

**You're listening to Imaginary Worlds, a show about how we create them and why we suspend our disbelief, I'm Eric Molinsky.**

**There used to be a bar near my neighborhood in Brooklyn called The Way Station. From the outside, it looked like a normal bar. But when you went inside, the first thing you saw was a blue police box.**

ANDY: Every day I open up the shutters and I see her sitting in the corner. It's just like I feel at home.

**That's because the owner of the bar, Andy Heidel, was a huge Doctor Who fan. When I went there, the show was playing on the back wall. He used to play a lot of episodes from when David Tennant played The Doctor in the mid 2000s. Every fan has their favorite Doctor. David Tennant is Andy's favorite, and my favorite too.**

ANDY: And nobody can say I'm sorry like Tennant -- if I'm dying, I'm on my deathbed, my make-a-wish foundation is for him to come and tell me I'm sorry.

*DOCTOR: I'm sorry, I'm so, so sorry.*

**And what does the blue police box have to do with Doctor Who? It's actually a ship called the TARDIS. It looks like a police box on the outside but that's an optical illusion meant to disguise the gigantic ship on the inside. In fact, it's a running gag on the show, every time a new character goes into the TARDIS, they say:**

*Well it's huge.*

*It's bigger inside than out.*

*It's bigger inside than it is on the outside! I know!*

**The TARDIS at the bar was the entrance to a bathroom – which was not as exciting as a spaceship, but it was still an optical illusion.**

*Oh my God. So on the inside here I'm in the bathroom here. I see a painting of weeping angels. (FADE OUT)*

**There were paintings of Doctor Who characters on the wall – and an autograph from Matt Smith, who played the main character after David**

**Tennant. Matt Smith actually came to the Way Station, with the show runner at the time.**

ANDY: They were in town doing publicity for his season finale. And the hotel didn't have BBC America, so they went on Twitter, and they were like is anyone showing it? And everyone tweeted, go to The Weight Station. So they stayed and watched the season finale with everyone, and I looked at the TARDIS, I looked at Matt Smith and watched Matt Smith watch himself on TV as the Doctor walking into the TARDIS. It's mind blowing.

***And then did Matt Smith go to the bathroom?***

ANDY: And then he did. It was the circle of life.

**If you're having déjà vu right now, it's not your imagination. This episode originally aired in early 2018. But we're now in the midst of a 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of Doctor Who. There's a three-part special airing on the BBC and Disney Plus, with a lot more to come.**

**Now I've covered a lot of fandoms over the years, but typically after I talk with fans, I move on. Not with Doctor Who. After I did this episode, I became a full-fledged fan and The Doctor is now one of my personal favorite characters of all time. And a lot of stuff has happened on the show since 2018. So I decided to regenerate this episode, to use a word that's appropriate to Doctor Who, with new information and new insights that I've had over the last almost 6 years since I first wrote this episode.**

**Now, if you've never watched a single episode and you're a little confused - - let's look at the big picture:**

**The original run of Doctor Who was on the BBC from 1963 to 1989. In 2005, Doctor Who returned to the BBC but the modern version of Doctor Who is not a complete reboot. The events that happened on the original run of the series are canon, they're part of the main character's backstory.**

**You see, The Doctor is an alien. He gave himself that title, The Doctor. The title of the show, Doctor Who, is a question.**

*CLARA: Who are you?*

*THE DOCTOR: The Doctor.*

*CLARA: Doctor who?*

*THE DOCTOR: No, just The Doctor. Actually, sorry, could you ask me that again?*

*CLARA: Ask you what?*

*THE DOCTOR: Could you ask me that question again?*

*CLARA: Doctor who?*

*THE DOCTOR: Ooh yeah!*

*CLARA: Doctor who?*

*THE DOCTOR: I never realized I enjoyed hearing that said out loud. Thank you*

*CLARA: Okay.*

**The Doctor comes from a planet called Gallifrey, which is run by Time Lords that look human, but they have vastly superior intelligence. And among the Time Lords, The Doctor is a rebel. He stole one of the time traveling spaceships – the TARDIS – so he could explore the universe. And he often has human companions. They can be like stand-ins for the audience -- ordinary people going through this extraordinary adventure of traveling with The Doctor.**

