



**Wild & Sublime® Podcast, Season 2 Episode 30**  
**“How to stay open-minded in bed”**  
**July 8, 2021**

**Nervous about trying something new? Panelists discuss communicating with partners around trying new things, and answer audience questions on vulnerability, asking for what you want, and exploring turn-ons – with partners and by yourself.**

**Host: Karen Yates**

**Guests: Peter/MksThingsHappin, Jo Flannery**

[Wild & Sublime theme music]

Peter/Mksthingshappin

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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. 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, our panelists discuss how to be open-minded in bed, plus audience questions. Keep listening.

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Hey, folks. I don't talk about this a lot, but you might know that I am alcohol- and drug-free, especially if you've been listening in the past couple of months. It's been coming up a little bit more in my interviews. So, yesterday was my 33rd anniversary. And in case you're like, "What? 33 years sober??" I got sober in my early 20s, just after college. And I wasn't really sure — I thought, should I even mention this on the podcast? I wasn't even sure that I was going to bring it up. But I am becoming very, very aware, and maybe you are too, because it's getting covered in the media, about how this pandemic has caused an explosion in people taking to mood-altering substances, and also compulsively overeating to ease their anxiety, their depression, isolation, and all the feelings that we have been going through in this mass event. I'm not going to say much here, except that my life massively improved when I stopped looking to substances to make me feel better, and then sought ongoing and consistent support from others in changing my thinking and taking a different action. In other words, really committing to myself in the most beneficial way I knew possible. It was not easy. But the alternatives were much worse. You might immediately say, "Hey, Karen, I've got it under control." And that's great! But I do want to ask you: What about it, whatever you're doing, do you need to control? Why does it need controlling? If you are interested in taking action for yourself, or you have someone in your life that might have a problem, we have included a few links in the show notes.

So, moving on, today, we'll be hearing a discussion that occurred at our last live show, in March 2020 in Chicago, about staying open-minded in bed, especially staying open-minded to your own impulses. This conversation covers conventional sex and kink, and how to really listen to yourself. You'll be hearing from sexologist Jo Flannery and kink and relationship coach Peter, also known as MksThingsHappin. Enjoy.

[in front of live audience] So, let's talk about staying teachable and open-minded in bed, which is the theme of what we're discussing right now. Before folks venture into expanding their sexual skills, or their kink repertoire, what are some of the inner issues that you have seen or have experienced yourself that usually need to get addressed before an expansion can start happening?

Peter/Mksthingshappin

In the early days — you know, I have various kink disciplines now — but in the early days, I used to get really stuck on the "why." Why do I like topping for impact? Why do I like pet play? Why do I do these things? And you end up getting stuck in a mental loop, where you're so much caught up in the "why," you never get past the "how" or the "who," or the "what." So I think it's necessary to have the conversation with

yourself, and be comfortable in yourself with. "Let me put aside the 'why' for now, and focus on the 'how' and the 'who' and the 'what.'"

Karen Yates

Of getting to what you want — like, getting to achieve the goal.

That's correct.

Yeah. I mean, it's easy to say, "Oh, I'm this way because of my mother, or my father," or "I remember that time when... Oh, is that it?" And just go [whirring sound]?

Peter/Mksthingshappin

The funny thing is, you will accidentally discover the "why" as you continue your journey.

Karen Yates

Yeah, right? Right.

Jo Flannery

So I was gonna say, paying attention to what's going on inside of you, and feeling out your boundaries for yourself — where do you want to start, and want someone else to stop? And so, once you feel comfortable with boundaries that you have, then you're able to put them in place with other people. And that can be a way to feel more comfortable with the experience.

Karen Yates

Yeah, put them in place at the very beginning of, either the sexual encounter, or throughout, right?

Jo Flannery

Yeah, yeah. But there's more to it, like finding the courage to stand up for yourself, where you want to be and you want someone else to be, I guess.

Peter/Mksthingshappin

Externally, it looks like when you're doing kink and BDSM, you're seeing all the flash, you're seeing the interaction, you're seeing the people. It's external. However, this is more of an internal journey. You're actually discovering a lot about yourself. You know, I used to be emotionally closed off, did not get in touch with my emotions, just typical alpha dude. And I discovered, at some point during my kink journey, that I had to learn

to be vulnerable. And I had to ask myself some tough questions. And I had to do things that I thought I would never do, so that I can open myself up to truly be with someone. And as a result of being in BDSM and kink for over seven years, I'm a much better person overall. And this was kind of the medium I used to get there.

