

Ep #362: Why Nervous System Healing Isn't Meant to Be Done Alone



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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Ep #362: Why Nervous System Healing Isn't Meant to Be Done Alone

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. Listen, my sweet, tender, little magical, wonderful butternut ravioli. Here is the truth. Are you ready? You're sitting down? I'll wait. Here's the truth. You ready?

You can do this work, this healing work, this stepping out of emotional outsourcing, this reclaiming interdependence from our codependent perfectionist and people-pleasing habits. You can do this work alone. You really can. Of course, you can. You can read the books. You can listen to the podcast. You can journal until your wee hand cramps. You can practice orienting and grounding in your living room. You can notice your breath. You can track your sensations. You can interrupt your people-pleasing habits and slowly but surely build self-trust. Many people do. I did. For a long time, I did this all alone. Growth is possible in solitude. Some growth is for sure.

And here's what's also true. Our human nervous systems are social organs because we're pack animals. You and me. Hi, pack mate. Our nervous systems evolved in groups, shaped by voices, faces, attunement, energy, rupture, repair, proximity, laughter, conflict, safety, exile, return. Nervous system regulation isn't just an internal skill. It's also a relational event. We calm because someone else is calm with us. We learn what's safe because we see it reflected back. We feel worthy because we're met, not because we convinced ourselves we should be.

So yeah, you can absolutely heal alone. And healing alone has limits, and those limits are biological facts. So before you start to make it mean like, "Oh, I should be able to. Oh, there's something wrong with me." Me. Phenomenal. Put it away. Biological facts. Okay?

Ep #362: Why Nervous System Healing Isn't Meant to Be Done Alone

All right, my nerds. One of those limits, when you're doing this work by yourself, which can mean like literally just you and the material or you one on one with a coach, with a therapist, counselor, whatever. Either way, you're inside your own echo chamber. And even the most insightful, reflexive, self-aware people can't see the soup they're swimming in, especially if it's the soup you've been swimming in for decades, for a whole lifetime, for generations. Right?

You can't question the assumptions you don't know you're making. You can't hear the tone you grew up with if it sounds like home. You can't notice the pattern that feels normal. When you're only ever inside your own language, your own metaphors, your own stories, your own interpretations, your own meaning-making, your own nervous system language, your own nervous system logic, change can quietly stall.

And that's not because you're doing anything wrong, but because your system is just recycling the same material it already knows. And of course, it is. That's what nervous systems do in isolation. Without new relational input, there's nothing to update against, no contrast, no living evidence of other ways to think or feel or respond. And that's the piece that people miss. Without being in a relationship with others who are practicing something different, it's very hard to know what's even possible for you. It's very hard to dream it up out of nowhere.

So this is where doing it alone stops working or doing it alone costs you years of your life. And to be a bit dramatic, darling, those are years you just can't get back. When the work we want to do, the change we want to make involves the nervous system and the body and our sense of self. And when the work is relational, because it's about how we relate to others, my perfect little chickadee, this is where community stops being nice to have and becomes the route through which you actually change. It's pretty vital in my experience, and I've been doing this for what studies are calling a hot minute.

Ep #362: Why Nervous System Healing Isn't Meant to Be Done Alone

When you hear someone with a completely different life, in or from a different country, another continent, a different family structure, a different relationship history, a different cultural lens, someone who's decades younger or older than you. When you hear them describe the same tight chest, the same looping thoughts, the same bracing, the same fear of being too much or not enough, the same struggles with rumination and self-doubt and decision-making, something cracks open. Your nervous system registers it before your brain does.

"Oh," your brain slowly begins to realize. "Huh. Perhaps this isn't just me. Maybe I'm not this singularly effed, messed up, broken, terrible, no good, uniquely wicked, bad person. Because I really respect that person who just shared that she has super similar thoughts to mine that lead her to take similar actions that create similar experiences in her marriage that I'm seeing in mine. And oh, my goodness." Oh, my goodness indeed.

And then something even more powerful happens. They name that shared experience differently. They describe it with words you've never used or thought to. They track that same experience that you have in your body, in their body in a way you've never thought to try. You're watching how she notices sensation differently than you do, catching the exact moment her shoulders drop when she names something true. You're seeing her stay present through discomfort in a way your system has never tried or imagined. And it's illuminating and inspiring and just, wow.

And it gives you all this space to be compassionate with you because you're so compassionate with her and with them, and them with you, which helps you then to contemplate the possibility of you being kinder with you. You're not sitting there thinking, "God, why am I not like her?" or "I should be further along." You're learning. And then you see those other people do things. Leave the marriage, ask for the raise, say no without crumbling or overexplaining, set a boundary, and stay regulated when the other person has feelings about it. You see them making decisions with ease, stop

Ep #362: Why Nervous System Healing Isn't Meant to Be Done Alone

performing and letting themselves be seen as they actually are, reclaiming their sexuality, improving their digestion on and on.

