

Ep #18: Negative Self-Talk



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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We've all done it. we've all heard ourselves say, "Oh, I'm the kind of person who doesn't eat vegetables, who doesn't work out, who doesn't finish what I started, whose always late, who doesn't drink water, who always procrastinates, who gets angry at the drop of a hat, who's always anxious, who is a workaholic, who..." fill in the blank, with a negative proclamation about our history and habits, a negative story about who we are, stated as fact about the present and the future.

These kinds of declarations keep us stuck in what has been, with little room for growth. Does this habit sound familiar, my love? If so, I promise, you're not alone. I hear it so often, and I'm here to support you in seeing this habit, pausing, and accepting it, so you can start to rewrite it and to build a future in which you are the boss of you and the kind of person you want to be.

You're listening to *Feminist Wellness*, the only podcast that combines functional medicine, life coaching, and feminism to teach smart women how to reclaim their power and restore their health! Here's your host, Nurse Practitioner, Functional Medicine Expert, Herbalist and Life Coach, Victoria Albina.

Hello, hello, my loves. I hope this episode finds you doing so well. I am on my way to San Francisco this week to give a lecture about holistic approaches to mental health concerns; depression and anxiety primarily. I am excited to really geek out about the science and to share the cognitive behavioral framework that I share with y'all here on the *Feminist Wellness* podcast, and the thought management protocol that I use to help folks, and myself, to change our thoughts to change our feelings, and thus to change our entire experience of the world.

I'll also be talking about the magical power of breath work meditation to help us transcend our stories of pain and suffering, to shift our relationship to our childhood wounds, our mother and father wounds, our witch wounds, for those of us holding that story, a story I have held myself.

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And I'll be talking more about our wounds, how to heal them, in coming episodes and in the course I'm creating, just for you, to help supercharge your healing using cutting edge science and functional medicine, breath work, and super smart life coaching techniques. I'm so excited about this upcoming program and I can't wait to give you the details, so soon.

Today, we'll be having a conversation, you and I, about the words that we use to define ourselves. And I say a conversation because I would love to hear your thoughts on this episode and all the others over on the Instagrams and the Facebooks. I post a preview of the coming episode there each week with a cute little video snippet about it. And I would be so honored and delighted to hear from you in the comments section.

When you're done with this episode, hop on over to your social apps and find me @victoriaalbinawellness. I can't wait to hear from you.

So, negative self-definition, that's a doozy. So, saying things like, "I'm not the kind of person who takes time for self-care," or, "I'm just the kind of person who gives too much." Ouch, like, it hurts my tender heart just to say it out loud.

When I hear my coaching clients and the folks I love say these words, I invite them to pause. Here's why; I respect them and you too much to believe that they are inherently the kind of person who does pretty much anything, especially something negative, because I have deep faith in people's ability to change pretty much any behavior and self-defeating thought pattern.

The reason that I respond so strongly to that language is because I know just how disempowering it is. If you tell yourself you're an angry person, you're going to keep being an angry person. That is, if you keep having that thought, "I'm the kind of person who gets angry easily," or, "I'm just

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generally pissed off about the world,” you’re going to feel that way because our thoughts create our feelings.

We then take action based on that feeling, so feeling angry can lead you to act in an angry way, likely creating a situation that you’ll then need to deal with on the other end, like being angry at yourself for being angry and grumping at someone. If you’re having the thought, “You know, I’m just a depressed person,” and walk around telling that story, you’re reinforcing that story in your own being and will feel the weight of that declaration.

You are reinforcing your own habits of feeling depressed by telling the story that you’re the kind of person who is oft depressed. I’m not saying to ignore the feelings in your heart and body – always quite the opposite – but rather I’m saying that by declaring you are a certain kind of person, you are leaving yourself no room for growth. You’re giving up your agency and you’re basically declaring that you are powerless to change your own experience of yourself by changing your thoughts.

Even with something as banal seeming as saying, “I’m not a water drinker,” or, “I’m not like a vegetable person,” you’re breathing that story into existence, giving it strength, and limiting your own options for growth from jump. Does that habit serve you, my love? I must say that I doubt it.

When you stop to think about it, each of us has very few truly immutable unchangeable traits. For example, I’m five foot three- and three-quarter inches tall. I can’t do much to change that. Okay, I guess I could do Pilates or something, but stay with me. I can’t do much to change my height as a fully-grown adult human, or that my eyes are brownish hazel, or that my hair is naturally a shade of dark brown, for now. Nature will make it all white someday, Goddess willing.

