree. You know, only with our effort us doing this, us talking about it, us being here and saying to the world, hey. But childless men were part of the we want to be part of the narrative. We're just regular people. We want to be your friends. We want to be kind of like interacting with you guys. I think that will help it to grow even more. And then the exclusion will feel less and less as as it grows.

Michael Hughes(00:26:35)- Thanks, Joe. We appreciate that.

Michael Hughes(00:26:37)- I'm leaving you to last, Rob, because I'd like to get your opinion on on how your research sort of reflects what the guys have been talking about. So, Mike, what would be your experience?

Speaker 7 (00:26:49)- Um.

Mike Sparks(00:26:50)- There are there are certainly many times that I feel an exclusion in society in general. And I think that and I completely agree with, with Russell on this, that it's ambiguous, it's not intended. It's it's almost like a complete ignorance of some people to the plight of, of childless men. Um, it's a complete non-

recognition and it can make me quite angry at times because so much of society is geared towards people with children. Just about every economic forecast you'll see from a Chancellor, no matter what his political persuasion is, will be geared towards the family. So much of the tax system is geared towards the family and people with children. And, you know, we were all children once, weren't we? So, you know, we acknowledge the importance of helping the young to become adults and responsible and law abiding adults, hopefully.

Mike Sparks(00:27:55)- But I find that when I get involved with groups of friends would be that at a club or in a bar or in a restaurant or meeting on school, friends, etcetera. So much of the talk is about the children and now getting to my age. They're potential grandchildren, and I can be sitting there just thinking that I've got nothing. I'm not really interested in this after just a few basic facts, um, I certainly can't contribute and I'll wander off. So I do feel exclusion, without a doubt. Um, but within this group and may I say how pleased I am and how much it's helped me to find this group is total inclusion. Um, and I think I mentioned it to you, Mike, when you very kindly came to see me last week, which was great. Um, one of the strongest things I got from the The Story House gathering in Chester last month was I went with a completely open mind because I'd never been before. I'm relatively new to the community. Um. So I didn't know what to expect.

Mike Sparks(00:29:07)- I didn't expect anything. I just went with an open mind. When I came away, I realized just how buoyant the whole atmosphere was. Like everyone else who was there. I met lots of people and it was, it was it was a real uplifting experience because there wasn't, as one might have expected, um, sadness and downbeat. It was very upbeat. And in that I feel total inclusion in this group. And Jay, you mentioned that there is so much that goes on about childless women and rightfully so, and that but this is the beginning. It's going to take some time. But this is a beginning. Maybe we maybe we'd be on the beginning. Now we're motoring through. But I'm very, very interested and committed to to be involved in making society not only in the UK but across the globe, much, much more aware of the plight of childless men. So in society I feel excluded within this group. I feel very much included and hope that we will, in the long term, achieve that objective.

Speaker 7 (00:30:25)- Thanks, Mike.

Michael Hughes(00:30:27)- Really appreciate that. And yeah, it was good to see you last week. It really was. So Rob, how does how does the responses so far reflect from the research that you've done?

Robin Hadley(00:30:39)- Well, first. Thanks, lads for sharing. It's. Really moving to hear your accounts and how you feel. And you, you fit in in a way that we all don't fit in. If you get that, yeah, definitely. There's been a lot about, um, women and childlessness and there's lots of sort of sociological reasons around that and how societies develop. Um. And really. One of the things around that is why there's no social narrative for men. Around it. The narratives around men are around about virility but successful virility, not only biological but economic. Social. So how is a man supposed to be man? And how is a man measured? I guess is the thing. How are we measured? And very broadly, you could say women are measured by their external, their internal validity, their existential internal validity through reproduction, through motherhood.

Robin Hadley(00:32:02)- And that's very strong. It social culturally depends where you are in the world, whether it's out there very direct and very structured or I think more in the Western time, it's sides, it's more over, it's hidden a bit, but it's still there's an underlying structure. And for men, we're sort of measured by what we do. And that's outside. And it's narrative then to be inside. And I think that's where the struggle is. Um, inserted. There's no narratives for us to occupy or very few. And we're making that narrative now with our stories and being out there. But some things I was writing down that now I can't read, but about being in a group for men. I think generally what do we talk about is stuff outside ourselves. It's football. It's music. What people are doing, what I'm earning to be in a group and go, actually, this is what I'm feeling inside. Well, when I was counselling, I'd soon found out not to say how are you feeling? Which is like the standard counselling question to man because you could see them struggling.

