

Ep #350: Your 'No' Is Final: Stop the Boundary-Pushers



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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This is *Feminist Wellness*, and I'm your host, Nurse Practitioner, somatics and nervous system nerd, and life coach B  a 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. So, here's the thing most of us know about vampires: they can't enter your home unless you invite them in. But here's what's even more fascinating: they don't just ask once. They keep asking, they keep pressing, they keep finding new and interesting and really annoying ways to try to make you say yes. Because they know one darn thing for sure, which is that most people, if pressed, will eventually cave, including you, with a literal vampire at your door.

So, today, I want to talk about the less literal vampires in our everyday life. Not actually the fictional kind, but the largely loving, well-meaning, super caring people who treat your "no, thank you" like a rough draft. The ones who ask again and again until your truth, preferences, wants, needs, boundaries, limits becomes a negotiation, and your truth becomes something to overcome with polite social pressure and maybe a very well-intentioned word about what they think is the most bestest thing for you.

Picture this, my love. You're at a family dinner. You're stuffed to the gills. Back home we say, "Ilena hasta el apellido." And your aunt offers you cake. You say, "No, thank you. I'm stuffed." A few minutes later, "Are you sure? Just a sliver." Then, here we go, "Oh, come on. I made it especially for you." What started as an offer has become an interrogation and a guilt trip. And here's the thing that'll make your brain itch: all of this, it's not really about cake at all.

This is something that I call the Vampire Invitation. That moment when someone decides your no is just the opening line in a conversation they're determined to win, without realizing it, generally. And if you've been trained through emotional outsourcing, that codependent, perfectionist, and

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people-pleasing wiring, then you've likely been accidentally teaching people that your boundaries, well, they're more like suggestions.

So let me tell you about my birthday a few years ago because goodness gracious, this one was like, it's quite the scenario of this. So, someone who shows love by insistence pushed and pushed and pushed me into having a party I didn't actually want. I said no, very clearly, more than once, but the pressure kept coming, wrapped in the language of love. "Oh, you'll regret not celebrating. It's good for you, you'll see. All we want to do is celebrate you. Come on, why won't you let us celebrate you?"

Eventually I caved, because that's what we do, isn't it? We mistake wearing us down and trying to exert control for caring about us. And we believe them over our own deep knowing when they just push hard enough. And also, we just get tired. I mean, I got tired. I said no six ways from Sunday but eventually said yes because, oh my goodness gracious, I just didn't have the energy to keep saying no. Then the whole thing kind of sucked all around because, of course, I didn't, I didn't really want it to be happening. I didn't really want to be there. I got wicked heartburn, couldn't sleep. My nervous system was already in shutdown, resentful that my no had been bulldozed. And the people who had insisted on the party were upset with me because I wasn't lighting up with joy about something I'd never actually wanted in the first place.

That's the vampire trap, my darling. They think forcing a yes will guarantee closeness, appreciation, you'll be grateful, that everyone will be so happy. But what it guarantees is resentment on both sides. Here's what happens in your precious body when you say no, and that vampire, which I'm just going to say loving vampire ask, comes again. Your nervous system goes on high alert, sympathetic activation. Your throat tightens, your chest gets hot, your breath goes shallow. The courage it took to say no once is being stretched thinner and thinner like taffy in the sun.

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Eventually, it just feels safer to just surrender. You say yes. You go along to get along, but it's not real consent. It's exhaustion disguised as agreement. And afterward, resentment brews like a poisoned tea. That's your nervous system saying, "My boundary wasn't honored. I didn't feel like I had the right to hold it. And wow, am I pissed about this whole thing."

My sweet one, this pattern is especially devastating for those of us wired through emotional outsourcing. When you hear again and again, "I heard you're no, but actually, I know better than you what you want," your nervous system learns to second guess your instincts. You start to scan for what other people want before you even register your own needs. Over time, that dynamic chips away at self-trust like water on stone. It creates a chronic state of self-doubt where you can't tell if your hunger, your exhaustion, your boundaries, your preferences, your wants, your needs are real or if you're just being difficult or demanding.

This isn't just about food or small asks, my love. Think about partners. "Want to take a bath with me?" "No, I'm tired. I just, I don't want to deal with it." 10 minutes later, "Come on, it'll help you relax." Later still, "I think you'd really love to. Come on, I'm drawing the bath already. Let's go." My beauty, again, I get the drive. I get the desire to share a moment with your partner. And I've been there thinking, "I know what's best." But at the end of the day, that's not intimacy. Yeah? It's a vampire invitation.

