

# Ep #120: Trauma Therapy and Somatic Practices with Andrea Glik, LCSW



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Victoria Albina, NP, MPH**

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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.

Victoria: Hello, I am so delighted to have you with us here today.

Andrea: Yes, me too. Thank you for having me.

Victoria: Oh, it's such a delight. So I'm hoping we can just dive right on in so you are a trauma therapist, you have studied a bajillion different modalities, and I would love to talk about what's going on in the world of trauma support, trauma therapy these days, where you see things going. I think I'll just open it up to you.

Andrea: Yeah, cool, totally. Certainly there's a lot more of a recognition of the way that our body is impacted by trauma, of the way that different forms of oppression or sitting at different intersections of identities is traumatic or can result in certain traumas.

And then I also think that I'm seeing both people who are trauma therapists and people who have trauma or are seeking trauma therapy have more of an understanding of the impact of childhood and maybe what was previously understood as how things were, or "low-grade" trauma, or the way that certain ways of parenting, certain life experiences have been minimized be more - having more weight given to them.

Like the way that your parents talked to you, or your experience in school, being in the closet for 10 years, or any sort of experience that was maybe seen as not as "severe" as some of these larger traumas that I think trauma

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therapy was modeled originally to address, i.e. sexual assault, sexual abuse, experiencing a natural disaster, or being away in a war zone. There's more expansiveness within the trauma field.

Victoria: Yeah, right on. So an error that I made early on in this podcast, probably about two years ago almost was I talked about big T, little T trauma, and I used that language. And I now have a different understanding of it and you're the expert. I'd love to hear you talk about that language and your relationship to it, and what you'd shift about it if anything.

Andrea: Yeah, totally. I think it can be helpful sometimes to use a single incident versus ongoing trauma, like language not that it's an either or, or it's a binary, but it is a really different experience to have something like one car accident or one bad fall, and that is a different life experience or is a different trauma than 10 years of being in an abusive relationship, or your whole life living in white supremacy.

So I think that can be really helpful. I think for most people they have single incidence and long-term traumas, so those have different impacts, or maybe they both sort of create a specific life experience or trauma experience for people. But I do think that that is helpful but the big T, little T is really invalidating for some people.

There are a lot of ways in which what was considered a big T trauma, i.e. going to war, being in a hurricane, I think obviously the sexual abuse and sexual assault stuff should still be upheld as being a really, really major trauma and pretty much one of the worst things that can happen to a person.

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But having those seen as the more important, more impactful, bigger traumas and the “smaller” ones being these ones more related to social conditions, or related to parenting styles, those actually impact us sometimes more than what’s considered a bigger T trauma.

And I think we just have in the trauma field, more of a nuanced understanding of that thanks to the work of amazing, amazing women trauma therapists and folks of color who had trauma therapists. It really was white cis men who perpetuated the big T, little T trauma stuff and it has been the trauma field expanding to include these other voices that has really shifted the perspective.

Victoria: Yeah. And what shifted for me in addition to everything you just shared is the understanding of trauma being that shift within one’s neurological state from stress to distress, to actual trauma, the shutdown of the nervous system, that life threat response, which is so individual. So something that can feel like not that big a deal, we might call it little T to me, might be earth-shattering for someone else and vice versa.

Andrea: Right, exactly.

Victoria: We learn better, we do better, I guess, right?

Andrea: It’s true. And the field is changing too. It’s not - I think a lot of us are using different language now that we’re listening to the voices of a more diverse group of trauma therapists.

Victoria: Thank goodness. Thank all the goddesses. Every single one. Yeah, right on. You do a lot of work around somatics, which is something I’ve been talking about a lot lately, and I’d love to hear and share with folks

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some of your favorite somatic ways to support ourselves, to help ourselves ground.

Andrea: Yeah, totally. I could talk about this for a very long time. But...

Victoria: This is going to be a 7000-hour conversation, so cool, buckle up everybody.

Andrea: I think where my practice both personal and within my therapy practice of somatics has kind of shifted is more towards understanding the nervous system and what we need to support our nervous system, versus this very capitalistic idea of building a toolbox, which I think is still useful, but we're always resourcing, we're always supporting ourselves, versus I need to buy this thing, or I need to go do this external thing like a class, outside of myself to ground or cope.

And that framework is very much from sensorimotor cycle therapy, which is the training that I have, and they, Pat Ogden, the creator and those who teach her work talk a lot about resourcing versus coping. So resourcing in a somatic perspective is like feeling your feet on the ground, or cooking yourself a beautiful intentional mindful dinner, or sitting in your garden, or taking a walk outside, or hugging your friend or your cat.

