



**Wild & Sublime® Podcast, Season 2 Episode 2**  
**“Bust Out of Your Sex Rut”**  
**Dec 17, 2020**

**Monogamous, polyam, kinky or solo – we all get into sex ruts! Our panel discusses how to climb on out and bring a sense of play back into your sex life. Plus Karen's Sermon on the Pubic Mound® on confronting trauma when trying new things.**

**Host: Karen Yates**

**Guest: Heather Rider, Jason Best, Tazima Parris**

Jason Best

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Tazima Parris

It might help to take orgasm off the table.

Karen Yates

"I want to bust out of the fake, porny personality I put on during sex, because I'm afraid to be myself in the bedroom."

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. You'll hear meaningful conversation, dialogues that go deeper, and information that can help you become more free in your sexual expression. I'm sex educator Karen Yates. Today, how do you get out of a sex rut, a kink rut, or a masturbation rut? Our panelists discuss. Keep listening.

Hello, hello. It's been pretty dreary weather here in Chicago, as the winter is about to set in. But the big news in my world is that I got a dog, my first ever, and it's been really nice. She's a two year old Siberian Husky from a rescue facility, and she's helping me get up very early and go outside and get a ton of exercise. So thank you,

Sigrún. And I'll talk a little bit about what I'm noticing about being with her at the end of the episode as well, in my Sermon.

Before we get to the panel today, I do want to tell you about Wild & Sublime's monthly membership program, The Afterglow, which is housed on Patreon. Starting at just \$5 a month, everyone who subscribes gets the chance to ask anonymous questions monthly to a fantastic group of sex coaches, therapists, kinksters, writers, and others from the sex-positive community -- a lot of folks that you've probably already heard on the podcast. With those questions, we do a Zoom livestream which can be tuned into by some membership levels. But everybody, all subscribers, receives the bonus audio session monthly. We are still taking questions for December. So, if you want to get in on that, go to the Afterglow link in our show notes. You can learn about other benefits too, and how you can make a one-time contribution as well. A good chunk of our income here at Wild & Sublime comes from listeners just like you, and helps us cover the expenses of doing the podcast. So consider joining monthly, or giving once, to help us out in this holiday season. No amount is too small. Thank you.

Are you feeling like you need a little inspiration when it comes to your sex or kink life, and maybe a little humor, too? On today's show, we discuss busting out of the ruts almost all of us find ourselves in from time to time. You'll be hearing a panel from our September 2019 show at Constellation in Chicago, followed by audience Q&A. I talked with sex educator and founder of Course magazine Heather Rider, and recurring guests: therapist Jason Best, and sex and intimacy coach Tazima Parris. Enjoy.

[audience applause] So we were zipping a bunch of emails back and forth before the show started, about what we were going to be talking about. And so one of the big things that we were discussing was "play," and where does that fit into getting out of a sex rut, or a sensation rut. And I would love -- everyone had an idea, wanted to talk about play. Who wants to hit the buzzer first?

Heather Rider

When you're going into a sex education program, to be a sex educator or a sex therapist, you learn -- your first question is like, what does sex mean to you? And then helping us understand sex means something completely different for every single person. And also understanding that most of the time, it doesn't involve penetration, that there's so much more to it. And so once we understand and dissect our own definition of sex, we can incorporate play more in, and maybe focus a little less on orgasm and finishing. And focusing more on sensation and other acts that you can do that are also considered sex.

Karen Yates

Sure.

Tazima Parris

So, as far as I'm concerned, sex is adult play. And so what I like to remind my clients of is, like, how did you play when you were little? Were you thinking about time? No. Someone had to remind you to eat, because you weren't. It didn't matter what you were doing. Some people you liked to play with more than others, because they were more fun and more -- they liked to do the things you do. Okay, hey! Sex is the same way, except for grown folks. [applause]

Karen Yates

Yeah! Right on.

Tazima Parris

And so get your play on, get your play on. That's my invitation to you.

Karen Yates

Jason.