Karen Yates

The interesting thing to me about talking about kink, especially in a crowd that's mixed between kinky and non-kinky people, is that so many things that kink folk do, or experience, it's transferable skills. Everything is transferable, and, like, what you learn, and communication — I mean, it all is completely the same for people who don't engage in kink play. Or beneficial. I wanted to ask you both, what can folks do to add knowledge?

Jo Flannery

So I guess, explore: explore your edges, explore porn, do some reading, if you'd like. It's not super common. I think it's more common in the kinky and the poly community to talk about sex, and talk about what you like. But otherwise, sex, there's still a lot of shame around it. And so just kind of opening yourself up to have those conversations, and see if you can learn something that way.

Karen Yates

Right. The dialogue can be so critical, because I think when you're partnered with someone, there's an assumption. Especially if you've been with someone a long time, there's this deep assumption, like, I know this person, I know what they like, blah, blah, blah. And meanwhile, you're having your inner journey, right? You're having all this shit, like, I really wish he or she would do this, or they would do this, and the other person is assuming the same thing about you. Right?

Jo Flannery

Right. When that's not necessarily true, right? You don't know someone else completely and wholly, so there's always something new to explore there. Give them the opportunity to be someone different.

Peter/Mksthingshappin

I mentioned being vulnerable. It's difficult to tell a longtime partner, or a new partner, or partner, that you're into something a little untraditional. So let's say you really get off when being spanked. And of course, there's a whole lot of negative connotation involved in that. And it's strange, it's shameful, you can put a whole bunch of negative attributes to it. So in order for you to talk to your partner and say, "Okay, I really would

like to be spanked, or I really would like to spank you," there's a moment where you hold your breath, because you don't know necessarily where the conversation is going to go. They can go, "Get away from me, you freak," which is almost your worst-case scenario, where it could end the relationship, because you're so far out of whack. Or they may raise their eyebrow and go, "Hmm, interesting." Which is a really good sign.

Karen Yates

Jo, when we talk about couples, what advice do you give to folks when one person in the relationship is the adventurous one, and they want to go out, and they want to try shit sexually, and they want their other — they're pulling their partner like, you know, the ball and chain, like, "Come on, come on!" What advice would you give to that person?

Jo Flannery

I would say to have patience in a relationship like that is really important, to give the other person the opportunity to learn about what you like, and take some of that anxiety and that fear out of it. Once the other person might know more, and the more patience that's there, when they're not on such a tight leash — kind of a joke — the more freedom there is for them to see how they fit into the situation, and what they may enjoy, and where their edges are.

Karen Yates

And what would you say to the person who is the person who's being pulled? What advice would you give to that person?

Jo Flannery

First of all, is that something that they want to be doing? Do they want to be pulled? And if they do, you know, it's all baby steps, and just kind of learning along the way. And there's always an opportunity to do more or do less. And so if you want to take a step back, that's okay, too. It's really about baby steps, I think.

Karen Yates

So, Peter, I'd like for you to take this question for poly and open relationships.

Peter/Mksthingshappin

Why is that? [laughter]

Karen Yates

Ba-da-bum. If say, like one person has had — I find this a really interesting question — if one person has had, like, a sexual learning experience with one partner, and then wants to bring it back to the other partner, it seems to me there can sometimes be a little tension. How do you think is the most elegant way to bring back learning from, say, another partnership?

Peter/Mksthingshappin

There's no elegant way. There's no smooth way to do it. So get that out of your head. What's important is actually being in a relationship where you feel comfortable having that conversation. There's no— I've been doing this a long time, and I'm not smooth at those type of conversations. I have all kinds of stuff I want to try. But I think one of my greatest strengths is, I'm not afraid to ask what I'm looking for. And I encourage, require that my partners have the same type of attitude. And I think — you know, you were talking about, as a couple, if one person's pulling someone, and the other one is resistant, the actual act, the actual kink, the actual thing, doesn't matter. It really doesn't matter. What matters is actually the shared governing values of the relationship — open communication, being able to negotiate being vulnerable. Sex — is sex important? Is sex not important? How important is it to each other, and where do we overlap? When you have the basics covered, which is all about the relationship and the ongoing thing — day to day, hour to hour, so it's not like it's done and you move on — but when you have that kind of foundation, it's much easier to go, "Hey... rope. What do you think?" And even if your partner goes, "No freakin way am I going to do that," that's okay. It's absolutely okay. Because then you negotiate what you can do. Okay, well, maybe not rope. How about handcuffs? It doesn't matter what the task is, what the actual kink is. It's the actual core of the relationship that matters.

