

Kieryn Darkwater:

I'm Kieryn.

Eve Ettinger:

I'm Hännah. This is Kitchen Table Cult.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Where two Quiverfull escapees talk about our experiences in the cultish underbelly of the religious right.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Hey, Hännah.

Eve Ettinger:

Hey, Kieryn. How's it going?

Kieryn Darkwater:

You know. I'm here. And I did school this week, so...

Eve Ettinger:

Same. I did school this week, I slept most nights, and I have yet to murder a man.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Yes, that's... same. Same story here. I haven't yet murdered anybody.

Eve Ettinger:

I feel very proud of myself.

Kieryn Darkwater:

I feel like it's increasingly more and more of an achievement.

Eve Ettinger:

Right? I mean, they're really not making it easy. It's like they're asking for it. But, because we're nice, normal people who are familiar with how consent works, we're not killing anybody right now.

Kieryn Darkwater:

My English class has basically been me teaching people about how the patriarchy works, because we're reading Elaine Brown, and one of my classmates is a extremely cis, white dude with egg vibes, and he's like, "I don't understand why-"

Eve Ettinger:

You're going to have to... yeah, not everybody knows what egg vibes are.

Kieryn Darkwater:

I will explain that after this story. And he was like, "I don't understand why Elaine saw these men being misogynistic and didn't necessarily do anything every time."

Kieryn Darkwater:

And I was like, "My dude. Uh, let me explain to you about how this works. It's not always safe to do that. It puts you in danger. You're not always listened to. Look at what happened this week with Dr. Ford," and I just laid it out. And it was exhausting.

Eve Ettinger:

When I get that conversation, I usually just go straight to the news article from the situation in Pittsburgh where [inaudible 00:02:21] was approached by a guy, and she didn't want to go dancing with him, or let him buy her a drink, and she was like, "I'm leaving. Leave me alone." She left the club and went outside, and was waiting for her Uber, and he shot her.

Kieryn Darkwater:

See? That shit. That's shit is why.

Eve Ettinger:

That's exactly why we don't do this.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Anyway. What are we talking about this week, Hännah?

Eve Ettinger:

How to not kill anyone when you're angry at the patriarchy, AKA self-care.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Yes. Good.

Eve Ettinger:

And this includes yourself. Not to kill anyone, including yourself.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Including yourself. And we have somebody with us today who's been a part of this podcast forever. Since we started, basically.

Eve Ettinger:

And he's always with us every time we record, basically, but this time, he's actually participating.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Aaron, do you want to introduce yourself?

Aaron:

Hi, you guys.

Eve Ettinger:

Hey, Aaron.

Aaron:

I'm Aaron. I have been, as they said, part of this podcast from the start. Always on the editing side, though, so this is a little weird being on the other side of the microphone, as it were. Glad to be here.

Eve Ettinger:

Yeah. Didn't you have to steal your microphone from your job?

Aaron:

No, I borrowed it... I'll take it back Monday or Tuesday.

Eve Ettinger:

Okay. Well, do you want to tell people what your job is?

Aaron:

I work for a large megachurch, Evangelical church in Akron, Ohio. I am the video director, so I'm responsible for all of the content that goes on the screens during the service, make the pastor's slides, song lyrics, et cetera, et cetera. As well as all of the web updates for the organization, and making sure that the sermon video and edit, audio podcast is up and running each week.

Eve Ettinger:

So, doing work with us is functionally like reparations for whatever damage that church is doing?

Aaron:

Yeah, I guess you could put it that way.

Eve Ettinger:

We're really glad that you're helping us. We've had a couple people offer to fix our audio, after our first episode, which... the audio is, granted, terrible, because I was editing it and I don't know how to do that. And I was like, "No, no, no. We've got someone now. He's great."

Aaron:

Well, thanks.

Kieryn Darkwater:

So, self-care. Why are we talking about it this week, besides that we've all lived this week? Which I guess is really why we're talking about it.

Eve Ettinger:

Well, Aaron and I were talking about this a couple days ago, and I feel like he should take the lead on it, because this is kind of the... Kieryn, you and I have been practicing self-care for a long time, but what it is and why it's important is a little harder to grasp, especially if you come from an Evangelical

background where emotional needs are generally disregarded as sinful desires, and you're not supposed to trust your body or your emotions.

Aaron:

Yeah, sure. For me, it's a little different, and my upbringing wasn't nearly as fundamental as either of you two, but I grew up in a family where the man is supposed to be the strong man and take care of the family, and you can't show emotional weakness because you have to be strong.

Aaron:

And so, I basically was taught inadvertently, I guess you could say, you don't need to worry about that. You don't need to take care of yourself, because your job is to take care of others. And so, it wasn't really until probably in the last five years or so that I started recognizing, through my wife mostly, who was like, "You need to take care of some stuff," that I started seeing a therapist and was realizing, "Oh. I've got stuff to work on here. I need to take care of myself. I need to set aside time to be with myself, to be by myself, and to take care of myself. Because if I can't, then whether or not it's my job to take care of those around me, I can't if I'm not taking care of myself."

