

Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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Have you ever found yourself telling someone else what they should do to fix their life? How they should be living? How their life would be so much better if they just followed your plan, especially when they didn't ask you for your input?

This, my love, is the fixer thought fantasy, and it's one I engaged in for so many years. This thought habit is insidious and sneaky and doesn't serve you, my sweet one. Nor does it serve the person whose life you're trying to control with your attempts to soothe yourself by, well, attempting to control them and to be the fixer of their life. If this resonates for you, my sweet one, keep listening, 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 am coming to you from beautiful upstate New York, and it's been so magical to wake up amongst the trees, to go out on the porch. My brain loves to wake me up at like, six, 6:30 in the morning, and I make my maté and I go out on the porch and just stare at bunnies. I've been staring at a lot of bunnies and we have this gorgeous, fat, amazing chipmunk.

No, not chipmunk. Woodchuck. This woodchuck. I just love him so much. I talk to them, all of them, quite a bit. They kind of stare back at me but that's okay. It just brings me so much joy to just connect with nature. And you know I'm a nerd for the nervous system, and it's been so beautiful to be my own watcher and to bear witness to how different my nervous system feels when I'm able to earth and ground, to connect in with the earth in a place where the earth isn't electrified, like it is in New York City.

Where there aren't electrical cables and subways and everything running under the earth beneath my feet. It's been so beautiful to lie down in the clovers. Yes, I'm doing good tick checks, don't worry. And it's been - yeah, it just feels so beautiful in my body to connect with trees. They are such a resource for me, meaning they are a way that I can get ventral vagal by looking at trees, touching trees, nature.

In New York, one of the things I do is I look out my window, there are trees, I can resource with them, connect with them, it's different. But I now have this kind of mindscape of the beautiful trees and the yard with the little house - the yard of the little house where we are staying.

And yeah, it's just a beautiful thing I can hold in my mind's eye, this energy of relationship to connection with nature, the earth, trees. So that's what's up in my life. I am excited for this week's topic because it was one of my favorite activities for most of my life.

And that activity was fixing people. So I was a woman obsessed, and I actually had no clue I was doing it. Yeah, I just didn't realize because I hadn't stepped into being my watcher, I hadn't raised my awareness. I sometimes talk about the first 20-25 years of my life as sort of living on this autopilot of survival, and it feels kind of resonant.

Of course, I have always had my moments of feeling connected inward, but not like now. Not like it is since I've made it this really active, conscious, thoughtful thing that I do each and every day. To meditate, to move my body, to just bring my awareness to my family of inner children, to the conditioned thoughts in my mind and my conditioned survival responses.

It's been pretty rad, I must say, this process of inward connection and outward growth. All of it. So in that process, I came to understand that I had this thought fantasy that I could fix other people. And it's a habit. It's just a

thought habit, just a fantasy, like so many of the things we talk about. And it's not bad.

I mean it doesn't serve you, but you are not bad or wrong for having these thoughts. There's no shame to be had for having this habit. It came from a deep place in your childhood likely, where your body decided, your psyche decided that this was a way for you to ensure your own survival.

So before we even dive in, as always, I want to state that really, really clearly. Your mind, your body, your inner child, your spirit just love you. And that can show up in some ways that don't work so well for us as grown adults, but comes from love.

So one of the other reasons we are talking about this fixer habit, this fixer fantasy right now is because we've talked about people pleasing for the last several weeks, and so it's a natural follow-up to those conversations and if you're new to the show and you're like, wait, what? Welcome, enjoy this episode all the way through and then do go back and listen to the people pleasing episodes right after this one for more on the subject.

And particularly if you're new to the family, but I mean, all of you, follow me over on the 'gram, @victoriaalbinawellness. I've been doing a lot of live videos and just showing up there a lot to be of service and it's so fun to be connected with you all. Drop me a little DM, let's connect.

Okay, so one of the things that's really important to me is to normalize these habits. For you to walk away from this episode being like, oh, I'm not a freak show for doing that, I'm not bad. This is a normal part of growing up with a framework of codependency, codependent thinking, perfectionist thinking, and I think one of the most powerful ways I can do that is by calling myself in, by telling on myself, and I think that's really important.

