Therapy Chat Episode 323

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[00:00:00] **Laura Reagan:** Therapy chat podcast, episode 323.

[00:00:04] **Announcer:** This is the therapy chat podcast with Laura Reagan LCSW-C. The information shared in this podcast is not a substitute for seeking help from a licensed mental health professional.

[00:00:18] **Announcer:** And now here's your host, Laura Reagan LCSW-C.

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[00:01:16] **Laura Reagan:** And now for all you prescribers out there, Therapy Notes is proudly. Introducing e-prescribe use coupon code chat, or click the link in the show notes to get two free months@therapynotes.com.

[00:01:27] **Laura Reagan:** Hi, welcome back to therapy chat. I'm your host, Laura Reagan. And today I'm so excited to be speaking with someone who here in my area in Maryland is a well-known leader, teacher and therapist. And I hope that our conversation will help their message reach a wider audience. My guest today is Tavi Hawn. Tavi Hawn is a Southern lover of books, music, dance, a dog named Scully, the cat named Lionel, a spider loving scientist and a baby named WIA, which means Wolf. Tavi is a multiracial two spirit person who currently is a founder of a group therapy and consulting practice in Maryland, as well as serving as faculty on the Indian country paths remembered echo project. And as a therapist with native American lifelines in the past, Tavi was co-founder of a multi-racial LGBTQ plus holistic wellness collaborative in North Carolina and co-founder of a nonprofit summer camp for queer and trans youth, and youth queer and trans parents. They've written two books, Cultural Awareness In Therapy With Trans Two Spirit And Gender Non-conforming Adults And Older People. And their recent book that just went on sale in January, 2022 is the Gender Identity Guide For Parents, Compassionate Advice To Help Your Child Be Their Most Authentic Self. Tavi holds Master's Degrees in Theological Studies and Social Work, but their best education has been life experience and learning under elders trans and two-spirit.

[00:03:04] **Laura Reagan:** And transformative justice movement workers. Tavi provides consulting and training services to organizations and individuals on a variety of topics and hopes that this leads to more affirming environments everywhere for their community members. I am very honored to be speaking with Tavi today. I know that gender identity exploration.

[00:03:25] **Laura Reagan:** Is something that many parents are contacting my practice, looking for how to support their child with. And I know that this is

becoming more and more of a norm for parents to hear from their child. Some kind of message that lets them know their child is questioning, whether the gender assigned to them at birth matches their internal life.

[00:03:50] **Laura Reagan:** And so I think this book is much needed and I've read it. And it's very, it's very compassionate. It's very helpful. It's very clear and straightforward, gentle, and supportive to the parents and the child. So I highly recommend Tavi's book and we'll talk a lot more about the book and Tavi's work in our conversation.

[00:04:15] **Laura Reagan:** So let's just dive right in.

[00:04:21] **Laura Reagan:** I'm so excited to be interviewing today, Tavi Hawn. Tavi, thank you so much for being my guest today on Therapy Chat.

[00:04:28] **Tavi Hawn:** I'm really excited to be here. This is going to be a fun conversation today. So thanks for inviting me.

[00:04:34] **Laura Reagan:** You're so welcome. And I've really wanted to talk to you for a long time. It's kind of ironic that we work like 45 minutes apart and you know, the first time that we actually meet is through you being a guest on the podcast but I'm glad it kind of gave me a reason to make the time to get to know a little bit more about you, because I've heard so much about your work. And I really have been admiring you from afar for a long time. So.

[00:05:00] **Tavi Hawn:** Uh, sweet. Make me blush over here.

[00:05:03] **Laura Reagan:** I, well, I do mean that.

[00:05:05] **Laura Reagan:** And, um, so let's just start off our conversation by you telling our audience a little bit about who you are and what you do.

[00:05:13] **Tavi Hawn:** Okay. Um, my name is Tavi Hawn and my pronouns are they them and their. I'm a licensed clinical social worker and I've been working in the field for probably around 15 years now. I have a group therapy and training practice that I founded in Maryland.

[00:05:31] **Tavi Hawn:** And I also work at Native American lifelines. As a contract therapist and trainer, I'm on the faculty of the trans and gender affirming care echo, which is an echo across Indian country to make sure that providers who are working in any of the health centers with indigenous folks have the support that they need to work with our two-spirit. When did your

queer people, and let's see a while back I co-founded a summer camp for queer and trans youth and youth of queer and trans families in North Carolina, which is where I'm from. And I am a newish parent to a toddler 17 months. So I'm on that journey. Thank you. I guess, you know, I'm somebody who has been on my own journey to understand my gender since I was a kid.

[00:06:23] **Tavi Hawn:** And that has really been a lifelong process for me. I'm 43 now. And. You know, in recent years have taken different medical, gender affirming processes for myself. That makes sense for me now, but I also share a story about, I think I was like three and it's my first memory of going trick or treating at Halloween.

