

Transcript of Interview with Amanda Lohman Yeu by Kit Heintzman

Interviewee: Amanda Lohman Yeu

Interviewer: Kit Heintzman

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Location (Interviewee): Ramsey, New Jersey

Location (Interviewer):

Transcribed By: Angelica S Ramos

Some of the things we discussed include:

Becoming an end-of-life doula after helping a friend go through her dying process with breast cancer. Working as an end-of-life doula, this work being put on hold during the pandemic. The different roles of healthcare workers and death doulas when working with terminally ill patients. Having been in a long process of seeking a diagnosis around an autoimmune disease pre-pandemic and continuing to navigate diagnostics and health care during the pandemic. How having been raised in Europe and with exposure to war and refugees shaped early reactions to the pandemic. How COVID brought mortality to the surface of Americans' consciousnesses. How struggling with our own mortality impacts our relationship to safety. Being on the phone with a person who was alone and dying during COVID; feeling powerless. The common good. Losing friendships over politics. Children's understanding of death. Stigma and silence around disease and dying. Grief and loss as universally shared experiences, though the quality of these experiences are unique. Grief support looking different in different settings, eg. when you are in a room with someone in contrast to phone support. Grief as the affirmation that we've loved. The emotional toll of the pandemic on healthcare workers. Staying in the present.

Kit Heintzman 00:00

Hello.

Amanda Lohman Yeu 00:02

Hello.

Kit Heintzman 00:03

Would you please start by stating your full name, the date, the time and your location?

Amanda Lohman Yeu 00:08

Yes, my name is Amanda Lohman Yeu. It is Tuesday, May 31 at 9:09am and I am in Ramsey, New Jersey.

Kit Heintzman 00:19

And it is the year 2022.

Amanda Lohman Yeu 00:21

It is the year 2022.

Kit Heintzman 00:24

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Amanda Lohman Yeu 00:34

I do.

Kit Heintzman 00:36

Thank you so much for being here today. I'd like to start by just asking you to introduce yourself to anyone who might find themselves listening to this.

Amanda Lohman Yeu 00:45

My name is Amanda Lohman Yeu and I am an end of life doula. And that is why I'm here today to talk a little bit about that.

Kit Heintzman 00:57

Tell me a story about life during the pandemic.

Amanda Lohman Yeu 01:03

Life during the pandemic, got very, very quiet. And my work as a doula was absolutely put on hold. Because I could not access those that were in the process of dying even of non COVID related end of life situations. So that was very, very difficult to not be able to be present and help knowing that people were suffering and having to do it in many cases by themselves.

Kit Heintzman 01:39

What was your day to day looking like pre pandemic?

Amanda Lohman Yeu 01:44

Well, I'm a mom. So that keeps me very, very busy. So pre pandemic, just like any other parent out there was normal racing around taking care of children and then taking care of the people that I took care of outside of my home. So lots of caretaking, lots of busyness lots of movement always on the go. Yeah. [inaudible] So that's what was that.

Kit Heintzman 02:13

What brought you to work as an end of life doula?

Amanda Lohman Yeu 02:17

Um, it was something that I always did, unknowingly, I didn't realize that it was even a, a roll that had had a name to it. I've always been, I've always been very careful.

Amanda Lohman Yeu 02:41

Okay. Let's, let's ask that question again.

Kit Heintzman 02:45

What brought you to work as an end of life doula?

Amanda Lohman Yeu 02:48

Um, it was something that I always did. And I didn't realize that there was a role that actually fit that. I, I've always taken care of family who started with family members, close family members, and I was just very comfortable around death. It didn't frighten me even as a younger person. And I think what really, what really sealed that call to do that work was a my best friend who had metastasized breast cancer. And we went through that process together. And it was sort of her telling me that I should help other people only in the same capacity that I helped her through her dying process, and that I was able to be present in that element. And then it was really just a question of timing, that I was lucky enough to find a group of doula workers that live locally, and I contacted them and, and that's that I went through their training and their process. And yeah, so that's how that happened. But it was a sort of a natural evolution. Because I think a lot of people who work you know, I would label that as holistic, holistic care kind of happens. I'm also I'm also a yoga teacher and other things. So there's other elements of that, that we're constantly weaving into that story.

