



**Wild & Sublime® Podcast, Episode 14**

**“Sexual Transparency and Intimacy with *Group* author Christie Tate”**

**Oct 29, 2020**

**How far would you go to feel better? Karen speaks with Christie Tate, author of the new memoir *Group* on writing about sex, listening to the body, and her quest for intimacy through an unconventional process of radical transparency. *Group* is the November 2020 selection for Reese Witherspoon’s book club.**

**Host: Karen Yates**

**Guest: Christie Tate**

Christie Tate

It worked. It cracked me open and I got the intimacy and the relationships that I wanted. And what I had to give up was secrecy and a kind of privacy that I had had before, that I guarded pretty closely. And then I actually got better when I let go of it.

Karen Yates

Welcome to Wild & Sublime, a sexy spin on infotainment®, no matter your preferences, orientation or relationship style. Based on the popular live Chicago show. Each week, I'll chat about sex and relationships with citizens from the world of sex positivity, with spicy additions from storytellers and musicians. I'm Karen Yates. Today, I chat with author Christie Tate about her new memoir "Group," and about sexual transparency, intimacy and addiction. Keep listening.

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I'm really pleased to have author Christie Tate on the show today to talk about her very well received new memoir "Group," that came out earlier this week. Various reviewers have called "Group" funny, emotional, and insightful, fearless and hilarious and engrossing, and I certainly felt the same way when I was reading it. In "Group," published by Simon and Schuster, Tate chronicles her journey of enlisting the aid of an unconventional psychiatrist, and then joining one of his group therapy circles in order to help her learn how to be able to sustain a lasting intimate relationship. Christie Tate

is both a writer and lawyer of many years. She has been published in the New York Times Modern Love column, The Washington Post, Chicago Tribune, and McSweeney's, among others. Christie Tate is also a good friend of mine. I've known her for many years, and it was quite a thrill to interview her about her latest achievement. Christie will begin the interview by reading an excerpt from "Group." The selection features a moment late at night where Tate, a fourth grader being brought up Catholic and living in Texas, listens to the radio in bed.

Christie Tate

The night of my first big "O," the spring weather in Texas was pleasant enough that I had my bedroom window open at 6644 Thackery Avenue. I couldn't sleep, so I flipped on the radio and heard "Sexually Speaking, you're on the air." Ooh, this radio program was not for kids. I burrowed deeper under the covers. Sister Mary Margaret told us that sex was only for married couples trying to have a baby. Having sex under any other circumstances would lead to hell, far away from God, our parents, and our pets. My mom affirmed that Catholic truth over dinner one night, when she explained that there were two sins that could get you a one-way ticket to eternal damnation: murder and premarital sex. It was not hard to imagine myself slipping from God's favor. As I scootched up the volume on the radio, a caller confessed that she was unable to reach orgasm with her partner. What followed were Dr. Ruth Westheimer's instructions on how to get to know your body through masturbation. Helpfully, Dr. Ruth explained where the clitoris was and what it did. It was almost like she knew she was talking to a fourth grader. I couldn't let all that sage advice go to waste. I slid my hand between my legs and touched the delicate pearl that sometimes hurt when I rode my bike for too long. Slowly, I circled with my finger until I felt something happening. A warm wave building, making my legs go stiff. My fantasy reel: Tad Martin from "All My Children" kissed my face and told me he loved me more than all the women in Pine Valley. I rubbed myself harder. The extra pressure didn't hurt. My body climbed toward its first glorious sexual release. Then my whole body shuddered with pleasure, just as Dr. Ruth promised. For the first time in my life, I thought: my body is exquisite and powerful.

Karen Yates

Welcome, Christie Tate.

Christie Tate

Thanks, Karen. Thanks for having me.

Karen Yates

You know, I was wondering as you were reading — I had a couple of thoughts come across my mind. The first was: how long after fourth grade did you continue to listen to Dr. Ruth on the radio?

Christie Tate

You know, I really I was not a very resourceful kid. So if I stumbled upon her, I would listen. But then I think maybe they moved her time to a little bit later. So I finished up the year and I remember a few months, right? And then maybe they moved her time, and I didn't have the wherewithal to figure out when she was on. So it was kind of a brief period that coincided with my first sexual exploration of myself.

