

Ep #396: How to Stop Running From Your Feelings



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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. I have heard that this episode is one many of you keep tucked in your back pocket for those heavy days, those challenging days, those days that life got really particularly lifey. In this episode, we're looking at what it really means to allow your feelings because I feel that gets bandied about quite a bit. Just allow your feelings. Just feel your feelings. That's not super helpful if it's not explained or backed up or Englishified. You know what I'm saying? So, we are looking at what those words really mean, and we're exploring somatic tools for sitting with, being with, caring for big emotions, which is so much of what we do in my coaching work.

If you've ever felt the societal or patriarchal pressure to just shove your feelings down, soldier on, compartmentalize, dissociate a little bit, so you can look like, "I'm totally fine" on the outside, my angel, I think this episode will be really supportive because we're going to talk about how to not run from yourself and instead how to be with yourself and all of your beautiful feelings.

So, before we dive in, I want to invite you to join me to put a gentle hand on your heart, take a slow, deep breath, and let's dive in.

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My perfect tender ravioli, tell me if this sounds familiar. So, you're having a perfectly fine day. Things are pretty good. Your coffee was particularly delicious this morning. It was exactly what your body wanted, because you asked. Things are going well at work. The dog did not barf on the cat, nor vice versa. You're cruising along, things are fine. Something happens.

Maybe your partner says something offhanded like, "Oh, that? I thought you'd already taken care of that." Or your boss emails you again, urgent in

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all caps at 9 p.m. Or maybe it's subtler, more subtle. Like your kid gives you that look. You know that one. That look, and suddenly, boom, your chest tightens, your throat feels all hot, and all you can think is, "Oh my God, I do not have time for all of these feelings right now." So, you do what you, like so many of us, have been taught to do your whole life and you shove the feelings down and power through because there's stuff to do, because life doesn't stop for your feelings, right? Right.

And sure, maybe you've gotten really good at this. Maybe you're the queen of soldiering on, of keeping it all together, of stiff upper lippping it, of looking totally fine on the outside. But underneath that, what's really going on? If you're like so many of us, I dare say all of us, because, physiology, the feelings that you push down don't just disappear. They stick around like uninvited guests at a party, and they make themselves at home in your body, in your thoughts, and eventually in your relationships, where they tend to come out sideways in a jabby way if we don't let them out directly. Sound familiar?

So, if it does, and I imagine you're nodding along, I mean, you also chose to listen to an episode about allowing your feelings, then it's really important that we start by saying this. If it you, it's not your fault. You, like the rest of us, have been taught that feelings are inconvenient to you and everyone around you. They're a problem. There's something to fix, to ignore, to avoid altogether, to do a million somatic practices till they all go away and we're perfectly regulated.

But what if I told you, as I am wont to do, that those feelings that you're shoving down as a survival skill, shoving it down is a survival skill, no one's mad at you. What if all those emotions, all those feelings are actually your greatest asset, that they're trying to tell you something important, and that when you learn to listen, to truly feel, to allow all the feelings to be, you unlock a kind of power you probably didn't even know was possible.

Now, I get it. I mean, sitting with your feelings and allowing them all the space they need doesn't exactly sound like a fun Friday night. Trust me. I

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too would rather be watching whatever garbage TV with a big bowl of popcorn, but here's the truth. Those feelings you're avoiding, they're the key to pretty much everything you've been looking for in your #healingjourney. Calm, clarity, connection, joy, authenticity, intentionality, presence. Because to get to the calm presence, we need to allow the big rage.

Let's pause. Before I go too there, because I will go there so hard. Let's talk about why we avoid feelings in the first place. Important work. So, it's not because we are lazy or weak willed or lack discipline or are incapable. It's not like, "Oh, I'm just wired that way. I don't know, I don't just don't feel my feelings." None of that silly nonsense. It's because your nervous system is trying to protect you.

So, when you feel something big or uncomfortable, your body doesn't know if it is a messy email, a snarky comment that your mom texted you, or a lion about to pounce. To your nervous system, any intense emotion can feel like a potential threat. Sympathetic comes on board, your heart rate spikes, your muscles tense up, your breath gets shallow, all the signs that your body is bracing for impact. And because your brain is wired for survival, it has one beautiful priority, which is to keep you safe.