[00:06:44] **Tavi Hawn:** And I told my parents, "I want to be a, I want to be a man for Halloween". And they said, okay, which is kind of surprising to me given their beliefs and stuff, but they did. So I had this little t-shirt that was made to look like a tuxedo. And, um, I wore like that a little hats and glasses and black pants, and I thought I was looking so good.

[00:07:07] **Tavi Hawn:** I was so excited, so proud and I was going around to the houses trick or treating. And then I realized. People were asking me, like, I was supposed to be a specific man. They were asking me, who are you? Like, what man are you? And I was like, oh, I'm not supposed to be just a man. And so the first thing that came out of my mouth was Mr. Bologna head. And so that's what I went around telling people that I was. But I think about that story a lot now because I was three. I didn't have any representations. No one around me showing me different gender expressions, identities, anything, but I feel like that was one of the earliest times. I think I was trying to express another side of myself and my identity in the way that I knew how.

[00:07:53] **Tavi Hawn:** And that was an avenue that I could do it, you know, in that moment.

[00:07:57] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. And I'm pretty struck by how you were like, I look good. Like you were like, yeah, THIS. Now I've got something that feels the right fit. Yeah, because I think that - I have a question for you about, well, let me, I'm going to be all over the place. Let me start by saying I'm from Virginia.

[00:08:18] **Laura Reagan:** Where are you from in North Carolina? If I may ask?

[00:08:21] **Tavi Hawn:** Well, I was born about an hour from Qualla boundary, which is where a lot of my ancestors are from. So in Western, North Carolina in the mountains. Okay. And I lived in, we moved around a lot, so I lived in a lot of small rural towns around North Carolina and then South Carolina.

[00:08:39] **Tavi Hawn:** So yeah.

[00:08:39] **Laura Reagan:** So not really places that are known for a lot of acceptance of queer trans you know, people. So I can imagine that that must have been pretty challenging because I I'm 50. And I grew up in Virginia and, you know, even a little, a little bit more progressive than a lot of places, Norfolk, where I'm from, which is in Southeastern Virginia, close to North Carolina, not Northern Virginia.

[00:09:06] **Laura Reagan:** What everybody from our area up here. You know, it's not, it's not the most, it's pretty traditional and old fashioned. So that context just helps me understand a little more about who you are. But, so the question that comes to mind is what this book written for. Well, it sounds like it's written for parents whose children are letting them know that they don't identify with the gender that they were assigned at birth.

[00:09:32] **Tavi Hawn:** Well, you know, the book is called The Gender Identity Guide For Parents. I kind of wish it maybe had a different title because I feel like it's really, for all parents and all people that are helping raise kids. So that could be aunties, uncles, cousins, neighbors, childcare workers, coaches, all the people that it takes to raise a kid, right?

[00:09:55] **Laura Reagan:** Teachers, therapists.

[00:09:56] **Tavi Hawn:** Teachers, therapists, anybody who is working with kids and also their parents or foster parents, whoever they're living with the people, supporting those people. That's really who the book is for. Because it's really talking about how do we all shift the ways that we've been socialized and taught to think about gender?

[00:10:18] **Tavi Hawn:** How do we shift within ourselves? Things that we might be replicating or modeling without even realizing it that keep kids feeling like it's hard to communicate who they are or that they don't even have the language because they're not able to. To see and have relationships with people of different identities or different expressions.

[00:10:39] **Tavi Hawn:** So that's why I say it's really, for a lot of adults that have to do that are coming together to help take care of kids.

[00:10:45] **Laura Reagan:** Wonderful.

[00:10:46] **Laura Reagan:** And I know it will help so many, as I've already said to you, what I'm noticing in my practice. We have, we work with children and adults and we are, I'd say over the past, probably 4 years, we've been getting a lot more calls from parents who are saying my anywhere from 7 to 12 generally is what we're hearing from people. My child, my daughter is saying, she's a boy and I don't know what to do. And I think, you know, what I'm seeing when I see therapists looking for referrals, people who they're trying to refer a client to, there's a lot more of families who are hearing something like this from their child and not really knowing what to do.

[00:11:35] **Laura Reagan:** So I love the compassionate way that your book talks to parents or the adults in a given child's life. What, what do you think are the most important things that the adults in a child's life who. I'm trying to express this to they're the trusted adults in their life. What do you think the most important things are for them to do?

[00:11:55] **Tavi Hawn:** I think, you know, one of the first things I talk with families about is just it's going to be okay. Because a lot of times when people are first reaching out to a therapist, there's a lot of anxiety going on. People are worried, nervous, confused. Don't know what this means. And so just making sure people know, you know, what, just breathe.