Karen Yates

You know, the other thought that kind of drifted across my mind as you're reading was, you know how you got this knowledge from Dr. Ruth — and I learned about masturbation from first like, the Judy Blume books, like — oh, not "Are You There, God," but was the other one — Deenie? Deenie. About masturbation. I remember just reading like, not understanding.

Christie Tate

At the time, I remember thinking, this is super naughty. I've never heard of this. I don't know what this is. It was a part of my body that was undercover and unspeakable. And then a few years later, when I started to have health class and the type of sexual reproduction talks that they gave at my Catholic school, they exclusively spoke of masturbation as something that boys did. And so I thought, ooh, it's not even really for girls. That's how I remember it. And now when I think about it, I'm like, I got my instruction from an immigrant with a heavy accent, who was a woman, and who also wasn't from my religion. And I don't think any of that's an accident. I just find it very interesting that my sexuality for myself was othered, and I was introduced to it from a figure in culture who was also othered. Although definitely a woman, obviously. I just think I had to look outside my cultural bubble, to know my own body.

Karen Yates

Yeah. And I think it's really interesting, because the Jewish spirit really informs your writing. Because you had a Jewish therapist, and then you subsequently married a Jewish man, and there were other Jewish men that figure prominently in the book. And how this sense of wisdom from another culture definitely comes through in the writing.

Christie Tate

Yeah, I feel really, really grateful for the people who touched my life. If I would have stayed in my bubble — it's a terrible thought. I would be a fraction of who I am today.

Karen Yates

Yes. And I did appreciate you talking about — because you did also mention in the book, during this section: Wow, no one has ever mentioned this before! I've stumbled onto something. Me having an orgasm is something I have just literally stumbled upon. I'm just I'm just thinking about how we have these pieces of ourselves, especially around sexuality that, as we become more expansive in our sexual expression, we're basically bringing these pieces or these parts back to ourselves and back into wholeness.

Christie Tate

Yes. Well, you know, it's not an accident. I was in a very, very Catholic home. There's a lot of repression there. And so anything that's not speakable — for me and my history, things that we can't talk about become infused with shame. And they'd start to be cut off from the sunlight, or from spirit, or from wholeness, like you said. And shrouding something in silence is the first way that I know, to take all the pleasure out, and to siphon any sense of any sense of goodness of something. If you can't talk about it, it must be terrible!

Karen Yates

Yeah. You know, as you're saying that, I'm thinking about this idea of shame, because of course, it figures prominently in your book, around secrecy, which we'll talk about in a moment. And this sense of repressing or kind of blocking off, which is a type of secrecy. It does take away the life force. It's almost like a plant that you're putting in darkness. Barely giving any water, but it's still alive, but it doesn't have the the nourishment from the sun. And how destructive it is, but also, it can be so invisible. So obviously, your book, one of the main things about your book — and it's the thing that gets written about the most — is the fact that you elected to see a therapist in group therapy, who one of the first things he tells you is, "There are no secrets." And not only is this "no one in group will have secrets from each other," but also that the group itself is not confidential, and that he and you as individual therapist/client will not have confidentiality, and that it's all open, and that he runs other groups, and that people can talk freely among groups with each other. And I know this is a pretty radical, shocking idea, especially since he is a psychiatrist and so, a medical doctor, and this idea of patient/doctor confidentiality. And yet, this was the thing that ultimately saved you.

Christie Tate

Long before I started writing any of this down, when I would tell people about an experience in group — and for years, I was very tight lipped about it, like, "Ooh, I have mental health treatment." And then I was like, "Wait a minute, having a therapist is super awesome." And that's like going to the dentist. And so I kind of came out of the closet. But then, when I started sharing some of the details about the way in which we were encouraged in group to sort of crack our lives open and to share, and that there was not a prohibition about... In traditional group therapy, as I understand it — I'm not in traditional therapy. My understanding is, one thing that often happens is at the beginning, when you join the group, you sign a confidentiality pledge, or it's like a contract, where you make two promises. First is, I won't talk about anything that happens here outside of the group. And the second one is, I won't have any contact with group members outside of group. And I completely understand those norms. That's not what I stumbled into. In the world that I joined, that I write about in my book, there was a sense of fluidity, that everybody needed to be free to say what had happened to them, to their bodies, things that they'd heard, rumors about other group members. And that holding those secrets had become a toxic process, and had contributed to what I understand is my own addiction, which I consider the ways in which I was socially isolated, and sexually anorexic. I consider that a version of addiction, that holding all those secrets was making me really sick. And so, I stumbled into the right place for me, and I was able to work with the parameters. It's not for everybody. But it was for me, and it worked. It cracked me open, and I got the intimacy and the relationships that I wanted. And what I had to give up was secrecy and the kind of privacy that I had had before, that I guarded pretty closely. And then I actually got better when I let go of it.

