

Ep #95: Getting Real About How You Feel



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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Perfectionist and codependent thought fantasies can lead us to think that if things feel terrible, there's a problem to solve. That drive to try to make everything look perfect can lead us to not acknowledge when things do in fact totally suck, when things are actually not great.

And that drive itself creates so much suffering for us humans as we struggle against reality, versus stepping into acceptance of life as it is. Do you find yourself doing this? Are you surprised to hear me say that some circumstances are just plain garbage? 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. Before we even get started, if you're listening with children or sensitive animals around you, I want you to know there will be an occasional swear word in this one. I mean, let's be real. If you know Argentines, we swear obsessively. I grew up in Rhode Island, lived in New York, if you know me in real life, I swear like a drunken sailor. I don't even realize the F bombs are flying out of my mouth.

But on the show, I've been thoughtful about it because I know that folks sometimes listen in settings where hearing a lot of swear words would make it less accessible to listen in. I also don't swear on the show because my sister Eugenia, who I love so much, is very sensitive to swear words

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and I love that about her. She's a very tender, perfect, amazing animal and she asked me not to swear and it's no skin off my teeth so I don't.

But I'm going to today because the topic is one where a little S bomb makes some sense. So you've been warned. Okay, alright, let's dive in. So my beauties, as this pandemic drags on and as we head into more winter holidays without the usual familial gatherings, without time with friends and colleagues, with everything just being really F-ing weird - see, I didn't drop the F bomb there - I wanted to talk today about something that might surprise you from bubbly old me, which is that it's okay, normal, understandable for things to feel terrible.

I talk a lot about how the thought work protocol helps us to see that we always have the option to see any and every circumstance in life as completely neutral. That as humans with an amazing prefrontal cortex, we really do have the capacity to decide how we want to think and feel about anything in the world.

And this fact is profoundly mind-blowing to most folks and it sure was for me at first too because I had this story in my mind, as many of us do, that some things are always terrible. Like being ghosted by a date, getting sick, getting a divorce, losing a job.

And the thought work protocol has helped me to step out of the old narratives I learned about what things obviously mean, which has been so wildly empowering. Because it has taught me and shown me as I apply it to my life each and every day that I get to choose the narrative I want to live in.

I don't just have to live on default from the narrative I've heard my whole life. Totally mind-blowing, right? You don't have to think anything is good or

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bad unless you choose to. You really do get to create your own story. Like those choose your own adventure books that I totally loved back in the 80s.

And through that process, we can decide how we want to live, how we want to experience life, and I love using thought work to feel better about a situation that is out of my control. And that's one of the most beautiful things we can do, to intentionally make that choice.

I'm not going to assume that I have to feel bad about this. I'm going to choose my own thoughts. Particularly when the circumstance is one you cannot change no matter how much you'd like to, like say, just casually, global pandemic.

And it really does work. It's very efficient and very effective, which is why as a nurse practitioner, I mean, who loves efficiency and effectiveness more than a nurse, right? I really love thought work. And at the same time, it behooves me and it's really important to me to make note that there are all sorts of things in this world that I personally do not choose to use thought work to feel good about.

Namely, those things are genocide, says the Argentine born during a brutal dictatorship and dirty war where 30,000 Argentines were disappeared by our government, racism, discrimination, prejudice of any sort, poverty, homelessness, hunger, abuse, assault, the list goes on. But it's mainly in that same theme of folks in systems of oppression doing other folks wrong.

Sure, I mean, I could do thought work to get to a place of feeling okay about those things, but I'm just not interested because I don't want to think about those things as anything other than wrong and bad. Beginning, middle, and end on that one.

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So while I do believe that we do have the power to recognize our habitual thoughts in relationship to our circumstances and can consciously choose to get neutral, to see that there's no inherent good or bad, right or wrong in many - I don't believe all - but many situations.

And we can therefore see that it's possible to step out of our conditioned thinking, the thoughts we were taught to think about the situations in our life, about ourselves, our bodies, our minds, our choices. Applying this as a blanket statement to everything in our lives and doing endless mental gymnastics to try to feel good about something that sucks is just not realistic, honest, loving, or kind to ourselves.

And often, it can be a kind of emotional bypassing where we try to change our thoughts to feel good or okay or even neutral about something before we've really recognized or accepted that circumstance as something terrible, or something that just plain sucks.

I've said it before and I'll say it again. You can't skip steps in healing. It just doesn't work. And before you can change your life, it behooves you to step into acceptance of life, on life's terms.