This is where fight, flight, freeze, fawn come in. When a big feeling shows up, your nervous system might decide to fight it off with anger or defensiveness, right? Have you ever experienced that where you're actually really sad, but you hiss and anger? Or maybe you flee, bury yourself in work, doom scroll for hours, find anything else to focus on. You buffer against it. Or you freeze, stuck in a fog, unable to process what's happening, kind of just crossing your fingers and hoping and willing that it will pass. And for so many of us who've learned to prioritize others over ourselves, we fawn. We people please, we enact codependent behaviors, and we overfunction to attempt to make the discomfort go away.

This is all completely normal. It's biology, plain and simple. Your body is doing exactly what it's designed to do. The problem is, once more, your

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nervous system can't always tell the difference between a legitimate threat and a big old uncomfortable emotion that you learned at some point is not a great idea to have. It doesn't know that sadness, anger, or fear won't actually harm you. So, it defaults to survival mode and we get stuck in these loops of avoidance.

Oh, and let's not forget the role of societal pressure. We live in a world that glorifies productivity and stoicism. Late-stage capitalism doesn't exactly hand out gold stars for sitting in your feelings. The patriarchy doesn't exactly make space for women, especially women, to express anger or grief without labeling us overly emotional, hysterical, so sensitive. So instead of claiming our emotionality, our sensitivity, we push it all down. We've been conditioned to believe that our feelings are inconvenient because they are. It is wildly inconvenient to have big feelings, and that's on purpose. They are made to make us stop and pay attention to what's real.

But we have been trained and conditioned to believe they make us weak in some bad way, whereas being in the feelings and allowing that moment of deep weakness is part of the yin yang of being strong in the world. They move together, sunset, sunrise, the ocean's tides, weakness and strength. And instead, we've been conditioned to believe that having big feelings means we will lose credibility, respect, control, that our emotions must be hidden to keep it together, which is somehow our job.

But here's the truth. Avoiding our feelings does not make them go away. It just buries them deeper. And over time, those unprocessed emotions build up like a traffic jam in your body and your brain, and that, my love, is when we start to pay the physiologic, emotional, and relational price.

Before we dive into the cost of avoiding your feelings, let's pause for a moment and get curious about why it can feel so impossible to just sit and allow the feelings because if you're anything like most of us, you've probably tried and then beat yourself up when it didn't go the way you

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imagined. So, let's take a breath and normalize this, okay? Because there are some really good reasons why you don't allow your feelings.

First, there's your nervous system. We've already talked about how it's wired for survival. When you feel something big or uncomfortable, your brain doesn't stop to analyze whether it's just an emotion. It's wired to see discomfort as a problem to solve, a threat to neutralize, a mess to clean up. You going to there, following that internal drive is not you failing to allow your feelings. It's your biology doing its job.

And as always, it's not just biology. It's also socialization. From the time we're little, most of us are taught, explicitly or implicitly, that some feelings are bad or too much. Think about it. How often were you told to stop crying, to calm down, or to just be a good girl and just let this one go? Or maybe you grew up in a family where no one talked about feelings at all, or the only feeling that was allowed was a man's anger, right? And so feelings were frightening.

For those of us who grew up with emotionally immature parents, feelings were often only big explosions. And so, yeah, having feelings felt really risky. For many of us, if you brought your sadness or anger to the table, it was met with silence, disapproval, negation, or worse. Maybe these early messages stick, teaching our nervous systems that expressing emotions really isn't safe.

And then there's the culture we live in. We're swimming in a sea of messages that tell us to be productive, positive, in control at all times. Capitalism says, "Don't slow down for your emotions." The world is literally and metaphorically on fire. Keep working, keep hustling, keep going, keep producing. The patriarchy says, "Don't let them see you cry or they'll call you a weak little woman." White supremacy says, "Keep it together, stay composed, don't let your guard down, don't trust anyone, go get yours." Maybe these systems weren't built to support your humanity. They weren't built to support us having our big, messy feelings. They were built to suppress what is human and loving and interconnected and interdependent

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within us. And that suppression trickles down into our relationships with ourselves and the world.