Jason Best

Yeah. So I think you really got to take performance completely out of it, you know, take your expectations out of it, as a lot of other people have said. And I do work a lot with the kink community. And I think a lot of times it's thinking about, what do you want from the experience? What emotions particularly do you want from the experience? Do you want to have an experience that really activates your adrenaline? Do you want fear? Do you want a sense of being taken care of? Do you want a sense of nourishment? And that can really inform what kind of sex you're having or not having, what kind of scene you're going to have. Are you going to have the kind of scene where you're getting oral sex like a goddess, or you're getting oral sex where you're being strapped to a table and being taken advantage of? Both of those can be hot, but from a really different emotional space that's going to really get your rocks off.

Karen Yates

Cool. So what about tech? There is a bunch -- there are so many sex apps out there now. I was kind of astonished, when I started looking through the various sex apps -- I thought there was only like, two. I was mistaken. Have any of you used them? Or

known clients that have used them? What's your feeling about sex apps, to kind of spice things up? Jason.

Jason Best

So there are some teledildonics people use--

Karen Yates

Wha?

Jason Best

Teledildonics.

Karen Yates

Oh, right,

Jason Best

You can use apps with a vibrator, or--

Karen Yates

Like We-Vibe? The We-Vibe thingy. The thingy -- you know what I'm talking about?

Jason Best

Yeah. And those can sometimes be used if you're having remote partners. Those can also be used sometimes as an adaptability device. So if you have issues with your wrist, or, you know, if that's something that you have difficulty with, you can set up a pattern or something in advance and kind of preset what you want, and then just hit the button and go. Those can be useful. They do have a learning curve, so look at it before you start playing. Don't start looking at the user's manual during, because it's gonna really kill the vibe.

Karen Yates

There's some timeless wisdom being imparted here.

Jason Best

I will say, there's one other thing. There is a great series of apps by the Gottman Institute for couples, around communication and discussions. They have a lot of really good apps, their card decks are really fantastic. They also have a lot of sex apps that are really terrible. So I never recommend them. But their communication apps are great.

Heather Rider

My experience with them is a lot of really quality information. But it can be a little -- it can invoke a little PTSD in me, because I'm a queer person. And sometimes when I'm reading it, it is talking about two partners, when I have had experience with lots of partners, and enjoy having experience with lots of partners in different relationships. And then also, it's heavy on very he/him she/her pronouns. I'm like, can we just say "they," please? It would be a lot more helpful. And then it kind of takes the sexy out of it for me.

Karen Yates

So my question -- you brought up multiple partners -- is it possible to get in a rut, a sex rut, and be poly?

Heather Rider

Fuck yes.

Karen Yates

Yeah, let's talk about it. So what happens? What happens if you're if you're poly and you're in a sex rut? Are we talking about the rut -- like, say, with a single partner, you know? What is it? Like, is it a scheduling issue? Is it just always being kind of locked in, of like, "Oh, it's Monday night, and I'm gonna be seeing Jeremy"?

Jason Best

There has been some research that oftentimes satisfaction within poly relationships is separate per the relationship. So you know, I think it's probably oftentimes, there is some separation. But I also think that obviously, if something is affecting a person globally, like someone is, say, for example, depressed, or they're really stressed out, or they're going through some big life experience that would be affecting them sexually in a lot of different ways. It's probably affecting them in all of those different ways.

Karen Yates

Okay, so you're going to notice, like, a blanket kind of -- you know, what's that old thing? If I'm pissed off at everybody, what's the common denominator?

Jason Best

I would I would also say, if you have a certain number of orgies, after a while, you do have to keep them spiced up. Like, it can--

Karen Yates

I so agree.

Jason Best

You have to have themes, you have to like, think in advance...

Karen Yates

Toga party.

Tazima Parris

Another play party. Same bag...

Heather Rider

And also, I feel like desire plays a role in that fantasy as well. Once, a lot of times, people become integrated into the [inaudible] or they have ongoing long term relationships with multiple people, your fantasies can start to almost feel like they're deceiving you. And because sometimes you negotiate rules with different partners. And you can start having desires to break those rules. Just like if two people were negotiating a relationship. And it can feel a little uncomfortable, and there can be shame and guilt. And that's something really hard to cope with sometimes.

