

[00:00:00] **John Moe:** Trans people are under attack in America today. Often through harassment, often through direct—sometimes fatal—violence. And trans people are under attack through legislation, in states and on the federal level. Legislation having to do with health care, education, public accommodations, free speech. It's a difficult time to be a trans person, and that's reflected in the mental health statistics among people who identify as trans. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness—or NAMI—transgender individuals are nearly four times as likely as cisgender people to experience a mental health condition. Today, on the show, someone who is trans, who experiences mental health conditions, and who has some insight on what it's like to live in America today. *Depresh Mode*. I'm John Moe. I'm glad you're here.

[00:00:52] **Transition:** Spirited acoustic guitar.

[00:01:00] **John Moe:** Parker Molloy is an independent journalist and media critic based in Chicago. She's worked for *Media Matters for America*, written for *The Advocate*, has a large social media following, and these days she writes a Substack newsletter called “The Present Age”, which features cultural commentary and media criticism. Parker is a trans woman. She's also a person who has dealt with major depressive disorder and anxiety and panic disorder dating back to childhood, many years before she transitioned. I've followed Parker for a while now on Twitter, where she has made no secret that it's really hard living with mental health concerns in an era of increasing aggressive transphobia in public discourse. She's written about being just so tired from the hatred she gets, online and elsewhere, for being who she is.

[00:01:49] **Transition:** Spirited acoustic guitar.

[00:02:00] **John Moe:** Parker Molloy, welcome to *Depresh Mode*.

[00:02:02] **Parker Molloy:** Hey John, thanks so much for having me.

[00:02:05] **John Moe:** How is your mental health doing today?

[00:02:08] **Parker Molloy:** Today—you know what, today's not too bad. Today is like kind of a lull in a very rocky time. So, I'm okay with that today. Look, we'll go at that. We'll go there.

(*They chuckle.*)

[00:02:21] **John Moe:** Okay. How's the rocky time been going?

[00:02:25] **Parker Molloy:** Well, that—I mean, that's just been kind of the challenge of the past several years. You know?

[00:02:32] **John Moe:** I was gonna say—I was wondering how far the parameter is stretched.

[00:02:36] **Parker Molloy:** Yeah, yeah, it's—we're now going on like—what?—five, six, seven years of things being utter chaos. For me, really the big moment that set me on this sort of chaotic mental health journey on my end was the 2020 election. So, I was working at *Media Matters* at the time. So, which is—for those who don't know—a progressive media watchdog group. Basically, we would watch a lot of Fox News and right-wing media. And I was really hoping that the 2020 election was going to end, and then I was going to be able to take a breath. Because it was a chaotic year leading up to that. 'Cause you had the pandemic and you had all of the campaign and stuff like that. And then, I would be able to chill out from like November to January—like end of January.

But that didn't happen, because the election never really ended. So, yeah, I had to kind of stay plugged in that whole time. There's something about having like a goal just out of reach, but you can see it, and then suddenly being like, okay, it's gone now. Like, it's worse than had there never been that little ray of light at the end of the tunnel in the first place.

[00:04:06] **John Moe:** Yeah, the ray of light might be a freight train.

(Parker agrees with a chuckle.)

Were you expecting that things would calm down for the nation politically and socially, or were you—did you think it was gonna calm down in terms of trans issues?

[00:04:21] **Parker Molloy:** You know, I had hoped that it would be a little bit of both. As someone who is trans, the focus that trans people have played in the imaginations of politicians has not been good for my mental health or I think the mental health of many other trans people. You know, because it really kind of just thrusts you into a topic of debate. You know, for instance, there was a *New York Times* focus group thing that they did where they interviewed some trans people. And they asked them like, “What do you want? Like, what—” And it's really like we just want to be left alone. And the headline they went with was like, “These 11 trans people just want to be left alone”. And that's a fine sentiment to have, because that's true.

And I remember after they published it—it wasn't even a very good like focus group. It was kind of weird. Like, they found like Trump supporters to put in it. And finding trans Trump supporters—like, they exist, but that's really rare. Like, I don't know if you want to include them in something where they'll represent 10 or 20% of the total people you're talking to.

(John agrees.)

But so anyway, they published this thing. And I remember seeing a tweet from Bari Weiss. It was—

[00:05:46] **John Moe:** And who's Bari Weiss?