[00:12:15] **Tavi Hawn:** It really will be okay. I'm feeling a sense of relief by hearing that there's more and more kids who are telling this to, to their parents or their families or their school counselors, because. Those kids have always been here. That many kids have always been here and couldn't tell anybody and didn't have anybody to go to.

[00:12:36] **Tavi Hawn:** And so that's another thing I express when, when families reach out for help is it's a really good sign that your kid is feeling comfortable enough to tell you that this is how they're feeling or that y'all have the kind of relationship where you're seeing and noticing things they might be expressing even without words.

[00:12:55] **Tavi Hawn:** So I really try to highlight the positive and the strength of that. And then, you know, we can go into figuring out what, what does the family know and not know, you know, what's been their exposure to learning

and hearing about these things. What kind of learning can they do so that they feel that they understand more about what's going on?

[00:13:17] **Tavi Hawn:** What is the child communicating? And I really try to help people ground in not assuming that we know what's going on with kids or not putting assumptions onto them, that they're not expressing or communicating. And really honestly, a lot of, I feel like a lot of the work is helping families and caregivers.

[00:13:36] **Tavi Hawn:** Unlearned their own assumptions and belief systems about gender, because those are deeply, deeply ingrained. People start putting assumptions about gender on people before they're even born based on ultrasounds and things like that. And so a lot of times we're not even fully aware of how much the social messaging has really absorbed into us and it effects us in ways we're not even noticing.

[00:14:02] **Tavi Hawn:** So trying to help families realize those things. So that then they can start to shift in ways that are going to help their kid feel affirmed and also just free to be whoever they are.

[00:14:13] **Laura Reagan:** Yes. I think that was one of the things as I was reading your book that I just felt was really beautiful. Even beyond gender identity, as a parent, like my P my kids are in their early twenties.

[00:14:25] **Laura Reagan:** So. It's like, expectations that I'm putting on my kids that I don't even realize. I am like, you know, well, one could be you'll grow up and get married and have children, you know? And like there's so many assumptions built into that, right. About their gender identity and about their, you know, sexual identity. And who they are and what they want.

[00:14:49] **Laura Reagan:** And you know, and it's like, you're putting that on a little kid when they're like a toddler and they never even get a chance to say what they want. It's like what you're thinking they're going to do.

[00:14:59] **Tavi Hawn:** Totally. And that's something that I talk with families about sometimes too, is that I believe it's part of being a parent or being somebody who's raising a kid.

[00:15:09] **Tavi Hawn:** That part of the process is. Letting go of your own expectations for that human. And I know I'm going to experience this personally, you know, as I'm guiding and helping support somebody through the world, but at some point, whether it for your kid, it could be about their gender

identity. But if it's not that it's going to be something else where as a parent, you have to say, okay, this was really my thing.

[00:15:31] **Tavi Hawn:** And that's not what my kid is saying. They want for themselves. That's not who my kid is. Maybe it's not what they're capable of. And so I have to let go of that so that I can really show up for my kid.

[00:15:44] **Laura Reagan:** Right. I think that was like probably the deepest, most poignant lesson that I took away from reading was like this isn't, you know, and this is like so obvious, but it, it was like in inside, it was like this isn't YOUR kid that you made who's going to be what you want. This is you did create this person, the reproduction, but they're a separate person.

[00:16:09] **Tavi Hawn:** Yeah. They have their own spirit, their own personality. And I think I'm not sure why, but I don't. I think socially. We kind of have this message that we pass on. That's like, yeah, like your kid is a miniature you or something.

[00:16:23] **Tavi Hawn:** And that's just not really how they show up.

[00:16:26] **Laura Reagan:** They never thought that.

[00:16:27] **Laura Reagan:** They came out. Like I like to play, I like to do this. I like to do that. What are you, what are you ...go away! I want you when I want comfort, but I don't want you to like project your unfulfilled desires onto my life. So let's sort of with, I guess, what are some of the things that a child might say that would lead them to would lead an adult to be reading your book?

[00:16:56] **Laura Reagan:** You know, there are a lot of different nuances in. The different expressions that we're talking about right now, right?

[00:17:02] **Tavi Hawn:** Yeah. There could be a lot of different things. I mean, I'm thinking, I'm thinking back to when I was in my twenties were really starting as a teenager, 15 and up. I worked in childcare a lot.

[00:17:15] **Tavi Hawn:** And so I'm remembering one family that I worked with, there were a set of, of twin two year olds. And I worked with them from like age two to four or something like that. And one of them would say, started to say, you know, don't call me this name. I want you to call me that name. And it was a name that was traditionally, you know, associated with a different gender.

[00:17:37] **Tavi Hawn:** And so I, I would just go with it and say the name, you know, and I was there. And then that, that went on for awhile. The kid also then slowly started to show other, other interests in communicate things like an association with um, the parent that also had the gender, that the kid was seeming to express things with wanting to wear those clothes shoes, making, just making comments.

