

4 Quick Q's: Book Talk With Enfys Transcript
Deborah Lipp: Recorded April 24, 2023

Deborah Lipp: I have never been interviewed by dice. I've been interviewed a lot of times, including by some very strange people, but never by inanimate objects.

Opening Jingle: Take a playful look with Enfys Book as they roll for crit hits with pagan wordsmiths.

Enfys J. Book: Hi there and welcome to 4 Quick Qs: Book Talk With Enfys. I'm Enfys J. Book and on this show, I ask pagan authors four quick questions chosen by a roll of the dice.

Today, I am interviewing Deborah Lipp, who wrote, "Bending the Binary: Polarity Magic in a Non-Binary World." And Deborah has been teaching Wicca, magic and the occult for over 35 years. She is a Gardnerian witch and high priestess and has been featured in many pagan publications.

An international speaker, Deborah has appeared in various media discussing Wicca, including Coast to Coast Radio, the A&E documentary, "Ancient Mysteries: Witchcraft in America," and the New York Times. She's the author of more than 10 books, including, "Magical Power for Beginners." She lives with her spouse, Melissa, in Jersey City, New Jersey. Deborah, welcome to the show.

Deborah Lipp: Thanks for having me.

Enfys J. Book: I'm so excited to have you here. I am always extra excited to interview folks who've written books that are specifically for the queer magic community. So thank you for that.

Deborah Lipp: Oh, it's, I'm also hoping with this book that I, this is a book that I, I'm kind of hoping to scoop up the allies with, you know, this is for people who are really confused about queer people, but they want to do magic with us.

Enfys J. Book: Exactly.

Deborah Lipp: That's, that's always the hope is it's not just to make queer folks feel more included, but also to help allies find ways to be more inclusive.

Enfys J. Book: I really appreciate that.

Enfys J. Book: So have you ever been interviewed by dice before?

Deborah Lipp: I have never been interviewed by dice. I've been interviewed a lot of times, including by some very strange people, but never by inanimate objects.

Enfys J. Book: Well, first time for everything. What would you like to name our inanimate object who will be deciding the questions tonight?

Deborah Lipp: I'm, we're in, in honor of, of the late Isaac Bonowitz who named everything Fnord. We're going to name the dice Fnord.

Enfys J. Book: Fnord, excellent. I wonder if Fnord pines for the fjords.

Deborah Lipp: Yes.

Enfys J. Book: All right, so let's get going with question number one. Question number one is: who is your favorite underrated deity?

Deborah Lipp: There's, there's a Hindu deity named Chinnamasta, which is the most horrific. It is, she, she decapitates herself and feeds her worshipers from the bloodstreams issuing from her neck. It's the most horrific and, and extraordinary image in Tantra. And it's, it's about sacrifice. It's about life feeding life and death and rebirth being the same thing. And it's, it's wild. It's, it's, it's an image that just looking at it and meditating on it can, can change your life.

Enfys J. Book: That's amazing. Chinnamasta.

Deborah Lipp: Chinnamasta.

Enfys J. Book: Fascinating. That is the first time I have heard of them. That is awesome. All right.

Question two is about writing. What's the hardest thing about writing a book?

Deborah Lipp: I did read once somebody said that writing is easy. You just stare at the page until blood comes out of your forehead.

Enfys J. Book: Yeah.

Deborah Lipp: The, the, the hardest, the, it's, it's always some easy thing, right? Like you, you write a book and maybe 80% of it, you know, pretty well. Otherwise, why would you decide to write the book if you didn't know your material?

Enfys J. Book: Right.

Deborah Lipp: But there's something, and it's only a sentence or a paragraph, and it takes you fully one quarter of your writing time to research that paragraph. And it is, you never know when it's going to happen. It is some little bastard is sitting in there waiting for you. And if you don't, if you don't research it properly your editors will catch it. So you never know.

Enfys J. Book: Absolutely. I've definitely had that experience where I write something too. And I'm like, wait a minute, I go back and read it. I'm like, none of this makes sense. Why did I write it this way? Wait a minute.

