



vulnerability, *that's chic.*

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"The relationship I have with myself, the compassion and love I give and practice on a daily basis shows that I hold myself to a very high standard. And I won't take anything less than that from anybody because I know that's what it means to have a good relationship with myself."

It's Saturday morning

when I connect via Zoom with Rachel. I have no idea what to expect, just Halsey's lyric from her song 929 rewinding and repeating in my head: "don't meet your heroes, they're all f***ing weirdos." But as soon as Rachel flashes me her signature toothy smile, the grey feeling fleets, replacing it with gratitude and surrealism; this is really happening.

My admiration of Rachel dates back four years ago, when I first wandered upon her YouTube page, her blog, then her creative projects. After the 2019 launch of Warde, the "co-operated safe space that is defined by its contribution," she's become a person I consistently list as a source of inspiration when asked.

I asked about her journey in being vulnerable within sharing her creative

process, further the messy, nitty gritty parts that make us human. Rachel says, "I think it's a process; the process of being vulnerable with yourself is not something that just happens overnight. I'm an open book now because it's something that I have to actively practice." She pauses. "I'm working on a video right now and I have to remind myself that it is okay, to be slightly unfinished, and that it's never going to get to some magical point that I have in my head. At the end of the day, no matter what I put out, somebody is going to enjoy it because there's still a lot of arcs and heart, and just myself in this video that they will still find very new to them. It's just so human of us to be able to connect on that level."

"Obviously, last year had brought up a lot of not adventures, but new feelings, new challenges

to overcome, explore, to solve. And, you know, the pandemic itself has really put everybody in for the first time on a very similar wavelength, like no one can escape this pandemic. And we all have to universally, collectively deal with it. It sort of shed more light on the fact that there's so much common feelings happening, and as long as we're all talking about it, we can connect, sort of like a gateway drug to being even more vulnerable with somebody."

It's clear what sets Rachel apart; her fearlessness in presenting herself in a raw, brutally honest, and intimate light. Even when it comes to things like makeup or skincare, she always puts an emphasis on enhancing

the features she'd been blessed with, not berating the parts of herself society may find "unconventional."

"A piece of advice I'd give to those who are struggling to be transparent with themselves ... It's hard because I don't think there's a strategy to it. For me, it just comes very naturally. But I think if anyone is struggling to find that natural relationship with themselves, I would encourage people, especially young ones, to build a relationship with themselves first. What I mean by that is, before you build a relationship with your audience, friends, lovers, anyone, you want to build that relationship with yourself first. If your boundaries are clear,

your essence is clear. Then, when you do share yourself, it comes from a very authentic place and those around you just happen to be along for the ride."

I can't help but take a moment to absorb her last line. "Yeah, I see that." I reply. "I saw something, maybe it was on Warde, but it was a quote about how your friends shouldn't be your entire life, but they should be the ones that bring joy and connection into your life. And I think as a younger individual, that was a really difficult distinction I had to learn."

Rachel quickly questions me of my age. I feel bashful, almost embarrassed to tell her I am a senior in high school. "You're in high



school right now? I mean, girl, you're only like, half my timeline, I'm as twice as old as you! You know, be gentle with yourself." She smiles. "I always want to remind people who are younger than me that I'm where I'm at right now, this comfort with myself, because I have spent 31 years building this relationship with myself." When she sees the corners of my lips turn up, she continues. "I was not like this in high school, you know, I was really toxic. I was probably toxic throughout college, and I had to learn things the hard way to become the person I am. Honestly, be compassionate with yourself. We make so many mistakes when we're young, we just don't know it. But those mistakes don't define us

at all; you just learn to grow from it and be accountable with it."

As we both start to get accustomed to each other's company, she isn't afraid to segue the conversation when she shares that she was on the phone with a friend of hers, previous to our call. "I was talking to her about boy problems. And she was like, 'well, what do you want? Like, what do you want? Have you thought about that with yourself?' and I was like, well, you know what I want, I want tenderness. That's what I want. I want someone to be very tender with me. I want someone to acknowledge my feelings. I want someone to acknowledge my feelings and perceive me in a way that's better

than how I perceive myself."