[00:18:04] **Tavi Hawn:** That kind of seemed like to suggest that they were seeing themselves in their mind as the same as this parent. And then as that would start to happen, the parents would be able to ask questions. To find out more what the child meant, especially as they were getting older and that family was, was supportive and was really just kind of taking things as they went with where the child was saying that they were, which was cool to see and to be part of.

[00:18:30] **Tavi Hawn:** So it could mean it could be about just how that child sees themselves and saying I'm not. This gender, I don't want you to call me that it could be, you know, I've worked with kids before young children who really did not like and want a certain body part that they had and, and would just talk about it, not feeling right, or like it was part of themselves, you know, some kids can just clearly communicate, you know, I'm not this, I'm this.

[00:18:58] **Tavi Hawn:** You know, some kids will say, you know, I'm not a boy and I'm not a girl I'm something different. Or I just, I don't want to be called either of those things. I just want to be called me. You know, I'm just me call me my name and nothing else. So some kids will say that. And then, you know, this book is kind of talking more about younger kids, but a lot of times too, we see people in around when puberty starts.

[00:19:24] **Tavi Hawn:** In puberty changes starting to happen. That's another kind of big time where some people will start to have a realization that wait, these changes don't fit right with how I feel inside about my gender. And then they'll be able to start expressing some of that. They may not know right off the bat, what, what exactly that means for them, but they can say I'm feeling really, really, really bad about having a period in ways that I don't think it's different than what some of my peers are feeling about having period.

[00:19:53] **Tavi Hawn:** It's, it's just not feeling right for my body. So I think it ranges. And there's not like a, I think sometimes parents want there to be like a magic phrase that like, okay, if I hear this, this means my child is blank. Yeah. And so part of it, I think is just helping parents slow down a little bit, breathe.

And again, just reassure that we can get through this together, you know, your child.

[00:20:20] **Tavi Hawn:** Is going to let you know what they need and want as long as you're talking with them in ways that foster, that kind of communication.

[00:20:28] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. And that seems really important. So I mean, everything you said totally makes sense about, you know, it's not like they're going to necessarily say at five years old, I'm gender fluid, but they might say, like you said, No, I don't want to be called that or call me this, or why can't I wear, you know, this or things like that.

[00:20:51] **Laura Reagan:** And I think it's like culturally in Western culture and European culture, it's pretty common for parents to just kind of. Tell them, no, you're not. Or don't, don't say that, or that's not for you that's for this group. And really not necessarily even consciously thinking that they should have been paying more attention to what the child was really trying to let them know.

[00:21:14] **Laura Reagan:** But I think that back probably do a lot of harm even unintentionally.

[00:21:19] **Tavi Hawn:** Yeah. And I think part of the reason why in, in our mainstream society, Who are five, aren't saying I'm gender fluid is because we're not teaching them from birth. That there's all these different genders. Here's all these different words.

[00:21:34] **Tavi Hawn:** Here's, here's the different people that I personally know that you can grow up knowing who have these different gender identities. Right. I feel like a lot of kids are in these kinds of bubbles of I'm only growing up around people who are cisgender, who are straight, you know, and have the stereotypical gender expression.

[00:21:53] **Tavi Hawn:** And nobody else is telling me about anything else than less, that has like a negative connotation to it. So if I think part of what the book is talking about is that if we're actually raising kids from the beginning with, you know, teaching them about these things, Then they will have more words and language earlier on to tell us how they feel.

[00:22:14] **Tavi Hawn:** So for folks that I know were raising their kids that way, their kid may be able to say earlier on, Hey, I'm non binary, you know, or,

Hey, I want this to be my pronoun, you know, because they knew that there's different pronouns that people use and things like that.

[00:22:29] **Laura Reagan:** Right? Just like, if you tell your child there's boys and there's girls, then they're like, oh, which one am I?

[00:22:34] **Laura Reagan:** They can only, there's only two choices. Right?

[00:22:37] **Tavi Hawn:** Exactly. Yeah.

[00:22:39] **Laura Reagan:** How did, how should parents teach their children that just across the board, whether your child turns out to fit into a binary or not? What language can parents use with kids? That's not going to like overwhelm them, but just normalizing the variety.

[00:22:57] **Tavi Hawn:** Things that you can do. For example, like when you're reading your kids a book, a story I know right now, you know, my kid has all these board books, these baby books, they're all, you know, mostly written with, like, this is a boy. He does blah, blah, blah. This is a girl. She does this. Here's the mommy, here's the dad, you know?

