

Ep #50: Positive Self-Regard



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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Your thoughts create your feelings, my darling. And if your brain is used to thinking that you are anything less than amazing and magical, then you will feel that same way. The truth is you get to decide what you think about you. No one else's opinion matters. And when you think the very best of yourself, when you believe it in your heart, you are living with positive self-regard and will take the courageous action you want and need to take to live the intentional life of your dreams.

As always, I'm about to get nerdy up in here and will leave you with some tangible, actionable steps you can take to begin to feel unconditional self-love and self-regard. So stay tuned, it's going to be a good one.

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Hello, hello, my love. I hope this finds you doing so well. As I mentioned last week, we're coming up on February, and I'm going to be focusing this month on love because I love love. And what I've learned in my 20 years in coaching, health and wellness is that if you don't have and take action in this world from a place of love, life can be really challenging.

And when I'm talking about love here, I'm talking about both self-love and unconditional love for the world, topics I promise to dive into more in episodes soon to come. So if you're not subscribed to the show, take the 14 seconds to do it because I'm all about removing the obstacles to getting what you want. And remembering to download an episode is an obstacle

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you do not need in your life. So subscribing, yeah, subscribing is a form of self-love because you're making your own life easier, so that's nice.

So today, we're going to start it off by talking about unconditional positive regard, which is a concept developed by the humanistic psychologist Carl Rogers and is defined as, "The basic acceptance and support of a person regardless of what the person says or does."

Now, I want to invite you to get cozy in your chair, close your beautiful eyes if it's safe to do so. Please don't if you're driving. And I want to invite you to take a deep breath in and out. Remember when you take a big deep belly breath, you're engaging your parasympathetic nervous system, the ventral vagal system, that part of your body, of your nervous system that lets you know that you are safe and secure.

So let's do one more deep breath into your belly and out. Take a moment to orient yourself. This is another way we calm the nervous system. Feel the air on your skin, feel your clothes touching your body. When your eyes are closed, you can still sort of see, right? You can see the lights, or maybe you see darkness. Smell what there is to smell. Feel your feet on the floor or your seat in a chair. Orient yourself to time and place. You are safe, my darling.

And now, a question. Do you have unconditional positive regard for yourself? Do you show up for yourself each and every time with radical full on acceptance and love? Or are you like so many people, so many of my clients and the folks I work with who are their own worst and most vocal critic? Do you find yourself believing all of the negative things the world tells you about yourself? The negative things you tell you about yourself?

Or are you rock solid in loving who you are exactly as you are? Do you accept yourself for all of the things that you may want to change? Do you

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accept yourself and accept the things that are beautiful and amazing about you? Breathe into it. These are challenging questions, which is why I had you breathe, invoke that parasympathetic response, orient yourself. Do you have unconditional positive regard for yourself and do you want to have it?

When you are ready, flutter open your beautiful eyes, or stay with me, listening with eyes closed. Whatever feels right for you. So my beauty, it is a decision and a choice to say, “Regardless of what my family, my boss, the world tells me, I have got my own back. I get to choose to believe in my own friggin’ awesomeness.” That’s right. You get to choose the way you want to look at yourself.

And I do mean, yeah, when you look in the mirror, are you criticizing your own perfect human body? Are you criticizing your thoughts, your feelings, your decisions, your actions, your results? I’m here to tell you that choosing positive self-regard, really learning to believe deeply in your own value and worth is absolutely life-changing.

And as always, I also want to recognize that this work of looking at how you think and feel about yourself can be really challenging at first. So, my sweet nerdlet, let’s pause here, nerd alert, and remember how brains work. So you’re always going to think the thoughts you’ve always thought until you pause, bring awareness to your own thoughts, going back to our good old friend the watcher here.

So bringing awareness to your thoughts and the feeling each thought creates, and then you get to pause to feel that feeling. And if you’re doing this work alone at home, which is great, naming circumstance, thought, feeling, action, results, looking at what that thought work protocol is creating in your life, I want to remind you to not just name the feeling and jump on by it.

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If you're sad because you're - I don't know, your llama died, let yourself feel sad. It's important. We don't spiritually or emotionally bypass in this family, which is when you intentionally jump over the feelings part because feeling feelings is challenging. So as we continue to talk about this, this concept of positive self-regard, a lot of feelings may come up and I'm here to remind you that bypassing a feeling is not going to bring you the change you want in your life.

If you don't pause to feel what it feels like to have that original thought, well, it's much more challenging to change it. And I bring this up because evaluating the way you think and feel about yourself, it's challenging, right? And it can be so tempting to run from feeling the pain and discomfort of it. I get it. How very human of you.