Karen Yates

So what about being in a pleasure rut with yourself? You know, I mean, one of the prompts talked about porn. You know, porn rut. Or just like, in general, maybe not masturbating as much, or same old, same old. Any thoughts there?

Tazima Parris

Well, I think with oneself, clearly you know what's good. You know what works. And are you using your solo play to go to sleep? Or are you what using it to wake up? I mean, what time of day are you doing? I mean, real basic stuff like that. It's like, what time of day is it? Can you surprise yourself in the bathroom at work? [laughter] I don't know. Maybe!

Karen Yates

I can't believe you touched me there! [laughter]

Tazima Parris

I know! So it's cool to know what you like, but you might discover something new if you mix it up with yourself. Try a new time of day. So, it's along those lines, trying new things with yourself, even though you know what works.

Karen Yates  
Anyone else?

Jason Best

Yeah, absolutely. I think there's two things that I always try to keep in mind when understanding sexuality in general. And that's the idea of this kind of Pavlovian response sometimes, which is if you really fixate on a certain fantasy, just over and over and over again, or doing it a certain way over and over again, then sometimes you can condition yourself that "I'm only going to orgasm, or I'm going to have a difficulty orgasming if I don't do it this particular way every single tim." And I've had people who will [say] "Every time I orgasm, I use a death grip," or "I am between two pillows, upside down, with three gallons of lube. There's five chickens, only five. And I don't know why I have trouble with my partner sometimes. Because they only want three chickens, and it really bugs me!" And it's like, Okay, well I think I have an idea. And so really, the only answer is, I mean, you have to kind of go cold turkey, which people don't love hearing, but you have to break that response a little bit and try other things, to kind of condition recondition yourself to being more general in your response.

Karen Yates

But I have heard another another thing, which I think is quite valid, which is go deep. If you have like this fantasy that just gets played out ad nauseam, go deeper into the fantasy. Like, live it more deeply. Next time you're in it, stop in the middle of that fantasy, and look around, and be like, what is this person? What are they wearing? What are they doing? What's the room like? And start filling in a lot of more color and nuance, and instead of just resisting, of like, what happens if you sink into it even more deeply? Yeah.

Tazima Parris

With that, I think it speaks to being present in the moment, which, no matter whether you're present with another person, or you're present with yourself, that really helps to massively increase sensation, whatever's happening.

Karen Yates

Yeah, right. Right. Heather, did you wanna say something?

Heather Rider

Yeah. I think solo play is the key to -- like, when you're experiencing a sex rut, sometimes you might have desires that might have changed, and just paying attention to your body and sensation... Like, there's a lot of things that you can be aroused by that aren't necessarily -- or you can get curious when you're masturbating. Like, sometimes you want to relax and let new thoughts come in. Exploring porn, exploring different books, exploring different TV shows, any sensations that you felt that you're like, let's explore that more. Let's go deeper. Sometimes you have a new fantasy you might not have even ever thought of. And then if you want to bring it up with your partners, if you feel like it's safe and comfortable, and you're ready to share that that might be a desire and something that you'd like to act on. That could help get out of a sex rut as well.

Karen Yates

Yeah. So, last question. With all of the sensation, and all of the tools, and all of the dungeons out there, is it possible to get into a kink rut?

Jason Best

Absolutely.

Karen Yates

One of the sex rut prompts was, "I want to stop avoiding stigmatized kinks," which I thought was great. What would you say to kinky folks about ruts in kink, and busting out of them? Anything different than what we've said?

Jason Best

Well, I think it's really easy for a lot of people, especially in the kink world sometimes, to fall into -- I think it's true for everybody, but especially you hear this a lot of times from kinksters. They'll say like, "Okay, well, we've got our standard scene where, you know, we spank for half an hour, then we tie them up to the angel's cross, you know, then we bring in the five chickens, then we do all the stuff..." [laughter] And then it's like, okay, you know, but we do that same scene every time, because we know that's going to work, because that's the scene that we do when we're tired, when it's been a really long week, when we're just trying to, you know, kind of get each other off as efficiently as possible. And it's easy to default to that's the efficient release. But, you know, defaulting to efficiency is a really bad goal.

