

Ep #367: Unfreeze for Collective Liberation: End Emotional Outsourcing to Live Your Values



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 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 my darlings, my work is deeply and inherently political and given everything happening in the US and globally, we need to talk about how our emotional outsourcing habits aren't just keeping us from our own joy, our own peace. They're also keeping us from showing up for collective liberation.

And this is going to be a multipart series. So if you start listening to this one and you're like, "Cool, cool, cool, this pattern isn't me," that's cool. Keep listening because there's always a gem or two and make sure you're following or subscribed to the show so you get parts two and three and who knows, I might do four and five. You never know. But make sure you get those automatically via the magic of the interwebs.

It's pretty cool though, right? Just that you can subscribe to a thing and then it automatically downloads to your phone for free. I don't know, it's all kind of wild to me. What even are phones? But alright, so refocusing. Picture this.

So your friend texts about a protest this weekend. ICE out, Palestine solidarity, climate march, whatever the cause. And you feel that pull, right? That yes in your body, that knowing that this matters. Even if you've never been to a protest, you haven't been to a protest in years, or you used to go all the time.

So your body says yes and then, you don't even think about it, casually mention it to your dad at dinner, or your partner, or your boss, and they get that look. That disapproval. Maybe they say it's dangerous. Maybe they say it won't change anything. Maybe just, "Oh, yeah, no, I really just wish you wouldn't."

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And suddenly, that yes in your body that felt so big, so strong, so powerful gets quiet, gets small. Because now you're doing that internal math, right? That calculus of who's going to be more upset, whose feelings matter more, whose reaction can you tolerate?

And so you know what you end up doing? What most of us end up doing, and there's no blamies around here ever, right? But what do you do? Nothing. You freeze. You sit on your couch feeling completely paralyzed because everyone else's opinion about what you should do has become louder than what you actually believe, what you actually value, what your body is screaming matters.

Or maybe it's not even about going somewhere. Maybe it's just dinner. Tuesday night, placing plates and someone says something. About the protestors, about those people on welfare, about trans kids. Something that makes your stomach drop, something racist, something ableist, something ugh. You can feel it rising. That need to speak, that truth clawing its way up your throat and you just... Well, you swallow it. You take a sip of water, ask someone to pass the salt. There's this ringing in your ears as the conversation moves on, as everyone relaxes because you didn't make it weird. Sigh, big sigh.

And so you sit there feeling like you're disappearing, watching yourself from somewhere else because keeping everyone comfortable just became more important than saying what's true, what's real, what's in your heart.

And this is what emotional outsourcing does when the stakes are high. It doesn't just keep you from your own authenticity and personal relationships, which that's huge, right? But it keeps you from acting on your values in the world. Frozen when action is required, silent when your voice is needed, playing by the old rule book that, let's call a spade a spade, you were socialized and conditioned to play by, right? But you're not living by the values you believe in. That's a big ouchy, right?

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So my darling, ahem, let us nerd. And we nerd because when we understand the science, we can give ourselves a bit more grace, right? It's not you, it's you, but different. Alright, so let me tell you what's happening in your nervous system and your brain bits. So you can understand why this feels so impossible to override. It's not, but it feels that way until you have the tools for it not to be. Okay.

So when you've spent your whole life outsourcing your safety, your belonging, your worth from other people's approval, when the way to survive has been by reading the room and adjusting yourself accordingly, well duh, your loving, survival-focused nervous system interprets any potential disapproval as a threat. And a real threat, a survival threat. Okay, but not intellectually. You know your dad being disappointed won't actually kill you. And yet, your amygdala, that almond-shaped little troublemaker deep in your brain that's been detecting threats since you were born, it doesn't quite make that distinction.

So, your dad gives you that look, and your amygdala fires freak-out stories. Signals shoot down your vagus nerve, that super highway between your brain and your body. Heart rate changes, breathing gets shallow, muscles tense. Your whole system floods with stress hormones.

And one of the main protection responses when fight and flight aren't options, because you're not going to flip the table, well it's freeze. Immobility, tonic immobility if we're getting fancy about it. You can't move forward, you can't move back, you're just stuck. Deer in the headlights, possum playing possum, except the headlights are your father's potential disappointment.

And this is, to use the metaphor of polyvagal theory in the way it's very helpful as a 'metáfora', this is that dorsal vagal shutdown, right? That ancient part of your nervous system, the part we share with reptiles. And it does one thing really well: It makes you disappear.

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I mean, not literally. You're still sitting there, fork in hand, looking probably 86% normal, but energetically, metabolically, your system essentially is playing dead to avoid the threat. And in that disconnected, frozy state, you cannot access your values. You cannot access your courage.