[00:05:46] **Parker Molloy:** Yeah, Bari Weiss is a conservative commentator. She used to be an editor for the *New York Times* opinion pages, but then she left to start her own thing, called it, I think, *Common Sense* for a little while. Now it's *The Free Press*, where she has

others from the intellectual dark web—that old group—write pieces for her. And so, her comment about this *New York Times* like focus group was like, “See, this is—mainstream media won’t have difficult conversations. They want to shut things down. Meanwhile, the free press is going to keep focusing on these issues.” And really it’s like, man, it really kind of sucks that like a group of people being like, “Yeah, we just want to live our lives and not be a part of these sorts of discussions constantly and having to deal with that.” That’s not like asking for silence from media outlets. It’s asking for reasonable coverage. It’s asking for maybe some trans voices involved in these discussions. You know, that sort of stuff.

But it’s very frustrating to constantly have to be part of a discussion, a debate, a—it is forcing me to think about being trans so much more than I otherwise would. Like, I would just be living my life, and gender would play a very, very tiny part in all of it, and that would be cool. But no, I have to be reminded every single day with some new, weird story. You know, I saw as we’re recording this, someone posted something about some like fishing league, like competitive fishing, banned trans people for some reason, saying like unfair advantage. (*Chuckling.*) None of it makes sense, but it’s been a frustrating few years to kind of exist like that, you know?

[00:07:57] **John Moe:** It seems like it must go deeper than frustrating when it’s an existential question of—the controversy is whether or not like you should be allowed to exist in the world.

[00:08:10] **Parker Molloy:** Yeah! It’s—like, that’s the thing. I do hang on to words like frustrating, because trying to actually express the level of anxiety and frustration and pain and sadness and all of that stuff that comes with this—you know, this debate and this discussion and all of that, it’s a lot. It’s a lot to deal with, and it takes up time, and it takes up energy, and it takes up focus, you know, away from doing things that I would otherwise like to be writing about or doing. Instead, it’s constantly having people be like, “Okay, well, should your healthcare be legal? Should we make it illegal? Should we add some more like boundaries here? Should we—” You know.

[00:09:00] **John Moe:** “Should we exclude you from more things?”

[00:09:02] **Parker Molloy:** Yeah! Like, (*sighs*) that’s the frustrating—the really frustrating part, genuinely frustrating, is that people talk about this like it’s some big debate. You know, big debate, and we’re all arguing points, and we’re trying to find a spot in the middle to agree on. But really it’s one side saying, “You shouldn’t exist as you are, or you should exist, but society should treat you as an outcast for being who you are. And you should be forced to out yourself as trans anywhere you go.”

But yeah, it’s not a good time to be a trans person in the US. It’s definitely gotten—and elsewhere, I guess, but it’s definitely taken some steps back since before I came out—back, you know, more than a decade ago.

[00:09:56] **John Moe:** Yeah. Well, how long has depression been an issue for you?

[00:10:00] **Parker Molloy:** You know, that’s—(*sighs*) the challenging thing about that, about depression—because it’s been a big part of my life, and it has been, you know, since I was—

you know, in my early teens. 13, 14, 15, you know, around there. I remember, you know, depression and anxiety both kind of hit me around the same time. I used to have this thing when I was in junior high, so it's sixth, seventh, and eighth grade. I used to have this thing where I would go into school, and then I would feel sicker than I've ever felt. And I would think I was going to throw up, and then I wouldn't throw up, but I couldn't. I would just kind of stay in the bathroom, because I felt like I was constantly on the verge of getting sick. And eventually then I'd go to the nurse's office and be like, "I feel sick. I'm sick. My stomach hurts. I'm sweating. I have a fever now. I need to go home." And so, my mom would come and pick me up and take me home. And it kept happening. Like, once every five or six weeks, there would be a day like that.

And we were trying to figure out what that was. And we never—you know, my parents and I never figured it out at the time. Later, I would realize that these are panic attacks and that that's why I was—you know, that's what I was going through. (*Chuckles.*) And so, having all—having that situation with my anxiety and then the depression, which is such a—it's really difficult to deal with, you know. I think anytime you're trying to balance—you're trying to figure out what the different variables are. You know, growing up, it's like, "How many of these issues are my gender? How many of these issues are depression? How many are anxiety?" Like, 'cause they're all there, and they're all part of the same party in my brain. (*Chuckles.*)

[00:11:58] **John Moe:** Yeah, and how much of the depression and anxiety was coming from your gender identity?

[00:12:05] **Parker Molloy:** Yeah! Exactly. It's so difficult. And you know, one of the challenges, the real challenges, with my mental health I think has been that—you know, like how do I know that the way that I'm experiencing the world is inconsistent with the broader human experience? Like, more generally. You know, we're our only example. And you know, I just assumed that, you know, when I was growing up, I was like, "I assume that all the boys want to—actually want to be girls. (*Laughs.*) Oh, I assume that everyone feels this way and sad. And, you know, oh, I assume that everyone feels sick to their stomachs at this point." You know, these various things where you just don't—you don't have anything to compare it to. You can't—I can't know what it feels like for someone else to go through a day. You know, it's that same sort of question of do we all see the—you know, when it comes to colors.

