

Ep #37: Action



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With Your Host

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Think, feel, act. It's what we do as humans. And once you really understand this cycle, you can use this tool, think-feel-act, to not only understand why you do what you do, but to get in touch with the thoughts and feelings that lead you to take action for your own life.

Whether you want more self-confidence, self-esteem, to go for that promotion, to not snap at your loved ones, or to speak to your perfect self with more kindness, to heal your body, to start that exercise or meditation practice you've been taking about and moving from to-do list to to-do list like I have done in the past, all of this self-care, all of this self-love, it all starts with understanding the think-feel-act cycle and how to apply it to your one perfect human life. Stay tuned my love, it's going to be a good one.

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 this finds you doing so well. When this podcast goes live, I will be on a plane to San Francisco to do some small group life coaching work and I am so excited. Before I could get on this plane, this morning in the future - what a funny thing to say - I will have taken a series of actions. Both small and big.

I will have woken up, brushed my teeth, said my daily affirmations, told myself I loved me, which I do to start off each and every day. I will have done my future self planning, exercised, breathworked, because that's a verb, sure. And I will have eaten a nutritious breakfast, though I do often fast when on a flight. But that is neither here nor there.

In addition to these small daily actions, I also spent the last 20 years in health and wellness. Becoming a nurse practitioner, becoming certified as

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a life coach, and there were hundreds of actions I took to get where I am. Actions that set me up to do this work. To support women in learning how to manage their minds, to understand the thought work model we're here to discuss, you and I.

All of our actions lead to results. And our inactions do too. For example, if you speak your needs directly, you're more likely to get what you want and need and you might drum up some more confidence in the process. When you don't set clear boundaries, you might find yourself rolling around in resentment when people cross your unspoken lines.

Action and inaction. They all lead to results. And if you want to get unstuck, to live your one precious human life with more confidence, feeling the power of your own worth, to make bold decisions for your own deal healing and wellness, you'll want to get clear on why you do the things you do. Why you take the actions you take. The topic we're here today to dive into together, my darling.

As always, let's start with a quick review. So we talked in episode 34, you and I, about self-care and how the greatest act of self-care available is to learn to manage your mind. So you don't need to buffer against your own feelings with self-care actions. You can learn to raise your awareness around your thoughts, sentences in your mind, sentences that you use to judge everything.

Yourself, your life, your job, the world, your past, your present, your future, it's super common to conflate your thoughts with facts. To believe the old stories that your brain loves to roll around in because they're cozy and comfortable and you're used to them.

You've likely had them for quite a while. Maybe even your whole life or most of it, especially if your inner child is holding tight to a story. A narrative from when you were five or eight or 12. Episode 35 is all about thoughts

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and while we're on the subject, episode 22 is all about your inner child. So 35 is all about thoughts and it's worth a listen before proceeding.

So we often believe our often-uncomfortable thoughts that are comfortable in that way that that tight old ouchie shoes can be comfortable because it's the discomfort we know and trust. Because we know it, right? There's that old saying. The devil you know.

And it's super common to believe those old thoughts that you're not enough, that you have to take care of everyone else before yourself, that it's rude or selfish to put yourself first or speak up for yourself. We often believe those thoughts to be fact when they're just a cognition. They're just a story.

And there is nothing shameful about having your old thought stories. You just get to choose each and every day if holding on to them serves you. And your feelings, a sensation in your body, as discussed in episode 36, are a response to your thoughts. So we talk when we're doing our thought work about feelings as one word at a time because how are you going to process like, 10 different feeling words at a time?

Recognizing that your feelings live in your body and are held there. Held deep in yourselves. In your biochemistry. So feelings like sad, joyful, anxious, disappointed, grateful. Each of these emotions create physical responses in your body. Again, mediated by the two branches of the vagus nerve.

So if you're feeling anxious, says the New Yorker, this town is like, run on caffeine, alcohol, and anxiety, and a touch of ennui. Maybe more than a touch. But anyway, if you're feeling anxious, your heart rate may go up. Your breathing may feel really shallow, sort of tight and in the top of your chest. You may feel tingling in your hands, feet, face. You may feel tension in your neck, shoulders, or head, or butterflies in your belly.

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These are the physiologic responses to the emotion of anxiety. The feeling of anxiety in your body that comes from a thought. Important to pause here as a scientist to say that sometimes a bodily sensation is automatic. Like when you get triggered and your vagus nerve sends you into a fight-flight response of anger, fear, panic, et cetera.

