

Nadja & Jesse



SFLY051114-347



Our Relationship Story

We met in High School though we didn't start dating until after we graduated. If you ask most of the people who knew us in the early days they would tell you that they always knew the two of us would be together in the end. No one was surprised when we eventually got married. After graduation we both got jobs in town and within a year Jesse moved in with Nadja and her family before the two of us moved together to Berkeley, CA. Here we played house in the city, both working and learning what it meant to be in a relationship without the company of family and friends being close by. We were young and there were a lot of challenges but also good times and adventures. Having met at 15 and starting a relationship at 17 our young adult sense-of-selves were very intertwined and didn't fully know who we were as individuals.



Above: We are about 19 in this photo, on the beach in LA visiting Jesse's Grandma



Wanting to explore life as our own people and experiment with what else and who else was out there, we had a brief separation after Berkeley. Jesse lived in Sacramento, started college, worked at a bike shop, and spent a lot of time hanging out with friends. Nadja spent time with her parents, and stayed in Berkeley as a live-in Nanny. She went to travel for several months in Europe. We both concluded that we belong together, through thick and thin, and have been continuing to grow and learn from each other ever since.

In the summer of 2012 we went on a month long road trip, driving down to Arizona and over to Colorado before making our way back up to Montana and home through Washington. We visited multiple national parks, a favorite being the Grand Tetons, and had fun stopping at many breweries along the way. We camped most of the way to keep it affordable, and listened to the Harry Potter books on tape for extra entertainment.

Right: Ettinger, Germany. Close to where we are currently renting out our family apartment to a Ukrainian family.

Below Left: We are both fortunate enough to work from home.

Below Right: Setting up a tent on one of Nadja's family's annual ocean trips.



Left: Hanging out playing video games on the floor at Nadja's parent's house.

Right: Ziggy asleep on the rocking chair while we work on finishing the quilt for Nadja's brother. Christmas tree in the background.





We married in 2013 and both had a royally good time. While Nadja stayed more focused on the ceremony itself, making sure it fit with their beliefs and values, incorporating many traditions from around the world, Jesse was focused on community with friends and family, brewing a batch of beer and putting together a play list for the dance party.

Though we did not have any children of our own, we have always been conscious of the little ones in any gathering, so we made sure to have goodies and fun activities geared especially for those small guests. It was a very laid back and inexpensive affair full of love and laughter.

Katherine, (bottom left), composed a song for us and played her cello as we walked down the aisle. Nadja was fortunate enough to have the chance to wear Jesse's great grandma's wedding dress, with a few alterations. Grandma C (top right) was at their wedding and had a chance to see this. We did not have a receiving line but instead served the pizza, along with two of our best friends, Sage and Katherine, and got to say hello to all our guests that way.



Left: May 2013 in Kawaii just before we got married. Right: September 2013 in Germany just after we got married.



As we had been living together for many years before we got married, not much changed after the wedding in terms of our daily life but we continued to support each other in all aspects of life, both emotionally and financially. We took turns putting each other through college and know what it means to spend sparingly while living on a single income.

We spent about six years together in Sacramento, CA before moving all our plants and two kitties up to Portland, where we have been working to put down solid roots, building a local community, and preparing to raise a family.



Left: July 2023 at the Portland Tea Fest, for our 10 year anniversary

Our Two Kitties
White: Ziggy Stardust or the cat who fell from the sky
Black: Bumble bee Cat





Nap Time!

We don't own a TV, though we do stream shows on the computer often enough, mostly nature and travel shows. We spend a lot of our free time exploring our other interests and hobbies together. Here are some of the things we enjoy:

- * Cooking (Nadja as the Sous-chef chopping everything and Jesse as the spice master sautéing it up)
- * Quilting (Jesse with the sewing machine and Nadja by hand)



Above: Ziggy and Nadja taking an afternoon nap together on the couch.

Right: We enjoy playing games together, both with family, friends, and just the two of us.



- * Snow fun (Jesse on cross country skies and Nadja on snow shoes)
- * Water fun (Nadja in a kayak and Jesse on his paddle board)
- * Quiet fun (Jesse doing cross words and Nadja knitting)
- * Screen fun (Nadja with her movies and Jesse with his games, Zelda being a favorite)



Grandma Dolly and Brielle

Family Time is Special and Meaningful to us...

Chris, Dad, Jesse, Nadja, Kavi, Mom



Below: Making silly faces with Kavi many years ago



Top Left: This was within the last few months of Omi (Nadja's grandma's) life. We were showing her pictures of our trip to Germany.

