

## Ep #163: The Self-Abandonment Cycle



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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## Ep #163: The Self-Abandonment Cycle

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

Hello hello my love. I hope this finds you doing so well. I'm so excited that spring is upon us. I saw a crocus the other day and I squealed out loud. I was on a walk with a friend and she jumped because I squealed.

I take great joy in the coming of spring and I found a lot of peace in this winter as I've shared here before. I also took my first real, real vacation since the pandemic started. I did go home to Argentina for two months last year around this time, and that was beautiful and amazing.

I saw so many things and really got to travel and explore my country and be with mi gente, which is so important. And was also with family, which was so beautiful. And the vacation I took recently, went to Miami Beach, had a really chill time on the beach, in the pool, soaking in the sun and really, really loved it.

It's important to take time for ourselves. And it's a real privilege to be able to do so, and it's one I am incredibly grateful for. So this week, after talking about conflict for a few weeks, I want to talk about how our conflict aversion or subtle conflict creation habits play out and impact our self-concept, the way we think about and relate to ourselves, and thus the people we love. The people we are in community with.

Those of us living with codependent, perfectionist, and people-pleasing thought habits, where we define codependent thinking as chronically sourcing our worth, value, and validation from others, from outside ourselves. These habits often stem from not feeling seen, cared for, accepted for who we were as kids.

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This can be because our parents were emotionally immature, because they were physically or emotionally not present, because they had demanding, A+ always expectations of us, because they didn't expect us to amount to anything and they told us all about it, or because we were the weird kid, the queer kid, the theatre kid in the football family, the sensitive tenderoni in the tough love family, the immigrant, the first generation American kid born to parents who grew up back home, wherever that may, who had a completely different rubric for living, a different story about emotions and how they should be experienced, felt, talked about.

Talked about was often like, not even on the table, right? But here we are in USA, amongst all these American kids talking to their parents about their feelings. And we didn't feel seen. Or maybe it was because we didn't fit into the narrative of what our caregivers or family expected us to be, to want, what they expected us to perform for them and their benefit. Or because the pressure on us to pave a new way for our family felt like so much.

One of the methods that many of us used to try to get love, care, and acceptance was to over-function or over-give. I did this myself in childhood, I did it in my romantic relationship, and in my friendships.

I would over-perform being loving, being kind. And that doesn't mean that I'm not loving or kind. I am. I firmly believe that and I love myself for being such a tenderoni, such a just a basket full of love.

And I would also chronically give so much more than I actually was capable of giving. I gave until it hurt. And I did this the most in situations where I was under-receiving, where I wasn't getting the validation I wanted for doing oh so much for others.

So my response, a very common response, was to continue to give and give and give, to give more when I was getting less back. And what I didn't

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realize was that I was giving in an attempt to please, to appear perfect and lovable, and in an attempt to get back, to receive the love that I wasn't giving myself because I didn't know how to give myself love and care the way I needed, the way I do now.

I believed I had to get all of that from other people so I would try to win their affection, attention, and care by pouring from my own empty cup. And again, the less I got back, the more I would give.

And we do this, this over-giving, over-functioning, overdoing often from anxious attention, which we talked about in episodes 129, 130, and 135. And we do this because our subconscious mind is always seeking two vital things. Connection and significance.

Our subconscious is constantly asking, "Do I matter to you? Am I significant to you? What is my role here? What is my job in this moment? Are you connected with me? As I am important to you as you are to me?" And we do this because when we have these two things, connection and significance, and we feel safe in it, stable in it, secure in it, it makes the nervous system feel safer.

We can find and stay in ventral vagal, the safe and social part of the nervous system, when we believe that we matter to others because we believe that that means that they will save us when the lions or the marauders come to destroy the village. Connection and significance.

And when we don't feel connected emotionally and physically with our caregivers, when we don't feel significant to them in our authenticity as who we truly are, when we are told we are too much, too loud, too quiet, too smart, too dumb, too silly, too serious, too fat, too thin, effectively not right, not enough in either overt or subtle ways, then we take that all in and we believe it to be true, especially as children, because well, who else are we

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to believe if not our parents, our caregivers, the people who are supposed to love us?

Somatically then through the body, soma being the Greek word for the body, we perceive this energetic imbalance. And as brilliant and amazing children, we start to do everything we can to prove our significance, to prove that we matter, to try to connect somewhere somehow.

