

Ep #384: The Truth About Nervous System Reset



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With Your Host

B a 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. Today we're bringing back an absolute listener favorite. This is an episode that resonated so deeply with so many of you, and I know because I got a lot of DMs and a lot of emails saying, "This was really good." I feel like that's really good criteria, right? That's like solid science.

Hey, so this one is The Truth About Nervous System Reset. I hear this all the time. In The Shift, which is my 12-week course about codependency and codependent habits, in my nervous system course, Signs and Signals, we talk about it in Anchored all the time. There's this pressure that comes from social media to instantly fix your stress or, I guess it comes across as like hit a magic reboot button on your nervous system as though that was how it worked. And so, I thought I should talk about that because more and more clients were asking me, how do I reset my nervous system? This hard thing happened and my husband disappointed me so deeply and I just want to reset my nervous system.

And I think we're going about this whole thing pretty sideways. And so my goal with this episode is to give you, let's call it a gentle permission slip to embrace slow integration over quick fixes. So whether you're hearing this episode for the first or the 5011th time, your tender ravioli nervous system is going to thank you for this one. Let's dive in.

So one of the most challenging parts of somatics and nervous system work getting popular is that important concepts get misinterpreted, misattributed, and words that just don't make sense get used to talk about really important work. This matters because psychoeducation matters. I talk pretty endlessly about the nervous system and regulation and somatics and nerdy things because science matters. And understanding what's going on in your body matters, especially if you're looking to heal your emotional

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outsourcing and come into a more grounded and balanced relationship with self, understanding you're not broken, you're not busted, you don't need fixed, there's nothing wrong with you. Your nervous system is just like doing some old business is really important and understanding the science of it, for me has been like, endlessly helpful in taking a lot of the burden of blame and shame off of my tiny shoulders.

That was like A number one and maybe B number two and maybe C number three. I kind of lost track in the middle. So all of that, but also, this nerd loves to set the record straight and it's very like - English is my second language and I was raised by like a language nerd. The right word matters. That's what I'm saying.

The right word matters. So, this is something that came up, was that people were asking about nervous system resets. They said they wanted more of them, that they wanted to be able to reset their nervous system. And that term gets tossed around quite a bit these days, often suggesting that you can somehow like reboot your entire nervous system, erasing trauma and restoring yourself to a clean slate, or maybe just like deeply and intensely calming your nervous system as though that were what we all should want. And don't get me wrong, it's a lovely idea on the surface, offering the illusion of a quick fix to something as deeply complex as trauma, chronic stress, emotional pain, all of which are the end effect of life being lifey either in a chronic way, like with childhood developmental trauma, parental misattunement, abuse of any assortment at any point in life, or back to childhood growing up with emotionally immature or emotionally outsourcing parents.

It can also be the end effect of life being lifey in a kaboomy, acute, or shock trauma way, like an accident or war. Remember, like we talked about way back in the day in episodes 199 and 280, trauma is not what happened to you. It's how your nervous system reacted to it, responded to it, the patterns that were written into your body.

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So while this language is super popular, that's right. All the cool kids are using it. Let us be clear. There is no such thing as a nervous system reset in the sense of like hitting an imaginary button that erases the impact of the past or brings the nervous system back into some utopic blissed out peace. That's what Quaaludes did, and studies show they don't make those anymore. And also it's not great to be like blissed out and calm and zen all the time because then you are a regulated robot, not a beautifully mood and emotion-filled living, breathing human animal. And I don't know about you, but me, I'm here for the depth and breadth of human experience, which means all of the highs and also all of the lows and all of the balance in between, which is a way of life quite antithetical to the supposed goal of the nervous system reset. Right? Right.

And while we're on it, frankly, the very notion of being able to reset your nervous system carries some dangerous undertones that can reinforce unrealistic expectations and feelings of failure for those who don't feel fixed after a session or a retreat or doing a practice they saw on the social media, devoid of orienting therapeutic relationship or anything beyond the singular movement and often outlandish claims about it.

