

Ep #60: Antidotes to Control



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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Ep #60: Antidotes to Control

It's alluring to think we can control anything other than ourselves, that telling others what to do, how to do it, when, where, and why will help you to feel, well, less out of control. But nothing could be farther from than the truth, my love. Seeking control leaves you feeling out of control.

So this week, we're picking up where last week left off and we're diving into the remedies, the antidotes, like we do. Ways to move through that desire to control the uncontrollable and to help yourself feel better by attending to you. Your thoughts, your feelings, your actions, and the result you create for yourself in this life.

Want to release yourself from your own desire to attempt to falsely control others? Keep listening, 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. I want to start, as I start every day these days on a note of gratitude. It's been amazing, the outpouring of love I've been getting from you all in DMs, on emails to podcast@victoriaalbina.com, and just in general. Thanking me for my work.

And I want to pause to thank each of you for the work that you are doing to heal yourself and to be a guiding light of wellness in this world right now. Last week, we talked about control and how much we can desire to attempt to control others as a way to try to feel, well, in control.

Ep #60: Antidotes to Control

We're going to dive further in to that topic this week because it's such a huge part of healing. Whether you're healing from your own codependency, growing up with codependents, narcissists, folks who use or abuse alcohol or other substances, or if you were simply - my brain almost said it's not simple at all, but if you were simply raised by wounded children, as many of us were, and so took on that wounding as your own, this work is vital.

And it's part of the global healing we need to do, and we are being called to do in this moment, to heal the collective unconscious. And to heal ourselves, so our interactions with others, with the people we love, with strangers, with everyone and everything can come from a place of love and care and understanding.

If you haven't listened to the last episode, I'd highly recommend that you pause this one, go give that one a quick listen and come on back. So last week, we talked about the difference between true control and false control. To refresh your memory, because it's been about a month since last week, true control is the control you have over yourself.

Your think-feel-act cycle, your decisions, your outcomes, your results from the thoughts you're thinking and all that they generate for you. From true control, self-control, you respond thoughtfully, with intention. You don't react. You are aligned with your own integrity and act from it regardless of what someone else wants or needs or what you think or project them to want or need.

When you're skilled at managing your own mind, your choices are less likely to be about attempting to feel in control because you are in control of yourself. Today, we'll be talking about the remedies, the antidotes to the siren song of false control. And yes, my nerds, I'll be getting super specific for you. You know I've got your back.

Ep #60: Antidotes to Control

But at first, as always, I want to own my own story here. For most of my life, I had a deep desire to attempt to control the world. To tell others what to do without emotional consent to do so, and we talked all about that if you want to hear more about it in episodes 27 and 28.

So this conversation is not rhetorical or hypothetical for me. I do this work. I am a life coach and I show up for my clients, for all of you because I've been there. When I look back on my own life and all those years of trying to sometimes subtly and sometimes less subtly control others, I can see how much pain and suffering it caused me.

And so, I want to support you in shaking yourself free from the grasp of false control. My own desire to exert false control was evidence of the emotional childhood I was swirling around in. And to refresh your memory, we talked about emotional childhood way back when in episodes 23 and 24.

So emotional childhood. That is when you, I, blame our - let's just call it our - thoughts, feelings, actions, and results on other people. It can sound like, "He said x, so I feel y." Instead of realizing he said x, I took it personally, made it mean something terrible about me. And so I created my feeling in myself with my own thoughts. My reaction to his words.

And yes, our reactions often come from our trauma, our history, are informed by the multiple systems of oppression we may be subject to in our lifetime due to our social location, as animals socialized as women, as people of color, as queer folks, as differently abled folks. And yes, we can call out the systems and we can simultaneously look at our own reactions and the framework in which we're understanding he said x, so I felt y.

In my own case and to put it simply, I stayed in emotional childhood because I didn't know any other way to be. I didn't have another rubric for

Ep #60: Antidotes to Control

living, which I now have through thought work and understanding the think-feel-act cycle. I chose to lean on false control, attempting to control others, because I didn't feel in control of myself. My own thoughts, my own feelings.

And quite frankly, because I feared feeling my feelings. My own feelings weren't a think I grew up connected to. I didn't have the words or access to the somatic or bodily experience of my feelings other than angry, sad, joyful. And part of me feared feeling feelings because I worried that I didn't know how.

I worried that it would be too much for me, which I've learned isn't real or true. I now know that I am most in my power when I'm feeling my feelings in my body, when I'm processing them through, when I'm really present to them and to accepting them, when I'm not pushing them away. And when I'm focused on the one thing I can control, my own mind and my responses to life on life's uncertain terms as an emotional adult.

