

Ep #141: Raising Interdependent Children with My Sister Genie Albina



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Victoria Albina, NP, MPH

Ep #141: Raising Interdependent Children with My Sister Genie Albina

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, hello my love. I hope this finds you doing so well. This week, we have a super exciting guest. It is my sister. I'm going to allow her to introduce herself and we are going to be talking today about how to raise interdependent children, what that parenting looks like, and how we can aim towards interdependence in all of our relationships.

We will also be talking about how to interdependently reparent yourself, your inner children. For those of us who do not have human children, this is an equally helpful and supportive show, and my sister is completely amazing. She's also on Zoom staring at me right now as I talk about her in the third person. Hi human who shares my pretty much exact same face. How you doing?

Genie: Hi there, hello.

Victoria: Hello. Do you want to introduce yourself?

Genie: Yes. I am Maria Geraldina but they all call me Genie, and I go with it. My pronouns are she/her/hers and I live in Evanston, Illinois, which is the traditional homeland of the Council of Three Fires, the Potawatomi, Ojibwe, and Odawa. I am a mama to two babies. My kiddos are eight and five and I'm your sister, which is very fun.

Victoria: It is really fun to have you as my sister. I'm really glad you're so awesome.

Ep #141: Raising Interdependent Children with My Sister Genie Albina

Genie: Aw shucks, thank you.

Victoria: Yeah. So for folks who are just meeting you, will you give a little background to your cred, other than being a mom, which is wicked cred. But you're a teacher, you're a coach, you're fancy pants. Tell them all about it.

Genie: Sure. So I was a public school teacher for about 10 years. I started in Chicago public schools and then we moved our family to Evanston, Illinois so I started teaching in Evanston. I had the privilege of teaching at the school that my son attended for two years, my older kiddo. And that was super, duper fun.

So in the course of working as a teacher, I learned just a lot about children, a lot about families, worked a lot with parents and with kids through conflict, through tough spots, through celebrations. I got to see so many different ways to parent kiddos and all the different ways that parenting can look like.

And hearing from my own students, because sometimes they would - they go to school and they share the dirty laundry. Just like for anyone out there who has gone to school, your teachers are not safe, just FYI. Just hearing them talk about the traditions they loved growing up, talking about things that were challenging when they were growing up, and it was just an honor to be able to witness all of that and simultaneously, I had my first kiddo at the end of my second year of teaching.

And once I was raising my own kid, it really shifted my teaching. I found myself becoming more compassionate, more empathetic, more understanding, both to my students and to the folks who were raising them.

Ep #141: Raising Interdependent Children with My Sister Genie Albina

And that was a huge shift for me, and I think also teaching has helped to make me a stronger parent because I understand the importance of communication and boundaries and that it's helpful for kiddos to know that someone is there looking out for them, and they need to know that, the same way that students need to know at school that their teacher is really looking out for them.

So at the moment, I work for a curriculum company supporting teachers, so I'm still working in education although not every day in the trenches. And I'm doing a parent coaching certification through the parent coaching institute run by Gloria DeGaetano. And that's what brings me here today.

Victoria: That and you're awesome.

Genie: Aw shucks.

Victoria: Yeah. Thank you for that. So I think it's smart to start by defining terms because we're nerds. Do you want me to go ahead with defining codependency?

Genie: Yeah, that'd be great.

Victoria: So I think about codependent thinking as the chronic habit of putting ourselves last. And we do that because we source our self-worth, our value, our worthiness as humans, worthiness of love, care, attention, affection, direct communication, healthy parenting, we source all of that from other people instead of sourcing it within ourselves.

So at some point in life, we sort of lost our grasp of and connection to our self-worth. And so some habits that I see coming as sort of subcategories

Ep #141: Raising Interdependent Children with My Sister Genie Albina

of codependent thinking are perfectionism and people pleasing. We believe that it is our job to fix the world, fix other people's lives for them so that they will love us and prove our value and worth, and we do that through people pleasing and by trying to show up as completely perfect all of the time.

From there, I see interdependence and I'm curious how this lands for you Genie, interdependence as understanding and believing that each member of a relationship, whether that be two people, family unit, a community, that we are all autonomous animals that don't need anyone else to fix us, to prove our worth, to change things for us, to step in as the martyr, the savior, the saint, but rather we believe in our own autonomy and we believe in the autonomy of everyone else in the collective, in whatever relationship we're talking about.

So from there, we take care of our own needs, we validate ourselves, we show ourselves our worth, we trust that everyone else is doing the same, and then we show up from that energy to support ourselves when we're challenged. And then to lean in to love and care and the collective and to ask for the coregulation, the support, the love that is part of being a human animal because we are pack animals after all and we need each other.

So for us in that work from codependent thinking into interdependent thinking, the first step is that individuation. I am an autonomous animal, I need to, often as adults, learn that because we didn't get that as kiddos. We often grew up in a codependent family structure. And from that belief in our own independent autonomous capacity to support ourselves, we lean in for mutuality and to connect with others.