Deborah Lipp: Now I'm tying myself in knots, trying to rethink this and overthink this and under think it all at the same time.

I just got caught. This is just the worst. I said something, we're doing a revised edition of "Elements of Ritual" because it is just had its 20th anniversary. So that's-

Enfys J. Book: Oh, congrats.

Deborah Lipp: Thank you. That's how long I've been doing this. So, so my editor is looking at this and she says, where did this statement of fact come from? It's completely wrong. And I was like, oh, you know what? I bet that I read that in a book when I was like a brand new baby pagan in the 80s. And it was probably one of those subsequently discredited feminist books like by Merlin Stone or one of those. And now we just have to cut two paragraphs. Okay, bye.

Enfys J. Book: Well, at least that was an easy fix.

Deborah Lipp: Well, yeah, no, it's, it's, I had to read, you know, there were then two paragraphs preceding it that I had to sort of rejigger so that we weren't coming to this conclusion that turns out to be completely wrong.

Enfys J. Book: That's one of the things I really appreciate in Bending the Binary that you wrote about questioning assumptions and not necessarily throwing out those old assumptions, but looking at them in a new light, I think seems to be a big focus of the book. And I just think that's, that's really important and really useful in the community.

I was really surprised when I first embarked on this path, which it took me sort of embarrassingly long to get started because it had been nudging me for like decades. And I was finally like, fine, fine, I will get into the esoteric. But like, there were so many things that I soaked up so much knowledge at once, right at the beginning, and just didn't question any of it.

And it wasn't until I was six or seven years down the path as a 30 something – who has critical thinking skills – where I looked back and I'm like, wait a minute, I just assumed all of this was the case, but I'm not sure what those assumptions were based on. So there's kind of a breaking down and rebuilding process that I think is quite healthy for modern day pagans.

Deborah Lipp: Oh, absolutely same. I was so thrilled. I was so thrilled to find the occult. I was 21 and it was pre-internet, it was hard to find. And, you know, whatever the high priestess told me, I was just gonna soak it up. And now this is just, thank you for telling me all the things. And some of those things I had to question later.

Enfys J. Book: Yeah, yeah.

Deborah Lipp: And a lot of well-meaning things that we just don't stop and consider the implications of.

Enfys J. Book: And a lot of the stuff that you talk about in the book about like, what do we mean by masculine and feminine binary and like, are there different ways to look at this that are still helpful binaries, but are not gender-based? I thought that was particularly helpful.

Deborah Lipp: What do we mean by tradition? Honestly, traditional things take about 15 minutes to become traditional.

Enfys J. Book: Right.

Deborah Lipp: I have like one of my downline covens, they are doing their traditional ritual that this is how Lammas is done. And I'm like, I wrote that. And they don't, it took 15 minutes for that to become a tradition that nobody could change.

Enfys J. Book: Wow.

Deborah Lipp: And that's normal. Human beings love that repetitive, it does something in our brains comforting. It's like when all the spoons line up in the drawer, you know, it's got that, makes that sound, like ASMR or something. Like it does some kind of like, when we are repetitive and we do something in a way that we treat as traditional, it makes us feel so good. But that doesn't necessarily mean it's actually traditional. And we need to actually question our own history.

Enfys J. Book: Absolutely, absolutely. I think part of the itch that tradition, quote unquote, scratches is, I read a book on change management many years ago, it's called "Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard." And it looks into personal motivations to change and all that. And one of the things they said is, when you're considering how much bandwidth you have to get through your day, basically, habits are free. Like, they don't cost us extra mental effort the way that new things do. So I think traditions are much like that, where it's like, okay, this is the path of least resistance. This doesn't require me to rethink anything or redo anything. It's plug and play, we'll just do it the same way. And then, you know, is it the most meaningful way to do that ritual? Not necessarily.

