

Ep #365: A Life with Default “Sorry”



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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 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. So, someone said something in a recent webinar of mine that landed in my body with like this thud. And it was that like quiet thud of the truth that you feel like behind your sternum, right? Like it lands, it resonates, it moves you. I asked what would most change their experience of their life. Like if I had a magic wand. And she wrote, if I could start a sentence without the word sorry. So no more, sorry I’m late. Sorry to bother you. So sorry for asking. Sorry for taking up space. Sorry for needing. Sorry for having a preference. Sorry for existing. Sorry for having feelings. Sorry for existing. Sorry for existing. Sorry for existing.

And the chat erupted because everyone in that space recognized the weight of what she was saying. That reflex, the constant automatic, oh, sorry. It isn’t about manners, my love. It’s about a nervous system that learned very early on, we all learn emotional outsourcing. That safety lives in shrinking, in not being your realest you, your fullest self, the fullest expression of who you are, anywhere really.

When you grow up where connection feels conditional, where love is unpredictable, where the adults around you are emotionally immature, overwhelmed, absent, volatile, or subtly disappointed by your needs or like your existence or having to parent. I mean, your body does the math. To belong, I have to be less of myself. To be safe, I can’t make waves or bother them. To have worth, I can’t need much.

So yeah, sorry becomes your opening line, your opening energetic, a peace offering before you’ve even spoken. A way to soften your presence before anyone has the chance to reject it, reject you. Because being abandoned, being rejected is existentially dangerous to human animals. We are very small. And so we worry about being left to die cold and alone

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on the mountaintop. So we shrink ourselves, so we can stay in the village by the fire where it's warm and the lions aren't around.

So this is a survival skill. It's procedural memory as well. It lives in your autonomic nervous system. Well, it doesn't live in there. The story lives in your neural pathways, and your autonomic nervous system has it as a heuristic, a shortcut, a boom. Quick way to go.

So your body learned that leading with apology kept you safer. It reduced the risk of conflict, withdrawal, ridicule, annoyance, abandonment, right? All the scary stuff. It was brilliant adaptation, and it worked. I mean, it worked really well. Because here's what actually happened. So you were like five or seven or 10 or 15 and you had a need. You were hungry at the wrong time or sad and emotional, too sensitive when it was inconvenient. Or really excited and really wanted to share when the adults needed quiet. And you learned, generally not from a lecture, but from like the tightening of someone's jaw, oh, the edge in their voice, the way they turned away, that your aliveness was a problem.

So you found a solution. Lead with sorry. Make yourself smaller. Apologize for the space you take up before anyone has to tell you're taking up too much space. And it worked. People softened, the threat passed, connection remained possible. Your body filed that away. This is how I stay safe. This is how I stay loved. This is how I stay in the good graces that get me enough food and water and safety.

That learning got encoded in the part of you that operates below conscious awareness, that reacts before you can think, that runs the show when you're stressed or overwhelmed or tired or just trying to get through the day or when you're around certain people, certain patterns, certain ways of relating. And so now, decades later, sorry, comes out of your mouth before you've even registered what you're apologizing for. Oh, sorry I'm talking. Sorry I have a question. Sorry I exist in this space.

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And listen, darling. Of course, we apologize when we actually mess up. When we're late, when we hurt someone, when we cause harm. Of course, we apologize. Episodes 72 through 75 are all about how to apologize well, how to take accountability, how to repair. But that's that's not this. This is that reflexive, oh, sorry, that has nothing to do with wrongdoing. The sorry that's apologizing for existence, for taking up space. And it doesn't stop at words. We apologize for having feelings. And then we don't let ourselves actually feel those feelings. Because if expressing a feeling might make someone uncomfortable, and discomfort might lead to disconnection, then the safest thing to do, well, it's to stuff it down. Right? Oh, it's fine and smile through the anger. Downplay the hurt. Don't worry about it. Convince yourself you're fine. I'm fine. Don't worry. I'm fine. When you're drowning.

And so that becomes the reflex, not just with others, but when you're alone. So you have a flash of rage and you immediately talk yourself out of it. Oh, it's not that bad. I'm just being dramatic. You feel grief rising and you busy yourself with tasks. I do not have time for this right now. You notice resentment building and you rationalize it away. They didn't mean it like that. Again, I'm too sensitive. Without realizing it, like fully unwittingly, no one's throwing stones here, you abandon yourself before anyone else gets the chance to.