**The other thing about Time Lords is that they live multiple lives. Whenever The Doctor dies saving the Earth or his body he's in has too much wear and tear, he can regenerate into a different human body. And thus, a new actor will take on the role. The Doctor remembers everything that happened to him in all of his previous bodies, but every new incarnation of The Doctor has his own unique sense of style and humor.**

**In 2017, it was big news that Jodie Whittaker was cast as The Doctor. The role had always been played by men. But the character has gone back to being played by male actors, so I'm going to refer to The Doctor as "he" for most of the episode.**

**And once again, the show is at a crossroads. This month, Ncuti Gatwa will become the Fifteenth Doctor, and the first Black man to play the role.**

**I think regeneration is the key to why Doctor Who has been a global icon for more than half a century. I mean the show itself regenerates with every new actor and every new production team. And I think that regeneration works as a powerful metaphor which resonates with fans, no matter where or when we were when we first discovered Doctor Who.**

**>> BREAK**

**This episode is full of spoilers. If you want to do a deep binge before you listen, there are different eras of Doctor Who streaming on Max, Brit Box, and Disney+ in the U.S.**

**Let's begin in 1966. The show actually started in 1963, but let's begin in '66.**

**Doctor Who is a popular black and white children's show. The Doctor is played by William Hartnell. He was in his late 50s but he looked older. And he played The Doctor like a Victorian schoolmaster, clutching his lapels, making pronouncements with a twinkle in his eye.**

*THE DOCTOR: You see there's something over there which might be the salutation to all this business.*

*SUSAN: What's that?*

*THE DOCTOR: A telephone my dear!*

**But there was a problem. William Hartnell's health was deteriorating. He couldn't keep up the schedule, and he was flubbing his lines.**

*THE DOCTOR: D-d-d-d-. Hmmmp. It's one thing after another.*

**So, the producers made a tough choice – or we hope it was a tough choice. They decided to fire William Hartnell and bring in a different actor to play The Doctor.**

**We can imagine what that moment was like because it was dramatized in a made-for-TV movie the BBC produced to celebrate the show's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2013. William Hartnell was played by David Bradley. Brian Cox played Doctor Who's first producer Sydney Newman, who was Canadian.**

*SYDNEY: We've got great plans for Doctor Who, Bill. Believe you me, great plans.*

*BILL: Well, I'm glad to hear it.*

*SYDNEY: But we're looking at ways to refresh it, regenerating it.*

*BILL: Well yes quite right, spice things up a bit.*

*SYDNEY: Bill...*

*BILL; I'm glad we're on the same wavelength.*

*SYDNEY: Oh hell, Bill there's no way to say this. We want Doctor Who to go on, but not with you. Like you said things have got to change.*

*BILL: I see.*

**Nick Randall is a producer at BBC radio, and a big Doctor Who fan. He still can't get over the way they recast The Doctor.**

NICK: Because if I was a TV producer and my lead actor was forgetting his lines and he wasn't well and was getting on a bit. But the show was proving popular. I would either can the show, think of another science fiction show that would cover similar basis but will be different. Or if I was going to recast I would either get somebody who looked as close as William Hartnell did and put the wig on them and all the rest of it. I mean the thing is when we talk about regeneration rejuvenation, I would imagine perhaps a younger version of the same actor. So, somebody who looked like a young William Hartnell. I wouldn't try to think of getting an actor who looked like look nothing like him at all, not even pretending to look anything like him and also to encourage him to play it in such a different way.

**But that's what happened when Patrick Troughton became the second actor to play The Doctor.**

*THE DOCTOR: I was wondering where that had got to. <plays recorder>*

NICK: So, I think that is so outrageously bonkers but it's brilliant.

