

# S2E1 Expressing Queerness (Part 1)

[00:00:00] **Claire::** You know, when you're like 15, 14 years old, all you want to do is find somewhere you belong. Specifically, around that time, all you want to do is figure it out. You just want to be like, okay, this is who I am, this is what I am. And you just don't know yet that you're never going to be 100 percent sure of who you are.

And figuring out your sexuality or your gender identity is important, but you don't have to do it all right away. This podcast, it's just, it's a group of us and we're all varying age and the way that we identify is different. And I feel like there's a lot of places you could find yourself. And I also feel like gaining all this information from people who are queer and who are younger and who, um, are, you know, going through similar experiences, talking about what's life like.

I hope that from this podcast you can just sit and and listen or figure it out at your own time. Why shouldn't we talk about this when it's something that happens all the time?

[00:01:00]

*"I'm feeling queer today" theme song .*

[00:01:04] **Lily::** Hello everybody. I'm Lily Mueller . I am 20 and I am in Massachusetts, and I use they, she and he pronouns.

[00:01:10] **Claire::** Hey guys, I'm Claire Florence. I'm 23. I'm from New York, specifically Staten Island, pausing for effect on that one, and I use she/her

pronouns. And we want to welcome you to I'm Feeling Queer Today, the podcast that amplifies the voices of queer youth. So, Claire, at the top of the episode, you talked about figuring out our identities as queer folks and how that can change.

I think a lot of our exploration comes through our creative expression, whether it be visual art, poetry, the music we make, and even fashion. So, What are some ways that you use creativity in exploring your identity?

So I would say mostly, I'm really a writer. I like to write a lot of poetry, um, whenever I'm feeling like a lot of emotions, I like to just sit there and get a lot of it.

A lot of it's bad, but most of it's just like for me. Other than that, I like to call myself a [00:02:00] hobby hopper, um, and most of those hobbies. are to do with accessories. So I'll, you know, I make a lot of bandanas and, um, a lot of like bad jewelry and stuff like that, but it's all stuff that I eventually end up wearing.

Those are the things I like to do to express my creativity. What about you?

[00:02:18] **Lily::** I also, I think I'm writing a ton of a woeful amount of terrible poetry, but again, it's, it's for me, so it can be bad. Um, but on the whole, I feel like creativity is everything, especially if you don't have the space. to explore that identity elsewhere.

It can, again, just be for you. You can sort your things out, and then you can share it in the world if you want to. I think right now I'm at a phase in my life where I'm enjoying

doing creative stuff with other people, which is against everything about me. Like, it's so stressful. It's so hard. Every minute I'm like, oh my god, I never want to do this again.

And then I do, because it's so rewarding. That's where I'm at. Anyway, you and I get a chance to sit down with our fellow producer, Alex Massey, to have a conversation about an outward manifestation of our [00:03:00] personality. Queer fashion. Let's take a listen.

[00:03:08] **Claire::** Fashion is an integral part of expressing one's identity. The queer community has always utilized fashion as not only self expression, but as a way to communicate with each other. One of the most prominent forms of this communication is through what is called flagging. Flagging begins with the Hanky Code.

Gay men in the 70s began this practice as a way to safely identify each other. The hanky code indicates sexual interests and preferences depending on the color and placement of the bandana. This, however, is not the first time queer people have used fashion to communicate. In the 1890s, Oscar Wilde popularized wearing a green carnation in his lapel to signify his queerness.

In the 1920s, women began to wear pants, which for some was a signifier of being queer as well. The 80s brought women wearing clothes that didn't adhere to the male gaze, and the 90s popularized gay men [00:04:00] using ear piercing for identification. Nowadays, flagging's main use is visibility and about finding community.

Queer fashion is still integral to the community, but not necessarily in the same way. It's seen now through cuffed jeans, carabiners, mullets, and shags.

Alex, how would you describe your style?

[00:04:22] **Alex Masse::** It's quirky and curated, and these days I'm using a lot of layers, and I definitely lean to a lot of vintage. I've been described as vaguely elfy, but also kind of giving Disney Channel. Basically, I just use a lot of layers, and I use a lot of colors, and I just try to wear clothing that makes me happy.