Eve Ettinger:

Yeah. My sister likes to say that, and I'm sure this came from a meme on the internet somewhere, but she likes to say, like, "We are complicated houseplants with feelings." Which is kind of-

Kieryn Darkwater:

My favorite thing is, "Brains are chemical soup." They're just a very hard balance. Sometimes the soup is off.

Eve Ettinger:

Yeah. That's real. Yeah, I mean, for me, self-care has always been something that was questionable because there's this sense of... suffering is important for holiness, and I think there was an article that was going around this week that was interesting. There was this study done of Calvinist households, and saying that Calvinism predisposes couples to domestic violence because the theology of suffering as godly or holy makes you more inclined to put up with stuff longer.

Eve Ettinger:

And so, having that kind of same base, that basis for my relationship with myself and my body, it's really hard to slow down and tell myself, "You're doing enough. You don't need to work harder. You don't need to beat yourself up for not doing more or doing better."

Aaron:

Yeah, and one thing that I've been trying to incorporate more when I interact with people... Since I've had this realization that self-care is essential to a healthy being, to a healthy self, is that when I see somebody struggling with something, I'll say, "Hey, take care of yourself. Hey, are you doing the self-care that you need?" And I don't take that lightly. I don't say it flippantly. I mean that as a, "Think about that. Do what you need to do to recharge."

Eve Ettinger:

I will give a similar admonition where it's like, you know, "Be nice to my friend."

Kieryn Darkwater:

Yes.

Eve Ettinger:

I care about my people more than they care about themselves often, and so, I feel like, "Hey, don't diss me by being mean to my friend. Take care of my friend."

Aaron:

Definitely.

Kieryn Darkwater:

That's what some of my friends have been telling me lately, too. They're like, "Don't beat up on Kieryn. They're fine. Be nice to them. I like them." Like, "Oh, okay. I guess I can do that."

Eve Ettinger:

Yeah, yeah. I like Kieryn more than Kieryn likes Kieryn.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Yeah.

Aaron:

Which is so true sometimes that, how often, when you're feeling down, you just don't like yourself? And to have somebody else say to you, "Hey, I like you, I care for you, do what you need to do," is really helpful.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Yeah.

Eve Ettinger:

Yeah.

Kieryn Darkwater:

It is really helpful. Yeah, self-care for me has also been a hard thing, because I was never meant to value myself. So, when I was growing up, my entire purpose was to be my mom's arms and legs when she was just pregnant. So, I was never supposed to have any needs. Learning that I had needs and learning that it was okay to have needs, and on top of that, that it's okay to take care of those needs, is something that's been a huge process to go through.

Eve Ettinger:

It's hard, and it's hard to admit that you're weak and you need help, and you need that kind of space, when you've been on the defensive for so long. I joke that I grew up in a surveillance state, because I

kind of did. And so, I think there's something about that mindset of trying to tough it out and survive and not show vulnerability, because it'll be used against you, has poisoned...

Eve Ettinger:

A lot of my siblings and I struggle to be vulnerable with each other. I think we genuinely like and respect each other, and have each other's backs, but there's this emotional distance that we're trying to offset potential risk always, because we don't want to be found out, still. Even though there's nothing to be afraid of, and we, as I said, like each other and have each other's backs, there's this sense of, "I can't admit that I have needs because that means that I'm going to get punished."

Aaron:

You've been condition.

Eve Ettinger:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kieryn Darkwater:

Yeah.

Aaron:

You've trained yourself to not ever be vulnerable. And so, part of self-care for me has been unlearning some of those things, even, where I have to be vulnerable with my therapist, with myself, in a way that I've never had to learn how to do growing up.

Eve Ettinger:

I have to learn how to not see my therapist as an authority figure. That's been a constant challenge.

Aaron:

Yes.

Eve Ettinger:

Not feeling like, "Oh, I have to, A, treat you like someone I have to confess to, like an accountability partner, but also there's not going to be any repercussions for being open."

Aaron:

Exactly. I've actually started getting to a point with my therapist where I'm saying, "I'm thinking about this thing, I'm not sure how to process it, but I need to keep thinking about it. So, remind me next time so that we can talk about it first thing, because I'm going to forget to bring it up, or I'm going to be hesitant to bring it up." And trying to treat it as more of a partnership, and working through all of these issues.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Yeah. My relationship with my therapist is basically a brain-dump on someone who knows how to hold it. So, I just talk about everything, and she just holds it and asks really good, pointed questions that help.

Eve Ettinger:

With my therapist, we don't do talk therapy, because I... again, trained to not see them as an authority figure. That's one easy way to shortcut that. Two, I literally can't afford to go through the years of therapy that it would require to catch someone up on where I've been. At some point, I'll probably find a talk therapist and I'll just hand them this podcast and be like, "All right, let's go."

Kieryn Darkwater:

"Here, listen to it. Thanks."

Eve Ettinger:

"Thank you. Here's your homework. Let's meet next month."

Kieryn Darkwater:

Yeah.

Eve Ettinger:

But I do EMDR, and she's a yoga teacher and a professor, and expert in this field of how your body responds to trauma. And so, we do a lot of lying on the floor, and opening up spaces in the body, and meditating and breathing, and then working through visualizations and EMDR stuff. So, it's really good, but last week, I ended up just crying on the floor for the entire hour. But I came in and I was like, "I'm not wearing my shoes, I'm sitting on the floor, and I'm bringing my dog. And I can't breathe if I have my bra on, so we're taking that off, and I am the boss here, because I have hired you to help me and this is what I need right now."

