

Ep #68: How to Interrupt the People-Pleasing Cycle



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Victoria Albina, NP, MPH

Ep #68: How to Interrupt the People-Pleasing Cycle

My love, this episode goes live on June 4th 2020, on the heels of the murder of George Floyd, amidst national protests around systemic racism in the US. I thought a lot about whether or not to publish an episode this week, and I decided to put this show out there, remedies to people pleasing, because I hope that these tools will be helpful in the fight to address racism and dismantle white supremacy.

So often, white and white-passing people go along with racism to people please. Don't say anything in response to a racist joke or comment, don't speak up, don't raise our voices, don't use our privilege to say that the murder of black folks, the systemic disenfranchisement of black folks is not okay, that change needs to happen on a system-wide and personal level.

And this does indeed start with our thoughts. People pleasing disconnects us from ourselves, from our wants and needs, from the ways we need to show up for ourselves, and thus, the world. So of course, it makes sense that if we're constantly trying to please others, to uphold the status quo, constantly looking outward, it becomes even more challenging for us to build deep and powerful compassion and solidarity with others.

So this is one offering and I hope that it resonates. I want to hear from you about whether it does. And stay tuned for more in depth offering from me about how white and white passing folks like myself can concretely move towards being true coconspirators, accomplices, and not just allies with our black and brown siblings because we need to do it and we absolutely can. We must. The time is now. Thank you for listening.

—

Ep #68: How to Interrupt the People-Pleasing Cycle

Last week, we spoke to the question of if I'm so smart, why do I people please? And there are so many possible root causes of this thought habit and all of them point to the genius of your inner child. That younger part of you that was tasked with developing, growing, learning, and more importantly and above all my nerds, keeping you alive.

And with that singular focus in mind, brilliant and amazing little you learned that if the people around you were happy with you, then you would be safe, warm, fed, watered, and possibly even rewarded with that human connection our nervous system wants more than anything. That co-regulation of the ventral vagus complex.

So my love, your inner child was a genius and taught you to people please for your own survival. And this week, we're diving into what you can do as your adult self to start to heal that tender inner part and to stop putting other people's thoughts and feels about you ahead of your own. The remedies to people pleasing. 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. This week, I am very excited to dive back into the topic of people pleasing. So last week, we talked about the root causes, and we took a deep dive into the reasons why we do it.

So in review, people pleasing is the habit of pleasing other people instead of pleasing ourselves. Saying yes when we mean no, saying, "I'll do that

Ep #68: How to Interrupt the People-Pleasing Cycle

task,” when you’re like, so at or beyond capacity. Saying you like something, laughing at a joke that you really don’t find funny because you want other people to like you.

My darling, it’s normal and natural and human and mammalian to want other people to like you. That’s not a bad thing. It doesn’t mean you’re wrong or messed up in some way. It’s just that often, in our childhood, if our inner children or the child we were then, who in our adult lives is our inner children - I like to say inner childrens as though it were plural because I always said that other childrens and my parents still bring it up and we all laugh in a fun way.

But right, if when we were childrens we learned that our adults weren’t safe, if they were people pleasers and so we learned that habit, if our parents were codependent or had a lot of perfectionism, a lot of self-doubt, as kiddos, gosh, kids are like the most brilliant little creatures on this planet.

Well yeah, kids are wicked smart. But if we feel like our adults are unreliable emotionally, are emotionally fragile or like the walking wounded, have unhealed and unattended to inner childs - I mean inner childrens - of their own, as smart little children, we may seek to fill that void for them, to heal that wound by being the joker, the clown, by pleasing them, by getting straight As, by being a good girl.

We may have learned that in order to be safe and this can mean emotionally safe, meaning validated, praised, taken care of, or it can mean actually literally safe if we grew up in an unsafe environment in any way, we can learn that to be safe, we need to keep our adults happy, which makes a lot of sense, right?