[00:23:17] **Tavi Hawn:** And so when I'm reading that too, I can use different pronouns for different people. I can, you know, call a child in a book, a kid, instead of girl or boy, I can, you know, use different words for the parents or the caregivers in the story. And I can do that as a way, not that I'm, you know, trying to just change the book, but as a way to introduce early on to my kid, that there's different pronouns people have in use there's different genders people have.

[00:23:47] **Tavi Hawn:** Um, because I also want to teach that I can't just look at a person that I don't know and know what their gender is. And so part of how we can practice doing that is when we're out and about. If we see somebody we don't know, or we talk to somebody, we don't know, we can use gender neutral language by saying like, oh, that person over there, you know, that person riding the bike or whatever, it may be and explain to our kid, I'm saying that person, because I haven't talked to them. And asked what their pronouns are or what their gender is. So those are just little everyday. You can just do that in normal conversation. And those types of things really help kids understand. Okay. You know, and then they're going to have questions cause they're going to be like, well, so-and-so at school says that, you know, there's only boys and there's only girls.

[00:24:36] **Tavi Hawn:** And then that can bring up another conversation.

[00:24:40] **Laura Reagan:** How does a parent handle that conversation?

[00:24:44] **Tavi Hawn:** Well, you know, I think you can say there's a lot of people that don't know still that there's a lot of genders, so some people still think that there's only two, but really, there's a lot. And there always has been a lot throughout history, but our schools and everything, aren't teaching people about that history.

[00:25:02] **Tavi Hawn:** So that's why people don't know. So that's a way to explain it. And sometimes kids also just ask things in different ways. Like another therapist, friend of mine who had read the book reached out and was like, oh, I'm so glad I had just read your book because my kindergartner, the other day came home and said, um, what, what did the doctor say that I was?

[00:25:23] **Tavi Hawn:** And the parents said, well, what do you mean? And kids said, what did the doctor say? I was a boy or I was a girl. And the mom said, well, the doctor said this, but what do you think we could have gotten it wrong? And so that in the mom was like, I knew I could say that because I read that in the book. So those are just little like conversations that you might not be able to predict, you know, but you can kind of have some answers in mind for when those kinds of questions come up from your kids.

[00:25:52] **Laura Reagan:** Running a group private practice has been a challenging and rewarding experience. And one thing that has made it so much easier is Therapy Notes. Therapy Notes makes billing, scheduling, note taking. And tele-health incredibly easy. If you're coming from another EHR, like I did therapy Notes Makes the transition incredibly easy.

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[00:26:57] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah, it's really about kind of letting go of binary thinking and being open to whatever and being curious about whatever they're presenting. I don't know when I was a kid in Virginia, I had a friend who, when, whenever we would play the friend, my friend, a girl would say, I'll be, um, prince so-and-so. And you be the like princess and I'll rescue you from the castle or whatever is, are still doing gender, gender norm.

[00:27:28] **Laura Reagan:** But, um, I didn't question, well, why are you being a prince? If you're a girl, you know, I was a kid. I was just like, okay, that's what you want to do. So, you know, it's, it's the adults who put these limitations on the natural curiosity and natural, like openness, I guess, that kids just have.

[00:27:49] **Tavi Hawn:** Yeah. I mean, the kids really understand this stuff really easily, from what I've seen.

[00:27:54] **Tavi Hawn:** It's, it's the adults that struggle with them more. And you know, I also encourage adults to think about what their own relationship is to gender. And how did they know what their gender was? Have they ever let themselves think about are the ways that I've expressed my gender throughout time. Does that feel true to me?

[00:28:12] **Tavi Hawn:** Were there ways that I felt kind of boxed in, like I wasn't allowed to do certain things or look certain ways or act certain ways because sometimes adults haven't even given themselves permission to think about those things.

[00:28:25] **Laura Reagan:** I suspect that that might make it more difficult for those adults who haven't ever thought about that if their child is presenting a different possibility to them about the child, that that's the kind of thing that makes the blind spots that make us react, you know, with that, no, there's two choices.

[00:28:45] **Tavi Hawn:** Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And I think helping parents and caregivers get to, what is the root of the reaction for them? You know, is it fear of what other people are going to say or do about the family or about the kid? Is it trauma? Because a lot of people, very young were punished for doing anything that was outside of.stereotypical gender norms. And so parents had that experience really young in childhood. They may be quickly and were like, okay, I cannot, you know, I have to be in this spots and stay in it. And that's what you do to be safe and take care of yourself. And they could have suppressed that. And I do see that and hear that a lot.

[00:29:26] **Tavi Hawn:** Once we get into working with people on this things, you know, you hear lots of sad stories about the ways people were punished in early childhood for just trying to express their selves the way they wanted.

[00:29:38] **Laura Reagan:** With what felt right for them. Yeah. Yeah, it is. Um, and I know that again, there's a lot of harm that can come from the boxes.

