

# Ep #117: Saying Yes from Obligation: How to Say No from Love



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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## Ep #117: Saying Yes from Obligation: How to Say No from Love

This is *Feminist Wellness*, and I'm your host, Nurse Practitioner, Functional Medicine Expert, and Life Coach, Victoria Albina. I'll show you how to get unstuck, drop the anxiety, perfectionism, and codependency so you can live from your beautiful heart. Welcome my love, let's get started.

Hello, hello, my love. I hope this finds you doing so well. One of the big things that's been coming up pretty frequently in my six-month program *Anchored: Overcoming Codependency* is living our lives from a sense of obligation. That story, "I have to. I have to do this. I have to take care of them. I have to make dinner. I have to go wherever it is, even though I don't want to do what someone else wants me to do when I don't want to. But I feel I must. I should. It's the right thing to do, right?"

And this whole framework of thinking makes so much sense. When we believe that the only way to feel good about ourselves is to look outside of us, to get other people, our job, our career title, our credential, our anything and everything to fill that hole in your heart that says, "I'm not good enough unless other people say I am."

And so, it makes so much sense that from there we live our lives from this place of obligation. It becomes our why, our central driver. But the catch is this. When you agree to do something or conjure up an offer to do something or be something to try to get that external approval, to create a feeling for you based on someone else's potential response to you, which you may not actually get, you're setting your tender self up for pain and suffering, for heartache and resentment when it doesn't all go according to plan.

When your partner, mother, kiddo, boss doesn't fall all over themselves with gratitude for you doing something you didn't want to do in the first place, when you live our life from obligation, you're actually hurting your

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relationships with the world and with yourself. And you're not showing up to have your own back. You're attempting to create the feeling of self-love, of validation, of worthiness, of approval by having someone else's back and dreaming that they'll have yours.

And it's just not sustainable, kind, or loving, my sweet darling. Remember, in the think-feel-act cycle, we create our feelings based on our thoughts, in response to the cocreated circumstances in our lives.

Let's say your boss says words. He says something and you interpret those words through your own lens based on your socialization, your conditioning, your hunger, your thirst, your sleepiness levels, the tension patterns in your own body, your historical stories about how this is likely to go and you create a thought about the words someone else said, which is the catalyst for the biochemical and energetic response, which is our emotions.

So, he says, "I'd like it if you could get this done by five today." And you consciously think, "Oh jeez, I have 473 things on my to-do list and I have no time." Well, maybe the habitual script in your mind, that old cassette tape from way back that plays in the background is saying, "Alright, I really need to do this or he's going to be disappointed in me. He'll think less of me. He'll be upset. I can just put my needs aside to make sure to make him happy; happy with me. And then he'll know I'm a good person," on and on.

So, that swirl in your mind which is correlating what someone else thinks of you and your worthiness, of course that makes you anxious, because duh. If that is our habitual thought, you should get anxious. That is an anxiety-creating thought for sure. It is anxious-making. Of course that script makes you tense up in your belly, feel tightness in your chest.

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There's now a lot riding on this in your mind and body. So, of course, you say yes from that sense of deep obligation to manage both what other people think and what they feel.

So, you put your everything aside and get his task done by five. Meanwhile, what you're creating for yourself is not just a backlog of your own work that you didn't get done, but it's a boatload of annoyance, resentment, and grump. And it's totally understandable why humans do this. Evolutionarily, my nerds, we want to keep the village happy with us so they'll remember to save us when the lions come.

Humans socialized as women are often taught that it is above all things vital to be nice and that nice means saying yes when we do in fact mean no. We're often taught pretty directly that it's our job to put everyone else first, that our needs come last. So, we do what we're taught. We show up as the good girl, the obliger, the appeaser, the people pleaser until we are able to step into being our watcher and can start to hear our own thoughts as they happen and can learn to question them, get meta with them, and ask, "Do I want to keep thinking this way? Does acting out of obligation, living from obligation serve me? Serve the people in my world or the collective as a whole?"