My beauty, it's okay for things to feel lousy, terrible, rotten, to just suck. It's okay for things to not be easy. It's okay to attempt to do the thought work, to change your thoughts about a situation, and for the thought work not to work. To not believe the new story.

And we don't lie to ourselves in this family, my beauty. We don't try to force ourselves to believe something that's not believable. It's okay for your body to object to a thought that things are okay when that's not what's real for you in this moment. And it's in trying to force that shift that we create even more suffering for ourselves.

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My love, life is 50/50. 50% amazing, joyful, beautiful, wow, and 50% suffering. And you can't change that through sheer will, by muscling through and trying to change reality by jumping to change your thoughts. I know, I know, you want to.

Trust me, there are times I want to too, but being human means having this balance of emotions and we can't just avoid the ones we don't like and expect those feelings to just magically evaporate and the energy of those feelings, those molecules of emotion will stay in your body if you don't get real with them and process them through, allow them to process through your body.

If you try to ignore your own shadow or life's shadow and try to change your thoughts to put your face in the sunshine while Rome is burning around you. That was a bit of a mixed metaphor, but you know, it's how I do.

And so we try to avoid present and future painful emotions, try to say and do and be the right thing to avoid criticism, try to make the "right" choice, which is always in air quotes because you never actually know how something will turn out until you go for it, take courageous action for your own life and either fail and learn, or have it turn out just as planned. And then live into that new reality and see what that does for your life, which quite frankly at the time of making a decision is completely unknowable.

But the truth is that attempting to manipulate things now to avoid future yuck is just unrealistic. It doesn't work. And it makes this moment suck while you're sitting around worrying about future terribleness. You're borrowing tomorrow's potential trouble by worrying about it today.

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And while the emotional experience of something being terrible is created by your thoughts about it, not recognizing when something is causing you pain or anguish or distress is just doubling down on the suffering. As individual humans and in different moments of our lives, we may respond differently to different circumstances.

But one thing we have a responsibility to do is to acknowledge the feelings a given circumstance engenders. And yes, as I've said, you can use the thought work protocol to leap to changing those feelings, and sometimes it works. And it's the right thing for you.

And I'm inviting you to do something important first, to acknowledge and tend to those feelings, even if, perhaps especially if they are hard and feel shitty. You can't skip that step, my love.

So this week, I'm urging us all to give ourselves permission to acknowledge the hard stuff and to get really real with it. For some of us, it sucks to not go home with ease for the holidays. For some of us, it may be a relief. For those who have lost loved ones to COVID or who have been sick themselves, especially my long-haulers out there, this pandemic sucks.

For many of my clients who are riding out this pandemic alone, skin hunger is real. And loneliness is real. And while you can absolutely do thought work around something like loneliness, I've done it, it's important to do, it's important to start not to sugarcoat it, but from yeah, this sucks.

For all my frontline and healthcare workers out there, and I know a lot of healthcare providers listen to this show because nerds love nerds, this is really, really challenging. And I can only imagine how much it sucks to show up to the hospital or the clinic every day and to maybe not have

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enough PPE, or to worry about getting sick, or being an asymptomatic carrier, taking the virus home to your loved ones.

I have had in my days as a hospice nurse and not a hospice nurse, I've had patients die and it sucks. This is all just garbage. For the parents and caregivers out there trying to work from home while attempting to keep kids occupied all day, that too can be really exhausting and frustrating.

I'm hearing a lot of that from my clients. That too really sucks. So we get to own it. We get to get real with all the suckyness, all the terrible, all the garbage fire of it. And many of us resist this. We resist feeling the depths of this ugh because we want to feel like life is sunshine and rainbows and we give lip service to being here for the struggle of it, but when it comes time to name it and get real with it, we want to jump right on over it.

And I totally get that impulse, but my beauty, you know it doesn't serve you. And when you drop your resistance to feeling your feelings, starting with acknowledging the hard things, then the feelings you feel in response are rarely as challenging as that intense resistance to letting yourself feel.

It's just so much worse when you try to resist reality, when you hold it all in, bottle it all in, and you feel that tension and that armoring and your body pushing against acknowledging that things suck. So okay, things might suck right now, acknowledged, okay. I don't like this, I want it to be different, but right now it can't be.

And once you can get to there, then the other door opens to acceptance to the facts. And from there and from feeling your feelings about it, well, it's just not as terrible as struggling against it, maybe actually being the level of terrible it is. Because when you're resisting it, you're actually making it worse on yourself because you've got the thing that happened and your

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own resistance. It's like wrestling two tigers instead of just sitting with the one tiger you actually get to sit with right now.