Karen Yates

We've known each other for many years. And I also know fairly well people from Dr. Rosen's group. And I remember when I was first presented with this idea, that he was doing this, I thought it was fucking loco. And I didn't know how I squared with it, right? Because I knew that I was talking with people who didn't have the same attachment to secrecy, privacy, confidentiality, and all of those words — secrecy, privacy, confidentiality — have different shadings of meaning. And I'm aware of that. And yet, at the time, I remember that I was undergoing a radical revision of my sense of what secrecy is, and was it healthy for me. And a true belief, that has only grown through the years, that there are no secrets. At the end of the day, there are no secrets. I mean, I don't know, I think it was some German philosopher, said, you know, if you tell something to one person, you have to act as though you've told it to the world, because humans are fallible.

There's sort of two themes in the book. One is transparency, but the other is intimacy. And they're two very different things. And so, I guess the first thing I want to talk about is sexual transparency. Because it's maybe the easier thing to talk about, because in a way, sexual transparency is almost more fact based — where intimacy, that's a whole other ball of wax. So my my first question to you is: I loved your book, and, full disclosure, I read it in a blind flash in the past couple of days. Because I forgot that we were doing the interview today. I thought it was like, in five days, and I suddenly looked at my calendar, I'm like, "Ho-ly shit." But one of the things of many things I loved about it was that it is very visceral, and connected to the body. So as I moved through the book, I was moving through with a sense of your body sense, but I was having a body sense as well. I talk a lot on the show that we are so disconnected from our bodies in general life. We're in our head all the time. And certainly, writing tends to be more of a head, thinking art. So I would love for you to talk just a little bit about moving down that road.

Christie Tate

Yeah, that's actually, I would say, to me, the greatest affirmation that anyone could ever give me about any piece of my writing, would be that they could feel my body, or see my body, or they had their own body experiences. So, thank you. And, you know, I had an early draft of this book — a lot of jokes, a lot of glib moments that were glossed over. It was a lot shorter. And I hooked up with Lidia Yuknavitch, who had written a memoir that was totally stunning. It's the most embodied book I'd ever read. And I started to take classes with her, and I took some pages to my first in-person workshop with her. And she does a radical way of workshopping that is extremely, extremely generative and affirmative. So it wasn't a teardown fest at all. There was 10 of us. So she told the other nine writers, "Okay, you guys have all read Christie's work. Circle every place where she talks about her body." And there was not one thing about my body there. She was, like, "Where is your body?" And I was like, Huh. All along, I've joked that this is a sexual bildungsroman. And in 15 pages, no body. And I had gotten feedback from agents that my story seemed very superficial. And I had this sense that if I put my body in the book — and what Lidia always says is that your body has a point of view. And I didn't know what that meant. I'm not sure I do now, as I sit here and talk to you, post book. But I do know that the first step has to be: what was my body doing and feeling in my first session? The first time I called someone when I was bingeing on apples? If that's not a story about my body, I can't possibly tell you what it feels like to have sex. If I can't tell you what it feels like to sit in a chair in front of strangers talking about my sex life, I can't possibly tell you a true story about sex. The story became a true, live story when I put my body in it.

Karen Yates

Yeah. This is a really interesting idea of the body's point of view. I'm sort of thinking about sex and the sexual journey through life, and how the body can change, has the potential to change, throughout that the sexual journey. And it's really interesting. There was one boyfriend you had in the book who had sex in a very rigid, highly repetitive manner of having sex. And I thought, Wow, it was a very — to me, a disconnected way of having sex. You just said you weren't sure, even now, what that means to you. If you could hazard a guess, what would that mean? Your body having a point of view?

