

Ep #400: Take Me at My Word (Part 1): How to Stop Second-Guessing When Others Question You



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Búa Victoria Albina, NP, MPH

[Feminist Wellness](#) with Búa Victoria Albina, NP, MPH

Ep #400: Take Me at My Word (Part 1): How to Stop Second-Guessing When Others Question You

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, something that comes up constantly, like very much all the time in the work I do with people healing from emotional outsourcing, which is the habitual pattern of sourcing our felt sense of safety, belonging, and worth from outside of ourselves, which shows up as codependent, perfectionist, and people-pleasing habits and patterns, is this tension. This tension that often comes up in our most intimate, most vulnerable relationships, the ones that we most hope we can be our authentic self in, the ones we most hope we can be seen and heard and believed in. Our relationships with parents, siblings, our closest friends, our partners.

And there's this, well, this habit, this pattern, this thing that comes up that creates friction, that compounds over time in ways that are like easy to miss when you're in it, and then eventually, you're just like up to your neck in it, and you're so annoyed, and it's so too much, and you feel like you're just going to explode. And it's the moment when you tell someone very clearly what you want, and they don't take you at your word.

They offer an alternative. They nudge. They say, "Are you sure?" They suggest you try the orange juice when you clearly said you wanted tomato. They present a brief but enthusiastic TED Talk on why you might reconsider. But they're not just casually offering. They're unwittingly, and I'm going to say unwittingly here because I'm coming from love, I'm coming from compassion. I don't think people realize how exhausting they're being. Because somewhere they learned that doing that, pushing through to get their opinion to the top of the pile, was the best and the most rightest and potentially the most loving thing to do in a relationship.

Ep #400: Take Me at My Word (Part 1): How to Stop Second-Guessing When Others Question You

Because it's an important way for them to feel important, to be seen as important, to somehow be less likely to be abandoned because they are so helpful, which unfortunately often has the opposite effect on a relationship because, like, do you want to hang out with someone who's constantly questioning whether you want the thing you clearly said you want?

And so, you, that other person, the person on the receiving end who's spent so long having your stated preferences questioned, your no relitigated, your internal experience treated as a, well, a first draft. On that side, you start to wonder whether you even know yourself as well as you thought you did. And you've also probably wondered if the people that claim to love you, that claim to care about you so much, actually love you at all, since they don't seem to believe your stated wants, your stated desires, your stated preference, that you know what juice you want.

If either is you, and I've been both for sure, stay with me. We're going to talk about what this whole scenario actually does to people and to relationships, and what it means to start asking for something different.

So yeah, not to brag, but I have lived on both sides of this dynamic. Growing up, well, it never seemed to feel like my opinion about what I wanted or needed or preferred really mattered, and definitely not as much as a grown-up's opinion on the matter. And I've also been the pusher. Like, in a warm, enthusiastic, "Oh, I just love you and want good things for you" kind of way, which is definitely what my intention was. And I know now that that was generally not my impact.

And golly, golly, that way of managing other people and their feelings so you can attempt to feel safer, it is such an insidious way to relate. Because like, well, it's so hard to be annoyed at from the other side, you know? So like someone would say, "Oh, no thanks, I don't eat, I don't know, fennel." And I would say, "Yeah, but have you tried it this way? So this is how we prepare it in Argentina. It's different. I promise, like, this is the one that

Ep #400: Take Me at My Word (Part 1): How to Stop Second-Guessing When Others Question You

converts people." And I would push, and I would push like I was running some kind of like, anise-based missionary operation and their soul was still up for grabs.

Someone would say, "Oh, I'm just not a hiking person." And somehow my brain, like, it would land in there as like a puzzle to solve rather than information to receive. Because I love hiking, always have. I'd get really thoughtful, I'd tilt my head like a little golden retriever and I'd say something like, "Well, I wonder if you just haven't found the right hike yet." Which like, to be clear, is a sentence that means absolutely nothing. And yet, I said it with the full confidence of a person who had just discovered the existence of mountains and like could not wait to bring everyone to there.