Remember the problem with attempting to control anything outside of ourselves. Thinking you can control the world is impossible. It doesn't serve you. And in fact, can be harmful and exhausting to your mind, body, and spirit, shunting you time and time again into sympathetic nervous system activation, into that flight or fight freak out part of your nervous system.

The futile effort to control others can create stress, frustration, disappointment, even anger in your mind, body, and spirit because controlling the world is impossible. And as always, I get it. I was there too. Nothing to feel shame or guilt or anything else about, other than motivation, to bring your awareness, acceptance, and action to this thought habit, especially if it's fueling the codependency and resentment cycle where you try to control someone and they don't do what you want and then you resent them for it.

Ep #60: Antidotes to Control

Or the externalization or people-pleasing habit, where you ask someone else to control you by asking their opinion because you don't trust your own. And then you resent them when they give you an opinion, feedback, or advice that you don't want. Or - and this was my favorite for sure - when you ask for advice from that place of not trusting yourself, and then you act on that advice, and then the situation doesn't turn out the way you want. And then you resent the advice-giver when they give you advice because you asked.

Oh brains. Before I step into details about the antidotes, the remedies, I want to say this; not being able to control the world is one of the greatest gifts I've ever heard of because if the only thing I have to control, the only thing I can control is me, then I am free. And it frees me from the responsibility of attempting to make other humans' choices for them.

And here we're talking about other adults. If you have a toddler, or an infant, or you're caring for a fragile elder, someone else who's not able to make their own decisions, then that's a different story altogether. So if you're an adult and you're thinking about other adults, it's so freeing to know that they get to make their own decisions. It's the only way forward. And you get to make yours.

I find this fact so liberating. I wanted to share that with you. Mull it over. Give it a good think. Okay, my perfect darling angel, my beautiful love, what is a human, particularly when raised in codependency or chaos to do to release this habit?

Well, step one will be no surprise to you, my beauty, if you are a long-term listener. Awareness. That's how we do in this family. Awareness, acceptance, action. You can't heal what you can't see. So start to raise your awareness around your own subtle and overt attempts to control people, places, and things.

Ep #60: Antidotes to Control

And maybe that's all you do for the next week, the next month, the next year. Focus on noticing your own thought patterns. And if that's what you do, if that's where this work starts and ends for you right now, then that is fabulous. Bring your awareness to your words, your thoughts, the sensations or feelings in your body when you are about to or are attempting false control. Please don't judge it. Just bring gentle awareness to you and your habitual thought patterns.

Two, remember, you can set boundaries and I recommend that you do. Stepping away from attempting to control others and setting boundaries, these are not mutually exclusive things. Just check in and ask yourself if you're setting a boundary with the energy of taking care of yourself, versus attempting to control anyone or anything.

Asking someone to stop talking about the latest death rate numbers because you need a break is a beautiful thing. Go for it. I've done this in my life. Asking the people in your house to wash their hands, having a household convo about staying in place versus leaving the house right now, all of these things can be voiced with the energy of a healthy, loving boundary, to take care of yourself. Not to control others.

Remembering when we set a boundary in this family, it sounds like, "If you do x, then I will do y." Your focus is on you when you're setting a boundary. What you want and need, and not on the other person and their decisions as an adult. They can do whatever they want to do and you will make a decision for you. If you do x, then I will do y.

And if you want to hear more about boundaries, that's from way back in 2019, episode five. I will of course include here a caveat for parents. So you do get to tell kids what you want them to do, especially when it comes to safety. No running in the street, no juggling knives, no using the toaster in the bathroom, we don't hit in this family, et cetera.

Ep #60: Antidotes to Control

And all of that can be done either with control energy or with the energy of loving parenting. And if you're making rules with your kids from the energy of trying to control them, no matter their age, I will lovingly ask you to check yourself before you wreck yourself, because think back.

Fetuses don't always do what you want them to do. Newborns, toddlers, they certainly don't. And your school age or teenage kid, your kid home from college. The more you can have loving rules for safety, calm, and peace in place from a place of pure love and not control energy, the more your kid will feel that love energy behind your words and there is nothing to rebel against or push against.

They might still rebel anyway because sometimes that's developmentally appropriate, but I think and I hope you get my point here. Love energy serves you. Controlling energy doesn't. In order to do this, to recognize what energy you're bringing to your communications, decisions, statements, you need awareness of what's going on for you in your mind and body, which is the gift of daily thought work and the breathwork meditation I teach.

