

GOOD GIRLS TALK ABOUT SEX

Transcript – Michelle, Episode 112

[MUSIC]

LEAH: Welcome to Good Girls Talk About Sex. I am sex and intimacy coach, Leah Carey, and this is a place to share conversations with all sorts of women about their experience of sexuality. These are unfiltered conversations between adult women talking about sex. If anything about the previous sentence offends you, turn back now! And if you're looking for a trigger warning, you're not going to get it from me. I believe that you are stronger than the trauma you have experienced. I have faith in your ability to deal with things that upset you. Sound good? Let's start the show!

[MUSIC]

LEAH: Hey, friends. Today, we're trying something we haven't done before. For the very first time, I've invited back a previous guest to find out what has happened since our initial interview two years ago. If you'd like to go back and listen to that initial interview before diving into this one, go to the November 14, 2019 episode *A throbbing in my nether regions with Michelle*. I've put a link to it in the Show Notes. And then, come back here to listen to Michelle's update.

For those of you who just want to dive in, here's where we left Michelle two years ago. She was in a monogamous, mostly sexless marriage, with her wife of 17 years. She identified strongly as a lesbian and it was a key part of how she perceived herself. But all that began to crumble when she met a man who excited her in a way she hadn't experienced in a long time. When we recorded that conversation two years ago, she had begun talking with her wife about how to explore her potential bisexual interests.

Now, I'm not going to give you the standard intro to Michelle with all her biographical details because she says it so well herself at the beginning of this conversation. All I'll tell you is that she is a 44-year-old black cisgender woman. If you like this type of, "Where are they now?" interview, let me know who you'd like to catch up with from previous episodes and I'll do my best to make it happen. And now, for the second time, I'm so pleased to introduce Michelle!

Michelle, I am so excited to have you back. As you probably know, I almost never do repeat guests. However, when we did your first interview two years ago, you're at this moment of potential transformation and I had said to you at that time we should catch up again in a year. And then, the pandemic hit.

It's been more than a year, but I have to tell you that I was actually talking with a group of other podcasters maybe a month or two ago and everybody was asking each other about favorite episodes. And when they asked me, yours was the episode that they mentioned. And I was telling them you had identified as a lesbian for most of your life. And then, all of a sudden, you're in this moment where maybe you were interested in a guy and this was mind-blowing

for you in trying to figure out who you were and what you wanted. And they were like, "Have you done the follow up with her yet? Because we want to hear it."

[LAUGHTER]

MICHELLE: That's awesome.

LEAH: And so, even though you and I had been periodically in touch, we've never actually sat down to do the interview, so finally, here we are. Welcome back.

[LAUGHTER]

MICHELLE: Thank you. It's good to be back. Thank you.

LEAH: Yes. And I think having read between the lines of a couple of your messages, I think I have some idea of where this might be going, but honestly, I don't know really anything. So, let's go back to that moment where we last spoke. You were exploring the idea of what it might be to get involved with a man for the first time in a very long time. Start there and take us to today.

[LAUGHTER]

MICHELLE: It's funny because I had just recently listened to that previous episode, just to remember what the hell it was I said.

[LAUGHTER]

MICHELLE: I'm such a goofball, but I just remember being in that place of struggling with identity and not knowing which way I was going or what I was anymore and all that. And I'm happy to report I am very settled in my identity at this point. I am able to what I feel is a very thorough description of my identity and it often confuses people, so I just say I'm queer.

LEAH: That's fair.

[LAUGHTER]

MICHELLE: It's the simplest thing, but the full description that I give people and I'm always happy to answer questions about it is that I am a homoromantic bisexual sadomasochistic dominant-leaning switch.

LEAH: Wow. I love that. I love how clear that is and that there are some really important delineations in there.

MICHELLE: Yes, indeed. And it's been almost the entirety of these two years since we talked that I've been exploring and reading and interacting and things that have helped shine the light on that and give clarity to it and also make me feel extremely at peace and very certain, recognizing that things are fluid and they change and that's okay.

And that wasn't a place where I was at before that it was okay for things to change. It's funny. I think about this episode in *Sex and the City* back in the day and I've watched old programs and just hearing how transphobic they are and homophobic and queerphobic and all that in their

comedy and things that they said. Because back in the 90s or so, that would be considered funny and we know better now.

When I think of the episode of Sex and the City where they were out at lunch and they were talking about Ricky Martin and that he had just come out as bisexual. And they were like, "Isn't that a layover to gay town?" or it was some joke like that. And it's just always this idea and I was raised up on it that bisexuality wasn't a thing. You were one or you were the other. And if you were in the middle, you were confused. You just hadn't made your mind up or you were selfish.

LEAH: Selfish, yes.

[LAUGHTER]

MICHELLE: Yeah, all that kind of stuff and just how damaging that is and how much we internalize that. And now, I just recognize that that is a part of my identity.

LEAH: Yeah. So, let's start from the beginning of your self-identification. Can you talk a little bit about what being homoromantic and bisexual means to you?

MICHELLE: It's funny because I think about how I talk about this idea of getting physical with men and maybe having an attraction to them, but not having an emotional connection to them and just being like, "Hey, yeah. Let's get on the bed. Strip, let's do this. All right. Holla!"

[LAUGHTER]

MICHELLE: "I'll just see you later. Hit me up later when you want to do this thing." But my emotional attachment is going to be with women. And that's what confused me because I was like that's what's leading to me to feel like a confused lesbian. Because emotionally, I still love women. I still only love women. I still only think about building a life with women. I don't think about that with men at all.

And so, to be homoromantic and bisexual means I'm capable of feeling this sexual attraction to both and to not be embarrassed or ashamed by that and be fooled into thinking it's not there just because I don't want it. It's inconvenient for me. It's that attraction is there, but homoromantic means that I am going to pretty much reserve my emotional bonds to women that I engage with and not so much the men.

LEAH: So, when we last spoke, there was a lot of friction for you around your sexual relationship with your wife. Where does that lay now?

MICHELLE: I still absolutely love my wife, but this discovery process has been extremely rough on us. We got back to couple's counselling and things because one of the things in the previous episode was, I had had this extreme sexual attraction to a man that I had wished that I could have for her.