Karen Yates

Yeah. Jo, what about couples learning together? They both have the same interests in whatever, and they're going to go forth and they're going to explore something. Like, they're going to go to Chicago Rope and take a rope class or something. What advice would you give to a couple just sailing into new territory, sexually?

Jo Flannery

You don't have to be on the same page, but staying in touch and making sure that you know where the other person is, I think that that's really important.

Karen Yates

I'll return to the panel in a moment. You can find more info on this topic in our episode, "Four Steps to Ask for What You Want in Bed." The link to that is in our notes. And did

you know that Wild & Sublime provides transcripts for all episodes? Go to the episode page on our website, [wildandsublime.com](http://wildandsublime.com), and the link for the transcript is below the audio player.

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[in front of live audience] All right, panel. Coming back for questions. [reading] "What was a kink that did not go over well?" Interesting question. Let's split this into two things. What was a kink you tried with someone that didn't go over well, and what kink did you start exploring and realize, "Eh, not so much."

Jo Flannery

I'll go first. So, this was something that was not negotiated. I was younger, and my partner wanted me to humiliate him, like, during intercourse. And that just struck me. And so I did. And then later on, we talked about it, and how we have to talk about things beforehand. And so that was like... I mean, if you ever are just brought into something in the middle, you're like, "Whoa, what the fuck!" But I'm like, "Yeah... slut." But it was good. It was okay. We worked through it.

Karen Yates

You worked through it, because you had maybe some of the basic things MksThingsHappin was talking about earlier — like, these overarching things were maybe present in the relationship.

Jo Flannery

They were, yeah. It was a nice relationship.

Peter/Mksthingshappin

I have an ongoing play partner that asked me to do wax play. And wax play is basically pouring wax on her body. And I find it boring, personally. So, I've done it in the past, and it was not really something that really engaged me. But she asked, and her and I have a very interesting relationship, where it's like our IQs drop when we're together. We're incredibly silly. It's always laughing, always a lot of fun. So when she actually asked to do wax play, I was like, "The only reason I'm doing this is because it's you. Because I know it's boring, and I know we're not going to be into it, but we always

have a good time." And it was actually incredibly a lot of fun. In fact, as we were doing it, she's talking me through how to do wax, because I had really no experience with it. I still find the actual wax play itself boring. But that was a really fun scene, because I was with someone who I already had a connection with, already played with, and we tried glitter play — yeah, me and glitter, that totally makes sense. [laughter] But because I was open to doing this type of play, the play itself was cool — but the experience that we had together was, like, really awesome.

Karen Yates

Okay. [reading] "How do I reconcile being happy alone and the occasional desire for romantic/sexual relationship? Isn't true friendship more valuable?"

Jo Flannery

So, reconcile being happy alone... And so, you know, I think that the most important relationship we have in our lives is with ourselves, especially sexually. We need to know who we are sexually before we can share that part fully with someone else. So to just kind of develop your relationship with yourself, right? What do you think? Am I on the right track?

Karen Yates

Actually, what I hear in this question is maybe a tension or a conflict between true friendship — being friends with people — and then occasionally fucking people. Like, that there might be another belief in play, that it might be more valuable to have deeper, emotionally connective sexual experiences, and they're at odds with friendship, somehow.

Peter/Mksthingshappin

In my mind, the question is flawed. The premise is—

Karen Yates

We're not insulting you, whoever wrote this.

