

**Ep #370: Caring for the Long Haul:
End Emotional Outsourcing to Live Your Values
(Part 4)**



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 for the last three weeks, we've been talking about how we show up in this current political reality. Some might call it a bit of a dystopia. We talked about the freeze. We talked about, I don't want to say like too much vehemence, but I do because that's what I mean. Having that fire-burning intensity that burns down ally ships, folks who want to be comrades as well as folks who don't. We talked about what to do last week when you're like, I want to get involved, but I have no more to give, no doy mas. I'm just like the tank is beyond empty between the house and the kids and the job and the whatever and then the political everything.

And so this week to close out this series, I want to talk about the long haul because I think that could be the hardest part of this. Right? So not the showing up once, not the first protest, the first call, the first time you put your body or your voice somewhere that felt like a stretch or risky. Because that part, as terrifying as it can be, well, it has a kind of energy to it, right?

So urgency carries you, fear carries you, righteous fury carries you. But the hard part that I don't think we're preparing enough for, and I think is incumbent upon us, us folks who are aware and present and are clocking what's going on, we need to think about month four, month eight, year two. Because life isn't going to stop being life-y, right? Like the cat is still, Wade Elizabeth, my son, if you're new to the program, I have a son. We adopted him in March of last year. He's about, the vet thinks from his dental records, he's about two, maybe three. He's all black. He has one white fur, like one white hair on his belly. He is a feline, he is my son, and I won't hear otherwise.

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Anyway, yeah, life gets life-y. Wade Elizabeth jumped up on this windowsill right over here and knocked like 12 plant babies to the ground, spraying soil everywhere just when I was sitting down to record this. It's a tiny thing, but I'm saying, life is going to life.

So how do we stay politically engaged, active, effective, not just for this news cycle, not just for today's current horrors, but for the duration of something that doesn't have a clear end date? Because here's what can happen, and I've watched it happen through movement after movement after movement in real time. People who care so much, people who mobilized, who showed up, who refused to look away, hit a wall. Which is not from a lack of caring, of course not, but because we haven't figured out how to sustain caring inside a human body that still has to sleep and eat and show up for their kids' school play and has to make sandwiches and change diapers and do life.

Right? And when we don't know how to do that, we do one of two things generally speaking. We go numb, so check out, scroll past, take a break that quietly becomes permanent. Or we stay so raw and so activated that we can't sleep, can't be present with the people we love, can't function until we end up horizontal on the couch for three months staring at the ceiling with the specific glazed-over look of someone whose nervous system has simply had enough, thank you very much. And never shade in any direction. What I'm saying is that neither of those serves liberation.

We need you, yes, you, for the long haul. And that requires something most activist culture doesn't talk enough about in my humble opinion, which is taking care of the body that's doing the fighting.

So, your nervous system is designed for acute stress. Threat, response, recovery, that's the whole cycle. Something threatening happens, your body mobilizes, you respond, the threat passes, and you recover. No more lions. But chronic exposure, knowing terrible things are happening day after

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day with no clear moment of resolution, is not what your nervous system evolved for.

Right? There's no all-clear signal, no moment when your body gets to shake it off and go back to baseline. So, it either stays in overdrive until it physically cannot anymore, or it starts shutting down to protect you from what it can't process.

What that looks like in real life, you can't sleep even though you're exhausted, so tired but wired. Right? You snap at people you love over truly ridiculous things. The dishwasher, the way someone breathes, the fact that someone asked what you want for dinner as if you have bandwidth for a ridiculous question like that right now. Or, you go quiet and flat and start to feel like nothing really matters. You swing between doom scrolling at midnight and putting your phone in a drawer for four days because you literally cannot look at it, cannot get another news alert, cannot see another post.

And so all of that is your nervous system doing its absolute best with more than it can metabolize. It is protecting you, not failing you, no meanie pants. It's just running out of strategies, right? And here's where I come in because my goal here on the show is not just to highlight what sucks, but of course, to give you remedies. More of those in just a second.

So here's the first concept I want to give you today: pendulation. So this is a term from somatic work. I learned it in my somatic experiencing training, and I use it constantly with clients and in Anchored. So pendulation is moving like a pendulum, swinging back and forth and back and forth or like your metronome, if you took piano lessons. I always wanted to take piano lessons. It wasn't exactly, wasn't what we were up for when I was a kid, but it seemed pretty cool.

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Pendulation means moving between activation and resource, activation and resource, said more plainly, panicky thing or shut-y downy thing and cozy thing. Panic to cozy to panic to cozy. Of course, we're not going to go to panic, but that's the pendulation.