Eve Ettinger:

And she was super excited about it, because she's great. But it's taken me five years of therapy to get to a point with a practitioner, and it's not the same practitioner this whole time, but it's just getting used to that process where I can... "All right. This is my space right now."

Aaron:

Yeah. So, other than therapy, what do you two do on the regular for self-care? What do you try to do most? What's your go-to, I guess?

Kieryn Darkwater:

I usually... it depends on whether or not I need to distance myself or I need to ground myself. So, if I need to ground myself, I will walk around Lake Merritt at around the time everyone is walking their dogs, which is conveniently also around the time I get home from school, or walk home from school. And I will just walk and look at people's dogs, and there's this dock that I usually sit on, and I just sit there and meditate, and draw or write.

Kieryn Darkwater:

And if I need to disassociate and just not be part of the world for a bit, I will play video games. I will either play The Sims 4, because it is super chill, and you can just be and live life without worrying about anything, and you can have pets now. So, I have this really cute gay couple and a dog, and it is good.

Eve Ettinger:

Is it your pet gay couple?

Kieryn Darkwater:

Basically, yes. Or I'll play Destiny 2 if I need to take out anger and just kill aliens. Those are my... yeah.

Aaron:

It's like the simulated version of punching the pillow.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Yes, exactly.

Eve Ettinger:

God, I need to get a punching bag. Again, it depends on what the need is. I've got a whole toolbox full of tricks that I use. My go-to, often the most time-efficient thing, is I take a nap. I do power-naps, 15, 20 minutes, and it just kind of resets my brain, wherever my emotions are. Because something about the sleep mechanism records memories differently, and so, it helps me metabolize whatever has just happened a little bit without me having to actively engage it.

Eve Ettinger:

So, I'll take a power-nap, I'll make a cup of coffee, and then restart wherever I left off. And then, having this dog has been insanely good for me. Being able to just go for a walk with her, take her to the dog park, just get out of the house and leave my phone behind for 45 minutes to an hour while she goes and plays. She's so awkward and funny. Just watching her play with the other puppies at the park is hilarious, and that's a stress reliever.

Eve Ettinger:

I also have, if I need to check out or process something, I will do things to turn my brain off. So, I will go read in the bathtub, or I'll binge-watch a show, and again, usually that's trying to get my... stop observing my brain in action, stop observing myself processing something, and just let it incubate wherever it needs to go, and then it'll pop up later in a more developed form.

Aaron:

That's interesting. I'd never heard the part where you're saying about taking a power-nap and how it helps solidify or metabolize your memories. I'm interested to hear, is that something you'd studied before, or read about?

Eve Ettinger:

I mean, I have read about it in various places. I'm writing a memoir, and one of the things that is talked a lot about is kind of the stuff that was talked about with Dr. Ford's testimony is, like, how do you remember things? And how does the brain actually solidify memories?

Eve Ettinger:



And a lot of the time, when you look at recall for witnesses to an accident or a robbery or whatever, it's really easy to place details suggestively. So, it'd be like, "Yeah, was he wearing a red shirt?"

Eve Ettinger:

"Yeah, of course he was wearing a red shirt." And suddenly, you remember that.

Eve Ettinger:

And so, if you don't look at something too closely, you can almost preserve it better. So, if I am like, "Something's bothering me, something's off," and I am looking for the trigger, I can't always find it by looking at things directly.

Aaron:

And let it simmer in the background.

Eve Ettinger:

Yeah. I have to let my brain do its own thing and go do something else. It's like running a background process on your laptop.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Yeah.

Eve Ettinger:

And I don't know, my mom and I have always done this; she would do this to cope with stuff at home, so I learned it from her. She's a nurse, and I think she was the one who introduced me to some of the science behind it. But 20 minutes is enough time for your brain to fall into deep sleep and cycle back out. So, 20-minute increments, 20, 40, 120, those are the limits that you need to do to have a successful nap that's not going to leave you super tired and groggy.

Eve Ettinger:

So, I am not an expert on any of this, but this is just anecdotally stuff I've been tinkering with for a long time. This is what works for me.

Aaron:

That's interesting.

Eve Ettinger:

Yeah.

Kieryn Darkwater:

I feel like I should try that. But my brain also does this thing where if I lay down and then I'm quiet, and then everything starts turning in a very loud loop, and I can't turn it off, and I'm like, "Okay, I need to actually go do something so I'm distracting myself."

Eve Ettinger:

Yeah, right. For me, I have almost conditioned myself to do this now... I mean, I've been doing this since college, and it's now gotten to the point where if something emotionally intense happens, I get really sleepy immediately.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Ah. [inaudible 00:20:17]

Eve Ettinger:

It's like my body knows, "We're going to just go check out for a bit."

Aaron:

"Hey, you. We need to process this."

Eve Ettinger:

Yeah. "Hey, can you listen now?" So, yeah. And sometimes I'll even do the thing, I don't know if you are familiar with this, but the way caffeine hits your system, it takes 20 minutes to hit. So, usually I'll have a cup of coffee before I take that nap.

Kieryn Darkwater:

That makes sense.

