

Ep #358: The Best of Feminist Wellness: Emotional Liberation, Somatic Wisdom, and Collective Care



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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[Feminist Wellness](#) with Búa Victoria Albina, NP, MPH

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This is *Feminist Wellness*, and I'm your host, Nurse Practitioner, somatics and nervous system nerd, and life coach Béa 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. Happy solstice. Happy Hanukkah. Merry Christmas. I hope that whatever you celebrate, oh, Festivus, the holiday for the rest of us. I hope that whatever you celebrate or don't. Happy Yule. Listen, maybe it's just like stay home and make stew and homemade bread day, which is what we're doing around here. Pretty excited about it.

I hope that regardless of what you celebrate or don't, at this inflection point in midwinter, I hope that you can take a moment to pause, to orient yourself to your space, to ground into your body, to come home to yourself. Even if it's just for one breath. Right? Because we kitten step around here. And if you're new, a kitten step is the smallest, the very smallest of possible steps we can take. So much smaller than a baby step. Those are intimidating. We don't want to fall on our snouts, right? Especially when it comes to growing.

We want to give ourselves so much space, so much room, so much love, so much care. And so that's my invitation for you for today. I mean, as every day, right? That's what we're all about here at *Feminist Wellness*.

Listen, I work with the most amazing podcast producers, Digital Freedom Productions. They're not paying me to name them at all. Actually, I think I'm going to get a little slack about how they're blushing at being complimented. They're the sweetest, kindest, most amazing people. Pavel and Angela and their whole team, and they offered to put together a best-of episode for me today. It feels like it's my holiday gift from them. And so I said, yeah, thank you so much. Like, how cool is that? So, many thanks to the team at Digital Freedom. Thanks to you for listening.

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If you'd like to give me a holiday gift, I would so appreciate it if you could leave the podcast a five star rating and a written review wherever you get your podcast. And if you could do the same for the book, for *End Emotional Outsourcing: How to Overcome Your Codependent Perfectionist and People-Pleasing Habits*. For small first time authors who do not have one hundred thousand dollars to throw at publicity, it's hard to get your book seen and heard and received in this very noisy media landscape. And so, I turn to you, to my loyal listeners, to the folks who have been enjoying *Feminist Wellness*, this free resource I make each and every week just for you. I turn to you and I ask for your help and your support because my goal in writing this book was not to make money. It's been a money losing experience and that's fine. Right?

But I'm just saying you leaving a review for the book isn't about me making more money. No, no. It's about the book getting into more hands. That's what I'm here for. Because I'm here for this revolution, for this feminist revolution, for this compassion revolution. I'm here for the liberation that comes when we stop calling ourselves meanie pants names and instead can step into our power through compassion, curiosity and care.

That's what I'm here for. And I'm here for this book to get into as many libraries as possible. I'm here for it to get published in paperback, which won't happen if y'all don't buy it. I'm just going to be very frank. If you don't buy it and you don't review it and rate it, the publishing house won't know that it's wanted, and they won't take a bet on publishing it in paperback or translating it. And oh my God, I want it in Spanish. I want it in Mandarin. I want it in Turkish. I want it out there. And so again, I'm turning to you. Order a copy. You can gift it to your library. We bought thirty copies and sent them to libraries across the country just like to support, right? You can gift them. You could like loft your dorm bed with them. There's a lot of things you could do with them. But thank you for your support.

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All right, I've been talking too much. In Spanish we say, "Te di la lata. No me das la lata." Don't give me the can? I should look up where the heck does that come from? What a weird thing to say, but I love it. Anyway, I will stop rambling at you. Onward and upward to our super fun best of episode. I hope you enjoy it. And here's past me.

Because your worth is measured in output under capitalism. Time is money. Emotions, whether yours or someone else's are seen as distractions, inefficiencies, interruptions to the machine of productivity. But here's the truth, and I'm going to put it in capitalistic terms, emotions are productive. Not in a like maximize your quarterly output kind of way, not in a KPI kind of way, but in the way that in my world matters most, because they help us process experience, connect with others, be a more vibrant, living human in the world, not really capitalism's goal, but emotions help us to make meaning. And humans are meaning-making machines. So when we shut down emotions, ours or anyone else's, we lose access to that deeper wisdom.