All

About

Nadja

Follow your Heart



Occupation: Billing Specialist

Fun things to know about Nadja:

- ~ She once bought a one way ticket to Germany, lived there for 8 months and learned how to speak the language.
- ~ She can knit a pair of baby socks in a single day.
- ~ She knows how to juggle
- ~ She likes to take hikes barefoot through the forest
- ~ Her favorite author is Barbara Kingsolver
- ~ She grew up without a TV

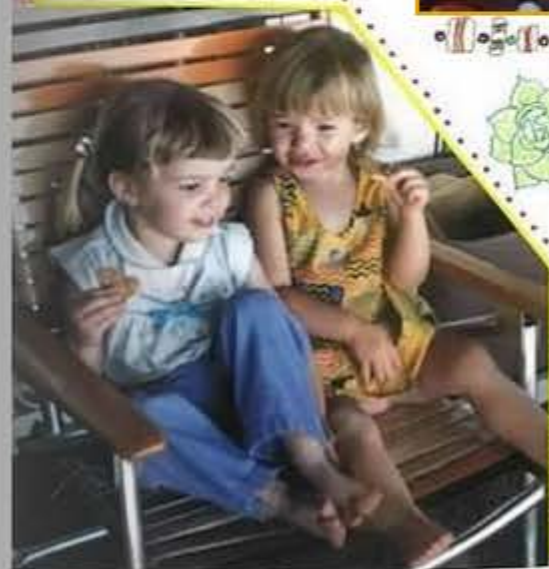


What Jesse Loves about Nadja:

- ~ Her compassion and empathy to her fellow human beings
- ~ Her love of plants that makes our house a cozy jungle and joy to live in
- ~ Her confidence in herself and who she is as a person in this world
- ~ Her dedication to self improvement, and desire to grow as a person
- ~ Her artistic ability, and the joy she receives from crafting
- ~ How she brings joy and light to my life
- ~ How she has not just book smart intelligence, but also emotional intelligence
- ~ Her faith in the universe to provide and her trust that everything will work out



Nadja was born in Tucson, AZ, where much of her father's side of the family still lives. When she was two her parents moved the family to a small town in the foothills of Northern, CA. Here Nadja and her older brother grew up and had a wonderful childhood full of fun adventures. Nadja's dad was a carpenter who worked hard during the day and played fully with his children in the evenings and on the weekends. They would fly to the moon on the swings in the back yard, or run from the trolls chasing them on their weekend hikes.



Nadja's mom is a consistent and loving presence. She volunteered and worked part time during Nadja's school years. Nadja went to a Waldorf orientated school with the same teacher and classmates 4th-8th grade.



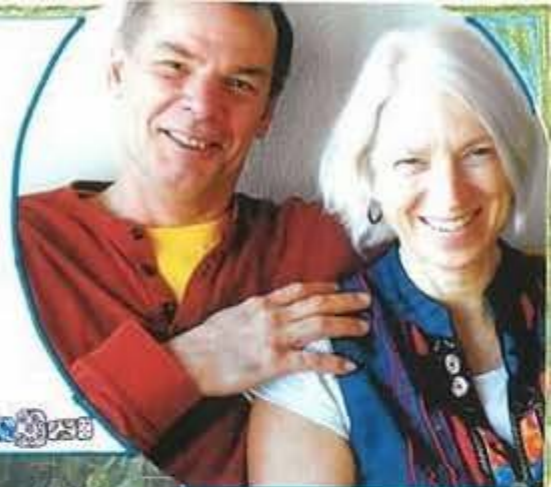
Nadja's mom is German who came as an exchange student when she was sixteen to live with Nadja's dad's family for a year. Having this German upbringing in her life has given Nadja a different perspective on many things, allowing her to be more open minded and curious. Nadja grew up surrounded by love and support from family and very close friends. She grew up with nature as her playground and imagination in her heart. She was raised with a love for animals and always had cats and dogs, sometimes also guinea pigs, birds, or even a rabbit once. Her brother was three and a half years older and everything you would want a big brother to be. Supportive and loving, also annoying and difficult, teasingly trying to scare Nadja with vampire stories but quickly shifting to a protective nature if she ever got too scared.

The biggest tragedy and trauma Nadja had to face was when Chris's long-time girlfriend, Cassie, died in a car accident on her way to Nadja's high school graduation. Cassie had been living with Nadja's family for over a year and was like a sister to her. She has since discovered other soul sisters but Cassie is still missed to this day and will always hold a special place in Nadja's heart.