Finally, let's talk about fear. Because for so many of us, there's a deep fear that if we let ourselves feel, we'll never stop, like if you start crying, you'll cry forever, or if you let yourself feel angry, you'll blow up your life. That fear isn't logical, but it's so understandable. It makes so much sense when you've spent a lifetime holding it all together. Feeling your feelings can feel like standing at the edge of a cliff. You don't know what's on the other side, and so of course, you're terrified of falling. So, if you've been avoiding your feelings, I want you to know it's not because you're broken. It's not because you're failing. You've been doing what your body and your conditioning have taught you to do, which is to survive, and surviving is no small thing. It's worth celebrating, even as we gently ask ourselves, "What if there's another way?"

I also want to talk about the sneaky little BS lie that so many of us, especially those of us committed to healing, growth, and showing up as our best selves, have picked up along the way. It's this story that we're not supposed to feel things like anger, sadness, frustration, annoyance, grief, the "quote unquote" negative emotions. Have you noticed how I don't use that language? So, there's a story that somehow being calm and Zen and unbothered is the absolute pinnacle of healing, that if you're still feeling rage or heartbreak or frustration, you must not be doing it right. And let me tell you, that's story, it's absolute nonsense.

Sacred anger is just as sacred as sacred joy. Rage is vital. It's a fire that burns away what no longer serves us, that reveals what we truly value, where the injustice is, what we need to protect. And grief, oh, my goodness, grief is love in its rawest, most vulnerable form. And baby, if you're not grieving right now, grieving what's been lost, what could have been, what's been taken, you're not paying attention. These emotions aren't distraction from your healing. They are your healing. Feeling sacred rage about the

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state of the earth, the world, humanity, that interconnectedness is a vital part of all of our healing.

And these big, messy feelings are invitations to move closer to the truth of who you are and what you care about. And rushing to get over it before you've actually moved through it only cuts you off from that deep, internal, and collective wisdom. Healing isn't about being chill. It's about being real and authentic, and sometimes, often these days, real looks like weeping on the floor or screaming into a pillow, and that's not failure. That's an interdependent move towards greater collective freedom.

And so, I want to invite you to think about your emotions less as tidal waves that have the capacity to drown you, but it was waves that can carry you back to the shore. Yes, they can feel overwhelming at first, especially if you've been bottling them up for years. But when you allow them to move through you, they don't destroy you. In fact, they move more quickly than you think, leaving clarity and calm in their wake.

And here's what's really, really beautiful about allowing your feelings. Every time you let yourself feel, you send a message to your nervous system. I am learning to handle this. I am building the capacity to handle this, which eventually becomes I can be with this. I can allow this. And that, whew, that is such a powerful and healing message. It builds self-trust, which is the foundation of everything else, your ability to make decisions, set boundaries, and meet life's challenges with resilience.

And this doesn't just transform your relationship with yourself. It changes how you relate to others, too. The more attuned you are to your own feelings, the more capacity you have to hold space for others without losing yourself in the process. Instead of outsourcing your emotional needs to others or feeling resentful for carrying theirs, you can show up with authenticity and connection. Feeling your feelings isn't just about you. It's about building the kind of relationships where you can truly thrive and can hold space for others' emotions so they can thrive alongside you.

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And of course, the more we avoid our feelings, the more we lose access to the very things that make life rich and meaningful. Joy, creativity, connection, those don't exist in a vacuum. They live on the same spectrum as sadness, anger, and fear. You can't selectively numb your emotions. When you shut down the challenging stuff, you shut down the easeful stuff. And I would say that there's something to learn and gather and grow that's brought to us by all emotions. So, they're all beautiful in their way. You just kind of got to squint to see the beauty in the ones that feel really painful.

So, now that you're hopefully on board with the idea that feelings are vital and sacred, that they all are, and that it really truly serves us to allow them all, maybe you're thinking, "Okay, great. How do I actually do that?" Especially if the idea of sitting with something as big as grief or anger or rage feels downright terrifying.