[00:13:03] **John Moe:** Right, is "green" green to everybody?

[00:13:05] **Parker Molloy:** Is "green" green to everyone? You know, and if it's not, how do we explain that? And it's that sort of thing when it comes to, you know, mental health. And like I get myself so psyched up whenever I go into like an optometrist appointment to get a new prescription for my glasses. I'm always afraid that I'm going to mess it up. I'm just like, "Alright, don't fail. Don't fail the eye exam."

(*John laughs.*)

Yeah, like I'll sit there, and I'll be like, one, two.

[00:13:38] **John Moe:** Do you study for it?

[00:13:38] **Parker Molloy:** Yeah, well, no, no—I'll like look back, and I'll think like, “Oh no, did I say two was clearer than one? And did that take me down a path that got me the wrong glasses? Is that why I have a headache right now?” You know, like those sorts of things where I'm just constantly in my head, psyching myself out about—you know, about failing an eye exam. (*Laughs.*)

[00:13:58] **John Moe:** Yeah, which is not a pass/fail proposition, of course. Yeah.

[00:14:03] **Parker Molloy:** No!

[00:14:05] **Transition:** Relaxed acoustic guitar.

[00:14:08] **John Moe:** More with Parker Molloy in just a moment.

(*Music ends.*)

[00:14:19] **Promo:**

Music: Intense rock music.

Biz Ellis: Parenting. It's hard. But don't worry! You're not alone. Belly up to the low bar with *One Bad Mother* and let us remind you that fine is good enough.

Speaker 1: They wanna climb on different things. And how am I supposed to keep them both from dying? (*Laughs.*)

Speaker 2: There is a right way to do this. And if I can figure out that right way, I'm gonna be a good parent. So, that is not a thing.

Biz: So, join us each week and let us tell you that you are doing a good job. You can listen to *One Bad Mother* on Maximum Fun or wherever you get your podcasts.

(*Music fades out.*)

[00:14:55] **Transition:** Relaxed acoustic guitar.

[00:14:56] **John Moe:** We're back with journalist and media critic Parker Molloy.

(*Music ends.*)

What behaviors and what forms did your depression and anxiety take over the years? Like, for some people, it's going to bed for a week. For some people, it's lashing out. What has it been for you?

[00:15:15] **Parker Molloy:** Yeah, I mean, I think it's been (*sighs*) kind of—it's a challenge for me to really pin it down, because kind of—you know, when I think about it, it's like, yeah, there will be times where I won't want to get out of bed for a week. And I will stay in bed more or less for a week. And that's something that has been with me since I was younger. And then there's—you know, I look back at like friends from high school, friends from college, friends from grade school, and I wouldn't keep friendships very long. And a lot of it, it turns out was—you know, and I've come to terms with it over time. It's just that my—you know, my personality. For whatever reason, no matter how hard I try, I get anxious. And then when I get anxious, I get worried, and I get vigilant, and I get kind of paranoid sometimes. Oh, I think everyone hates me. Oh, I think they hate me. I think I'll send them—I'll send them more messages to be like, “Hey, hey, is everything okay? Are we fine?” And then I'll be like, oh no, because I sent them more messages asking if we're okay and if we're fine—you know, do they now think that—? Am I now annoying them even more?

You know, it's that kind of a thing where you're like, “Am I making things worse by trying to fix things all the time?” You know, when it comes to friendships and relationships and stuff like that. I'm happy that I was able to find, you know, a job where I can just kind of do my own thing and, you know, do my writing. And it's just kind of me, you know. Because I have this habit, and I have since I was a kid, of just being—you know, taking things extremely personal, even when they're not. Just not being able to convince myself that there aren't like some—you know, that, oh, well, the reason so-and-so canceled plans with me must've been because they secretly hate me. You know, that sort of stuff. That's been with me my whole life.

And I think that, you know, in trying to deal with that, I end up closing myself off to a lot of people as an adult. Because rather than striking up friendships and destroying them by being a strange person—(*laughs*) like, I don't even know how else to describe it. But it becomes one of those things where it's like is it worth trying to make new friends as I get older? Is it worth trying to—because I'm still trying to fix the—there are several issues that I'm still really working on that, you know, I've kind of bounced around to, you know, several different diagnoses, you know, several different— And just trying to find like what's the thing that's wrong with me? Or what makes me different in a way that I can improve on, you know? Where it's like major depressive disorder, panic disorder, bipolar 2, ADHD Inattentive, you know. And part of that is that there aren't tests for these things. So, doctors ask questions. I answer them to the best of my ability. And then it's like, “Oh, you have everything!” (*Chuckling.*) You know?