Robin Hadley(00:33:17)- Well, how am I feeling and how am I supposed to feel and that that's been put in them? To be a disconnect from very early age. So I used to say, you know what's happening inside. Rather than use the word feelings. And then they'd go, oh, well, it's this. Um, and generally if you said, well. What about this fella? Well, I'm not like that. Um, but that's great because then you can go to, well, what are you like and or usually they go, I'm like this. So it's sort of identity by difference. Whereas I think for women initially there tends to be a little bit more oh yeah, I know what you mean. And then the difference comes in later in the conversation, um, around that I'm wobbling here. But what I'm going to do is read a poem I wrote at my ma, actually, because I think it encapsulates everything the guys were saying, and it's called something missing. A conversation ended before it began, scuttling thoughts that could have should a would a Dada.

Robin Hadley(00:34:30)- The later maelstrom of the nom man. There's something missing. Holding a life wide gap. Breathing wallpaper. Am Hall an incomplete. There's something missing. First to be left behind. First we sent in. This line is incomplete. And that was from the guys I interviewed. And the key phrase there is something missing. And there was something missing inside. But there's also what we're discussing. Is something missing socially. As well. And we're. We're filling in the something missing. I hope, I think, I hope that makes sense.

Michael Hughes(00:35:14)- No, it does perfect sense. Rob. Thank you. I'm going to take us off on a different tangent a little bit. Now, we've talked about do we feel excluded? I think there's so one of the things that Russell talked about was that we need to take control of this, and we need to turn up. We as blokes need to turn up in the community and always say the community as a whole. Also, do we need a little bit of help to actually get that space, find that space from the greater childless community.

Michael Hughes(00:35:44)- So one of the things I think about is recently I was told. At in the UK by a woman in our community that she says that being around so many childless men has reinstated her faith, that there are really nice, good guys out there that really that yeah, really struck home because the flipside of that was at at Chester, we were given a question when we did our session, which started off around the language of and I won't be able to do this exactly, but around the language of, you know, men out there dicking women around, dicking women around. I think that's the way it was explained, as if to say that, sorry, what it did for me was maybe squirm in my seat because I just felt that we were we, as all men, were getting painted with that brush of all men are bastards. Now I'm going on extreme here, and I'm being provocative for a reason so I can elicit some, you know, some really good responses I would be interested to.

Michael Hughes(00:36:58)- Hear from you guys about what would it what what do you think it would have taken for you to turn up, to claim a space in the childless community as a way of inspiring other men who will be listening to this podcast and thinking, oh no, I can't do that. I can't do that. And when we look at that response that I was given where I'm, I'm really I'm waiting for childless men to turn up because they are really nice guys. You know, it's really instilled, you know, faith in that. There are good guys out there. We would like to respond to that.

Mike Sparks(00:37:32)- If I if I've understood the question. It's about how do we encourage. More childless men to claim their space and speak up. I think. I don't I do know other childless couples. I really only know of one for sure where the childlessness is not by choice. That character? Well, they're both particularly good friends of mine, but he's a very, very alpha male, and it just doesn't seem to bother him at all.

Mike Sparks(00:38:08)- That couple have gone on to do all sorts of exciting and different things in life. They really have it completely welded at the hip. So I don't think a chap like that, he better remain nameless just for the sake of of security, etcetera. But I don't think he really needs any help. He's just comfortable with it and etcetera, etcetera. But I feel that. It's important if if you feel somewhat crushed by your childlessness. And I think goes back to the answer to my first question, I think society can inadvertently make you feel like that because as you were saying, Mike, you can feel that you're not you're not. You failed that. You're not a complete bloke. Um, and it still is to a certain extent, a bit of a blokey society, particularly amongst men. So I would urge be anybody listening to this who feels that they have some, some negative experiences and

emotions about being childless, probably actually, the first thing to do is join. Join the Facebook Childless Men's group because you'll find it so supportive.

Mike Sparks(00:39:23)- There'll be there'll be plenty of people out there with similar emotions, if not identical emotions. You will certainly get support if you feel that you you'll need it and certainly from my own point of view, it actually pushed me on to get involved with pushing this forward. So I think it's important if you feel so inclined and you have the confidence to do it, to go out there and stand up and put your head up and say, yeah, I'm childless, I'm a childless bloke, not by choice. And actually, do you know what? It doesn't make me feel very good. Can I tell you about it? And if they don't want to listen. Then that's a shame. But move on and. Yeah. Stand up. Be proud about it in a way.