After a few years of working with children, taking a few college classes both for fun and to feed her brain, Nadja decided it was time to focus a bit more on an actual career. She picked accounting as it fit into her idea of making enough money, being her own boss, and only working part time, so she could put most of her focus on being a mother.

One of the families she was a nanny for was very influential in that it helped her experience and understand that being related by blood isn't necessary to make a family. She worked for them for two years, one of which she lived with them as a family member. The family moved to New Jersey and it became more difficult to visit and stay in touch, though Nadja did her best and still holds those two children, now teenagers, very close to her heart.

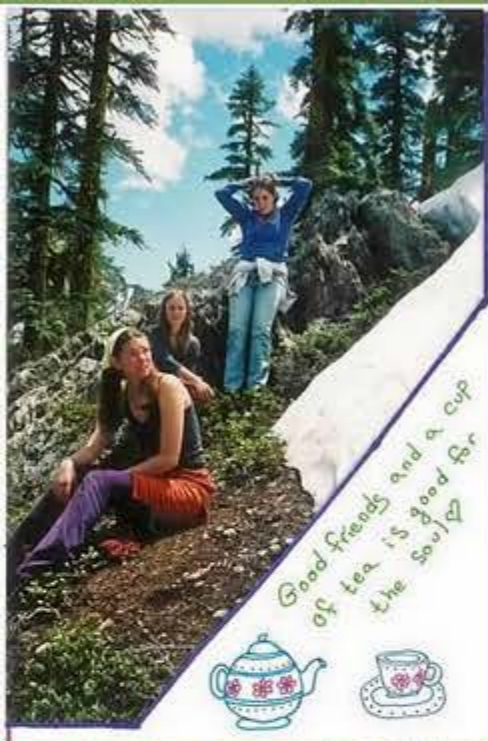


Above: My desk with family photos when I still worked in the office



My mom's mom (pictured left and right) who lived in Germany most of my life, taught me how to knit and was a big part of my life even though she lived across the ocean. ♥



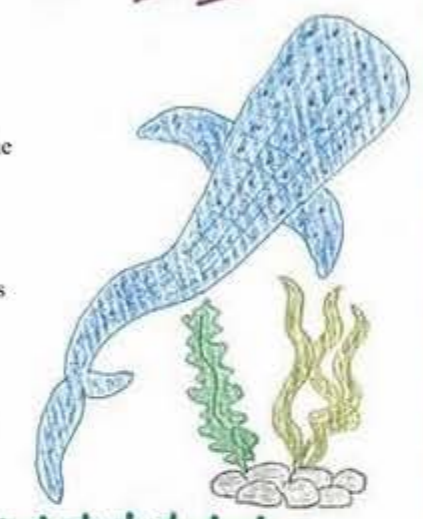


Nadja loves living in Portland these last handful of years, even if sometimes it can be a bit challenging to live so far away from long time friends and family. Even at a distance those that love her and Jesse find ways to be supportive and stay close. Fortunately, the world we live in today makes it easier to stay close over large physical distances. She is making new friends and having fun exploring the possibilities these friendships present, such as monthly crafting groups, dinner parties, and hiking buddies.



All About Jesse

- Occupation: GIS Analyst
- Fun things to know about Jesse:
- ~ He made himself a soft shell jacket and embroidered forest park on the arm and every time he wears it he gets compliments
 - ~ He was once part of a Cyclecross bicycling team
 - ~ He can go somewhere once and then remember how to get there without having to look up directions ever again.
 - ~ His favorite author is Terry Pratchett
 - ~ He can ride a unicycle
 - ~ His favorite thing to do on his birthday is cook for his friends
 - ~ He is an avid Nature Documentary Watcher



- What Nadja loves about Jesse:
- ~ How he randomly knows something about seemingly everything.
 - ~ His excitement over new things and willingness to experiment and have an adventure, whether physically in a foreign country or more locally, in the kitchen, with some newly discovered spice.
 - ~ His passion and desire to protect people and their basic human rights.
 - ~ His sense of humor.
 - ~ His confidence in himself and who he is as a person in this world
 - ~ His fantastic memory
 - ~ The joy and light he brings to my life.