Christie Tate

If I had to say what it means that my body has a point of view, it's like, what would it be like — in any story I tell, I sort of run through the checklist. What did my breasts think? What was it like for my breasts to have sex with a man who couldn't look at my face when we were being intimate together? And what got neglected? What got pressed upon? I think it means, like, tell the story of your body. I may understand this differently. I mean, I hope I do, will understand this differently in a year, in five years. But what it means today is, where are the sensations in my body? And what are the best words I can put to tell what that story is?

Karen Yates

We'll return to the interview with Christie in a moment. I wanted to take some time to tell you about the new benefit for all Wild & Sublime Patreon members. Starting November 1. each month, all members get a chance to ask anonymous sex and relationship questions, just like the live show, that a wide variety of sex and relationship experts will answer in a monthly panel session. How do you work with your libido, explore kink safely, communicate more clearly in bed? And everything in between. If this new membership benefit sounds like something you'd be interested in, check out the Patreon link in our show notes. Memberships start at \$5 a month. We also have the ability for you to give a one-time contribution to our work. Any amount is sincerely appreciated. And now, back to the interview.

As I was reading the book, I was also thinking about my experience on the stage. because it's a very frank memoir about your sexual journey with these various men. One of the arcs of the story is, you are looking to have a connected, intimate relationship with someone. Your desire to be partnered in a long-term relationship. Your desire to be married. And you have not been able to achieve that. And this is one of the reasons you're driven to therapy. So it's a very frank sexual memoir as well, as you start dating and seeing various men, and then of course, reporting back what happens

sexually in group, because there are no secrets, right? So you are always talking about sex in your group. And as I was reading this, I'm like, yeah, you had to go through the process as a writer, of saying, "Okay, now I am telling this to the the audience, the reader, the reader is now going on this sexual journey with me." There's so many layers to transparency, intimacy. But first, I would just love for you to talk a little bit about sexual transparency, and your journey with that.

Christie Tate

Yeah, that's a great — I mean, I obviously started... Before group, there was so little sex that there was nothing to be transparent about. And of course I had shame about how paltry and unpopulated my sex life was. And it's even hard to remember back. I started group in 2001. So prior to that, I would have sexual relations, or I'd have boyfriends, and I didn't really tell anyone what was going on. Like, everything was such a broad brushstroke, because I didn't know what normal was, but I was sure I wasn't doing whatever was normal. And so when I got to group, I remember one time I was describing... This must have been early on, because it sticks out in my head. It was like, Oh, yeah, I once had sex with that guy, and everyone just staring at me like, "And?" And I'm like, Well, what and" That's the story. And they were like, what kind of sex? And what was it like, and what was your experience. And they were right to press on me, because it was something I had a lot of shame about. And they picked up on it instantly. And I write about it very briefly in the book, but it was an experience where I'd had anal sex with my partner, and I didn't know if that was okay. I didn't know if it was normal. I certainly didn't think I was allowed to talk about it. That's the bottom line. All my programming in my family and my religion were like, don't do it. If you do do it, do not talk about it, because that will make it real. And so now, when I think about — pretty much whatever happens, especially if I feel like that tremor of shame about something, I know I've got to tell somebody. Because this will grow, and it will fester, and it will impede my wholeness, my pleasure, my communication with my partner. And I don't want that. But when I think about, now this book is going to go out to the world, I will tell you that I sometimes have a little bit of like —ugh! Like, I'm gonna walk down the street — theoretically, you know — and there's a family, we know them from school. So my kids are school-aged. People are like, oh, we're gonna buy your book! And I'm like, do you know that I talk about anal sex in the book? Now, the dude at dropoff is going to know something about me that I don't know about him. And I have given some thought to that. And part of me thinks that that particular story that's in the book, A) it happened like 20 years ago. So I have this sort of cloak of, it's not immediate, it's not like I did it yesterday. And even if I had, I'm sexually liberated now! But I think that's something I'm still currently, right this minute, grappling with. The fact that the intimacy and the transparency is very lopsided. You know, Gary from

accounting at my office, if he gets this book and he reads this, he's gonna know a ton about my sexual awakening. And I don't even know his last name.