Michael Hughes(00:40:07)- Thanks, Mike. So what would be your response?

Jay Palmer(00:40:12)- I'll think about this for a second. I've been contemplating it for several minutes. Um. I think my response would be to say to these people or these men, the community as a large.

Jay Palmer(00:40:26)- There are people out there who care who want to hear your story. I think a lot of the time that's what stops us from engaging with people or communities for a specific reason. If we know that it is a safe space. If we know that people are going to listen, then we're more inclined to actually engage in that. So over the last few years, I've been hearing about all of you guys. From Bindi, my wife. So to come and meet you wasn't an issue for me, because I'd heard about how lovely everybody was, and I'd heard about how the community was and how they spoke about their childlessness. Yes, there's a grief element to it, but there's also an element of helping people. And that helped me to actually then say, okay, I'm going to come and see what this is all about. I grew up very, very shy, painfully shy, which which is a kind of. It's odds with what I do. You know, I'm a musician. I'm a YouTuber as well.

Jay Palmer(00:41:48)- And the thing that YouTube has taught me over the last ten years of doing it is I have to be in front of a camera, you know, speaking to people and being myself. And over that time I've become comfortable with doing it. But I do remember that initially it was scary to do. I was putting myself out there and not knowing the response I would get. That was the scariest part of it for me. Uh, if I had known back then that the response would be absolutely amazing from people. There were really good people out there, and there were people who were going to support what I do and like what I do, and. Be nice about it, then it would have made it easier. And I think that helps me with a lot of things. That's the thing that I keep in my mind now. I'll always look at it from that perspective, that there are actually people out there who do care. Sometimes it takes a little bit of time to find them. And this community for sure, you know, is very much like that.

Jay Palmer(00:42:56)- I feel, you know, I feel that, you know, if I needed to have a call with you, Michael, and talk about something which about childlessness, then I could do it. It would be very, very easy for me to do that. And that knowledge helps me a lot, I think, and I think that can help other people. And it's something that I try and do when, you know, when I was at story House and when we met at Saint Pancras as well, there are some people there. I decided to go and engage with them. I went over and said, hey, how's it going? This is who I am, and get to know them and interact with them, engage them. And then they felt comfortable. And it was interesting because, you know, made new friends as a result. And I felt that they came out their shells a little bit as well as a result of that. So for me, that's an important element.

Michael Hughes(00:43:49)- Thanks, Jody.

Michael Hughes(00:43:51)- What about you, Don?

Don Martinez(00:43:52)- Um, this is a again, I'm very complicated question, Michael. I'm hearing the missing. That was a beautiful poem, Robin, on what's missing. And then I'm hearing kind of the misandry that we sometimes face. Um. And then trying to reclaim your space. I guess I can. Let me just try to answer it from the perspective of a single man. I think that I grew up in a very patriarchal culture where men were actually



elevated, but for their for their aggression, for their willingness to be quite alpha, to use your word in the sense of not being sweet, not being tender, not being that soft male, quote unquote. So I developed this sort of exterior of trying to develop social and sexual currency through those ways. Being successful status money is how it's usually played out in my culture for men. And then that's supposed to then give you the, the currency to then have a wife and have children. And so my journey has been to actually reclaim that other part of me, that missing part of me, which is that that part of me that is quite shamed in my culture and particularly in, in dating.

Don Martinez(00:45:31)- So I'm always like, when do I, you know, I got to lead with being confident. But then I also have to be careful about not being too confident, but then I don't want to be too soft. And I find that at least in my culture, I get to speak to within my culture, since that's what I know, that that internalized misogyny, or that that kind of hatred of softness is very generalized, but not just limited to to men, but to women too. So a lot of the women in, they want that well speak to generally, in my experience. I can't be too soft. Does that make sense? Because then I'm somehow I lose sexual currency. And that, in turn, has led to, in many ways, is related to my singleness, I think, in some way. And my struggle has been to say, I'm going to be that that's who I want, that's who I am. And there is a real masculinity and strength in that way of being and take it or leave it.

Don Martinez(00:46:36)- But that's, you know, I don't want to be this, this thing that I've been prescribed to be. So that's been very costly for me. And my struggle has been to hold on to that voice even in the face of childlessness and singleness, and then, of course, grieve the fact that I have to cherish and value that part of me alone for the most part. And Bernice, you mentioned something a while back in one of our podcasts that was really powerful for me, which was that, you know, you take the hits and then you have to go back and kind of like, re consolidate yourself if you don't have a community. Right? So you take the hit and then it takes all this energy to like refine your center. And then you come back out. And that can take so much energy that you just spinning in that. And so I really relate to that, you know. But so anyways that's sort of. Doesn't quite answer your question directly, Michael. Other than to say yes, I do experience a struggle to come out, but particularly in this area of my of who I am as a man.