It's sad to not have felt good about yourself for all those years. That's okay. We talked last week about how okay it is to feel hard things and over time, for them to not feel so hard. The way I think about my past and not having positive self-regard for myself was devastatingly sad until it wasn't so sad because I was able to create a new way of thinking and feeling about me now, for today, and for the future.

And part of coming to terms with not having had positive self-regard in the past, and the past could mean 20 years ago, 10 years ago, 10 minutes ago, and accepting the truth of what was and is, which is step one in healing, is understanding with love and compassion how having negative self-regard served me at the time that I had it.

So as a kid, I got the message that I was a constant F-up. Too loud, too boisterous, too emotive, too gregarious. I am a Leo after all. Too fat, too much, that I didn't fit in, that I wasn't like the other kids. And all of that was painful to carry, and informed so many of my ways of thinking about myself and the world as I made my way into adulthood. I found myself constantly

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apologizing, taking things personally, looking for all the ways that, “Oh sorry, it was my fault.”

And as a kid, I blamed myself and I made myself the little villain because it felt safer. And this may sound paradoxical, so stay with me for just a second here, my darling. It made a certain kind of sense to my child brain to blame myself because child brains need to believe in their adults for their own safety. Because they can't take care of themselves because they're children.

I came to understand that as a kid, it was easier for me to feel bad about myself because I couldn't lose faith in the grownups around me. Questioning the emotional or physical safety of my caregivers, my teachers, my grownups felt scarier to my child brain than blaming myself because of the math of being a kid.

If you question your adults and they desert you or abandon you, then you'll be kicked out of the village and will effectively be left to die cold and alone on a mountainside. There's this instinctual knowing that you can't yet throw a spear to catch dinner. You don't really know how to fish, you don't know which berries are safe, and you sure can't keep the fire going overnight while also getting the sleep you need if you're actually alone in the world.

So I, we, develop all these stories in which we blame ourselves that we're adaptive then. Stories that you're wrong or bad or unlovable, too fat, too thin, too loud, too quiet, because it felt safer to just believe that you're unlovable and to work hard to prove yourself rather than to think your adults won't take care of you.

Those thoughts are maladaptive as an adult, which is to say they don't serve you now because you can take care of yourself. You now have that

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developmental capacity and you can choose your next adventure with full embodiment, empowerment, and faith in yourself if you want to.

If you're curious about this concept of adaptive and maladaptive habits and thought patterns, listen to this episode and then make sure to go back and download episode 19 in which I talk all about it.

So, the more acceptance I could bring to the fact that I felt bad about myself as a child as a protective mechanism, with these stories of I don't fit in with my family, I don't fit in with the other kids as a weird little immigrant, the easier it was for me to move through the feelings of sadness, to hold space as an adult for that pain, and to then choose thoughts for my adult life that serve me better.

In short, don't feel bad about feeling bad. Don't shoot that second arrow, my love. It never serves you. So I can feel sad about having these stories in my past and I can grieve for my inner child and everything she went through. And when these same stories pop up in my adult life, for example, not asking for help, that was a big way it showed up for me, having this like, I can do everything on my own kind of story, I can have compassion and understanding about where they came from, versus judging myself for having these thoughts.

I don't need to be mean to myself about the fact that those thoughts are there in my brain. Neither do you. I've said it before. Monsters under the bed are only scary until you turn the lights on. All those stories of negative self-regard, again, I'm too fat, I'm too thin, I'm too loud, I'm too quiet, whatever those stories are, bring them to the light of day, my darling.

Recognizing these stories, seeing where they came from is super vital in building a positive self-regard so you can let them go. You can't change the stories you can't see, so my love, give yourself permission to feel sad that

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you haven't had positive self-regard in the past, and know that you can choose a different path now. The path of acceptance and radical self-love.

Pro tip on this one. If you're a person who tends to ruminate and to get lost in thought and feeling, consider setting a timer. So when I'm doing deep thought work, when I'm working that thought work protocol about something that has historically felt very painful or challenging or is causing a lot of turmoil in my life, I'll set a timer.

So I'll give myself like, 20 minutes or a half hour to really dive in, really feel about it, have a good cry, mash my little fists, write and write and write and write about it, and when that timer goes off, I take those big deep, big belly breaths, do a little breathwork about it, reset, and take one more minute to get clear on the new thought that I want to practice, such as, I am working to have more positive self-regard.

Today, I am choosing to lay down these old stories and to love myself, just for today, just these little 24 hours, and we'll see what we choose tomorrow. But yeah, setting a little timer can be a really simple, helpful way to go into this work.

