

Ep #25: Reparenting Your Inner Child



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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When our wounded inner child is at the helm of our emotions, we can feel like we're waiting around to be rescued, to be saved, for someone outside of us to take care of us. Or we can be quick to anger, or to blame others, or take on too much blame and responsibility on our own shoulders, weighing ourselves down.

It can be exhausting to carry these child wounds around, the same way it was when we were small, especially if the parents you were given didn't show up for you in the ways you wanted them to. Maybe you weren't listened to, heard, seen, or cared for in the ways you wanted as a child.

Maybe you were told the things you were seeing, feeling, intuiting just weren't happening. Maybe secrets were kept. Maybe voices were raised. Maybe you lived with insecurity or hunger, a lack of boundaries or guidance. Maybe you were a parentified child; you grew up too fast because life asked that of you.

Most of our parents never learned to parent themselves, let alone how to show up for us as children. Whatever your childhood stories, those inner child wounds will stay inside you, stirring up trouble, self-doubt, lack of motivation, anger, sadness, or anxiety until you learn to actively support and love your inner child, to show up for little you as the adult parent you wish you had.

This is the process of reparenting ourselves, of showing up as the firm, loving, kind, responsible parent of our dreams. This is how we heal intergenerational and inherited trauma. This is how we shift the story of our lives for ourselves and generations to come. Sound like something you'd like in your life? Listen on, my love, to hear my thoughts on how you can show up as the parent you always wished you had.

You're listening to Feminist Wellness, the only podcast that combines functional medicine, life coaching, and feminism to teach smart women how

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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 this finds you doing so well. It is so frigging hot here in New York City, but finally, it just started raining, which is great because it's cutting the heat. But if you hear the little pitter-patter of raindrops in the background, I hope it may be soothing for you. It's also something I cannot control, so I'm going to record right through it because this is the time I have set aside to record, so that is what I'm up to.

Back to the topic of sweltering heat, I am so glad these days that there is a beach close enough that we can spend every weekend that we're in town sprawled on the sand surrounded by people we love. Jacob Reese Beach, you are a treasure and I adore you.

One of the places where my inner child most loves to come out to play is at the beach, and I had this really interesting experience when we were in Maine a couple of weeks back that I shared about on Instagram in my stories. Oh, do make sure you're following me, my love, @victoriaalbinawellness.

So we were in Maine with my entire family, which was its own adventure. And my inner child really wanted to build a sandcastle and she really wanted my partner to want to build it with me. And my partner, Ash, has this really stressful really intense job and they were sitting in a cozy chair reading a nice book, chilling out, and had no interest in building a sandcastle. And they told me so in a really lovely sweet kind way.

And I could feel this kiddo inside me just, like, grumping about it so hard, stomping her foot and then immediately diving into self-pity and telling this story about being lonely and how no one wants to help me or play with me. and it was so fascinating to step into being my own watcher and to have

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some perspective on the fact that adult me wasn't ruffled up. Little six or maybe eight-year-old me was; that kid who never fit in at school, who everybody knew but who didn't have a lot of close friends.

My inner child was just rolling around in these old protective stories. And it was lovely to be able to give her some love, to reparent her in that moment and to just go ahead and build a sandcastle on my own, which was super duper fun. And this is what I'm so excited to talk with you about this week, my love, this concept of reparenting ourselves.

One of the things that I have found the most valuable in my own healing is learning to recognize, see, hear, and connect with the different parts of myself, starting with my inner child. I'm a huge fan of internal family systems work and that's on the list of things to talk with you about soon, while today, we'll focus on the concept of reparenting ourselves; a vital part of healing our inner child wounds.

So, way back in episode 22, we talked about the basics of the concept of the inner child, that we all carry the memories and experiences of our childhoods within us. We all have these wounds, these stories, these experiences from our childhood. And they stick around with us and in us well into adulthood, even if you tell the story, "My childhood was great, we never fought," maybe your inner child is telling some stories about how emotions were never processed. Everything was glossed over with this story of being fine and perfect.