It's a lot more about supporting the nervous system and helping the nervous system feel safe in the moment, instead of doing this bigger thing that usually requires something external, not that that isn't also helpful sometimes. But we do have quite a bit inside of us and already around us to support our nervous system.

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So somatics being like, drinking a glass of water mindfully, or letting a yawn be a really big fully expression, or watering your plants, or orienting yourself towards the safety in your home when you feel triggered, or feeling the sun on your face, or being in your body for 0.5 seconds, instead of this needing to be this big cathartic release.

Victoria: Right, for sure. Thank you. I really love that. A lot of the work I do is around reconnecting with those internal resources and anchoring into ourselves so we can build that internal trust that really allows us to know that it's actually possible to have our own backs when shit goes all pear shaped, when stuff goes real sideways, that okay, I have stepped into these daily practices in these really small ways, small being perfect and beautiful and amazing, these small ways each and every day that are so incremental. It's like a flexing of a muscle of having your own back. I love that you said 0.5 seconds as well.

Andrea: Right, exactly.

Victoria: So you used the word triggered and I have been wanting to write a show for a long time about triggered in the clinical sense and #triggered. And you and I have chatted about this before and I'd love to just have you talk about the differences if you could define terms for my nerds as well, and talk about how you're seeing that term come up in your practice and your life.

Andrea: Yeah, definitely. I think that it's wonderful that this word has become part of our sort of general population lexicon. I think that's really great; it's really normalizing of trauma, it's acknowledging that most people have trauma, or even if they don't have trauma, have things that are activating for them.

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And at the same time, I think that for some trauma survivors, it can feel like the severity of their experience is maybe getting minimized. So it's kind of like a - it's complicated as all things are within this work. So I think there's a lot that's really wonderful about this language being used more often.

A word that I offer people so that they can kind of understand the difference between being activated and triggered, which I think is a way to both validate people's life experiences who are trauma survivors who experience triggers, also acknowledge that we all get triggered, and sometimes those triggers are simply things that activate us.

So a trigger being something that makes us feel unsafe, as though we are reliving or back in an unsafe traumatic time, and then something that's activating, it can be something that maybe doesn't have to do with our safety. Maybe it's more about something that makes us really angry, or something that makes us feel really uncomfortable, or reminds us of a past dynamic that doesn't serve us anymore that maybe is less trauma related.

But at the same time, I also feel like I'm more in favor of people using this language and normalizing this language than not. I just think that it's nice to have some options of different words to use if people are feeling like yeah, I feel triggered but maybe that word isn't exactly the right thing because it's not rooted in trauma.

It's more rooted in a life thing that happened that wasn't particularly traumatic or is more related to a relationship in the past that maybe wasn't abusive for example, but was a place where someone really lost themselves, or where they really didn't feel fully understood or loved or something. Maybe that isn't triggering to feel that way, again, it's just very activating.

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Victoria: Right. Really uncomfortable. It's interesting, I was coaching one of my clients in Anchored the other day and we were talking about how when we are first coming out of whatever habitual thought patterns we learned growing up that whatever we're habituated to, ways of seeing ourselves, seeing the world, and we start to recognize that we don't have to live this way quite frankly, we don't have to live in those codependent thought habits and the perfectionism and the people pleasing, whatever it may be, that it can be really helpful to start to use words like triggered and trauma and sort of use those to - perhaps it's to put a little space between us and blame.

Like that self-blame and self-shame for whatever may have happened. And so I had started there a couple months back with this client and it was really fascinating. We circled back around to it the other day and she shared now at this point, having really identified as having been victimized, having been traumatized, getting triggered all the time, and now having learned somatic modalities and thought work to help myself ground, learning how to orient, creating this different relationship with herself and her self-story, her narrative, she no longer felt attached to those same words.

Her words were, "I outgrew it," and I didn't say that. She did. And it was interesting how it can be sort of this steppingstone into a different level of empowerment.

Andrea: Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. Those words being useful for maybe the beginning of recovery and then at the end of recovery finding other language, or maybe just like, that some people heal in a way where maybe a trigger isn't something that happens for them anymore. Maybe other trauma responses happen, but maybe it's not a trigger, so that makes a lot of sense for sure.



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I think it's a very empowering experience to name trauma as trauma. And at the same time, I think especially for those of us who maybe are being called in in this moment, those of us who are white, those of us who are cis, have able-bodied privilege, are not from the land that we are living on, it's really important that we also build the somatic resources to be able to feel guilt or shame in a way that isn't going to shut us down completely.