Deborah Lipp: Well, and it doesn't, and it's good to have repetitive behaviors. It empowers you. You don't want to relearn to drive your car every time. You want the gas and the clutch and everything in the same place they were last time. You know, you want enough repetitive plug and play stuff so that you are empowered to do the things that are really meaningful. But first, decide that you're actually doing them and notice that you're doing them. Just notice.

Enfys J. Book: Absolutely, absolutely. All right, we've got question three. Fnord, what is our question three?

Question three is, do you have a cheerleader in your life who keeps you motivated to write, to teach, to do all the awesome things?

Deborah Lipp: I have multiple cheerleaders. I have people who think I'm cool and who are incredibly supportive. My spouse goes around and tells people that she's Mr. Debra Lip, which is both hilarious and kind of motivating.

Enfys J. Book: I love that.

Deborah Lipp: My daughter loves my writing. I mean, people, but every time you get like a fan letter from a stranger who is gushing a little bit and is a little bit weird and says, "you know, my four people in Wisconsin are using your book as a study guide, and that's how we're structuring our pagan group." Like I can write another year based on that, you know? So-

Enfys J. Book: That's definitely good fuel.

Deborah Lipp: Yeah, but I mean, I love the people in my life.

Enfys J. Book: I love this.

Deborah Lipp: And like my spouse can't possibly get enough credit because like when I'm on a book deadline, food just shows up. Magically, like I don't know where it came from, but I eat it and then it's gone. And then, you know, there's a kitchen, there's all these things that have to happen in one's life. If I wasn't married, I would be living on tuna and Ritz crackers.

Enfys J. Book: Yeah, it's super important to have those support chains when you were in editing deadline. Those are the ones where it's like, I have no life for several weeks until I get this done.

Deborah Lipp: That is about to happen again on my next book, and I'm afraid of it. And I'm going on vacation next week and I will come home and not leave the house until June.

Enfys J. Book: Blessed be, may that go well, because I know that is not fun.

Deborah Lipp: Well, I'm always scared of it. It always goes better than I think it's going to, but I'm always terrified of it. I have a friend who, she used to post these very provocative things on Facebook to get people like talking about their spiritual whatever. And she said, what inspires you? And I think she was looking for sunsets or something. And I said, "deadlines."

Enfys J. Book: Yeah.

Deborah Lipp: Yeah.

Enfys J. Book: Yeah, similarly, I saw one of the comments in your book is that you have a lot of earth in your chart. I do too. And so it's

like deadline: Yes, thing I can assume is true. That is what I will work toward right there.

Deborah Lipp: Yes, the sword of Damocles will come and kill me. So I better meet the deadline.

Enfys J. Book: Yes, and getting things done in itself can be so motivating. Just like, okay, I don't have to worry about that anymore. I can push it out of my brain.

Deborah Lipp: Well, I mean, I talk about this in *The Way of Four*. Like you can't start anything until you finish something. People always, always, when you're having an interview like this, they're like, oh, what's your next project? I need to finish this project. There is no next project until I open the space by finishing this project.

Enfys J. Book: Yeah, I definitely feel that.

Deborah Lipp: Every book is the only book I've ever written while I'm writing it.

Enfys J. Book: Yeah, I feel that in a big way. It's one of the things that's a little bit frustrating about the publishing process is that there's like a year where the writer isn't doing very much because it's all happening at the publisher level within traditional publishing. And then it's like, oh wait, now I have to do things again, but I can't like let my brain just sort of push the project away, even though I'm not the one actively working on it. So it's like, I have to have that in the background that whole time. And that's a little challenging for me sometimes.

Deborah Lipp: Yeah, it's gonna come back. It's gonna come back. I'm going to forget about it and relax and start building my enormous LEGO globe. Melissa got me this giant Lego globe, which is like this expensive collector's piece. It's this big. It's like, I don't know, it's like a foot and a half in circumference. It's just, it's magnificent, it spins and it's got, it's so cool. And she got it for me for Yule. And I promised myself that I was going to finish preparing *Elements of Ritual for Llewelyn* before I touched it. So I opened it in March and I built the base, just the base. And then I get this email from Llewelyn: "Actually, you didn't do what we expected you to do for this."