Because for the person with emotional outsourcing habits, the body hears each repetition as danger approaching. The first no may have been shaky, or not, but was real. The second maybe feels like being backed into a corner. By the third, you're trapped, right? And you're like, "Ah, there's no way to get this to stop other than saying yes," which can be a very well-worn script for a lot of us, right?

So what do you do? You get in the tub, but your nervous system is buzzing with resentment like a broken electrical wire. Imagine how devastating this becomes with the life-changing questions, not just the banal whatever of

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taking a bath. "Do you want to have kids, go to med school, move in with me, get married?" Those are not vampire invitations to repeat until you get the answer you want. When someone says, "no," or "not now," that's the answer. To keep pressing doesn't just destabilize the moment; it destabilizes the whole relationship. It says, "To me, your no is not valid. Your truth, your desire, your everything doesn't matter until it matches mine."

Now, here's where my brain gets really fascinated, because sometimes the vampire invitation isn't about disrespect at all. It's about generosity, about ritual, about how love is culturally expressed. In some families, communities, cultures, you're not supposed to accept right away. You're expected to say no at first, and being offered again is what marks you as cared for. In that context, repetition can be sweetness when it's a dance where both people know the steps. Right? So that's really important.

But here's the plot twist. When those cultural patterns land on a nervous system already trained to collapse into compliance, sometimes even sweetness can feel like being cornered. A cultural expression of care can become inside your body a trigger for resentment. Isn't that fascinating, right? The same action can be love or control, can feel like love or control, depending on the nervous system receiving it, the context, the moment, and of course, from whom. There's another layer, too.

Sometimes the vampire invitation comes from that belief, "I know what's best for you," sounding like, "You should eat something. You'll regret not coming. You don't know what's good for you, but I do. You should buy the blue sweatshirt, not the green one." On the surface, it sounds like care, like someone looking out for you, like someone loving you. But the impact, when you didn't want those statements, when you didn't consent to it, when you're not asking and you're not being heard, the impact is control. The message underneath is, "Your no doesn't count until it aligns with my yes." Psychologically, that's a power play dressed up as caretaking. It assumes

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that the other person doesn't have access to their own wisdom or can't be trusted with their own choices.

And what's happening in the nervous system of the vampire inviter? Well, for some, it's unconscious cultural training. They don't even think twice. For others, hearing "no" feels like rejection, and their body flares with anxiety. Their chest is tight, their mind is buzzing, and they try to soothe themselves by pressing again. Either way, the effect is the same. Your no gets erased like chalk in the rain.

This gets especially dangerous under patriarchy and other systems of domination and oppression because those messages aren't just individual. They're structural, my darling. Women are told their no is less valid than a man's yes. Queer folks are told their desires are wrong, so someone else should decide what's normal for them. Kids are told over and over that adults always know what's best, even when the child's body is saying, "Absolutely not." Disabled folks are constantly having their own knowledge of their bodies overridden by, well, everyone, but particularly medical and social authority. And I could go on and on about women of color, about so many marginalized communities.

And the nervous system doesn't just experience that moment of being not heard, your no not being honored, your no not being listened to, as a momentary thing when it's a chronic experience. It encodes it like a trauma recording. It learns with repetition, my internal signals, what I feel in my body, are not trustworthy. I should give in. And my beauty, that's the perfect breeding ground for emotional outsourcing. Because if my no never mattered and never matters and never will matter, then maybe my job is actually just to comply, to be the good girl, the easy one, the one who doesn't make waves, the one who gets along to go along, the one who completely assimilates.

The tragic irony is that the vampire inviter often believes they're showing love. And I do truly believe that 96.743% of the time, it does actually feel

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like a way that they can show love because it's what their caregivers and theirs and theirs and theirs and theirs did, right? When you grow up with your most loving people not respecting your limits, how do you know to begin to respect anyone else's? It's the only way of love they know, you know?

And they frame it as care in their own minds because that's how it was framed for them. I want what's best for you without respecting or honoring what you want. But in practice, it's a nervous system move to manage their own discomfort, paired with a psychological assumption that their judgment trumps yours. And when those forces combine, they create an atmosphere where one person's body, one person's preferences, one person's mindset and identity is constantly overridden. And beauty, that is not care. It's simply not care. It's control disguised as care, like poison in a pretty bottle.

So, how do we break the vampire invitation cycle, my lovely, lovely human? Well, I'll be back with remedies in just a moment.