Someone would tell me they wanted a quiet Friday and I would spend 45 minutes making like a very gentle, very affectionate case for the plan I thought would be more fun for them. But really, it was for us, which involved a restaurant they said they didn't love, in a neighborhood they said was hard to get to, and like annoying to get to because you had to change two trains, you had to change at Atlantic, like, freaking kill me. But because I had decided the funness of the evening was more visible to me than it was to them, I wanted to convince them. And I wasn't malicious. I was not trying to like override or disrespect people or be a jerk face. I genuinely thought I was being helpful and enthusiastic and generous with my extensive personal opinions about what makes life good because in a way, I was. I thought I was offering and just making suggestions, because in a way I was.

And I realized by, let's call it my mid-30s, that I was also being annoying as hell, and I'm really sorry to everyone that I did that to. Because here's what I understand now that I didn't, I want to say fully understand, but even like understand barely at all then, which is that when you don't take someone at their word, especially when it's about themselves, you're communicating

Ep #400: Take Me at My Word (Part 1): How to Stop Second-Guessing When Others Question You

something that you almost certainly didn't intend to communicate. You're saying, "I decline to receive you the way you want to be received. Your realness, it's not real enough here. Not real enough to get believed." Ouch, right?

Your stated preference isn't quite real to me yet. I need to do a little more digging before I accept this. I have some concerns about the veracity and accuracy of your self-knowledge and I'd like to run a brief audit if you'd just hold tight. And even when it's wrapped in warmth and genuine care, the effect is that the other person now has to spend energy they certainly didn't budget for. Energy defending the validity of their own desire. Energy convincing you that, yup, they meant what they said, or like, jeez, they wouldn't have said it. Energy reestablishing something that should have been established on the first pass, which is, I know myself, I told you what I wanted. That's the thing I want. We are done here.

And every single one of those energy expenditures, it costs the other person something. And that's a small but very real tax. And when it happens repeatedly across time, especially inside a close relationship where we should, we should be able to just be ourselves and be trusted and believed and just relax into our realness, that tax compounds into something that starts to feel like, I don't quite get to be who I actually am in this dynamic. My preferences are opening bids, not conclusions. Which, wow, is an exhausting way to be loved. And for us, especially coming from emotional outsourcing, it can also make us question ourselves, which is so very painful.

Because if the people I love are questioning my desires, then, oh, wait, are they even the right ones to have? Is there something wrong with me that I'm being chronically misunderstood here?

Now, I want to pivot to share a very personal story. Let me tell you about this one time I agreed to move to Toronto. And for folks who are new to the

Ep #400: Take Me at My Word (Part 1): How to Stop Second-Guessing When Others Question You

program, hello, welcome, I love you. I am a very much Argentine Leo New Yorker here. I am from a people who are, generally speaking, very quick-witted, very funny, and wry, and sarcastic, and direct, and hilarious, and super humble. And I need you to hold that context for what I'm about to tell you.

My way of interpersonally relating with strangers, with new friends, with old friends, with family, with everyone is within the context of jokes, of being funny, of being quick, and like taking the piss and pointing out what's hilarious about life. Okay, you got it? You got the context? We're going to talk about being misunderstood. And my wife, Billey and I, lived in Toronto for just shy of two years, and it was what studies call a genuinely terrible, horrible, no-good fit for both of us, for reasons I could fill a whole other podcast itself with, but shan't.

The headline evidence for today, and I say this with full awareness, fullest awareness, that I am generalizing, and I have not met or spoken to everyone in Toronto, nor have I personally conducted exit interviews with every single person here. So if you are a Torontonians with a razor-sharp sense of the absurd, hello, I'm really sad we never met. Where were you hiding? Oh my God, I was so lonely.

And so the headline is this. In the time I was living in Toronto, I would say something quick, specific, funny, the kind of thing that in New York or San Francisco or Buenos Aires, or like basically anywhere I have ever lived, would get at minimum a snort, at best a table-slapping incident. And overarchingly, people here just look at me, often kind of confused, often a little like, "Wait, what?"