Because when you’re a child, what, you’re going to go kill an elk and dress it somehow and start a fire and roast it? You can’t do those things. You’re

Ep #68: How to Interrupt the People-Pleasing Cycle

four or six or eight or 12, right? You don't have those skills that you need for your own safety, your own comfort, to stay warm, to stay sheltered and fed. So we rely on adults. Makes a lot of sense.

And the problem with these habits is that they keep you putting other people ahead of yourself. They reinforce thought habits like codependency and perfectionism, which then reinforce the people pleasing. It's a bit of a cycle, my darling.

So these are some of the root causes along with, of course, everything we're taught by our socialization, by culture at large, by capitalism, by racism, xenophobia, classism, homophobia and on and on. We are taught that we are less than if we are not assimilated, if we don't toe the company line, if we are not the same as everyone else, if we stand out, if we are other, if we are our real authentic or weird selves.

I had a period where I tried to fit in. There may have been a lot of Polo shirts involved. It was the early 2000s and I lived in Boston, and well, that happened. And it was a real period of people pleasing in my life. I was trying to people please the person I was dating, I was trying to people please my parents by doing this school - I mean, every single aspect of my life seemed to really - when I look back on it because it wasn't a conscious thing at the time, but it was all about being pleasing to other people, attempting to make other people happy and it was very much at my own expense.

So my darlings, this week, I am excited to talk about antidotes, remedies. And this is going to be a short one because again, I really want you to focus on these few things to do. Awareness, acceptance, action. So you can let this all soak in, permeate, so you can see it in all the ways that people pleasing shows up.

Ep #68: How to Interrupt the People-Pleasing Cycle

Doing the dishes when you need to be working, so that your partner might be happy when they're done with their work. Those kinds of things.

Spending an hour during your work at home workday cleaning the tub, not because you want to take a bath but because someone else might.

So we will start by remembering the think-feel-act cycle. The basis for the thought work protocol we do in this family. In our framework, we know that only you can create your thoughts and other people create theirs. So you never have to choose to be mean to yourself or to judge yourself. You never have to choose the thought, "They don't like it when I disagreed, so I should never do that again."

Nor do you ever have to choose the thought, "I just want to say yes or I'm going to say yes because then they will feel happy with me. They will feel good. They will like me." Because baby, if your thoughts create your feelings, other people's thoughts create theirs.

And whatever response or reaction someone else has to your thoughts, feelings, actions, or the results you are creating for yourself is all based on the thought protocol in their mind. Not based on what you actually said or did, but in their interpretation of you, through their own lens, through the goggles they're wearing.

If they're wearing bifocals, they'll see you - oh, that's such a great little metaphor. If they're wearing bifocals and they look through the top of it, they may see you clearly. But if they look through the bottom, the reading part, and no, I don't wear bifocals yet, but my nerds, I know it's coming. Oh, the 40s.

So if they look through the bottom, which is the reading part, for those of you who don't know what bifocals are. And if someone's looking at you through rose-colored glasses, they're going to see you in a positive light.

Ep #68: How to Interrupt the People-Pleasing Cycle

And if they're hungry, angry, lonely, tired, maybe it doesn't matter if you say something that may otherwise be pleasing to them. They may have a grump about it because their thoughts are creating their feelings.

And my baby, I get it. This is challenging for the brain to let in and it's challenging to shift for sure because of all the reasons we talked about last week and this. And if you want to live an intentional life, starting to see and shift these patterns is everything.

And I remember back to my people pleasing days and I can see now with that old 20:20 hindsight, I was scared to feel certain feelings. Mostly, I wanted to avoid feeling that I had disappointed someone, that someone was upset with me or doesn't approve of me or that I had messed up in some way that made someone, in my own mind of course, think less of me.

Mostly because then I would be mean to myself about it. So I get it, it's really challenging and somewhat vicious cycle this people pleasing, until you learn how to step in on your own behalf to interrupt it all. I talk a lot about discomfort as something to embrace, to befriend, to get to know and to learn slowly, slowly, slowly, to make yourself more comfortable with.