I think that's also a place that I can see the word trigger, not being misused, but maybe it's not a way to not do the work. Yes, it can be triggering to realize that you've caused harm, but that doesn't exempt you from doing the work of repairing that.

Victoria: I love that and I love that you named directly that having guilt and shame for privilege. It's one of the things I've been talking about a lot is how vital it is to be able to take it personally but not take it personally. Does that make sense? It's my personal responsibility, it's not like my fault that I was born in this body, but it comes with privilege and that comes with responsibility.

Andrea: Exactly. If we get something wrong, like not shutting down, or building the somatic resources to show up for those conversations. Again, whether it's with a friend of ours, whether it's with a community, whether it's with a partner, yeah, just being able to ground and show up for that instead of losing ourselves in a trauma response, and that's going to happen but there are ways to not let our triggers around those specific feelings make it so that we can't grow and change.

Victoria: And be of service. Hold that relational responsibility in community. I would love it if a somatic practice comes to mind for you that you could share with folks, like in those ungrounded moments. Is there something you teach your clients that could be a helpful takeaway?

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Andrea: Yeah, definitely. I mean, I think what in somatic therapy grounding literally means is connecting with the ground. And taking that moment between the activation of that shame part or that guilt part, and grounding, whether it's putting your feet on the ground, walking outside and feeling your feet on the earth, or just even pushing your hands down on your thighs.

Just taking one second to be more aware of what's happening. And there's also a thought work component too of okay, I've been called in and my shame part, which is probably a wounded kid is taking over the bus of my consciousness and I'm going to take this moment to let my core self, my grounded self be the one to respond to this.

Victoria: Right, which is such a beautiful practice to spend time when you're not in activation, getting in touch with that core, grounded, centered, here, present sense of self. So that when you're called on to again, have your own back, you've got access to that.

Andrea: Right, exactly. Not losing yourself in that automatic response.

Victoria: Yeah. And you and I just read a book together, which is Somatic Internal Family Systems. We did a super nerd book club, which was so fun. And we really geeked out on so much of that. I want to give Susan McConnell some big love for writing that book.

Andrea: Yeah, we love you.

Victoria: We love you. Oh my god, we're your total nerd fan club. I'd love to hear what from our time reading that book is still resonating for you and

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what you're using in clinic and what's feeling useful for folks, or in your own life too. Because I know I'm living that book as best a gal can.

Android: Yeah, totally, definitely. I think on a smaller example, this idea that intrusive images or thoughts, which I think a lot of us struggle with, especially at nighttime, or when we're trying to be present or mindful, that those are messages from parts of us.

So I'll give a personal example. I'll be laying in bed trying to go to sleep and I'll have images or memories of people who have deeply hurt me or wronged me just come into my brain, which is very distressing and hard to go to sleep when you're thinking about that.

And what is from Susan McConnell's book, Somatic IFS and just other parts work, IFS books that has been really helpful is recognizing that those intrusive images and thoughts are a part trying to tell me something. And for me, it's definitely that part who is wounded by those people being like, "Don't forget that this happened to you, what are you going to do about this? Are we still safe?"

So I can attend to those parts later, but in the moment when I'm trying to go to sleep or trying to meditate for 30 seconds before a client, I can ask that part to stop and I see you, I hear you, thank you for telling me that still hurts, can I have my brain back? So that's been a smaller example that's been really helpful.

And then I think in a larger context, having this framework of the different parts of us not just showing up in our brain, in our thoughts, in our actions, but also in our body and being able to connect to younger parts through the body, being able to connect to protector parts, or wounded parts through

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the body, whether that is through noticing that a physical response that's coming up is actually a part, or being able to physically attend to physical pain that's happening or physical discomfort and seeing it through the lens of that being a part trying to tell you something, instead of why is my upper back bothering me still?

But it's like, who's trying to say what? That whole book is so wonderful and it's so nice to see something about IFS written by a woman and a queer woman at that, it's so wonderful.

Victoria: So, so beautiful. And I love - also, this conversation is just turning into the Susan McConnell fan club hour. But I love how much she talks about our healing and the connection with our breath as a marker of interdependence with the world.

Because if the plants are breathing, we aren't breathing, the ocean is the biggest CO2 sink on this planet, I don't remember the number but hundreds of thousands of times more than the Amazon. So if the ocean's not breathing, we are not breathing, the plants aren't breathing. We are interdependent with all of creation.

Andrea: Yeah, I love that, totally.

Victoria: So beautiful. And I love how she also brings the elements in. Water, fire, minerals, earth, and how much we can use those as resources for ourselves.