Like I'd produce a sound their equipment was not designed to receive. Like they can see I've made an attempt, and they're doing their genuine, effortful, good-natured best to locate where it was supposed to land, and they simply cannot find it. And we all would then stand together in the

Ep #400: Take Me at My Word (Part 1): How to Stop Second-Guessing When Others Question You

rubble of the joke. And I would smile and move on and say something like, "Forget about it. Don't worry about it. No, no, no, it was a joke. Don't worry about it." Anyway, so, it's snowing again, huh?

And something not so small inside me would feel like it's dying. Because let's be real. I am hilarious. I am a lot of things. And I know that I'm funny, right? Like, without irony or like some caveat, like I am genuinely, objectively, verifiably funny. I am hilarious in New York, New England, New Jersey. I'm hilarious in Barcelona. I am on the available evidence pretty much wicked funny and quick and clever worldwide with one geographically specific exception.

In Toronto, apparently I communicate exclusively in a frequency that only I and possibly certain migratory birds can hear. And I have a piece of evidence for this that I want to share with you because it puts a point on it. And the point on it, again, just to be clear, I'm not here to diss the people of Toronto. I don't know them. I actually met very few of them because winter is so long and most people hibernate and I didn't grow up here, which, when you talk to people here, they tell you means it's really hard to meet people here because people don't meet people outside their circles.

So again, my goal is not to diss the good people of Toronto, it's to share an extremely painful story. These two years have been profoundly terrible. I mean, luckily I have Billey, I have Wade, I wrote and published a book, but wow, so lonely. And I'm sharing this in the midst of this story about not being taken at your meaning because I think it really illustrates it. And so there's a million little stories, and this one illustrates this moment where like sarcasm, where joking, where being light of energy just doesn't seem to land here.

So we were at a cabin, they call them cottages, whatever, it was a cabin. Billey, me, and a Torontonion. And Billey got a bug bite. But like, not like a normal little tiny bug bite, whatever, we're covered in mosquito bites. But

Ep #400: Take Me at My Word (Part 1): How to Stop Second-Guessing When Others Question You

this was like a catastrophic architectural, her entire thigh was the size of a Chrysler bug bite. And so I texted a picture of like a dinner plate next to Billey's thigh because we were laughing. It was hilarious. God, poor thing, it hurt so much, but we were also laughing because that's what we do.

I texted this photo to my best friend Sanai in Manhattan, Dr. Sanai Kusari. She's an MD with multiple board certifications. God, I'm so proud of her. And she is also separately and with equal distinction board-certified hilarious. Sanai texted back immediately, "Listen, medically speaking, you should just amputate and make her a new leg out of a log from the cabin. It's the only option. I recommend a rusty saw." And Billey and I absolutely lost it. Because here she is suffering, and that's a hilarious, ridiculous, rude, amazing, perfect thing to say. We were howling, like the kind of laughing where you can't breathe and you're not entirely sure you're going to be okay laughing.

And I read it out loud because of course I did. And I looked up from my phone mid-cackle and the Torontonion had this expression on her face, not confused, not amused, but like genuinely concerned. Like she was doing like rapid mental math about whether we had a tourniquet. And I watch her face cycle through what appeared to be actual alarm, and then I realized she was taking us seriously. Like she thought we were laughing because we were panicking. And I had to put my hand up and say out loud with words to a grown adult, "Hey, no, we're joking. This is a joke. Sanai is joking and we are joking. No one's getting amputated. No one's getting a an old-school peg leg made out of a cabin log." And she goes, "Oh," in the way people go, "Oh," when they've understood the information but they haven't like echo-located the humor. And then she said, and I am quoting her directly, "Gosh, I think I'm too serious."

I mean, listen, she diagnosed herself out loud at the scene of the crime. And like, again, and it is interesting that I feel like I need to put so many

Ep #400: Take Me at My Word (Part 1): How to Stop Second-Guessing When Others Question You

disclaimers in here. I'll do some thought work about it. But like, no, I'm not judging her. What I'm pointing out is a different way of communicating and relating that is more dryly earnest and serious and simply not attuned to creatures like me and our constant cut-ups.