Your prefrontal cortex, the part that knows what's right and can think strategically, goes offline, as it were. Meaning strong stress can down-regulate prefrontal cortex activity and amplify amygdala-driven reactivity, which has been seen in fMRI studies. That's why people under threat often lose access to complex reasoning or moral reflection. It's like built into the pudding. It's how we survive.

So all that beautiful capacity for moral reasoning, gone. And you're just trying to survive the social threat, right? You're just trying to not be abandoned, not be left, not be left to die cold and alone on the mountaintop. Which is, it feels so real in the moment, right? Because if we lose connection, we lose safety. Which is not not true, but what is true is that it gets overblown in these moments when we are so deep in our emotional outsourcing.

And so, I mean to put quite a fine point on it, this is how empire wins, my darling. Not by convincing you that justice doesn't matter, but by making you so afraid of losing connection that you'll betray your own knowing to keep the peace. By weaponizing your need for belonging against your commitment to liberation.

And so the cruel part is that you feel terrible either way. Go to the protest, speak up, state your mind, you're flooded with anxiety about relational consequences. Stay silent and stay home, you hate yourself for it. Feel like a coward, like a hypocrite, you're complicit in the exact systems you claim to oppose. Which I'm just, by the way, I'm not saying you are. Protests aren't for everyone.

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Backing up, tender ravioli, my darling tender ravioli, when this is happening, it's not that you're a coward. You're working with a nervous system shaped by a lifetime of learning that your survival depends on not rocking any kind of boats, on managing other people's comfort, on making yourself smaller and smaller and smaller so others can stay comfortable. And that's not your fault. Who would choose that? That's what happens when you grow up in systems that punish authenticity and reward compliance. When you learn early that love comes with conditions, and the main condition is being who others seem to need you to be.

Here's what I need you to understand. And this is where it gets actively political, I guess you can say. You cannot heal your personal emotional outsourcing patterns while staying silent about injustice. And you cannot show up for collective liberation while prioritizing everyone else's comfort over your own values. These aren't separate projects, they're the same work.

Breaking free from emotional outsourcing means reclaiming your right to act from your values, even when it makes people uncomfortable. Even when it risks their approval. Even when it means they might be disappointed or upset or confused about who you're becoming, who you're showing up as, who you've always been, right? Because the personal is political. And where we're not speaking up in our personal lives is reflected where we're not speaking up around politics, right? It's part and parcel, it's the same systems telling us to hush little lady. Shh, be a good girl now, huh? Be a good little girl, keep your mouth shut, right?

And listen, this work feels particularly poignant right now, especially in the US context, where more of us are waking up to what's actually happening and what's been happening, right? Listen to Black women, these are not unprecedented times. This is very precedented. But people are waking up to the systems that have always been there and are now impossible to ignore.

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So, don't let anyone tell you that this work to overcome emotional outsourcing isn't important right now or that it's selfish or that you should be doing something else instead. No. This is vital. Because when you step into your values politically and socially, that also changes how you treat each other, which is also political. How we show up for each other, how we build relationships based on authenticity instead of performance. How we create communities that can actually sustain movements for liberation, all of that matters.

I want to acknowledge, my beauty, that all of that can be scary as hell. When your whole identity has been built around being the good one, the accommodating one, the one who never causes problems, stepping into your values can feel like stepping off a cliff. Your nervous system is screaming, "Danger, danger, danger," because rejection feels as threatening as a predator in the wild, right? Because sadly, your nervous system doesn't fully know the difference between a disappointed parent and a hungry lion. Annoying, but real.

And so what's the cost of staying frozen? What's the cost of spending your life managing other people's feelings instead of acting on what you know matters? Whether it's politics or how your husband talks to you when he disagrees with you, right? What's the cost to your soul of watching injustice happen on the micro or the macro level and saying nothing because you're too afraid of the social consequences? What are you protecting by staying silent? Their comfort? At the expense of your integrity, your self-respect, your capacity to look in the mirror and recognize who's looking back?

And when you stay frozen, when you prioritize comfort over justice, you're not actually keeping the relationship safe. You're simply postponing the rupture. Because eventually the distance between who you're pretending to be and who you actually are becomes unbearable. Eventually, the resentment builds like pressure in a sealed container until you can't stand to be in the same room with the people whose feelings you've been

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protecting. Eventually, you either explode or disappear entirely, ghosting the relationship because performing has become too painful, and we've all been there, my love, or just turning away and being a shell of yourself at every family gathering.

The relationships that survive aren't the ones where you never make anyone uncomfortable. They're the ones where people can tolerate discomfort and stay connected anyway, where your authenticity matters more than their comfort, not in a meanie-pants way, but in a, "Let's be real here," way. Where there's enough trust that you can disagree, you can challenge each other, you can grow in different directions without the whole thing falling apart like a poorly constructed IKEA bookshelf.