And I would posit that it never actually does. Not at all, in fact. It just keeps us stuck in old patterns of feeling like life's victim, upset, out of control, disempowered. And it's not actually nice to be dishonest. Which is what saying yes when you mean no is. Unwittingly – I'm not saying you're doing this consciously, my darlings, but lying to try to make someone else happy versus simply saying no or having a clear boundary.

Folks who truly care about you are happy when you are happy, not when you're trying to manage their emotions for them. So, let's talk remedies.

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First, I'll remind you not to pathologize doing this again. It is normal, human, mammalian, and just because it doesn't serve you to keep acting from obligation, doesn't mean you're a bad person or diagnosable. It's just a habit, my tenderony. And you know to shift your habits. You shift them by using thought work each and every day.

Next, I'll invite you to ask yourself who's voice it is in your head telling you to put others first. Is it a parent? A grandparent? A Teacher? Someone else in your life? I find it useful to ask myself if it's my own thought or one I've been taught to have, so I can start to gently detach from it, to deidentify with it, to create some cognitive distance and to recognize it as something I don't have to stay in because it wasn't mine to begin with.

And from there, I ask myself if I actually want to do what is being asked of me. And sure, we often get to do things in life that we don't actually want to do, or there would be no clean dishes or taxes filed, no dogs walked in a snowstorm, no babies fed at 3AM. But we do those things because we want the outcome, the result.

So, we do actually want that thing done even if we don't want to do that thing in that moment. We get to make what I like to call a prudent choice, to get up and go to a job you don't like so you can pay your bills while you simultaneously do the thought work to hate that job just 1% less every day and also send your resume around anyone with a pulse.

So, the question is, do I want the result for me, for my life? Does it move my life forward, or would I be doing this to keep someone else happy with me? To attempt to be liked or applauded? To be the fixer, the savior, the saint? And simultaneously, when it's time to do whatever I have agreed to, will I feel good about doing it? Will I be happy that I'm doing it even if I don't feel like it right now?

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Because I've certainly been in those moments where I'm like, "Oh, I'll absolutely come to your party," and when I pause, I'm like, "But right now I'm tired." But I know that when I get dressed – pre-pandemic, right – when I get dressed, get on the subway and go to there and am around people I like and enjoy being with, I will be happy to be there, even if the shlepp is giving me pause in the moment.

So, it's about getting to know yourself, getting to know yourself, your own wants, your needs, so you can begin to differentiate, so you can use your discernment and tap into your intuition to know, "Is this obligation? Is this a moment of eurg? What do I really like to do for myself in the world? What are the results that I want to be creating?"

And so, I'll remind you of the power of pausing. It is in the pause that the magic happens. It's in the pause that we get to hear our own thoughts, get to check in with ourselves. And baby, you don't have to feel internal urgency within yourself to reply just because someone made a request of you.

If they are feeling urgency, that is theirs to manage. And clearly, I'm not talking about, "Hey, will you please put pressure on this gushing leg wound?" I mean things like, "Will you take a look at my resume or read this paper or help with this conference."

If someone else waited until the last minute or is feeling anxiety of their own for whatever reason and they are asking you to solve their emotion for them, that's okay. They can work with their own feelings and you can work with yours.

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Please, don't let anyone else's desire for an immediate answer lead you to say yes from a place of obligation. Instead, you can say something like, "Being thoughtful about my commitments matters to me. I'll get back to you in a few days. Or I'll get back to you as I'm able," that's my favorite these days. No need to put a time frame on it, "As I'm able."

And I do that trusting myself that I will come back to it. I will give it thought. I will take myself for a walk about it. I will meditate about it. I will get to an answer in my own time.

But we make these simple statements because there's no need for an excuse, an explanation, or a story. That's what our codependent people pleasing perfectionist thinking does for us. It makes us believe that because the most important goal is external validation, we need to keep other people happy with us at all costs.

And so, if we are going to say no, of course we need to give some big explanation. And the more often you're able to say, "I'll get back to you as I'm able," the more able you are to trust yourself to have your back, first and foremost, and to understand that you don't need to explain to anyone why you are making the choice you are making for you.

"I'll get back to you as I'm able. I'm not available for that. Thanks for the offer, but I'm going to pass. This one's not for me, thank you..." done and dusted.