Genie: So much of that resonates. I'm thinking just specifically in terms of raising kiddos and doing what we can to raise the littles to be

Ep #141: Raising Interdependent Children with My Sister Genie Albina

interdependent or for us in the process of reparenting to think about interdependence, and I do want to just define a little term myself too.

So when I talk about parenting, that is a very loaded term that can mean a lot of different things to a lot of different people. So I will sometimes talk about people leaving children, or grown up, or as a person who's raising the kid, in my 10 years of teaching, I never had a classroom where every child, where their primary caretaker was their biological or adoptive parent.

That has never been the case. So there was always someone being raised by an aunty, by grandma, by older sister, so I want to acknowledge that stepping in as the aunt, the grandma, the older brother, older sister, cousins, when they step into that role of primary caretaker, they are functioning as a parent.

But I also would never want to tell them that they have to identify as a parent because that's not my place. So I know that the term parent can be loaded for some people, but essentially what I mean by it is the person who is the primary caretaker for a little or for a bunch of littles in their process of growing up. So I just want to talk about that a little bit too.

I think the big thing that resonates for me is the danger of codependency as you mentioned is finding our value in others and it is for lots of reasons, it can be easy to slip into that as a person raising children and mold children to find their self-worth in the pleasure of the person who's raising them.

And it's dangerous waters for lots of reasons, but it's often something that's intergenerational, where I think we're entering an interesting point with raising kids and with what we know in terms of research about psychology and attachment and child development, where we know that that's not

Ep #141: Raising Interdependent Children with My Sister Genie Albina

healthy, that we do need to raise children from the itty bitty up, from the very beginning, to respect their autonomy.

Obviously in cases of imminent danger, we intervene. Of course when the baby is about to fall off the couch, you grab them and in that moment, they need an intervention. That's fine. But I think that parenting has shifted where there is a little bit more of an acknowledgment that just because they're little and just because they're young doesn't mean that kids don't have wants and needs, that they can acknowledge themselves.

If anyone's been around a very teeny tiny who wants to nurse, they will let you know what they want and what they need in that very moment. And they will peck away. So even with itty bitty newborns, they have a need. And then the way I see it is the job of the person who's raising them is to the best of their ability try to understand that need, when it's possible to meet that need, and if the need of the child is in conflict with the need of the parent to find a way to negotiate and find a common ground so that there's more of a win-win approach to conflict with need.

So that was something I was thinking about. And I think a book that I've been reading that I absolutely love by Dr. Thomas Gordon is Parent Effectiveness Training. Dorkiest title ever, with all due respect. But his big thing is about clear communication.

We need to listen for our children's emotional cues, try to verify that we're understanding what they need and what they want in the moment, and then we do what we can to meet the need, or we have an honest conversation about why that need can't be met in this moment.

Ep #141: Raising Interdependent Children with My Sister Genie Albina

Yes, you have a need for chocolate pudding, but it's 9:15 at night and I have a need for you to go to bed. Maybe we'll have chocolate pudding tomorrow. But have a conversation about it instead of just no, this is not what we're doing. I think that just like adults, children want to be heard and acknowledged.

And so for adults who maybe didn't feel heard and acknowledged as children, there's a chance - this is more your area of expertise than mine Vic, but to learn to that small voice, to listen to that little kiddo who maybe didn't get heard or attended to and start to help them heal, and this is where I'm over my skis, I'm going to be honest with you. I'm over my skis on this one.

Victoria: Have you ever been skiing? I mean, we didn't do that.

Genie: Okay, so at summer camp that were water skiing and the trick with water skiing is lean back. Turns out when you translate that to a snowy mountain, you end up with bruises on your backside because you lean back and then you fall repeatedly.

But Ezra Schwartz, if you're out there, dear Ezra Schwartz took pity on me and was like, Albina, I got you. And so he took me skiing this one time that I went on a school trip skiing and he helped me out and he was a dear. He was an expert skier but he was like, "Aw Albina, looking a little rough there," so he helped me out. He was a nice guy.

Victoria: Oh, the beans. That was a thing Americans did. We didn't...

Genie: No, we don't hurl ourselves down mountains.

Ep #141: Raising Interdependent Children with My Sister Genie Albina

Victoria: Argentines don't hurl themselves. I mean, I guess plenty do in Patagonia but not where we're from. We're from the beach. So I think something that came up, the difference between wants and needs, right? As coaches, we talk a lot about this, we think a lot about this. Should probably do a whole show on it.

But I think it just came up for me because I can imagine if Mateo, your son is like, I want chocolate pudding at 9pm, what I'm hearing under that is that's the want, but the need is different. The need is attention, affection - you're nodding so you go.

Genie: I think the need is I don't want to go to bed, and I think kids don't want to go to bed because they don't want to be separated from their caregiver. They want attention, they want snuggles, they want time together. Going to sleep can be scary for some kids, or it's just that moment of separation that can feel really, really hard.