But there’s a whole universe of things that I can change about myself, should I choose to. For my romance language speakers out there, I’m

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talking about the difference between Ser and Estar in Spanish, Je Suis and J'ai in French, Yo soy de Mar del Plata, Argentina, the unchangeable fact of where I was born, versus Yo Estoy en Brooklyn, because in a week, I'll be in San Francisco and when you listen to this, I'll already be back.

So to posit changeable habits as Yo Soy, and in a not-Argentine accent, Yo Soy, meaning, "I am, in the fact way," is robbing yourself of an opportunity. I've even seen people change behavior habits that we often think of as inherent, such as being shy or introverted, by changing the story they were telling about themselves from Yo soy, or Yo soy in my accent, to Yo Estoy, or Yo Estoy. Again, Argentine over here.

If we want to build the life of our wildest dreams, it behooves us to get clear about what things we truly cannot change and what things we can change, even if that change seems really challenging. So too, we can focus on trying to change the things that are unchangeable, and that can lead to an awful lot of heartache in a different direction.

Today's focus is on the things and the stories we can change, and I'll be talking in an upcoming episode about the things that we have no control over, namely other people, places, and things. I digress, but let's be real, what's new anyway?

So, my loves, language matters and plays a huge role in what we view as changeable and what we think of as a fixed trait. When we tell ourselves we are the kind of person who, our brains believe us, because neuroscience.

We are reinforcing over and over again the belief that whatever the behavior or characteristic is cannot be changed and is just a part of who we are for the next 70 or 80 years or whatever. Our brains are already prone to focus on the negative for the sake of survival and evolution. So we're adding fuel to the fire when we tell ourselves that we cannot change or that

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some negative behavior we've historically engaged in is intrinsic to who we are.

Here's the good news; our brains also believe us when we tell them, "I'm the kind of person who is building the habit of working out. I'm the kind of person who is learning to love vegetables. I'm the kind of person who is learning, day by day, to control my anger, the kind of person who meditates for five deep breaths a day and then 10 deep breaths a week later, onward and upward."

Studies of cognitive behavioral theory have shown that new scripts, the stories we tell ourselves, can actually rewire our brain, a topic I talk a lot about because it's been life-changing for me. Neuroplasticity is so freaking amazing. We can essentially train our brains to think and feel in new ways.

By telling ourselves new stories and managing our thoughts, we can manage our feelings and ultimately our behaviors. With new behaviors, we'll have new outcomes, and look at you, tiger, one day closer to the life of your dreams. So, let's go through some steps that can help you on this path.

The first step is noticing what stories you're telling yourself about who you are. We can only change what we can observe, says this super nerd, so it all starts with being our own watcher and getting real about the thoughts we're habitually choosing to think about ourselves and the world.

Just like you may not know that you have cucarachas in the kitchen until you turn the lights on late at night, which is the most New York example ever, so too you need to turn the lights on to your own ingrained patterns of thinking and acting before you can change your world view. Many of the scripts we run in our head are so old and familiar, they are like the air we breathe. We don't even see them.

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That's where coaching and practices like breath work can really help. As a trained outside observer, a good coach can help you uncover those stories and bring them out into the light of day. Another critical step is learning to pause. When you hear yourself thinking or saying, "I'm the kind of person who..." simply pause, take a breath, notice that you're doing it.

By creating just a little space, you can then ask yourself, how is this story making me feel? Is this thought, this story, really in my best interest? Does it serve me? Or can I tell another story? What thought would bring me more peace and happiness, if peace and happiness is indeed your goal. Meditation and mindfulness are such easy powerful tools for learning how to pause, observe your own actions, and give yourself the space to make more deliberate choices. It's all about learning to move from unconscious to conscious thought, to get clear on your own stories, to be your best ally in healing.

Another important step is to figure out how these old stories have served you in the past. Often, we hold onto stories because they have worked for us on some level. You're getting something out of telling yourself that you are the kind of person who, or you wouldn't do it. You're too smart for that.

A lot of the stories we hold onto about who we are develop in childhood as survival strategies to cope with whatever our families and the world threw at us. They worked brilliantly to protect us then, but may not be as helpful now. I'm doing a whole episode on the concept of adaptive and maladaptive behaviors; doesn't that sound fun? So keep your ears out for that one... Foreshadowing.

Sometimes, our stories about who we are become intertwined with and cloaked in something that seems positive on the outside. For example, maybe you're telling the story that you're the kind of person who goes above and beyond the call of duty at work.