This is the power of mindfulness and meditation, with the caveat that digging into meditation and mindfulness is not for everyone and titration or starting very slowly with one deep breath, then five deep breaths, then 10, titration, slow and steady, baby. So important.

And here's what's been real for me. For me, sitting in meditation really was not great at first. And feeling feelings in my body, it was really challenging. And it's also vital. When you gently and self-lovingly make space to feel all of your feelings, you can start with the glimmers too, there's no reason to start with the challenging ones.

Ep #68: How to Interrupt the People-Pleasing Cycle

And if you don't know what a glimmer is, episode 62 is all about it. You'll soon recognize that while feelings like disappointment can feel so uncomfortable in your body at first, sitting with them, versus trying to avoid them, buffer against them or push them away, creates space for them to feel less miserable.

That is, you'll come to see that you, my love, are strong enough to not just withstand any feeling on earth but to get comfortable and less afraid of feeling any and every feeling. Truly. Because eventually you'll come to believe by experiencing it that feelings are - well, they're just feelings.

They're just energy in your body. The dance of neurochemistry along that glorious, gorgeous vagus nerve. Brain talking to body talking to brain talking to inner child talking to spirit. My trauma taught me to try to keep everyone happy with me or else.

And part of my healing work was to ask, okay wait, what's that or else? And the voice I heard from deep within me, deep in my past, that inner child voice was, "Well, something very bad will happen." And that's just, as an adult, that's just not reason enough to put my own happiness at the end of the road, right?

Because something bad would happen? No, baby. I get it. My inner child was thinking that. I totally understand why she was thinking that. Totally love her for trying to keep me safe. But as an adult in emotional adulthood, I've learned that it's totally okay if someone's mad at me. It's okay if someone is disappointed that I'm not rolling over and showing them my proverbial soft underbelly. It's okay.

My being happy is more important than attempting to please others. This is vital. Me first, you second, with love. And what's not okay for me now is giving my power away, making choices from my life to try to make

Ep #68: How to Interrupt the People-Pleasing Cycle

someone like me, accept me, agree with me, to be okay with me. It's no longer what matters to me. My standing in my power does.

And this thought pattern, this people-pleasing habit can be one part of why and yes, there are so many other parts why that we're not diving into today, why so many people, those socialized as women in particular stay in abusive relationships or ones that just don't serve them.

Because they fear other people's thoughts, displeasing people because your partner will be mad or sad about your leaving. It'll upset the kids, your parents will be disappointed, because of the perennial questions that keep us stuck in people-pleasing habits like what will the neighbors says or simply because you've lost touch with what you want most.

So you prioritize everyone else in your life. Staying where you're no longer growing because someone may not like it if you leave. The antidote, my beauty, is owning it, accepting it, recognizing this habit in yourself, no longer pushing against it or fighting it, but giving it love, accepting it.

And accepting doesn't mean condoning it. It doesn't mean continuing to do it. You accept that you're doing it so you can learn to pause when you're about to do it or in the midst of doing it, about to agree to something you don't want to do, when you're about to say something or do something that isn't aligned with your integrity.

It's about saying to yourself and the world, "This is my realness with love, take it or leave it." And I want to caveat because I am the nerd that I am. I get how risky this is to a nervous system. As human mammals, we like to be liked. We want to fit in.

There's a part of us that's scared to be ostracized because my nerds, to our hunter gatherer ancestors, to not be part of the crowd was tantamount

Ep #68: How to Interrupt the People-Pleasing Cycle

to death. But like, literally. Therefore, living into your authenticity, leaving the crowd you've always known, speaking your truth is scary. I get it and I'm here to testify, it feels so beautiful, so freeing, so amazing to be on the other side of it.

So my beauty, let's pause for a meditation. If it is safe for you to do so, meaning you're not driving or walking down a dark alley or juggling knives, I invite you to flutter close your beautiful eyes, to take a slow deep breath in, fill that belly, fill that belly, fill that belly, and long slow out.