So you may be asking why this matters, and I would say that having a positive self-regard is important because it's the literal lens through which you see the world. Having negative self-regard is like wearing sunglasses at night. You're seeing through a distortion or for myopic mammals with astigmatism like me, it's like trying to drive without your glasses on. You can't see what's real.

The whole world looks foggy, wonky, weird. For example, do you have trouble hearing and accepting a compliment? I know for years if someone complimented what I was wearing, I would immediately dismiss it. I would say stuff like, "Oh, this old thing?" or, "I got it on sale." It was a way to not

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let the compliment and the evidence of someone else's positive regard for me end, to not receive it.

My negative self-regard buffered, acted as a filter against anything positive getting in because I didn't know what to do with it. But the reverse is also true. Having positive self-regard sets you and your brain up to see and believe positive things about you. Not only that, it acts as a loving emotional shield against other people's thoughts, opinions, and stories and all the messages we get from our culture, from our society that we're less than, that we're not enough, that there's some inherent problem with you.

Perhaps you're a person of color, you were assigned female at birth, you're queer, you're trans, you're differently abled. The world loves to tell you to tell us that we are something less than magnificent. And having this positive self-regard helps to buoy us up so that we can move through the world not taking in other people's stories, letting them wash over your back like water off a duck.

Again, I'm not here to say that shit doesn't hurt. It hurts and that's okay, and you get to turn back to your own self-love to find the way to support yourself and to decide what thoughts you want to believe. When I was a girl, there were so many stories bandied about me, that I was fat and that was a problem, that I was too loud, that was a problem.

And again, because I was a child, I took these things on as truths. And they fed into the side of the scales that tilted towards negative self-regard. Somewhere along the line, I also learned that being a girl and then a woman meant that I was less than, that being queer meant that I was less than, that being foreign meant that I was less than.

And it wasn't until much, much later, as a very much grownup that I've been able to do the work of building positive self-regard. For instance,

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those comments about my body and my weight used to hit home. They used to make me feel terrible and to want to change things about myself. I now recognize that it doesn't matter what anyone else thinks about my size, my shape, my weight. I get to choose how I want to feel about it, about me.

And I take myself to the gym every day because I promised myself I would. I make that commitment to exercise because it feels amazing. Not to change myself. Certainly not to change myself for anyone else. And I now know from the coaching tools I teach you that whatever someone else thinks about me or my body, those are their thoughts creating their feelings.

And it is my positive self-regard that allows me to remember that the only opinion that matters is mine. If I think I'm foxy and the perfect size and shape, then I am. And these days, I don't even really think about my weight. It's simply not part of the story of valuing myself, of my self-worth, of my self-regard.

I can recognize that weight is just a number. It's the mathematical understanding of the pull of the Earth's gravity on my body. It has no moral value. But when I was a young person, when I had less positive self-regard and my feelings of worth were tied to other people's regard of me, my weight took up a lot of space in my mind. Took a lot of energy.

And now I understand that I can choose to focus on things that increase my self-regard. That's right, my love. You get to decide what you think about you. No one else's opinion matters, truly. Not at all. It's just their thoughts creating their feelings. You get to have your thoughts to create your feelings.

The point here is that to learn to radically love and accept yourself exactly as you are is liberational. Because when you start from there, then you get

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to parse out all the stories coming in. You get to filter them. You get to decide for you what you want to believe, understanding that you will take action based on the thoughts you have and the feelings they generate.

So whatever you're trying to line yourself with and accomplish is so much easier when you love yourself. Whether you're trying to learn to be less codependent, to learn to be kinder to yourself and others, to learn to see where you're wrong, where an apology may be helpful, all of this and so much more is available when you come to it with positive self-regard.

And I can already hear you being like, "I don't want to be some self-absorbed, self-righteous narcissist." This is the pushback I get when I say that you can love yourself without question. It's so funny. We spend all this time and money and effort trying to convince other people that we're like, completely amazing, we have all the right trappings, right? The right Brooklyn hipster hat, the right crystal, the right expensive bag, the right marriage, kids, house, picket fence.

And when the invitation is for you to think that you are amazing, your brain goes right to like, pathologizing, right? To being like, oh, if I think I'm amazing then I'm going to be some egotistical narcissist. But it's just not true, my angel. We want other people to think we're amazing because we think that that will make us believe it ourselves, but that's the trap.