Aaron:

I've heard about that, too, where that actually helps you, when you're done with your nap, to be more alert instead of super groggy.

Eve Ettinger:

Yep, yep. Yeah, I don't know. It's a method that I've been using for years, and it's always been pretty fruitful. But I think one thing I was thinking about when we talked about... I want to take a minute to note, we were talking about self-care and why it's important, especially for people who have survived trauma or violence. The self-care options that are available kind of mimic the flight-or-fight response, and it's ways of capturing that and channeling it into healthy outlets, rather than causing chaos.

Eve Ettinger:

I think one thing that is important to note is because I grew up in such a state of crisis or chaos all the time, and with apocalyptic thinking about the world and how things are going to end, and it was always politically a crisis... Kieryn, you and I have talked about this a lot.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Yep.

Eve Ettinger:

This moment, the way... especially white women are responding to what happened yesterday, is... It feels like how we grew up.

Kieryn Darkwater:

It does.

Eve Ettinger:

It feels like the catastrophizing of politics and life that the home school fundamentalists, Quiverfull people, had when they were like, "Yeah, but we're the most persecuted people and the world's about to end."

Eve Ettinger:

So, I have to be careful not to artificially generate crises to keep myself stable. I feel like I'm used to functioning at a certain level of stress, and so, if I'm in a relationship, this is when I go and start a fight. I'm like, "I need an emotional release, so I'm going to go pick on you until you blow up, and then I blow up, and then I have a good cry, and then I feel great." Or I have to go fix something, or find some battle to take on.

Eve Ettinger:

And so, actively subverting that so that I don't hurt the people around me that I love, and don't create more trouble for myself later, is one thing that my self-care habits are always geared around.

Aaron:

It sounds like one of the reconditioning things we were talking about earlier. Just recognizing that that's something your body, it says it needs, but recognizing now that you don't need that. And so, how can I change that? How can I channel that into something else, healthfully?

Eve Ettinger:

Well, if you've been disassociated for so long, you may not be aware of how adrenaline is processing in your body. These are actual biological needs. The fight-or-flight response, your limbic arousal state is activated. There's adrenaline in your system that you have to release and literally process.

Eve Ettinger:

And so, this is why I joke about, I want a punching bag. I want to tire myself out. I want to get to some extreme physically or emotionally so that I can have that release.

Aaron:

Yeah. It makes total sense.

Eve Ettinger:

I can catharsize it. So, finding ways to do that, or to wait long enough for it to naturally level back down. This is why when you do trauma-based therapy around the body, they'll have you do cross-body touching. So, you put one hand on your belly and one hand on your heart, and that... it's your parasympathetic... whatever your breathing and your heart rate, linking them back together, and bringing them both back down.

Eve Ettinger:

So, I forget the term. It's parasynthetic, I think, but whatever that is, it's cocooning yourself and regulating your breathing and letting that process occur naturally, rather than forcing it. So, watching a TV show, or playing with Sims, or taking that walk is probably a way of doing that, changing your environment. It's like resetting all those things.

Aaron:

Yeah.

Kieryn Darkwater:

That makes sense. One of the other ways that self-care happens, we've talked a lot about disassociating and grounding and stuff, but something that's sometimes really helpful for me, especially when I'm feeling powerless and angry and I need to feel like I can change something, is to directly engage in a project that makes my corner of the world better. So, kind of the way that I wound up handling a lot of the stress this week is I'm organizing on campus, and Coming Out Week is this week on campus, and I'm one of the forces behind all of the events that are happening. And I was able to just sort of...

Kieryn Darkwater:

I spent a lot of time just working on organizing that this week, and it felt like I was actively thwarting what was happening, because while everything is going down and making things harder for anyone who isn't a cis, straight white dude, at least at Laney, there's going to be a little, tiny pocket that is safe for all of the queers.

Aaron:

Yeah.

Eve Ettinger:

Yeah. I'm doing similar things here. I've got voluntarily roped in... [inaudible 00:26:28] into helping with the Mental Health America's Roanoke chapter. Their office is the only free mental health clinic in all of Virginia, and they're doing a fundraiser in a couple weeks. And so, I'm helping with the organization for that.

Eve Ettinger:

So, I can't directly contribute, but I have lots of ideas, and then lots of experience with this kind of stuff, and so, I can be present in the room and help facilitate these things that will directly benefit the people who are going to be hurt by Brett Kavanaugh and whatever policies that he upholds.

Aaron:

My self-care has taken on a little bit of a different role. There's some similarities there, where I want to be able to create a better world around myself. I've always been a very creative person, loved music, have a music degree that I don't use anymore, and it's a big part of my world that I don't get to use. I don't get to do that anymore.

Aaron:

And so, I've kind of channeled that into a creative outlet for myself. I had somebody who basically donated an entire wood shop full of equipment, because I said I was interested in building things and

becoming a woodworker, and he was too old to use it anymore. And so, in my garage, I have a whole bunch of really nice woodworking equipment, and I've been spending a lot of time on YouTube. I have probably six different channels I subscribe to that are all makers of some kind, and I'm trying to learn techniques from them, and trying to figure out different ways to build things with my hands. To have this creative outlet.