And so that's a moment where in this moment of feeling so in my element of being in the laughter, in the jokes, making light of a like legitimately not great moment as a way that was like feeling good, it was like the wind got whipped out of my sails, and I was just sitting there luffing in the breeze, just like, "Oh, damn it. Fire extinguisher to the face again."

Another time we were at a dinner, few people, the kind of evening where everyone's being very pleasant and the conversation's moving through like the usual stations. And someone at the table started describing a work situation, a genuinely Kafka-esque bureaucratic nightmare, the kind where you can tell the person has been living like so deep inside it for so long, they've lost the ability to see how objectively, cosmically absurd it is. And as they're describing it, the third committee, the fourth approval process, the email chain that had somehow looped back to its own beginning like a temporal anomaly, I leaned in slightly, waited for exactly the right beat, and then said the thing.

Like the perfectly calibrated, dry, specific, hilarious thing that in any other room would have like, I don't know, perchance caused a small scene, a beverage incident at minimum. And the woman across from me smiled politely, and the man next to her nodded slowly, like he was considering whether I had made a point. And the person telling the story paused for just like a half second, not a laugh pause, but like a processing kind of pause and then continued exactly where they'd left off, slightly louder as if the moment had simply not occurred. And the table moved with him, seamlessly, collectively, like a school of very earnest, perfectly synchronized fishies.

Ep #400: Take Me at My Word (Part 1): How to Stop Second-Guessing When Others Question You

So I picked up my glass, took a sip, looked at Billey across the table. Her eyes said, "I heard it. It was funny. I love you," in the span of about a quarter second. And then I looked back at the table and smiled and added this moment to the running tally of moments of not being heard, seen, understood here and rejoined the conversation about the email chain. And I was fine. And I was also quietly and completely alone, except for my perfect Billey, in a room full of people who were being quite politely nice to me in a town where I clearly just don't make sense.

Here's the part that really got me. After enough time in an environment that doesn't receive you, the strongest amongst us start to question the facts, not the preferences, the facts, things you've known about yourself for, oh, I don't know, 46 years, things with evidence, such that I know I'm funny. I have decades of data on this. I have witnesses. And yet, somewhere around month infinity plus in Toronto, I found myself lying awake at O-dark-thirty genuinely wondering, "Okay, but what if I'm not? What if I've been operating under a fundamental misapprehension about my own personality this whole time? And Toronto's just the first place honest enough to show me? What if everyone else was just being polite and I, a grown adult with advanced degrees have simply never clocked it?"

My beauty, my darling, my tender little narwhals, that is not a reasonable thought. And I know that, and I was having it anyway with complete sincerity because that's what chronic not being received does at a certain point. It doesn't just make you feel lonely. It starts to make you feel like maybe you don't know yourself as well as you thought you did. It leaks into the places you were sure about.

And listen, of course I'd take my own advice. I've been doing a ton of thought work around this, loving myself up, leaning into the internal evidence base that my sense of humor is real and good and does not require external validation to exist. All of that is true, and I am doing it. And

Ep #400: Take Me at My Word (Part 1): How to Stop Second-Guessing When Others Question You

most days it works beautifully because I've been at this for a while. And also, I want to tell you what this has taught me from the inside, from almost two very long and painful years of living it.

Not being met, not being understood, not having even something as simple and instinctive as your way of communicating or your humor land in the room, it is genuinely lonely in a way that is rather hard to explain if you haven't felt it. It's not dramatic loneliness, though Toronto has certainly taught me so much about loneliness in these long winters when no one leaves the house and everyone hibernates. But it's not that. It's not the loneliness of loss or grief. It's more like being slightly out of phase with your environment at all times, a persistent, low-grade, completely possible to survive, but nonetheless exhausting hum of being slightly beside the point, slightly not fitting in, like you're the only one in the room running on a different operating system and every interaction requires a small translation layer that nobody else can see you installing. Like I have to not be me in order to not live in constant and chronic frustration and annoyance. Like I have to stop making small talk with strangers to not feel even more alone and alienated. Like I have to hush to reduce the friction of being alive here. Like I just need to not leave the house to not feel constantly the odd man out.

