

**Ep #397: Catharsis Is Cute.
Integration Changes Your Life.**



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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Ep #397: Catharsis Is Cute. Integration Changes Your Life.

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, we talked about why so many of us who are deep in the healing world are, if we are being really honest, chasing a peak experience high. And today we're going where that conversation was always headed. Here's the thing that happens, and I want to describe it precisely because I imagine you might recognize it in your bones.

So, you have the breakthrough. In the session, in the ceremony, in the retreat, in the therapy room, whatever it was, something opened. You drove home different. You felt it. You maybe even texted a friend about it at a stoplight, which, safety aside, whatever, is really a testament to how real it felt.

You went to sleep that night with that particular quality of exhausted hopefulness that follows a genuine opening, and you thought, okay, wow, finally. Something's different now. I am different now. And then Tuesday arrived.

As it tends to do. With its grocery store and its passive aggressive email from that one person and its moment, you know the one, where the thing happened, the exact thing you thought you'd healed, and your nervous system ran the old program so fast and so completely that by the time you noticed what was happening, you were already three sentences into the over-explanation or halfway through the yes, you meant to make a no, or lying on your bathroom floor at 11 p.m. composing a text you knew you shouldn't send. And you thought, wait, but hold up, hold up, wait a minute. Didn't I already heal this?

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Didn't I already heal this? I had the peak experience. I had the breakthrough. I cried with the lady. The lady held me when I cried, or the therapist handed me the Kleenex. I cried. I did the thing. I healed it. And my beauty, what we don't realize is something I say very, very often. If you are part of the Anchored alumni community, if you've been through Anchored, you've heard me say this a couple dozen, two, three dozen times. Catharsis is cute. Integration changes your life.

And so today, we're talking about what integration actually is, because it can be a little fuzzy. And why it's so much harder than the opening, and why it is, without question, the thing that changes everything, which is why it's such a huge part of the work I do with my clients.

So, my love, welcome back. Or if it's your first time here, welcome. I'd love to invite you to go back and listen to last week's episode first. I'd love that for you, because it'll make this one land. It'll just make it land a lot more betterly. If you're jumping in here, don't worry about it. You're in the right place either way. Now, the opening is not the change. The opening, whether it's through somatics, thought work, plant medicine, ketamine assisted therapy, bungee jumping, like whatever, whatever it is that led to the breakthrough, the catharsis, the peak experience, the wow.

The opening is the condition under which change becomes possible. But it is not the change. And most of us have been treating those two things as the same thing for years, which is like, I shared this last time, right? It's a little like getting your eyes checked and having the optometrist hand you a prescription and then framing the prescription and hanging it on your wall and wondering why you still can't read the menu. It's kind of like that.

The neuroscience is worth a quick visit here, so, nerd alert. A peak experience, breathwork or psychedelics, an extraordinary coaching or therapy session, it can create a window of neuroplasticity, a period of increased receptivity where new patterns have a slightly easier time taking hold. A critical window is what it's called by the nerdy nerds. Researchers

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studying psychedelics like psilocybin, MDMA, et al., are finding evidence of this. The brain becomes briefly more flexible, more open to reorganization. But that window closes.

And so if you don't do something inside the window, if you don't actively work to build new neural pathways, new somatic patterns, new relational ways of being to actually institute change in your life, the nervous system defaults to its existing architecture. Because that architecture is what it knows and what it knows feels like home as it were, even when home was never particularly safe.

Your mind, your body, your nervous system has been running the same operating system for decades and maybe has received those like update notifications on the screen and has chosen, repeatedly, to click remind me later instead of install now. Am I right? I'm guessing I'm right. I'm thinking I'm right. But my beauty, the catharsis opened the window. Integration is what you build while it's open and what you build ongoing in your life.

And here's what I've watched happen over and over. The breathwork session was extraordinary. She felt it, she wept, she saw the face of her mother as a young woman and understood something about generational and intergenerational pain. She'd never understood before and she felt briefly, completely free. Then she went home. And her partner said something dismissive, like he always does, and she felt the familiar collapse in her chest and she said nothing. And she made herself wrong for it again, because hadn't she just healed this? Huh.

The plant medicine ceremony was the most significant experience of their life. They saw with perfect clarity that their people pleasing was rooted in a specific moment of childhood terror. They came home with pages of notes and a sense of mission. And three weeks later, they were back to over-explaining, to managing everyone else's emotions, back to lying awake replaying a conversation they'd had with their boss and wondering if they'd upset him. The insight had been so loud and so specific, they'd written it in

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their journal in three colors and still somehow their nervous system received the memo, considered it thoughtfully, and filed it directly into the recycling bin.