So, said otherwise, it's between touching the pain and coming back to something that feels okay enough, neutral or okay enough. Sometimes we can't get to warm and cozy and great, but listen, I'll take okay enough. So, it's moving between letting yourself feel the full weight of what's happening, all of it, and giving yourself, your nervous system, all of you somewhere to land that isn't just more horror.

And so what this looks like in practice, you read something devastating, you let yourself feel it. The grief, the rage, the helplessness, the hopelessness, the all of it, and you hold space for that. And then instead of immediately scrolling to the next thing, you pause. You orient your nervous system.

And if you don't know what that means, I have a whole suite of free nervous system exercises, including an orienting exercise on my website, top of the page, BeatrizAlbina.com, or you can go to BeatrizAlbina.com/freemeditations, easy peasy.

You orient your nervous system. You feel your feet on the floor. You look out the window. You put your hand somewhere on your body that feels okay, maybe even nice, maybe even warm. I go hand on chest most of the time. It feels pretty great. Let's do it together. Feel your hand on your chest, your belly, your thigh, your other hand, whatever works for you. Feel the warmth from your own palm. Feel your own heat.

Let your nervous system register. I am here. I am breathing. Right now, in this moment, I am not in immediate danger. And then my favorite, I am safe enough. Yeah, I am safe enough. Yeah, let that register. And I am safe

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enough, not because the world is fine. The world is emphatically not fine. But it also is, right?

But more importantly, the point I was going to make is that we're not doing any spiritual, emotional, energetic, any kind of bypassing here. We don't do that. We recognize that we're safe enough in this moment because your nervous system needs evidence that you can touch the fire and not be consumed by it. Right, that you can feel the grief and come back, that you are actually still here.

And this is how we build capacity in our nervous system. This is how we build spaciousness. I talk all about building nervous system capacity in the book in End Emotional Outsourcing because this is the work, to build the capacity to be with what's freaking terrible and then pendulate back. So you read another article, you go to the action, you have the hard conversation, and then you come back to resource again, back and forth, back and forth forever.

This is how you build capacity. Not by toughening up. Ew. Powering through. Ew. No. No, no, no, no, no. We don't toughen up here. We do it by training your nervous system to move rather than getting stuck at either extreme. Right? Because it's the stuckness that sucks. It's the stuckness that's exhausting, that's terrifying, that's that overtakes us and overwhelms us. So we move.

The second concept, and we do this constantly in my short programs, in Anchored, is titration. So you don't have to take in everything all at once. You can be a really good person, politically engaged, super thoughtful, kind, loving, good, whatever that means. And you are allowed, and in my world, encouraged actually, to be strategic about what you let in and when, without that making you a bad person or a bad activist at all.

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Because here's the truth. Some days you can hold more. Some days your system is already full and adding more will just tip you into shutdown, at which point let's be real. You're useful to nobody, including yourself, including the movement, including your community, your collective, your neighborhood, your neighbors who maybe can't leave the house because they're scared of ice or our relations across the globe who need us focused, who need us present. Right?

So you get to choose the pace. You get to look away sometimes. And I want it to be clear that looking away in this thoughtful way is not evidence of not caring, but because you understand that a shutdown version of you serves no one. So you're not going to let it go to there. Right?

And this is nervous system wisdom. So write it on a sticky note if you need to, right? I am allowed to titrate. Titration in medicine or chemistry, right? It's adding a drop of something instead of, okay, if you're making salad dressing, you're not going to add, you know, half a cup of lemon juice into the salad dressing. You're going to add a couple drops and taste it, a couple drops and taste it. You're titrating your salad dressing. In medicine, it'd be like, you know, we don't give the maximum dose of a medicine all at once. You just give a little bit of the medicine, see how it lands, a little bit of medicine, see how it lands. Okay. So that's titration. So we got pendulation, we got titration.

Now, I need to speak directly to those of you who feel guilty every time you have a good day. Yeah? So I was talking with a client recently who told me she felt ashamed, like genuinely, viscerally ashamed for enjoying a dinner out with friends. Like, how dare she laugh when children are suffering? Like taking pleasure in anything was a kind of moral failing.

And there's a whole story, maybe cultural, maybe from your family of origin, probably both, that for many of us says that suffering in solidarity is the only acceptable response. That joy is for people who aren't paying attention.

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And I want to dismantle that story completely because it is not only wrong, it is actively working against the liberation that we say we want.

Right? So your nervous system needs moments of goodness to remember what you're fighting for. This is why we dance, right? At the end of my webinars, we dance in Anchored every week in all of my programs. You are invited to join us for dancing. You are invited to join us for joy. Joy is vital.

It's one of the many reasons I'm such a silly goose and call you a freaking tender ravioli. What a silly thing for one grown-up professional woman to say to another. But it's vital. Because what are we fighting for? What are we healing for? Why are we overcoming our codependent perfectionist and people-pleasing habits? Why are we doing this work if not for joy, for love, for beauty?