[00:18:48] **John Moe:** It's—you gotta study for it, like the eye exam.

[00:18:52] **Parker Molloy:** Yeah. Well, I also—I don't know if this is really a problem that other people have, but you know, if someone was like, “How are you feeling today on a scale of one to five? Five being the best and one being the worst.” I would sit there and in my head, I'd be like (*sighs*) well, I don't know. I mean, is it a one? If I say one, is that exaggerating? Because there have been worse days. You know, like these things where I end up just being like, oh, it's all arbitrary anyway. It's all based on my own perception. And now I'm psyching myself out again. And so, it's like, “I don't know, somewhere between a 1 and a 5, I suppose?” (*Chuckles.*)

You know, like I'll get to there, or maybe I'll be able to narrow it a little smaller than that, but—

[00:19:34] **John Moe:** Isn't it something how anxiety won't let you catch it in the act?

[00:19:39] **Parker Molloy:** Yeah! No, it's so smart!

(They chuckle.)

It's like, yeah, you're gonna have this thing. You're gonna get sweaty all the time. You're gonna get nervous. You're gonna say dumb things in public, and then be like, oh, I shouldn't have said that, because I upset someone. And you know, that sort of thing. And you know, for my whole life—I mean, I've always been kind of like a—you know, like a—just generally like a smaller person, not very physical. I mean, I played like soccer in high school. *(Chuckles.)* And so, it's like I was never like strong, and you know. And I got bullied a lot. And all that I ever had at my disposal were words to fight back, because I couldn't throw a punch. I couldn't—you know.

[00:20:30] **John Moe:** Could string a sentence together, though.

[00:20:31] **Parker Molloy:** Yeah, I can put a sentence together, and I can find those words that hurt, you know? Like, and that's the only way to sort of fight back. And then, that became kind of a defense mechanism where it's like you build in these—like, this prickly personality that kind of keeps people at arm's length. And you know, that's the one thing right now that I'm trying to work on—you know, being a bit more outgoing and open and trying to be less prickly, I guess, if that makes sense.

[00:21:09] **John Moe:** When did you realize the truth about your gender, or when did you accept the truth about your gender, I should say?

[00:21:16] **Parker Molloy:** Yeah, that—you know, it was one of those things where there were always these little like clues along the way. But it was like—it was around 12 or 13—you know, 11 or 12, somewhere around there, where it was just this sort of identifying with not being like any of the boys in my group. And it wasn't because my interests were out of line with theirs. It wasn't—you know, people like to be like, “Oh, well a girl played with a truck, or a boy played with a doll. And that's how you know they're trans.” You know, like that's not—you know, I loved sports. I still love sports. I love baseball and football, you know, like all these things.

Those are, you know, stereotypically boy interests—video games, you know, like these sorts of things. And that's why I think I had a lot of trouble really pinpointing that this was a gender thing and not something else. Because I didn't feel like I was out of place in terms of interests with boys in my class, but it was more, I was out of—I was just not—something was off in trying to hang out. You know, it just felt like being in the wrong place where you don't belong and that sort of thing. But it really wasn't until, you know, I was 17 or 18 that I was really like, yeah, this is not something that's going away. I'll just hope—

But you know, at the time—you know, if you're 18 years old and you don't have a job and you're going off to school and you're worried that your parents who cosigned on all your loans with you—you know, you're worried how they'd react to you coming out. It becomes one of those things where I came to terms with the fact that I was trans, but I just decided—I was like I'm just gonna not... do that. I'm just going to not transition. I'm just going to keep this to myself, and I'm going to bottle it up. And you know, that'll be that. Everything will be fine.

[00:23:36] **John Moe:** For good? Just for the indefinite future.