Peter/Mksthingshappin

No, no. This is my point of view, and this is how I view my life, this is how I do things. Is that you're putting people in particular boxes, which means, "You're only my friend, and I can only do friendlike things with you." And, "You're only a sexual partner, I can only be a sexual partner," and "You're only going to be my spouse, and you'll just be my spouse." Which I did for the vast majority of my life. Over the last seven years, those lines have been blurred. I have play partners. I have play partners that I have

really deep connection with, but I don't necessarily call them a girlfriend type of scenario. In fact, the term I use is a "plus." So, you know, a play partner, who's someone you just meet every once in a while, and you do kinky, cool, awesome things. Never a downside. Always awesome. And then, I have people who I consider a plus. What's the difference? Well, if it's 3am, and they were stuck on the highway, and they called me and say, "Can you come get me?" A play partner, you're less likely to go. Seriously. But a plus, you will get out of your pajamas, you will hop in your car, not think twice. Both are valid relationships, both there's connection, and both I would not do anything without. So I think just putting people in particular categories limits the experiences you have, limits the connections. I find that it multiplies your experiences — or actually, I think this... What's not 'multiply'? I'm trying to think... I'm thinking of a math term. [laughter] Thank you!

There you go. Okay, I want to ask Jo — a couple folks, one person wanted to have more vulnerability, learning the skill of vulnerability. One person wanted to be more present. Can you speak to either one of those?

Jo Flannery

So, being more vulnerable and being more present, I think both have to do with having some courage to move away from your anxiety, maybe be in a space that's uncomfortable. And so, I'll just go back to being with yourself. So if you're going to be vulnerable with someone else, you have to be comfortable being vulnerable with yourself. And so, I think that's kind of the starting point. And then also courage, which I think Peter was talking about earlier — like, having the courage to get out of the "whys" of your mind and move into action. And so, there has to be some sort of place where you're like, just ready to do it. Just ready to be brave and be vulnerable like that, I'd say.

Peter/Mksthingshappin

I confused for many, many years that being vulnerable meant being weak. And I have discovered that being vulnerable is actually an ultimate form of being strong. You know, I'm human. I have multiple partners, and they have partners, and for me to admit that I feel jealous — because I feel jealous, because I'm human, that was always tough for me. Because I'm, you know, badass Dom, I'm not supposed to have any emotions, everything is, you know, cool, everyone does their own thing. And then to say, "Hey, wait a minute. They're going out on a date with someone, and I feel possessive, I feel jealous." And then for me to say out loud, "Hey, just so you're aware, I'm feeling jealous. You don't have to do anything. I don't want you to cancel the date, I don't want you to do anything. I'm just expressing how I feel." That is incredibly vulnerable. And it

takes a lot of strength to go, "This is how I feel." And it took me a long time to realize that.

Karen Yates

And also, thinking about being present — for me, this idea of being more present in bed is really about connecting to my body. And becoming very aware of: what is my body doing in this moment? Connecting to my breath, really feeling my body — because that person was also talking about getting out of routines. And I think these two things are really aligned, in that the more you're in your body, the more you can actually sense the impulses in bed with a partner that you want to be taking. You can feel, like, these tiny little, they're almost like twitches. They're almost like, "I want to do this. I want to touch this person this way." And it's all because you're really being connected through breathing, through just a body awareness. So I think that's part of staying present.

Jo Flannery

Yeah, and I think playing with your different senses, too, helps you to stay present. So if you feel like you're getting more in your mind, you can pay attention to what your fingertips are on, what you smell, maybe taking a sense away and really feeling into your body, helps you to stay present.

Peter/Mksthingshappin

And I'll say it: playing with yourself is also very important. [chuckles]

Karen Yates

Yeah. Yeah. In fact, I'm reminded that I didn't get to all of the prompts that are in my pocket, but they will be on Instagram. One of them was the desire to learn how to orgasm without ejaculating — which, the first steps for that are masturbating. You learn by masturbating, not with a partner. Forget that — that's not gonna work. You gotta be by yourself, to teach yourself how to do that. So thank you so much, panelists! Woohoo!

To learn more about Jo Flannery and Peter, go to the show notes. The work I do in biofield tuning, an energy modality that uses sound waves to help repattern your bioelectric field, can support you in getting out of stuck behaviors and become more aware of different choices. If you're interested in working with me, or learning more about my weekly group biofield tuning sessions on Zoom on a variety of topics, including increasing intuition, expanding consciousness, balancing your energy centers and more, go to [karen-yates.com](http://karen-yates.com). That link is in the show notes.

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