

Ep #13: Future Tripping



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Victoria Albina, NP, MPH

[Feminist Wellness](#) with Victoria Albina, NP, MPH

Ep #13: Future Tripping

I've been thinking a lot about future-tripping, also called anticipatory anxiety. Those times when we get so lost in worrying about the future and playing out different future scenarios, often the most doom and gloom filled ones, that we lose out on today.

This used to be my brain's favorite distraction technique, to keep me from feeling feelings I didn't want to deal with or wasn't then equipped to deal with by focusing laser-like on a thought about the future and going to town on worrying about it.

Future-tripping robs us of this one and only current moment and is frankly a useless exercise in borrowing trouble. Trading in having peace in your heart today for worrying about a tomorrow that you have no control over. Sound familiar? Stay tuned to hear more about why we engage in future tripping and some super simple tips to help calm your perfect brain by learning to manage your mind to keep you in the here and now.

You're listening to Feminist Wellness, the only podcast that combines functional medicine, life coaching, and feminism to teach smart women how to reclaim their power and restore their health! Here's your host, Nurse Practitioner, Functional Medicine Expert, Herbalist and Life Coach, Victoria Albina.

Hello, hello my love. I hope you're doing so well today. I've been noticing lately how often my brain will project out into the future. It shows up in my morning meditations when I sit to write out my future self planning and then a thousand different little moments throughout the day.

I also hear the folks I care for in my practice start to future-trip on the daily. Worrying about their lab results, their boundaries, what will happen if so and so doesn't like the changes they're making in their lives. It's so common to worry about tomorrow and to lose today in the process.

Ep #13: Future Tripping

Thinking evolutionarily like my brain wants to do, I get where this habit is coming from. If we're feeling uncomfortable things in the now, our brain wants to do whatever it can to make those feelings stop, and worrying about tomorrow is a pretty darn convenient way to do that. If only it actually did anything useful, I'd be all about it. This would be a show that was like, hey you guys, you should probably future-trip more.

But alas, it's quite the opposite. Future-tripping is often rooted in our desire and unconscious thought that we can control a situation or an outcome when in fact, we can't. Life is just going to happen and we get to roll along with it. Choosing how we want to feel each step of the way. It's totally human to want to control a situation, but trying to do so is a great way to lose control of yourself, your mind, and the way you feel in your human body.

This desire to worry about tomorrow and this often-unconscious belief that worrying about the future can change a darn thing is a recipe for hard times. Those thoughts rolling around in your brain aren't facts. They're thoughts. Sentences in your mind born from habit, and this habit of engaging in anticipatory anxiety can leave you frustrated, exhausted, and no better off than you were before you went for your mental spin.

Let me give you a common example of future-tripping that hopefully resonates in your own life or that of a friend. A client recently told me about a guy she's dating that she's super into, but she had this worry that he wasn't as into her as she was into him. She was awash in anxiety and fear about her future with him just a couple weeks into the relationship.

She kept thinking, "This isn't going my way. He's going to break up with me. We'll have to have a difficult conversation," when actually, things were going pretty well. She really got herself all twirled up, feeling sick and anxious about it. The deep unconscious fear beneath all this worry was about being abandoned and alone.

Ep #13: Future Tripping

By focusing obsessively on what this guy was thinking, on projecting her fear into the future and focusing on what might happen tomorrow or in a year or in 10 years, she forgot all about her own needs and wants and she lost all grounding in herself. And the truth is, not only did she actually not know what the guy was thinking, she sure couldn't control it.

And spinning around in what might be also doesn't accomplish anything other than to make you feel completely bananas now. What this sweet gal can control are her own thoughts and feelings about the situation and what, if anything, she wants to do. By stopping the future-tripping, she was able to show up authentically, bringing her wants and needs to the relationship and focusing on what is today.