Andrea: Absolutely. I love that. It's like an instant recipe for grounding is like, do I have a glass of water? Is there a candle lit? Am I breathing? Are my feet on the earth? It's just a really easy reminder.

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Victoria: Yeah. And once again, to go back to what you said about it, being an anti-capitalist system, you don't need to buy nothing. There is nothing to buy, there's no tricks or tools. There's just coming back to the basic-est most basic basics. Where are my feet? Am I breathing?

Andrea: Yeah. And even - this is less from that book and more polyvagal stuff, which I know we both love to nerd out about. But that really, if you have a deep understanding of your own nervous system, that is the greatest tool. And no one can give you that but yourself.

Yes, we need something like the polyvagal theory to have a framework and maybe you have a different framework that helps you understand yourself better. But once you really know your nervous system, a lot of things make sense. It's really easy to validate yourself, to have self-compassion, and to find ways of resourcing that work for you.

Victoria: Yeah. I recently noticed I've been in a city for the last week, a small city, but my nervous system is very different than when I was in the Hudson Valley on occupied Lenape territory. I'm currently on occupied Mapuche territory and my nervous system is sending me very different signals.

There's a heightened vibration within my body. Not quite - it's like a low-grade hum of activation versus the - so this energy feels, I'm seeing red spikes. That's what I see when I talk about it, versus I might cry my nerds, so here we go, but when I think about being back with the trees, it's like a smooth green energy through my nervous system.

And you can't see me, but my hand wants to move forward like a wave, just soft. And the gift of having done the work I've done over the last 10 years is

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that I know how to recognize it, I profoundly value community and allies like you that I can call when I'm like, "Yo, I am dysregulated." And I can turn to my internal resources.

Andrea: Yeah. And I'm so glad that you mentioned community too because the other anti-capitalist coping or resourcing is other people, is the earth, is our connection with plants and animals. And that's the biggest takeaway of polyvagal for me is that it is our core human need is to be coregulating and luckily, we're able to coregulate with ourselves, we're able to coregulate with the planet, just as you are kind of doing imagining the forest and moving your hand.

But ultimately, it is about connection with other humans. And for some of us, our connection with the planet is maybe more safe or more fruitful, and that's totally fine. But for most of us, it is about other people.

Victoria: Yeah, which I think can be - one of the beautiful challenges in this healing work in the United States in 2021, there's so much push in the social media world of what comes to be sort of rugged individualism and this real self-focus in a way that can be so problematic because it is at the exclusion of relationship.

Versus what you and I know about the nervous system, which is that when I look into your eyes and I see that smile and I hear your prosodic voice, meaning that sing-song melody of voice, I feel my nervous system shh. And if we're not healing to be in relationship with one another, in healthy interdependent relationship with each other, I don't know what we're up to. What's the game we're playing here?

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Andrea: Yeah, absolutely. And to be in relationship with plants and the earth and ourselves, it's all of that. So many of us are so disconnected from the land that we live on. Not even knowing the territory that we live on, or the names of the birds in our backyard, or the names of the indigenous plants that are around us.

And to me, as my understanding shifts as I'm educated primarily by indigenous authors, I feel like the same isolation that so many of us feel from each other, we actually are also feeling from the planet. And if we could feel as close to the planet as we do ourselves, or the other closest people in our lives, what would that be like and how would we treat the earth differently?

That comes to mind too. And I think the other piece about how understanding that the main human stuff is human connection, it also helps those of us that have childhood trauma or attachment trauma feel really validated for how significant that stuff is.

I think going back to the conversation we're having around triggers or the shifting language away from big T versus little T, for those of us that have, "little T" trauma that felt like oh yeah, this was my - I have birth trauma, or this was - my parents worked all the time but it's fine, it's fine, it's fine.

And obviously a lot of us, our parents did absolutely the best that they could and a lot of us have experiences that were impacted by the social context of our childhood. And at the same time, it's like, it makes sense that those wounds feel so deep, even if it was a thing that your mom said to you once 25 years ago, or whatever.

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It stays with us for a reason because our biological core need is connection. If we feel disconnected, if we feel rejected, unloved, or uncared for, even for a little bit as a little one, it is really, really wounding.

Victoria: Yeah, I would completely agree. And in my own body, I can tell just how wounding those small things were because the inverse is true. When I have done EMDR and done somatics and done thought work around the things that one might call small, the relief is so large on the backend that it's like, oh, that was impacting my nervous system more than I could have recognized.

Even this week of I'm out of the trees, literally a week yesterday, and to feel a level of dysregulation I haven't felt since honestly early pandemic is really fascinating. It just shows you the impact.

