

**Ep #394: Self-Compassion:
How to Stop Beating Up Your Past Self**



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Búa Victoria Albina, NP, MPH

Ep #394: Self-Compassion: How to Stop Beating Up Your Past Self

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 last week, as we started off our deep dive series, we started looking at the deeper patterns that keep people disconnected from themselves, even after years and years and years of growth work. And one of the biggest barriers to change that I see over and over and over again in Anchored, in The Shift, in all of my courses, with my private one-on-one clients, when I'm facilitating breathwork or psychedelics, one of the biggest things I see as a big barrier is how profoundly meanie-pants we are to the version of ourselves that learned these patterns in the first place.

The way we relate to that us, oof, it can be so deeply cruel. And I don't think we realize we're doing it, but we're trying to do this growth while rejecting a part of ourselves, rejecting the us we used to be. And it creates this kind of internal tension that really keeps us stuck. Here's the thing, real change doesn't come from pushing parts of yourself away. It never works, right? It's on my list of, if it was going to work, it would have worked by now. Instead, it comes from understanding these parts, loving these parts, showing these parts of us compassion and care and tenderness and sweetness and really, truly accepting that who you were then was who you were neurologically capable of being.

Like if your nervous system had the capacity to show up in some different kind of way, it would have. It truly would have. I mean, of course it would have. The way you are learning to be able to show up now is less painful, much more easeful, and biologically makes a lot more sense because you're not wasting so much energy. Or you're working towards that at least.

So let's talk about it. Let's spend some time with this concept. Let's talk about how we talk to, refer to, treat, and think about and feel about our past

Ep #394: Self-Compassion: How to Stop Beating Up Your Past Self

self and how shifting that internal relationship can bring us into a new understanding and a new way of relating with our whole self now as we step into being the self we most want to be. I don't think I've ever said the word self so many times in such a small period of time, but self, self, self. I'm glad you're here. I love you. You're doing great. All right, let's talk about it.

So today, I want to talk about the concept of our past self. When we start to learn to live in a new way, that it's possible to ditch our old codependent, perfectionist, and people-pleasing thought habits, it's super common to get really down on ourselves. We coach on this a lot. In Anchored, it's a whole thing for sure. We beat ourselves up when we learn new things, new ways of being. We forget that we, you know, just learned it. And we don't give ourselves the grace for being new at something.

We have this habit of speaking to and thinking of ourselves in such unkind and even cruel ways. We are often mean to ourselves for not knowing what we didn't know before we knew it, which often comes from both the codependent story that we're not worthy or good enough, or else we'd already know everything and everyone else must know this, and at the end of the day, we were probably too broken to know it anyway.

We think this way and treat ourselves this way from the perfectionist thought fantasy that tells that same old story, that we're supposed to know all the things all the time and that something is wrong with us for not being all-knowing. We are so focused on the things we should have done, the things we think we could have done better before we knew how to do them better. We get so focused on the things we don't see as successes, see as failures in a bad way, versus failure in a good way, which we talk about in episodes 39 and 40, and we're cruel to ourselves.

Ep #394: Self-Compassion: How to Stop Beating Up Your Past Self

And in so doing, we walk around the world with blinders on to how amazing we really are. All the amazing things we are doing, all the ways we are succeeding and growing, and we brush those successes aside and move steadily along to self-flagellation from the story that we're never good enough.

So our brain says, why celebrate ourselves at all if we're not 127.43% perfect? And in that, we create so much shame for ourselves, where shame is the belief that there's something inherently wrong with us and not knowing what we didn't yet know is evidence of that in our unmanaged minds. And that shame keeps us from being present with ourselves and those we love, from celebrating, from continuing to grow, and from thoughtfully evaluating why we didn't do what we meant to or said we wanted to do.

And shame is the most massive success blocker ever, the most rigid and unyielding barrier to self-love, to taking risks and possibly failing and thus growing. And it simultaneously blocks us from seeing how we're getting in the way of our own success. What a cluster cuss, am I right?