Because if all you're holding is horror, right? If rage and grief and despair are the only things getting airtime in your body, in your mind, in your spirit, you lose the thread of why any of this matters. You need to feel alive to remember that life is worth protecting. You need connection and pleasure and rest to have any visceral sense of what we're actually building toward.

Resting is not apathy. Laughing with someone you love is not complicity. Tending to your own precious, irreplaceable life is not a betrayal of the people who are suffering. It is how you stay whole enough to continue to fight for all of us. It is, and I will die on this hill, a political act.

The movement does not need your martyrdom. Nowhere needs your martyrdom. It needs your presence, sustained, grounded, still here presence for years. And that is only possible if you stop treating yourself like you, my love, are expendable, because you're not.

So let's talk about co-regulation. You cannot nervous system your way through this alone. I don't care how many somatic practices you have or

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how devoted you are to your morning routine. You, my beauty, are a social mammal, and you need other social mammals, not as a nice bonus, but as a biological necessity because science.

Right? Your nervous system regulates in relationship. When you're overwhelmed and someone actually sits with you, breathes with you, holds space for your pain without fixing it or silver lining it into oblivion, your nervous system starts to truly settle because theirs is settled. You borrow their regulation when yours is tapped out. And this isn't just metaphorical, this is our biology doing the thing it was designed to do.

We're here to be in community. Right? And this is why we build movements, not only because we need the numbers, obviously we do, but because we need each other's nervous systems. We need to be in rooms, physical or virtual, with people who share our values and understand the urgency without being consumed by it, people whose steadiness we can borrow.

So my beauty, if we've learned anything from Minneapolis, find your people. Not just for the strategy sessions and the action planning, though obviously also those, for the meal after the protest, where everyone is exhausted and giddy and a little bit crying, for the voice memo that says, I see you, I'm tired too, I'm still here. That is not a luxury. That is load-bearing infrastructure for the long haul.

Now, what do you do with the activation once it's in your body? Because you cannot store rage and grief indefinitely. They are not meant to be stored, they are meant to move. So, rage, anger, what the F, right? That vibe needs physical discharge. Run, dance, shake, movement. Your body mobilized for action, it needs to complete that cycle. If it doesn't, it just sits around making you feel rigid and reactive and exhausted in that very specific way where you're too wired to rest but too depleted to do anything useful.

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And grief needs its release too. So actual crying, actual ugly crying if that's where you are, huge fan. Not once, but again and again because this grief is not a one-time event. It's cumulative and ongoing, and it needs ongoing tending. So my beauty, I want to encourage you to let it move through you. That's what it's trying to do and needs to do.

And helplessness, that specific flavor of I can't stop this, I can't do enough, nothing I do matters. That one needs action, small, imperfect drop in the ocean action. Make the call, sign the thing, donate the 20 bucks. Your nervous system needs evidence that you are not completely powerless. The action doesn't have to change the whole world today, it just has to remind your body that it can do something, that you can go on five calls and contact your senators, your congresspeople, you can take action for the midterms, for the long haul.

So my beauty, this is not a sprint. It's also not a marathon because a marathon has a finish line. Oh, and a Mylar blanket. I love those, and someone handing you a banana at the end. No, it's not like that. This is more like being a tree. You put down roots, you weather storms, you grow slowly. You are here for a very long time.

These systems did not get built in a day or a year, and they're not coming down in a year either. This is generational work, which means it requires people with roots, regulated enough, resourced enough, connected enough to actually keep going. Not people who burned so bright they burned out. People who are still here in decade two because they learned somewhere along the way that their body is not an obstacle to the work, it is the vehicle for the work.

So my beauty, I want to encourage you to stay enraged, stay heartbroken, stay committed, and also stay rested. Also laugh. Also let yourself be loved and fed and held and occasionally, or more than occasionally, delighted by

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something completely frivolous. And I highly recommend cats for that matter.

My beauty, you're not just fighting against something. Please remember you're fighting for something. For a world where everyone gets to experience the safety and joy and ease that you are trying, sure, imperfectly, exhaustedly, bravely, to protect in your own life right now.

Take care of yourself, my love. Not instead of the work, right? We don't want to hashtag self-care ourselves out of doing the work, but as the work, right? As the most essential, non-negotiable, I will not budge on this part of doing the work. Because we need you for the long haul. But if you're too exhausted to show up, if you're too exhausted to make your calls, what then, beauty?

So please, keep an eye on the prize. Go make those calls, but take the bath too, and look at a video of like, I don't know, a panda. I mean, they're just so ridiculous. I don't know how they exist and they're so perfect. And you are too.

Truly. You're doing great. I love you. I'll see you in the streets. 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.