So the reason I do this work, the reason I started this podcast, why I coach codependent and perfectionist thinkers and why I created my six-month online group coaching course, The Feminist Wellness Guide to Overcoming Codependency is because I grew up with this kind of thinking. And it wasn't until I was truthfully in my third decade on this planet that I started being able to see it all within my and to do the work to begin to shift it.

So I used to have a wicked fixer or savior complex. And looking back, I can see how I was so often doing for others what they could totally do for themselves. And then on the backend, I would get resentful if they didn't "appreciate" it enough or if they didn't love the way I did whatever task for them that didn't ask me to do.

And I would get so super resentful and make sure that you go on back and listen. There is a whole episode. It's number 64, all about resentment. So if you're like, wait, what is resentment, tell me more, listen to that one after this one. But I would get so super resentful if they didn't drop everything and bend over backwards to try to help me in return, once again, for my doing the thing they never asked me to do.

And let me tell you, my darling one, this quid pro quo way of thinking is so exhausting. And it's so damaging to one's sense of self and to our relationships with others. As I was thinking about this just now, I remembered this fascinating thing I used to do as a girl. Here's an interesting one.

So I got to laugh at this, this is just - brains are so fascinating. So I loved cleaning my friends' rooms. Like I would go over to a friend's house to hang out and do whatever 10-year-olds do, and what I wanted to do was make their room sparkly, shiny, to organize it.

And obviously my fellow 10-year-old didn't ask me to do this, but I felt this compulsion to get all up in someone else's business and attempt to manage their life for them. And while their mom was usually really grateful, my friend probably didn't want to spend her whole Saturday watching me clean her room or being bossed by me.

Brains are so fascinating. I literally just remembered this story. Like I haven't thought about it, oh my goodness, in like, eons. Wow, childhood coping mechanisms, am I right? Like, child brains are so amazing. And mine was trying to create a sense of control when I didn't feel like I had control or autonomy elsewhere in my life. Genius.

Okay, so thanks for going down memory lane with me, darling. So let's cut to it. There is a fine little line between the energy of supporting someone, which I'm all about that, and fixing or trying to fix them. And once again, oh my goodness, have I delighted in attempted the latter.

So to be clear, I'm not talking about - I'm not problematizing thoughtfully deciding to answer the call to be of service, to give someone what they're asking for, or to like, fix someone's broken toy for them. I'm talking about this pull, this drive within the codependent thinking mind to try to fix someone's life for them, to try to take their troubles away, to try to make their life the kind of life you want them to have.

And to thus engage in the fixer fantasy that you actually can fix someone's life for them. And here's the really good news; it's impossible to fix or save other people. And I say luckily because it's such a burden to carry, to think that we can fix anything for someone else.

Because if codependent thinking is your habit, you are likely to take that whole concept on as a should. That is, thinking that if you can fix their life for them, make their problems go away, then you should fix their life. That it's incumbent upon you, often at a cost to your own life.

And I mean, the codependent brain will love to say, "I know better for someone else's human existence than they do, so it's like I have an obligation to jump on in and to impose my will, my help, my point of view." It's especially true that you cannot fix anything for someone else when that something is based on their own choices and mindset for their life.

Their thoughts, feelings, actions, and results, and in my experience, what we're usually trying to fix for others are their feelings. Whatever guise or costume we put on the actions we engage in, we are trying to get someone else to feel what we want them to feel, which is for sure not possible because science, my nerds.

So let's do what we do and look at the motivating factors and thought errors that lead us to attempt to try to fix the lives of others, often without the consent or request for our intervention. And we'll talk about the remedies and the antidotes and why you might want to look at and shift that pesky habit.

So a non-exhaustive list. There are many other reasons and motivators why we do this, but most commonly I see that we try to attempt to fix others to unconsciously feel good about ourselves, fix ourselves through others, to try to look good in someone else's eyes, to gain approval, to people please, to create an energetic debt, to buffer against our own feelings, to take the attention off of ourselves, to further a story of ourselves as a martyr and a saint, a savior, to attempt to prevent suffering for ourselves or others, which keeps us out of acceptance.