Andrea: Yeah, and the reframe of being like, fascinated by it versus losing yourself to it is so important. Like oh, I'm going to be curious about my nervous system, that's really interesting. Now I know this thing about myself that I have to live in the woods and that's such a good thing to know about yourself.

And I think too there's like, being able to understand not just our trauma from childhood but also the trauma that we carry in our biology from our ancestors, or even the work that some of us have to do around repairing the harm that our ancestors have done.

But I know that for me, and you and I have talked about this, sharing certain components of a lineage where like, it's not a surprise to me that most people in my family struggle anxiety and addiction and OCD after



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literally every single person experiencing displacement and fear of loss of life and home, immigration trauma.

So it's like, as soon as I can really understand that it's not that I'm like, well, that was always how it was going to be for me, but I actually have so much more self-understanding around why I used alcohol to cope, or why I struggled with OCD and "anxiety" as a child. That was always going to be my journey because it was in my body.

And so I think that's also part of the way that the trauma field is expanding is to really honor the sort of epigenetic impact on us and that a lot of the stuff we deal with isn't even ours. It's our parents' or it's our grandparents' or so on and so forth.

Victoria: Right. Yeah, that ancestral lineage stuff is no joke. I remember - can I share our conversation from early pandemic days?

Andrea: Oh yes, certainly.

Victoria: So Andrea up and left New York City from one day to the next. Just like, boom, was gone. And we were talking about how it was yeah, that ancestral story of I have to be where I am safe. I am feeling all my muscles tense as I'm retelling your story because my family escaped the pilgrims, part of it came to Argentina, escaped Argentina.

Escaped. They were not refugees. There's a complexity there. They were economic refugees. But point being, I carry that business, like you do. And there is this profound deep place in me that needs to know where I'm going to live and I was talking with a new friend and she was like, "Oh yeah, then

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I picked up and moved to Norway for a couple years and then I moved to Ireland.”

PS, we're both shaking our heads like absolutely not. And I love an adventure. I mean, I spent my 20s in Nicaragua and Vietnam and Cuba and Mali working all over the world, but I had a teeny tiny little bedroom in Boston where my stuff was. And my body felt a sense of safety around that.

Andrea: Absolutely. That's also very attachment centered too. So it's like, both intergenerational stuff and also our biological need to have a home base, of whether it's a person or a bedroom, or a city, a piece of land, definitely. The way in which I was able to pack a suitcase in five minutes was something that my great-grandmothers gave me that I didn't know was in me.

Victoria: I love that. At this point in your healing journey and in all that you do, you're able to see it so clearly as a gift.

Andrea: Absolutely. And the way that some of that can end with me hopefully, definitely not using alcohol to regulate my nervous system anymore feels like a huge pattern breaking in my lineage in which everybody has always probably for forever. So there are ways that I can acknowledge and appreciate certain survival resources and also part with them.

Victoria: Oh yeah. Alcohol is such a tempting mistress because it's socially approved and it's legit everywhere and it's so glamorized socially. It's like, had a tough day, pour a glass of wine, have a martini, kick back with a beer.

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Andrea: Exactly. It's socially unacceptable to not do that in fact.

Victoria: Yeah. I don't drink for all my reasons and yeah, there's that weird moment of are you sure? Are you okay? And my absolute favorite, are you pregnant? It's like, just because I have a uterus doesn't mean that's the only reason I would make choices for me, but thank you.

Andrea: Totally. Most of my family's response when I stopped drinking was, "Well, you'll drink again eventually," which was like...

Victoria: Right. Okay.

Andrea: It's hard for some people to imagine not regulating with alcohol because it works "so well" and so fast until it doesn't.

Victoria: Until it doesn't. Until about the third drink, which is when I fall off the barstool.

Andrea: Yeah. Or say something I deeply regret. Or begin a relationship I deeply regret for years of my life.

Victoria: Oh, the beer goggles. The beer U-Haul, let's be real.

Andrea: I have not heard that or thought of that but it is - I'm crying it's so relatable. The beer U-Haul, yeah.

Victoria: I have beer U-Hauled. That shit's real.

Andrea: It really is.

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Victoria: I mean, mix that with some anxious attachment, what are you going to do? Shack up.

Andrea: Totally. Intergenerational trauma, childhood stuff, there you go.

Victoria: I mean, why not? What else are we doing? We're not busy.

Andrea: Exactly.

Victoria: Life is for me, so much better without alcohol.

Andrea: Me too.

Victoria: It is really fascinating to see how quickly other buffers just come, invite themselves into your life though, right?