And of course it has an impact on my nervous system because it touches on so many parts of connection, attachment, safety, identity. Every interaction at the supermarket where connection was declined, every blank stare, every joke that poof evaporated. My nervous system collected them all and started doing what psyches and bodies and nervous systems do when they have enough data points, which is reach back for the old stories that feel both painful and familiar and thus like oddly comforting in their. The ones from way before Toronto. Stories about not fitting in, about being the odd one out, not being received or cared for as I am, for being me, being too much and also somehow not enough simultaneously, which, like,

Ep #400: Take Me at My Word (Part 1): How to Stop Second-Guessing When Others Question You

that is an impressive thing to pull off, but it is not one that I would recommend.

Here's what two years of this has taught me. The thing that connects directly back to taking people at their word in a way I genuinely did not expect. What I have craved most living here is the experience of someone other than magical Billey to experience someone simply receiving what I offer as it is. Not needing it to be something else, not looking for the version of me that fits more neatly into the room, just, "You made a joke, or a smart comment, or even said, 'Hello,' on the street or in a store, and I acknowledge you. It landed. I see you. We're good." I don't need the point belabored. I don't need to hear, "You're so funny." Nah, let's just move on. Here's another one. Perhaps some banter, maybe even a joke or a comment, or like something wild, like, "Hello, good morning," back. Like, I'm not even asking for witty repartee here, just not to get stared at, like I'm unintelligible, or for a stranger on the street to look away when I say, "Hi," and smile.

Because the experience of being accurately received, of having your expressed reality just met as your actual reality is more regulating to the nervous system than I think most of us consciously clock. Because when it's reliably happening, we just call it Wednesday and move through the day without thinking about it. And when it's not, it's so profoundly painful. Because when it stops happening consistently, you feel it everywhere. In that small bracing and tightening before you try the joke, in the way you start running a little internal cost-benefit before you say the thing, anything, even hello. In the exhaustion that isn't really tiredness and is utterly draining.

Here's what I started to notice. This is the part that sent me down this whole rabbit hole and which is what brought you this episode today. When my nervous system is already running a chronic low-level, "I'm not quite

Ep #400: Take Me at My Word (Part 1): How to Stop Second-Guessing When Others Question You

being received here, retreat, it's not safe to be me," kind of signal, my sensitivity to micro-moments of not being taken at my word goes way, way up. Pre-Toronto, Bea could hear, "Are you sure you don't just want orange juice instead?" and I'd say, "Yep, sure do want that tomato juice," and would continue her life as a basically regulated, grounded, pretty steady person.

In Toronto, Bea hears, "Are you sure you don't want orange juice when you clearly said tomato?" and something in her body goes, "Oh, crap, we're doing this again. Here's the thing where what I said is apparently a first draft where my stated preference has been received as a preliminary position, where I need to make the case that I know what I like to someone who's known me for years. Oh, for fart's sake. Come on." And that is not a proportionate response to being offered citrus. And my nervous system and mind and body and smarts, I mean, like I know that in my more generous, resourced, grounded moments. What it's actually responding to is cumulative. It's the pattern underneath the individual moment, the same way a body that's been lifting heavy boxes all day will flinch at picking up a coffee cup. The coffee cup is not heavy, but the body is at its limit and the coffee cup doesn't know that. And listen, here we are.

And this is what chronic misattunement does. When the environment you're in, a relationship, a city, a workplace, a family system consistently doesn't quite take you at your word, at your truth, as yourself, you get more and more raw. And the cost of each individual moment climbs even as the moment itself gets smaller. And you start doing this thing where you're braced before the conversation even starts, pre-loading the defense of whatever you're about to say. And then someone says, "Are you sure you want the thing you clearly told me that you're sure that you want?" about literally anything. And you have to decide in real time whether you have the capacity to respond to the question that was asked or the two-year archive of questions underneath it.

Ep #400: Take Me at My Word (Part 1): How to Stop Second-Guessing When Others Question You

And like, the Toronto version of this, the city that doesn't get you, the environment that's a terrible fit, is in some ways the way easier version to hold. It's external, for us it was temporary. We knew within the first week of being here that, "Whoa, not where we wanted to stay," and pretty soon decided we were moving to Barcelona. And so I'd remind myself on a given Tuesday at approximately 9:00 p.m. while staring at the ceiling, "Barcelona is coming." Because yeah, we got out of Toronto the millisecond Billey finished her Masters.