Tazima Parris

That's not play! And what I also want to bookmark here is that this is actually -- those ruts are literally neurological ruts. Like, there's a way that your brain, it has a track that it's going on, and it literally takes practice. Like you Oh, I'm going into -- no, let me go over here! So it actually takes practice to create new neural pathways. But because neuroplasticity, which means basically, your brain can change, you've got to practice. If you keep doing the same thing, it's going to keep being the same thing. If you mix it up -- and that's what we were doing when we were kids.

Karen Yates

Even a tiny change in your patterning, even a tiny change will move you. You don't actually want to go after extreme changes, you want to move the needle kind of slowly, to really help create some flexibility in the way you're thinking.

Jason Best

For example, if you wanted to roleplay as a bunch of sexy panelists, that's an option.

Karen Yates

Right? And on that note, go get a drink! Yay. See you back. Bye.

We will be getting to the Q&A portion of the panel in a moment. But before we do that, I want to play a segment for you. At every live show, audience members can anonymously answer a prompt we give them. Here are what some audience members wrote that night at the show when we gave them pencil and paper and the prompt "The sex or sensation rut I'd like to bust out of is..." Let's have a listen.

[reading] "The sex or sensation rut that I want to bust out of is: I want to bust out of the fake, porny personality I put on during sex, because I'm afraid to be myself in the bedroom." [snapping in audience] Yeah, whoever wrote that, there's some agreement! I'll give you number two, let's see. "The sex rut I want to bust out of is: I never communicate that I want to go slowly, then even more slowly, with a new partner as we explore each other." Nice, nice. "The sex or sensation I want to bust out of is the feeling of needing to orgasm, and digging deeper instead into enjoying the other pleasurable sensations during sexual intimacy." "I want to get out of avoiding the more stigmatized kinks." Stop avoiding!

And now, here are some audience questions the panelists received. Again, Heather Rider, Tazima Parris, and Jason best. So, here are some questions. "Jason suggested focusing less on performance. Can he or anyone offers some tips on how to do that?" Focusing less on performance?

Jason Best

Yeah, I think sometimes it's about -- you know, we've talked about introducing play, and really focusing on playful elements. I think that, you know, if you sometimes play in themes, as we were talking about with the orgies earlier, you know, hell, have "flogging and filthy things" on your schedule. Put scheduled dates where you're going to have something that's there, we know it's gonna happen -- so that that's the night where you don't eat the refried beans, you don't do the -- you know, like, you're going to work extra shifts, and then you know, come home smelling like everything at work, and be super stressed and do your taxes right beforehand, you know, so that you can actually be in a right space and then just like really enjoy it. And really try to just be in the moment.

Karen Yates

Yeah, cool. Anyone else?

Tazima Parris

I think it's the presence and play element will take performance away. So if you're present, and that literally means what are my toes feeling right now?

Karen Yates

Yes.

Tazima Parris

What are my eyelids...? What's happening with my buttcheeks? Like, really be super present in the moment, so that you can feel whatever you're feeling, and then that becomes sensuality. Also, it might help to take orgasm off the table. It's a suggestion I've made to several clients. It often opens up to more kinds of activities. Because if you're not on a race to get to the end -- orgasm doesn't have to be the end either! Then you can also do other things. So there's if there's no end, then you have more that you can play with.

Karen Yates

Right Absolutely.

Jason Best

I will say, just on that topic too, sometimes I've had couples where I've said, "Take orgasm off the table," or even genital contact off the table. And then the hilarious thing is, they'll come back the next week and say, "Uh, okay, so we kind of screwed up. And

we had genital contact. And we've been inorgasmic, and we actually orgasmed... Sorry." Yeah. [laughter] And we're like, "...Okay. I guess you get a demerit."

Tazima Parris

Maybe some spankings.

Karen Yates

Okay. "At first the sex was so kinky. Now that we love,"-- oh, this is great--"LOVE each other, it's very much less so. She wants it. I want it. But how do I make it happen again?"