And so the substitute is I want chocolate pudding, but what they really want is all the things that you said. They want closeness, affection, and so I think that if we're moving towards interdependence, with kiddos, we would kind of get curious about the wants that they've articulated and be like, okay, is your tummy hungry? Because if your tummy is hungry, we have some other foods that we can choose because chocolate pudding isn't really like a hungry food. That's a fun food.

And one of the things that Dr. Gordon encourages, which I really appreciate is just saying to them, it sounds like you want snuggles, it sounds like maybe you want mommy, is that what you want? And kids are really good at being like, no. Okay, you are nervous about turning off the light and it being dark? No. Okay, you can't find your stuffed animal? Yes.

Ep #141: Raising Interdependent Children with My Sister Genie Albina

Whatever it is, sometimes we just have to get curious and ask them questions, feed them multiple choice answers, especially when they're really little to see what is actually going on for them, rather than going straight to the no, it is bedtime, and because I said so. That is daggers in the soul of anybody who wants to try to work toward interdependence. No, because I said so.

And going back to a baby who's crawling and is about to - or just learned to turn over and is about to fall off a couch, I would put the baby on the floor because you can't fall off the floor, number one, just putting it out there. But let's say you didn't know your baby could turn over and you put them on the couch and you grab them. Who does it hurt to say to them, "I grabbed you because I was worried that you were going to hurt yourself, I grabbed you because I was scared, I was scared just now?"

Who does it hurt to articulate that? It doesn't hurt at all. But it can help the baby - they may or may not understand the words, but they can feel the vibe. You know what I mean? And I think as a parent, then it's reminding ourselves, okay, the baby didn't do anything wrong. I'm scared, I'm nervous, and so I'm choosing to intervene.

And then there are other times when kids get older where maybe a teenager wants to go out with a friend who isn't your favorite friend's choice. I think it's fair to have an honest conversation and say I know you really want to see whomever, it makes me a little nervous when you go out with that friend because I want to make sure that you come home safe and in one piece. I'm a little nervous about that.

And if you start that early with our kids, it can just turn into they're just accustomed to us articulating our needs and our wants as opposed to

Ep #141: Raising Interdependent Children with My Sister Genie Albina

feeling like, oh, well, if mom says she's uncomfortable then I have to do what she says.

Victoria: Right. I mean, it's interesting. So often my clients don't know what they want and need, and it seems like maybe this is a really nice way to practice that.

Genie: 100%. I mean, I think there was a little thing like today we have parent teacher conferences, which I think should be called family teacher conferences, that's just me. And they're back to back, so we need 45 minutes of childcare. And we've decided that Netflix will be our childcare and we're okay with that decision.

But last night, we had a conversation at dinner about where do they want to watch Netflix. Do they want to watch in the basement? Do they want to watch in one of their bedrooms? Do they want to watch in the garage? We have a whole TV garage situation.

And then we had a conversation about what they want to watch. And it was about 10 stressful minutes of them not agreeing about what they wanted to watch, and then I said, "We need this time where we can really focus and listen to your teachers and what they have to say about you and if you two can agree on something that you like to watch together, we would really appreciate that. And if it's really hard for you to agree, we can step in and help. But my whole hope would be that maybe you can eventually find something you both want to watch."

And then it was Garfield and Matilda, whatever, so they're going to watch Garfield, some silly cat or whatever it is that happens on Garfield. But they came to that on their own. And at some point, I interjected to refocus them,

Ep #141: Raising Interdependent Children with My Sister Genie Albina

which is like, we need these 45 minutes, it would be really fantastic if you two could find something to agree on, and then they did.

Rather than you two are going to watch this and here's where you're going to watch it because then there's no buy in. And I know it might seem like a small thing, but when you're eight and five, what you're going to watch for that 45 minutes of screen time in the middle of the week that you never get is huge.

And like you said, this is practice. So you practice when you're eight and five, agreeing on what you're going to watch and where you're going to watch it, and then when you're older, when you're 25 and your partner and you are trying to figure out where you're going to have dinner, you've practiced having those conversations, or you're going to decide bigger things.

Like maybe someone is moving and you have to decide whether or not you're going to move with them. Whatever these larger things that come up later in life, if you're practiced from a young age, then you have a clearer sense, like you said, of what you want, what you need, and also where your limits are.

Victoria: Yeah, I love that. I heard you say you explain what's going on, you state your needs, I need these 45 minutes and I need your support and your help here, and then you set that limit for them. And I think that's so beautiful modeling that. And again, because I want to always include all of us who are not parents to human childrens, these are the same conversations that we can have with our inner family, with our inner children.

Ep #141: Raising Interdependent Children with My Sister Genie Albina

Because as we get in touch with them and can hear their voices and connect with them, it can be regally really useful to get curious. Like what's up for you? Here's what I want and need. And if you're not able to come to an agreement amongst you, I will step in. I love that clarity G, I think that's so beautiful.

Genie: Thanks. It's not easy, and trust me, in moments of high stress, it's harder to do. So I would say to everyone out there who is a parent to a human baby, sometimes there are moments when we get louder than we would like, and we get more domineering than we would like, and it is what it is and it's okay.