This habit of beating up on our past selves and thinking unkind thoughts about the you you were yesterday or five years ago or 50 years ago. These thoughts become part of our self-concept, the story we tell about ourselves. And that's where this gets super problematic for making future change because you're telling the story as you beat yourself up for your past decisions that you're a kind of person who fails in a certain way, instead of seeing that you've just been operating from your programming, enacting a set of behaviors likely based in your survival skills from childhood, which are running in the background on autopilot. And most of us don't know to pause, to connect with our inner children, to reparent ourselves. More on the inner child and reparenting in episodes 22, 25, and 153.

So we don't know to pause and connect with those little kiddos inside who've been keeping you, who've been keeping us in the same old

Ep #394: Self-Compassion: How to Stop Beating Up Your Past Self

narratives and beliefs, the same old somatic or bodily stories in our nervous systems that drove our past actions. You were going from an old script. So of course you did what you did, my love. Of course you dated that emotionally unavailable person or were the emotionally unavailable person in a relationship. Of course you said yes when you actually wanted to say no. Of course you did whatever you now wish you hadn't done because you were the version of you you were then. And now you're the version of you who knows how to do it differently.

And when you decide who you inherently are is based on your past self, you block growth, create shame, and remain stagnant in that old self-concept story. It's like labeling ourselves as codependent, which we don't do around here because it blocks change. When a label or story feels like a fixed part of your core identity, then that's all you can ever imagine yourself being.

Versus stepping into a self-loving growth mindset from which you can understand that your past codependent, perfectionist, people-pleasing thinking are sets of survival skills that did you right for so long until they didn't. And that you were doing the best you could with everything you learned in childhood from your family of origin, from what was modeled from you, from your socialization and conditioning, from growing up like we all did in the patriarchy and white settler colonialism. And labeling ourselves in these ways is so likely to leave you feeling stuck and forever screwed. "It's just who I am," says this thinking. And my beauty, my darling tender ravioli, I'm not buying it. You are so capable of change.

The neuroplasticity of our minds is evidence of that. You can change your thinking. You can change your somatic or bodily experience of life and your nervous system responses. And not only am I living proof of that, the hundreds of women who've gone through Anchored, whose transformation stories you've been hearing on the show lately, are also proof positive of that, which is why I'm sharing them.

Ep #394: Self-Compassion: How to Stop Beating Up Your Past Self

You truly can change, and hating on your past self is not going to facilitate that change. It's only going to continue blocking it because science, my nerds. When we are cruel to our past self, we're not giving ourselves the grace. We are robbing ourselves of compassion, curiosity, and care. And what we're doing is staying in self-judgment instead of leaning into self-acceptance, which is key to owning who you were and what you did. So you can look at those past behaviors, you can look them right in the snout and can say, no more. Basta. I'm doing this in a different way, starting now. And you can't know that you want to change your past ways if you're not looking at it. And when we wallow in being mean to ourselves, we are out of acceptance, which keeps us out of making positive change.

And inherent in that judgment of self is so much moralistic, all-or-nothing thinking. We decide that some things are morally okay or good, and some things are bad, which strengthens the stories the patriarchy loves to reinforce, like the narratives around how good girls, good women, good wives, moms, partners behave, which is generally to put ourselves last for sures. Stories like that thinness is imperative for lovability, which means that eating certain things is good or bad, which makes us good or bad for eating them. Thereby that fries are a sign of moral failing and a side salad is the marker of making good and worthy choices. And here's the kicker, choices that prove your worth.

And from that way of thinking, how can you possibly decide what's actually good for you? What you actually want, what truly serves you if you're looking at your choices through a moralistic lens that was taught to you by oppressive systems?

Learning to be kind to our past and present self does not mean you don't change or grow. It just means you stop identifying with the person you were as a forever identity. There are two things I like to share on this. You know, I love my metafora.

Ep #394: Self-Compassion: How to Stop Beating Up Your Past Self

In the romance languages, we have two forms of the verb to be. In Spanish, my native language, those are ser and estar. They both mean to be, but they have different flavors to them. So ser is what you are in this unchangeable way. So for example, a ver, "Yo soy de Mar del Plata, Argentina." I am from Mar del Plata, Argentina.