But I digress, mas o menos. Listen, what it comes back to is this: the nervous system, the human mammal, and the nervous system within the mammal, and the autonomic nervous system, which is the one we're talking about. No part of it is a computer, a machine, or a binary system with an off-on switch, much like nervous system states aren't all or nothing despite what the social medias might have you think. It's never all sympathetic, all dorsal, all ventral. It's a spectrum of lived experience within a living, breathing dynamic system that has developed in concert with everything you've experienced from the moment you were born and arguably long before that, to this exact second. Every single event, emotion, experience of safety or threat has shaped your nervous system into the state it currently holds. Trauma, stress, and life experience cannot simply be deleted like unwanted data. Nor frankly, would I want to. They're woven into the very fibers of your being and make you, you.

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And that is not something to be feared. This is the fundamental truth of how our bodies and minds work. We don't reset. We adapt, evolve, grow. My beauty, my tender, tender, tender ravioli. Trauma sucks. And I'm so, so, so sorry it happened to you. You didn't need it to grow or evolve. That's garbage. Lo siento, mi amor. Qué cagada. Trauma is sticky, icky, messy and leaves its fingerprints on the nervous system in lasting ways. It imprints in our body, mind creating learned patterns of reactivity, tension patterns. Trauma is like a rippling wave in your body's internal ocean, not an isolated glitch to be fixed by pushing reset.

What this means is that your nervous system has learned something deeply profound in response to the experiences in your life. It's learned to protect you by heightening your vigilance or withdrawing from connection or any of the myriad ways humans adapt to danger, like emotional outsourcing, our codependent, perfectionist, and people-pleasing habits. These reactions, these responses, they are not malfunctions. They are intelligent, survival-driven adaptations. They are brilliant and amazing and frankly, full on genius.

When we think of trauma as something to reset out of existence, we miss the wisdom embedded in these survival responses. And worse, we miss the opportunity to integrate these experiences in ways that serve us. This misunderstanding is particularly troubling because the language of reset implies that something is wrong with you for having these reactions in the first place. When, in fact, your system has just been doing its job, like exactly as it's supposed to. The defensive adaptations of your autonomic nervous system, the hypervigilance, dissociation, shutdown, those all suck. And again, I wish you and I had never experienced them, and they are your body's way of keeping you alive in the face of something that should never have happened. They're your body's way of saying, I care enough to protect you, my human, at all costs.

When we treat these adaptive responses as errors to be erased, we reinforce the shame and self-blame so many people carry around their

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trauma. Instead, what we need is to work with these patterns to understand them, to rewire them slowly through safety, connection, and co-regulation.

In the world of Somatics, Polyvagal Theory, and trauma healing, there is no switch to flip. What happens instead is that we learn to be with our nervous system reactions, with curiosity, compassion, and care, the three Cs I'm always talking about. We learn to re-engage our parasympathetic nervous system when we're stuck in sympathetic arousal, fight or flight, or find small ways to break out of the dorsal vagal, deer in the headlights, checkout to bring more aliveness in or to bring more balance to the mixed state of freeze.

This isn't about resetting. It's about building capacity. Capacity for presence, for safety, for expanding the window of tolerance so we can move through life stressors without the same degree of overwhelm. We learn to let our nervous system hold more. More joy, more anger, more stress, more everything by working with and on our belief that we are capable of holding it. It's about integration of all the sensations, thoughts, feelings, and experiences of life, not elimination. Let me say that again. It's about integration, not elimination of your nervous system responses, emotions, feelings.

When trauma occurs, the nervous system goes into protection mode. That's its job and this is what we call dysregulation. But that doesn't mean that the system itself is broken or malfunctioning. Dysregulation is a sign of a well-functioning nervous system doing what it was designed to do in the face of perceived or real danger. The problem isn't the protective response itself. The issue arises when that protective response persists long after the threat has passed, when the nervous system keeps firing those danger signals and keeps us locked in cycles of hypervigilance, anxiety, or numbness. Healing is about teaching the nervous system that safety is possible once more. Baby, this is slow, intricate work. There's no reset button for the nervous system.