And that's one thing to explain. It's difficult to say, "Hey, I have this attraction to this other person." And it's difficult because it's a guy. It's even more difficult when you have that for another woman because it's almost like a reverse one penis policy kind of thing like you can

engage with this other person so long as they're the opposite sex of me. They can't be the same sex as me. And then, if they are, then it's a problem.

And so, in my discovery of the other parts of my identity, the kink-related parts, that has raised other issues to the point we got into just really rough couple's therapy and we were just trying to figure out if we were going to stay married or not. At this point, we've been together 19 years and it's hard. You build this whole life together and then you think, "What the hell?"

And a friend of mine was telling me women initiate divorce at such a high rate when they're in their 40s and it's just because they have all these realizations and what they're going to deal with and what they're not going to deal with anymore. And then, the 40s come and then they're like, "I'm out to find actual happiness."

In this quest for me to find my identity and find happiness and all of that, that's been one of my struggles is feeling like I've upended what we thought was stability and happiness in our marriage that was really shielding the sexual difficulty part. And so, we were just like, "Are we going to stay together or are we going to get divorced?"

And part of our communication around that was just my wife being like, "You know what? I am not leaving. Whatever you're going through or whatever, we're going to have to figure out because I'm not leaving you. I'm not leaving this marriage." And I'm like, "Thank you because I don't want you to, but there is this part of me that exists and I can't live in that denial anymore because I denied for way too long." So, that's where we are right now.

LEAH: So, that begs the question of whether you've opened your relationship sexually and what your sexual relationship is, if any, with your wife at this point?

MICHELLE: It's non-existent at this point in terms of with my wife. We have opened our relationship over several difficult conversations because around a year or so ago, I began digging into BDSM. And it started off just this really, really exciting thing that I was just interested in. And I went to this demonstration thing that happened here in my town and the woman who was leading it is a professional dominant. And she was doing this giggly fun thing where she was like, "Hey, everybody. Do you want to get spanked? Come up here and I'll give you a spanking" or whatever with her flogger. So, everybody runs up there. I'm like, "Hell, yeah!"

[LAUGHTER]

MICHELLE: So, I run up there to the table and I lean over the table with everybody else, just there to have a good time. So, she's whipping up onto two, three women before me and she's whipping up on them. And I'm like, "Oh, shoot. I'm wearing these jeans." And I'm like, "We're all in here doing this thing. Let me pull my pants down, so I can really feel the flogger." So, she hits me and I don't know. It seemed like there was something. Really, I don't know if she felt the energy from me or she saw something different in me or whatever, but when I first walked in, she walked straight to me and gave me a hug. And I was like, "That's interesting."

[LAUGHTER]

MICHELLE: So, I get up there and when she gets to me, she hits me what I felt was harder than everybody else. And I was like, "Oh, goodness." And she starts wailing on me or whatever, but then she mixed it with this sensual kind of touch in the middle and it was doing this thing. I didn't know what was happening, but what was happening was I was being driven into subspace and didn't know that.

LEAH: So, let's just pause here for a second. What did that feel like for you? What does subspace feel like for you?

MICHELLE: I felt like I was floating outside of my body out in space, in the darkness of space where all I could do was feel, but not feel where or see anything. Not be aware of anything really that was going on, just sensations. And that combined with at one point, she grabbed my face and yanked it to the side and it just fit into everything.

[LAUGHTER]

MICHELLE: And all she did was whisper, "Are you okay?" And I was like, "Yeah, I'm good." But I realized afterwards that I probably should have asked her to stop because I was going into subspace and it's hard to come back from that, but I recognize that, at that point, I wanted anything to get her to keep going. I would have said, "Do anything you want. I would do anything." And so, it was such an amazing feeling. She just kept wailing on me and mixing it with this touch and just it fucked my mind up.

LEAH: Yeah. Was there any negotiation between the two of you before she started?

MICHELLE: No because it was just meant to be a giggly, "Everybody, run up there and get spanked." And up until we got to me, that's exactly what it was. For everybody else, it was just like wham, wham, wham and pull your pants up or whatever and then go back and sit down.

And when it got to me and I had a completely different reaction than everybody else. And then, she went on to the rest of the women and I recognize that I was shaking when I was trying to pull my pants back up. And I was like I don't know if I'm going to be able to walk back to my seat, but I didn't want to pass out and make anybody freak out. And so, I was like, "Get it together. Get it together." Before that, I had gotten to play with some subs and hit them with floggers and all that thing and I was like, "Great, I can really do this."

[LAUGHTER]

MICHELLE: And the whole mood had changed. And I was like yes, whole setting changed. It really fit into this thing that I had. And so, I was like, "Okay, cool. I can be a dom. Cool." And then, it was like that and I was like, "Let me just feel what this feels like to be a sub for a minute. Get a spanking." And it felt completely different. The impact on me and my body and my mind was completely different.

So, I managed to struggle back to my seat and I was shaking. And I didn't stop shaking. She just went on spanking everybody. Everybody went on fine. Nobody had the reaction I did. And so, afterwards I flagged her down because she was just going around talking to people and stuff. I flagged her down and she sat on my lap really flirtatiously.

[LAUGHTER]

MICHELLE: I remember being aroused like, "Oh my gosh, she's got the softest thighs I've ever felt in my fucking life. Why are you doing this?" So, she's like rubbing on my neck and everything like just being really flirtatious and I just grabbed her hands to stop them, "I can't focus when you do that."

[LAUGHTER]

MICHELLE: "I can't stop shaking. What's happening?" And she was like, "Okay. Let me get you some water. You have to hear my voice and listen to me when I say you are here. The moment is done. You are here. You are okay." And it was like she was just talking to me and she got me a snack and stuff like that and it helped me to just sit there and calming down because I wouldn't have been able to drive home at that point from the event.

LEAH: So, for people who are not familiar with BDSM scenes and you may talk about this more later, but I want to just flag that that is what we mean when we talk about aftercare is helping the sub come back into their body, helping them come back into this moment and to feel safe and present and grounded.