They are both amazing tools for feeling your feelings in your body, where feelings live. Feel into when you're trying to control and when you're making a suggestion from a place of love. Not all suggestion-making is about control. You get to learn to feel the difference in your body.

I'll pause here on this issue of control, kiddos, energy, to bring in the thought work protocol with an example from a coaching client of mine. So Amy lives here in New York City and has a very curious and active three-year-old. They went for their first foray out of the house yesterday with her little one in the stroller.

Ep #60: Antidotes to Control

She pulled the stroller over to blow her nose and, in that moment, her daughter reached out of the stroller and touched a box on the sidewalk. And before I share what Amy said, I want to be clear to say that I'm not putting words in her mouth. These are her words exactly. She said she lost her mind and that she completely panicked.

She pulled her daughter's hand away and she said, "Sarah, no, don't touch anything. The world is really dangerous right now. It's not safe." And of course, little three-year-old Sarah started sobbing and then Amy started sobbing. So challenging to be a human and to be a parent and to be a child right now.

So Amy and I took this situation and we ran it through the through work protocol. So we looked first at the unintentional thought process, that is the habitual process. And I'll go through the protocol for you really quickly here. So we write CTFAR on our piece of paper.

C stands for circumstance and that is the completely court-admissible neutral fact of the matter with no adjectives, no adverbs, no opinions, no judgments. The circumstance. The thing that happened in the world. Then the T line. We wrote CTFAR in a nice little row on your paper.

T is for your thought, so that's the sentence in your mind. We start with your habitual thought, the one that just pops into your head when something happens. Usually based on your family, your society, culture, what you were trained to think in any given situation. And then that thought creates a feeling.

And I will note, sometimes a thought is in reaction to your physiology. So you'll have a nervous system reaction like Amy here had some physiologic sympathetic panic. She went a little sympathetic here and she then had a

Ep #60: Antidotes to Control

thought in reaction to that sensation, that adrenaline rush in her body, and that's where we can take action.

There's different work we can do to address and regulate the nervous system, and we're actually going to be diving into polyvagal nervous system 101 next week. But for now, so a nervous system reaction happens or you simply have a thought, and that's where you get to intercede on your own behalf.

So you have that thought and it creates a feeling in your body, which is energy. It's a vibration, it's the movement of energy through your body. A feeling. You take action based on your feeling. Not your thought. And I like to say think about it, you're about to cross a busy street. I don't think anyone crosses the street because they have the thought, "I guess no cars are coming."

Instead, you feel into it. Your neuroception, which again, I'll get into more nerdy detail about next week, your neuroception is how your body understands the world to be safe or not and that you have a feeling in your body. A sensation in your body based on whether you feel safe.

So the thought may be, "I looked both ways, there are no cars coming," and you feel safe, and so you take an action, crossing the road. And then there's a result. And the result is for you from your A line, your action. Not the result created for anyone else because you don't know that. You never know what your action creates for someone else. It's always a guess.

And my encouragement for you is always to keep your focus on you, to manage you and your mind first and foremost because it's the only mind you can manage. And so we stay really focused on your R. Okay, so that is the thought work protocol.

Ep #60: Antidotes to Control

So here for Amy, the C line, the situation, the circumstance, baby touched something outside during COVID-19. Her thought was, “I need to control her.” She felt, F line, scared. The action she took, and again, her own words, not mine, “I had an overreaction. I freaked out.” And what we came to understand together through our conversation was that the R line, the result, which I’ll know is always evidence that your T line, your thought, created your lived experience always, so with the thought, “I need to control him,” she created the result of actually not being in control of herself because she was seeking to control someone else.

So in this situation, she thought that the circumstance, her baby touched something outside during COVID is a problem. But it was actually her thought, “I need to control her,” that led her to her F line of being scared. And so from that fear, she had what she called an overreaction, a freakout, which led her to the result of not feeling in control of herself.

She thought that she was taking action, of having this oversized reaction, this, again, freakout, because of the circumstance of her baby touching something. But it was because of her thought, “I need to control her,” that she took that action and got that outcome of actually not being in control of herself in that moment, leading to the cycle of stress.

Amy was not being the parent she wanted to be. She was mirroring her own childhood and the anxious parenting she had received onto her own child. That led to the knee-jerk flood of sympathetic nervous system energy that led her to her panic and to future trip of her child getting sick and dying.

She was unable to calm herself and bring herself back into ventral vagal alignment with herself. And that is our goal. To recognize that flutter in your belly that means your body is flooding with adrenaline, and to take a breath in and to focus on your exhale, to calm your physiology so you can get back into alignment with your mind, body, and spirit.