So let's dive in, my darling. For folks with perfectionist, codependent, and people-pleasing thought habits, trying to fix other people is a totally understandable and natural extension of what we learned in childhood. Put other people ahead of ourselves.

And generally speaking, humans socialized as women are often taught it's our job to take care of everyone, to fix everything for everyone and put everyone's needs and wants ahead of our own, which can lead us to try to fix other people without consent because our brains think that's our job.

Our job to value their needs and wants and desires, whether they state them or we project them, more than we value ourselves and our own needs. As children, this often felt safer than focusing on ourselves, which left us open to criticism, being called out, being told we were wrong.

If we weren't in touch with our own feels, didn't prioritize them, and focus on keeping everyone else happy, then we'd feel safer as children. Makes a lot of sense for our children, and isn't a way to live your adult life, you gorgeous adult human, you.

Often, we try to tell people how to run their lives, how to do x, y, z better when we weren't asked for our input or opinion. We try to fix other people and attempt to try to feel good about ourselves. Let me tell you, it's so delightful to be the fixer for that one small moment when someone says "Wow, you really helped me out there."

It's a dopamine hit. It's a form of external validation, to get someone else's approval by saving the day, by being the knower of things, by offering up a solution that was not asked for. By saying yes when you mean no, by saying you'll do a thing when you have no intention of doing that thing, but know that for two seconds, it'll make that person like you.

This can also look like negating someone's feelings in attempt to keep them from feeling feelings you fear. And like most humans with a brain, we fear things like being sad, angry, disappointed, frustrated, even being joyful, if you learned that fear in childhood.

Being a fixer can make you feel worthy of love and attention when someone says, "That was helpful, thanks," which can be a cover up job for our own insecurity and feelings of unworthiness. And my darling, you know how I feel about putting a Band-Aid on our feelings.

And if you don't know how I feel about it, I do not feel good about it. I do not like that. I do not endorse that. Making yourself the focus is one of the goals of fixing, and that's the rub. It looks on the outside like you're being all altruistic and taking care of others, but when you are imposing your will on others, you're centering yourself.

You're making something about you that just isn't. Putting in the center of everything your experience, opinions, thoughts, et cetera, over someone else's. And I know this can be a challenging concept for my codependent thinkers because our brains love to do this dance between wanting so desperately to be seen and validated and acknowledged, but also really fearing all of that in this deep way because so often we've never had it in a healthy way.

And as I'm saying that, I'm thinking, it would be pretty cool to dive into that push-pull energy dynamic in another show. So I like to make shows that y'all want to listen to, so drop me a line, podcast@victoriaalbina.com and let me know if you want to hear that show. So I'll do it for sure if I hear from enough of you.

Alright, I digressed. Coming back. Often, we try to fix in others what we want or need to fix in ourselves and don't know how to address. It's a mirror moment. You see in that other person what you don't like in you, and you scramble to try to free them from that habit or worry or whatever.

Here is where you can lean into being your own watcher and doing the thought work protocol each and every day to start to see your own thinking and what it's creating in your life, so you can focus on your growth. And as I

say that out loud, I'll do a whole show on this too, my beauty, about mirrors. It's a big one for all of us who are in the process of healing our hearts and minds from codependent and perfectionist thinking.

So we feel this desire to take center stage while also fearing that role deeply, and we often don't know how to let someone else have their feelings because we don't know how to have our own. So it's like we try to do this weird dance to protect others from having feels because we've spent a lifetime trying to guard ourselves against having them.

Adding growing up with codependent caretakers who push their feelings and your away, who maybe negated your upset and/or your joy, or growing up with caregivers who had scary explosions of feelings. Oh my darling, it all makes sense, once again, that your perfect inner children would have this habit. Logical, totally understandable, and totally doesn't serve you as an adult.

We can also attempt to fix others as an attempt to buffer against our own feelings in this moment and to buffer against our discomfort. If I fix you, you won't see how upset I am about your situation or mine. And I think it comes from the inability to confront suffering.