But for a lot of us, the experience of not being taken at our word isn't just like a city that you don't actually belong to that you can pack up and leave because it was never your place and the city made that clear. Instead, it's a person. It's your partner who does this with your feelings about your family, your decisions about your career, your sense of what you need on a hard day. It's your mom who's been offering alternative interpretations of your inner experience since 1987 and somehow has not yet tired of the project. It's a best friend who loves you so much they can't quite let you be wrong about what you want.

And I got to say that version is so much harder to name because it's wrapped in relationship, in history, in genuine love that comes out sideways. And you're not going to move away from it as easily as packing boxes and leaving a city that was never yours. You can't just wait it out because there's no end in sight. And because it's been happening for a long time in small increments, you may not have a word for why you feel slightly smaller in that relationship than you do everywhere else, why you stop mentioning certain things with them, why you ghost the call, why you agree when you don't agree, because I mean, come on, you've learned it's not like you're going to be listened to anyway, so why waste the energy? Why you notice yourself thus pre-editing before you speak, running a quick internal calculation about whether what you're about to say is defensible,

Ep #400: Take Me at My Word (Part 1): How to Stop Second-Guessing When Others Question You

whether you have enough evidence to back it up, whether it's worth the gentle or sometimes not-so-gentle cross-examination that follows.

That pre-editing is a kind of self-abandonment, and it happens so gradually and so reasonably that most people don't catch it until they're doing it about everything. Folks with emotional outsourcing habits are specifically vulnerable to this. So when you grow up in an environment where your internal experience consistently didn't match the external feedback you got about it, where you were told you weren't really angry or you're overreacting, you're too sensitive, or your needs were too much, or you should just be grateful with all your mother's sacrificed for you kids. Your nervous system actually has to work harder to trust its own read on reality. We've talked about this in different forms across so many episodes, including back in episode 292 called How to Break the Self-Abandonment Cycle, where we really got into how the core move of emotional outsourcing is outsourcing the question, "Am I okay?" to the external world because the internal signal feels like, well, it might not be so reliable.

So when your stated preference gets questioned, even gently, even warmly, even with good intention by someone who loves you, it can land on that exact nerve. And the moment stops being at all about orange juice. It becomes, wait, am I sure? Did I misjudge what I want? Was my preference actually wrong? And then it goes deeper than preferences. So for folks with significant emotional outsourcing histories, chronic not being believed doesn't just make you doubt what you want in the moment. It starts to erode the things you thought you knew for certain about who you are, like your sense of humor, your values, your read on a situation, what you know, what you want, who you are. The stuff that's supposed to be bedrock.

Because if you learned early that your felt sense of reality was regularly contradicted by the people whose job it was to know you then, "I'm sure about this," isn't actually a stable floor. It's a position you've held. And

Ep #400: Take Me at My Word (Part 1): How to Stop Second-Guessing When Others Question You

positions can be wrong. And maybe the people questioning you have access to something, some kind of wisdom, some kind of knowledge, some kind of knowing that you don't. And so that thought spiral, "I thought I knew this about myself, but what if I've been wrong the whole time?" is not catastrophizing. It's the entirely logical output of a nervous system that was trained to treat external feedback as more reliable than internal signal, which is also, by the way, the definition of emotional outsourcing. Full circle. That is a very different weight than the moment would seem to deserve. And it makes complete sense. And it's also a signal worth listening to about what your nervous system has been carrying all these years.

All right, my love, let's talk about some remedies here. So if you're the one who's been living on the receiving end of this, the work is not simply to become someone who needs less confirmation from the outside world because that framing puts the problem back on you, and the problem's not you. But rather, the work is to start building a louder internal signal, an inner signal that you trust more. So that when someone questions what you just said, you have something to come back to in your mind, in your body, in your nervous system, some ground within instead of just like looking at their face waiting to be convinced.