But I think that when we have the resources, when we're rested, when we're fed, when we're in a decent mood, when the stars are aligned, we're practicing too. And especially if your needs and wants were dismissed as a child and now you're raising children, then it's an opportunity not only to try to help set them up to be able to know what they want and even articulate it and negotiate and all the thing.

But then it's your chance as a parent to say, oh look, I can do this for them and maybe it wasn't done this way for me, but look at this gorgeous outcome. And I do think it's a healing process. It's been enormously healing for me to take the time to listen to them.

Victoria: Yeah, I mean in the nervous system world we talk a lot about reenactments and how our nervous system will reenact past stress, distress, and trauma, moments of dysregulation to try to rewrite the story.

And so we can either let our nervous system do that on its own, or we can intervene in this loving, kind way to say okay, I'm going to do this

Ep #141: Raising Interdependent Children with My Sister Genie Albina

differently, I'm going to regulate my nervous system, I'm going to breathe, I'm going to check in with me. Maybe that means acknowledging I just raised my voice and I'd love to invite you to talk about how we do repair with kids because I think that's so important. But acknowledging whatever happened and then redoing it, right? Rewriting it.

Genie: That's really powerful. I hadn't thought of it in those terms before. But it makes sense that if there's a moment of parental child conflict needs or inner child adult need - as an adult you're thinking I need or want this and your inner child is like, oh gosh, but if you say what you want there are going to be negative consequences because that's maybe the script from childhood, and then taking some deep breaths, taking a walk, closing our eyes, doing what we need to - I know you have a million tools that you share with your clients about ways to get your nervous system all parasympathetic and whatnot. That's the good one.

Victoria: Yeah, ventral vagal.

Genie: Yeah, ventral vagal. But I've had my kids say to me like, especially Mateo will be like, "Mom, I think you should take some deep breaths right now." And I think depending on - and I think what it taught him is it's okay for him to tell me that.

I think the old story a couple generations ago with parenting is like, how dare you? Don't you talk to your mother that way. But it's like, no, we are equal beings and I happen to be taller than you and I happen to be the one who pays the bills but if you notice that I'm going off the rails and you want to tell me to take a couple deep breaths, fair enough, he was right, I did need to take a couple deep breaths.

Ep #141: Raising Interdependent Children with My Sister Genie Albina

And I respect that, I appreciate him sharing it, and I will thank him whenever he does that. So times when my sympathetic nervous system gets the better of me, I do think it's important with children to go back and acknowledge what happened. I'm trying to think of an example.

It wasn't chocolate pudding but it was another of these bedtime delay things that I got kind of frustrated about. And it's been a while, I've been getting better at the bedtime process and not getting too frustrated because I know it's a very vulnerable time for everybody.

But if I do get nervous, raise my voice, or say something unkind, give it time to settle, make sure I'm in a calm spot, make sure the kid is in an okay spot, going back to them and saying this is what happened. I think it's important for them to hear the words like, I'm sorry, or I want to apologize because I didn't like the way that I spoke with you.

And I think I've found with kids, if I start making excuses, like I'm tired, I don't know that they need to know that. I think what they need to know is I'm sorry I raised my voice, I wish I would have spoken to you better, I'm going to do my best to do better next time. And then I think it's important to ask them, is there anything that you want to tell me about what that was like for you? I think it's important.

And sometimes again, feeding them multiple choice options. Was that scary? Were you sad? Were you nervous? Or did you not even notice? Sometimes especially as parents and I think as adults too, we can be our own strongest critic. And sometimes the other party is like, wait, what, something happened?

Ep #141: Raising Interdependent Children with My Sister Genie Albina

And then I will - this is a trick I learned from an old colleague of mine, a fantastic kindergarten teacher, he would tell children when someone apologizes to you, you can say it's okay if it really is okay, or you can just say thank you for apologizing. But don't say it's okay if it's not okay. If you're still hurting, it's not okay. If you're still scared, it's not okay. If some trust has been ruptured, things are not okay, but you can always thank them for apologizing and acknowledge that.

So I've done my best to teach that to my kiddos. I think it's important for the parents of kiddos to know that the little ones, because they depend on us for all the things, their default will be whatever mom did is okay because it's scary to think that their grownup made a mistake.

But the younger we can start with, no, I made a mistake, if I could do that differently I would, I'm not beating myself up over it but I'm looking back and being reflective and I'm saying, you know what, I didn't necessarily need to raise my voice just then, or I let my temper get the better of me and I'm going to do better next time, the sooner we can start teaching them that, I think the sooner they can grow up understanding that it's okay that no one's perfect essentially.

You were saying perfectionism is such a problem with codependency. And so if we can model that for our kids, and then I would imagine, again, you know more about this than I do, as an adult talking to our inner child, just reminding our inner child like, it's okay, nobody's perfect, perfect is a myth, it's not even a thing.

Victoria: I love that because we understand that children want to see their adults as perfect, as faultless, as never making mistakes because it creates a sense of safety within them, right? When the lions come to destroy the village, I can trust that that adult will be there because they're impeccable.