[00:29:48] **Laura Reagan:** That culture puts us in. One of the things that you and I started to talk about a little bit before we started recording, was that, and you mentioned this too when you said that you were glad that more people are contacting therapists, looking for how to support their child, that this has always been a possibility.

[00:30:07] **Laura Reagan:** The gender spectrum has always existed, but you know, through culture, through history, it's some places and some cultures have completely wiped out the potential for considering anything. But boy or girl.

[00:30:20] **Tavi Hawn:** Yeah. Yeah. It's something that I talk to folks at work with about a lot. And I wanted to put more of it in the book that the publishers were like, this is going to too much.

[00:30:31] **Tavi Hawn:** So we got to pull back.

[00:30:32] **Laura Reagan:** And that'll be for an next book.

[00:30:33] **Tavi Hawn:** Yeah. Another book. Yeah. I guess a lot of people don't know that around the world, there have been, most cultures have had multiple genders as part of the culture. Um, it could be three genders, four genders, 5 genders. Many genders. And there've been some research studies that have been done that can directly tie the time period that a place was colonized usually by European forces.

[00:31:01] **Tavi Hawn:** Sometimes even in more recent history by like U.S, Imperialism like U.S military occupation of a place that there's a direct correlation between when that happened. And when that culture started to lose their reverence and valuing of multiple genders. So places that were able to go longer without being colonized.

[00:31:23] **Tavi Hawn:** Were able to retain their cultural belief system about many genders longer and some still have retained it today. And so that's something that, that history is definitely not taught in school. It's not something

most people are learning about, but it, we know like we have lots of historical evidence.

[00:31:41] **Tavi Hawn:** And again, some places today have always retained their belief system and they're honoring of multiple genders. But to know that we've always existed in most people are coming from a lineage of people and there was an intentional effort to wipe out that knowledge and in if we want to talk about turtle island.

[00:32:00] **Tavi Hawn:** So north America. Are calling from talking from that history, I think was intentional as part of genocide that two-spirit people and each tribe had their own terms for two spirit people before colonization, or if they didn't have a term, a lot of times it's just because everybody was just a person and you were just accepted, but, but people, two spirit people often held certain sacred roles, certain high positions.

[00:32:29] **Tavi Hawn:** Important roles within the tribe. And so in order for genocide to really be successful, those people had to be wiped out and removed. And also in order to be successful in genocide, uh, positions. Well, really the way that cultures, uh, were organized in matriarchal ways, a lot of times are matrilineal ways too, that had to be disrupted.

[00:32:53] **Tavi Hawn:** So that patriarchy could be put into place. And so all of that was really intentional and part of the overall plan. And again, this is a whole nother book, I guess, but it was also just a lot about lands, taking land and power. And so I think one thing that I encourage anybody that I'm working with, whether it's a family at child.

[00:33:13] **Tavi Hawn:** And adult, but for that person to whatever their own cultural heritage is, if they know it to learn about what their culture is, teachings and knowledge was about gender either before colonization, as far back as they can, can go with learning. And I try to also connect folks people with shared cultural identities so that they can have these conversations and so that they can learn from people who maybe know a little bit more about that so that they can be in community with other people with shared cultural traditions, because for a lot of people too, your gender and your culture, can't be like two separate things.

[00:33:53] **Tavi Hawn:** Totally separated or understood in separate ways, if that makes sense.

[00:33:58] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. It's like they are tangled together.

[00:34:01] **Tavi Hawn:** Yeah.

[00:34:01] **Tavi Hawn:** Yeah. I was just saying that's, you know, that's why I think it's important too, for folks to learn about the history of gender, as much as you can, and then connect with folks with shared identities to talk about what that means for you.

[00:34:16] **Laura Reagan:** Why is it important to talk with people with shared identities?

[00:34:19] **Tavi Hawn:** I think sometimes it's because. Your family or you yourself may have different experiences based on those identities. You know what I'd say? A lot is that gender expansive people and trans people were, are not like a monolith group. It's not like a community.

[00:34:36] **Tavi Hawn:** There's lots of communities. And so it can be important to be able to be in relationship with people that go through similar experiences that maybe can help kind of work through some of the maybe cultural challenges that are there of, okay. What does this mean? Maybe for a role that I, I might hold in the culture and if that's changing, what is that going to be like?

[00:34:57] **Tavi Hawn:** You know, how do we, I don't want to say recreate, but re-imagine sometimes cultural roles that people have. That may have been tied to different genders, or if your gender, your understanding of your gender is different. How is that going to affect the things that you do culturally? So it's just good. I think for people to have relationships where they can talk about that stuff, and sometimes people even, you know, form their own groups where they have cultural practices or spiritual practices, but they can also still be their full selves.