And one reason why for many of us is that our perfectionist thought habits tell us that if things suck, we're a failure, that we have to be able to see the bright side or the lesson or whatever, that we have to find the solution or the fix, or we failed at being a grateful or positive person and that we have to keep up a positive appearance of seamlessly floating right on through it all, unfazed by the everything.

And our codependent thought habits tell us that we need to keep things seemingly copasetic for those around us, lest they doubt our unfailing ability to keep it together and take care of them, to suck it up, buttercup, lest they doubt our ability to manage their feelings for them by acknowledging our own hard times, challenges, and experience of things being terrible.

And as usual, I want to call BS on all of that. Things suck because they do. Things feel terrible sometimes because there are terrible circumstances, and sometimes things feel terrible because our brains have a habitual response to a circumstance without really looking at all sides of it.

What's true is that things don't suck because you're deficient or lacking some capacity to make the unchangeable better. It is nothing to do with that ever. It's not that you're not strong enough or good enough or doing your internal work enough. That's just not real, my tender love, so put that one down.

A big part of why I felt compelled to do this episode is because I'm hearing many versions of that, of folks beating themselves up left and right for not making the best of this pandemic. And I'm just like, sure, yeah, fine, take

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advantage of more time at home, get a hobby, whatever, but also oh my god, we're in month 10 of a global pandemic. Come on now kittens, it's okay. And I would posit really important to call this spade a spade.

And as we head into New Year's, a time that can also be known as let's review the year and beat ourselves up for what we didn't accomplish and then make a new set of superhuman resolutions for 2021 that we will absolutely beat ourselves up for not accomplishing come 2022, I want to say it clearly.

You didn't not achieve every goal on your 2019/2020 resolution list because you're a failure of a human, but because 2020 happened. And because it didn't happen the same to all of us. Someone sent me a meme recently that said we don't all have the same 24 hours in a day, and that is so very true.

So yeah, the same circumstance happened to all of us, same pandemic everywhere, but it hits us differently based on our social location. If you're living in poverty, if you're subject to racism and systems of oppression, if you have access to financial resources or childcare, it hit you differently.

If you could just easily escape to your weekend house or if you're living in a fifth-floor walkup in a major city, it hit you differently. If you care for a sick family member, if you're a human with a disability or a chronic illness, if you're a frontline worker, if you have kids who used to leave for school who are not all up in your grill 24/7 while you try to work from home full-time, on and on, it hit you differently.

And you get to recognize that that's so real and totally sucks. And when you don't acknowledge the reality of life, you create double the suffering. When you attempt to buffer against it or push through it or thought work

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your way through it without pausing to realize that maybe you're not in a great situation, you're just compounding your anguish and that really sucks.

For example, a life coaching client of mine is a trauma surgeon in LA. And she has two autistic children, one of whom, the younger of her two daughters is non-verbal, has chronic seizures, they're often petit mal, but this kid has grand mal seizures several times a week and she gets very angry and violent and will attack her older sisters.

And so my client, let's call her Maria, sleeps in the same small room with her girl every night in case she has to get up to take care of her if she's having a seizure. And these seizures often happen four to five times a week overnight. And yes, they have tried every drug, medical cannabis, implants, literally everything.

So Maria's up, often all night, with a very upset, sick kid. And then she gets up in the morning and drives through LA traffic to go to the hospital to operate on folks who may or may not have COVID, but also just got in a car accident and may have, I don't know, massive internal bleeding for example.

So this circumstance sucks. This set of circumstances is not great. And trying to get Maria to do thought work to see this situation as anything other than shitty is just dishonest, not loving, it's not kind. And so we don't try to. We don't even attempt to.

Instead, we've worked on shifting the resistance to feeling and acknowledging how lousy this all is and focus on where Maria can bring in more acceptance, that this is her current life circumstance. And from there, where she can bring in small, small amounts of self-care, play, pleasure,

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fun into her life any way she can, how she can enrich her life, given these unchangeable circumstances.

And that was only possible once she was able to move through her deep desire which cannot be changed, to shift that resistance, to feeling all the feels around this complex situation. And your situation doesn't have to be this dire or dramatic for you to prioritize acknowledging what's hard, getting real about it and how it impacts you so you can get real about what you're feeling.

A woman in my six-month masterclass program was talking recently about living alone in a high-rise in Chicago and not having had human touch for nine months. And that's hard. That's challenging to mind, body, and spirit, and it's important to name that. That sucks.

Another client of mine is in month 11 of cancer treatment and on our live weekly call, we do a live call every single week in our six-month program, and this woman was sharing and she said, "I'm frustrated that I can't thought work my way out of feeling so depressed and blue these days. I just want these feelings gone, I'm so sick of them."

