

Ep #62: Glimmers



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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The world right now can feel extra trigger-tastic as we spend so much time indoors, in our homes, with our partners, families, roommates, or on our own, in quarantine, a pandemic swirling outside. If you have codependent thought habits, or your quarantine pod is one where codependency, indirect communication, or other challenging relationship patterns are coming up a lot, this time can feel like a big challenge to your emotional and physical wellness. Your ability to show up with love for yourself and others.

And yeah, this time can feel laced with tons of potential triggers lurking in the shadows like gremlins who have had pizza after dark. And so, I'm excited to share the concept of glimmers with you today. The antidote to triggers. This is going to be another nerd-tastic episode, so 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 recently posted about glimmers on the Instagram, Facebook machines, and you all loved it. So I wanted to talk more about the concept because glimmers are extra important to notice and appreciate right now, as you're able.

Stress is a thing for sure, for many of us, and I want to remind you that you have so many ways to release stress from your mind, body, and spirit. Thought work is my go-to way, and if you're new to the show and don't know what I mean by thought work, go back after you listen to this one and listen to episodes 39, 36, and 37. Thoughts, feelings, actions. That's where I lay it out super clearly for you, my love.

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Right now, it's more important than ever to both acknowledge the challenges, the hard things, and to celebrate the beauty, the joy, the in between moments of being just fine, thank you. Not to BS yourself with fake positivity because you know that's not my jam.

I'm not a fan of fake prescribed gratitude lists, done with a big should attached because you think you should be grateful. But rather, I'm into and lovingly encourage you to find the beauty, hope, gratitude. The glimmers. Because you want to feel better. And it's a simple way to support yourself in finding the things that already make you feel good and bring them to the fore of your mind because they are there.

There may just be other things clouding your vision of them in this moment. I've been thinking of that Mr. Rogers quote lately. "When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.'" And it's important to situate that quote - he was talking to preschoolers.

And we can complicate our understanding of this whole quote and can critique the police state totally, but right here, I'm using it to reference our own internal helpers. For times when we feel like lost children. Yes, the original intended audience of the great Fred Rogers.

And yes, you're an adult, and yes, you also have an inner child. And when we feel most afraid, most sympathetically or dorsal ventrally activated, that's when we can show up for the child within, to look for the helpers within. And one of those great helpers is your glimmers.

So what are glimmers? Glimmers come from the world of polyvagal theory, which is the work of Dr. Stephen Porges, PhD. I learned the term glimmers from Deb Dana, who wrote the book Polyvagal Theory in Therapy. Such a good book. She takes all this deep nerdity, this really research-based work and makes it really accessible, really usable. Highly recommend.

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So, last week, we talked about polyvagal theory in some detail. And if you haven't heard that one, I recommend you go back and give it a listen. It's an important primer for what we're going to discuss today. You and I, my love. And I highly recommend it. It's super nerd-tastic.

So back to glimmers. Glimmers are the opposite of triggers. In many ways, the antidote or the remedy to a trigger. Most of us have heard the term triggers, those things that shift us out of ventral vagal, out of feeling safe and secure and connected, tended and befriended.

Triggers are often based on our past experience, in our history, and the thoughts and feels that we continue to carry into our own life. Triggers can also carry ancestral origins. Trauma and stress from generations ago, and can quickly make you feel that whoosh, that rush of sympathetic activation, fight or flight. Or a trigger can knock you back right down the ladder into dorsal ventral shutdown, immobilization, freeze, playing possum.

Triggers cue the body to respond to danger, to start up the survival state responses, and then we have a thought about that experience. A thought about feeling that sensation, that flood through or bodies, which triggers a feeling, brain down, and the cycle continues. Body, mind, body, mind.

Glimmers can bring us back into our window of tolerance and can cue your body that you are safe, which is such a gift. I love that this kind of language and these conversations about the impact of stress and trauma in our lives is now a part of our vocabulary and our conversations, as folks speak up about and seek to heal their trauma and reduce stress, overwhelm, and anxiety in our individual and collective lived experience.

So important. Like I always say, you can't heal what you can't see, what you can't feel. Feeling the experience of your sensations, body up to brain, and your feelings, brain down to body, so vital for healing. When we're

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talking about the autonomic nervous system, we're talking about that body to brain, body up, up through the vagus nerve experience of sensations.

And once that information reaches your brain, you have thoughts about it. And those thoughts send a chemical messenger to your body, with the brain down process of the think-feel-act cycle. This is where the self-coaching I teach my clients and here on the show for you comes in.