It doesn't ever matter what other people think about you because you just get to choose your own thoughts, always. And I get that it can feel impossible if your long-held stories that you're unlovable and not worthy of love, whatever it may be, but truly, coming to the world, to your work, whatever it may be, coming to your driving why, your passion, taking courageous action and loving the people in your lives from a place of positive self-regard, that is so beautiful.

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You're putting more love out into the world. You're helping to heal the collective unconscious, and I promise, this will not turn you into a self-absorbed, self-righteous narcissist, seriously. So, I think it's really important to talk about why people resist making this change, this shift to wildly, radically accepting yourself beyond this like, surface story of I don't want to be some ego maniac. You're not going to be just because you love yourself.

And I think that the main reason people resist this is that it has to do with this false cognition. This belief that it's only by judging yourself, by having shame, guilt, or self-loathing that you'll be able to make change. That if you don't beat yourself up, you won't be motivated, you won't get things done. You'll amount to nothing. I hear this all the time from people who are chronic procrastinators.

They say things like, "I work best under pressure. If I'm not waiting until the last minute, I won't get anything done." You know I don't believe in all of that. They're just thoughts. To apply this here, to the question of positive self-regard, it's often this thought that you need to improve yourself, fix yourself, because then you'll like yourself and then you'll be worthy of your own positive self-regard.

What I offer you, my love, is that if you just choose to pause today, right now in this little moment and recognize that you are thinking about yourself as anything less than incredible human is simply wrong. And you're willing to be wrong about that, which we talked all about last week, then there's space to acknowledge that the opposite is true. You are completely amazing; you were born that way.

And if you're not believing me at all, listen to episode 45. It's my love note to you. Maybe listen to it on repeat and let it sink in. You are so amazing. You living, breathing, moving, dreaming, doing, feeling, incredible mammal,

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you. And to put a finer point on this thought problem that can keep us from feeling that radical positive self-regard, and it truly is that your own self-critical thoughts that have you thinking you're broken, need to be fixed, are actually what is keeping you from feeling good about yourself.

Your thoughts create your feelings, create your thoughts, create your feelings, and if you want positive self-regard, you get to release yourself from the grasp of those thoughts, so you can start to do the thing that you most want to do. You get to start there.

The further irony of all this thinking that being harsh with or hard on yourself, thinking that you're stressed or anxious or overwhelmed, having shame, guilt, self-criticism, believing that all of that is going to help you create positive action, baby, that's the opposite of everything I teach.

When you're mean to yourself, you feel bad about yourself. And then your actions are less likely to be aligned with what you actually say you want to do. Positive self-regard not only feels better, but if we pull back and look at the think-feel-act cycle, it can support you to take courageous action.

One of the most powerful ways this has shown up in my life is in my own healing journey. So in my 20s, when I didn't have the same positive self-regard I've worked to have now, I started to do the work of healing my gut. And once I finally found the right person to do the right test, we found a parasite. So I changed my nutrition, took all the supplements, and all of that was very helpful, but it didn't last.

The beasts came back and the change wasn't lasting because I felt like crap about myself and was continuing to send myself into either fight or flight, sympathetic activation, or dorsal vagal shutdown, which on the subconscious level sounds like, "I give up, I'm just good for nothing, I'm

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never going to figure this out, I'll never do this right. Frankly, the lion can just come eat me now.”

Also known as giving up and not taking the big risks, not risking failure by not taking courageous action. And both fight or flight, sympathetic, and dorsal vagal shutdown are two states in which you cannot have a healthy digestive system. You cannot have a balanced mood, good energy, healthy adrenals and thyroid. You are fatigued on every level when you are in those states because you're supposed to be. Because you guessed it, science.

And so it wasn't until I learned about nervous system dysregulation and how to regulate my nervous system, about the importance of attending to my inner child and giving her love as my own best parent, and it especially wasn't until I learned the think-feel-act cycle, the thought work protocol I love to teach you, to manage my adult brain that I was able to heal my gut for good, by getting to the real root cause of my issues.

No, not the parasite. No, not the imbalances in my gut microbiome, but my negative self-regard. So, hopefully you're sold on this concept of the importance of having positive self-regard and you're likely asking, “Hey Vic, how do I get more of it?” So shocker alert, for long-time listeners, it starts with awareness. Say it with me. Awareness, acceptance, action.

It starts with beginning to pay attention to when and where you are thinking about or talking about yourself in the negative, and where you're taking actions that reinforce something other than positive self-regard. Maybe you don't believe in your capacity to do something or get to a goal. Maybe you aren't speaking up in all sorts of relationships. Maybe you're not setting boundaries and honoring them.