The therapy breakthrough was real. She finally said the unsayable thing. Her therapist held it beautifully. She drove home feeling lighter than she had in years. But then Thursday, her mom calls, and without even realizing it, she reburied it. And this is what happens when we treat catharsis as the destination rather than the doorway.

The opening gave you the map. Integration is actually moving into the house, setting up shop, living in the new reality that you envisioned in the wow moment. Now, I want to tell you something about integration that I don't think gets named enough, and it has nothing to do with daily practices or morning routines or the size of your journal, though we'll get to all of that. It's something more fundamental. Something that explains why integration can so often be so much harder than the opening even when you are genuinely trying. Even when you have the practices, even when you know what to do and you are doing it.

When you start to actually change, not dramatically, not in a way anyone can specifically point to, but in the quiet way that integration actually works, slowly and surely. I mean, the system around you destabilizes. And I mean system in the most literal sense, like your relationships, your family, your friendships. The people who have organized their entire way of being with you around the version of you that existed before the opening, they know her. They know how long she'll manage before she snaps and when she'll cave and what particular flavor of guilt trip will work fastest and how to read the specific tension in her shoulders that means she's about to people please her way out of her own needs again.

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They are not bad people for knowing this. They probably don't even consciously realize they know it. They learned it the same way you learned everything, right? That's how human animals do, through repetition, through pattern, through years of the two of you doing the intricate relational dance that I mean, you've always done together. The old you is legible to them. And the new you, the one who pauses before answering, the one who actually says no, the one who let the silence or your bad mood sit instead of rushing to fill it with reassurance or fixing it, it's not legible, at least not yet.

And here is where it gets interesting. And by interesting, I mean occasionally absolutely wild to witness. The people who said they wanted you to heal are sometimes the first ones to pull you back towards the version of you they know how to manage. Not because they're villains, but because the old you is comfortable, because the old you made them feel a certain way, like needed or certain or important or safely in charge of the dynamic. And the new you is asking them without a word to reorganize. And come on now, reorganizing is uncomfortable. And uncomfortable, as we have established, does not get a great reception in most of the rooms we grew up in, right?

So what happens? The partner makes a familiar dig and waits for the familiar collapse and instead gets a pause and a steady look, and something in the room shifts in a way that feels to them slightly alarming. The friend who's always been able to process her anxiety by dumping it onto you for hours long calls, she calls and you say, oh, I'm so glad to hear from you. I have 45 minutes. And then you mean it. And she gets off the phone feeling vaguely unsettled and you spend the rest of the evening wondering if you did something wrong.

The family member at the holiday table says the thing they've always said, and you don't take the bait. And the silence that follows is so unfamiliar that three people ask if you are feeling okay. And yeah, you're feeling okay.

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You're feeling better than okay. You are feeling possibly for the first time like yourself, like a capital S self. And the room is treating it like a minor medical emergency. This is why integration cannot happen in solitude. Not because you need witnesses, but witnesses really help.

But also because the actual test of whether the new pattern has landed is not how you feel it in your morning practice. It's what happens when someone who knew the old you is standing right in front of you and the moment arrives and you choose differently anyway, even though they won't like it. And then, not only do you choose differently, you stay in that choice, right? You don't fold like an origami swan. Instead, you let them have their feelings about it without abandoning yourself back into the comfortable version of you that everyone found so much easier to be around.

My beauty, my sweet, perfect pickled pepper, that is the work. That's where integration either holds or doesn't. And it is, I will be honest with you, considerably more demanding than most ceremony and most sessions. A ceremony may ask you to surrender, but integration asks you to stay.

So what does it actually look like practically in the body, in the life on a given Tuesday morning? Because I find that when I name this, women sometimes hear me saying, stop doing the big experiences, sit in a room being responsible. Integration is not dull. It's not punishment for having too much fun at the retreat. It just looks from the outside like, well, it can look like absolutely nothing, which is a real branding problem, and I acknowledge that, right? Like there's no good photo the moment you didn't overexplain, right? There's no certificate of completion for the Thursday you let an uncomfortable silence just be a silence.

And yet, integration looks like after the breathwork session, having someone to process with who can help you make sense of what happened, rather than just sitting alone in the glow of it until Monday arrives and takes it away. That's why in my groups, we always do integration after breathwork, after big coaching, etc. It looks like building a daily routine

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small enough, kitten steps, small enough that you'll actually do it. Not like the two-hour morning ritual that works on retreat, totally does, and collapses on a Wednesday when you have a 7 a.m. call. Five minutes of somatic check-in, a hand on the heart every hour, asking your body what it needs before you ask everyone else what they need.