Again, because we've blocked ourselves from the complexity of our feelings for a lifetime because our tender inner children are so scared of being overwhelmed. And our nervous systems are not regulated enough to hold as a witness to the suffering of another, suffering of our own.

We have been taught by society and often by our family of origin, conditioned to believe that suffering is a personal failure rather than a human experience, part and parcel of the culture, society, systems of oppression we grew up in. Maybe we were taught that we need to have a stiff upper lip or to soldier on, be strong.

So having our feelings can be coded in our brains as dangerous, as weak, as a problem, and so we seek to avoid and evade "negative" - yes, that's always in air quotes - or challenging feelings. And are able to support others who are in their suffering.

This can sound like saying, "Don't cry, it's going to be okay," when a friend tells you about a breakup or a kiddo skins their knee. This can sound like, "Don't you worry, I've had it worse," when someone tells you they lost their job. This can sound like, "Well, seriously, my cousin had eight miscarriages before having the twins so there's nothing to be upset about," when a friend tells you about their pregnancy loss.

It can sound like all of this versus holding space for someone else to suffer, to be in their feels, in their pain, in their worry, without trying to fix it. Versus saying, "Oh babe, that just sucks. I'm so sorry. My sweet one, how can I support you right now?" To be clear, this is particularly challenging to do for others when we are experienced or skilled in doing this for ourselves.

In sitting with our own challenging feelings and giving them equal air time, the space they need. When we don't know how to meet our inner children with love and reparent them with care, which we talked about in episodes 35 and 36.

So we try to fix someone else's experience, try to look good in someone else's eyes, to gain approval, to people please, to push away our feelings, to buffer, and finally, we can attempt to fix a situation for someone else, whether it's on the emotional level as we've been discussing or in other ways, to further a story of ourselves as a person in need of saving or a martyr, a saint, a savior.

When I was a kid, I was so awash in perfectionism I would leave massive assignments until the last minute and a parent would swoop in to fix the situation. That was both kind of them and also not. Because it taught me to

lean on in to being that person in need of saving persona, one I can still find myself slipping into today if I'm not being my own watcher and being attentive with my thought work.

That habit can lead us to spin around in perfectionism even more, to have this story within us that someone else's opinion of what we produce or write or say is more important than our own. All of this can leave us feeling so disempowered and looking for someone to fix us.

Again, no shame, just childhood survival mechanism. On the flip side, that feeling like we don't know how to save ourselves can lead us to try so desperately to try to fix others, to tell them how to live, to do things for them that they can totally do for themselves, like their homework, that report, make their own dinner, clean their own room, which puts us in that put upon martyr role, which also sets us up to get validated as a savior.

So fascinating, the twists and turns of this one, right? And what just popped into my mind is this dear friend of mine who has so embodied the lesson they were taught as a kid by their mom who has this savior habit, who did literally everything. Not literally everything, but pretty much everything for them and their two siblings.

And I remember when we met at Oberlin College, what's up weirdo school, in the 90s, they literally didn't know how to do any of the most basic life things for themselves, like how to make a simple meal, how to boil water not using the microwave. And laundry, they literally didn't know where to start because they had never been taught. They had never done these simple things for themselves.

I don't know if their mom had the conscious or unconscious goal of wanting her family to be dependent on her, but that was sure the result. And that's what she was taught to do as a human socialized as a woman in her time and place.

And when we do things for others that they can do for themselves, when we fix their problems in their life for them in the short run, they never learn how to do it for themselves in the long run. Another example of trying to fix things for others that comes to mind is when we love someone who is dealing with substance use, depression, codependent, perfectionist thinking, any habit that can lead them to eventually hit a bottom.

Where they're people pleasing or drinking or whatever, leads them to feel so low that they come to question the way they've been living. To hit that stage of personal growth and development where they realize all that they've been thinking and thus feeling that no longer serves them, and to go through what is often a painful, difficulty, and suffering-laced transition to a deeper understanding of themselves.