And that's that self-abandonment cycle we talked about in episodes 163 and 164. That pattern where you disconnect from your own feelings, your own needs, your own reality, because somewhere along the way, you learned that your internal experience was too much, too inconvenient, too threatening to the people you needed. So my brilliant, darling, amazing, incredible love, you learned to manage yourself, edit yourself, be the version of you that's easiest for everyone else. And the cost? You lose access to your own emotional truth. You lose the ability to know what you actually feel because you're so practiced at not feeling it. You lose trust in your own perceptions because you've spent so long minimizing them. The number of women I work with who tell me, I am a stranger to myself. All because your nervous system learned that apologizing for your aliveness,

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your existence, your exuberance, your joy, your feels, your reals. And then actually making yourself less alive in that process was the price of staying in connection.

Add patriarchy to the mix, and this training goes into overdrive, especially for women and gender marginalized folks. We are taught that our likeability, I mean, it's our currency, right? That being too much is dangerous, that confidence without apology reads as arrogance. Right? And what's worse than a woman that's full of herself, that directness is aggression, that taking up space requires some kind of permission slip. So we cushion every word, we soften every edge. We ask permission to speak. Hey, if you don't mind, I actually have something to add as the expert on this topic in this meeting.

We apologize for our feelings. I'm sorry, but I'm just like really pissed off. We apologize for our time, for wanting anything, for taking up oxygen. And this is emotional outsourcing in its most insidious form. That chronic habitual sourcing of your safety, your belonging, your worth from outside of yourself, from approval, from not upsetting anyone, from being easy, from being chosen. And when your default setting is, sorry I exist, your nervous system never rests. You're always scanning, always calibrating, always editing yourself in real time. Like, you read texts five times before hitting send. You rehearse conversations for hours in your head before they happen and after. You say yes when every cell in your body is screaming no. You laugh at jokes that make you uncomfortable, minimize your pain so others don't have to feel awkward, fold yourself smaller in meetings, in relationships, in your own damn life.

That vigilance is bone deep exhausting, and it fuels anxiety, resentment, burnout, that functional freeze where you feel like you just can't make a single freaking decision. It severs you from your own preferences because you are so busy attempting to manage everyone else's comfort. And yeah, what you actually want and feel, what you're allowed to have, that you're allowed to speak first without asking. These things are forgotten. You forget that you're allowed to want without justifying the why. You forget that you're

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allowed to exist without explaining yourself. I mean, jeez, you forget what your own voice sounds like when it's not apologizing.

And here's what makes me want to shake the entire self-help industrial complex. I watch brilliant, deeply feeling, wildly capable people try to think their way out of this. To just read all the books, just write affirmations about self-worth. Tell themselves they need to stop apologizing so much, and then someone asks them a simple question and, sorry, falls out of their mouth before they can even register it happened. Because my beauty, you cannot think your way out of a survival strategy that your body learned in relationship. Affirmations don't rewire procedural memory. Insight doesn't update the autonomic nervous system. Understanding why you do something is important. Awareness is in and of itself healing, but it has its limits, right? Understanding doesn't change what your body believes is safe.

So what does? Experience, repetition, relational safety, and tenderoni, we need all of that to make lasting change because nervous systems don't learn from information, they learn from experience. My beauty, you don't stop apologizing because a podcast tells you it's okay not to, though I sure do hope this helps you give yourself some level of permission. My darling, my darling, my sweet little squash blossom, you stop apologizing for existing when your body has repeated, lived experiences of being welcomed without making yourself small first.

You need to watch someone speak their truth directly and not get punished for it, but rather celebrated. You need to see someone say, no, and still be held with care and love. You need to hear someone express anger, desire, clarity, a boundary, a limit, a want, a need, and not get abandoned for it. You need to feel in your actual nervous system, in your body, in your spirit, what it's like to take up space. And while you're taking up space to stay connected.

We learn these lessons on the cellular body level through co-regulation, through relational repair, through your nervous system experiencing

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another doing the thing you most want to do. And then, mirror neurons, you model yourself on them. You do the thing they do. And that's how your body updates its operating system about what's actually safe, what's actually okay, what you can actually want in the world.