I remember three years ago, one of my New Year's resolutions was to wear more color and since then I think that it's really helped me just kind of expand my personal expression and it's definitely brought me a lot of euphoria and joy. I have a whole color palette these days. I feel like

[00:04:58] **Claire::** that was a very good description.

[00:05:00] I definitely have, I have an image in my brain.

[00:05:02] **Lily::** And I think, oddly, because it doesn't really align with my sense of self from my presentation, I wear a lot of dresses. Like, I'm on a college campus now. And I'm like, on a given day, I'm the only person I see in a dress but really that, that's born from laziness because it's not an outfit.

You just put it on,

[00:05:20] **Claire::** you're covered. You look so put together, too. A hundred percent. I, recently, I like to wear at least one piece of clothing that's like a little bit outrageous. I was in a phase over the summer where I would go out and I would only wear like, cheetah print bike shorts and a red sports bra.

And, like, Doc Martens, and that's all I'd wear. That's iconic.

[00:05:40] **Lily::** Maybe this is, I feel like this is me, but I'm having, like, a little bit of a pink renaissance right now, because I completely rejected it as a child.

[00:05:46] **Claire::** Yes, this is a good color. This is the best color, one might say. I'm, I'm the one who's saying it.

It's the best color.

[00:05:52] **Alex Masse::** I will say, I do love that there is, like, kind of a trend of pink. Especially, you know, young femme queer folks who, I, I don't know why [00:06:00] as kids, we all have that, like, cool phase where we're, like, tomboys and we hate everything girly and stuff. Well, I do have some ideas. There is definitely, like, this whole, like, thing where so many of us just, like, run away from that because it represents sort of a conformity to heterosexuality and being cisgender and that scares us and we run away from it.

And then I think once we can name what we're experiencing and we can, like, embrace that, I think suddenly things like wearing pink seem a lot less daunting because it's more of a reclamation and stuff.

[00:06:34] **Claire::** Yes, it feels like this is something that I chose to be mine instead of something that was assigned to me.

So, do you have any favorite flagging tools?

[00:06:42] **Alex Masse::** I mean, I don't know if any of my stuff is explicitly very, like, flagging. I guess if I want to be really unsubtle, I can bust out the t shirts with, like, lesbian avengers or gay is good on them. Those aren't very subtle. Or I have my double Venus necklace. I feel like a lot of my most [00:07:00] flag worthy traits are just things about the way I carry myself, the way I present myself.

Like, maybe my hair. That's kind of some weird mullet situation that makes people confused about what my gender is. Sometimes it feels like what I don't do is more flaggy than the things that I do actually do. I don't do all these things that people associate with typical feminine conformity to norms and stuff, but I also am out here dressing like their grandmother.

So I think that combination definitely gets people to do a double take, and that's how people will ask me for my pronouns even when I'm in the biggest, poofiest dress. They're like, there's something kind of fishy going on here. It is very fascinating that these days now flagging is something that definitely well, almost irre recognizable to what it was even just like 20 or 30 years ago, could be very cynical and say it's a capitalist thing that now the brands like to sell the rainbow shirts or whatever, but.

I feel like a lot of people are going above and beyond when it comes to, like, exploring new ways [00:08:00] to make their identities apparent and make the way that they express themselves apparent. They're finding ways that make them happy. I would say that these days flagging, at least where I live, which is a very liberal area, it's a good way to cut to the chase.

It's a good way to see another queer person and be like, ah, another queer person without having to say anything. I'm not doing this for safety because I am very fortunate to feel very safe where I live. I'm doing that so that other people will see me and be like, oh my goodness, a homosexual.

[00:08:37] **Claire::** Okay, so when I was listening to this, it just reminded me of how much fun I've had recording it, and specifically how interesting it was to take you guys out of your little computer boxes, um, and brush you up in my head, um, and just figure out, like, what you would be looking like, because I, I, I hadn't met either, I still haven't, um, which is sad, in person, um, but, like, it was just so [00:09:00] much fun to hear you guys talk about what you used to express yourselves and just fashion in general, and it's exactly what I was looking for with this segment because, you know, I just wanted to know, like, how are we taking what was once flagging and making it what it is today?