Aaron:

And I've built three or four different things, and only one of them has been for myself. I've been trying to give these things to other people because I like them, I care for them, and, "Look at this cool thing I built. And you get to have it."

Kieryn Darkwater:

Do you have a lathe? A wood lathe?

Aaron:

I do. It's a really old one, it's from the '30s...

Kieryn Darkwater:

That's fine. I use lathes from the '30s. So, when I go to Akron this winter, I should say hi and hang out in your wood shop garage.

Aaron:

You should. Yeah.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Yes.

Aaron:

Yeah.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Okay.

Eve Ettinger:

Kieryn's going to...

Aaron:

I'll need to get a space heater though.

Eve Ettinger:

Get down on one knee and be like, "Will you be my shop husband?"

Kieryn Darkwater:

"Can I just borrow your lathe?"

Aaron:

Yeah, it's been a lot of fun.

Eve Ettinger:

I think doing this podcast is a little like that for me. It's something I can give away that is educating people. So, I'm super angry all the time because I see all these connections, and I know I'm not making it up or crazy, so let me bring you up to speed with what I see, and do it in bite-sized portions.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Yeah. That's what this feels like for me, too. It's really cathartic, and it's also like, "Here, let me tell you what's happening and how these dots are connected, because I know how these dots are connected, and it seems like you should know."

Eve Ettinger:

Yeah. I was talking to one of the local political organizers here about why I'm doing this, as opposed to working with one of the campaigns here. I don't really have time to do that with school. I do have time to do this, and I feel like this reaches a similar demographic of people who are a little bit confused about what's going on, and really want to understand more, and know how to change or work against whatever's happening.

Eve Ettinger:

So, yeah, I should be more active in the midterms, and I'm definitely following everything and encouraging people to vote, but I feel like this is what I can contribute right now.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Yeah. A lot of my election work right now is basically helping out with the organizations that I'm involved in, setting up things for them, but also I'm mostly just going to make a slate card and hand it out to all my friends on campus and tell them to vote, and that's my contribution on top of this.

Eve Ettinger:

I will say, dear listeners... there's glitches in systems that, I don't know if it's hacking or tampering, but people are finding that they're removed from voter rolls when they get to the polls.

Aaron:

I've been seeing that.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Yep.

Eve Ettinger:

So, make sure that you have all your documentation with you and in order when you go to vote, and insist on being given... they have supplemental forms, and it takes a little bit longer, but you can still do it even if it says that you're not showing up in the system. Just push for it. But also, check online every couple weeks to make sure that you're still registered.

Kieryn Darkwater:

They cannot deny you the right to vote.

Eve Ettinger:

Yep.

Kieryn Darkwater:

I was a poll worker. They're not allowed to do it. If they do it, cause a stink, because it's illegal and they have to give you at least a provisional ballot.

Eve Ettinger:

Yep. Yep. So, stand up for your rights, and make sure that you're able to do it. And I know that local organizers, in almost every precinct, they're coordinating rides. So, if you can't get to the polls, put out feelers on Facebook, find someone who'll give you a ride, find someone you can carpool with. They are out there and they're offering. I feel like-

Aaron:

I saw something somewhere that... might have been Uber, is giving free rides to polls?

Eve Ettinger:

Yeah. I was going to just mention that. I think it's Uber, too.

Aaron:

Oh, okay.

Eve Ettinger:

I think it is Uber that's doing that. So, there's solutions. Go find them.

Kieryn Darkwater:

And if you can't do that, you can request a mail-in ballot, I think. You can probably still request it this week if you're fast.

Eve Ettinger:

Yeah. I think it's a month out.

Aaron:

Check your local deadlines.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Yeah.

Eve Ettinger:

Yeah. Anyway, thank you for that moment...

Kieryn Darkwater:  
Everyone, go vote.

Aaron:  
Please vote.

Eve Ettinger:  
Everyone go vote.

Kieryn Darkwater:  
For whatever remains of our democracy.

Eve Ettinger:  
And if you have extra time, go knock on doors. Whatever your local race is, go knock on doors, try to get people out, just try to get... even just getting people to the fucking polls is really the name of the game right now.

Aaron:  
Yep.

Kieryn Darkwater:  
Yep.

Eve Ettinger:  
So, other self-care things, other tricks that you've learned, other things that surprised you about how your life and your body started responding, once you started listening to your own needs?

Aaron:  
It was hard at first, when I finally recognized, "Oh, I really need to get out of this house, by myself, no kids, no one to worry about," and the first couple times I did that, I was stuck in the car in a parking lot, going, "What do I do? Where do I go? I guess I could see a movie. Oh, sure, why not?" And it took a while of kind of that listening to my body aspect, to realize that, "No, no, no, that wasn't really cutting it," and that's when I started to pursue the woodworking thing, and...

Aaron:  
Just taking the time. Don't give up, don't be frustrated; I mean, you can be frustrated all you want, but don't give into the frustration, and just recognize that everyone needs it. Just keep pursuing it.

Eve Ettinger:  
Or if you have your frustration, take it to the gym. Find a punching bag.

Aaron:  
Yeah.



Eve Ettinger:

I was taking the trails...

Kieryn Darkwater:

My therapist taught me silent screaming.

Aaron:

Do tell.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Which is like...