Kit Heintzman 04:25

Do you remember when you first heard about COVID-19?

Amanda Lohman Yeu 04:30

Yes, yes. I think the first case of it in New York City when that was on the news was, was I just there was something about it. That sounded too foreign and to to foreign isn't like out of our known existence or unknown world. And it was, yeah, it was scary and my husband works in the city, and so I was I also grew up, I grew up in Europe. And so my reaction to news and things and like, it's a little different. But I grew up in the 90s. In Italy. So like, you know, I had a little bit more experience with disease and war and all these things, and a lot of Americans, I would say, so I took it seriously from the start.

Kit Heintzman 05:29

What did taking it seriously look like at the beginning?

Amanda Lohman Yeu 05:36

First and foremost, I guess setting politics aside from myself personally. I didn't see it as a political thing, whereas many people that live around me did and still do, and that I couldn't understand or wrap my head around. Why, if you were on one side, or that that was the separation, whether or not you were taking this, this virus, this thing that descended upon us all, seriously, it didn't make any sense to me. So I think taking it seriously was like masking number one, and, you know, respecting what was being asked for the common good. Which was the most important thing to my, to me personally, and to my family, and to what I felt was our obligation to each other as people. Oh, yeah, just being respectful of what we're being asked to do.

Kit Heintzman 06:39

What's it felt like living in a place where that's maybe not the dominant position?

Amanda Lohman Yeu 06:46

Oh, that's interesting, because I've always rather felt like a black sheep, even in just what I do. Like, it's, I don't know many people who even know what a death doula is. So like, I've always felt on the outskirts of sort of the societal norm anyway. And then this put it even more. So like, it really, I lost, unfortunately, I lost friendships,

because of this political divide. Whereas I would never even consider losing a friendship or relationship. Due to politics until this until this happened. And then it was very like, no other choice but to sort of walk away from certain people and things because it was to, to it got very aggressive, these divides, these political divides, felt very aggressive, very personal, and had it not had that not happened. I'm sure we would still have those relationships or friendships. But the Yeah, that it was very apparent. And it is difficult to know that you're in a community, or in a place where you're in the sort of the minority of the thought, like, of how you're viewing something or handling it. You know, and even for my children, like it was difficult for them, because we were dealing with it differently than other families, we chose to, to keep them home, you know, and to, to have them in virtual school. Like that was our choice throughout the whole thing. And so they made us go back this year. But yeah, so just, yeah, it's difficult. It still is, it still is, because he can still it's still the line and was drawn in the sand. And it's so it's unbelievably sad.

Kit Heintzman 08:50

How much do you think your kids understand about what's been going on?

Amanda Lohman Yeu 08:57

Oh, they're were at an interesting age, because they were still, I had one in I guess, the fourth grade when we shut down that day, and it was like, Oh, we're taking a couple of weeks off. Okay. You know, so that was it. And she missed that transition into middle school, like we were home. And then I have my older one and same thing, like they missed a lot of elements of things, but I think they understood the importance of it, like the importance of it, and also to loop it back personally, I think because of what I do. They have a different understanding of that. And what that is what it means. And when you when I explained to my children, like we're doing this to keep you safe and to keep other people safe, especially in older people or people that are compromised, and like They've seen that they've seen death, I've had family members pass in my house, under my care. So it's just like they had an a different a different understanding the consequences of not of not doing of not doing what you should were being asked to do.

Kit Heintzman 10:25

Would you share more about how the pandemic shaped your social circle?

Amanda Lohman Yeu 10:33

My social circle? Very, yeah. It brought my very, very close friends even closer. But yeah, my social circle got much smaller, very quickly, it sort of it cut out the fray. That's terrible thing to say. But you know, the people that you have niceties with, and that's wonderful, like we should always have niceties with, with others. But then, that was it, like, there wasn't, there's none of that. So it got this is very condensed and got very, very boiled down to like, who your real who your very close friends are who the people are that you want to always be there to depend on. And for them to depend depend on you.

Kit Heintzman 11:34

Could you give me some examples of ways that with, the people you stayed in contact with, ways that you communicated about boundaries and discussed needs and safety?