Ep #141: Raising Interdependent Children with My Sister Genie Albina

But I think it creates a deeper more coregulated sense of safety to say yeah, I messed up and I'm here, I'm with you, I'm making eye contact if your child's available for that. I'm providing it at least and then they can make their own choices, but I'm here with a full open heart. And that's where that intero-exteroception, that felt sense of safety comes in, versus glossing over parental F-ups, which I think like few things feel as unsafe as that.

Genie: Because it's really confusing. And that's a big thing that Dr. Gordon says is that if we don't tell our kids what we need, if we don't tell them when we're frustrated, if we don't tell them when we're angry, they sense it. They pick up on it, and that's more confusing.

I felt like the other day Santiago was goofing around with something and he broke a flowerpot and I really didn't care. I was like, no big deal, let's just clear it up, whatever. And I sincerely meant it, I really didn't care. But let's say it had been the case it was a flowerpot you had bought for me and it was really important and it had sentimental value and I was really upset, I think it would be important for me to say to Santiago, "I'm really sad right now because I really loved that flowerpot, it really meant a lot to me. Tia Vic gave it to me, I'm really bummed out that it's broken. And I love you and let's clean it up but I am really sad about it."

And notice that I did not blame him. I'm not sad, I'm not mad at him, I'm not angry with him. I'm mad about the flowerpot or I'm sad about the flowerpot or I'm frustrated because the fact of the matter is a flowerpot is broken and that's the problem.

He was goofing around and he broke it, and we can often talk about that too, once he's regulated, I'm regulated, we can have a conversation about being more mindful about things around the house. Or he might even have

Ep #141: Raising Interdependent Children with My Sister Genie Albina

a solution to say why do we have a flowerpot on the table? It's in the middle of the living room, it's going to get knocked over, and maybe we just move the flowerpot.

But I think it's important to be very clear with kids when we are not feeling okay because how confusing is it, how gaslighting - not gaslighting. It depends.

Victoria: It can be.

Genie: And I've heard in my practice coaching with parents, I've heard a lot of parents say, "I don't want them to know that I'm upset," and I've had to question them like, why not? Well, then because they'll know I'm upset. Like okay, we're safe, what's the worst-case scenario if they know you're upset? They might feel a little upset.

Like okay, well, you're in relationship. What's bad about them knowing that you're upset? And a lot of parents eventually come to like, oh, yeah, I guess it's okay for them to know I'm upset. It might actually be beneficial for them to know I'm upset because then it's a sincere relationship.

As opposed to like, I'm going to be like, oh, you broke the flowerpot. People pick up on that. And in the teen years, that's when you end up with a lot of pushback is because they've had 13 to 15 years evidence that you're not sincere or honest or clear with them.

And then once they have their own money to spend and they can get themselves to a friend's house, they've had years of good evidence that your word may not actually be honest. As I'm saying this, anyone out there who is like, oh God, I broke my children, it's all good. It's all good. There's

Ep #141: Raising Interdependent Children with My Sister Genie Albina

always time for repair, there's always a chance to do something different. But I do think it's okay to let children know that we're upset.

Victoria: I love what you say about it creating those honest real bonds. A couple things are coming to mind. I'm going to flag attachment so we can come back to it. But what came to me is the difference between the invitation to coregulate and that codependent sense of obligation to fix.

So if your parent is like, I'm having x, y, z feelings, secondary to event, it's that clean, clear, direct statement without the indirects, without the BS, without the fakery that yes, all mammals can feel that when we're bullshitting them.

So that can create within a child, particularly if they've been raised in a family system with codependent thinking, with perfectionism, people pleasing, if their attachment to that caregiver is insecure, is anxious, if they have learned to be an over-functioner in the world, they may think they need to step in to create safety for their parent.

That internal obligation of oh God, and I'm just going to go with the word mom because I'm talking to you, oh God, mom is upset, I have to fix it, I can't have mom be upset, I'm the worst, she's not going to love me. And where their reptile brain is going to is she's going to leave me cold and alone to die in the mountainside, so I have to step in. I'm six, I'm 10...

Genie: It's not appropriate.

Victoria: It's not appropriate.

Ep #141: Raising Interdependent Children with My Sister Genie Albina

Genie: I've talked this thought with someone who was coaching me, one of my classmates when she was coaching me. I know that when my dear coparent is in a moment of very high stress, he can be a little short with the kids. Just a little snippy.

And also funny that I mentioned - he happens to be over six feet tall. So for little, tiny children who are not even four feet tall, his stature can be imposing and he can be a little sharp. And he's a delight and he's a fantastic parent...

Victoria: He's a delight. He's phenomenal.

Genie: So I have said to the kids sometimes you know, daddy is a little stressed out right now, let's give him some space so he can feel okay. That to me feels different than a child on their own in their mind saying oh my gosh, dad is stressed, this is stressful for me, again, dead on the mountainside, cold and alone.