Because under the patriarchy, emotional labor isn't just encouraged for women, it's demanded. Be the caretaker, be the peacemaker, soothe things over. But here's the catch, express your emotions too much, and suddenly you're too sensitive. Cry, and you're hysterical. Get angry, and you're unladylike. Women are way too emotional to be in leadership, running things, you know, because anger and putting a hole in the drywall with your fist is not an experience of an emotion, right? It's an impossible double bind. You've learned that emotions make you weak, unlovable, a problem. And so, you might habitually shut them down in others too. Because somewhere deep down, you absorb the message that emotions are a liability.

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Capitalism tells us that emotions slow us down, that we should push through and stay productive. Patriarchy tells women and femmes that our value is in how well we soothe others, not in expressing our own needs. White supremacy polices emotional expression for all of us and particularly forces BIPOC to suppress their natural emotional responses just to stay emotionally, physically, financially safe. These systems don't want us to reclaim our nervous system. They don't want us to build capacity because when we do, we become harder to control, we become ungovernable. We stop abandoning ourselves to keep the machine running.

It's essential to recognize that the act of reclaiming emotional space is never apolitical. When we dare to honor our feelings and the feelings of those we love, we resist the dehumanizing forces that seek to silence us. Whether it's the pressure to conform to rigid gender roles, the expectations imposed by capitalist productivity metrics, or the legacies of colonial structures that diminish the emotional lives of marginalized communities. This work is revolutionary. By insisting on authentic connection, we challenge the status quo in ways that are both subtle and profound. We disrupt the narrative that vulnerability is weakness and instead affirm that it is through vulnerability that we create resilience, empathy and justice. In doing so, we help create relational spaces where power is shared more equitably and where the full range of human experience is validated. This is how we forge new models of care that are as much about healing social wounds as they are about personal well being.

Wellness is not a luxury good. It's your birthright. Meanwhile, the wellness industry loves to talk about balance. But balance for whom? Wellness influencers prescribe endless self care rituals and hours long morning

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routine while ignoring the systems that perpetually exhaust marginalized bodies. They tell us to meditate away our rage without acknowledging rage as a perfectly understandable, intelligent, appropriate response to profound injustice. to optimize our focus while questioning why our worth is tied to productivity. That exhaustion regulation are personal failures rather than consequences of living under white supremacy, patriarchy and late stage capitalism. This approach makes suffering personal instead of structural. We believe our pain, our fatigue, our suffering is a personal failure rather than the logical result of living under systems that oppress us all. This is victim blaming wrapped in a cashmere weighted blanket.

Healing isn't about individual optimization, it's about survival, resistance and collective liberation. Feminist wellness, intersectional feminist wellness to be specific, rejects spiritual bypassing, depoliticized nervous system practices, perfectionism, individualism, and disembodied self-improvement narrative. It instead centers somatic intelligence as a tool of resistance and liberation, a generative tool that supports us to imagine new beginnings. It centers community care, mutual aid and collective healing, reckoning with grief, rage, injustice and not love and light escapism.

My beauty, consent is a regulation practice. It gives both people in a conversational diet a moment to take a breath. It helps you stay in connection instead of slipping into collapse or conflict thanks to old survival skills. It's one of the simplest and most powerful ways to build coregulation in real time and it's a potent way to live our feminist values. Meanwhile, most of us didn't grow up seeing this model. I know I sure didn't. Maybe you had a parent who confided adult worries in you when you were eight or ten or twelve. Maybe you were expected to always be available to soothe others, to be the joker, the funny bunny, to take the pressure off. Maybe you

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learned to equate love with caretaking and had no idea you could say no, or even pause and still feel belonging, connection, value, worthiness, care.

In white supremacist, capitalist, patriarchal cultures, boundaries are often mocked, negated, pathologized, especially for people socialized as women or those living in colonized, racialized or marginalized bodies, we're taught to be endlessly accessible, emotionally, physically, energetically. So of course, it feels strange at first to ask, hey, are you open to this when it's just a conversation? Of course it lights up the inner critic. Of course it feels vulnerable. Of course it feels weird at first. Maybe too much. But isn't not doing it way not enough? Because if we want relationships that are attuned, trauma aware, respectful of nervous system capacity and desire, right? Because that's the really important feminist note in here. It's not just about like, can you, it's do you want to? So if we want relationships that take all those boxes, in my opinion, this practice becomes non-negotiable.