Ep #60: Antidotes to Control

Together, Amy and I came up with the following intentional protocol, which is what we call the thought, feeling, action and result you want to create for yourself in your life with intention ahead of time. So the circumstance is always the same because that's an unchangeable thing. Baby touched something outside during COVID.

Thought, she's a child. Children touch things. Feeling, and we tried several on until we got to this one that Amy really resonated with and felt like the energy she wanted to be bringing to her parenting, and that feeling is accepting. The action she will take the next time this happens because it will is to react appropriately.

That is to gently clean her hands while soothing her, talking in a tender voice, calming them both. And the result is to recognize that her child is a child and to hold space in her heart for sweet little Sarah to be a baby who touches things. When I read this to her slowly and invited her to feel into it, to connect with her body and then her mind, she told me that this new intentional protocol felt so much better and is an example of her being the parent she wants to be in the world.

So her work is to practice this new protocol over and over. So I invited her to write it on Post-Its and to put it on her front door, on her stroller, on her mirror, so she can choose this thought on purpose and ahead of time. Knowing that babies touch things and they're supposed to.

And Amy gets to choose how she wants to respond, understanding that that initial whoosh of adrenaline may just happen and she can take a breath in, long out, so she's not reacting from false control. And this is, in a way, reparenting herself. She was not only showing up for her daughter with false control panic energy, she's been showing up for herself, her inner children, and her partner with this energy too.

Ep #60: Antidotes to Control

Next remedy. If your issue is asking for other people's opinions as a way to try to control your outcomes, I want to invite you to focus on practicing trusting yourself and your decisions. Listen, you may make a decision that doesn't work out the way you want it to. You may fail. But like we talked about in episodes 39 and 40, failure is a gift because it means that you tried and you learned something.

So put yourself out there, make the scary decisions without second guessing yourself and then if you fail, that's great. You've got more information to use as loving evidence to help you make your next decision. To quote the magnificent Buddhist teacher, Pena Chodron, "Fail, fail again, fail better."

And our final remedy, focus on what you can choose. A gift of recognizing where you may be trying to control is that it gives you options. My favorite being to shift from a focus on control to a focus on choice. You may think the thought, "I feel out of control," and thus you will feel out of control. And so logically, you may want to attempt to control life.

When this comes up, recognize the part you that's talking. Is it your inner child? How old is the you that seeks control? Be your own best parent. Give yourself some big old love, remind yourself that you are taking care of you, and you'll likely have to do this many times to get the message through and that's okay.

Because I love you, I've made you an inner child soothing meditation that's available on my website, victoriaalbina.com. Right at the top of the page you can put your information in and get several different meditations sent right to your inbox and you can also look at the show notes for this page and you can find it there.

Ep #60: Antidotes to Control

Lots of ways to get it, but do go download it. It's really short, it's something around 10 minutes and it's a real gift to your inner child. So instead of repeating that old advice of looking for what you can control and focusing there, which can lead you to mentally tighten your grasp on the people around you, on your nutrition and your supplement and exercise schedule, instead of tightening your grasp on anything at all, instead of trying to control anything, I want to invite you to ask yourself, what do I want to choose to think and feel in this situation?

Focus on the fact that you can make choices and therein lies your power. Through that question, you can begin to feel into the thoughts and feelings you want to have on purpose, like Amy did. So you can actively choose them. Again, not to try to control anything but because you are making that choice.

Because when your perfect plan to control your nutrition, et cetera, works out, that I can control framing can be one more thing leaving you feel so out of control. Instead, choose the next right thought. So my love, here is your homework. Take a moment to list out, pen to paper, all the things you want to control. And then write out your new choice to release your attempt at grasping for control.

I release all the things I cannot control. That could be your first one. I release my desire to control the pandemic. Instead, I choose acceptance. This is happening. I can take good care of myself, my family, the healthcare providers and grocery store clerks in my world, I can write to my senders asking for a rent freeze, rent cancelation. I mean, that would be even better, right?

But for now, I release my desire to control the pandemic. I choose acceptance. I release my desire to control the stock market. I choose trust that things will eventually balance out. I release my desire to control my

Ep #60: Antidotes to Control

partner, my children, my dog, my body, my neighbors, the government. I choose love.

When you're focused on controlling, you are in fact out of control because you're striving for something impossible. You're creating more spin energy in your life. Let it go, my sweet one. Let it all go and focus on what you want to choose to give your attention and energy to right now. Perhaps it's a way to make your own life better or the life of an elderly neighbor, a low-income parent down the street, or someone you've never met who's suffering in this moment.