Heather Rider

Okay, so I'll speak from personal experience on this one. So this was a big part of our relationship recently, is that we started out as kinky little motherfuckers. So that being said, so like we live together, it's been awesome, but also, we fell in like a little rut. It was like, rough. And it took some really scary moments in conversation of becoming really, really truthful about different aspects of ourselves, and realizing like, what we might have lost when we got together, and like, how comfortable we got. And we're like, holy shit, what were these like little kinky fantasies that we had before we met that we were fulfilling with other partners, or with porn, or with like, online photos? And like, how do we bring that back to our relationship? And having this like, really raw conversation, crying a lot, being really scared to tell each other what we want. That really opened us back up. And we were able to fulfill a lot of things that we forgot we were missing. [applause] Also, I'm very sorry, honey.

Tazima Parris

I want to piggyback on what you said, because what you're demonstrating beautifully is actually the vulnerability. And I think we end up getting "safe," we do this safe thing when when we're in love with the person, because we feel like relationships are fragile, and they're not. Okay, people are not actually fragile. We're extremely resilient. And if it's a true vulnerability, it's literally something that is true for you, and it is vulnerable, that is super hot. One of my mentors says, "Truth is verbal orgasm." And I love that, because it speaks to how hot vulnerability can be, even though it can be super scary. And if you're already in love, like, this person should be a safe person. And if that person is not safe, get support. And you know, do what you need to do to be safe.

Karen Yates

Yeah, there's something about, you know, as you get deeper into a relationship, it's like the hook in. It's like a fear hook, like, Oh, I can't, I can't change this, because then

I'm going to lose them, if they really understand that I really want this particular thing. That wasn't just a one-off. Like, I really want that.

Tazima Parris

And we want to be known. And you can't be known if you're not telling the truth. That's what we want the most in our relationships, is to be known and if you're withholding anything that is actually true about you, then you're not fully known.

Karen Yates

Yeah, absolutely. Jason, did you want to say something?

Jason Best

Yeah. Esther Perel talks about the tension between this desire for emotional safety -- you know, that we are driven in relationships to be emotionally safe -- and to feel warm and connected, but that that's oftentimes not sexy. You know, at the beginning of relationships, we have this tension, like, is this person going to leave, you know, are they going to bring chickens in? And I also have to clarify, I'm using chickens as a joke. Many people asked in a concerned way about chickens during the break. But you know, that is this kind of natural tension. And I think particularly in kink, sometimes with sadism, what can happen is that people feel this sense of love and tenderness, and they go like, "Oh, great, I really love this person, I want protect this person, and oh shit, should I hurt this person anymore? Even though that's super hot and it really gets me off? Ah, damn, I don't really know." And so sometimes I think you have to really push that barrier. And then sometimes that means you change the scenery. I know some people have found success like, going on camping trips, or, you know, doing something in a hotel, going to a dungeon, doing something that's really different. Sometimes it's forcing people to try a different scene, to go to a different place, to really explore their fantasies. Sometimes it's getting people to have those honest conversations about, what are you masturbating to now? Like, you guys had those early scenes, and they were really hot. But now what are you into? Because maybe that's really changed, and you guys haven't updated for a while.

Karen Yates

Yeah, exactly. Like, especially if you're in a real long -relationship. There might be things bubbling up, and you you're never talking about them because you're watching TV, and they don't come up. Yeah, yeah, absolutely. "Why are we sexual?"

Tazima Parris

Because we are human. Done. And that sexuality doesn't have to mean a specific thing. I really feel like -- we're all here because of sex. Every one of us is here because someone had sex with someone at some point. And whether you choose to act on your sexuality is your choice, whether you choose to act a lot on it, or whether you choose to ratchet it down, or when you want to act more on your sexuality, it's part of who you are. These genitals aren't decorations. They're here for a reason. All of our parts are our sensual skin, our neurons, mirror neurons, every part of us has an aspect that plays into our sexuality. And when we leave some of that stuff off the table, we leave some of ourselves hidden.