MICHELLE: Yeah. And I was terrified because what I realized when I went to sit back in my seat was that I had no idea who was there with me anymore. I was in a room full of people. I had no idea who was there anymore, how many people were there, what they looked like, what they were wearing, anything, didn't know what the room would look like anymore. It was like I was totally out of my mind like didn't know where I was. I was totally confused and was not anticipating that that was going to happen, and by all attempts, it didn't happen to anybody else. And I think that it may be just fed this desire I had had for a really long time and didn't realize that I had it.

LEAH: So, when you say that that's a desire you'd had for a long time, do you know what that desire was?

MICHELLE: I felt like as dominant as a person as I am in my everyday life that I wanted to be dominated. It had been extremely stressful with my job I had at the time, just running projects and things like that can be really stressful to be the one in charge and everything. And I needed to have that stress taken from me. I needed to be relieved of responsibility and just to be dominated in that way had been a desire that I had actually for years and then to actually come to feel an element of that really just took off like a rocket for me. And so, that was what told me, "So, you can be a sub."

[LAUGHTER]

MICHELLE: So, it was like at that one thing, I got to test out being a domme and being a sub. And I was like I like both and they both feed me in completely different ways.

LEAH: Yeah. So, how does being a domme feed you?

MICHELLE: It's interesting because that workshop was in January, February of last year, and after that point, I got to talking to women and everything and ended up getting into a dynamic,

not kind of, it is a dynamic where I'm her domme, she's my sub, but it's bedroom stuff only. It's not 24/7. It's not TPE.

But I have learned such an incredible amount about myself just from those interactions and it feeds a natural caregiver that I have in me. But I have an interest in receiving and causing pain and never really had thought much about that or even what that meant or what it said about me and did it say anything about me or anything like that. But being able to be a dominant is an incredible power rush, but it's also got this thing where I know I am helping to fulfill the fantasies of someone who wants that from me. So, it's also being like a service to them. You know what I mean? Like offering a service to them.

LEAH: Yeah. In the cultural conversation around BDSM as it is currently happening, all right, quick rant. 50 Shades of Gray was great in bringing this conversation into the mainstream, but fuck.

[LAUGHTER]

LEAH: That was the worst kind of demonstration of what a dynamic should look like. That was fucking abusive because, in that dynamic, he said, "We're going to do what I want to do. Fuck what you want to do and if you ever need to safe word, I'm out. We're done." That is some fucking bullshit. Because like you said, the domme is there to serve the needs and desires of the sub.

[MUSIC]

LEAH: Are you aching to explore new vistas of your sexuality? Do you hear me talk about concepts on this show and think, "It makes sense, but I need help applying it to my particular situation?" That's where personalized sex and intimacy coaching comes in.

When you work with me, I promise to help you feel safe exploring your sexuality. Together, we'll look at your needs and desires without judgment and help you figure out how to fulfill them. There is no single answer that's right for everyone, so I'm going to help you discover what's right for you and we'll go at your pace. That's the pace that respects your emotional needs, your boundaries, and your nervous system. Because going too fast can send you into shutdown while going too slow can be infuriating and exhausting. The goal is to find what's right for you.

I work with clients who are motivated to explore many different areas of sexuality including things like expressing your sexual desires to current or future partners, exploring if you might be queer, challenging body image insecurity in sexual relationships, dipping your toes into BDSM, exploring consensual non-monogamy, learning to date after a long time out of the dating pool, exploring your sexuality for later in life virgins, and so much more. I want you to have a deeply fulfilling intimate life and together, we can help you get there. For more information and to schedule your discovery call, visit www.leahcarey.com/coaching. That's www.leahcarey.com/coaching.

[MUSIC]

[24:40]

MICHELLE: There's so many people out there masquerading as dominant and it's all about, "Serve me and what I want sexually." And I'm just like that just feels gross. And that was one of the other things about 50 Shades of Gray is just how predatory it was. You know what I mean? He was towards her.

The one thing that I really enjoyed because I watched it after I had already started talking to people and going to munches and things like that, reading and stuff like that, but one of the things I will say that I enjoyed was the negotiations with the contract screening. You know what I mean? She was acting goofy and they played her character up all immature and everything like that, but I did appreciate the discussion of the contract, "Okay. I'm not with that. Let's cross that out, etc." Because I feel like that's something that a lot of uninformed dominants fail to talk about or do and a lot of uninformed subs they don't research enough about that kind of thing. So, I felt like they did that right, but generally the movie was trash. God, it's awful.

[LAUGHTER]

MICHELLE: I couldn't watch any of the other parts. I was like, "I'm done."

[LAUGHTER]

LEAH: I haven't even watched the movies. I've skimmed through the books because that was as much as I could do. It was so awful, but yeah. So, god, I have so many questions.

[LAUGHTER]

LEAH: Okay. So, you've mentioned that you have an ongoing dynamic where you're a domme with a sub. Do you have any dynamics where you are a sub to someone else's domme?

MICHELLE: This is the interesting thing because my sub is also a switch. And so, what she gets from me being a domme is because she has to be so dominant in her own life and it allows her a place to feel safe and be free and let loose. And after hearing, I have a friend who had such an interest in BDSM and unfortunately, the first person she engaged with was her girlfriend, her still current girlfriend, who only had watched 50 Shades of Gray and took that to mean she could be a dominant, but was extremely abusive and got upset with her for using a safe word and touched her in a way she had already said she did not want to be touched, it was awful.

And so, just knowing that these things exist, I am really glad, not to say that I'm perfect because I'm new as a domme, but I also respect life and boundaries and I think that's very important. And so, that helps me to be a good dom. And so, my sub has often said how fortunate she feels that I was the one that she ran into for her first experience with that. But she has an interest in playing being a domme, but she more loves being a sub. But because she knows that I have that desire to be submissive, at some point, I let her practice, but it's hard because I'm her dominant. So, at any point in time, I'll just arrest control back and she's just like, "Damn it."

[LAUGHTER]

LEAH: Do you ever play with a dynamic where, "I'm your domme, so I'm going to order you to domme me?" Is that the dynamic?