[00:23:39] **Parker Molloy:** Yeah, yeah. I was like, you know—(*laughs*) I remember at one point thinking when I was—right before I made the conscious decision to socially and medically transition, when I was 26, I remember just right before that just thinking like, you know, 26. What's that? That's—you know, there's 50 years left. Maybe it's not that. (*Laughs.*)

And you know, you start to just kind of think like maybe I can just hang on. And maybe I could just hang on. And then—you know, but every day was—it was getting more and more difficult to hang on. And I think that a lot of people miss that when it comes to, you know, trans people and transitioning and stuff is that the way that it gets discussed a lot in the media, more generally—especially mainstream media—is this thing that's like, “Oh, someone impulsively decides to do. Or oh, someone just one day decided they were going to go on hormones.” And it's like, first off, every trans person I know has put so much thought into this before taking any steps, because as much as this idea that it's like, “Oh, no, it's cool to be trans, and it's a trend!” (*Chuckling.*) You know, it's not. I mean, if—like, I'll say right now: like if I could have gone through my life as either, you know, a cisgender man or woman, I would've been fine with that. As long as I was fine with the gender that I was, you know, then I would prefer that to being trans. Just because it's difficult, and it's something that you kind of have to learn to live with in various ways.

Because you—you know, it's like, yeah. Trans—like, the person that I want to be, the version of myself that I want to be doesn't exist. And I think that we all sort of have those versions that don't exist. You know, the version of me that I would like to be is someone who was, you know, born a girl and raised as a girl and, you know, all of that and have all of those sorts of life experiences. And it's like being trans is—it's like you can't be what you want to be. So, you're—you know, the most that you can get yourself to be, you know, so you feel comfortable in society and not—you know, nothing else. You know, it's not—it's just... (*sighs*) yeah. Yeah. So, when I was like 18—so, I come to terms with this, and I just think I can put this off, and I can kind of—I can float. I can tread water, and maybe it'll go away. Which is something that I had already been thinking for four or five years at that point.

And I made it 'til I was 26. To get to 26 involved picking up smoking. Smoking a pack and a half a day, drinking way too much, drinking too often as well, you know. It was five, six nights, you know, a week. And it was having, you know, two or three drinks at least at home or going somewhere. And that was just kind of just to numb myself from point A to point B, you know. But those—you can't just drink and smoke your way to— Well, I guess you can drink and smoke your way to the end line by making that end line come a little closer to you. (*Chuckles.*)

(John agrees.)

But you know, it just wasn't sustainable, and it wasn't making me happy. It wasn't making anyone around me happy. Now, I mean, the one way I know that transition was the right thing to do, the right direction here, was when I was drinking a lot, when I was in my early 20s, that was survival. You know, that sort of “just gotta numb the parts of me that are yelling ‘this isn't right’ and kind of move on”. However, once I transitioned, suddenly it's like, “I guess I don't need to drink all the time. I guess I can quit smoking cigarettes.” And I did both of those things! You know, I think maybe I have like a drink once a year. You know, if someone hands me a beer, like that'll be like okay. But I don't go out to bars, and I don't drink, and we don't have any alcohol in the house just because neither my wife nor I, you know, drink.

So, it's nice to see something and realize this was what I was leaning on to—you know, this was the cost of me not being true to myself, you know. And trying to figure out what the right puzzle pieces are here, what needs to be added to this to make the equation balanced, that's all I've ever been trying to figure out. And that's why, you know, bouncing around from different meds to trying different therapies to, you know, just a little bit of everything. But I used to post this thing on Twitter years ago where it was, you know, “I tried my best today. I'll do it again tomorrow.” And I stopped doing that, because Twitter got kind of mean. *(Chuckles.)* I don't know if you've noticed, but Twitter from like 2013 and 2014 was a little different than Twitter in like 2016 and 2017 and definitely a lot different than Twitter now. *(Laughs.)*

(John agrees emphatically.)

[00:29:56] **Transition:** Cheerful acoustic guitar.

[00:29:59] **John Moe:** More with Parker Molloy after a quick break.

(Music ends.)

[00:30:12] **Promo:**

Music: Cheerful synth.

Daniel Baruela: Hey, this is Daniel Baruela, Technology and Data Specialist. I'm here with—

Kira Gowan: Kira Gowan, Ad Operations Specialist. And we're both worker-owners here at Maximum Fun.

Daniel: October is national co-op month, so we're celebrating our brand-new co-op and others with an event called—

Daniel & Kira: *(In unison.)* Co-Optober!

Kira: We've got special events all month long, starting with a live Q&A on YouTube, where MaxFun worker-owners will answer your questions on Friday, October 6th. And much more to come!

Daniel: We also wanna tell you about some incredible, limited-edition merch, exclusively available to MaxFun members until the end of October.

Kira: If you're already a member of MaxFun, you've shown that you care about our shows and what we do.

Daniel: If you also wanna help launch us into this cooperative era and show off your support, go ahead and get yourself a hat, pin, or shirt. We worked with some of our favorite artists to make them really special.

Kira: For details on merch, all of our upcoming events—like Meetup Day and more—visit MaximumFun.org/cooptober.

Daniel: That's C-O-O-P-T-O-B-E-R.