Karen Yates

Yeah. And by the way, you didn't really describe a whole lot of anal in the book.

Christie Tate

See? To me it feels like it was like, stnading on—

Karen Yates

You told me a couple of months ago, like, oh yeah, anal! And I was like, Oh, god, she's gonna... You're like, oh yeah, and when I told my parents there was anal in the book, I was like, holy crap, there's gonna be a lot of anal! I had no clue Christie was that into anal! Then I was reading the book — waiting for the anal. [laughter]

Christie Tate

Oh, my God, a false promise!

Karen Yates

it was. It was totally a false promise. It was like, a paragraph.

Christie Tate

I'm not even sure it was that.

Karen Yates

It was like, yeah, I had anal with this guy. That was it!

Christie Tate

Yes. I'm so happy you're busting me on that.

Karen Yates

I mean, I did appreciate that everyone in your group therapy did have to relate an ass story. That was good. But it was like, diarrhea, this, that, your pinworm story. So it was like... it was ass-friendly.

Christie Tate

Yeah, it wasn't sexually explicit.

Karen Yates

So, talking about anal. And you were talking about shame, and kind of excavating that. I was thinking about that scene from high school, with the boys at the party touching your breasts.

Christie Tate

Yeah.

That was such a fucking painful scene to read. Like, I was so there. There was a lot in the book — I teared up a lot in the book. And I was always a little bit surprised, as I was making my way through the book, where I was getting teary. And I kept trying to figure out like, \am I getting teary because I know Christie and she's a good friend? Or am I getting teary at the journey of the addict, as I am an addict as well? And that journey, which we can talk about in a moment. But that moment was so laden. It reminded me so much of these things that get filled with shame for us. And they're not even — I don't want to say they're not even like the worst possible thing that can happen to a human — but they're so awful.

That's a such a great point. So, two things about that. One is, that was a very late added scene. And back to your earlier question, this might be an answer to your earliest question, about the body has a point of view. Like, I had breast hatred long before those boys came, approached me when I was drunk on wine coolers. And I had breast — I still have it today, to be perfectly honest. And so, when I was telling the story — I know I had gone in there, and I was mad about the bras. And in the book, I talked about how I got a prescription from Dr. Rosen to go—

Karen Yates

Let me just cut in here and say, you know, for the for the listener: part of the book is that Christie wore more than one bra. Because she had large breasts. And so that was part of the the unraveling, if you will — I mean, I guess it's a weird pun. But you know, this idea of just becoming okay with with your boobs. But go on.

Christie Tate

I had gone to group, and I was wearing a tank top. And you could tell I was wearing multiple bras. And it's kind of like, What's up with that? And it's like they pulled on that thread. And it was like, Oh, well, yeah, I hate my boobs. I'm trying to flatten them down. And, you know, I would I would toss off comments about hating my breasts all the time. And people were like, Oh my god, people spend so much money trying to get breasts like that! I had a hard time articulating what exactly it was. And some of it just comes back to plain old anorexia. I always thought I should be really, really skinny,

prepubescent, and boobs are not compatible with what I thought, the body I was supposed to live in. And so I had written those scenes and I think that was fine. But then I realized I had written about showing up at group with extra bras and kind of being "busted" — another pun — about what's going on, how do you feel about your breath, blah blah blah. And then I remembered that sequence of those boys. And I thought it was important for so many reasons. And one of them was: that's a story that lives on my breasts and in my body, around my breasts. And it's like a body memory. That seemed really important. And I also wanted to show that I participated in that degradation of myself. I was not held down. My memory of myself is that I was drunk, and I wanted the attention, and I wanted them to keep coming. But I mean, I was ambivalent. That's not to absolve them, but this wasn't a case where I was forcibly held down. They did not have positions of authority. I was desperate for attention, and I had no idea how to go about getting what I thought that I wanted. And I was real messed up with alcohol and food. And so that was a result of that. But adding that story reminds me, or makes me think about — what did that mean? My relationship to my breasts and telling that story is like, my breasts have a point of view, and how I've used them as weapons against myself, and really abused them a lot. I owe my breasts a lot. I'm still making amends to them.