MICHELLE: It doesn't start out that way. It morphs into that. But where I find she is the most successful in dominating me is when it's just sexual activity without the BDSM component. Because it's hard for me as your dominant to turn around and view you as my dominant or my top every time in that way. And if I see a weakness, I'm going to jump in there.

[LAUGHTER]

MICHELLE: But when we're just together sexually, that is where I find that my desire to be dominated comes out most without the official, "I'm going to give you orders, etc." kind of domme speak. It's just let me hold your body in this way and touch you in this way and my desire to be topped in that way really comes out then. So, she gets to explore in a variety of different ways.

LEAH: So, we've been using this term BDSM fairly loosely, given that those four letters encompass a huge amount of activity. So, what are the activities that you participate in that you particularly enjoy?

MICHELLE: Impact play. Bondage and impact play. In a short amount of time, I've gathered quite a few toys.

[LAUGHTER]

MICHELLE: Oh gosh, my favorite is vampire gloves. Man, those are amazing.

[LAUGHTER]

MICHELLE: And it was funny because I got a pair for my sub that only gets used on her. The pair that I have only gets used on me. Before I had really dived into all of this whole world and stuff, my wife and I were looking at some things and we went to a store and everything and I was like, "I heard about vampire gloves. I want to get them." Went to this leather shop, got some. She took the gloves out. They let her try them on, so she could see if they fit. She got these freaking monkey fingers that are super, duper long.

[LAUGHTER]

MICHELLE: And so, she wanted to make sure that the medium gloves fit her. So, she put one on and then she grabbed my wrist. And when she grabbed my wrist, I was just like, "Oh, god." And I just fell on my knees. She turns to the guy. She's like, "Let's take these."

[LAUGHTER]

MICHELLE: But it was just like I had never felt a sensation like that before and those have quickly become some of my favorites. But anything about mixing pleasure and pain, everything, and edging and forced orgasms and things, love that shit. Love it.

LEAH: We're going to need to do a glossary for this particular episode.

[LAUGHTER]

LEAH: Hey, friends. Just a quick break in here to tell you that there are links in the resources section of the show notes if you're interested in learning more about vampire gloves, flogging, edging, and forced orgasms. Also, so I don't have to interrupt the conversation again in a little bit, you'll hear Michelle refer to a doctor talking about relationship dynamics. That person is Esther Perel and you'll find a link to her work in the resources as well. Okay, back to Michelle.

MICHELLE: What's wild to me is when I went back and listened to that previous episode where I had just said I am almost puritanical about sex to compare that to now how I feel about it and how I've engaged with it and what I've found that I want and need and everything like that, it's night and day.

And this is the area where it gets tough for me and my wife because my whole sexual life, I felt as if two Michelles existed and there's never been a way to marry them. And there was this one Michelle that existed that was not interested really in sex at all, was interested in the experience of it like, "Yeah, let's do this. Let's whatever" and finding the interesting things about it, but sexual feelings of it wasn't really interesting.

And then, there was the other Michelle that like if on a dance floor, I felt like the center of attention, the sexiest person in the room, just exuding sex and calling all people to me and this sexual person. And then, when I was having sex and it felt really good, I was insatiable. There was never enough to the point where my wife was like, "Nobody can go as long as you can. I can't keep going as long as you can," which made me feel like there was something wrong with me. I was never going to get what I fully needed from sex. And so, it was like this disconnect of how can this person exist and also this person exist at the same time?

And so, what I found when my wife and I were first exploring was we tried when it seemed like kink was my thing, we tried to incorporate that. I knew that I was dominant leaning. And what my wife would do because it takes a lot to get into that headspace as a dominant, it takes a lot to get into that headspace, my wife would keep wanting to switch it and it would mess up my concentration. And that frustrated me because her being dominated is not what she wants. So, there was a disconnect.

And what I found was that I had no interest really in regular sex, in what they call vanilla sex. I didn't have an interest in that. My interest solely was in sex with a BDSM or kink element to it. And if it didn't have that, I wasn't really interested, which helped me to figure out why my whole life, I never really was interested in sex because BDSM and kink was totally underground. Only weirdos do that kind of thing. People walk around in leather and they went to these clubs. You know what I mean? And so, normal good society people didn't engage in this kind of thing. And so, there was no way for me to really learn about it and stuff and all of that and it was really discouraged. And my wife and I have had that conversation where it's just like she's not interested in BDSM and kink sex.

LEAH: I don't want to go too far in her story because that's hers to tell. But just in terms of your relationship, is she getting her sexual needs met by other people as well?

MICHELLE: She is. And we have that conversation. We've had a lot of conversation. It's been extremely difficult, but if I can't get interested in sex without the element, but she's not

interested in that element. We actually gotten to a tug of war kind of debate/argument because she's like, "I can't introduce that into my sex until we're actually having sex." And I'm like, "But I can't get sexually into sex and start sex without that." So, it's like a chicken and egg struggle and we never were able to figure that out. And so, it was just a thing and she's been with a couple of different people.

The issue with her is just that the amount of time and attachment that I have with my sub is not something she's comfortable with because her thing is, "I understand that this person feeds you in a way that I am not interested in feeding you and I want you to have that. But if another person is going to get your sex, the one thing I demand is that I be the one to have your love. And so, if you have a person who's getting both, what do I have?"

And my thing is, "There is no competition here. This person does not want to take your place. I love you with my whole everything. This area, we have never connected on, but that doesn't mean I want to replace you, I want you to leave, anything like that. I want you to get what you need, but you can't ask me to dump off this perfect partner for me for kink because I've heard the horror stories and things like that. We are perfectly suited for each other for what we do and just hearing how difficult it is for people to find a good partner that they can then trust and let themselves to be vulnerable with and who will trust them and things like that. I have that. And you want me to get rid of her because you are uncomfortable with the fact that I also care about her? I have been very clear. I am not in love with my sub. I love her, but I am not in love with her."

LEAH: So, it sounds to me like there's a distinction for you between being romantic versus being attached. You are attached to your sub without being romantic with her.