Kira: Happy Co-Optober!

(Music fades out.)

[00:31:16] **Transition:** Relaxed acoustic guitar.

[00:31:20] **John Moe:** We're back with Parker Molloy.

(Music ends.)

At 26, when you began the transition, the gender affirming transition, what did that do for your depression and anxiety?

[00:31:36] **Parker Molloy:** You know, it helped so much. I mean, it's—there's this challenge that exists though, because especially I think if you're transitioning for trans women—you know, transitioning from male to female. There's this stereotype that people have of trans women that you're always afraid of like fulfilling in their mind—this big, hulking, you know, huge shoulders, and hairy chest. You know, like all this stuff. And so—

[00:32:12] **John Moe:** Yeah. Drag clichés. Yeah.

[00:32:13] **Parker Molloy:** Yeah. There's this big worry about “Oh no, is this how everyone sees me?” So, it's like—so, while my actual anxiety, you know, as a mental health experience was getting better, my legitimate concerns about how I'm being perceived in the world and, you know, whether that is going to be a threat to my work or my life or my health—you know, like these sorts of things kind of pop up, and you have to be more aware of different things. So, that was one of the, one of the, the issues. But overall, like I look back on it and

I'm like, "No, this was definitely the right way to go for me." You know, and the things that still kind of linger about that—you know, about the anxiety that was really closely tied to gender related stuff is mostly—you know, mostly has to do with just being worried about how society treats trans people. If someone sees me and goes, "I think that's a trans person," you know—are they going to be mean to me? Are they going to yell at me if I have to use a public restroom? You know, like those sorts of things.

[00:33:33] **John Moe:** Yeah. Are they gonna physically attack you?

[00:33:35] **Parker Molloy:** Yeah. You know, it's like those things are legitimate concerns, but they're not anything to do with me personally. It's more the type of society that we're living in, the culture that we're living in, that is getting better or worse. And I think it's fair to say that for the past few years especially, it's been getting kind of steadily worse for trans people. Because, you know, everyone's talking about, "Oh, you know, trans kids and, oh, you're trying to—stop trans-ing the kids!" You know, like that's—people will say stuff like that.

But really nothing has changed in how healthcare for trans kids has been performed and carried out for like a decade. Like, there haven't been some like big recent changes to how things are handled. And I think that when a lot of people see, you know, these debates about trans people and trans issues, they think of it in terms of, "Well, you have trans activists who want to go from point A to point B where things will be better for them." And you have the other side that is like, "No, you're fine at point A." But that doesn't quite explain it, because what it really is is you've got trans people who are like, "Okay, we would like to get to point B. Point B would be better, but we understand that things really aren't moving in that direction at the moment." (*Chuckles.*)

You know, there aren't some giant advances for trans rights popping up all over the place. Really, it's just a matter of hanging onto the status quo, because what—you know, what conservatives are really pushing for these days is to try to implement laws that haven't existed for 50 years! You know, to try to turn the clock that way back, you know. It's not a matter of progress being too slow, but it's a rapid reversal of progress, which is something that Chris Geidner wrote about in his Law Dork blog. And he's right. That is the case. It's like what they're trying to do, you know, this—like, all these bathroom bills and, you know, really being weird about what can be in school libraries and stuff. It's like they're not trying to just turn back the clock 10 or 15 years. It's 40 and 50 years that they're trying to move things back to.

[00:36:05] **John Moe:** I still see you on Twitter sometimes, or X, I suppose. A site that is run by someone who is transphobic.

(*Parker agrees.*)

And it's full of jerks, to put it mildly, who are amplified more than ever. It's a Nazi bar. It's a bad part of town. Why do you stay on?

[00:36:25] **Parker Molloy:** Yeah, that's—so... that's a good question. And it's something that—because I did take a step back from that for—

[00:36:34] **John Moe:** Yeah, you left for a little while or stepped away.

[00:36:34] **Parker Molloy:** I think it was six or seven weeks where I just didn't post anything. And then, I was like, "I guess I should post my articles again." Because what happened—you know, it's like I make most of my income from my Substack, from the present age. Which, you know, Substack's another example of a company where it's—where you're like, okay, I have some serious concerns about the people who run the thing, you know? And—but with Twitter, with—or X or whatever. You know, it's like—it's a little more overt. It's a little more in your face. You've got Elon Musk posting his anti-trans, his racist, his sexist—you know, he's just awful all around. I mean, 'cause it's not just trans people. He's terrible about all manner of things.