Eve Ettinger:

We're both like, "Wait, what?"

Kieryn Darkwater:

Yeah. No, so, silent screaming is basically... you make like you're going to scream, but you don't actually yell, you just scream silently. Like this...

Aaron:

Okay.

Kieryn Darkwater:

The mic picked that up. You won't hear it. And it's really helpful. And so, sometimes this is just... for a solid couple weeks, or months, really earlier this year, my partner and I'd just, in the morning, we'd look at each other over our coffee, and just scream silently at each other. It does the release that screaming gives you, but it doesn't worry the neighbors.

Eve Ettinger:

Well, it's like the full-body engagement. Just going and excising the adrenaline somehow by engaging your entire body. Earlier this year, I was going trail-running, and I hate running, and I love hiking, and I love being outside, and I'm not very in shape. I don't have a lot of stamina for that kind of stuff. But just getting myself to the point of exhaustion so I could just exist was really nice.

Aaron:

Hm. Just wearing your body down to a point where you could actually relax?

Eve Ettinger:

Yep. Pretty much.

Aaron:

Yeah.

Eve Ettinger:

Which is probably an abusive relationship tactic, and is something I need to keep working on, but, hey, it's a start.

Kieryn Darkwater:

In the meantime, it helps. Yeah.

Eve Ettinger:

In the meantime, it helps. Okay, so, part two to that question: Aaron...

Aaron:

Yes.

Eve Ettinger:

How can dudes be helping? I guess, Kieryn, you can answer this, too, although maybe less...

Kieryn Darkwater:

Not really.

Eve Ettinger:

No, you got far less privilege. Okay, so, how can privileged individuals be helping sexual assault survivors get through this fucking news cycle?

Aaron:

That is a hard question, and it's something I've been struggling with. I'm not one to get involved politically anyway, but the one thing that I've learned, especially this past week, has been to check in. I spent a good part of last night texting almost all the women that I know, or at least have a close enough relationship to where I could just randomly text them, to say, "Hey, how are you doing tonight?"

Aaron:

And some of them were like, "I'm fine. Okay." And they're like, "What's up?"

Aaron:

"I don't know. Just checking in after this week. I know it's been hard for everyone. Just making sure you're okay."

Aaron:

And some of them were like, "Yeah, thanks, great," and some of the others were like... it spawned into an hour-long conversation, and by the end of it, they're just like, "Oh. Thank you." I'm not trying to toot my own horn or anything by saying of that, but it's-

Eve Ettinger:

But it's a practical way of doing emotional labor.

Aaron:

Yes.

Kieryn Darkwater:

I really appreciated it.

Aaron:

Thanks. And just sitting back and listening is a big one. One of the conversations I had was... I didn't have a lot to offer them, but it was good to just sit back and listen, and hear what she was having to say, and being a sounding board for some of the thoughts she was having, and it was just really nice. It was really nice to just be there for somebody without any kind of agenda or any purpose, necessarily, other than be a friend.

Eve Ettinger:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah, that's really good.

Kieryn Darkwater:

I feel like that's really important.

Aaron:

Yeah.

Eve Ettinger:

I had a friend this week, somewhere mid-week, she Venmo'd me \$25 and was like, "This is for wine." And I was like, "That's so nice." And she didn't have to do that, and then she's also a survivor of all of this stuff, so she gets it, but it was just nice to feel... I don't know, seen.

Aaron:

Yeah.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Yeah.

Eve Ettinger:

Something like that was just like... it was a concrete gesture of solidarity.

Aaron:

Let me turn the question back on you. What would you like to see more cis, white dudes do? Speaking for both myself and my brethren, as it were. And I know, I'm very potentially opening a huge can of worms, but here we go.

Eve Ettinger:

Kieryn, you start.

Kieryn Darkwater:

I mean, listening, and validating that that's okay, is a good place. It's like that people are having their feelings, and just understanding that, and not taking that personally is huge. But also, talk to your own people. Tell them this shit isn't okay. Be like, "That's not cool. You can't treat people like this." That's where it has to come from, really.

Kieryn Darkwater:

That's something that I've noticed, weirdly, in English class now, is... because I'm trans-masculine, no one in my class reads me as a girl, but all of my experiences are that of growing up as a woman, right? So, I have all of this insight, insights... it's really just life experience, as to what it's like, and I can explain things like why women let men wear them down, or go along with things, or don't always cause a fuss or whatever. Why they don't speak up and report things, because I grew up that way.

Kieryn Darkwater:

And what I'm noticing is the men in the class are listening to me, because I have a deep voice, and they're like, "I was never taught any of that."

Kieryn Darkwater:

And I'm like, "No shit, you weren't. You're a dude. No, you weren't taught that. I was. I was taught that, and I am telling you, this is what we're taught and this is why we have a problem." And it's weird and interesting and frustrating, watching that sink in, just because of my voice. If another girl in class had said the same things, they wouldn't have listened the same way.

Aaron:

Oh, not at all. It would have gone over their heads and they would have shrugged it off.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Yeah.

Eve Ettinger:

Yeah. Yeah.

Aaron:

Do we need a whole nother podcast for your answer?

Eve Ettinger:

No. I think that what it boils down to is not participating in apathy because you hate your gender. Or because you're afraid of our anger.