And this kind of deep, sustainable, lasting change doesn't happen alone, my tenderoni. It doesn't happen in your journal at 11 p.m. It doesn't happen by saving one more Instagram carousel about people-pleasing. No, it happens in community with people who are doing the exact same work. When you're in a space with people who are also unwinding emotional outsourcing, something subtle but also radical happens, which is that you borrow each other's courage. You borrow each other's nervous system capacity. You watch someone take up space without apologizing, and your body thinks, wait a second. Hold on now. That's possible? That's allowed?

And so you learn somatically in your body that the world doesn't collapse when you stop saying, oh, sorry for existing. And gradually that knee jerk default story starts to fall away. Not because you become harsh or careless. Come on now, we're tender. But because apology returns to its rightful place, something you offer in response to actual harm, not as a price of admission for having needs.

So what becomes possible on the other side of sorry I exist? I mean, come on now, everything, darling. You speak with clarity because you're not bracing for rejection. You listen with presence because you're not monitoring your own acceptability. You have energy for your actual life because your system isn't running threat assessment 24/7. So the buffering with substances or doom spiraling, forget about it. You don't need it as much because you're not in that old rumination pattern, right?

And so you make decisions without spiraling because now you trust your own signals. You experience intimacy and connection that feels reciprocal instead of like a performance you're constantly auditioning for. You become someone who can say, here's what I need, here's what I feel, here's what works for me without writing an apology essay first. You become someone

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who takes up space because you're allowed to have a body. And you're allowed to be present in your body, because you're someone who exists without needing permission.

And yes, of course, my love, of course it can feel terrifying at first like staring down a cage full of lions and you realize there's no lock on that door. Because when you stop apologizing, you're stepping outside an old protection. And I get that. I mean, I get that. Of course, I get that. And so of course your body might brace for backlash. Sometimes people react. Sometimes people don't like it. Sometimes people offer what John Bradshaw calls the change back demand. I liked you the way you were when you didn't have limits, when you didn't have boundaries, when I benefited from you being sorry that you existed.

Sometimes people react. Sometimes they don't. Sometimes they don't notice. The change is just internal to you, and wow is it potent within you. But listen, sometimes you're in a family like Anchored, and everybody notices in the best way possible, and everyone cheers you on and everyone says, "I'm inspired by you." Regardless of which way that goes, you stay intact. And studies show that you are highly unlikely to die from taking up space, claiming your ground, not apologizing for simply existing.

My beauty, that's the work. Building capacity to remain with yourself even when others squirm, building nervous system safety to stay grounded in your worth without needing external validation to prove that you matter. And this is why I build everything I do in community. This is why Anchored isn't you trying to fix yourself in isolation with a workbook and sheer willpower, because eek, that doesn't work. Because unlearning sorry I exist requires witnesses. It requires relational safety. It requires repetition. Dozens and dozens of micro moments where your nervous system collects new data about what's possible when you stop shrinking.

That's what six months of weekly community calls creates, and six months of daily posts in the community forum. That's what somatic practices in real time with other humans generate. That's what nervous system repatterning

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in relationship actually does. It builds the capacity to exist without apologizing, the capacity to speak without bracing, the capacity to want without producing a 47-page justification.

If that one sentence from that webinar landed somewhere deep, if hearing this made something in your chest ache with recognition, if some part of you is exhausted from apologizing for being alive and desperate to know what it feels like to just exist, know this. Sweet, tender, little lamb chop, nothing is wrong with you. Your nervous system made the smartest possible adaptation to impossible circumstances, and it's allowed to learn something new. You don't need to disappear to belong. You don't need to apologize to deserve love and care and all good things in this world. You are allowed to exist without earning it.

And there's a room full of people in Anchored learning how to do exactly that together. And I want to invite you to join us. This upcoming cohort is the only one this year. I'm not really sure when the next one will be. So if you've been thinking about it, if you've been enjoying the podcast, my webinars, my Instagram content, and my book *End Emotional Outsourcing*, and you've been wanting to work with me, you've been wanting to do exactly this work, it would be an absolute delight to have you in the next anchored class.

My website BeatzAlbina.com/Anchored has all the details. The application is there. It would be magnificent to have you join us. So you can stop apologizing for simply existing. I can step into your power to live a life you really want to live. And I'll testify, it's pretty freaking groovy over here. It's rad. It's super rad. It's pretty amazing. So come on, join us. I can't wait to get to know you. All right, beauty, 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. Talk to you soon. Ciao, ciao.