Heather Rider

It's interesting to also bring into -- a lot of people are demisexual or asexual. And it's just, they're not interested, or they're very specifically interested in one type of sexual touch or contact, and anything else doesn't do it for them. We were all talking about Emily Nagoski, and I think something in her books that she points out is, sex drive is fucking made up. Like... you can live a life without sex, you're not gonna fucking die. You can live a very fulfilling life without sex. And intimacy can be something different, as well. Yeah, so why are we sexual is... maybe I could also see the question being framed, like, "Why am I sexual?" And going there, and digging in deep and trying to understand. because you know, there's a lot of people out there who aren't sexual. And that's, you know, sometimes by choice, and sometimes it's just the way that they are.

Jason Best

I just think that question would be really different for every person.

Karen Yates

Absolutely. Well, thank you so much, panelists. Really glad to have you on the show. Thank you. Thank you. [applause]

You can learn more about our panelists in the show notes. And all authors, websites, and books mentioned today can be found in the show notes as well. And all books purchased through our affiliate link Bookshop support independent booksellers and Wild & Sublime. 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). And now, it's time for my Sermon on the Pubic Mound.

In thinking about my new dog, Sigrún, who comes from a not-great upbringing, I've been thinking a little bit about trauma. I've been watching her each day as she becomes a little more open to try new things. One day, she could only stand being in a dog park for about three minutes. I watched her shut down and become scared around other dogs. But as we've been engaging more dogs when we walk, I've watched her become more comfortable with them. Four or five days later, we returned to a dog park and she was way more relaxed and comfortable. We ended up spending about 10 minutes there. People are the same way. While we talked about ruts today, presuming that most people have a basic ability to change their behavior, folks who have various types of trauma in their past might feel challenged at trying new things, even if currently they feel they are in a rut. Ruts can seem safer than new explorations. In her great book, "Science for Sexual Happiness: A Guide to Reclaiming Erotic Pleasure," sex educator Caffyn Jesse talks about the autonomic nervous system, the part of the nervous system that controls the processes outside our conscious awareness. The sympathetic branch controls functions that occur when we're excited and alert. The parasympathetic branch controls the autonomic functions that occur when we're relaxed. The sympathetic system is at play when we engage in a fight-or-flight response. The parasympathetic is at work when we get lightheaded or faint, due to a trauma reaction. Jesse writes, "Learning to regulate autonomic nervous system responses and reclaim erotic pleasure may at times feel stressful, and even scary. And we can learn to recognize the difference between feeling uncomfortable and feeling unsafe. We can learn to regulate and tolerate the stress mobilization of discomfort, and gradually restore a sense of safety and aliveness to the whole body. But only when we work in our personal learning zone. That means not too much, and not too fast. For each person, the learning zone will be different. Exposure to just enough stress creates benefits, even though exposure to any more stress is harmful. We can each get familiar with that feeling of just enough stress to create a manageable challenge. That just-right stress will be very different for each person. Pushing ourselves can be painful and re-traumatizing. With too little stress, we will stay stuck in our habits and experience nervous system atrophy. It is important to continually assess the limits of our personal learning zone, where we may be uncomfortable but not unsafe. We can aim to work carefully within these limits while challenging ourselves to continually expand them."

So, what's your edge of learning? How do you define comfortable tension for yourself? Are there ways you can try new and potentially challenging things and communicate to a partner about your anxiety, but also enlist them as a support? Or if you're solo, are you able to identify positive excitement and the memories from the past as opposed to overwhelming scenes and overstimulation, and use the positive excitement memories as a clarifying guide in the present to new experiences as you go forward? With any

rut, the devil you know can seem easier to deal with the devil you don't know. But maybe the devil you don't know doesn't actually exist, and you're letting fear of the future keep you stuck in today.

Next week, sick of the "same old, same old" with your masturbation habits? Maybe you should consider mindful erotic practice. I'll be doing an in-depth interview with somatic sex educator 'Captain' Snowdon. Thank you for listening. If you know someone who might be interested in this episode, send it to them. And please, if you like 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).