Their mind, their conditioning, their habits, their actions, the results they are actively creating for themselves, and how they want to be living moving forward. And when we try to save people from their own suffering, we prolong their suffering by keeping them from hitting that wall where they say, "Basta, stop, I'm done living this way. I'm going to start to do the work to find a new way to live."

And that's when so much magic happens. That's when folks start doing the thought work. I teach them to start to see their own minds. I'm seeing it every day in the folks in my group coaching program, and it's so inspiring.

My role there as here is not to save anyone. Not to fix a darn thing. It is to offer you skills, thought work, a tool you can use to manage your mind and meet your inner children with love. Lots of tools you can use to support your beautiful nervous system, and of course, so much acceptance and love with the knowing and the understanding that I am not here to fix your life. Only you can do that, my darling one.

And yes, feeling love, feeling support, getting ventral vagal with yourself and others is a vital step. Humans are not independent animals. We are interdependent and collective healing is everything, and thoughtful support versus fixing energy is the way to build that healing, loving, collective village.

And of course, my love, you do intervene, you do take the keys away from a drunk friend who wants to drive. And of course you can say to the people who love, "If you want to hear my thoughts on x, y, z, just let me know." But again, there is such an energetic difference between I want to fix you and, "Hey babe, I'm taking your keys away so you literally don't kill yourself or others," for example.

Finally, when we try - though I think I already said finally, but that's okay. This is extra finally. When we try to fix someone's life for them, when we try to change someone without their consent or them asking for your support, my beauty, you are out of acceptance of them and their truth and where they are in this moment. And this is never loving. It's never loving to tell the story that you know what is best for someone else.

What's important to know is that trying to help folks without their request, it's really patronizing. It's paternalistic, and it's actually a way to try to control them. It comes from judging someone else and their life and their choices against your own internal compass and thoughts about what's right, what's wrong, what's good, what's bad, and my darling, eyes on your own paper. That's never your job.

So let's take a nice big deep belly breath, big, expand that belly in, and long slow out. Always attend to that nervous system, my beauty. So let's talk about antidotes and remedies. How do we stop trying to fix other people's problems that we see as problems?

Well, you'll be shocked to hear this if you're a long-time listener, but it really does start with awareness. So I had no idea I was doing all of this until a friend pointed it out, and I started to see this deep desire within me to fix other people's lives for them, especially when I hadn't been asked to.

So it starts with daily reflection, with learning to be your own watcher, which we talked about in episode two or - way back at the beginning. Way back, like a year and a half ago. But still, way back then.

And it starts with daily thought work, with taking a dedicated, committed to, five minutes every morning to do a thought release, which is to free write and to get your thoughts out of your own head, where they're just a swimming hot mess of habits and patterns layered on top of beliefs, which are thoughts you've thought over and over again until your nervous circuitry makes you believe them to be facts, which they are not.

Next, we start to pull out the neutral circumstances. The thing you're having those chronic, habitual, unintentional thoughts about that lead you to feel beholden to helping others, disappointed and resentful when others don't do for you what you've done for them, sad when someone doesn't value your opinion, or anxious when a friend calls crying and your brain goes into dorsal vagal shutdown and screams, "Oh my god, I don't know what to say to support this person who's crying other than to try to make them stop crying."

Then you look at your thoughts about wanting to fix or change someone else like it's your job or they need you or that they'll love you or be grateful for your doing things for them, or thoughts like, "If you don't do it for them, no one will," or simply that you need to fix them or help someone who isn't asking for help.

And I think I've been clear on this point but like, my love, I'm not talking about babies and my goodness, feeding the animals we've domesticated in

our homes. That is your job if you took them in. I'm not talking about extending care to vulnerable populations, fragile elders. Babes, I'm a hospice nurse. Being a hospice nurse was one of the greatest joys of my life.

Anyway, sorry, my brain just went back and flashed all the beautiful dead people I've been so honored to know and care for. Sweet ones, I'm not talking about that kind of help. I'm talking about when your friend is like, "Oh yeah, my relationship has been rocky," and you're like, "Well, what you should do."