Andrea: Yeah, certainly. Like your cellphone.

Victoria: Like your cellphone. Like scanning, getting that dopamine from that blue screen instead of the bottle, which is I think where the - yes, somatics, but also cognitive work comes in. To come up with a different story for yourself in those moments when your brain is like, listen, this body wants to feel feelings and I'm so not about it right now. Distract, distract, distract.

Andrea: Yeah. And the somatic part of that, of how - I just learned this thing that is very mind-blowing, which is that there are all of these studies of primates getting tools like pliers or sheers to help with food collection, and their brain scans show that after using those tools just a few times, their brain thinks it's part of their body.

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And the same actually goes for humans and our devices. Our bodies think that our computers, our televisions, our cellphones are part of our bodies. That's why if your phone is in the other room, you feel so much discomfort because it's like your hand is in the other room, a part of your brain is in the other room.

Victoria: That's interesting. I don't know if you know the answer but why? Is it from the blue light and the dopamine? Why does that happen with a cellphone and not my favorite pen?

Andrea: It probably does happen with your pen.

Victoria: I love this pen. I'm holding up a hot pink pen.

Andrea: Yeah, I think maybe it happens more with a device because we are human and we are not as much a primate, where the phone is not only a tool but it's also a means of connection. So it's even more vital than our pen. But I do think that maybe 50 or 60 years ago, your typewriter or your pen would have been more so that tool. But now a pen is kind of meaningless to our brain compared to a computer probably.

Victoria: Fascinating. That is really interesting. It makes sense, particularly for those of us who genetically tend to be lower in dopamine and who are looking - I know my body is wired to seek external dopamine, which is why everyday movement, I know that part of moving away from alcohol was yoga for you. Remember when we used to do stuff in person?

Andrea: No. I don't even remember.

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Victoria: Me neither. It was pretty fun though. What was that? 40, 50 years ago? 60?

Andrea: Different planet.

Victoria: Different planet, different timeline probably just fully. But yeah, my body craves dopamine is where I was going. That external dopamine. And that's where all the self-knowledge and empowerment, I get to lean on that to remind myself to be curious, not judgmental, and that I get to make choices.

I get to choose exercise, singing out loud, all the somatic resources, social connection, instead of things like alcohol that doesn't work for my body, for my psychology, for my nothing.

Andrea: I love what you said about I know that my body is wired to want external dopamine. That's so much better than the I'm an addict, or all of the other language that we typically are given to describe that. I have depression - and again, if those are labels that work for people that's great. But it is really helpful to have a different narrative that's maybe more compassionate and also just biologically informed.

For me, the stuff I shared about my lineage is really helpful when I'm feeling my OCD type tendencies, or anxiety hyperarousal tendencies come out. I'm like, there's that hundreds of thousands of years of fear coming up. So it's helpful to have a different story to go with it, and a body story too.

Victoria: Right. Because I can at this point sort of feel that craving that I have come to see as that dopaminergic desire. So I practice the thought very frequently, "I have choice here," which I'm really grateful for.

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There were so many years where I didn't know what was happening, I didn't have the words, I didn't have the understanding, I thought I was broken, I thought my picker was broken, my desire was broken, I just thought I was broken and had been told that over and over, you're just broken, you got to always watch this because here's some labels for you. So you're F'ed. But to be able to flip that on its head and just be like, I got choices here, I'm going to go do some jumping jacks, it's really freeing.

Andrea: And it's not just cognitive work that is somatic. You're saying I have a choice, and then your body is experiencing the choice. I am very rarely nervous for any podcast recording or public speaking, I'm a very intense extrovert, I'm a double Virgo, this is - comes very naturally.

But I was so nervous when we started recording because I've never recorded a podcast with a dear, dear friend. And because there's such a relational component to this podcast and to the conversation, versus someone I don't know who I - there's less relationally on the line, or there's more cues of ease, whatever, not that it's whatever, but we'll probably never talk again.

Maybe we will, but it will be for a part two. But there's so much more weight to being in conversation with someone who you have a relationship with. And it goes to support all of the polyvagal stuff of relationships really impact us more than anything else.

Victoria: Right, totally. I felt that nervousness too. Relational nervousness and also, I think really wanting to honor you and how vast the breadth and the depth of your knowledge on these subjects. And you are just such a constantly remarkable person and so I felt that - it felt like this little flutter like hummingbird wings in the middle of my chest. This little blue flutter of like, oh gosh, I want to do right by her.

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Andrea: Yeah, totally.

Victoria: So it's sweet. I think it's sweet that we both have that. It's kind of tenderoni.