And that means practicing in small, low-stakes moments, kitten steps, if you will. And I will. I mean, I will, if you will. No, but I will anyway, right? Practicing letting your first answer be the answer. Not softening it preemptively. "Oh, I mean, if you don't mind, I actually would love it if I could have a little piece of cake." Not adding qualifiers to make it easier to question. "Oh, I mean if it's okay with you, is there any way that you could, maybe that, maybe?" But rather practice, and I mean when it doesn't matter at all in any way. Like with a temp who's working at your office for the week and you know at the end of the week, you'll literally never see her again. A clerk at a store that you never go to across town, right? Just practice saying the thing politely, kindly, come on now, but like without all

Ep #400: Take Me at My Word (Part 1): How to Stop Second-Guessing When Others Question You

the extra jazz, and then not picking it up, not examining it the second someone looks at you sideways.

You wanted the tomato juice. You said so. That's the whole thing. Right? "Yep, I wanted tomato. Yep, I asked for tomato." Right? Our minds, our bodies, our nervous system need reps of thing, neuroplasticity. We need like repetition, right? The thing being true and staying true. I said what I wanted. I still want the thing that I said that I wanted. It's like doing push-ups, right? Those reps add up faster than you'd think. The way you build that signal back, where the bat signal that rules your world is your own. It's not by starting with your mother. I don't mean to throw mothers under the bus. It's a good, let's see if the accent says funny. It's not by starting with your father. Oh, it's equally funny. Okay, great. Well, great. Pick a guy. Pick a person, right?

But whoever's like most challenging for you, I cannot stress this enough, my perfect little biscuit, do not begin the project of being taken at your word by having the conversation with the person who has been not taking you at your word since the Reagan administration, right? Start at the supermarket with the person at the coffee counter who asks if you want room and you say no and they say, "Are you sure?" And you say, "Correct, no room. Thank you." And you feel that small, weird, old pull to explain yourself. It's just, "I really like it black. Like I've always liked it black. And, um, sometimes I think like maybe I should try to use dairy, but like here's my relationship with dairy. Like, let me give you a brief history of me and lactose."

Can someone put that on a shirt? Here is a brief history of me and lactose. But what are we going to do? So, we're going to not do it. You're going to let your no be a complete sentence. You're going to let it stand there on its own without scaffolding. Then you're going to pay for your coffee and you're going to leave and nothing bad is going to happen. And your nervous

Ep #400: Take Me at My Word (Part 1): How to Stop Second-Guessing When Others Question You

system is going to file that away. And then you're going to do it again somewhere else, and then again. Kitten steps all the way up. The barista, the colleague, the friend, and eventually, sure, a parent. But you have to have enough reps under your belt that when she does the thing, he says the thing, you have something to stand on besides hope.

The other piece, and this one may be a little harder to get to at first, is starting to notice when you've already caved before anyone pushed. So the preemptive self-override where you've run your own preferences through an imaginary cross-examination before it's even left your mouth and decided it probably won't survive contact so you have trimmed it down to something more defensible, which is a completely different thing than changing your mind. And it's worth learning to tell apart. There's a felt difference to it.

So when you notice yourself doing that, my perfect little turnip, please always remember data, not failure. It's data, not failure. It's data, not failure. That's your body showing you exactly where it learned that its first answer wasn't safe. And that's where the actual work is, not in fighting the pusher, because don't fight the pusher. It's not about them. Don't make it about them. It's about getting your own read on yourself, your capital S self solid enough that the push doesn't find purchase the way it used to. There's nowhere for their claws to land, right? And whether those claws are like loving, "You know what I mean," right? There's nowhere for them to push off of because you're just like, you're breathing through it. You're solid. You're grounded in you. All right? Good place to start. I think it's a pretty good place to start. Take that, feel into it, see how it goes, and so my love, I'm going to pause there.

Let all of this land. If you're from Toronto, again, no beef, but like, where's the beef? You know what I mean? It's been real hard to connect with y'all. Sending you love. Hope things are great for you. Good luck with the next

Ep #400: Take Me at My Word (Part 1): How to Stop Second-Guessing When Others Question You

winter. If you're the one who does the pushing, next week is going to be all about you. All right? All right. 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.