In an attempt to regulate and hopefully co-regulate our nervous systems with someone else, to bring ourselves into a calmer nervous system state, ventral vagal, so we can feel safer in the world.

Flash forward to adulthood. If we don't realize that we are still going through life seeking safety primarily from outside ourselves, we will push in all of our relationships to try to get the validation and reassurance that we don't yet know how to give ourselves.

Now my nerds, the thing that humans do is called reenactment. And of course there'll be a whole show about that soon enough. I love talking about reenactment, worry not. But in short, this means that we replay our childhood relationships in adulthood, to try to get what we didn't get as kids.

And often, that means especially for us, that we show up to our adult relationships as over-givers, seeking to rebalance the proverbial scales of give and get, hoping that this time, this time we shall get our due, which we believe means endless appreciation and validation, often for doing things that nobody at all, like 0% of people in our lives asked us to do for them.

And because we're over-performing and over-helping and putting ourselves out, putting ourselves and our own needs and wants last in doing things for other people, that again, were not asked of us in most cases, because

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we're doing things for others that they can totally do for themselves, we don't get the immediate and enormous validation we're looking for.

As we abandon ourselves again and again as we seek connection and significance for others. And so this cycle of self-abandonment gets activated. And all those years of pent up feelings of not feeling seen or appreciated, they start to come out sideways in our adult relationships.

And it comes out as resentment, as irritability, as annoyance, as passive aggression. It comes out in what's called protest behavior. Trying to make the other person feel guilty, blaming and shaming them if we are not happy. Not feeling fully seen.

We make our partners, kids, coworkers, friends, strangers on the bus responsible for our happiness, joy, calm, and peace. The internal script goes either you validate me in the exact right way, or wow, am I going to be grumpy about it and you're going to hear about all of that grumpity-grump.

And it comes out in phrases like - I have heard this from my clients about one bajillion times and I've definitely said this myself. "With everything I do for you, you can't do this one thing for me?" And we may say it in our regular voice but it's like, super melodrama. It's fully on telenovela. Full on soap opera. I couldn't remember the English.

Okay, I'm not allowed to talk to my family back home in Spanish for like an hour and then record the show because then my English just goes out the window. Soap opera, right.

So we may say it in a normal tone but in our minds, in our bodies, in our hearts, it's like, melodrama. It sounds like, "With everything I did for you last week when I was so exhausted, when I was so tired, when I told you I was

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feeling burnt out, I did all of this for you and you can't show up for me right now?"

We make our love conditional. And we make ourselves, putting ourselves out someone else's problem, someone else's fault, their doing. And when they don't reciprocate our over-functioning, over-doing every single time, when they don't give and over-give and over-give until it hurts the way we did, then we're pissed off. We're angry at them.

We're annoyed, we're irritated, we're resentful. That often comes out in these passive aggressive statements, indirect aggressive statements, or in an explosion of emotion, when we hit our limit of pouring from that emotionally empty cup.

When we say yes and yes and yes and we just want to say no, and we end up breaking things, throwing things, destroying things, throwing things out, saying mean and hurtful jabbing things, being unkind in word and action because we were so focused on being nice for so long.

And until we explode outward, all of those feelings stay stuck in our bodies. This is the important somatic aspect of doing this work. We hold these feelings in, hold all this anger and resentment and annoyance in. We stuff it into our bodies, into our physiology, and we hold it in so tight that of course we have neck pain, jaw pain, hip pain.

And these are the big three areas that I hear my clients having pain. Really holding tension into these foundational parts of our physiology. And while we're holding in all this anger we're pointing at others, we're blaming and shaming ourselves, beating ourselves up. And we so unwittingly jack up our nervous system.

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We stay in fight or flight, in somatic bodily overwhelm, in worry, anxiety, stress, full of adrenaline, norepinephrine, and cortisol, our stress hormones, until our body cannot keep up with it anymore and we collapse into dorsal vagus. Foot all the way off the biological gas, detached, depressed, self-isolating, sad, lonely, dejected.

And all of this happens because we're angry at the people we love, or angry at the people we want to connect with, who we want a sense of significance from. Because they are not putting themselves out the way we do. They are not disrespecting themselves the way we do.

And of course, as always, I'm not talking about situations of abuse here. I'm not talking about situations where we're actually being victimized or taken advantage of. And so often, it can feel like we're being taken advantage of because we're saying I'll do anything and everything for you, I'll take on your life and I will make it my number one priority because we were socialized and conditioned to do just that.