Part of learning to manage all feelings or sensations, including these automatic physiologic responses is to pause, breathe, show yourself some compassion and love, and get right back into that watcher place where you are watching yourself think and feel. Episode two is all about this.

From the watcher place, you are not subject to your historical reactions. From the watcher place, you can respond to life and key to this is recognizing your thoughts as something separate from yourself. And feeling into your feelings to raise your awareness, which is so healing and powerful.

It's astounding what you'll notice when you bring your attention to your body and your feelings and create some distance cognitively in your mind between yourself and your thoughts. While you may have that really quick snap to physiologic, automatic reaction, that first fight-flight-freeze response, I know because the science says it so clearly that we can retrain ourselves to get back into control over mind, body, and spirit, so you can choose the next thought and thus, the next feeling, and can once again step into that response place.

Now, you may be asking how on earth do we do this and awareness, acceptance, action is how we do in this family. So let me speak to this. Why awareness, acceptance, and action? I'm so glad you asked. Well, so our actions come from our feelings, which come from our thoughts. And I think it's really vital to start with awareness because you can't change what you can't see.

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So if you don't understand the thoughts you're having that are leading to your feelings, how will you ever really know why you're taking the actions you're taking? And when we're planning actions for our lives, it's important to pause and look at this process as well.

So many well-intentioned plans to take action like to do self-care things like starting to exercise or to eat differently or to think and feel differently are made without taking a deep look at our thoughts and feelings. How many of us have set New Year's resolutions without really looking at our thoughts and feelings about the action we're trying to take, about the reasons why we haven't been doing this thing all along?

And we've just jumped to action only to find ourselves not doing that thing like a week or a month or two months later. Like, how the gym is packed in January and by March it's like, 6am at my local is me and three guys on a treadmill. All those people who were there in January are gone by March if they haven't paused to ask the question, gosh, why haven't I been exercising? What are my thoughts about the gym? How do those thoughts make me feel?

Or meditation similarly in January, the meditation groups I go to and the breathwork meditation circles I run are jam-packed. And a month or two or three later, the meditation song I go to, not as many people hanging around. We'll just say it that way.

And again, if in the back of your mind there's this thought, well, I should meditate, that makes you feel maybe kind of resentful of it or like, not really in. You're not going to be all in. And so you're not going to continue to take an action that you don't feel great about.

You're smarter than that. Why would you keep doing something you just don't want to do? If you want to change your life to achieve your dreams, to stop arguing with your partner or partners, to not take life so seriously or to

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not take things so personally, you get to pause. To raise your awareness of your thoughts and feelings first before diving in to take action.

And when you raise awareness of your feelings and accept that they're happening, you can take the action of creating some space between you and identifying with the feeling. This - oh, this is where your power lies, my love. You are not subject to your feelings.

You can take back control by learning to manage your mind. To get curious about the thought and feeling you're having, to ask yourself what's up, to feel it in your body and to ground yourself in it. It's so magical. And it's also the science of how our brains work. You can choose your next thought. Mind-blowing.

And what happens for most of us is that we aren't in touch with our feelings. We don't pause to deeply feel them, let alone pull back and find the thought that's leading to that feeling. And so we try to change the situation. A circumstance. When we feel feels we'd rather not feel like anxiety, frustration, sadness, feeling disrespected.

But the truth is that the situation has nothing to do with your feelings. Your thought about it does. And taking action to try to change the world, things out of your control like people, places, and things - that's right, nouns - will do nothing for how you feel if you're having the same old thought and thus, the same old feeling.

Weight loss is a great example of this, and before you immediately shut off the podcast or send hate mail, I'm not about to talk about weight loss as a good thing. I'm not a proponent of weight loss as an inherent concept. I am all about health at every size. All bodies are amazing, perfect, incredible, and good bodies.

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So I had a client, Lisa, and she wanted to lose 10 pounds. And she did this through hating herself. By not eating enough, by working out really intensely, while depriving herself of foods not because they made her feel bad or were inflammatory or made her psoriasis flare, gave her bloating. She was cutting out foods that she loved that were healthy foods like sweet potatoes and butter and steak.

And you know how us Argentines feel about anyone cutting out steak. But she was cutting these things out because she wanted to lose weight. All while thinking unconsciously mostly that she would be lovable once she finally lost the weight. That she wasn't lovable at a size whatever she was to start because it's irrelevant, right?