Michael Hughes(00:47:48)- I think you don't. I don't think you're alone. I think there'll be many men that will get some that will resonate with what you said. And it's important because being single is a very big cohort within our community. So thank you for that. Russell, what would be your response?

Russ Pata(00:48:08)- What was the question, sir?

Michael Hughes(00:48:12)- I don't remember.

Russ Pata(00:48:16)- It's been too much, really. It's been too many good comments. It's sort of hard to keep up. It was something that Robert said for me. Um, and it brought me to that place, uh, the one place where I probably feel, uh, the most excluded for me would be my workplace. Apart from the fact that I work with a predominantly younger workforce, probably 35 and under, a lot of prospective or current parents, uh, and it's a, it's a common, a common topic of conversation. And I know Michael had something that you, uh, put forward to the Diversity Council of Australia. Um, and of course, you caught them short because they went, oh, we haven't thought about this.

Russ Pata(00:49:06)- Um, and it was something that we started to put forward in the diversity of space within my workforce. And it's something we're still pushing. Um, and this is probably where my feeling of ambivalence from others comes from is we constantly there are a couple of us that constantly put it into that space. Um, on workplace or other places, which workplace is a work version of Facebook and, um. The absolute lack of response to anything there. I put on 2 or 3 of us put on posts about World Childlessness week. We put on other information and that sort of thing. Um, and maybe got 1 or 2 acknowledgments and I think that's space there. That's, that's, that's from a, a, a non-binary. Point of view. Um. And if you add to that the even lesser impact that um, Benilde has on that. Uh, it's. Yeah, it just seems to

be that there's a lack of interest from anyone who's not involved in this. Uh, it's I know we can look forward to 2030, when a larger percentage of the population are going to be asked.

Russ Pata(00:50:40)- And then marketing people are going to have to start looking at the childless community. Otherwise they're going to start losing money. Um, but that's not where we are now in 2023. And I wonder how we make that change, how we get people to take up. That message. It seems really unusual.

Michael Hughes(00:51:04)- Mm. Yeah. Thanks for us, Rob. So from your your work. Um. How was that fitted in? How these responses fitted in with your research.

Robin Hadley(00:51:17)- Mark, again, lovely responses and very deep and very moving. So thanks guys. It is difficult to say this is me particularly a thing for men because our deflector shields are put in as this is me, I'm a whatever job I do. I'm a fan of whatever. It's all outside. So to come inside is. And reveal it. Um, the woman who wrote Handmaid's Tale. Whose name I forgot said in another book, you know, women fear murder and men fear humiliation. And I think there's something around that. But that's been put in us by society.

Robin Hadley(00:52:08)- We're all born with broad stuff here, the same emotional response. So what happens that men find it difficult to talk and find it difficult to reveal what's happening inside for them. But there is more coming through. Definitely we are making a difference. And it could be that the shakers and the movers, particularly in the media, there's a generation coming through that reflect our experience and on their reflections as they journey through their careers, are realizing they're part of this group. And therefore, the situations and our stories and our experience are starting to get more exposure, I think. I think from Storey House was sold out this year for the first for the first time, it's on for next year. There's definitely more interest. I think I've noticed in 1 or 2 films that childlessness is raised by characters. So there's a groundswell coming through. And in terms of policy, like I said, in in this country, there's definitely a recognition that actually we need to include needs to be inclusive of everyone, not just those who have reproduced.

Michael Hughes(00:53:37)- Very sincere. I'd really like to hear your thoughts about what's been talked about so far.

Berenice(00:53:43)- I have so many, so much I've written down. I know I've seen Sarah scribbling notes down too. There is so much to unpack here. The first thing is just to thank you all for this. It's been absolutely wonderful to listen to and so informative. That point of view of knowing most of you for quite some time now through the work that Michael's been doing and at Chester as well, the privilege of meeting some of you. There's still so much, I think for us, I feel I've still got so much to learn from all of you. You can see my desk is a swathe of notes here. I need a moment to unpack the conversation, it's a lot to think about.

Sarah(00:54:34)- Going back to the question you asked Michael about the it's about the question, wasn't it a story house around? We were for people that weren't there.