Karen Yates

Something in what you said made me think about... As I got older, and started moving out of prime childbearing years, and then, childbearing years in general, I felt like I was being kicked out of a giant machine of objectification. And that this machine basically starts when you as a woman mature sexually, and then basically rejects you when you are of no use to it any longer. And yet, instead of being angry about it, I was so profoundly glad that I had suddenly this perspective that I didn't have before. And so I had all this extra extra energy, if you will. Instead of being this outward facing desire for attention, or desire for validation, I was able to take that and give it back to myself. But to your point, in terms of the machine, the machinery of objectification: when you're in it, it's invisible. Again, talking about these ideas of things that are invisible, that we're not even aware they're there. Cultural assumptions, right?

Christie Tate

It's totally terrifying. I certainly hope that when I think about what are the things that I can do to help my daughter have a better relationship to her body, and that if she wants sexual play with her breasts, I support that. I just would like that to be coming from a place of connection, and not a degradation, of course. And the one thing I think I can do today — she's a lot younger than I was in that story in my book — is, let's have conversations about pleasure, and about bodies, and about the potential for

these body parts to bring us great pleasure. And that I want her to have agency. I want her to be in charge of that. The word that comes to mind is just "agency." But if we can't talk about it, if she can't talk about it, I can't imagine how much agency you can have about a process, a body part, that's unspeakable.

Karen Yates

Right. The other thing I wanted to talk with you about is this idea of intimacy. Getting back to the original query about transparency versus intimacy. And as a fellow addict, in recovery, I was so — you know, the phrase that kept coming up over and over again for me, in reading your book, is "go to any length." Going to any length to get wholeness, get right with oneself, become at ease, become serene. And in your journey, I could recognize myself as well. That it was and it still is probably the most important thing in my life — that I am willing to go to any lengths to have peace of mind.

Christie Tate

Yeah. I agree completely, and I hope that comes through in the book. What I feel hungry for — I get a lot of questions like, why did you write this book? Who is this book for? And I have some feelings about both those questions, but the true answer is: I was so desperate for a book, or a story, or someone to tell me how messy and how long it takes to learn intimacy. It looked to me from where I sat, at age 27, alone in Caribou Coffee outlining my law books, it looked to me like everyone else had just figured it out. They knew how to have brunch and sleep over, and whatever, put in their diaphragm. I had no idea. And it was so painful. And one thing that helped was — this doesn't help everybody, but for me, to learn what was going on with me has a name" it's called sexual anorexia. And it is a starvation, like the kind of starvation an anorexic does around food. And so then I didn't feel as alone. But you can't recover in 30 days. I couldn't. Other people may be able to. But for me, it was really messy. If you would have told me when I started — the events in the group were August, they begin in the summer of 2001 — if you would have told me it took about seven years to get what I saw other people had before I ever stepped in therapy, I'm not sure I would have done it. I like to think I would. I'm glad. I kept thinking, two years. Okay, okay, three years. Then it was like — four years! It just takes a long time. And that's what I hope readers of any age, of any gender, of any longing in their heart — maybe they're longing to get out of a relationship, mnd I was longing to get into one. But I want there to be more stories about the mess, and what happens along the way, instead of just something tidy. I don't think there's anything tidy about my story.

Karen Yates

I really am so excited you said that, because I've been, in recovery for years. I think I entered in my life about the same time you entered, in your 20s. And that is the truth of it — that it is long, but it's not despair-filled. You know, I think it's easy for people to look at the recovery process as, Oh, my God, I'm sorry, I don't have the time for that. But the rewards happen almost immediately. And they keep happening, day in, day out. I mean, there are trenches of feeling — and I'm not just talking, I'm not really even saying this for addicts. I'm saying this for anyone who wants to effect change in their life: that there's so much joy that can happen, the more clear-headed you get, day in, day out. There is a level of intense work, but it's not intense work every single day. It's like, life is hard. There are weeks, there are months, there are years that are hard, but then there are weeks and months and years that aren't as hard. You know what I mean? They just are. It's basically saying, I'm going to show up, and I'm not going to medicate the way I interface with the world. There's not going to be a buffer between me and the rest of the world. And you can use sex or food or drugs or alcohol, or video games or pornography — you can use whatever you use. But suddenly making that decision of one day saying, I don't want to do this anymore, because I'm not being my true self. Right?