Here's the sneaky thing with future-tripping. In the millisecond of doing it, it can feel like a genius way to manage your anxiety, by creating a false sense of control, a false cognition. In that moment where your thoughts are on what tomorrow's going to be, when you're overthinking instead of allowing yourself to feel, you avoid the temporary discomfort of feeling your feelings in this moment and sign yourself up to continue this pattern, to keep getting roped into your brain's game, worrying about tomorrow for the long-term by not attending to your feelings today.

You're signing yourself up to never change. And let's remember the science here. Brains do not like change. Your brain doesn't have any proof that the thing you're making it do - deal with your feelings in the moment - is not going to kill you. So change is hard at first, and that's cool. You've done hard things before and you can do them again.

Change can feel challenging, and this, in a way is what future-tripping is. It's feeding your brain with a story about a new thing and then being surprised when your brain says, "That sounds terrible." That's what brains do, especially if you haven't learned to manage your mind using neuroplasticity, and if you haven't brought in new thought patterns and

Ep #13: Future Tripping

created new neural pathways to train your brain in a new way of doing things.

So today we're going to be talking together about what future-tripping is, why it's keeping you feeling all spun out, out of alignment with your highest self, and quite simply, not getting the stuff you need to get done, done. And of course, you know me, I'll give you some practical tips of how you can work to stop future-tripping and get present to today.

So what is future-tripping? Future-tripping comes from anxiety and it feeds anxiety. What a vicious little cycle. Future-tripping is also known as anticipatory anxiety. You're worrying about something that hasn't even happened yet. This anxiety comes from overthinking, from an attempt to over-engineer the future as if it's all within our control.

If we just worry enough about it, we can control the outcome, says our brains. And of course, that makes us anxious. We're spending our time worrying about things which we have no control over, and that's a recipe for misery. Future-tripping can also be our brain's response to the idea of change.

For example, every week I have folks in my office making themselves so miserable when they start a new supplement or a new nutrition plan. They often want to know, "Can I ever eat gluten again? Do I have to do this forever?" Rather than focusing on the issue in front of them, they spin off into worrying about forever, as though that was even a real thing.

And we all do it. I mean, maybe in that moment you feel like you're being proactive. For others, it's an ingrained habit. Something we do so reflexively we don't even realize we're doing it. And it can be familiar and comfortable on some level.

Ep #13: Future Tripping

To bring my beloved cognitive behavioral science framework into this, the idea of forever is just an idea. None of us actually have proof that tomorrow is going to happen and given the way climate change is going, I mean, come on, right? But seriously, tomorrow's not promised. We have no idea if tomorrow will ever come.

If we spend the limited time we have today in this 24 hours worrying about the next 24 hours that may never come, that takes us out of our power. Remember, your thoughts create your feelings. So if you can pause and take a breath, maybe you can realize that the only thing that creates your panic, dread, worry about tomorrow is that you're thinking about it in a certain way.

There's nothing actually happening about tomorrow yet. Tomorrow will be what it will be, whether or not you spend today worrying about it. Not to be all ancient scripture head, but Buddhist text, the Bible, I mean, we can go pretty far back to get readings talking about the futility of spending your time and energy worrying about the future and things beyond your control.

And doing so is putting your power where it can't impact change. Staying present to the present moment, that's where your power lies. And that's what I want for you, my love, to stay grounded in your power, and that means staying present and accepting life on life's terms.

When we have expectations about and try to control the future, we set ourselves up for hard times. We can't control the world. We can't control other people, places, things, pets, children, jobs, subways. Life happens. It's super life-y that way. And sometimes in the moment it seems good, and sometimes it seems less good.

But whatever the actual circumstances and facts, we always have a choice and we can always learn a lesson. And if we believe that the universe is conspiring with us, for us, for the best outcomes for us, then we begin to be

[Feminist Wellness](#) with Victoria Albina, NP, MPH

Ep #13: Future Tripping

more able to accept what life deals us, without having to spin out into future-tripping.

It's all going to work out. I mean, it really is. Maybe not exactly as you thought it would or exactly when you thought it would, but fighting the reality that life will happen in life's own way doesn't sound like a great plan for a peaceful life, my love.