And the relationships that can't survive your authenticity, those aren't relationships where you were truly known anyway. Those are relationships where you were performing, where you were managing, slowly suffocating yourself to keep the peace, operating as an emotional support animal instead of a full human being. And you deserve so much more than that, my darling.

And I know all of this can be devastating to hear, especially if we're talking about people you love, your parents, your partner, your best friend since childhood. These are the people whose approval you've built your whole sense of safety and self around, your attachment figures, the ones who taught you what love looked like, even if what they taught you was that love equals self-abandonment. But staying small to keep them comfortable, it isn't actually love, my darling. It's just perpetuating a dynamic where nobody gets to be real, where connection is conditional on never causing discomfort, where intimacy is actually impossible because you're not actually letting them know you, on any level, real you.

You're giving them a performance, Oscar-worthy, I'm sure, but not a person. Real love, real belonging has to be big enough to hold your full humanity, including your values, including your rage about injustice,

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including your commitment to something beyond just keeping everybody happy, including your evolution into someone they maybe didn't expect. And that's because you are allowed to grow, my love. You are allowed to change, no matter what certain family members might think.

Oh, and darling, my sweet, beautiful squash blossom, if the people in your life can't hold that, if your authenticity threatens them so much they'd rather lose you than let you be real, then those aren't actually your people. And I get that's a devastating revelation, but also, it's the doorway to freedom. Because it means you get to stop performing and start finding the people who want to know the real you, who celebrate your values instead of being threatened by them, who see your fire and think, "Yes, more of that, please."

So how do we break this pattern when our nervous systems are wired for it? Well, we'll get into remedies in just a second. So first, notice it. Notice when you're in that checked-out, disconnected freeze, when you're doing the math of whose disapproval you can handle. Spoiler, this equation has no solution, but your brain keeps trying anyway. When you've lost touch with your own yes, your own no, your own knowing, your own body, when you're not, "Oh, I'm not in my body." When that computational part of your brain is trying to solve the unsolvable equation of how to honor yourself without losing anyone, right?

So notice the body sensations. Is there tightness in your throat, ringing in your ear, chest constriction, mind going blank? Where are your feet? Does time feel strange, too fast, too slow at once, like you're moving through maple syrup while everyone else is on normal speed? If you suddenly can't remember what you were going to say, even though you knew it 10 seconds ago, that's a clue. These are your nervous system signals that you're in protection mode, my love. There's a system override.

So notice it, one. Two, resource your nervous system. Resource your nervous system. We're going to start with our primary resource if you've

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been in any of my courses or any of my free offerings, what do we do first? That's right, 10 points, orient. Yeah, if you're new around here, you can get an orienting meditation, a whole suite of meditations and nervous system exercises for freebies at my website, BeatrizAlbina.com/freemeditations. You can't beat the price. We'll put the link in the show notes.

Orienting your nervous system, at its simplest, it's very simple. You look around the room you're in and remind your nervous system there's no lions here. Lion-free zone, lion-free zone, and just literally taking your surroundings, you're orienting your nervous system to the space you're in. We start there. Yeah, orient that nervous system. Then if you've been in the Somatic Studio, what do we say every two seconds? Find your feet, find the ground. Find your feet, where are my feet? Feel them. Find the ground. You're starting to resource your nervous system. Yeah, you're giving your nervous system somatic sensorial reminders to be here and now in the here and now and not in the active trigger, not in a nervous system state that's not grounded. Yeah?

Remember, you cannot think your way out of freeze, right? And I know, I know, you've tried. We all have, right? You just can't do it. We can't logic yourself into courage. You have to give your body evidence that it's safe enough to act from your values, even when someone might be disappointed or will very likely be disappointed. And so the more we can resource our nervous system here and now, the better it will be. And we need to practice. So doing small acts of honoring your knowing, your values, even when it creates discomfort. So what do I always say? Kitten steps, right? The tiniest step possible. Start with the lowest-stakes situation. Practice with people who feel safer or just notice the urge to say something and don't immediately swallow it.

Pause, breathe, feel your feet, hand on heart, remind your nervous system you're not actually in danger even though it might feel that way, even though it might really, really, really feel that way. And through that process,

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build experiences of surviving someone's disapproval, right? Of saying the true thing and not being destroyed, of acting from your values and discovering that you're okay, even if they're upset, even if they withdraw, even if they get angry. You're still here, still breathing, still whole, still you.

And we do that by saying tiny nos to things that don't matter, tiny yeses to things that don't matter. We practice in that micro scale so that we can build up the capacity in our nervous systems to stay present for the bigger things, for the conversation about politics or a protest or a whatever. So, and this is going to sound so microscopic, whatever, but let's say you're going to go out somewhere with your mom and she's like, "Okay, I need to go right now," but you have to pee. And usually you would just get in the car, having to pee and feeling miserable. Say, "Mom, I need to pee," and let her be annoyed.