Amanda Lohman Yeu 11:46

My close friends are very much of my mindset, of course, it's we tend to have our close friends meet. So it was much easier, there wasn't really like any no one was getting offended. Like there was no like taking offense to choices being made, or, or how we interacted with one another, or children eventually started to interact again together. So I think we were very, very respectful of each other's boundaries. And I again, I had friends who were also dealing with health issues, like I have health issues, so that I had to be aware of, so everyone was very, very respectful. And I think gave each other the space and understanding and support. So there was, you know, we would make sure that we were having our zoom get together and gatherings, like millions across the world and hanging out together and just checking in, and just having a hang so to speak. So yeah, but it was good. It was good. And I think it showed that you can be supportive of, of someone else, it's just a lot of patience. And you're taught patience with your friends and the people that you love.

Kit Heintzman 13:13

Is there anything more you're willing to share about how your own experiences of health shaped your response to what was happening?

Amanda Lohman Yeu 13:24

Sure, so I have autoimmune issues that I was just actually uncovering, as we went into the pandemic, and autoimmune issues are very, very difficult to diagnose. They take a long time. For you know, for doctors and your team of caregivers to really understand what's happening. So I had started that process, I was already about a year and a half deep, with still really no solid answers. So that was difficult to have to navigate through a lot of it, not being able to see the doctors or like consult with them as frequently or to even differentiate a symptom from stress. You know, so like being able to understand what was happening in my body if there was something that was stress related because of this, you know, the situation we were in or if it was another development of my health issue and so, yeah, it was it was stressful to navigate through that and you know, now thankfully I have the answers that we were looking for through COVID But it was hard because especially when I was unwell because of my autoimmune issue like that, to kind of is to be isolated in already very isolating environment. was very weird and very surreal.

Kit Heintzman 15:05

Do you feel like the pandemic interrupted the sort of process of learning more about what was going on?

Amanda Lohman Yeu 15:18

of my personal issues of [inaudible]?

Amanda Lohman Yeu 15:28

I didn't, I had a different view of the I didn't see it that way, like even of the pandemic, of these things of, you know, this lingo that we tossed around of like, a life was interrupted. And then we're back to normal, like all this terms that we use. Life was for me life was an interrupted, it was just what was happening in life. And I think I was taught that by my grandparents who lived through the Depression, and they did this and they did that. And it wasn't like, Oh, my life got interrupted, it's like, no, we're, we're just going through this. This is just what is happening. And even this thing of return, like let's return to normal return to normal. I don't under I don't even understand that. I don't relate to it at all. And it's what's what is that word? What is normal? What's normal, it's just this thing that we went through. And now we're still and it's still just shaping to shaping things. I mean, humanity's always gone through moments that that shape the presence does that answer that question?

Kit Heintzman 16:42

Yeah, absolutely.

Amanda Lohman Yeu 16:48

Yeah, so I'll even elaborate on that if I may. Um it was it was awful. It was a terrible time, it was a terrible time to go through is awful to see that many people sick and dying and to to be feeling that like energetically rebounding, you know, in our world. But we can't run away from those things. Like we can't, we can't convince ourselves that it's an inconvenience, but you have to be like, Oh, I can't drive my kid to soccer and can't sit on the bleachers. What an inconvenience it's not an inconvenience. You know, it's not it's just just how it is. But yeah, so what I wanted to say was like it as a from my perspective of what I do, it really shone a light on though we don't talk about disease, death and dying catastrophic things like we really run away from them and as at least and I hope it's not terrible to say but in the United States like we, these are not discourses that we're sitting around talking about. So when they do happen, it's easier to categorize them as an inconvenience if that makes any sense.

Kit Heintzman 18:29

I'd love to hear something about your relationship with grief and helping others navigate grief.