*POLLY: That is The Doctor, I think.*

*BEN: It's not only his face that's changed. He doesn't even act like him.*

**And thus, a pattern emerged. A new actor would be cast as The Doctor. He looked nothing like the previous actor. He could play the character however he wanted. And then after several years when he got tired of the role, he'd move on.**

**In the original series, a regeneration would have The Doctor lying down like he was dying. And then they'd cross fade to the next actor lying in the same position wearing the same clothes. After he'd wake up, he'd pick a new outfit and check out his new face in the mirror.**

**Here's Tom Baker in his first episode as the Fourth Doctor.**

*THE DOCTOR: A new body is like a new house, takes a little time to settle in, you need to take the rough with the smooth. I think the nose is a definite improvement.*

**In the modern series, the regenerations are more dramatic with special effects. But the routine is the same.**

**That transition can be hard for young fans. Robin Bunce teaches history and culture at the University of Cambridge. When Robin was a kid, he loved Tom Baker's version of The Doctor, with his mop of curly brown hair, his big fedora, and his scarf that went down to his knees. And Robin's father worked at the BBC, he got behind-scenes-access.**

ROBIN: But as I was leaving the set, Tom Baker strode on and he was in costume, and he looked and sounded every inch The Doctor and he asked me my name and he asked me if I wanted a jelly baby.

**A jelly baby is kind of like a gummy bear. And that's something Tom Baker would do on the show, he'd offer jelly babies to characters at inappropriate times.**

*MONTAGE: Would you like a Jelly Baby?*

**And then, Tom Baker left.**

**The next Doctor – played by Peter Davison – had feathered blonde hair and he dressed like a gentleman about to play cricket. Was that traumatic for Robin?**

ROBIN: Oh enormously. Yes enormously. In fact, I didn't watch the show for two years after that, to this day I've never forgiven Peter Davison for not being Tom Baker and the trauma of my life is that as a young man I used to look a bit like Peter Davison. So when people discovered I liked Doctor Who and they say oh yeah and of course you look like Peter Davison, which is exactly the wrong thing to say to me.

**I started to wonder, what do all these different versions of The Doctor have in common?**

**There's a famous quote that a lot of actors and writers have referenced as a lodestar for the character. It comes from Terrance Dicks, who wrote Doctor Who in the '70s. He said: "The Doctor never gives in, and never gives up, however overwhelming the odds are against him. The Doctor believes in good and fights evil. Though often caught up in violent situations, he is a man of peace. He is never cruel or cowardly."**

**The playwright Mac Rogers loves Doctor Who fan. When he was a kid, The Doctor was a role model for him because the character didn't rely on any weapons. He outsmarted the villains, and he sometimes had compassion for them too.**

MAC: I hadn't realized how much I was hungering for someone who wasn't an action hero, for someone who was more of a hero through intellect and through joking.

**And Mac says, there's a key question about The Doctor, which is baked into the format of the show.**

MAC: Is The Doctor on a quest to fight evil or not? And that's something that's fluctuated many times in the show's history. Are his adventures part of a quest or are they just an epic series of failed attempts to go on holiday? The Doctor is fundamentally a trouble shooter. The Doctor comes in and averts crisis. The Doctor is never there to build the better system that might need to come after the crisis has been averted because he can't that would destroy the concept of the show that you're in a different place every single episode, you're in a new world, you're in a new story.

**The Doctor's relationship with the human race is kind of like a stepparent who really wants to impress us. We're his favorite species. He cheers us on when we're doing well. But he also delivers harsh lectures if he thinks we're not living up to our potential.**

**Mac thinks this aspect of The Doctor's personality also emerged from the format of the show, because Doctor Who was originally designed to be a children's program.**

MAC: I think a certain point The Doctor very often needs to spell out the moral of the story because where adult critical faculties might tease out that moral from the actions of the story, children don't always necessarily bring that same level of

analysis of the story, and I think very often in children's books you see a literal verbal explaining of the story.

**Yeah.**

MAC: So I sometimes think that's an external consideration and sometimes I think The Doctor is just genuinely really arrogant because he spends almost his entire life around less smart people. He very rarely bumps into someone who shares his intellect.

EMMET: I do think that there is a little bit up of a smart guy's power fantasy there.

**Emmet Asher-Perrin writes for the website Tor.**

EMMET: I think there is there's the aspect of like you know we always talk about the male power fantasy

***It's like you know big guys like the beta male power fantasy.***

EMMET: Exactly. It kind of is especially. I mean if you're like a nerdy lady you've had guys, I mean I've had guys come up and try to 'splain Doctor Who to me which is hilarious because I'm like you're doing. You're just sort of aping your favorite character. You're doing what he does.