The thing with kiddos is that they are brilliant and amazing and intuitive and find ways to survive, to grow, to thrive, to get their needs met. And we bring these skills into our adult lives and continue working to get our unmet needs met by just about any means possible. And I talk more about the genius of children and our child brains in episode 19, Maladaptive and Adaptive behavior, so do make sure you check that one out too.

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Whether we recognize it or not, our inner child may be calling the shots more than we realize. So often, when my patients and my coaching clients tell me that something triggered them or folks with resistance to practices like breathwork or other forms of meditation, resistance to making change like starting a new therapeutic nutrition plan, taking supplements, exercising, when an old story about worth or capacity pops up, often we can trace the origin of these stories about to our childhood or to our teens or our 20s and the continued presence of our beautiful inner children within us.

See, our inner children are tender, young, innocent, full of emotion, of life, and can be super sensitive, the way children can be. And the pain and joy they carry within us can deeply influence us now.

Children want to be seen, heard, and shown love, shown that we're safe. And if you didn't feel that as a child, it makes perfect sense that it would be hard to feel all of that as an adult, and harder still to embody it. The beauty of being an adult is that we get to recognize the ways our inner child is still asking for our support now. And we get to show up for those parts of ourselves. We get to show our inner child a new way to function and move through the world.

In the last two episodes, we conversed, you and I, about the idea of emotional childhood and emotional adulthood, the ways we show up for our daily lives, either as an embodied adult or embodying our child self in a way that doesn't serve us, such as not taking responsibility for our feelings, our thoughts, our actions, blaming or shaming or guilt-tripping others for the outcomes in our lives, not stepping into our full power to own our own thinking, to manage our minds, and thus, our hearts.

And as always, my beloved, this habit of being in emotional childhood can be a trauma response, for sure. And I want to both honor that and empower you to do the work to give your inner child new tools so you can live your adult life squarely situated in emotional adulthood. I have so much faith in

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you that you can do this work and you can embody and live into being the adult of your own dreams, my love.

And while we're talking about the roles of children and the stories that children are told, I want to bring in some feminism here. When we are kids, we have little capacity to control our emotions because they're new to us in this lifetime. We're figuring out so much and learning how to handle anger, fear, grief, sadness in ways that are socially and culturally acceptable to the people in our world; our parents, siblings, teachers, other family members. It can be a challenging thing.

It's important to recognize the role that socialization plays in how we learn as children to relate to our feelings and how that might play itself out in adulthood. Humans assigned female at birth or raised as girl children often hear that it's not okay to be angry, to raise our voices, to express displeasure. Rather, we're often taught to hold it in, to not express it, to not risk making anyone else angry or upset even when we're angry or upset ourselves.

Children assigned male at birth or raised as boys are often taught not to express tenderness, vulnerability, gentleness, to present an outward façade of toughness. Boys don't cry or express sadness, but their anger or acting out is tolerated and even sometimes societally approved of. Boys will be boys after all and toxic masculinity is so often the norm.

And not everyone learns the exact same lessons. All of this may get blurred in our particular individual home cultures. These are generalizations and they're generalizations based on my own experience as a human, a life coach, a clinician, and frankly, a watcher of TV. These lessons are taught to us in so many ways and the patriarchy and gender norms are at the route of it, doling out oppressive constraints on our emotions for humans of all genders.

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These stories can be the root of so much pain, so much sorrow, repression. And I know we can do the work of transcending these lessons if we want to, for our own good and that of all of humanity. And doing this work is the work of reparenting ourselves in profound and complex and also simple ways.

And on that note, I want to turn back to our homework from the last few weeks, which was, in a nutshell to raise our awareness of when our inner little kiddo is ruling the roost and running the show. I want to hear from you in the comment section of my website for this and the previous episodes in this series.

How did you see your inner child coming up? What wisdom or tantrums did your inner wee one bring you? Do you see and feel yourself slipping into emotional childhood, and were you able to pull back and shift into emotional adulthood?