Amanda Lohman Yeu 18:44

Yes. Well, I always want to be guests, I'll treat that question like I'm, I would be talking to someone who just came to me to discuss that. Grief. We've experienced what we've all experienced. Even if you've never experienced death, even if you've never been exposed to death, you've been exposed to grief. We grieve things all the time. We grieve the ends of a relationship we grieve the end of a job of of, you know, losing money have we were there's always loss in life and so there's always grief so we have this understanding like we've been exposed to it on different levels. When it comes when it harsh sorry. You have to go out of the room. And this is something that we got weird due to like this is call that an inconvenience. Yeah, this is just a situation. So life is sort of always preparing us for greater feelings of grief. When we go through a grieving process, it can even start before someone dies, it usually does. When someone is ill, when someone's going through a long battle with something, people will start a grieving process then, because they're grieving a life that was, and now can no longer be, even though that person is still here and with us. So like, there's so many different parts and times of grief. And then when someone passes, that's a different kind. And how that experience unfolds. For the people that are still living is different, like it's never the same from one person to the other. It's very, very personal journey in experience, and it can be quite long. And there really is no date of end to what grief looks like, or when things should or shouldn't happen. So what we, what we try to do and when I try to do as a doula is recognize that and give people the space and understanding that it's okay to grieve and and to go through whatever that process is for them individually. Yeah.

Kit Heintzman 21:26

Do you think sort of a broad understanding of grief has been changed by the last couple of years?

Amanda Lohman Yeu 21:48

I think so. I mean, it really brought it brought the the mortality, everyone's mortality right to the surface. And that's usually why people don't want to discuss loss or death of any kind, because it starts to make an individual think about their own mortality. And that's usually where things get fearful and uncomfortable. So COVID, it

made us all think about our mortality very, very quickly. Like, we know that terrible things happen in the world every day, we just, we just live through another horrific week in this country. But it's, but those things we can compartmentalize and keep them very, very distant. We can keep war very distant, we can keep the idea of you know, dying from a gunshot very different, we get overweight over there. But when something's right here, I'm like, oh, there's this thing, and it's right in front of you. So yes, to answer the question, I think that it did sort of make it not make but give that the most, I would say opportunity to think about what that means and leave how you process it.

Kit Heintzman 23:17

How was your work impacted by the pandemic?

Amanda Lohman Yeu 23:24

Again, like it was, you know, there was no access to anyone immediately, within like six immediately about about five or six months in, I did work with someone via like this, and on the phone. And that was weird and difficult because what I do is is very tactile in a way. But it's so extremely personal. And sometimes, you know, when I'm working with someone in person, it's very quiet, like it's very just quiet and you're just there present. So when you're not able to physically be their president, you rely on other things like you rely on speaking or on your whole tool bag changes on how you interact with someone who's dying. And then that one particular instance, I had a the last time I spoke to that person, it was over the phone. And they were very keenly aware that it was their last few hours. And I you know, I had to I am not a doctor and I'm not a therapist, and like there's all kinds of sort of legalities to what I can and can't say to someone by and I had to offer in that circumstance, I had to ask multiple times, like, Do you want an ambulance? Do you want an ambulance? Do you want an ambulance? And I even though I knew she didn't, and she had all her paperwork, paperwork in order to, you know, her DNR s and all that. But I had to ask because I wasn't there. So it changed in it. But as a doula, I'm, that's not my place. Like, once that person makes those decisions. I'm to sort of uphold them, you know, and support them through those decisions. So that when they have those moments of needing the reassurance that I can do that. So in a way I was like, I was, I felt short, as a doula by offering and saying, like, Do you want an ambulance. But as, as I'm having such crazy deja vu, as a person, you know, as an individual as a human. Not being there, present physically. I felt very powerless and disconnected. And I had to throw that thing out. So and it's weird, because I've never gone this deep, you know, this deep into that thought until this moment. So that's interesting. But yeah, so that was that was weird. And then that person was said, no, no, thank you, and, and that they were ready to go. And that was our last one permutation. We said goodbye. And I knew I'd never speak to him again. And it was interesting, because I called it was evening, early evening. And I had dinner with my kids and went to bed and woke up the next morning. And I called no one answered, and no one answered. And this person was alone, too, because of COVID. And I knew they had gone. So I had to contact the management of the building that they lived in. And, you know, leave it up. And I said, like, I, because I had to prepare this people who were going to enter her apartment that she was probably no longer here and with us. And so it was all these pieces that were strange. You know, of course, they found her and then they had to call, you know, file and call the police. And they have to declare, and all these things. And it was very difficult to not be there. And to offer that softness, even to those people that I didn't even know, because I don't I don't know what they're those. They're strangers to me what their relationship to death and dying.