Aaron:

That's really hard. Just saying. But I get it.

Eve Ettinger:

The degrees, the quality of what we are afraid of when we are afraid of male anger, is so universally different than what men are afraid of when they are afraid of our anger. When men are afraid of our anger, they're afraid of feeling like shit.

Aaron:

Yep.

Kieryn Darkwater:

But when we're afraid, we're afraid of dying.

Eve Ettinger:

We're afraid of dying. This is what we were talking about earlier.

Kieryn Darkwater:

"I just don't want to die."

Aaron:

Men don't get it. They don't get it. We don't get it, I should say.

Eve Ettinger:

Right. And so, it's kind of like... it's just fragility stuff. Stop being a pansy-ass butthead, and put your skin on the line, and listen, and absorb, and put yourself in the fire hose. Go find somewhere on the internet, some very intelligent femme is going to be spouting off about this. Go find it, go listen, and then take it seriously. And go be proactive to educate yourself, and then be proactive to do what you're doing, reaching out, putting in effort.

Eve Ettinger:

I was really overwhelmed earlier this week. I had a man corner me, and he didn't mean to, but it was just this really bad moment where I got really triggered, because he was talking about the news and he wanted to apologize. And he was like, "You know, I just hate myself and I hate my gender," and da-da-da-da-da, and I was like, "Don't do that. Do not do that."

Eve Ettinger:

There's a Venn diagram somewhere on the internet about how to handle grief, and how to properly support people who are grieving, and that's applicable right now because, don't go apologizing. Don't go making someone comfort you in your grief for this moment because you are struggling to understand what's happening or what we're going through and you feel bad about it. Go to someone outside... a privileged degree further out. Go to someone who's a peer, someone who is experiencing the same things, and go vent about that there. Don't bring that into the circle down the privilege ladder. Do not bring it to someone who is already conditioned to placate you and emotionally support you and affirm you by obligation. This is the whole point of this whole news cycle right now.

Eve Ettinger:

Women have been groomed to just take it. And so, when you go and say, "I hate my gender, I'm so sorry," don't go looking to us for absolution. This is what we said last week: don't be sorry, be better.

Don't make us feel your guilt. And when there are conversations about white fragility and race and white guilt, and racism, this same conversation comes up where it's like, "I don't want to..." The Black community or the people of color, they don't want to hear about how we feel bad. And we need to take that elsewhere, and not bring that down to them. Don't bring that into their spaces. Don't demand that kind of emotional support.

Eve Ettinger:

And so, when men go to me this week right now for emotional support, I'm just like, "Shun the unbeliever." Just like, "Get out." Don't...

Kieryn Darkwater:

You are not understanding the gravity of what is happening if you're coming to women for help to deal with your feelings about men being shit. If you're a dude and you feel bad about men being shit, handle that on your own. Talk to other men about how everything going down is terrible, and how you need to do better. Don't bring it to not-men. We've got enough.

Eve Ettinger:

Yeah. Bring a plan. Do something. Have actions. Go educate yourself to the point where you don't need us to tell you what to do.

Kieryn Darkwater:

We've written about it and talked about it. Just go listen.

Aaron:

Yes, and this is something that I've been learning a lot in the last few years. Fairly new to feminism and the role that it plays, and it's been hard. When shit happens, when shit hits the fan like it has in the last couple weeks, my gut reaction is to go... because I know I'm not like those guys. I know I'm not the Brett Kavanaughs or any of the sexual abusers.

Aaron:

But my instinct is to go to the women I know and say, "I'm not like that. Trust me. And I'm sorry."

Eve Ettinger:

And, see, the instant you even said...

Aaron:

I know.

Eve Ettinger:

My hackles are up.

Aaron:

Oh, sure. I know they are.

Eve Ettinger:

I'm physically responding to you being like, "I'm not like that." And I'm like, "If you say that, you are."

Kieryn Darkwater:

Yep.

Aaron:

Exactly, and I know that I can't go to anyone and say that. And for me, the process... well, how do I handle that, then? Where do I take it? Where do I go? I loved what you said, Hännah, about take it up the chain, up the ladder of privilege, not down. And that really helped me kind of put a frame of reference on, "Well, if I need to talk to somebody about how I don't see myself as these other people, how do I handle that? Where do I go?" And it's, "Okay. I got to talk to somebody who's a peer. I got to talk to somebody who's up the privilege chain ahead of me somewhere, and figure out with them what that can mean and what that can entail."

Aaron:

Because anybody else lower on the chain cannot hear that, they won't hear that, they'll be angered by hearing it...

Eve Ettinger:

Because it will reinforce whatever oppression and trauma that they have been experiencing.

Aaron:

Yeah.

Eve Ettinger:

Because it'll just replicate the power differentials that they have lived for their entire lives.

Kieryn Darkwater:

And it just reminds them that their pain isn't the one that matters right now, even though their pain is the one that's being talked about.

Eve Ettinger:

So fun.

Kieryn Darkwater:

This is a great cycle that just caves in on itself. It's so good.

Aaron:

And another thing that I've been learning, too, is that when doing that, when saying to somebody else, "Oh, I'm so sorry. Help me feel better about this," that's when it becomes about me. That's when it becomes about my guilt and my shame for the other people that are in my peer group, and not about listening to the women or to the survivors of sexual abuse, and it just turns the cycle back on myself, which is not helpful.