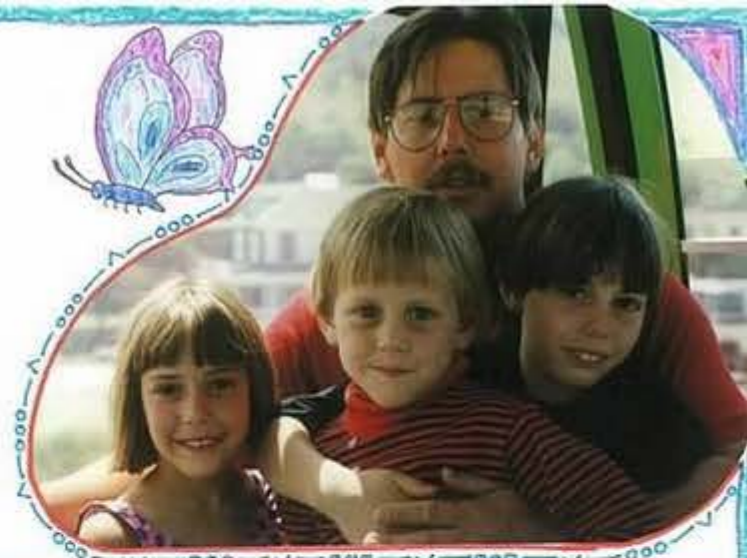




Jesse was born in Nevada City, CA as a middle child in a family of six. His mom worked off and on throughout his childhood but spent the majority of her time volunteering through and for the church, raising and home schooling her four children. Jesse's dad was a plastic injection machinist and engineer with his own company and worked from home so was also around for Jesse's childhood. Jesse would often take off into the forest and go camping either by himself or with his siblings. Church was a big part of Jesse's early years and taught him the value and power of community. Even though he completely broke away from religion starting in his high school years, he still acknowledges the important role it played in his social life and his ability later in life to build fast and strong friendships with the people around him.



From a very early age Jesse had a slight stutter for which he went to speech therapy for many years. While the speech impediment still remains, it is mild and non-disruptive. Instead the skills he learned from speech therapy have helped him communicate and made him more conscious of what he is saying and better at articulating how he is feeling. Towards the end of 3rd grade his parents thought to try public school and things seemed to go okay until a few months into 4th grade when one of Jesse's teachers told him to "just spit it out". Naturally this did not go over well, and his parents quickly pulled him back out. There are challenges from his childhood, such as the way his parents argued and yelled at each other, which he decided to do differently when he became a husband and later, a parent. Despite this, Jesse's parents loved their four children and his overall memory of childhood is joyful. They instilled a love for the outdoors and adventure in their children, with the many camping trips and road trips all through the US. Some of his favorite memories come from these adventures with his family.





The years Jesse spent in Sacramento, both without and with Nadja, provided joy and fun times with friends that he looks back on fondly. He really grew up and came into his own person during this time. Jesse spent a few years in college pursuing different directions before he found what he liked and wanted to do for a career. He settled for Geographic Information Systems as this allowed for a variety of opportunities. He has worked, using his skill with maps, in several different fields, including medical, Apple Maps, and sanitary companies.



I got into making bread and pizza during the pandemic

Top Row Left: I got a paddle board for my birthday. Middle: I participated in the "Walk a Mile in Her shoes" to bring awareness to sexual assault. Right: I got to visit the oldest brewery in the world while in Germany.



Sophomore year of High School found Jesse back in public school, though a very small and new charter school with only 100 students total. Jesse had already begun to drift away from his parents and loose faith in the church. Since church, and the youth group, had been such a big part of his life and self identity there was a period where Jesse felt a little lost and didn't really know who he was without this community.

He knew he wanted to be kind and happy and with the help of the new life and community he discovered and built, he was able to find himself. In High School he was introduced to Ultimate Frisbee, which was a big part of his life for many years. He also became friends with a unique and special group of people who would get together Friday nights and make fancy dinners. One of the people in this friend group was Nadja. Jesse's parents got divorced shortly before Jesse and Nadja moved to Berkeley and even though Jesse was out of the house and an adult, this was still an adjustment. The reason his dad said, was because his mom was no longer the same person he had married. This has always bothered Jesse as his parents had been married for 25 years and he would hope she wasn't the same person. People are supposed to change and grow. He has always been grateful that the relationship he has with Nadja allows for both of them to do just that.



Jesse's father died in a motorcycle accident when he was 26. They had just started to reconcile their relationship after the divorce, second marriage, and second divorce. Less than two years later Jesse's mom passed away just a few days before Christmas. These two extreme losses are still hard for Jesse and the grief and memory has put a strain on the relationship he has with his siblings, even though they all still care about each other deeply. When their parents passed the four of them came together as one strong unit of support that impressed people watching from the outside.