Those kinds of little things where you take a moment to actually take care of yourself, or you say, "You go ahead, I need to eat, I'll meet you at the mall in 30 minutes." Right? And I know we're talking about big things, about ICE and fascism and the fall of democracy and protests and politics, but we need to recognize that many of us cannot get to there if we can't tell a loved one, "I need five more minutes," right? Or, "It's not appropriate for you to speak to me in that tone." Right? We need to start with the most micro of micros. That's where we are. Why would you start where you're not? Start where you are, beauty.

Right? And so then even if they withdraw, even if they get angry, you're still here. Still breathing, still whole, still you, still present with yourself. And your nervous system needs that evidence, my darling, right? Those tiny experiences of, "I did the hard thing that maybe no one else thinks is hard, but who cares because it was for me, and I'm still here." Because that's how you build new neural pathways. That's how you teach your amygdala that authenticity doesn't equal death, even though your amygdala is convinced it does.

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Third, that was all part two. Build community with people who share your values, right? When your whole nervous system has been shaped by needing approval from people who benefit from the status quo, you need other nervous systems around you that are regulated in a different direction. You need your people. You need people who aren't going to judge you for showing up, who celebrate your courage, who understand that collective liberation requires us to stop prioritizing comfort over justice. People who get enraged about the same things you do, who don't think you're too much or too sensitive or too political, because honestly, I mean, there's no such thing as too political when people are dying, right? When children are being kidnapped. Folks who welcome your fire instead of trying to extinguish it, those are your people, right?

Your nervous system learns safety through co-regulation. When you're around people who are calm about your authenticity, who welcome your values, even when they create discomfort elsewhere in your life, your system starts to learn a different pattern, right? That being real doesn't equal being abandoned, that you can have both authenticity and belonging, just maybe not with the people you thought. And that sucks, but it's okay. It really is. And so this is why community matters so somatically, not just intellectually.

Your body synchronizes your nervous system with the nervous systems around you, meaning autonomic synchronicity, heart rate, hormone changes, pupil dilation. Your body's doing the cha-cha with other bodies, whether you know it or not. So when you're in a room full of people grounded in their values, regulated in their commitments, who can hold both grief and rage without collapsing, right? Who are honest and direct and good communicators, your system learns from theirs. You borrow their capacity until you build your own.

My beauty, we need to build practices that help us return to our body when we notice we're in freeze. So breathwork that activates ventral vagal,

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movement that shakes out that freeze, time in nature, gathering with others to break these patterns, whatever gives you the physiological experience of being safe enough so you can access courage.

This is the work, my most tender ravioli. Every time you choose your values over someone else's feelings, every time you show up even when it's uncomfortable, every time you act from your knowing instead of from fear of judgment, you're breaking a pattern. You're refusing to let empire use your need for belonging against you. You're evidencing to your nervous system that it is possible. It is possible to be authentic and to survive. And my beauty, that is nothing short of revolutionary.

That is one vital part of how we build the world we want to live in, one brave, uncomfortable, values-aligned choice at a time. And you don't have to do this perfectly because what even is that, right? But you don't have to suddenly become fearless. You start by noticing when you're frozen and choosing to act anyway. Even when your nervous system is screaming at you, "Stay small," because your values start to matter more than their comfort. Your integrity matters more than their approval.

My beauty, the world needs you unfrozen. Needs you acting from your center. Needs you showing up for liberation, step by step, as best you can, even when it costs you something. The people who truly love you will figure out how to stay connected even when you make them uncomfortable. And the ones who can't, beauty, they were never going to let you be free anyway.

So take a breath. Feel your feet on the floor. Hand on your heart. Feel yourself here in this body, in this moment. Remember what you're here for. Remember what your ancestors survived, so much worse than someone's disappointment. Remember that you have a right to your values, to your voice, to your full participation in the work of justice.

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And the next time that moment comes, when you feel that pull to act and that terror about the consequences, ask yourself, "What's more costly? Speaking my truth and risking disappointment or spending my whole life frozen, watching injustices happen while I prioritize everyone else's comfort?"

I'm going to guess you already know the answer, my love. Your body knows. It's been trying to tell you. It's just been too scared to act on it. And that makes sense. We got to honor that. We got to give that some love, some care, some compassion and show ourselves that another way is possible. You don't have to sit quietly in the break room while someone makes a racist joke. You don't have to stay silent on things that matter because other people might not like it.

Someone's always going to not like what you're doing. Man, you can take that one to the bank, right? And you just get to decide who you want to be and how you want to show up. And being part of the movement for collective liberation starts with liberating ourselves from emotional outsourcing and then rippling that outward.

Thank you for joining me, my love. Thank you for hearing me. Thank you for receiving this message. Thank you for sharing it with your friends, with your family, with your community. I appreciate you. 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.