So I hope, and again, we may do another one of these episodes in a couple months and I'll be like no, that's not the thing. But for now, it seems fair to say - he does it for me too. I get sleepy really early and he'll be like, kids, mom's tired, this is not the time. Teaching them to respect other people and where they are and what they can manage in the moment without giving the impression to feel responsible for how I feel.

Victoria: I love that. I love that. So that creates that invitation to coregulate, to snuggle.

Genie: I'll even sometimes say like, yes, daddy's stressed, let's go see if he wants a hug.

Ep #141: Raising Interdependent Children with My Sister Genie Albina

Victoria: Just so sweet.

Genie: And if he doesn't want a hug, we don't do it because I'm really into body autonomy.

Victoria: Yeah, and consent. Consent's the coolest.

Genie: I was watching something with Mateo, we were watching Charlie Brown and I think Sally gave Schroeder a kiss and Schroeder did not like it and I said, "Mateo, what did Sally forget to do?" And he said, "She forgot to ask."

Victoria: Oh my gosh.

Genie: I was very proud of him.

Victoria: Yay. I love what feminist little animals you're raising.

Genie: I'm working on it. It's a process.

Victoria: Day by day in the patriarchy. So one of the things I want to give you a shout-out for, you're the most freaking amazing sister and parent, but what I love about watching you and your mister is I feel like there's an energy - so when we talk about thought work, our thoughts create our feelings, we take actions, create results.

So we can do the same action with different thoughts and different feelings. So I feel like one parent talking about the other to a kid could be like, "Daddy's having a hard mood, let's act from avoidance, let's avoid conflict, let's not upset the patriarch, let's pretend we're okay."

Ep #141: Raising Interdependent Children with My Sister Genie Albina

And create that anxiety within - from your own anxiety create anxiety within the children, and then create - replicate that story of like, it's not okay to talk about emotions, it's not okay to have emotions, we have to pretend they're not real and happening, we have to be in that perfectionism and people pleasing of be a good little boy or girl or gender nonbinary human, be a good little animal so that someone else doesn't have feelings. And I love the way you guys just do it the opposite. I see...

Genie: We're working on it, yeah.

Victoria: Yeah of course. All of these things are a work in progress. But I know because we've talked about it that you're like, it's about mutuality and autonomy. I love and respect my coparent, my partner, and I love and respect these childrens and our family as a unit and I'm going to step in and I'm going to say hey, let's go play Legos in the other room.

Genie: Right. I think it's okay to say we're going to play Legos in the other room because dad's kind of stressed out right now and he could just use a little bit of space. I think so much of that - it's the intangible. You said it's the stuff that other mammals pick up on. It's this intangible where is it coming from? Is it coming from, like you said, avoidance?

And I think just because of my own experiences with feeling like I had to be very cautious because heaven forbid, don't rock the boat and all this kind of business, because of my own experiences, I wanted to make sure not to do that with my kiddos.

But I do think if it's coming from avoidance and you run the risk, like you said, of teaching kids that it's their job to do the emotional labor of their

Ep #141: Raising Interdependent Children with My Sister Genie Albina

caregiver when it's not, but if it comes from like a, let's just be respectful, I do think kids pick up on the difference.

Victoria: Yeah, for sure. For sure. And I think it's when we play into that avoidant game, trying to manage other people's feelings for them, fix the situation for them, we step further into those codependent tropes of martyr, savior, fixer, saint, that I know don't serve anyone long term.

And in teaching those tropes to our children subconsciously, we don't really realize we're doing it until we pause and realize we're doing it, but we're strengthening those neural grooves within ourselves. We're reifying the story that that is our job on this planet is to manage other people's minds, their feelings, their somatic experience. And I think it's really beautiful how one can and how I've seen you rewrite these stories for yourself through the experience of parenting

Genie: Yeah, it has been a lot of fun. And challenging and having to face some hard stuff, but it's really rewarding. And I would say also for folks who are working with their own inner child, you can do the same work. I can imagine saying when I was a kid this was the story, I want to write a different story and work on, like you said, building different neural pathways.

And the thing that's kind of standing out to me as you talk about all of this is it seems like the more straightforward the communication with ourselves, with our inner child, with the people we're raising, just the easier it becomes when it turns into don't do the thing because maybe they think that, maybe they're upset, it could be that, maybe - too much, too much, too much, too much.

Ep #141: Raising Interdependent Children with My Sister Genie Albina

Mommy's tired, she can't deal with you right now, we're not having chocolate pudding at 9:15pm. We need to find our differences. So more straightforward I think the communication is with less projection and fewer assumptions and a little bit just more grace, the better the outcomes are in terms of what we're teaching our inner child or our - the people that we're raising about what is and is not their job.

Victoria: And I think we can apply that at work. If we're managers or employees, I think that applies in romantic relationships and dating, there's really not an area of life where direct, honest, radically honest communication isn't the most helpful thing.

And I think what's necessary for that so often, it's interesting, it's one of those things that feeds into itself. It's a positive feedback loop. When we believe that we are worthy of love and care, we can communicate that directly. And when we communicate directly, we get that feedback both internally and externally that we are worthy of love and care.