MICHELLE: Yes.

LEAH: And I think that's a really important distinction that not everyone will be able to make and not everyone will understand, but there are some people who will think, "Oh my god. Thank you for delineating that for me because I get it."

MICHELLE: We are friends and I love her to death and everything like that, but I'm always clear with her about where I am romantically, emotionally speaking. There's only so much I can give. I know my bandwidth without trying to stretch myself super thin to try and give too much and still it's been a struggle just between the two of them in trying to be everything to both of them.

But it's a hard conversation to have with my wife where she's just like, "I demand that you cut this person off." But at this point, I've already engaged with this person so much. What she gives me is so amazing to me. It feels nothing else I've ever experienced and you want me to cut that off because you are angry, insecure? I don't know what, but I'm telling you I'm not going anywhere. I haven't changed the way I treat you. I haven't changed the way I love you or anything like that. That's not fair to me. And just to have these conversations about what's fair and what's not fair to each other has been a struggle.

LEAH: Yeah. And it's got to be really scary to have been in this love relationship with someone for such a long time. You're coming up on two decades together. And then, it's like suddenly the script has changed. And even if she wasn't completely satisfied with the old script because the two of you weren't having sex that she wanted, to have that script completely changed, that's scary.

MICHELLE: It is. It is and I try to always be mindful of that.

[MUSIC]

LEAH: Are you ready for easy access to birth control? Me too! That's why I'm so excited about Planned Parenthood Direct, Planned Parenthood's app. You can use the app to get birth control prescribed and mailed right to your home or sent to your pharmacy for pick up. You can also communicate directly with licensed Planned Parenthood doctors and nurses and learn about different types of birth control to figure out which one is right for you because we're all different. Insurance isn't required and birth control starts at only \$20 a pack. In some states, you can even get UTI treatment and emergency contraception through the app.

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[MUSIC]

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[MUSIC]

MICHELLE: There was a point when we first started, me and my sub, where my wife was like, "Okay. I'm cool with this because this is casual kind of thing. I'm cool with this." And there was no grief. There were no difficult conversations. There were no arguments or anything like that and it felt for the very first time in my life like these two separate parts of Michelle came together as one and I got to exist as one full complete being with all my interests, all of the same person, body, being, everything.

And my wife and I started having way more sex. So, I would be just turned on. I was like, "Hey, let's do this." But then, it became an issue of, "You only want to have sex with me because

you're turned on by her." And I was just like, "Oh my god. We're having such great sex now. Can't we just keep having sex?" But then, it became like, "You spend too much time interacting with your sub and I'm not comfortable with that." And then, it became all this issue and everything like that. That one brief point where I felt one, where these both sides came together, began to fracture again. And then, it was like now, I'm back being two different versions of myself, depending on what part of my life I'm living and that's been very difficult.

LEAH: Yeah. So, normally this question would be five years, but good lord, you've moved so much in two years.

[LAUGHTER]

LEAH: So, if you were to look a year or two into the future, where do you imagine yourself? Where do you imagine your life structure looking like?

MICHELLE: It's funny because it's like where do I imagine it and where do I wish it were and those are two completely different things. What I would love because, for a time, I was trying to figure out if I was poly, if I was capable of being polyamorous. And maybe I could, but like I said, I know my bandwidth and what I can give and really struggling with finding time for myself with as much time that I try to give to these two women in my life and trying to make everybody feel like they've gotten enough and often, my time for myself ends up getting sacrificed.

But I've thought about this and what I wish it could be is that I'd be in a triad or something with my wife and my sub because their sex drives are really similar. And my sex drive is driven by kink. I remember when I was talking to you in the other episode that was like I had never felt sexual attraction before. And I was just like, "Oh my god. This feeling and what happens if you get to have sex and you have that feeling accompanied with it? And is it addicting?" And I have found that it's quite addicting.

[LAUGHTER]

MICHELLE: Now that I've gotten the chance to experience it, I'll be sitting there and just my mind will start thinking about it and I'm just shaking. It's like I have this need to engage in it. It's insane and I've never felt anything like that and I have that with my sub. At the same time, it's just like if we think about being in a relationship, that would probably be the most toxic thing ever. It just would not work.

[LAUGHTER]

MICHELLE: But you just realize the reality of situation is like that a relationship would never work, but as long as you don't need 100% attention from me or 50% attention from me even, they could take care of each other sexually. She and I could take care of each other BDSM and kink-wise. And everybody could get what they want. And I'm like, "Oh my god. We can all be together. That'd be amazing."

[LAUGHTER]

MICHELLE: And then, I want my alone time and I just want to go watch basketball or something, y'all can go hang out.

[LAUGHTER]

MICHELLE: It's wild and I just think it can be so hard to just be two people in a relationship. And that's where I'd love to be, but where it probably will be in two years is my sub bristles at the confines of what she has to stay in in our dynamic. And at some point, I'm sure she'll get frustrated by it and want to go on and find her own thing. And I tell her I'm fine with it. You have to find your happiness. I'd love it if we could still be engaging.

And my wife and I will still be together, I'm sure. Neither one of us wants this to end. We're just struggling on trying to figure out how to make this work because, and this is where the animosity comes in for her, she loves me to death. I know she does. I love her to death, but she's so angry with me because when she cheated on me all those years ago, I told her, "You have to cut that person off, period." They were really good friends and then they chose to go that route. And I was like, "You have to cut that person off." And she did to the detriment of both of them mentally and emotionally.

And I understand that differently now. And if I had my level of understanding now back then, I would have handled that a lot differently. And so, now she's looking at this situation with me and my sub and she's like, "I'm not comfortable with it. I need you to cut them off" and I am not doing it. So, there's this animosity where she's like, "When you asked, I did it. And now, I'm asking and you are not."

That's a problem and I know she's been so angry with me like, "You're so selfish and you're so this and you're that." And my thing is, "Do you know how long it took me to get here to get this place of understanding and finally getting to feel the things that everybody else gets to feel and it's amazing and finding clarity and all of that? And you want me to cut it off when it's not a threat to you?" That is not fair to me." And it's been a lot of difficult conversations. So, in two years, I'd like to think we'll still be here together, maybe finding a better way to communicate with each other about this. Maybe more openness, more levity, but I honestly don't know.