It looks like bringing what the ceremony, what the session, what the work showed you into a relational container where it can be tested, held, challenged, and refined. Because insights that only live in solitude often don't survive contact with other people. My beauty, your nervous system does not get regulated out in a yurt somewhere far from home, right? The regulation shows up at the dinner table in a text thread with your mother, in the meeting where you start to defer, and then one unremarkable Wednesday, you don't. It looks like the unglamorous work of noticing yourself in the old pattern, pausing, and choosing differently. Not once, not just in the peak moment, but thousands of times in the ordinary moments, the ones nobody sees and nobody celebrates that are quietly like the whole freaking thing.

I want to name something that might sting a little. So for many of us, and I say us because of course I include myself in this, the seeking of peak experience can become its own form of avoidance, of buffering. The ceremony is coming so I don't have to look too hard at this thing right now. The retreat will handle it. The next session will crack it open. Ugh, I have one-on-one coaching next week. That'll fix this. So we stay in this perpetual pre-integration state, always approaching the threshold, but never quite crossing into the territory the threshold revealed. We become, in a very specific and deeply human way, professional almost there's, connoisseurs of the doorway, if you will. Extraordinarily well resourced people who have never quite unpacked their bags in the territory the opening revealed because there's always another opening to get to.

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And the next opening has the considerable advantage of being both more exciting because it hasn't happened yet and less likely to result in a weird dinner party silence. Hmm. And underneath that, often is a fear of the ordinary, of the slow work, of the days when nothing cracks open and you're just a person trying to be a little more honest, a little wee bit more present, a little less reactive than you were yesterday.

The peak experience, I mean, it's fun. Come on, let's be real. But it's also dramatic. It's felt, it's undeniable, and the ordinary work of integration offers no such reassurance. You don't always know if it's working. You don't always feel it. Some days, the only evidence that anything has changed is that you noticed the old pattern happening while it was happening, which feels like a consolation prize until you realize it absolutely is not. You just keep showing up. And one day you realize the collapse didn't happen. You didn't actually overexplain. You said the thing and then you, you stopped talking. You let someone else's discomfort be theirs. Not because you had another breakthrough, but because you practiced quietly, without fanfare, until the new pattern was more available than the old one. No ceremony required, no facilitator present, just you and a Monday, and a nervous system that has finally, finally started to trust that you're not going anywhere. You've got your own back.

So my beauty, I'm not asking you to stop having peak experiences. Come on, they're a blast. Please keep going on your mat, going into ceremony, going doing the deep coaching work, going into therapy, and keep cracking yourself open. Go for it. Those moments matter. But what I am asking is that you stop treating them as a finish line. Stop leaving the breathwork session and going straight back into your regular life without tending to what opened. Stop going to ceremony and coming home to nothing. No integration support, no container, no community of people who can hold what you're moving through. Stop collecting openings and wondering why you're not different, why you're not relating different, parenting different, being different.

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The opening is the grace note. Integration is the song. Catharsis is cute. Integration changes your life. And if you've been doing the work, the real work, the honest work, the work that doesn't always feel like anything, but that you keep doing anyway, my beauty, you're already in integration. Every single little, teeny, tiny time you notice yourself in the old pattern and you pause. Every time you take a breath and choose differently, even badly and clumsily. Every time you stay in the room with your discomfort instead of reaching for the next peak or the next buffer to take it away. Every time you let there be a silence and you let it be a little weird and you let everyone else handle their own feelings and you stay in your body anyway, that counts. That really counts.

My beauty, if you're ready to stop collecting openings and start doing something with what they showed you, I want to invite you to check out my courses. Anchored is my six-month small group coaching program, and it is at its core an integration container. We do deep dive coaching. We do breathwork. That's in there. It's part of what I love most about this work, and you will feel it. And then we stay. We process. We bring the somatic insight into the relational and the cognitive work. We practice together, staying in the choice when the room gets uncomfortable. We build the daily practices small enough to survive contact with that dreaded foe known as Tuesday morning. We show up for the ordinary moments and learn to trust that the ordinary moments are, in fact, where everything happens. You can find out about Anchored and so much more at BeatrizAlbina.com. I'd love to have you with us. And if joining Anchored, if a big six-month container is not it for now, I have so many courses at all sorts of price points to meet you where you're at.

In the meantime, tend what opened. Whatever the latest peak experience revealed to you, it's still there. The window may have narrowed, but my beauty, it has not closed. What's one small thing that you could do today? Not to crack open again, but to stay in the choice a little longer than you did

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yesterday. To stay present with yourself for just a wee breath more today. That's your homework.

Thank you for being here. I'm grateful to share my thoughts, to share my musings, to share this space and this community with you. I'm so glad you're here, Tenderoni. 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. Talk to you soon. Un beso. Ciao, ciao.