Not always externally. When we stop people pleasing, people are not pleased. But we get to give that to ourselves, to drop the justifications. Last week on the show we talked about honoring our yes and our no and how you don't need to explain, you don't need to justify, you don't need to do some big old song and dance about no, I'm not available for that, and done.

But it is this really interesting thing how it can feel so scary to communicate directly. So what are some tips you would give folks to practice communicating directly?

Genie: With children?

Ep #141: Raising Interdependent Children with My Sister Genie Albina

Victoria: Yes, sure, both, all the things. You're so smart, Genie.

Genie: I will say if you are raising young people, just the sooner you start the better. Start as young as possible, practice it, and know that your kids might look at you funny and be like, wait, what? Because if they're not used to it, they might not be accustomed to a parent saying, "I'm frustrated with the situation right now, I've been sitting at the table ready for dinner for the past 10 minutes, super hungry, waiting for everybody, and I'm really hungry and kind of frustrated. I want to find a better solution. What can our solution be?"

If a family isn't accustomed to that kind of conversation, it might be hard at first, but my experience working with young people is that they're very flexible and they will adapt. And honestly, it probably feels better in their body and soul to have that kind of clear communication, so I would say just try it. Get started, do it when you can.

And I also think it's fair in adult relationships to also be mindful of the person you're speaking to and whether or not it is safe to engage in radical honesty. I'm not sure exactly what - something in me is saying to trust spidey sense, and not every relationship might be in a place where one can go straight there. And that's something to be mindful of too.

If you don't feel like you can be radically honest with someone, that might be worth getting curious about too. What's the nature of this relationship? Is radical honesty appropriate right now? Is it something we can work towards, have conversations about it? Or is this maybe a relationship that isn't serving me in the moment, I can step away a little bit and that's alright too.

Ep #141: Raising Interdependent Children with My Sister Genie Albina

That's the thought that I have. Our children, for better or worse, are kind of a captive audience so we can practice on them. But we're practicing something good so it's good. I don't know, what are your thoughts especially about the see if it's a safe situation?

Victoria: Right, I see what you mean. As always, I talk about the mind-body connection and how there's safety in the mind, there's safety in the story in the prefrontal cortex, and then there's safety in the body and the physiology. And those two things don't always line up.

So our brain can tell the story, it is my thoughts that keep me safe, I can always believe that I am safe in every - emotionally safe in every situation, I don't have to believe this person's thoughts about me, their reply doesn't impact my story around my safety. And we also get to honor that our nervous system, our soma, our body, and our inner children may not hold the same belief.

And so for example, our eight-legged relations, if you know what I'm talking about, so I know in my brain that where I live on this planet, there are not really eight-leggeds that are going to murder me. And the ones in my house are those little, tiny white ones that hang out in the corner. They're not dangerous.

Genie: Nope, they're just eating mosquitoes.

Victoria: Yeah, they're very, very helpful, and they're amazing creatures that do incredible things. And you and I grew up with a dad who's incredibly scared of all bugs. All bugs, all insects, and particularly the eight-leggeds. And so there was that narrative growing up like this is something to be scared of.

Ep #141: Raising Interdependent Children with My Sister Genie Albina

And so that resides in my body. I mean, I've been working on it for an actual decade, to the point where now I don't need to scream for another grownup to take them outside. I can take them outside myself. But it involves some somatic work.

I get to do the practices that I teach and I get to do box breathing and I get to, alright, alright, alright, Vic, you got this, you can take this friend outside. It's a whole physiologic workup while my brain's like, yo, it's a spider. You're totally fine. I don't live in Nicaragua or Australia or somewhere where spiders will murder you, it's fine.

So I think we can use that as a point of remembering that having conversations with certain people in our lives, we can tell this story like, what's the worst that's going to happen? She's going to tell a lie? She's going to say something mean about me? She's going to just have a different recollection of the situation?

And we can tell those stories in our brains, but our body might not yet be there with us. And so we get to hold that duality and hold space for that. And so we can support our bodies and our inner children, our nervous system while continuing to change the neural groove around the story, the cognition, but while honoring our bodies.

Genie: It's very tender.

Victoria: Yeah, I tend to be very tender GG. It's okay.

Genie: It's okay little inner child.

Ep #141: Raising Interdependent Children with My Sister Genie Albina

Victoria: Yeah, I think compassion is really the key, you know? The more compassion and tenderness we can show our hurt parts, the more they trust us as their adults. Like when I've seen Mateo and Santiago, your kids, have a hard time and you're immediately on the floor, crisscross applesauce, making eye contact, connecting, coregulating, making yourself their size, speaking the language that's kind for them, your body language shows compassion, care, gentleness, which does not mean you are not firm and directive.

Genie: We can be very clear when we need to be.

Victoria: Oh yes. Yeah, we are getting in the car right now and you can bring one toy friend to keep you company. I just made that up. I've never heard you say that.