And I get why stepping into acceptance and love for our past self for making choices we now don't like is scary at first. I hear this from my clients in Anchored all the time. They say, I don't want to be kind to myself about the past choices that I don't like because I don't want to do it again. And we tell the story that we need to beat ourselves up in order to attempt to prevent present and future harms or missteps, but that's the absolute opposite of what's real. It's when we are kind to ourselves that we make real, lasting, sustainable change. When we are most loving, compassionate, caring and curious towards our past selves, that is when we can in fact do it differently the next time. Pinky promise.

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Language shapes reality. When you call yourself a codependent person, you're not just describing behavior, you're claiming an identity rooted in pathology. You're saying, I am fundamentally flawed instead of I learned some strategies that worked then, but don't work now. Let me learn some new ones. When I work with my clients, I use my new term, emotional outsourcing instead. Because that's what's actually happening. You've learned to source your sense of worth, safety and identity from outside yourself. And just like you learned to do that, you can learn to source those things from within. I've seen it in hundreds of clients and in my own life. The shift in language creates a shift in possibility. Instead of managing a chronic condition or living inside some oppressive identity, you're building new capacity. Instead of recovering from a disease, you're reclaiming your center. Instead of being broken, you're just being human, learning, growing, changing, shifting.

Every time you say yes when you mean no, you're essentially taking out a loan against your future self. You're borrowing energy, time, and emotional capacity that you actually don't have to give in this moment. And just like financial debt, emotional labor debt compounds over time. That small favor you agreed to, it doesn't just cost you the hour it takes to do it. It costs you the sleep you lose thinking about it, the resentment you feel while doing it, the energy you don't have for your own priorities, wants and needs afterwards, and the growing sense that your needs, they simply don't matter.

Now, I want to get into the nerdy science of what's actually happening here because this is where it gets really interesting. Our nervous system has this incredible surveillance mechanism called neuroception. Neuroception describes how neural circuits distinguish whether situations or people are safe, dangerous or life threatening. It's like how you can walk into a room and your body goes, oh, that person. Right? It's basically like having a

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paranoid but well meaning security guard living in your brain stem. Here's the thing. Neuroception occurs below the level of consciousness. It doesn't require conscious awareness. Your body is constantly scanning for safety and threat, and it's doing this below the level of your thinking brain. So it's really like having a background app running 24/7 that's really trying to do nothing more than keep you alive.

So when you say yes, but you mean no, you're creating what researchers call a neurological split. When in a calm state dominated by ventral vagal pathways in the social engagement system, which we've talked about here in detail, neuroception is less likely to reactively trigger defensive states and behaviors. But when you chronically override your body's signals, something shifts.

And here's what's particularly devastating for women. Research shows that up to 80% of people with autoimmune diseases are women. And studies have found that a high portion of patients report significant emotional stress before their disease onset. The chronic hypervigilance, the constant cortisol flooding, the suppressed emotions, that huge push to be the good girl, the good wife, the good mother, it's not just making you tired. It's all setting the stage for your immune system to potentially turn on itself.

But here's what really gets me. We're raised up to think this is normal. To believe that everyone feels this wired and this tired. We come to think this is just what it means to be a thoughtful, caring person to love your family, to want to care for them, but it's not. The physical cost is massive, but the emotional and existential cost, I don't know, that's where it gets extremely heartbreaking for me, because you start to feel like a support character in your own life, like you're written into someone else's story rather than being the protagonist of your own. You find yourself over functioning in relationships. You become the fixer, the peacemaker, the one who smooths everything over.

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And underneath it all, there's this growing resentment that you feel too guilty to acknowledge, let alone express, process, or move through. You say yes when you mean no. You apologize when you've done nothing wrong and you're not even Canadian. You avoid conflict even when it means betraying your own values. And here's the part that might make you want to cry, because it's really tender. You do all of this thinking it's keeping you safe. I get it. Let's take a moment for love for that. But actually, it's keeping you small.

Emotionally immature partners often present so well to the outside world. Oh, they can be charming at parties, hilarious at dinner, beloved by all of your friends, which makes it even more confusing when behind closed doors, you're the one absorbing their tantrums, their anger, their defensiveness, their refusal to engage with reality, their refusal to grow up. This Jekyll and Hyde dynamic makes it hard to trust your own experience. So if you're wondering whether you're dealing with emotional immaturity, some signs you might include, you consistently feel confused after conversations like you're the problem, even when you brought something up calmly. They deny things you both know happened, or they shift blame so fast. You're left utterly dizzy. They can't handle feedback without melting down, lashing out or shutting down, or making personal attacks on you, your character, who you are. You rarely feel seen or understood because they center themselves in every discussion. You find yourself working over time to regulate not just yourself, but them too. You're tiptoeing around moods, cushioning your words or managing situations so they won't explode because they will explode.