So, my love, we start small. We start gentle. We remind ourselves that any emotion, any feeling that has arisen, we have the capacity in our bodies to feel all the way through. Like, there's an end to the story. And I start there because that's what always blows people's minds in Anchored when we do this work of processing anger, for example, all the way through. Just because you started feeling angry doesn't mean it's you're stuck with it. You really can provide your body the tools. This is what we do in somatic experiencing, to process that anger, to complete that stress activation all the way through.

And so, we start with your body because your body is always here, ready to guide you home, to be that grounding anchor through this process. An actual somatic practice, when emotions feel overwhelming, grounding is the place I start, grounding and orienting. So, orienting is bringing your nervous system into the time and place you're in. It can be done as simply as literally just looking around your space, letting your nervous system know I'm here and now, in the here and now. Grounding is connecting your body into the space in presence, in the present moment awareness. My favorite way to do that is to feel my feet on the ground and to feel a chair

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holding me up. And in that moment, in that process, we can remind our nervous system that this one moment is safe. Other moments have not felt safe. Other moments may not feel safe in the future, but this one moment is safe.

So, I want to invite you to join me if you're not driving a car or other heavy machinery. Place your feet flat on the floor if you have the capacity to move your feet. If you do not, take your hands and push either on the desk or a table in front of you, on the arms of your wheelchair, or on your thighs. Push on something and feel the connection between your body and that downward push towards the ground. If you are capable, wiggle your fingers or your toes. Notice the texture of the surface that you're making contact with. Bring your awareness to the sensation of your body sitting or standing and being held. However you're being held, the couch, the bed, the subway, the airplane seat, feel how you are held. Take a moment to ground into this moment and allow your nervous system to orient to the present moment, which is a crucial first step in creating a sense of safety for your nervous system.

Then there's your breath. Your breath is the bridge between your body and your nervous system. So, if you are actually in the moment of like someone just did something, you're feeling really angry, you're feeling desperately sad, don't change your breath. Stay with your breath and what's happening. Allow your breath to be this really important guide, right? Because your breath shows you what's going on inside. It's your way of seeing what's happening in your nervous system below your conscious thinking, below your conditioning and your socialization.

So, your brain might be saying, "I'm fine. I'm fine," but your breath is all up high and just kind of like feels kind of ragged and feels kind of heavy and feels tense and fast and tight. And your mouth is saying, "No, I'm fine. Don't worry about it. It's fine. Don't worry about it." Because that's your conditioning. You were trained to be a good girl. You were trained to do

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that, right? Be a good little boy, right? So, listen to your breath, pay attention to your breath.

Meanwhile, if you're not in the moment of activation, if it's some time after the moment of activation, so somebody said something really harmful last week, last month, 10 years ago, and that feeling's arising in your body, orient and ground, and you can take a moment before actively choosing to dive into the feeling, to be with it, to hold space for it, to allow it. That's when we can work with our breath and use our breath as a bridge between our mind, body, and nervous system. Nervous system's part of the body, but I think you know what I mean, right? Between the sensorium, right, the sensory system and the nervous system.

So, that's when a long, slow exhale can send a message to your brain to say, "Hey, we're safe. We can feel this. It's okay to allow me to go in." Yeah? So, you can try inhaling for a count of four, holding for two, exhaling for a count of six. So, let's do that together. Breathe in, two, three, four, hold, two, exhale, two, three, four, five, six. And let that exhale be soft and easy as if you're sighing with relief.

This simple practice can calm your nervous system enough to begin to allow you to feel whatever big feels have been present that maybe you had to push down because you were driving or you were in the airport or you were evacuating or you were at a student teacher meeting on either side of the table, and it would have been inappropriate to start screaming or you didn't want to lose your job, so you didn't start like flipping tables. And so, you subsumed it, you get home, and you're like, "Ooh, I want to let this through." Send that safety signal inside, orient and ground, and then let yourself go to it.