And the whole time, your nervous system is taking notes as it were. Not through comparison per se, but through your system learning in real time from another system doing something yours hasn't figured out yet. You model what's possible for one another. That's the magic of doing this healing work in a group, and wowzers. Wow, oh wow, is it magical.

This is one of the reasons Anchored, my program, is structured as a community cohort, a true familia. Not for like accountability theater, I'm not interested. Not to pressure you to share, we never do that. Not to perform healing in public because ew, but because witnessing is regulating. Resonance is regulating. Being seen without being fixed is regulating. Watching someone else stay with themselves when they talk about something tender teaches your nervous system that you could stay too.

People often come into this work believing that if they just worked harder, stayed more disciplined, read one more book, listened to one more episode, they'd finally arrive. And there's a cultural romance, at least here in the US, here on Turtle Island, there's a cultural romance with muscling through, with grit, with doing it yourself. The old bootstraps and all, being the one who doesn't need help. And sure, listen. Listen, you can muscle through. That is actually available. I mean, tons of people are doing it, right?

But in true me style, I want to ask a gentler and in my opinion, more honest question. Why truly though? Why just muscle through instead of getting the help that's available to you? And because I am the compassionate person I always am, let me answer that from our emotional outsourcing patterns and narratives. A thought pattern I know intimately myself.

So for those of us who grew up in emotional outsourcing, living with codependent perfectionist and people-pleasing habits, especially if they

Ep #362: Why Nervous System Healing Isn't Meant to Be Done Alone

were in the home, going it alone often feels like the most right way. Like it feels like integrity. I mean grumble, grumble on that, but it but it does. Feels like the right way to do it, right? Like proof that we're finally not a burden.

And so it plays into this really painful story where our authentic self, particularly as children who wanted help, needed help, needed attunement, were not met and attuned to, because our caregivers didn't have the skills or capacity to do it. We absorbed this story that wanting help, needing help makes us a burden, right? Who are we to ask for help? Oh, I'm fine. Other people have it so much worse, right? Who are we to need support when other people have it so much harder, right?

Which is a coded way of saying, "In this core deep place of myself, I don't believe that I matter. I don't believe that I deserve love and care and support." Right? Ouchy though, huh?

Listen, that voice that says, "I should be able to do this myself," isn't wisdom. It can feel like it, but it's not. It's the same pattern that kept you small, that taught you your needs were too much, that made you responsible for everyone else's comfort while your own went unmet.

So going it alone when you're healing relational wounds isn't noble. It's just recreating the conditions that hurt you in the first place, without meaning to though, but it's just recreating those conditions, right? Let's take a breath and let that sink in.

Shall I say that again? Let me say that again. Going it alone when you're healing relational wounds, emotional outsourcing is relational wounding, right? I don't feel safe to be myself, right? I don't trust my safety, belonging, and worth in relationship. So I am not me. I am not authentic. I am not real. I am not present. I am not intentional.

Going it alone when you're healing relational wounds isn't noble. It's just recreating the conditions that hurt you in the first place. Oof. Oof. And

Ep #362: Why Nervous System Healing Isn't Meant to Be Done Alone

here's the part that might land even harder. You're ready? Are you sitting down?

Staying isolated in your growth because you don't want to be seen as needy or as taking up space, it feels like again, this like noble high road, but it's actually in its way the more self-centered move. Not because you're like selfish and wrong and bad, but because you're still making it about whether you deserve support instead of recognizing that healing happens in relationship. And you're so focused on how you are being seen and perceived and experienced through not being too much or not being a bother or a burden that you're withholding yourself from the exact conditions that would help you stop abandoning yourself, which would then in turn help you show up better for the people you love.

You see that? It's really annoying. And it turns out the more generous move is letting yourself be in community, letting your growth be witnessed, letting yourself receive. Being of support to others by being vulnerable. And not because like you've earned it, but because that's how humans actually change, because science.

So when I ask why, why take the longest road when there's a shorter one available? Why make this harder than it needs to be? Why insist on doing relational repair without relational support? Why heal patterns that were formed in relationship entirely on your own? I'm asking you to notice if the answer is still coming from the wound. And that is a vital question that we just don't think to ask.

When people join Anchored, one of the first things they tell me they notice is how much less scattered they feel. Not because they suddenly become more disciplined or whatever, but because the container holds them. There are bumpers in the bowling lane. You still throw the ball, you still do the work, but you're not flying into the abyss every time something tender comes up.

Ep #362: Why Nervous System Healing Isn't Meant to Be Done Alone

Distraction isn't a character flaw. It's a nervous system response to too much choice, too little containment, and too much emotional load. When you're doing this work alone, it's easy to veer off into ten modalities, 20 different tools, six new podcasts, three contradictory frameworks to like cherry-pick all the millions of options. You start something and then you abandon it. Not because you lack commitment, but because your system lost the thread. I've been there. I've been there a dozen times.