You have a sensation mediated by your vagus nerve complex, and you have a thought in response that creates a feeling. An emotion, upon which you take action and create results in your life. And you can slow this process down to get the clarity you need to make changes, when it all starts with noticing your sensations and feeling your feelings.

There is so much you can do to reduce the impact of triggers on your nervous system, mind, body, and spirit, and to rewrite your relationship to those triggering experiences, which I talked about in episode 61, on polyvagal theory, and also in episodes 56 and 57 on perfectionism. 58 on uncertainty, 59 and 60 on control. I talk about this a lot. It's so important.

And this work can be done with coaching, and also often calls for the support of a trained trauma therapist for folks managing things like complex PTSD or frequent intense daily triggers. I say this because it's so important that you get the help that you need, because healing is possible and help is vital.

For those of us who grew up in chaos, in households with codependency, active addiction, stress, trauma, poverty, other substance use, mental illness, overly demanding parents, too lax or negligent parents, checked out parents, on and on, these situations may have trained it out of you to notice your glimmers. Trained it out of you to celebrate them and to focus on what's going well versus what's going less than well.

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And that bias towards noticing what's not working is a protective mechanism that your beautiful inner child developed because it loves you and doesn't want you to take your eyes off of the lion in the room for even a second. Your protector part worries if you're too cozy, too okay, you're lunch. So make some drama, make some chaos, stir things up, it says.

And this makes perfect sense to me that your protector part, this child part would want to make sure that you are always hyper-vigilant, because it doesn't want you to die. And this habit sure does not serve your adult self and your adult relationships.

As always, our work is strength based. We praise the heck out of that little one, giving them so much love and care and gratitude. And then we slowly, drip by drip, drop by drop, this work is slow and steady, we do the work of healing, noticing our glimmers for and as our adult selves, and sharing them with our inner child as we can.

When we're talking about stress and triggers, it's important to remember that when we perceive stress or threat, remembering that what is stress, trauma, threat is super individual and not like, one thing for everyone, in those moments, humans reach for ventral vagal first for social connection. To not feel alone in our scaredness, but connected and protected in our scaredness.

And in come our dear friends, glimmers. One of my favorite things to help me stay grounded, centered, and more able to breathe and orient and find my footing, to stay ventral vagal and to come back to it easily throughout the day is to focus on the glimmers. The things that bring that warm, fuzzy sense of connectedness to self and others.

I've been actively naming and cataloguing my glimmers these days here in quarantine in New York City. Noticing them, celebrating them, and inviting my perfect inner village or inner children to revel in the glimmers too.

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Particularly because my glimmers, and likely yours too, are the things that helped our inner children feel most loved and cared for.

Noticing our glimmers is an act of reparenting. And it's one I highly recommend. Remember, the goal in nervous system regulation is not to be in ventral vagal, super chill all the time, or you'd never put on pants. You'd never have that get up and go energy that a tiny touch of adrenaline gives you.

The goal is to be able to be flexible, plastic, to be able to move gently between states, versus getting stuck in a survival state pattern, where accessing ventral vagal, that energy of coming home to yourself, safe and connected, is not as accessible.

All sorts of things can induce our systems into either survival responses or ventral vagal responses. This can be smells, songs, poems, food, people, thoughts. And it's beautiful to notice how much variety there is, how different we all are. And so, I want to share some of the things that you all named as glimmers and replied to my Instagram post.

Beckyincolor707 writes, "Seeing new growth in my garden."

Carolinaannalise writes, "Sun on my face, sounds of a cello, being the little spoon, and holding my child's hand." Davidbarbarisi writes, "Music. This reminded me to put on Don't Stop Me Now by Queen, which led to an impromptu karaoke party. Inner child says the entire Aladdin soundtrack. Not the new one, obviously."

Fatkidanceparty said, "I have a playlist with three songs that bring me to gratitude for the present moment and hope for the future. Love the term glimmers for it." Desicresswell writes, "Yoga is a major glimmer for me right now." Emilysterchio writes, "Reading a book, listening to my favorite music, taking a walk, looking up at the sky."

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Casadinahome writes, “Playing and cuddling my cats. Sun baths lying on the grass. Old funny TV series I watched many times and still laughing.” And RMTjanine writes, “Massage, laughter, simple moments of beauty and connection.”

For me recently, glimmers have been my morning and evening rituals of stretching and self-coaching, doing my thought work, feeling the sun on my face, a hug, which I’m so lucky to be able to get right now. Showers, baths, and the smells of sandalwood, palo santo, and rose. And of course, my favorite glimmer is thought work.