Feel your weight wherever you're sitting, standing, lying down. Feel your chair, the bed, the floor, the Earth holding you up and ground yourself downward. Feel your connection to mother Earth, the sky above, the air that surrounds you.

Know in this moment, perhaps with a hand on your heart, that your purpose on this planet is not to attempt to keep other people happy. That is not your job, my sweet one. Your job is to attend to yourself with your full mind, heart, body, spirit, soul, to reparent your perfect inner children on the daily, to show up for yourself with a full open heart and mind, to attend to you.

To ask yourself, what is it that I want today? For me, on my own terms? How will I show up for me today? When you ask yourself this over and over, your brain, your body, your inner children, your spirit, you start to believe it. Start to believe that the most important thing for you to do is to show up for you, to attend to you, to love you up.

And from that place of filling your own cup, you can be of service from the overflow. Not by giving away your last drop, attempting to please others. Fill your own cup, my beauty. Give from the overflow. Fill your own cup, my darling. And give from the overflow.

Ep #68: How to Interrupt the People-Pleasing Cycle

Remember my darling, you are no good to others if you have burned yourself down. Your last drop is of no service if it leaves you empty. Sink into that. Allow that to permeate every cell of your body and know that you are not on this planet to please others, not to hide yourself, not to apologize for being your perfect you. You are here to live into your authenticity. That's it.

With your beautiful eyes closed, hand on heart, repeat after me if you are able. I love myself. I put me first. I know that I matter. I give from my overflow. Never my last drop. Take a deep breathe in and long out and flutter open your beautiful eyes. Thank you for joining me in that, my darling.

So beautiful to meditate with you. So my tender one, the work here is to slow down, to get in touch with your inner children, and to lovingly ask yourself, all the parts of you, what do I actually want here? What would actually make me happy if no one else and no one else's opinion was involved?

Your brain's old habit may say, "Well, if dad, sister, mom, partner, boss, kiddo are happy, then well, I guess I'll be happy." So ask yourself, when you're making a decision and this can be a big decision or a small one, if I lived in a desert island, what would I want to do right now? Do I want to go out to tacos or to sushi?

I should caveat. This island has a mall and lots of restaurants and there's no COVID. So you're on this desert island and you can have anything you want. Cost isn't an issue, it's all available. Like, fantasy land. Do you know what you want? When everything is available, do you know what you want?

My darling, I want to invite you to learn about it. And if you're not used to doing this, to checking in with yourself, asking yourself what you want, and

Ep #68: How to Interrupt the People-Pleasing Cycle

then having an open heart about that it's okay to ask for it, to want it, to say, "Yeah, I want sushi and not tacos."

It can be challenging to ask yourself and to hear it. To hear that voice within and that's okay. It's just about practice and attunement, my love. And this beautiful Anais Nin quote comes to mind. "And the day came when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom."

My love, is it not time for you to blossom? To please yourself first? I think it is. And it's a risk well worth taking in service of your own most beautiful and intentional life. And with that, I thank you for listening in, for all the DMs and emails you send me telling me how the show has helped you.

And actually, this week, I got a hand written card sent to my office from a listener. I want to thank you very much, Diane in Detroit. My goodness, thank you. I also want to thank you for all the reviews on Apple Podcast that helped to get the show to more people who need to blossom.

And for those of you who left a review and haven't gotten your thank you present, or for those of you who have yet to review the show, head on over to victoriaalbina.com/freemeditations to grab a set of meditation downloads, on the house, yours to keep, to say thank you for subscribing, rating, reviewing, and sharing the show.

My greatest dream is that folks all over this country, all over the world have access to these lessons. I feel so honored and lucky and privileged and blessed, like, all of the words, to have had access to education and teaching and mentors. Well, I just want to keep paying it forward and your help helps.

Ep #68: How to Interrupt the People-Pleasing Cycle

So thank you for sharing the show in all of the ways. Thank you for following me over on the social media, @victoriaalbinawellness. And my love, don't forget to get your presents, victoriaalbina.com/freemeditations.

Alright my darling, let's take one more 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 beauty. 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.