So you have some choices. You can spend today worrying about tomorrow, you can burrow trouble, make yourself feel all kinds of terrible imagining all the worst things, but when you do, not only do you continue to feed the beast that is your own worrying lizard brain and keep yourself anxious, uncomfortable, and disquieted. You absolutely miss out on the beauty and grace of the present moment.

To be clear, I'm not saying you shouldn't plan for the future. I love it when you plan for the future. When you meal plan so lunch isn't a daily cluster cuss. I love saying cluster cuss. It really makes me laugh. When you write goes to yoga on your schedule and actually block that time and go to there, I love it. I love it when you plan your work and work your plan.

What I'm saying is that you get to be thoughtful about the kind of energy and expectations you bring to future planning. If it creates tension in your body, anxiety, worry, you get to sit with that and ask yourself what's going on that's creating that experience within you. And if you can bring a neutral energy and be willing to get neutral about the eventual outcome of your actions, you are operating from a much more powerful place.

For example, if I don't know, some gorgeous Argentine functional medicine nurse practitioner recommends you do a 30-day food elimination protocol, you can start to freak out and be like, "Oh my god, does this mean I'm never going to drink again? What will I do when I have a craving? How will I ever be social again?"

[Feminist Wellness](#) with Victoria Albina, NP, MPH

Ep #13: Future Tripping

Or you can take it one day at a time and you can see what your body says about each food in your elimination protocol, knowing that these things often shift and change as we heal. Again, you can focus on today and what living this new way might feel like now, or you can worry about a month from now, a year from now, 20 years from now.

You can also set a massive goal like getting your coaching business to one million dollars a year. You can take the classes, write the course, advertise it, hire the people, make the website, and you can choose to keep showing up day by day to work towards your dreams. Or you can spin for an hour or two each day in the thought, "What if no one buys my product? What if I don't hit 10,000 followers on Instagram? What if? What if? What if?"

Just curious my darlings, which thought do you imagine will get you to your goal faster and with your sanity intact? Staying grounded in your daily to-dos while planning for the future or spending your time worrying about a future that's beyond your control and working hard on today's goals today?

I'll say it again. Focus on the things you actually have control over versus those you don't. And the only thing you have control over in this beautiful life is your own thoughts, feelings, and actions. Make the lunch plan, make the launch plan, the work plan, the workout plan. Work your plan and release your brain's attempts to control tomorrow.

Consider not worrying about whether or not, gosh, I don't know, whether your gut will heal on your timeline. Let's be real. That just jacks your cortisol and keeps your gut from healing because science. I hear this one all the time in clinic. "Is there anything on my labs that I need to worry about?" And the answer is always 110% of the time nope. There is nothing that you ever have to worry about.

There is nothing to future-trip about here. Nothing. Because worrying, leaving this perfect, precious moment to spend your energy on what may

[Feminist Wellness](#) with Victoria Albina, NP, MPH

Ep #13: Future Tripping

be does not serve you. If your labs show iron deficiency anemia, don't worry about your anemia. Take some iron and heal your gut so you can absorb it better.

If your labs show a bacterial overgrowth in your large intestine that explains your IBS, don't worry about your bacterial overgrowth. Instead, focus on supporting your sweet leaky gut with immune boosters, quality probiotics, maybe a spritz of prebiotics and herbal antibiotics. Do the work instead of worrying about the outcome.

I mean, even if your labs show cancer, don't spend your time worrying about the cancer. Get your affairs in order, get to oncology and consider starting the ketogenic diet to starve those rude cancer cells of their favorite food, glucose. But think about it. Does worrying change anemia, IBS, bacterial overgrowth, cancer? Does it do anything to solve those problems?

Or does spending your time rolling around, indulging in future-tripping and worry keep you from placing that order for iron tablets, from healing your gut, from calling oncology, from getting going on healing? Not to be all, well yeah, but, but yeah, my loves. It totally does.