Amanda Lohman Yeu 27:43

And, and I don't know if they've ever seen someone who's passed on. So it was like I had to put that in those people's hands and not be able to support them. So that was really hard. And, yeah, that was difficult. And I did see them later. Because I had to go, many months later, I had to go to the building to sign off on something for that day. And they were just nice as could be. And I said, thank you. And I thank them, and they knew who I was. And I don't think they'd ever been thanked before either. Like for how that like and that was interesting. You know, this is a big, big building in New York City. But there is a human there's a humaneness to these moments. But has to be seen and recognized and supported. Had that death happened in a non COVID time, it would have been very different. That person would not have been alone in their apartment. I mean, and again, they were entirely alone. There would have been more support for them and more support for the people who were coming in more support for the funny Irish police captain who I met again like two months later who had to come in and I'm sure he has had dealings with death before. But I don't know if we ever is that's ever been acknowledged in a soft, kind way. So that was one of my stories. [inaudible] work during COVID.

Kit Heintzman 29:57

Tell me more about softness.

Amanda Lohman Yeu 30:05

In, I will assume your, in those circumstances because there is a lot of fear around death and dying. Softness, softness is a feeling, right, it's a feeling of support, it's a feeling of being seen. Death can bring a lot of fear, it can bring a lot of anxiety, sickness long term illness can and can bring on depression and anxiety can bring us to very, very dark places that are very, very isolating. So having someone or anyone it can, it doesn't have to be a doula, it can be a friend or a family member, or supportive stranger, like it doesn't really matter. To just hold your hand not just physically, but energetically, emotionally, spiritually, if that's what you're you're needing. So it's just this. It's this that moments of human connection that's almost wordless. Because it's something we all experience whether we want to or not, like, we're all gonna go, we're all going to it. So it's it, you know, being born and dying is, is our absolute. I mean, it's like, no question, it's our absolute thing we have in common, we have a lot in common much more than people want to give credit to. But those things like those are kind of can't, can't deny those things. So it's yeah, the softness is, is that it's a feeling, it's just that feeling of like that, like being helped and being supported and being loved. And like, and that's that to love word, know, how does love play into, to dying. But love plays a huge role in our end of life, and grief, you know, and I say this a lot grief is the the affirmation that you have loved, you know, in most circumstances, would agree because we'd loved something or someone a time period, because we've loved that you've put love into it. So grief is sort of this other side of love, like it's still love, it just feels very, very different. But it's just that it's a reflection of love.

Kit Heintzman 33:21

Thinking about sort of a long stretch of your experiences tell me about tell me something about what you've observed pre pandemic during the pandemic about dying alone. And wanting someone dying alone on one hand and wanting someone to be there on another.

Amanda Lohman Yeu 33:58

It's so individual. It is so, so individual. And like, we all have we sit back when we reflect on what did it what do I want in that moment? Right? I'll speak for myself like, Well, I would like my you know, my family and friends and people that care about me, you know, to sort of be in the space and, and being present. And then it's up to them if they want to what how much they want to be involved, of course. And so my answer is that someone

else's answer might be very, very different. I only want my partner or I only want my children or I only want my best friend Betty or I want to be myself so it's like it's it's it's so individual. It's so individual. And then that you know the moment of death we have no control over when that happens, sometimes even with the best of intentions that we all want to be present, and that person has requested the circumstances sometimes. And I mean, this is, again, like the antithesis of not, can't control that. So it's like we try our best. But yeah, it's very, very, very individual. And what we try to do is to not as I tried as a doula is to not impose what I think that person wants, or what I think they should want, or what I want, because we do that too, right? We, we kind of, we see our own stuff, and then we're like, No, you definitely want the same exact thing that I want. That's not true. And so like, it's that it's like giving, giving space to make to to decide those things, and then and then support them in the best way possible. And then with COVID, that flipped it like totally, totally on its head.

Kit Heintzman 36:08

Tell me more about the flip.