But it was something where for about a month, I was watching as my revenue was kind of tapering off, on my newsletter. And I was trying to figure out—I was like, okay, what can I do to turn this around, to try to up that? And I was debating. I was like should I try Google Ads? Uhhh. You know, it's like—'cause I used to, you know, like 15 years ago, work in like search engine marketing. So, like those sorts of, it's like, yeah, I could do that. But I know that you'll end up spending a lot, and conversion rates on those things aren't usually that good, especially if you're trying to convert them to paid subscribers—which almost no one goes from not being subscribed to being a paid subscriber right away. It's usually someone signs up for free, and then maybe a few months down the line they're like, "I think I'll upgrade." You know. Even though most of my stuff does not go behind the paywall. It's more like—I guess like subscribing is more like a tip jar. (*Chuckles.*)

So, you know, like that's kind of the basic vibe there, but I was like, okay, I should post on Twitter, I guess. 'Cause I do have, you know, it's like a 200 and some—30, whatever—thousand followers. You know, a number that has been steadily going down for like—for more than a year now. Which has been wild, 'cause at one point it was at 250, and now it's at 238. But it's just something where like once they started tweaking things, it's kind of—you know, the algorithm's weird now. Trying to get anyone to see anything that you post is difficult. However, when I clicked over to—you know, when I look over at my newsletter, there are a lot of—you know, I was having this drop off. And so, posting on Twitter and trying to post enough so that my account wasn't seen as some like dormant account that only randomly posted every once in a while.

Because in talking to some people who have experience working with these sorts of algorithms, you know, the frequency of posts is something that gets factored in. And so, I was like maybe I'll get buried, you know, if I don't post more. So, I did, and my numbers went back up. But at the same time, I'm like this isn't sustainable. I don't wanna be on Twitter. You know, I don't wanna be on Twitter. And you know, eventually I don't wanna be on Substack.

[00:40:05] **John Moe:** Well, how about the issue of—you know, what is a depressive disorder, and what is a purely logical response to such an incredible amount of hatred and discrimination for trans people? And what is an anxiety disorder as opposed to what is just living in a state of danger? You know, where you're in physical danger based on who you are. Is it really a disorder, or is it just this is of course how somebody responds?

[00:40:36] **Parker Molloy:** Yeah, you know, it's—(*sighs*) I think it's more of a question of what do I need to get through the day, to get from point A? Like, it doesn't necessarily matter if there's a specific diagnosis that works for me. (*Chuckles.*) It matters to me—like, I don't need some label I can point to and be like, “That explains my brain!” (*Chuckling.*) You know? Like, I really just need to figure out how to go from point A to point B. And in talking with my therapist about this a whole bunch—because that is the question. You know, is this a problem with my brain, with my mind, with—you know, is it a disorder that can be fixed with chemicals or talk therapy? Or is it just this is how the world is, and it's now just really not a good time to be trans?

And I—like, it's difficult to know the difference, but you know, (*sighs*) I've kind of gotten to the point where I'm just—I'm really trying to figure out ways out of this. You know, ways out of feeling like this all the time. You know, feeling sad and anxious and alone and worried. You know, it's like those feelings are very difficult to deal with. And so, I'm seeking out different treatments that—you know, to hopefully find something that helped. Earlier this year, I tried—I did a series of ketamine infusions.

[00:42:35] **John Moe:** Oh, yeah. How'd that go?

[00:42:36] **Parker Molloy:** And it was—you know, it was fine, and it was helpful, but at the same time, it was... Like, it wasn't an answer. You know, it's—like, afterwards, I could—I felt better. I felt like I could bring a new perspective to things, but it really—it's one of those things where it wasn't quite the— It wasn't the silver bullet that I had hoped for, you know? It was very expensive.

(*They chuckle.*)

It was weird to spend an hour on a Tuesday morning tripping out of my mind. (*Laughs.*) But you know, like it was different. It was an experience. And you know, I'm glad I did it, but at the same time, it's like I don't think that that fixed this. But again, that's the question. What's there to fix, and what can't be fixed? What do you just have to make do with? You know, hold on and hope things get better. Like, at this point, you know, it's like I'm not—you know, for my own health, I have had to really back off on a lot of my writing and a lot of things that I would otherwise do.

Like, I now, if—like, every once in a while a newspaper editor will—an editor of an opinion column or an opinion section at a newspaper will reach out to me and be like, “Hey, I've got an idea for a piece.” And now, when I'll hear—when I'll get those kinds of messages, I will say, “Hey, thanks for reaching out to me. Thanks for thinking of me.” I'll share a list of four or five other trans people who I think could make much better arguments, you know, who are doing important writing at this moment. Because I don't—I definitely don't want to give off the impression that I'm, you know, any sort of, uh...