And for sure, you know, we talk about this around people pleasing. When we stop people pleasing, people aren't pleased. And so, folks may not like that answer. But again, when we people please, we're prioritizing pleasing everyone but ourselves and, beauty, I am done with that game.

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It is high time to please me first, remembering that it's a gift to the people I love to be honest, to show up in my authenticity, to state my needs, capacities, limits plainly versus feeling the resentment and annoyance that comes from giving what I don't have or want to give.

So too, when I am clear I'm not available for that and set that limit, I trust myself that I will give and give and give as generously, as lovingly as I can from my overflow. From my own overflow of time, energy, money, I will give.

And when I am not in a place where that's what I want to do, can do, am available for, I will state that cleanly, clearly, without emotion, without guilt, without shame, plainly as well.

One of the things our brains, with that codependent thought habit loves to do is to believe that we are most safe when we see the world as all or nothing, black and white. That when we see the yes and the no as the only options, things can be, well, safer, right? We trust those extremes.

And for me, a big part of overcoming my codependent thinking habit of coming home to myself and anchoring myself in me has been trusting myself to see the nuance, to see the grey in between.

And so, one of the things that we can do when we are shifting out of living from obligation, of saying yes from obligation, is to get creative. So, one of the things that happens pretty often in my life these days is that I get invitations to be part of online summits or other events that I don't have the bandwidth for.



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Instead of saying yes from obligation and feeling annoyed when it's time to send out the emails for these events, I get creative. I let folks know that I'm not available, but my colleague who's working to build her own business may be.

If I'm asked to make dinner and I don't want to or don't have the energy or would prefer to read my book in the sun, I might say, "No, I'm not available to cook. But I will happily order takeout or delivery."

I offer what I'm able and get creative about finding solutions, about not jumping simply to the extreme of yes or no, but finding that grey in between that meets as many needs as possible without sacrificing myself just to attempt to gain external approval.

When I focus instead on how I can be of service to myself and others, I'm able to give from my emotional, financial energetic and time overflow with grace and love instead of from obligation and resentment. And I will testify, it feels so much better on this side of obligation, my beauty. Join me.

I'd love to share one of my favorite tools that has helped me day after day to step evermore into my watcher role. And that is the tool of meditation.

I've talked here about how meditation isn't for everyone. And so, the meditation suite that I offer for free from my open heart contains an orienting exercise as well, which is a nervous system exercise that is a beautiful place for many people for whom meditation is not the right option.

So, if going into your body and getting present within your soma, within your bodily form, if that's not working for your nervous system, cool. Cool, cool, cool, cool, cool. No problem. Nothing has gone wrong. Nothing is

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wrong here. You just get to do a different exercise. And that exercise is orienting.

So, if you head on over to [victoriaalbina.com](http://victoriaalbina.com), right at the top of the page, you will see the opportunity to put your name and email in and get that suite of meditations sent right to your inbox.

You can try the meditations. You can try the orienting or the grounding exercise. Play around. Let it be fun. See what works best for you so you can learn to pause. Because that's the greatest gift meditation has given me. Because it's not about attempting to sit still and control my mind. It's about being the observer of my own thinking, noticing my thoughts, bringing my awareness and my consciousness to them so I can make choices.

So, check that free resource out. I hope you enjoy it. And if you want sweet messages from me several times a week, they're just sweet tender reminders, you can get those texted right to your phone, only if you live in the US. Sorry, it's the system. But you can get those by texting me at 9175408447.

Those messages are free from my end of the world. Carrier rates may apply. But it's a really sweet way we can stay connected. And sometimes there's journaling prompts or just thoughts, just little things that you can incorporate into your day to connect inward and to continue building your own beautiful capacity to be your own watcher.

I hope that these free resources are of service to you, my beauty. Alright, my darling, let's do what we do. Gentle hand on your heart, if that feels supportive, attune to your breath, bring your awareness to it, and

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remember, you are safe, you are held, you are loved. And when one of us heals, we help heal the world. Be well, my love. I will 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](https://victoriaalbina.com/masterclass) to grab your seat now. See you there. It's going to be a good one.