**Emmet wrote an essay where they argued that if you look at the whole arc of the series, the regenerations aren't random, based on which actors were available at the time or how the writers or actors chose to interpret The Doctor. Emmet thinks the character has taken on a life of its own. And when Emmet looked at the chronology of all The Doctor's different regenerations, they saw a consistent story about a character who keeps trying to change for the better. But he keeps overcompensating and overshooting the mark.**

**I thought this was fascinating and I wanted to hear more about it.**

**And since we have a time machine – let's go back to that moment in 1966 when Patrick Trouton took over the role of The Doctor from the first actor to play him, William Hartnell.**

EMMET: You sort of get the impression that William Hartnell's doctor with a little fusty and he had very specific ideas of how things needed to be done and maybe he thought, oh, you know I could stand to be a little bit looser a little bit more chill. He changes it up and very interestingly you get this sort of weird goofy guy with



the haircut that's supposed to be reminiscent of The Beatles which is strange. But you get someone with a bigger sense of humor.

*THE DOCTOR: The Doctor was a great collector, wasn't he?*

*POLLY: But you're The Doctor!*

*THE DOCTOR: Well, I don't look like him.*

*BEN: Who are we?*

*THE DOCTOR: Don't you know?*

**But the Second Doctor is too much of a rebel. He's forced to regenerate as a punishment by The Time Lords. The Third Doctor is strictly business.**

EMMET: Sort of maybe you need to be a little bit more of a leader and stop messing around you know behind the scenes like actually take some responsibility.

*LETHBRIDGE-STEWART: The thing is Doctor is there anything I can do*

*THE DOCTOR: Yes, pass me a silicon.*

*LETHBRIDGE-STEWART: Yes but is there anything UNIT can do about this space lighting business.*

*THE DOCTOR: Lightning?*

EMMET: I think what you get from the third to the fourth is a little bit more of a desire to interact with people more, he wants to get the trickiness back, he wants to have his own agenda.

*THE DOCTOR: I'm a Time Lord*

*SARAH JANE: Ooh I know you're a Time Lord.*

*THE DOCTOR: You don't understand the implications. I walk in eternity.*

*SARAH JANE: What's that supposed to mean?*

**The Fourth Doctor, played by Tom Baker, had great chemistry with his companion Sarah Jane, played by Elisabeth Sladen. And from that point on, The Doctor becomes more invested in his companions.**

**But that led to deeper questions. Why does this alien, who is practically immortal and infinitely intelligent, want humans traveling with him? Do they keep him grounded? Is he lonely? How close should he get to them?**

**Emmet says this question came to a crisis with the Fifth Doctor – played by Peter Davison -- who optimistically took on a batch of companions.**

EMMET: The Fifth Doctor had so much tragedy before he regenerated. He had all of these companions on the TARDIS, and he clearly liked having a big crew. And then they all left him usually in traumatizing circumstances.

*TEEGAN: A lot of good people have died today. I think I'm sick of it.*

*THE DOCTOR: You think I wanted it this way? No, don't leave! Not like this!*

EMMET: And so he regenerates in this position of really feeling like he's not a good person to be around. Like he's kind of a really unlucky Penny.

**So he regenerated into the much-maligned Sixth Doctor, played by Colin Baker.**

EMMET: And the Sixth Doctor is incredibly pompous, and he seems sort of arrogant and The Doctor still in there and he's still wonderful but also, he's very clearly scarred by what happened previously.

*PERRY: Your former self was polite enough.*

*THE DOCTOR: But at such a cost, I was on the verge of becoming neurotic.*

*PERRY: We all have to repress our feelings from time to time. I suggest you get back into the habit.*

*THE DOCTOR: And I suggest Perry, you wait a while before criticizing my new persona.*

**A lot of people didn't warm up to him. The show was put on hiatus. The fans were upset, and it was brought back with a new actor, Sylvester McCoy. This Seventh Doctor had a different approach to his companions. He wasn't their travel buddy. He was more like a professor or a father-figure. But it didn't boost the ratings.**

EMMET: And the Seventh Doctor of course is the one who makes the comment about regeneration, you never know what you're going to get. It's like the lottery, and I'm so bad at it.