Now, if the idea of sitting with a huge wave of grief or anger feels like way too much, please don't dive into the deep end. That's not what we do around here. Start small. Instead of trying to name the emotion right away or be with the entirety of it, begin with the kitten step of your physical sensation. So, feel into your body and just notice. Perhaps I feel tightness

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in my chest. I notice heat in my face. And maybe that's it. Maybe that's it for today, and you get to orient again and walk away. Because there's no need to figure it out all at once, right? Just saying I feel tightness in my chest when I think about that moment, that's enough to start building trust with your body, showing it that you're willing to listen, particularly in these little teeny tiny doses that aren't going to flood your nervous system and totally freak you out again, but are enough to sort of begin to build a little bridge towards that present moment awareness.

So, I'll invite you when you're working on sitting with these big feelings, imagine how you would comfort a dear friend who's in pain, right, who's really suffering, who feels a lot of anger or sadness, betrayal, frustration, annoyance, worry, fear. Soft words, gentle presence, patience. Now, what would it look like to offer that same gentleness to yourself? When you feel a big emotion rising, consider saying something like, "It's okay to feel this. I'm here with you. You don't have to do this alone." And you can bring a resource in, like your abuela, or Anne of Green Gables, or a teddy bear, or a pet, right? Pachamama, our Earth Mother. You can bring a guiding, supportive resource in to support you. Use these simple, tender affirmations to create a container of safety for your feelings, especially while you're getting started.

As always, I love journaling. Sometimes it helps to get your feelings out of your head and onto paper. Here are a few prompts to get you started. You ready? But hit pause if you need to go get a pen and paper, but make sure to come back. Okay. One, what am I feeling in my body right now? Two, if this feeling could speak, what would it say? Three, if my body could speak, what would it say? Four, what does this feeling want me to know or understand? Five, is there anything my body wants or needs me to do to support this feeling moving through me?

And so, let me give you a menu of some things that we do a lot in Anchored. Movement, right? We call it dancing, but it's movement with music, letting it flow, letting the movement move through us. Do I need to

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push on the table or push on a wall? Do I need to draw? Writing is a good thing to do, but I want to encourage you, after doing some basic journaling and just letting it out, not analyzing it, not trying to fix it, just letting it out without judgment, I want to encourage you to come back to the body or to something like drawing where we're leading less on words and more on movement and sensation, drumming, running, gardening, but something where you're in your body and present as much as you're able in the body and less in the mind, which these are totally all skills and we're kitten stepping towards it and you're doing great.

So, finally, remember, you don't have to do this alone. Being witnessed in your feelings by a trusted friend, a well-trained coach like myself, a therapist, a supported group like Anchored or The Somatic Studio can be incredibly healing. There's something profoundly validating about having someone hold space for you without judgment, simply saying, "I see you and it's okay to feel this." If you don't have that kind of support in your life right now, consider exploring communities or spaces where emotional expression is welcome and encouraged.

So here we are, my love, at the heart of it all. Feeling your feelings is more than just a practice. It's an act of vital reclamation. It's choosing to come home to your body, your heart, your truth, your community, your interdependence. It's saying, "I am worthy of my own care and attention. I am worthy of feeling fully alive and I am fully alive when I'm having my feelings."

Imagine for a moment what your life could look like if your feelings, if your big emotions were not some enemy to shut up, but your guide. If sadness was an invitation to rest and honor what matters most, if anger was a call to protect your boundaries and values, to speak up against injustice, if joy was something you could lean into without fear of some other shoe doing whatever it is shoes do. Don't even mention it. Imagine meeting yourself with tenderness, holding all of your messy, beautiful humanity with compassion and in turn meeting the world with authenticity.

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So, I leave you with this question. What would it look like to give yourself permission to feel today? Not to figure it out, not to get over it, but simply to allow your feelings, to start small, maybe by naming a sensation in your body or letting out a single sigh and let that be enough, because my love, it is enough. It's the most perfect kitten step. And each little kitten step is enough in and of itself, and my beauty, you too are enough exactly as you are.

Thank you for joining me. I'm so grateful that you're here. 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.