And while I totally get that, that's just not how feelings work. And resisting the feelings, wanting to push them away, it never works, my beauty. In my own life, the more honest I've been able to get with myself about a situation being challenging and bringing up challenging emotions, the more able my perfect human body, like yours, is able to process that feeling through and to actually release it on its own.

In recognizing that losing the job, the relationship, the friendship, whatever the shitty thing may be really does suck has allowed me to believe in my capacity to choose my relationship to the circumstance. While pushing it

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away and being like, no, it's fine, it's totally fine, has never led me to feeling truly happy because I didn't let myself feel truly upset or sad, so I stayed in the relationship of wanting that circumstance to go away.

And the more I do my daily thought work and work with my own coach, because side note, never trust a coach who doesn't have a coach, the more I actually for reals embrace my own suffering and can realize that the challenging situations have made me who I am.

And now these days, I wouldn't change the loss, the stress, the trauma, the getting fired, the getting cheated on, the getting dumped, the adrenal hot mess, the digestive hot mess, the folks I love and patients dying, any of it, because it's all part and parcel of my human experience in this lifetime.

And now in hindsight, I can see how it's been part of making me who and how I am. And to be very clear, you don't ever have to see the bright side of a painful or tragic situation while you're in it or otherwise, and I don't suggest you force yourself to.

Instead, I recommend you allow yourself to really sit with it, to get really real with it, to feel all the feels in your body in a real way so you can metabolize it all and move through it, not push against it by trying to find some lesson while things are still terrible.

And often, I've found in my own life when I drop the desire to find the lesson and I acknowledge the terrible, the lesson presents itself, so that's pretty cool.

Furthermore my beauties, the call here is for you to get into deep awareness, honest awareness around when your circumstances really do

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suck and those other times when you're using your circumstances as an excuse to not take radical ownership and responsibility for your life.

Just because shitty shit happens doesn't mean you can't overcome it. But it's also real that our circumstances sometimes just plain suck. And attempting to positivity wash that is just some perfectionist and spiritual bypassing garbage that I am never ever about.

And simultaneously, we get to remember that when bad things happen, it doesn't mean you're a bad person. It's not about you as the human that you are. It's not that you called them in or whatever your brain may be saying. Your worth is in no way connected to the shitty circumstances that may happen, or you're having a lot of hard feelings about them.

My darling love, there is no right way to do this being a human thing. You get to see what works for you, what truly honors you and your mind, body, and spirit, and for me, that means getting real with life being 50/50 and honoring the facts of it all, good, bad, and ugly, because that's just life.

And the more trust you can build in yourself to get honest and real and to accept it all, which is so different from condoning it, you give yourself the opportunity to see and feel that you truly can survive feeling any and all emotion. None of them are going to eat you whole, and I know it can feel that way.

I know, I know, I know. I have so felt that in my body, the fear of saying something, speaking something, feeling something, and feeling like the world will literally just explode and end around me. And with time and self-love and courage, I've done it. I've allowed myself to feel the terrible feeling, tell the story of the horrible thing that happened, and I have survived it each and every time.

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And my beauty, so can you, truly. And the good news about feeling the suffering deeply is it means you can feel the joy and the beauty next time it comes around just as deeply. And what has helped me to tease this all apart in my own life has been working with a skilled and thoughtful, loving life coach.

Someone who can help me to see when my circumstances do suck and when my brain is trying to make them bigger and suckier than they are. A coach who can help me to pull it all apart and put it all back together again. More than ever, we need coaching so we can see our own habitual thought patterns, conditioned and survival responses, the impact of our family blueprints on our lives.

And if you're looking for the support of a firm and loving coach, I'm here for you, my darling. I am currently enrolling folks for the next opportunity to join my six-month program, Overcoming Codependency. We take a deep dive into looking at the codependent, perfectionist, and people-pleasing thoughts that have kept us from living in our authenticity, integrity, and in living with intention for so long.

If you're sick and tired of being anxious, feeling stuck, feeling like you can't make change in your life or get ahead, like you're constantly trying to manage other people's lives and emotions, if you're exhausted by it all, you're going to want to check my program out.

It's an absolute delight and I would love to have you join us. Head on over to victoriaalbina.com/masterclass to learn all about it and to see how you can schedule a conversation with me to get all the details.

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Alright my beauties, thank you for joining me. It's okay for things to feel terrible. It really is. You get to acknowledge it. That's one of your superpowers, really, truly. But like, really, really, truly.

Okay, let's do what we do. Sweet little hand on your heart, slow deep breath 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 beauty. 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.