*THE DOCTOR: You don't understand regeneration, Mel. It's a lottery and I always draw the short plank.*

**The show stopped production in 1989. There was a made-for-TV movie in 1996 with a new actor, Paul McGann, but it flopped.**

**Doctor Who finally came back to the BBC in 2005 with Christopher Eccelston as The Doctor. And the show was a hit again.**

**And the showrunner Russell T. Davies also gave The Doctor a surprisingly dark backstory.**

**We learn that while the show was off the air, The Time Lords of Gallifrey went to war with their arch nemesis -- these evil creatures called The Daleks. To save the universe from being sucked into this all-consuming war, The Doctor ignited a doomsday device which killed the Daleks and his own people.**

EMMET: And then the Ninth Doctor is born out of PTSD, and he is very broken and very wounded and very hurt and he doesn't know how to handle any of his emotions because he regenerated out of you know what he thinks was genocide double genocide.

*ROSE: What about your people?*

*THE DOCTOR: I'm a Time Lord. I'm the last of The Time Lords. They're all gone. I'm the only survivor.*

**The Ninth Doctor is edgier. He wears a leather jacket. He's got a Northern English accent. His new companion is a working class, young woman named Rose, played by Billie Piper. In their second adventures together, he brings her to the far future to show her how The Earth is destroyed.**

EMMET: He wants to know if she can shoulder the burden the way he's having to shoulder it and if she can, she's the perfect companion. What happens he takes her out of the TARDIS after showing her all that and he wants to know how she's going to react, and her first reaction is I want to eat chips and that's it. It's perfect. She's exactly what he needs at that point in time.

*ROSE: Right then, before you get me back in that box, chips it is, and you can pay.*

*THE DOCTOR: No money.*

*ROSE: What sort of date are you?*

**Then The Doctor does something very unusual. He falls in love with his companion.**

EMMET: But what happens all the time people keep saying he's a little bit older for you. A little bit a little bit too much. This is not really a good idea. He looks like he's in his 40s and you're 20. And he regenerates into the perfect person for her. No one will ever say he's too old again. They look like a pair. He also apes her accent, which I think is precious.

***Oh my God! I was wondering why Tennant picked that accent.***

EMMET: Yes!

*THE DOCTOR: I was dying. To save my own life, I changed my body, every single cell, but I'm still me.*

*ROSE: You can't be.*

*THE DOCTOR: Then how can I remember this? The very first word I said to you, just one word. I said, run.*

*ROSE: Doctor?*

*THE DOCTOR: Hello!*

**They end up separated for completely fantastical reasons I won't go into, but The Tenth Doctor never really gets over that loss.**

**The Eleventh Doctor, played by Matt Smith, is quirky and fun but he tends to repress his darker emotions. He's very restless. He actually gets married to an equally unavailable time traveler.**

**But his true love is for his companions. He adores this married couple, particularly the character of Amy, played by Karen Gillan.**

*AMY: Why do you keep coming back to us?*

*MATT SMITH: Because you were the first, the first face this face saw, and you're seared onto my hearts.*

**He loses them too – again for fantastical reasons I won't go into, but the loss feels real. Emmet thinks that's why he regenerates into the grumpy Twelfth Doctor, played by the Scottish actor Peter Capaldi.**

EMMET: And you do get the influence of the companion again, Amy imprinted on him again him, like, it's like a hen and a chicken. And he apes her accent too. They're both Scottish.

***Oh my God, I didn't think about that either.***

EMMET: Yeah.

**This Doctor protects humanity while keeping us at arm's length.**

*THE DOCTOR: I'm The Doctor, I've lived for 2000 years and not all of them were good. I've made many mistakes, and it's about time I did something about that.*

**The Twelfth Doctor eventually comes to peace with himself. He also senses that his mansplaining or alien-'splaining has gotten tiresome. And with that thought, he regenerates into the first female Doctor, played by Jodie Whittaker.**