The goal is to visualize and work towards what you want while releasing your attachment to the outcome. Focus on your thoughts and how you want to feel. Grounded, calm, powerful, whatever the outcome is. My client who's worried about how her new boyfriend felt can't actually control how he feels or what he does, but she can control how she feels and what she does.

She can choose to stay grounded in what she wants and needs from the relationship and can communicate that clearly. May or may not work out, but she'll be acting from a grounded, authentic place that is ultimately in her own best interest. Either he feels the same way or he doesn't. Either way,

Ep #13: Future Tripping

she's staying centered in the present and who she wants to be and what she wants in a partner.

The key to avoid future-tripping is simple. Focus on today. One day at a time. Plan tomorrow and let the rest go. Don't indulge in worry stories. Put your energy on what you can control, let go of the things you can't. But how, your brain may be screaming. But how?

Well, you know I love a clean, clear actionable plan. I am, after all, a nurse at my core and there are a few things we love more than a protocol and a plan. So, step one, stay in the here and now. Be the watcher of your mind, not the subject of your own brain. Brains do fascinating things to try to protect us, and those things like future-tripping don't always serve us.

Watch your brain do its anxious dance. Observe it without judgment and when you see it starting to thrust you into the future that may be full of doom and despair, take five deep slow belly breaths. Breathe in, and out. See? Isn't that so much better?

To nerd out just a bit, deep breathing shifts the oxygen-carbon dioxide balance in your body and has a deep chemical calming effect on you. It shifts you from a sympathetic or freak the F out state to a calm parasympathetic state. Your body is so magical. Remember that you have this simple tool of breathing to help you begin to interrupt old habits.

Deep breath in and out. Observe your brain and breath in and out. Step two is to allow the feelings. If you're worried or concerned, feel those feelings in your body. Ask yourself where they live. When I start to worry, I get like a tightening in my chest and throat. Sometimes my neck will start to hurt, my back feels tense. Attend to your own perfect human body. Ask your body where the tightness is and then give each tight or tense place some love. Consider doing a body scan meditation, even for just two minutes, and recognize where your body is holding this energy.

[Feminist Wellness](#) with Victoria Albina, NP, MPH

Ep #13: Future Tripping

Feel it and start to release it by relaxing each tense part of you. Remember, no one ever died of feelings. They're just energy or sensation in your body caused by a thought. You have the power to change your physical experience, the way you feel, by changing your thoughts about the situation. But first, we cannot push the feelings away, but rather, we allow them, feel them, give them love, and then start to release them and bring a new story in.

This is amazing news, my love. Having allowed our feelings, we get to pause in step three and remember that your thoughts, a sentence in your mind, a cognition, a story, create your feelings, which are the movement of energy and sensation through our bodies. We take action because of our feelings, the way our body interprets our thoughts.

This is the think-feel-act cycle. You always get to pause and recognize the thought creating the feeling, worry, freak out, panic, spin, and you get to ask yourself if you want to keep feeling this less than pleasant way or if you want to feel better by choosing a different thought such as, "Future-tripping and worrying about this changes nothing and I'm going to do everything I can to get the outcomes I want, my best health, a happy relationship, the job of my dreams, one little day at a time."

If hearing that makes you say, "No, that's some positivity bullshit, that's not going to work for me," then it's not the right thought for you. Please don't try to lie to your brain, it won't believe you and change will be elusive. If the new thought I just shared feels completely unattainable, just try stating the facts.

Facting it, one of my favorite non-words, has been so helpful for me and kind of always makes me feel like Dwight on The Office and it's hard not to laugh when you sound like Dwight, which really helps me remember not to make things such a big deal.

Ep #13: Future Tripping

Fact, I had blood work drawn. Fact, my functional medicine provider will go over all my results with me soon. Fact, if there was something that needed immediate attention, she would call me. Fact, whatever the outcome is, we'll create a plan together to move my health forward.

Question, which bear is best? Fact, bears eat beats. You know I could go on like this, right, you guys? I could totally nerd out about The Office for like maybe, I don't know, 100 episodes of this podcast. Alright, I'll make myself stop.