Anchored is designed to keep the threads in your hands. There is a sequence. There is pacing. There is a framework and a pedagogy that builds on itself. There is a plan. There's a logic that respects how nervous systems actually learn and grow and change. And you're not wondering what to focus on next. You're not spinning in self-analysis. You're practicing, integrating, noticing, connecting with others, and moving forward with intention.

Another thing people don't talk about enough is how lonely healing can feel when you're doing it by yourself. Even when you're making progress, even when you're proud of yourself, even when you're outgrowing old patterns, especially then, I'll say. There's grief in that. There's a disorientation. There's a strange ache of becoming someone new without witnesses.

You deserve to be held while you change, not held in a way that collapses you or makes you dependent, held in a way that gives your nervous system enough safety to take risks, to tell the truth, to try something different, to rest into support without disappearing. In Anchored, people often say some version of this. I didn't realize how much I was carrying alone until I didn't have to anymore.

And wow, I mean, that matters. Because so many of those people-pleasing perfectionist habits, the ones where you handle everything yourself to be safe, to be loved, to be worthy, they're built on the belief that receiving support means you've failed. Receiving support without strings attached

Ep #362: Why Nervous System Healing Isn't Meant to Be Done Alone

isn't just helpful, it's reparative, and that's something we do every day in Anchored.

There's also something quietly powerful about being in a room where other people are doing the same kind of deep nervous system-based work at the same time. You're not the odd one out for caring about this. You're not the only one who wants to slow down, feel more, live with more integrity. And that normalizes your desire for a different way of being in the world. It helps you step into this new vision because you're seeing the vision through others.

And then there's time. So healing doesn't have to take forever. When you're focused, supported, guided, and resourced, things move, not in a rushed way, because we never rush, but in an efficient way. You spend less time circling the same insight, less time doubting yourself, less time getting stuck in loops. You've actually already outgrown. People are often surprised by how much shifts when they stop trying to do everything at once and instead commit to a coherent path.

Anchored isn't about piling more on. It's about stripping away what isn't necessary and training your system to come back to itself again and again and again till you are your own North Star. There's also the reality that some things only show up in relationship. Your patterns with authority, with visibility, with vulnerability, with receiving feedback, with being witnessed, with asking for help, with getting support without earning it. And you can't practice those things alone. They need a relational field. They need other humans. They need a space where you can notice what happens in your body when you speak, when you listen, when you're quiet, when you're moved, when you're challenged, when you're affirmed, when you're loved on.

Anchored gives you that feel. Yeah, in a gentle way that is safe and soft for your nervous system in a way that's paced, intentional, and deeply respectful of where each person is. People sometimes worry that joining a

Ep #362: Why Nervous System Healing Isn't Meant to Be Done Alone

cohort means losing autonomy, and I think the opposite is true. When your nervous system is supported, your agency increases. When you're less braced, your choices get clearer. When you're not managing everything alone, you have more energy for your actual life. You still do your own work. You still make your own meaning. You still move at your own pace within the container. The difference is that you're not doing it in isolation anymore.

Beauty, my darling. This isn't about like needing someone else to fix you. It's about letting yourself be in a system that was designed to support long-lasting, sustainable human change. It's about recognizing that independence and interdependence aren't opposites. They're partners. You can heal alone, and you don't have to.

If you're tired of white-knuckling your way through growth, if you're ready to stop reinventing the wheel every time something hard comes up, if you want your healing to feel held, focused, and alive in community, if you want to learn from people whose lives look nothing like yours and yet feel intimately familiar, if you want this work to take less time because you're not doing it in a vacuum and you're not scuffling for the what's the next thing, that's what the Anchored cohort offers. Not pressure or performance or perfection, but containment, community, co-regulation, kindness, compassion, care, and love and the relief of knowing you don't have to do this the hardest way possible anymore.

Trust me, my beauty, there's no suffering Olympics. There's no gold medal for going it alone. If anything, I mean, in these unfortunately all too precedented times, what we're seeing now more than ever is just how vital it is to come together in community and to have each other's backs.

Thanks for listening, my love. If you feel moved to get this kind of support, head to BeatrizAlbina.com/Anchored to learn more and apply now. This is the only cohort planned for 2026. We'll see when the next one is. I'm taking

Ep #362: Why Nervous System Healing Isn't Meant to Be Done Alone

a sabbatical later this year, and so I don't know when the next Anchored will be.

So if you feel moved, if you've been listening to the show and following me on Instagram and you've read the book or you just heard about me today and you feel moved to not participate in the suffering Olympics anymore, but rather to get support and love and expert care and coaching to step into the life you know is possible or the life you don't even know is possible but dream is possible, let me tell you, it is possible. And I'd love, love, love, and I'd be really honored to be your guide on that path.

Thanks for listening, my love. I look forward to welcoming you to Anchored. 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, ciao.