And once she lost the weight, she came to me more miserable than ever because she had lost the pounds. The scale had gone down but she still felt terrible about herself. And that was because sweet darling Lisa still had the same old thoughts. The weight loss did nothing for her self-worth because it can't. It simply cannot.

Weight is a measure of gravity's pull on a mass. It is not an arbiter of worth or value. It is not a moral issue. It's just a number. Lisa was trying to change her feelings about herself with an action. To change a circumstance of her life. To change her thought, I don't love my body, with an action. And that just doesn't work.

Loving your body is how you love your body. Not by changing your body. And when you try to change the number, when you try to take the action from a place of anger, shame, guilt, blame, it doesn't matter what the number is. It'll never be good enough if it's a stand-in for your value as a human.

And if this issue of weight doesn't resonate for you, fill in the blank. Title at work, income, married with children. You can put any false arbiter of value

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into this example and you can work towards it. You can take action towards it from that place of believing that once you take enough action and do the thing, you will be lovable. While the truth is you are perfectly lovable now. You just get to practice that thought. There's not an action in this world that's going to make you feel that until you decide to practice feeling it.

An action I often hear people trying to take is to change how you feel without connecting into the thought that leads to that feeling. That too just doesn't work without the step of connecting in. Feeling the feels in your body. Having that somatic experience of them. I've tried it a thousand times and the result is always fleeting at best.

For example, man, I am so anxious at this wedding. I'm just going to pretend to be happy and that'll work, right? No. It may work for a minute, sure, but you know this, my darling. It's a cover up job and you'll soon have the same old feelings unless you're really pausing to look at your thoughts. To ask why am I telling the story that I'm so anxious at this wedding?

What is it about being here around these people on this day? What's the story I'm telling? What are my thoughts that are leading me to feel anxious? And how would I rather feel? This cycle, think-feel-act, think-feel-act is the background chatter of the human mind.

And trying to cover it up by changing how you feel without looking at the thought, that's just going to keep it all rolling around in the background until you pause to investigate it. So all of this about thoughts and feels leads us perfectly into the third arc of the process. Action. And the question I long asked myself before thought work was, why on earth did I do that?

And that, here, was have that third or sometime fourth cocktail, eat that pizza, finish that whole pizza, date that person who just felt wrong in my heart. My intuition was like, oh my god, don't do this and I was like, but they're so cute. There was a list of those characters.

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Anyway, why on earth did I do that? Yeah, taking things personally, and I have a whole episode on taking things personally that's coming up soon, my darling, so stay tuned. Make sure you're subscribed, make sure you're on my email list.

Why on earth did I do these things? I kept asking myself that as though there was going to be a thunder clap and Zeus was going to come down and be like, listen up here, tiger, here's why you do these things. Well, I guess kind of in a way. I mean, am I calling Byron Katie Zeus here? An Abraham Hicks Zeus and Eckhart Tolle Zeus? I mean, kind of.

They're gods in their own right, I suppose, but what I'm saying with all this rambling is that I didn't know that my thoughts and my feelings were the driver here. That they were leading me to take action, which takes us back to the central question. Why do we do the things we do in this life? Why do we snap at the people we love? Why do we procrastinate? Why do we make a situation so much more stressful by ruminating and rolling around in stress?

Why don't we act more confident? Why don't we value ourselves? Why don't I do the things I promise myself I'll do, you may ask? Why don't I take care of myself the way I say I want to? Why don't I do all that self-care that makes me feel amazing? And before I dive into answering all of that, it's so important for me to pause here to say you are not your actions.

If you're eating more than feels good, not exercising, drinking too much, not speaking up for yourself, if you're battling with anxiety and your anxiety-fueled choices, know that it's not you as a person. It's your unmanaged mind at the helm, like an unattended toddler in a china shop.

I want you to pause before you beat yourself up for these actions and inactions. It simply doesn't serve you, my darling. It gets you nowhere. Remember, your thoughts create your feelings, lead to your actions, so

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every time you think thoughts like why can't I do this, why can't I make time for self-care, I'm the worst, then you're going to feel bad about yourself. And the action you're going to take in response is to roll around in your self-defeating, self-recriminating thoughts and not loving yourself just as you are and holding space for change.

I want to encourage you to do the ladder that is to pause, breathe, give yourself love, care, and gentleness. Everything is okay, my love. There's no problem here. You're just growing. And yes, that's painful and challenging. Yes. And let me tell you, it's so worth it.