Pausing in a moment of sympathetic activation to remember that I can calm my own body, begin to regulate my own nervous system, by giving my brain some love. And that is just so amazing, so empowering. So in those moments, I excuse myself, often to the bathroom because it’s an easy place to get two minutes of privacy, and I write.

Pen to paper if I can, on my phone if that’s the only option. And I download all of my thoughts and I breathe. I breathe in with a focus on a long slow exhale to help my body get ventral vagal, while I look at the thought patterns that come up when I’m activated.

And I’ll note here that when I’m in a freeze or you’re in a freeze, language may be challenging to come by. So thought work may not be available in that moment, so you can tap into some more somatic or bodily glimmers. Maybe smells, maybe the sun first, to begin to bring you back into yourself. And then you can look at your thoughts and feelings about whatever is going on, whatever you’re experiencing.

And this too feels like a coming home to me. Actively connecting with my body and my cognition. It’s one of the most beautiful and concrete ways I can show up for myself, by looking at my own habitual think-feel-act cycle and asking myself once I’ve processed those feelings all the way through

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my body, what I'd rather think and feel instead, how I'd rather act, a result I'd like to create in my life. It's been so supportive.

And sometimes, just remembering that I know how to do thought work, that's a tool in my toolbox, that alone is a beautiful glimmer for me. When we focus on noticing these moments of calm, centered, grounded joy, peacefulness, we can celebrate them. And we can reach for them actively to help us get back into our window of tolerance when we feel our state shifting.

I know this can be so challenging if noticing the positive is not part of your habitual way of thinking. And know that glimmers are happening within your body, and by bringing your awareness to them, you can support yourself to fully experience them.

And then once your physiology is calm, you can do your thought work to create your most intentional life. So my darling, you have some homework. You know I'm a nerd for homework, and I want to do this one together because you know I love collective healing the most.

So I want you to head on over to social media. I'm on Instagram a lot more than the Facebook. And you can find me, @victoriaalbinawellness. And I want to invite you to take a moment to ask yourself, what are my glimmers? What are the things that I can count on to bring me back into ventral vagal? Into feeling safe, connected?

These can be smells, sensations, like being all nice and warm, or feeling a nice cool breeze on your face. It may be people that you can see in real life right now, or on FaceTime or whatever video. It could be the sensation of a pet's fur, your child's hand. On and on.

There are no wrong answers. Whatever supports you in feeling more grounded and centered in yourself. And so your homework is to write that

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out and to head on over to Instagram and post about it. Post about it in your feed, in your story, doesn't matter. But tag me @victoriaalbinawellness. And you can use the hashtag #thisishowweheal if you're into doing hashtags.

And if you're not on the social medias, totally fine. Email your homework to me, podcast@victoriaalbina.com. Either way, I'm so looking forward to cheering you on. This is such vital work. It's such a beautiful way to support ourselves, to connect inward, to show ourselves love.

And if you want to hear more from me about this topic and a thousand others, there are several exciting opportunities coming up. So I'm going live every day on the Instagram to take about topics you've sent in to me. And if you haven't had a chance to send a coaching question, the story of something you're struggling with, or a topic you want me to speak to, email me, podcast@victoriaalbina.com or send me a DM, @victoriaalbinawellness.

And the date of release of this show is April 23rd 2020, and I'm doing a webinar tonight. So if you're listening to this show as it launches, join us. I'll be talking all about how to overcome codependency and live an intentional life using the tools I teach you here. Somatic nervous system methods plus thought work and breath work. The science and the sacred together for your best healing.

And I'll be telling you all about my upcoming masterclass on the subject, which starts in a week and a half from when this goes live. I'm so excited. And I'm keeping the masterclass really small, intimate, just really connected, so everyone can get the attention they need and deserve. And it's a little over half full at this point, so if you're interested, make sure that you apply for a consult call right now by going to victoriaalbina.com/masterclass.

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All the info on the application, which is like, super short, it's like, 10 questions so I can get to know you, are right there for you. There's only a few spots left so if you've been wanting to work with me, to coach with me, this is your chance, my love, and I can't wait to talk to you.

Alright my beauty, take the time this week to notice those glimmers. They are a gift that's just a smile or a bird song or a warm shower away. 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.

If you've been enjoying the show and learning a ton, it's time to apply it with my expert guidance so you can live life with intention without the anxiety, overwhelm, and resentment, so you can get unstuck. You're not going to want to miss the opportunity to join my exclusive intimate group coaching program. So head on over to victoriaalbina.com/masterclass to grab your seat now. See you there. It's going to be a good one.