Enfys J. Book: No.

Deborah Lipp: Cause I'd never done a revision of an existing book with the same publisher before. So I didn't know that we were doing a brand new InDesign. I was like, yeah, just make these revisions and those revisions. "No, no, no. Treat this like a new book." So then that globe sat there mocking me and I know I did. I at one point burst into tears saying that globe is staring at me because I would not let myself like go back to it until I finished. And I did finish, and the globe is beautiful. And now the next round of edits have come and I am prepared to be with those edits because my globe is beautiful.

Enfys J. Book: That sounds really awesome. My partner and his son really like working on big LEGO projects together. They recently built the LEGO Millennium Falcon and that was..

Deborah Lipp: That's quite a, yeah.

Enfys J. Book: Yeah, it's huge. It took a really long time, but they're so happy with it. And I love seeing that.

Awesome.

All right, so we're coming up on our last of the 4 Quick Q's.

This is one where Fnord is going to be joined by the unnamed four-sided die to pick our random encounter here.

Jingle: Random encounter question!

Enfys J. Book: So we have, what is your favorite sound?

Deborah Lipp: You know, when my daughter was about five years old, I would just stand outside her bedroom while she was reading herself to sleep so that I could listen to her laugh. She would laugh like, it was like a waterfall. It was just the most beautiful sound. It was, of course now she laughs like exactly like her father with this sort of bark, which is less beautiful. Adult now, but it's just like little children laughing. Oh, what a beautiful, beautiful sound.

Enfys J. Book: Such a pure joy and innocence to it that I think we lose.

Deborah Lipp: And they don't, there's something, I don't even, they don't do their voice when they laugh. When they're at a certain age, you kind of can't tell different people's laughs apart because it's just this like bubble, right? It's not coming from, I'm thinking about how my voice sounds when I laugh. It's just bubbling up from just a very pure place. It's so beautiful. And I would, I would just haunt the closed bedroom door and just listen.

Enfys J. Book: What kind of books made her laugh?

Deborah Lipp: Oh, she would read joke books. She would read, like, old fashioned joke books. Like that girl reads on The Last of Us. She would read just corny joke books.

Enfys J. Book: I love that. I think I used to collect some of those from the library whenever I could find them as a kid. And yeah, a lot of them I'd have to have my mom explain to me. Cause they would be a little out of date and I wouldn't know what something was.

Deborah Lipp: She was very analytical. She was trying to figure out what humor was. Sometimes like, "explain to me why this is funny."

There's just nothing like the combination of a good sense of humor and autism to just really, we're going to analyze humor now.

Enfys J. Book: I love it.

Well, that's our four quick questions. I would love it if, Deborah, you could tell the folks listening to this about whatever you are most excited about right now. And I hope you'll tell us a bit more about "Bending the Binary" and why everyone should buy it. And then also where people can find you online.

Deborah Lipp: Sure.

So "Bending the Binary: Polarity Magic in a Non-Binary World." It is my passion project. It may be the best thing I've ever written. I want everyone to buy it. I was trained in a very traditional polarity-based Wiccan system. And I still practice that system.

But the gender normativity that is assumed to be a part of that system doesn't make sense. It doesn't make sense to me as a queer person. It doesn't make sense in 2023.

And if you look at, so part of what I'm doing in the book is I'm looking at where does that come from? How did we make all these assumptions about what polarity is? It's just an energy. How did it get a penis? And a uterus? I mean, where did that come from?

And I had, actually my questions about what the history were were wrong-headed questions. I learned that like the very premise of some of my questions was incorrect when I found out what the real history was. And it took me a while.

It took me many years to figure out how to write this book, what I wanted to say and how I could say it. And I'm sure it will offend some people, but I also wanted to say it in a way that wasn't inherently offensive.

I love working with traditional polarity. I love it passionately. I also love my queer life and my queer community. And I approached the book with the idea that both of those things could be true.

And that most of the people writing out there in the world were assuming that only one of those things could be true.