I

[00:09:16] **Lily::** agree. It was so fun to record and I also remember, uh, distinctly. That the interesting connection was that Alex and I had sort of brushed virtual shoulders in a workshop years before we started to work together and their style had inspired me to dress more, more the way that I wanted to. So it was a little bit meta.

Um, but yeah, so fun and so interesting again to see how everything evolved. And I'm thinking a lot about the, the pros and cons of rainbow capitalism and how I love that we have so much merch available and I hate that we have so much merch available that does not benefit the community at all, and that's what I'm sitting with today.

Shop local. So true, [00:10:00] shop local, shop queer. But to get back to the idea of expression and how sometimes we can get the notion that we just need to conform to a certain way of being to disprove our queerness. Has that ever

[00:10:11] **Claire::** happened to you, Claire? Um, definitely. I mean, I feel like this happens to me more within myself than anywhere else.

And I've found that I need to perform this justification less when I'm more confident in myself and the people that I'm around, which is definitely a privilege that I have. But being around so many queer people now, in my life makes me more willing and ready to wear whatever I want and to exist the way that I want to and to be as creative as I want to.

And it's just such a stark contrast to the way that I was living before that. Has that happened to

[00:10:49] **Lily::** you? I just, it's, it definitely has, but it's so, it's such a sweet thing, like you said, to be able to move past that. I think especially when I was very little and I was first [00:11:00] realizing that I was queer. I felt a lot of pressure to be very masculine or

tomboyish, and the way that I knew how to do that was by putting down the woman around me and by putting down femininity.

So I was a misogynist with pigtails. I'm so happy we moved past that. And I think throughout my life I have vacillated between that and trying to be like, Okay, how do I be the best girl I can be if that's how people are going to see me? How do I do that? But now I feel like I've gotten to a point in my life where I can just kind of relax and be like, I know who I am.

The people that I care about respect that, even if they don't understand it, they respect it. And that's fine. And that's good. Embrace yourself if you can. It's a journey, but you'll get there in the end, and it's worth it. That's so real. I used to

[00:11:44] **Claire::** also be, um, a bit misogynistic, and we figured it out.

Everyone's great. Um, so now, um, we're gonna share Logan's story from the Future Perfect Project's original series, Queer Youth Animated. Logan is a visual artist, writer, and [00:12:00] performer from Minneapolis who went through a phase where she wasn't quite sure how she needed to mold herself to fit in. Until she just decided to be herself.

[00:12:15] **Logan::** My name is Logan. I am 16 years old and I use she her pronouns. And I'm from Minneapolis, Minnesota. I grew up in a very accepting family. Uh, my parents had two girls. My dad would always let me, you know, use tools and stuff. Like I, I've never felt different 'cause I was a girl. Even then, I still. I found internalized misogyny, and I still felt this pressure from myself to be a better girl.

And I wanted to be defined by one thing. And I felt like if I could define myself as a theater girl, or as like one of those nerd girls, I could like finally feel whole. Then, once I went to high school and I got this toy, and I started making my own friends instead of just being friends with people who looked like me.

It became a lot easier to, like, feel [00:13:00] okay about myself and to start thinking, like, I don't owe, like, an explanation to anybody. I still have to kind of remind myself that it's okay to not be perfect at everything and, you know, and just to, like, kind of try not to be defined by one thing, which is also, like, why I just love the word bisexual is because bisexual is what you think bisexual is and it can mean anything.

The more I learned that other people are not tied down by definitions. I feel like I don't need to define myself. I don't need to define my gender. Just 'cause I'm like a tomboy girl doesn't mean I'm not a girl. I can be a girl and a tomboy and I can be a girly girl sometimes, whatever the hell that means.

You know? I think what really happened was I just figured out that like the cool people are the ones who do whatever the hell they want. Don't let other people define who they are.

[00:13:59] **Claire::** I [00:14:00] loved this so much, listening to Logan's story. It brought me back to times in my own life where I felt similar and just being able to hear from somebody who was actively going through that situation, who has already grown so much from where she was previously. It's just so great to

[00:14:16] **Lily::** hear. My big takeaway from this is to quote Logan, the cool people are the ones that do whatever the hell they want.