[00:35:29] **Laura Reagan:** Beautiful. You are, you are so knowledgeable about this and speak so easily about this subject. And I'm just really grateful that you are sharing your knowledge through your books through coming on this podcast and all the training and teaching that you do that is spreading this important information to as many people as possible, because, you know, it's just like you said, it's not that there is a new trend in the young people, and I've heard some people say that, like, why is, why are so many kids now saying that they're trans or nonbinary gender fluid?

[00:36:13] **Laura Reagan:** It's like we have to open up to be able to allow people to it shouldn't be to allow, but by opening people naturally can just. You

know, kind of blossom into all the full expression of themselves and when we're closed, it's, it's the opposite. It's like, you know?

[00:36:34] **Tavi Hawn:** Yeah. And you know, that's another thing I explained sometimes parents or just people that I talk with, they'll say, you know, well, my kid doesn't need to know about all this stuff now, but whoever they end up telling me when they're older, you know, when they're grown or whatever, I'll support them, whatever it is been.

[00:36:49] **Tavi Hawn:** And so with that, I try to help people understand that by taking that approach, you're kind of limiting the chances that your kid is going to feel like they can tell you who they are or they can be whoever they are, because you're not from the get, go communicating. Here's all of the people you might be in a I'm here for the journey of learning, who that is.

[00:37:10] **Tavi Hawn:** You know, and, and I'm still learning too. And I'll say that, you know, I, I do know a lot about a lot of these things, but I also am constantly learning. There is so much history to learn because we haven't been taught it. And so I feel like I'm on a lifelong journey with learning that language, you know, is informed by communities.

[00:37:29] **Tavi Hawn:** And so language changes a lot. And so I have to try to keep learning those things too. And so I think that's another reason I stress with families, just the concept of humility that I know people raising kids get a lot of pressure to do it right. Whatever that means, you know, and to raise good kids and whatever that means.

[00:37:50] **Tavi Hawn:** So I know that there's that pressure there, but that pressure can sometimes make us think that we know the best thing for our kid or that we we're the ones telling them what to do, and they just need to listen to us. And if we practice humility then we can admit, we don't know everything. And then we can admit, sometimes I probably am going to be able to see something that my kid needs to see, or I hope that they can understand.

[00:38:16] **Tavi Hawn:** And then other times. Maybe they need me to learn something from them.

[00:38:20] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. That's it it's like we don't always have to be the teacher. We, our children can teach us so much, you know, and I was just struck when you were saying that about like parents feeling like we have, you know, we have to know everything and have all the answers and we have to be right.

[00:38:36] **Laura Reagan:** Just how much all parents want their children to be safe. Yes. And I think, yes. Fear because of. Our culture, this U.S culture, Western European culture, European influenced culture, like is violent towards people who don't fit the acceptable group stereotype, whatever it is. And so parents are afraid at times that if their child is in some way different, that they will be unsafe.

[00:39:06] **Laura Reagan:** And it's true that there is a lot of transphobic violence in our culture. And I think what you're doing is to change that for one to just start from children's early years, educating parents about how to do things differently and be open and accepting and curious.

[00:39:26] **Tavi Hawn:** And yeah, I mean, that's, that's one thing that I say in the book that one of my huge hopes for it is that people who read it.

[00:39:35] **Tavi Hawn:** Apply this stuff to all, all the kids that they're interacting with, because the other piece that can come out of that is that kids who are cis-gender, they identify with the gender they're assigned at birth. And that doesn't change that doesn't their understanding is always, um, cisgender those kids can be raised to be affirming compassionate of kids with other genders and that decreases the level of violence that we see towards the trans communities and, and especially trans folks of color. So it's really, if we take this approach in raising kids, it really helps everybody regardless of what their gender identity is. And I can, I have deep empathy for parents, fear of people hurting their child because of who they are.

[00:40:20] **Tavi Hawn:** There is real risk. There is real violence. And we see this year 2022, I think is the most anti-trans legislation that's ever been proposed in the United States across a bunch of states. So we see trans people being used as sort of a political like lightening rod to try to rile up, you know, and being used as ponds for that.

[00:40:42] **Tavi Hawn:** And that's very hurtful to the people that experienced that and that hold these identities. And so I empathize and I, I don't minimize parents' fear about that. And I encourage them that their kid is who they are. They're going to be who they are. And we can either make it easier for them to be who they are or we can make it harder and making it harder.

[00:41:05] **Tavi Hawn:** Also has some really scary. To it, um, that can also end up in death and things like that. And so by making it easier for your kids to be who they are, you can tap into your own strengths. You can call on your own support network and say, look, I need y'all to back me on this. I need your help.

You know, I'm scared call on your village to show up for your family and your kids seeing you do that, gives them.

[00:41:32] **Tavi Hawn:** And it gives them that sense of I can make it through whatever comes my way with this, because we also have to believe in gender expansive people's resilience, right. That we have always been resilient too. We have always been fierce. We have always fought for ourselves and we are not going to stop doing it.