[00:44:42] **John Moe:** Spokesperson for—?

[00:44:43] **Parker Molloy:** Yeah, spokesperson. Like, you know, it's like I don't consider myself an activist. That's a label that often just gets tossed on trans people. Any trans person who's like, “Hey, I would like to live.”

(They chuckle.)

You know, they're like, yes, you're an activist!

[00:44:56] **John Moe:** Oh, why make it political like that?

[00:44:58] **Parker Molloy:** Yeah, it's like aaagh! You know, but I think the one thing that really helps me get through the day is seeing other trans people who are doing phenomenal writing, where I no longer feel like I have an obligation to weigh in on whatever the weird little, you know, Dylan Mulvaney and Bud Light or—you know, like on any of these things that happen. You know, so, I'll be like, “No, you know, you should check out Erin Reed or you should check out Evan Urquhart or—” You know, like all of these other trans writers who are, you know, constantly diving into this. You know, and I just, I hope that they don't go through the same sort of burnout that I did, because it catches up to you, and it stays with you for a long time. You know?

So, it's like—so, as I get into like my late 30s, I'm trying to pass the—not that I ever held a baton but pass that to people who have—you know, who have the ability to actually push to make the world a better place. You know, I would very much like to spend my time on the sidelines sharing the work of others than having to be in any way personally involved in any of this. Because it does make me anxious to ever see my own name, to ever—you know, like I don't want to be recognizable. You know, I just want to exist. I want to blend in with the world, and that's all.

[00:46:44] **Music:** “Building Wings” by Rhett Miller, an up-tempo acoustic guitar song. The music continues quietly under the dialogue.

[00:46:53] **John Moe:** You can find Parker Molloy's Substack newsletter, “The Present Age”, at ReadTPA.com. Our show exists because people support it financially. If you have already donated to the show, thank you. We really appreciate it. You're getting the show out there in the world where it can help people, where it can promote understanding and commonality and where it can bring people together. If you haven't donated yet, don't worry. It's easy to do. Just go to MaximumFun.org/join. MaximumFun.org/join. Find a level that works for you, and then select *Depresh Mode* from the list of shows. Speaking of URLs, check out MaxFunStore.com. That's our merchandise store. We've got all sorts of *Depresh Mode* merchandise on there. We got t-shirts and mugs and blankets and, of course, the *Depresh Mode* sweatpants. That's all at MaxFunStore.com.

Be sure to hit subscribe, give us five stars, write rave reviews. All of that helps get the show out into the world. We really appreciate your help with anything you can do in that goal.

The Suicide and Crisis Lifeline is available 24/7 for free in the United States by calling 988. The Crisis Text Line, also free, always available. Text “home” to 741741. Our Instagram and Twitter are both @DepreshPod. If you're on Facebook, look up our mental health discussion group, Preshies. A lot of good conversation happening there, people supporting each other through that platform. Our *Depresh Mode* newsletter is on Substack. You can search that up. I'm on Twitter and Instagram @John Moe. Our electric mail address is DepreshMode@MaximumFun.org.

Hi, credits listeners. My fridge died last week, and we had to get a new one and get it installed. And I mean to tell you, it was just so exciting. I got so jazzed about a new fridge, and the younger me might have thought that it was really stupid to get excited about a new fridge. But I think he would be wrong. It's good to get excited about new major appliances. And I'm still excited now.

Depresh Mode is made possible by your contributions. The show is produced by Gabe Mara. Our senior producer is Kevin Ferguson. We get booking help from Mara Davis. We get music, including our theme song, “Building Wings”, from the fabulous Rhett Miller.

[00:49:14] **Music:** “Building Wings” by Rhett Miller.

I'm always falling off of cliffs, now

Building wings on the way down

I am figuring things out

Building wings, building wings, building wings

No one knows the reason

Maybe there's no reason

I just keep believing

No one knows the answer

Maybe there's no answer

I just keep on dancing

[00:49:49] **Adam:** Hi, this is Adam from Tulsa, Oklahoma. I just want you to know that your love has never been wasted.

[00:49:58] **John Moe:** *Depresh Mode* is a production of Maximum Fun and Poputchik. I'm John Moe. Bye now.

(Music fades out.)

[00:50:11] **Sound Effect:** Cheerful ukulele chord.

[00:50:12] **Speaker 1:** Maximum Fun.

[00:50:14] **Speaker 2:** A worker-owned network.

[00:50:15] **Speaker 3:** Of artist owned shows.

[00:50:16] **Speaker 4:** Supported—

[00:50:17] **Speaker 5:** —directly—

[00:50:18] **Speaker 6:** —by you!