LEAH: Yeah. I know that this is not the solution to any of that, but I am curious if you have invited her to get back in touch with that person and bring them back into her life?

MICHELLE: I did, yup.

LEAH: And has she done that? Okay, good.

MICHELLE: Yeah, she did. And I told her, it was one of our frank conversations, where I was just like, I asked her, I said, "Are you in love with her?" And she said, "I don't know." And I said, "Okay." And I was just like, "However you feel, I don't feel threatened. If you want to leave, then you want to leave. Hopefully, you want to stay with me because of what I offer you and our life together and all of that."

I'm not the jealous type. I never have been. My issue with her back then was that she did it behind my back. You know what I mean? Not so much that she did, I wish she hadn't and I wish we could have talked more and come to an agreement, but I've never really been a jealous person. And so, I was just like, "If you think that that would help you to get back in contact with her, go ahead and do that." And there's some looking at it like, "You just want me to do that, so

you can justify doing what you're doing and I can't do anything about if you feel that way." She did end up getting back in touch with her and it's like how I said with my sub, a relationship would never work because we'd just be toxic.

[LAUGHTER]

MICHELLE: It's the same thing with them. Y'all just need to be friends and fuck every so often. But relationships and stuff, it gets difficult. But they did get back in contact.

LEAH: I'm glad that you are having the conversations you're having even though they're difficult.

MICHELLE: My wife is frustrated because she feels like there's things I'm feeling that I'm not telling her. There's things I'm doing and I'm not telling her and she just wants me to be open and honest. Because when we first started having these missteps and disagreements, her thing was, "Whatever you're doing, I just want to be informed. I want to go along with you and try."

And that's one of the things that's come out in couple's therapy is we spent so long in our relationship with a message being that the sex issue was mine to resolve. It was my problem. It was my issue. I was a source of it. She always wanted to have sex. I never wanted to have sex. So, it was my issue to fix. It's my fault. Something was wrong with me, me, me, me, mine, mine, mine.

So, then, my thing became if BDSM was a solution, it's my solution. I don't need to bring you along because this is all being done in an effort for me to fix what is wrong with me. And this is all for me to find what I really want and what's going on with me. And for so long, the message being that it was my issue to fix. Then if I find this fix, then it is mine as well. So, it's hard to change that mindset to now bring you in and give you all the details and keep you informed about this stuff that I'm doing because, like I said, I'm into sadomasochism, receiving and getting pain, which I love it.

And my wife, when I'm talking to her about maybe doing it with me, she's like, "Who wants to do it? Nobody wants to." It's just this really judgmental way of speaking about it and it's like that's another way of othering me and my desires to be like, "Who in the right mind wants to do that kind?" I do. And there's other people who do. So, there's all this messaging around it that doesn't gel well with me suddenly being open and energetic to talk to you and bring you into this. You know what I mean? And so, in a lot of ways, she feels like this became my thing that I had shut her out of and that's a hard thing to figure out and resolve.

LEAH: Yeah. So, there's one more aspect that I want to make sure we touch on, which is the bisexual piece. Are you or have you engaged with people of other genders?

MICHELLE: I have not, no. And I haven't felt the need to or the desire. I remember I was in a restaurant. I was picking up some food or whatever, and just really attractive guy came up to me.

[LAUGHTER]

MICHELLE: He came up and he starts talking to me and he's like, "Hey, I dig your body art and stuff like that." And I was like, "Thank you." And I was sitting there like, "You don't have to do much. I will let you in my pants."

[LAUGHTER]

MICHELLE: I was just like, "Yeah, let's talk" kind of thing. But he just left it at, "I like your body art" and we chatted it up a little bit. And then, he went on his way. And I was like, "Damn it."

[LAUGHTER]

MICHELLE: But he went on his way, but that hasn't been a lot honestly in terms of temptation or desire or anything like that. And then, the pandemic came and I wasn't really going out to restaurants or anything anyway or going to social settings anyway. And then I ended up meeting my sub and engaging with her and that took a lot of my time and my energy and in a lot of ways, it feeds me in a way that I don't feel a need to, but I still refer to myself as bisexual because I don't want to shut that part off.

LEAH: Yeah. And I think it's so important to recognize that we can have attractions that we don't necessarily act on. We can be bisexual and still only engage with one gender or a portion of the gender spectrum. That does not negate your bisexuality, my bisexuality.

MICHELLE: Exactly. I'm like I know that at any point in time, that desire can spring up and pop up and it's just I'm open to it. You know what I mean? But actually acting on it, there hasn't been a desire or a need to at this point.

[MUSIC]

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[MUSIC]

MICHELLE: Having sex with my wife and just be able to go on for hours like it's the most insane thing for somebody who never really liked sex. To be able to just keep going and my wife was just like, "No one can go as long as you." And then, I met my sub and she can. Our most recent time together we had this one particular day, we spent eight hours together or something like that and the whole time, we were fucking. And it was just insane, mixing of all these different elements and stuff and desire and everything. And we talked about it afterwards and it was the first time that I had ever a time where I blacked out during sex. I wasn't passed out, but I didn't remember things.

And so, we'd be talking and she would say something and I was like, "What? When did we do that?" And then, we'd talk a little bit more and I'd say something and she was like, "When did we do that?" And it's like being swept up in this vortex of primal sexual energy and it's like being on autopilot almost where you're not even really thinking. All you're doing is feeling and progressing, doing things and it's just this amazing level of sex and intimacy that I have never had before in my life. And it inspires me to want to open myself up more intimately. I generally avoid intimacy.

[LAUGHTER]

MICHELLE: Vulnerability, all that stuff, ugh, hate vulnerability. But it's opened me up to being that way in ways that I never really thought about being and it, in this realm and only this sexual realm, makes me want to be more open and vulnerable and do more and explore more and it's a very different relationship with sex I've ever had.