Genie: But yeah, but there are times when yes, someone just needs to make a decision and that's okay.

Victoria: Right. And that totally makes sense. As the adult, you just have to make the decision sometimes, be that light, loving parental figure for your actual childrens or your inner childrens, right? Or often both I guess, right?

Genie: Absolutely. I feel like thoughtful parenting is a form of healing for sure.

Victoria: That's so beautiful.

Genie: Thank you. Kind of like you.

Ep #141: Raising Interdependent Children with My Sister Genie Albina

Victoria: Aw, GG. We have the same face so you're beautiful. So now I get to make a decision, which is that it's been almost an hour. I know, it's wild. So I think we should wrap up and I want to invite the listeners, so the theme for today, Genie and I have been talking about wanting to do a sisters show for forever.

But the theme from today came from a member of Anchored, my six-month program, who asked this question. She asked, "Can you talk more about how to parent towards interdependence and how to reparent ourselves towards interdependence with and for our children?" So this question came from y'all effectively, so if there is a theme that you would like me to speak to on the show, Genie and I to speak to on the show, you've got two Maria Albinas at your disposal.

Drop an email to podcast@victoriaalbina.com and let me and us know what you'd like to hear us - I was going to say rant about but we don't rant. We just...

Genie: No, we just have conversations.

Victoria: Yeah, I love that. We're very smart and good looking.

Genie: Studies show.

Victoria: Studies show. I love those studies. Those are great. NIH funded, tax dollars are work. So GG, closing thoughts. Anything you'd like to leave our wonderful listeners with?

Genie: I think that in order to parent toward interdependence, whether for the human children that you are caring for or your own inner child, so much

Ep #141: Raising Interdependent Children with My Sister Genie Albina

starts with being willing to have the most open and clear communication possible and knowing that listening is a communication skill too.

So listening to our inner child, what do they need, what do they not get, what do they want now, how can we help them, if they're asking for chocolate pudding what are they actually asking for, and again, that applies to inner children and external children.

But it sounds like through the course of our conversation, I'm seeing so much have to do with attentive, thoughtful, and active listening because then we can respond in a way that is helpful. Either saying yes, I can meet your need, or no, I can't meet your need, but let's figure something out. But it really has to start with just listening.

Victoria: I love that. Thank you, GG. And that listening internally. Limit setting, boundary setting, and at the root of what I'm hearing from you is really intentional present living.

Genie: Yes. And this isn't something at least I find that I'm able to do 100% of the time because you know, life is what it is. But in those moments when I can drop into being present and really listen either to my children or to my own inner voice, it's that quiet voice, that small voice, that gentle yet ever-present voice, that is the one that I found is the one that's a really good guide.

And when I have intuitions about my children, I find that they're often the things to listen to and my intuitions about myself and what I need, about really plugging in, and I think a lot of it is trusting ourselves despite all the messages we got that shouldn't or can't or not to.

Ep #141: Raising Interdependent Children with My Sister Genie Albina

Victoria: I think that would be a great theme for our next fireside sister chat is self-trust. That's a good one. We're so smart. Yay. So GG, where can the amazing people find you? I know they're going to want to follow you and check you out. What's your Instagrams?

Genie: Oh, I'm @geniealbinacoaching.

Victoria: How do you spell Genie?

Genie: Genie. And Albina is the same way she spells it. And then coaching, like the way you spell coaching. I was a little more active and then this thing called school started so it's been a little quiet lately. But I do have something I want to post.

I had to go out of town and I do these little visual things for my kids when the schedule is going to change. That really helps them. But I'll post those. You can find me there.

Victoria: Fantastic. Yay, so go follow Genie. She's amazing. And she will be offering parenting coaching soon enough. So follow her now, be her super fan. I am.

Genie: Oh thanks.

Victoria: Genie, I'm your number one fan.

Genie: Thanks. I'm your number one fan.

Victoria: Yay. Thank you for your time and your brilliance and honestly, for just being this shining example in the world of what an intentional,

Ep #141: Raising Interdependent Children with My Sister Genie Albina

thoughtful, caring, gentle but firm parent can look like in the world because you're really doing it. You're walking the talk.

Genie: Thank you.

Victoria: Thank you.

Genie: Thank you. Thanks for making space for me to and taking time and just letting me share this platform with you.

Victoria: Thank you GG.

—

Thank you so much for listening in to this episode of the *Feminist Wellness* podcast. I so hope you enjoyed it. If you do, I want to invite you to head on over to wherever you get your podcasts, subscribe or follow the show and if you're enjoying it, leave a five-star rating and a review.

Every time you leave a review, it helps others to find the show, which helps spread the word and share this amazing free resource that I'm just so delighted to share with you. And don't forget to share on social media. Give me a tag @victoriaalbinawellness. It's just so fun to connect.

So thank again for listening in and let's do what we do. Put a gentle hand on your heart if that feels supportive. Attune to your breath, 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 darling. I'll talk to you soon.

Ep #141: Raising Interdependent Children with My Sister Genie Albina

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.