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While that may ostensibly seem like a good thing on the surface, underneath that drive to work, work, work, there may be a whole rat's nest of issues about control, self-worth, the ways you value yourself and your time, or not, that may be causing you unnecessary stress and unhappiness.

And the time you spend doing extra work could very well be interfering with your doing things that serve your goals or your spirit or growth more; like moving your body however works for you, getting enough sleep, attending to yourself and not proving your value or attempting to do so by calling yourself the kind of person who puts others before herself, who takes care of her family first, who makes sure everyone is happy before she thinks of her own joy.

Once you have begun to cultivate this awareness of your thought habits, it's important to hold and create space for acceptance before you try to change the story. The goal here is not to rail against this new awareness, not to fight the fact of your thought habits, because that will just create more tension in your body. So, you call yourself a lazy person or a procrastinator, someone who couldn't possibly give up coffee, even though she has wild and wicked heartburn.

So, cool, cool, cool, you did those things, you were mean to yourself, you did that. You said that to yourself and anyone who would listen about you. Okay, that moment has passed, my love. Accept it. Embrace it. Own it. getting mad at yourself for it doesn't serve you and keeps you from moving on and through it to change and growth.

If your thought is, "It's sad that I was so mean to myself for all those years," and that leads you to feel sad, then by all means, my beautiful perfect love, feel that. You can feel sad about it. That's okay. If you have the thought, "I'm so angry that I wasted so much time self-sabotaging," then feel that

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anger. Feel it in your bones, in your muscles. Cry about it. Scream about it. Feel it. Name it.

And when the energy has moved through you, make like a gazelle and give your body a good shake. Go for a run or take a dance class. Find someone, human or animal, to consensually hug and connect with. But please, remember to do something to complete the stress activation cycle.

And if you're not quite sure what I'm talking about, that's okay too. Go back and take a listen to episode 17 when you're done with this one. I go into a lot of detail there that can help you to release stress and tension in your body; an important thing when we're coming to terms with our history, which can create quite the sense of tension in our body that it behooves us to release.

And when you're done with that process, know that you get to create a new story about your past too. Your past is past. It is unchangeable. And the story of your past is the story that you choose to tell about it now.

"I used to have the habit of running late," can replace, "I'm just a late person, I'm just, like, always late," if being late is getting in the way of living your best life. Coming to understand your stories and how you've been using them, whether to feel like a protection for you or to guard you against disappointment, to justify your behaviors or actions, to keep you stuck because change is really scary – and so completely worth it, it turns out – is part of the process of transforming those stories.

When we are able to see our own false protections, when we're able to watch how our mind works rather than embodying or living inside the thoughts, we have the freedom to create change. For most of us, changing patterns of thoughts and behaviors gets to be a daily practice. It takes daily dedication to journaling, meditating, breath work, watching our thoughts, attending to ourselves, even if just for a few minutes a day, plus a boatload

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of self-compassion as we practice, over and over again, telling ourselves new stories and acting in new ways.

The real beauty in freeing yourself from the story that, “I’m the kind of person who,” is that you open up the radical possibility of self-transformation. When you stop telling yourself stories about the kind of person you are, you have the power to become the kind of person you want to be. It is no longer preordained in your own mind and you can be the kind of person who is living the life of your dreams; a life full of beauty, health, happiness, gratitude, a connection with great spirit, however you define that, community, love, and friendship, love and friendship first of all from you, for you.

I hope that this was helpful, my loves, and I thank you for listening to this week’s episode of the *Feminist Wellness* podcast. Hop on over to Instagram and follow me there @victoriaalbinawellness, cruise on over to victoriaalbina.com, sign yourself on up for my email list to be the first to learn about my upcoming breath work course, a four-week at-home program where you’ll learn the life-changing practice of the two-part Pranayama breath work I’ve been so honored to learn and that has been so life-changing for me.

You’ll get videos, worksheets, journal prompts, and soundtracks so you can complete this practice at home in your own time, so you can follow along each week, or you can go at your own pace. And you can go back and repeat the lessons anytime you want forever and ever and ever. How fun.

I can’t wait to share this offering with you, my love. It just makes me so happy to think of y’all sitting at home listening to my voice and some really good tunes and engaging in the transformational work of breath work. Ooh, so fun. Okay, until next time, take good care of yourself. And remember, you are safe. You are held. You are loved. And when one of heals, we help heal the world. Be well, my darling.

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Thank you for listening to this week's episode of *Feminist Wellness*. If you like what you've heard, head to VictoriaAlbina.com to learn more.