And sorry, it's really cracked me up with that accent, Mar del Plata, Argentina. And then the other is estar, which are the things that you are that are mutable and changeable. So like, I used to estar in Brooklyn and now estoy in the Hudson Valley. Changed and changeable. And we all have the option to look at our lives, the choices we've made, the ways we've shown up through the lens of estar. Not permanent things about who we are, just who we were being then, who we were estando or being in that moment. And when we can look back on our lives and we can look at our past self through that lens, we can give ourselves so much grace, so much space to choose in this present moment how we want to think about our past selves.

Remembering that when you look back on your past and see yourself in the most unkind way possible, then everything feels so loaded and heavy. And of course your brain will make your past choices mean bad things about you, versus just being the things you did with the skills you had at the time. So right now, my darling, my perfect little pancake, you can choose to remind yourself that you were doing the best you could in that very moment and can remember that it does nothing, exactly 0.0 things to make your life better to look back on your past self in a harsh and critical way.

And in fact, nerd alert, if we take a nervous system view, which you know I'm always gonna, when we look back on our past self with critical, mean eyes, versus lovingly evaluative eyes, we take ourselves out of ventral vagal, which is the safe and secure part of our nervous system, and we jack ourselves up into sympathetic activation, or we drop ourselves down into dorsal, which is the checked out freeze response. So we either get all anxious and worried and, "Oh my God, I did this thing and I'm having all

Ep #394: Self-Compassion: How to Stop Beating Up Your Past Self

these thoughts about it and about myself and I'm beating myself up and I'm all stressed about it."

Or, 'cause that was sympathetic, that was fight or flight, or we drop down into dorsal and we go into that place of checked out, sad, depressed, disconnected, isolating, unable to make change. What's important to know is we're not going to be able to make change and do things differently the next time unless we're in ventral vagal about it, unless we're in that grounded, safe, and secure part of our nervous system with ourselves and about ourselves. And that, being in ventral vagal, is facilitated greatly by being in acceptance of what was versus being in moralistic judgment of ourselves.

Because the next time you go to take whatever action, to say whatever you want to say, if your immediate thought, if the neural groove immediately firing, and thus your immediate somatic, bodily, nervous system response is, "Oh man, I can't mess it up the way I messed it up before," or, "Well, I'm just going to mess it up as usual," then you're priming yourself to do just that, versus finding your way through somatic practices like the ones we do in Anchored each and every week to get into right relationship with yourself, with past you, so you can make different choices now from a grounded nervous system.

I'll also share one of my absolute favorite Spanish sayings, and I do love the Spaniards and all of their lisp. "Hola, I am Silvia from España." I love their lisp. And just by the way, I don't sound like a Spaniard in Spanish. Por favor, I sound very Argentine. It's very different.

But there is this fabulous saying, you can't kiss the same girl twice. Isn't that so great? I mean, think about it, right? Every kiss changes you. Every moment in life changes you, so you can't kiss the same girl twice because that girl is forever changed. And now that I'm hearing myself out loud, let's be more feminist. You cannot kiss the same woman twice. I must say it irks me when people call grown women girls, but anyway.

Ep #394: Self-Compassion: How to Stop Beating Up Your Past Self

There's a similar saying, you can't cross the same river twice because the river is always moving. It's always changing. So whichever metaphor works for you, think of your own life as that ever-moving river, that ever-changing experience of being you. You are now changed. You're not the same person you were 10, 15 minutes ago. And so you now have the option of living in a new way, and you have a new lens for thinking about your past decisions and your past choices.

And this is where you get to do thought work to consciously make the next right choice for yourself. And for me, that next right choice is never beating past me up for doing the best she could with what she knew when she knew it. I was just operating from my nervous system programming, which, let's please remember, that original programming largely happens ages zero to seven. Right? So when you're beating past you up, you're kind of beating up a children. That's not cool, right? Come on.