Sarah(00:54:44)- Think the question. Correct me if I'm wrong. Michael was from a lady who asked about men being in the community, and there was an allusion to perhaps safety for women. Guys told us men in the community, and I could feel the discomfort coming off you, Michael, with that question, I really sensed there was like, oh, what do I say? And I think. I think I said something along the lines. Again, I can't remember what I said specifically, but I think I mentioned that actually there's there's work for us to do as women individually. If we've had experiences with men that have left us feeling not safe around them. And I include myself in that. I've done a lot of work around it. But I think I also mentioned the fact that actually and it kind of goes back to forgive me, Don, what Don was saying about male identity being soft and masculinity and all that stuff. My, my experience with men in this community has been that. All of the guys that I've come into contact with have been very self-aware.

Sarah(00:55:56)- Obviously we're not your stereotypical alpha male. I don't know whether we'd get alphas in this community. I don't know enough about it, if I'm honest with you. But there's a sense that actually, through having this experience of childlessness, whether coupled or not, it changes you. And I think that's

kind of how women experience it, too. So you talk about the outside of the inside. For me, my identity completely changed as a woman because I was brought up to say, right, I'm going to be a mum. And I imagine for you guys it's like, oh, you're going to earn this amount, you're going to have this job, you're going to have this many children, you're going to be this virile. And I think it impacts all of us, regardless of gender. Our identity completely shifts in terms of how we turn up and who we are. And I'm really struck by at the moment the sense of not completely knowing how to rock up. Perhaps in this community or outside it.

Sarah(00:56:58)- And that's kind of the sense I got from this conversation today. There's not a vocabulary, there's not an identity, there's not really. Thing that you can kind of grab onto. And your controversial question, Michael, was, how have I how have I contribute to that? And think my experience was that when I went googling, when I was struggling, the first thing I came across was Gateway Women. And I was like, well, that was a great start for me. It feels safe because I hadn't done my work on myself, and men for me were still dangerous, and that meant that it was safe and it made it a good place for me to start. But actually, I invite these conversations, and I love the fact that our community is is diverse so that, you know, we can all have a conversation about it. But I hope that answer the question that you you said you wanted provocatively to put out there.

Berenice(00:57:56)- I was completely head in the sand because my other half was not quite so. For him, having a child would have been the icing on the cake. In a previous unsafe relationship, it was just messy and was inappropriate. So I had a bias against the fact that I suppose I just thought it was only me. That the only women that were childless, because I hadn't clocked on to the fact that actually, of course, this impacts men. I hadn't known any men who had spoken or said grieving, or that they were childless. The interesting thing is that since my other half met Michael, which was only a couple of weeks ago. He started to get engaged with being childless and the community a little more. That is big. Because actually he wasn't grieving. So I think for me, yeah, shameful ignorance.

Michael Hughes(00:59:25)- Well, thank you both for that. I know that couldn't have been easy, but. Yeah. Look. And that's I really had no expectations about that question. I thought it would be a great quote, great question to just elicit what we've had today. Brilliant. You know, and you bring up the fact that. Look. As the custodian of 325 men stories. Now, I think it is. I know that there is a lot of grief out there. The boys, the boys in the community here know there is a lot of grief out there. My dream, I have a dream would be that this conversation actually brings us all together so we can support each other so that we can support each other in turning up. Because I do feel quite, I do feel quite emotional about those responses that those guys gave in that poll, because I just felt so sad. And listen to you, Don.

Michael Hughes(01:00:27)- But how you struggle with with your identity. You know, how are you supposed to turn up? You know, to. But but at the same time, try and achieve what you want to in life, you know? It really hits home, you know? So. Oh, Rusty's got his hand up. Thanks for saving me, buddy.

Russ Pata(01:00:49)- It's something that Sarah said, and I am. It does make me wonder, is there any intersectionality there between the acceptance of men into that, that women's space, because of the prevalence of violence towards women from men, and we give women a safe space to feel comfortable away from that? And, you know, there's as we know, intersectionality comes from so many different. We can think of it with with Don and his cultural issues and also with J. Um, all these things come in one on top of the other on top of the other. Do we need to be looking at our dialogue or our monologue, what we do as men to take responsibility for that part of what's happening and make ourselves available, I suppose, and available in a non-confrontational way.