[00:41:49] **Tavi Hawn:** And we really want our families to do it with. You know, we really want our families to be there with us in that and to love us and to love us for who we are, how we are, and to be celebrated, that's.

[00:42:01] **Laura Reagan:** Celebrated, not tolerated, celebrated.

[00:42:05] **Tavi Hawn:** Celebrated. Yeah. And I think I also try to encourage parents. They can feel the fear.

[00:42:11] **Tavi Hawn:** And can you channel that, you know, with fear, there's usually also anger that people are coming at my child for being who they are. Right. So how can you channel that into action for the sake of all trans folks? Not just your own family, but I have seen a lot of family members. Really move into activism and advocacy because of their experience of their own child's journey.

[00:42:33] **Laura Reagan:** I'm so inspired by what you're saying. I really am. I mean, it's just beautiful and hopeful, very hopeful message and very like, down to the core of what matters. So I'm just so grateful for what you're doing.

[00:42:48] **Tavi Hawn:** Yeah. And when families are scared, I try to help us ground in that too. Like life can be really short, you know, I think the older I get and the more I understand that, so clearly, so at, in the big picture, if we really zoom out, what really matters?

[00:43:03] **Tavi Hawn:** What really, really matters. We have one chance, one time period on this earth, and none of us knows how long it's going to be. So with that, what do I want my relationship with my child to be? And how do I want them to experience me as a parent when they're saying this is who I am, whatever that, whatever that is that they're saying, that this is who I am.

[00:43:23] **Laura Reagan:** I think that's a great place to end because that's it it's like what really matters. You know, and what, you know, do you want the, I

don't mean this in any kind of a shaming way, but when you're an ancestor, how do you want to be remembered? Do you want to be the one who brought change that was needed or do you want to be the one that's stood in the way and made things harder?

[00:43:44] **Laura Reagan:** And that other people had to heal from.

[00:43:46] **Tavi Hawn:** Yes. Yes. I love that.

[00:43:48] **Laura Reagan:** Me too. I think you just brought that right out on me. Thank you. So Tavi I know that many people who are listening might be thinking if they're therapists, they might be thinking, can I consult with Tavi or, you know, where can I get this book?

[00:44:04] **Laura Reagan:** Is there training? And I know you do training. I'm going to a training that I know you, you lead a part of, which is the Shauna Marie Brown's de-colonizing therapy. Oh, yes. So good. So where can people find what you're doing if they want to get in touch with you and, and

[00:44:23] **Laura Reagan:** learn, and.

[00:44:24] **Tavi Hawn:** Sure they can email info@hawntherapyandconsulting.com.

[00:44:31] **Tavi Hawn:** I do offer a lot of different types of consulting. I work with organizations sometimes on a long-term contract basis where we're working on a particular project or we're working. To really do an assessment of the whole organization and then come up with changes that we want to make. I do group consults for therapists and mental health providers who are wanting to be trans-affirming in their work.

[00:44:58] **Tavi Hawn:** I do one-on-one consultations. Therapist. Just want to do I have this one case I want to meet with you a couple of times about, so I do that. And then our practice, we have several different trainers in our practice and we offer a lot of different topics of trainings related to LGBTQ plus people, two spirit people anti-racist practice.

[00:45:19] **Tavi Hawn:** A lot of different topics aside, fun thing that I also do is helping people design their practice spaces or their offices. So I have a little bit of a side interior decorator thing. Yeah. And then the books, there is an author website, tavihawn.com. People can find the books on Amazon, but there are also some local bookstores that are carrying them.

[00:45:46] **Tavi Hawn:** And I encourage folks. If you have a favorite local bookstore to just ask them to order a few copies, is I really like to support independent, book sellers when I can.

[00:45:55] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. Okay. And that's T a V I H a w n.com, right?

[00:46:00] **Tavi Hawn:** Yeah, you got it.

[00:46:01] **Laura Reagan:** Okay. And then it was info@hawntherapyandconsulting.com. Right. Okay. I'll put those in the show notes and Tavi, thank you so, so much for bringing your wisdom to Therapy Chat today and teaching us and inspiring us. Um, I'm very grateful and I've learned something and been very inspired.

[00:46:22] **Tavi Hawn:** He thank you for having me. Nice talking with you, and I'm just really honored that you invited me to do this.

[00:46:33] **Laura Reagan:** Thank you to Therapy Notes for sponsoring this week's episode. I do love Therapy Notes. It's such an asset to my business and makes my job as a practice owner and a therapist. Much easier. Try it today with no strings attached to see why everyone is switching to Therapy Notes. Now featuring E-Prescribe. Use coupon code chat or click the link in the show notes to get two free months@therapynotes.com.

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