In my life, I am actively consciously on the daily choosing self-love, compassion, surrender, and release. And I've put Post-Its up around the house to remind me of this. I am writing it out in my journal a dozen times a day. And I'm voicing it to my one-on-one coaching clients and guiding them to make the best choices for their own lives.

And I'm sharing this dedication with the people I love because brains need repetition to make change, for neuroplasticity. The conscious changing of our own patterned reactions to take hold. And these thoughts may feel extra challenging right now, so I'm doing everything I can to remind my brain of this choice, to release my desire for control.

I want to say clearly that releasing your need to attempt to control is universally challenging for human minds, and may always feel extra challenging if you were raised not having a sense of control, have trauma around other people making choices for you. While you can't control the world, the thing you can control is so important to be conscious of, to have top of mind, and that is you.

I see you, my darling. I see you out there. Keep breathing. The other choice that I am making is to remind myself that I cannot take this global pain

Ep #60: Antidotes to Control

away and can't make the people in my life relax, take a nap, rest, or make choices like I want them to. To not go out, to take a break. But what I can do is to regulate my own nervous system as much as I can, breath by breath, thought by thought.

I will leave you as we close out this week's episode with these final guiding questions to ask yourself, more homework my sweet nerd. I know you love your homework. PS, I love it when you send me your homework. It makes me so happy. My mother is my whole maternal side - well, and the women in my father's line were all teachers. My mom, my sister, pretty much all my aunties are teachers.

Oh my gosh, I love it when you send me your homework. Really, send me your homework. Podcast@victoriaalbina.com. I'll send you a big gold star. You are magical and amazing and I love you.

So final guiding questions as homework. Take this to your journal and I want to really, really encourage you to set aside, five, 10, 15 minutes a day to coach yourself, to ask yourself what the circumstance is at hand, what you're thinking about it, what you feel in your body as you think that thought, what the action is you take when you feel that energy, that vibration in your body, and what the result of that specific action is.

And get specific. Get real. Get vulnerable and write it down. This is how you take back your mind from your socialization, from the patriarchy, from your familial teachings, your stress responses, your anxiety, worry, fear, and attempts to exert false control in the world. Write it down, my angel. See it in black and white on paper for your own wellness.

So those question are who do I want to be in the world? Someone who shows up with false control or do I want to be someone who lives from acceptance? What kind of feelings do I want to create for myself with my

Ep #60: Antidotes to Control

think-feel-act cycle? How do I want to show up always and in this particular moment for humanity?

If you are feeling particularly activated, if your desire to engage in false control is really intense for you right now, you're feeling anxious, stressed, worried, if you're feeling the weight of our global grief right now, know that you are not alone. I'm here with you, my angel. We're all in this together. Follow me over on social media, @victoriaalbinawellness.

I'm posting a lot and I'm going to be doing a lot of Instagram Lives and webinars, and I'm hosting free breathwork as often as my own bandwidth allows. If you don't do the social media thing or you want to be the first to hear about things, I do tell my email list before I tell social media when I have a free offering. So drop me a line, podcast@victoriaalbina.com and I'll make sure that you're on my email list.

I also have some exercises you can do to help yourself orient and ground into yourself, which are vital things to practice right now, especially if your trauma history makes things like breathwork or feeling your feelings feel particularly challenging, like it did for me.

I want to invite you to start with orienting and consider doing the grounding exercises. And because I love you, I made a series of short meditations and I'll link to those in the show notes. So head on over to victoriaalbina.com. There's a place right at the top of the page where you can download those meditations right to your email inbox for free. They're yours to keep.

It's so worth it to take good care of you, my darling. And finally, because coaching is more necessary than ever right now, I will be launching my six-month course in May and I have room for one more one-on-one life coaching client before that. If you're interested in coaching, head on over to

Ep #60: Antidotes to Control

victoriaalbina.com to sign up for a consult for one-on-one work and drop me an email to podcast@victoriaalbina.com if you want to learn more about my upcoming masterclass.

It's going to be all about a feminist framework for releasing codependency and taking back your mind and your nervous system so you can learn to do what Amy and I did, so you can know that there is no situation or no feeling too daunting. You really can manage your mind around it and show up as your highest, most intentional self.

The classes are little over half full, which is so exciting because we haven't even really started advertising yet or sharing it anywhere. So that's exciting. So if you want to get in on it, please reach out ASAP. I don't want you to miss it and it's going to be so good. Gosh, I am such a nerd for teaching. I love it.

Alright my sweet ones, let's do what we do. Nice breath in, long exhale. In and out. 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 and go wash your hands.

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.