And don't let other people define who they are. It may come from a 16 year old, but it's always good to have a reminder to just be who you are. Because that's, that's what makes you cool.

[00:14:31] **Claire::** Yeah. Some of our best advice comes from 16 year olds sometimes. I'm also, um, slam poetry snapping in the corner.

Absolutely.

[00:14:38] **Lily::** I know, Logan, but, um, we haven't seen each other in a few years. Um, such a sweetheart and so, so talented. So I think my heart's a little bit warm just from that. So, our co producer Alex joined us for our first segment on queer fashion, and I thought it would be nice to end this episode with our Queer Crushes segment, where they tell the story of their first queer crush.[00:15:00]

[00:15:06] **Alex Masse: (2):** I think I had my first queer crush in kindergarten. It's something that I only realized years down the line. As for how it felt, when you're that young and you don't have the words for it, a crush feels a very peculiar way, because I didn't know that I could like girls. But I knew that this one girl was very pretty, and I liked her clothes, and her hair, and I wanted to be near her and do the things that she did.

I think she had black hair, but that is literally all I can remember. One other thing I remember is that she was left handed, and I remember this because I remember wanting to use my left hand too. I was actually ambidextrous as a kid, and everyone always told me to pick a hand, and this girl I liked used her left hand, so I started favoring mine.

And now I'm left handed. I really chose hard mode on that one, huh? I hope today, young queer crushes and childhood queer crushes are easier to name and Recognizing oneself. I'm hoping that, you know, [00:16:00] all the positive representation in children's media helps with that. Because again, all I remember thinking was, Wow, I really want to be this girl's friend, and be just like her.

Really, that was only the beginning of a long, long saga of me doing very silly things for very gay reasons.

[00:16:24] **Claire::** This was so sweet. This brought me right back to being a child and being like, Oh, what's going on over here? I don't get what this is. Um, and it's just, it was just so wonderful to hear. And like, my favorite part about when anyone tells a story of when they were a child is just the things that they remember.

Like Alex remembered that this girl had black hair. And that she was a lefty. And, and now Alex is a lefty. And that, that to me is queerness. That's what she, I, I too only remember when girls have pretty hair. I'm just kidding. Um, but it's just, it's just so sweet to hear [00:17:00] what, um, the six year old brain remembers about that first crush.

It's, it's so sweet. I

[00:17:04] **Lily::** think I had a similar takeaway. Like, I think I'm, I'm like a bit of like a, You know, I think it's crows that, like, take shiny things and bring them back to the nest, except with my personality. Um, there's a good quote that circulates the internet that's like, we're a patchwork of all the people that we've loved, but it's true.

I hate that it's so sentimental, but it's true. Um, like, I learned to braid hair to impress a girl, and I started to wear high tops because I had a crush on someone that wore high tops, and I thought it was so cool. Um, and I still do those things to that day. I'm an adult person who still does those things.

It's so bad. That's so sweet to me. Heart's warmed. So Claire, in terms of expressing ourselves as young, queer people, we tend to try on a lot of things, sometimes, literally, sometimes figuratively, as we've discussed in this episode. Um, so would you give any advice to like the caregivers or the parents of a young queer person who might be listening?

[00:17:57] **Claire::** I would say, honestly, and I've been thinking about this a lot [00:18:00] recently, phase can be a scary word. Um, as, as resident bisexual person, uh, I used to get really mad when people would say that to me. I'd get really, really irritated. But, what is life if not a series of phases? Or, you know, what is your childhood if not trying things and figuring out who you are and what you are?

This part of your child, or this part of, of the, of the young person that you're around, is just another part of them figuring out who they are. And it doesn't need to be scary unless you make it scary. So you just need to, we need to take three deep breaths together and listen. And maybe do some research, maybe, maybe listen to a certain podcast that's by queer young people and for queer young people and their adults around them, um, but also just listen to, to what the, the young person in your life has to say, and sit with that, and then move through it, it's just like when you only wore, I [00:19:00] don't know, like red shoes for a year and a half, like it's the same thing, we're figuring it out, right?