Alright, step four – sorry, I'm still laughing at, "Which bear is best?" Extra points if you get the reference, and even though the essential oil giveaway is over, the first person to post in their story sharing this podcast and that you got the reference and continuing the joke, I'll send you a set of my essential oil rollers. So there you go.

Alright, let's refocus. I'm going to take a big deep cleansing breath. Step four, check in with yourself before you make a rash worried future-based decision. A couple of episodes back, I talked about a client of mine who thought her company might fold. She might lose her job and so she sent out 30 resumes and got a bunch of offers, when in fact, she needed 0.0 jobs, she still had hers.

She then had a bit of a cluster on her hands. She didn't know if her organization would fold or not, if she'd need these job offers and contacts in the future, or at all, and had to figure out how to turn these many job offers down without making a mess of it. Had she just paused long enough to see that she was projecting her fear about the future into today, she was borrowing an awful lot of trouble from tomorrow to manage her feelings of fear today, she could have waited to send those resumes out.

And I think most of us have done this in one way or another; sent the email or the text or the voicemail without thinking it through, from that rash

[Feminist Wellness](#) with Victoria Albina, NP, MPH

Ep #13: Future Tripping

worried place. Take a deep breath, my love. Don't just do something, sit there.

Finally, write it out on paper. Things that swirl around in our head make us feel, well, swirly. And it's amazing the clarity I get when I write things out. Journaling is such an important part of my every day. It helps me put real distance between myself and the thoughts my brain is thinking on autopilot.

Every morning, I do a thought download, which is when I write out all the worried thoughts, the regret thoughts, the concern thoughts, the angry thoughts, the happy thoughts too. And I get them out of my head. When I can look at them on paper, frankly, the worry thoughts often look really laughable in their intensity and I can look at my own thoughts objectively instead of feeling like I'm their subject.

It's from this place of empowerment, clarity, and agency that I can do my future-self planning work which I talked about in episode nine. Future-self planning is the opposite of future-tripping. It's a grounding intention-setting practice that has been nothing short of miraculous for me.

Once I've done the internal work of grounding myself in my breath, pausing before making rash decisions, and have written out my last spin in motion, I can then call someone I love or my life coach, who is trained in this kind of work, to talk it out. But don't jump to the step of internalizing your story onto someone else hoping they'll solve the way you feel for you.

As long as you're holding onto your old worry story, no amount of, "Aww, there-there, it will be okay," will actually help. You have to shift that future-tripping anxiety-creating story on its head, fact it out first, and then you can start to make change.

Ep #13: Future Tripping

Remember, my darlings, the only moment we have is this one moment; nothing else is promised. The past is just that, over and done with, the future, who knows? And I love that. I love that I don't have to worry about tomorrow. I can make my plans, set my intentions, create a goal, and show up for now with a full open loving worry and panic-free heart.

Your homework for this week is to bring your awareness to when you're future-tripping or indulging in worry. In your journal, ask yourself, does this thought take me out of the current moment? Is this thought about me and my next decision and what I can control, which is, after all, just myself and nothing else? Or am I spending my limited time and energy on trying to control something outside of myself?

Then fact it out and start to pick a new thought to replace the freak out one. Write it out and keep practicing it. You're not going to be able to change your thinking by just repeating your new thought once. It takes time and patience and repetition to change old habits and old neurological brain patterns.

You've got this, my loves. Thanks so much for listening to this week's episode of the *Feminist Wellness* podcast. It has been a delight, as always, to show you how you can manage your mind to change your mental and physical health and to reclaim your power. Hop on over to my website to download my free ebook that goes into so much more detail about how to manage your mind and comes with a set of very lovely worksheets.

Have a great day, a beautiful week, and I'll see you next week, right here on *Feminist wellness*. And remember, when one of us heals, we help heal the world. Be well, my loves.

Thank you for listening to this week's episode of *Feminist Wellness*. If you like what you've heard, head to VictoriaAlbina.com to learn more.