Russ Pata(01:01:52)- And yes, the people in this conversation where we are at the moment, that's who we are, the men, this group of men that were inclined. Um, but the statistics show that as a subset of the species, we're not. And that comes back from so many other concepts which are impacting on us now, and our childlessness, which is toxic masculinity. It's the alpha male fantasy, the, you know, all these elements that come in to stop us from feeling capable of engaging with each others, um, and talking about this in that way. And. Yeah, sorry, I'm on my soapbox and I'll try and get off. Um, but but but I wonder if that is something

that's worthwhile, uh, engaging with that. Is that sort of that barrier? Of how we get more inclusion in that space by making ourselves more available. On an emotional level, I think.

Michael Hughes(01:03:05)- So I like the way you put that. Jay had his hand up. J what do you got for us?

Jay Palmer(01:03:09)- Such an interesting part of the conversation, because it reminded me of something that happened right after story House, which was a bindi, and I took a little trip.

Jay Palmer(01:03:18)- We we went up to see one of my friends up in Chester. Sorry, not in Chester and up in Lancaster. And he had realization that night. And I had a realization that night about. Just. He felt that he he lacked. Well, he had not supported me as much. He's a very good friend of mine. He's one of my closest friends, and he just kept apologizing and saying, I had no idea I should have asked you. I should have talked to you. I should have engaged with you more. I had the realization also that, well. At the. At that time when everything happened, I was I had to stay strong for myself and also for Bindi because we were in a relationship and she was going through her grief and. One of us had to kind of keep it together. I took it upon myself and kind of compartmentalize the grief. So when I spoke to him, I was like, you know what? It is, what it is, and I'm okay with it and stuff.

Jay Palmer(01:04:29)- And reflecting back on that, it was from that perspective of, well, I'd better keep it together now, because if we both fall apart, then it's it's going to be not good for the both of us. Um. And I've lost my train of thought. I've just gone down Robin's route now. No. I'll gather my thoughts again. Um, but. Sorry, what was the line of. Just remind me. What? What the line of you were.

Michael Hughes(01:05:00)- Talking about the good friend, and how you both had a realization that. Yes. Yeah. He said he should have supported you more. And you had a realization that.

Jay Palmer(01:05:12)- Yeah. I was just wondering about the general what we were discussing previously. What the question was, or which Baroness and Sarah had raised.

Michael Hughes (01:05:25)- About how we could all sort of about the threat that men can generally pose to women. And then how Russ challenged the point of how do we change that? How can we bring about change to the safe spaces as well?

Berenice(01:05:44)- It is a conversation. So don't you have to answer the question? Rabbit holes are absolutely fine. It's like being down the pub so to speak!

Jay Palmer(01:05:55)- Well, I was going to liken this to my work as a musician because. I was. I was at Music China last week, which is an enormous expo. Is music fair. I was playing for one of my endorsers, and I had to be on stage with a guitar by myself in front of up to about 50 people at a time, just with their cell phones going like this, you know? It can be extremely scary. And I remember the first time I was on stage and the first few times. It was extremely scary because you're putting yourself out there. And as human beings, we want to be in a safe space. So for us to actually put our emotions out there as well. It's very, very similar. The feeling is very, very similar.

Jay Palmer(01:06:47)- How do I actually, you know, take this first step to actually say to people, especially as everybody else has been mentioning within societal constructs, I can very much relate to Dom's journey as well, because Indian society is very similar. You know, it is. The men are supposed to be very strong, very kind of. Yeah. Go getters and you know, bring in the the money and have good jobs. You know, I wasn't always a musician. I actually I've, I always loved art. I should have actually become an artist or an architect or something. But thought process in my mind even from a young age was, no, I need to go into a profession where I have where I'll be revered. So I became a lawyer initially, and I did that for ten years. Um, and I basically put aside the artistic stuff for that time being in order to kind of try and make the same journey. So eventually, when I met Bindi. Um, I was doing music as a sideline and she said to me.

Jay Palmer(01:08:05)- Just give it a try. Just start teaching. If it doesn't work, go back to being a lawyer because I wasn't happy doing that. It was extremely scary to do that, and I think that's something that we're all going to experience, that initial stage of actually coming out and saying. You know what? This is who I really am. I am an emotional person. I cry sometimes, you know, I get really upset sometimes and things aren't great sometimes. I have shit days. And as men were not really supposed to talk about it, but we do talk about it. And if when we have really, really good and close friends who are understanding, I'm very lucky that I do. I can talk to about them. I can talk to them about it, and then they can talk to me about it as well and think we need to. Well, hopefully we can bring that to the childless community as well and help people feel comfortable, help men feel comfortable with saying. I'm here.