Jesse moved to Portland about eight months after Nadja and while it was a bit of a struggle at first, finding a job and making friends, it didn't take long after deciding to finish getting his degree that he'd begun the ground work of a new community.



He became part of the GIS club and even after graduating he is still friends with many of those people. He loves the misty weather and the great out doors of the pacific north west.



Our Home and Neighborhood



A little fuzzy, but this photo was taken Our very first morning of waking up in our new home.



Our house is full of plants



Jesse showing us how tall the asparagus has grown, wearing his favorite garden overalls.



Left: This is our kitchen.



Right: Our first winter storm, walking to the store for some dinner food.



We live just a couple blocks away from the Montavilla Community Center. We've gone there with our friend's girls a few times and they enjoyed the pool as well as the playground next door. Just around the corner is a local urban farm we are hoping to become involved with. We are also hoping to help organize future block parties. We appreciate living on a street where the neighbors know each other, are always happy to help out when needed, and smile when they cross paths. There are quite a few other families with small children and we like to imagine the friendship possibilities this presents for our own children.





Left: Reading Stories
Right: und Bebi's
Decorating the
Christ mas tree
on December 24th
two different years



Favorite Traditions

Weihnachten



Christmas, (weihnachten in German), is probably the most elaborate holiday we currently celebrate, with home made cookies, german pancakes for dinner, candlelight and stories read out loud to each other on the 24th before opening any presents. The morning of the 25th is for stockings and presents from Santa.



Holidays are a cause for celebration in our families and a chance to spend time with those we love, a chance to have fun and express ourselves creatively. Easter is for painting blown out eggs to keep for years to come, (bottom right photo). The four advent Sundays before Christmas are for making our own wreath and holiday crafts such as cutting out snowflakes and making home made Christmas presents.

Many of our traditions are german, such as celebrating St. Nick on the 6th of December, but others we have developed ourselves, like the Thanksgiving Tree we decorate with paper fall leaves naming all that we are grateful for in this life of ours. We are looking forward to getting to share all these fun traditions with our child/ren, (and their birth family), and hopefully creating and adopting some new traditions as well. We enjoy any excuse to appreciate and celebrate life, love, and happiness. We recently came up with a new tradition we plan to start this year of using New Years Eve to discuss and plan a few of the following years trips and adventures.





Left to Right
 Nadja
 Jesse
 Moma (Dan)
 Nadja's Dad
 Orri - Nadja's
 grand ma
 Marion
 Nadja's aunt

German Breakfast



Jesse built us the below
 Pizza Oven in our back yard.



Eating out in Nature



Jesse making us breakfast
 while camping.



Some non-holiday traditions include German breakfasts with fancy bread, cheese and soft boiled eggs, camping in the summer, getting pedicures on Jesse's birthday, and family reunions on both Jesse's and the Nadja's sides of the family.



When it comes to the dreams we have for our child/ren and their life with us, we know no limits and yet the answer is very simple. We want our child to be happy, feel safe and loved, and believe they can accomplish anything and everything they dream off, but also know that whatever they choose to do with their lives will be enough and we will easily be proud of them. They will grow up loved unconditionally, guided and supported gently and consistently. They will be encouraged to pursue their passions and interests and to be their OWN mindful person - regardless of how that person may or may not mirror us, as their parents. In addition our child will also benefit from an extended family and community which they are joyfully included in.



Dreams for our Child/ren



Grandparents were an integral part in both Nadja and Jesse's childhoods and we expect they will also play an important role in our child/rens life. Nadja's parents are very much looking forward to being supportive grandparents and have been patiently waiting for this opportunity. Jesse's parents are unfortunately no longer with us but we have many aunts and uncles on Jesse's side who are excited to step in and fill that role.



Open Adoption Aspirations



We believe family is who you choose your family to be, whether of the same blood or not, and we take this belief to heart. We have a circle of friends who are as close as family to us and just as cherished and important. We hope our birth family will join this circle and we know this circle will love and support our child with all their hearts, as aunts and uncles, god parents, cousins, and birth parents.



We hope to be able to have a relationship with the birth family in whatever capacity they are willing and able, but never with any pressure or expectations. We understand every family and story is different and we are willing and open to adjust to the needs our particular situation presents, even if that means our child's birth family is unavailable. They will still always be a part of our family and we will talk about them often with our child and make sure they are a part of our day to day lives and always hold a place in our hearts. It is important to us that our child know they are loved by all who make up their beautiful and complicated family. Our goal is for our child to grow up understanding, appreciating, and celebrating their unique story.

Thank You for Visiting