Andrea: Totally. It's also - this is a very relationally therapeutic moment of like, how did it feel within this thing? It's so meta and I'm not surprised that that is something we're able to do, which isn't possible when you're interviewing someone who you aren't in a relationship with outside of this piece.

Victoria: Totally. It's really sweet to be able to check in about these things. And I think when I think about all the work I've done in the last 20 years for myself, with myself, on myself, I think it really has been towards this end of being able to show up in relationship with people like you with the whole of me, with holistically, with the entirety, with an open heart, with an open mind, not defensive, not in a protective stance.

I have shown you, you've seen me cry, you've seen me in relationship troubles, you've seen my butt I'm sure, peeing in the woods at some point, I'm sure you've seen my butt. And 20 years ago me would have been in so much people pleasing, codependency, perfectionism, so concerned with what you, who I think of as really, really cool, what you would be thinking about me.

And I would have been more in that internal storyline, in that narrative, than I would have been able to show up in my realness and show you some serious shadow side, and some serious light.



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Andrea: Right. And same here. I think something I've been working on in my own personal therapy is not performing for people who I want to have a certain understanding of me. Like you said wanting you to see me as someone who's really competent, really professional, really knows her shit, and trusting that you already feel that way, that's why I'm here, and you know.

And the way that I think a lot of us can perform to prove ourselves and that actually takes us away from our core self instead of embracing it. And that authenticity as our safe and social state, or as our ventral vagal state.

Victoria: I love that. Because when I feel really deeply anchored in my authenticity, as mammals, as pack animals, we of course care what other people think about us. Again, that's our wiring. It is natural, it is normal, it is mammalian.

But I do give fewer fucks what people think about me, and I'm more able to apply the lens of do I want to choose to care versus indiscriminately just caring what everyone thinks. And when I'm not in that ventral vagal authenticity, it's more of that like, what do you think? What do you think? Do you like me? Do you like me? Like Bambi.

Andrea: Yeah, right, which is again like a fawn response.

Victoria: Fawn response is Bambi.

Andrea: Or like the ways that I felt very convinced of what success or getting back at anybody who had hurt me or bullied me or belittled me was, which was like, deeply, deeply relying on capitalism, overworking, and yeah, not being the most authentic version of myself to prove myself or get

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them back or undo the trauma that I had been through, when it's actually at the end of the day going back to the things I liked doing as a 10-year-old is my own version of that. And my practice has become even more authentic and grounded since I've let myself just be myself, instead of who I thought I needed to be to somehow overcome my trauma or give the people who had hurt me the middle finger.

Victoria: Right. And that of course brings to mind respectability politics. It was probably some number of years ago, I left my corporate primary care job and started doing functional medicine and coaching and built my own thing. And it wasn't until a few years later that I threw out the Ann Taylor and no diss to anyone wearing Ann Taylor, you do you, you are a goddess. And I wasn't wearing it because I wanted to wear it or the whatever, Banana Republic, whatever.

Andrea: Can you imagine?

Victoria: Can you see this face in - I didn't sweater set it because I couldn't, but there were some very professional pants. A lot of pencil skirts, which is sort of skirting the line. But anyway, I was trying to play a part. I was trying as an NP, in a place where MDs, DOs were paid three times as much for the same work, I was working to prove myself to the male gaze, quite frankly.

Andrea: Oh my god, absolutely. So true. I can definitely relate to that. And even when I was wearing - I think I had - where are those pants from? I had a J. Crew pair of pants that I bought when I started grad school because I was like, I have nothing I can wear to my first day of clinical internship. I wore those pants for two years almost every day.

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But even then, I was still too much for those places. My girlfriend at the time was told that she couldn't come within three blocks of my job because if someone found out that I was gay, then it would ruin the clinical relationship and then having my tattoos, I have tattoos of curvy, gorgeous naked ladies on my arms and being told I had to cover those at jobs because it would be triggering for people, for our conversation. So even when I bought the J. Crew, I still was too much and then as it turns out, the work that I'm able to do now is only possible because of the ways in which I'm too much.

Victoria: Isn't that amazing? I have been really just thinking about that a lot. As an Argentine, the culture of conformity here is very intense. And I recognize why. During the Dirty War from 1976 to 1982, when 30,000 plus Argentines were disappeared by our government, you did not want to stand out.

Andrea: Oh my god, totally.

Victoria: And that culture still continues because the economy's been garbage since forever and if you look different, you're a target. Either for government machines or for guys on a motorcycle who are going to steal your purse. So it was a very - I remember when I came back home to study at the University of Buenos Aires in 1999, my dad who is not an advice giver, he was sort of the like, don't get involved kind of parent, pulled me aside and pretty much begged me to shave my legs and armpits.