Jay Palmer(01:09:12)- I'm not doing too good today. You know, this is what I'm feeling. This is what's going on inside.

Don Martinez(01:09:17)- All right.

Michael Hughes(01:09:19)- I'll mute myself. And thank you. Joey and Don, you've got your hand up.

Don Martinez(01:09:26)- Uh. Thanks, Michael. I just had to follow that J. Appreciate you sharing your story. Lawyer I would never have guessed from your background. And I'd love the fact that you're not a lawyer, at least for the short term. I can relate, because I was an engineer the whole thing, and was a long struggle to become a therapist, and also just wanted to weave back, to acknowledge, Michael, that moment when you drop down into something very poignant for you and just it's a I just wanted to slow it down there because I don't want to interpret your sorrow or sadness, but I do know that it's hard for me to get there if other men don't get there. So it opened up for me also a definitely a sorrow and a sadness for my father, for the men in my life, in my community who I cannot.

Don Martinez(01:10:23)- I simply it's just simply unsafe to bring these parts to them because I will be hurt. I will be brutalized if I do. So that's just something I'm gonna have to live with. But it is a like a feeling of not belonging that I grieve all the time and then have to fight against. And then. So the vision that you're casting, Michael, of a space where we are, we belong based on who we are rather than our categories single, childless or married or with children or whatever is is one I long for. Two is what I'm trying to acknowledge. And then I just wanted to touch on what both Jay and Sarah said. So I think, Sarah, you were talking about being cracked open, that we had a previous identity. Mine was very much. Trying to be an alpha male. It was toxic. I really want to name that. I was aligned with this sort of shunning of single people in my first identity. I had several single aunts, single uncles who had no children, and I was very much a part of not talking to them about their lives and trying to become something that would make sure that I wouldn't become, quote, like them.

Don Martinez(01:11:55)- So I was part of that, excluding and shunning in my first identity as a patriarchal male, seeking status, seeking money, etcetera, etcetera. And. Um, part of that identity, because I was shutting down major parts of myself as a man. So as a man, when we when we do that and we lose connection with that, how do how then do we feel alive? Well, for me, it was possessing a woman and children. That was my bypass to to to the deeper work. If I could just get that plus the house, then I would be. The identity would be complete. And many of my. So for me, the identity that I hold on to now, today. Now that I've lost all that, is that my singleness, my childlessness, how can I put it? It's like there's not. There wasn't room for two babies in the crib. I had to rescue myself first and my own identity. And now that I have cracked that open, and I'm slowly working towards reclaiming those parts of myself that I had hated along with my community and pushed to the side.

Don Martinez(01:13:17)- To me that's the essence anyways, of like first of all, just being whole. But second of all, fathering, mothering, altering it comes from that place. And so I don't know how to describe it. So that's that's the piece that I'm holding on to that the loss was for that reason because because, you know, I could have had even if I was lucky enough to have had children, I would have been transmitting this awful thing.

Don(01:13:49)- Um. So I'll take that. I'll take that new identity.

Don Martinez(01:13:54)- That's what I'm trying to say.

Michael Hughes(01:13:57)- And thanks, Don. I'm really. I'm really pleased you turned out, because I knew. I knew we were getting something profound for me today. Thank you. Mike sparks, you had your hand up.

Mike Sparks(01:14:08)- Yeah, I did. You know, the the title of this gathering today is Why is No one talking about childless men? From everything I've heard today and my experiences, and I think you'll all agree that it is well known that it's accepted that.

Mike Sparks(01:14:30)- Being childless as a female is such a devastating thing, because there is that motherly instinct in the vast majority of ladies. Um, but from my schoolboy schoolboy biology, it takes a male and a female to create another human being. No matter what circumstance which processes you go through, whether it be IVF or whatever. And that means that the that urge to be a parent is and can be just as strong from the male as it is from the female, and therefore the pain. Suffered and experienced in the anxiety and the emotions when that doesn't happen is exactly the same too. We really need to create that space that this group is trying to do and others as well. To give, to allow men to come in to as well to express that. And I feel that very strongly. It's the same.

Michael Hughes(01:15:42)- Now. Thank you Mike. Appreciate that. And Robin, you would agree, because a lot of your research is based on the fact that men are broody.

Robin Hadley(01:15:52)- Uh, absolutely. I'm off mute.