So it doesn't need to be as scary as you think it is, and I completely understand being scared because everything is scary when you have a child. But this, this is just life, and we're just gonna, we're gonna let our kids grow up as they are.

[00:19:15] **Lily::** Yes. Be who you are. Express yourself in whatever way makes you feel most alive and most seen.

We're going to close this episode with a captivating poem from Eric Eubank called To Be Queer is to Feel. That serves as a reminder for all of us, that all of our emotions are valid and can serve to guide us on our queer identity journeys.

[00:19:42] **Claire::** Eric Eubank:

[00:19:43] **Eric Eubank::** To be queer is to feel. To feel as though you're playing a game, only you don't know how to play it. Where the cards are stacked against you, and you're a piece of a puzzle that doesn't quite fit. To be queer is to fear. To fear what will happen if you dare to be, what people will say when you live un beholden to [00:20:00] the body and heart they say you should have, who will leave you behind because they can't stand to share a space with authenticity.

To be queer

But in queerness, there's so much more. In queerness, there's more than feelings of confusion and pain, more than fears of what might happen someday, more than wishing for more. In queerness lies power. In queerness lies beauty and joy and connection. In queerness lies action, a chorus of voices meant to be heard.

In queerness lies feelings of freedom and color, a wash more potent than life itself. and wishes of telling even just a single lost spirit or soul that to be queer is simply to feel.

[00:20:53] **Claire::** Thanks for joining us today! I'm Claire. And I'm Lily. And you've been listening to [00:21:00] I'm Feeling Queer Today!

If you like what you hear, please rate us and share the show with your friends or family, or both, please both. And don't forget to ask yourself, How am I feeling queer today?  
For

[00:21:13] **Lily::** more information and resources about this episode, check out the show notes or visit the episode page at [thefutureperfectproject.org](http://thefutureperfectproject.org)

slash podcast. We want to hear from you. That's why we set up our very own online voicemail box for you, our listeners, to leave us recorded messages. Let us know what you think of the latest episode. Or share topics that you'd like to hear us cover on the pod. All you have to do is go to [speakpipe.com/ifqft](http://speakpipe.com/ifqft), to make your voice heard.

That's S-P-E-A-K-P-I-P [e.com/if QT](http://e.com/ifQT) and who knows,

[00:21:43] **Claire::** your response, might choose to end up in a future episode. If you or a young person you know between the ages of 13 to 24 is currently in crisis, check out the [Trevor project.org](http://Trevorproject.org) for lgbtqiaa plus specific support through text and chat. Or call 1 8 6 6 4 8 8 7 [00:22:00] 3 8 6.

We will also include this information in the show notes as resources. To learn more about The Future Perfect

[00:22:05] **Lily::** Project and all of our free arts programming with LGBTQIA plus youth, visit [thefutureperfectproject.org](http://thefutureperfectproject.org) or find us on social media at The Future Perfect

[00:22:14] **Claire::** Project. I'm Feeling Queer Today is produced by The Future Perfect Project with support from Radio Kingston, WKNY, Kingston, New York.

This episode was produced by me, Claire Florence, as well as Trudy Pooks,

[00:22:25] **Lily::** Frankie Gunn, and me, Lily Muller. Special thanks to podcast producers and special Eric Eubank and Alex Bassi. Additional thanks to the rest of the IFQT production team. Wallace, Zorian Edwards, Sam Smalls, Sonny Miablanco, and Ari.

Loganstar is produced by Julie Novak and scored by Thomas Varner as part of FPP's original series, Queer Youth Animated. Available on YouTube.



[00:22:46] **Claire:** Our theme song was composed and performed by Alex Masse and produced by Emma Jayne Seslowsky . Additional music composed by Alex Masse and Epidemic Sound.

Episode mixing and mastering by Julie Novak with assistance from Emma Jane Soslowski.

[00:22:58] **Lily:** Special thanks to executive producers [00:23:00] and mentors Julie Novak and Celeste Lucene, as well as Future Perfect Project team members Ryan Amador, Kiko Wan, and Aliya Jamil .