"The relationship I have with myself, the compassion and love I give and practice on a daily basis shows that I hold myself to a very high standard. And I won't take anything less than that from anybody because I know that's what it means to have a good relationship with myself. I think about how another person shows up for me, and I can look at it and go, 'is this adding to my life? Or is what I'm giving myself already good enough?' Because then, I don't need to put energy into this person, or relationship."

Something about Rachel willing to share about her life before asked makes me feel brave to

discard my shell. I confess how I truthfully see her as an older sister figure.

I tell her how I feel. "I feel like we grew up and navigated life together. Definitely, in a different context, like when you were creatively stimulated at Adobe in San Francisco, I was at sleepaway camp. And when you were falling in love, I was trying out for the swim team. There's overlap in growth where you wouldn't expect it. They're totally different but I could resonate to all the emotions that you were willing to share with us. But another recurrent thought was how often, we face more hate than love, or criticism than appreciation on the internet and really how vulnerable it is to put

yourself out there on a public platform, especially as a POC woman." I take a breath. "So how do you make peace with the idea of rejection or judgment from people you don't know?"

She glances around the room before clasping her hands together beneath her chin. "That's a great question. I think I have to rewind and think about why someone would reject something or why someone would judge something. And more often than not, I think one of the main things that really trigger our feelings is our own intuition. As a viewer, we have our own intuition when someone's acting inauthentic, or they're trying to be something that they're not, those are red flags to us.

People are almost always going to be receptive to that because that's just human nature. People only judge when things are a facade and people think that they're trying to be swindled in some way. And that said, it is harder to be vulnerable. But no one's ever going to call you out when you're experiencing genuine pain or growth and you're wanting to share that. Because you want the betterment of two parties to learn from that experience." She quickly adds, "the party being the viewer and myself."

I quote back on her solo road trip to Montana, specifically one clip where she was eating dinner by herself while discussing the art of



judgment, and how if there was more kindness in this world, perhaps there would be less bickering from not understanding one another.

"When you're honest with yourself, no one can poke holes at that. It's sort of human nature. I'm not saying I'm perfect. I experience jealousy too. But I always backtrack myself

and question where that stems from, and most of the time, it stems from my emotions, not feeling safe in that moment." I nod, and she nods back. "I always try to disarm the viewer by disarming myself first by being like, 'I have nothing here. This is me. There's no armor, there's nothing between us right now' and I think that... if you can show up and assure that it is a space where only love

and compassion and no judgment exists, it can slowly just disarm somebody. It wouldn't happen right away, maybe, but it does. And that goes to how I treat the camera, how I treat editing, making sure it's very natural to me, because that's how I show up to people, my friends, and my relationships, in real life."

Our conversation flows

to me asking her how she stays so unapologetically herself, and she grins before answering with no hesitation.

"I think we always have to remind ourselves that having an opinion is sexy. It's sexy, because more often than not, there's not a lot of boundaries in this world where people are like, 'oh, that's a hard no.' It's also kind of funny. Like, it's sort of funny that I don't like what I don't like and I like what I do like, and I enjoy it. Yeah, my first childhood crush, my sexual awakening was

with Jafar from Aladdin. So what, like, that's funny. Rather than shaming and judging myself, because you can't judge yourself. Why would you? What's the point of it, you only have yourself to trust. So why would you question your innate ability, your desire to express what you're feeling? I've just learned to accept those little things, like the weird quirk about Jafar. It is what it is, and I can't fight that. So I'm just going to lean into it."

We conclude our conversation amongst other topics, but Rachel

leaves me with a final note.

"Enjoy being young while you still can. Like, just enjoy being young and dumb and make mistakes and try not to adult so fast. I know it makes me sound old but maybe you'll get there when you're no longer the youngest generation. It's really interesting to see how younger people are seeing the world in their eyes, and it makes me really excited for the future."

Thank you so much to Rachel for chatting with Lina. Want to see more of *Rachel*? Follow her on *Instagram* and *YouTube* @thatschic, and on her website www.thatschic.net!