Amanda Lohman Yeu 36:11

Particularly in hospitals. I that was and still is because around here, like even a lot of like intensive care units or, you know, whatever. They don't want people they just don't want people around. They definitely don't want volunteers around. They definitely don't. It's an I, I understand it makes absolute sense. The downside of that is, and we all know, lots of people died alone. And lots of people through COVID, dying of COVID had no access to family members had no access to friends, if they were lucky, and the nurse could spare a minute, they would hold up, you know, a phone so that at least someone could see their face. And that might not have even been on that moment of, of parting. So it's just like that was absolute loss of control. I mean, we have almost, let's face it, we have no control over most things. No control over really that moment. But that was absolutely there's nothing to do. We're all just sitting on our hands. I can't imagine the emotional toll that has taken across the globe on healthcare workers that had to witness people dying by themselves, or had to sit with people dying by themselves. And we you know, even in an I've been told this by people in the medical field, and again, I'm not a I'm not in the medical field. But there's very, very little training in their experience, on how to do that. You know, how to how to be hold themselves and hold space. Let's be and that's why doulas kind of exists. Because we we do that, you know, we have the time, nurses and doctors don't have time, even in many situations like hospice workers don't have the time. It's hard. It's hard, incredibly demanding work. And their job let's face it is to keep people alive. So there's a difference, right? There's a difference in roles. Um, so I can't imagine what that felt like for them. To have to sit in a space and witness over and over and over again. I mean, they're used to doubt they're used to seeing, but there's a difference of I know, you know, Joe over there really wants to see his wife and you can't and that's breaking my heart. So like that's that humaneness that and that I could not even imagine what that felt like or still feels like in many places.

Kit Heintzman 39:13

How was your heart responding to what was happening around you?

Amanda Lohman Yeu 39:26

I think there's an element of you go into survival mode. Like you just go into survival mode. You do what you do on a day to day to keep your family and loved ones safe and well. So many layers of witness. So you witnessing that first inner layer. And then the next which is like your community in your town and the people that you know, govern around you. And then bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger until it goes out and out and out. I had a

hard time knowing that, that was happening, that those conditions were happening that people, like, you know, my instinct as a, someone who works closely with tap is to kind of get in, get into get into those situations to be of support. So it's a weird thing to have, and then not be able to do anything. So for me personally, it was sort of just shifting that. And, you know, I'll use a hippie word and say energetically into, into other things. Because you also have to recognize where you have to also where you have to step back.

Kit Heintzman 40:59

I'm curious, the last few years have been so much more than the pandemic, what have been the other issues in your mind?

Amanda Lohman Yeu 41:07

Can you say that, again?

Kit Heintzman 41:09

What have been some of the other issues on your mind beyond the pandemic over the course of the last two years?

Amanda Lohman Yeu 41:28

Right now it's guns. Um, and again, it's not a political thing for me. It's a thing of life or death. And it's like, Why? Why are we choosing these things that bring on so much destruction. And [inaudible] death, there's enough death in the world. Like, there's enough death all around us. Why are we choosing to continue on the storyline? And it's, again, politics, forget it. I It's almost like I don't even care anymore about politics. Because it's, it's so not human. Human takes let's, let's go for that.

Kit Heintzman 42:23

What does the word health mean to you?

Amanda Lohman Yeu 42:25

Health. So health, health is a whole health as a whole, it's, it's a whole body. And whole body is different than just, you know, treating issues. Health means also preventing and saying, Well, health is staying happy is is hopefully, being happy, like health is so many things. It's not it's not just physical, because our physical bodies don't respond to our other our other things that we've got going on. So health is being whole as best as we can, and stay again, staying more in the idea of, of being well, yes, we treat disease, but that shouldn't be what we consider like health care. Yeah, it's also just [inaudible]

Kit Heintzman 43:32

That's such an interesting answer. I'm wondering if that means that within that worldview, one can in fact, be healthy up until the moment of death?

Amanda Lohman Yeu 43:50

Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. Absolutely. Even like even it's weird because we we think that if we die we've lost the game. Okay, I couldn't beat that death you've lost you failed somehow. That's not true. That's not true at all. And I think that was my my entrance into into that understanding. And when I was with my friend who was you know, had a long battle with breast cancer. When that was something we talked about often was like, even though this is

happening, and this is absolutely real. There is still there is still like, wholeness. There's still wealth of things to think about and, and be and you're still a mother and you're still a friend and you're still five and you're still all these things like your identity isn't just one thing. It's not. It's just part of your story. But it's not your whole story. Absolutely, certainly not. And that's also, you know, the role of doula does is. You know, we asked about life and like, what what did you love to do? Like, what did you do? Like, what really got you going? Like what motivated you to get up every day? And we talk about that I'm gonna support it and we shine a light on it, because it's like, this isn't you this is this is just this piece. So it's just this piece that we all share in common. But what is you? Like, what? What are you in? Who are you on? You know, and to and to shine a light on that you are special just to people you are loved you are these things, all this? All these things? And so much more. Yeah, and that is a part of health is a part of?