So, first, if you're the one asking and asking and then asking again, here is your new rule. Ask once, then let it breathe. Notice what happens in your body when you hear, "No." Do you feel that urge to repeat yourself, to change your language, to push in another way? Do you feel that buzzing in your chest, that fear that no means rejection? Do you want to push your point because you think you know better? Or because whatever you are offering is your way of sourcing love? Meaning, if I insist that she eat my pie and she say yes, and then she enjoys the pie, then I will feel loved because she enjoyed the pie even though she doesn't want to eat it, even though she said she's full, even though, even though. That's your cue to pause, to breathe, to ask yourself, what you're asking this offer to do for you. Are you asking the offering, the insisting, the pushing to make you feel better?

Let's get curious, right? Pause and breathe. Orient your nervous system to your surroundings, find your feet, find your ground, let your nervous system

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settle. And that's what I want to invite you to have a note open on your phone and call it whatever you want to. It doesn't matter. When my offer gets declined, when they say no, vampires, you could just have an emoji of pie, right? And I want to invite you to write out some new thoughts that you'll have on tap, such as: their no isn't a personal attack, it's their truth. And what a gift that they trusted you enough to share it. Them saying no doesn't mean anything about me. Honoring their no is the best way to show love. Yeah?

Because I'll also add this: when I say no and someone disrespects it, right, and pushes to that exhaustion point, if I truly, truly don't care about the relationship, and I'm low energy and low spoons, I'm way more likely to be like, "Sure, you know what? Fine. Yeah, okay, go ahead, do whatever you want to do in my name." Right? Because I'm not going to bother having negative feelings about them in the situation, right? I'm going to stop investing in that relationship if you consistently are disrespectful and keep pushing, right?

So, someone actually saying like, "Hey, please honor my limit, honor my boundary," that's meaningful. That means they care enough to let you know. So I want to invite you to hear it that way, right? And it's going to take some time. If your sense of safety is tied to being the pusher and to people saying, "Yes, yes, yes" to you, it's going to take some time for a no to feel like, "Okay, whatever." But that's the work, right?

Alright. And if you're the one with the other side of the emotional outsourcing habits, because it's emotional outsourcing both ways, right, the pusher and the being pushed, if you are struggling to stick to your no, sweet pea, I hear you. I get it. And here's your new superpower. And it's going to sound simple, but it's not easy. But it is really simple. But it's definitely not easy. It's going to take time, attention, care, the way all of these things do, right? And so this is the solid no.

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And to do this, we say in our head, "Hold, please, no, thank you." Right? This is the same tool I teach in Anchored of how we deal with our mean and negative thoughts. We simply say, "No, thank you." Period. No explanation, no softening, no justification. Yeah, your nervous system, your habits, your good girl training will want to add cushions. "I'm so sorry, but maybe later. I wish I could, but..." right? And that's, sure, being polite, but also old survival training talking, trying to make your no more palatable.

For now, while you're practicing holding that no, that solid "no, thank you," we're going to leave all of that aside. You can bring it back in later when your no feels more solid, more grounded. And I recommend you do because it's nice to be loving, but not now. So when you're just practicing saying, "No, and I mean it, and no," we don't want any other language involved. "No, thank you." Solid. Done. Yeah? And then a couple months or a couple years when you feel, yeah, I can really hold my no through the third and the fourth and the fifth offer, "Hey, you know what, Mallory? I really appreciate you're offering, but I'm really going to need to say no because I don't really want whatever it is you've been offering me again and again. And I can imagine, you know, how that feels for you." Like, you can do a whole thing, but once you're really solid in your, "No, thank you." Okay?

So for now, take a breath, orient your nervous system. Yeah? Drop into your body. Feel your feet on the floor, your breath in your chest, the support of the chair beneath you. Remind yourself, "My no is a complete sentence. I don't have to defend it. I don't have to make it comfortable for anyone else." And it's going to feel so barfy maybe, but that's okay because we're going to expect it, right? So you just need practice for it to eventually feel more easeful. So let's do a practice together that will begin to rewire your nervous system towards more grounded, safer feeling, no.

So, we're going to take a moment. And obviously, if you're driving, do this later. When you feel the vampire invitation pressure, "No, come on, just say

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yes," I want to invite you to orient your nervous system. And if you don't know what that means, go to my website BeatrizAlbina.com and at the top of the main homepage, you'll see a little banner that says, "Get your free meditations." That orienting exercise is right there for you because I love you. Zero dollars.