LEAH: It's fascinating to me to hear you say avoiding vulnerability, avoiding that openness when you find yourself in a situation where you have said the two different Michelles have diverged again because you don't get to experience all of yourself in any one place, so it's not just avoiding vulnerability and intimacy with other people, it's like you're avoiding vulnerability and intimacy with yourself too.

MICHELLE: Yeah. I'll buy that.

[LAUGHTER]

LEAH: And I don't say that with any judgment. I don't necessarily think that's a bad thing if this is where your comfort level is right now. When I'm working with clients and they come back and they're like, "I didn't do my homework. I'm terrible," no, we were just pushing too far too fast. If you didn't do this, there's a reason you didn't do it, which is that you weren't ready. If you're not ready to experience that level of vulnerability and intimacy with another person, let alone with yourself, it's okay to be where you are.

MICHELLE: Yeah, indeed. Sometimes, it feels disconcerting just the amount that I've felt and experienced in these times where I'm with my sub and stuff because of what it opens up in me. It makes me think about and feel. And then, comparing it to just my whole life, my whole life's thought process was in terms of sex and how I related to it and it's like hey, you're not actually that way. Wherever you got that idea from, that's not you. You are actually this way and that actually more jives with these other things that felt very disconnected. It's just disconcerting to have it be in a whole other part of myself that I don't get to engage in every day because there's that other side of me that is primary Michelle. That's where 80% of where I am.

And then, there's this other part and it's got me thinking a lot about relationships and everything because I was super-duper a romantic type back when, like I said, another thing I watched a lot of TV and everything, I was just a very Hollywood romantic kind of person and everything. And I've come to think about relationships on an entirely different way in this exploration of myself and what I want and the type of relationship structure I want and everything.

Now, I remember I heard this woman talking about the concept of monogamy and how it hadn't evolved with the ways that our access to technology and everything else had evolved. And so, people were straining against the confines of monogamy. And unfortunately, a lot of people are engaging in it unethically.

But I've come around to that idea that I'm not sure that one person can always or is even meant to fulfill the needs of another person. It puts a lot of weight on that person. You're the one. Hollywood pushes the romantic "I've found the one." But you know what they don't talk about is what happens when you found the one and it's still not enough and there's still one element or two elements or a whole portion of yourself or something that's not being fed by that person who you just thought was the one? And it makes it seem like you better go and find another the one.

My only options can't be stay in this relationship that is not completely fulfilling. It's unfulfilling in some major ways or totally leave this person and start over fresh. Those can't be the only, but those are the only ones that we get. It's like monogamy or else. And it's like what else, man? What happens if I have this person that is amazing in all these ways, but in this one particular way, they don't feed me and I don't feed them? You mean to say that the only options we have been is to stay here and be unfulfilled and be sad and be heartbroken, hurt, resentful or divorce each other and give up everything that we have and try and find it again and who knows how long it'll take? Why is that the message and they never talk about what do you do to get that other part of yourself fulfilled? How do you make that work and still keep the relationship?

And so, I don't think monogamy works for me anymore. And that's hard when you've gotten married to another person and it's under the auspices of monogamy. This is just yes, we're going to do this thing where we're monogamous and faithful to each other all the time. What happens when it doesn't work anymore? And how do you change that when that's the agreement when you got married? I don't know.

LEAH: I don't know either, but I do know that I spent my life thinking because monogamy was the only thing that I ever saw growing up or at least a parent monogamy, I'm not actually sure that that's what was going on.

[LAUGHTER]

LEAH: But that was the only thing that I knew. And so, I assumed that was the only ethical option. And now, having gone through the last five years and everything that I've experienced, as much as I love my partner and he is my primary person. He is my primary sexual partner, my romantic partner and all of that, the idea of going through my life without ever touching another person is no longer acceptable to me.

MICHELLE: And it's like they don't teach us how to navigate that or even that it's an option or how to do it in a way that is agreeable to everybody that's involved. You know what I mean?

LEAH: Yeah, to do it ethically and to do it in a way that leaves everybody feeling whole and healthy.

MICHELLE: Right. And it's like generally from a male perspective that it's okay for you to sneak out and go get your groove on with somebody else and come back to your home and all that stuff, but it's wrong for women to do that kind of thing.

[LAUGHTER]

MICHELLE: But it's like how about it's just not the way to do it, period. I'm in groups where if you start talking about non-monogamy and there's pressure on the men to not accept that from their women. You know what I mean? And it's like that's not cool. We have to get to this place where we all speak about this thing like we all have only one life to live and it's our job to make sure that we're getting all of our needs fulfilled and that's okay if we need more than one person to do that so long as everybody's in agreement and you're not hurting anybody. You know what I mean?

And so, that's the difficult thing that my wife and I are going through is this whole how do we change this now from being this understood held-up society definition of a monogamous marriage to being something that actually more works for the both of us? It's funny because I saw this tweet that was like, "Monogamy in this economy?"

[LAUGHTER]

MICHELLE: You have another person to help you pay these bills, shit.

LEAH: Right. That's interesting because we also used to live in a world where people would find a job, a career, and do it for 40 and 50 years until it was time to retire. Now, you'd be hard-pressed to find anyone who has done that, let alone is able financially to do that.

MICHELLE: Indeed. And when I was listening to this, just everything financially, things have changed and everything, but I was listening to this doctor speak and she was saying that so much has changed except for the concept of monogamy as the primary goal for relationships.

She was like, "Back in the day, you might live to 40 something or 50 something. If you got with a person, you weren't going to live that long with them anyway."

[LAUGHTER]

MICHELLE: So, you couldn't really travel. You rode your horse's buggy for some mile like a five-mile radius or something, you're in the town where everybody knew. You didn't really travel. There were no options. Now, medicine has made us live decades longer. Decades longer. We have access to internet, technology that not only exposes us to different people, to meet different people as dating options, but to also find different interests. You're not limited to this one small area where everybody interacts in the same things and likes the same things and these are the only people and you can't really get out to meet other people.