If you haven't listened to the three episodes previous to this one and if you haven't made time to do your homework, pause this episode. Go download the three before this one. Give them a listen. Do the recommended awareness work and come on back. This concept of reparenting will make so much sense once you've taken a stroll through the concepts of the inner child, emotional adulthood, and emotional childhood.

So, last week, we talked about one of my favorite ways to support our inner child or children, which is to turn our awareness to them, to begin to listen for and to that child within us, by being our own watcher and cultivating awareness of who exactly is speaking in our heads. I often ask myself, particularly when I feel heightened emotions, who's speaking right now? Who's driving this trigger truck right into my heart? And it's often my inner child, especially when I can recognize that I'm not having a particularly adult reaction to what's going on.

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When my reaction is out of scale or bigger than the moment truly calls for, that's often when I'm reacting, or overreacting, let's be real, from that hurt child place. So too when I find myself feeling wounded by someone's words or when I'm having a hard time shaking something off and doing my thought work to recognize what part is mine and what part is someone else's.

These are some of the signs, for me, that my inner child wants and needs some attention and will keep hollering at me, like kiddos do, until they get it. I also know my inner child is awake and asking for support when I find myself buffering against a feeling or buffering against a task or deadline by distracting myself, or otherwise not taking responsibility for the adulting I get to do to reach my goals.

Another way she shows up is by being hard on myself, not giving myself enough credit for my success or judging myself harshly. That's the little one in my that doesn't want me to fail because she thinks it may kill me. And I love her for that. And I can show up for her and can let her know that she doesn't need to be harsh. It's just an old survival pattern that doesn't serve me anymore.

So, what does it mean to reparent yourself? Well, reparenting is the process of showing up for your younger self and giving those versions of you what they long for, holding space for them to feel their feelings, to cry or whine or let it out without being mocked or told to grow up or being ignored, or whatever their experience in their child self is.

And now, my love, I shall pause to nerd out like I do. Reparenting is about calming the central nervous system, which likely got really freaked out when you were a kid and led you to react with a fight, flight, freeze response. If this language is new to you, I want to encourage you to subscribe to this podcast because I am a woman obsessed with the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems.

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And I was going to list which episodes you should listen to, to learn more about that. But the truth is, it's so central to everything that we experience and all of our healing as adults and as human mammals that I talk about it all the time. In particular I guess I might say episode three, Anxiety, episode seven about adrenals, episode 14, Buffering, episode 17, The Stress Cycle. I mean, babes, just listen to it all.

Alright, so when these parts of us get over-activated into fight, flight, freeze, the sympathetic nervous system, over and over and over again, neural tracks get wired in our brains that make us more likely to react with panic, anxiety, or stress in certain situations. This is where thought work, the conscious rewiring of our brains, and breathwork, learning to connect in with our bodies, come in as ways to begin to connect with ourselves so we can show up for reparenting.

Our thoughts create our feelings and we take action based on our feelings. If we don't know what we're feeling or what the thought leading to that feeling is, it's hard to know where to start, which is why breathwork is such a vital modality for the work I do, because it gives us that in, that way to listen in, to feel where our energy is stuck, to bring deep awareness to our own blocks; blocks that were often put in place in childhood and we can show up for through breathwork as a way of reparenting ourselves.

Mindfulness in general is a gorgeous tool for this too and is one you can cultivate every moment of your life. I have a free body scan meditation on my website and I want to invite you to download that, to listen to it, and to start connecting in with yourself in this deep way. So for me, reparenting has been absolutely life-changing. It has meant having lots of loving conversations with my inner child and children – there are lots of them within each of us – which are conversations I tend to have in my mind.

I first started connecting with my inner child by meditating on photos of little and then, with my eyes closed, invited four, eight, 14-year-old me in. Kids

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are super intuitive. And if you've spent time around them, you know they love to ask and answer questions.

So, when I was first learning to connect with my inner child – and I still do this today – I made and make space in my heart for those little mes to show up. And as they did, I got really present with them and showed them a tone of love and asked them a lot what they wanted and needed from me. What do I need from you? How old are you? How old do you think I am? How can I support and love you and how can you support and love me? What can we do together right now that will be supportive, loving, and helpful for us?