So, when you feel the vampire invitation pressure, orient your nervous system, find your feet, and picture your no as a fortress wall. And picture it all the way around you, not a wall made of brittle drywall that someone could poke through with a finger, but stone, thick, ancient, steady. A wall that has weathered centuries of storms without crumbling. Solid, unmoved. And importantly, this wall was not built to keep people out. It was not built to keep people out at all, but especially not because you hate them or you're mad at them or to be mean. Come on now. It's not sharp with spikes or lined with barbed wire. It was built to keep what's precious safe.

That's the energy of "no, thank you." It's defense, it's protection, it's love, it's resentment prevention. It is not attack. So when someone presses against your no, whether it's your aunt with the cake, your partner with the bath, your boss trying to slip just one more thing into your overflowing plate, notice what happens in your body. The survival brain wants to argue, explain, and soften. It wants to offer a compromise so that no one gets upset. I hear you, I hear you. I love it. You're just coming from love and care. And that's old emotional outsourcing wiring.

If I can just smooth this over, give up a little bit of me to meet them, maybe I'll be safe. But it doesn't work that way. Yeah? And the fortress wall doesn't argue. Doesn't shout or collapse, it simply stands strong, still, reliable. Each time someone pushes against it, your body may feel the surge of adrenaline, the heat of guilt in your chest, the flutter of fear in your belly. Let those sensations rise and fall like waves. Orient yourself, feet on the ground, shoulders back, breath low and slow. Let your nervous system learn that you can stand to without caving. Beautiful.

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My beauty, this is where the broken record technique becomes your secret vital tool. The beauty of this practice is in its simplicity. The vampire invitation comes again, just a bite. You reply calmly, evenly, "No, thank you." They circle back. "Oh, you'll regret it. It's so good." You meet them again with, "No, thank you." They push one more time. "Come on, it'll be fun." You stay steady. "No, thank you." Same words, same tone, no extra justification, no new debate. This matters because your body has procedural memories of being worn down. Procedural memories are like riding a bike, right, the things you don't think about, part of the default, right?

Your nervous system expects that after a few repetitions, you'll fold. So it braces for collapse. By holding steady with the broken record, you are teaching your body a new pattern. I can hold my no without escalating and without disappearing. Each repetition strengthens those neural pathways, laying down fresh tracks on a dirt path until it becomes the main road your nervous system takes. And the other person is learning too. "No, thank you" teaches them something about you, that your boundaries are not a draft, not an invitation to negotiate, a puzzle to solve. Your no means no. Period. Over time, they start to feel that in their own nervous system. They realize they can survive the discomfort of hearing no without pushing. They can feel their anxious chest, their urge to control, and let it move through instead of acting it out on you.

And they're probably not going to be happy at first, but you get to breathe into knowing that you are speaking up for you and for the relationship because what happens when we don't? We live in resentment, right? My darling, this is how mutual regulation starts to build. You hold your wall with love, they learn to self-soothe, and suddenly there's space for actual respect. Not a forced yes, but a real no. Not resentment disguised as consent, but clarity. And sometimes, unfortunately, the other person never comes to a place of respecting your no, and we'll be talking about that in a follow-up episode soon.

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For now, practice this, my love. Picture that fortress. Feel the ground under your feet. Let your no be steady, unmovable, sacred. Use the broken record like a mantra. Not sharp, not defensive, just clear. Over time, your nervous system will stop equating no with danger. It will begin to trust that you can stand firm without losing love. And that shift is revolutionary. It's the nervous system discovering that safety can come from inside you, not from giving yourself away.

And my beauty, if you're the one whose nervous system recommends you keep pushing, keep breathing, keep bringing yourself into presence. Remind yourself you're not a bad person, you're not unkind, you're not unloving. You're enthusiastic. You learned to show love the way you learned to show love, and it might just not be working anymore. So I'll invite you to give yourself compassion, give yourself care, and remind yourself to honor the no in front of you is a way to make everyone involved feel safer, more loved, and more connected.

My beauty, thank you for joining me. This is a topic I could go on about for a very, very, very long time. And I hope that this episode has been supportive. If you're enjoying it, I'd be grateful if you could head on over to where you get your podcast, give it a 5-star rating and review, share it with the people you love, share it on social media, and tag me. This podcast is a huge passion project for me, and I'm so grateful to share it with you. Thank you for sharing it with the people you love.

Until next time, 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 beauty. I'll talk to you soon. Ciao.