I can recognize that in the past, past me was making the best choices I could from my own attachment wounding, which we talked about in episodes 129 and 135, and I was making the next right choice from the information I had, the skills and tools I had, the somatic capacity in my nervous system I had at that moment. A thing that just came to me is this, and this is super important. I never know. You never know what growth will come from a decision you made in the past that you don't like right now. You just can't begin to know how it's all going to play out. And by hating on those past choices, we're declaring that we do, in fact, know what the future holds, which is not only not possible, it's a further block to our growth because it keeps us believing that we can control the uncontrollable. And that is a key component of our codependent thinking, that desire to control everyone and everything.

And that keeps us believing that if we are mean enough to ourselves, we can control the world and have some perfect fantasy life that plays out exactly to our specific specifications, instead of trusting the universe and

Ep #394: Self-Compassion: How to Stop Beating Up Your Past Self

the great unknown and that things are rolling out how they're meant to. And thereby allowing that process to unfold instead of trying to be the endless puppet master of it all.

Now, my darling, do I love every choice that I've made? For example, do I love that I stayed in an emotionally abusive relationship for many, many years? No. I don't love it. And having done all the work I have, I can accept it now because, well frankly because it happened, right? It's a court admissible fact that I stayed. And I don't need to beat myself up now for doing the best I could with the skills I had then, because I didn't know how to do life any differently until I did. And then, then I took action steps, lots and lots and lots of them, lots of coaching, lots of therapy, lots of somatic work, nervous system work, all the work to change my life.

And I get why stepping into acceptance and love for our past self for making choices we now don't like is scary at first. I hear this from my clients in Anchored all the time. They say, "I don't want to be kind to myself about the past choices that I don't like because I don't want to do it again." And we tell the story that we need to beat ourselves up in order to attempt to prevent present and future harms or missteps, but that's the absolute opposite of what's real. It's when we are kind to ourselves that we make real, lasting, sustainable change. When we are most loving, compassionate, caring, and curious towards our past selves, that is when we can in fact do it differently the next time. Pinky promise and for realzies.

I'll also say this, spending time and energy now beating up past you is a buffer. You heard me right, it's buffering behavior, where buffering, as discussed in episode 14, is when we don't feel our feelings in this moment, and instead do whatever is easiest for our nervous system as a distraction from feeling the feelings. So instead of feeling the guilt, the shame, the anger, the disappointment, frustration, et cetera, and process it through our body somatically, instead of actually being present with it, we beat ourselves up for it. And can you see how that actually keeps you from doing

Ep #394: Self-Compassion: How to Stop Beating Up Your Past Self

the work you want to do to make change when you're so busy buffering against the feelings? Isn't that fascinating? Gosh, we think beating ourselves up does so much. So much good for us. It just, it does so much just the opposite of what we want.

So when we can show up for our inner children with compassion and care and can say, "I recognize and accept that I dated that person, took that job, said yes to that thing I didn't want to do, and that led to this pain for me. And I don't want to do it again. And what I'm going to do is show up as my own most loving adult to repair my relationship with myself and my inner children. I'm going to actively choose right now to soothe myself, to meet myself with kindness." It's from there that we can take stock of what we did, and we can take personal responsibility in a way that creates a pathway forward, instead of leaving us spinning in the past.

And these are the remedies, my love, more self-love, more compassionate, embodied, self-responsibility, and more, deeper, always more self-acceptance. You were doing the best you could with the skills, tools, socialization, and conditioning you had at the time. And let me say it one more time, beating past you up, that serves no one and nothing in this world, my darling.

Oh, my beauty, once you start relating to yourself with more compassion, more kindness, more gentleness, more understanding, something else becomes a lot more visible. And that's where you're still holding on to patterns that hurt. Even when you can see them clearly, there's still that holding on, that clutching, that bracing around them, that almost protecting them, right?

And so that's what we're getting into next week. That's what we're going to be thinking about, feeling into, and really gaining some intimacy around. So I can't wait to share that episode with you. Make sure you're following or subscribed to the show, wherever you get it, and let's dive deep. I mean,

Ep #394: Self-Compassion: How to Stop Beating Up Your Past Self

why not? What else are we doing? Were you busy? Are you too busy to dive deep? You're not too busy to dive deep. 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.