And what you're going through, feeling like your actions are inexplicable is totally normal and common. Most of us feel that way often. There's nothing wrong with you, my love. And the way to shift the habits you've had in your life is learning to apply the think-feel-act cycle every single day.

And most of us - all of us, it's new to most of us. We aren't taught this in school or even in therapy. So logically, your brain says if I do the thing, I'll be worthy, lovable. And my darling, you've heard me say it before, you'll hear me say it again. You are completely and utterly perfect just as you are. You don't need to change a darn thing to be a good person and you do get to make different decisions if you want to live this life in a different way.

And the way to do that is to start taking stock of the thoughts and the feelings they produce. Knowing you take action based on how you feel at the time of taking action. Everything you do or don't do is because of a sensation or feeling in your body, which is such good news.

The more awareness you have of what your body is telling you, the more information you have to guide you in understanding your actions. Something I hear often is thinking that you took action because of the world and the situations and circumstances in it, which I alluded to earlier. When

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in fact, the more empowering truth is that you took action because of your very own thoughts.

An example of folks sort of getting that backwards that I see often is about responding to an urge or desire and blaming the situation. Like you may feel the urge to eat food that you know makes you feel bad, or to have that third cocktail, or to send an angry reply email or text, or to speak to those you love with annoyance. All without pausing.

We've all done these things or similar things. I know I have. And it makes sense if you don't understand what's driving your actions. You have a desire, a feeling that comes from a thought, and you respond with an action. Eating something, having another drink, hitting send, raising your voice.

You respond without pausing because you blame the circumstance. The situation. They had just baked the cookies and they smelled so good, I couldn't help myself. Well, I was at the bar with friends and I didn't want to be the weirdo not drinking so whatever, I had a beer. I mean, I felt like crap for like, three days but whatever.

Or his email made me so mad, or she was being so annoying, which both lead to, so of course I reacted. I hear these kinds of stories all the time. And once you understand the think-feel-act cycle and begin to write these stories out, you can see them clearly in black and white on paper. And you can know that the situation doesn't dictate your actions. Not at all. Your thoughts about it do.

You have a thought, genius body responds with a feeling, drives your action. The reason you ate food that doesn't serve you wasn't because like, a cookie or whatever exists. The reason you wrote an angry email wasn't because someone wrote words in an email to you. In both situations, it was

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because you had a thought and a feeling so you did x, y, z, and that action led to another thought, another feeling, and then another action.

For example, you smelled the cookie, you wanted the cookie, you had a desire and a thought, I want cookie. And then you felt deprived because of your next thought, I know I'm not supposed to eat that. And then you felt bad for yourself. Poor me, I am sensitive to the gluten and the sugars. I really am. They both make me into a hot mess nightmare.

But you were having that thought, you were feeling bad for yourself, you were feeling deprived, so you ate the cookie. And then maybe felt guilty or shameful, knowing that like me, you're sensitive to the gluten and the sugars and that a belly ache, a headache, anxiety, or joint pain are on their way.

So you have the thought, well, F it. I already had one. Another isn't going to make it that much worse. And off you go for the second, maybe the third, maybe the fourth, and by now, your biochemistry is spinning in a thousand different ways. Your blood sugar is spiking and then plummeting and now you feel even worse about your choice.

And you may be having the thought, I can never stick to this plan. Not eating gluten and sugar is impossible. I'm a failure and I'm going to be sick forever, which of course makes you now feel even worse about yourself, which will drive another action.

Meanwhile, had you paused and taken a deep breath, you could have looked for an alternative thought like - and I say this one to myself all the time - sure, cookies are super delicious. That kind of sounds like a fact. But my body feels so much better without gluten and sugar. Doesn't serve me too eat it so I'm going to choose feeling really good in my mood, in my digestion, my skin, et cetera, versus the 10 seconds of pleasure from a cookie.

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And then you can breathe some more and can keep breathing until you feel calmer, keep repeating the new thought that feels better for you, until you can release the story that you're being deprived. Because you're an adult and you're making this choice for yourself, right?

And you can get into more alignment with the choices that serve you. Like skipping foods that lead to troublesome symptoms or general inflammation. Or for example, if your kid screams at you and you have the thought, show some respect, I am your parent, and you feel annoyed, frustrated, and you scream right back at her, escalating the whole situation and setting yourself up to feel guilt, shame, blame, upset, because you yelled at a child, which is not how you want to parent, based on having the thought, this is not how I want to parent. I really just lost my cool.