We learned to do just that, to survive and let's be real, even thrive in our childhoods because everyone loves the good kid. The good girl who always does the chores, all the everything for everyone, and that carries on into adulting big time.

Think of the super mom trope. She who does 473 things for the family before breakfast. It's so real. And when this is both what we learned in childhood and from society, of course we find people to partner with. This is the reenactment part, who either are subconsciously looking for that themselves, who are used to that in their lives, people who want someone to do everything for them.

And when it doesn't start that way, if you take over doing all the things and you are - here's where the perfectionism comes in. If there's an exact right



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way to load the dishwasher, to do the laundry, and if you don't do it exactly right you're going to hear about it, well, most partners or children, roommates will eventually grow accustomed to you doing all of the things and will find that it's easier to just let you be a whirlwind of doing than to actually do anything for themselves because that will likely displease you and no one wants that.

So of course they don't have to make the bed or do the laundry or the dishes or cook or grocery shop or think about much of anything at all, including doing emotional labor. Meeting your partner emotionally, because the other person is doing all of this for you, right?

And so they stopped doing the things, if they ever did them in the first place, both because humans socialized as men in white settler colonialism, in the patriarchy, are often taught that not doing the work of running a household is normal and fine. Or because that was modeled for them in their households growing up.

And important side note, it's not just the patriarchy. So there's a huge class component to this that goes beyond childhood gender roles. I was in a relationship with someone who came from exorbitant wealth, to quote them, who was socialized as a girl and was taught that they didn't have to do anything around the house because either their mom or one of the women who cleaned in their houses would do literally everything for them.

So yes, always going to throw the patriarchy the full way under the bus, but there's also very much a class component here too. So either we find partners who don't want to participate in an interdependent, reciprocal relationship based in mutuality, or if they came into the relationship wanting to do their part, they eventually stop because you're over-functioning to the point where they don't need to and it's smarter sometimes not to do the things if it's going to lead to a blowout.

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But then they don't do the things and then you're angry about the situation. One which you unwittingly - no blaming here, my beauty. But you played a part in creating it. And of course, of course, of course, of course, my saying this is not in any way absolving the other person of not doing their fair share. Not at all. But I'm just saying, do you see the circular effect of this?

This terrible, painful, negative feedback cycle we get into. You do too much, more than you want to or have the capacity for. Abandoning yourself, your wants, your needs, in service of others. Those others don't appreciate you, validate you the way you want and expect them to, especially when you're doing things they didn't ask for or don't even want you to do.

Then you get mad about them not validating you as the amazing goddess of doing too much. They don't recognize and celebrate your martyrhood, your saviorism, you being the fixer and the saint.

And because you don't realize that you're actually angry at yourself and the systems that taught you to behave this way, for teaching you to abandon yourself by continuing this cycle of over-giving, in an attempt to source connection and significance and safety, it all builds up and comes out sideways as you get more and more resentful and feel more and more taken advantage of and disrespected.

So then you express your pent up feelings intensely, like when you hold beach ball under water for a long time and it just comes shooting up, pow, eventually. So you say the mean thing, you jab, you poke, you prod, you have an explosive emotional experience, you're reactive and big, you made the other person responsible for all your feelings and blame them for this cycle you find yourself in.

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And then you feel guilty about it. You feel bad about it. And of course you do because you were trained to not express your emotions, especially not in a way that might make someone else uncomfortable. And because of pro-social guilt, which we talked about in episode 85.

We feel bad when we attack others and we feel especially bad when we attack the people we depend on for emotional wellness and safety. So the next turn of the self-abandonment cycle from feeling guilty, feeling bad is that you overcompensate for your explosion.

You do 20 more chores, you buy them gifts, you make their favorite elaborate meal when you actually don't have the time or energy. You shower them with love and affection, you clean everything. You do their homework or laundry or life for them to try to absolve yourself of the guilt.

To try to get rid of the guilt of having exploded like that beach ball coming up from under water, not realizing you were taught in all of the ways, family of origin, society, culture, that it's your job to buy the beach ball, blow it up, and to hold it under water forever, which is just too much for one tender ravioli to handle.

And so your actions, in an attempt to assuage your guilt from the thought, "I shouldn't have behaved that way," starts the cycle all over again. Of over-giving and under-receiving, which of course, will lead to more anger, resentment, and protest.

More explosion, more guilt, more overcompensating. And in this cycle, what we don't realize is we are blocking ourselves from receiving love, care, kindness, and support from ourselves and others. And that's often because we don't know how to ask for our wants and needs to be met.