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Maybe you're maintaining your old codependent or people-pleasing habits, which don't actually feel good because they generally lead to the yucky yuck of resentment and don't leave time for you to actually take care of yourself. And maybe it's the more surface things. "Why did I wear this outfit?" Or looking in the mirror and judging the shape or size of your body.

So, you start with noticing, with paying attention, to gently flagging when you hear your beautiful self-loving protector parts, the parts that are scared that if you're too nice to yourself you won't be successful or people won't like you or they'll think something negative about you. Listen in for when that protector part shows up.

Maybe it's when you wave off an achievement by saying, "Oh, thanks but it wasn't that hard." Or when you're actively unkind to yourself with actions such as procrastinating, putting yourself down, saying yes when you mean no, worrying about what other people think about you, taking things personally, on and on, my love.

Remembering all these actions come right from your thoughts about yourself and as always, I want to say it clearly and once again. There is nothing to be ashamed of if you don't have a positive self-regard. Your thoughts come from somewhere very smart and served you well at some point in your life, so give yourself love. You're learning, you're growing, and that's a beautiful thing.

And I want to offer you this; I'm here to support you, my love. I'm going to be doing a seven-day positive self-regard challenge over on the Instagram. So from the day this podcast launches, January 30th 2020, I'll be posting at least one amazing thing about me each day in my stories and I want to invite you to join me.

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Post something, anything about you that is so great, and it can be super banal or super deep. It doesn't matter because this is the work of rewiring our brains to believe new thoughts. And as always, community is such a vital part of healing. Late stage capitalism wants us to each be alone in our little silo, healing, or attempting to heal all alone.

And I'm not down with that. I'm into us all connecting as often as we can. So post your story and tag me, @victoriaalbinawellness in your positive self-regard story, remembering that if your account is private, I might not see it. I don't know, y'all. I do my best with these internets. And if you tag me and I can see it, I'll share it so our whole *Feminist Wellness* podcast family can cheer you on. How fun is that?

And we're going to be using the hashtag #thisishowweheal because this is how we heal, and that's amazing. And to help you in this challenge, your homework should you choose to accept it is to an asset list. So I love an asset list. It's probably about a decade ago that I got introduced to this concept and it's something I do frequently and it's just lovely.

Okay, so an asset list is when you write out literally all the things that are amazing about you. So again, the super banal to the super deep. I'm a Leo, we all know I'm a Leo, and I am, as I well should be as a Leo, obsessed with my hair. I just love my mane. So the first thing I always put on my asset list is my hair.

And then it depends on my mood and my energy and where I'm trying to go with it. Sometimes I'll keep it really surface and those thoughts feel really great, and sometimes I'll go deeper. So sometimes it's like, I make great choices around shoe wear, or I have an amazing earring collection and I'm very discerning with my jewelry, which is true. Or I'm a really awesome friend. I'm the person that my friends call when everything hits the fan, when things are just a hot mess, they know they can call me.

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I'm really good at giving an apology. I'm really good at being really, really loving and compassionate and empathetic. So that's the asset list. Start surface if that's helpful, if you want to dive right in, go on, but write. I highly recommend setting some kind of limit on this, so either I will write 40 things or I will write for 15 minutes. Because the neuroscience lets us know that brains like having a safe container for things like this versus like, I guess I'll just free write for the rest of my life.

So set a timer or just decide. Today I'm going to write 20 amazing things about me and I'll do 20 more tomorrow. And so I want to invite you to write that list and keep writing it throughout our work, and it's a beautiful thing to be able to turn back to when you're not feeling so much positive self-regard, and you may need a little support in remembering the thoughts that you want to think on repeat, understanding, because science, that our beliefs are just thoughts that we've thought again and again and again.

So why not choose the beautiful ones? The ones that leave you feeling amazing and full of self-love? Okay, thanks for listening, my love. I'm so excited to support you in learning to love yourself a little more each and every day. And if you're loving the podcast, if you're getting value from it, please do me a solid. Share it with the people you love and head on over to iTunes. Subscribe, rate, and leave a review.

The goal here so you understand why I keep asking for this is to make the podcast more accessible because unless you know the name of the podcast and you're typing in *Feminist Wellness*, it's really challenging to find shows that don't have a lot of ratings and reviews. The more ratings and reviews, the higher up it goes in the chart. And the reason, my why for wanting it to go higher in the charts is quite simply so more people will hear these messages.

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This is my free offering to the world and I want everyone to hear it. So I'd really appreciate your help on this one, and always sharing on social media is helpful too, right? Enough about that. Let's take a deep breath in and out. And remember, you are safe, you are held, you are loved. And when one of us heals, we help heal the world. Be well, my darling. 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.