Begged. He was like, please, everyone's going to know you're foreign, the second you raise your arm to get a taxi, that taxi driver is going to know you're foreign and they're going to rob and kill you.

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Andrea: There is so much safety in blending in that is so real for so many people. And even you've experienced that.

Victoria: It's a particular challenge to the nervous system to know that I am most regulated when I am in my weirdness, when I'm wearing - on the podcast you can't see me but I'm wearing a vintage little jumper thing with sailboats on it. I look weird to an Argentine.

I should have Puma on or something, or a football jersey. I am safest within myself when I'm in my authenticity. But that may not translate externally. So it's just a fascinating - it's its own tango, in that the tango, you're dancing in a little box.

Andrea: Definitely. I hear that. It's been - since moving back to my hometown and the land that I grew up on, which is a lot more conservative than where I lived for a long time in New York on occupied Lenape territory, it's been really interesting to see people's responses to my body hair, or my tattoos, or even being out in public with my wife.

And there's a lot of times where I can doubt those choices, not so much like my queerness but my aesthetic choices of I am the voice of - I am drawing attention, or am I trying to prove something by being so different, but it would be such a re-wounding for my kid self to deprive her of being exactly who she is.

Victoria: Yeah, and she is a real weirdo, which is why I love her so much.

Andrea: Yeah.

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Victoria: Yeah, our weird little inner children love each other. And our grown weird selves love each other so that's beautiful.

Andrea: Exactly.

Victoria: That's convenient. Well, I just want to honor that we're coming up on an hour. Is there anything else you haven't gotten a chance to talk about? Anything else you want to make sure to share before you tell folks where to find you?

Andrea: Yes. I think something that has been on my mind with everything that's happening in the world is another way that we can experience that sense of connection and groundedness and ventral vagal energy is through supporting others, whether it's financially through mutual aid, or checking in on our friends that have identities that are under threat right now.

So this idea that connection is our core human need also extends to mutual aid. And that's such an important way for us to selfishly take care of our nervous systems, but also largely show up for our communities.

Victoria: I love that. I love that. And it's this beautiful circular thing I find that the more we're of service in the world, the more we're able to be of service internally, and the more we trust ourselves, I talk a lot about the difference between being of service and attempting to pour from an emotionally empty cup.

Learning what it means, everything we've been talking about during this call of connecting in with your own resources, getting to know your own nervous system, understanding what is activating and or triggering for you, and doing that work so you can check in.

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Am I about to give from my overflow so I can be of service? Because being of service in the world is of service to me, of service to the world, and this is that interdependent, the oceans breathe, we breathe. Or am I pulling my old people pleasing, I am not in my self-worth in this moment? And I either want to be an optical ally, which please hit pause on that, or am I giving from guilt, am I giving from shame?

Which brings me to my favorite question, which is why. What is your motivation? What is your why for doing whatever you are doing in this moment or are fixing to do? Not because we need to question our motive in every moment, but in several moments it is wise.

Andrea: Totally.

Victoria: So pause and run that check.

Andrea: I love that.

Victoria: Beautiful. Thank you so much for being here. You are just so fantastic and my heart is so explode-y with joy right now.

Andrea: Ditto.

Victoria: So beautiful. I just want to reach across the screen and hug the vaccinated crap out of you.

Andrea: Yes please.

Victoria: I know, right? Will you tell the good people where they can follow you, which I highly recommend?

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Andrea: Absolutely. I have a website, [andreaaglik.com](http://andreaaglik.com), and I'm on Instagram @somaticwitch.

Victoria: Yay. I have taken your courses before and they are phenomenal and so I'd love to invite you to give those a little plug too.

Andrea: Yeah, certainly. So I have some workshops on somatic coping, I have a workshop on healing through BDSM, I have a career coaching workshop for others who are healers and therapists and coaches. And I have a workshop on digital minimalism for those who are wanting to help their brains realize that their phones are indeed not part of their body.

Victoria: It's an important thing for all of us to do. Yeah, I was so glad this summer when you sent me that book, the Cal Newport book. So, so good. Thank you.

Andrea: That book is very liberatory.

Victoria: It is indeed. Yeah, and your workshops are so phenomenal. So folks, go check those out. Go follow Andrea and really, thank you for the generosity of your time today. I'm so grateful.

Andrea; Ditto. I'm so grateful to be able to have this conversation so honestly and authentically with you.

Victoria: Me too. It's a real, real gift. Thank you.

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