Eve Ettinger:

And we've talked a bit about Spoon Theory on this, I think, which is a relevant analogy. It's the idea... it's specifically designed to talk about chronic disability or chronic illness, and how each task requires a spoon.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Or a certain amount of spoons.

Eve Ettinger:

A certain amount of spoons, and this came out of a late-night diner conversation that somebody wrote up on the internet, and has taken off. But if getting about a bed takes a spoon, and making coffee takes a spoon, and getting dressed takes a spoon...

Eve Ettinger:

People who don't have chronic disabilities often wake up with infinite numbers of spoons, 50 or 100, and they can get through the day just fine, and they might have some spoons left over. And people with chronic disability or who are dealing with the physical ramifications of trauma in the body often wake up with fewer spoons, maybe five or six or 10. They have to ration them, and they have to figure out, "How am I going to spend these throughout the day?" And I think emotional labor works a little bit the same way.

Eve Ettinger:

When you have been suffering under these various power differentials, these intersections of oppressive systems for your entire life, you only have so many spoons to give toward resisting those things. Otherwise, it just takes a lot out of you to push back. And so, someone who is a dude, who I care about deeply, texted me late last night being like, "Dating sucks."

Eve Ettinger:

And I just wanted to respond to him with, like, "Talk to everyone else about that." I had to calm-

Aaron:

"Sorry, dude. Can't talk about it."

Eve Ettinger:

"Nope. Don't want to hear it. Not this week. Wrong, wrong. New number, who's this?"

Eve Ettinger:

And he's a good person who's been a good friend to me, and that's fine, we worked it out, I talked about that a little bit, I pushed back on it a little. But that's something to be aware of with this, this week. Being engaged in the news takes spoons for those of us who are going to be affected by this. So, be aware of what kind of things you're asking people down the privilege ladder from you to do for you, emotional labor-wise. Because they probably have fewer spoons this week.

Kieryn Darkwater:



And then, most of their spoons are taking up with just trying to get through this week.

Eve Ettinger:

Yeah.

Aaron:

And it can be hard when you wake up, and you have to calculate how many spoons you're going to have to spend today, and if you recognize there's not going to be any left, if anything happens that wasn't accounted for during the day-

Eve Ettinger:

Gone.

Aaron:

That could just ruin everything.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Yep, yep.

Eve Ettinger:

Just done, just done. Do we want to save the questions, the listener questions, for the next episode? Or do we want to try to talk on some on here?

Kieryn Darkwater:

Those could be an episode in themselves, so let's save...

Eve Ettinger:

Okay.

Kieryn Darkwater:

We got some really great questions in...

Eve Ettinger:

Listener Bethany...

Kieryn Darkwater:

But they will take a long time, yeah.

Eve Ettinger:

Yeah. Listener Bethany, we hear you. You have some fantastic questions, and we will try to get to them next time.

Kieryn Darkwater:

They're really good. They will just take up forever to answer. All right, so, what are you going to do to self-care today?

Eve Ettinger:

I was just going to ask you that. I think I want to go see A Star Is Born. Something I did for self-care today is I went into my kitchen this morning and I poured out my bottle of whiskey in the sink, because I don't want to keep using that to disassociate.

Aaron:

Bravo.

Eve Ettinger:

I want to be careful about how... I mean, I live alone, so I only have myself for accountability, but, yeah, I just don't want to have to worry about myself.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Good job.

Eve Ettinger:

And so, I'm going to go find things to do that take me outside of the house, and I'm going to go scrub something, and get out energy there.

Aaron:

For me, I know I have to parent a lot this afternoon, which takes out of me so much. So, in the meantime, I'm probably going to take a nap, because Sunday afternoons are born for naps.

Eve Ettinger:

Yes.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Yes.

Aaron:

Especially when I have to be at work at seven in the morning.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Why?

Aaron:

And then, I don't know what else. We'll see. Because I work at a church.

Kieryn Darkwater:

I'm so sorry. I'm going to visit a friend of mine up in North East Bay, deep East Bay, and then I think I'm going to ride my bike for a bit.

Eve Ettinger:

Sounds nice.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Yeah.

Eve Ettinger:

I have a bunch of art supplies and I keep meaning to do some sort of art thing, and I just remembered that. Maybe I'll do that later.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Yes, do that.

Aaron:

Awesome.

Eve Ettinger:

Creating things.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Thanks for listening. Yes.

Eve Ettinger:

Thank you for joining us.

Aaron:

So glad to be here.

Eve Ettinger:

Yeah, and listeners, take care of yourself this week. Don't engage more than you need to. Stay with us, and whatever that takes.

Aaron:

Find something that brings you joy and recharges you.

Eve Ettinger:

Yeah.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Yes. Self-care is important. The way I like to describe it is, self-care is a radical act, and it is a radical act of resistance. So, take care of yourselves.

Eve Ettinger:

All right. Thanks for joining us. Come subscribe to our Patreon, and get access to these things earlier rather than later, and send us your questions.

Kieryn Darkwater:

See you next week.

Eve Ettinger:

Bye.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Bye.