Kit Heintzman 46:05

What does safety mean for you?

Amanda Lohman Yeu 46:16

Safety? You don't know? I don't know. I think more and more I don't, it's weird that you asked this today. We're, you know, we're sending our children to, to camp for the summer. Like the first time, and it's like, there's all the safety, I'm like, my head, really worried about safety and worried about safety and the extreme way, and I'm worried about COVID safety, and I'm worried about the safety and ethic. What does then what is safety? I don't know, is are we safe? We want to be safe, right? We want to be safe and free of all this worry. But these are realities, I think our safety. I hope it comes from an ever growing understanding in our human world, that our responsibility here is to take care of each other. That's it. It's not that hard. It's really an easy concept, right, like take care of each other. So if that kind of just spreads a little bit, not from any political standpoint, just that like done that create safety then just remember that.

Kit Heintzman 47:54

How do you think that as a sort of bigger population, we could get to know that?

Amanda Lohman Yeu 48:02

As a bigger population? That's tricky. Because to get there, we have to put aside our our own stuff a little bit, right. Like we have to be willing. have to be willing to do that. I don't know. It's a good question. I find out the answer. I'd be out there like screaming it. How do we get there? Yeah, I don't know. I don't know. We just keep doing keep doing what we do. Right? Like you just keep doing what you do. As long as it's good. Good, do good work.

Kit Heintzman 48:58

How are you feeling about the immediate future?

Amanda Lohman Yeu 49:07

So with what I do, I'm always trying to stay very in the present. Right. So like that's, that's a tough one. Because I think it's what what you're doing in the present that matters the absolute most in this moment in this day. Right? You can always be thinking about tomorrow and the next week and the next week. But it's really what you're doing right now that counts the most maybe that's my own scapegoat for not thinking about my future so that I don't have to be scared I don't know I There isn't a fear factor of course. And I think that's also because I was

worried I always worry about that, like, really far future, like 100, 100 years, I'm just dust. What does that, what does that look like? Generations past thought about that more, like thought about future more future times, but didn't involve them. And they were good with that. I don't know if that's happening so much anymore. So that I would like to see happen more think about much later.

Kit Heintzman 50:37

What are some of your hopes for a much later?

Amanda Lohman Yeu 50:48

That yeah, that we, as a whole just are able to recognize where help is needed and give it a little, willingly. Willingly without question. So without so much. No, this is definitely mine. And outside can't help that guy way over there. Because that, you know, or even in terms of countries like, oh, well, these, these vaccines are mine. You know, that's crazy. Like, it's crazy. You know, I did a genetic tests a few years back, and like, you know, like, lots of people, fun to do and whatever. And like, yeah, I mean, I've got stuff from all over the world. So you're not like in your present shoes. You're you but you come from 1000 on 5000, but many different places that we tend to, like, be like, well, they're way over there. Actually, they're not. They're like, totally right inside you. Yeah, so like a little bit more care about the over there.

Kit Heintzman 52:10

Who's been supporting you throughout the last couple of years?

Amanda Lohman Yeu 52:17

I have a very, very supportive family, very supportive friends. But I also have a community of holistic people that I work closely with, who are just amazing. And, you know, and we have that common goal of, you know, being of support in our own different capacities. We all work in different cities. But the goal is the same. And so like that, that's a big one. Like to have those people that like, I'll use the word professional even though it's not like oh, I'm a professional I don't think on a professional level that that have your back and then under understand that understand.

Kit Heintzman 53:10

What are some of the ways that you take care of yourself?

Amanda Lohman Yeu 53:15

I take I do a lot of yoga, which is not for everybody and it's certainly not a be all end all fix all because it's not I'm also a teacher and I also don't tell that to anybody. Yoga doesn't solve problems. It just has a moment of making you feel better and then you feel better so you can do better. So yoga for me is that yeah, music like music art, like the beautiful stuff. Do the beautiful stuff because that is the soul feeding stuff and the care feeding stuff. And that's something to as a doula that you know, we work with people and make sure that that's present for them as what the things that they find beautiful.