And so I, in the introduction I say, I am sure there is a baby in this bathwater. So let's see if I can save it. And that was the goal. And I hope I succeeded and I'm very passionate about it. And I want everyone to buy it.

The other thing I'm working on is a 20th anniversary –21st anniversary by the time it comes out – fully revised edition of Elements of Ritual.

And the two a little bit dovetail, I didn't realize when I started revisiting Elements of Ritual, how incredibly gender normative it was and how rooted in assumptions about polarity that I no longer believe that book was.

And I keep, I mean, I believe in the integrity of the book. That book is popular. People love it. I didn't want to just throw it away and write a new book. That's not a revision to me.

So, but all of the work that I did in Bending the binary, I had to bring forward into the revision of Elements of Ritual and say, okay, here's traditional Wicca as I understand it for you, the reader, that is no longer gender normative because it's 2024, well, well, it will be when the book comes out.

So those two projects really go together and I'm very passionate about them.

I spend whole days, like, not thinking about gender. I promise, you know, but what we're doing as a culture with gender right now, is so important and so powerful and so healing and so necessary. And I didn't even start Bending the Binary with an intention of being like radical. I started it with an intention of asking questions. Like it's...polarity is like the weather. Everybody talks about it. Nobody does anything about it. What does it mean? Why do I need a partner? Why are we constructing ritual around polarity? What does it mean to take polarity out of ritual and do something else instead? No, why weren't people having these conversations? Why was everybody telling me that I was working a polarity system and not having those conversations? If it's that important, if it's a polarity system, shouldn't those conversations be empowering? So like that was where I started and it is my passion project. And I think you can tell I'm all worked up.

And I do think it's the best thing I've ever written and I hope people love it. Also the cover is so cool.

Enfys J. Book: I love the cover.

Deborah Lipp: And where to find me, let me tell you where to find me. It's deborahlipp.com. I'm the easiest person to find. You do have to spell my name correctly. D-E-B-O-R-A-H. And there are two P's in Lipp: deborahlipp.com.

I have Twitter. I have Instagram. I have Facebook because I'm old and the old people are on Facebook. I have a Bookshop link that you can use.

Everybody who is an author needs you to review their book on Amazon. Even if you don't buy their book on Amazon and you hate Jeff Bezos, we all need you to review a book on Amazon because algorithm is king.

But if you want to buy at your local bookstore or you want to support your local bookstore, you can go through my site to mybookshop.org

site and click through that way. And they are a wonderful organization and they don't pay me to say that.

Enfys J. Book: I love bookshop.org as well. They're fabulous. I'm able to support my local indie shop and not bother them with special orders. It's just like, chances are they don't have on the shelf what I'm looking for, but I can order it through them and the bookstore still gets money, which is nice.

Deborah Lipp: And I also have a new book out with Crossed Crow Publishing as well as a revision of *The Way of Four* because I don't have enough to do with my free time.

Enfys J. Book: That's awesome. Well, congratulations on all your success. And I hope folks do buy your book. And if you want to read the book, but cannot afford to buy it, your local library is a great resource. And if they don't have it in stock, you can request that they purchase it and they usually will. So I always encourage people to see their local libraries. They can help.

Deborah Lipp: All right.

Enfys J. Book: Well, thanks everyone for listening to this weird, nerdy little dice-based interview show.

If you enjoyed this episode of *4 Quick Qs: Book Talk With Enfys*, be sure to like, subscribe, and leave a review on your podcast app of choice.

Check out more content from me at majorarqueerna.com.

That's M-A-J-O-R-A-R-Q-U-E-E-R-N-A.com.

Whatever time it is where you are, have a fantastic day and may the dice of fate roll well for you.

Outro Jingle: Thanks for listening to *4 Quick Qs*!

Enfys J. Book: This is Enfys J Book again. Tune in next time when you'll hear author David Salisbury say:

"I dish with author friends usually over a couple of drinks, you know, like, oh, what's the most ridiculous review you've had this year, you know?"