Robin Hadley(01:15:55)- Fantastic. Um, yeah. In my MSC, I did the thing looking at levels of greediness and found a very similar, which isn't surprising, but the surprising thing is, it's not acknowledged very much anywhere, really. But if you know, if there is a species with a male and a female and either one of them wasn't interested in reproducing, then the species wouldn't survive very long. Um, and so what's the advantage around denying men get broody, want to reproduce? And why is it all around women? There's all sorts of reasons for controlling women, for the motherhood mandate. Uh, around that I. I think the interesting thing about that study was the levels of jealousy and anger and depression were higher for the men than they were for the women. The challenge men and the childish women in that study. It was only a small study, so he can't go too deep into. But it's indicative of actually that lack of narrative narrative socially for men to occupy and that they they can't express themselves or find it difficult to express themselves.

Robin Hadley(01:17:20)- And I just want to read something. There's a political scientist in America who wrote a book in 2006 called Reproductive Masculinities and Cynthia Daniels, and she puts but only through the recognition of the vulnerabilities of men can gender injustice be transformed. We must see and believe evidence of male weakness and vulnerability, who must see and recognize men's intimate connection to human reproduction. And I put on that, you know, advocate a change in attitude towards men and boys. Felicity facilitated through the acknowledgement that the biopsychosocial complexity of life that is applied to everyone is also shown to men. And men are people too, because I think it's quite often men are just categorized, almost not being. People as in feeling. Messy. Chaotic beings which think we all are. And I'm going to go to another poem. Think if that's okay with you guys.

Robin Hadley(01:18:36)- Yeah, okay. It's called No Candle and it's about the live courts and no candle to light. No cake, no nappy, smelly, no tea to keep, no hand to squeeze, no stories to read, no surprise to feign.

Robin Hadley(01:18:51)- No place to see, no shoes to clean, no sport days drama. No parties to peace please. No presents to by no means to make, no scrapes to clean, no kiss. It betters. No tears to dry. No hearts to mend. No embarrassment to give. No graduation photos snapped. No. Can you help with this? No. Now. Emptiness. No grandchild to hold. No legacy to give. No one to call. No one to catch the fall. No wishes heard. No live. Life described. Few tears shed, no candle lit.

Michael Hughes(01:19:27)- Thanks, robe. That certainly does encompass that whole life cycle of what it's like to be childless. Thank you. And so I think we should probably draw this to a close, because we're now on to nearly an hour and 40 minutes. But for me, again, I had no expectations. I wanted to ask the provocative question. And it's been really interesting to see how we've pretty much all come to the same place where we're finding comfort in us being together.

Michael Hughes(01:20:02)- We are accepting who we are. And I really, really do hope that particularly other men can identify with us and get some inspiration, some strength and some, yeah, some willingness to show up in to the childless community because as we know, people are waiting for us to, to turn up. And yeah, I really want to thank you all for today. It's been amazing. Baroness Sarah, do you have any last words before we hit stop record?

Sarah(01:20:40)- I just want to say thank you. Thank you for your candour and allowing us to listen in. Really? Because it was like a privilege to hear a conversation amongst a bunch of guys that, as you say, you don't usually show what you think you're thinking or feeling. I really chimed with the conversation around having to be strong. My husband was having to be very strong, so still, he's still a nut to crack, as it were. So thank you for sharing. Really appreciate it.

Berenice(01:21:06)- To echo Sarah, thank you. I think there's so much more that we can do together.

Berenice(01:21:11)- And I'm looking forward to being part of that story with you. And thank you for your honesty and your emotions. And thank you, Michael, for being a brilliant host. You've done brilliantly. Thank you.

Michael Hughes(01:21:20)- Thanks, Bernie. Oh thank you. Thank you for listening. And a huge thank you to our guests for their time and wisdom. We will continue this conversation in the future because, in the words of Baroness, there's a lot to unpack here. And don't forget, we welcome you to our full stop online community, where you will find companionship regardless of how you identify. And you'll find all those details at our website. The full stoppard.com. And don't forget to find us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter or sorry, ECS. We would greatly appreciate if you enjoy our content to leave us a review and writing, and this will help get the podcast out to more of our childless community and in turn, allow them to not feel so isolated. And as always, it's important for us to let you know.

Michael Hughes(01:22:16)- You are not alone. Thanks guys, tell Ticker that I'll be looking forward to that hug at Chester next year.

Berenice(01:22:29)- I will let him know. He said he was very comfortable in your presence. Thank you. I think you'd be really welcome within your community too. Thank you so much.

Michael Hughes(01:22:37)- Thanks again everyone.