Kit Heintzman 54:05

What do you think scholars in the humanities in the social sciences, so people in fields like literature or sociology or poli sci, what should we be doing right now to help us understand the human side of COVID-19?

Amanda Lohman Yeu 54:27

I guess stuff like this, I mean, this is great.

Amanda Lohman Yeu 54:38

I mean, for me, everything still it a lot comes down to having open discussions open discourse about death and dying. It's something I talked about a lot. It's something that I offer to people who aren't even, you know, in that process, or you know, but it's like talking about that, instead of running away from, so that we have a better understanding of it, and not just not just the, the processes that are different all the time, but sort of the DE stigmatization of it. And also putting it in reality. Because I think even a lot of like this, it's not just COVID, and not just this, you know, these diseases that we have to battle, but all these sorts of sort of social things, to these, social diseases, and social. You can, like the opioid crisis, and like, all these things, but we don't want to really deal with it, because it all ends in death and dying, right? It all ends in death and dying. And it's because we have, so we don't, there's no concept of how real death and dying is. Because we run away from it, because nobody likes to talk about it and makes people very uncomfortable. And I think if we, if we understood that a little bit more, if we talked about that more, maybe we wouldn't, you know, be selling weapons that can take out school rooms with children. Or maybe we wouldn't be doing all of these things. Like it was like, oh, no, that is actually real people. It's actually a real thing. And I choose not to wear a mask. Okay. Do you understand that death is a real thing. Like it's not a judgmental thing. It said that it's that maybe that person really internally struggles with mortality. And that's probably the case. You know?

Kit Heintzman 56:53

What are some of the places that, how could you learn about compassion?

Amanda Lohman Yeu 57:07

So again, I grew up in Italy, I grew up in a different country and different places, I grew up in the 90s. So we were having a lot of refugees coming from all different very war torn countries. So at a very young age, I, you know, my school took in refugees from, from Bosnia, from Herzegovina, from Croatia, from you know, Sudan from Ethiopia from like, all these countries experiencing absolutely unimaginable things. And so like from a young age, I knew people I knew people that the set actually happened to and new people who were fleeing I had you know, so my exposure to it was different not that it was better and that's why I'm a better person you know, whatever I was moral high ground I don't think so at all. But again, I think it was a lot to do with exposure I think compassion comes from recognizing and that could be you know, and seeing seeing yourself in someone else that's compassion is I could be that person. I am that person. Like I am you. You are me, we are the same. So like, that's compassion. And yeah, so I think that I had an early exposure to that not really understanding that maybe that would have happened I know can happen anywhere like it doesn't have to this this is an extreme right but we can learn compassion walk down the street you know, walk down the street I'm sure you'll find find it.

Kit Heintzman 58:53

I'd like you to imagine speaking to a historian in the future someone far enough away that they have no lived experience of this moment. What would you tell them needs to be remembered about right now?

Amanda Lohman Yeu 59:12

I would say first and foremost that our hard lines in the sand of politics created huge problems created huge divides. And I would say to them, please don't let that happen again. Like please just put it all down. And again, it

doesn't like it's not it's not that I choose the side I really don't. It's almost like I feel like I would be on my knees saying please remember that. That's what creates divide and chaos.

Kit Heintzman 1:00:10

I want to thank you so much for the generosity of your time and care and thoughtfulness of your answers. Those are all of the questions I sort of know how to ask right now. But I'd like to open some space if there's anything you want to say that I haven't made room for please say so.

Amanda Lohman Yeu 1:00:34

Um think I think I said most of what I wanted to say in regards to like, the, what it is my personal messages would be. But yeah, I would I would highlight this letting go of this notion of back to normal, normal inconvenience, because when we start to use the word words, like you know disruptive Oh, COVID was so disruptive. It's so it's somewhat, it's very good to circle so egotistical, it's putting me first above the entire world. It's a lot of people. That's a lot of people. So, I you know, I hope we don't experience something again in our lifetime. Chances are, though, that might happen, might happen in one form or another, whether it be disease, plague, war, or this or that. So hopefully, we come back to our human understanding a little bit before.

Kit Heintzman 1:02:10

Thank you so much.

Amanda Lohman Yeu 1:02:11

Thank you so much.