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We don't know how because it was never okay to do it in childhood or from our social location. It was never taught to us and it likely never felt safe when we were children to have our own particular individual wants and needs, especially if they weren't the wants and needs our family wanted us to have.

Especially if we saw others in the household repressing their own wants and needs and that was normalized. And thus, really seem like the smartest thing to do. And so this cycle is one of detachment from self. And in an ironic twist, detachment from your attachment figure, from your partner, parent, lover, child, friend, the person whose support and care you most want.

As you continue to put yourself last and continue to make decisions that are based on you ignoring or pushing aside, repressing and not acknowledging your person wants, needs and desires. So we keep this cycle spinning and spinning until our relationships eventually implode.

And in the meanwhile, we've had a belly ache for decades. So my beauties, I want to pause right there because this is a lot. It's a lot to realize that we've been living in this cycle, often for decades, often for an entire life.

And so I want to give you some space and to come back next week to talk about the remedies, about how we intervene on our own behalf for our own good and the good of the collective. This week, your homework - I'm realizing I haven't given you homework in a minute, is to raise your awareness around this.

To notice when this comes up in your life, and to just ask yourself, am I giving from my overflow or am I giving from my empty cup? Am I giving

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more than I want to, than I have the capacity for? Am I giving with the desire of trying to get someone else to think or feel something about me?

Is there perfectionism, people pleasing, codependent thinking at the root of this act of giving? Is it actually an act of service or is it a covert act of manipulation and control? Start to feel into it. Start to bring your awareness to it.

Make sure that you're subscribed to the show so it populates right into your little phone and just goes ping, you've got a new episode every Thursday so you don't even have to think about it. One less place you have to function at all. The show comes to you via the magic of the interwebs.

But really, come on back next week and let's talk more about this. Let's talk about the remedies so you can really pause this cycle before it takes over your life.

Before I let you go, I want to tell you about two exciting things. On Tuesday, April 5th, I will be doing a breathwork session. It's a two-hour session in which I will teach you the pranayama journey breathwork that I use with my clients. We do it every single month in Anchored and it's a beautiful part of the program and our healing work.

I'll teach you the practice, tell you all about how to do it, share what I know of its origins with an energy of appreciation and not appropriation. I will lead you in a 50-minute practice and then I will hold copious time and space for integration afterwards.

You can learn all about that at [victoriaalbina.com/breathworkmeditation](http://victoriaalbina.com/breathworkmeditation). Keeping it simple. And you can register there. The exchange is \$37. And it's going to be a delight. And yes, a recording will be made and sent to all

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those who register in advance. So that's on Tuesday, April 5th at 7pm Eastern standard time.

And then the following week, on Monday, April 11th at 7pm Eastern standard time - all of my everything is in New York time, so just put that into your head because New York believes it is the center of the universe. They've got it wrong. Buenos Aires is.

But anyway, I'm such a goose. On Monday, April 11th at 7pm Eastern standard time, I will be doing a free webinar all about authenticity. So I'm really excited for that. It's the first time I will be sharing that webinar publicly. It's something I've shared with the folks in Anchored before.

So that's going to be a delight and you can sign up for that at [victoriaalbina.com/authenticity](http://victoriaalbina.com/authenticity). I like to keep my URLs simple. Okay, how fun, beauties? So much fun.

And if you're new to the show and you don't know about Anchored, it is my six-month program to support folks just like you, just like me, to overcome codependency, perfectionism, and people pleasing, and you can learn all about it and can apply now at [victoriaalbina.com/anchored](http://victoriaalbina.com/anchored).

We start up again in May and the group is filling up fast. So if you've been curious about it, if you've been wanting to join us, if you've been wanting to take this work deeper, if you love what you're learning on the podcast and you want to really apply it to your life, to see significant, sustainable, lasting change in your relationship with yourself, in your romantic relationships, your friendships, relationships with your parents, coworkers, job, you're going to want to join us for Anchored.

It is a blast. I always say we laugh a lot, we cry a lot, we move a lot, there's a lot of somatic practices in it. And it really is a very unique experience,

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bringing together thought work, somatic practices, and breathwork. So [victoriaalbina.com/anchored](http://victoriaalbina.com/anchored).

Alright my beauties, let's do what we do. Gentle hand on your heart should you feel so moved. 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.

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](http://victoriaalbina.com/masterclass) to grab your seat now. See you there. It's going to be a good one.