**Although not everybody at MI6 got the memo.**

*C: Don't be ridiculous, Franklin, I've read the files, The Doctor is a man.*

*THE DOCTOR: I've had an upgrade. Hi.*

**The Thirteenth Doctor starts out with a sense of renewal and optimism. She takes on a batch of companions. She cheers them on like a team captain. But when she discovers that her history with the Time Lords was not what she thought -- she had been lied to -- she becomes aloof and introspective. Her companions feel frustrated.**

**Towards the end of her run, The Doctor runs into previous companions from the 1980s – Tegan, who was a companion of the ill-fated Fifth Doctor, and Ace, who was a companion of the professorial Seventh Doctor.**

*THE DOCTOR: Tegan. Ace?*

*ACE: That is a good look on you, professor.*

*THE DOCTOR: How have you been?*

*TEGAN: Like you care!*

*ACE: Tegan, we discussed this.*

*TEGAN: 38 years.*

*YAZ: I'm Yaz. The only one here who doesn't really know what's going on.*

*TEGAN: We used to be you, decades back.*

**When it came time for The Doctor to regenerate – for the first time ever – The Doctor went backwards. Jodie Whittaker morphed into David Tennant, much to his confusion.**

*THE DOCTOR: What? What?!*

**But David Tennant isn't playing The Tenth Doctor again. He is the Fourteenth Doctor, with all the memories in between. David Tennant only signed on for these special anniversary episodes where he's tried to understand why he regenerated backwards, and he's been discovering how much he's changed on the inside since the last time he wore this face.**

*THE DOCTOR: Because I had this best friend, Donna Noble. And she was my best friend in the whole universe and I absolutely love her -- oh! Hmm. Do I say things like that now?*

**>> BREAK**

**There was an interesting moment in one of the recent specials where a trans character refers to The Doctor – played by David Tennant – as a “male-presenting Time Lord.”**

**The symbolism of The Doctor's gender changes has not been lost on Riley Silverman. She is a stand-up comic in L.A. When she first began her gender transition, she was shy about it.**

RILEY: I was kind of on the verge of starting to insist on using female pronouns at the time. It was kind of like hey be cool if you did this but I was like still timid about asking for it like as a thing that I demanded to have happen.

**But she had an epiphany in 2013. She was watching the Eleventh Doctor, played by Matt Smith, face the final minutes in his body. He was about to regenerate into another male body. But the language Matt Smith used resonated with Riley.**

*THE DOCTOR: We call change, when you think about, we're all different people all through our lives and that's okay, that's good, you got to keep moving, so long as you remember all the people that you used to be.*

RILEY: And that line really stuck out to me as this idea of like oh we change as life goes on. And like I can transition, and it doesn't mean that I wasn't myself before. It just means like I'm putting on this new face that better reflects who I am inside

**The next year, the Twelfth Doctor played by Peter Capaldi was having a tough time and his struggles spoke to Riley's fears about how her friends would react to her changing. The Doctor's companion Clara couldn't accept that this new Doctor was the same person she had been traveling with. She was on the verge of leaving him.**

RILEY: And The Doctor says to Clara like I'm standing right in front of you, and you can't see me. Do you know how hard that is just see me.

*THE DOCTOR: You can't see me, can you? You look at me, and you can't see me. You have any idea what that's like?*

RILEY: And that line made me sob like it is just it was like right to the heart of how I felt. Have people look at me and they don't see me, and I still think about that a lot because I know I'm transitioning but it's not perfect and it's not exact, you now, it's a process.

**And then of course The Doctor became a female-presenting Time Lord.**

RILEY: So The Doctor has transitioned with me. Who ever gets a chance to have their favorite go through a major life event with you, completely separate with you?

**Doctor Who has been an inspiration to other transgender fans as well. Again, here's Emmet Asher-Perrin.**

EMMET: I fell in love with my husband who is trans based on our love of watching the show while we were in college.

**Sylas and Emmet were roommates at Sarah Lawrence College back when Sylas identified as a woman. Together, they fell in love with the show together. But it took years for them to admit that they were in love with each other. Here's Sylas:**

SYLAS: We were one of those people who we were always really annoyed. Everyone's like you're just dating right? And all of our friends were just like why would you hide it, why are you lying to us like this is the most liberal welcoming school you could possibly be. And we're like no, no we're just friends. But they were right and we were wrong!