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What we can do is to cultivate a relationship with it. We learn to be with it, not to shove it down or away to race or calm or reset it. We build awareness of when we're in sympathetic or dorsal vagal activation. We map our own individual experiences. We practice skills to bring us back to ventral vagal, social engagement, connection, calm, not by forcing it, but by gently inviting the body to experience safety again. One small, teeny, tiny, insy-winsy, baby, tiny kitten step at a time. This is why trauma healing is a long-term commitment. Trauma was too much, too fast, too soon. Healing trauma reactions in the body is about slow, steady, safe. It's not about erasure but integration, turning our nervous system and our bodies into a home where we can live alongside our experiences rather than being haunted by them.

To suggest that trauma can be erased or reset is also to suggest that the history and context that shaped us can be wiped away. This idea is not only biologically inaccurate but socially and politically negligent. Our traumas are not just individual experiences. They are woven into the fabric of our cultures, our families, and the systems of oppression we live within. Many of our deepest nervous system patterns are responses not just to personal danger, but to societal harm: racism, misogyny, homophobia, colonialism, the patriarchy, capitalism, etc. To reset the nervous system would be to ignore these broader contexts which are still very much alive and impacting how safe or unsafe we feel and are in our bodies and in the world. Healing doesn't happen in isolation. It happens in community, in relationships, and environments that either perpetuate or relieve these dangers. In the end, what we seek in trauma healing isn't a reset, but a deepening of self-understanding. It's about learning how to live with our nervous system, how to cultivate more moments of safety, connection, and joy.

Rather than erasing the past, we weave it into the present in a way that makes space for healing, for truth, for our authenticity. We learn to trust that our body is wise, that it can find its way back to safety, not through forgetting or resetting, but through remembering that safety is still possible. Trauma may not leave us, but neither does our capacity for healing, for joy,

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for resilience, for creating a new tomorrow. In fact, our ability to heal is as much a part of our nervous system as the trauma itself. And that's where the magic really lies. Not in resetting, but transforming the very fabric of our being and creating new possibilities for ourselves, one breath, one moment, one experience of safety at a time. And then we can take that healing, that safety we have created within us, and we can be agents of change and can ripple that out across the planet for the good of all of us who call this earth home.

Healing trauma reactions in the body is about giving the nervous system the time it needs to trust the world isn't always on fire. It's about unlearning urgency and embracing the slow dance of safety. It's about reclaiming ease, one calm breath at a time. Not because calming ourselves is ever the goal, but because the goal is to show ourselves we can be calm. Healing trauma reactions in the body is about gently reminding yourself that not every crack of thunder signals a storm and not every storm equals doom. It's about slowing down to remember that safety isn't a sprint. It's a steady rhythm. It's about letting the body rewrite the story one gentle whisper at a time. It's about teaching your nervous system that it's okay to come out of survival mode. It's about moving from reflex to reflection with patience as your guide. It's about unraveling the urgency so your body can breathe easy and fully with that long, slow out. It's about orienting to whatever whisper of safety you can find wherever you find yourself. And it's about trading panic for presence, fast for safe, reset for reconnection with self.

Thank you for listening, my beauty. Thank you for allowing me to nerd out about the things that I love being a nerd about. Nervous system work, nervous system regulation work, Somatics has profoundly and endlessly changed my life. I know that I was able to leave an abusive marriage, to find the right amazing city for me, to fall in love again, to do powerful work, build my business, rebuild my sense of self, come back to who I truly am in so many ways to reparent myself, and to become the most grounded, whole, mature version of me, my favorite self, the one I like best. And I was able to become this version of me through somatics and nervous system

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regulation work by doing this deep work and also by connecting with the joy that can be found when you're present in your body.

All right, my 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. I'll talk to you soon. Ciao, ciao.