This process of simply practicing how to hold space for them and to ask them gentle and loving questions has been incredibly transformative. And I want to say clearly that I wasn't able to connect in with my inner children right away. It was a matter of patience and gentleness and focusing on self-love as the driver for this work.

Remember, my darling, in this family, we aim for progress, not perfection. I deeply believe that holding the intention of connecting with your inner child is healing in and of itself. So even if you can't immediately see your younger self in your mind's eye, keep showing up each and every day, like we do.

I love to do breathwork for about 10 to 15 minutes and then I do my future self journaling, and then I open up space to connect in with my inner children. This whole process may take like 20 to 30 minutes, which may be just about how long you spent scrolling social media while, like, lounging on the couch every morning.

So consider developing a morning practice like this. It can be really supportive. And I also want to say that this process is so different for

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everyone. Some folks may have a really easy time visualizing their younger self and some folks may find that more challenging.

The more you meditate on and contemplate the ways your inner child shows up in your adult life, the more they'll show up. One technique I love for folks who are having a hard time connecting with their inner child is to get out some paper, get out some crayons, some markers, whatever and to draw with your non-dominant hand, to open up a side of your brain that isn't used as much. So if you're a righty, draw with your left, if you're a lefty, draw with your right.

And I have folks start by drawing an image of themselves as a child, to see what your inner child wants to express. Once you have this image, you can work with it. You can see what comes up. Often, we draw a picture of ourselves at a crucial developmental moment, a time of trauma or stress or at a really beautiful time.

Once we have this imagine in front of us, we can have a conversation, a dialogue with little us. And this is a great technique to help folks who may have a hard time connecting with little you and you can start to ask yourself what little you needs and what you can give little you that she needs; love, comfort, support, guidance, safety. This is the work to release the criticism of little us, the blocks that keep us from moving forward, from fully loving ourselves at each and every age and stage.

And the more you can take responsibility for how you act or react when younger you is present, the more you're showing up to be the most adult and empowered you possible. This is the process of reparenting yourself.

Your homework, my love, is to continue to tune into your inner child and when that person asks for your love and support. When you can, start to bring your full awareness to your inner child's voice, to see and or hear them in your mind, and to feel them in your heart, in your body.

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Sometimes it's just a felt sensation, and that's great. Stay with it. Start by asking the loving questions I've posed above. My darling inner child, what do you want or need to feel peaceful? Is there something you'd like to tell me? Is there something I can tell you that would feel supportive? What's the best choice that we can make, you and me together, to live our best life right now? What do you need to feel loved, seen, safe, and heard? How can I take care of you? How would you like to take care of me?

Practice this daily, and especially if you feel activated, upset, annoyed, triggered, irritated, put out. If you find yourself blaming, shaming, or acting like an emotional child, that's often when your inner child needs you most. Show up for yourself. Be your own parent.

You can do this, my love. I know you can. Be firm with yourself, be loving, allow yourself to play, and come on back right here next time, when I'll be sharing my top 12 tips for supporting and reparenting yourself. Make sure you're subscribed to the show so you don't miss a single episode, and hop on over to my website, victoriaalbina.com to make sure that you're on my email list, so you can get all the secret things that I share just with my email folks, including a little heads up on when an episode is about to drop.

Again, I don't want you to miss a thing. This series was really good and it's been really, really fun to share it with you. And I'm really excited for next week, to dive into a lot more detail.

Alright, my love, that's it from me today. You've got some great homework. You're going to continue to raise awareness about when you're in emotional childhood versus emotional adulthood. You're going to continue to pay attention and see when you can notice your inner child being all activated and wanting you, and your help and your support, wanting to share something with you, teach you something, wanting you, adult you, to show up and be the parent for them; the parent they wish they'd had.

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Alright, my darling, let your little ones know I say hi, and please, remember, you are safe, you are held, you are loved. And when one of us heals, we help heal the world. Take care, my love, and I'll talk to you soon.

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.