**Remember the first big romance of the modern era was between David Tennant's Tenth Doctor and his companion Rose. Emmet felt a profound identification with Rose. And Sylas wanted to emulate the Tenth Doctor had pinstripe suits, long swishy coats and spiked hair.**

SYLAS: I definitely was sporting that same haircut for a while.

*You kind of still are.*

SYLAS: Yeah, I kind of still am!

**In 2010, Emmet and Sylas cosplayed as The Tenth Doctor and Rose at Comic-Con. It was one of the first times Sylas felt comfortable occupying a male identity in public. And his costume was a hit.**

SYLAS: And it was all over the Internet for a while and I remember seeing comments on a picture of me and the comment was, I don't know if this is a guy or a girl but I'm really into it. I was just like hey, yeah, like it doesn't it doesn't matter. And I thought like yeah, I can be The Doctor. Like not as a costume not as but as you know someone who is a man and sort of has a right to the space and to identifying in that manner.

**And how did his partner react?**

SYLAS: When I just showed her the picture, I was like isn't this great. She was like that is great. That's kind of something you want. And I was like yeah, I think it is.

**That conservation can be really hard for some couples. I mean, Emmet would've reacted the same way whether they watched Doctor Who together or not. But Sylas says Doctor Who gave the couple a language to explore what was going to happen next.**

SYLAS: She was like well you know it's kind of like regeneration you know it's kind of like you are 9 and now you're going to become 10 and I'm going to miss nine but 10 is sort of who you were always supposed to be. And I was like yeah and someone I could only be because of you.

**These questions about change and love can go in both directions. You may wonder if I change, will the people in my life still accept me? But after you change, will you still feel the same way about them?**



**Emmet thinks the character of The Doctor is always happiest when he or she accepts change with all of the gains and losses that come with it.**

EMMET: And I think that The Doctor is very much a perfect cipher for what it means to get older and to constantly have shifting ideas. And that I also think is a really useful thing that the Doctor provides people the ability to understand that it's okay to shift and change which I think a lot of people think of as a scary or a bad thing. He's sort of advocating the idea that change is good and that you should want to be different people in your life because that means that you're evolving.

**Those themes of change and evolution are one of the reasons why I fell in love with this series. Ever since I was in junior high, I've been going through my own attempts at regeneration -- trying to shed whatever parts of myself I didn't like. I enjoy purging my belongings, getting rid of old things; old clothes. I've moved around a lot from coast to coast. I've changed careers. I've lost touch with people. I've also made new friends; new relationships. That constant drive for change can be healthy. Sometimes it's not.**

**And since The Doctor is a time traveler, he occasionally meets earlier versions of himself, played by the previous actors. And the current Doctor will sometimes cringe when he sees what he used to be like. In those moments, I relate to the character a lot.**

**Because when I think of the versions of me from high school or college or when I lived in California, I feel like everything I did or said happened to someone else in a different body. I just share their memories.**

**None of us get to live as long as The Doctor. But we try our best as we go through space and time at our own speed. It's good to be reminded that no matter how many times we change, there are core elements that are always inside of us. The only difference is how we choose to express them.**

**That's it for this week, thank you for listening. Special thanks to Andy Heidel, Nick Randall, Emmet Asher-Perrin, Robin Bunce, Syllas K. Barrett, Mac Rogers, and Riley Silverman.**

**If you liked this episode, you should check out the rest of the mini-series I did in 2018. I did an episode about the Doctor's companions, and an episode about The Doctor's arch nemesis The Daleks. I also interviewed the creature makeup designer for Doctor Who in 2020.**

**My assistant producer is Stephanie Billman. If you like the show, please give us a shout out on social media or a nice review wherever you get your podcasts. That helps people discover Imaginary Worlds.**

**The best way to support Imaginary Worlds is to donate on Patreon. At different levels you can get either free Imaginary Worlds stickers, a mug, a t-shirt, and a link to a Dropbox account, which has the full-length interviews of every guest in every episode. You can also get access to an ad-free version of the show through Patreon, and you can buy an ad-free subscription on Apple Podcast.**

**You can subscribe to the show's newsletter at [imaginaryworldspodcast.org](http://imaginaryworldspodcast.org).**