The examples I gave above. I don't know, my heart felt like I really just wanted to make sure that was clear because it's so important to me. I love being of service. Okay, let me hop back into what I was saying.

So get clear on your thoughts. The thoughts that you need to fix something or to help someone who isn't asking for help. Oh right, that's what triggered my brain to be like, it's beautiful to be of service when it's asked for.

So yeah, look at those thoughts and get really clear, like really direct and clear about what those thoughts are creating for you, what the feeling is that those thoughts are bringing up. So some common feelings may be that feeling of compulsion, obligation, that have to, should, must, those kinds of feelings of anxious, those feelings.

So feel into it and ask yourself what action you take when you're having that feeling and what the result is that you create for yourself in your own life with that action. The only life you can directly control is your own. And I'll also remind you to remind yourself that other people have their own guidance system, their own inner knowing, their own intuition, whether they're clued into it or not.

They have their own life force consciousness, goddess, god, connection with nature, whatever words work for you there. And my love, it is with a full and loving heart that I say this; you are no one else's god, goddess, life force, energy, consciousness. You are not anyone else's internal guidance system. You are not their spiritual GPS.

You have yours, they have their own. You get to trust that. You get to give the folks who love your love, to answer the call to be of service when called on, but it is not your job to fix anyone else, to heal anyone else, to do for others what they can do for themselves. It is not your job to change anyone who does not want to be changed.

That's like telling a river to stop flowing. Good luck with that one, darling. Instead, you can offer love and support and stop trying to change anyone else's habits in life. Again, that is patronizing, paternalistic. Just not loving and not yours to do, my beauty.

If someone you love is in the midst of active addiction, is in a dangerous place with their relationship to any habit or any substance or any way of being, you can offer them your love and support and can point them to resources. But darling, sometimes that's all we can do is show up with a full heart.

And just because you love someone doesn't mean you have to stick with them. Yes, I believe in collective healing and loving and accepting and supporting the people we love, but that does not ever mean putting yourself in harm's way or staying in relationship with someone who doesn't treat you with love and kindness, with someone abusive, someone dangerous. Baby, that serves no one. And I want so much more for you.

What you can do for others instead of trying to fix them or make them happy is to allow them to have their own experiences, to allow yourself to

have your own, and to really put your focus on feeling your own feelings versus buffering, by trying to prevent other people's suffering.

Because life is a solid 50% suffering and that's okay. Imposing your story about what's right for someone else is never a loving choice. Instead, focus on acceptance. Accepting folks as they are is freeing for you too, my darling, as you stop fighting against the facts of someone else's behavior and choices and start focusing on your own beautiful healing, which ripples out to help heal the collective.

Start with you. Get strong in your own sense of self-love and self-acceptance and see how you can lovingly show up to be part of a beautiful interdependent collective. And we need community. We need collective healing. Community care in addition to self-care, now more than ever, my darling.

Let's take a deep breath in and out. Thank you for listening, my beautiful one. If this episode has been supportive and helpful for you, I hope you'll share it on social media and tag me there, @victoriaalbinawellness. So I can feel that heart explosion of joy and re-share it.

And one ask that I do have for you is if you would be so kind as to head over to Apple Podcasts to subscribe to the show and leave a rating and a review if you haven't already. It helps to make the show more accessible, meaning - I mean, it's a free show and it always will be, but when there's more ratings and reviews, and this is like, whatever, capitalism, but the show will show up more on search.

So if someone puts in like, self-help or codependency, shows that have more ratings will just pop up more often. So please help me by leaving a rating and a review, subscribing so I can help get the show as a free resource, a vital part of my sliding scale and accessibility work to more and more humans.

And of course because it's me, I have a thank you for you. So there's a series of meditations on my website, and if you go to victoriaalbina.com/freemeditations, and I'll put a link in the show notes for the show, you can grab those free meditations as a thank you for leaving your review.

Alright, that is it from me. Make sure that we are connecting in all the ways because it makes me so happy. I just love hearing from you all. Alright, have a beautiful day, my darling. So look at a tree, give yourself some love, let other people be themselves. 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.