Meanwhile, had you taken a deep breath and paused, you could see that the kid screaming is just what's happening. It's a fact. And you don't have to react. You can breathe and choose a thought like I am the adult here. I am going to respond with love. And could breathe some more. Might take a lot of deep breaths until you feel calmer.

And then instead of reacting, you can respond, you can choose that action and can talk to your kid in a gentle, loving way about house rules and how you've agreed to behave. The screaming kid never causes you to scream. Your thoughts and feelings do.

So key to this, being kind, gentle, and loving with yourself. Please and thank you always. Remember that mindfulness is a vital part of this work and as you get more adept at seeing what you're doing and asking yourself what am I thinking and feeling, what action is this leading to, you'll start to gain some traction.

This will start to feel less weird and foreign and uncomfortable and awkward, I promise. And you'll start to see results in your life when you

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take stock of your actions, take accountability for them, and realize once again, the empowering truth that you are in control. And one of the greatest gifts of this work is knowing that you're not some terrible person who makes terrible decisions and takes inexplicable actions.

All of your actions are predicated on a thought that leads to a feeling, so practicing noticing those unconscious thoughts is the key for taking back ownership of your life. You don't have to eat pizza or cookies or whatever you're allergic or sensitive to. Whatever will make your IBS, depression, anxiety, or eczema flare.

You don't have to send an angry email just because you got one. You don't have to snap at someone because you're having a thought that leaves you feeling annoyed. You get to check yourself and oh my god, does knowing why I do what I do, that feels so amazing. And this applies to not doing things too.

If you have the thought, I'm not smart enough for that promotion, you'll feel less than and then you won't do what it takes to get to the next level. If you don't feel confident in yourself, you may not even apply to the job or go on the date, or heck, start your own podcast. Your own life coaching practice.

The think-feel-act cycle can be applied to literally everything in this life, my love. And as always, it starts with awareness. So that is, as it often is, your homework. Pay attention to the actions you take or demure from taking. Ask yourself what you are thinking and feeling before taking action and after. Write it down. Rinse and repeat.

You'll start to see some fascinating patterns emerge in your life. I know I have. And this, all of this, looking at the think-feel-act cycle in our lives. This is self-care in action. See what I unwittingly did that? I'm such a nerd. Looking at these cycles, pausing, breathing, writing it all down, and not

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taking action and blaming it on the world, on our circumstances, that is so powerful. That is true self-care in my book.

And yes, get the massage. Yes, take a break with your friends. Yes, take a bath, go walk in nature, do the face mask. I'm about to do a hair deep condition. Yes, to it all. And yes, from a place of true self-love. Not taking action because you're not managing your mind. In lieu of getting in touch with your thoughts and feelings because you're always stressed and anxious and reactive.

Yes, to the self-care actions that are rooted in loving yourself and not covering up the feelings you'd rather not deal with. I'd love to hear all about how you're applying these teachings to your life, to drop me an email to info@victoriaalbina.com, or follow me on social media @victoriaalbinawellness and send me a DM.

I hope you've enjoyed this wee series on the think-feel-act cycle. Make sure you're subscribed to the show and if you're enjoying it, I'd be so grateful if you could leave me a rating and review on iTunes. It really helps folks to find the show, which is so important to me to spread this free resource far and wide, and I hope you will help me with that dream.

Thank you in advance, my darling. I also have a beautiful four-week virtual breathwork class up on my website, victoriaalbina.com and I'll put a link to that in my show notes. I do hope you check it out. It's all online, it's videos that you get to download and keep so you can do it from anywhere in the world at any time.

And yes, I'll be doing more webinars and episodes soon about breathwork meditation. I've gotten so many emails and DMs asking for it so I heard you my loves. Thank you for speaking up and telling me what you want to hear on the show, what you want to see and hear from me.

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So keep an eye on your emails. I'm going to be doing some webinars soon all about breathwork and we'll actually be doing a completely free short breathwork practice in the second half of the webinar so you're not going to want to miss that. Make sure you're on my email list and then you won't miss a thing. How convenient is that?

Alright my darling, until next time, my sweet perfect love. Remember, you are safe, you are held, you are loved, and when one of us heals, we help heal the world. Be well 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.