Now, we're living way longer. We have access to more interests and more people as options. But we're supposed to now take all of this and still be with one person and have that one person now instead of 20 or 30 years, now we're talking about 80 years with them and never want anything more or interact? How realistic is that, man? And so, the concept of monogamy has not grown with how our lifespans have grown and access to people, dating options, and travel options. We can go further. You'd drive more than five miles to get to your job. You know what I mean?

[LAUGHTER]

MICHELLE: All these things have changed except for this concept of monogamy and it's still pushed as the primary thing and nobody talks about what do you do when it feels like it no longer fits? Do you just feel like a failure? You know what I mean? I tried this marriage and it didn't work or I kept screwing it up and I kept doing this thing. It's like maybe monogamy just wasn't for you and nobody ever told you that. And instead of carrying this weight of feeling like an utter failure, according to society's terms, there's nothing wrong with me.

There's a lot of guilt that goes with that and even with my own interests, I have a lot of guilt about that. It's like shit, I maybe destroying my marriage over something that I'm feeling this strongly about. I don't feel like I'm just fucking around. I don't feel like it's just something like a frivolous thing. It's a need that I have and I feel it strong enough that I am willing to stand here in this storm and tell my wife, "No. As much as I love you and I love you to death and I will lay down my life for you in any number of ways, but I am not giving this person up because I don't see any other reason other than it will help you with your insecurity. That's not fair enough for all that it will take away from me."

Because, like I told her, I said, "I'm in these groups and I have been out there trying to find other play partners and stuff and things like that to try and make that work. It's extremely hard because now, it's not just what are y'all into sexually BDSM-wise, kink-wise? What kind of personality are you? Can I trust you? Are you safe? Can you tell that I'm safe? It's COVID protocols. How do you carry yourself? Do you take COVID seriously?" Because I do. And how many people are getting tossed out of your dating pool as options because they have, "Oh, it's a conspiracy." You know what I mean? And it's like, "No, you're out there being careless and now,

I'm supposed to get here and swap body fluids or spit or whatever with you?" I can't trust. This stuff is life and death now. You know what I mean?

And now, there's this whole other thing we have to also add in and consider, will I have this person here that matches all of that and you want me to get rid of that and who knows how long it will take me to find everything this person offers me? Only because you feel like you should be the sole owner of my heart and my love. But you're not hurting for anything. I'm not neglecting you. You just don't like the presence of this person. It's heavy, but that's what happens when you've spent decades together under this idea of monogamy as the source of your relationship.

LEAH: Yeah. So, I want to ask you one final question and this is a reimagination of the question I usually ask at the end of interviews, which is if you could go back and talk to your childhood self or your teenage self, what would you like her to know? Instead, because we've already answered that question, what would you like to go back and say to yourself two or three years ago? What misconceptions would you like to disabuse yourself of from two or three years ago?

MICHELLE: It's funny I actually would like to go back to earlier than that because what I would tell myself is take your time exploring your options. Don't shut anything out. Don't listen to, "Oh, that's taboo, so don't think about it." Because in some elements, elements of kink and sadomasochism and all that stuff have always been an interest to me and I never knew where to go with that. I bury that. You know what I mean?

And I think that had I spent more time particularly in my early 20s instead of just fucking around and eventually getting with my wife, had I spent more time exploring my own relationship with sex and what I desired, what I was truly interested in, what I was doing just because society said do that, what I was avoiding because society said, "Don't do that," but I actually had an interest in and just be open with myself, I would go back and tell that person, before you start getting into a lifetime with just having sex in a way that folks tell you is the way you should be having sex, even though it's unfulfilling, take all the time you need to really be honest with yourself about what you want and what you desire.

Because at this point, I'm impacting a lifetime of a marriage because I chose to start doing that digging and that exploring in my 40s. You know what I mean? Whereas had I taken more time and knew what I needed and knew what I wanted, maybe in my mid-20s or something when I met my wife, I could've been like, "Are you cool with this? Because this is a thing that I'm into." And it would be known from the beginning instead of upending everything this far in.

As far as just three years ago or so, it would probably have to be more like four years, time-wise, but it would be like, hey, take a minute. This whole thing with your wife will be a little bit more understanding about that. A little bit more, I mean a lot more. Don't fly off the handle because of your pride and how you feel like you were lied to and played like a fool. There's something deeper here that's not about you, but some part of this is.

So, let her do what she needs to do and you take this time then instead of it feeling like the only reason I'm okay with her being open is because I want to go out and do my own thing now and where was that some years ago when it really could have helped? It's like no, she's opened this

pathway. Let her go and do her thing and find some fulfillment and you use this time to focus on what you want and then y'all can come together and have a completely different open and honest conversation. It might have saved the heartbreak of where we are right now.

LEAH: I love that. Michelle, thank you so much. I have loved having this conversation with you.

MICHELLE: Thank you. I was like, man, that other conversation was hard to follow up with. That's tough to have to follow.

[LAUGHTER]

MICHELLE: And it is like when I know, when I'm aware of how much change has happened in this time and it's not so lighthearted and everything now. It's a lot of change like some really serious stuff. I'm like it's an A-to-Z conversation like totally opposite ends of the spectrum conversation.

LEAH: It really is.

MICHELLE: It's weird, but that's the life that I have and I'm trying at this point to figure out how to merge these pieces back together, so I can really feel settled and whole.

[MUSIC]

LEAH: That's it for today. If you're enjoying this show, please take a moment to leave a 5-star rating and review on Apple Podcasts or if you're using another podcast app, go to www.ratethispodcast.com/goodgirls. And remember, there's a treasure trove of audio extras available for free at Patreon. Go to www.patreon.com/goodgirlstalkaboutsex.

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Good Girls Talk About Sex is produced by me, Leah Carey, and edited by Gretchen Kilby. I have additional administrative support from Lara O'Connor and Maria Franco. Transcripts are produced by Jan Acielo.

Before we go, I want to remind you that the things you may have heard about your sexuality aren't true. You are worthy. You are desirable. You are not broken. As your sex and intimacy coach, I will guide you in embracing the sexuality that is innately yours no matter what it looks like. To set up your free discovery call, go to www.leahcarey.com/coaching. Until next time, here's to your better sex life!

[MUSIC]