Christie Tate

Right. And to your point, I remember the last breakup — I mean, I've had a lot of breakups, and disappointments, and ghosting and whatever through my history, as recounted in the book. But I remember that last time. I was in bed the morning before group starts, at 7:30. I'm, like, wallowing. I'm like, maybe after group I'll kill myself. I just was really bereft about the latest breakup. And it was extra difficult because each breakup was like, that's it. That's proof. I'm alone forever. I suck. And so I was doing the whole routine, and I got to group and I was just sad, and crying and yelling, this doesn't work. And I remember at one point, maybe it was 45 minutes into the session, and somebody else — you know, I'm not the only one in there with a problem or a thing to discuss — somebody else had taken the floor, and they were talking about something, and we were laughing so hard. I don't remember what it was, but I remember looking at the, like, am I seriously laughing my ass off at 8:15, when at 6:15 I was like, "Maybe after group I'll jump on the L track"? The company and the people — either in recovery meetings or in my group — they brought so many riches every single time. So even when I think of the dark periods, I can still remember the guys in my group taking me out for eggs and trying to make me laugh. And that's the thing. I think that's why, for me, having the group and the company helped me hang on through the desperation. Because on my own, I can't. I can't seem to pull out of it on my own. It takes a long time.

Karen Yates

Yes, yes. And that's one of the the biggest messages I got from the book — that this was a community event. And that, especially in this time of COVID, as we are so isolated from each other, yeah, we need community to pull us out of ourselves, into the fold. This idea of intimacy. I just love it. Because the conclusion I drew from your book — because you talk a lot about emotional intimacy — it's really about this idea that what we're trying to cover up is that terrible fear that we don't have the right to exist, or the terrible fear that we don't have the right to feelings and opinions. And it takes a community to bear witness to us, and to say, yes, you exist, you have a right to exist. And basically, as they say, to love you until you love yourself.

Christie Tate

Yeah, I think that's so true. And I agree completely. And one of the things I see happening, for me, and a nice thing about being in a group, is you can watch it happen for someone else. You can watch them do their hard work and be like, Oh, I did that too. I get to reap the benefits of someone else's transformation, I get to participate in it. And even just this morning we had a session, and one of the group members had called me yesterday with an issue, and we had a lovely conversation. And she was struggling with something. Okay, so then today in group, she's like, Oh my God, I was such a seeping wound. That wasn't my experience of it at all. But the story in her head is she always has to be the one giving, how she has to be strong. She has to help me with whatever, and she had been vulnerable to me by asking for my help. The way she talked about it, I changed a gangrenous wound! And to me, we had a lively, connecting conversation where we were both vulnerable. The stories in our head are so loud and so wrong. They're often so flat out wrong. Hmm.

Karen Yates

Yeah. Thanks, Christie.

Christie Tate

Thanks, Karen.

Karen Yates

The link to more information on Christie Tate is in the show notes, as well as the ability to buy "Group" through Bookshop, the organization that helps independent booksellers and Wild & Sublime through your purchase. Wild & Sublime is also sponsored in part by our Sublime Supporter, Chicago-based Full Color Life Therapy, therapy for all of you, at [fullcolorlifetherapy.com](http://fullcolorlifetherapy.com). If you would like to be a Sublime Supporter,

showcasing you and your business and supporting us at the same time, contact us at [info@wildandsublime.com](mailto:info@wildandsublime.com).

Next week, we look at the green-eyed monster, jealousy. Thank you for listening. If you know someone who might be interested in this episode, send it to them. And please, if you liked what you heard, give us a nice review on your podcast app. I'd like to thank Wild & Sublime associate producer Julia Williams and design guru Jean-Francois Gervais. Theme music by David Ben-Porat. Our media sponsor is Rebellious Magazine, feminist media at [rebelliousmagazine.com](http://rebelliousmagazine.com). Follow us on social media @wildandsublime and sign up for newsletters at [wildandsublime.com](http://wildandsublime.com).