Now, if you're hearing this list and you're thinking this sounds familiar, but I can't figure out why I keep ending up in relationships like this, there's two really important things we need to talk about, reenactment, which we're going to get into detail about, and attachment style.

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If you've been overfunctioning for a while, the people around you might actually expect it now. They might even get upset when you stop stepping in. This doesn't mean you should go back to managing their lives. No. Not at all. When you first start pulling back, don't be surprised if people get upset or confused. They might accuse you of not caring anymore, suddenly become helpless in ways they never were before. This is normal. You've been doing their emotional and other labor for so long that in one way, they've forgotten how to do it for themselves. Hold steady, be loving, remember why you're taking a step back and trust that they'll figure it out or they'll ask Dr. Google for some help.

On the other hand, some people will be relieved and will actually step up with joy. Others might initially struggle or get frustrated. Relationships might feel awkward or tense at first. You might feel anxious or guilty. All of this is normal. You're changing a dance you've been doing together for years. Give it time. You can say things like, "I've realized I've been stepping in too much. I trust you to handle this." Or, "I'm working on respecting your ability to manage your own life." Or, "I care about you, which is why I want to support you, not manage you." And let's be honest about something else. So many of us get something out of being the person someone needs. Being indispensable feels safer than just being loved for who you are when you don't believe that you're inherently lovable. Come on, let's give that some compassion, some care. That's a real thing. And there's a certain power in being the one who holds everything together, the one people turn to, the one without whom everything would fall apart. But my beauty, that's not sustainable, and it's not fair to anyone involved, because my darling, you're not actually indispensable. You're just scared of finding out what would happen if you weren't.

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When we can genuinely appreciate our survival strategies first, when we can look at them with curiosity and gratitude and love instead of just judgment, we land our nervous system in what's called ventral vagal safety. This is the part of our autonomic nervous system where we feel calm, connected, curious and maybe even a little bit giddy about the possibilities ahead. And from this place, from this sweet spot of nervous system safety, we can actually make real changes. Not the like white knuckled, forcing ourselves to be different kind of changes that feel like trying to perform surgery on ourselves with oven mitts, but the organic, sustainable kind that emerges from self-compassion. Because there's a massive difference between shame-based change and love-based change. And your nervous system can feel the difference immediately.

This whole celebrate your patterns thing might be making you squirm, and I get it, because it goes against pretty much everything we've been taught about self-help and self-improvement. You maybe likely probably grew up thinking you had to be mean to yourself to get anything done, right? I mean so many of us did. There's like this internal drill sergeant who calls you lazy, reminds you of every time you've ever failed, threatens you with worst-case scenarios if you dare to be kind to yourself. Right? You're going to fail, you're going to be lazy, you're not going to get anything done. That voice has been your primary motivator for so long that self-compassion feels not just dangerous, but like stupid.

Like if you're not constantly criticizing yourself, you'll just become some like blob on the couch who never accomplishes anything and never takes responsibility and probably forgets to wear matching socks and is just not good or worthy. Like we don't trust ourselves to function without that harsh inner voice keeping us in line. And so the idea of celebrating our survival strategies instead of beating ourselves up for them feels like we're being too soft, right? Like we're letting ourselves off the hook.

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But here's what's absolutely mind blowing. That mean internal voice, it's just another survival strategy. It's your nervous system trying to keep you safe by making sure you never get too comfortable, never stop performing, never risk being seen as weak or incompetent, or heaven forbid, needy, because like what's worse in a woman than being a human with needs. And just like your people pleasing habits, it worked for a while until it didn't. So, celebrating your emotional outsourcing habits, which might feel very, very weird at first. I totally get it. Doesn't mean you want to keep them forever or you wouldn't be listening to this show.

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Oh, my love, thank you for listening. Wasn't that so fun? I really enjoyed it. Big ups again to Digital Freedom Productions, to you for listening, for sharing your day, your time, your brain with me and this work. I'm so grateful each and every day. I never take you for granted, my beloved listener. Not for a millisecond.

I hope you have an exquisite rest of your day. May it be restful. If you're in the southern hemisphere, may it be invigorating. My whole family is on the beach in Argentina right now. May you have the day you need, and may you know you are so loved. 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.